LANGUAGE·TEXT·CONTEXT

语言·语篇·语境

朱永生 主编

清华大学出版社

第二届全国系统功能
语法研讨会论文集

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内 容 提 要

第二届全国系统功能语法研讨会于1991年7月15日—18日在苏州大学举行，参加会议的有来自全国近30所高校代表50人。当代著名语言学家、系统功能语言学创始人韩礼德(M. A. K. Halliday)等4位国外语言学家应邀出席。本论文集选编了会上宣读的论文22篇，涉及系统功能语法的渊源、发展和根本任务，语篇分析的意义及方法，系统功能语法在汉语和外语教学研究中的应用等诸多方面，反映目前我国在这一领域的研究水平，有较高的学术价值和实用价值。

适用范围：高等院校语言文学专业教师、研究生及语言工作者。

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前　言

自从方立、胡壮麟和徐克容三位先生率先于1977年向国内读者介绍韩礼德(M. A. K. Halliday)的系统功能语法之日起，系统功能语法来到中国这块对外开放的黄土地“插队落户”，已有十四五年的光景。然而，就在这段不长的时间里，中国语言学界对系统功能语法已经从知之甚少发展到基本了解，从冷静观察发展到积极参与，从客观介绍发展到全面评价，从机械模仿发展到灵活应用。系统功能语法在中国的推广速度和取得的成效，大概是任何其他西方语言理论都无可比拟的。

造成这种可喜局面的原因是多种多样的。概括起来，主要有如下几点：

一、随着国门的开放，系统功能语法方面的论著出现在很多大学的图书馆和资料室，国内读者不必远涉重洋便能从这些原著中直接接触系统功能学派的语言史观和研究方法，直接领悟它的科学性和实用性。

二、系统功能语法学家来华讲学，把系统功能语法的精要直接传授给中国的教师和学生。在这一方面，贡献最大的当数韩礼德。他曾于1983年和1985年两次来华讲学，通过在北京、上海和广州等地举办系列讲座，培训了一大批骨干。1991年7月，他又专程来到苏州，参加由苏州大学主办的第二届全国系统功能语法研讨会，并在大会上就语言研究的指导原则作了重要发言。近年来，除韩礼德外，来华讲学或访问的还有R. Hasan、C. Matthiessen、M. Cummings和P. Fries等系统功能语法学家。值得指出的是，有些语言学家，如C. Butler、M. Berry和J. Benson，虽然没有来过中

国，却也始终关心系统功能语法在中国的发展。

三、出国进修、访问或讲学的教师和学生回国以后，成为国内系统功能语法研究的一支中坚力量。这支队伍人数虽然不多，但由于多年来团结一致，以开课讲授、著书立说、定期研讨等多种形式，不遗余力地介绍和宣传系统功能语法，迅速扩大了这种语法对中国的影响。就已能看到的成果而言，除了散见于各种杂志的论文之外，第一本专门介绍系统功能语法的入门书——《系统功能语法概论》(作者：胡壮麟，朱永生，张德禄)已于 1989 年由湖南教育出版社出版，并被列为语言学系列教材之一。此外，北京大学出版社 1990 年出版的《语言系统与功能》(主编：胡壮麟)一书收录了第一届全国系统功能语法研讨会收到的近 20 篇论文，对系统功能语法在中国的普及与发展，也发挥了积极的推动工作。

我们衷心地希望，由清华大学出版社出版的这本论文集，能为系统功能语言学的进一步推广与应用做出应有的贡献。

本书在编辑过程中，得到了 Halliday 教授、胡壮麟教授、方琰教授、程雨民教授、任绍曾教授、王文昌教授、陆昇教授、赵建成副教授、黄任副教授、余珍萍女士的关心与支持。在此，我谨代表本书所有的作者向他们表示由衷的谢意。

这本书之所以能够顺利出版，并能在较短的时间内与读者见面，关键是得益于清华大学出版社的全力帮助。对他们这种重视社会效益的可贵精神，我们在此也表示诚挚的感谢。

朱永生

1992 年 4 月

目　录

Systemic Grammar and the Concept of a "Science of Language"

M. A. K. Halliday

Those who study language have often been concerned with the status of linguistics as a science. They have wanted to ensure that their work was objective and scientifically valid. The natural way to achieve this aim has been to use other, earlier developed sciences as a model: theoretical physics, evolutionary biology, chemistry——some discipline that is currently valued as a leader in the field of intellectual activity. It is assumed that, if we investigate language using the same principles and methods that have proved successful in these other domains, we shall have made our linguistics equally "scientific".

There are two problems here. One is perhaps a fairly obvious one: that the phenomena we are trying to understand——those of language——are phenomena of a rather distinct kind. Certainly there core, at a very abstract level, features in common to systems of all kinds, whether physical, biological, or social; and we can add to these also the fourth kind, semiotic systems, which are those which construe meaning——the kind of system to which language belongs. But there are also significant differences; and what constitutes "science", or scientific inquiry, is not likely to be the same thing in all cases. A science of meaning is potentially rather different from a science of nature, or of soci-

ety.

The other problem may be less obvious. As I see it, the concept of "science" refers to scientific practice: to what scientists actually do when engaged in their professional activities. But this is not always the same thing as what they say they do; it is certainly not the same thing as what other people say they do, and it is still further away from what other people say they ought to do. We have tended to derive our concept of science from studying the models constructed in the name of philosophy of science, rather than from observing scientists at work. But these models are highly idealized; even when they set out to be descriptive (as opposed to normative) they present a picture that is far removed from scientific daily life. I share the view of colleagues such as Victor Yngve and Claude Hagège, that in so far as we want to emulate those working in the more established sciences, it is the working practices of the scientists themselves that we need to be aware of——how **they** construct theories to explain the phenomena **they** are studying. These are what count for us; not the philosophical interpretations of science, which are theories constructed to explain how scientists work (Yngve, 1986; Hagège, 1988).

As an illustration of this point, consider how linguists have constructed the notion of "counterexamples". If anyone offers a generalization, others immediately start hunting after counterexamples, in the belief that this is how you test a hypothesis: if you find one counterexample you have demolished it, and it has to be abandoned. But this is an idealization; it is not how people actually work. What you do with a generalization is to apply it,

and when you find it doesn't work a hundred percent of the time (which it never will do), you try to improve it, to define the limits of its applicability, and seek further generalizations to back it up. (Grimm's law was not abandoned; it was shown to apply only in certain cases, and then backed up by the addition of Verner's law.) In order to escape from this trap, linguists have had to invent the concept of the "prototypical". But they would never have needed such an escape hatch if they had not dug the hole for themselves to fall into in the first place.

I would like to enumerate, in this paper, certain principles and practices which I think are usually followed by linguists working in systemic-functional linguistics. These are not derived from any idealized model of scientific endeavour. They seem to me to correspond fairly closely to the sort of things that scientists do, and the general positions they adopt, in their everyday working lives. But I am not setting out to prove that linguistics, whether systemic or in any other model, is a science. My aim is simply to characterize how some linguists go about their work: what they adopt as their working principles. It is useful, I think, to try to make these principles explicit. (For the concept of "doing science", See Lemke, 1990.)

1. Categories that are used in the analysis of language are general concepts which help us to explain linguistic phenomena. They are not "reified": that is, they are not endowed with a spurious reality of their own.

For example: we do not start with a readymade concept like "Theme". We start with a particular problem, such as "Why does a speaker of English choose to put one thing rather than an-

other in first position in the clause?" To explain this, we have to set up a long chain of explanation; this involves certain abstract categories, through which we relate this question to a large number of other phenomena in the language. "Theme" is the name that we give to one particular link in this chain of explanations, embodying a generalization about the structure of the message.

Two points should be made. One is that the name is not a definition. We try (following a traditional practice in linguistics) to give names that suggest the typical "purport" of a category, in Hjelmslev's term: hence grammatical categories get names that are interpreted semantically (and likewise phonological categories get names that are interpreted phonetically). But we do not then argue: "this instance does not fit my name; therefore it is not a member of this category". The name just helps us to remember where we are on the map.

Secondly, we do not use the name to impose artificial rigour on a language. Linguistic phenomena tend to be indeterminate, with lots of ambiguities, blends and "borderline cases". The categories of the analysis take this into account, allowing us to treat it not as something exceptional or dysfunctional, but as a natural and positive feature of an evolving semiotic system.

2. The categories used in the analysis are of two kinds: theoretical, and descriptive. Theoretical categories are those such as "metafunction", "system", "level", "class", "realization". Descriptive categories are those such as "clause", "preposition", "Subject". "material process", "Theme".

Theoretical categories are, by definition, general to all languages: they have evolved in the construction of a general lin-

guistic theory. They are constantly being refined and developed as we come to understand more about language; but they are not subject to direct verification. A theory is not proved wrong; it is made better—— usually step by step, sometimes by a fairly catastrophic change.

Descriptive categories are in principle language-specific: they have evolved in the description of particular languages. Since we know that all human languages have much in common, we naturally use the descriptive categories of one language as a guide when working on another. But if a descriptvie category named "clause" or "passive" or "Theme" is used in describing, say, both English and Chinese, it is redefined in the case of each language. (See Hu, Zhu & Zhang, 1989 *passim.*)

So, for example, while "system" itself is a theoretical category, each instance of a system, such as "mood", is a descriptive category. Similarly,"option" (or "feature") in a system is a theoretical category, while each particular instance of an option, like "indicative" or "declarative",is descriptive.

Descriptive categories are thus of a lower order of abstraction. They can be defined in such a way as to make them subject to verification. For example, if in defining "passive" we include morphological criteria, saying that passive is distinguished from its alternative ("active") by systematic variation in the morphology of the verb, then it becomes possible to say that a particular construction in a given language is not a passive, or that there is no passive in the given language at all. (Note that, if it is claimed that some descriptive category is a "universal" or language,such a claim can only be evaluated if there is some explicit

formal definition of this kind. A universal feature is different from a theoretical category; it is a descriptive category that is being said to be present in every language.)

3. Within both these types, theoretical and descriptive, the categories are defined not individually but in relation one to another. For example "Theme", in English; this is defined not only in relation to Rheme (through the structural configuration "Theme + Rheme") but also in relation to the category of "clause", to other functions in the clause like "Subject", to the system of "mood", its various options such as "declarative", and so on.

There is no ordering in such definitions; we do not **first** set up one set of categories and **then** derive other ones from them. (We may have to express the description in an ordered way, since Chapter 1 has to precede Chapter 2 in the grammar book; but that is a question of presentation.) The only ordering is that of delicacy: more specific categories depend on those that include them (i.e. that precede them in generality, as "indicative" precedes "declarative" and "interrogative"). But even this is not a definitional ordering. For example, "past", "present","future" are defined as options in the English system of "tense", which is a system of the "verbal group". But, equally, the "verbal group" is defined as the entry condition to the system called "tense" whose options are "past","present" and "future".

4. All descriptive categories are identified from three perspectives: those of (i) the higher level, (ii) the same level, (iii) the lower level. This is sometimes referred to as (i) "from above", (ii) "from around" and (iii) "from below". For exam-

ple, in English the Subject is that which

(i) has special status in the interpersonal structure of the clause, being the element on which the argument is made to rest (by reference to which the proposition is laid open to argument);

(ii) is mapped on to certain elements in the experiential and textual structure (e. g. Actor in active material process; Senser in one type of mental process; Theme in declarative mood, &c.);

(iii) is the nominal group that accompanies the Finite operator and is taken up pronominally in the declarative mood tag.

This enables us to express the difference between functional and formal grammars. All grammars, of course, are concerned both with function and with form; the difference is one of orientation. In a formal grammar, perspective (iii) has priority; (i) is derived from (iii), and may not be stated at all (e. g. in some formal grammars the category corresponding to Subject in English would have no interpretation from above). In a functional grammar, such as systemic grammar, (i) has priority, and (iii) will typically be derived from it.

Since criteria from the different perspectives often conflict, there may be a substantial difference between formal and functional grammars in how the descriptive categories are aligned, and even in the categories themsleves. Categories that are relatively clearly identifiable from above may be very complex to describe from below (e. g. the different types of process in English, which may simply not be recognized in a formal grammar). Again, however, it must be emphasized that the priority is not absolute: no category is fixed from one perspective alone. The

description is always a compromise among all the three perspectives.

5. In a functional grammar, perspective (i) is that which **explains** (this is what is meant by saying that a functional grammar is one which offers functional explanations—— a kind that are not recognized as explanations in a formal grammar). What is **to be explained** is some pattern identified from the vantagepoint of perspective (iii). For example: "why does a particular one of the nominal elements in an English declarative clause turn up again pronominally in the tag?" (and cf. the question "why does a particular element come first in the clause?", cited in 1 above). The explanation will be given from the vantagepoint of perspective (i), e. g. "this is the element which the speaker selects in order to carry the weight of the argument—— the one that is held 'modally responsible' for it". In other words, a functional grammar is one which explains the forms of the language by referring to the functions they express.

Now consider the case of **comparative** description: that is, using the categories set up for one language as tools for exploring another. Here the direction of inquiry is typically reversed. Instead of beginning with a question seeking to explain the formal pattern in (iii), we begin with what was originally the answer to such a question, namely the functional generalization under (i). So, for example, if we are using the concept of Subject to investigate the grammar of Chinese, we don't say "Is there a nominal element in the clause that accompanies the finite operator and also turns up pronominally in the tag?"—— which would not be very helpful, since we would first have to find Finite operators

and mood tags in Chinese before we could ask the question! We say "Is there a nominal element that has special status in the interpersonal function of the clause, as being the one on which the argument is made to rest?" The assumption is that, if there is any such element, it will be recognizable somehow or other (that is, identifiable from perspective (iii)), although not the way it is in English.

In other words, the comparison is made from the vantage-point of perspective (i). We look at the meaning of some category in the language of reference, and then ask if there is any category in the language under description that has a comparable function taken in the context of the whole. Almost all descriptive work today is in this sense comparative; and this is reasonable, since there is no point in pretending, when we come to describe a language, that no other languages have been described before, or that we cannot learn anything from those that have. Ideally—— but let me say clearly that this is not what is usually done! —— each language should be described twice over: first comparatively, using categories drawn from other languages as guides, and then "particularly"—— entirely in its own terms, as if no other language had been described before. This is the only way to ensure that it will not be being misrepresented. Historically, the second one was the way the ancient Indian and Greek grammarians proceeded; first they described the forms, perspective (iii), and then they questioned why these forms arose: why is this noun in this particular case? why are there two sets of forms for certain verbs? and so on. This was the origin of syntax. The reason why syntax never evolved in China is that Chinese has no

morphology; so questions of this kind were never asked.

6. We have said that comparative description begins from the vantagepoint of perspective (i): we look for categories which are comparable when viewed "from above". But by itself this could be misleading. We do not, in fact, start out by trying to identify individual categories, single elements of structure, like "Subject", or single options in a system, like "passive". The basis of any comparative description is the **system** (a point made very many years ago by Sidney Allen; see Allen, 1956).

Thus, if we are using English categories to explore Chinese, we do not ask whether there is a Subject, or whether there is a passive; we ask whether there is a comparable system, in each case. For example, the category of Subject in English realizes choices of mood; so instead of asking whether or not Chinese has a category of Subject, we first ask "Is there a system of mood? —— that is, a system for exchanging information and goods-&-services, one through which speakers are enabled to argue." There is; so then we ask about its options, to see whether they can be interpreted by reference to categories of declarative, interrogative and so on. Step by step we come to the question whether there is a particular nominal element which has a special function in the clause with respect to the system of mood. There is —— but not the same as in English. The Subject in English does two jobs in the mood system: it takes responsibility for the proposition, and it also plays a part in realizing the distinction between one category of mood and another. There is a nominal element in Chinese which does the first job but not the second——and since it is not required for making the distinction be-