ABSTRACT

This paper is an extensively revised version of a paper orally presented at the “Linguistic Theories and Evidence” symposium held in February, 2010 at the Kwansei Gakuin University Umeda Campus. This symposium was organized by Katsumasa Yagi and supported by a Grant-in-aid for Scientific Research (B) 20320089 as well as by KYODO-KENKYUHI from Kwansei Gakuin University.

Linguistics is an empirical science and linguistic theories are presumably based on linguistic facts. However, with the emergence of theoretical linguistics, namely generative grammar, linguistic evidence seems to have been relegated to a secondary or subsidiary position behind theory. On the other extreme, quite a few corpus linguists tend to do their research in a totally data-oriented way and statistically process the data and present the results of their analyses of the data in terms of whether the differences between item A and item B are statistically significant or not, without giving any reasons why A and B are “statistically significantly different.”

This symposium was planned to exchange views on how four different linguists representing four different linguistic standpoints (namely, semantics/pragmatics, cognitive linguistics/construction grammar, phraseology, and usage study, all of which claim their theories and practices are based on hard evidence or usage-based) obtain and utilize evidence to prove their theories. To be fair to generative grammar, a leading generative grammarian was also invited to the symposium as a discussant, and he gave extensive comments on the panelists’ presentations.

The main theme of this paper is to discuss how phraseology uses evidence to analyze linguistic phenomena, but before that, it looks back on what phraseology is and is about, and why the term “phraseology” is used, because this term is quite new to linguists in Japan. The recent rise of phraseology as an area of linguistics is closely related to the development of corpus linguistics during the past several decades, but it basically does not use statistics and instead theorizes about the obtained evidence. Phraseology is an area of linguistic study whose main interest is in collocations, set phrases, idioms, grammatical constructions, gambits, and proverbs. In other words, phraseologists are interested in individual linguistic facts which theoretical linguists have paid little attention to or even took no notice of. I have carried out my own research on phraseology from the viewpoint of “semantic syntax,” which is presented in detail with a large amount of evidence in Yagi (1999) and many other related works.

Key Words: phraseology, evidence, semantic syntax