普通语言学纲要

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前言

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　　介绍普通语言学大致有三种操作方式。一是按照历时的方式，介绍语言学发展及流变，重点介绍各个语言学流派。二是按照共时范式，介绍语言学各分支学科。三是从内容专题出发介绍语言学。本书主要采用共时范式，同时兼顾语言学流派的介绍。

　　本书共分三大部分，十七章。第一部分由第一章构成，主要介绍当代语言学的由来、语言学的构成及其分野。第二部分包括第二到第八章，介绍语言学本体的各个主要分支，包括语音学、音系学、形态学、语义学、句法学、语用学、话语分析和语言学流派。第三部分包括第九到第十七章，介绍语言学相关应用学科，例如语言教学与测试、语言习得、认知语言学、语言与文化、社会语言学、心理语言学、神经语言学、语料库语言学和文体学。

本书分工如下：刘振聪负责编写全书各章节。王伟负责编写各章所附的案例以及收集图片。葛文霞负责各章的练习和推荐阅读书目。

本书配有丰富的教学资源，包括课程大纲、参考书目、推荐阅读书目、课件等。因此，它适合即将开设或已经开设普通语言学课程的教师，也适合修读该课程的同学。此外，由于本书行文简洁，资源丰富，它也适合广大有志于考研的同学，可作为考研辅导书使用。

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于北京翰墨斋

Table of Contents

An Introduction to Linguistics

Language and Linguistics

Introduction:

In this chapter, we will discuss such topics as the definition of linguistics, the branches of linguistics, the important distinctions in linguistics, the definition, the design features, the origin and functions of language.

1. What Is Linguistics?

Linguistics is generally defined as the scientific study of language, which involves the investigation into all human languages. It is scientific because it is based on the systematic investigation of linguistic data, conducted with reference to some general theory of language structure.

2. The Branches of Linguistics

Linguistics includes general linguistics, interdisciplinary branches and applied linguistics.

(1) General linguistics refers to the study of language as a whole, which deals with the basic concepts, theories, descriptions, models and methods applicable in any linguistic study. General linguistics can be further subdivided into various fields like phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis, etc.

Phonetics: The study of speech sounds.

Phonology: The study of the system of speech sounds in a language, or the system of sounds itself.

Morphology: The study of the morphemes of a language and of the way in which they are joined together to make words.

Syntax: The way that words and phrases are put together to form sentences in a language.

Semantics: The study of meaning.

Pragmatics: The study of language in use.

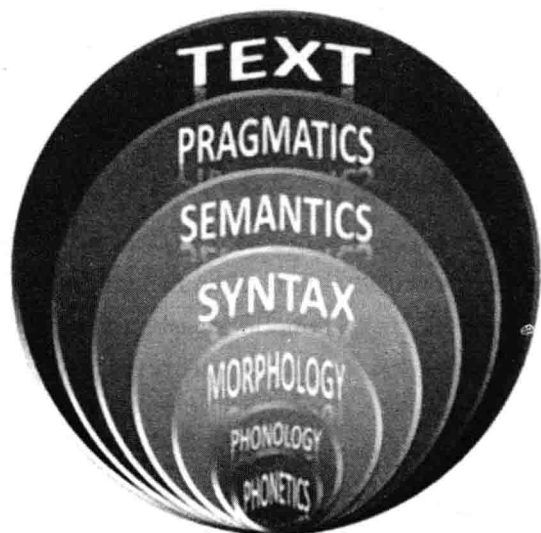Discourse analysis: The study of relationship between language and context in which it is used.

Figure 1.1   Branches of Linguistics

(2) **Interdisciplinary branches** of linguistic studies refer to those branches of linguistic studies which have established close links with other branches of social studies, e.g. stylistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, anthropological linguistics, neurolinguistics, and so on.

Stylistics: the study of language style.

Psycholinguistics: the study of the relationship between language and the mind.

Sociolinguistics: the study of the interaction of language and social organization.

Anthropological linguistics uses the theories and methods of anthropology to study language variation and language use in relation to the cultural pattern and beliefs of man.

Neurolinguistics studies the neurological basis of language development and use in human beings.

Historical linguistics: the examination of the historical development of languages.

Computational linguistics: an approach to linguistics in which mathematical techniques and concepts are applied, often with the aid of a computer.

(3) **Applied linguistics** refers to the study of the applications of linguistic theories and principles to solve practical problems such as language teaching, the recovery of speech ability, dictionary compiling, and machine translation, etc.

3. Important Distinctions in Linguistics

The important distinctions in linguistics include the distinctions between prescriptive and descriptive studies, synchronic and diachronic studies, speech and writing, langue and parole, competence and performance, traditional grammar and modern linguistics, syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, functionalism and formalism, and so on.

Table 1.1   The distinction between prescriptive and descriptive studies

	Prescriptive	Descriptive
Purpose	To lay down rules for correct and standard language	To describe and analyze the language in use
History	Earlier studies of language	Modern linguistics
Focus	Written language	Whatever occurs in language

Table 1.2   The distinction between synchronic and diachronic studies by F. de Saussure

	Synchronic	Diachronic
Definition	At a certain point of time	Over a period of time
Use	Priority in modern linguistics	Historical linguistics

Table 1.3   The distinction between speech and writing

	Speech	Writing
History	Primacy	Secondary
Learning	First	Second
Evaluation	Authentic	Invented and recorded
Communication	More commonly used, more informative	Less commonly used, less informative
Reality	Many languages are without written form	Language with only written form like 女书 is rare

Table 1.4   The distinction between langue and parole by Saussure in the early 20th century

	Langue	Parole
Definition	The abstract linguistic system shared by all the members	The realization of langue in actual use
Focus	Conventions and rules	The concrete use
Feature	Abstract	Concrete
Stability	Relatively stable	Varying

Table 1.5   The distinction between competence and performance by N. Chomsky in the late 1950s

	Competence	Performance
Definition	The ideal user's knowledge of the rules of his language	The actual realization of this knowledge in linguistic communication
Number	A set of rules	An infinitely large number of sentences
Consciousness	Internalized but not conscious	Conscious
Focus	The object of linguistic study	Imperfect, too haphazard to be studied

Table 1.6   The distinction between traditional grammar and modern linguistics

	Traditional grammar (TG)	Modern linguistics
Time	Before Saussure's book	After Saussure's book
Study	Prescriptive	Descriptive
Primary emphasis	Written language	Spoken language
Framework	Latin-based framework	Universal framework

Table 1.7   The distinction between syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations by Saussure

	Syntagmatic	Paradigmatic
Direction	Horizontal	Vertical
Relation	Linear sequences	Particular place in a structure
Relation	Sequential arrangement	Relations of substitution

Table 1.8   The distinction between functionalism and formalism

	Functionalism	Formalism
Definition	The study of the forms of language in reference to their social function in communication	The study of the abstract forms of language and their internal relations
Focus of study	Social function of language	Forms of languages
Representative	M. A. K. Halliday	Noam Chomsky
Representative school	The Prague School, most contemporary linguistics in Europe	Transformational-generative grammar (TG grammar)

4. What Is Language?

Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication.

First, language is a system, i.e., elements of language are combined according to rules.

Second, language is arbitrary in the sense that there is no inter-relationship between a linguistic symbol and what the symbol stands for, for instance, between the word "pen" and the thing we write with. The association between the form and the meaning is established by convention.

Third, language is vocal because the primary medium for all languages is sound.

Fourth, language is symbolic in that every word within a language refers to something in the natural or virtual world.

Finally, the term "human" means that language is human-specific.

Figure 1.2   The Wall of Love in Paris, where the phrase "I love you" is featured in 250 languages of the world.

5. Design Features of Language

Design features refer to the defining properties of human language that distinguish it from any animal system of communication. The design features of human language may include arbitrariness, productivity, duality, displacement, cultural transmission, stimulus-freedom, discreteness, the human vocal tract, and interchangeability, etc.

Table 1.9   The design features of language

Design features	Description of the features
Arbitrariness	There is no logical connection between meanings and sounds.
Productivity	Language is productive because we can produce and understand sentences that have never been created or heard before.
Duality	Duality refers to the property of having two levels of structures: sound and meaning.
Displacement	Language can be used to refer to context removed from the immediate situations of the speaker. (compare with animal calls)

Cultural transmission	Language is culturally transmitted through teaching and learning, not by instinct.
Stimulus-freedom	While animals must be stimulated to express themselves, humans have the ability to say anything they like in any context.
Discreteness	The components of language are not always changing and if they change, there are certain limits.
The human vocal tract	Only humans are endowed with a highly sophisticated speech organ to produce the many differentiated sounds.
Interchangeability	Human beings can be a producer as well as receiver of messages.

6. Origin of Language

In general, most theories of the origin of language fall into four categories.

1) The Devine-origin Theory

Christians believe that it was God who created language for human beings and thus languages have been endowed with a mystical power in some cultures.

2) The Invention Theory

Many think that language was invented by human beings in their life, from imotating the natural sounds, from "crying" the cries of nature like chimpanzees do, or from the grunts of men at work.

3) The Evolutionary Theory

Many linguists argue that language has a common evolutionary origin: both arose from a sudden genetic change in the brain and the nervous system that took place over 150,000 years ago.

4) First Language

Some believe that there existed the first language or the most primitive language wherefrom all languages on the planet originated, e.g. Hebrew, Egyptian, Chinese, and Phrygian.

Although many theories have been attempted, the debate on the origin of language has never terminated.

7. Functions of Language

There are two major theories of the functions of language—Halliday's theory of metafunctions and Jacobson's theory.

1) Halliday's theory

According to Halliday (1994), language performs ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. Ideational function creates a model of experience and logical relations, interpersonal function enacts social relationships, and textual function creates relevance to context.

2) Jacobson's theory

Jacobson suggests six functions of language: phatic, poetic, referential, emotive, conative, and metalingual, which correspond to the six components in communication—contact, message, context, addresser, addressee and code.

Despite the different emphasis that different linguists put on the functions of language, there are some basic functions that serve people's daily communication, namely phatic, performative, informative or descriptive, expressive or emotive, evocative, directive, and interrogative.

Table 1.10　Functions of language

Functions	Roles in commu-nication	Examples	Notes
Phatic (应酬/寒暄)	To create an atmo-sphere, or main-tain social contact	Greetings, farewells and comments	When a person is asked "How's everything going?" he is not ex-pected to complain endlessly on his work.

Performative （施事）	To perform certain action by uttering certain words or sentences	The priest says: "I announce you husband and wife". The president says: "I hereby name this ship Elizabeth".	It must be the right person to say the right thing under the right circumstance to perform the act.
Informative （信息）	To tell the fact and describe the material	"I have a red suit." "He went to Paris last week."	It is characterized by the use of declarative sentences.
Expressive (emotive) （表意）	To express immediate feelings or the reaction to the immediate situation	"God!" "Oops!" "What a disgusting spell!"	Language can be used to manifest the attitude, the personality and characteristics of the speaker according to the words selected.
Evocative （激发）	To evoke certain feelings in the audience	Jokes and comedies, public speeches such as the famous "I have a dream", advertisements.	Some words are sometimes so powerful as to make the audience conduct something they would have never done by themselves.
Directive （使役）	To get the listeners to do something	"I suggest that you go there." "Could you open the window?"	Usually the imperative sentences can be used as directive, and other types of sentences, such as interrogatives and subjunctive mood, etc., can also serve this function.
Interrogative （探问）	To inquire information	"What's your suggestion?" "Do you think I'm beautiful tonight?"	Not all sentences in question forms carry out the interrogative function, e.g. "Good idea, isn't it?"

CASE STUDY

The Tower of Babel

Up until this point in the Bible, the whole world had one language—one common speech for all people. The people of the earth became skilled in construction and decided to build a city with a tower that would reach to heaven. By building the tower they wanted to make a name for themselves and also prevent their city from being scattered.

God came to see their city and the tower they were building. He perceived their intentions, and in His infinite wisdom, He knew this "stairway to heaven" would only lead the people away from God. He noted the powerful force within their unity of purpose. As a result, God confused their language, causing them to speak different languages so they would not understand each other. By doing this, God thwarted their plans. He also scattered the people of the city all over the face of the earth.

This religious story is to explain why different races speak different languages.

Summary: So far, we have discussed such topics as the definition of linguistics, the branches of linguistics, the important distinctions in linguistics, the definition, the design features, the origin and functions of language.

Exercises

1. Define the following terms.
   duality; communicative competence; langue and parole;
   cultural transmission; phatic communication
2. What are the main differences between modern linguistics and the traditional grammar?
3. Compare Saussure's distinction between langue and parole with Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance.
4. What is creativity as one of the defining features of language? Give examples to support your idea.
5. In what ways is competence and performance an important distinction in modern linguistics?
6. How do you interpret the following definition of linguistics: Linguistics is the scientific study of language?

Suggestions for Further Reading

1. Poole, S. C. (2000). *An Introduction to Linguistics*. Macmillan Publisher Ltd. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

   This is a practical introductory book to linguistics.

2. Fromkin, V. et al. (2004). *An Introduction to Language* (7th ed.). Beijing: Beijing University Press.

   This book is appropriate for a variety of fields—including education, language, psychology, anthropology, English, and teaching English as a Second Language (TESL).

3. Yule, G. (2000). *The Study of Language* (2nd ed.). Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

   Designed for beginners, this best-selling textbook provides a lively introduction to the study of language.

4. Robins, R. H. (2000). *General Linguistics*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

   It introduces readers to important concepts, theories and insights about linguistics.

5. Saussure, F. de. (2001). *Course in General Linguistics*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

   This is a classic work by F. de Saussure to introduce the most fundamental content of linguistics.