

Philosophical Foundation of Word Class Division

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Abstract—Since Plato proposed the idea of word class division, Western linguists and philosophers have continued to supplement and improve it, gradually forming a modern word system. In view of the existing loopholes in the definition of word class, Jespersen proposed a new rationale for word class division — the system of three-part method combining form, function and idea. The study found that: first, Jespersen's distinction between generic nouns and proper nouns is mainly reflected in the formal characteristics, that is, the distinction between proper nouns and generic nouns belongs to the category of grammar; second from the perspective of function and ideology, the boundaries between the two gradually disappear. This study believes that Jespersen's three-point system has realized the transition from philosophical philosophy to grammar philosophy, and laid the foundation for the subsequent philosophical discussion of the proper nouns.

Keywords—word classes; Jespersen; philosophical philosophy; grammar philosophy

I. INTRODUCTION

OED defines a part of speech as "a grammatical category determined by a certain concept or relationship expressed by a sentence in a sentence." From the perspective of traditional grammar, the grammatical description of a language is equivalent to the division of the word class (William 1976: 96). The division of word class can be traced back to Plato, who divided word classes into nouns (ónoma) and action words (rhēma). His student Aristotle added a type of conjunction (syndesmos). After the Stoics and Alexandrians, and finally to Prician, the English word class is divided into nine, including adjective, noun, interjection, adverb, verb, preposition, conjunction, pronoun, and article (William 1976: 97).

II. PROBLEMS WITH WORD CLASS DIVISION

Jespersen (1924:58) pointed out that most of the existing word class definitions are sham definitions: these definitions are not precise enough, there are many loopholes, and there is no uniform arrangement on the basis of the division.

A. Limitations of the Division System

The division system of Varro (116-27 BC) is the most unique in terms of division. He distinguishes four types of words: nouns, verbs, words with characteristics of both nouns and verbs, and particles. However, the division system is only applicable to Latin and Greek, not to other languages.

Jespersen gave another logically rigorous division system: participles that are distinguished by tense and gender; common nouns that are distinguished by gender; personal pronouns that are not distinguished by tense neither by gender; verbs that are distinguished only by tense, as demonstrated in "Fig. 1".

nouns	ordinary:	with gender, without tense
	personal pronouns:	without gender, without tense
	participles:	with gender, with tense
verbs:		without gender, with tense

(Jespersen 1924:58)

Fig. 1. Classification of nouns and verbs based on tense and gender.

In the part-of-speech system shown in "Fig. 1", participles are divided into sub-categories of nouns, which obviously contradict the standard of word class division in traditional grammar. Jespersen (1924) explained that the standard of this division is only to examine its division logic from the overall system of division, and to make an analogy with the division system of Varro. It is found that the two system division methods are highly consistent and only suitable for accounting for some languages. The difference is that one system considers the attributes of case, and the other focuses on the attributes of the gender.

B. One-sidedness of Word Class Definition

J. Hall and E. A. Sonnenschein define each word class. Nouns used for naming; pronouns referring to objects without naming; adjectives and nouns used together to describe, identify, and enumerate; verbs used to describe something or someone; conjunctions used to connect phrases or words. Jespersen proposed his objections to it with examples:

- (1) Who killed Cock Robin? (pron.)
- (2) Then none was for a party. (pron.)
- (3) the absent (adj.)
- (4) He was angry. (adj.)
- (5) Browning the poet. (adj. *)
- (6) You scoundrel. (v. *)

- (7) a man of honor (conj. *)
- (8) friendship/love/health (n.)

In (1) and (2), is the content referred to by whom and none identified? Obviously, according to the meaning, we conclude that these two pronouns have meanings, but the content is uncertain. Jespersen also pointed out that in the revised grammar book of Seines, "identify" was replaced by "indicate". Although the latter was improved than the former, it could not solve the reference problem in these two examples. The adjective *absent* and article *the* in example (3) are used in conjunction with the table. In example (4), the adjectives are used as the words of the word were, indicating a state of the subject. In response to the above various vulnerabilities, Jespersen pointed out the one-sidedness of the definition of word class, and it is urgent to propose a more reasonable standard and definition of word class.

In the rebuttal of the definition of the above part-of-speech, Jespersen proposed the definition of the noun only to contrast with the pronoun, but did not refute it. The friendship/love/health in Example (8) is an abstract noun, and its meaning is too complicated to explain, let alone name it.

III. JESPERSEN'S PART OF SPEECH SYSTEM

Jespersen proposed a new standard for word class division: a comprehensive consideration of form, function and idea. Form is the most obvious feature, but different languages are difficult to generalize with more uniform formal features; function is an important feature, but it is very difficult to analyze.

A. Formal Standards

When the method of determining the word class does not work by examining the meaning of the word, grammarians believe that the only criterion should be to examine the form of the word. J. Zeitlin defines nouns according to form: first, nouns can be preceded by articles or indicators; second, inflection changes are used to represent the belongings and the plurals; third, prepositions are used together with the prepositions. The various relationships at the end of the inflection change; in addition, he added a word, a word with these form symbols that should have or be in a particular idiom.

For defining word classes based on form, Jespersen also found the flaws. Jespersen (1924: 60) argued with the example of must. He pointed out that there is no change in the form of the word, so it should be in the same category as "the", "then", "for", "as" and "enough".

B. Combination of Form, Function and Idea

Jespersen (1924: 60) gives two extreme language structures: one word in a language has formal features, and the other has no formal features. Ido language belongs to the former and Chinese belongs to the latter. In Edo, nouns end in -o, adjectives end in -a, adverbs end in -e, and verbs end in -r/-s/-z. In Chinese, the opposite is true. No word class has a form tag. Some words can have multiple word classes. The

standard for classifying word classes can only satisfy some languages with formal features. For languages without formal changes, this standard is not applicable.

Jespersen (1924:61) pointed out that even for languages with formal features, formal features and word classes do not have a one-to-one correspondence, and often one form corresponds to multiple word classes. In English, for example, -ed is generally located at the end of the verb, forming past tense or past participles; -ed can also be used to form adjectives after nouns, such as blue-eyed, moneyed, talented, etc. From the perspective of function, these formal features can be used as the basis for word class judgment: first, if -s is placed at the end of the word as a plural form, then the word can be judged as a noun; if -s is placed at the end of the word to form a third person singular, the word is treated as a verb; second, some articles or indicators in front of the word my or the, can be judged to be a noun, as in the following two examples:

- (9) my love for her (n.)
- (10) the love I bear her (n.)

Compared with love in the sentence below, it is clear that "love" in (11) is a verb.

- (11) I love her. (v.)

In the above example, love can be used as both a verb and a noun. If we replace love in the above example with admiration and admire, it is easier to understand.

In addition to the judgment criteria of form and function, it is also possible to use the meaning to identify the word class. Jespersen pointed out that although words with the same spelling may have multiple word classes, in actual speech, each word has only one word class. That is to say, in a specific context, the word class of each word is determined, and the principle of determination is the meaning expressed by it. He also corrected a mis-division of the word class in the grammar world, that is, some words are not nouns used as verbs, but rather they are verbs themselves, for example:

- (12) We tead at the vicarage. (Jespersen 1924: 62)

Although *tea* as a verb and a noun have no ending changes in spelling, they are two different words. Jespersen clearly pointed out that it is impossible to use a noun as a verb.

Jespersen (1924: 62) believes that a well-trained grammarian can easily determine which word class a word belongs to, not based on the definition of the word class, but on the way we judge animals (when we see an animal, it is easy to tell whether it is a cow or a cat). This criterion is a combination of factors, namely form, function and idea.

IV. PHILOSOPHICAL DISCUSSION ON THE DIVISION OF WORD CLASS

A. Relationship Between Language and Philosophy

Language is the symbolic representation of meaning transfer, based on the experience and perception of cognitive

subject. But the development of linguistics is based on philosophy as the cornerstone and cradle. The process of the development of language cognition science is under the influence of the existence of different philosophical schools. Different theoretical systems and their camps have led to differences in language cognition among different linguistic schools. They have formed different views of language cognition. The concept of experiential philosophy holds the cognition and study of linguistic phenomena, based on the experience of cognitive subjects. Therefore, it is of great value to clarify the influence of language cognition philosophy on language cognition, grasp the philosophical theoretical basis and basic characteristics of the language cognition experience view, understand its epistemological and methodological significance, and promote human social practice activities.

Philosophy cannot avoid thinking about its own direction. The direction of philosophy is related to that of philosophical concerns. Related to it are the various forms of "end of philosophy" since the 20th century. The latter inherently contains an understanding of the fate and direction of philosophy. Of course, the philosophy of "end of philosophy" that has ended or should be ended refers to a certain form of history, not to all philosophies, but to specific areas of existence such as language, consciousness, or political ethics, i.e. the philosophical approach to the "end of philosophy" theory. However, philosophy can neither end in a certain period of time nor be limited to language, consciousness, or specific areas of existence. Discarding the above restrictions means returning to the real world, which at the formal level affirms the complementarity between formal logic and dialectical thinking, and at the substantive level requires a move towards a real world based on "things." "Things" are not only the premise of the real world, but also the way people exist. Paying attention to the real world based on "things" also means reflecting on people's work process: "Why do things"? "What is the achievement?" "How to do things?" The former two are related to the value purpose and value direction of doing things, while the latter involves the way of doing things. From the philosophical level, the inquiry and questioning of the world based on things involves both the flow of thought and the source of reality.

B. Philosophy of Word Class Division

Jespersen (1924: 63) believes that real life provides us with specific things or phenomena, such as seeing a certain apple at a specific time on a particular day, at a specific place. The apple's color, size, maturity, weight, etc. are all certain or unique. Although language cannot accurately express all of the certain information, for the purpose of achieving communication, one will ignore this entire specific information and use "apple" to refer to all apples, and thus avoids each specific thing or phenomenon to create a name. Everything in the real world is changing rapidly, but people's thoughts or language can capture some of their fixed and typical characteristics. There are no typical things or phenomena in the real world. However, there are words in language. In order to convey one's impressions and thoughts, one must create some abstract expressions, such as "apple",

"fruit", "red", "yellow", etc. are all abstract concepts. All expressions are abstract, and different expressions have their own abstraction.

The discussion of the reference problem of language is one of the main issues discussed in Western language philosophy. Kripke (1980) criticized the referential theory of Mill, Frege and Russell and proposed the theory of causality. Mill believes that proper nouns have no connotation, and general nouns have both connotation and extension; Frege agrees with Mill's point of view in the general name, but puts forward the difference between meaning and reference on the issue of proper name. Russell believes that the proper name has a logical name and a common name.

Jespersen believes that proper nouns are naturally used to refer to an individual, such as "the Pyrenees" and "the United States", although they have a plural form. Features are also used to refer to specific individuals. However, for proper nouns "John" and "Smith" can refer to a number of people with the same name, because there are many people called "John Smith." Similarly, although "Rome" is a proper noun, it also has multiple references. In addition to Italy's Rome, there are five towns in Rome in North America. From this point of view, proper nouns are not used to refer to the name of a single individual. So how do people distinguish between a proper name and a generic name?

Mill (1884) proposed that proper nouns have no connotations and they are used to denote individuals, but not to indicate or imply any attributes of these individuals. A proper noun is only used to indicate the object of the discussion, without a specific description. For example, "people" can not only refer to countless individuals, but also have certain connotation meanings, such as materiality, animality, rationality and some external human characteristics. As long as these nouns convey some information, they make sense. These meanings exist in their connotative meaning, not in extensional meaning. Those nouns that have no connotations are proper nouns. Strictly speaking, proper nouns are meaningless.

Bertelsen pointed out that the name "John" does not explain any problem except that it refers to the names of all people named "John" and not "Henry" and "Richard". The generic noun expresses the typical characteristics of all the alleged people or things, while the proper noun is the opposite. Therefore, the difference between a proper noun and a generic noun does not lie in the number of objects referred to.

From the perspective of communication, Jespersen examines the practical significance of proper nouns on both sides of the communication, and then explores its alleged content. In the actual communication process, the value of the proper noun refers to a certain existence of the two parties. When the speaker uses the same proper noun (e.g. John) in different social situations to refer to different people, the same purpose is achieved: the proper name conveys the speaker's accurate meaning in the listener's mind.

To prove the same intrinsic meaning of the proper name, Jespersen took advantage of a more contextual example:

when one first heard or read someone, he/she came to the listener or reader. In a novel, the more you read it, the more familiar you are with the characters. However, for the same reason, when one sees a new name such as "ichneumon", its connotation or meaning will be more abundant as his or her knowledge increases.

From the perspective of the combination of function and idea, Jespersen uses the example of the full name to change the name, which strongly proves that the proper noun is connotative. A Frenchman asked a little Danish girl what her father did. Because she didn't know how to express "sculptor" in French, she used "Tovason (a famous Danish sculptor)" instead of "sculptor". This will make the communication go smoothly.

The logicians represented by Keynes think that when a proper noun is used to represent a class of people, it has connotation meaning, but in this way the proper noun has become a generic noun because it has all the names. In this regard, Jespersen proposed an objection: when a proper noun is transformed into a generic noun, a well-known feature is selected from the most typical features of the existence or thing referred to by the proper noun to describe the existence of the same feature or things. The reason why a proper noun can be converted into a generic noun is that they all have connotative meanings, but the richness of the meaning they express is different.

According to Jespersen, the proper noun can be in plural form, and the plural form of the proper noun has certain modified senses. There are mainly the following categories:

- (13) In the party, there were three Johns and four Marys.
- (14) I have not visited any of the Romes in America.
- (15) All the Tymperleys have long noses.
- (16) in the days of the Stuarts
- (17) the Henry Spinkers

The name indicated by a single noun is an abstraction. Each individual is in the process of constant change. The role of the name is to understand and determine those eternal elements from the changing moments and then simplify them into a common denominator. If the proper noun has no connotation, it is difficult to understand the following sentence:

(18) He felt convinced that Jonas was again the Jonas he had known a week ago, and not the Jonas of the intervening time. (Dickens)

(19) There were days when Sophia was the old Sophia — the forbidding, difficult Sophia. (Bennett)

Jespersen focused on the connotation of the proper noun from the perspective of form, function and idea. On the basis of the original language philosophy to explore functions (referential) and ideas (connotation meaning), he added formal feature analysis. Accordingly, one can think that the three-point system proposed by Jespersen has realized the transformation from linguistic philosophy to grammar philosophy: its grammar philosophy has both the meaning

and the meaning of ideas outside the language, as well as the ontology of language exploration. The analysis method is more comprehensive and systematic.

Jespersen (1924: 69) pointed out that although there are certain differences between proper nouns and names, their connections are very close. From a linguistic point of view, it is impossible to draw a clear line between proper nouns and generic nouns.

A proper noun can be converted to a generic noun. Conversely, a generic noun can also be converted into a full name. The more random a noun is, the more likely it is to become a proper noun. "The Dover Road" is not a proper name if it refers to a road to Dover. Over time, it became the special name "Dover Road". According to the principle of arbitrariness, a street that has nothing to do with Dover is named "Dover Street", which means that the name is a proper noun from the beginning.

When a generic noun is transferred to a proper noun, the meaning is relatively specific, and the meaning change between them is not a type change, but a degree difference, such as "the black forest" and "the Black Forest"; "the black bird" and "the Blackbird". A proper noun can refer to all things that have a certain trait (black); a proper noun can only be used to refer to a thing with that name, and does not necessarily have a corresponding relationship with the trait.

V. CONCLUSION

Using a comparative method, combined with a number of linguistic examples, Jespersen criticizes and revises the grammatical theories or related concepts of predecessors, and puts forward many unique insights and theories, which have an impact on contemporary grammar research. Bloomfield (1927) pointed out that "English grammar will always benefit from this book." Samuel wrote in a Danish newspaper in honor of Jespersen's seventieth birthday (1930), praising his work as elegant in style and fresh in words.

From the philosophical point of view, Jespersen analyzes the root of the meaning of the word class, and further develops the focus of the debate in the philosophy of language: the referential problem of generic and proper nouns. And it is concluded that the common nouns and proper nouns do not have clear boundaries, and their difference is only in the degree of meaning of the expressed meaning. The standard of word class division proposed by him can be used as an explanatory grammar system. People had better understand the essential features of language from the depth of philosophy.

Jespersen proposed a relatively systematic and comprehensive standard for classifying word classes: a combination of form, function and idea. At the same time, it combines the actual and specific context to explore the meaning of the word class in the process of communication. The idea of grammar philosophy includes both the study of language ontology and the philosophical discussion outside the language (language philosophy). This idea has realized the transition from philosophical philosophy to grammar philosophy, laying a foundation for further in-depth

philosophical reflection on and discussion of the proper nouns and generic nouns.

Although Jespersen explicitly proposed a combination of form, function and idea to classify the word class, in the specific analysis process, the part of the function is relatively small, and in some cases the discussion is not clear enough, which makes it difficult for readers to understand. This has also become a new topic for us to study Jespersen's philosophical thinking in the future.

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