

「英语理论语法 及其教学应用研究

● 罗明江 著



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YINGYU LILUN YUFA JIQI JIAOXUE YINGYONG YANJIU

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前 言

过去的几十年中,理论语法和教学语法都得到了长足的发展。理论语法是语法学家按照自己的语言观和方法论对某种语言的语法所作的分析和描述。此种从不同的角度提出各自不同的语法学说,形成不同的体系。因此可分为不同的流派。20 世纪以来,随着英语语法研究的蓬勃发展,出现了结构主义语法、转换-生成语法、系统功能语法等不同流派的理论语法。教学语法是根据语法教学的要求所制定的语法系统。具有规范性和稳定性,侧重于语法功能的描述,要求实用、可读性强,而理论分析不是其重点。这样就造成了理论语法和教学语法之间出现了一个非常奇怪的现象:一方面,二者之间并没有区别开来,人们常常把理论语法和教学语法混在一起;另一方面,二者之间的鸿沟越来越深,以致到了今天,我们要在这里讨论它们之间的衔接问题。出现这种情况的根本原因是没有把理论语法与教学语法二者区别开,二者没有做到各司其职,具体表现为人们把语法教学等同于语法学教学,而教学中应该教授的东西却没有教授,这就出现了二者的脱节。

《英语理论语法及其教学应用研究》一书力求从结构主义语法、转换-生成语法、系统功能语法等不同流派的理论入手,比较深入地探讨如何做好英语理论语法与教学语法的衔接。即理论语法应该提供什么,理论语法提供了什么,理论语法可以提供什么,教学语法需要什么,教学语法从理论语法中得到了什么,教学语法能为理论语法提供什么,教学语法是否应该建立自己的理论,这是

当前语法研究中的重要任务。其研究意义在于理论语法和教学语法不是互相排斥的,而是互相依存的。教学语法要以理论语法为本源,理论语法要以教学语法为出发点。如此,则教学语法将成为理论语法研究成果的普及、推广和应用,也是对理论语法的检验。理论语法研究的新成果又不断丰富教学语法,教学语法所提出的新问题又促进理论语法的发展。

本书在阐述英语词法和句法时,从传统语法和当代语法两个角度进行了对比。众所周知,英语传统语法已有两千多年的历史,定义、规则和例证通俗易懂,为英语教学作出了巨大贡献,同时也为其他语法流派的确立奠定了基础,功绩显赫。但随着语言的发展和人们认识的提高,传统语法存在的问题显得越来越突出,因为它是以拉丁语法体系为蓝本,正误不以大多数人的口语为准,而以书面语为准,不统一、不严谨,有的现象进有发生。本书在论述传统语法的优点和存在的问题的同时,着重论述了英语理论语法及其在教学中的应用。例如,转换-生成语法与系统功能语法之间存在着内在的差别。以转换生成语法为代表的形式语言学是从个体内部的角度来研究语言的,即从个体的心理和生理的角度来研究大脑的活动机制,以此发现个体是如何运用天赋的语言能力生成无限的合乎语法规则的句子的。这种语法所关注的首要问题是语法结构的形式及其相互关系,而不是它们在不同语境中的意义和使用问题。系统功能语法把语言看作是一个交际系统,语法分析的目的在于发现语法是通过怎样的组织结构来是语言使用者进行意义的构建和交换的。因此,这种语法所关注的首要问题是语法结构和结构成分的功能及其在语境中的意义。

语言教学的目标是培养语言学习者的交际能力。有些教师认为交际语言教学排斥语法教学。事实上这种观点无论在理论上还是在实践上都是站不住脚的。在海姆斯(Hymes, 1972)的“交际能力”概念中,语法能力是一个重要的方面:(i) 语法性,即某种表达是否(以及在什么程度上)在形式上是可能的;(ii) 可接受性,即某

种表达是否(以及在什么程度上)能被接受;(iii)得体性,即某种表达是否(以及在什么程度上)是得体的;(iv)实际操作性,即某种说法可能具有合乎语法性,可接受性和得体性。由此看来,语法教学是交际语言教学的一个重要方面。威尔金斯(Wilkins, 1976)明确表示过语法在外语教学中的地位。他认为学习者对语法体系的掌握是学习一门外语的重要因素,语法是创造性运用语言的一个基础,语法知识的缺失严重影响着学习者交际能力的发展。维多逊(Widdowson, 1978)认为,交际能力的培养必然涉及语法知识的讲授。

众所周知,语法研究有种种体系、种种学派。这些体系和学派,都有一定的科学性,也都有一些不够完善的地方。教学语法要吸收它们的长处,克服它们的缺点。实用性既是语法教学的出发点,又是教学语法的归宿。实用性体现在教学中,要具有教学性,而教学性的表现之一,是可接受性。在科学性的前提下,要通俗易懂,好教好学,力图避免艰深晦涩、繁琐抽象。稳定性是对教学语法的要求。我们知道,语言三要素(语音、词汇、语法)中,语法的稳定性最大,这就为教学语法的稳定性提供了可能。要真正做好英语理论语法与教学语法的衔接不是一件容易的事,为此,本书旨在对英语语法教学和理论研究者提供一些帮助。由于作者的知识水平有限,难免有偏颇之处,有待于专家和学者给予指正。

作者

2009年4月

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
0.1 Development of Grammars	1
0.2 Types of Grammar	15
0.3 Grammar in Relation to Other Levels of Linguistic Structure	28
Chapter 1. Some Basic Concepts	37
1.1 Linguistic Prescription	38
1.2 Problems of Linguistic Prescription	39
1.3 Prescription and Description in Conflict	41
1.4 Synthesis	42
Chapter 2. Traditional Grammar	45
2.1 Survey of Traditional Grammar	45
2.2 Key Concepts of Traditional Grammar	47
Chapter 3. Transformational-Generative Grammar	81
3.1 Generative Grammar	81
3.2 Transformational grammar	83
Chapter 4. Systemic Functional Grammar	93
4.1 Why is it Called Systemic Functional Linguistics?	94
4.2 Register	96
4.3 Individual Text and Language Systems	98
4.4 Everyday and Academic Language	99

Chapter 5. The Clause in English	103
5.1 Form and Function of the Clause in English	108
5.2 Subject	112
5.3 Verb	114
5.4 Direct Object	115
5.5 Indirect Object	116
5.6 Object Complement	117
5.7 The Subject Complement	118
5.8 The Adverbial and Adverbial Complement	119
5.9 Grammatical Ambiguity	121
Chapter 6. The Phrase in English	123
6.1 The Noun Phrase	123
6.2 The Verb Phrase	126
6.3 The Adjective Phrase	133
6.4 The Adverb Phrase	134
6.5 The Prepositional Phrase	135
Chapter 7. The Structure of Words and Word Classes in English	137
7.1 The Structure of Words	138
7.2 Word Classes	141
Chapter 8. Coordination and Subordination	149
8.1 On the Concept of Clause and Sentence	154
8.2 Forms of the Subordinate Clause	160
8.3 Functions of the Subordinate Clause	163
Chapter 9. The Grammatical Foundations of Style	167
9.1 Metafunction	167
9.2 Grammar around and beyond the Clause	175
9.3 Grammatical Metaphor	178

Chapter 10. Functional Re-evaluation of Grammatical Forms	
in Context	180
10.1 Potential Polysemy in Grammar	180
10.2 Synonymy in Grammar	188
10.3 Grammatical Doublets	195
Chapter 11. Pedagogic Grammar and Second Language	
Acquisition	201
11.1 Language Teaching Methodology and Grammar	
Instruction	204
11.2 Second Language Acquisition Theories and Teachability	
of Grammar	205
11.3 Role of Explicit Grammar Instruction	211
11.4 Target Structures of Explicit Grammar Instruction ...	212
11.5 Considerations in Grammar Books from the	
Learner's Viewpoint	214
11.6 Design of a Pedagogic Grammar	216
Bibliography	220

Introduction

0.1 Development of Grammars

Grammars evolve through usage and human population separation. With the advent of written representations, formal rules about language usage tend to appear too. Formal grammars are codifications of usage that are developed by observation. As the rules become established and developed, the prescriptive concept of grammatical correctness can arise. This often creates a gulf between contemporary usage and that which is accepted as correct. Linguists normally consider that prescriptive grammars do not have any justification beyond their authors' aesthetic tastes. However, prescriptions are considered in sociolinguistics as a part of the explanation for why some people say "*I didn't do nothing*", some say "*I didn't do anything*", and some say one or the other depending on social context.

The formal study of grammar is an important part of education from a young age to advanced learning, though the rules taught in schools are not a "grammar" in the sense most linguists use the term, as they are often prescriptive rather than descriptive.

Constructed languages, (also called planned languages or conlangs)

are more common in modern times. Many have been designed to aid human communication (such as Esperanto or the intercultural, highly logic-compatible artificial Lojban) or created as part of a work of fiction (such as the *lingon* language and Elvish languages). Each of these artificial languages has its own grammar.

It is erroneously believed that analytic languages have simpler grammar than synthetic languages. Analytic languages use syntax to convey information that is encoded via inflection in synthetic languages. In other words, word order is not significant and morphology is highly significant in a purely synthetic language, whereas morphology is not significant and syntax is highly significant in an analytic language. Chinese and Afrikaans, for example, are highly analytic and meaning is therefore very context dependent. (Both do have some inflections, and both had more in the past; thus, they are becoming even less synthetic and more “purely” analytic over time) Latin, which is highly synthetic, uses affixes and inflections to convey the same information that Chinese does with syntax. Because Latin words are quite (though not completely) self-contained, an intelligible Latin sentence can be made from elements placed in largely arbitrary order. Latin has a complex affixation and a simple syntax, while Chinese has the opposite.

We know that as early as the fourth century B. C., Greek philosophers were intrigued by the phenomenon of language. Concerned primarily with large questions about the nature of humans and their universe, and working on the assumption that there must exist certain deep and eternal universal truths, these philosophers turned to the study of language in the hope that here they might discover the answers to some of life's great mysteries. The earliest known motives for language study seem, then, to have been philosophical rather than practical.

The first attempts to study grammar began in about the 4th century

B. C. with Panini's grammar of Sanskrit in India and with Plato's dialogue *Cratylus*. The Greeks, and later the Romans, approached the study of grammar through philosophy. Concerned only with the study of their own language and not with foreign languages, early Greek and Latin grammar was devoted primarily to defining the parts of speech. The biblical commentator Rashi attempted to decipher the rules of ancient Hebrew grammar. It was not until the Middle Ages that grammarians became interested in languages other than their own. The scientific grammatical analysis of language began in the 19th century with the realization that languages have a history; this led to attempts at the genealogical classification of languages in comparative linguistics. Grammatical analysis was further developed in the 20th century and was greatly advanced by the theories of structural linguistics, transformational-generative grammar and systemic functional grammar.

One more early Greek philosopher and grammarian, Dionysius Thrax, must be mentioned. Thrax lived in Alexandria during the last great period of the Greek empire sometime around the first century B. C., when that city had become the center of Greek culture. In a small book entitled *Technē Grammatikē*, Thrax expanded the word classes to eight, still basing his classifications largely on meaning. His eight classes were roughly equivalent to *nouns*, *pronouns*, *verbs*, *participles*, *articles*, *adverbs*, *conjunctions*, and *prepositions*. For each of these classes, he gave a detailed definition and provided many examples. This small volume was destined to become so influential that nearly two thousand years later, grammarians throughout Europe and in England were still classifying words into eight categories. To be sure, the names of the classes changed slightly from time to time, but the number remained at eight. Even more important, Thrax seems to have been influential in establishing a linguistic gospel that the best way to describe a language

begins with a description of its words.

English grammatical theory has a long tradition going back to the earliest Latin grammars of the 17th century when “grammar” meant only the study of Latin. Until the end of the 16th century there were no grammars of English. One of the earliest Latin grammars written in English was W. Lily’s work published in the first half of the 16th century.

Looking at English through the lattice of categories set up in Latin grammar, W. Lily presented standards for similar arrangement of the English grammatical material proceeding from Latin paradigms and using the same terminology as in Latin grammar.

Attempts to break with Latin grammatical tradition characterise the treatment of the structure of English in Bullokar’s and Ch. Butler’s grammars, but in many cases they still follow the Latin pattern.

The early prenormative grammars of English reproduced the Latin classification of the wordclasses which included eight parts of speech. Substantives and adjectives were grouped together as two kinds of nouns, participles were considered as a separate part of speech.

In the earliest English grammars the parts of speech were divided dichotomically into declinable and indeclinable parts of speech or words with number and words without number (Ben Jonson), or words with number and case and words without number or case (Ch. Butler). Declinable words, with number and case, included nouns, pronouns, verbs and participles, the indeclinables-adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions and interjections. Ben Jonson increased the number of parts of speech. His classification includes articles as the ninth part of speech.

In Lily’s grammar, for instance, we find three Latin concords: the nominative and the verb, the substantive and the adjective, the relative pronoun and its antecedent.

The second half of the 18th century is generally referred to as the

age of the so-called prenormative grammar. The most influential grammar of the period was R. Lowth's *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* first published in 1762. Lowth's approach to the study of grammar was upheld by his followers.

The first to be mentioned here is Lindley Murray's *English Grammar Adapted to the Different Classes of Learners*. First published in 1795, it was then widely used in its original form and in an abridged version for many years to come. Murray's grammar was considered so superior to any then in use that soon after its appearance, it became the text-book in almost every school.

The principal design of a grammar of any language, according to Lowth, is to teach us to express ourselves with propriety, to enable us to judge every phrase and form of construction, whether it is right or not. The plain way of doing this is to lay down rules and to illustrate them by examples. But besides showing what is right, the matter may be further explained by what is wrong.

In the words of Lowth, grammar in general, or Universal grammar explains the principles which are common to all languages. The Grammar of any particular language, as the English grammar, applies those common principles to that particular language.

O. Jespersen showed good judgement in observing at this point that in many cases what gives itself out as logic is not logic at all, but Latin grammar disguised.

The early prescriptive grammars exerted an enormous influence and moulded the approach of many generations to English grammar.

Applying the principles of Universal grammar, Lowth subjected to criticism of many expressions established by long use in English, for instance, the use of adverbs without the suffix *-ly*, the expressions like *it is me, these kind of*, or, say, such patterns as *had rather, had better*.

Lowth and other grammarians at that time condemned as wrong many constructions and forms which occurred in the works of the best authors. They used passages from the works of classical writers as exercises for pupils to correct bad English or "false" English.

The end of the 19th century brought a grammar of a higher type, a descriptive grammar intended to give scientific explanation to the grammatical phenomena.

This was H. Sweet's *New English Grammar, Logical and Historical* (1891).

Instead of serving as a guide to what should be said or written, Sweet's explanatory grammar aims at finding out what is actually said and written by the speakers of the language investigated. This leads to a scientific understanding of the rules followed instinctively by speakers and writers, giving in many cases the reasons why this usage is such and such.

The difference between scientific and prescriptive grammar is explained by H. Sweet as follows: "As my exposition claims to be scientific, I confine myself to the statement and explanation of facts, without attempting to settle the relative correctness of divergent usages. If an 'ungrammatical' expression such as *it is me* is in general use among educated people, I accept it as such, simply adding that it is avoided in the literary language.

... Whatever is in general use in language is for that reason grammatically correct."

In the words of Sweet, his work is intended to supply the want of a scientific English grammar founded on an independent critical survey of the latest results of linguistic investigation as far as they bear, directly or indirectly, on the English language.

Scientific grammar was thus understood as a combination of both

descriptive and explanatory grammar. Sweet defines the methods of grammatical analysis as follows: "The first business of grammar, as of every other science, is to observe the facts and phenomena with which it has to deal, and to classify and state them methodically. A grammar, which confines itself to this is called a descriptive grammar. . . . When we have a clear statement of such grammatical phenomena, we naturally wish to know the reason of them and how they arose. In this way descriptive grammar lays the foundations of explanatory grammar."

Sweet describes the three main features characterising the parts of speech: meaning, form and function, and this has logical foundations, but the results of his classification are, however, not always consistent.

It is to be noted, in passing, that H. Sweet's ideas seem to anticipate some views characteristic of modern linguistics. Here are a few lines from H. Sweet's work which bear relevantly upon F. de Saussure's ideas about synchronic and diachronic linguistics: "... before history must come a knowledge of what now exists. We must learn to observe things as they are without regard to their origin, just as a zoologist must learn to describe accurately a horse . . .".

The idea that language is primarily what is said and only secondarily what is written, i. e. the priority of oral is in accord with Sweet's statement that "the first requisite is a knowledge of phonetics or the form of language. We must learn to regard language solely as consisting of groups of sounds, independently of the written symbols . . .".

The same viewpoints were advocated by other linguists of the first half of the 20th century, such as C. Onions, E. Kruisinga, H. Poutsma, G. Curme, O. Jespersen, H. Stokoe, M. Bryant, R. Zandvoort and others.

According to O. Jespersen, for instance, of greater value than prescriptive grammar is a purely descriptive grammar, which, instead of serving as a guide to what should be said or written, aims at finding out

what is actually said and written by the speakers of the language investigated, and thus may lead to a scientific understanding of the rules followed instinctively by speakers and writers. Such a grammar should also be explanatory, giving, as far as this is possible, the reasons why the usage is such and such. These reasons may, according to circumstances, be phonetic or psychological, or in some cases both combined. Not infrequently the explanation will be found in an earlier stage of the same language; what in one period was a regular phenomenon may later become isolated and appear as an irregularity, an exception to what has now become the prevailing rule. Grammar must therefore be historical to a certain extent. Finally, grammar may be appreciative, examining whether the rules obtained from the language in question are in every way clear (unambiguous, logical), expressive and easy, or whether in any one of these respects other forms or rules would have been preferable.

In *Essentials of English Grammar*, O. Jespersen aims at giving a descriptive, to some extent, explanatory and appreciative account of the grammatical system of Modern English, historical explanations being only given where this can be done without presupposing any detailed knowledge of Old English or any cognate language.

One of the most important contributions to linguistic study in the first half of the 20th century was O. Jespersen's *The Philosophy of Grammar* first published in 1924 which he presented his theory of three ranks intended to provide a basis for understanding the hierarchy of syntactic relations hidden behind linear representation of elements in language structures. In its originality, its erudition and its breadth it was the best book on grammar.

The book is an attempt at a connected presentation of his views of the general principles of grammar. The starting point of the theory of