

安徽省高等学校“十一五”省级规划教材

英语 快速阅读

主编 陈葵阳 孟爱萍
主审 王吉良 周平

English Fast Reading



安徽大学出版社

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前 言

《英语快速阅读》主要供财经类院校学生使用,旨在培养学生快速获取信息的能力。全书分为《基础英语快速阅读》和《商务英语快速阅读》两个部分,每部分包含 20 个单元,每单元就某一相关知识或话题提供 3 篇阅读材料。

《基础英语快速阅读》部分严格执行《大学英语课程教学要求》,每个单元中的第一篇文章完全采用大学英语四级考试题型,紧随其后的两篇相关文章也均采用标准化命题形式,内容涵盖语言、文化、信息、科学及社会焦点问题等,可供大学一年级学生使用。

《商务英语快速阅读》部分选材新颖,时代性强,内容涉及国贸、金融、货币、证券、保险、营销、管理等方面知识,符合培养国际化、复合型和应用型人才目标。其中,商务基础知识具有一定的理论性,系统性和前沿性;商务内容具有较强的时效性,趣味性和实用性,可供具有一定相关专业知识的二、三年级学生使用。为了有利于学生自主学习,本部分课后练习注重多样性和互动性。

本书所选文章题材丰富,语言规范,篇幅随练习题的考察目的和难易程度的不同而增减,且生词量在 3% 左右。此外,根据《大学英语课程教学要求》对学生快速阅读能力所作的一般要求,每篇文章后均附有阅读所需时间。

本书由安徽财经大学外国语学院陈葵阳、孟爱萍主编,王吉良、周平主审,杨友朝、吴勇、阎先宝等参编。本书在编写过程中参考了大量的文献资料,在此编者向所有的有关作者和著作权人表示衷心的感谢。由于编者水平有限,尤其是《商务英语快速阅读》在国内尚属首次尝试,书中难免有不妥或错漏之处,敬请有关专家和广大读者批评指正。

编 者

2008 年 7 月

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Basic English Fast Reading

基础英语快速阅读

Unit 1

Passage 1 Learning a Language

When Do We Learn a Language?

Children begin learning languages at birth (infants pay attention to their parents' voice, as opposed to random noises or even other languages), and haven't really mastered the subtleties before the age of ten years. Indeed, we never really stop learning our language. This isn't exactly the sort of behavior (like foals walking an hour after birth) that we call "instinct" in animals.

Do We Learn When We Don't Have to?

But at least it's effortless, isn't it? Well, no, as we can see when children have a choice of languages to learn. What's found is that, to be frank, children don't learn a language if they can get away with not learning it.

Many an immigrant family in the U. S. intends to teach their child their native language; and for the first few years it goes swimmingly so much so that the parents worry that the child won't learn English. Then the child goes to school, picks up English, and within a few years the worry is reversed: the child still understands his parents, but responds in English. Eventually the parents may give up, and the home language becomes English.

People's Influence

A child is likely to end up as a fluent speaker of a language only if there are significant people in her life who speak it: a nanny who only speaks Spanish, a relative who doesn't speak English, etc. Once a child discovers that his parents understand English perfectly well, he's likely to give up on the home language, even in the face of strong disapproval from the parents.

It's a myth that children learn to speak mainly from their parents. They don't; they learn mostly from their peers. This is most easily seen among children of immigrants, whether they come from different language backgrounds or merely

different dialect areas: the children invariably come to speak the dialect of their neighborhood and school, not that of their parents (I found a neat example of this in my college's alumni magazine: A liberal family in Mississippi sent their daughter to the public schools, which except for her were all black. She grew up speaking fluent African-American Vernacular English).

Do We Need Grammar?

Supporters of the "language instinct" make much of the fact that children learn to speak without formal instruction—indeed, they notoriously ignore explicit corrections.

Very little of what we learn is through formal instruction. Children aren't schooled in video games, either, yet they pick them up with the same seeming ease.

The apparent effortlessness is largely an illusion caused by psychological distance. We just don't remember how hard it was to learn language (In fact, there're some studies suggesting that memory is tied to language, so that we can't remember the language learning process). The perception of effortlessness should be balanced, anyway, by the universal amusement (which some cartoonists have been mining for nearly half a century) over children's language mistakes.

Do Children Learn Faster?

One may fall back on the position that languages may be hard for children to learn, but at least they do it better than adults. This, however, turns out to be surprisingly difficult to prove. Singleton examined hundreds of studies, and found them resoundingly ambitious. Quite a few studies, in fact, find that adult learners progress faster than children. Even in phonetics, sometimes the last stronghold of the kids-learn-free position, there are studies finding that adults are better at recognizing and producing foreign sounds.

Now, I think Singleton misses a key point in understanding this discrepancy: the studies he reviews compare children vs adults who are learning languages. That's quite reasonable, and indeed it's hard to imagine an alternative approach; but the two groups are not really comparable! All children have to learn at least one language; but few adults do. So the studies compare the situation of all children with that of the minority of adults motivated to formally learn other languages.

Why?

Why do children learn languages well, when even adults who want to learn them have trouble with them? Innate abilities aside, children have a number of powerful

advantages:

- They can devote almost their full time to it. Adults consider half an hour's study a day to be onerous.

- Their motivation is intense. Adults rarely have to spend much of their time in the company of people they need to talk to but can't; children can get very little of what they want without learning language(s).

- Their peers are nastier. Embarrassment is a prime motivating factor for human beings [I owe this insight to Marvin Minsky's *The Society of Mind*, but it was most memorably expressed by David Berlinski (in *Black Mischief*; P129), who noted that of all emotions, from rage to depression to first love, only embarrassment can recur, decades later, with its full original intensity]. Dealing with a French waiter is nothing compared with the vicious reception in store for a child who speaks funnily.

If adults could be placed in a similar situation, they might well learn languages as readily as children. The closest such situation is cross-cultural marriage. And indeed, this works quite well. My wife, for instance, a native Spanish speaker who came here in her late 20s, has learned exceptional English, since we speak it at home. By contrast, some of her Spanish-speaking friends of the same age, married to other Spanish speakers, speak English haltingly and with a strong accent.

(4563 words / 15 minutes)

Directions: In this part, you will go over the passage quickly and answer the questions.

For questions 1-7, mark

Y (for YES) if the statement agrees with the information given in the passage;

N (for NO) if the statement contradicts the information given in the passage;

NG (for NOT GIVEN) if the information is not given in the passage.

For questions 8-10, complete the sentences with the information given in the passage.

1. () The passage gives a general explanation about the benefits of a cross-cultural marriage.
2. () According to the author, children don't learn another language if they don't have to.
3. () Unless children have other people in their lives who speak another language, they cannot speak it fluently.
4. () Children don't learn to speak another language from their parents because at times, children don't get along with their parents.
5. () Nearly everything we learn is through formal instruction.

6. () Few studies find that adult language learners progress faster than children.
7. () Some studies say that adults are better at learning phonetics than children.
8. Singleton's studies compare the situation of all children with that of the _____ of adults motivated to formally learn other languages.
9. Three advantages that children have over adults in language learning include: _____, _____, and _____.
10. The closest situation to that of a children's environment for adults is _____.

Passage 2 English Language

The number of speakers of English in Shakespeare's time is estimated to have been about five million. Today it is estimated that some 260 million people speak it as a native language, mainly in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. In addition to the standard varieties of English found in these areas, there are a great many regional and social varieties of the language, as well as various levels of usage that are employed both in its spoken and written forms.

It is virtually impossible to estimate the number of people in the world who have acquired an adequate working knowledge of English in addition to their own language. The purposes for which English is learned and the situations in which such learning takes place are so varied that it is difficult to define and still more difficult to assess what constitutes an adequate working knowledge for each situation.

The main reason for the widespread demand for English is its present-day importance as a world language. Besides serving the infinite needs of its native speakers, English is a language in which some of the most important works in science, technology, and other fields are being produced, and not always by native speakers. It is widely used for such purposes as meteorological and airport communications, international conferences, and the dissemination (传播) of information over the radio and television networks of many nations. It is a language of wider communication over the radio and television networks of many nations. It is a language of wider communication for a number of developing countries, especially former British colonies. Many of these countries have multilingual populations and

need a language for internal communication in such matters as government, commerce industry, law and education as well as for international communication and for access to the scientific and technological development in the West.

(316 words / 3 minutes)

11. Which of the following is the main idea of this passage?
 - A. There are many different levels of English usage throughout the world.
 - B. English is becoming more and more widespread in the world.
 - C. The number of English speakers has been increasing in recent years.
 - D. English is used widely in science, technology and other fields.
12. Which of the following is NOT TRUE according to this passage?
 - A. Austrians do not speak English as their native language.
 - B. About 260 million people in the world have an adequate working knowledge of English.
 - C. English is widely used in some developing countries, especially former British colonies.
 - D. For some multi-lingual countries it is necessary to choose a language for both internal and international communications.
13. The English language is used _____.
 - A. for only one reason that English is becoming an international language
 - B. mainly by people from the American continent and the Europe
 - C. as an official language in an international conference on the American culture
 - D. in science and technology as well as in cultural and historical studies of all the countries in the world
14. The meaning of the word "meteorological" in the third paragraph is "_____".
 - A. of or relating to the studies of the atmosphere or weather conditions
 - B. of or relating to the studies of philosophy
 - C. of or relating to the technological problems in airport communications
 - D. of or relating to international communication in airplanes
15. Which of the following is the best title for this passage?
 - A. Internal and International Communications.
 - B. Varied Reasons for Learning English.
 - C. English as an International Language.