

语言学教程

高等教育应用型本科重点专业精品规划教材（外语类）

A Course in Linguistics

丛书总主编 冯光华

罗莉 李杨 张馨引 主编



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前 言

《语言学教程》是面向民办独立学校英语专业本科生使用的教材。语言学作为大学本科阶段英语专业必修课程受到各高校的广泛重视。高校对语言学这门课程及相关教育的观念发生了巨大变化,对英语专业语言学课程的教学时数、内容、手段和方法,教材编写与使用等都提出了更高的要求。随着时代的发展,语言学这门学科在国外得到了与时俱进的发展,而国内对于语言学的认识也亟待更新;此外,在英语专业研究生入学考试中,语言学也是一门必考科目。入学后,英语语言学也是英语专业研究生所学课程,而语言学理论和概念往往抽象难懂,内容较多,不少学生和考生不能轻易地掌握各章节的所有重点、难点,所以编写一本架构新颖、内容简单翔实,特别是配套练习全面、解答详细、并附有各高校最新考研真题的英语语言学教程,成了一项十分重要的任务。鉴于此,为满足广大学生和参加英语专业研究生入学考试的考生需要,我们在广泛征求了各方意见后,精心编写了本书。本书编写主要参考了 Victoria Fromkin 所著的 *An Introduction to Language*, 还参考了戴炜栋、何兆熊主编的《新编简明英语语言学教程》和胡壮麟主编的《语言学教程》(修订版)等国内外学者编写的著名教程。

《语言学教程》旨在帮助学生掌握现代语言学的基本概念、基本原理、基本方法,引发学生对语言本质、语言学习过程、语言教学原理的深入思考,培养初步的语言研究能力。为了帮助学生更好地学习“语言学”这门专业课,我们有针对性地编著了一套国内外教材配套的复习资料,主要包括章节内容讲解、考试重难点、章节全方位总结、章节知识内部关系图解和相关配套练习。本书具有以下 5 个特色。

1. 章节讲解脉络清晰: 本书结合国内外各主流教材对每章节的重难点内容进行深入浅出的讲解,用案例进行引导,增强了可读性。
2. 突显考试重难点: 单独列出章节重难点术语,强化对重难点知识的理解,方便学生查找记忆。
3. 章节全方位总结: 在英语讲解后,以中文形式对每章节内容进行总结,方便学生理解每一章节的重点内容。
4. 图表结合: 以图表形式展现每章节知识结构图,强化学生理解,使重难点一目了然。
5. 精选考研真题,补充难点习题: 精选名校近几年常考题型并提供详细的解答。所选习题结合国际最新视角进行编排与解答。

本书的编写结构如下: 全书按照从微观到宏观的语言学研究顺序进行编排,总共包括十二个章节,内容涵盖语言简介、语音学、形态学、语义学、句法学、语篇学、语用学、认知语言学、社会语言学、二语习得及语言学流派。每章编写结构包括背景介绍、知识讲解、中英文小结、思考问题、考研真题及详解、考研重难点汇总、各知识点关系

图、推荐读物、参考文献，第十二章的考研模拟试题及详解。不论是对学生还是考研的考生都更有针对性。

本教材由武汉工程科技学院外国语学院院长冯光华教授牵头，并带领本校英语专业优秀的中青年骨干教师共同编写。参加编写人员包括：罗莉、李杨、张馨引、王电兴、胡玲、蔡喆、严红烨、张慧，黄莉。

语言学具有独特的发展规律，一些语言学原理和概念有着不同的理解与诠释方式，我们在借鉴国内外同类教材和相关著作的经验和优点的同时，也力图在视角、结构、体系、概念解释、考研题目选择和问题设计以及解答等方面都能体现新的时代特点。但是由于时间仓促、部分资料难寻、编者学术水平有限，书中难免有不足之处，敬请广大师生和学者批评指正。

目 录

| | |
|---|-----|
| CHAPTER 1 Introduction of Language | 1 |
| Introduction | 2 |
| 1.1 What is language?..... | 2 |
| 1.2 Knowledge of language..... | 4 |
| 1.3 Functions of language | 9 |
| 1.4 What is linguistics?..... | 12 |
| 本章节考试重难点串讲 | 17 |
| CHAPTER 2 Phonetics and Phonology..... | 31 |
| Introduction | 32 |
| 2.1 Speech segments..... | 32 |
| 2.2 English consonants | 34 |
| 2.3 Vowels in English | 36 |
| 2.4 Suprasegmentals | 41 |
| 2.5 Intonation..... | 44 |
| 本章节考试重难点串讲 | 46 |
| Further reading | 55 |
| CHAPTER 3 Morphology | 59 |
| Introduction | 60 |
| 3.1 A brief introduction of morphology..... | 60 |
| 3.2 The words of language | 61 |
| 3.3 Morpheme, morph and allomorph..... | 62 |
| 3.4 The classification of morpheme | 63 |
| 3.5 Word formation processes | 70 |
| 本章节考试重难点串讲 | 76 |
| CHAPTER 4 Semantics..... | 85 |
| Introduction | 86 |
| 4.1 What is semantics? | 86 |
| 4.2 Approaches to meaning | 86 |
| 4.3 Sense and reference | 88 |
| 4.4 Word meaning..... | 89 |
| 4.5 Sentence meaning..... | 97 |
| 4.6 Ambiguity..... | 99 |
| 4.7 Semantic analysis | 100 |
| CHAPTER 5 English syntax..... | 115 |
| Introduction | 116 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 5.1 Syntactical structures..... | 116 |
| 5.2 Grammatical construction and its constituents | 120 |
| 5.3 Clauses, sentences, and clause functions sentence..... | 124 |
| 5.4 Syntactic function..... | 127 |
| 5.5 Summary | 129 |
| 本章节考试重难点串讲..... | 129 |
| CHAPTER 6 Discourse | 136 |
| Introduction | 137 |
| 6.1 Types of text | 138 |
| 6.2 Cohesion..... | 140 |
| 6.3 Coherence..... | 145 |
| 本章节考试重难点串讲..... | 148 |
| CHAPTER 7 Language in Use | 153 |
| Introduction | 154 |
| 7.1 Grammatical meaning vs. pragmatic meaning | 154 |
| 7.2 Sentence vs. utterance | 155 |
| 7.3 Speech act theory..... | 155 |
| 7.4. The cooperative principle..... | 157 |
| 本章节考试重难点串讲..... | 161 |
| CHAPTER 8 Language and Cognition..... | 168 |
| 8.1 What is cognition?..... | 169 |
| 8.2 What is psycholinguistics? | 169 |
| 8.3 What is cognitive linguistics?..... | 173 |
| 本章节考试重难点串讲..... | 176 |
| CHAPTER 9 The Social Context of English..... | 179 |
| Introduction | 180 |
| 9.1 Language varieties | 181 |
| 9.2 Dialect, style and register | 183 |
| 9.3 Diaglossia | 184 |
| 9.4 Code-switching..... | 186 |
| 9.5 Pidgins | 187 |
| 9.6 Creoles..... | 190 |
| 9.7 Gender | 194 |
| 本章节考试重难点串讲..... | 194 |
| CHAPTER 10 Second Language Acquisition | 201 |
| Introduction | 202 |
| 10.1 Theories about child language acquisition | 202 |
| 10.2 Introduction to second language acquisition..... | 204 |
| 10.3 The relationship between first language acquisition and second language acquisition..... | 205 |
| 10.4 Contrastive analysis..... | 206 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 10.5 Error analysis..... | 206 |
| 10.6 Second language learning models and input hypothesis | 207 |
| 10.7 Second language acquisition and its pedagogical implications..... | 208 |
| 本章节考试重难点串讲..... | 208 |
| CHAPTER 11 Theories and Schools of Modern Linguistics | 215 |
| Introduction | 216 |
| 11.1 Ferdinand de Saussure | 216 |
| 11.2The Prague School..... | 218 |
| 11.3 The London School | 222 |
| 11.4 American structuralism..... | 229 |
| 11.5 Transformational Generative (TG) grammar | 233 |
| 本章节考试重难点串讲..... | 238 |
| CHAPTER 12 Test..... | 248 |

CHAPTER 1 Introduction of Language

Learning Objectives

After completing this unit, you will be able to do the following:

- ✓ have the general idea about definition and the knowledge of language
- ✓ recognize the functions of language
- ✓ analyze branches of linguistics study
- ✓ master the important distinctions in linguistics
- ✓ have the general idea about grammar of language

Linguistic Vocabulary

In this chapter, you will learn the meanings of the terms listed below.

- the definition of language
- the origin of language
- design features of language
- functions of language
- main branches of linguistics
- the definition of linguistics
- important distinctions in linguistics

Chapter Outline

The following are the main sections in this chapter:

Introduction

1.1 What is language?

1.2 Knowledge of language

1.3 Functions of language

1.4 What is linguistics?

Academic Vocabulary

The listed below are some words appearing in this chapter that you should make part of your vocabulary.

- signify
- neurophysiological
- voluntarily produced

Introduction

This chapter continues to be a concise introduction to the general study of language. It contains many “hooks” for engaging students in language study, including the fundamental contents, such as the definition of language, the origin of language, design features of language, functions of language, main branches of linguistics and important distinctions in linguistics; the universal properties of languages including signed languages of the deaf; a consideration of animal “languages”; and the occasional silliness of self-appointed mavens of “good” grammar who beg us not to carelessly split infinitives and who find sentence-ending with prepositions an abomination not to be put up with. This chapter provides an overview of how linguists approach the study of language. It describes language as one of many different systems of communication, a system that is unique to human beings and different from, for instance, the systems of communication that animals employ. Language exists in three modes: speech, writing, and signs (the last of which are used by people who are deaf). Although all languages (with the exception of sign languages) exist in spoken form, only some have written forms. To study language, linguists focus on two levels of description: pragmatics, the study of how context (both social and linguistic) affects language use, including competence and performance, etc., and grammar, the description of how humans form linguistic structures, from the level of sound up to the level of sentence, including traditional grammar and modern grammar, micro linguistics and macro linguistics, etc.

Language is many a thing—a system of communication, a medium for thought, a vehicle for literary expression, a social institution, a matter for political controversy, a catalyst for nation building. All human beings normally speak at least one language and it is hard to imagine much significant social, intellectual, or artistic activity taking place in its absence. Each of us, then, has a stake in understanding something about the nature and use of language. This chapter also provides a basic introduction to linguistics, the discipline that studies these matters.

1.1 What is language?

Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication. Given the huge range of forms of communication, it is important that before we embark on our study of language we have a clear understanding of what we mean by the term of language. Our first response might be that language relates to communication between human beings and not to communication between animals, and that is certainly a useful first step towards a definition. However applause in a theatre, an expression of friendship by means of a smile or attracting

somebody's attention by means of a "cough" any more a part of language than are the alarm calls of vervet monkeys which distinguish from snakes, leopards and eagles?

An American linguist Charles F. Hockett enumerated a number of features which, as he argued, constituted human language. Other communication systems might exhibit one or more of their features but only human language has them all. This definition has revealed five essential factors of language: systematic, arbitrary, vocal, symbolic and most importantly human-specific.

So how do we define the term of language? Another American linguist, Edward Sapir, gave a definition in 1921. He supported the hypothesis that related human language with cultural transmission, so Sapir considered that it was "non-instinctive" and "voluntarily produced". Thus for him language does not include such instinctive forms of communication as laughing and cries of sadness. His definition is as follows:

Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols.

For comparison, we may look at a definition of language given by a British linguist, David Crystal (1989), who wrote as follows:

The discussion may be summarized by referring to language as human vocal noise (or the graphic representation of this noise in writing) used systematically and conventionally by a community for purposes of communication.

Steven Pinker (1994) used the word "instinct" to give a definition of human language, who expressed the idea like the following:

Whether one considers language to be instinctive or not depends on precisely what one is talking about. Language is instinctive in so far as we are all born with a predisposition to speak, we all acquire a language without tuition and when we speak we do not consciously convert our thoughts into speech. Language is, however, non-instinctive in that we can choose what to say or whether to say anything at all; it is not instinctive in the way that removing one's hand from a very hot plate is, done before we are even aware of the situation.

And R.H. Robins pointed out that although there was a danger of definitions of language being simplistic, it might help us to focus our study of language if we tried to distil a definition. Such a definition might be something like the following: language is a form of human communication by means of a system of symbols principally transmitted by vocal sounds, or more simply like language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication.

1.2 Knowledge of language

All languages share certain fundamental properties, and children naturally acquire these languages—whether they are spoken or signed. Both modalities are equally accessible to children because human language is designed for human beings. Design features refer to the defining properties of human language, but we may find it hard to specify what makes our language advantageous over animal language. A framework was put forward by the American linguist Charles Hockett.

He specified twelve design features. The following are the frequently discussed ones. As is mentioned before, there is no logical connection between meanings and sounds. For example:

A dog might be a pig if only the first person or group of persons had used it for a pig.

Another typical example to illustrate the arbitrariness of language is a famous quotation from Shakespeare's play:

As Julie says in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*:

What's in a name? That which we call a rose

By any other name would smell as sweet.

一朵玫瑰不管它叫什么名字，闻起来都是一样香的。

When you know a language, you can speak and be understood by others who know that language. This means you are able to produce strings of sounds that signify certain meanings and understand or interpret the sounds produced by others. However, language is much more than speech. Deaf people produce and understand sign languages just as hearing persons produce and understand spoken languages. The languages of the deaf communities throughout the world are equivalent to spoken languages, differing only in their modality of expression. A child can walk without understanding or being able to explain the principles of balance and support or the neurophysiological control mechanisms that permit one to do so. The fact that we may know something unconsciously is not unique to language.

1.2.1 Knowledge of the sound system

Part of knowing a language means knowing what sounds (or signs) are in that language and what sounds are not. One way of this unconscious knowledge revealed is by the way speakers of one language pronounce words from another language.

Knowing the sound system of a language includes some more than knowing the inventory of sound. It means also knowing which sound may start a word or end a word, and follow each other. The name of a former president of Ghana was Nkrumah, pronounced with an initial sound like the ending in the English word "sink". While this is an English sound, no word in English begins with the "nk" sound. Speakers of English who have occasion to pronounce this name often mispronounce it (by Ghanaian standards) by inserting a short vowel sound, like

Nekrumah, making the word correspond to the English system. Children develop the sound patterns of their language very rapidly. A one-year-old baby learning English knows “a word cannot begin with “nk”, just as a Ghanaian child of the same age knows that it can in his language. We will learn more about sound system in Chapter 2.

1.2.2 Knowledge of words

Sounds and sound patterns of our language constitute only one part of our linguistic knowledge. Beyond that we know that certain sequences of sounds signify certain concepts or meanings. Speakers of English understand what “boy” means, and that it means something different from “toy” or “girl” or “pterodactyl”. We also know that “toy” and “boy” are words; that is, you know which sequences of sounds relate to specific meanings and which do not.

Arbitrary Relation of Form and Meaning

The minute set eyes on an animal I know what it is. I don't have to reflect a moment; the right name comes out instantly. I seem to know just by the shape of the creature and the way it acts what animal it is. When the dodo came along he (Adam) thought it was a wildcat. But I saved him. Just spoken up in a quite natural way and said, “Well, I do declare if there isn't the dodo!” MARK TWAIN, *Eve's Diary*, 1906

If you do not know a language, the words (and sentences) of that language will be mainly incomprehensible, because the relationship between speech sounds and the meanings they represent is, for the most part, an arbitrary one. When you are acquiring a language, you have to learn that the sounds represented by the letters of “umbrella” signify the concept; if you know French, this same meaning is represented by “parapluie”; if you know Japanese, by “あめかさ”. Similarly, is represented by “sun” in English; “soleil” in French. The same sequence of sounds can represent different meanings in different languages.

These examples show that the words of a particular language have the meanings they do only by convention. Despite what Eve would have us believe in Mark Twain's satire in *Eve's Diary*, a pterodactyl could have been called ron, blick, or kerpunkity.

Arbitrariness is the core feature of language, which refers to the fact that there is no logical or intrinsic connection between a particular sound and the meaning which it is associated with. It is not entirely arbitrary at all levels. Some words, such as the ones created in the imitation of sounds are motivated in a certain degree.

1.2.3 Knowledge of sentences and non-sentences

Our knowledge of language not only allows us to produce and understand an infinite number of well-formed (even if silly and illogical) sentences, but also permits us to distinguish well-formed (grammatical) from ill-formed (ungrammatical) sentences. This is further evidence of our linguistic creativity because ungrammatical sentences are typically novel, not

sentences we have previously heard or produced, precisely because they are ungrammatical!

Consider the following sentences:

- a. John kissed the little old lady who owned the shaggy dog.
- b. Who owned the shaggy dog John kissed the little old lady.
- c. John is different to love.
- d. It is different to love John.
- e. John is anxious to go.
- f. It is anxious to go John.
- g. John, who was a student, flunked his exams.
- h. Exams his flunked student a was who John.

If you were asked to put an asterisk or star before the examples that seemed ill-formed or ungrammatical or “not good” to you, which would you mark? Our intuitive knowledge about what is or what is not an allowable sentence in English convinces us to star *b*, *f* and *h*. Which did you star?

Would you agree with the following judgment?

- a. What he did was climb a tree.
- b. What he thought was want a sports car.
- c. Drink you beer and go home?
- d. What are drinking and go home?
- e. I expect them to arrive a week from next Thursday.
- f. *I expect a week from next Thursday.
- g. Linus lost his security blanket.
- h. *Lost Linus security blanket his.

If you find the starred sentences unacceptable, as we do, we see your linguistic creativity at work.

These sentences including the starred ones illustrate that not every string of words constitutes a well-formed sentence in a language. Sentences are not formed simply by placing one word after another in any order, but by organizing the words according to the rules of sentence formation of the language. These rules are finite in length and finite in number so that they can be stored in our finite brains. Yet, they permit us to form and understand an infinite set of new sentences. They also enable us to judge whether a sequence of words is a well-formed sentence of our language or not. These rules are not determined by a judge or a legislature, or even taught in a grammar class. They are unconscious rules that we acquire as young children as we develop language and they are responsible for our linguistic creativity. Linguists who refer to this set of rules as the grammar of language.

The Creativity of Linguistic Knowledge

Knowledge of a language enables you to combine sounds to form words, words to form phrases, and phrases to form sentences. You cannot buy a dictionary or phrase book of any language with all the sentences of the language. No dictionary can list all the possible sentences, because the number of sentences in a language is infinite. Knowing a language means being able to produce and understand new sentences never spoken before. This is the creative aspect of language. Not every speaker can create great literature, but everybody who knows a language can create and understand new sentences.

A longer sentence can be formed, and then there is no limit to the length of sentences. In English you can say:

The old man came.

Or

The old, old, old, old, old, old man came.

How many “olds” are here? How many “olds” are too many? Six? Twenty-two?

It is true that the longer these sentences became, the less likely we would be hear or say them. When we are talking and writing, it is unusual for us to make a sentence with so many “old” in it, however, such a sentence is theoretically possible, because English nouns can take any number of adjectives as modifiers.

All human languages permit their speakers to increase the length and complexity of sentences in these ways; creativity is a universal property of human language. Creativity means language is resourceful because of its duality and its recursiveness, which enables human beings to produce and understand an infinitely large number of sentences in our native language, including the sentences which have never been heard before. This ability is one of the things that set human language apart from the kind of communication that goes on, for example, between birds, which can only convey a limited range of messages (Thomas & Shan, 2004: 7)

Language is resourceful because of its duality and its recursiveness. We can use it to create new meanings. Words can be used in new ways to mean new things, and can be instantly understood by people who have never come across that usage before. Birds, bees, crabs, spiders, and most other creatures communicate in some way, but the information imparted is severely limited and confined to a small set of messages. Because of duality human speaker is able to combine the basic linguistic units to form an infinite set of sentences, most of which are never before produced or heard. The recursive nature of language provides a potential to create an infinite number of sentences. For instance:

He bought a book which was written by a teacher who taught in a school which was known for its graduates who...

Linguistic Knowledge and Performance

Speakers of all languages have the knowledge to understand or produce sentences of any length. Here is an example from the ruling of a federal judge:

We invalidate the challenged lifetime ban because we hold as matter of federal constitution law that a state initiative measure cannot impose a serve limitation on the people's fundamental rights when the issue of whether to impose such a limitation on these rights is put to the voters in a measure that is an ambiguous on its face and that fails to mention in its text, the proponent's ballot argument, or the state's official description, the severe limitation to be imposed.

Theoretically there is no limit to the length of a sentence, but in practice very long sentences are highly improbable, the verbose federal judge notwithstanding. Evidently, there is a difference between having the knowledge required to produce or understand sentence of a language and applying this knowledge. There is a difference between our knowledge of words and grammar, which is our linguistic competence, and how we use this knowledge in actual speech production and comprehension, which is our **linguistic performance**.

Our linguistic knowledge permits us to form longer and longer sentences by joining sentences and phrases together or adding modifiers to a noun. However, there are psychological and physiological reasons that limit the number of adjective, adverbs, clauses, and so on that we actually produce and understand. Speakers may run out of breath, lose track of what they have said, or die of old age before they even finish. Listeners may become tired, bored, disgusted, or confused, like poor Alice being interrogated by the Red Queen.

1.2.4 Knowledge of displacement

Displacement means that human languages enable their users to symbolize objects, events and concepts which are not present (in time and space) at the moment of communication. Displacement benefits human beings by giving them the power to handle generalizations and abstractions. This property provides speakers with an opportunity to talk about a wide range of things, free from barriers caused by separation in time and place.

In contrast, no animal communication system possesses this feature. Animal calls are mainly uttered in response to immediate changes of situation, i.e., in contact of food, in presence of danger, or in pain. Once the danger or pain is gone, calls stop.

Human languages enable their users to symbolize objects, events and concepts which are not present (in time and space) at the moment of communication. Thus, we can refer to Confucius, or the North Pole, even though the first has been dead for over 2550 years and the second is located far away from us. Animal communication is normally under "immediate stimulus control". For instance, a warning cry of a bird instantly announces danger. Human language is stimulus-free. What we are talking about need not be triggered by any external