

英文文法精義

STUDIES IN ENGLISH GRAMMAR

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*A HANDBOOK FOR CLASS USE AND  
PRIVATE GUIDANCE*

*With Exercises*



By

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KAIMING BOOK COMPANY, LTD.

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二十年八月初版 三十六年二月六版

每冊定價國幣一元五角

編著者 葛傳槩

發行者 開明書店  
代表人 范洗人

印刷者 開明書店

有著作權 \* 不准翻印

## PREFACE

This book deals with a number of difficult, or rather delicate, points of syntax and usage that I have not found fully treated of, or so much as touched upon, in any "complete" or "advanced" grammar designed for school or college use. It aims chiefly at discussing those constructions which are apparently right but really wrong—those mistakes which even careful persons sometimes make.

These points are not imaginary ones, however. Nor are they of interest to curious readers only. They represent the actual difficulties and problems of all who have occasion to use English, and who wish to use English as English *should* be used. I have said "all", and I really venture to hope that this book will be read or consulted with profit by persons born to the English language as well as those who study it as a foreign language, though I am well aware that Englishmen and Americans are by no means likely ever to look into an English grammar written by a Chinese. As a text-book it is intended for those students who have finished their study of formal grammar and are possessed of a good knowledge of the subject, presumably those of the last year of the middle school or of the first year of the college. As a reference book it should prove invaluable to all grammatically-minded persons.

In reading the book the reader will probably now and then cry in surprise: "This is wrong? Go to! I have found it in great authors often enough". It is true that many, if not all, of the constructions that

I have called wrong are very commonly used by great authors. But great authors, if you please, are great, not because of their faultless English, but rather in spite of the faults in their English. A mistake is a mistake, no matter who makes it. Grammar is no respecter of persons.

As writers of books like this are often apt to be dogmatic, and dogmatism is perhaps the greatest crime they can be guilty of, I have revised the manuscript several times with a view to removing too unqualified statements regarding controversial matters. The material being largely the result of years of patient study, I am probably indebted to more books than I am aware. The only books that I have constantly consulted in the preparation of the articles are Messrs H. W. and F. G. Fowler's *The King's English* and Mr H. W. Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, from both of which I have derived much help. But for anything and everything I have said in the book I am alone responsible.

HERTZ C. K. KÊ

## PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

In this edition a few slight changes have been made here and there, and a few foot-notes have been added.

*April, 1941*

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## CHAPTER I

### The Articles

1. Almost all books on grammar contain a rule to the effect that “an”, instead of “a”, should be used before an unaccented syllable beginning with *h*; thus, “*a* history”, but “*an* historian”. This rule is no longer necessary. While “*an* historian” was formerly more idiomatic than “*a* historian”, the second form is now more idiomatic than the first. We should likewise say “*a* hotel”, “*a* habitual drunkard”, and the like.

2. The following forms illustrate the idiomatic use of “a” (or “an”) after an adjective instead of before it:

such a boy  
many a boy  
so clever a boy  
too clever a boy  
as clever a boy as his brother  
how clever a boy he is  
what a clever boy he is

“A so clever boy” is as correct as “so clever a boy”, but is less idiomatic; so is “a too clever



boy" as compared with "too clever a boy". What is to be noted is that "a" (or "an") is idiomatically used after an adjective instead of before it *only* in the case of the three adjectives "such", "many", and "what", and of adjectives preceded by one of the four adverbs "so", "too", "as", and "how". This construction, however, is very often wrongly adopted with adjectives preceded by "quite" or "rather" and with comparative adjectives containing "more" or "less" or modified by "much" or "far", as in:

quite clever a boy	much cleverer a boy
rather clever a boy	much more clever a boy
more clever a boy	far cleverer a boy
less clever a boy	far more clever a boy

The right forms are:

- a quite clever boy (or quite a clever boy)
- a rather clever boy (or rather a clever boy)
- a more clever boy (or a cleverer boy)
- a less clever boy
- a much cleverer boy
- a much more clever boy
- a far cleverer boy
- a far more clever boy

(Note that "a" or "an" may be placed between "quite" and "rather" and their adjectives.)

With comparative adjectives preceded by “no”, though idiom seems less fixed, the use of “a” (or “an”) after the adjective is at least ill-advised; thus, “He is *a no more clever boy* than his brother” and “He is *a no less clever boy* than his brother” are better than “He is *no more clever a boy* than his brother” and “He is *no less clever a boy* than his brother”.

3. “A” (or “an”) is often superfluously used after a comparative adjective or the adjective “other” preceded by the adjective “no”, as in “No more clever *a* boy than this has ever studied here”, “No other *a* boy than John has won the prize”. The *a* in each sentence should be omitted.

4. With “ever” or “never” in the emphatic construction “a” (or “an”) is idiomatically omitted; thus, “Did *ever* boy of his age write such a fine composition?”, “*Never* boy of his age wrote such a fine composition”. When “ever” or “never” is in the ordinary position, however, “a” (or “an”) is indispensable; thus, “Did *a* boy of his age *ever* write such a fine composition?”, “*A* boy of his age *never* wrote such a fine composition”.

5. With “as” meaning *though*, “a” (or “an”) is idiomatically omitted; thus, “Fool as he is, he

does not believe in his dishonest friends”, not “A fool as he is, he does not believe in his dishonest friends”.

6. With “as” meaning *in the capacity of*, “a” (or “an”) or “the” is idiomatically omitted; thus, “He wrote the article as editor”, rather than “He wrote the article as *an* (or *the*) editor”. Attention must be called, however, to the fact that with “as” meaning *considered as*, the article should not be omitted; thus, “As *an* author, he is superior to his father”, not “As author, he is superior to his father”.

7. In such expressions as “no small city”, “no easy task”, *no* is not an adverb, but an adjective equivalent to *not a*. “No small city” means *not a small city*, or *a great city*; “no easy task” means *not an easy task*, or *a difficult task*. Therefore, such expressions as “*a* (or *the*) no small city”, “*a* (or *the*) no easy task” are wrong. It is necessary, however, to add that in “no smaller city”, when this expression means *not no city that is smaller*, but *city that is no smaller than*, or *as great as, another*, the *no* is not an adjective, but an adverb (meaning *by no amount*), and therefore can be preceded by “a” or “th”.

8. Names of persons preceded by characterizing adjectives usually take "the"; thus, "*the* wise Solomon", "*the* ambitious Caesar". However, "the" should not be used before such ordinary epithets as "dear", "poor", "little", "young", "old"; thus:

dear John	poor little John
poor John	young John
little John	old John
dear little John	

9. As we all know, "the" is not now used before a proper name denoting a language; thus, "a book written in English", "a book translated into English". After "from", however, it is often more idiomatic to use "the" than not to use it; thus, "a book translated from *the* English", where the article seems to suggest *the English original*. On the other hand, "to translate a book from English into Chinese" is more idiomatic than "to translate a book from *the* English into Chinese", the absence of "the" in *into Chinese* being responsible for the absence of the same word in *from English*. Two other cases in which the name of a language takes "the" are that it is applied to a particular word or phrase, as in "'Man' is *the* English for '人'", "What is *the* Chinese for

'efficiency'?', and that it denotes the language of a book, an article, etc., as in "I like the story, but<sup>t</sup> do not like *the* English".

10. In regard to "the" there is a question that does not matter in speaking, but matters very much in writing. The question is whether we should write "*The* China Press correspondent" or "*the* China Press correspondent", i. e., whether the *the* in such an expression should begin with a capital letter or not. Since "the correspondent of The China Press" is correct, "*the The* China Press correspondent" would also be grammatically correct. But this form is of course far from idiomatic; idiom has decided that only one "the" should be used. Now it is clear that this "the" should belong to *correspondent* instead of to *China Press*, just as the *a* in "a China Press correspondent" belongs to *correspondent* instead of to *China Press*. Hence "*the* China Press correspondent", instead of "*The* China Press correspondent", is the right form, though the latter form is even commoner than the former. Similarly we should write "*the* Kaiming publications" rather than "*The* Kaiming publications".

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**EXERCISE\***

*Correct the following sentences in the light of what you have learnt in this chapter:*

1. No less interesting a book than this was ever published.
2. No less interesting a book than this was never published.
3. No less interesting book than this was never published.
4. A less interesting book than this was never published.
5. The book is written by no other an author than H. G. Wells, who is a no mean English novelist.
6. This is more interesting a book than that, but it is said to be a translation from French.
7. A millionaire as he is, he looks like a poor man.
8. No other college in China than this seems to have so glorious a future.
9. He was so keenly an interested listener that he made the no insignificant number of one hundred notes of the lecture.
10. That is quite a sufficient amount.
11. The farmer wondered why all his friends treated him as a stranger.
12. "Did girl like you ever talk like that?" the lady asked young Alice.

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\*In this and all the following exercises some sentences that do not call for correction have been purposely included.

13. It is quite impossible a theory.
14. He was very sorry to find the poor Mary in no different a condition from his.
15. He cannot translate from Chinese into English, though he has no small knowledge of both languages.
16. He has far better a memory than any other child in his class, and is a no dull boy.
17. I am a no more foolish man than he.
18. I am a more foolish man than he.
19. He has had many years' experience as interpreter, but as linguist he is a no great one.
20. Some of The Times correspondents said a great deal about The Hague Conference.

## CHAPTER II

### “It”

1. “It” is often unidiomatically inserted after the relative pronoun “as”, because the relative pronoun is mistaken for a conjunction, as in “Shakespeare, as *it* is well known, is the greatest English dramatist and poet”. Here *as* is a relative pronoun meaning *which fact*, and *it* is therefore superfluous. Grammatically, indeed, we might regard *as* as a conjunction and *it* as representing the fact that Shakespeare is the greatest English dramatist and poet, and then the construction would seem quite right; but it is contrary to idiom, according to which *it* is impossible unless *as* is omitted so as to make *it is well known* a parenthetic clause. In “As it is true, two and two make four”, “As it can be seen from the above, the matter is of great importance”, and the like, *it* should also be omitted.

2. “It” is as often ungrammatically omitted after the relative pronoun “as” as it is unidiomatically inserted after it, as in “As has been thought will be the result, the school has to dismiss



the bad boy". Here the wrong omission of "it" after the relative pronoun *as* is not easy to detect. Incidentally, if the necessary "it" had been used (then the sentence would be right), most readers would probably take the *as* for a conjunction without considering it grammatically in connexion with other parts of the sentence. The fact is that the *as* certainly is a relative pronoun, and "it" is absolutely necessary. As has just been said, here the wrong omission of "it" is not easy to detect. To prove the necessity of "it" a rather detailed explanation is needed. "That this fact will be the result has been thought", rearranged idiomatically, becomes "It has been thought that this fact will be the result". In combining this sentence with "The school has to dismiss the bad boy", we substitute the relative pronoun "as" for the words *this fact* in the clause that is to be subordinate, and place this relative pronoun at the beginning of the clause instead of in the middle; thus, "As it has been thought will be the result, the school has to dismiss the bad boy". (It will be seen that the conjunction *that* has been omitted, but this omission is a matter of idiom and has nothing to do with the point under discussion.) The wrong omission of "it" is frequent not only after "as"