

牛津应用语言学丛书



Vague Language

模 糊 语 言

Joanna Channell

上海外语教育出版社



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出版前言

去年5月本社出版了从牛津大学出版社引进的19种“牛津应用语言学丛书”,受到了外语教学界师生的一致好评和欢迎,在短短的一年中,重印了4次。为了向我国的外语教学和研究人员提供更多的学术参考专著,帮助读者了解近年来国外应用语言学和外语教学研究的理论,促进我国外语教学的研究和改革,本社又挑选了10本该系列中的精品,奉献给广大读者。希望本套丛书能够对于借鉴国外研究成果和总结我国自己的外语教学经验,形成具有中国特色的外语教学理论有所帮助。

《模糊语言》是一部从英语教学的角度分析、研究英语中有模糊意义的单词、短语和表达法的学术著作。作者J·查奈尔(Joanna Channell)博士是伯明翰大学的名誉研究员,从事英语语料库研究并撰写Cobuild系列出版物。查奈尔博士自1978年起就开始从事英语及应用语言学的研究、教学和学术创作,对如何将语言学知识运用于现实世界诸问题尤感兴趣,曾到波兰、德国和澳大利亚等国讲学。

与以往从哲学或模糊数学的角度入手研究模糊语言不同,本书以语言使用为基础,结合英语教学,着重对模糊语言进行分类分析。全书的九个章节可以归纳为三个部分。前两章主要介绍什么是模糊语言,在书中作者用什么方法研究模糊语言。作者指出,尽管长期以来“明白”与“精确”是我们讲话或写作所追求的标准,但是在现实生活中,模糊语言大量存在。书中着重处理的模糊现象有三类:第一类是模糊附加词,即附加在意义明确的表达形式之前的词或短语,可使本来意义精确的概念变得模糊;第二类是模糊词语,即有些词语和表达形式本身就是模糊的;第三类是模糊蕴含,即有的清晰概念蕴含着某些不言自明的细枝末节,以精确形式传递模糊意义。作者认为语言研究应该采用真实的语料,而不是杜撰的、脱离语境的句子。因此,本书采用了语用学的观点和方法分析模糊语言。

接下来的五章为第二部分。这一部分用相当大的篇幅列举了语言运用中的大量实例,内容涉及数词和约数词、约整数词、模糊量词、类型标记符以及占位符等方面,分析其模糊性的根源和实质,并指出对英语教学的启示。

最后两章为第三部分。作者指出,模糊语言使用的背后有许多动机,有时讲话者想提供更精确的信息,有时是为了保密,有时则是迫不得已,因为语言中可能没有现成的表达形式。在全书的结尾处,作者简要回顾了自己的论述,然后指出:在语言理解中,听话人不会停留在字面意义上,而是尽可能发觉隐含的模糊意义;语言研究也不能只停留在单词和句子的水平,而应该考虑语境。这不仅对语言理论研究有指导意义,对英语及其他语种的教学实践、掌握交际技巧、遵循礼貌原则等,也颇具启示作用。

本书的读者对象为英语及语言学与应用语言学专业的教师、研究生,英语及相关专业的本科高年级学生,模糊逻辑、模糊数学等相关专业的研究人员和感兴趣者。

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2000年5月

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Particular people helped with specific aspects of the work. John Local showed me how to understand the complexities of repair mechanisms in intonation and commented generally on the transcription of intonation; David Pimm and Rolph Schwartzburger tried to give me a more mathematical perception of number; and Walter Grauberg helped me with the French examples in Chapters 3 and 4.

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Billy Bayswater, Nigel Watts, Hodder and Stoughton 1990.

Curse the Darkness, Lesley Grant-Adamson, Faber and Faber 1990.

Follow the Sun, Arthur Marshall, Sinclair-Stevenson 1990.

Nice Work, David Lodge, Secker and Warburg 1988.

The Guardian, July-November 1989 and April-July 1990.

The Independent, 1989–90.

Data from three papers published by academic economists is also referred to. Since the authors took part in a study in which they were interviewed about their writing, some of the results of which are used in this book, the precise sources of the papers are not given, in order to protect the identity of the authors. The three papers are identified as [E].

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The author and series editors

Joanna Channell has been researching, teaching, and writing about the English language and applied linguistics since 1978. She has a special interest in applications of linguistics to real world issues. Funding for her applied research and consultancy has come from such diverse sources as the National Westminster Bank, the UK Department of Employment, the UK Post-Experience Vocational Education (PEVE) Initiative, as well as from publishers and the Leverhulme Trust. After D.Phil. work at the University of York, she lectured at the University of Nottingham from 1983 to 1991, initially as Lecturer in EFL, and later as Lecturer in Linguistics. She is an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham, working on the Bank of English corpora and on development work for Cobuild publications. Dr Channell has lectured on her work in Poland, Germany, and Australia. Her previous publications include *The Words You Need* and *More Words You Need* (Macmillan 1980 and 1985).

John Sinclair has been Professor of Modern English Language at the University of Birmingham since 1965. His main areas of research are discourse (both spoken and written) and computational linguistics—with particular emphasis on the study of very long texts. He has been consultant/adviser to a number of groups including, among others, the Bullock Committee, The British Council, and the National Congress for Languages in Education. He holds the title of Adjunct Professor in Jiao Tong University, Shanghai. Professor Sinclair has published extensively, and is currently Editor-in-Chief of the Cobuild project at Birmingham University.

Ronald Carter is Professor of Modern English Language in the Department of English Studies at the University of Nottingham where he has taught since 1979. He is Chairman of the Poetics and

Linguistics Association of Great Britain, a member of CNA A panels for Humanities, and a member of the Literature Advisory Committee of The British Council. Dr Carter has published widely in the areas of language and education, applied linguistics, and literary linguistics. He is Director of the Centre for English Language Education at the University of Nottingham, and from 1989 to 1992 was National Co-ordinator for Language in the National Curriculum.

Foreword

Describing English Language

The Describing English Language series provides much-needed descriptions of modern English. Analysis of extended naturally-occurring texts, spoken and written, and, in particular, computer processing of texts, have revealed quite unsuspected patterns of language. Traditional descriptive frameworks are normally not able to account for or accommodate such phenomena, and new approaches are required. This series aims to meet the challenge of describing linguistic features as they are encountered in real contexts of use in extended stretches of discourse. Accordingly, and taking the revelations of recent research into account, each book in the series will make appropriate reference to corpora of naturally-occurring data.

The series will cover most areas of the continuum between theoretical and applied linguistics, converging around the mid-point suggested by the term 'descriptive'. In this way, we believe the series can be of maximum potential usefulness.

One principal aim of the series is to exploit the relevance to teaching of an increased emphasis on the description of naturally-occurring stretches of language. To this end, the books are illustrated with frequent references to examples of language use. Contributors to the series will consider both the substantial changes taking place in our understanding of the English language and the inevitable effect of such changes upon syllabus specifications, design of materials, and choice of method.

John Sinclair, *University of Birmingham*
Ronald Carter, *University of Nottingham*

Vague Language

When Dr Channell first described her project to the series editors, it was received with great enthusiasm. The art of being vague is a neglected concern for the linguist, and yet an important part of the armoury of every speaker and writer. But the title worried us a little. Would the intended readership like it? 'Vagueness' has rather negative connotations, after all. Teachers surely put great emphasis on such virtues as clarity, precision, and care in the use of language—how could they espouse vagueness as an object of interest in communication, far less as a sometimes desirable communicative goal? We tried something more pompous—Precision and Imprecision in Languages—but as the work took shape we all felt growing confidence in the directness of the original title. There is nothing to be ashamed of in vague language; in fact, if people did not have access to it their range of communication would be severely restricted.

As speakers of the 'same' language, people share a common code, and a rough agreement about the meaning of the code—but it is not always precise, except in specialized codes like mathematics and logic, where the range of expression is very limited indeed. As Dr Channell shows, ordinary language leaves room for people to be vague, to avoid precision and the commitment associated with it.

The range of devices we have for being vague—many of which are exceedingly common and instantly recognizable—is astonishing and comes out clearly in this book. *Vague Language* sets new standards in the documentation of the pragmatics of language. It is a fascinating picture of language in use.

John Sinclair

Text data, its sources, and presentation

Naturally-occurring text data from both spoken and written sources is discussed in this book.

Spoken data

There are six sources, identified as follows:

- [A] author's corpus
- [B] examples from the corpus of Marion Owen
- [C] examples from the Bank of English
- [D] examples from the British National Corpus

Naturally-occurring examples published in the work of other investigations are credited to that person, with a full reference in the bibliography.

Finally, data transcribed off-air from BBC Radio programmes is identified by the programme name, and acknowledged in full in the acknowledgements.

Invented data: in some places it was necessary to invent examples, and these are marked [I].

Conventions used in the transcription of spoken data:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| A: B: | stands for different speakers |
| (laughs) | brackets enclose description of non-linguistic communication |
| (.) | untimed pause |
| [| indicates speech or vocal noise concurrent with that above |

/ /	encloses interjected utterance from a different speaker
~~~~~	indecipherable speech
↑ ↓	marked pitch deviation, upwards/downwards
"	precedes emphatically-stressed syllable
[ ]	encloses transcriber or situational comment
—	any prosodic feature heard as delineating a sense group

I have used apostrophes in *don't*, *can't*, simply because it seems upsetting to miss them out. They are however omitted where intonation transcription is included, because they would interfere with reading the intonation symbols.

## Written data

In each case, written data is reproduced as it first occurred. A brief indication of its source is given where it appears, and a full acknowledgement appears in the acknowledgements.

## Conventions used in the transcription of intonation

	onset of tone unit
	end of tone unit
·	stressed syllable
"	heavy stress
`	fall
˘	rise
^	rise-fall
˘	fall-rise
(.)	untimed pause
↑ ↓	sudden pitch change for beginning of next segment

