

The Cognitive and Applicable Study of  
English Language and Culture

# 英语 语言文化 的认知与 应用研究

靳倩倩 许虹 张攀 曾杰

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西南交通大学出版社

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The Cognitive and Applicable Study of English Language and Culture  
靳倩倩 许虹 张攀 曾杰 著

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## Preface

This book combines the theories of cultural study and the relevant ones of cognitive linguistics to reveal that language is the carrier of culture, and language is closely connected with cognition and cultural study. The first chapter is the theoretical basis of the whole book. The second chapter discusses the close relationship between EU multilingualism and European cultural identity. It also analyzes why the EU promotes such a policy and the relationship between EU's implementation of the multilingual policy and cultural identity. The third chapter draws the conclusion that language and culture are inseparable by comparing the cultural elements in three English textbooks. The last two chapters use the theory of cognitive linguistics and related ones to analyze the uncertainty of translation and the multiple meanings of the English preposition "up". This book supplements the relevant theories in the study of English language and culture and expands the scope of the relevant theories. It offers a more comprehensive and multi-level dimension to think about languages, culture, and cognition.

The first chapter serves as the theoretical foundation of the book. It involves the revisit to cultural study theories including cultural identity, collective identity and discusses the close relationship between culture and language. This chapter also illustrates the interaction of language and

cognition, the theoretical position of cognitive linguistics and its application.

The second chapter centers around the relevance between culture and languages. As it is known to all, language and culture are indispensable. The EU practices the multilingual policy in order to advocate its diversity because it is composed of many member states varying in religion, history, languages, and culture since its birth. Clearly, the culture identity of each member state is different from a common one of the EU. The implementation of the multilingual policy by the EU helps to build a collective cultural identity for all the people in the EU and the formation of the recognition by its people. As the EU develops and realizes more and more integration in the fields of economy, politics and public affairs, a recognition of a collective culture identity is needed by the EU. The first chapter also analyzes the objective rationality behind the support of multilingualism and English (or English, German and French) as the language(s) in the EU respectively and tries to propose an acceptable solution facing this contradiction—the coexistence of the two.

The third chapter discusses the invisible culture of English textbooks. By drawing on the sociology of school knowledge and the culture reproduction and society reproduction theories, it arrives at the conclusion that English textbooks are socially and culturally concealed. The case study in this chapter shows that although there is less social structure concealed from *Senior English for China in 1996* (SEFC 1996), *Senior English for China in 2003* (SEFC 2003), and *New Senior English for China 2007* (NSEFC 2007), there is also a shift from the dominance of America culture in SEFC 1993 to the resistance to the dominance in SEFC 2003 and NSEFC 2007. It reveals that English textbooks involve political, economic and cultural implications. By discussing the dominance and resistance of invisible culture in EFL textbook, it further emphasizes the integration of Chinese excellent culture

in EFL textbook and gives some implications for the EFL education in the future.

The fourth chapter makes a thorough and systematic analysis of the preposition “up” with the expectation that the senses of “up” change from the prototypical “up” to the peripheral ones and this trend can also be examined in the verb phrases with “up” based on the cognitive theories such as prototype theory, image schema and cognitive metaphor. Based on this expectation, this study extracted 200 high-frequency verb phrases with “up” from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), creating a creative classification of the senses of “up” and presenting how the sense of “up” is contributed to the verb phrases with “up”. Through the analysis of the data, this study has grouped the senses of “up” into the following seven types: Prototypical Up, Static Up, Graphic Up, Size Up, Inner-to-Outside Up, Completion Up, and Preferred Up. They change gradually from prototypical “up” to non-prototypical “up”.

The fifth chapter uses cognitive construal theory to analyze the indeterminacy of translation. The chapter first compares different accounts for the indeterminacy of translation from three philosophical schools including Quine’s. Then, the chapter introduces “embodied construal” to make a complete and effective account of the indeterminacy of translation. Finally, an analysis of cognitive motivation for the indeterminacy of translation in five translation versions of *Tian Jing Sha·Qiu Si* is used to explain the causes of the indeterminacy of translation originally and completely, as well as remedy the defects of Quine’s explanations for the indeterminacy of translation and hermeneutical and deconstructionist views on it. In this way, the profound causes of the indeterminacy of translation can be explained reasonably and the cognitive motivations for it can be elucidated appropriately, which provides novel perspective and approach to understand and study the nature of the indeterminacy of

translation.

It is universally acknowledged that language serves as a carrier of culture and the embodiment of national culture. The EU, a transnational organization formed in the 1990s, strives to form a collective identity for all member states after having realized the integration in fields ranging from economy, politics, public affairs, etc. Its practice of the multilingual policy is an example in case to show the EU's slogan: "Unity in Diversity". In this way, the relationship among languages, identity and culture is again strengthened. English textbooks in China, carriers of language and culture, are loaded with English culture and values. To integrate the Chinese culture in them could help to build national cultural confidence, promote English teaching and cross-cultural communication skills. By recognizing that the study of language, culture, and cognition has been fragmented into separate disciplines and paradigms in present study, this book aims to reestablish a dialogue between cognitive linguistics and cultural studies in order to advance the understanding of the relationship among language, culture, and cognition. It highlights the ways in which cognitive linguistics can contribute to a better understanding of cultural and social phenomena. In so doing, it aims to provide insights into the study of the relationship among languages, culture and cognition.

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# 1

## The Interplay of Language, Culture and Cognition

### 1.1 Language and Culture

It has long been recognized that language is an essential and important part of a given culture and that the impact of culture upon a given language is something intrinsic and indispensable. (Hu, 2001: 223) The definition of the word “culture” itself is not easy: In the opening of his book *The Idea of Culture*, Terry Eagleton claims that the word “culture” is “one of the two or three most complex words in the English language”. For Claire Kramersch, culture is what has been grown and groomed compared to nature, which is born and grow organically. As to the relationship of language and culture, Claire Kramersch makes his voice heard: the words people utter refer to common experience. They express facts, ideas or events that are communicable because they refer to a stock of knowledge about the world that other people share, words also reflect their author’s attitudes and beliefs, their point of view, that are also those of others. In both cases, language expresses cultural reality. But members of a community or social group do not only express experience; they also create experience through language. Through all its verbal and non-verbal aspects, language embodies cultural reality. Finally, language is a system of signs that is seen as having itself a cultural value. Speakers identify themselves and others through their use of language; they view their language as a symbol of their social identity. In this sense, language symbolizes cultural reality. (Kramersch, 2003: 4-10)

Europe is not only a geographical concept; it is a cultural concept. (Chen, 2004: 13) In the EU, the meeting of diversified culture of all member states is a design

feature. Jean Monnet, the founding father of the EU, later recognized the importance of culture in the integration policies and claimed: “If we were to do it all again we would start with culture”. The Maastricht Treaty in 1992 states the goal of cultural policy as follows:

The EU shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the member states, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore. The Maastricht Treaty gives cultural policy its own legal basis. Article 151 provides a basis for action aimed at encouraging, supporting and supplementing the activities of the member states, while respecting national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore. The principles for intervention by the EU in the field of culture are complementarity and subsidiarity. Any act of harmonization of legal and regulatory provisions of the member states is excluded from the scope of Article 151. Measures are taken by co-decision procedure with unanimity in Council.

In reality, a great number of cultural programs have been carried out to serve the above objective, which include: *the Kaleidoscope Program* in 1996, *the Ariane Program* in 1997, *the Raphael Program* in 1997, *Culture 2000 Program* and so on. Language diversity as an important part of EU cultural identity is recognized in Article 22 of *the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU*. Knowing other European languages will not only bring forth more job opportunities but also further understanding among the EU citizens. So the EU also adopts measures to disseminate and preserve European languages. The “2+1” objective is a case in point. Besides, the European Year of Languages 2001 was a great success and, in July 2003, the European Commission adopted an action plan for 2004—2006 with a view to promoting language learning and linguistic diversity.

The English word “identity” originates from the Latin word “identitas” and old French “identite”. It contains a root of “idem” which means the same. Thus, identity is often used to express “sameness”, “likeness” and “oneness”. So the basic concept of “identity” is the same nature and state existing in the composition, characteristics and properties of a certain thing. (Wang, 2007: 277-278) The concept of “identity” is based

on the dichotomy of “us” and “others” since people belong to different speech communities prehistorically. Language is such a suitable vehicle to make people of the same language identify with one another and exclude those of other languages. As Peter Rietbergen (1998) argues in his *Europe: a Cultural History*, language, of course, always has been and will remain an important cultural factor, not only in communication unit also in defining different groups within society. The German philosopher Humbolt holds that language is the spirit of a nation, and it brings people in the same language community sense of belonging and molds their minds.

Language is very much bound up with identity. The link between language and identity has had a long and varied history, especially in Europe. Language became a key element in the emergent nation-states that replaced the old dynasties and empires in Europe. (Gubbins & Holt, 2002: 1) Identity involves not only sameness but also otherness, whereas a unified language can not only strengthen the sense of sameness within a community, but also distinguish the sense of difference felt as otherness. The distinction of a language represents loss of a total vision of life, of reality, and of consciousness. (Phillipson, 2003: 26)

National identity represents one aspect of a person’s social being, and it also embodies his/her sense of belonging. When a language has become a nation’s symbol, concepts like “national identity” and “being faithful to a language” appear. In the EU, for example, all member states insist that their languages should be used in EU organizations and this is closely linked to their feelings of recognition of their countries. (Wu, 2004)) The way people use their languages reveals their personal and social identities. As Joshua Fishman puts it:

Language itself is content, a referent for loyalties and animosities, an indicator of social statuses and personal relationships, a marker of situations and topics as well as of the social goals and large scale value-laden arenas of interaction that typify every speech community. (1970:1)

The problem of citizenship and identity arise almost the same day as the process of European integration begins. In the European integration, identity could be understood both as the individual characteristics by which a thing or person is recognized or known and a feeling of recognition. In Chinese we say “shenfen” (身份)

and “rentong” (认同). The EU is made up of so many member states and brings so many countries and its people together. But will the Englishman, French or German admit that they are Europeans in the first place rather than they are British, French or Germans? If not, what is the point of integration? So, the citizenship and identity of the people of these member states are worth great attention. When a member state’s language is under threat, the leaders and countrymen will react vehemently to maintain and save its position. Because of this, there is a natural need for multilingualism in order to make communication between different speech communities possible.

### 1.1.1 Linguistic Identity and Cultural Identity

One cannot deny the importance of languages in the development of human history. This is not only because languages serve as the indispensable tool for human communication but also because language is the symbol of the collective identity of a nation. Therefore, languages are closely bound with social groups and nations. In human history, the name of a language could also be used to refer to the people who speak the language. For example, English and German, which began to form in the 4th and the 7th century respectively, are also used to refer to the people who speak the two languages. And it is self-evident that languages are importance features of a nation.

The German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte emphasized the importance of languages to national identity: “...the original, and truly natural boundaries of states are beyond doubt their internal boundaries. Those who speak the same language are joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds by nature herself, long before any human art begins...(Fichte, Johann Gottlieb 1968:190-191) The famous political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson analyzed the influence of languages to national characteristics by saying that people have to distinguish different languages in the process of printing and make sure one standard language is used by all. This is beneficial to the establishment of a common language and reduce variations. And it makes languages possible to use in places as well as in different times. So here one can see that Anderson put more emphasis on the communicative function of languages rather than its referential one. The same stance is also shared by Renan, the French philosopher, who argues: “A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things that are

actually one make up this soul, this spiritual principle. One is in the past, the other in the present.” (Joseph, John Ernest: 2004: 112) However, sharing the same language is beneficial to the formation of a common memory. American political scientist Karl W. Deutch proposes the important function of linguistic identity to the formation of a nation and a country. He insists that the precondition of the formation of national identity for a people is that a large group of them could communicate in a more effective way on a widely known topic than outsiders. Once again the communicative function of languages are emphasized here. So it is very hard for people who speak different languages to have real communication.

There are two functions of languages to the formation of a nation. One is the communicative function and the other is the referential function; that is to say, one uses his language to identify himself and the same applies to a group. In this way, the cultural identity of a nation emerges. Communication is conducive to the formation of a collective memory of a nation and strengthen national identity. In the European history, a nation has its own specific language or a similar version. For example, the Germans realized the unifications of language and culture and make German its national characteristics. This happened around 1520 to 1546 and one third of the publications at that time were the Martin Luther’s version of *Bible*, which is in German.

It is generally acknowledged that the modern nations appear after the Thirty Years’ War, which was fought primarily in Central Europe between 1618 and 1648. The Westphalia Treaty signed after the war establishes the essential structure of modern Europe as a community of sovereign states emerge. Before this, language and national identity is not necessarily bound. For example, the Roman empire spread Latin in its army, judicial system and bureaucracy. But the locals still used their vernacular language like Greek. It seemed that the Roman emperor did not care about the unification of languages. The fact was that in the west region of the Roman Empire (the present western Europe) Latin had replaced some local languages to communication. This is because the Romans used Latin in administration rather than the operation of some certain language policy. In the ear of Byzantine Empire, Greek became the official language but vernaculars still flourish in arts and literature. In Ottoman Empire,

Turkish is used in armies and the court while other languages were still employed.

The reason why the Roman empire failed to unify languages in its territory can be threefold: the first is that when Roman empire grew, communication among different regions was quite limited; this is especially the case for the ordinary people; secondly, it is either because the empire is too large or its political system is too complicated to promote such unification; thirdly, the educational level was too low to provide the common people with enough opportunities of language training. And Latin was less affected by other languages. Karl W. Deutch found that there is no discrepancy between the increase of modern European countries since 1871 and the growth of common languages emerging in these countries.

It is evident to see that languages are not necessarily linked to national identity in ancient times. After the Thirty Years' War, to have a common language became the important guideline for modern nations, which is also the time when capitalism began to rise in Europe. By analyzing considerable related documents and data, Deutsch concludes: "In 1809, there were 16 common languages in Europe; up to 1900, it has risen to 30; by the year of 1937, it has amounted to 53." (Deutsch, 1945: 522-545) So, it is reasonable that the formation of sovereign nation-states is the precondition for a national common language. England and France both successfully established English and French as its national common languages. The former is a country with a single nation while the latter with more than one nation. Usually it is the language of the dominant nation that becomes the common tongue. Countries like Belgium and the Switzerland practices the bilingualism and multilingualism because there is more than one nation that populate these two countries.

It is safe to conclude that after the rise of sovereign nation-states, certain language has become a symbol of the national identity of a specific country. To promote one language and make it a common standard has become a guideline for modern European countries. To appoint a language the official language is the most important feature of the language policies in most countries. However, some scholars doubt this practice and insist that this might be true for the industrialization in 18th-century Europe but not for the world at present. Others hold the opinion that the promotion of one language would not eradicate other local languages and those of the

minority groups. Having more than one official language would not separate people since they are so devoted to their languages.

In modern European countries, the policy of monolingualism is practiced. Take the member states in the EU for example. The EU boasts of 28 member states and 17 of them stipulate that there is only one language in the country, including Austria, Denmark, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Malta, Holland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Czech, Slovakia and Italy. Three of them have more than one official languages in law: Great Britain, Spain and Slovenia; seven of them have two official languages: Belgium, Cypress, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg Sweden and Switzerland. Belgium is a country with three official languages. The Dutch speaking region in the north and French speaking region in the south virtually divide Belgium in two parts and this is detrimental to the Belgian national identity. The debate over whether to have a coalition government by politicians from the two parts illustrated this point to some extent, after the general election of in June 2007.

Therefore, it could be summarized that modern countries still consider to have a common standard language in order to form strong national identity. Countries will take the establishment of a common standard language into account when they make their linguistic policies.

### 1.1.2 The Characteristics of Linguistic and Cultural Identity in Globalization

In the age of deeper globalization, how relevant is the linguistic identity to cultural and national identity? In order to answer such a question, one need to focus on the influence of globalization on culture in different countries and regions. Generally speaking, with the economic globalization and quick development of digital technology and the internet, the interaction among different countries and regions develops at an unprecedented level. Owing to globalization, countries tend to have more common understanding towards certain issue and acknowledge the universal values which transcend those of their own national boundary. The assimilation and homogeneity of culture happen inevitably. However, the cultural exchanges among different countries are not the same since globalization is initiated by the western

capitalist countries like America. The United States plays a dominant role in global cultural exchanges thanks to its superiority in politics, economy and mass media. Cultural studies scholar like Edward Said refer it to the cultural hegemony or cultural imperialism. But culture in every country has its own uniqueness and tend to confront the invasion of foreign culture in order to safeguard its characteristics. Home culture launches a counterattack to foreign culture by localizing its enemy. So, some scholars arrive at the conclusion: culture globalization is going hand in hand with localization of the foreign culture. It might be pointless here to argue which force is stronger. But one can not deny the assimilation and homogeneity of culture in the process of globalization.

The same happens to languages. But the exchange of languages or the study among languages users could be multidimensional, compared with that of culture. In globalization, the United States make English the most widely used language in the world due to its superiority in politics, economy, technology and culture. In fact English is the most widely used language before globalization: some countries make English their official languages; some countries make English their second language or working language; some countries learn English as a foreign language. The number of English speakers tops any other languages, so much so that some linguists claim that the leading position of English and the increasing inequality in English and other languages result in “the linguistic imperialism”. (Philipson, 1992: 39-77.) Others oppose the viewpoint by saying that this is a very bad comparison. Countries and people need a common language to communicate and English is such a language.

But in practice, many countries try its best to protect their own languages to safeguard its own national culture due to the intimacy of language and culture. For example, France as a member state of the EU is taking French as an important tool of national identity and social integration. In 1970s, with the flooding of immigrants and the economy developing at a low pace, the French government and the people had paid more attention to French. In 1972, 1975, 1986 and 1994, the French government passed laws to purify French and elevate its role in public media in France to counterbalance the influence of English. They also fought for the international position of France.