

Linguistic description and typology, academic year 2004-05

Doctorates in “Multilingual communication: translation, literature and linguistics studies” and “Cognitive science and language”

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Programme

The subject will be presenting two complementary perspectives on linguistic analysis:

- a) the connection between linguistic description and typology and linguistic theory, which will focus primarily on aspects of syntax;
- b) the relation between typology and contrastive linguistics, which will deal with lexicosemantic analysis and the study of feigned orality in different languages.

One of the main goals of linguistic theory is to explain the variation between languages. To achieve that goal, we need to start from accurate descriptions of linguistic phenomena in particular languages which enable us to establish the facts of each language and the differences between the two with precision. The differences between languages are often grouped in the sense that the presence of a particular property in one language implies the presence of another property. Linguistic theory sets out to account for that “co-variation” of linguistic properties.

To illustrate this research programme in linguistics, in the first block we shall be observing the differences between languages which may have null subjects and those that cannot. From a theoretical point of view, we shall be studying an analysis of that linguistic variation within the “Principles and Parameters” and “Optimality Theory” approaches.

In the second block we shall be studying the differences and similarities between different languages, clearly distinguishing between a typological approach and the methodology produced by contrastive linguistics. With that aim in view we shall be starting from studies of specific cases such as the question of words for colour in languages, a subject which will also serve to

distinguish between the ideas of structural linguistics and those of cognitive linguistics. The other question we propose to deal with in this second block will allow us to examine the modalisation resources in different languages by comparing, for example, the use of modal particles in German feigned orality texts and the use of verb tenses which, in the Romance languages, modalise the interlocutor's statement. In this way we shall distinguish between universal orality resources and the specific resources of each language.

Assessment:

The students will do a presentation in class (10 to 20 minutes) along one of the lines mentioned (60%). To help orient the students a global set of themes will be presented during the first days of class. As the case may be, that presentation can be expanded into a piece of work to obtain the necessary research credits. The remaining 40% will be obtained through the participation of each student in class (linguistic analyses, readings, assessment of readings, etc.).

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