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ON METALINGUISTIC LABELLING IN ENGLISH-SERBIAN CONTRASTIVE STUDIES

The paper provides an overview of current issues concerning the metalinguistic inventory used in contrastive investigations of contemporary English and Serbian. Modern contrastive linguistics (CL) has largely shifted its methodological focus from the elaboration of theoretical prerequisites towards matters connected with the electronic processing of large amounts of linguistic data. Consequently, a need to revisit the problems of terminological discrepancies found in different frameworks used for the description of the compared languages is deemed appropriate. Problems arise on at least four levels: 1. restrictions imposed by the structure of the two languages compared; 2. the model-specific use of particular terms; 3. a semantically associative, but potentially misleading interpretative potential of linguistic terms; 4. the inconsistent or underspecified use of the metalinguistic units pertaining to a particular level of linguistic analysis or respective linguistic traditions. Having investigated the observed pitfalls, a conclusion about the necessity for a more precise determination of CL metalinguistic apparatus and a possible meeting ground to overcome the obstacles by means of corpus linguistics is presented.

Key words: contrastive linguistics, English, Serbian, metalinguistic inventory, linguistic tradition, corpus linguistics

1. INTRODUCTION

As Prof. Ranko Bugarski rightly observed some 25 years ago in the Serbo-Croatian preface to the translation of David Crystal's *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, there had mostly been a poorly controlled terminological expansion pertaining to myriads of theoretical approaches and methodological viewpoints, which in turn led to immense profusion of terminological units to grasp and master (Kristal 1999: VII). To tackle the problem, numerous papers had been presented and entire academic panels organized (see Berić 1986: 373–408), providing invaluable contribution to the issue at hand. Today, with the unprecedented development of technology and ease of access to large amounts of available data, accompanied by a tendency for linguistic research to be more multidisciplinary, it is not surprising that the situation has become even more complex. So, how does this situation affect the area of English-Serbian (henceforth E-S) contrastive analysis, where not only languages are compared, but their descriptive

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(sub)systems as well? How are potential issues manifested and what can be done to mitigate them? Is there still any danger for an inexperienced linguist to make serious mistakes in language comparison due to terminological confusion? This paper aims to offer some answers to these questions by illustrating the issues on the E-S language pair and discussing a possible convergence point.

Since its very beginnings in the middle of the 20th century, one of the main methodological concerns and debates in CL as a whole has been the issue of compiling the appropriate descriptive inventory, a *sine qua non* of any scientific undertaking, which would equally be applicable to as many languages as possible. Such an inventory would comprise a uniform, consolidated and highly precise metalanguage (i.e. the language *about* a language) for the purposes of cross-linguistic description. The model for this was often sought in mathematics and formal logic as the exemplars of precision, conciseness, and unambiguity. As it happens, a descriptive linguistic apparatus is more often than not full of expressions from everyday life and even highly formalized approaches are not immune to this, employing a number of quite evocative metalinguistic labels. For example, most generative approaches use everyday expressions such as *tree*, *node*, *branching*, *raising*, or *government*, while cognitive linguistic models commonly make use of the terms *blended space*, *image schema*, *special scene* and the like. Of course, these terms have undergone a semantic shift to lose their everyday meanings and gain linguistic ones, but their associative undertones can still be discerned. The terms are usually combined with a specialized type of notation resembling mathematical or logical system of symbols (as is the case with generative approaches or categorial grammar), or with specialized terminological items such as *specifier*, *inflectional phrase*, *subcategorization*, *immediate constituent*, etc. As can be expected, the use of specialized terms is typically not an issue, and their meanings are easily accessible to the adherents of a particular linguistic approach or anyone familiar to the applied framework. However, linguistic terms which are also found in general vocabulary may pose considerable problems to the uninitiated audience belonging to other linguistic proclivities as they can be taken to mean something other than what has been intended.

In an ideal contrastive scenario, one would expect a full one-to-one semantic correspondence between labels designating comparison criteria² in respective languages. However, achieving this is highly unlikely due to various factors, so linguists usually resort to finding the most salient common denominator to serve as a basis for comparison in the two languages that are compared. The situation where descriptive terms are applicable universally or at least applicable to a vast number of languages is even more desirable, especially in linguistic typology, where the primary aim is

2 Also called *tertia comparationis*, in the metalanguage of CL.

to classify a large number of languages into types based on a shared linguistic property.³

Numerous attempts to resolve the problem of universal linguistic labelling have been made but have achieved only partial success. Although functional concepts have been dealt with more precision and significant consolidation in this area has been made (see Croft 2016), there is still little consensus about the universal metalinguistic set serving as a standard terminological repository for semantic description. Initiatives such as NSM – Natural Semantic Metalanguage, an inventory of granular semantic features representing universal components of meaning (cf. Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014), were considered to be notable starting points, but in time manifested certain limitations in terms of their universal applicability (cf. Boas 2020).

Arguably, some areas of linguistics seem to be less problematic than others. As Haspelmath (2021: 35) observes, a good example of integrating objective criteria into the linguistic analysis are the areas of phonetics and phonology. In these disciplines the physical properties of speech sounds and related phenomena serve as universal touchstones of linguistic description, so Haspelmath proposes that the same principle be applied to morpho-syntactic phenomena (ibid.). Of course, some labelling variation exists in these disciplines as well, but the degree of differentiation appears to be much smaller than in other domains of linguistic description.

2. METALINGUISTIC LABELLING ISSUES IN ENGLISH-SERBIAN CONTRASTIVE STUDIES

Having briefly considered general aspects of metalinguistic labelling, we now turn to the situation in the E-S contrastive studies. The topics we discuss have been classified into four provisional domains,⁴ dealing with structural, theoretical, traditional and semantic issues, each accompanied by concrete examples illustrating potential problems. It needs to be mentioned that this list is far from being exhaustive and that it merely serves as a general overview of the occurrences identified as potential sources of discordance.

3 The most comprehensive repository of cross-linguistic features to date can be found at the recently implemented online platform *Grambank*, which provides a staggering amount of information about 2467 languages across the globe and covers 195 linguistic features in total. The current list is not final since new data is planned to be added to the repository. Source: <https://grambank.clld.org> (accessed: April 19th 2023).

4 The 'provisional' characterization of the classification stems from the fact that many examples can be classified within more than one group. Therefore, the choice to which group an example will belong was made by deciding where the example is most suitable to illustrate the matter at hand.

2.1. STRUCTURAL SPECIFICITIES

The easily observable fact that languages differ in their physical manifestations is widely acknowledged in all modern approaches to linguistics. For this reason, any attempt at a cross-linguistic comparison requires that a relevant metalinguistic inventory be precisely determined in terms of its scope and applicability, especially if the structure of one language considerably differs from the other.

When Serbian and English are concerned, one of the most illustrative phenomena in this respect is the lexical category of *determiners* (or *determinatives*). In a general linguistic sense, they represent the main exponents of the grammatical category of definiteness. In Serbian, this category can be expressed in numerous ways, for instance by using demonstrative or possessive pronominals (Piper et al. 2005: 919). However, the category is not firmly integrated into the grammatically system of the Serbian language because its exponents typically represent non-mandatory syntactic components. In most cases, an exponent of definiteness will typically have an optional, modifying status, used as the speaker sees fit when it comes to specifying the information about the nominal he or she is referring to. Furthermore, in traditional Serbian linguistics the term is generally accepted to denote lexical, not grammatical elements (cf. Piper et al 2005: 65). By contrast, English determiners, prototypically represented by articles, have a systemic, strictly grammatical status. Being inextricably connected with the entire class of nouns, they are essential elements in numerous syntactic environments. Due to different grammatical statuses of the units in the two languages, it is quite understandable that Serbian linguists found no reason to make a distinction between optional and obligatory uses of these adnominal structures, so the term *determinator* has been adopted in Serbian literature to include both of them.

In a monolingual context the previously mentioned situation would not be a reason for much concern for any of the two languages were it not for one of the most frequently used morpho-syntactic labels in generative approaches to linguistics – that of the Determiner Phrase (DP, cf. Bošković 2009). Within the major part of the generative-linguistic canon, it is posited that at some level of analysis all nominals are intrinsically accompanied by a determiner as an obligatory element, and that the determiner is the head of such phrases, forming a DP. In languages with articles this claim appears to be tenable. But, when it comes to languages without articles, such as Serbian, where the use of determiners is not structurally required, the use of the term becomes highly problematic. Without going into the discussion whether the existence of DP in Serbian is indeed warranted,⁵

5 There are analyses trying to justify the existence of DP in Serbian and other Slavic languages, but considerable disagreements on the issue can be found even within generative framework itself (see Bošković (2009) for more details). The reason why the concept of DP has not gained considerable ground in Serbian linguistics can presumably be attributed to its dubious applicability to the Serbian language.

it can reasonably be expected that the use of the term in E-S contrastive investigations would in all probability require extensive and burdensome elaboration to merit its use in contexts where no articles can formally be found. To add to the confusion, certain analogous phenomena, although structurally very similar, can be classified into different syntactic categories. Again, the example of English determiners is instructional: *my/your/her/our/their* are commonly classified as possessive determiners in English, while corresponding forms *moj/tvoj/njegov/njen* and *suchlike* are generally considered to be possessive pronouns in Serbian (Piper et al. 2005: 580), making the entire determiner business quite hard to grasp for the uninitiated audience.

2.2. THEORY-SPECIFIC ISSUES

The choice of a theoretical model is one of the crucial steps in performing a contrastive analysis (Đorđević 2005: 71). It is posited that a contrastive investigation needs to be conducted within a single model in order to maintain methodological consistency and ensure the validity of the analysis. Nevertheless, problems may arise if the investigated phenomenon needs to be explained from different theoretical perspectives (*ibid.*). It is clear that the terminology valid for one language or approach cannot simply be mapped on to another, as was illustrated by the problem of DP discussed above. The issue is further complicated by the advent of new linguistic (sub)models, by certain terms falling out of use or by their undergoing semantic shift in one language, without doing so in the other. Furthermore, the use of various emblematic expressions in different theoretical frameworks may require a thorough explanation, burdening the exposition of the analysis and creating difficulties for the potential reader unfamiliar with the lingo.

To illustrate the particularity of the theory-specific application of a term, we can consider the term *spell-out* regularly found in English generative minimalist syntax (for a more detailed account of the term, see Elfner 2018). Due to its suggestive association with the expression *to spell something (out)* and its connection with the English writing system, along with the complexity of the phenomenon to which it refers within the minimalist framework, it is quite difficult to translate the term into Serbian, a language with no 'spelling' system as such. It could arguably be claimed that without a thorough familiarity with its exact use in English, the term itself is quite hard to explain without the elaboration of the entire mechanism of utterance production, making it even more problematic and semantically less transparent if rendered into another language.

The advent of practically every major linguistic approach, be it structural, generative, cognitive, or dependency model – to mention but a few, has led to the introduction of their own terminological subsystems. Along the way, the already existing terminological (sub)systems become incor-

porated into the new framework to varying degrees and sometimes with more specific uses. Still, some theory-neutral terms continue to persist unaltered, such as the ones denoting certain general notions like *subject*, *phoneme*, *clause*, *word-formation*, *polysemy*, and so on. On the other hand, new theoretical perspectives typically require that new terms be coined, or for some of the old ones to gain new uses for the novel concepts brought about by the fresh theoretical distinctions. To illustrate this, we can consider a highly specialised use of the term *phase* from the perspective of different theoretical standpoints and see that the use may vary drastically. In a more general sense found in most theoretical orientations, it refers to a phenomenon associated with aspectual investigations regarding temporal segmentation of predicates, exemplified by the use of so-called *aspectual verbs* such as *begin/continue/end* and their verb complements. On the other hand, in minimalist syntax *phase* is taken to be a chunk of syntactic derivations interacting with the domains of semantics and phonology (Elfnér 2018). Again, if the principle of adhering to a single model in analysis were followed, little confusion could be expected. But, in an easily imaginable scenario of not being aware of the differentiation about the specificities of the two uses, a Serbian researcher unaware of the distinction may inadvertently combine information coming from unrelated frameworks to gain false result and reach invalid conclusions.

Another important issue concerns the lack of standardization pertaining to translations of theory-specific terms. With no standardized mechanism in place, the choice of translating a terminological item into the target language is left to an individual user.⁶ This problem may be attributed to vast proliferation of (superseding) theoretical approaches and their offshoots, which simply leaves no time for a specific expression to be established enough in the target language. Consequently, numerous terms do not live to be adopted as translations, while others which may have been translated simply fall out of use quickly, especially if they have to compete with the already entrenched homonymous traditional term. Even some terms central to a theory elude standardization. For example, the notion of *fuzziness*, extensively employed in cognitive-linguistic investigations, was adopted into Serbian in different ways: in the title of an influential book by Milorad Radovanović (Radovanović 2009), the term's adjectival morphological base *fuzzy* was phonologically adapted into Serbian as *fazi*, while the Serbian translators in Kristal (1999: 218) offer the calque *mutan*. The former translation solution is transparent only to individuals already familiar with the use of the expression in English publications and has apparently not lived enough to catch on in the Serbian environment. The latter option, on the other hand, has a questionable degree of acceptability, except again for a highly specialized linguistic professional working within the framework. To some extent, the expression *mutan* in Serbian has a

6 A problem identified quite a while ago by Bugarski (1986), and apparently in many respects still unresolved.

negative connotative potential, so if combined into a complex structure like *mutna lingvistika*, it may be taken to mean *dubious linguistics* rather than *fuzzy linguistics*. The situation is even more problematic if the abstract derived noun *fuzziness* is translated literally as *mutnost* or *mutnoća*, bordering on the full unacceptability in Serbian due to its unusual formal and semantic realization.

2.3. SEMANTICS OF LINGUISTIC LABELLING

Although readily apparent to a trained linguist, the issue regarding the surface semantic resemblance of analogous linguistic terms in source and target languages appears to have been somewhat under the radar in E-S contrastive studies. This is exemplified by pairs *possessive adjective* : *prisvojni pridev*, *perfect* : *perfekat*, *phrase* : *phrase*, and suchlike. What we have here is an apparent mismatch between the denotational content of each of these expressions because different linguistic traditions assign different meanings to them. In traditional grammatical and some contemporary ESL accounts,⁷ the class of English 'possessive adjectives' comprises pronominal elements such as *my/your/his/her/its/our/their*, which do not correspond to elements dubbed *prisvojni pridevi* in Serbian. In other words, the English version is synonymous with a more modern term *possessive determiners*, while the Serbian expression, if understood as a calque, belongs to the class of adjectives proper. The term *perfect* has broadly been identified as an aspectual category in English, while in Serbian the term *perfekat* is used to denote the category of grammatical tense, irrespective of its aspectual (perfective or imperfective) status. Being the focal point of numerous E-S contrastive investigations, the terms are usually easily distinguished when theoretical analysis is concerned, but they are quite frequently a source of confusion in an ESL classroom, where the interference between the first and second language is quite prominent. The last pair manifests indeterminacy insofar as the terms have different senses in different contexts: the English term *phrase* is used in grammatical descriptions of multi-lexical clusters typically containing a syntactic head (for which the most common Serbian equivalent is *sintagma*), while in Serbian the term *fraza* can simply be understood as an idiom, a fixed expression – even by linguistically trained professionals.

There are cases when the general meaning of the traditional linguistic label is semantically highly suggestive, yet problematic in light of contemporary linguistic theory. For instance, it would be difficult to explain the 'pastness' of the *past participle* or 'presentness' of the *present participle* in isolation (cf. Kristal 1999: 256), which by analogy could also be said for their Serbian counterparts *prošli particip* and *sadašnji particip*. As the

7 The British Council's widely-known *LearnEnglish* web platform is an illustrative example: <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/grammar/english-grammar-reference/possessives-adjectives> (retrieved on January 12th 2023).

examples below show, they can clearly be used in all temporal domains depending on the matrix verb (bold print), be it the past (examples 1a, 2a, italicized), present (examples 1b, 2b, italicized), future (examples 1c, 2c, italicized) or no time at all (all underlined segments in the examples below):

- (1) a) Burning/**burned** to the ground, the place *was starting* to look like a ghost town.
- b) Burning/**burned** to the ground, the place *is starting* to look like a ghost town.
- c) Burning/**burned** to the ground, the place **will be starting** to look like a ghost town.
- (2) a) Burning/**burned** to the ground, the place *was forgotten* in an instant.
- b) Burning/**burned** to the ground, the place *is forgotten* in an instant.
- c) Burning/**burned** to the ground, the place **will be forgotten** in an instant.

An experienced linguist would presumably easily avoid these pitfalls by specifying the intended interpretation, but the interpretative lapses do occasionally occur by association of the terms with the present/past time, ultimately leading to the invalidation of the research process owing to a false basis of comparison.

2.4. LINGUISTIC TRADITION DISCREPANCIES

Last but not least, a question of different linguistic traditions also comes into play. This issue concerns the dominant and widespread use of labels within culturally or geographically connected linguistic backgrounds. Here, a high level of overlap in the use of specific terms may persist due to entrenched linguistic beliefs. Labels falling under this group in E-S contrastive context may share the phonological/graphemic form, but differ significantly in interpretation, making them metalinguistic *false friends*. Examples include pairs like *clause* : *klauza* or *gerund* : *gerund(ij)*. The cause of misinterpretation in the first pair is the restricted use of the term *klauza* in traditional Serbian linguistic accounts since it commonly, but not exclusively (cf. Piper and Klajn 2013: 258), refers only to dependent finite subject-predicate structures. The typical English use of the term *clause* extends its semantic scope to all subject-predicate constructions, i.e. both dependent or independent/finite or non-finite ones. The second example illustrates the problem of unstable use of the term *gerund* in Serbian, where it can be interpreted either as a participial structure (cf. Piper et al. 2005: 548) or nominal structure, where it may assume a slightly different morphological realization *gerundij* (cf. Kristal 1999: 256).

Other instances of this type are not related to the formal resemblance but can cause confusion because of the underspecified sense that a term carries in one linguistic tradition compared to the other. Examples like this include terms such as *sentence: rečenica* or *linguistic: lingvistički*. The first pair is frequently problematic because in English the term *sentence* typically refers to a hierarchically higher syntactic constituent than a clause, but its Serbian counterpart *rečenica* may denote both what is meant by a *clause* or a *sentence* in English. The distinction between the two Serbian expressions is often resolved by the use of a modifying element, namely *predikatska rečenica* (literally: *predicate sentence* [= clause]) and *komunikativna rečenica* (literally: *communicative sentence* [= sentence proper]). In the second example the English term is ambiguous between denoting something pertaining to language (Serb. *jezički*) or something pertaining to linguistics (Serb. *lingvistički*). A potential problem may arise if the linguistic description is given in English, but the Serbian reader cannot determine whether the term itself refers to the communication system or the academic discipline investigating it.⁸

As a final illustration for this group, we consider the situation where a well-established term denoting a grammatical category is used intralingually in a contradicting sense. For instance, the English term *gender*, used for the grammatical category most manifestly realized in (pro)nominals to mark biological sex distinctions (*male/female/sexless*), has the term *rod* as its Serbian equivalent. The Serbian label plays a much more important syntactic role of distinguishing among grammatical masculine/feminine/neuter forms and governs the grammatical agreement between several word classes – nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs. Yet, this is not the only use of the term *rod* in Serbian traditional linguistics. As a matter of fact, another category of a different type also uses the same expression, that of *glagolski rod* (Eng. literally: *verb gender*), but this time it refers to what is commonly understood as the (in)transitivity of verbs (see Piper et al. 2005: 182). Clearly, there is a conflicting situation between the two uses, which can easily be avoided if a generally more widespread Latinate term *transitivity* is opted for.

3. A POSSIBLE MEETING GROUND?

As the previous section shows, the problem of metalinguistic labelling in CL occurs across various domains of linguistic investigations. Numerous positions on the topic were taken in the literature, main issues were identified and discussed, but a sense of incoherence still prevails since most elaborations favour one approach or model to another, with little (if any) resolution. However, the advent of corpus linguistics, an area which

⁸ An alternative and less problematic term for associated with the noun *language* is *lingual*.

has gained immense traction in the last decades, has led to a shift from theoretical considerations towards the quantitative aspects of cross-linguistic investigations. Most importantly, not being a model or theoretical framework, it is predominantly a set of tools and procedures used to join the quantitative facets of linguistic research with the mechanisms of machine processing. As such, it is highly objectivized in terms of operational capabilities and is theory-neutral, because it deals only with empirically observable and measurable data. What separates corpus linguistics from other domains of linguistics mentioned in the previous section is its potential to accommodate existing modes of description and their metalinguistic inventories into the analytical framework suitable for machine processing, as deemed appropriate. In other words, since it is essentially a methodological discipline relying on machine processing of large quantities of linguistic data, it does not discriminate between the employed theoretical underpinnings as long as they do not conflict with the purely computational procedures used by the electronic device performing the quantitative processing. Contemporary corpus linguistics allows us to use not only raw linguistic material, but to combine it with additional descriptive content, the so-called *metadata*, for the purposes of easy identification and efficient retrieval of information. Nowadays, a widespread method to enter metadata is by applying the XML format, which allows for a linguistic label to be assigned flexibly in the process of *linguistic annotation*. Such annotation can be performed with few formal restrictions and is neutral in terms of theoretical or methodological inclination. The labels used for the annotation need not be dependent on a particular theoretical viewpoint, but their use must be consistent and frequent enough for the algorithm to be able to automatize the process of identifying the desired structure, which it often accomplishes with exceptional level of preciseness.⁹

Admittedly, corpus linguistics is far from being omnipotent and cannot give answers to numerous questions raised by theoretical linguistics, especially those connected with phenomena spanning beyond the surface representation. One of the major drawbacks of corpus linguistics is that it is based purely on formal units and operations, meaning that definite conclusions from the analysis cannot be drawn without human involvement in terms of interpretative and speculative potentials of conducting research. Furthermore, corpus linguistics is unable to handle what is *not* present in a corpus, however comprehensive it might be, as it cannot go beyond numerical calculations used to statistically represent the investigated phenomena (see McEnery and Hardie 2012 for more details). Nevertheless, a combi-

9 McEnery and Hardie (2012) stated that the standard automatic part-of-speech identification error rate for English is between 3–5%, which can be considered a rather high level of accuracy. Considering the fact that this piece of information was presented more than a decade ago, it stands to reason to assume that with the significant rise in the processing power of modern computers and judging by the sophistication of contemporary electronic language models and their derivatives which are trained on vast amounts of linguistic material (such as the now tremendously popular ChatGPT), the current level of precision significantly exceeds the rate mentioned in the publication.

nation of quantitative information, on the one hand, and the linguist's interpretative prowess, on the other, does provide a rather solid baseline for linguistic comparisons. When it comes to advantages, the main one here is that the processing of data is not subject to personal preferences. It relies exclusively on machine operations, leaving the human factor to choose the type of descriptive labels according to their own preferences. The labels can be associated with formal, functional, semantic, discursive, stylistic or many other features and can later serve as the basis for the analysis. What is more, even models which do not acknowledge the purposefulness of corpus linguistics, as is the case with generative linguistics, can still find their way into the area of corpus linguistics. Evidence for this can be found in numerous syntactic parsers available on the Internet, many of which are based on generative-syntactic postulates, but essentially making use of the resources common for corpus linguistics.

4. CONCLUSION AND PROSPECTS

What the examples presented above argumentatively indicate is that a full and comprehensive contrastive account should benefit greatly from employing a metalinguistic apparatus which is precise, unambiguous and which can be used in as broad a number of contexts as possible.¹⁰ In an ideal situation the descriptive inventory for CL should be reduced to a minimal set of unequivocally and semantically transparent terms, which should also be limited to the least possible number of respective interpretations to avoid unnecessary evocative uses. At the same time, the inventory also needs to be balanced, that is as exhaustive as possible to encompass all relevant domains of use while not leaving much room for multiple readings or indeterminacies. Such inventory allows a contrastive linguist to use metalinguistic labels optimally, with the ultimate goal of achieving the highest level of scientific validity. This appears to be a daunting task with uncertain outcomes, but it is still a goal to strive after. When discrepancies between the uses of labels arise, an effort should be made to reconcile them, either by redefining the domains of concrete uses, or perhaps by updating or replacing the term(s) in one of the languages with the one in line with current findings. It is a process which involves considerable dedication, yet a systematic effort to accomplish this seems reasonably viable.

Metalinguistic labelling issues identified in the four groups of E-S contrastive contexts can be addressed in several ways, given here in no particular order of precedence. A possible terminological confusion can

10 What needs to be mentioned is that the assumptions or suggestions made in this paper should not be understood as a prescriptivist call for an intervention in the strictest sense of the word. What is meant to be accomplished is merely a more exact specification of the metalinguistic inventory that could lead to more consistent, precise and consolidated research processes in a cross-linguistic context, validated by a broader applicability and reduced semantic variation in all domains of CL investigations.

always be avoided in a conventional way – in the form of a preliminary contrastive elaboration preceding the central analysis, that is by explicating the labels' obvious uses or by elucidating the particularities of notions used in an unconventional manner. Next, an increased effort can be made to standardize the terminology typically used in various frameworks, in full accordance with the modern advances in the study of language(s) – this could preferably be done by determining the core set of semantically stable labels applicable across domains, and then extending it to include variations specific to distinct areas of use. Another possible step may be to use linguistic internationalisms wherever possible. These can be classical terms (for example *case*, *oblique*, *declination*, *theme*, *morpheme*, and many others) since they have reached a level of usage where they are no longer confined to their languages of origin. There are many such terms from classical Latin or Greek, which, in the course of time, have been semantically adjusted to denote linguistic phenomena applicable across a great number of languages, including English and Serbian. Nevertheless, the adoption of internationally widespread set of metalinguistic labels sometimes involves breaking away from the custom of using traditional terms for tradition's sake. Finally, reliance on procedures which minimize the subjective aspects of analysis, but do not eliminate any applicable theoretical model *per se* – as is the case with corpus linguistics – may prove to be a fertile ground for an integrated approach to contrastive analysis and metalinguistic labelling in general.

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Dejan M. Karavesović / O METALINGVISTIČKOM OZNAČAVANJU U ENGLSKO-SRPSKIM KONTRASTIVNIM ISTRAŽIVANJIMA

Rezime / U radu se razmatraju aktuelna pitanja u vezi sa metalingvističkim izrazima koji su u upotrebi u kontrastivnim istraživanjima savremenog engleskog i srpskog jezika. Budući da je savremena kontrastivna lingvistika svoju pažnju preusmerila sa teorijskih razmatranja preduslova za sprovođenje kontrastivne analize ka pitanjima vezanim za obradu velike količine široko dostupne jezičke građe, javlja se potreba

za preispitivanjem problema vezanih za terminološka razmimoilaženja u kontekstu različitih istraživačkih okvira koji se koriste pri opisu jezika koji se porede. Problematična mesta se javljaju u barem četiri ravni: 1. ograničenja usled različitog strukturnog ustrojstva jezika koji se porede; 2. posebne upotrebe termina specifične za pojedinačne jezičke modele; 3. semantički sugestivan, ali potencijalno neprecizan interpretativni potencijal samih metajezičkih izraza; 4. nedosledna ili nedovoljno precizirana upotreba metajezičkih terminoloških jedinica koje se javljaju na određenim nivoima jezičke analize ili unutar konkretne lingvističke tradicije. Nakon što su moguća problematična mesta razmotrena, izveden je zaključak da je i dalje neophodno jasnije precizirati metajezički aparat specifičan za kontrastivna razmatranja, a predloženi su i odgovarajući koraci ka prevazilaženju aktuelne situacije.

Кljučне речи: kontrastivna lingvistika, engleski jezik, srpski jezik, metajezički inventar, lingvistička tradicija, korpusna lingvistika

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