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SFL与LCT专题

SFL and LCT Approach

主 编 赖良涛 严 明 王 革

Liangtao Lai, Ming Yan and Ge Wang



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Seeing the World Differently¹

Karl Maton² Cuiying Li³ Wenchao Zhao⁴ Dongbing Zhang⁵

University of Sydney Chongqing Jiaotong University
Henan University of Science and Technology University of Sydney

导读

李翠英

知识是人类智能发展的一个重要结果，知识的积累与创新也大大推动着人类社会的发展。那么，知识究竟是什么？知识的表现形式是什么样的？编码理论创始人伯恩斯坦（Bernstein 1999）提出知识结构的概念，认为不同人群以及同一人群在不同语境中所使用的话语并不完全一致。他将话语分为“水平话语”（horizontal discourse）和“垂直话语”（vertical discourse）两大类。水平话语表达日常知识，语境依赖性强、碎片化；垂直话语表达教育知识，具有独立性、象征性和专门性等特征。Bernstein又把垂直话语结构进一步分为“水平知识结构”（horizontal knowledge structure）和“等级知识结构”（hierarchical knowledge structure）两种，用以表示人文社科知识平面化的特征和自然科学知识系统化的特征。教育社会学家卡尔·梅顿（Karl Maton 2000）认为，Bernstein的研究成果只看到不同场域使用不同的知识结构，却未能提供产生这种现象的深层指导原则。在融合伯恩斯坦的知识结构理论（Knowledge Structure Theory）、法国社会学家皮埃尔·布尔迪厄（Pierre Bourdieu）的场域（Field）理论、系统功能语言学家马丁（J. R. Martin）的“权力三合一”（Power Trio）分析方法以及其他哲学、教育学研究成果的基础上，梅顿（Maton

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2 Karl Maton, 男, 剑桥大学教育社会学博士, 悉尼大学教授, 合法化语码理论创始人, 主要研究领域: 教育社会学。Email: karl.maton@sydney.edu.au。

3 李翠英(1976—), 女, 英语语言学方向博士、博士后, 重庆交通大学外国语学院教授, 主要研究方向: 系统功能语言学、教育语言学、教师发展。Email: sayusayme@126.com。

4 赵文超(1976—), 男, 英语语言学方向博士、博士后, 河南科技大学外国语学院讲师, 主要研究方向: 系统功能语言学、教育语言学、功能话语分析。Email: w_yxy2009@163.com。

5 张冬冰(1987—), 男, 悉尼大学语言学系博士生, 主要研究方向: 系统功能语言学、功能语法、功能话语分析。Email: dongbing.zhang@sydney.edu.au。

2004, 2005, 2007, 2013, 2014) 创建了“合法化语码理论”(Legitimation Code Theory, 简称LCT), 同时关注知识结构和知者结构, 并提出了自主性(autonomy)、语义性(semantics)、紧密性(density)、专门性(specialization)、时间性(temporality) 5项原则, 从5个不同的维度对不同场域的知识结构和知者结构进行分析和描述。

合法化语码理论从研究学校教育知识开始, 但不局限于学校教育研究。目前, 该理论已经广泛应用于法律、政治、艺术等领域的研究与创新, 在澳洲、南美、南非、西欧等地区引起了一定的反响。在我国, 合法化语码理论也越来越受到学界的重视。但是, 由于语言翻译以及其他因素的影响, 国内学界对合法化语码理论的基本概念、原则和使用还存在许多误解。此次我们特约合法化语码理论创始人卡尔·梅顿教授前来就一些核心问题进行解答, 以期厘清基本概念、扫除学界广大同仁心中的困惑, 也希望对刚接触合法化语码理论的各位老师和同学在学习上有所帮助。

本次采访话题主要包括: 合法化语码理论的基本概念; 合法化语码理论同伯恩斯坦知识结构理论以及布尔迪厄场域理论之间的关系; 合法化语码理论5项原则提出的意义、目的和使用; 合法化语码理论的国际研究现状; 合法化语码理论对知识学习和教育发展的意义; 合法化语码理论同系统功能语言学之间的关系等。采访中, 梅顿教授对中国学习者在合法化语码理论学习和学术研究方面给出了建设性的意见和建议。

Professor Karl Maton is the creator of Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) and Director of the “LCT Centre for Knowledge-Building” at the University of Sydney. He is from England and moved to Australia in 2005, and now both British and Australian. Professor Maton accomplished three degrees at the University of Cambridge, including a Ph.D. and previously worked at the University of Cambridge, the Open University, Keele University, and the University of Wollongong. He is currently Honorary Professor at Rhodes University, South Africa. Professor Maton has extensively published in sociology, education and linguistics. His most recent books include: *Knowledge and Knowers: Towards a Realist Sociology of Education* (2014, Routledge), which sets out key ideas of LCT, *Knowledge-building: Educational Studies in Legitimation Code Theory* (2016, Routledge), a primer for using the approach.

Legitimation Code Theory or “LCT” is a framework for researching and shaping practice (Maton 2014). The framework integrates insights from a range of influences, but most explicitly articulated are its relations with the work of Pierre Bourdieu, and above all, Basil Bernstein. LCT extends and integrates these sociological approaches to embrace more phenomena within a more systematic and integrated framework. This theoretical development is, however, always in dialogic relations with empirical research. LCT is a “practical theory” used to explore a host of issues, practices and contexts in education, sociology, linguistics and beyond (e.g.

Maton *et al.* 2016a), both on its own and alongside complementary frameworks such as systemic functional linguistics (Maton & Doran 2017; Maton *et al.*, 2016b). LCT is now an international and multidisciplinary community, including scholars in Australia, China, Europe, South Africa, South America, the U.K. and the U.S., among others.

Q1: Good afternoon, Professor Maton! Thank you very much for taking the interview. LCT is now getting more and more popular around the world and is being widely used in many different fields. But as it is introduced into China, there are also some misunderstandings of the theory. We believe it will be important to conduct this interview and have the frequently asked questions answered directly by yourself. First, could you please give us a brief introduction of the Legitimation Code Theory? What do you mean by this name?

The choice of the name “Legitimation Code Theory” or “LCT” is interesting to Chinese scholars because of the important question of translation from English into Chinese. It’s a good question, because every choice of word matters and every concept name is carefully chosen. I have a long list of criteria by which I choose names of concepts in English, to ensure they have the right resonances with meanings. On “LCT”, the first thing I must say is that one inspiration is “code theory” by Basil Bernstein. His ideas are inside many (but not all) LCT concepts. LCT concepts integrate Bernstein’s concepts and extend them to capture more phenomena. But “legitimation code” is not a subtype of “code”; LCT does not refer to a subtype of code theory. LCT refers to “a theory of legitimation codes”. LCT is not a small part of “code theory”. It’s the other way around: LCT embraces more phenomena than code theory did. Having the words “code theory” inside “Legitimation Code Theory” is intended to show that Bernstein’s ideas have been incorporated inside LCT.

Why is it a theory of “legitimation codes” and not just “codes”? Because it brings two ways of thinking together. Bernstein is useful for explaining this. He argued that studies of education was split between studies of “relations to” knowledge and “relations within” knowledge. On the one hand, studies of “relations to” knowledge or education focus on external relations, relations of class or race or gender to education. They study who is speaking, who is the author, who is in the classroom, in terms of their social characteristics. This is true of almost all

sociology. Such studies ignore the nature of the knowledge itself: they are what I call “knowledge-blind”. They treat knowledge as simply a means through which we communicate, one that is homogeneous and has no effects on what is being communicated. In other words, it doesn’t matter if the knowledge is abstract or concrete, based on personal experience or specialist knowledge, and other attributes. Those issues are ignored. On the other hand, studies of “relations within” knowledge or education focus on the inner structures of knowledge. They often ignore the wider social context, as if knowledge is not subject to struggles among actors over status and resources. Bernstein argued that most sociology of education studied “relations to” knowledge but not “relations within” knowledge. His code theory pointed the way to how we can study these “relations within” knowledge, by focusing on what I call the organizing principles underlying practices. Bernstein was groundbreaking in doing this. But I felt his approach, especially in the hands of other scholars tended to push “relations to” knowledge out of the picture. So while “code” in English has resonances that point to inner structures (like genetic code or DNA in biology), the word “legitimation” emphasizes struggles, status, success, etc. Taken together, the term “legitimation codes” points to the need to study the organizing principles underlying practices and how they are involved in struggles and cooperation among actors for status and resources. It also points to the issue of success: “legitimation codes” explore the basis of achievement, success, and legitimacy.

I should emphasize that ALL concept names in LCT have clear and specific meanings and that those meanings cannot be found by looking up the words in a dictionary. They are technical terms. They have technical meanings. For example, “legitimation” has nothing whatsoever to do with “being legal”.

Q2: What is the relationship between LCT and the theory of the English sociologist Basil Bernstein and the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu?

Bernstein and Bourdieu are not the only influences on LCT. There are many other influences, including from philosophy critical realism by Roy Bhaskar and critical rationalism by Karl Popper. They influence the ontology and epistemology that underlies LCT. And there are many other influences, from modern physics to ancient Eastern philosophy. Bernstein and Bourdieu are two influences about which I have been explicit. I have discussed mostly the relations between LCT and Bernstein, because I wanted to show that it is possible to do cumulative knowledge-building. My first book, *Knowledge and Knowers*, starts each chapter from concepts

from Bernstein and then shows how LCT concepts integrate those concepts in new ideas that both embrace more empirical phenomena and are more systematically integrated. Why? Because those are two attributes that Bernstein, Popper, Bhaskar and many others have described as crucial for cumulative knowledge-building: that a new theory extends the old theory to cover more empirical phenomena in a more coherent way. This does mean that *Knowledge and Knowers* is not really a simple introduction to LCT. I am currently compiling a “primer in LCT” that brings together introductions to concepts—I hope I can publish this book in China soon.

To return to your question: I have mostly discussed relations to Bernstein’s ideas to show that cumulative knowledge-building is possible in sociology and education research. I wanted to demonstrate how to do it. But I should emphasize that not all LCT ideas build on Bernstein—they are not simply extensions of his concepts. For example, there is nothing in his framework that is similar to “semantic density”. And there are innovations that revolutionize the approach. The most revolutionary change is the use of what are called “Cartesian planes” to show different kinds of legitimation codes. Here is the “specialization plane” that shows four main “specialization codes”:

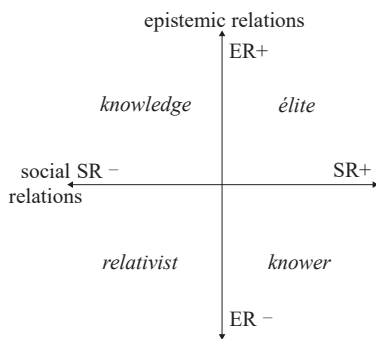


Figure 1. The specialization plane

Why is this so revolutionary? In the past, when using ideas from Bernstein, scholars described four codes and showed them as four boxes. This meant that each code or box was completely homogeneous and there was no way of showing processes of change between the boxes. It was a segmental way of thinking about practices. The plane allows an infinite number of positions. For example, inside the “knower code” quadrant in the Figure 1, there are many positions: one can identify many kinds of different “knower codes”. And the same is true of all the other codes. We can also analyze a set of practices as a scatter pattern or set of dots on the plane, with instances in different codes. We are not limited to fitting complex and diverse

real-world practices inside a simple box. We can also trace pathways across the plane: we can analyze practices as starting in one place and then moving to other places on the plane, either within the same code or shifting between codes. There are so many advances enabled by the use of these planes. And they did not come from Bernstein or Bourdieu (although you can find similar looking figures in Bourdieu's writings, he used them differently).

So, in short, Bernstein was a very very important influence on LCT and on me personally, so was Bourdieu and so were other great thinkers. I was lucky enough to know or work closely with Bernstein, Bourdieu and Bhaskar. And there are other influences on LCT as well.

Q3: You have developed five dimensions in LCT, which are specialization, semantics, autonomy, density, temporality. Each dimension offers us a different perspective to understand a specific field. But why these five dimensions?

The framework of LCT is structured into a series of “dimensions” (or sets of concepts) that each explores a distinctive species of legitimation code. I have named five dimensions: Specialization, Semantics, Autonomy, Temporality, and Density. Different dimensions do *not* refer to different practices but rather explore different organizing principles underlying practices. The same practices are underpinned by all dimensions. How many and which dimensions are drawn on by empirical research and practice depends on the problem-situation (specific questions concerning a particular object of study). Thus the same practices may be analyzed in terms of, for example, specialization codes and semantic codes, to reveal different aspects of the same phenomenon.

There is no perfect number of dimensions. In the future, there may be more than five or there may be less. I hypothesized four dimensions in my Ph.D. thesis in 2004. To that I later added Semantics. But not all five are working yet. There are three active dimensions: Specialization, Semantics and Autonomy. We spent five years working very intensively on Autonomy and it was released properly for the first time in 2018 with revamped concepts (see Maton & Howard 2018). Temporality is not ready to use yet. Density is not at all ready—do not touch those ideas! What we do is test the concepts very extensively for years: we take my original ideas, strip those ideas down to the most basic level, rebuild them, and test them against all kinds of data, to make sure they work. We test them against everything, from articles in science journals to television comedy sketches, from videos of classroom practice to pop music lyrics. Only after I am convinced they will work no matter what the topic,

then do I release them.

LCT is a changing, evolving, improving theoretical framework. But I add new concepts with great reluctance. I'm not interested in just adding more and more concepts. One thing we check a lot is whether we can use existing concepts, rather than create new ones. I want LCT to have as few dimensions as possible. It must be elegant and simple. And new concepts should only be released after serious and intense testing. I have no time for people who claim to invent new concepts or new dimensions without doing proper, rigorous and extensive empirical research.

Each dimension has a number of attributes. Each dimension must have a founding axiom or simple point from which you start that no one can really dispute. For example, Specialization begins from the simple idea that practices are done by someone and about or oriented towards something. That sounds very basic. But from that simple starting point, you can develop the notion of “epistemic relations” and “social relations” and all the structures, codes, and so on. And each dimension must have codes based on organizing principles and which can be used on a plane, traced on a profile...there are many attributes. You cannot just say “I have created a new dimension!” without doing all this work. This is why I say that the dimension of Density may not survive when we come back to look at it. It may no longer be needed.

Q4: Can I understand it this way: These five dimensions are different perspectives on or approaches to looking into some social phenomena and some problems?

As I said earlier, dimensions do not refer to different practices or different objects of study or different phenomena. One can use them all to study the same phenomenon. They reveal different organizing principles. I suggest scholars use the concepts that are valuable for solving the problem they have in front of them. Using more concepts is not always better. I always say that you only need as much theory as the problem demands, no more and no less. You only need as much theory as the problem demands, you have word count or time for, and the audience can read or listen to. Sometimes it's a lot better to have less theory and more data, so you can create a clearer and sharper explanation. There is no point making a map as big as the country. The explanation needs to simplify complexity. A map as big as the country is not useful. So focus on specific issues, and use whatever concepts from the toolbox of LCT seem to be the most valuable for your problem. Sometimes working that out may require discussion with someone who knows LCT a lot more and has more experience.

I sometimes use a metaphor which isn't quite perfect, but it's one way of understanding how dimensions relate to each other. I say: imagine an amazing medical machine that has an X-ray camera and a CT scanner and a gamma-ray camera and other ways of seeing inside the body. Each can show different aspects of the body. Sometimes you might need to use just one, but sometimes you might need to use more than one—it depends on the problem. But each of those medical scanners and cameras can be used on the same body. The same with dimensions: they see beneath the surface to show different principles underlying the same practices. And sometimes you only need one, sometimes you might need more. It depends on the problem.

Q5: What should we pay attention to in the application of the five dimensions, especially specializations, semantics and autonomy?

I try to avoid saying “apply” or “use” LCT. I talk about “enacting” LCT, putting it to work. The most important thing is to ask: What is the problem you're looking at? What are the questions you have about that object to study? I know that in China, Ph.D. students often begin by reading theories and only afterwards do they develop a question. That is opposite to Australia, where you normally start with a problem and then read theory. Either way, the problem is key. You can read theory first, but the problem is more important. Your problem, your issues, your question, what is it you're trying to explain—that is what drives which concepts you choose to enact in your research.

Because LCT concepts can be used to analyze almost any social practice, another issue is to pay attention to what concepts look like in your specific data. For example, stronger semantic gravity (one LCT concept) looks different empirically in dance to how it looks in writing and it will appear differently in physics to how it appears in History. In each case, you need to develop a way of showing how the theory and data are related, or what's called a “translation device”, to translate between the higher level abstract concepts and the empirical concrete data. So LCT is not a recipe that you just carry out according to a set of instructions. It requires thought. It's not what in English we call a “cookie-cutter” approach. You should not take the concepts and impose them on data. Like cutting dough into biscuits (cookies). You need to pay attention to what your data is telling you. These are ways of thinking that are really important and I wrote about in the first half of the book *Knowledge-building* (Maton *et al.* 2016a), which explains how to enact LCT in qualitative research, in quantitative

research, in practice, and alongside systemic functional linguistics. I recommend people read those chapters. They are helpful for how to go about doing analysis. They show how it is a dialectic between theory and data.

Q6: What's the research state of LCT around the world and the work of the international research team in LCT?

LCT is rapidly growing. It's a young theory and dynamic. It's not been around very long. My first papers came out in 2000, but the name "Legitimation Code Theory" first appeared in print in early 2009. So it's relatively new, but it's growing very rapidly. It's also young in the sense that many people in LCT are young. So, it is a young, dynamic, exciting field that is full of possibilities. LCT conferences are wonderful—they are full of people with ideas and energy. They are finding LCT helps them see the world in a different way and helps solve their problems and change their practices. They are making a difference in the world.

LCT is well-established in South Africa in higher education studies and academic development, and is now starting to be used there to look at schooling and teacher training. So it began there in one area but now is spreading out into other parts of education. In Latin America, it is emerging in teacher training. In China, so far most scholars who have heard of LCT are from systemic functional linguistics, so it has a different history here. In some places, like South Africa, LCT scholars are not linguists. So in each place it has a different flavour.

In Australia, we have scholars who enact only LCT and scholars who enact both LCT and SFL together.

LCT began with the study of education, but is expanding to explore other issues. That's very exciting. Scholars are looking at law (indeed, there is the beginnings of a subfield called "forensic LCT"), politics, the media, climate change, the military, and many other issues. That is very exciting because LCT is not limited to studying education. Knowledge practices are much more widespread than just education. So in each country where LCT has emerged, it has begun with studies of specific topics, but they expand. What all these studies share is their concern with real-world problems. I have no time for discussions that compare theories without looking at data. It is very easy to theorize if you ignore the real world. Comparing theories in the abstract is a waste of time. One needs to enact theories to solve problems and so improve education, culture and society.

Q7: In the application of LCT there are a lot of studies on academic or disciplinary literacy. How can LCT help with students' disciplinary literacy development in knowledge-building?

There have been some great studies on pedagogic practice that enact LCT to support academic literacy, such as in English for Academic Purposes. You can find this work on the LCT website (www.legitimationcodetheory.com or www.karlmarton.com). This work uses LCT to analyze what is required to succeed and then teaches that to students. For example, it explores the semantic profile of successful examples of student essays, showing changes in the complexity and context-dependence of the knowledge being expressed. It then teaches students how to write the assignment in that way and also how they can use the concepts to help them see what is needed in other assignments. So LCT practice shows students how to learn to succeed.

LCT also supports the teaching of study skills to students. For example, in South Africa academic developers work with lecturers, using “autonomy codes” to understand how to successfully integrate study skills with the disciplinary content. The concepts of the dimension of Autonomy are valuable for working out how to integrate different kinds of knowledge, so they work very well for ensuring study skills are embedded into teaching practice.

LCT helps reveal what we call the “rules of the game”. That helps students and lecturers. Those rules of the game are usually tacit—they are not normally explicitly taught. So people who know how to succeed already will understand how to succeed, but other people will not. LCT makes the rules of the game explicit so that everyone can succeed. And one thing LCT educators are doing: helping students by showing what it means to succeed at a particular subject area at a particular level, whether it's in university or in school, whether it's physics or English.

Q8: From the publications we can see that the collaboration between LCT and SFL is very profound. Can you talk about it?

The dialogue between SFL and LCT is remarkable—it is extraordinarily productive and really powerful. It builds on a tradition begun by Halliday, Hasan, and Bernstein, back in the 1970s. And it has become far closer and deeper and more productive over the past 13 to 14 years. Now we are seeing the emergence of scholars and students who are, as it were, bilingual in theory. And that is very unusual. The degree of mutual influence between SFL and LCT, in terms of pushing each other forward, is almost unprecedented in the social sciences for two theories.

If you want a history of that dialogue, then a paper by Maton & Doran (2017) called “SFL and code theory” (on the LCT website) describes the main phases. There are several reasons for the successful collaboration. As I say, there’s always knowledge, there’s always knowers—and the reasons for the dialogue involve both the nature of SFL and LCT as forms of knowledge and the knowers involved, the people. In terms of the people, we are open to ideas—the people in LCT and SFL who work together are very open to ideas. It helps that Jim Martin and myself are very good friends who live near to each other. It means we can chat about anything, without ego, as equals. We often discuss ideas while walking together. Friendship helps collaboration. We also share what Bernstein called a dedication to a problem, not an allegiance to an approach. We focus on solving problems, and want to use whatever ideas will help solve those problems. So, there are attributes of the knowers that help.

There are also characteristics that both theories share—I’ve written about those (e.g. Maton *et al.* 2016b). I describe them as both realist, relational and risk-taking. They are both realist: they believe there is a real world. They are in-depth realist theories: they believe there is more to the world than what we can see empirically. They are also both relational in how they analyze things. And they both put their concepts at risk against real-world data. So there’s a number of characteristics like that they share, that enables them to work again. They also have similar kinds of structuralist origins with Marxist inflections. So there’s a certain element of shared intellectual DNA.

Q9: How do people use them together?

It depends on the object of study. In education research, for example, scholars use LCT to explore the knowledge practices—the nature of the knowledge being expressed—and they use SFL to explore the linguistic practices that are expressing those forms of knowledge. Often LCT provides a way of bringing together complex SFL analyses. For example, a researcher may analyze several texts in terms of periodicity or appraisal, generating a complex set of findings—there may be all kinds of differences among the texts. Then they use LCT to show what brings those linguistic features together. So, it might be that one text embodies a knowledge code and another text embodies a knower code, or one text exhibits a semantic wave and another text exhibits a semantic flatline. The LCT analysis then shows what generates the diverse and complex set of linguistic features.

What is important, however, is that they are *different* frameworks. They are not

parts of the same framework. The strength of using them together comes from their differences. Sometimes people confuse the two frameworks. Sometimes people think that a concept from LCT is the equivalent of a concept from SFL. That is wholly mistaken. For example, it is completely wrong to think that “semantic density” in LCT is the equivalent of “field” in SFL. It is mistaken to claim, to take another example, that “semantic waves are caused by grammatical metaphor”. What happens in language cannot be equated to what happens to knowledge practices and may vary dramatically between modes and contexts. We can, though, bring them together to argue (in this example) that grammatical metaphor is *one* linguistic resource that *may contribute* to semantic waves *in the case being studied*. It is also then extremely important to understand which concepts belong to which approach. Just because the same English word appears in both theories, it does not mean they are related. “Wave” is one example: LCT has no relation to any use of “wave” in SFL. “Semantic” is another example. The “Semantics” dimension of LCT is not related directly to “discourse semantics” from SFL. They are different frameworks that ask different questions. They offer two different ways of looking at practices. They provide different ways of seeing things that are complementary.

The dialogue has been very productive both in terms of providing stronger explanations and in pushing new theoretical developments. For example, we are editing a book titled *Academic Discourse* (Routledge 2019) in which Jim details his new concepts of “presence” and “mass” that reshape SFL in new and exciting ways. Those concepts are direct responses to the LCT concepts of “semantic gravity” and “semantic density”. Jim realised from our analyses together that the LCT concepts were highlighting problems in SFL, namely that “context-dependence” had been only partially theorized and that the issue of complexity had not been addressed fully.

As I said, this collaboration, these developments, are always in relation to real-world data. We don’t sit and think about theories and how they relate to each other. We use SFL and we use LCT to analyze real-world data in order to explain something. This is crucial.

Q10: What do you think about LCT in China? What should we pay attention to? What suggestions would you give to newcomers in the field of LCT?

First, I would urge people to understand LCT on its own terms. It has a different history, different logic, different way of thinking. I would suggest learning the theory by reading as much as possible of the original papers. That may be difficult, because

they are in English. But there is nobody writing in Chinese who I have trained in LCT, so while there are valuable commentators and useful papers, you should read the original ideas too. Second, I would strongly encourage newcomers to talk with researchers elsewhere: there is a very friendly community around the world and they would be happy to discuss ideas with you. Do not be afraid of contacting the LCT Centre at the University of Sydney (lct.centre@sydney.edu.au) or contact other scholars and students on the LCT email forum. Talk to other people. We are stronger together. Third, I would suggest learning one LCT concept really well. People sometimes believe that the more concepts they use the better. That's a mistake. It's like getting to know a new city or country: get to know one part well before you try to learn about other ideas. So take one concept and try to learn that, then once you have used it several times, add another concept. You can use the new concept to analyze the same data. Then you can write a series of papers that each make one point really well, instead of having one paper that has too many concepts and makes little sense. Less is better. Think of learning LCT as a long-term project of learning: the better you get to know each concept of sets of concepts, the stronger your understanding will be, the longer it will last, the more powerful it will be. Fourth, you won't learn LCT unless you try analyzing data. You will not understand LCT just by reading about it. You don't learn a new language by reading a dictionary in that language. You don't try to learn all the words at once. You need to practice. And soon you will have new ways of seeing the world that you can use to explore all kinds of issues. And not just in research: LCT will change your way of seeing the world. Once you learn LCT, it will become part of your way of seeing everything.

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