

Principles Of Word Use In The Book “The Principles Of English Lexicology”

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Abstract:

Based on the content of Chapter Five of Mr. He Xuede's “The Principles of English Lexicology”, this study delves into the principles of word use, primarily elaborating on the utilization of vocabulary across grammar, semantics, style, and rhetoric. Additionally, it explores the application of idioms in terms of their syntactic functions, transformations, collocations, structures, and stylistic and rhetorical features. By giving a host of examples, research indicates that these principles of word use form the foundation for effective communication, and through understanding and application, and they enable the language expression to be clear, precise, engaging, and smooth. Continuous exploration and practice contribute to enhancing overall language proficiency.

Keywords: Grammatical use; Semantic use; Stylistic use; Rhetorical use; Use of Idioms

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I. Introduction

Chapter 5 of *The Principles of English Lexicology*: the use of words embraces the grammatical use (case, concord and government), semantic use (choices of senses, synonyms, antonyms and technical terms), stylistic use (poetic, novel, drama, and colloquial use), and figurative use (simile, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, personification, and antonomasia), and so on (He Xuede, 2012).

The principles of word use are fundamental to effective communication, enabling us to convey our thoughts clearly and precisely. By understanding the grammatical, semantic, stylistic, and rhetorical aspects of language, we can enhance our writing and speaking skills, making our expressions more engaging and fluent. This summary explores the key principles of word use outlined in the provided document, illustrating each point with examples and offering insights on how to apply these principles in practice.

II. Grammatical Use

Word Classes (Parts of Speech)

Word classes include traditional classes and new-established classes. Traditional classes mainly include nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, interjections, articles. For instance, in the sentence "The red apple fell from the tree," "apple" is a noun, "red" is an adjective, "fell" is a verb, and "from" is a preposition. Also, for example: "The quickly moving car caught my attention." Here, "quickly" is an adverb modifying the verb "moving."

Alternatively, new-established classes can be grouped into particles, auxiliaries, pro-forms, and determiners. For example, "not" is a particle, "have" can be an auxiliary, "who" is a pro-form, and "the" is a determiner.

Number

Grammatical number refers to the category that expresses quantity in language, typically distinguished as singular or plural. In English, nouns and pronouns inflect for number. For example, nouns like "door" become "doors" in plural form, and pronouns like "I" become "we". Verbs also conjugate for number, such as "he goes" for singular and "they go" for plural.

English, like many other languages, primarily distinguishes between singular and plural forms. The plural of nouns is often formed by adding "-s", while pronouns have irregular plural forms due to their ancient and frequent use.

In short, grammatical number is a fundamental aspect of language that helps distinguish quantity, and English, like most world languages, has formal means to express these differences through inflection and agreement.

Case

Grammarians contend that case is a universal grammatical feature present in all languages, common to every linguistic system (He Xuede, 2012). In English grammar, the term "case" refers to the different forms of personal pronouns used to indicate their grammatical function in a sentence. There are three primary cases: subjective, objective, and genitive. Additionally, there are two forms of genitive pronouns: determinative and independent. For example: subjective case—used as the subject of a sentence: "I am happy." ("I" is in the subjective case.)

Understanding the different cases of pronouns is essential for constructing grammatically correct sentences in English. Each case serves a specific function, helping to clarify the role of the pronoun within the sentence. The subjective case is used for the subject of the sentence, the objective case for the object, and the genitive case to indicate possession or relationship. By recognizing and using these cases correctly, English speakers can communicate more clearly and effectively.

Concord and Government

Concord

Concord requires that words in a syntactic relationship agree in number, gender, and person. For instance, "this man" (singular) versus "these men" (plural).

Government

Government involves one word determining the form of another in a sentence. For instance, a pronoun following a verb or preposition must be in the objective form. Example: "She gave him (objective form) a gift."

Based on the above point, summarize the concepts of "Concord" and "Government" in syntax.

- Concord refers to the agreement of word forms in a syntactic relationship.
- Government is the control of word forms by other words in specific syntactic constructions.
- Both are crucial for understanding morphological changes and word relationships in sentences.

III. Semantic Use

Choices of Sense

Words often have multiple meanings, requiring context and cultural background to discern the correct sense.

This emphasizes the importance of contextual understanding in determining word meaning. For example, "bank" can mean a financial institution or the edge of a river. Other example like "He deposited money in the bank (financial institution)."

Choices of Words

The abundance of synonyms and antonyms in English makes word choice challenging.

It emphasizes the importance of word selection in shaping the meaning and impact of what is being said. In various contexts, such as writing, speaking, or even text messaging, the choices of words can significantly influence how an idea is perceived.

For instance, "happy" and "joyful" are synonyms, while "happy" and "sad" are antonyms. Other example, "She was overjoyed (synonym for extremely happy) to receive the news."

IV. Stylistic Use

The book outlines the stylistic use of words, categorizing them into literary, neutral, and colloquial layers. The neutral layer, being universal, is the most stable and unrestricted in usage. The literary layer includes common literary, poetic, and archaic words. The colloquial layer comprises slang, jargons, and vulgar words.

Neutral Words

Neutral words are versatile and suitable for both formal and informal contexts. For example: "cat," "dog," "house."

Literary Words

Literary words include terms used in literature, poetry, and archaic expressions. For example, "eloquence" versus "fluency" (more literary). Other example, "The poet's eloquence captivated the audience."

Colloquial Words

Colloquial words are informal, often region-specific, and include slang and jargon. For example: "awesome" (colloquial for very good). Other example, "That concert was totally awesome!"

In short, this classification emphasizes the diverse nature of language and the importance of context in word use.

V. Rhetorical Use

In the study of English language, the rhetorical use of words stands as a cornerstone, enabling speakers and writers to articulate their thoughts with both precision and impact. This summary embarks on an exploration of 25 key rhetorical devices, each illustrated with examples to underscore its unique purpose and application.

Alliteration: The repetition of initial consonant sounds, such as in "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers." This creates a musical quality and helps to capture attention.

Asyndeton: The omission of conjunctions between coordinate parts of a sentence, like "I came, I saw, I conquered." This emphasizes the actions and conveys a sense of urgency or brevity.

Antithesis: Juxtaposition of opposing ideas, such as "Speech is silver, silence is gold." This highlights contrast and strengthens the argument by presenting two opposing views.

Anticlimax: Stating thoughts in descending order of significance, like "I won a Nobel Prize, a car, and a sock." This creates a humorous or ironic effect by deflating expectations.

Climax: Arranging words or phrases in ascending order of importance, such as "First, he lost his job; then, his home; finally, his hope." This builds tension and creates a sense of climax.

Bull (Litotes in error?): Conveying a meaning opposite to its usual sense by denying its opposite, e.g., "It's not bad, it's just different." However, 'bull' is not a standard term; litotes is closer, as in "I'm not saying it's perfect, but it's good enough."

Homophonic Pun: Using words with the same pronunciation but different meanings, like "Why was the math book sad? Because it had too many problems." This creates a play on words for humorous effect.

Irony: Using words to convey a meaning opposite to their usual sense, such as "It's raining cats and dogs—perfect beach weather!" This often produces humor or sarcasm.

Litotes: Emphasizing a statement by denying its opposite, e.g., "This isn't the best meal I've ever had, but it's passable." This understates for effect.

Metaphor: Describing one thing in terms of another, like "Time is a thief." This suggests a likeness or analogy between two concepts.

Neologism: A newly coined term, like "FOMO" (Fear of Missing Out). This introduces fresh vocabulary to express modern concepts.

Oxymoron: Combining contradictory terms, such as "bittersweet victory." This creates a paradoxical expression for emphasis.

Paradox: Using apparently contradictory ideas to reveal truth, e.g., "Only the educated are truly free." This highlights the tension between seemingly opposed notions.

Parallelism: Using similar structures in clauses, like "We must work hard, play hard, and love harder." This creates a sense of balance and rhythm.

Root Repetition: Repeating the same root word in different forms, e.g., "She sang, danced, and laughed joyfully." This reinforces the theme.

Parody: According to well-known idioms, temporarily replace certain parts to create new idioms, or based on famous quotes, change some words while keeping the basic structure intact e.g. "To lie or not to lie, the doctor's dilemma". Adapted from the famous quote in Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' To be or not to be, this is a question (He Xuede, 2012).

Pastiche: Imitating the style of another work, such as a novel written in the style of Shakespeare. This creates a new work with a familiar feel.

Pun: A play on words, such as "Why don't scientists trust atoms? Because they make up everything!" This creates double meanings for humor.

Repetition: Repeating words or phrases for emphasis, like "Never give up, never give up, never give up." This reinforces the message.

Rhyme: Words with similar sounding final syllables, e.g., "rose" and "pose." In poetry, this creates a musical quality.

Sarcasm: Using words to convey the opposite of one's true meaning, often with irony, like "Oh, great, another rainy day—just what I needed!"

Satire: A form of humor that mocks or criticizes, such as Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal." This aims to highlight flaws through exaggeration.

Simile: Compare two things or phenomena that share common characteristics, showing the relationship between the tenor and the vehicle. Both appear in the comparison, with the basic format: A is like B, metaphor words: as, like, as if, as though (He Xuede, 2012)), e.g., "Her smile was like a ray of sunshine." This makes comparisons

for clarity.

Understatement: Expressing less than what is true, like "It was just a little accident." This downplays for effect.

Unexpected Collocation: Using words together that don't usually go, such as "jumbo shrimp." This creates a surprising or humorous juxtaposition.

The study of rhetorical use enriches our understanding of how language can be manipulated to achieve specific effects. Each device serves a unique purpose, whether to create humor, emphasize a point, or convey complex ideas with clarity. By practicing the use of these devices, I can enhance my communication skills and better engage my audience. This summary provides a foundation for further exploration and application of rhetorical use in English language.

VI. Use Of Idioms

Idioms are important products of social culture and language, with rich cultural connotations. The range of English idioms is wide and their content is diverse.^[1] As English language learners, to use idioms correctly, it is essential to understand the rhetorical features of idioms. This will be discussed in detail regarding their usage (analysis of syntax, structure, and style).

Syntactic Function

Idioms align with grammatical categories. Verb phrases function as predicates, adjectives as complements, and adverbs as adjuncts. For example, "Kick the bucket" (verb phrase idiom meaning to die).

Transformation

Structural changes like word order alterations. For example, "Up went the prices" (transformed from "The prices went up").

Collocation

Typical collocates for idioms. Some idioms have broader ranges, while others are limited. For example, "A bolt from the blue" can be collocated with "be," "seem," or "come like."

Structural Variability

Idioms are generally fixed but can be modified slightly for effect.

For example, "Raining cats and dogs" (fixed idiom, but one could say "pouring rain" for a similar effect).

Stylistic Features

Idioms can be neutral, informal, formal, or slangy. For example, "Break the ice" (neutral), "Blow the whistle" (informal), "Call it a day" (formal).

Rhetorical Features

Idioms use phonetic and lexical manipulation, figures of speech, and vivid imagery. For example, "Alliteration" in "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers" and "Rhyme" in "Rain, pain, and gain."

VII. Conclusion

The principles of word use are an intricate yet fascinating aspect of language that enrich our ability to communicate effectively. By understanding and applying grammatical, semantic, stylistic, and rhetorical principles, we can craft expressions that are not only clear and precise but also engaging and fluent. Each

principle, whether it's choosing the right word sense or employing a metaphor, contributes to the overall richness and nuance of our language. As we continue to explore and practice these principles, we can refine our communication skills, making words more powerful and interactions more meaningful. The journey of mastering the principles of word use is ongoing, but with each step, we will grow.

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