

高等院校英语专业精品系列教材



新世纪网络课程建设工程项目

# 语言学概论

## An Introduction to Linguistics

主编 杨信彰



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主编 杨信彰

编者 杨信彰 刘承宇 李 力



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## 内容提要

本书是高等院校英语专业精品系列教材之一。

本书内容理论联系实际、重点突出。在介绍语言学的基本理论和概念的同时反映了语言学研究的新发展。全书共9章,包括语言与语言学、语音、词法、句法、语义、语用与语篇分析、语言与社会文化、语言习得与思维和语言教学等。本书体系完整、使用方便,每小节后配有练习题。书后提供了每小节的“参考书目”。另附术语表。

本书可供英语专业学生使用,也可供理工科和其他文科学生使用。

本书配有网络课程,网络课程中每小节后提供“相关链接”。

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## 前 言

语言学理论是普通高校语言专业学生需要掌握的重要知识,“语言学概论”在许多学校也已经成为一门专业必修课。经过百来年的发展,现代语言学研究不断深入,研究的领域不断扩展,新的理论和概念不断出现。为了适应这种形势,我们编写了这本《语言学概论》。全书采用课程教材的结构,使学生能够系统地掌握语言学知识。同时,本书配有网络课程,利用网络这一现代化的教学手段展现以“语言”为主干的概念体系,使基于语言学各范畴的纵向系统学习更加方便。

在编写的过程中,编者本着理论联系实际、重点突出的原则介绍了语言学的基本理论和概念,着力培养学生的感性认识和理性认识。在编排上,由浅入深、循序渐进,同时注意内容的连贯性。全书共九章。第一章介绍了语言的本质和语言学的研究内容;第二章至第五章对语言的各个层面进行了阐述,如语音、词汇、句法和语义;第六章至第八章介绍了语言与外部要素的联系,如语用学与语篇分析、语言与社会文化、语言习得与思维等;第九章讨论了语言学理论在语言教学中的应用问题。

本书在介绍语言学的一些基本理论和概念的同时,注意跟踪语言学研究的最新发展,增加了许多近年来新出现的理论和概念。例如,在描述语言和符号的关系时,涉及了语音、音位、形态、词汇、句法等问题。在语义学方面,讨论了语义研究的传统方法、功能语言学的方法和语用学的方法。鉴于语篇在语言研究中的重要性,书中探讨了语篇分析的内容和分析工具。在讨论语言和社会文化时,考察了语言的各种功能变体、语言变化的过程和各种原因。在讲述语言习得时,增加了Halliday的功能语言学解释以及近几年学者对第二语言习得的研究。在描写语言和思维的关系问题时,融入了Sapir、Jackendoff等人的观点。此外,第九章详细讨论了语言学理论对语言教学的指导作用,内容涉及语言教学法、大纲设计、测试、错误分析等。

本书可供一个学期使用,建议安排36课时完成学习任务。使用者也可根据实际情况灵活掌握学习进度。为了方便读者学习,在每个小节后配有练习题。在书后附有针对每个小节的“参考书目”,此外附有术语表。读者除了学习本书的内容、完成练习题外,还可以根据书中所提供的参考书目进行更深入的学习。本书可与教育部新世纪网络课程项目《语言学概论网络课程》配套使用,在网络课程中每小节后提供“相关链接”。

本书由杨信彰、刘承宇、李力编写。杨信彰负责制定编写原则和全书的整体设计,编写了第一章、第二章以及全书的练习和“参考书目”,并通读了全书;刘承宇负责第三章、第五章、第六章和第九章的编写;李力负责第四章、第七章、第八章和术语表的编写。在编写过程中,我们广泛参考了各种书籍(详见“参考文献”)。各位学者的见解和思想开阔了我们

的视野，无法详尽地一一列出，谨在此表示衷心的感谢。本书的出版，还应该感谢厦门大学黄鸣奋、巫汉祥、黄凇奇三位老师的大力支持以及高等教育出版社的不断鼓励。

由于编者的水平有限，书中肯定存在不少疏漏和欠妥之处，欢迎读者和同行批评指正。

编 者  
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教育部高等教育出版社主要负责全国普通高等教育、成人教育、职业技术教育等方面的教学用书、学术专著、译著、工具书、录音教材、录像教材、电子出版物等的出版发行工作。

包括此书在内的英语专业系列教材被列为“教育部面向21世纪课程教材”和“普通高等教育‘九五’国家级重点教材”，并于2002年获得“全国普通高等学校优秀教材一等奖”。同时，与之相配套的网络课程也将于不久与广大学生见面。

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# Language and Linguistics

## 1.1

### The Nature of Language

As human beings, we can feel the existence of language everywhere. However, very few of us know the true nature of language. There is remarkable uncertainty as to how language really functions in human communication. Many philosophers, historians, and linguists have been exerting every effort to define the nature of language from different points of view.

Sapir (1921: 7) in *Language* takes language as “a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols”.

Mario Pei and Frank Gaynor (1954) in *A Dictionary of Linguistics* regard language as “a system of communication by sound, i.e. through the organs of speech and hearing, among human beings of a certain group or community, using vocal symbols possessing arbitrary conventional meanings”.

Jack et al. (1985) in *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics* define language as “the system of human communication by means of a structured arrangement of sounds (or their written representation) to form larger units, e.g. morphemes, words, sentences”.

Hadumod Bussmann (1996) in *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics* views language as “vehicle for the expression or exchange 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 societal factors and subject to historical change and development”.

Unfortunately, a perfect and satisfactory definition has yet to come. However, most linguists have come to a general agreement about the following important features that are typical of the nature of human language.

### 1.1.1 Language Is Systematic

In natural verbal communication, people can learn and use a language consistently. This shows that language is systematic. This property is usually claimed to be unique to humans. Each human language is organized into two basic systems: a system of sounds and a system of meanings. This is called the duality of language. Linguists are concerned not only with characteristics of the two systems but also with their relationship.

Sounds are units which combine to make words or parts of words, like *tea*, *blackboard*, *im-*, and *-ly*. These units will enter in systematic ways into various combinations to form larger meaningful sequences, like complex words, phrases, or sentences. Different sequences of sounds have difference in meaning. Human language operates on two levels of structure.

At one level, elements have no meaning themselves. They have meaning when combined to form units at another level. The basic sound units of speech, such as [b], [e], and [d], are normally meaningless by themselves, but they can have meaning when they are put together into sequences such as *bed*[bed]. Not all the sounds are used by speakers of any language, and only certain combinations of sounds are possible.

Our daily experience tells us that in the sound system of a language, only a small number of sounds are used again and again in various combinations to form units of meaning. In the meaning system, these units of meaning can be arranged in an infinite number of ways to express both simple and complicated ideas. A language offers its speaker the opportunity to talk about anything. The interesting thing is that the number of words in a language is relatively finite but their possible combination can be infinite.

However, linguists are interested in exploring the unlimited possibilities any language offers to its speakers. This will include ways of describing not only sounds and combinations of sounds, but also sentences and parts of sentences.

In a language we can find agreed-upon sound-meaning relations and agreed-upon sequences. This means that there is a set of organizing principles

that control any system of language. These principles can be called rules.

The rules of the English sound system, for example, permit *slid* and *snid* as possible words, but not *znid* or *sntd*. In addition, a language has rules for the formation of sentences and parts of sentences such as phrases and clauses. These rules make up the syntax of the language.

Syntax may deal with the ordering of words, as we can see by these sentences:

*The boss hit Tom.*

*Tom hit the boss.*

This ordering is typical of English. The agent of the action is placed before the verb and the object at the end. The concepts of agent and object are probably found in all languages, but the means used to express them may vary. We can examine sentence structure by looking at such ambiguous sentences as *She read the book you gave her yesterday*. If *you gave her the book yesterday*, the structure is organized like this: *She read the book (you gave her yesterday)*. Here, *yesterday* is part of the cluster to which *gave* belongs. For the meaning “*Yesterday she read the book you gave her*”, the sentence would be understood as “*She read the book (you gave her) yesterday*”.

## EXERCISES

- The following two sentences are said to be ambiguous in meaning. How many interpretations could you give to either of them? What can you do to resolve such ambiguity?
  - He turned in his bed.
  - They gave preference to young men and women.
- Identify the units that have reference and the units that indicate structure.  
I saw Mary when I went to the library.
- How would you judge the following four sentences? Are they good or bad sentences?
  - The moon is made of brown eggs.
  - Moon brown the is of made eggs.
  - 慢走，您。
  - 为了安全，给您。

### 1.1.2 Language Is Symbolic

As we know, people use signs to communicate, which means that language

involves signs. The conception of sign has evolved through a long history of philosophical discussions, dating back to the Middle Ages. There has been a discipline to study the workings of signs. Saussure calls it “semiology”, and Peirce terms it “semiotics”.

Traditionally, signs are divided into natural signs and conventional signs. Natural signs do not depend on the whim of man and stand in an iconic or picturing relation to what they signify. An image in a mirror is a natural sign of the person mirrored. The mirror image is the causal effect of the object mirrored or a process emanating from this object, like smoke of the effect of fire and symptoms of some underlying disease. A conventional sign is a sign established by-convention and may have connection with the thing signified, e.g. maps, words.

Semiotics became an independent discipline with the work of Charles Peirce, who views semiotics as a branch of logic and philosophy. In contrast to the empirical studies by the linguists at the time, Peirce extends the scope of semiotics beyond the linguistic signs used in human communication. After Peirce, the science of signs in Europe came to have an anthropological orientation.

For Saussure, linguistics is a subdivision of semiology, dealing with language as a special means of human communication. However, later, Roland Barthes and others extend semiology to include complex cultural forms of communication such as painting, music, films, theatre, dance, clothing, advertising, architecture, literature, and even food.

Signs are ubiquitous in human society. To study language, we need to find out the location of language in sign systems and understand, among other things, the relationship between an object and the sign that stands for the object. According to Traugott & Pratt (1980), signs can be categorized into three major types.

#### (1) Icon

We say a sign is an icon when an object and its sign are related to each other by a physical resemblance. For example, a photo that is taken of a video cassette can be said to be an icon.

#### (2) Index

A sign is called an index when an object and its sign are associated to each other by physical proximity. In the case of thunder and lightning, thunder is an index.

#### (3) Symbol

If a sign and the object it signifies are associated by social convention, the sign is called a symbol. Common symbols include traffic lights, wedding rings,