

Patrice Larroque *Université Toulouse-Jean Jaurès* "'The British drive on the left': A contrastive approach to language learning."

Abstract

The aim of this research is to show that some English grammatical constructions can be symmetrically contrasted with their French counterparts. Overall, it amounts to describing opposites in order to ease language learning and provide an embryonic method for students to shift from analytic French to synthetic English. Learners of a foreign language tend to use their mother tongue as a basis and see the new language as the mirror image of their own linguistic system.

A number of grammatical phenomena correspond to this reasoning, for example the syntactic placement of attributive adjectives (a *rich man* > *un homme riche*) and of some categories of adverbs (*he sometimes plays tennis* > *il joue parfois au tennis*), genitive constructions (*Paul's car* > *la voiture de Paul*) which place the inflected noun first while the prepositional *de*-genitive is the only option in French, compound nouns (*the Trump administration* > *le gouvernement Trump*), comparison (*it's cheaper* > *c'est moins cher*), etc. In the verbal domain, one may want to compare *être/be* and *avoir/have* constructions (*I am hungry* > *j'ai faim*) and the use of aspects in both systems. Finally, the idea of symmetrical progression can be extended to translation and phonology.

Keywords: Linguistics, language learning, contrastive grammar, syntax, word order