

開明英文文法

KAIMING ENGLISH GRAMMAR

林語堂編

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PREFACE

The Science of Expression

The *Kaiming English Grammar* represents the application of a new philosophy of grammar to the teaching of English grammar to Chinese students. It regards all grammatical forms and constructions as merely means of expressing notions, and grammar itself as a science of expression. Instead of starting from the outward form to the inner meaning, it starts from the inner meaning to the outward form, from the notions to the expression of these notions. Consequently, instead of concerning itself with the definitions and analysis of word-forms and formal changes, it goes deeper into the psychology of the speaker, and asks what are the notions back of the speaker's mind, which he is trying to express, and by what grammatical means he expresses them. Grammar therefore, concerns itself with (1) the notions, and (2) the expression of these notions. To these questions all grammatical changes and constructions are related and made subordinate. This emancipated view of grammar is made possible through the ideas of Benedetto Croce, and, more specifically, through the epoch-making works of Otto Jespersen (*Philosophy of Grammar*, 1924) and Ferdinand Brunot (*La Pensée et la Langue*, 1922),

Chinese and English Compared

In a way, the *Kaiming English Grammar* contains within its covers the adumbrations of a new comparative grammar of the English and the Chinese language. This, again, reduces itself to a comparison of the English and Chinese notional categories and the different means employed to express these notions. The points mentioned, however, are strictly of a practical, rather than theoretical, nature, and are made in order to help the Chinese students overcome certain psychological difficulties. Many common grammatical mistakes can be corrected very easily by this psychological method, and by no other way. Where there are national differences in the notions themselves, the obvious way is of course to train the Chinese students in the new way of thinking. And where common notions exist in both languages, as in the majority of grammatical categories, the most interesting thing would be to show how *differently* the two languages express these notions. English grammar, presented in this way, therefore, teaches the English ways of thinking and expression. The student is constantly made to ask himself this question: If I have a given idea, how shall I express it in English?

Why Mistakes Are Made

The distinction between notions and their expressions is merely a logical, not a real, one. There is no thinking which is not a way of expression, and no expression which is not a way of thinking. We think while we talk, and many ladies talk in order to find out what they think.

The ways of thinking and expression are really inseparably bound up with each other. Consequently, there can be no grammar claiming to teach the expressions which does not at the same time teach the ways of thinking. When grammatical mistakes are made, it is because the ways of thinking and habits of expression are wrong. Mistakes are of two kinds: those due to foreign ways of thinking, found naturally among the foreign students of a language, and those due to other psychological causes, like conflict of ideas, change of mind, human forgetfulness, influence of near-by words, etc. Mere knowledge of rules does not prevent either the foreign student or the native speaker from making mistakes. The only sensible way of teaching grammar and making it effective is, therefore, to regard it as the science of expression and build up certain correct, idiomatic habits of thinking and expression through repeated and systematic drills.

Grammar or No Grammar?

The failure of the teaching of grammatical rules to ensure correctness of expression has caused many people to throw grammar contemptuously aside, and advocate progressive and assimilative reading to take the place of conning over grammatical paradigms. So far as this method emphasizes the building of unconscious habits rather than rigmarole grammar, it is quite sound. The advocate of progressive reading, however, is labouring under a fear-complex, regarding grammar as the student's bugaboo. There is no reason why this should be so, when grammar is regarded, as it should be regarded, as merely

a series of systematic drills on classes of expressions which every speaker must employ. No sane advocate of the reading-without-grammar method would deny that the value of such reading lies really in picking up turns of expression in living contexts, and that by arranging these turns of expression in notional classes, and providing systematic drills, the picking up of such expressions can be made much easier and more pleasant. There is no gainsaying the fact that coming across a lone expression here and there and finding its parallels after long intervals is less effective and less convincing than having that lone example immediately reinforced by a dozen other examples of the same class and construction. Put in this way, there can be no argument against grammar.

The Bugaboo of Rules

I should have mentioned a third cause of grammatical mistakes, that due to efforts at "correctness" and fear of breaking grammatical rules. This fear can be carried so far as to override all natural idioms. The poor boy who begins to say "Whom are you?" after having learnt grammar at a night-school, or the Ziegfeld Follies girl who says "between you and I" with some sort of conscious pride is really only labouring under a confusion of mind engendered by the subtle rules of grammar. Even among foreign students, this type of grammar with so many "don'ts" and "shall-nots" is more likely to make the school-boy feel he is treading treacherous ground in a room full of traps and secret doors rather than using plain English to express his ideas. Such abominations as "if

war will break out next week" and "I had been sick before yesterday noon" are only the products of this type of grammar teaching. Psychologically speaking, correctness is the enemy of natural expressiveness, and the teaching of grammar, instead of increasing the student's power of expression, can actually become the nightmare which makes all natural expressiveness impossible.

"All Grammatical Rules Leak"

But there is a deeper logical reason for the futility of rules. It is Edward Sapir, the gifted philologist, who says that all grammatical rules leak. There is nothing harder to bear than the college graduate who has learnt or taught a little grammar, and who, always armed with rules of tense sequence or syntax in much the same sense as a professional lawyer is armed with the articles of a criminal code, jumps upon your perfectly idiomatic expressions, possibly correcting your "let alone . ." into a "letting alone . . .", insisting that it must be a participial phrase, or changing your "the boat sails next Monday" into "the boat will sail, etc." If the incidental remarks contained in this book can help to shake the teacher's faith in rules and reveal the more intimate phases of an Englishman's speech, it will have served some purpose.

A Grammar without Rules

It is time that we replace the categorical rules and equally categorical exceptions with more observation of the living facts of the language. The power of expression can be trained only by learning the expressive, ever-

changing idioms, and not by putting on the grammatical strait-jacket. Grammar, as the science of expression, should be more subtle and less rigid; it should address itself more to the speaker's intentions and less to the rules and definitions. It should be more concrete and wallow less in the terms of Latin origin. It should also be more positive and less like a criminal code. It has been the effort of the present author to replace such categorical rules by observations on the present usage. The English language is a living thing, and this is the only way to deal adequately with it. It is hoped that, through this means, the student will form a more intimate acquaintance with modern English usage than is otherwise possible.

It remains only to acknowledge my great debt to all previous writers on the subject who take the same views of grammar as I do. My debt to Prof. Jespersen and his *Modern English Grammar* and *Philosophy of Grammar* will be evident to all users of the said books. I have incorporated his views and examples in this book on many points, although, naturally, I have not dared to go quite as far in the matter of new terminology in a book that is intended for general school use. Thus, I have managed to keep all the eight parts of speech intact, for instance. Above all, I have derived courage from him, as well as from Prof. Ferdinand Brunot and M. Henri Frei, for this somewhat heretical venture. Thanks are also due to the authors of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* and *Modern English Usage* for enlightening articles and examples.

West End Gardens, Shanghai.

May 26, 1930.

FOREWORD

The average senior middle school class should not attempt the covering of the whole volume in the same school year, unless the teacher is confident of the students' ability to do so; but if half a volume is used each year (beginning from Senior Two) along with some proper reading material, it will be found useful and interesting as a means of increasing the students' power of expression.

Judging from the average standard of the present college students, this grammar may also be profitably used by a freshman class. A more elementary grammar, written in Chinese, but based on the same notional principles and devoted to drills on idioms, will be prepared for the more elementary classes. The present grammar will then serve as a useful book of reference for the teachers who may use this more elementary book of drills.

Thanks are due to Mr. Chang Pei-lin of Kaiming Book Company for compiling the Index of Subjects and Terms and for valuable assistance in seeing the book through the press.

THE AUTHOR

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

THE SCIENCE OF EXPRESSION

1.10.	Something to Say and Way of Saying It	1
1.11.	All Grammatical Forms and Constructions are Ways of Expressing Notions	2
1.20.	Grammar as the Science of Expression	3
1.30.	National Differences in Notions and Their Expressions ..	5
1.31.	National Differences in Notions	5
1.32.	English Grammar Should Teach English Ways of Thinking and Expression	6
1.40.	Formal and Notional Grouping of Grammatical Facts ..	7
1.41.	Outline of the Course	8
1.42.	Living Grammar	10

CHAPTER II

PARTS OF SPEECH AND CHANGE OF FUNCTION

2.10.	The Eight Parts of Speech or Word-Classes.....	11
2.11.	Definitions.....	12
2.12.	Grammatical Function	14
2.13.	Chinese and English Compared	15
2.14.	Sense of Function.....	16
2.15.	Sense of Thing.....	17
2.16.	Sense of Action and Quality.....	18
2.17.	Sense of Aspect and Manner.....	20
2.18.	Sense of Prepositional Force.....	22
2.20.	Change of Function	23
2.21.	Nouns Used as Adjectives	24
2.22.	Nouns Changed into Adjectives	26
2.23.	Nouns Used as Verbs	26
2.30.	Verbs Used as Nouns	27
2.31.	Verbs Changed into Nouns	29
2.32.	Pairs of Nouns and Verbs	29

2.33.	Verbs Used as Adjectives: Participles.....	32
2.34.	Spelling of Participles.....	33
2.35.	Verbs Changed into Adjectives	35
2.40.	Adjectives Changed into Nouns	35
2.41.	<i>The Poor, the Dead, etc.</i>	37
2.42.	Adjectives Changed into Adverbs: The Ending ^o -ly	38
2.43.	<i>Knowingly, Decidedly, etc.</i>	39
2.50.	Prepositions Used as Adjectives	40
2.51.	Adverbs and Prepositions Used as Nouns	41
2.52.	Adverbs, Prepositions and Conjunctions	41
2.60.	Some Interesting Compound-Words.....	42

CHAPTER III

THE SENTENCE MOODS

3.10.	What is a Sentence?	45
3.11.	Importance of Finite Verb	47
3.20.	Sentence, Phrase and Clause: Subject, Predicate and Principal Verb	48
3.21.	Direct and Indirect Objects	48
3.22.	Sentence Structure: Modifiers and Conjunctions	49
3.23.	Phrase and Clause	50
3.30.	Sentence Moods	51
3.31.	Chinese and English Compared: Chinese Modal Particles	52
3.40.	Affirmation: <i>I Do, I Am</i>	53
3.41.	<i>Can, Will, Have, Must, etc.</i>	54
3.42.	Affirmative Replies	55
3.43.	Qualified Assertion	56
3.44.	Emphatic Assertion.....	56
3.45.	English Reticence and Double Negatives	58
3.46.	Affirmation by a Retort Question	59
3.50.	Negation	60
3.51.	<i>Aren't, Isn't, Mustn't, etc.</i>	61
3.52.	<i>No, Not a, Not Any, Nothing, etc.</i>	63
3.53.	<i>Few, a Few, Little, a Little</i>	64
3.54.	No in Negative Answers.....	64
3.55.	Emphatic Negation	65
3.56.	<i>"I Ain't Got Nothing"</i>	66

3.57. Conditional Negation	67
3.60. Interrogation	68
3.61. <i>Will You? Won't You?</i>	69
3.62. The Tag-Question	70
3.63. Tonal Interrogation and the Questioning Tone	71
3.64. The Indirect Question and Noun Clauses	72
3.70. The Potential Moods	73
3.71. Command, Request, Suggestion, etc.	74
3.72. <i>Shall and Will</i>	75
3.73. Hope and Wish	77
3.74. Permission, Prohibition, Obligation, etc.	78
3.75. Conjecture and Possibility	80
3.76. Pure Supposition: <i>Would, Should, Could, Might</i>	81
3.77. The Subjunctive Clause.....	83
3.80. Emotional Utterances	85
3.81. Swear-Words	86

CHAPTER IV

PERSONS, THINGS AND THEIR GENDER

4.10. Classes of Things	88
4.20. Process and Result	89
4.21. Process-Words Denoting Results	90
4.30. Abstract and Concrete Nouns	91
4.31. Abstract-Words with Concrete Meaning	93
4.32. <i>A Piece of Folly, a Fit of Anger, etc.</i>	94
4.40. Common and Proper Nouns	95
4.41. Proper Nouns and Capital Letters.....	96
4.50. Collectives and Mass-Words: Collectives or Group-Names	97
4.51. Mass-Words	97
4.60. Things, Persons and Personification: Things and Persons	98
4.61. <i>Who, Which and That</i>	99
4.62. <i>Whose and Of Which</i>	100
4.63. Personification	101
4.70. Sex and Gender.....	103
4.71. Masculine, Feminine, Common and Neuter Genders.....	104
4.72. Animals and Persons of Different Sex.....	105

CHAPTER V

NUMBER AND QUANTITY

5.10.	The Notions of Number and Quantity	107
5.11.	Mass-Words: <i>Grain of Sand, Bushel of Rice, etc.</i>	108
5.12.	Abstract Nouns: <i>Piece of Luck</i>	110
5.20.	Singular and Plural: The Plural Endings <i>-s</i> and <i>-es</i>	111
5.21.	<i>Boys, Ladies, Pianos, Potatoes</i>	113
5.22.	Irregular Pluals: <i>Fish, Dozen, Alumni</i>	113
5.23.	Collectives: <i>Government Have</i> and <i>Government Has</i>	115
5.24.	Psychological Intent: <i>Three Weeks Is Heaps of Time</i>	117
5.25.	The Generic Singular	118
5.26.	Natural Plurals	119
5.27.	Differentiated Plurals.....	120
5.28.	Some Special Cases: <i>Sons-in-law, the Miss Rogers, etc.</i>	121
5.30.	Numerals: Numerals, Fractions and Multiples.....	123
5.31.	Indefinite Number.....	126
5.40.	Conflict of Number	128
5.41.	Number in Verbs	130

CHAPTER VI

WEIGHT, VALUE, SIZE, SHAPE AND POSITION

6.10.	National Differences in These Categories.....	135
6.20.	Expressions of Weight.....	135
6.30.	Expressions of Value	136
6.40.	Expressions of Size and Distance	138
6.50.	Expressions of Shape: English Shape-Blindness	140
6.60.	Expressions of Position	142
6.61.	Peculiar Use of Prepositions	144

CHAPTER VII

REPRESENTATION

7.10.	Representation	146
7.20.	Personal Pronouns: Case and Person	17

7.21.	<i>Mine, Thine, etc.</i>	149
7.22.	Influence of Modesty, Respect, Familiarity, etc.	150
7.23.	Reflexive and Reciprocal Pronouns	152
7.24.	General Person: <i>One, People, etc.</i>	154
7.25.	Conflict of Person and Case: Conflict of Person	156
7.31.	Conflict of Case: <i>Who, Whom, Whoever, Whomever</i>	158
7.40.	Thing-Pronouns	160
7.41.	<i>Some, Any, None</i>	162
7.42.	<i>What</i>	162
7.43.	<i>One, Thing, Affair, Something, etc.</i>	163
7.44.	<i>That</i>	164
7.45.	<i>It</i>	165
7.50.	Metaphors: Metaphors and Figurative Expressions	168
7.60.	Indirect Statements: Direct and Indirect Statements ..	172
7.61.	Tense of Dependent Clauses	174
7.70.	Representation by Omission	176

CHAPTER VIII

DETERMINATION

8.10.	Representation, Determination and Modification	180
8.11.	Classes of Pronouns	181
8.20.	Distinction: This, That, Same, Other ..	182
8.30.	Possessive Pronouns and Nouns	184
8.40.	Apposition: Apposition and Example	186
8.50.	Sequence: the Ordinals	188
8.60.	Alternation and Distribution: Either, Each, etc.	189
8.70.	Definite and Indefinite: A, An and The	190
8.71.	Generalization: <i>A Cat, The Cat, Cats</i>	193
8.72.	Special Uses of <i>A</i> and <i>The</i>	194
8.73.	Omission of <i>A</i> and <i>The</i>	196
8.80.	Indetermination: Whatever, Whoever, etc.	200

CHAPTER IX

MODIFICATION

9.10.	Modification: Its Importance	203
9.11.	Word-Classes and Word-Ranks	205

9.20.	Relationship between Modified and Modifier	207
9.21.	The Use and Omission of Hyphens.....	210
9.22.	Relationship between Modifiers	213
9.23.	Co-ordinate Modifiers	213
9.24.	Subordinate Modifiers.....	216
9.25.	Shifted Ranks	219
9.26.	Transformed Phrases as Modifiers.....	223
9.27.	Nouns and Verbs as Modifiers.....	225
9.30.	Phrase and Clause Modifiers	227
9.31.	The Infinitive Phrase as Modifier	228
9.32.	The Split Infinitive, etc.	231
9.33.	<i>Need to, Dare to</i>	233
9.40.	The Participial Phrase as Modifier	235
9.41.	Misconnected Participles	238
9.42.	The Absolute Participial Phrase.....	239
9.50.	The Prepositional Phrase	241
9.51.	Prepositions for Brevity.....	242
9.52.	Prepositions at End	243
9.53.	<i>But, Than</i>	244
9.54.	Some Special Uses of English Prepositions.....	245
9.60.	The Relative Clause	246
9.61.	<i>That</i> as a Defining Relative Pronoun.....	247
9.62.	<i>Which</i> as a Commentative Relative Pronoun.....	249
9.63.	<i>Which</i> Modifying Statements.....	250
9.64.	<i>In Which, from Whom, etc.</i>	251
9.65.	<i>Which . . . It, Which . . . Them, etc.</i>	252
9.66.	<i>That . . . to, That . . . for, etc.</i>	253
9.67.	<i>That</i> Used for <i>in Which, for Which, etc.</i>	253
9.68.	<i>That</i> Dropped	253
9.691.	<i>As</i> as a Relative Pronoun	254
9.692.	<i>But</i> as a Relative Pronoun.....	255
9.70.	Relative Adverbs <i>When, Where</i> and <i>Why</i>	255
9.71.	<i>When Called, When Resting</i>	257
9.80.	Phrase and Clause Modifiers Summarized	258
9.81.	Post-Nominal Position of Modifiers	259
9.82.	Economy in Phrase and Clause Modifiers	260
9.83.	The Nominal Phrase.....	261
9.84.	Joining of Phrases.....	261

9.90.	The Predicate Complements	262
9.91.	"I Made Him Go"	264

CHAPTER X

COMPARISON AND DEGREES

10.10.	Degrees of Comparison: Their Relative Nature	266
10.11.	The "Three Degrees of Comparison"	267
10.12.	<i>More Better, Next Best, etc.</i>	269
10.13.	Superiority, Equality and Inferiority	270
10.14.	Implied Comparison	271
10.15.	Words That Cannot Be Compared	272
10.16.	Weakened Superlatives	273
10.20.	Comparison with a Standard	275
10.30.	Degrees of Difference	279
10.31.	Indeterminate Degrees	279
10.32.	Limitation	285
10.33.	Cumulative Degrees	286
10.40.	Choice and Comparison	288
10.50.	Comparison and Case	290

CHAPTER XI

ASPECTS OF ACTION

11.01.	The Study of the Verb	292
11.02.	What is an Aspect?	293
11.03.	The English Verbal Aspects	295
11.10.	Action and Condition	295
11.11.	Being and Doing	298
11.20.	Transitive and Intransitive Verbs	299
11.21.	Intransitive Verbs and Prepositions	302
11.22.	Intransitive Verbs Used Transitively	305
11.30.	Active and Passive: The Term "Voice"	307
11.31.	Formation of the Passive	307
11.32.	Use of the Passive	309
11.33.	Active and Passive Nouns	310
11.34.	Active and Passive Adjectives	311
11.35.	False Active	312