

Understanding
Fundamentals in Linguistics

From theory to practice

语言学基要新解

理论与实践

段成钢 王欣 陆洁 葛岚 彭彤 著

中国书籍出版社

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序 言

收集在这部著作里的文稿大多是我和几位朋友近十年以来在学习和工作中所记录和整理的。这些文稿与其说是体现了我们的成绩，还不如说是反映了我们的学术志趣。虽然数量有限，但对于已经付出的劳动，留下点点思绪和足迹还是十分必要，也是十分值得的。对此，我们不敢学古人“悔其少作”全部弃之，而是敝帚自珍，裒然成集。由于水平有限，不敢称这些文稿有多大价值，充其量只是为语言学的初学者们提供一些掌握基本概念和要领的“快捷方式”罢了。

本书既然命名为《语言学基要新解：理论与实践》，主要的新处，体现在如下两方面：第一，每部分的讨论是以问句驱动模式（Question-driven model）来进行的，即把每个讨论的话题以问句的形式提出；第二，收入了一些当代语言学最具有代表性或最为典型的内容，如语用学和语义学的区别，语言研究中的类典型论等，同时对当前国内英语教学改革和发展的一些热点和政策性问题也做了一定的探讨。相信这样的编排也许可使初入此道者开拓思路、渐达通识，更易于领会。本书意在向读者提供有关语言分析和描述以及人类

使用语言进行交际的基本概念和知识，以适应研究生、本科生和广大语言爱好者等不同层次的需要。集内的文稿基本上以类（module）相分，涵盖语言学研究的各个方面，由理论和实践两大部分构成。理论部分包括：语言学基本概念、语音相、句法相、语义相和语用相；实践部分则包括：语言和翻译的关系、语言和认知的关系（认知语言学）、语言和社会文化的关系（社会语言学）、语言教育（一语和二语习得）、语言和文学的关系（文体学）和语言以及测试的关系，其中也包含了一些类与类之间接面的讨论。此外，最后一章节是关于语言学的发展历程方面的，笔者以提纲、表格和树状图的形式简要地概述了自 Saussure 以来现代语言学的发展历程，目的是使读者对语言学各分支学科的发展有个大致的了解；本书的参考目录部分，按字母顺序排列，附于书末，读者可根据自己的研究兴趣有针对性地查找。文集最后附有两个附录：附录 1 为语言学概念词库，目的在于帮助读者了解语言学习和研究中的一些基本概念和关键词语，为进行下一步的学习、教学和研究工作铺平道路；附录 2 中收录了笔者们已发表的一些综述和实证性论文，撮取一二与此，以彰显语言学和文化学领域内长久以来对普遍论和相对论之争的讨论。

从事语言研究难，编写普及性的语言学论著和讲稿也实非易事，加之本书作者们学识浅陋，因而其中谬误及不当之处难免存在，恳请各位同仁和广大读者不吝指正。

新世纪以来，随着世界经济一体化、科学技术全球化、

技术人才国际化、信息技术产业化、文本信息数字化、学术成果网络化进程的加快，对于语言教师和语言学习者而言，挑战和机遇并存，这也为我们提供了自我发展的良好契机。时不我待，作为语言教师，我们还要继续努力地奋斗下去。我们不能灰心，不能降低自己的目标和要求。我们还要耐心地认真做学问，力图达到“学如不及，犹恐失之”（《论语·泰伯》）的境地，期望今后能有更多的收获。我们坚信，对于语言学的研究，如笃学之，慎思之，明辨之，后得之于心，必可有所收获。是为序，愿与同侪共勉。

段成钢

2009年3月30日

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理 论 篇

Theory



Module 1 : General observations

1.1 What is the definition of language

Generally speaking, language is a means of verbal communication; it is rule-governed in that speakers of the same language follow the same grammar and communicative conventions; it is instrumental in that communicating by speaking and writing is a purposeful act; it is social and conventional in that language is a social semiotic and communication can only take place effectively if all the users share a broad understanding of human interaction including such associated factors as non-verbal cues, motivation and social-cultural roles.

1.2 What are the design features of language

As to the design features of language the following aspects are included:

(1) arbitrariness: by arbitrariness we mean that the sound and image of language bears no natural relationship to its concept. Proposed by Saussure this idea has met a lot of challenges from other fields.

To put it simple to what degree is language arbitrary? On the levels of morpheme, lexis, syntax or discourse? Conventionality, a concept contrary to arbitrary, has picked up much attention in that it poses great difficulty on the language learners. Another concept “iconicity” also captures our attention in that it runs counter to arbitrary. Language, as a whole, is composed of more arbitrary units than iconic ones.

(2) linearity (generativity, creativity): the feature has its senses in two dimensions: the feature of duality is responsible for the generation of unlimited number of language units; on the other hand, Chomsky’s view on language (LAD) justifies the production of the astronomical number of language units.

(3) duality versus discreteness

(4) displacement: by this it is meant that human can use language to refer to the objects, events, ideas far away from the present state of time and place. To put it simple human’s language, unlike animal’s, is stimulus-free.

(5) learnability: Chomsky’s universal grammar makes

language learning possible for the human beings, but this does not mean to ignore the social factors involved.

1.3 What are the definition of linguistics, its task and source of data

Linguistics, generally speaking, is the scientific study of language and our knowledge about language: what this kind of knowledge is and how we acquire and use it.

Ontologically, it touches on what is the nature of this cognitive system which we identify with knowing a language (linguistic proper).

Cognitively, it is concerned with how we acquire such a system (developmental system).

Psychologically, it deals with how this system is used in speech production and comprehension (psycholinguistics).

Neurologically, it refers to how this system is represented in the brain (neurolinguistics).

Sociologically, it explores the nature of language through social interaction (sociolinguistics).

The task of linguistics is in part to discover the appropriate units of analysis at each level and to state generalizations in terms of these units that capture the regularities inherent in the

language itself.

Data of linguistics may fall into 3 categories:

Introspection: it appeals to our own intuitive competence as the data source.

Elicitation: one uses other members of the community as informants, drawing on their intuition.

Observation: programs have been devised within corpus linguistics to collect and analyze large corpora of actually occurring language, both written and spoken, and this analysis reveals facts about the frequency and co-occurrence of lexical and grammatical terms which are not intuitively accessible by introspection or elicitation.

1.4 Why study linguistics

Before the Saussurean revolution, linguistics received less attention in study for it was seen as a tool of the pursuit of other disciplines. It was the Switzerland linguist Saussure who made linguistics an independent discipline in its real sense. On the other hand, the advent of computer industry also gave a further boost to the prosperity of linguistics, for such computer-related disciplines as cognitive science, psychology and artificial intelligence attach great importance to linguistics.

1.5 The object of language study

Before giving a clear object of language study, we'd better attempt to discuss a great diversity of language definitions. Though most of them don't provide a full account to the language, yet by doing this we can have a better understanding of language nature and its function. Generally speaking, language is involved in 3 aspects: muscular, neural and social. Different outlooks would lead to different definitions of language: by a naturalistic view language is treated as some kind of biological organism with its life span; by a mentalistic view language is an inner state of mind, thus leaving a lot of issues to reveal.

The barest definition of language may go as follows: first language is rule-governed in that speakers of the same language follow the same grammar and communicative conventions; it is instrumental in that communicating by speaking and writing is a purposeful act; it is social and conventional in that language is a social semiotic and communication can only take place effectively if all the users share a broad understanding of human interaction including such associated factors as non-verbal cues, motivation and social-cultural roles.

1.6 What are the perspectives of language study

The fact that linguistic theories differ justifies different perspectives:

(1) Language as an innate human knowledge: this view derives much of its heritage from the theories of Chomsky and Slobine with the former assuming that there is an inborn model of the structure of human languages—Language Acquisition Device (LAD) that allows any child who has acquired a sufficient vocabulary to combine words into new sentences; while the latter (Slobine) maintains that there is a set of cognitive and perceptual abilities—Language Making Capacity (LMC) that are highly specialized for language learning; besides, there is an interactional position that acknowledges the biological role in the child's acquisition of language, but at the same time it would lose much of its appeal if environment has not been taken into account.

(2) Language as a fixed code: language is a code, namely, it is the sets of phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic rules that, together with the lexicon, can be used to construct any or all sentences of a language. Treating language as a fixed code assumes that a language, in virtue of its internal

structure, establishes correlation between a set of fixed verbal forms and a set of fixed meanings.

However, to look at language as a code can be a fallacy. We can raise at least two objections:

First: when a child learns a language, he eventually acquires the code. But he acquires it by observing and hearing utterances in situational and cultural contexts, not just observing the bare code.

Second: language is a fixed code, and it must be fixed before the language can be used. But the fixing of the code, namely, establishing the agreement among language users as the relations between form and meaning must be done in language too.

(3) Language as a system: treating language as a system entails 2 implications: the first is to treat it as a system of differences, and Saussearn discussion provides the best illustration in this regard; the second is the major theoretical thrust of systematic linguistics (stratification). Systemic linguistics holds the view that language has strata. In language meanings are realized as wordings, which are in turn realized by sounds or letters.

(4) Language as interaction (Bakhtin): in this vein, meaning is not a product of a self-contained and impersonal