

Linguistics and Its Application

语言学及其应用

胡明珠 著

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前 言

语言在人类生活中占据重要的地位,没有语言,人类的活动几乎无法进行。正是通过语言,人类才能够更加全面地了解自己。语言的重要性使得语言研究成为人类社会科学研究的永恒主题之一。语言学是研究语言的科学,自 20 世纪以来,语言研究已有长足的发展,无论是对语言本体的研究,还是对语言跨学科的研究,都取得了很大成绩。与此同时,语言学产生的影响越来越大,不仅语言专业的教师和学生研究语言学,而从事其他学科研究和学习的人员如哲学、社会学、心理学、人类学、认知科学等也对语言学本身和语言学与其学科之间的关系表现出极大的兴趣。但是语言是一个复杂的概念,而语言学也涉及很多复杂的理论和知识,因此,一本知识全面的、通俗易懂的语言学著作对于英语专业的教师和学生,以及对语言研究有兴趣的人士显得尤为重要。

语言学是英语专业的必修课程,作者在师范学院为英语专业的学生教授《语言学概论》已十年有余。在教学过程中时常听到学生对语言学学习难度的抱怨,也时常能感受到学生在学习语言学时的困惑。语言学中术语多、学派多、理论多、发展快,众多的生词也会使学生对学习语言学产生畏惧心理。因此,作者在教学过程中一直致力于语言学课程讲授的深入浅出以及与实际语言学习和使用的结合,经过多年磨砺,在教学教案的基础上编写了《语言

学及其应用》一书。

与同类著作相比,《语言学及其应用》在知识层面上强调语言研究的实用性,所选内容既要体现知识体系的完整性,但更突出基础性;在英语表述上尽量简单易懂;在例子选用方面特别关注与学生英语学习和语言实际使用的相关性。其一大特点是每个章节都有关于该内容在英语使用、学习,或教学中的作用或启示的讨论,使学习者在学习过程中深刻体会语言学的作用和学习价值,对语言学学习产生兴趣。

《语言学及其应用》包含九个章节,涉及普通语言学中的语音学、音位学、形态学、句法、语义学、语用学,以及宏观语言学中的社会语言学、心理语言学、语言习得等内容。本书适合大学英语专业语言学课程教学使用,并可作为报考语言学硕士的备考用书,还可供语言研究者参考。

本书虽经认真核校,但疏漏和错误难免存在,恭请各位读者、同仁批评指正。

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作者
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Chapter 1

Introduction to Linguistics

1.1 Language

We live in a world of language and language is at the center of human life. We talk from time to time to our friends, our associates, our lovers and our parents. We talk face to face and over telephone, and every one responds with more talk. Hardly a moment of our waking time is free from words, and even in our dreams we talk and are talked to. Language is so built into the way we live that it has become an axiom of being human. Language is the attribute that most clearly distinguishes our species from all others; it is what makes possible much of what we do, and perhaps even what we think. Without language we could not specify our wishes, our needs, practical instructions that make possible cooperation. Without language, we would have to grunt and gesture and touch rather than tell. And through writing system or word of mouth we are in touch with distant places we will never visit, people we will never meet, a past or future of which we can have no direct experience. Without language we would live in isolation from our ancestors and our descendants, condemned to learn only from our own experience and to take our knowledge to the grave.

Surely, other species communicate too, sometimes in ways that quite seem human. For example, a pet dog or cat can make its needs and wishes effectively, not only to others of its own species but to its human owner. But is this language? Dolphins are known to make very complex sequences of sounds that may suggest equally complex mes-

sages, but so far no way has been found to verify the suggestion. Chimpanzees have been taught several humanly understandable languages such as American Sign Language and a computer language, but there has been heated debate whether their uses of these languages are like ours or merely learned performance of much greater subtlety than those of trained circus animals. Since there are no definite answers to these questions, one thing we can assume is that human language is of a scope and power unequalled on earth.

1.1.1 Definition of language

Then what is language? We have taken language for granted for so long that not many people would stop to think what meanings the word “language” has. In fact, it involves many different senses and concepts which we need to distinguish in linguistics.

According to Hu Zhuanglin et al. (1988), language has the following senses:

(1) Language can mean what a person says or said. In this sense, language simply refers to the concrete act of speaking in a given situation, or the expression one uses in speech in one instant.

(2) Language refers to an individual's personal dialect called “idiolect”. A person does not speak in a particular way only on one occasion; he often has a consistent way of speaking or writing. So “language” is sometimes used to refer to the whole of a person's language, as in “Shakespeare's Language,” “Lu Xun's Language,” etc.

(3) “Language” also means a particular variety or level of speech or writing, such as “scientific language,” or “colloquial language,” and so on.

(4) Language is the abstract system underlying the totality of the