英语语言学笔记精华

Linguistics Digest

English Linguistics Digest

张莱湘 主编

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英语语言学笔记精华

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机械工业出版社

本书以条理清晰、分析透彻为原则，以易于查询和掌握为目的，将当前国内外语言学相关教程归纳、整理为适合学生接受的笔记式文本。权威、精炼、深入、明晰是本书的具体特点。本书适用于英语专业本科生、自考生、研究生，特别是准备报考英语专业研究生人员的有价值的学习辅导手册，同时亦将为英语语言学教学和测试提供有效帮助。

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前　言

继索绪尔的语言系统理论奠定了现代语言学的基础之后，语言学得到了众多学者多视角、多层次的探讨和研究。对于英语专业的学生来说，掌握一定的语言学知识是必不可少的。《高等学校英语专业教学大纲》明确地把英语语言学列入高等院校英语专业必须开设的专业知识课程之一。这门课程对于提高学生的英文修养及专业水平至关重要，而且属于英语类自学考试及硕士研究生资格考试的必考科目。

随着我国英语专业学生人数不断增加，越来越多的学生并不满足于本科教育，考研已经成为新世纪大学生的追求目标。目前考研的大形势对英语专业学生《语言学》知识掌握的要求也越来越高。但是，关于语言学的书籍不多，而且还不系统，更何况其中大部分书籍全部采用英文编写，内容多，知识点分散，学生接触、掌握、吸收起来比较困难。目前的《语言学》有关书籍只能满足学生对语言学知识的最基本了解的需求，并不能为学生提供对该科目的深入认识，更不能满足广大学生要扩大自己知识面及认识深度的需求。况且，要想真正学好这门课程，仅依靠课本是远远不够的，学生必须博览群书，取众多教材之精华，才能对所学内容有更全面、深入的认识。因此，应广大在校英语专业学生及英语爱好者的要求，本书按照简化学习程序，特别是将知识点提炼出来，结合其他同类教材进行综合、整理的原则，利用联想的方式加深理解记忆，帮助学生更容易、系统地了解课本，并通过补充的信息，为学生节省大量重复阅读其他教材的时间，帮助学生打开思路，同时对各类考试也有很大的帮助。

本书遵循条理清晰、分析透彻的原则，以易于查询和掌握为目的，其具体特点如下：

权威　以目前使用最广、最有影响力的教材为依托。

精炼　以笔记形式直接呈现知识点。

深入　对于重要的知识点，有全面综合的分析。

明晰　大量图表让人一目了然，易于查询。

本书既为学生提供语言学的基础理论知识，又对英语语言学的历史发展及语言与文学、语言教学、心理学、社会、文化的关系等作了简明扼要的阐述。各章之间既存在有机联系，又各自具有相对的独立性。

本书适用于英语专业在校学生、英语专业自考学生、报考英语专业研究生的各类考生，以及相应水平的爱好英语学习者。它亦将为英语语言学教学和测试提供有效帮助，是英语专业本科生、自考生、研究生，特别是准备报考英语专业研究生的有价值的学习辅导手册。

由于编者水平有限，错误之处，在所难免，恳请广大教师与读者不吝赐教，便于以后修订提高。

编　者

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Chapter 1 Language and Linguistics

1.1 Language

It is language that makes us human. It is the distinctive characteristic that separates the human from all other species, even from the other great apes. Language, which we cannot be more familiar with, may refer to various senses. It may mean what a person said or says, a particular variety or style, or the components within a language.

Then, what is language, and how does it differ from other forms of communication? There does not exist a universally accepted definition of language, or criteria for its use. Language consists of various aspects that people believe are more or less important, such as, grammar, symbol usage, the ability to represent real-world situations, and the ability to articulate something new. Nevertheless, some linguists have reached a consensus of the features of language, which are shown in the following table.

Features of language	Illustration
Language is a **system**.	Letters, words or phrases, must compose a systematic and unified whole. Those put together without following the universally accepted rules do not form what we call language.
Language is **arbitrary**.	The form and the meaning of a language do not bear any inter-relationship.
Language is **vocal**.	Language must be vocal. Although it can be in written form, and in a broad sense it may even include non-vocal gestures and signs. However, any means of communication that exist only in written or non-vocal form cannot be recognized as language.
Language is **symbolic**.	Every word within a langue refers to something in the natural or virtual world, although the words have been selected in an arbitrary way.
Language is particularly **human**.	Language is a tool for human communication. Any sound, the "gestures" or even marks from animals do not fall into the category of language, although sometimes we think they are speaking in their own "language".

1.1.1 Definition of Language

Language in a broad sense may refer to the neural activity of the human brain, the movement of the vocal organ and the muscles of human body and the written language, and even gestures and signs are sometimes regarded as part of language. Therefore, people holding different views of language may offer various definitions. Here are some definitions of language:

- Duane Rumbaugh: Language is "an infinitely open system of communication".
- David Crystal: Language is "the systematic, conventional use of sounds, signs or written symbols in a human society for communication and self-expression."
- German philologist August Schleicher: Language is an organism in the natural world, which consequently has its own birth, growth and decay.

Other definitions include:

- A language is a system that uses some physical signal to express meaning (sounds, gesture or marks on paper).
- Language is an individual's capacity to alter, through structured sound, gesture or visual emission, the mental organization of another individual.
- Language is a means of verbal communication governing the speakers who share the same language, non-verbal language, and even the same cultural background. (People who speak different languages do not seem to communicate with one another in an efficient way. In this case, what works might be the non-verbal language, i.e., the gestures or body language.)

One generally accepted definition of language is put like this: **Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication.**

1.1.2 Defining Properties of Language

As is mentioned above, language is a highly elaborated signaling system. We call the aspects that are peculiar to define it the defining properties of language, or the design features of language. We find some of these properties only belong to the language of human beings, whereas some are shared by animals. Defining properties may include duality of patterning, displacement, open-endedness, stimulus-freedom, arbitrariness, discreteness, the human vocal tract, interchangeability, and cultural transmission. The following parts will offer brief explanations of these features.

1. Duality of Patterning

Duality refers to the property of having two levels of structures: units of the primary level being composed of elements of the secondary level and each level having its own principles of organization. Sounds can form words; words form phrases; and phrases form sentences. Languages can be analyzed on two

levels, composed of meaningless elements (the "sound" side) and meaningful ones (the "meaning" side). Only in this way can the finite number of words in one language form infinite sentences and therefore describe endless things in the world.

2. Displacement

Displacement means that we can refer to persons, things, ideas, theories, events, and anything concrete or abstract in our speech or written context, no matter when they are or where they are. Therefore, we have the branch of history and we can refer to anybody or anything in the history that we have knowledge of. And scientists can even predict the "future" of certain planets that are several billions of light years away from us. These are all the contribution of displacement of language.

3. Arbitrariness

Saussure defined arbitrariness and its relationship to the form as "the link unifying signifier and signified is arbitrary or, even more, since we understand by the sign the total result of the association of a signifier with a signified, we can say more simply: the linguistic sign is arbitrary".

The concepts in the world and their labels are arbitrary. Why is a piece of furniture consisting of a seat, legs, back, and often arms, designed to accommodate one person called "chair"? The forms of words and their meanings do no have *a priori* connection. For instance, when a chair is referred to in English it is called a "chair", but "椅子" in Chinese, and "isu" in Japanese. As a result, people of different languages may not understand each other without pointing to the subject they refer to.

4. Stimulus-freedom

Stimulus-freedom is another aspect that distinguishes human language from animal communication. The honey-bee must perform its dance; the woodchuck must cry out in order to warn its fellows when it sees an eagle. Animals must be stimulated to express themselves.

Humans have the ability to say anything they like in any context. This ability is only restricted in certain ceremonial contexts such as church services, etc., where a fixed form is expected to be followed. The possibility to violate this fixed linguistic behavior is then the source of jokes, such as a bride's deliberate "no" when asked whether she will take the man as her husband on the wedding ceremony.

5. Open-endedness

By open-endedness of language we mean that language is productive, or generative, because we can produce and understand sentences that have never been created or heard before. Since language has the feature of duality, speakers can create infinite sentences with the limited linguistic components. Therefore, we can hardly hear two persons utter exactly the same sentence although they may express the same idea.

6. Discreteness: limits to change

Discreteness in language tells that the components of language are not always changing and if they change, there are certain limits. Different stages of children's understanding of the concept —dog— may analyze this clearly:

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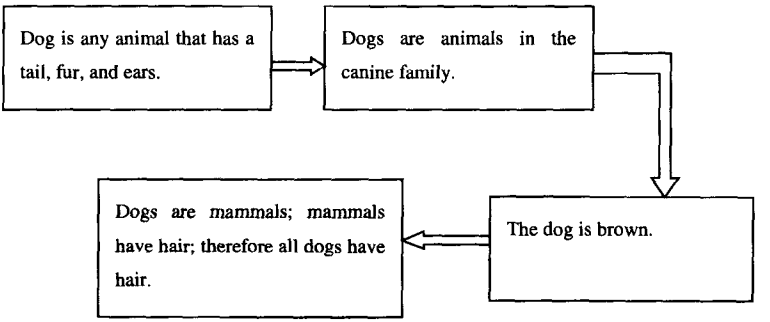


7. The Human Vocal Tract

An elaborated language requires a highly sophisticated speech organ that will enable the speaker to produce the many differentiated sounds. Only humans are endowed with a speech organ of this complexity. A vocal tract is capable of producing the sounds of articulate speech and transforming the raw sound of the voice source into a stream of vowels and consonants to form the desired language-based message.

8. Interchangeability

Interchangeability means that individuals who use a language can both send and receive any permissible message within that communication system. Human beings can be a producer as well as receiver of messages. In addition, a speaker can reproduce any linguistic message she or he can understand and can perceive what they are transmitting and can make corrections if they make errors. Besides human beings' language, gibbon calls and bee dancing are the other two forms of communication that manifest interchangeability.

9. Cultural Transmission

Cultural transmission means that various languages are culturally transmitted, not genetically. Languages have been inherited through acquiring, teaching, and learning, rather than through instinct. But the genetic basis of language acquisition, such as language mechanism as advocated by some linguists, is not denied.

1.1.3 Origin of Language

We have to make the origin of language clear in order to answer the question of "when and how did language arise?" Here are some answers to this question:

When	Language with syntax (rather than just individual words) is very recent in the evolutionary scheme: perhaps it has been with us for as little as one or two hundred thousand years, a very short period in the evolution of our species.
How	Most linguists agree that language is in its spoken form when it originated. Spoken language might have originated from the imitation or transmutation of animals or the sounds in the natural environment.

If language is vital for the survival of a species, why have only human beings succeeded in acquiring language? However, there are only some hypotheses for the origin of language: Some linguists believe that language arises from animal sounds like bird song, dolphin whistles, and monkey hoots through hundreds of millions of years of evolution. Therefore, the earliest form of language was imitative. Some argues that language is uniquely a human adaptation, or series of adaptations, with no precursors among other species.

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

1. The Divine-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. But linguists do not attach much importance to this theory.

2. The Invention Theory

Many think that language was invented by human beings in their life, from imitating 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 arise from a sudden genetic change in the brain and the nervous system that took place over 150,000 years ago. Some stress the development of the physical apparatus (i.e. the vocal tract and the flexibility of the tongue) for speech; while others highlight the highly developed cognitive abilities.

4. First Language

Some believe that there existed the first language, or the most primitive language, wherefrom all languages on the planet originated. Some even offer the evidence of one language to be the first in the world, such as Chinese, Hebrew and Phrygian.

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

1.1.4 Functions of Language

Language is the tool for human communication. Then the answer for the functions of language seems to be very simple: to communicate. In fact, there exist many categories of functions of language. Some linguists attempted to categorize the various concrete functions that we can think of. For example, the functions of meeting your most basic needs can be called survival functions. Socializing, establishing and maintaining relationships, getting away barriers,

influencing people, giving feedback, arguing, and avoiding trouble fall into the category of social functions. Expressing opinions and emotions can be categorized into the function of expressive functions. Managing conversations is the cognitive function. And all these functions fall into the category of communicative function. People generally agree on the concrete functions of language, only the classifications are different.

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

1. Halliday's Theory

Language performs ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. Ideational function creats a model of experience and logical relations, interpersonal function enact social relationships, and textual function creates relevance to context.

2. Jakobson's Theory

The basic function of language is communication. Jakobson 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. The following table will give a clear illustration of these functions:

Functions	Roles in communication	Examples	Notes
phatic	To create an atmosphere, or maintain social contact	Greetings, farewells and comments	When a person is asked "How's everything going?", he is not expected to complain endlessly on his work.
performative	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 (descriptive)	To tell the fact and describe the material worl	"I have a red suit." "He went to Paris last week."	It is characterized by the use of declarative sentences.
expressive (emotive)	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.

(to be continued)

Functions	Roles in communication	Examples	Notes
evocative	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	To get the listeners to do something	"I suggest that you go there." "Please be seated." "Could you open the window?" "If I were you I wouldn't have said that to her."	Usually the imperative sentences can be taken as directive, and other types of sentences, such as interrogatives and subjunctive mood, etc. can also serve this function.
interrogative	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?"

Except for the above functions, other common functions of language include the interpersonal function and the recreational one etc. Since they are not the main functions of language, we will not go deeply into the discussion about them.

1.2 Linguistics

1.2.1 What Is Linguistics?

Linguistics is the branch of cognitive science concerned with language. It can be defined as the scientific study of language, which involves the investigation into all human languages. Linguists study the structure of language in general, and of specific languages. Their studies include the sound structure, the syntax (how sentences are put together), semantics (meaning), and pragmatics (how language is used), etc. interfacing with psychology, neurology, sociology, anthropology, and physics, etc. Linguists argue that it is possible to study language as a distinct cognitive system, abstracted from issues such as communication, aesthetics or persuasiveness. And their task is to investigate how languages are constructed, applied and related to each other.

The goals of linguistics are to understand:

a. What linguistic knowledge is;

b. How it is represented in the mind;

c. How linguistic knowledge is acquired;

d. How the knowledge is perceived;

e. How the knowledge is applied;

f. How it relates to other aspects of cognition.

1.2.2 Distinctions in Linguistics

It is necessary to know the basic distinctions in linguistics since they are fundamental to the understanding of linguistics. And

if anyone intends to further investigate into this field of study, they will certainly benefit greatly from the knowledge and theories of these distinctions. But still the following categories are not perfect yet and are constantly in development.

1. Langue and Parole

Saussure distinguished the linguistic competence of the speaker and the actual phenomena or data of linguistics (utterances) as langue and parole. Below is the comparison between the two concepts:

	Langue	Parole
Definition	The shared social code and the abstract system including the underlying sets of linguistic structures, patterns, principles or unstated rules upon which individuals base their speech.	The particular actualities of individual utterances. Speech, the idiosyncratic utterances made by individuals.
Characteristics	It is neither behavioral nor observable, but conceptual and only indirectly evident through analysis of observable behavior.	It varies enormously (and which individuals can creatively reorganize). It is actually observable.
Part of language	It includes the lexicon, grammar, and phonology established in each individual by his background in society and on the basis of which he speaks and understands his language.	Speech, writings and other observable linguistic behaviors carried out for communication.
Comparing with the chess game	The rules, the pieces of chess and the board.	Actual games of chess.

Language, for Saussure, is the symbolic system through which we communicate. Since we can communicate an infinite number of utterances in different circumstances, it is the system behind them that is important. For him, therefore, it is langue rather than parole that is more important and worthy of investigation. As a result, the object of linguistics, Saussure argued, must be language (langue) and not speech (parole). Thus in linguistics, while we may collect our data from actual instances of speech, our goal is to work back to the system of rules and words that organizes speech.

2. Diachronic and synchronic

More than a century ago, Saussure attempted to distinguish between synchronic and diachronic linguistics. The former is the study of a language as a self-contained system of communication at any particular time, i.e. at a particular stage or moment of its development, most usually at the moment it is studied and the latter is about how a language changes over time. We will see both distinctions respectively.

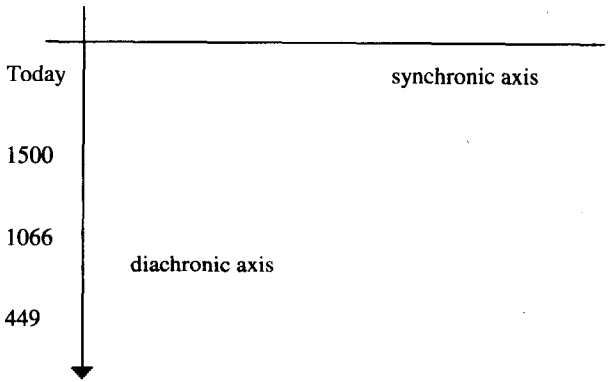
(1) Diachronic view

Diachronic linguistics views the historical development of a language. It is the study of a language through the course of its history. Thus, on the diachronic axis employed by some linguists we can go back and forth in time, investigating the language in change during all these years. Besides the term

"diachronic linguistics" we can have the term " historical linguistics" as well. Historical linguistics is diachronic, "across time". It inquires about and illustrates where languages arose, how they are interrelated and how they have changed over time.

Diachronic linguistics distinguishes four phases of English: **Old English, Middle English, Early Modern English and Present-day English** (or Modern English). Although this division is somewhat arbitrary and idealized, certain phonological, morphological and syntactic features peculiar to the period characterize each of these stages. One stage shows distinct changes from the previous one in these features. Language changes occur through gradual and constant processes and they convert English from one stage to another.

Although it is not required to command the stages of English, which only introduces the characteristics of each stage, for studies and research on this language, we have to acknowledge that the historical study of English can be useful to explain synchronic irregularities. And it will be easier for students to gain access to the medium in which English literature is transmitted.



(2) **Synchronic view**

Before the 20th century, English linguistics had a historical orientation, i.e., it examined the development of the language and its position within the Indo-European language family. Since the beginning of this century, the synchronic study of language has been further emphasized. Synchronic linguistics views a particular state of a language at some fixed or given point in time. This could mean Modern English of the present day, or the systematic analysis of the system of Shakespeare's English.

Modern linguistics, following Ferdinand de Saussure, is primarily interested in the synchronic point of view. Saussure assumed the priority of synchrony: No knowledge of the historical development of a language is necessary to examine its present system. The fact that "beef" is an Anglicization of a Middle French word that entered into English after the Norman Conquest is completely unnecessary for understanding its use in contemporary speech.

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