

THE STATE OF APPLIED CONTRASTIVE LINGUISTICS
AS REFLECTED BY THE 19th ANNUAL ROUND TABLE MEETING

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For linguists as linguists, it may be exhilarating to play with new notations and models and speculations about various edges and depths of language and languages; but those games can be confusing for people with work to do.

(W. F. Twaddell. "The durability of contrastive studies", *19th RTM* (1968), p. 201)

Whereas previous Annual Round Tables had often dealt with quite a large number of different problems at one meeting, a growing tendency towards a stronger concentration of efforts on one topic could be observed in the last few years: Semantics in 1966, Tagmemics in 1967, and 1968's theme was "Contrastive linguistics" with special emphasis on "its pedagogical implications"¹. What we shall have to look for then are

1. the impulses the theory of contrastive linguistics was expected to receive from this meeting and
2. its bearing on actual classroom teaching.

As for the latter requirement we should remember that up to now contrastive studies of different languages as carried out on a systematic linguistic basis cover only a few sections of the whole area, i.e. much more investigations will have to be done in order to meet the most necessary and fundamental conditions of the first requirement mentioned above, before these conditions may be regarded as satisfactory, making them the linguistic basis of a thorough-bred pedagogical system. Therefore much would already be gained

¹ J. E. Alatis, ed., 1968. *Report of the nineteenth Annual Round Table Meeting on linguistics and language studies*. Monograph series on Language and Linguistics, 21. Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press.

at present, if the contributions to 1. were just able to indicate prospective perspectives in 2. To a young discipline like applied linguistics, and in particular to its even younger offspring, contrastive linguistics, this attitude should be nothing but fair.

These considerations should serve as a caveat against K.W. Mildenerger's scepticism concerning applied linguistics as uttered in the second luncheon address to the 19th RTM (208 ff.). He points out how much harm has been done to the public image of linguistics by the impasse which has been reached in such promising linguistic fields as mechanical translation, programmed language instruction, and even foreign language instruction in the classroom. If this holds true, the more reason then for giving applied contrastive linguistics its chance for getting the latter two disciplines out of their strait. It is true most language teachers feel some perplexity by being confronted with the contest of the different approaches of structural linguistics: the first period of American structuralism, being based on *la parole* and following Bloomfield's mechanistic-behaviouristic outlook which asked the teacher to concentrate on the actual speech act and on audiolingual habit-formation, the European tradition, which tends to abstract from actual speech, reducing the phenotype to the underlying *la langue* genotype, thus calling for cognitive learning — as is also done by America's second structural period, the Chomskian age.

The way out of this problem will not be the hope for one of these approaches to win the day, but for the 20th century language teacher's capacity to adjust himself to thinking and methodologically proceeding in terms of a multiple approach to language. That these approaches are not merely devices for seeing the same data from different angles but that all of them can be justified by the nature of language will become obvious in the following discussion of the general auspices under which this 19th RTM stood. Scientists have coped with the problem of looking at an electron from two seemingly contradictory angles according to its nature as a corpuscule and as a wave. The results are outstanding. Why should not linguists, whose object of research is of a comparably heterogeneous nature, do an equally good job — instead of zealously supporting one approach while scorning at all others at the same time.

This RTM again presents itself in the usual outer appearance, which has meanwhile become well-known through its predecessors: three panels with four speakers each, and two luncheon addresses. As the theme throughout the three panels was a central one the criterion which was responsible for assigning the different speakers to the different panels seems to be far from cogent (if there was one at all). The different emphasis which the various contributions lay on phonology, lexicology, and syntax could have provided a clearer

framework. The fact that unlike previous meetings the discussions which followed the papers were not recorded this time, is also regrettable.

In this introductory remarks to the first panel Chairman J. Lotz opposes "contrastive" analysis as viewed from the background of modern linguistic systematic research to the older "comparative" analysis: "... we restrict the term 'contrastive' to systematic comparison of certain groups of elements in two (or more) languages without any reference as to their genetic relationship, typical affiliation and so on" (9). The "and so on" is probably supposed to indicate the opposing principles of the 18th century universal-logical aim of comparison or of the 19th century psychological data-orientated outlook of comparing languages, and the 20th century linguistic point-of-view, which concentrates far less on describing the phenotype of languages than on methods of contrasting which will cast light on genotype differences by a reduction-process of abstraction.

It follows as a natural consequence from abstraction that phenotype features of language are to be classified according to their significance in the relations to the other linguistic units of the same system — and it is exactly this necessity of ranking, which makes contrastive analysis (as carried out with the tools of modern linguistics) not merely an interesting source of information but a prerequisite for any modern language teacher, whose endeavours to optimally economize his teaching must necessarily be based on a reliable hierarchy of difficulties. This is not to say that the linguistic hierarchy was the only one that mattered; along with purely pedagogical considerations and a psychologically motivated hierarchy it will nevertheless be one of the factors of utmost importance which has to be taken into account by the teacher's didactic planning².

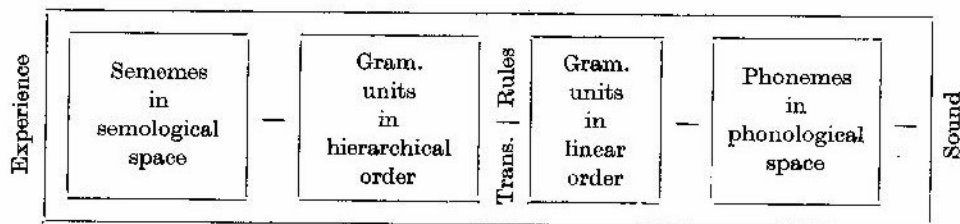
For this reason it seems to be of some significance, that the whole meeting was started by R. P. Stockwell's paper "Contrastive analysis and lapsed time". It may be regarded as a rejoinder to the criticism mainly R. Langacker and D. L. Bolinger had raised against the way he had established his well-known hierarchy of difficulties³. Whatever may be objected against his procedure, it still provides the only acceptable alternative to collecting lists of errors

² Cf. E. J. Brière. 1968. *A psycholinguistic study of phonological interference*, *Janua Linguarum* 66. The Hague: Mouton, p. 13 ff., and R. J. Di Pietro, 19th RTM, p. 76.

³ Cf. R. P. Stockwell, J. D. Bowen, J. W. Martin. 1965. *The grammatical structures of English and Spanish*. Chicago: University Press — Cf. a. R. Langacker, *Foundations of Language*, 4. (1968), p. 211 ff., D. L. Bolinger, *Romance Philology* (1968). — For the general discussion cf. a. G. Nickel — K. H. Wagner. (1968). "Contrastive linguistics and language teaching" *IRAL* 6. 245 ff., and for some examples of phonological data cf. W. Kühlwein. 1970. "Phonetik und Phonemik im englischen Anfangsunterricht". *Schule und Hochschule* (1969). 193 - 212.

students have made — a method, which, however, is unsatisfactory because it must remain eclectic and for this reason can never achieve an equal degree of predicative power — which again is a criterion of utmost importance for the language teacher both when engaged in preparing his lessons and in the classroom situation. In most of the reviews of Stockwell's books as well as in his present rejoinder too much space and time seem to have been devoted to the question as to how much linguistic theory a pedagogically orientated audience of language teachers can stand. The solution seems simple enough: the more time and means those who are engaged in teaching already will get for linguistic retraining — as envisaged by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in the sense of life-long integrated education (*éducation permanente*) — the more successfully they will apply recent linguistic theories and reshape them according to their practical demands.

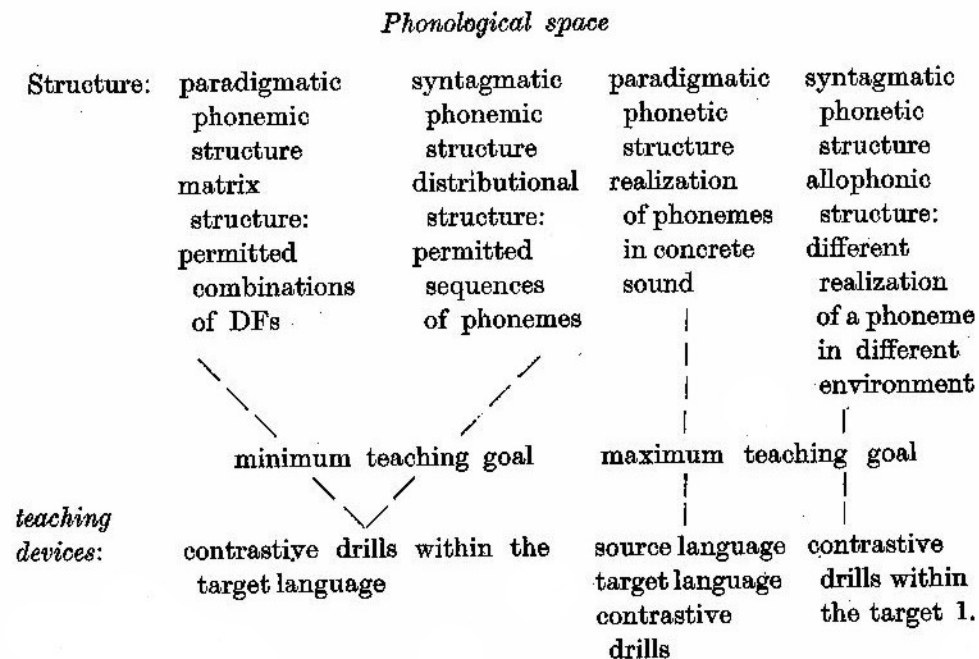
W. G. Moulton's contribution concerning "The use of models in contrastive linguistics" indicates best what we had in mind, when advocating a "multiple approach" above. Atoning the generative transformational model and the stratificational model to each other he arrives at the following sketch of a model for a language (29):



The enormous difficulties in the stage of development which contrastive analysis has reached on the various linguistic levels become obvious in almost everyone of the present RTM contributions. Contrastive phonology is still ahead of contrastive syntax, which, however, is still far ahead of what has been achieved in contrastive semantics up to the present day⁴.

This deplorable fact seems to be mirrored best in what Moulton has to say about the semological space when he discusses the structure of the four units of his model and the respective teaching devices which he recommends. The phonological space is most nicely delineated in both its structure and its teaching devices, as can be shown by the following table:

⁴ Cf. R. P. Stockwell, 25; J. Lyons, 1968. *Introduction to theoretical linguistics*. Cambridge: University Press, p. 470 ff.; cf. also *18th RTM* (1967), ed. E. L. Blansitt, Jr., p. 65 ff. and W. Kühlwein, *IRAL* 9, 157 ff. and *Anglia* 88, 114 ff. (review of B.M.H. Strang, *Modern English Structure*, 2nd. ed.).



Concerning the structure of semological space, "About all we can do is to try to show how a few small areas of the universal semantic grid (of sememes) are structured in the source and target languages." (31)—and even this still remains to be done! There it would, however, have been appropriate if the author had done mention to recent endeavours which mainly linguistically orientated anthropologists have been taking in developing componential analysis⁵. And as for the teaching devices recommended for the semological

⁵ For further literature and more detailed aspects of this highly promising field of investigation cf. R. Austerlitz, 1959. "Semantic components of pronoun systems: Gilyak". *Word* 15, 102 - 109; E. H. Bendix, 1966. *Componential analysis of general vocabulary: The semantic structure of a set of verbs in English Hindi, and Japanese* (Bloomington, 1966); I. R. Buehler, 1964. "Measuring the development of kinship terminologies: Scalogram and transformational accounts of Crow-type systems". *American Anthropologist* 66, 765 - 788; R. Burling, 1962. "A structural restatement of njamal kinship terminology", *Man* 62, 122 - 124; R. Burling, 1964. "Cognition and componential analysis: god's truth or hocus-pocus?" *American Anthropologist* 66, 20 - 28; F. P. Conant, 1961. "Jarawa kin system of reference and address: a componential comparison". *Anthropological Linguistics* 3, 19 - 33; W. H. Goodenough, 1956. "Componential analysis and the study of meaning". *Language* 32, 195 - 216; L. Guttman, 1954. "The principle components of scalable attitudes" in P. F. Lazarsfeld et. al. 1954. *Mathematical thinking in the social sciences*. Glencoe, E. A. Hammel, 1964. "Further comments on componential analysis". *American Anthropologist* 66, 1167 - 1171; H. McKaughan, 1959. "Semantic components of pronoun system: Maranao". *Word* 15, 101 - 102.

space all the author can offer apart from the pedagogically primitive stage of explicit explaining is to "have our students learn and act dialogues containing words of this sort" (32) — which proves that here we are even more at a loss.

The fact that some languages require more successive specification in certain places than do others is also due to the different structuring of the bundles of semantic features of words. This insight leads beyond the level of lexicological research to discourse structure. As H. A. Gleason, Jr. points out in "Contrastive analysis in discourse structure", differences come primarily in the minima allowed, whereas there seems to be no upper limit on possible detail. Contrastive discourse does not only ask, how what is said is articulated into parts, which parts are located in the centre vs. the periphery and how the parts are classified, but also poses the fundamental question what is selected to mention and what is not. Besides purely semantic features different connotational features, which words receive from the various macrocontextual varieties as specified by Firth will have to be considered as well. One should, however, be on the guard, not to attribute more "importance" to a sememe if it occurs as a noun or a verb rather than as a synsemantic unit (in A. Marty's sense); cf. Gleason's example *Kate: Rora rareckera enuc mumbi* vs. English: *Then they sat around it and said*, where English *sat around* is expressed by two verbs *encircle* and *sit* in *Kate*; the author comments: "One feature of the 'reality' is given a place in the main sequence of verbs in *Kate*, whereas English puts it outside the main sequence as an adjunct" (45). The author is right as long as phrases like putting something "outside the main sequence" are intended to be interpreted from a strictly formal basis without drawing any mentalistic inferences from them, from where it would only be a little step to the 19th century correlation between language structure and national psychology. In the detailed example which the author gives for the investigation of several important aspects of discourse structure (Action and Participants), and which is based on the stratificational model, he fortunately sticks to the basic formal aspects of a narrative: ordering of events into a sequence, kind of relation of the actions in the narrative to each other (direct or indirect), specification of the kind of connection according to a small set of contrasting relations, amount of repetition. The kind of mapping discourse structure according to these criteria could certainly even be carried out roughly at High School level; composition and essay-writing will certainly benefit from such exercises, for which passages from contemporary authors should be chosen as materials.

Whereas contrastive discourse analysis as advocated here, is rather closely attached to surface structure, R. J. Di Pietro outlines the generative approach to contrastive linguistics as opposed by the structural-taxonomic one, revealing the various well-known shortcomings of the latter. The postulate that a viable

contrastive study has to rest on an understanding of language universals and to show the processes, how each language interprets these commonly shared features as peculiar surface forms, leads him to the corresponding framework of deep and surface structures as given in the three components: semantics, syntax and phonology. Whereas on the deep level the constituting "set of grammatical primes" and the "basic stock of phonetic features" can be established without too much difficulties, troubles will arise again in the semantic component: how is the deep level "common stock of semantic features" to be obtained? Should this stock be obtained from the extra-linguistic level (from logic or from the world outside) or is it established by a semantic collocation of the respective languages? This would, however, imply that contrastive analysis which is the aim, would actually have to precede the whole investigation. Regardless of this theoretical objection, we agree to the author's demand that with regard to the semantic component a contrastive analysis "must also proceed from a feature to feature comparison rather than going from lexeme to lexeme" (76), as our remarks in addition to Moulton's treatment of contrastive semantics have indicated already.

A. B. Gaarder's luncheon address "Education of American Indian children", showing how despondent Indian children have to grapple with a school-system, that still has too many nonnative features, will prove to be of more interest to the anthropologist than to the linguist.

An application of methods and procedures of contrastive linguistics to intra-language contrasting is suggested in C. A. Ferguson's article on "Contrastive analysis and language development". Comparable to older diachronic linguistics two kinds of contrasts must be distinguished in the child's language development: contrasting successive stages with each other and contrasting the structures of the model with a particular synchronic stage of the replica. This second kind of contrastive analysis becomes interesting as soon as the respective stage of child's language is not any longer described in terms of deviations from the adult norm, but as a system in its own. What Ferguson outlined in his phonological example can also be done for the child's morphology⁶. The following pedagogical implications may be extracted from this contribution: relevance for speech-therapy up to the age of 8 or 10 by simplifying or accelerating the process of language acquisition by using techniques which are adapted to the contrast between the model system and the particular stage of the replica system; pedagogical inferences may also be drawn on the process of second language learning, the more translucent the entire model-replica relation becomes for the teacher.

⁶ Cf. W. Kühlwein, 1970. "J. Pačesová's 'Development of vocabulary in the child' reconsidered in the light of some contrastive German data". *Language Learning* 20, 127 - 133.

The title of J. B. Carroll's article "Contrastive analysis and interference theory", stimulating as it must be to any contrastive linguist, must not make us overlook that this was a highly unrewarding task. He had set out to interpret the principles of interference theory in psychology in the framework of contrastive linguistics. He knows that he failed. However, rather than attributing this failure to the highly gifted author, we should better look out for reasons inherent in his subject matter, or strictly speaking in the present state of empirical psychological investigations in the field of interferences. The author is right in stating that most psychological studies devoted to verbal learning concentrated on the A-B, A-C paradigm, where one response to a certain stimulus was substituted by another response to the same stimulus. What differs from this psychological model in linguistics is the fact that the old response B (source languages) has to be retained when the new response C (target language) is learned. The second disadvantage of the author's task was the fact that psychological research into language learning concentrates on retroactive inhibition, i.e. on the way the new learning interferes with the old learning. The interferences, in which the second language teacher will be interested, however, are of a proactive nature, i.e. the way how the structure of the first language modifies or inhibits that of the second.

R. Lado's contribution "Contrastive linguistics in mentalistic theory of language learning" may be looked upon as a reinforcement of Gleason's insisting on a comparative analysis above sentence level on the one hand, though he reaches this conclusion not from the stratificational but from the glossematic point of view, and as an answer to Di Pietro's recommendation to adopt general transformational grammar as the basis for contrastive studies. Though Lado cannot help admitting that generative transformational grammar "offers us the possibility of making contrastive studies with greater explanatory power" (126), he nevertheless objects that the learning problem is not one of mechanical derivation of sentences from deep structures through rules. When he maintains instead that whole complexes, corresponding to situations rather than to sentences should be considered as the basis of language learning, one feels reminded of quite similar objections which D. L. Bolinger had raised against the generative semantic model of Fodor and Katz⁷. Lado advocates a performance model instead, which distinguishes between the three components: metalinguistic thought, language thought, and speech resp. writing. Language thought obviously means the content form of language. Metalinguistic thought is multidimensional, goes beyond the expressive level, encompassing what Firth had probably meant with "the great unsaid", which sometimes can convey as much or even more information than what is actually expressed by the spoken utterance. As references he can draw upon Bel-

⁷ D. L. Bolinger. 1965. "The atomization of meaning". *Language* 41. 555 ff.

yayev's distinction between objective and subjective thought and on Bruner's enactive and ikonic types of thought⁸. It is true, his glossematic-rooted distinction introduces a new dimension into contrastive studies, with which generative transformational grammar has not yet been able to cope, unfortunately, however, his central notion of metalinguistic thought is still far from being clearly developed.

E. P. Hamp in his contribution "What a contrastive grammar is not, if it is" takes an even more sceptical attitude towards the use of generative grammar for language teaching purposes. His reason is that it does not reflect what is going on in the mind of the user of the language anyway. One might argue that this criterion is by no means the only relevant one concerning the practical usefulness of generative grammar; Hamp's conclusion, however, to prefer a careful and searching consideration of the mistakes made, to systematic contrastive analysis (on whatever theoretical basis it may rest) seems somewhat rash in any case.

There is one intention which Hamp shares with W. M. Rivers, the first panelist of the third panel: to arrive at a closer definition of contrastive linguistics. Whereas Hamp opposes the various terms which have been used for what contrastive linguistics does, Rivers in "Contrastive linguistics in textbooks and classroom" approaches "contrast" from its relation to "difference". This article is more of practical rather than of theoretical interest as it contains many useful hints even for those teachers, who are not linguistic experts, e.g. not merely to concentrate on sounds with distinctive features, "which contrast most obviously with those of otherwise comparable sounds in the native language ... while allowing students to produce with native-language articulation sounds with fewer contrasting features" (154 ff.), as such procedure results in a disruption of the phonological system of the target language; then teachers are advised to avail themselves of obvious similarities instead of merely clinging to the obvious contrasts between different languages, to view a contrasting feature not only from the contrasting language but to check its value within its own system as well, etc.

Whereas most of the former papers emphasized the predicative function of comparative analysis, J. C. Catford's article "Contrastive analysis and language teaching" gives priority to its explanatory function. Following the observation that there are "systematic" differences between two languages, i.e. "differences in the conceptual oppositions, underlying systems of articles, tenses, prepositions and the like, which are not obvious since they are represented not by the sequencing of simultaneously present surface features but by the selection of alternative forms" (162) the author discusses as a point

⁸ B. V. Belyayev. 1963. *The psychology of teaching foreign languages*. Oxford; J. S. Bruner et al. 1965. *A study of thinking*. New York.

in case the opposition between progressive—non-progressive in English past and between perfective/imperfective in Russian past: was writing/wrote vs. *napisal/pisal*. In each language they constitute a marked and an unmarked form. But whereas the marked form in English is the expanded form, its meaning being “past”+explicit reference to “progress”, the marked form in the Russian pair is the perfective one, which explicitly refers to a completion. As a pedagogical consequence the teacher of English to Russians will deal with the non-progressive form first (a procedure, which, on the other hand will cause classroom difficulties, as from a situational approach the progressive form offers itself sooner: *I am standing up, I am going to the blackboard...*) whereas his Russian colleague will teach his English pupils the imperfective form first. Whereas some of his predecessors at this RTM were primarily occupied with a delimitation of the various linguistic components which matter in contrastive analysis, Catford takes an overall view, pointing out, how e.g. shifts of tonic can involve changes in the surface syntax of the sentence as well (John met *Mary* in Paris) Jean a rencontré *Marie* à Paris vs. *John* met Mary in Paris (c'est bien *Jean* qui a rencontré Marie à Paris). This kind of consideration may be regarded as a noteworthy addition to what Moulton had said before. Furthermore he suggests to supplement the contrastive phonemic charts by charts showing the realization of phonemes in terms of their position in the syllable, e.g. (168 ff.):

INITIAL

Javanese	Lab		Dent		Alv		Retr		Postalv	Velar	
	—	LL	—	LL	—	LL	—	LL		—	LL
voiceless	p	p-	t	t-	tj	tj-	ʈ	ʈ-		k	k-
voiced	(Nb)		(Nd)		(Ndj)		(Nd)			(Ng)	

English

voiceless	p		t		ɔ	k
voiced	b		d		ʒ	g

FINAL

Javanese	Lab	Dent	Alv	Postalv	Velar
voiceless	ʔp ⁿ	ʔt ⁿ			ʔk ⁿ

English

voiceless	p		t	ɔ	k
voiced	b		d	ʒ	g

(LL=larynx lowered; N=homorganic nasal)

The “polysystemic” approach (Firth) inherent in this kind of procedure is used on the level of syntax as well; unfortunately it is again not illustrated for the semantic level.

The multiple approach, as indicated above, is most emphatically advocated by R. A. Hall, Jr. from the textbook-writer's point of view in “Contrastive grammar and textbook structure”. As for the ways, in which the differences in structure should be dealt with in textbooks, he suggests an eclectic approach, availing himself of item-and-arrangement, of item-and-process, and even of the paradigm-and-principal-parts approach according to their degree of explanatory power, which in turn ultimately varies with the particular language problems that are to be taught; thus he would e.g. use transformational rules for presenting relationships between clause-types, they are, however, “to put it mildly, not useful, if they serve only to waste the student's time on imaginary derivations such as that of Fr. *Mon enfant* “my child” from *L'enfant est à moi* “the child who is mine”, through the intermediate steps *l'enfant qui est à moi ... > l'enfant à moi... > *l'enfant/moi*, Modifier, Pre-Nom / > **le/moi*, Modifier, Pre-Nom / *enfant* > *moi *Modifier, Pre-Nom / enfant* > *mon enfant*.” (180)

Regarding the present state of the theory of applied linguistics this attitude is without doubt realistic — though the deeper reasons for the author's scepticism as to the efficiency of generative grammar for his purpose stem from the same root as has been shown in Hamp's case. It also seems significant that he tries to arrive at a compromise in an addendum to his article, where deep structure, the linguistic existence of which he had seriously questioned before, comes in a modified form as “source structure”.

W. L. Lee's “Thoughts on contrastive linguistics in the context of language teaching” refute some assumptions, which he considers as still wide-spread among language teachers, e.g. that the greater the differences are, the more acute the learning difficulties will be.

Viewed as a whole, the editor can be congratulated to his success in assembling so many distinguished linguists. The world-wide reputation which each panelist of this 19th RTM enjoys will contribute towards the perpetuation of international attention which is duly being paid to this event every year. The reader who had expected the birth of a full-fledged, ready cut theory of contrastive linguistics from this meeting, it is true, will be disappointed. For him, who aims less high, however, the broad variety of approaches, outlined here in their contesting and in their mutual complementing, will be promising and stimulating, rather than distressing.