

文化语言学研究

张从益 著 Joan Chatters 审校

西班子業大學出版社

A STUDY OF CULTURAL LINGUISTICS

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【内容简介】 本书从宏观视角论述了文化语言学的本体论和方法论;从 微观视角论述了语言与文化的深层关系,依次对语言与思维、哲学、政治、神话、 宗教、文学艺术、民俗等方面的有关问题进行了探讨。具体内容包括:文化语言 学的文化观和语言观,文化语言学的对象,文化语言学的任务,文化语言学的性 质,文化语言学的方法论,文化语言学的渊源,文化语言学的建立和发展,文化 语言学比较研究,文化语言学的相关问题研究,等等。

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Foreword

This, as far as we know, may be the first book on cultural linguistics compiled and written in English. The Chinese language, long in history, varied in form and rich in content, has remained one of the most original, ingenious, and vital traditions among all languages.

Language is the vehicle for the expression or exchanging 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 cultural and societal factors and subject to historical change and development. In this definition, language refers to a specific form of expression that is restricted to humans, and differs from all other possible languages, such as animal communication and artificial languages through creativity, the ability to make conceptional abstractions, and the possibility of metalinguistic reflections.

Cultural linguistics is that sub-field of linguistics which is concerned with the place of language in its wider social and cultural context, its role in forging and sustaining cultural practices and social structures. As such, it may be seen to overlap with another sub-field with a similar domain, sociolinguistics, and in practice this may indeed be so. But for my purposes in this book, I will make a distinction between these two sub-fields along the following lines. Cultural linguistics views language through the prism of the core cultural concept, e. g. language and thought, language and

cultural values, and so on and so forth, and as such, seeks to uncover the meaning behind the use, misuse or non-use of language, its different forms, registers and styles. It is an interpretive discipline peeling away at language to find cultural understandings. Sociolinguistics, on the other hand, views language as a social institution, one of those institutions within which individuals and groups carry out social interaction. It seeks to discover how linguistic behavior patterns with respect to social groupings and correlates differences in linguistic behavior with the variables defining social groups, such as age, sex, class, race, etc. In accordance with this principle, based on cultural and linguistic considerations, the book is mainly concerned with the objects, the tasks, the methodology and the nature of cultural linguistics.

The striking differences between the Chinese and the English languages and cultures pose a great challenge in writing about cultural linguistics in English. Some Chinese cultural terms vary greatly in meaning, and therefore it is extremely difficult to find accurate English counterparts. Nonetheless, I have tried my best to use the most appropriate English version.

I'd like to express my gratitude here to all the heads, friends, editors, and colleagues who gave me their kind help and valuable suggestions in the course of writing this book. I offer heartfelt thanks to Professor Wang Yingyun & Joan Chatters, a Canadian Professor of English who were kind enough to go over the manuscript and make various improvements. I am particularly indebted to Tang Xiufang my wife and to all of my postgraduates for their most invaluable encouragement and suggestions. Acknowledgements must also be made to all the authors of the reference books that I used.

Since this book is only an attempt, there must be some things to be improved. I sincerely invite the readers to join us in perfecting it in the future by their valuable criticism and suggestions.

Zhang Congyi October 28, 2008

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1 Cultural and Linguistic Considerations

Animal call systems are genetically transmitted. That is, animals are born with the capacity to produce the set of calls peculiar to their species. All cats, gibbons and bees, for example, have systems which are almost identical to those of all other cats, gibbons and bees. With human beings, things are different: a Chinese speaker and an English speaker are not mutually intelligible. This shows that language is culturally transmitted.

1.1 A Cultural Consideration

Culture—an ancient yet young term. Culture is something that originated with the emergence of man. One cannot trace the historical origin of man's culture without galloping his mind to the remote past.

1.1.1 Concepts of Culture

I . The origin of Western culture

According to textual criticism in philology, the English word "culture" came from the Latin word "cultura", whose earliest basic meaning was "cultivation, planting, crop". That was how ancient Romans understood culture. It may be said to be a definition of culture which emphasized man's biological attribute. The Greek words "υδις" and "υδρμος" are now translated by "nature" and "customs", referring to heaven, earth and nature on the one hand,

and social customs and habits on the other. This fact shows that ancient Greeks understood culture differently from ancient Romans, that is, the former had a vague consciousness of culture as an integration of matter and mind. *Later*, *Cicero* (106 B. C. —43 B. C.), who inherited this spirit of ancient Greek culture, came up with the term "culture mentis", thus developing the spiritual aspect of the Greeks' concept of culture.

II. The origin of Chinese culture

According to textual criticism in philology, the character "文" was written as "one of the control inscriptions and bronze inscriptions, whose basic structure was the interception of four lines. So the original meaning of "文" was "crisscross", implying that longitude & latitude, heaven, earth and nature crossed each other. So the idea of "x" in ancient China, like that of culture in ancient Greece, encompassed the two aspects of the natural world and man's cognition of it. The character "化" combines the meanings of "人" and "七", the former meaning "person", and the latter meaning "turning round to follow another person". The Book of Changes (《易经》) says in the explanation of the Diagram of Prosperity, "One observes humanity to cultivate all under heaven by changing them. "(观乎人文,以化成天下) Liu Xiang, who lived in the West Han Dynasty says in the chapter "On Armed Forces" in his Collection of Essays, "Armed forces are used to suppress rebels. But only if they refuse to be changed by civil cultivation can they be put to death." This brings about a question of what the Chinese "化"really means.

After it assumed dominance in China, Confucianism upheld an outlook on culture that emphasized *righteousness* at the expense of *profit*. Righteousness is a term in law and discipline rites, which

have to do with the mind, but profit is a term in economy, which is related to matter. It is the suppression of the tendency to integrate matter and mind that emerged at the beginning stage of the concept of culture and the banishment of matter from the category of culture that is at the root of a narrow understanding of culture by our countrymen up till now.

III. The definition of culture

There are, according to statistics in Encyclopedia Britannica, as many as 160 definitions of culture in regular publications the world over, which vary so much that no agreement can be reached among them. But the most authoritative of them is the one advanced in "Primitive Culture" published in 1871 outstanding anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917): "Culture, or civilization, is the complex whole that consists of knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs and other abilities and habits that man acquires as a member of society." Tylor's definition of culture, however, seems to stress spiritual culture to the exclusion of material culture. So some scholars from Japan, Britain and Russia put forward the view that culture is "the sum total of the spiritual and material wealth of human society". Similarly, a Chinese scholar says, "Culture is a phenomenon peculiar to human society, a system that contains people's modes of action and the material and spiritual products created by man's action." The definition of culture prevalent in US universities is that by David Pope, who maintains that culture consists of three chief elements: ① symbols, meanings and values—the means by which to interpret reality and standards by which to judge what is good and bad and what is right and wrong; 2 norms and rules interpretations of how people in a specific society should think, feel

and act; 3 material culture—natural and man-made objects, which reflect non-material cultural meanings.

IV. Culture in broad and narrow senses

Now we are in a position to summarize the concept of culture: culture can be defined broadly or narrowly. Broad culture includes material culture (man's action upon nature), institutional and customary culture (man's action upon society) and spiritual culture (man's action upon himself). And narrow culture refers specially to spiritual culture.

V. Dominant culture and sub-culture

It is important, before we begin our examination of the characteristics of culture, to remind you that within each culture there are numerous co-cultures and specialized cultures. Later in this chapter, we define some of these, but for now we need to clarify what our reference is when we use the term culture. When we refer to culture, we are applying the term to the dominant culture found in each society. Although many discussions of culture use the terms umbrella culture or mainstream culture, we prefer the designate dominant, which clearly indicates that the culture we are talking about is the one in power. The people in power are those who historically have controlled, and who will control, the major institutions within the culture: church, government, education, military, mass media, monetary systems, and the like.

1. 1. 2 Characteristics of Culture

In sum, regardless of how many definitions we could have examined, there would have been a great deal of agreement concerning the seven major characteristics of culture.

- 1) Culture is learned.
- 2) Culture is transmitted from generation to generation.
- 3) Culture is based on symbols.
- 4) Culture is subject to change.
- 5) Culture is integrated.
- 6) Culture is ethnocentric.
- 7) Culture is adaptive.

Now let us take "Culture is learned." for example:

- 1) God helps those who help themselves. This saying calls attention to the strong belief in America that people should show initiative.
- 2) Strike while the iron is hot. In the United States, we value people who take quick action. Even our problem-solving techniques are characterized by impulsive rather than reflective methods.
- 3) A man's home is his castle. This expression not only tells us about the value of privacy, but it also demonstrates the male orientation in the United States by implying the home belongs to the man.
- 4) Actions speak louder than words. As is known, Americans are a "doing" culture, hence activity and "getting things done" are important to the dominant culture.
- 5) The squeaky wheel gets the grease. In the United States, people are encouraged to "speak up" and make sure their views are heard.

Below are some proverbs from places other than the United States. You will see some of these proverbs again elsewhere in this book as we use them to explain the communication behavior of the cultures from which they come.

1) A proverb is like a swift horse. The Yorubas of Africa

believe that people are not qualified to take part in communal discussions unless they are able to quote the proverbs relevant to each situation. The "swift horse" proverb simply underscores the importance of proverbs to this culture.

- 2) One does not make the wind but is blown by it. This saying, found in many Asian cultures, suggests that people are guided by fate rather than by their own devices.
- 3) The ill-mannered child finds a father wherever he goes. This African proverb demonstrates the value of the extended family, for it is saying that everyone takes a hand in raising the child.
- 4) Order is half of life. This expresses the value Germans place on organization, conformity, and structure.
- 5) Even if the bridge be made of stone, make sure it is safe. This Korean saying expresses the wisdom of going slowly and being cautious and reflective.
- 6) Nothing done with intelligence is done without speech. This Greek saying emphasizes the importance of talk as a means of communication.
- 7) Wisdom is better than jewels. This Jewish saying expresses the importance of learning and education.
- 8) A man's tongue is his sword. With this saying, Arabs are taught to value words and use them in a powerful and forceful manner.
- 9) He who stirs another's porridge often burns his own. The Swedish, a very private people, teach the value of privacy with this proverb.
- 10) However crowded the way be, the hen will reach her eggs. The African proverb stresses the love of a mother for her 6 •

children.

1. 1. 3 Basic Functions of Culture

We are not born knowing what clothes to wear, what games to play, what foods to eat, which gods to worship, or how to spend our money or our leisure time. It is culture that teaches us all.

Culture makes the world a less perplexing place: ① It serves the basic need of laying out a predictable world in which each of us is firmly grounded; ② It shields people from the unknown by offering them a blueprint for all of life's activities.

Culture has now evolved to the point where they are people's primary means of satisfying three types of needs: ① basic needs (food, shelter, and physical protection); ② derived needs (organization of work, distribution of food, defense, social control); ③ integrative needs (psychological security, social harmony, purpose in life).

We might even go so far as to agree on the idea that our primary mode of biological adaptation is culture, not anatomy.

1. 1. 4 Foundations of Culture

Culture is a complex matter, including knowledge, belief, art, morals, customs, and other capabilities acquired by people as a member of society. People learn culture in the course of everyday living by communication with those around them. Culture learning starts at an early age and generally stays with people for the whole of their lives. In turn, people transmit culture to others, especially to their offspring, through direct instruction and the behaviors they consciously and unconsciously encourage and discourage.

I . Values and norms

The foundation of a culture is its values and norms. Values shape ideas about what society believes to be good and right; values also establish the culture bedrock of a society. They provide the context within which a society's norms are formed and justified. They include a society's attitude toward such concepts as norms of a society; it is also true that the social structure and religion can be influenced by values and norms of a society.

What are values?

One of the most important functions of belief systems is that they are the basis of our values. Formally, a value may be defined as an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to another. Values are, according to Rokeach, "a learned organization of rules for making choices and for resolving conflicts." These rules and guideposts are normative and teach us what is useful, good, right, wrong, what to strive for, how to live our life, and even what to die for. As Albert says, a value system "represents what is expected or hoped for, required or forbidden. It is not a report of actual conduct but is the system of criteria by which conduct is judged and sanctions applied."

Although each of us has a unique set of individual values, there also are values that tend to permeate culture. These are called cultural values. Cultural values are derived from the larger philosophical issues that are part of culture's milieu, and transmitted by a variety of sources (family, media, school, church, state, and so on) and therefore tend to be broad-based, enduring, and relatively stable. Most important, as is the case with beliefs, cultural values guide both perception

communication. That is, our values get translated into action. An understanding of cultural values helps us appreciate the behavior of other people. Knowing, for instance, that the Japanese value detail and politeness might cause us to examine carefully a proffered Japanese business card, as the Japanese do, rather than immediately relegate it to a coat pocket or purse. An awareness of cultural values also helps us understand our own behavior. We can, for example, associate impatience with our value of time, aggressiveness with our value of competition, and self-disclosure with our twin values of friendship and sociability.

An individual's cognitive structure consists of many values, which are arranged into a hierarchical order that is highly organized and that, Rokeach says "exist(s) along a continuum of relative importance." Values can be classified as primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary values are the most important: they specify what is worth the sacrifice of human life. In the United States, democracy and the protection one's self and close family are primary values. Secondary values are also quite important. In the United States, the relief of the pain and suffering of others is secondary values. The securing of material possessions is also secondary values for most Americans. Tertiary values are at the bottom of our hierarchy. Examples of tertiary values in the United States are hospitality to guests and cleanliness.

What are norms?

Norms are social rules and guidelines that prescribe and rule appropriate behavior in particular situations. Norms shape the actions of people toward one another. Norms guide the relationship of people. We can also categorize norms as folkways or mores. Folkways are the routine conventions of everyday life. Generally