英语专业课考试丛书

Linguistics

语言学

习题集（第2版）

总主编　田强　主编　李洁红

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前　言(第2版)

近年来,由于我国对高水平英语人才的迫切需求,越来越多的学生希望通过国家自学考试或全国硕士研究生入学考试获得学士或硕士学位。但是,无论哪种考试,英语语言学都是一门让考生望而生畏却又不得不面对的课程。由于考生对该内容平时接触少,因此,在复习中抓不住重点,在考试中生搬硬套,其结果往往不大理想。针对这种情况,我们编写了这本《语言学习题集》,旨在帮助考生抓住重点,了解英语语言学各领域中的基本问题,并通过相应的测试了解自己对这些问题的理解和掌握程度。

本书综合了《全国自学考试大纲》和《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,借鉴了国内主要外语院系英语专业研究生入学考试的相关部分,讲述了概述、音位学、形态学、句法学、语义学、语用学、历史语言学、社会语言学、心理语言学、语言习得和语言学流派等11章内容。本书以问题－简答的形式编写,内容连贯,语言精练,问题回答篇幅适中,既体现了知识的系统性,又有所侧重,便于学生在学习中掌握重点。本书测试题部分题型全面,包括填空、选择、判断和名词解释各12个,简答题2个,共50个题,基本覆盖了该章的主要内容。考虑到学生备考的实际需要,本书列出了书中知识点的索引,详细标明其所在章节和问题的序号,方便查阅。

本次修订除更正前几次印刷中的错误外,还补充了几所高校的硕士研究生入学考试试题以供广大考生复习备考使用。

限于编者水平有限,书中纰漏之处定属不少,望读者批评指正。

编者

2009年8月于哈工大

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1

Introduction

1.1 Origin of language (Q1 ~ Q2)

Q1. What's your understanding of language?

Language is a means of verbal communication. It includes the following attributes: language has system; it is vocal and arbitrary; it is a human and social activity; it is non-instinctive and is related to culture; language changes with time.

Q2. What are the well-known theories about the origin of language?

They are bow-wow theory, pooh-pooh theory, contact theory and "yo-he-ho" theory. Bow-wow theory: In primitive times people imitated the sounds of the animal calls in the wild environment they lived and speech developed from that. Pooh-pooh theory: In the hard life of our primitive ancestors, they uttered instinctive sounds of pain, anger and joy. What makes the theory problematic is that there is only limited number of

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interjections in almost all languages. Contact theory: The theory that language arose from human beings instinctive need for contact with his companion has been called the contact theory. Yo-he-ho theory: As primitive people worked together, they produced some rhythmic grunts which gradually developed into chants and then into language.

1.2 Features of language (Q3 ~ Q11)

Q3. What are design features of language?

Design features refer to the defining properties of human language that tell the difference between human language and any system of animal communication.

Q4. What are the characteristics of human language?

The characteristics of human language include arbitrariness, duality, productivity, displacement, discreteness, transferability and linearity.

Q5. Explain the characteristic of arbitrariness. What are the relationships between arbitrariness & onomatopoeic words and arbitrariness & convention?

Arbitrariness refers to the fact that the forms of linguistic signs bear no natural relationship to their meaning. Onomatopoeic words are the words that sound like the sounds they describe. Only when people know the meaning can they infer that the linguistic sign is appropriate for the exact sound. Arbitrariness of language makes it potentially creative, and conventionality of language makes a language be passed from generation to generation.

Q6. Describe the characteristics of duality.

Duality means the language's property of having two levels of structures: the system of sounds, which is the meaningless level of the language system, and the system of meanings. The sound system of a language contains a limited number of meaningless discrete sound segments that can be used over and over again in various combinations to form units of meaning. The meaning system allows the meaningful units to be

arranged in an infinite number of ways according to both syntactic and semantic rules to express what a speaker wants to.

Q7. What does productivity mean for language?

It means language is resourceful because of its duality and its recursiveness. It refers to the property that language enables language users to produce or understand an indefinite number of sentences including novel sentences by use of a finite set of rules.

Q8. What does displacement of language imply?

Language can be used to refer to what is present, what is absent, what happens at present, what happened in the past, what will happen in the future or what happens in a far-away place. This property of language enables language users to overcome the barriers caused by time and place. Due to the feature of displacement of language, speakers of a language are free to talk about anything in any situation.

Q9. What is your understanding of discreteness of language?

Discreteness of language is opposite to continuousness. Each word in a language is composed of individual linguistic unit. For example, in English *bet* is composed of /b/, /e/ and /t/.

Q10. Explain the property of transferability.

Language has two forms: spoken and written. Either form can be transferred or interchanged into the other. Thus it is possible for us to read what is written or to write down what is spoken. Written language exists in the form of letters or characters, and spoken language in medium of sounds. This feature of language enables language users to communicate in either way: spoken or written.

Q11. What does linearity of language refer to? Please give examples to illustrate it.

Linguistic symbols occur in a linear order. They are strung together in sequence and combined into larger units according to different rules. For example, the English word ['læŋgwidʒ] (language) should not be pronounced as ['gwilæŋdʒ], or written as "ngaaluge".

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1.3 Functions of language (Q12 ~ Q19)

Q12. What functions does language have?

Language has at least seven functions: informative, interpersonal, performative, emotive, phatic, recreational and metalingual.

Q13. Explain the informative function of language.

Language serves an informational function when used to tell something, characterized by the use of declarative sentences. Informative statements are often labelled as true or false.

Q14. Explain the interpersonal function of language with examples.

The interpersonal function of language is the most important sociological use of language. People use the interpersonal function of language to establish and maintain their status in a society. In the framework of functional grammar, this function is concerned with interaction between the addresser and addressee in the discourse situation and the addresser's attitude toward what he speaks or writes about. For example, the ways in which people address others and refer to themselves (e.g. *Dear Sir*, *Dear Professor*, *Johnny*, *yours*, *your obedient servant*) indicate the various grades of interpersonal relations.

Q15. Explain the performative function of language with examples.

The performative function of language is primarily to change the social status of persons, as in marriage ceremonies, the sentencing of criminals, the blessing of children, the naming of a ship at a launching ceremony, and the cursing of enemies. The kind of language employed in performative verbal acts is usually quite formal and even ritualized. The performative function can extend to the control of reality as on some magical or religious occasions. For example, in Chinese when someone breaks a bowl or a plate the host or the people present are likely to say *sui sui ping an* (every year be safe and happy) as a means of controlling the forces which the believers feel might affect their lives.

Q16. Explain the emotive function of language with examples.

The emotive function of language is one of the most powerful uses of language because it is so crucial in changing the emotional status of an audience for or against someone or something. It is a means of getting rid of the nervous energy when people are under stress, e.g. swear words, obscenities, involuntary verbal reactions to beautiful art or scenery; conventional words/phrases, e.g. *God*, *My*, *Damn it*, *What a sight*, *Wow*, *Ugh*, *Ow*, *etc*.

Q17. Explain the phatic function of language with examples.

The phatic function of language refers to the social interaction of language. For example: Mrs. P sneezes violently.

Mrs. Q: Bless you.

Mrs. P: Thank you.

Such small, seemingly meaningless expression to maintain a comfortable relationship is used between people without involving any factual content. The phatic function refers to expressions that help define and maintain interpersonal relations, such as slangs, jokes, jargons, ritualistic exchanges, switches to social and regional dialects.

Q18. Explain the recreational function of language.

The recreational function of language refers to the use of language for the sheer joy of using it, such as a baby's babbling or a chanter's chanting.

Q19. Explain the metalingual function of language.

The metalingual function of language refers to the fact that language can be used to talk about itself.

1.4 Linguistics and its main branches (Q20 ~ Q22)

Q20. What is linguistics?

Linguistics is the scientific study of language. It studies not just one language of any one society, but the language of all human beings. A linguist, though, does not have to know and use a large number of languages, but he ought to have a wide experience of different types of

language. His task is not to learn to use any particular language, but to investigate how each language is constructed. He is also concerned with how a language varies from dialect to dialect, from class to class, how it changes from century to century, how children acquire their mother tongue and perhaps how a person learns or should learn a foreign language. In short, linguistics studies the general principles whereupon all human languages are constructed and operate as systems of communication in their societies or communities.

Q21. What are the main branches of linguistics?

The study of language as a whole is often called general linguistics. But a linguist sometimes is able to deal with only one aspect of language at a time, thus the arise of various branches: phonetics, phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax and pragmatics.

Q22. Please describe the scope of research for each branch of linguistics.

Phonetics studies speech sounds, including the production of speech, that is how speech sounds are actually made, transmitted and received, the sounds of speech, the description and classification of speech sounds, words and connected speech, etc. Phonology studies the rules governing the structure, distribution, and sequencing of speech sounds and the shape of syllables. Morphology is concerned with the internal organization of words. Syntax is about principles of forming and understanding correct sentences. Semantics examines how meaning is encoded in a language. Pragmatics is the study of meaning in context.

1.5 Macrolinguistics (Q23 ~ Q24)

Q23. What are the interdisciplinary studies of language?

The interdisciplinary studies of language are also called macro linguistics. They are sociolinguistics, anthropological linguistics, neurological linguistics, mathematical linguistics and computational linguistics.

Q24. What does comparative linguistics concern?

Comparative linguistics is the study of the historical relationship between languages, especially those believed to have a common historical origin; also often called comparative philology, or simply philology.

1.6 Important distinctions in linguistics (Q25 ~ Q32)

Q25. What is the difference between synchronic linguistics and diachronic linguistics?

Synchronic linguistics takes a fixed instant (usually, but not necessarily, the present) as its point of observation. In contrast, diachronic linguistics is the study of a language through the course of its history; therefore, it is also called historical linguistics.

Q26. What distinguishes prescriptive studies of language from descriptive studies of language?

The distinction lies in prescribing how things ought to be and describing how things are. To say that linguistics is a descriptive science is to say that the linguist tries to discover and record the rules to which the members of a language-community actually conform and does not seek to impose upon them other rules, or norms, of correctness, which are in the scope of prescriptive linguistics.

Q27. Why is competence and performance an important distinction in linguistics? What is communicative competence?

Language competence is the ideal user's knowledge of rules of his language, that is, of its sound structure, its words and its grammatical rules. Whereas, language performance is the actual realization of the ideal language user's knowledge of the rules of his language in utterances. It means the actual saying of something, the act of speech itself. Respectively, the former refers to a language user's underlying knowledge about the system of rules and the latter refers to the actual use of language in concrete situations. We can observe discrepancy between language competence and language performance in normal language users. Language users all have intuitive grasp of the rules of language,

however, in actual use, they may not always observe the rules. In contrast, children may not understand the rules, but they can use the language in a grammatically correct way. Communicative competence is the extended idea of competence restricted to a knowledge of grammar to incorporate the pragmatic ability for language use.

Q28. Who put forward the concept of langue and parole? What is the difference between them?

F. de Saussure distinguished the linguistic competence of the speaker and the actual phenomena or data of linguistics as langue and parole. To say it in another way, langue refers to the abstract linguistic system shared by all members of a speech community. On the other side, parole refers to the realization of langue in actual use.

Q29. What is linguistic potential? What is actual linguistic behaviour?

These two terms were made by M. A. K. Halliday in the 1960s, from a functional point of view. There is a wide range of things a speaker can do in his culture, and similarly there are many things he can say, for example, to many people, on many topics. What he actually says on a certain occasion to a certain person is what he has chosen from many possible linguistic items, each of which he could have said.

Q30. In what way do langue, competence and linguistic potential agree? In what way do they differ?

Langue, competence and linguistic potential have some similar features, but they are innately different. Langue is a social product, and a set of speaking conventions; competence is a property or attribute of each ideal speaker's mind; linguistic potential is all the linguistic corpus or repertoire available from which the speaker chooses items for the actual utterance situation. In other words, langue is an invisible but reliable abstract system. Competence means "knowing", and linguistic potential a set of possibilities for "doing" or "performing actions". They are similar in that they all refer to the constant underlying the utterances that constitute what Saussure, Chomsky and Halliday respectively called

parole, performance and actual linguistic behaviour.

Q31. What is your understanding of grammar?

Grammar is, in a broad sense, the science of the structure of a language and both the syntactic and semantic rules of its generally accepted use.

Q32. According to the distinction between descriptive linguistics and prescriptive linguistics, what are the branches of grammar?

The description of a language should be an actual model of the speakers' linguistic knowledge. Such a model is called a descriptive grammar, which does not tell how the speakers should speak, but rather describes their basic linguistic knowledge, explains how it is possible for them to speak and understand and also explains what it is they know about the sounds, morphemes, words, phrases, clauses and sentences of their language. There is another kind of grammar which is believed to represent the correct forms that all educated people should use in speech and writing. Such a grammar is called a prescriptive grammar, which prescribes the rules or principles of the grammar rather than describes them. The grammar usually taught in classroom is the pedagogical grammar, which is a grammatical description of a language specially designed as an aid to teaching that language to native or foreign learners. It emphasizes the functional aspects of grammar rather than its theoretical categories. It states explicitly the rules of the language.

Exercises

Ⅰ. Fill in the blanks.

1. Language, broadly speaking, is a means of _____ communication.
2. In any language words can be used in new ways to mean new things and can be combined into innumerable sentences based on limited rules. This feature is usually termed _____.
3. Language has many functions. We can use language to talk about itself. This function is _____.

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