

语言学实用教程

Linguistics:

A Practical Coursebook

■ 主编 赵忠德 赵永青



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Linguistics: A Practical Coursebook

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前言

为什么要编这本教程?

国内用英语撰写的普通语言学教程已有多种。在前人努力的基础上,我们试图探索出一条新的编写路子。在此,我们采取了新的编撰体例,即每一章以Chapter Focus开始,告知读者本章的重点。接着是Introduction,或概述或导引本章要讲解的内容。每一小节都以Lead-in的形式将问题提出,在Discussion中对问题进行阐述,在Definition中给出确切的术语定义,然后在Practice中进行练习,最后在Feedback中对练习进行讲解,并给出答案。

本书共分八章。第一章是引言部分,主要论述语言的本质、特征及其功能,介绍语言学研究中的一些主要概念,以及部分交叉学科。第二章是语音部分,主要介绍语音学和音系学的区别,元音和辅音的不同特点,音段音系学和超音段音系学中的一些基本理论。第三章针对语素和词汇方面,主要涉及语素的理论,与句法有关的屈折形态学和与构词法有关的派生形态学。第四章是句法,给出了句子的定义,解析了句子结构,分别介绍传统语法、结构主义语法、转换生成语法和系统功能语法。第五章是语义部分,解析词汇意义和句子意义,并介绍语义研究中的语用和认知等方法。第六章关于语言的使用,涉及到语用学和社会语言学的一些基本知识,包括言语行为理论、会话结构与会话原则、语言的社会变体,以及语言与文化的关系等。第七章论述了语言的变化,主要是历史语言学的部分内容,包括语音、形态、词汇、句法、语义的变化,对变化的原因做出探讨,并比较详细地介绍了语言谱系。第八章探讨了语言,特别是外语的教与学,简介了外语教学的各个流派,教学大纲的设计,教材的编撰,教学的方法和手段,课堂活动,语言测试等。

本书的特色是:

- * 实用性:讲授和自学均可。有实例,有解释,有练习,有答案。既可用于本科教学,又可用于考研复习。对语言学习有启发性和指导性。
- * 实践性:以实例引出主题,以讨论进行阐释,以练习进行巩固,以反馈提供检查。
- * 学术性:重点难点突出,定义权威可靠。以英语例子为主,但不乏其他语言实例。
- * 趣味性:不拘泥于理论,提供常见实例加以分析。

- * 系统性：以普通语言学本身的理论为主，加上语言的共时变异和历时演变，以及语言的教与学。理论系统，分类清晰。
- * 适用性：适合学生的实际接受能力，避免晦涩理论，力争做到通俗易懂，循序渐进，深入浅出。

本书第一章和第五章由赵永青编写，第二章和第七章由赵忠德编写，第三章由卢晓娟编写，第四章由李春姬编写，第六章由刘风光编写，第八章由常俊跃编写。最后由赵忠德统稿，赵永青校对。

衷心感谢高等教育出版社的同志们对本书的出版所做的一切努力。

由于编者水平有限，书中一定存在瑕疵和疏误，敬请读者和同仁不吝赐教。

编者
2009年1月

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Introduction

Language, as quite a few people would define it, is the "tool" for communication. And linguistics is the study of it.

Since linguistics became one of the core courses for English majors in China in the National Curriculum, a lot of students have been having a "hard time" when they step into the linguistics classroom. You, the reader in our mind, perhaps is frowning now at the page. You might think "I am quite happy with what I can do with my mother tongue, the Chinese language, sort of, some degree, the English language now" and wonder why we bother to study, "scientifically and systematically," a tool? We learn to use a tool, but not to study a tool.

As students who learn the English language, you have already struggled hard for years to grasp the language. So do you feel learning to use this "tool" is as easy as learning to use some other kind of tool? No, you really think that language is like an object, such as a saw, or a more complicated tool, in function, a car, which you can use or reuse it without necessarily knowing its workings and the making of it.

Language is a vehicle, but "the vehicle for the expression or exchange of all sorts of

Language and Linguistics

Chapter Focus

In this chapter, we are going to focus on:

- * The nature and functions of language
- * Linguistics by definition
- * Some important distinctions in linguistic analysis
- * The interdisciplinary studies of linguistics

Introduction

Language, as quite a few people would define it, is the “tool” for communication. And **linguistics** is the study of it.

Since linguistics became one of the core courses for English majors in China on the National Curriculum, a lot of students have been having a “hard time” when they step into the linguistics classroom. You, the reader in our mind, perhaps is frowning now at the page. You might think “I am quite happy with what I can do with my mother tongue, the Chinese language, and to some degree the English language now” and wonder why we bother to study, “scientifically and systematically”, a tool?! “We learn to use a tool, but not to study a tool!”

As students who learn the English language, you have already struggled hard for years to grasp this language. But do you feel learning to use this “tool” is as easy as learning to use some other kind of tools? Do you really think that language is like an object, such as a saw, or a more complicated “tool” in function, a car, which you can use or drive it without necessarily knowing the workings and the makings of it?

Language is a vehicle, but “the vehicle for the expression or exchange of thoughts,

concepts, knowledge, and information as well as the fixing and transmission of experience and knowledge. It is based on cognitive processes, subject to societal factors and subject to historical change and development." Bussmann (1996) gives this definition in *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*. What he means is that language is a carrier for thoughts and information in communication, but more importantly, it is the means with which we understand human experience and knowledge. If you don't understand this idea, here is an example to illustrate it. Suppose you don't understand the term *linguistics*, which at this present stage we are quite certain about. You check it in a dictionary and get the definition. But you still don't quite understand it until you finish the whole book. The moral is that behind this word is the whole body of knowledge, the study of language. The **word** is a gate through which you get into the realm of linguistics. Your perfect knowledge of the term builds upon your perfect knowledge of the subject. So, it is wiser not to undermine the significance of your major, the learning of a language!

If you think the above argument is valid, we will now turn to the curious "object" of our study, **Language** and briefly look at the nature of it.

1.1 Language and the Nature of Language

Lead-in

Decide whether each of the following words will go into the definition of language. Make a tick (✓) in the bracket next to the word if you think it will, a cross (×) if you think it won't and a question mark (?) if you are not sure.

representation	()	animal	()	system	()
communication	()	spoken	()	symbol	()
structure	()	tool	()	knowledge	()
change	()	human	()	learn	()
thought	()	written	()	arbitrary	()

Discussion

The definition for human language varies from time to time and from school to school as our views of language change throughout history. However, some agreed-upon essential elements remain unchanged. You are encouraged to look it up in different dictionaries and encyclopaedias of linguistics so that you can see the similarities and differences. At present

and for convenience sake, we quote one here from *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics*: “(Language is) any system of human communication which consists of the structured arrangement of sounds (or their written representation) into larger units, e.g. MORPHEMEs, WORDs, SENTENCEs, UTTERANCEs” (Richards et al., 1992: 245).

This definition captures the following major features of language:

Language is systematic and human specific. Anything that can be defined as a system consists of parts or components which are combined by rules to work together. Human language is composed of two systems: the sound and the meaning. In English single sound such as [i], [n], [p], [u] and [t] usually does not make sense to speakers of English, but when put together, in a sequence like [input] and its written representation *input* will mean something to us. However, a sequence of sounds such as [tnipu] and a stretch of letters such as *tnipu* will not mean anything to us because rules of combination don't allow us to do so. The combination rules make it possible that certain sounds, syllables, letters, words and phrases can go together to make meaningful sentences. Language is structured.

This nature of language is called **duality**. By duality we mean that each language is organized at two levels or layers. One is sound and the other is meaning. The advantage of this division is that we can use a limited number of sounds to produce an unlimited number of sound combinations with distinctive meanings. For example, in the language of English we use around 48 (44 according to some linguists) sounds to produce almost indefinite number of sound combinations. This feature is very economical for the system of language.

Duality is said to be human specific, for animals are said to communicate at only one level. But when we say language is human specific we mean more than that. There are some special characteristics which distinguish human language from animal “language.” For instance, we can talk about something in the past or future, or make reference to someone or something absent at the time of speaking. Also, we can create and comprehend an indefinite number of sentences that we have never heard before. Human language is said to have more advantages than animal “language” in many aspects.

Another nature of language we can deduce from the definition is that language is primarily vocal. Think of how much time ordinary people speak and how much time they write to communicate everyday! Sound is the primary medium of language and written forms are representations of sounds and meanings.

Language is also symbolic and arbitrary as the word *representation* in the definition shows. Why is the sign [p] used by us to represent the sound we utter that way? Why is

the sequence of the sounds [input] represented by *input* but not other ways? Why does *input*, but not any other stretch of letters, stand for the meaning of *putting in*? They just happened to be so when language came into being and people have just followed the convention afterwards. In most of the cases, there is no explanation to these questions although there seems to have some reasons for the existence of onomatopoeic words. Language, in general, is a set of arbitrary and symbolic representations.

The word *communication* in the definition indicates what language is for. As the world is undergoing a process of globalization, people communicate with each other more frequently than ever before. We talk to each other at home, at school and at work, when we meet friends and strangers, shop for groceries, travel and do businesses. We write letters and emails, and read magazines and newspapers. We talk over phones, send faxes, listen to the radio, and watch TV programs and films. We talk and are talked to everyday. Communication makes up a large part of our lives. It is hard to imagine what our lives would be like if language never existed.

Practice

What feature(s) of language does each of the following show?

- ① sub + mit = submit, work + man + ship = workmanship
- ② 我感冒了。(Chinese)
- ③ 我感冒了。= I have a cold / I caught a cold. (English)
= Hargab baa ku haya. (Somali)
= Tá slaghdán ort. (Irish)
= 나는 감기에 걸렸다. (Korean)
- ④ 小虎: 我感冒了。
妈妈: 别装了, 快起来, 上学去!

Feedback

- ①—This is an example of language components (morphemes) being combined by rules to form larger units of language (words).
- ②—This is a case of written representation of sounds in Chinese. Also, the relationship between forms of written representation and sounds, and that between concept and sound/written representation is arbitrary and maybe symbolic (in the example of the Chinese character “冒”).

- ③ — Different languages have different forms of sound and written representations. This is cultural specific and cultural transmissible.
- ④ — Language is used in communication. Here “我感冒了” is not interpreted by the mother as a report of someone’s health condition in a real communicative situation. Of course there are many cases in which “我感冒了” can be interpreted in its literal meaning in communication, but more often than not something more than the literal meaning is communicated through language.

1.2 Functions of Language

Lead-in

Try to imagine situations in which the following may occur. Discuss with your classmates the possible functions (such as to report an event, to express emotion, etc.) that these sentences perform.

- (1) You fit into me, like a hook in an eye — a fish hook, and an open eye.
- (2) Have we met before?
- (3) Marilyn Monroe is said to have been killed by Kennedy’s political associates.
- (4) Can’t you see that the definition is below line 3?
- (5) Q: How do you get four elephants into a Volkswagen?
A: Two in the front and two in the back!

Discussion

There have been a lot of discussions on the functions of language by scholars such as Searle (1969), Halliday (1970), Leech (1983) and Finch (1998). Although they view those functions from different disciplines of study and thus have categorized in different ways, most certainly there are many functions that language can fulfill. However, depending on the approach to this issue the number of functions and their names might vary. For simplicity’s sake (hopefully not oversimplified), we classify them into categories from three perspectives: the **conceptual**, the **interpersonal** and the **metalingual**.

- The conceptual category covers the following functions of language labeled as they were originally mentioned in various kinds of linguistic literatures. They are **referential** (Jakobson, 1960), **ideational** (further divided into **experiential** and **logical**) (Halliday, 1970, 1994), **recording**, **identifying**, and **reasoning** (Finch, 1998) and they

are sometimes called **informative** and **cognitive** by others as well. This category refers to the function that language speakers use to convey information, record and describe life experiences, identify objects and events in the world, think and reason, and in a word, to conceptualize processes involved in our mental activities and to represent the world. This function, as it is often said, accounts for the majority part of the everyday communication activities.

- The second category coincides with Halliday's interpersonal function by name, but it umbrellas, on a larger scale, the following function labels having appeared in other sources mentioned above: they are **phatic**, **emotive**, **expressive**, **directive**, **conative**, **physiological**, **ceremonial**, **performative**, and **social**. The reason for us to put them together is that they indicate the social function of language. Language does not just communicate "pure" information, and in fact information about people and events is inevitably described and presented with speaker's emotions, attitudes, and personal judgments of the truthfulness of the event reported. Even swear words contain elements of emotional information about the speaker, though sometimes he/she may not intentionally say that to anybody else at the time of speaking.

Interpersonal function also means that language enables speakers to do things, such as to exchange greetings, to make small talk, requests, apologies and promises, to give commands and orders, and even to perform ceremonies. What's more, while people do things with language, they simultaneously use language to create certain feelings, exercise influence on each other, establish and maintain relationships among people in society. This can be seen, for example, from the choices available to people when making a request of borrowing money:

- (1) I wonder if I could borrow some money from you.
- (2) Would you mind if I borrow some money from you?
- (3) Could you lend me some money, please?
- (4) Lend me some money, please.
- (5) Lend me a few bucks, will you?

Just think what you would say to your friend and what you would say to your parents if you want to do the same thing! Do you think you simply can use the same way? This simple example shows that in real life situations, people make appropriate choice of linguistic expressions on the basis of their estimated roles in the relationship. Language, in a sense, defines a society and divides people into different social groups.

- * The metalingual function directs us to view the function within the language itself. Halliday's **textual** and Jakobson's **poetic** and **metalingual functions** fall into this

category because all of the three refer to the ability of talking about language with a metalanguage, and of manipulating language to fulfill other functions of language. We find there are certain devices which enable us to, for instance, refer to what has been discussed previously, such as in English language we have *this, that, the previous chapter, last paragraph*, etc. and therefore we are able to hang the text together. **Poetic** and **metalingual** functions labeled by Jakobson, on the other hand, enable us to define language and play with language for joy. Riddles like “紫藤开紫花，紫花结紫瓜，紫瓜里面有芝麻” and example (5) in the Lead-in part would be good enough to illustrate this point.

Definition

FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE is the purpose for which a language expression is used. Language functions are often described as categories of behaviors, e.g. giving information, making requests or complaints, referring back and forth in a discourse, etc. (Richards et al., 1998: 185).

Practice

- ① Go back to the Lead-in part and decide the main function that each of the sentences plays.
- ② Are there any other possible intentions that the speakers may have when actually saying them? If there are, what could these intentions be?

Feedback

- ①—In general, language is multi-functional at the same time. We cannot say that one piece of language only plays one function at one time. There is always a problem of correspondence between language form and language function. A simple road sign such as “Pedestrians cross here” can be interpreted both as a direction to pedestrians and a warning to drivers. So are all the examples listed in the Lead-in part. Sentence (1) is experiential (describing the relationship between “you and I”) and expressive (expressing emotion). Sentence (2) is more on the identifying side and (3) has more of the informative nature. Sentence (4) is metalingual and identifying, and sentence (5) is more metalingual by nature.
- ②—There are several possibilities. For instance, sentence (2) is always used by people to start a talk with a stranger rather than identify someone or describe some past

experience, even though sometimes the speaker clearly knows he/she has never met the person talked to. The discussion about the functions of language in this section is not concerned with any particular context of language use. We have discussed them in general terms and in an abstract sense. When a piece of language is used in communication, its function is determined totally by the context. We actually cannot pin down the functions played by one piece of language out of a context.

1.3 Linguistics by Definition

Lead-in

What do you think of the statements about *linguistics* below? Do you share with these ideas?

- (1) Linguistics studies the history of languages.
- (2) Linguistics teaches people how to pronounce words and how to speak and write grammatically in a language.
- (3) Linguistics is all about rules and principles of languages.
- (4) The knowledge of linguistics enables people to approach the study of a foreign language more confidently and methodically.
- (5) Linguistics is theoretical by nature and only useful for those who want to get into postgraduate programs.

Discussion

Linguistics is not merely concerned with the study of the history of a language or languages but it is primarily the study of the present day language phenomena. Linguistics does not teach people the pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary of a certain language, but it describes the sound, the grammatical and the meaning systems of a language so that linguists can explain how language functions as a system of human communication. Linguistics is not a set of rules or theories of language prescribed and imposed on language speakers, but it is a scientific and systematic account of empirical investigations of the norms to which the members of a language community actually conform.

Linguistics is the scientific and systematic study of language. Its major areas of investigation covers:

- * The sound systems of language, Phonetics and Phonology