

21世纪英语专业系列教材



对比语言学导论

(英文版)

柯平 / 主编



北京大学出版社
PEKING UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Introduction to Contrastive Linguistics

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PREFACE

The first edition of this book was published under the heading of *Contrastive Linguistics* in 1999 and has since then been used by many colleges and universities in China as a coursebook or listed as a major reading item for graduate students of English who took the course Contrastive Linguistics. This new edition was revised and slightly enlarged to accommodate the needs of students studying languages or other subjects in the humanities or social sciences. It may be used as an introductory reader of contrastive linguistics for learners who have little knowledge of linguistics but are interested in such disciplines as Contrastive Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, Translation Studies, Second Language Teaching, Chinese as a Foreign Language, Communication, or other subjects of study which involve the use of a second language.

The work grew out of an attempt to rethink my introductory course offered for years to graduate students enrolled in programs of Linguistics, Translation Studies, or Bilingual Lexicography at Nanjing University and, in the past academic year, to the undergraduate students of Translation at the University of Macau as well. It is written with a one-semester course in mind although, with the addition of some supplementary materials, it could be used for two semesters.

Although many tertiary institutions in China and other countries or areas of the world have included Contrastive Linguistics in their postgraduate or undergraduate curricula for a long time, the subject of the course remains indeterminate to some extent and many explorations made in this field are still somewhat tentative. While researching and writing this book, I kept reminding myself that a work providing merely a general survey of the “state of the art” of this particular branch of linguistics and its general, “standard” theories would not be of much help to the students: contrast and comparison are not ends in themselves; they should serve some meaningful purposes. The important point is that the contrastive

analysis made should lend us useful insights into some real problems in areas of language use and study. In my opinion, these areas should include, among others, the theory and practice of translation, second language teaching and learning, bilingual lexicography, and general linguistics. Based on this understanding, this work places somewhat greater emphasis on what contrastive linguistics has to offer to related fields of linguistic studies and practice than on the discipline of contrastive linguistics itself.

For the convenience of readers, key terms are usually printed in boldface type, especially when they are newly introduced into the text. Each chapter concludes with a “Questions for Discussion and Research” section, in which are presented some questions and issues related to what is dealt with in the chapter. By trying to respond to them, students can not only test their understanding of the content of the chapter but also learn to apply what they have learned in the course to the analysis of interlingual problems in the real world.

A book of this kind no doubt draws on a wide variety of sources. I owe a lot to the authors of the sources as listed in the References and wish to express my deep appreciation to all of them for the valuable information and inspiration their work has benefited me with. I am also very grateful to my students at Nanjing University and the University of Macau, whose questions, comments, suggestions, and keen interest in the book itself have been the chief driving force behind the revision of this work one decade after the publication of its first edition.

Ke Ping

June, 2016

Department of English, FAH, University of Macau

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This book was written in a plain and direct style. It consists of seven chapters. In the first two chapters, we discuss the name, nature, classification, and history of **contrastive linguistics** (对比语言学), as well as the general principles of and procedures for contrastive analysis. By doing that we get some basic ideas about the subject of our study: its status, its theoretical background and assumptions as well as its methodology.

The remaining chapters, which make up the main body of this book, will be devoted to contrastive analysis at various linguistic levels. We shall first take a “classic” contrastive look at languages, concentrating on **lexis** (the total stock of words in a language [词汇]) and **grammar** (语法); and then assume a macrolinguistic approach to **contrastive linguistics** (对比语言学), treating language as function in context, and looking into such topics as **contrastive text linguistics** and **pragmatics** (语用学). The emphasis of these chapters will be placed on the contributions contrastive linguistics can make to fields as diverse as translation studies, language learning and teaching, writing, and general linguistic theory.

1.1 What is Contrastive Linguistics?

When we take up any subject for study, we usually start by investigating its nature, its relevance to us, and the way to study it. In other words, we ask three basic questions: (a) what it is, (b) why it is needed or important, and (c) how we are to do it. In this section we shall try to answer these three basic questions about **contrastive linguistics** (对比语言学).

1.1.1 The Name and Nature of Contrastive Linguistics

1.1.1.1 Linguistics

Apparently **contrastive linguistics** (对比语言学) is something related to or subsumed under linguistics. So let us, as the saying goes, begin from the very beginning and start with an examination of the name and nature of linguistics.

Language is used by us every day. It is a reality, that is, it is something actually observed or experienced by us. Generally speaking, we can distinguish three modes or aspects of reality—physical, social, and psychological—and at least five modes of knowing or approaches to the understanding of reality, that is, **philosophical, mathematical, theological, hermeneutic, and scientific**. Researchers in various disciplines, depending on the specific mode(s) or aspect(s) of reality they are concerned about, approach their objects of study largely from one of these five perspectives.

We may consider the following facts about language and possible ways of understanding the reality of language before we characterize the nature of **linguistics** (语言学).

(1) As structured (linguistic) use of the auditory-vocal mode of patterned human communication, language is **physically real**. Created by, and acquired and used in the human society, language is a social phenomenon and obviously has **social reality**, too.

(2) As human behavior, language is **psychologically real**. Two major linguistic schools that evolved in the 20th century were **structural linguistics** (结构语言学) and **generative linguistics** (生成语言学). Both structural linguists and generative linguists analyze language in terms of human behavior (that is, “verbal behavior”—in fact a book American behaviorist and structural linguist B. F. Skinner [1904-1990] wrote in 1957 takes that very title).

Structural linguistics (结构语言学) adopts a behavioristic approach towards language, treating it as a product of the **stimulus-response** (刺激-反应) mechanism of the humankind. This approach has been proved to interpret the nature of the phenomenon of language in an inaccurate or inadequate way. The

limitations of behaviorism as a method of explanation of human behavior have been severely criticized by the generative schools of linguistics led by Noam Chomsky.

Chomsky argues that the basic mistake of behaviorists is that they do not postulate any mental mechanism underlying organized human behavior, linguistic behavior included. The transformational theory of language assumes the existence of such an underlying mental structure which, it asserts, is common to all people. The study of language makes access to this mental reality possible. Thus, the linguistic theory is supposed to contribute to the general knowledge about the mental capacities of man rather than to the knowledge of his linguistic behavior.

Although structural and generative linguists hold different assumptions about the nature of the mental mechanism operating under observable language behavior, it is not difficult to see that they all regard language as something related to human mind and treat language as a psychological reality.

(3) Language is not usually considered to be related to the nature of God and religious beliefs, so the study of language is rarely, if ever, approached from the **theological** perspective. Neither is language per se about the nature of knowledge, reality, and existence (as philosophy is), or about the numbers, quantities, or shapes used to calculate, represent, or describe things (as mathematics is). Therefore, the **philosophical** and **mathematical approaches** to the study of language are relevant only in limited ways.

(4) The **hermeneutic approach**, which was developed in the 19th century by German Protestant theologians (Rudolf Bultmann [1884-1976], Friedrich Schleiermacher [1768-1834], etc.) and German philosophers (Wilhelm Dilthey [1833-1911], Martin Heidegger [1889-1976], Hans-Georg Gadamer [1900-2002], etc.) and which has been influential in many realms of humanistic inquiry for more than a century, is however not typically employed in modern studies of language. The **hermeneutic approach** (阐释学路径) lays emphasis on the individual characteristics. The typical method it employs is known as *verstehen* (“understand [from within]” [设身处地地去理解领悟 (对象)]), which is a term used in Germany from the late 19th century to denote the understanding of a subject of study from within, by means of empathy, intuition, or imagination, as opposed to getting to know it from without, by means of observation or calculation. The hermeneutic approach was thought by some to be characteristic

of history, literature, and the social sciences as opposed to the natural sciences, and by others to be characteristic of history and literature as opposed to the social sciences.

Most present-day researchers of language, however, do not approach language as hermeneuticians would do: basically they do not focus on the individualistic traits as seen in the use of language, but on all the properties which are common to all the users of a given language, and further, on all the properties which define the notion of human language as such; neither do they rely on the *verstehen* method in their study of language, because that method is based on a belief that is hard to verify (in the sense of establishing a belief or proposition as true), i.e. we can understand the behavior of human beings by being able to share their “state of mind.” According to the logical positivists, if a proposition is to be significant, it has to be verifiable by sense-experience, or by attention to the meaning of the words that express it, or, indirectly, by induction or demonstration. The *verstehen* method is certainly not a method of verification and can hardly be used as a scientific tool.

(5) What is most widely followed in contemporary language studies community is the **scientific approach**. Modern language study (**linguistics** [语言学]) claims to be an empirical science and as such aims at producing true (in the sense of “**verifiable**” and “**falsifiable**”) statements by means of formulating **testable hypotheses**.

Based on the essential characteristics of language and the relevant approaches to the study of language as elaborated above, we may depict the nature of linguistics as follows:

Linguistics (语言学) is the scientific study of human language, which exists primarily as physical, social and psychological realities.

1.1.1.2 Contrastive Linguistics (Contrastive Analysis)

What, then, is contrastive linguistics? Apparently, **contrastive linguistics** (对比语言学) is a kind of or a branch of linguistics. As its name suggests, contrastive linguistics involves **contrast** or **comparison**. Comparison is one of the basic ways by which we study and get to know things, just as the saying goes, “only by comparison can one distinguish.”

The method of comparison is widely used in linguistics. Almost all the branches of linguistics involve comparison of one kind or another, since to identify and elaborate on a particular feature of the human language, linguists usually have to make explicit or implicit comparative or **contrastive analyses** (对比分析) (CA) of the various forms which the feature finds expression in and the parallels of these forms in other comparable or related systems. For instance, to establish the grammatical feature of the **plural**, linguists have to compare different languages to find out the various possible forms with which it can be actualized, like inflection (such as *cats* [/kæts/] and *dogs* [/dɒgz/], and *classes* [/kla:sɪz/] in English), and lexical means (such as *haoxie maogou* [好些猫狗] and *duoge banji* [多个班级] in Chinese).

We may come to a better understanding of the nature of **contrastive linguistics** (对比语言学) by putting it in the perspective of a general framework of comparisons within and between languages.

Comparison may be conducted intralingually or interlingually, on a synchronic basis or on a diachronic basis. So four types of comparison may be distinguished:

	Synchronic	Diachronic
Intralingual	① synchronic intralingual comparison	② diachronic intralingual comparison
Interlingual	④ synchronic interlingual comparison	③ diachronic interlingual comparison

Table 1-1 Types of comparison within and between languages

(1) **Synchronic intralingual comparison** (共时语内比较). This is the comparison of the constituent forms of the phonetic, phonological, lexical, grammatical and other linguistic systems within a particular language during a specific period of its evolution. For instance, to identify and describe the phonetic system of a *particular* language, linguists need to compare all its **phonemes** (音位) with regard to their **places of articulation** (发音位置) (e.g. front as /i:/ in *beat*, back as /əʊ/ in *boat*, high as /ʊ/ in *put*, low as /ɒ/ in *pot*) and **manners of articulation** (发音方法) (e.g. unrounded as /e/ in *bait*, rounded as /u:/ in *shoe*, voiced as /d/ in *den*, stopped as /t/ in *team*), their acoustic qualities as well as their **distributions** (分布) in the syllables of the language.

(2) **Diachronic intralingual comparison** (历时语内比较). This kind of