

世说英语

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系列丛书

英语精短人文译评

TALES OF
MODERN
TIME

国家
小事

李家真
编译



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英语精短时代译评

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编者的话（代序）

一向以为，每一种语言都承载着一个民族的智慧与文化。它的不断更新变化也反映着使用者思维方式的变异和他们所处社会的演进。倘若脱离了社会现实，单单把语言当作工具来学习，不但没有什么趣味，效果恐怕也要大打折扣。本书所收的短文中使用的都是鲜活生动、原汁原味的英语，其内容则是在我们这个日新月异的世界里最近发生的一些有意思的事情。这些记录真实事件的短文涉及政治、经济、科技、宗教、艺术、体育、娱乐等各个方面，正如折射国外社会风貌的一颗颗小水珠。读者们可以借鉴其中鲜活的词汇、生动的句法和颇富风趣的行文，由此改善阅读和写作的技巧；也可以从中管窥我们这个地球上各个角落人们十分多样化的生活和思想。

古代许多文人雅士都喜欢搜集当时的异人异事乃至神仙鬼怪之说汇编成书，用以美善刺恶、讽时劝世，如刘义庆的《世说新语》、袁枚的《子不语》、纪昀的《阅微草堂笔记》等皆如此类。编者愚陋，不敢追攀前贤，但选文之时亦力求每篇皆有其令人回味或发人深省之处。其意不在讥弹，只在让读者对别样的文化和生活有所认识。作为文化的载体，英语本身无疑已经为我们揭示了许多西方世界的历史、传统、世界观和思维方式，而众多短文中记述的种种真实事件更是让当今世界中其他民族的生活跃然纸上、如在目前。

作为中国人，我们已经拥有一种源远流长、辉煌灿烂的文化，但这并不妨碍我们以开放的胸襟去了解和借鉴其他民族对世界的认识和思索。立足自身文化、放眼地平线之外多元文化的绚烂繁花，其中的乐趣和收获绝不仅仅局限于语言方面。书名“英语”而兼“世说”，其意正在于此。

编译书中的一篇篇纪实短文，犹如驻足观赏一帧帧世态风情画。殚精竭虑之余，自不能了无触动。编者在每篇短文之后附上了自己的一点心得，正是希望借此与读者诸君分享思维的乐趣，或有强作解人之处，诸君但可一笑置之。总之，编者希望本书不仅是学习英语的好材料，也是一本值得在闲暇时一读的有趣的书。

李家真

二零零八年十二月二日

A Night of High Drama

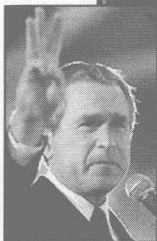
U.S. Presidential Election: While campaign chairman William Daley announced, "Our campaign continues," the TV networks had already declared Texas Gov. George W. Bush the 43rd president of the United States, Gore had telephoned his congratulations to Bush.

On the day after the election, it remains up to Florida to decide the final outcome. Most of America went to bed not knowing who would be running the country for the next four years and woke up ... not knowing who would be running the country for the next four years. But the hours in between were one wild and crazy ride: The networks gave Gore the key state of Florida at 7:49 p.m. ET, retracted it at 10:16 p.m., gave it to Bush at 2:17 a.m., awarding him the presidency, and retracted it again at 4 a.m.. Fortunately, they are quiet now.

一夜疯狂名利场



Gore 戈尔



Bush 小布什

美国总统大选：在戈尔的竞选委员会主席威廉·戴利宣称斗争仍在继续之时，美国的电视网络却迫不及待地吧得克萨斯州长小布什推上了第43届美国总统的宝座，不知就里的戈尔也打电话向小布什致贺。

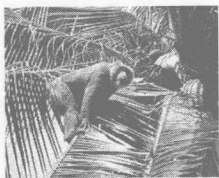
然而，虽然大选已经过去了一天，佛罗里达州的选举结果却还在统计之中，最终结果自然也还未见分晓。大多数美国老百姓酣然睡去——并不知道今后四年中谁将会统治他们——然后醒来——依然不知道。但在这一梦之间却有一出惊心动魄的好戏：美国东部时间晚上7点49分，电视网络宣布戈尔在决定生死的佛罗里达州取得胜利；10点16分，他们把这一说法咽了回去；凌晨2点17分，他们将该州判给布什并给他加冕；4点钟——又一次——他们自食其言。幸好，现在终于踏实了。

Remarks: 可以想象，在这样一个晚上，有多少颗心在起起落落，有多少人会认为在这几个小时中他们已经历了一生的悲和喜。还好，我们只是看客，我们一直很踏实。

Cheap Labor

Concerned by the rising cost of hiring farm workers, Tawee, a Thai farmer who owns orchards of tamarind, mango and coconut, is teaching the monkeys how to pick fruit. His venture near the resort town of Chiang Mai is not unique. Monkeys have been used to harvest coconuts in southern Thailand for generations. But Tawee is the first farmer in the north to try to use them to pick softer fruit like tamarinds and mangos. Tawee concedes monkeys will never replace humans completely. Some types of fruit can't be harvested by monkeys—strawberries and loganberries, for example, which are too delicate for a monkey's grab-and-pull technique. Watermelons also are problematic, being too heavy for the little animals. But monkeys are loyal and have no fright of height, and "on top of it, they will not complain or ask a raise."

廉价劳工



眼看着雇帮工的价码日益上涨，拥有罗望子、芒果和椰子果园的泰国农民 Tawee 只好训练猴子来采摘果实。他在观光胜地清迈附近所作的这一尝试并不是破天荒，因为用猴子来采椰子在泰国南部是有传统的。不过在泰国北部，Tawee 却是第一个训练它们来采像罗望子和芒果这样较为柔软的果实的人。Tawee 承认猴子永远也不能完全替代人：像草莓和罗甘莓这样精致柔弱的果实无法承受它们又抓又扯的手法，西瓜对这些小东西来说又太重了。但是猴子有猴子的好处，它们忠诚，不恐高，而且“最重要的是，它们不会抱怨，也不会要求加薪。”

Remarks: 好玩的故事，严酷的背景：金融危机使泰国失业率大幅度上升，政府为增加就业而驱逐外籍劳工，雇佣农业工人的成本因此也节节攀升——猴子的机会来了。

Europe's Worst Linguists

The British are the European Union's worst linguists while the citizens of Luxembourg are the best, according to an EU poll published recently. Almost two-thirds of Britons know no language apart from their mother tongue, the highest figure recorded in the 15 EU countries. That compares to just 2.2 percent in Luxembourg, 12.3 percent of Danes and an EU average of 47.3 percent of people who speak no other language but their own, the poll of 16,000 EU citizens said. But British travelers to Europe need not worry. English is the most common second language in the EU, spoken by 41 percent of the bloc's citizens. In Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands, at least 78 percent of people speak English as a second language. Although 47 percent of EU citizens know only their mother tongue, there is wide agreement that speaking a foreign language is a good thing. 72 percent of those polled believe foreign language skills are useful, 71 percent said everyone should know one foreign language and 69 percent said everyone should speak English.

欧洲最不会说话的人



Big Ben 伦敦的大本钟

新近公布的一项欧盟民意测验结果显示：英国人和卢森堡人分别是最差和最好的外语学习者。有1.6万名欧盟成员国公民参加了这次民意测验。调查发现将近2/3的英国人只懂母语，这一比例在15个欧盟成员国中是最高的。在卢森堡和丹麦，不懂外语的人所占比例分别只有2.2%和12.3%，而欧盟各国的平均百分比为47.3%。不过，在欧洲旅行的英国人无须担心自己会遇到什么障碍，因为英语是欧盟各国使用最普遍的第二语言。41%的欧盟成员国公民会讲英语，在丹麦、瑞典和荷兰更有至少78%的人使用英语作为第二语言。尽管欧盟公民中有47%只懂母语，懂一门外语是好事仍是大家的共识。参加此次调查的人中有72%认为外语是一项有用的技能，71%认为所有人都应该懂一门外语，认为所有人都应该讲英语的人则占69%。

Remarks: 正是英语的流行优势使英国人不思进取，所谓：“莫愁前路无知己，天下谁人不识 English?”

Do You Deliver?

When staff at a Thai restaurant in London received a phone call for a take-out order—they had little idea how far the delivery boy would have to go. When the customer revealed their identity and the delivery address it became clear that their normal moped service just wouldn't do. The order was for no other than the future King of Thailand, Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn who had so enjoyed his visit to the restaurant a month ago that he wanted to share the experience back home in Bangkok, nearly 6,000 miles away. He ordered 350 items for his marathon takeaway, which had to be flown on a 12-hour Thai Airways flight from Heathrow. "It may seem a long way to fly food," said a restaurant spokesman. "But I suppose that what the Prince likes the Prince gets. If he is happy, everybody else is happy."

送外卖?



Maha Vajiralongkorn
泰国王储

伦敦的一家泰餐馆收到了一个订外卖的电话，当时还不知道他们送外卖的小懂得跑多远。等他们得知了这位顾客的身份和地址，才意识到靠店里的机器脚踏车是没法送餐上门的。订单来自泰国王储 Maha Vajiralongkorn。一月之前在这家餐馆的逗留给太子殿下下的印象美妙之至，他因此想在 6000 英里之外的曼谷与家人分享这段经历。他为这次马拉松外卖订了 350 样食品，只能通过泰国航空公司的班机运送，航程为 12 小时。餐馆的发言人说：“这么大老远地运吃的未免有点兴师动众。但我想既然太子殿下喜欢，他总能得偿所愿。他高兴了，大家也就都高兴了。”

Remarks: “飞机落地王子笑，世人皆知外卖来。”