CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 A Survey of Contrastive Linguistics Literature

The history of contrastive linguistics dates back at least to the last decade of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Di Pietro (1971;9) finds an early example of contrastive analysis in C.H. Grandgent's *German and English Sounds* published in 1892. For most linguists modern contrastive analysis begins with Lado's *Linguistics Across Cultures* (1957). However, the idea of comparing individual languages is not new. Traditional books on foreign language grammars made use of the contrastive approach in comparing constructions or functions of the target language $L_2$ with those of the source language $L_1$. Such comparisons within the framework of traditional grammar have proved to be useful for pedagogical purposes.

A well established discipline of comparative philology reached its zenith in nineteenth century Germany. The use of contrastive approach at the school level is reflected in such terms as 'Gallicism', 'Germamism', and 'Anglicism'. However, the aims and methods of comparative philology differ considerably from those of contrastive linguistics. The comparativist compares languages in order to trace their phylogenetic relationships while the contrastivist compares languages with the quite utilitarian aim of improving the methods and results of language teaching. The founder of the Prague School, V. Mathesius, while working within the
framework of the traditional comparativist was perhaps the first linguist to recognize the importance of contrastive analysis. But the term contrastive linguistics was used by Worf in 1941 for the first time. It has been referred to as 'Konfrontative Linguistik' by German linguists (cf. Zabrocki, 1970 and others); Ellis (1966) uses the term 'comparative descriptive linguistics' whereas Akhmanova and Melencuk (1977) call it 'linguistic confrontation'. Contrastive linguistics is however the most frequently used term and relevant in the context of the present investigation.

Most of the early studies were predominantly theoretical in orientation (Grandgent, 1892; Vietor, 1894; Passy, 1912; Baudouin de Courtenay, 1912; Bogorodiskij, 1915). The applied aspect was accorded a peripheral importance. Contrastive linguistics as a systematic branch of linguistics is comparatively of recent origin. An earlier pioneer of applying the contrastive approach in foreign language teaching was C.C. Fries, the American structuralist. As far back as 1945 he expressed an idea which predicted the usefulness of pedagogically oriented contrastive analysis. In his oft quoted statement he says:

'The most effective materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner'.

Lado published his *Linguistics Across Cultures* (1957) and it marked the real beginning of modern applied contrastive linguistics. He has outlined the theoretical assumptions, the techniques, the significance, the application and usefulness of contrastive linguistics. Lado seemed to be fully convinced that the contrastive analysis is essential for effective language teaching and learning. Pointing out the basic assumptions of contrastive analysis he states:

'We assume that the student who comes in contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult. The teacher who has made a comparison of the foreign language with the native language of the students will know better what the real learning problems are and can better provide for teaching them.'

Supporting Fries as regards the utility of contrastive analysis he goes on to say:

'Textbooks should be graded as to grammatical structure, pronunciation, vocabulary, and cultural content. And grading can be done best after the kind of comparison we are presenting here.'

The Second World War gave a new impetus to foreign language teaching in the United States of America where enormous efforts and funds were spent in search of most

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effective and economical methods and techniques of teaching. The allied forces while thrusting forward in the newly occupied areas found that the armed forces required a basic knowledge of the language of those areas in order to have a verbal access to the population they came across. Contrastive analysis was viewed as a promising and appropriate approach for foreign language teaching. Intensive courses using materials based on an analysis of structure with much drilling and practice to achieve a high level of aural-oral skills were introduced. In America, the aural-oral approach was used in schools and colleges and new teaching materials for the study of commonly taught languages such as Spanish, French, German, Italian and later Russian and Portuguese, were prepared on the basis of contrastive analysis. As a result of this, more and more applied relevance was assigned to contrastive studies.

Since the publication of Lado's book (1957) which addressed itself particularly to teachers of foreign languages, a long list of publications bearing on contrastive analysis has appeared. Just after two years work was started on the contrastive structure series by Charles A. Ferguson under the auspices of the Centre for Applied Linguistics of the Modern Language Association of America in Washington, D.C. The aim behind such a well known series was the description of similarities and differences between American English and each of the five major European languages most
commonly taught in the U.S.A. - French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish.

In the 1960s a number of projects were taken up on both sides of the Atlantic amidst vigorous controversies concerning the validity, explanatory power, application and predictability of contrastive analysis. In the second half of the sixties, projects on contrastive studies were launched in Europe also. In Europe contrastive research was most intensive in the East European countries and in Germany (cf. Surveys or Introductions such as Hammer (1965), Alatis (1968), Moser (1970), Nickel (1971,1972), Kühlewien (1975).

The marked difference between the research work done in Europe and the United States can be summarized by saying that in the U.S.A. most of the projects were predominantly pedagogical in nature whereas in Europe both pedagogical and theoretical contrastive studies were taken up. The 1960s saw a host of contrastive studies published between English and other European languages. Based on such a contrastive analysis a number of teaching courses were made available. Various projects came into existence between 1965 and 1975: German - English, Serbo - Croatian - English, Polish - English, Rumanian - English, Hungarian - English, Finnish - English, French - English, Swedish - English, Danish - English, etc. In addition to this, well over one
thousand research papers and monographs were written during this period (cf. Sajavaara and Lehtonen 1980).

Interest in pedagogically oriented contrastive studies has not diminished since then. Inspite of vigorous controversies interest in contrastive studies continues even in the late 1970s. Jackson, while showing the pedagogical relevance of contrastive studies remarks that

'The contrastive descriptions of specific languages and language systems will contribute to an understanding of individual languages and their structures.'

Increasing number of courses offered at various universities and several national and international conferences on contrastive studies is symptomatic of current interest in contrastive studies (cf. Filipović (ed) 1971; Chitoran (ed) 1976). In recent years its contribution to studies of linguistic universals, bilingualism, machine translation and linguistic typology has been realised.

1.1.1 A Survey of Phonological Contrastive Studies

Phonological contrastive studies like contrastive studies of other components saw a host of projects in the 1960s. Phonology is the area of contrastive analysis that

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has attracted most attention. The Centre for Applied Linguistics has been instrumental in promoting phonological studies in the United States. The Centre produced a series of contrastive monographs. Amongst the phonological studies, reference could be made to Gage (1962), Moulton (1962), Lampach (1963), Stockwell and Bowen (1965) and Agard & Di Pietro (1965). Several dissertations on phonological studies were written: Wen-Min (1960), Nemser (1961), Khalafallah (1961), Blatchford (1962), Rameh (1962), Retman (1962), Sanders (1962), Briére (1963), Nemser and Juhasz (1964), Beyne (1966), Bineth (1966) and others. IRAL, Language Learning and other journals published research papers on phonological contrastive studies by American and other European linguists. Several dissertations and theses completed at European universities between 1970 and to date have been devoted to phonological contrastive studies.

1.2 Contrastive Analysis: Its Basic Assumptions

Contrastive analysis may be defined as a subdiscipline of linguistics which is concerned with the comparison of two or more languages (or subsystems of languages) in order to determine both the differences and similarities that hold them (Fisiak et al. 1978). During the heyday of taxonomic contrastive analysis its validity went virtually unquestioned and its pedagogical relevance was sometimes exaggerated. There has been wide agreement that the
ultimate objective of pedagogically oriented contrastive analysis is the improvement of foreign language teaching. Lado, the founder of modern contrastive analysis claimed that the results of a comparison of two languages and cultures, to discover and describe the learning problems have proved to be of fundamental value in the preparation of teaching materials, devising tests and language learning materials. His entire book (1957) is based on the assumption that

'We can predict and describe the patterns that will cause difficulty in learning, and those that will not cause difficulty, by comparing systematically the language and culture to be learned with the native of the language and culture of the student. In our view, the preparation of up-to-date pedagogical and experimental materials must be based on this kind of comparison.'

Almost on similar lines, Rivers (1964) observes with reference to the audio-lingual approach:

'Teaching methods rest on the careful scientific analysis of the contrasts between the learner's language and the target language.'

She goes on to say of contrastive analysis that


'This is the distinctive contribution of linguistic scientists, and the results of studies of these contrasts are incorporated in the materials prepared for class and laboratory work.'

In his introduction to the contrastive structure series, C.A. Ferguson states that

'... a careful contrastive analysis of the two languages offers an excellent basis for the preparation of instructional materials, the planning of courses, and the development of actual classroom techniques.'

Mackey has stressed the importance of the contrastive description of a source language and target language for pedagogical purposes and he says:

'Differential description is of particular interest to language teaching because many of the difficulties in learning a second language are due to the fact that it differs from the first. So that if we subtract the characteristics of the first language from those of the second, what presumably remains is a list of learner's difficulties.'

As a result of such claims a reaction set in and gave rise to a plethora of articles questioning the very bases of contrastive analysis, both psychological and linguistic.

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7 Ibid., p.14.


The application of contrastive analysis for teaching and learning relies heavily on psychology. The assumption that prior learning affects subsequent learning leads to the hypothesis of 'transfer' which perhaps could be treated as the most important concept in the theory and practice of learning. This is based on the age-old psychological concept of 'Association'. This basis of applied contrastive analysis is elaborated and formulated within a Stimulus - Response behaviourist theory of psychology. S - R theory is epitomised in Skinner's behaviourist explanation of how language learning is consummated (Skinner, 1957). Thus, contrastive analysis is founded on the assumption that \( L_2 \) learners tend to transfer to their \( L_2 \) utterances, formal features of their \( L_1 \). Contrastive analysis takes care of the effect of a given specifiable prior activity upon the learning of a given test activity. Traditional contrastive analysis is primarily concerned with 'proaction' rather than 'retroaction'.

In the 1960s and 70s both the fields psychology and linguistics have undergone a revolution. Behaviourism has been replaced by cognitive psychology. The turning point in the theories of language learning is marked by Chomsky's (1959) review of Skinner's Verbal Behaviour (1957). A perusal of the psychological literature on transfer theory reveals that this concept cannot be rejected altogether.
To quote Vladimir:

'Psychological research into the process of learning shows that one main task of a foreign language teacher should be to suppress the inhibitory effects of the native language on the internalization of the target language system.'

Pit Corder though a severe critic of contrastive analysis talks about 'transfer' within his cognitive framework. While referring to learning theorists, he says:

'... the sense we make of our environment depends on what we already know about it,... the relevant existing cognitive structures may be those of the mother tongue.'

One of the two basic principles that are broadly accepted by cognitivists is that new knowledge is to a certain degree acquired via old knowledge.

Recently two cognitive alternatives to L₁ transfer have been proposed: (i) H.V. George's mechanism of 'Cross - Association' and (ii) Newmark and Reibel's 'Ignorance Hypothesis'. There is research evidence to show that these alternatives are not profitable and rather


cumbersome. One of the merits of George's article, however, lies in its realization that redundancy in English causes certain learning problems. This debate over the usefulness of transfer theory can be summarized in the words of N.C. Christopher:

'Too simple an association of 'transfer' with behaviourist psychology, and too dismissive an attitude towards behaviourism by applied linguists who regard it as a total rather than partial explanation of learning, have combined to cast doubt on the psycholinguistic bases of contrastive analysis.'

A group of critics reject contrastive analysis because of its affinity with Structural Linguistics. Contrastive analysis owes to structural linguistics the framework within which the description and comparison of L₁ and L₂ take place. Thus, the goal of contrastive analysis—exploring the problems involved in the teaching and learning of an L₂ belongs to psychology while the framework and techniques are derived from linguistics.

1.3 A Critique of Contrastive Analysis

1.3.1 Preview

Most of the criticism on the literature concerning contrastive analysis creates the impression that contrastive

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analysis was the focus of controversy especially after a
boom in the late 1960s. There was severe and varied
criticism as regards its theoretical, psychological and
pedagogical bases. However, that vigorous controversy has
not hampered the ever increasing interest in contrastive
analysis research at various centres all over the world.
The culminating point saw on the one hand, the publication
of the Contrastive Structure Series in 1962-65 and, on the
other, the Georgetown Round Table Conference in 1968. This
conference seems to have struck the heaviest note of dis­
approval about the validity of contrastive analysis. The
revaluation of contrastive analysis continued at the Pacific Conference on Contrastive Linguistics and Language
Universals, held in Hawaii (cf. Whitman and Jackson (ed),
1971).

The evidence of continued interest in the field could
be seen from various conference reports ( particularly
Filipović (ed), 1971; Chitoran (ed), 1976). Due to the
revival of interest after the Chomskyan revolution in
linguistics in this area of linguistic investigation, several
new projects came into existence in Europe in the 1970s.
The PAKS project in Keil, later in Stuttgart, concentrated
on the problems of applying transformational-generative
model to contrastive analysis. The Swedish - English
contrastive studies project in Lund was begun and special
attention was paid to error analysis. Among the major projects launched were those in Jyvaskyla (Finish), Copenhagen (Danish), and Leuven (French). At the Mannheim Institute of German Language, German was contrasted with French, Spanish, and Japanese.

1.3.2 Criticisms of Contrastive Analysis: Old and New

Most of the early criticism centres round the papers presented at the Georgetown Conference and takes its driving force from the exaggerated claims and 'the strong hypothesis' made during the heyday of contrastive analysis. The inventory of criticisms and possible replies have been summed up in an excellent article by Carl James (Nickel, 1971: 53-68). The 'strong' version of contrastive analysis hypothesis has been stated by Lee (1968: 186). To quote him, the contrastive analysis is based on the following five assumptions:

(1) that the prime cause, or even the sole cause, of difficulty and error in foreign-language learning is interference coming from the learners' native language;
(2) that the difficulties are chiefly, or wholly, due to the differences between the two languages;
(3) that the greater these differences are the more acute the learning difficulties will be;
(4) that the results of a comparison between the two languages are needed to predict the difficulties and errors which will occur in learning the foreign language;
(5) that what there is to teach can best be found by comparing the two languages and then subtracting what is common to them, so that 'what
the student has to learn equals the sum of the differences established by the contrastive analysis'.

Based on this 'strong' version of contrastive analysis hypothesis, the major criticisms may be studied under three broad heads: (i) criticism relating to predictability, (ii) criticism of the theoretical and psychological bases of contrastive analysis and (iii) criticism of classroom applicability. In doing so some of the serious charges against contrastive analysis will be discussed and counter arguments will be advanced wherever necessary.

Critics have questioned the extreme claims made in the fifties for contrastive analysis. One such claim is that $L_1$ interference is the only source of errors and this has been rightly criticised by a number of scholars (cf. Corder, 1967; Wilkins, 1968; Lee, 1968; Dušková, 1969). Today no one agrees with such a claim and at the same time one would venture to express the doubt that CA has never made such a claim. The critics seem to have overlooked a very important point that contrastive analysis has never claimed that $L_1$ interference is the sole source

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of errors in L₂ learning. This could very well be seen from Lado's statement: 'These differences are the chief source of difficulty in learning a second language'. 'Chief Source' obviously implies that L₁ interference cannot be treated as the only source. Other sources of errors which have been recognized by Selinker (1972), Richards (1974) are of a 'non-linguistic' origin. Some of the sources like over-generalization, false-analogy, idiosyncratic features within the target language, indeterminacy, hypercorrectness, certain psychological factors and even bad teaching have been recognized as some of the possible sources of errors in L₂ learning. Lado it may be noted stressed the importance of the psychological aspects of language learning along with cultural contrasts. Since it has never been claimed that predictability of interference and errors is the sole purpose of contrastive studies or that interference is the only source of errors, the criticism seems to be ill-conceived.

There is sufficient research evidence to show that L₁ interference continues to be one of the most important sources of errors in L₂ learning. To quote the relevant portion from James:

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Several attempts have been made to determine the proportion of interlingual errors among all errors. Tran-Thi-Chau (1974) found 51% to be interlingual (L₁-induced) and 29% intralingual, strikingly confirming Richards (1971) who suggested 53% interlingual and 31% intralingual. ... Grauberg (1971:261) found that for his advanced L₁ English learners of German 'interference from English...can be observed in 71 errors out of 193', i.e. in 36% of cases. H.V. George estimated that about a third of errors are traceable to L₁ (George, 1972).15

From the above statistical account it is obvious that L₁ interference is not the only source of errors but definitely one of the most important sources. Recently, in the theory and methodology of error analysis and interlanguage studies, scholars have explicitly incorporated the assumptions and methodology of contrastive analysis in their models. The proponents of CA have to agree with the fact that there are quantitative limitations on the number of errors that CA can predict. These limitations stem from the fact that not all errors are interlingual in nature.

Closely connected with the strong hypothesis, is the criticism that contrastive analysis does not have 100% predictive reliability. The predictive power of CA and its reliability have been questioned by different scholars (cf. Dušková, 1969; Schachter, 1974; Bieritz, 1974). As

regards its 100% predictive reliability, no one has ever claimed so nor has contrastive analysis ever claimed the predictability about which choices speakers will make. Contrastive analysis claims no more than its ability to predict the potential area of mistakes. In his Preface, Lado (1957) uses the word 'predict' in the simplest sense of identifying, and not in the sense of 'prognosticating errors' in L₂ learning. He seems to be identifying two categories of L₂ items - the easy and the difficult. Since the late 1950s, the notion of prediction has somehow been literally reinterpreted to a point where it bears only a tenuous relationship with what Lado intended.

Baird cites an example of certain Indian and Pakistani speakers who use either a dental /t/ or a retroflex /t/ for the English alveolar /t/. Baird states that 'it is unlikely that a contrastive study of phonology of Hindi or Urdu and English would have enabled the teacher to predict this choice with any certainty'. A similar criticism is cited by Wilkins (1968) also, who refers to such a case of 'predictable alternation between two potential substitutions' namely, French speaker's propensity to use either French /s/, /z/ or /t/, /d/ for L₂ English /θ/.

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Among other instances of this state of indeterminacy reference could be made to Yar Mohammadi (1970), Nemser (1971). In this connection one would like to go along with James's (1971: 57) reply:

'As it stands, the CA prediction is valid; but the strict veracity of CA is being criticised. As in the preceding Indian example, it is likely that it is the paucity of linguistic knowledge that prevents CA from predicting which and when. Either that, or this is a case of interlingual free variation. As long as linguists choose to make ample use of this concept, it is not surprising that CA should be satisfied with it'.

Doubts have also been voiced over the reliability of actual errors made by learners and the reasons assigned for the errors predicted. Since some of the reasons are non-linguistic in nature, CA does not predict them as CA is concerned only with linguistic sources of errors. There is no denying the fact that contrastive analysis is able to predict and explain many of the actually occurring errors in L₂ learning, in particular, those that arise from interference from the learner's mother tongue. Thus, one could conclude by saying that before better predictions are made in language teaching in general, more research needs to be done on L₁ and L₂ interaction, and psychological phenomena affecting performance. It is not quite

fair to blame contrastive analysis for its failure to predict and account for all errors. Like that of other disciplines, contrastive analysis too functions within its own limitations. Errors of non-linguistic nature: idiosyncratic features of L1, bad teaching, etc. do not fall within the scope of contrastive analysis and hence one should not expect CA to predict and explain all such errors.

Lado seems to have viewed learning difficulty and linguistic difference as being directly and proportionately related. There has been some empirical confirmation of the correlation between language distance and learning difficulty (e.g. Oller and Redding 1971). However, the implicit suggestion that there is a constant relation between difference and difficulty has been challenged (Whitman and Jackson, 1972). They conclude, from their study of the errors made by Japanese learners of English syntactic patterns that 'relative similarity' rather than difference, is directly related to levels of difficulty'.

The view that differences are more difficult to deal with prevailed in the United States and elsewhere well into the sixties. In conformity with empirical evidence one has to accept that both similarities and differences may turn out to be troublesome in achieving the goals of teaching and learning foreign language.
The well-known hierarchy of foreign language learning difficulty was proposed by Stockwell and Bowen (1965) for phonology and elaborated to embrace syntactic structures in Stockwell, Bowen and Martin (1965). It will not be wrong to say that these hierarchies are of a very general nature - not taking into account particular structures in particular languages but rather types of interference depending on relations of correspondence between structures in the two languages under analysis. Critics are of the opinion that a hierarchy of difficulty based on contrastive analysis may not always be an appropriate basis for the sequencing of teaching materials. It is to be remembered that contrastive analysis is one of the several criteria. Stockwell and Bowen added functional load, potential mishearing and pattern congruity as three other criteria. The scale of difficulty has been criticised on several counts. Tran-Thi-Chau (1975:130-134) finds that in her data, absent categories carry a relatively low error index. On the other hand Brérie (1968:73) finds that for Americans, /R/, /r/ and /h/, which are absent in $L_1$, were more difficult than sounds close to $L_1$ equivalents. The fact that the scale overlooks the different orders of difficulty for encoding and decoding sounds has been pointed out by Nickel and Wagner. They feel that 'divergence is probably more important for the
language learner as a speaker while convergence is more critical for him as a hearer'.

Some critics have even questioned the utility of applying the findings of contrastive analysis for solving pedagogical problems. Pit Corder claims that CA has failed in providing the language teacher with any new and useful information. To quote him:

'Teachers have not always been very impressed by this contribution from the linguist for the reason that their practical experience has usually already shown them where these difficulties lie and they have not felt that the contribution of the linguist has provided them with any significantly new information'.

One cannot agree with Pit Corder in his assertion that the problem areas are known to all language teachers. No one will disagree with him if he keeps in mind only well experienced and competent teachers who are, however, rare. To rely only on unscientifically collected data seems unnecessarily risky and time consuming. By the time a large sample of errors has been collected, quite a number of students would have made these mistakes repeatedly. It is here that CA can do great service to the language

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teacher. It can make explicit what the experienced and perceptive teacher knows. Contrastive analysis attempts to benefit language teachers who do not have sufficient experience of teaching.

To know something by virtue of one's insight after long years of experience is one thing, and to get theoretical confirmation is quite another. One works with much greater confidence in one's profession if one knows that his views are based on a reliable discipline. In short we can say that teaching experience and CA should complement each other. CA findings could be used by both the experienced as well as those who are new to the field of teaching. CA is one tool among many, but a very useful one which can help predict potential errors and explain and remedy those which are actually present.

In addition to this CA helps in identifying problem areas. The very awareness that an item is non-existent in a learner's/is quite a useful and reliable source of problem area identification. Consistent and regular substitutions in the target language offer a clue to the fact that there is a good chance that the interference is due to L1 and what is needed is more/contrastive analysis. It helps the teacher to establish priority with regard to teaching items. In any teaching situation, sequencing and grading, (fragmentation of language into convenient
bits) is an inescapable reality as the teaching of the whole of a language is not conceivable. From the teaching point of view grading of items with reference to their being easy and difficult has been beneficial in actual teaching practice.

Lee (1968) shows his disapproval of what he calls piecemeal CA and protests: 'A language is not a collection of separable and self-sufficient parts. The parts are mutually dependent and mutually determinative'. Newmark and Reibel (1968:161) go to the extent of saying that CA seems to support a wrong theory of learning: 'to learn a new language one bit at a time'. No one will disagree with Lee if he suggests that language is not an inventory of parts and no items in a language are inherently 'easy' or 'difficult'. One would also like to agree with Newmark and Reibel that language learning is a continuous process. But these critics seem to overlook the facts of descriptive and pedagogical expediency of CA. It is a fact that CA executes partial and differential descriptions of selected systems and structures of


and but this is done for the sake of descriptive expediency with a view to stating points of interlingual similarity and difference. From this partial and differential description Newmark and Reibel form the false impression that CA endorses an atomistic view of language teaching and language learning. In treating items 'easy' and 'difficult' CA only suggests that the potential areas of difficulty should be given special attention but this does not imply that the rest of the items should be ignored.

In some of the preceding sections of this chapter a bird's eye-view of the historical development of CA and the claims for and against the power of CA to predict errors and its usefulness in the preparation and use of teaching and learning materials have been examined. Without making any exaggerated claims in favour of CA's predictability or staking any claims for its infallibility, it is hoped that the investigation undertaken in the following pages gives the teacher of English as a foreign language a carefully studied - a systematic descriptive basis for going about his job and if he adopts appropriate techniques with flexibility without being dogmatic, he will achieve his goal better than if he were to depend entirely upon empirical evidence from day-to-day experience which might not only be cumbersome but also wasteful...
of time and energy. And so far as the phonology of a foreign language is concerned, it is difficult to find a viable and dependable alternative to a contrastive analysis of the phonology of mother-tongue and the foreign language. This approach does not and need not preclude the usefulness of empirical and other evidence which the teacher might gather.

1.4 Importance of English in India with Special Reference to North-East and Manipur

English is not a foreign language in India in the sense in which languages like French, German and Russian, etc. are. We have had political, economic, social and cultural contacts with Britain for well over 200 years. The emergence of English in India dates back to the day on which Queen Elizabeth I granted a charter to the East India Company to trade with the East in 1600 A.D. In fact, English is the only foreign language, studied by the vast majority of people in the country as a second or a third language.

English continues to be used as the associate official language of the Indian Union and serves the purpose that it had served as the medium of inter-state communication. English is still the language of public affairs in our multilingual country. It is the language of some
of our outstanding newspapers and journals, our technological and professional studies such as medicine, engineering and indeed of all higher studies. Besides it continues to be a language of great international importance. It provides us with a link with the outside world and constitutes an indispensable tool for further study. The future development of India, its place in the comity of nations, its advancement in the field of science and technology, the image of the country we wish to project to the rest of the world and our own solidarity to a large extent, depends upon our knowledge of an international language and that language for a long time to come can only be English. By closing our door to English we would be closing the door to our individual and national progress.

The use of English in India can be studied under five broad heads:

(i) In the academic field, English is the important language as a medium of expression and as a means of acquiring knowledge.

(ii) English is the most convenient medium of inter-state communication. Official correspondence between the Centre and the States, and between the States themselves, is carried on mostly in English.
(iii) English is used for literary, political and other important writings of national or international importance. Scholars participating in All India Seminars, Workshops, and Conferences carry on their deliberations in English.

(iv) English continues to be used by officers and their subordinate staff working at All India establishments: railways, posts and telegraphs, shipping, airlines and travel offices, etc.

(v) All India bodies conducting competitive examinations for recruitment to All India services, almost always use English.

In the whole of the North-East, English is the only second language because most of the states in the North-East are multilingual. In Manipur itself as many as 30 languages are spoken which are not always mutually intelligible. In Nagaland and Meghalaya, English is used as the official language. Under such circumstances English serves as the link language. In addition to the above uses, English is used for inter-personal and inter-state communication. In conclusion one could say that so long as we do not succeed in translating on an enormously large scale and in the shortest possible time, scientific, political and economic thought, etc. from one language into other Indian languages, English has to stay and continue to serve the country.
In Manipur, English is taught from class III onwards in most of the schools. In English medium schools it is taught right from the day schooling starts. It is the medium of instruction in colleges and the University of Manipur. But there has been no consistent and organized effort to improve the quality of teaching the language though teaching English is one of the courses offered in the teacher training college. The result is that the majority of students who have taken their Matriculation or Pre-University examination can neither speak nor write intelligibly. The situation is not so very satisfactory even when we take into account graduates. There is therefore an urgent need to organise carefully planned courses in Spoken English, Written English, Reading and Discrimination.

Before the inception of the Central Institute of English, Hyderabad, the emphasis in English language teaching was on the teaching of written language, more often, of literary language. Spoken English was given almost a peripheral importance though the books on English pronunciation etc., figured in the syllabus for teacher-trainees. Right from those days, a few teachers felt that spoken English should be given due importance, but it is only during the last twenty five years or so that this view has come to be widely accepted. A curious imbalance, however,
has persisted in the teaching of Spoken English in our country. Some teachers now receive phonetic training at the CIEFL, Hyderabad, and other regional centres. But the fact of the matter is that a vast majority of teachers teaching English at all levels have no phonetic training. Consequent upon the prevailing situation, in English teaching very little attention is paid to speech which is one of the most important skills of learning a language. Language is chiefly manifested through speech and has an active social role. This spoken form is the ultimate basis on which all the other mediums are constructed. From the linguistic point of view also it is the spoken form which provides the basic data i.e. the sounds and their organisation. Indeed almost the entire reform in the methods of teaching foreign languages has been in the direction of emphasising this aspect.

It is quite interesting to note that our universities are engaged in giving fairly advanced courses in English literature at B.A. and M.A. levels, but spoken English has been ignored to the extent that even specialists in English literature do not show a comparable command of spoken English. Serious mistakes in the production of segmental phonemes, stress, intonation and rhythm can be noted in their lectures. It sounds quite contradictory that one who does not know the rhythmic pattern of English
appreciates Tennyson's word music or Swinburne's sound harmonies. Even when one's primary aim is literary appreciation, spoken English should have an important place.

Till recently there was no place for the teaching of spoken English either in the schools or colleges of Manipur. However, a diploma course in spoken English is being offered by Manipur University and the University intends to start a diploma course in the teaching of English for school teachers. The position at the moment is that the teacher is the only model for most students in Manipur. Since most of the teachers (the exceptions are so rare) have not been trained in spoken English, there is complete dearth of phonetically trained teachers both at school and college levels. The teaching of spoken English therefore, is one of the significant educational problems in Manipur.

1.5 Need for Contrastive Studies in India

The significance of teaching a second language assumes greater importance in a multilingual country with 1,652 languages being spoken by 438,936,918 speakers as their mother-tongue. Out of these languages, fifteen namely, Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Urdu, Telugu and Sindhi are in the Eight Schedule. English functions as lingua franca and is taught as a second language.

*The Figures are based on Census of India, 1971.*
in most of the states. The teaching material available in other countries where English is taught as a second or foreign language does not suit the needs of learners in our country, since in the preparation of this material, the peculiar problems arising out of India being a multilingual country have not been taken into account. In India, each linguistic community has some peculiar learning problems of its own. In such a situation one cannot think of all India problems in the teaching of English. Rather, there are as many sets of problems as there are languages in India. This necessitates the urgency of Indian languages being contrasted with English. Ideally speaking, there should be contrastive studies of all the different languages vis-à-vis English in order to teach English effectively.

1.5.1 Phonological Contrastive Studies in India

In the Indian context the Central Institute of English, Hyderabad, initiated contrastive studies in the early sixties. In the year 1962, work on contrastive structure series was started. Under this research project three modern Indian language—Hindi, Bengali and Tamil, were selected to be contrasted with English. Contrastive studies of Hindi—English, and Tamil—English were completed. Since then several projects have been undertaken and quite a number of research papers, monographs, dissertations and theses have been written (cf. CIEFL List of Research Projects 1986).
Very few of these, however, have been devoted to the contrastive study of phonological systems. Interestingly enough, English is the language contrasted in most cases (Chaturvedi, 1964; Yardi, 1965; Rubdy, 1975; Tara Warriar, 1976; Dhar, 1977; Meena, 1981, etc.).

Several dissertations on phonological contrastive studies have been completed during the last few decades in some of the Indian Universities (cf. Shakuntala Sharma, 1978). But no such study has been attempted so far as the languages spoken in the North-Eastern region are concerned. Indian Linguistics, CIEFL Bulletin and other Indian journals have been publishing research papers on phonological contrastive studies by Indian and foreign scholars from time to time.

1.6 The Present Study

No attempt to date has been made in the specific area of Manipuri and English contrastive phonology. Teaching materials based on contrastive analysis of English and other Indian languages now available do not satisfy the needs of learners of English in Manipur. For effective teaching of spoken English, it is necessary that a contrastive study of the phonological systems of Manipuri and English be made. Hence this study is an attempt to make
a contrastive analysis of the phonological systems of Manipuri (Meitei Lon) and English keeping in view the pedagogical implication of the study.

1.7 Languages Contrasted

For a phonological contrastive analysis of Manipuri (Meitei Lon) and English it is necessary to define the terms Manipuri and English, since the terms Manipuri and English include all those forms which are technically either their dialects or stylistic variations.

1.8 Manipuri (Meitei Lon)

1.8.1 Genetic Affiliation

Manipuri is a member of the Kuki-Chin subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman language family in the North-Eastern region of India. Tibeto-Burman is generally regarded as a subfamily of Sino-Tibetan, though scholars like Maspero (1983) in his review of Shafer (1938) and Kun Chang (1973) in his review of Benedict (1972) have objected to the use of the term. In showing the affiliation, the views of Benedict (1972) and Matisoff (1978) and others have been followed. According to their classification, Tibeto-Burman is coordinate with Karen within a group called Tibeto-Karen, while Chinese and Tibeto-Karen are in turn coordinate members of Sino-Tibetan.
There are quite a few detailed classifications of Tibeto-Burman languages (e.g. Konow - Grierson, 1909-1928; Shafer, 1955, 1966; Miller, 1969; Egerod, 1974 and Voegelin - Voegelin 1964, 1977). In addition to these global classifications of Tibeto-Burman languages, there are classificatory works which treat various subgroups in detail. Nigam (1972), based on Indian Census Reports for 1971 on a language by language basis, provides linguistic affiliations, figures and their geographical distribution. D.P. Pattanayak (1973) in his commendable work gives additional details on geographic distribution of languages in the 1971 census of India.

As its name implies, Manipuri (Meitei/Miteirol - ron ~ lol ~ lon) is the language of the Meitei or Mitei people. It is spoken mainly in Manipur in some parts of Assam, Tripura, Bengala Desh and Burma. G.A. Grierson in the Linguistic Survey of India (Vol III, pt. III) classified Manipuri as a member of the Kuki-Chin group, whereas Benedict (1972) termed this subgroup as Naga-Kuki-Chin. In the absence of in-depth studies of languages within the subgroup of family Kuki-Chin, it is difficult to say anything conclusive about the relationship between Manipuri and other geographically neighbouring languages which belong to this subgroup. To get an in-depth idea of the structure of the languages - phonological, morphological,
syntactic, lexical and semantic, there is practically very little that can be used to establish the affinities. According to Benedict, within the subgroup, 'Meitei shows significant points of contact with Kachin as well as with Kuki-Naga, though its affinities are predominantly with the later.'

A helical model (based on Benedict, 1972) classifying the Sino-Tibetan languages and showing the place of Manipuri (Fig. 1.1) is given on the next page. This chart has been taken from Benedict (1972: 6).

1.8.2 Social and Stylistic Variations

The variety of Manipuri described in this study is the Standard dialect of Valley of which Imphal, the capital of Manipur is the main centre. However, within the valley itself different varieties can be heard depending on the speaker's lineage and social background. In addition to variations at the phonetic and lexical levels, the tonal systems appear to be different. Such areas of phonetic variations may be called 'dialect areas'. Based on social

22 Paul K. Benedict, Sino-Tibetan: a conspectus, op. cit., p. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) p. 6
Fig. 1.1 Schematic chart of Sino-Tibetan groups (from Benedict, p. 37)
and geographical dimensions, one can distinguish the following main dialect areas:

i) Kakching

ii) Thanga

iii) Ningthoukhong

iv) Sekmai

v) Andro

vi) Phayeng

It is interesting to note that in spite of sufficient exposure to 'Standard Manipuri', each dialect area has preserved its own characteristic features. A synchronic analysis of Manipuri, on both geographical and social planes will give a complete picture of the complex language situation obtaining in the valley. The variables affecting language are status, age, sex and level of education. Like any other language there is a range of stylistic variants which can be arranged along a continuum: formal, casual, colloquial, frozen, consultative, and informal etc. styles, etc.

1.8.3 Dialect Studied and Sources of Material

As stated in 1.8.2, 'standard dialect of the Imphal valley' is taken as standard Manipuri. This is the variety widely used especially by teachers, radio news-readers and other educated persons. The data on which the present
study is based has been collected from different sources. The first is the speech of native speakers (informants) in the valley I recorded during the academic years 1978-1986. These speakers belonged to different places in the Imphal valley and are of various family backgrounds having different levels of education. The other source has been the All India Radio news bulletins in Manipuri.

For the word-list and most of the examples quoted in the main body of the dissertation, I used 'Manipuri to Manipuri and English Dictionary of N. Khelchandra Singh (1964). I have gone through every word of it, and made detailed notes regarding the phonological features available, leaving out the archaic and highly sanskritized forms.

1.9 Received Pronunciation of English (R.P.)

India is a multilingual country, and learners speaking different mother tongues (L1) tend to bring in their native sounds while learning English. As a result of this we have as many forms of spoken English as there are languages in India. Several regional standards of pronunciation - U.P. English, Bengali English, Kerala English and so on can easily be noticed. These divergent forms tend to be mutually unintelligible and even if there is some degree of intelligibility difficulties arise when
they are used as means of international communication.

Gimson has put these ideas very succinctly:

A disturbing development concerns the use of English in the Indian and African continents, where English functions as a lingua franca superimposed upon a large number of indigenous languages. In these regions, the interference of the indigenous phonological structures is such that the efficacy of spoken English as a means of communication is fast being lost; intelligibility tends to fall to a low level within quite restricted areas, for reasons which are primarily phonetic. Even where some reasonable degree of intelligibility is retained within any one country, there are serious deficiencies of a mainly phonological kind which become apparent when English is used as an international means of communication. It is conceivable that, if such divergencies are not restrained, communication will be easily maintained only in the written language.23

In this regard Bansal observes:

English as spoken by educated people in India does not differ radically from native English in grammar and vocabulary, but in pronunciation it is different from both British and American English. Even within India there are a large number of regional varieties, each different from the others in certain ways, and retaining to some extent the phonetic patterns of the Indian language spoken in that particular region.24

In the present context, the question of teaching a standard of pronunciation is of particular importance.


There has been a move among scholars in India and abroad to consider a type of Indian English as a non-native dialect of English to be taught all over the country. So long as Indian English or General Indian English is not well defined and described, we have to have one of the native varieties of English as our standard. English has various well defined varieties: Scottish, Welsh, Irish, R.P., American, Canadian, Australian, etc. And the Indian learner of English has to choose one of these forms in which he wishes to be trained.

For the purpose of this study, Received Pronunciation of English (RP) has been adopted as the model. This variety is popularly referred to as BBC English or 'Standard English'. Wells and Colson call it 'Southern British Standard'. To quote Wells:

Geographically, R.P. is associated with England, though not with any particular locality within England. It is most general type of educated British Pronunciation (although there are many highly educated English people who do not use it). Socially, it is characteristic of the upper class and upper middle class... Typically they belong to families whose menfolk were or are pupils at one of the 'public schools' (exclusive private schools standing outside the state education system) Until the early 1970s, this was the accent demanded in its announcers by the BBC.25

Gimson (1980:87-92) talks about variations within RP: Conservative RP, used by the older generation and traditionally, by certain professions or social groups, General RP most commonly in use and typified by the pronunciation adopted by the BBC and Advanced RP, mainly used by young people of exclusive social groups - mostly of the upper class, but also for prestige value, in certain professional circles.

RP speakers form a very small percentage of the British population. A much larger number of educated speakers have what might be called 'near-RP accent'. Nowadays, some people feel that we should look for an alternative to RP though no such practical alternative has yet been evolved.

Pedagogically RP, in many different ways is difficult to acquire. But it is by far the most thoroughly described form of English. It is well documented, and standard descriptions, dictionaries, are easily available. Besides, it continues to enjoy international acceptance and prestige. The choice of RP is not only because of its international acceptance, and its use for language teaching but also for the most important reason that due to long historical association of India with Britain, teachers of English were exposed to RP. It is reasonable
to suggest that RP though difficult to acquire should be our model of spoken English. RP is the model being taught to teacher-trainees at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, and its regional centres.

1.10 Scheme of the Present Study

By and large, the literature on phonological contrastive analysis shows agreement on four steps involved in making phonological contrastive analysis: (i) preparing a phonemic inventory of \( L_1 \) and \( L_2 \), (ii) equating phonemes interlingually, (iii) listing the allophonic variants, (iv) stating the distributional constraints on the phonemes and allophones of \( L_1 \) and \( L_2 \). A fifth step—a statement of the frequency of each phonemic contrast within \( L_1 \) and \( L_2 \) has been added by Stockwell and Bowen (1965: 5-6), Burgschmidt and Götz (1974: 197).

In accordance with this scheme, Chapters II and III are devoted to an analysis of Manipuri segmental and suprasegmental phonemes respectively. Phonotactic possibilities are also discussed. Chapters IV and V give an account of English segmental and suprasegmental phonemes. Phonetic realizations of the allophones of the corresponding phonemes both in \( L_1 \) (Manipuri) and \( L_2 \) (RP) are worked out. In Chapter VI a comparison of \( L_1 \) and \( L_2 \) phonological systems is made and Chapter VII is devoted
to pedagogical problems related to segmental and supra-
segmental phonemes of English.

1.10.1 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this investigation is an exami-
nation of the systematic linguistic differences and
similarities that exist between Manipuri and English at
the level of phonology. A detailed pedagogically oriented
contrastive investigation of the two languages will pro-
vide a dependable basis for the planning of courses,
preparation of teaching materials, devising classroom
techniques for teaching and learning spoken English. The
objectives are as follows:

i) A description of Manipuri phonology
ii) A description of English (RP) phonology
iii) A contrastive analysis of Manipuri and English
iv) Identifying the problem areas in teaching the
sound system of English to Manipuri speakers
v) Making some tentative suggestions for tackling
the problems which arise out of the analysis.

1.10.2 Need for and Importance of the Study

Teaching spoken English to those whose mother tongue
is Manipuri calls for considerable knowledge of Manipuri
phonology. Unfortunately little of this knowledge about
Manipuri phonology is available in the usual training that language teachers receive in the state or outside. This contrastive analysis of Manipuri and English phonology could therefore be a dependable basis for the preparation of instructional materials, planning of courses, devising testing techniques and the development of actual classroom techniques. Findings of this research it is hoped will be of some use in the organization of courses in spoken English; teaching of phonetics and preparation of day-to-day practice and language laboratory materials.

1.10.3 Scope of the Study

As mentioned earlier, contrastive analysis can be carried out at different levels: phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical and semantic. A comprehensive contrastive analysis comprising all the levels would be a stupendous work and may take fairly long time. Keeping in view the importance of teaching spoken English to Manipuri learners, the present study has been limited to the phonological contrastive analysis only. I have tried to be comprehensive so far as the segmentals of Manipuri and English are concerned. Manipuri suprasegmentals namely, falling tone and level tone have been discussed. The tones have not been fully analyzed because of certain limitations, such as, lack of facilities for instrumental
verification, etc. The syllable structure, stress and intonation of the language have also been only briefly discussed.

1.11 Methodology

As stated in 1.6, the present study relates to contrastive phonological systems of Manipuri and English. This involves extensive application of descriptive and contrastive methods within an accepted framework of a methodology. In the process of a contrastive phonological analysis due attention should be paid to the selection of a model and the procedure adopted for contrastive analysis.

1.11.1 Choice of a Model

There are as many models available in contrastive analysis as there are descriptive models: Structuralist or taxonomic, the Chomskyan or transformational generative, Krzeszowski's contrastive generative grammar and Fillmore's case grammar. Unlike contrastive syntactic analysis, for contrastive phonological analysis there is only a two-way choice between generative and taxonomic phonology. The taxonomic or structural model, is the model expounded by Bloomfield (1933) and elaborated by the structuralists Fries (1945), Lado (1957), and Harris (1963). In fact Harris himself, in his article entitled
'Language Transfer' (1954) claimed that the structural model could be used for comparative purposes. To quote him:

'The method outlined here enables us to measure the difference in grammatical structure and to establish what is the maximum difference (or the maximum similarity) between any two language systems'.

Lado's *Linguistics Across Cultures* (1957) presents a good workable scheme for contrastive studies at five different levels: sound system, grammatical structure, vocabulary, writing system and culture. This model was put to its best use by Burgschmidt and Götz (1974). The earlier volumes of the Contrastive Structure series (ed. Ferguson), namely German-English (Kufner 1962; Moulton 1962) and Italian-English (Agard and Di Pietro 1966) were based on this model. Studies of this kind have never been a mere intellectual game of professional linguists, but have always been produced with a clear practical purpose, namely with a view to their applications in language teaching. From the pedagogical point of view the taxonomic model yields not only theoretical but also practical results.

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While most phoneticians and phonologists feel that generative phonology is intellectually satisfying, for the ordinary teacher, it is too complex and abstract to be directly relevant. The choice of the model for this investigation is dependent upon the orientation of the investigation. As stated earlier, this analysis is carried out with a specific practical purpose, namely its application in teaching spoken English to Manipuri learners and hence, the taxonomic model has been adopted.