



An Analysis of Linguistics and Language Learning

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Abstract

Due to its consistent linguistic limitations, linguistics is the preferred medium for language learners. To take it a step further, language is essential for broadening people's perspectives on the outside world. Now it is time to investigate the connection between linguistics and language acquisition. This study adopts a method of case analysis in accordance with syntax, semantics and pragmatics in linguistics to clarify the relationship between linguistics and language learning based on the practical role of them and make some recommendations for language learning.

Keywords: linguistics, language learning, relationship.

1 Introduction

It is a prevalent misconception that linguistics is a prescriptive science, and that language is a tool for communication. However, it is crucial for language learners to comprehend the fundamental concepts of linguistics and language to examine the link between them in depth. This comprehension of "linguistics" and "language" is necessary in order to explore and uncover their relationships. Up to this moment, it has been the case that, overall, the

trend of studying linguistics and learning languages has scarcely increased (as indicated in Figure 1). Parallel to this, 56.4 percent of all linguistics and language learning research focuses on learning foreign languages (as shown in Figure 2).

It is crucial to make a fundamental observation that is pertinent to both linguistics and language learning before exploring the connection between the two fields. Therefore, case analysis is employed in this paper to examine their relationship, to investigate the relationship between linguistics and language learning, to clarify this relationship, and to provide some advice for language learning.

2 The Practical Role of Linguistics

2.1 Interpretation of Linguistics

It is important to be familiar with the definition of linguistics before beginning to study it, which is "Linguistics is usually defined as the science of language or, alternatively, as the scientific study of language. Linguistics is a rich and exciting field [1]." Although humans are at the center of linguistics, not all of them can focus on specifics and tangible facts. The study of a language is, in other words, linguistics.

2.2 Overview of Theories of Syntax, Semantics and Pragmatics

With the guidance of theories on syntax, semantics and pragmatics, the following details are to analyze the application of these theories through cases.



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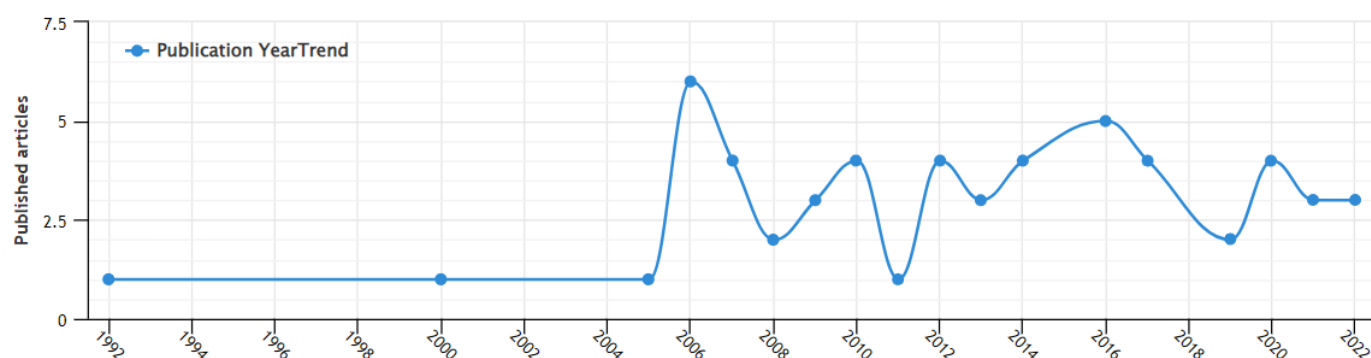


Figure 1. Trend of studying linguistics and language learning (1992-2022).

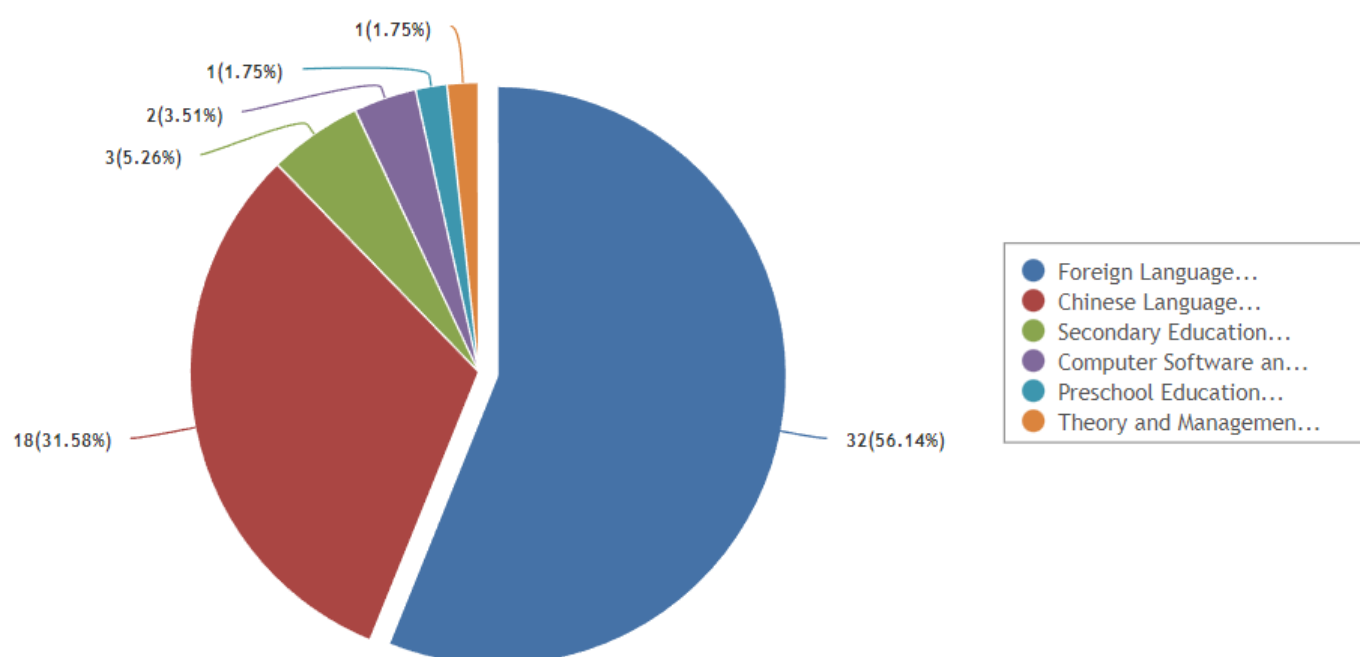


Figure 2. Trend of studying field between linguistics and language learning (1992-2022).

Table 1. Analysis of syntax, semantics and pragmatics.

	Syntax	Semantics	Pragmatics
Distinction	Rules for making sentences	The study of the syntactic structures	The comprehension of English sentences in context
Connection	In general, there has intrinsic connection among them: Syntax is the foundation, semantics is like a tool for analyzing sentences and pragmatics is on the top of the first two.		

2.2.1 Theories of Syntax, Semantics and Pragmatics

"Syntax is about principles of forming and understanding English sentences; semantics examines how meaning is encoded in a language; and pragmatics is the study of meaning in context [1]." From definitions of the three, although there is distinction, there is also a connection (as is seen in Table 1).

2.2.2 Application of Syntax, Semantics and Pragmatics

To make a sentence, it is necessary to have a knowledge of syntax. With the guidance and support of the theory,

a proper sentence is not only correct in grammar and vocabulary, but also right in semantics. It means that a proper sentence needs to be structurally right, readable and clear. There is a detailed analysis in Example 1 [1].

Example 1:

- ① The kids watched [the firework from the hill].
- ② The kid watched [the firework] [from the hill].

Here is a single string of words that without any change of order can have two quite different meanings,

each corresponding to a possible structure [1]. Here's another example: The water is too hot to drink. All that can be concluded is that if there are different intrinsic structures in the same sentence, the meaning in those sentences will change.

There are some improvements in learning linguistics. Initially, language learners' knowledge of linguistics improving, they are no longer limited to the superficial forms of language learning. Subsequent to studying theoretical knowledge in linguistics, for language learners, the exploration of semantics should be focused. The sentence "The kids can fish in the pond" is ambiguous in semantic meaning, so it may not be applied in compositions.

Example 2:

- ① The kids [can fish in the pond].
- ② The kids [can] [fish in the pond].

Sentence ① means that the kids are allowed to fish in the pond. However, sentence ② means that the kids can put fish in the pond into cans. Structurally, both sentences are true in specific situations. But semantically, without a more detailed explanations, misunderstandings can happen at any moment. Thus, sentences in formal style are not permitted to have ambiguities.

When learning linguistics, the learners' ability to choose words in writing and translation practices in accordance with context can be improved. The Chinese words "变化" have different expressions in English, such as "vary", "change", "transform" and "turn" etc. Four sentences are listed below in Example 3.

Example 3:

- ① A baby's need for food can vary from day to day.
- ② Needs change while policies fossilize.
- ③ It was an event that would transform my life.
- ④ His face turned red when he saw beautiful girls.

It is clear from the four sentences above that there is a difference. Verbs of the Chinese character "变化" are in the form of notional verbs in sentences ①, ② and ③, but it is a linking verb in sentence ④. When the Chinese characters "变化" are translated into English, there are different choices of vocabulary according to semantics. Thus, the proper use of words properly depends on the situation or context.

Ultimately, a certain theoretical knowledge of

linguistics is conducive to the analysis of structures in translation, which not only enables learners to make improvements in grammar and phraseology, but also develops their logical thinking demeanor. Here, this study presents two examples: one English sentence translated into Chinese (shown in Example 4) and one Chinese sentence translated into English (shown in Example 5).

Example 4:

- ① 1984年由353人组成中国代表团参加了在洛杉矶举行的第23届奥运会 [2]。

Target language (English):

Version 1: In 1984, a Chinese Sports Delegation composed of 353 members participated in the 23rd Olympic Games held in Los Angeles.

Version 2: In 1984, a Chinese Sports Delegation of 353 members participated in the 23rd Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

Version 3: A Chinese Delegation (which is) made up of 353 members participated in the 23rd Olympic Games that was held in 1984.

Learners already know about translation skills from different translated versions of the above. Unusually, they first read the source language, then analyze the sentence structure and translate, and finally re-read. For sentence ①, it can be structured by "1984年/由353人组成中国代表团/参加了/在洛杉矶举行的第23届奥运会". It is to figure out the subject "由353人组成的中国代表团", predicative verb "参加了", object "第23届奥运会", time adverbial "1984年" and place adverbial "在洛杉矶". After that, it can be translated into English in three ways. Version 1 is the first that learners can think of due to its domain being the source language. Version 2 is similar to Version 1, but the past participle "composed" and "held" are omitted, with prepositions "of" and "in" conveying the meaning, more concise and straightforward. What Version 3 is different from Version 1 and Version 2 is that the placement of time adverbial and the past participated "made up of". Nonetheless, despite the differences all three ways of translation, they all share the same meaning, which is acceptable in syntax, semantics and pragmatics.

Example 5:

- ① The team will exam each ballot to see if the chads indicate a presidential choice.

Target language (Chinese):

Version 1: 这个小组将检查每一张选票，以决定孔屑是否表明一个总统的选择。

Version 2: 这个小组将检查每一张选票，以决定孔屑的形状是否表明选举人在总统选举时的一个选择 [3]。

It is clear that Version 1 is unnatural and ambiguous. The sentence “以决定孔屑是否表明一个总统的选择” is translated literally, so it is a little strange in accordance with the semantics of the source language. Thus, to make the targeted language meaning clearer, the translator adds “形状” and “选举人”, which is more aligned with the targeted language. Methods of translation are different, but if the translation does not correspond to the target language in syntax, semantics and pragmatics, it is unacceptable. In the process of translation, it is of vital importance to linguistics knowledge reserves.

From the above two examples of Chinese-to-English and English-to-Chinese translation, linguistics is also applied in translation. Hence, language learners who major in translation should integrate linguistics with language learning.

3 The Practical Role of Language Learning

3.1 Interpretation of Language Learning

In the first place, before getting started on language learning, everyone in the world must be feeling obliged to know and understand the concept “language”. So how do you figure out what the real explanation is? “To give the barest of definition, language is a means of verbal communication. It is instrumental in that communicating by speaking or writing is a purposeful act [1].” Meanwhile, it is of vital importance to be the concept “language learning” in mind, understanding and applying it.

3.2 Cognition of Language Learning

Language learning is based on language itself. In fact, a little kid who has not been taught anything about language, but he or she can speak as the average people in everyday life. However, what makes it is “imitation”. There is a specific example: adults usually express themselves “I would like something to eat” when they feel hungry. Little kids about 2 or 3 years of age are also showing their hungry when they have it. But in the beginning, the little kids express themselves by crying. As time goes on, the kids are gradually able to do some imitation of what their parents or adults do when they touch them. That is to say, the kids will say, “Hungry! Hungry!” What the above case implies

that language learning, at first, is essentially an act of imitation.

To make it easy to understand, there is another example. When English learners, especially non-native speakers, practice listening and speaking, they will take advantage of materials like VOA, BBC, CNN 10 News and TED, following the audio which is called “Shadowing”. For instance, there is a sentence excerpted from TED in Example 6.

Example 6:

“This round structure is only about ten billionths of a meter in diameter, but it—as well as other technologies in the pipeline—could be steppingstones to a monumental public health ambition: a single vaccine that protects you against everything [4].”

What language learners do is repeat and follow as much as they can. Thus, the process of manner requires a combination of listening and speaking. Yet in doing so, grammar and other rules are less important. The key point is to follow the audio. Therefore, it is certainly the process of imitation in the learning of language, of which one must be conscious.

3.3 Approaches of Language Learning

Above all is to state how to recognize language learning, and explore how to learn a language. “In fact, knowledge in linguistics lies at the root of understanding what language learners should and can learn, how they actually learn and what they learn ultimately [1].” “Knowledge in linguistics can serve language learning [1],” so it is necessary to find ways to study a language.

Before deep learning, all language learners should know functions of language. According to [1], “Linguists talk about the FUNCTIONS of language in an abstract sense, that is, not in terms of using language to chat, to think, to buy and sell, to read and write, to greet, praise and condemn people, etc.” The reason why learners need realize it is helpful for them to explore how linguistics and language learning’s relationship between them. How do you recognize the connection between language learning and linguistics? Please notice the following five sentences in Example 7.

Example 7:

- ① There are a lot of/lots of apples to eat.
- ② There are a large number of/many apples to eat.

- ③ There is a lot of water to drink.
- ④ There is a plenty of water to drink.
- ⑤ There is amount of water to drink.

From sentences listed above, the phrases “a lot of”, “lots of” and “many” are likely to be the most to choose in English writing or speaking, but phrases like “a number of”, “a plenty of” are not frequently used. This seems to have no connection with linguistics, which creates confusion. It is, of course, intricately connected with linguistics. But the phenomenon does not always conform to the rules, as some exceptions still exist. In daily life, phrases like “a lot of” and “lots of” can easily occur to people’s minds. In contrast, things like “plenty of” and “amount of” are not so easy to be in mind. However, it is the truth that language learning lacks something to innovate and create because not all people in the world have a knowledge of linguistics. As is mentioned above, language learning is a process of imitation. Only the five showed that different people may have various levels of understanding of language and linguistics. So, there should be something to limit language learning, like a country’s rules.

All is stated above show that language learning includes a good three aspects: Grammar, Input, and Interlanguage.

Grammar is the integration of rules of speech, vocabulary, sentences, paragraphs, etc. Without grammar instruction, language learners (especially non-native speakers) will be in straited circumstances. “Strong views have also been expressed that any input must be comprehensible if it is to have any effect on learning [1].” As is analyzed from language learning, input is particularly important, which may appropriately regard it as accumulation of the targeted language: pronunciation, vocabulary, structures of sentence, paragraph, and passage et cetera. Besides input, output has also been reported to promote language acquisition [5, 6]. In other words, when language learners can put what their “input” into practice, they are quality. In the meantime, people have assorted styles with different people’s communication, which is called “interlanguage”. “Interlanguage is often understood as a language system between the target language and the learner’s native language [1].” For instance, if you want to ask your teacher about something related to a professional program, he or she can explain it to you in a more authentic and professional way, such as some terms or expressions related to formal situations. By contrast, if any of your

fellow juniors asks you for something similar to what you asked your teacher for, you should explain it to him or her in a brief way. This is because your fellow juniors have no more experience than you. There are no more words that one can understand, and this proves that the conversation between the speaker and the audience is nonsense. So, it is good to just do something that makes sense. Language learning is consistent with this.

4 Relationship Between Linguistics and Language Learning

The above cases analysis is all about linguistics and language learning, which are not separated. “Linguistics is the study of language itself [1].” Instead, language learning is intended to be applied and familiarized with the language. In the sense that linguistics is a further study of language, language learning is included, but not thoroughly. It is about putting what people learn into practice. Breakthroughs in linguistics require further study by language learners. It is clear that language learning and linguistics are integrated. No more deep thoughts on language, and language learning is settling down, which is not what one would wish for in the field of linguistics. Deep down, language learning is needed to set goals and take steps. Language has always evolved with society. Therefore, some rules, which have their origin in philological interests in language learning, have made great progress. Nothing but nonsense is allowed, and it may be empty. Only language learning, but without restrictions, can lead to something murky.

5 Suggestions for Language Learning

According to the analysis above, there are six pieces of suggestions for language learners to learn a language.

- (1) Language learners must establish a solid command of fundamental linguistic knowledge, encompassing grammar, phonetics, and vocabulary.
- (2) Language learners should study how to write a proper sentence in accordance with grammar and syntax. However, it is critical to recognize that grammatical accuracy alone does not ensure contextual appropriateness, as demonstrated in Example 8.

Example 8:

- ① Time permitting, I will invite my good friends to go climbing tomorrow.
- ② An apple eats Tom.

③ Backing home, the house is clean.

Sentence ① is a proper sentence. It is not only correct in grammar, but also appropriate in real language use. However, sentences ② and ③ are not proper in language use. Both sentences ② and ③ are only correct in grammar. For sentence ②, “an apple” is a kind of fruit, but “Tom” is a person’s name. Logically, “an apple” is eaten by a person or a man. The correction is “Tom eats an apple”. For sentence ③, the V-ing form has no relation with the sentence subject “the house”. To perform the action “backing home” needs a reality, but “the house” is an “object”. So this sentence has a logic error. The correct version is “Backing home, he/she found the house is clean.” Thus, the grammatically correct sentences are not always right. The reasonable way that is to write valid sentences needs to meet at least two conditions: firstly, it is grammatically correct; secondly, it is logically correct. In doing so, language learners can better master the language use with the help of linguistics.

(3) Language learners need to master essay composition by systematically applying syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic principles in linguistic theories.

(4) Language learning needs to study the interconnections and distinctions among syntax, semantics, and pragmatics within the framework of linguistics.

(5) Language learners should recognize that the integral relationship between linguistic theory and language acquisition, emphasizing their inseparability in the learning process.

(6) Language learning needs to investigate the application of linguistic theories to language learning through analytical, inductive, and summative methodologies.

Suggestions for language learning above cannot cover an area of everything. In a word, language learning is integrated with linguistics. As is known to all, language learning covers not only the basic knowledge of language audio study, pronunciation, speaking, comprehension, composition and translation, but also includes the deep learning of a language itself, such as its distinguished cultures, customs, applications and eventually its civilization. It is summarized because of analysis of language learning and linguistics theories of syntax, semantics and pragmatics, which is valid not only for this paper but also for later research on linguistics and language learning.

6 Conclusion

The analysis presented in this paper reveals the relationship between linguistics and language learning in accordance with the practical role of and offer language learners some suggestions to enhance language learning. Linguistics provides valuable insights into language learning, offering a deeper understanding of language structures, acquisition processes, and effective learning strategies. By comprehending linguistic theories, language learners can make informed decisions about language learning approaches and tailor their learning experiences to improve proficiency. Therefore, there is a close and inseparable relationship between linguistics and language learning. Only through in-depth study of the language itself and putting what language learners have learned into practice can they realize a comprehensive understanding and use of the language. Simultaneously, it is significant to maintain a continuous focus on and update the language learning process to meet the needs of social development and language change.

Data Availability Statement

Data will be made available on request.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate

Not applicable.

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