

大师撰稿 专家注释

伦敦华裔学者杜念嘉先生力作

A GUIDE TO CURRENT
ENGLISH USAGE

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英 美
新流行词语用法

- 集英美当代流行之词语
- 补国内英汉词典之缺环
- 促案头英语用书之换代

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英美新流行词语用法

A GUIDE TO CURRENT ENGLISH USAGE

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著者 1993 年于伦敦

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— the Writer

Foreword

In this series of random notes, it is my intention to turn the spotlight on that part of the English vocabulary which I believe may present problems to Chinese students of the language. Most of the words and expressions I have chosen to elucidate are in current use on radio and television, in the press and modern literature, although some of the entries may prove informative even to those English-speaking natives who are less interested in keeping up with the Joneses⁽¹⁾, linguistically that is. Such is the speed of change on the linguistic scene today! My aim is to illuminate English as it is currently used, rather than to seek out examples of arcane or overly ingenious⁽²⁾ usage.

Many excellent dictionaries and reference guides to modern English usage already exist, I am well aware, and I have no wish to flog a dead horse (炒冷饭) by duplicating the good work that their writers have already done. My purpose is rather to identify vocabulary hitherto overlooked, or perhaps considered too 'down-market'⁽¹⁾ to merit the attention of the magic circle⁽²⁾ of elitist lexicographers, and to bring to book,⁽³⁾ as it were, words and phrases which have hitherto been insufficiently explained in the multiplicity of existing English-Chinese dictionaries. In a language as constantly evolving as English, linguistic mutations—subtle shifts in and extensions to meaning—are frequently occurring. For the Chinese scholar who has gained a text-book knowledge of English, and who wishes to tackle the language as it is spoken and written in the 1990s, it is my belief that such a glossary, however modest in scope, is

not to be sniffed at. It is also my hope to be able to make a small contribution towards identifying the ever widening gap in the chain of English vocabulary encompassed by the general run of dictionaries and phrase books and consequently slot a few vital missing links into place.

Keeping up to date with the English language, particularly in the fast-moving contemporary English-speaking world where the mass media (especially the broadcast media) play a major role in influencing the way English is used, and the voice of the people (the 'demotic voice'⁽⁴⁾ as professor Randolph Quirk puts it) is, needless to say, a task requiring well-resourced teamwork and academic commitment. In the meantime it is my sincerest wish that this little effort of mine will serve as 'a sprat to catch a mackerel'⁽³⁾, or 'a brick to extract jade' (抛砖引玉), as the Chinese saying goes.

Notes: (1)down-market (or 'downmarket'): relating to something (a product or service) catering for the cheaper and more popular end of the market, hence of poorer quality. The antonym of 'downmarket' is 'upmarket'. Please note that these two words are mainly used as adjectives, or adverbs. (2)magic circle: a small elitist group of people privileged to make important decisions. (3)bring to book: to **make** someone accountable for his actions (here used as a jocular pun.) (4)demotic: pertaining to the simplified form of hieratic writing used in ancient Egypt. Hence the word is currently used to describe something (especially in language) that is typical of the unrefined common people. Eg 'Television is the most demotic of the arts.' The term 'demotic voice' is used by Quirk in his article, 'The Changing Linguistic Scene in Britain', published in Waiyu Jiao Xue Yu Yanjiu (外语教学与研究)

N. C. DOO

London 1993

前言译文

在这个随意组联的汇释中,我打算专门对学英语的中国学生可能遇到困难的那部分英语词汇作一些说明。我所选来解释的单词和词句,大部分是广播和电视、报章和当代文学著作中流行的,虽然有些词条对那些不太讲究在语言上力求合乎时宜的说英语的当地人也许也会有所启示。今天,语言方面的发展是多么快呀!我的目的,与其说在于刻意寻求能显示英语之奥妙或过于独出心裁的例子,不如说在于阐明英语的当代用法。

我很清楚,有关当代英语用法的优秀词书和参考指南有的是,我无意“炒冷饭”复述这些书的作者所做过的杰出的工作,我的意图无非是对那些迄今为止犹为那些有权威性的词典编辑圈所忽略,以及对现有英汉词典中迄今未充分解释的单词和词语加以说明。以英语这样一种不断发展的语言,语言上的变化——意义上微妙的变动和发展——是经常发生的,对于已经获得一大部教科书的英语知识,意愿应付九十年代的英语口语和书写的中国学者,我认为,是不会对本书所收有限的词语嗤之以鼻的吧。一般词典及成语词书中所收集的词目,与当今实用词汇的间隙日益扩大,我希望能在这条当代英语词汇的链条上补充少数不可或缺的新环节。要是能如愿以偿,便问心无愧了。

要跟上现代英语,特别是在这个变化迅速的当代英语世界中,(大众媒体在英语用法及“民众的声音”——伦道夫·奎克教授所谓的“通俗语言”——的影响上起了重大作用)是一项需要经费充足的一组人和在学术上承担责任的工作。目前我诚恳地希望,我的这份微薄的成果将起到“用小虾钓大鱼”或如中国成语“抛砖引玉”的作用。

【原注】(1)down-market (或 'downmarket'):有关供应廉价的、大众化的市场(产品或服务)的形容词,当然是较劣质的。“Downmarket”的反义词是“upmarket”。请注意,此二词仅用作形容词,偶尔也用作动词或副词。

(2)magic circle:有作出重大决定权的权威人物的小圈子。(3)bring to book:使得某人对他的行为负有责任。(4)demotic:指古代埃及一种比象形文字还要简单的写法,因此这个词现代用来描述一些(尤指语言)粗俗的普通老百姓的典型的语言,例如“电视是一种最通俗的艺术”。“Demotic Voice”这词是伦道夫·奎克教授在《外语教学与研究》(1985年第三期)上发表的那篇《英国语言学方面的变化》文章中所用。

【译注】①与邻居排场看齐。Joneses 是人名,指邻居之摆阔者。②In-genious 原意为“机敏”,Over-ingenuous 则有贬意,可译为“过于别出心裁的”或“过于标新立异的”。③A sprat to catch a macherel (或 herring, whale),用小虾钓大鱼,(喻)施小惠而得大利,近于汉语“抛砖引玉”。

杜念嘉

于伦敦,1993

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