

Lutz Gunkel and Gisela Zifonun (eds), *Deutsch im Sprachvergleich. Grammatische Kontraste und Konvergenzen*. Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2012. xvi + 520 pp. ISBN 978-3-11-028476-8. [Institut für Deutsche Sprache – Jahrbuch 2011]

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This book is part of a special series of proceedings based on the annual conferences of the renowned Institut für Deutsche Sprache (IDS). Held over several days each March in the IDS's home town of Mannheim, these gatherings (*Jahrestagungen*, www.ids-mannheim.de/org/tagungen) are the IDS's flagship event and one of the highlights in the year's cycle of conferences in German linguistics. Participation is open and international, and there are lively discussions (some with panels) and social events. The lectures are upon invitation only and there are no parallel sessions, thus ensuring maximum attention for those invited to speak. Another prominent feature is each meeting's individual theme, as reflected in the titles of the proceedings, which are billed as the IDS's annals (*Jahrbücher*). They contain peer-reviewed versions of the invited papers and are published by de Gruyter to coincide (more or less) with the meeting of the following year.

As the title of the present volume suggests, the theme of the 2011 meeting was “German in cross-linguistic comparison: grammatical contrasts and convergences”. The editors are Lutz Gunkel, postdoctoral researcher in the IDS's grammar section, and Gisela Zifonun, then head (now retired) of the same section. Zifonun is known in the field as the brain and main author behind the IDS's ambitious three-volume German grammar (Zifonun *et al.*, 1997) and its ongoing “German grammar in European comparison” research project (GDE, www.ids.mannheim.de/gra/eurostudien.html). The volume begins with the customary introduction by the IDS's director, Ludwig Eichinger, who harks back to two earlier cross-linguistically themed meetings in the same series called “Probleme der kontrastiven Grammatik” in 1969 (cf. IDS, 1969) and “Deutsch typologisch” in 1995 (cf. Lang and Zifonun, 1996). His overview briefly charts the history and changing emphases of contrastive linguistics from the early days, when the contrastive approach was beginning to emancipate itself from language pedagogy and the IDS itself was doing pioneering work in the contrastive description of German, through the European typology projects of the late 1990s and early 2000s, up to the present day. The editors then introduce the volume's theme, surveying its contents and pointing out that the vast majority of contributors adopt essentially the same typological orientation as the IDS's GDE project. A minority of papers adopt a corpus-based methodology which is used by the IDS mostly in the study of intralinguistic variation, but proves quite congenial to interlingual comparison as well.

Implicit in the editors' introduction is an important caveat for the target audience, viz. the fact that the IDS's understanding of “grammar” reaches well beyond morphosyntax. In fact, “grammar” is taken to encompass all aspects of linguistic structure, including semantics and some aspects of pragmatics, oriented as it is towards the utterance as its ultimate focal point. Morphosyntactic themes in the volume include noun declension (Bernd Wiese),

event-internal adjuncts (Christoph Schroeder), adnominal adverbs (Lutz Gunkel and Susan Schlotthauer), adverbial clause-combining (Hardarik Blühdorn) and split possession (Thomas Stolz). Interface issues are particularly prominent, including preposition/article amalgams (Patricia Cabredo Hofherr), W-Clefts (Volker Gast and Daniel Wiechmann), the link between word-order and sentence-type marking (Attila Péteri), the role of the left periphery in information structuring (Valéria Molnár), referentiality, specificity and discourse prominence in indefinite demonstratives like German *son* < *so ein* (Klaus von Heusinger), and clause-combining and information structuring (Catherine Fabricius-Hansen and Wiebke Ramm). There are also papers about phonetics (Marzena Żygis and Bernd Pompino-Marschall on glottal marking of vowel-initial words), phonology (Renate Raffelsiefen on the phonological status of /j/), graphematics (Nanna Fuhrhop and Rebecca Baghorn on spelling principles), and word-formation in a constructional perspective (Matthias Hüning). Framing the papers are two meta-methodological contributions: first by Ekkehard König on the scope, potential and limits of contrastive linguistics vis-à-vis other comparative approaches to language (cf. König 2012 for a similar argument in English), and finally by Jonas Kuhn on the role of annotated parallel corpora in cross-linguistic comparison.

Like so many edited collections, this one is unlikely to be read through from cover to cover by many readers. Those who do so anyway, or decide to tackle at least the majority of the 18 contributions (each between 20 and 35 pages in length), will notice the consistently high quality of the papers, but also inevitably their varying degrees of accessibility and technicality. The geographical frame of reference is European, and the selection of contrasting languages is suitably diverse: English (Fuhrhop and Baghorn, Gast and Wiechmann, Kuhn); Dutch (Hüning); French (Cabredo Hofherr); Polish (Żygis and Pompino-Marschall); Turkish (Schroeder); Hungarian (Péteri); Italian and Portuguese (Blühdorn); Norwegian, English and French (Fabricius-Hansen and Ramm); Latin, Italian, Polish and Hungarian (Wiese); English, French, Polish and Hungarian, amongst others (Gunkel and Schlotthauer); French, Swedish, Finnish, Russian, English and Hungarian (Molnár). Besides the staples of contrastive linguistics (Germanic, Romance), Polish and Hungarian are particularly well-represented; this is due at least in part to the prominent role of these languages in the IDS's own GDE project, for which Gunkel and Schlotthauer's paper functions as a partial progress report. An interesting observation is that more than half the papers cover more than two languages, a situation otherwise quite untypical of contrastive linguistics (cf. the argument made by König). The least typically contrastive paper in the collection, i.e. the one by Stolz, is classic areal typology, and the contributions by Raffelsiefen and von Heusinger each make a point about German from a broad cross-linguistic perspective, without specific contrasting languages (although the use of English 'this', as in "there was this man who...", is a major point of reference for von Heusinger). Not surprisingly, there is little in the present collection to bear out König's ideal requirement that contrastive linguistics should aim at comprehensive, fine-grained comparisons between two languages with some practical objective in mind, and that contrastive linguistics should therefore be complementary to typology (cf. König, 2012). Despite obvious differences between the extreme ends of the spectrum, the methodological borderline

between papers with two, three or more languages is quite fuzzy and in practice barely significant.

In summary, the IDS and the editors are to be congratulated for yet another timely and highly instructive contribution to German and European linguistics from a cross-linguistic point of view. In view of the subtitle, one may quibble that the term "convergences" has unfortunate diachronic overtones: while claims concerning (degrees of) synchronic similarity and contrast are at the heart of most papers, the diachronic dimension is in fact eschewed by all authors except Hüning. However, this should not distract from the overall achievement that this collection represents. Its sheer scope in terms of coverage of languages and structures demonstrates just how far contrastive linguistics has come since 1969. This can only be propitious for an approach to language which, despite increasing acceptance by many, is still frowned upon by some, or ignored to their disadvantage.

References

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