

GUIDE TO LINGUISTIC STUDY

语言学 学习指南

主编 王晋军

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云南大学出版社

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藏书

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前 言

语言学理论是普通高校语言学专业学生需要掌握的重要知识。语言学课程现已成为了专攻语言学方向学生的必修课程。由于语言学涉及深奥而抽象的理论和概念,知识覆盖面广,专业术语较多,对于大多数学生来说,语言学是比较枯燥难学的一门学问。然而,语言学又是许多高校硕士研究生入学考试的必考科目。

本书基于《英语专业本科教学大纲》中关于英语语言学课程的规定和要求,编写过程中以杨信彰教授主编的《语言学概论》和其他语言学教材为主要参考资料,参阅了国内主要外语院校英语专业研究生入学考试试题。为了帮助学生更好地掌握语言学知识,理解语言学的概念和理论,本书包含了10章,另附国内外有关语言学的网站及英汉对照术语表。

第1章至第9章的内容覆盖了语言学的理论概述、语音学和音位学、词形学、句法学、语义学、语用学与语篇分析、语言与社会文化、语言习得和思维以及语言学与语言教学。第10章主要介绍知名语言学家及主要语言学流派,以拓展学生的视野。每一章的内容包括要点、主要术语、相关练习及练习答案。要点部分以问答的形式涉及了一些基本理论和概念;主要术语部分以简洁的语言列出了该章的主要术语;相关联系部分紧扣每一章的内容,以配合学生理解和掌握相关知识。练习答案部分提供了练习题的参考答案。本书也附上了一些国内外有关语言学的网站,方便学生上网查找信息和资料收集。英汉对照术语表集中了对学生

来说可能会成为生词的词语或术语。

本书适合英语专业学生及自学者，特别对考研的学生尤其有帮助，因为该书具有针对性和实用性，为学生在学习及复习过程中提供便利。

王晋军负责全书的策划、组织、统稿和审稿，并编写了第1、4、5、6章；李佳负责第2、3、7、8、9章。洪登光负责全书要点部分的编写，并编辑了有关语言学的主要网站。王晋军指导的3位研究生也承担了一部分的编写任务：颜滢编写了第10章，以及第7至第9章的术语部分；赵建民负责英汉对照术语表的编写；吕楠负责第1章至第6章的术语编写。

本书是云南大学精品课程“语言学概论”的成果之一，同时也是建设云南省特色专业——云南大学英语专业的成果之一。

由于编者的学识水平有限，如书中出现纰漏之处，恳请读者批评指正。

王晋军

2009年10月

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Chapter One

Language and Linguistics

1 Key Points

1.1 What is the nature of language?

The nature of language is an essential question we have to encounter when we start our journey in linguistics. Generally speaking, there are six aspects concerning the nature of language, that is, language is systemic; language is symbolic; language is arbitrary; language is primarily vocal; language is human specific and language is used for communication. Among the six aspects, more attention has to be paid to the first three as far as the interpretation to them is concerned.

The fact that people can learn and use a language consistently in daily verbal communication shows that language is systemic. Basically, each human language is organized into two basic systems: a system of sounds and a system of meanings. Such character is called the duality of language.

We say language is symbolic, in the sense that there is no or little connection between the sounds that people use and the objects to which these sounds refer. Words are associated with objects, actions and ideas by social convention.

The linguistic arbitrariness proposed by F. de Saussure means that

the forms of linguistic signs bear no natural resemblance to their meanings and the link between them is a matter of convention, and conventions differ radically across languages.

Concerning the nature that language is primarily vocal, there are many supporting reasons. For example, the systems of writing are demonstrably based upon units of spoken language.

The claim that language is human specific implies that there are certain characteristics of human language that are not found in the communication systems of any other species.

It is easy for us to know that language is used for communication as language is the result of our communication.

1.2 What are the general functions of language?

Language functions in our society as a principal means of communication. The general functions refer to the particular individual uses of language. The general functions are listed as follows:

1) Physiological function, also called the emotive or expressive function of language can help people get rid of nervous or physical energy.

2) Phatic function refers to the language function of creating or maintaining social relationship between speakers.

3) Recording function allows us to record things we wish to remember.

4) Identifying function allows us to identify with precision and enormous array of objects and events.

5) Reasoning function shows that language is a tool of thought.

6) Communicating function means that language is a means of communicating ideas and facts.

7) Pleasure function shows that language allows us to derive

pleasure from it.

1.3 How can we classify language families?

The term “the language family” is used to account for the historical relationships between languages. Usually, there are two main ways of classifying languages: the genetic (or genealogical) classification and the typological classification. Genetic classification is a historical classification, based on the assumption that languages have diverged from a common ancestor. Comparatively, typological classification is based on a comparison of the formal similarities which exist between languages.

1.4 Try to understand the following pairs of linguistic concepts.

(1) Langue and parole

The distinction between langue and parole was proposed by Saussure in his *Course in General Linguistics*. Langue is the system of rules common to speakers of a particular language. It is a convenient principle of linguistics or an essential principle of language. Parole is the particular uses of this system, or selections from this system. It is the use of language in utterances or the particular actualities (facts) of individual utterance.

(2) Descriptive and prescriptive approaches

Descriptive and prescriptive approaches are two ways to deal with language. Descriptive approach claims that linguists' first task is to describe the way people actually speak and write their language, not to prescribe how they ought to speak and write. On the contrary, prescriptive study is to maintain some absolute standard of correctness. Any deviations from the rules are said to be incorrect or non-standard. However, it is believed that linguistics is descriptive, not prescriptive.

(3) Synchronic study and diachronic study

In linguistic study, we can either look at a grammar at one particular point of time, or we can study its development over a number of years. The synchronic study refers to the description of a particular state of a language at a single point of time. The diachronic study refers to the description of the historical development of a language. Linguistic study in the 19th century was primarily concerned with the diachronic description. However, from the 20th century synchronic study gradually has been dominant in linguistic study.

(4) Syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations

In doing linguistic inquiry a linguist is concerned with two major types of relationship, that is, syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations. Paradigmatic relation refers to the relation between an individual unit and others that can replace it in a given sequence. It is also the relation of substitution. Syntagmatic relation refers to the relations between units which combine to form sequences.

(5) Competence and performance

The two concepts were proposed by American linguist N. Chomsky. To him, competence refers to the knowledge that native speakers have of their language as system of abstract formal relations. Performance refers to the infinite varied individual acts of verbal behavior with their irregularities, inconsistencies and errors.

Chomsky's distinction corresponds in some degree to Saussure's langue and parole. However, there is some difference between langue and competence.

(6) Functionalism and formalism

Functionalism and formalism are two major trends in the field of linguistics. The formalism insists on a sharp division between a syn-

chrony and diachrony and between competence and performance. To the classic formalist, language is a synchronically closed system which must be explained from within. On the contrary, the functional approach centers on linguistic explanation based on language's function in a larger context.

2 Important Terms

1) Linguistics is defined as the scientific study of language or the science of language. It is the branch of cognitive science concerned with language. The linguistic studies include sound, structure, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, etc., interfacing with psychology, neurology, sociology, anthropology, and physics, etc..

2) Duality, one of the design features of language, refers to the property of having two levels of structures. The units of the primary level are composed of elements of the secondary level. Each level has its own principles of organization. For example, sounds which are meaningless form the meaningful words.

3) Arbitrariness is the property, first discussed by F. de Saussure, that the forms of linguistic signs bear no natural relationship to their meanings. The relationship between them is a matter of convention. As Saussure argued, the link unifying the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. Arbitrariness is the result of the need to express and code a wide range of meanings. Actually, arbitrariness can be found in different levels of language.

4) Metafunction is a function which is capable of describing one or more other functions.

5) Ideational function is the content function of language and allows us to conceptualize the world for our own benefit and that of

others. It is through this function the language encodes the cultural experience and the speaker encodes his or her own individual experience of the world.

6) Interpersonal function is the participatory function of language. It is concerned with the interaction between speaker and addressee, the grammatical resources or enacting social roles in general and speech roles in particular.

7) Textual function is the function of using language to bring text into being. It is concerned with the creation of text with presentation of ideational and interpersonal meanings as information that can be shared by speaker and listener. This function relates our abilities to construct texts out of our utterances and writings, and expresses the relation of language to the verbal and nonverbal situational environment.

8) *Langue* is the term proposed by Saussure which means the linguistic competence of the speaker. It is the shared social code acquired by all members of a community and also the abstract system including the underlying sets of linguistic structures, patterns, principles or unstated rules, based on which the speakers can perform their speech. It is neither behavioral nor observable, but conceptual.

9) *Parole* refers to the actual phenomena or data of linguistics, i. e. , the particular actualities of individual utterances. It varies enormously and represents the executive side of language.

10) Competence, according to Chomsky, refers to a language user's underlying knowledge about the system of rules. It is not a socially shared generality but a genetic endowment.

11) Performance is the actual use of language in concrete situations. It is about what we do when we speak or listen, that is, the in-

finite varied individual acts of verbal behavior with their irregularities, inconsistencies, and errors.

12) Prescriptive means the preference of one variety of language to the others. Its aim is to teach people how to speak, read and write a particular language. It heavily relies on rules of grammar and prescribes rules of what is correct. To prescriptivists, any deviations from the absolute standard of correctness are prevented.

13) Descriptive means that the linguists tend to objectively describe the ways people actually speak and write their language rather than correct them. Descriptivists record the data observed. They are interested in what is said, not what they think ought to be said.

14) Synchronic study refers to the description of a particular state of a language at a single point of time. It takes a fixed instant as its point of observation. Saussure proposed such an alternative approach, namely, a language can and should also be studied at a particular point in time. He paid attention to how the different parts of the language hang together and interact.

15) Diachronic study refers to the description of a language through the course of its history. It takes a historical view as its basis of study. Linguistic study in the 19th century was primarily concerned with the diachronic description, and the dominant approach to any scientific study of language was historical.

16) Syntagmatic relation refers to the relation between one item and others in a sequence, or between elements which are all present.

17) Paradigmatic relation is a relation holding between elements replaceable with each other at a particular place in a structure, or between one element present and the others absent.

18) Competence is a term proposed by N. Chomsky in the 1960s

which is used for a speaker's knowledge of his language or the knowledge that native speakers have of their language as system of abstract formal relations.

19) Performance is defined by Chomsky in the 1960s as the actual use of language in concrete situations.

20) Semiotics is a general science of signs, of which linguistics is a part, according to many scholars in the 20th century. Thus words and morphemes are signs, specifically linguistic signs. The notion is due especially to Peirce and Saussure. Semiotics is the term in the Peircean tradition and it is also called semiology in Saussure's tradition.

21) Anthropological linguistics is the study of language variation and use in relation to the cultural patterns and beliefs of human race. It often utilizes the theories as methods of anthropology. Anthropological linguists associate the ways of speaking of definite groups with the corresponding cultural factors to get the full meaning of the message they convey.

22) Psycholinguistics studies how humans learn language and the relationship of linguistic behavior and the psychological process in producing and understanding language. It involves the study of speech perception, memory, attention, and other processes in language use.

23) Sociolinguistics studies the interaction between language and the structure and functioning of society. Sociolinguistics takes into account such factors as the social backgrounds of both the speaker and the addressee, the relationship between speaker and addressee, the context, and manner of the interaction.

24) Neurolinguistics is the study of the neurological basis of lan-

guage development and use in human beings. Specifically, it examines the brain's control over the processes of speech and understanding.

25) Applied linguistics is used with reference to the application of linguistic theories and methods to other fields. More often, we use applied linguistics to refer to the application of linguistic theories, methods, and findings to the study of language learning and teaching. It is concerned with a wide range of issues, such as second language acquisition, teaching methodology, language testing, curriculum and syllabus design, and etc. .

26) Corpus linguistics deals with the principles and practice of using corpora in language study. A corpus means a collection of linguistic data, either compiled as written texts or as a transcription of recorded speech. The establishment of a corpus enables the linguist to verify a hypothesis about language.

27) Discourse Analysis, first used by Harris in the 1950s, is much concerned with the study of relationship between language and context in which language is used. It studies how sentences in spoken or written language form larger meaningful units, such as paragraphs, conversations, interviews, and so on. Discourse or text refers to all linguistic units with a definable communicative function, spoken or written. Since discourse involves the use of language, the communication of meaning, and social context, discourse analysis becomes an interdisciplinary enterprise.

28) Systemic functional grammar, proposed by M. A. K. Halliday on the basis of Firthian ideas, refers to a synthesis of concepts that aims at being theoretically powerful and at the same time useful to apply in the description of natural languages. In Halliday's view, language is a social

semiotic and text has close relation to context. It has two inseparable components: systemic grammar and functional grammar. Systemic grammar aims to explain the internal relations in language as a system network; functional grammar aims to reveal that language is a means of social interaction.

3 Exercises

I. Decide whether the following statements are true or false.

1. Each human language is organized into three basic systems: a system of sounds, a system of meaning and a system of grammar.
()

2. In modern linguistics, a synchronic approach seems to enjoy priority over a diachronic one. ()

3. In the phrase "*a bottle of milk*", the substitutes for "*bottle*" like "*pint*", "*cup*", and "*glass*" form paradigmatic relations. ()

4. Language is prescriptive, not descriptive. ()

5. In the 19th century linguistic study was primarily concerned with synchronic description. ()

6. Typological classification of languages is based on the assumption that languages have diverged from a common ancestor. ()

7. Linguistic arbitrariness can be found only at the lexical level of a language. ()

8. The functional approach to language centers on linguistic explanation based on language's function in a larger context, while the formalist approach insists on a sharper division between synchrony and diachrony and between competence and performance. ()

9. When a child is acquiring grammatical rules, s/he is also learning rules of the appropriate social use of the language. ()