

Language, Use and Contrastive Analysis

Yowell Y. Aziz
University of Petra

1. Introduction

There are at present two main views of language and its relation to the world: the older and classical view which is here termed the Objectivist theory of language and the more recent view which *is* referred to, following Moore & Carling (1982: 10), the Epiphenomenalist theory of language..

The traditional Objectivist view considers language a homogeneous 'object', a formal system to a large extent independent of its users and its context of use (Lee, 1992: 185). On this view, language is a code consisting of a set of phonological, grammatical and lexical features which may be investigated out of context. Phenomena in the external world are classified into discrete categories conceived by the speaker, which are in turn reflected in linguistic categories. Meaning originates in the mind of the speaker in the form of mental constructs or concepts, which are planned or encoded by the speaker into a text functioning as a container of the speaker's thought. All that the addressee or the hearer has to do is to decode the linguistic sign and arrive at the meaning of the sentence. The act of communication is therefore relatively unproblematic with language functioning as a means for carrying the meaning of the speaker to the hearer. Words and sentences are given independent meaning - that which is intended by the speaker - to be decoded by the hearer.

This view of language has dominated most trends in language studies. In modern linguistics it originated in the writings of De Saussure, the founder of modern European linguistics, who conceived languages as

closed system consisting of elements, each element having a value only within the system. To De Saussure, language (*langue*) is a common mental property of a speaking community. This view has been reinforced by the Generative theory, which regards language as an internalised set of rules, competence. The linguistic model proposed by these linguists was first an autonomous syntactic model (Chomsky, 1957), to which was later added a semantic component (Chomsky, 1965). This approach promotes language as an independent system divorced of its speaker, having its own meaning.

Most of the contrastive work until 1970s was carried out within the framework of the Objectivist theory of language. Since phenomena in the external world have an objective ontological existence and are discretely constructed, this objective foundation may serve as a basis for comparison. Differences between languages would result mainly from differences in the way speakers of various languages would conceptualise the external world. Conceptual or cognitive categories will mediate different viewpoints of the world in different languages. A second source of differences between languages may be traced to linguistic systems. This is known as "linguistic relativity" strongly promoted by the American linguist Whorf (1971), but may also be traced earlier than that in the writings of the eighteenth and nineteenth century German thinkers such as Kant, Herder, Hegel and Humboldt, and in the twentieth century in De Saussure and Sapir.

The relation between linguistic categories, cognitive categories and the world is a complicated one. According to a more extreme view claimed by Sapir and Whorf, known as Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, linguistic systems carve reality into segments, and hence the same facts are conceived differently by speakers of different languages. This extreme view has a few supporters today; however, most linguists support some version of linguistic relativity based on the prior influence of perceptual categories on speakers' choice of lexical items and syntactic structures used in describing objects, events and actions. Moreover, the view is that these conceptual categories are shaped by biological, psychological and social factors. This version of linguistic relativity, which has received considerable support from sociolinguistic studies, is the one which is adopted in the present paper.

In Objectivist theory, contrastive work is carried out within microlinguistics, where the sentence is the highest linguistic unit and the main emphasis is on the formal aspects of language, systems, rather than on the function or use of the language: i.e. on competence rather than performance. Meaning is accounted for in terms of traditional semantic theories, which study sense, reference and truth conditions related to words, sentences and propositions. For example, the definite article the may be compared with the definite article ال in Arabic. Differences and similarities would be explained in terms of distribution of these articles in a noun phrase: the house, the houses, the water, and البيت، البيوت، الماء (al-bayt, al-buyut, al-ma').

However, the real value of these articles, the and ال, is only appreciated if they are studied as two items in two different systems: the English system consisting of three terms, the definite article, the indefinite article and the zero article illustrated by these examples:

- (1) the man versus a man (the versus zero).
- (2) the man versus men (the versus zero).
- (3) the water versus water (the versus zero).

The Arabic article, on the other hand, functions in a two term system: the definite ال and the zero article:

- (4) الرجل : رجل (al-rajul:rajul)(ال versus zero).
- (5) الرجال : رجال (al-rijal :rijal) (al versus zero).

The value of the and ال cannot therefore be the same. No significant distinction would be drawn between the subclasses of count nouns and mass nouns (ماء: رجل) in Arabic, since such distinction is irrelevant for the distribution of the two articles; whereas it is significant for the distribution of English articles.

At the semantic level, two functions of the definite articles in English and Arabic are distinguished: specific reference and generic reference as in:

- (6) The man has arrived. (specific).
- (7) وصل الرجل (wa ala al-rajulu) (specific).
- (8) The fox is a cunning animal. (generic).
- (9) الثعلب حيوان مكر (Al-tha·labu hayawanun makirun) (generic).

Nothing is said of the function of these articles in a text, since contrastive analysis in the objectivist view confines itself to the sentence and its elements. The role of these articles in the actual process of communication is totally neglected although the uses of the English and the Arabic articles may reveal essential differences if larger (higher) units are examined, as the following example quoted from a novel by Mahfuz, *Awlaadu Haaratina*, and its English translation by Philip Stewart (London: Heinemann 1981) shows:

- (10) (p. 545) فسرعان ما قيدوا قدميها وادخلوها في الجوال ثم...
(fasur'ana rna qayadu qadamayha wa adkhaliha fi al-jawwali thumma ...).
They pushed her [Awatif] over and quickly bound her feet together, put her into the sack and (p. 350).

In the recent years, serious doubts have been cast on the idea that linguistics should be confined to the study of a linguistic string (sentence) without taking into account its context (Brown & Yule, 1983; Wilss, 1982; Beaugrande, 1994). Many linguists have adopted a broader view of their field, with context playing an important role in the construction and interpretation of a text. In this new trend, particular attack has been directed at the objectivist view of linguistic categories (Lakoff, 1987: 160-3) and their metaphysical basis which has the following characteristics according to Lakoff:

- (i) Objectivist Metaphysics, in that reality of the external world consists of entities which have fixed properties and relations among themselves at any instant;
- (ii) Essentialism, in that some properties make things what they are; these are essential properties. Other properties are accidental; their role is peripheral;

- (iii) Classical categorisation, which states that all the entities which share a certain set of properties form a category; such properties are necessary and sufficient condition to define the category.

Lakoff argues that recent discoveries in linguistics and other related fields do not support the Objectivist view of categories. His argument is essentially, based on Dixon's work (1972) on Dyirbal, a language spoken by the Aboriginals of Australia. Dixon claims that the principles of categorisation are culture-specific rather than culture-independent as viewed by the Objectivist theory. The main characteristics of human conceptual categories according to the view supported by Lakoff, Dixon and others are centrality versus non-centrality, chaining, lack of common properties, openness, culture specific experiential domain and motivation (Lee, 1992, 42). The structure of these categories is essentially "radial" consisting of a central core and some non-central members of the category. As an illustrative example, Lee quotes the following category based on the English verb climb:

- (11) She climbed the hill.
- (12) She climbed the rock face.
- (13) She climbed the ladder.
- (14) The aircraft climbed the sky.
- (15) See how that creeper climbs up to the window.
- (16) The spider climbed gingerly across the web.
- (17) She climbed down the rock face.
- (18) In the recent confrontation with the American president, the Russian premier was forced to climb down.

(Lee, 1992: 43)

Sentences (11)-(16), which express movement upward, form the core of the category, whereas (17) – (18) expressing movement downward are

peripheral. More will be said about this category in a later section (Section 2).

As a result of these discoveries in linguistics and others in sociolinguistics, psychology and ethnography, many linguists have rejected the classical view of categories and have moved beyond the sentence to text and discourse. This change has also shifted the centre of linguistic studies from linguistic competence to communicative competence and from the study of system to the study of performance and use. The data used for text analysis and discourse study are no longer the language of an ideal native speaker; they are taken from the language of everyday use.

Equally important is the change involving the nature of meaning. The new trend has rejected the static view of meaning as a property of words and sentences, and has replaced it by a more dynamic idea which states that meaning is produced as a result of interaction between the speaker and the addressee. A word or a text does not have a fixed meaning to be decoded by the addressee. The speaker, the addressee and the context all participate in determining the interpretation of texts. This new idea of language termed Epiphenomenalist (Moore and Carling, 1982) has gained considerable ground in the last two decades. Much work has been carried out in text analysis and discourse analysis, and in investigating the factors which determine meaning not only semantically but also pragmatically. Thus pragmatics has acquired considerable importance, and a number of pragmatic theories have been forwarded mostly by ordinary language philosophers (e.g. Austin, 1962; Grice, 1975; Searle, 1969) to explain the pragmatic level of meaning, which cannot be satisfactorily accounted for by traditional semantics and logic.

To date, as far as I am aware, the implication of this new view of language, the Epiphenomenalist view, for contrastive analysis has not received adequate attention. The present paper aims at presenting a modest contribution towards redressing this inadequacy. Although the illustrative examples are from English and Arabic, it is hoped that the main argument will have wider application. Here I will be mainly concerned with tentatively exploring certain areas which may be usefully exploited in contrastive studies. However, this is only a tentative attempt and much further work is required in the Epiphenomenalist theory. In this paper, three aspects of the new trend will be explored: vocabulary

(Section 2), pragmatic meaning (Section 3) and some types of discourse (Section 4). The results of the study will be summarized in Conclusion (Section 5).

2. Vocabulary

In the Epiphenomenalist theory, vocabulary plays a dynamic role in the process of constructing the meaning of a text. A text is defined here as the abstract theoretical construct underlying discourse (Van Dijk, 1977:3). The process of building the meaning of a text is a creative process in which the speaker and the addressee participate. Widdowson (1983 :92-4) draws a distinction between two types of vocabulary: procedural and schematic. A procedural word has a general meaning which changes according to the context in which the word is used, e.g. material, thing; tool, consist of. A schematic word has specific meaning which is normally not influenced by the context, e.g. pen, door, microscope. For example, in the following definition of microscope found in the *New Oxford Dictionary of English*

Microscope: an optional instrument used for viewing very small objects.

the word instrument, used for and objects are procedural; they acquire their meaning from the context in which they are used. Here instrument is equal to microscope, used to means how a microscope is used and objects are slides, etc. In other context, for example, the definition of telephone, these procedural words acquire different meanings. Microscope, optional and telephone are schematic words whose meanings will remain constant in various contexts. It is the first type, procedural words, which has a dynamic role in constructing meaning. The meaning of this class of words is pragmatically determined on the specific occasion of their utterance. As stated above, the schematic class of words has a constant meaning and serves as a foundation on which the dynamic meaning of procedural words is built.

This classification of vocabulary into procedural and schematic subtypes can be used as a basis for contrastive analysis. For example, the various relations realised by procedural words in English. (cf. Marco, 1999) may be compared with the corresponding relations realised by procedural words in Arabic. For scientific English, Marco (1999) distinguishes a number of conceptual relations which are mostly expressed by Be +

Adjective: be similar to, be equivalent to, be considered, be different from. Some relations are also expressed by full verbs: correspond to, range from, arise from. It would be revealing to examine Arabic scientific texts and find out what conceptual relations are realised, what procedural words are used, and how they compare with the corresponding relations and procedural items used in English texts. Here are some examples from English taken from Marco (1999):

- (19) The xerogel was a blue green colored piece of transparent glass. (whole-piece relation).
- (20) Primary volcanic deposits include proclastic deposits of lava flows. (identity).
- (21) Megacrysts are almost entirely absent from OTB lavas, etc. (exclusion relation).
- (22) Familial glucocorticoid appeared to be a form of Addison's disease. (class membership relation).

These conceptual relations are also found in Arabic texts; they are expressed by procedural verbs or adjectives:

- (19.a) ... كان جزءاً من ... (kana juz'an min).
- (20.a) ... يشتمل على ... (yashtamilu 'ala).
- (21.a) .. لا وجود له .. (la wujuda lahu).
- (22.a) ... شكل من اشكال ... (shaklun min ashkali).

The problem of finding Arabic equivalents for English schematic words in these examples is, of course, a major problem of coining a technical vocabulary in modern Standard Arabic. However, this problem falls outside the scope of the present paper.

Another area of vocabulary which may be suggested for constructive analysis is the radial structure of conceptual categories realised by lexical items as claimed by Lakoff, mentioned in Section 1. Let us return to sentences (17)-(18), which form a category built round the verb climb.

There are three types of movement radiating from the core to the periphery: walking upward (exs. 11-13), movement upward (exs. 14-16) and walking or movement downward (exs. 17 & 18). The structure represents a cline with walking upward as the centre and movement downward on the edge of the category. For convenience, the sentences are repeated here:

- (11) She climbed the hill.
- (12) She climbed the rock face.
- (13) She climbed the ladder.
- (14) The aircraft climbed into the sky.
- (15) See how the creeper climbs up to the window.
- (16) The spider climbed gingerly across the web.
- (17) She climbed down the rock face.
- (18) In the recent confrontation with the American president, the Russian premier was forced to climb down.

This „category may be contrasted with the category based on the corresponding Arabic verb تسلق (tasallaqa).

- (11.a) تسلقت الفتاة التل (tasallaaat al faHitu al-talla).
- (12.a) تسلقت الفتاة الصخرة (tasallaqat al-fatatu al-sakhrata).
- (13.a) تسلقت الفتاة السلم (tasallaaat al-fatatu al-sullama).
- (14.a) تسلقت الطائرة في السماء
(tasallaqat al-ta'iratu fi al-sama'i).
- (15.a) انظر كيف يتسلق اللبلاب نحو النافذة
(unzur kayfa yatasallaqu al-liblabu nahwa al-nafidhati).

- (16.a) تسلق العنكبوت بحذر في نسيجه
(tasallaqa al-'ankabutu bihadharin fi nasTjihi).
- (17.a) * تسلقت الفتاة الى اسفل الصخرة
(tasallaqat al-fatatu ila asfali al-sakhrati).
- (18.a) في المواجهة الاخيرة مع رئيس الولايات المتحدة, اضطر الزعيم الروسي ان يتسلق
الى الاسفل
(fi al-muwajahati al-akhTrati ma'a ra'Isi al-wiHiyati al-
muttahidati idturra al-za'Imu al-rusiyu 'ala an
yatasallaqa ila al-asfali).

These examples show that the Arabic category has a slightly different structure (see exs. 17.a – 18.a). Arabic and English structures are most similar at the core of the category. They also seem to agree at least partially on the edge of the upward movement. This brief comparison based just on one example shows, first that certain aspects of conceptual categories are culture-specific, others are not; secondly, categories in different languages are more likely to differ in their peripheral structures; and finally the core of category may have some common basis in various languages. Further contrastive investigation in the radial structure of various categories in different languages may confirm or disprove these results. Lakoff does not claim that all categories are radially organised; what he seems to suggest is that radial structure is an essential property of perceptual categories. This property may be usefully exploited in contrastive analysis.

3. Pragmatic Meaning

Pragmatic meaning relates texts to their contexts. In this area, contrastive analysis may be carried out with regard to several aspects of pragmatic meaning including speech acts, information distribution, deixis, conversational implicatures and thematic organisation (cf Levinson, 1983; Halliday, 1992). The list is representative rather than exhaustive. The possibilities in each of these for contrastive study will be discussed briefly.

Austin (1962) argues in *How to Do Things With Words* that language is used not only to describe the world but to do things such as threatening, promising, warning, advising, etc. In his earlier work, he draws a distinction between constative acts and performative acts. Utterances of

the former type are used to describe the outside world: It is hot today; whereas utterances belonging to performatives are used by the speaker to do things: I will be there; I promise I will be there. Further, within the class of performatives, Austin distinguishes between primary performatives: I will be there and explicit performatives: I promise I will be there. The latter subtype contains an explicit element (a verb, etc) which refers to the speech act intended by the speaker. Languages differ in how they exploit primary-explicit distinction; certain languages prefer to use primary performatives more than they would use explicit performatives. Others favour the opposite trend. Perhaps English belongs to the first group, Arabic to the second. This statement is, however, mainly impressionistic, based on a limited cases observed by the present writer. Further investigation is required here before a clear opinion can be formed of this point.

Languages may also differ in the way they realise linguistically certain speech acts. Note the difference between English and Arabic in the use of the verb form in the following examples:

- (19) a. May God help you.
b. كان الله في عونك (kana al-lahu fi 'awnika).
- (20) a. I will sell you this.
b. بعثك هذا (bi'tuka hadha).
- (21) a. Long live freedom.
b. عاشت الحرية ('ashat al-hurriyat).

In these examples English uses a modal verb or the subjunctive mood (21 a.) to perform the act of wish; Arabic uses the past form to express the same act.

An important distinction drawn by Searle and others is between direct speech acts: Close the door and indirect speech acts: Could you close the door? An indirect speech act is defined as one which is performed by using another speech act. For example, negation may be performed not only directly by a negative statement: I don't care, but also indirectly by interrogative sentence: Who cares? The phenomenon of indirection in achieving speech acts is a cline: utterances ranges from more direct to less direct, or from less indirect to more indirect speech acts. Indirection in

English has received considerable attention (Leech, 1983; Searle, 1975; Sadock, 1974). In contrast, very little has been written about this phenomenon in Arabic. The two languages show marked differences in how they express indirection. For example, an English speaker may choose from the following utterances arranged from less indirect to more indirect moods of expression:

- (22) Read the report.
- (23) I want you to read the report.
- (24) Will you read the report?
- (25) Can you read the report?
- (26) Would you read the report?
- (27) Could you read the report?

(22) is in the form of an imperative sentence; (23) is a declarative sentence; (24)-(25) have an interrogative structure. Other factors being equal, an English speaker would probably prefer (26) or (27) when asking a stranger to do something for him.

The corresponding Arabic utterances are:

- (22.a) اقرأ التقرير (iqra' al-taqrira).
- (23.a) اريدك ان تقرأ التقرير (uriduka an taqra'a al-taqrira).
- (24.a) هل تريد ان تقرأ التقرير? (hal turidu an taqra'a al-taqrira?).
- (25.a) هل تستطيع ان تقرأ التقرير?
(hal tastatT 'u an taqra'a al-taqrira?).

The symbol (?) placed before a sentence means that it is pragmatically odd since it is not normally used on such an occasion or in this context. These are only a few ways of expressing a speech act in English or Arabic; the possibilities provided by the two languages are certainly more numerous. However, these few examples suggest that Arabic speakers

tend to use less indirect ways of expressing the same act than English speakers do. Perhaps this is a general trend pointing to the fact that certain languages prefer a more indirect method of expression, others opt in the opposite direction.

Information carried by the units of a sentence or a text is of two kinds: given (old) and new. Given information is that which is assumed by the speaker that it can be retrieved by the addressee from the context. Thus the context of a text is essential in determining new and given information. In English, new information is basically realised phonologically by a heavy stress (nuclear stress). Any of the elements in the sentence, Ahmed came early may carry new information depending on the context, which is placed between brackets in the following sentences. The element carrying new information is underlined:

(28)(When did Ahmed come?)
Ahmed came early.

(29)(Who came early?)
Ahmed came early.

(30)(Did you say Ahmed left early?)
No. Ahmed came early.

How ' does Arabic express new and given information on a similar occasion? Note the corresponding Arabic examples :

(28.a) متى جاء احمد؟ (جاء احمد مبكرا)
(mata ja'a ahmadu?) ja'a ahmadu mubakkiran .

(29.a) من جاء مبكراً؟ (أحمد جاء مبكراً)
(man jā'a mubakkiran?) ahmadu jā'a mubakkiran.

(30.a) هل قلت ان احمد غادر مبكراً؟ كلا. احمد جاء مبكرا
(hal qulta inna ahmada ghadara mubakkiran? kaHa, ahmadu ja'a mubakkiran.

These examples show that Arabic uses its flexible word order besides the heavy stress to mark new information. Here is another example which

illustrates another aspect of information distribution. In the neutral pattern, new information has end position in English:

(31) The train has arrived.

In this example which has the structure (SV), the lexical element of the verb phrase receives the heavy stress showing that it carries new information. The corresponding Arabic sentence is:

(31.a) وصل القطار (wa ala al-qitaru.).

In the Arabic sentence, the element carrying new information is the same as that in the English sentence, the verb phrase, but it occupies initial position. It seems that this difference only occurs in a two-element structure (SV; VS). In three-element patterns (SVO, VSO, etc), the neutral distribution of information is similar in the two languages; new information comes at the end:

(32) Ahmed bought a car.

(32.a) اشترى احمد سياره (ishtara ahmadu sayyaratana.).

Further investigation in the information distribution in the two languages will certainly reveal some significant differences.

The most obvious connection between language and its context is by means of the linguistic phenomenon known as deixis, a Greek word meaning pointing (Levinson, 1983: 54). Deictic devices include demonstratives, first and second person pronouns, tense, certain time and space adverbs including now and here. The grammatical properties of these items are not the concern of this section: they fall within the domain of the grammars of various languages. Our main concern here is their function in a discourse. As an illustrative example, I will take this and هذا (hadha): the feminine form هذه (hadhihi). The English this may point anaphorically or cataphorically to a part of a text; the Arabic هذا also has anaphoric and cataphoric uses, but the uses of these two deictic forms do not seem to agree always, as the following examples show:

(33) (N. Mahfuz, *Awlaadu Haaratina*, p. 203). في هذا الكلام موضع للنظر.
(fi hadha al-kalami mawgi'un li al-naz;ari.)

(33.a) There is room to disagree in that : (p.131)

(34) You've meddled with my papers and falsified some dates-
That is not true.

(34.a) لقد عبثت باوراقى وغيرت بعض التواريخ – هذا غير صحيح
(laqad 'abathta bi awraqi wa ghayyarta b'a.da al-tawarikh-
hadha ghayru §abJhin.)

In both these examples, Arabic uses *Lim* , English uses that. Very little work is done in Arabic concerning the role of deictic items in discourse; and contrastive analysis between English and Arabic deixis has to wait until more is known about Arabic deixis.

One of the most important aspects of meaning which has been the subject of much research work in recent years is that which concerns the phenomenon of how the speaker means more than he says, i.e implicit meaning. In any act of communication, it is impossible and undesirable for the speaker to be completely explicit (Verschueren, 1999: 26). Considerable information is left unexpressed, and an essential part of this is what Grice (1975) has termed implicatures or conversational implicatures. Grice proposes a Cooperative Principle and four maxims to account for the implicatures of a text. The Cooperative Principle and the maxims are:

The Cooperative Principle

Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

(1) The Maxim of Quality

Try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically;

- (i) Do not say what you believe to be false.
- (ii) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

(2) The Maxim of Quantity

- (i) Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.

- (ii) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

(3) The Maxim of Relevance

Make your contribution relevant.

(4) The maxim of Manner

Be perspicuous, and specifically

- (i) Avoid obscurity
- (ii) Avoid ambiguity
- (iii) Be brief
- (iv) Be orderly

Since Grice formulated these maxims, a number of suggestions, criticisms and modifications have been proposed by various linguists and philosophers. However, here I will be concerned with the maxims as they were stated by Grice, to which I will add the principle of politeness as proposed by Leech (1983).

By observing the four maxims or flouting them, the speaker will express different meaning. One of the criticisms directed at these maxims is that they are not universal; various cultures use them differently. Here it may be useful to draw a distinction between two levels of these maxims, the deep universal level and the superficial level consisting in how the maxims are realised. The superficial level is culture-specific and would differ from one speech community to another: The universal level may be used as a basis for contrasting the ways in which the second level is exploited in various cultures. Various cultures would differ in the priority which they would attach to these maxims. For example, the maxim of Quality (telling the truth) may be sacrificed to give more emphasis to the principle of politeness. The maxim of Relevance is sometimes flouted, at least apparently, again in the interest of politeness or non-commitment. Western and Eastern cultures differ markedly in how they realise Grice's maxims. One or two examples will suffice here.

The normal practice among the Arabs is that an Arab guest would usually break the maxim of Quality and say that he is not hungry; he will only accept something if the offer is repeated for a second or even a third time. It is also polite for the host to repeat the offer. A European would normally accept his host's offer from the first time. It is also usual for the

European host not to repeat the offer. For an Arab, the behaviour of the European guest would seem greedy and that of the European host inhospitable. Thus, I am not hungry would be differently interpreted by an Arab and an Englishman in the same context. Here is another example:

(35) Have a little of this cake.

(36) Have some of this cake.

(35) is normally used in Arabic; (36) in English. (35) used by an English speaker would probably be considered niggardly (cf Leech, 1983: 138). For an Arab, the unfavourable interpretation would be attached to (36) because it suggests self-praise.

In criticising something, an Englishman would start by agreeing with the speaker, thus breaking the maxim of quality; then he would add the classic but (Yes, ... but ...): e.g. – Aren't these nice? -Yes, but the colours are too bright. An Arab would probably observe the maxim of quality more strictly by saying, No, they are not. These are different ways of using language to express the same meaning. No criticism is implied here; there is no question of one party being more polite than the other; both ways of speaking are polite, but different and may generate considerable misunderstanding unless the speakers of various cultures are aware of these differences. Much has been written about these maxims and their relation to politeness (cf Leech, 1983; Levinson, 1983; Verschueren, 1999) at the general abstract level. What is required is more research related to the level of realisation in various languages. Contrastive studies involving English and Arabic would yield significant results for linguistics and especially sociolinguistics. It would also help to clear much misunderstanding which is based on ignorance.

In the process of communication, a message is arranged into two parts: the starting point which is termed Theme (or Topic) and the rest of the message which is called Rheme (Comment, or Focus). How these two parts are realised in an utterance differs in different languages. Here a few examples from English and Arabic are sufficient. The Theme in these examples is underlined.

(37) Ali's father has died.

(37.a) علي مات ابوه ('aliyun mata abuhu).

(38) How far is the post office from here?

(38.a) دائرة البريد كم تبعد من هنا؟
(da'iratu al-baridi, kam tab'udu min huna?).

(39) Where have you put the book?

(39.a) الكتاب اين وضعته (al-kitabu ayna wa.Qa'tahu?).

These examples show that Arabic favours a non-subject Theme in the initial position of an utterance; whereas English normally opts for the grammatical subject as Theme, again in the initial position. Hence Arabic may be said to be a Theme-oriented language; English on the other hand is a subject-oriented language. However, further contrastive work is required to clear a number of points related to thematic organisation in English and Arabic. This would also include determining marked and unmarked Theme and the relation between Theme-Rheme and Information distribution mentioned above.

4. Types of Discourse

Discourse represents language in use in social contexts, and is realised in various kinds. This section will be concerned with two essential modes of discourse, which have received considerable attention in recent years, namely sexist discourse (or gender in discourse) and metaphor. They have been chosen as representative examples of the course which may be followed in contrasting the various aspects and modes of discourse.

The discussion of gender in English discourse flourished in 1970s mainly as a result of the work carried out by R. Lakoff(1975). It was claimed that gender as a factor of social identity tends in English to downgrade, marginalise and exclude women (Lee, 1982: 110), and favoured men. Two trends may be detected in the heated discussions revolving round gender in the English language. The first trend often termed "sexist discourse" is based mainly on the nature of English vocabulary which is biased in favour of the male sex owing to the use of male pronouns and

other male oriented terms (e.g. chairman, salesman) for generic reference, i.e. in pointing to men in general. Typical examples are the following:

- (40) Wharf asserts that grammatical structure and vocabulary content of language greatly influences the manner in which man perceives. himself, the universe, and his relationship to it. (Coffey, 1984: 512).
- (41) Everyone should do his best.
- (42) The chairman declared the session open.

These are examples of what is termed "linguistic relativity" as propounded by Wharf, where the structure of a language mediates a viewpoint of the world for the speaker. If to these male-biased terms are added words which are sex-neutral like teacher, lawyer, doctor, and engineer, grammatically described as having dual gender, it will become clear that gender in English discourse is far from being logical as is often claimed. In discourse dual gender may lead to confusion or even misunderstanding. It may be said that in English, vocabulary which is an essential part of discourse, is not gender-sensitive. In the following example, taken out of its context, there is nothing to reveal the sex of the subject, the speaker, the addressee and the other participant (the lawyer):

- (43) You told me that the lawyer has misjudged the case. Do you deny that?

Compared with English, Arabic is certainly more gender sensitive. (44) illustrates this point:

- (44) قلت/قلت لي إن المحامي/المحامية قد أساء/أساءت الحكم على القضية. أنتكر/أنتكرين ذلك؟
¶mlt::/nmlti li inna al-muhamli-al-munaun yata qau
asa'a/asa'at al-hukma 'ala al-qa.diyati. atankuru/tankurina
dhalika?)

In the Arabic text, the sex of the addressee and the lawyer are clearly indicated both in the noun phrase and in the verb phrase. The nouns corresponding to the controversial English items: chairman, policeman, salesman, are all marked for sex. There are two forms in Arabic, one for the male sex and the other for the female sex: مدير (mudir) (male

chairman), مديرة (mudira) (female chairman); شرطي (shurti) (male policeman), شرطية (shurtiya) (policewoman). Words of dual gender are rare in Arabic; nouns referring to human beings are either masculine or feminine; e.g. teacher معلم (mu'allim) (m) معلمة (mu'allima) (f); doctor طبيب (tabib) (m), طبيبة (tabiba) (f); engineer مهندس (muhandis) (m), مهندسة (muhandisa) (f); poet شاعر (sha'ir) (m), شاعرة (sha'ira) (f).

However, even in Arabic, there are items which have a masculine form and are generically used for men and women:

- (45) على المرء ان يعمل جهده
(‘ala al-mar’i an ya’mala juhдах) (one must do one’s/his best.)

In this example المرء (al-mar’i) may be said to be neutral with regard to sex, but the verb يعمل (ya’mala) and the possessive pronoun جهده (juhдах) have masculine forms; they depend on المرء (al-mar’i), which is linguistically masculine since it lacks a feminine marker. This is another example of "linguistic relativity". The role of gender in Arabic discourse has not been systematically investigated, and much work is required in this area before a proper contrastive work may be carried out. Here it may be mentioned in passing that gender in Arabic has not raised any heated discussion. The reasons for this may be both linguistic and cultural.

The second argument raised by gender in English discourse is revealed in the distinction drawn between male discourse and female discourse. Since this discussion is based on language use and may be eventually traced to culture, it is more problematic both for the descriptivist and for the contrastivist. It is claimed (Lakoff, 1975) that a female discourse is characterised by the use of certain lexical, grammatical and phonological features. Women frequently favour the names of certain colours, e.g. beige, equamarine, lavender, and certain adjectives, e.g. adorable, sweet, charming, divine. They favour the use of tag-questions often to receive support from the addressee. In phonology, women often use a rising intonation in such utterances as, at the railway station? (in reply to: Where will we meet?) (Lee, 1992: 120). Lakoff (1975: 18) also claims that women's speech sounds more polite than men's speech.

It would be interesting to find out how these features in the language of English women compare with the features which characterise women's speech in the Arabic countries. Here too very little is known about female discourse in Arabic culture.

Until recently, metaphors were considered verbal decorations confined to literary language. Thus for a long time, their role in language study was marginalised, and their study was restricted to literary criticism. This view has now changed markedly as far as English is concerned. Probably it is still the dominant view in Arabic studies. A number of linguists including Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and Lee (1992) claim that metaphors are an essential part of everyday language. They are also part of the speaker's way of thinking and mediate his/her view of the world. Metaphors draw on human experience and are used to explain unusual phenomena by comparing them to usual ones. They originate in figurative language.

Since metaphors are closely connected with the process of classification of perceptual categories (Lee, 1992: 88) through the use of language, they would differ from one culture to another; but they also have a broad foundation based on general human experience and therefore possess certain universal aspects. These common aspects may serve as a basis for contrastive study.

The following two metaphors, one from Arabic and the other from English, both dealing with the act of greeting illustrate the point:

(46) Good day. Lovely morning. Good afternoon.

(47) السلام عليكم (al-saHimu 'alaykum.)
(literally: peace be upon you).

The English metaphor based on the adjective "good" and the Arabic metaphor based on سلام (peace) reflect different cultures, but eventually reveal similar features of human experience: both "good" and "peace" serve the participants' interest. Note also another Arabic metaphor related to greeting based on "good" : صباح الخير (good morning). Here is another metaphor cited by Lakoff & Johnson (1980: 4): "Argument is War".

(48) Your claims are indefensible.

(49) He attacked every weak point in my argument.

(50) His criticisms were right on target.

(51) I demolished his argument.

(52) I've never won an argument with him.

(53) You disagree? Okay, shoot!

(54) If you use that strategy, he will wipe you out.

(55) He shot down all my arguments.

Argument and war being part of human experience, they also occur in Arabic figurative language, as (48.a)- (55.a) show:

(48.a) ارأوك لا يمكن الدفاع عنها
(' ara'uka la yumkinu al-difii 'u 'anha.)

(49.a) هاجم جميع نقاط الضعف في جدالك
(hajama jaml'a nuqati al-.Qa'fi fi jadalika.)

(50.a) لقد اصاب نقدة الهدف (laqad aṣabanaqduhu al-hadafa.)

(SI.a) هدمت نقاشه/ حجته (hadamtuniqqshahu Ihujjatahu.)

(52.a) لم اربح النقاش معه قط (lam arbah al-niqasha ma'ahu qattu.)

(53.a) الا توافق؟ هات ما لديك/ مافي جيبعتك
('ala tuwafiqu? hati rna ladayka / rna fiju'batika.)

(54.a) اذا كانت هذه خطتك, الحق بك هزيمة نكراء
(idha kanat hadhihi khittataka, alhaqa bika hazTmatan nakra'a.)

(55.a) لقد حطم جميع الحجج التي قدمتها (Iaqaad hattama jami' a al-hujaji al-lati qaadamtuha.)

This is also true of the English metaphor, "Time is money" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 7-8):

(56) You're wasting my time.

(57) This gadget will save you hours.

(58) Don't have the time to give you.

(56.a) ان تضيع وقتي (anta tugayy'u waqti.)

(57.a) هذا الجهاز يوفر لك ساعات كثيرة (hadha al-j ihazu .yuwaffiru laka sa'atin kathiratan.)

(58.a) ليس لدي مزيد من الوقت امنحه لك (laysa ladaya mazTdun min al-waqti amnahuhu laka.)

However, in the following metaphor built on "journey" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 44-5) there is only partial agreement between English and Arabic:

(59) We're at a cross road.

(60) It's been a long, bumpy road.

(61) Our marriage is on the rocks.

(59) is based on "journey" in a general sense, (60) on "journey by car", and (61) on "journey by sea". The Arabic metaphor in the following sentences seems to be based on "journey by land"; the sense of a sea voyage (cf ex. 61) is especially absent in Arabic. This is hardly surprising if we take into account the geographical factor.

(59.a) وصلنا الى مفترق الطريق (waalna ila muftaraqi al-tariqi.)

(60.a) كانت الطريق طويلة شاقة (kanati al-tariqu tawilatan shaqqatan.)

(61.a) يعاني زواجنا من مشكلات جمة
(yu'ani zawajuna min mushkilatinjammatin.)

A contrastive study of metaphors in English and Arabic along the lines suggested here would reveal significant similarities and differences in English and Arabic viewpoints of the world.

5. Conclusion

The traditional objectivist view of language, which dominated linguistic studies for a long time, considers languages as systems consisting of a number of levels including phonological, syntactic and lexical levels. Linguists confined themselves to the study of the sentence outside its context. Meaning has an independent nature, it is constructed by the speaker and encoded in the sentence for the addressee to decode. Conceptual categories have objective metaphysical nature and are reflected in linguistic categories.

This narrow objectivist view of language has recently been severely criticised by many linguists, who have adopted a broader view of language and linguistics; known as the epiphenomenalist view. This new trend no longer confines itself to the study of the sentence, it also deals with higher units such as text and discourse. Utterances are studied within their contexts. Languages are not only systems but means of communication, and the emphasis is on use rather than on competence. Meaning is constructed as a result of interaction between the speaker, the hearer (addressee) and the context of a text. Perceptual categories are to a great extent culture specific and mediate the speaker's viewpoint of the word.

Within this epiphenomenalist theory, contrastive studies have a new role. Representative areas suggested for contrastive analysis involving English and Arabic include vocabulary and its dynamic nature, pragmatic meaning and its relation to context and some modes of discourse, namely "sexist discourse" and metaphor. All these are viewed as dynamic concepts where the speaker, the addressee and the context participate actively. This new concept of language and contrastive studies will help to clear a number of points which remained unexplained in the traditional objectivist theory of language.

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