

简明英语语言学教程

CONCISE COURSE ON LINGUISTICS
FOR STUDENTS OF ENGLISH

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编者的话

虽然人们对语言的研究可以追溯到远古时期，但一般都认为，本世纪初瑞士语言学家索绪尔“普通语言学教程”一书的出版，标志着现代语言学研究的开端。因此可以说语言学这一学科的历史不太长，但在最近的三、四十年间，这一学科取得了异乎寻常的发展。各国的学者从不同的角度、在不同的层次上、以不同的方法对语言进行了大量的研究，出版了大量的文献。随着语言研究的不断深入，语言学与其他学科，如心理学、社会学、哲学之间的关系日趋密切，从而使语言学逐渐成为一门跨学科的边缘性科学。对语言感兴趣并作出贡献的不仅仅是语言学家，同时也包括心理学家、社会学家和哲学家等。因此，一定的语言学的基础知识，不仅对语言专业的学生来说是必不可少的，对某些其他专业的学生来说也是十分必要的。为了使我们的学生具备语言学的基础知识，对语言学的研究成果有所了解，我们为我系高年级学生开设了“简明英语语言学”这一课程。这是一门以语言学理论为指导，以英语语言为研究对象的课程。近年来，国外学者虽然撰写出版了多种语言学入门教材和介绍语言学的书籍，但或是由于过于偏重理论，或是由于文字深奥费解，例句涉及多种语言，或是由于专门术语繁多，这些介绍性的书籍往往使初学者望而生畏，产生对语言学的畏难情绪。为此，我们编写了这本简明教程，供初次接触语言学的中国学生使用。

本书的对象主要是英语专业高年级学生，以及具有同等水平的英语自学者。对具备一定英语水平，希望得到一点语言学基础知识的其他系科的学生，中学教师等等，本书也同样会有所帮助。

本书用英语编写。讲解过程中以英语为例。全书共分九章。前半部分介绍了音系、形态、句法和语义等语言理论研究的几个主要层次；后半部分涉及语言的变化、语言与社会的关系，语言的习得和第二语言的学习等问题。各章之间既存在有机的联系，又各自具有相对的独立性。

为了帮助初学者克服由于术语所造成的困难，书后附有英汉术语对照表。凡书中用黑体表示的术语，在该表中均能找到对应的汉译。由于目前许多术语尚无统一的标准汉译，该表中的汉译仅作参考。

在语言学研究中，出现了不少流派，对同一问题，各派学者往往持有不同的看法，对同一现象往往提出不同的模式加以解释。这完全是正常的现象。但作为一本入门教程，本书只能有选择地介绍较有影响、较有代表性的一家之言。

语言学是一门内容浩瀚的学科。要为初学者编写一本简明扼要的入门读本，绝非易事。我们尽自己的努力作了初步尝试。限于水平，谬误难免，尚祈读者不吝指正。

编者

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前 言

近年来，各个大专院校的外语专业都陆续开设了一些必要的语言理论课程，加强了学生所学外语的理论基础，进一步扩大了知识面，促进了外语教学质量的提高，这是一个可喜的现象。

然而，随着这些课程的开设，产生了一个编写能适应教学需要的教材的问题。不言而喻，各门教材的质量在很大程度上对教学效果起着决定性的作用。因此，编写质量合乎要求的教材，已成为当前迫切需要解决的重要课题。

《简明英语语言学教程》为学生提供语言学的基础理论知识，介绍了几十年来语言研究的各个领域所取得的重要成果，并对语言研究的三个层次，即音系、句法、语义，以及英语的历史演变、语言与社会的关系、母语习得和第二语言的学习等分别作了简明扼要的阐述，有利于使学生获得进一步钻研语言理论所必备的基础知识，并通过所获得的知识，加深对英语的理解。全书体系比较完整，内容新颖，层次分明，文笔精炼，做到了深入浅出，循序渐进，是一本值得推荐的入门教材。

杨小石

一九八四年十月

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Linguistics

1.1 What is linguistics ?

Linguistics may be defined as the systematic (or scientific) study of language.

Linguistics tries to answer the basic questions "What is language ?" and "How does language work ?" It probes into various aspects of these problems, such as "What do all languages have in common ?", "What range of variation is found among languages ?", "Why do languages change ?", "To what extent are social class differences reflected in language ?", "How does a child learn to speak ?" and so on.

A person who studies linguistics is usually referred to as a linguist. He does not need to be able to speak a large number of languages, though he must have a wide experience of different types of languages. He is usually a skilled, objective observer, who takes great interest in analysing and attempting to explain various linguistic phenomena. His task is basically to study and understand the general principles upon which all languages are built.

1.2 Linguistics vs. traditional grammar

Linguistics is not old school grammar with the addition

of a few new names. It differs from traditional grammar in several basic ways.

a) Linguistics is **descriptive**, not **prescriptive**.

A linguist is interested in what is said, not what he thinks ought to be said. He describes language in all its aspects, but does not prescribe rules of "correctness". He doesn't believe that there is some absolute standard of correctness concerning language use which linguists or school teachers should view as their duty to maintain. Instead, he would prefer to be an observer and recorder of facts, but not a judge. He might recognize that one type of speech appears to be more socially acceptable than others because of the influence of fashion. But this will not make him think that the socially acceptable variety can replace all the other varieties, or the old words are always better than new ones or vice versa. He will regard the changes in language and language use as the result of a natural and continuous process, not something to be feared.

b) Linguistics regards the spoken language as primary, not the written.

In the past, grammarians have overstressed the importance of the written word, partly because of its permanence. Before the invention of sound recording, it was difficult for people to deal with utterances which existed only for seconds. The traditional classical education was also partly to blame. People insisted on learning to use language in accordance with the usage of the "best authors" of classical times, and these authors existed only in written form.

But linguists give priority to the spoken word, because the spoken word precedes the written everywhere in the world and most writing systems are derived from the vocal sounds. Spoken utterances share many common features with written sentences, but they also exhibit considerable differences. Therefore linguists believe spoken forms and written forms belong to different systems though they may overlap. The systems must be analysed separately: the spoken first, then the written.

c) Linguistics differs from traditional grammar in that it does not force languages into a Latin-based framework.

In the past, many traditional textbooks have assumed unquestionably that Latin provides a **universal framework** into which all languages fit. As a result, other languages were forced to fit into Latin patterns and categories, especially its case system and tense divisions of past, present and future. To linguists, it is unthinkable to judge one language by standards of another. They are opposed to the notion that any one language can provide an adequate framework for all the others. They are trying to set up a universal framework, but that will be based on the features shared by most of the languages used by mankind.

1.3 The scope of linguistics

General linguistics covers a wide range of topics and its boundaries are difficult to define.

A diagram in the shape of a wheel gives a rough impression of the range covered (by Jean Aitchison).

In the centre is **phonetics**, the study of human speech sounds.

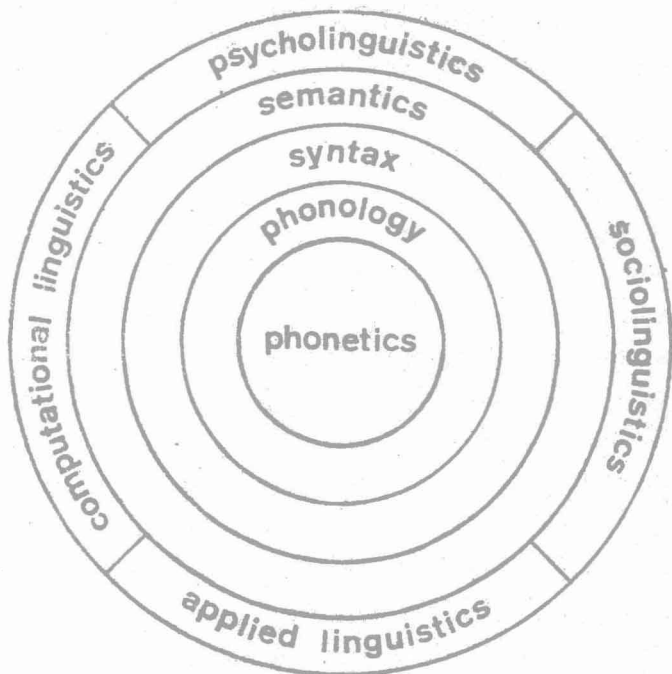


Figure 1

It is surrounded by **phonology** (sound patterning), then **phonology** is surrounded by **syntax**. The term 'syntax', used in its broadest sense, refers to both the arrangement and the form of words. It is that part of language which links together the sound patterns and the meaning. **Semantics** (meaning) is placed outside **syntax**, and next to the various disciplines which link linguistics with the external world.

Around the central core consisting of phonology, syntax and

semantics are the various branches of linguistics which are being rapidly developed at the present time: **psycholinguistics**, **sociolinguistics**, **computational linguistics**, **applied linguistics**, etc. Of these, psycholinguistics (the relationship between language and the mind) and sociolinguistics (the relationship between language and society) have perhaps expanded the fastest in recent years.

Finally, there is one important aspect of linguistics, that is **historical linguistics**, the study of language change.

If the wheel is regarded as three-dimensional, we can then include this topic. We can either look at a grammar at one particular point in time (a single cut across the tree), generally termed as **synchronic linguistics**, or study its development over a

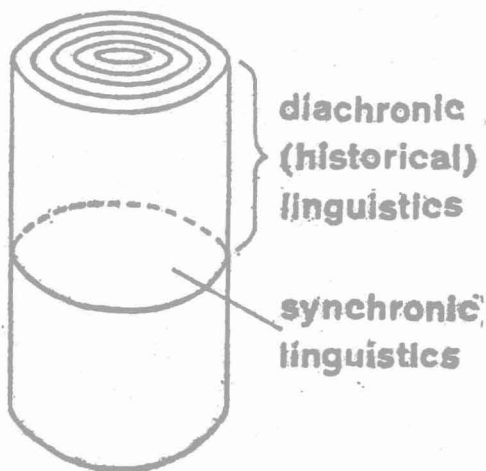


Figure 2

number of different cuts made across the tree trunk at different places, generally termed as historical or **diachronic linguistics**.

2. Language

2.1 What is language ?

Linguistics is defined as the systematic study of language, naturally it aims at describing language in all its aspects and formulating theories as to how it works.

What is language ? How does one define it ? What are its characteristic features ? Many philosophers, linguists and historians have considered these questions and provided various answers to them in accordance with the emphasis they laid on the different aspects of language. For instance, Sapir, an American linguist, wrote in 1921: "Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols". But the famous American linguist, Chomsky, gave a different definition when he wrote *Syntactic Structures* in 1957: "From now on I will consider a language to be a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements." Despite the differences in their views, many linguists have agreed to accept the view that language is, in essence, a system of symbols designed for the purpose of human communication.

2.2 The defining properties of human languages

Philosophers, psychologists and linguists commonly make the point that it is the possession of language which most clearly distinguishes man from other animals. 'Language' here refers