

Contrastive Linguistics And The Language Teacher

By Jacek Fisiak

Contrastive Linguistics And The Language Teacher By Jacek Fisiak *Unlocking Language Teaching Secrets* Jacek Fisiak's *Contrastive Linguistics* Ever wondered why certain grammatical concepts are easier for some language learners than others Or why certain sounds trip students up consistently The answer might lie in the fascinating field of contrastive linguistics and a particularly insightful book *Contrastive Linguistics and the Language Teacher* by Jacek Fisiak This isn't just a dusty academic tome its a practical guide packed with actionable insights for any language teacher looking to improve their craft What is Contrastive Linguistics Anyway Imagine you're building a bridge You wouldn't just start throwing planks together right You'd need a solid blueprint understanding the terrain on both sides Contrastive linguistics does the same for language learning It systematically compares and contrasts two languages usually the learners native language and the target language to identify areas of similarity and more importantly difference These differences or interference points are often the root cause of learner errors Fisiak's book illuminates how teachers can use this knowledge to anticipate problems preempt errors and tailor their teaching accordingly Image A visual representation of a bridge connecting two languages labeled Native Language and Target Language with highlighted sections representing areas of difference identified by contrastive analysis Practical Applications Turning Theory into Teaching Strategies Fisiak doesn't just present theory he provides concrete examples and practical methodologies Lets explore some key takeaways and how you can implement them in your classroom 1 Identifying Interference Points Example Lets say you're teaching English to Polish speakers Polish doesn't have articles a an the Contrastive analysis reveals this as a significant difference A Polish learner might say I saw cat instead of I saw a cat 2 How to Fisiak emphasizes the importance of thorough language analysis Before introducing a new grammatical structure or phonetic element compare and contrast it with the equivalent or lack thereof in the learners native language This allows you to anticipate potential difficulties 2 Designing Effective Instruction Example Knowing about the article issue you wouldn't just correct the student Instead you'd dedicate explicit instruction to articles providing ample practice and potentially using visuals to highlight their function How to Fisiak suggests focusing teaching on the differences not just similarities Design activities that specifically address those areas where interference is likely to occur This might involve error analysis focused drills or communicative activities that highlight the relevant grammatical points 3 Developing Learner Awareness Example Encourage learners to reflect on their own language and identify potential sources of interference This metacognitive awareness empowers them to actively monitor their own

language production How to Incorporate activities where learners compare sentences in their native language with English equivalents identify differences and discuss the potential reasons for errors This promotes self-correction and independent learning 4 Utilizing Error Analysis Example Instead of simply marking errors as wrong analyze the type of error Is it due to interference from the native language Is it a developmental error Understanding the root cause helps tailor your feedback and instruction How to Keep a record of common errors Categorize them based on their likely source interference developmental etc This data-driven approach helps you refine your teaching and adapt your materials Image A table showing a simple error analysis template with columns for student name error type native language interference and suggested remediation Beyond Grammar and Phonetics While Fisiak's work heavily focuses on grammar and pronunciation the principles of contrastive linguistics extend to other aspects of language learning Vocabulary False friends words that look similar but have different meanings are a classic 3 example of interference Addressing these proactively is crucial Discourse Different cultures have varying norms for communication Contrastive analysis can reveal these differences and help teachers adapt their teaching to cater to learners cultural backgrounds Summary of Key Points Contrastive linguistics is a powerful tool for anticipating and addressing learner difficulties Focusing on the differences between languages is key to effective instruction Error analysis is crucial for understanding the root causes of learner errors Teaching should explicitly address areas of potential interference Learner awareness and metacognition are essential for successful language acquisition FAQs 1 Is contrastive linguistics only relevant for beginners No its principles apply throughout the learning process even for advanced learners who might struggle with nuanced grammatical structures or idiomatic expressions 2 How much time should I dedicate to contrastive analysis The level of detail depends on the specific needs of your students and the differences between the languages involved Its about strategic application not exhaustive comparison 3 What resources can help me conduct a contrastive analysis Numerous linguistic resources grammars and dictionaries both online and in print can be used for comparison 4 Isn't contrastive linguistics overly focused on errors While it highlights potential error points its ultimately about facilitating learning by addressing these points proactively and providing targeted support 5 Can I use contrastive linguistics with multiple language learners Yes you can adapt the principles to a multilingual classroom by comparing and contrasting the target language with the various native languages represented However you might find focusing on common points of interference more effective than addressing each learners language individually Jacek Fisiak's *Contrastive Linguistics and the Language Teacher* remains a valuable resource for any language instructor By understanding and applying its principles you can create a more effective engaging and successful learning experience for your students Its not about eliminating errors but about understanding their origins and strategically preparing your students to navigate the complexities of language learning with confidence 4

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a masterpiece of linguistics scholarship at once erudite and entertaining confronts the thorny question of how and whether culture shapes language and language culture linguistics has long shied away from claiming any link between a language and the culture of its speakers too much simplistic even bigoted chatter about the romance of italian and the goose stepping orderliness of german has made serious thinkers wary of the entire subject but now acclaimed linguist guy deutscher has dared to reopen the issue can culture influence language and vice versa can different languages lead their speakers to different

thoughts could our experience of the world depend on whether our language has a word for blue challenging the consensus that the fundaments of language are hard wired in our genes and thus universal deutscher argues that the answer to all these questions is yes in thrilling fashion he takes us from homer to darwin from yale to the amazon from how to name the rainbow to why russian water a she becomes a he once you dip a tea bag into her demonstrating that language does in fact reflect culture in ways that are anything but trivial audacious delightful and field changing through the language glass is a classic of intellectual discovery

in this classic the world s expert on language and mind lucidly explains everything you always wanted to know about language how it works how children learn it how it changes how the brain computes it and how it evolved with deft use of examples of humor and wordplay steven pinker weaves our vast knowledge of language into a compelling story language is a human instinct wired into our brains by evolution the language instinct received the william james book prize from the american psychological association and the public interest award from the linguistics society of america this edition includes an update on advances in the science of language since the language instinct was first published

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