

高等院校商务英语专业  
核心课精品系列教材

**A**n Introduction  
*to the*  
English-Speaking  
Countries

英语国家概况

温洪瑞 / 主编 李延福 / 主审


 首都经济贸易大学出版社

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# An Introduction *to the* English-Speaking Countries

## 英语国家概况

◎主 编 / 温洪瑞  
◎主 审 / 李延福  
◎编 者 / 温洪瑞 于晓霞

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温洪瑞 主编 李延福 主审

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# 序

洪瑞同志主编的《英语国家概况》如期竣稿,邀我审阅并作序,诺后,浮想联翩。

1984年,洪瑞同志留校后的第一个本命年,与我一道开始编写《英语语言学基础读本》,一年后,该书由山东大学出版社出版。1996年,他做教师后的第二个本命年,与我共同编著《国外语言学统观》,由山东教育出版社出版。1997年,他与人合作主编的《英美概况》付梓前我曾为其作序,时值香港回归年。2008年,洪瑞同志迎来了他执教后的第三个本命年,亦即花甲年,我已年届古稀,又应邀为《英语国家概况》作序,且恰逢北京奥运年。这一桩桩人与事的时间巧合,可归结为缘分使然。

洪瑞同志从事英语教学多年,英美概况研究一直是其专长。他既有较早参加由美籍专家执教的“中美文化研讨班”的专业基础,又有为硕士生开设学位课程《英语史》的理论深度,还有编写《英语语言学》和《英汉翻译》教材以及翻译《英汉对照实用中医文库》的广泛阅历,更有巡回全省各地辅导“英美概况”自考科目的丰富经验。以这种经历与资格,应首都经济贸易大学出版社之邀担任《英语国家概况》的主编,可谓当之无愧。

《英美概况》与《英语国家概况》对比如下:就本质来说,同属文化背景知识,均由温氏担纲执笔;从理论上讲,后者是前者的扩版,今本是原本的续篇;凭品位而论,两书的区别不仅是范围的扩大,也不只是时间的延续,而是主编统观全局、删繁就简、革故鼎新、突出重点、与时俱进的科研创新和学术升华。本书提供的汉语译文,英语专业学生可视为翻译示例,非英语专业学生可把原文当做英语范文,自学考试者亦可借此节余时间,准备其他科目。这类利于多方学习的改进,可谓一举三得。

《英语国家概况》在教学改革相继铺开和不断深入的新形势下问世,定会对英语专业教学质量的提高有所裨益,同时为培养复合型人才带来契机,也必将受到高校师生与广大读者的欢迎。这一切不也正是出版社的初衷、编写者的期望和作序人的心愿吗?

李延福

2008年3月于山东大学五宿舍

# 前 言

随着我国改革开放的不断深入和对外交流的日益频繁,我国的外语教学,特别是英语教学,发生了巨大变化。各类外语院系纷纷突破传统的、以语言文学为主要目标的教学模式,代之以培养复合型外语人才为目标的、“外语加其他专业”的教学模式。例如,山东大学外国语学院在教育部和学校的领导与支持下,自20世纪末,在原有语言文学专业的基础上,试办了法律、科技、商务等英语专业,旨在为社会培养有用的外语复合型人才。

为适应新形势下外语教学的需要,我们根据教育部教学大纲的要求,几经使用、修改,编写了《英语国家概况》讲义,旨在为英语学习者提供有关英语国家的文化背景知识,为英语语言及其他学科的学习奠定坚实的文化背景知识基础。该讲义在山东大学试用数年,反映良好,受到一致好评。

本书能够在奥运年得以付梓,是与首都经济贸易大学出版社的领导和孟岩岭编辑的欣赏、鼓励与支持分不开的。按照他们的编写要求和原则,我们在原讲义的基础上又经近半年的努力,将其改编成现在这套公开出版发行的教材,向2008年在北京举办的奥运会献礼。

文化是一个十分宽泛的概念,几乎包罗万象。“为英语学习提供文化背景知识”,说起来容易,实际做起来难。别说有诸多英语国家,就算是一个国家,也够人研究一辈子的,更何况随着时间的推移,各国的情况都在不断地发生变化。几年前得出的结论,现在可能会改变,令人难以把握。所以,接到编写任务后,我们颇感压力。

本书的编写原则是:

第一,坚持马克思主义的辩证唯物主义和历史唯物主义原则,尽量客观、如实地反映英语国家的地理、历史、经济和政治概貌,尽量避免个人对这些国家的误读与偏见。

第二,把握《英语国家概况》课程的知识性特点,选择有利于语言学习和经贸往来的文化知识要点,在篇幅许可的情况下,尽量讲深、讲透、讲明白。全书共30章,每章都有英语课文,书后附有汉语参考译文,旨在帮助理解,提供翻译示例。文后有思考和练习题,便于学生课后反复练习,重点记忆,使其在学到文化知识的同时,提高中英文两种语言的阅读、互译和表达水平。

第三,因为本课程一般都放在低年级学习,在语言深度上,我们尽力使其适合低年级学生的英语水平,使他们可以通过本课程的学习,在英语阅读和语言表达水平上都有所提高,而不至于由于语言太难、生词太多而挫伤他们学习的积极性。

第四,在内容的选择和编排上,我们尽量做到精选、新颖、简明、条理、易懂,以减轻学

习者的压力。为了提高学习兴趣,我们还附有地图、插图,以提高知识的直观性和趣味性。附录中有各章练习客观题的答案,以便查阅与核对。

温洪瑞编写本书的1~26章,于晓霞编写27~30章。全书由温洪瑞修改、统稿。

在编写过程中,我们参阅了许多国内外文献。没有前人的努力,本书是不可能成型的。在此向各位从事文化交流研究的前辈们表示衷心感谢!

本书在编写过程中得到首都经济贸易大学出版社的领导和孟岩岭编辑的关心、鼓励 and 指点。山东大学外语学院已退休的前院长李延福教授审阅了全书,并欣然为本书作序,孙吉全同志在美国帮助查找了许多资料,在此一并表示衷心谢意。

由于编者水平有限、时间紧迫,难免有错谬之处,衷心希望专家、读者批评指正。

编者

2008年3月

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# **Chapter 1    The Land**

## **I . The Name of the Country**

There are different names for the country of Great Britain, which are confusing to beginners of English. The full and official name of the Union formed by England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, usually abbreviated to the United Kingdom or UK, Great Britain, or simply Britain, or sometimes informally England. We'd better bear in mind that some of them are official names, and some are geographical names and that some are full names and some are abbreviated ones for simplicity or linguistic economy. Different names are of different origin.

People in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland were once separate nations. England has controlled the other nations over centuries. The name Britain comes from the Brythons (Britons) who migrated from the European Continent before 300 B. C. . The name England comes from the Anglo-Saxon conquerors, it means "Angla-land", the land of the Anglo-Saxons, collectively known as Angles who migrated from the northwest of the European Continent in the 5th century A. D. . The name for the Union that once existed in the period between 1800 and the early 1920's was the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, which changed to its present form in 1927 after the 26 Irish Free States achieved their independence in 1921.

## **II . Location and Size**

Britain is situated in Western Europe and is separated from the European continent by the North Sea, the Strait of Dover and the English Channel. It lies between 50° and 60° north latitude, and roughly between 2° east and 8° west longitude. The prime meridian of 0° just passes through the old observatory at Greenwich.

The neighboring countries of Britain include France, Holland, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Irish Republic and Iceland.

Britain is a rather small country, with a total area of some 242 514 square kilometers, accounting for less than 2% of the land area of the world and ranking about the 75th in size among countries in the world. It is just less than 966 kilometers in a straight line from the south coast to the extreme north of mainland Britain, and about 483 kilometers across the widest part.



No point in the country is as far as 121 kilometers away from tidal waters.

Small as she is in both size and population, Britain has played an important role in shaping the modern world. She was once one of the oldest and strongest colonial powers in the world and ruled a vast empire, as boasted to be, “an empire on which the sun never sets”. Beginning with the Age of Exploration (about 1450 ~ 1600), English ships carried explorers, traders, and colonists to every corner of the globe. The English eventually ruled wherever they settled. Thus the British have spread their way of life around the globe through conquest and colonization. Many nations have laws and governments modeled on the British system. Millions of people speak English, probably the world’s most widely spoken language. The works of British greatest authors and thinkers—Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, Isaac Newton, John Locke, John Keats, and William Wordsworth, to name only a few—are known and read in every corner of the world. The British inventions, such as the Spinning Jenny, the steam engine and the railroads during the Industrial Revolution helped make modern life possible. In the 20th century, British scientists and engineers have helped develop the jet aircraft, radar and penicillin, the miracle drug that has saved millions of lives. As a member country in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and in the Security Council of the United Nations, Britain plays an important part in European and international affairs.

### III. Landforms

Of the four regions of Britain—England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, England is the largest and occupies most of the British Isles. Scotland occupies the northern part and Wales the western part of the British Isles. Northern Ireland occupies the northern part of Ireland.

The island of Great Britain can be roughly divided into the lowland area and the highland area in terms of landform. The former comprises Midland, southern and eastern England, and the latter comprises the broad central upland known as the Pennines, the Lake District, most of Wales and Scotland. In the British Isles there are hundreds of smaller islands, including the Channel Islands, the Scilly Isles, the Isles of Wight and Man, the Inner and Outer Hebrides, the Orkneys and Shetlands.

England, with a total area of more than 130 000 square kilometers, may be divided into three landform regions. The east and the southeast are made up of rolling downs and low-lying plains. Middle England is a region of mountains formed by the Pennines, which, with the average altitude between 200 and 500 meters, form the “backbone” of England, extending south from the Scottish border to Derbyshire. Cross Fell, 893 meters high, is the highest peak of the Pennines. The north and west of England are hilly, partly formed by the Cumbrian Mountain Range, the highest mountain peak of which is Scafell (977m), the highest in



England but the third highest mountain throughout the country.

Scotland has an area of 78 760 square kilometers. About two thirds of Scotland is covered by Highlands. The chief range in the Highlands is the Grampian Mountains, which contain Ben Nevis (1 344m), the highest mountain on the island of Great Britain. The central lowlands of Scotland include the valleys of the Clyde, Tay and Forth rivers. This is the most important area in Scotland, which contains most of the industry and population. Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland, and Glasgow, the largest city in Scotland, are both located in this area. The Southern Uplands are a region of rolling moorlands cut by some small fertile river valleys. The Southern Uplands reach their highest point in Merrick.

Wales covers an area of about 20 700 square kilometers. It is geographically divided into the industrial south, the central plateaus and lakes and the mountainous north of the farmers and tourists. Most of Wales is mountainous, mainly formed by the Cambrian Mountain Range. Its highest peak Snowdon (1 085m) is the second highest mountain in Britain. In Wales, only 12% of the land is arable, 6% is covered with forest, and much of the land is pastureland for sheep and cattle. The most fertile land in Wales is found near the coast and in the interior valleys. Coal has been mined in the area between Cardiff and Swansea.

The central part of Northern Ireland is composed of plains surrounded by such highlands and mountains as Antrim, Sperrin and Mourne. On the central plain lies Lough Neagh, the largest lake in the whole country. Northern Ireland is mainly agricultural, with industry concentrated in the two ports of Belfast and Londonderry.

#### **IV. Rivers and Lakes**

Being short and swift, few rivers in Britain are navigable.

The most important river in Britain is the Thames River (338 kilometers long), which rises in Cotswold Hills and flows through the capital city London and empties into the English Channel. The river is navigable for large ship to London.

The longest river in Britain is the Severn River (354 kilometers in length), which rises in the mountains of Wales and empties into the Bristol Channel, where the ports of Cardiff and Bristol are located.

The Mersey River (110 kilometers in length) flows between Lancashire and Cheshire into the Irish Sea. Its estuary, navigable for ocean vessels, is linked to Manchester by a ship canal, with the port Liverpool on its mouth.

The Humber River in Humberside is also navigable for large ships to Hull.

The Clyde and the Forth are the most important rivers in Scotland. The former flows through Glasgow, and the latter passes by Edinburgh, with the port Leith on its mouth.



Since Britain was subjected to considerable glaciations, the highlands, especially in northern Scotland, the Cumbrian Mountains, and the North Wales, contain many deep valleys filled with long, ribbon-shaped lakes. These regions constitute great attractions for tourists. Lakes in Britain are chiefly found in the English Lake District, the Scottish Highlands, the Welsh mountains and Northern Ireland. The largest Lake in England is Lake Windermere, located in the Lake District. It covers an area of 16 square kilometers. Lake District is one of the popular touring spots in England, where there are 15 lakes radiating like the spokes of a wheel from a central hub. It is commonly accounted the most beautiful part of England, where William Wordsworth and the other Lake Poets were born and lived, and were inspired by the perfection of water, trees and heather-covered slopes.

Lake Neagh in Northern Ireland is the largest of all throughout the country and covers an area of some 396 square kilometers.

## V. The Coast

For a small country of islands, Britain has a great length of coastline (about 11 450 kilometers). The coast is very varied, with perhaps the best parts in the southwest of England and in the west of Scotland. The coast of Devon and Cornwall, in the southwest, is much indented, with many sheltered bays and coves and fine rocky headlands. With so large a population on so small an island, the best parts of the coast are inevitably rather crowded during the summer. In the parts nearest to great centers of population big seaside resort towns have grown up. Four of these—Brighton, Bournemouth, Southend in the south, and Blackpool in the northwest—have become important towns, remarkable for the great number of visitors they receive.

## VI. Climate

Britain has a temperate, maritime climate, which is damp and warm all the year round and generally does not run to extremes. As the prevailing southwesterly winds are warmed by the Gulf Stream and made moist by the Atlantic Ocean, the climate in Britain is much milder than that of many places in the same latitude. During a normal summer, the temperature occasionally rises about 27°C in the south, and winter temperatures below -7°C are rare. The annual average air temperature is about 10°C, varying from around 5°C in the coldest month (January) to 17°C in the warmest month (July). The British Isles as a whole have an annual average rainfall of over 1 020 millimeters, while England has about 860 millimeters. The mountainous areas of the west and the north have far more rain than the plains of the east and the south.

The climate in Britain has three features. The first, there are more fogs or smog (smoke + fog) in winter, for which London is famous. The second, there are more rainy days but less



sunny days. The rainfall is not very heavy and there is not often any very violent storm or wind. Some places, such as the Shetland Islands, even experience over 260 rainy days a year. The third one is its instability or changeability. All the seasons are very variable, there is no part of the year at which it is possible to expect, with any degree of assurance, that weather will be dry or wet, clear or dull, and a bad day in July can be as cold as a mild day in January.

## **VII. Natural Resources**

The main natural resources in Britain are coal, petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, limestone, clay, shale, chalk and tin. Coal and petroleum are the most important.

### **1. Coal**

Many of the coalfields in the United Kingdom have been in continuous production since the beginning of the 17th century. The coal industry was brought under the national ownership by the Labor government in 1947, and since then many of the poor coalfields have been closed down and more profitable mines modernized.

The Ayrshire field in Scotland and the deposits of the Lowlands continue to supply Scottish industry. South Wales has valuable coal deposits. The leading anthracite fields are in Wales. The coal mining area of central England, including York, Birmingham and Nottingham, Leicester and Derby, is the largest one of the country, which constitutes about 40% of the total output. There are also coalmines in the northeast and southeast of England, in Durham, Northumberland and Canterbury. The annual coal production output in Britain is over 120 million tons.

### **2. Petroleum**

Only small quantities of oil had been found in Britain before big oil fields were discovered under the North Sea, east of the British Isles in 1965. The oil deposit there is estimated as 3 000 ~4 500 million tons. Britain began to put oil into production in the 1970s and by 1980 the annual output of oil had reached 100 million tons. Britain is now not only self-sufficient in oil supply, but has become the fifth largest oil exporter in the world.

### **3. Forestry**

With its mild climate and varied soils, Britain has a diverse pattern of natural vegetation. Originally, one third of the country was covered with forests, but now woodlands only covers 8.6% of its surface and the country's timber needs are basically supplied by import as a result of long years of denudation.

### **4. Fresh Water**

With too much rain and many short and rapid rivers, Britain is rich in water resources. However, it still cannot meet the needs of the growing industry and agriculture irrigation. Water



pollution affects on many English and Scottish rivers. The fresh water problems, including inland water pollution, are far from being solved.

### 5. Wild Life

There are no longer any really dangerous wild animals in Britain, except the wild cat, occasionally found in the depths of Scottish forests. The wolf died out several centuries ago, and there are no bears or wild boars though the word that denotes the animal still exists in the English language. The largest wild animal is the stag, for wild deer are found in Scotland and in Southwest England. Foxes are found all over Britain, though chiefly in England. The other animals found in Britain are rabbits, stoats, weasels and hedgehogs.

Birds are numerous and law protects many of them, especially the rare species, such as the eagle and the osprey. The chief songbirds are the nightingale and the blackbird. Of sea birds the most common are the various kinds of gulls. If not pronounced correctly, the word "gulls" is often misunderstood as "girls".

There are various species of fresh-water fishes and angling is a nationwide pastime, whether in lakes and rivers or in the sea, where there are also many kinds of fishes.

### Questions for Discussion



1. Discuss the names for the country of Great Britain, and point out the categories each of them may fall into.
2. Point out the location, size and landform features of Britain.
3. What a role has Britain played in shaping the modern world?
4. Point out the large mountain ranges and the highest mountain peaks they contain.
5. What are the large rivers and lakes you know in Britain? Point out their length or size.
6. Try to find the four big seaside-resort towns of Britain on the map and tell where they are located.
7. Describe the climate in Britain and point out its three features.
8. What natural resources is Britain blessed with?
9. Of Britain's natural resources, which are the most important to the country's economy? Tell their distribution.
10. What animals and birds can still be found in Britain?



## Exercise



### I. Choose the correct answer and circle the letter before it.

- The full and official name of Great Britain changed into its present-day form in the year of \_\_\_\_.  
A. 1920                      B. 1927                      C. 1914                      D. 1945
- The highest mountain peak in Britain is in \_\_\_\_.  
A. England                  B. Scotland                  C. Wales                      D. Northern Ireland
- The longest river in Britain is the \_\_\_\_ River.  
A. Severn                      B. Thames                      C. Mersey                      D. Humber
- The largest lake in Britain is located in \_\_\_\_.  
A. England                  B. Scotland                  C. Wales                      D. Northern Ireland
- The highest mountain peak in Britain is called \_\_\_\_.  
A. Ben Nevis                  B. Cross Fell                  C. Snowdon                  D. Scafell
- The Lake District is well-known for \_\_\_\_.  
A. its wild and beautiful scenery                  B. its varied lakes  
C. the lake Poets    D. all of the above three
- Which of the following is NOT the feature of British climate?  
A. coldness                  B. more rainy days                  C. changeability                  D. more fogs
- The leading anthracite coalfields in Britain are in \_\_\_\_.  
A. Scotland                  B. England                  C. Wales                      D. the North Sea

### II. Fill in the following blanks with appropriate words or expressions.

- Britain is separated from the European continent by the North \_\_\_\_, the Strait of \_\_\_\_ and the English \_\_\_\_.
- The total area of Britain is about \_\_\_\_ square kilometers.
- The chief ranges in England are the \_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_ Mountains.
- The highest mountain on the island of Great Britain is \_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_ Mountains.
- The Central Lowlands of Scotland include the valleys of the \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ Rivers.
- The highest point in Wales is \_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_ Mountain range.
- The most important rivers in Scotland are \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_.
- Britain has a \_\_\_\_, maritime climate.
- Britain's most important natural resources are \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_.
- In 1965, big oil fields were discovered under the \_\_\_\_.

### III. Match the names of the rivers in Column A with the names of their ports in Column



**B. Put the letter before the name of a city in the corresponding blank.****Column A**

1. \_\_\_\_ the Thames River
2. \_\_\_\_ the Severn River
3. \_\_\_\_ the Humber River
4. \_\_\_\_ the Mersey River
5. \_\_\_\_ the Clyde River
6. \_\_\_\_ the Forth River

**Column B**

- a. Hull
- b. Liverpool
- c. London
- d. Bristol
- e. Leith
- f. Glasgow

**IV. Translate the following into Chinese.**

1. the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
2. the Strait of Dover
3. the English Channel
4. Greenwich
5. the Channel Islands
6. the Orkney Isles
7. the Shetlands
8. the British Isles
9. the Pennines
10. the Cumbrian Mountain Range
11. the Cambrian Mountain Range
12. the Grampian Mountain range
13. the Thames River
14. the Severn River
15. Lake Neigh
16. Lake District
17. the Isle of Man
18. Edinburgh
19. Glasgow
20. Cardiff

**V. Explain the following in English.**

1. The British Isles
2. Lake District
3. Glasgow
4. Edinburgh
5. Cardiff