


HOW TO COMPARE TWO GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES

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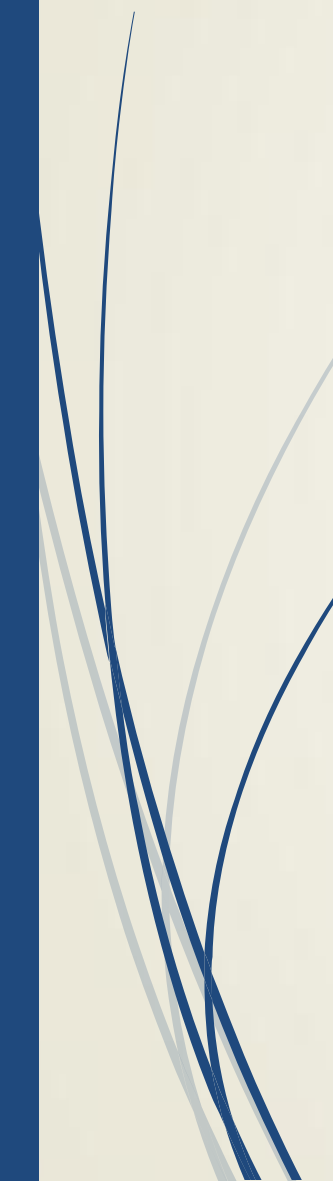





In chapter three of the Linguistic Across Cultures book, Robert Lado (1957) tackles the comparison topic of two grammatical structures in (L1) and (L2), trying to clarify what is meant by grammatical structure.




Lado puts seven main points in this chapter as the following;

- 1- What does grammatical structure mean?
 - 2- Illustrative discussion of elements of grammatical structure and types of structural items
 - 3- Grammatical structural; system of Habits
 - 4- Problems in learning a foreign grammatical structure
 - 5- Procedures in comparing two grammatical structures
 - 6- Necessity of validating the results of the theoretical comparative analysis
 - 7- Sample of the style used in presenting a linguistic comparison.
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(1)- Lado elaborates the question of the first point in **five subsections**, where he starts firstly **in a short introduction** in which he says those reactions and negation against the grammatical study nowadays, it becomes necessary and helpful to clarify what is meant by grammatical structure and what is not meant by it.




Then he proceeds describing them in points where it comes in (1.2) , with grammar as a definition or as grammatical terms, trying to say grammar defines the element of speech to the learners for facts of the language,

for example, a noun, a subject, or it requires to define N above the nouns, V above the verbs, D O above the direct objects in given sentences.




Where in (1.3), **grammar is not absolute rules of correctness**, trying here to say the rules are laid down by some authority for a speaker or a writer to use language in accepted usage among educated native speakers. So it would be a problem if learner did not use grammar properly, in spite of the fact that, the native speakers use the rules incorrectly, **for example, will with the first person which is in English be considered wrong and their speech is accepted.**



Where in (1.4), Lado shows that grammatical structure is not a mere usage, or it doesn't just tell the learners to use such usage, but the usage results in 'problems' that **require the learner to decide if this or that turn of phrase is the best one, regardless of whether or not the difference is structurally important in communication.**

For example, it is incorrect to say a phrase like a *watch pocket* , whereas it is correct to say ' a *pocket watch* ' and so on.



Where in (1.5), the grammatical structure as matters of form that correlate with matters of meaning, Lado means by grammatical structure the systematic formal devices used in a language to convey certain meanings and relationships, **for example; the word order and its intonation like this sentence**

Is he there? spoken with **a falling high-low** intonation which refers to a question, so the correlation between the formal device and grammatical structure is significant.



(2)- Lado discusses here the elements of grammatical structure and types of structural items in **seven points** as the following;

(2.1) he shows the relationship between the form and meaning for the structural unit, **for example** ; we have in English (-s) in books, ideas, hearts, so the form is (-s) and the meaning is **'one' versus 'more than one'**, that is singular versus plural, so the omission (-s) causes a singular ending .




In **(2.2)** he shows ,the different devices between languages cause difficulty to learners, for example variety of **formal devices**

(word order, inflection, correlation of forms, function words, intonation, stress and pauses)

constitute problems to learn the foreign language such as;

(a)- Word order as a grammatical signal, in which he talks about the arrangement of words, for example in English , **wool gloves for children** is not the same in Arabic as (قفازات صوفيه للأطفال)

، in English modifier comes before the noun and in Arabic modifier follows the noun, and it would be funny, if translated as in English word order as; (صوفيه قفازات للأطفال).



(b)- Inflection as a grammatical signal, in which he talks about the common grammatical signal which has been studied as grammar for example , the ending (ed) in verbs of past simple tense as in call, called, jump, jumped or the ending (-s) to signal plural as in book, books.


Whereas in Arabic language; Some singular nouns have a suffix which disappears in the plural.

Traditional morphology includes this singular suffix in the singular pattern:

(عقد - عقده)


(قنبلة - قنابل)

، and so on, so the different causes difficulty to the English speaker to learn Arabic .



(c)- Correlation of form as a grammatical signal, in which he talks about the nexuses inside the sentences for example; in English the correlation of the inflection (-s) in verbs with a third person singular subject such as; (I know, she knows , it knows, John knows) and so on.

Such correlation can help us to recognize the fact, for example, **The lists of the men who are good.....(the men are good.)**, as you can see the correlation between who and ,men helps us to understand that the men are good not the lists.



(d)- Function words as grammatical signals, in which he talks about the functionality of function words, where they can work same job if they have the same intonation, for example;


John came

He came


The boy came

Who came

All the function words above are spoken with same high-low falling intonation pattern, so they can replace the last one (who came) which is a question (who came?).



(e) - intonation as a grammatical signal, in which he talks about the levels of pitch-phonemes, for example, if the intonation rise from **mid to high to high signals**, that would be a question in English (He is a student?) whereas if the intonation rise from **mid to high to low** that would be a statement in English.




(f) - Stress as grammatical signal, in which he talks about the position of the sentence stress and accompanying difference meaning;

(a) PREsent (to) preSENT

(b) SUBject (to) subJECT

(c) OBJect (to) objECT




➔ **(g) - Pause as a grammatical signal**, in which he talks about the change in the modification structures when the tentative pause signalled by a comma, changes position. For examples;

(a)-Twenty , THREE - cent stamps
(twenty stamps and three cents each)

(b)-Twenty - THREE , cent stamps)
(23 stamps , one cent each).


(c)- A red WINE, barrel
(the wine is red)

(d)- A red, WINE barrel
(the barrel is red)




(3)- Lado speaks in point three about the **grammatical as structure ; system of habits**, in which he shows there are different systems, thousands of words, meanings, sound system, etc. they are a complex net which constitutes the language and these systems didn't come in a single day but through daily life conversations and each language became has its own potentials.


In addition, those acquired grammatical systems through all the years of daily life use of our native language stabilized from childhood until became habits.



(4)- Lado shows in point four the ***problems in learning a foreign grammatical structure***, in which he says, there are four problems (Transfer, similarity and difference as determiners of ease and difficulty, production versus recognition, and what constitutes differences and therefore difficulty as a form). Then he elaborates them as the following;




(a)- Transfer problem; is the process of transferring the native language habits to the foreign language. In other words, students tend to transfer the sentence forms, modification devices, the number, gender, and case patterns of his native language with its distribution as well.



(b)- Similarity and difference as determiners of ease and difficulty problem, he shows in this section, the process of **transfer has two levels**, the transfer between languages which have share ground or **closely related like English and German will be less difficult in learning**, while the other level is between the languages which have different structures , so the learning process is going to be more difficult.

In other words, we can say the degree of structures differences and similarities is an index to how much of the language a person has learned.




➔ **(c)- production versus recognition problem**, Lado speaks about the transfer process problem, where he differentiates between production of the transferred linguistic forms into foreign language by a speaker and his listening to the linguistic forms of foreign language, so the effect between production and listening is not identical, because in the production process, he chooses his meaning and then produces the forms that in the native language while in listening, he hears the forms and attaches the meanings that he has in his native language. For example;

➔ Can he speak English?

➔ **Can he speaks English?**

(it is a production problem not a recognition one).



(d)- what constitutes differences and therefore **difficulty as a form**, he shows the problem of differences between languages, where he says , the **lesser difference which exists in the same medium for example**, the differences between the **function words** or **inflection** or **word order**, but we have greater difference goes from medium in one language to a different medium in the other language, (i.e., from function word to inflection or from word order to a function words).



And for more details, Lado elaborates them as in
; (1)- Problem happens **in the same medium item**
within the function words environment,

for example,

the word (do) in English question comes at the beginning of sentence while the equivalent word (ka) in Japanese is fixed at the end of sentence, so the matter is in position of function word.

(2)- Problem happens **in the same medium**, within different item,

for example, English one - word modifiers precede the head in a modification structure, such as **garden flower** (**is a flower**) but **a flower garden is a garden**.

Another example, the phoneme **/i:/** in English like in this word, **beat** whereas its equivalent in Japanese is **/i/** so the Japanese speakers face difficulty in learning English.




(3)- Problem happens in the **same medium** within **different items such as correlation of forms**,

for example , the correlation between (-s) inflection in the verb in English as in **runs, jumps**, with singular form in the subject,

e.g. the car runs and the cars run, so the problem happens when the correlation of forms operates differently like in Spanish,


as in this example, the Spanish verb (**corre = run**) with singular subject doesn't take (-n) which the equivalent of (-s) **but when the subject is plural , the verb takes (-n).**



(4)- The problem happens in different media, such as the difference **between the word order in one language versus intonation in another**, for example, the English question

(Are you a student?)

spoken with **a falling intonation** whereas in Spanish has the same words order but it is spoken differently with a high pitch on the last syllable.



(5)- The problem happens in **different media**; **word order** in one language versus **function word** in the other, for example; in Thai language, the function word / ry/ or /maj/ comes at **the end** of the sentence signal certain questions which is in English are signalled by **placing the verb before the subject**.


For example (Is he a student? = Kha pen nakrien ry).

(6)- The problem happens in **different media; word order in one language versus intonation in other;**

for example between English and Latin, such as the location of indirect object as the following;

- English ; *The daughter gives her mother a coat.*
(indirect object is the mother)
- English ; *The mother gives her daughter a coat.*
(indirect object is the daughter)
- Latin ; *Matri filia vestem dat.*
(indirect object is the mother)
- Latin ; *Mater filiae vestem dat.*
(indirect object is the daughter)

So the English speaker learning Latin finds a great deal of difficulty in grasping the subject and direct object from the inflection of the words in the sentence.



(7)- The problem happens in **different media within function word in one language versus inflection** in the other, such as in Spanish (ire = I will go) indicates to future **through inflection** **but** in English, we put the function word (will) which indicates to the future. In addition, the future in past we get it in English with adding a function word would , whereas in Spanish (iria) which indicates to future in past through inflection.



Thank You