

大学英语

College English Reading
for Understanding

阅读理解

第四册

靳梅琳 主编



机械工业出版社
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内 容 简 介

本书是为高等院校学生编写的英语阅读书籍。难度适中,英语专业与非英语专业的学生均可使用。本书取材新颖,内容丰富,收入了反映欧美国家的科技发展、文化习俗、社会问题、环保意识、自然景观、校园生活等方面的文章。这些文章均选自近几年国外流行的书刊,语言与内容富有现代气息,可以帮助大学生提高阅读能力。

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《大学英语阅读理解》第四册

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前 言

《大学英语阅读理解》是根据国家教育部对高等院校英语专业教学基础阶段阅读课程的要求而编写的。全套共四册，第一、二册可供大学英语专业一年级学生使用，第三、四册可供英语专业二年级学生使用。也可供理工科院校学习公共英语课程的学生以及英语四、六级考生使用，亦可作为继续教育学院英语专业学生的阅读教材。

阅读理解在英语学习中占有举足轻重的地位。只有通过大量阅读，才能扩大词汇量，拓展语法知识，掌握现代英语中的习语与成语。阅读能力的提高不是一蹴而就的，学习者应当广泛阅读用现代英语写成的各种题材的文章，并反复进行阅读理解训练。没有大量的阅读理解训练，就不可能迅速提高阅读理解能力，也就难以显著提高英语学习效果。

本书是《大学英语阅读理解》第四册，供高等学校英语专业学生二年级第二学期使用。书中共收入 29 课，每课包括课文、注释、练习和课外阅读四部分。课文与课外阅读材料均选自近年来英、美、加等国出版的书刊原文，内容主要包括科技时文、社会透视、焦点分析、历史回顾等方面。内容新颖，题材多样，信息量大，富有时代气息。本书编写由浅入深，循序渐进，难度适中。练习配套严谨，紧扣课文。本书体现了科学性、知识性、可读性与趣味性。

由于编者水平所限，书中可能存在不尽人意之处，欢迎大家提出意见。

编 者

于天津理工大学外国语学院

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Lesson One

TEXT

American English, International English, and the Future

America's industry and commerce; its post-World War II emergence as a technological leader; and the world-wide network of communication which is now an established fact of modern life, have all combined to insure that in almost any corner of the earth, at any time of day, English is in use.

It was during this same period that the whole methodology of English language teaching became an important issue. It has been argued, rather unconvincingly, that English is an "easy language to learn" and that it is "natural" for such widespread use to develop. It has been claimed that the comparative freedom of modern English from inflectional endings — as compared to Russian or German — makes it potentially the international language. It has also been pointed out that much of its vocabulary is composed of words both of Latin and Teutonic origin, making large portions of its word stock readily comprehensible to millions of speakers of other languages.

Vocabulary borrowings have been especially heavy, so that languages like Spanish have come to acquire baseball terminology (for example, *siore* "shortstop"), and Swahili to have automobile terminology (*gear*) as part of their everyday content. English forms many of its new technological terms (*polyester*, *astronaut*) from Greek etymons; whether independently of English or through

its influence, many of the world's languages are using the same device. English *telephone* and German *Vernsprecher* were once greatly dissimilar, but the general German adoption of *Telephon* bridges the gap. Many comparable changes have taken place in the lexicons of the world's languages within the second half of the last century.

There is little doubt that American is the variety of English most often heard abroad and therefore most imitated by second language learners. Most learners are not, however, especially interested in sounding "American." What they wish to master is general, or international, English.

It is in its development as a second language that the current growth of English and its future development seem to lie. The various artificial international languages seem to have made little headway. Latin hardly exists as a *Lingua Franca*, and French, although very useful in places like Africa and the Near East, gained no further ground in the twentieth century. In the Arabic countries and in places like Vietnam, where a generation ago every educated person would have known some French, English is now the second language most likely to have been acquired by this generation. In Mexico and parts of South America, Spanish is an important second language for American Indian language speakers. In India, there were some politically motivated attempts to replace English, in its official language and language of wider communication functions, by one or another of the important indigenous languages. Advocates for Swahili can be found in East and Central Africa, where official trade between countries like Burundi and Kenya may be conducted in English, but covert activities are strictly in Swahili. Even in those areas, however, English is not without importance as a language of wider

communication.

With British power almost completely gone and that of America threatened by the economic losses of the late 1970's, one may wonder how much longer English will hold onto its preeminent position. Is it so well established that, even if Americans no longer dominate the economic life of an area, the traders themselves will go on using it with everyone who does not speak their native language? Or will it disappear rapidly once no one feels the necessity of using English "so the Americans can understand"?

There is, at the present time, no certain way to answer those questions. It is well to keep in mind, however, the possibility that the military might of the Russians, or the sheer economic force of the newly rich Arabic nations, or the emergence of China as a world power may lead to a gradual replacement of English by one or more of those languages.

Whether or not everyone speaks English, it is very unlikely that the influence which English — and American English — has exerted over the languages of the world, particularly in vocabulary, will disappear any time soon. We know that, by about 1330, the Norman French spoken in England by the conquerors had become a much less important factor than it was 200 or even 100 years earlier, but we also know that the French borrowings of the period actually increased and have remained with us till the present day. We know that the use of Old Norse became unlikely in England in an even shorter time after the Viking invasions, but we also know that the borrowings from that language like *they*, *their*, and *them* and the verb *take*, which we got from the Norse in the Danelaw, have remained a permanent part of English. In like manner, no matter how leaned Frenchmen may rail against "Franglais,"

Frenchmen are not likely to give up vocabulary like *zoning*, *bypass*, *tanker*, *container*, or *hit parade* (although, if they follow American trends, they will replace the last by *top twenty* or *top forty*).

We can well expect, also, that English will continue its habit of picking up vocabulary from other languages. We know that dictionaries of English at various periods of its history seem to reflect consistent growth. Dictionaries of Old English, of the language as it was used approximately 1000 years ago, contain about 37,000 words. A fairly complete dictionary of Middle English — that is, the language of more than 500 years ago — would have between 50,000 and 70,000 entries. It is likely that a dictionary of Early Modern English, the period of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, would contain at least 140,000 words, and unabridged dictionaries of present-day English have approximately half a million entries.

There is, as suggested already, strong evidence for the conclusion that the English vocabulary is increasing. Even if we consider the possibility that the early records are so fragmentary that the numbers just cited for Old English and Middle English fall far short of what the language actually contained, still the apparent quadrupling of our stock of words during the last three and a half centuries is significant. The vocabulary increase, in turn, is indicative of increased cultural contacts. There is no reason to suppose that these contacts will not continue to increase — although perhaps not at the same rate. Some increase in the English vocabulary seems likely throughout the foreseeable future, especially if the English of the twenty-first century continues to expand in international use.

We have noticed, also, that the recent extensions of our vocabulary have come not so much through word borrowing as

from the manipulation of elements which are already in the language. Such processes as compounding, the addition of derivative prefixes and suffixes, change in grammatical function, and formation of new idioms account in great part for our recent changes. Without question we shall continue to borrow some words from foreign languages in the future. We did so during both world wars, and if the language continues to spread over areas of the Far East, for example, it is reasonable to look forward to new words coming from Malay, as well as from Russian, possibly even from Swahili and the Bantu languages. (Americans who have been stationed in East and Central Africa know at least *kabish* "very, extremely," and *kidogo* "a little.") but the principal growth in the English vocabulary will undoubtedly come as a result of the processes which have just been mentioned — up to what point is hard to guess. A doubling of the vocabulary in the next two centuries is not difficult to conceive of in light of what has happened since 1600.

But there will increasingly be the factor that many of the new words, compounds, and expressions will be understood only where there is more or less direct contact with the language(s) from which they are borrowed or where the activities and processes are actually going on. As present-day Americans, in general, know only a small portion of the 500,000 words in an unabridged dictionary, it is not unlikely that the restriction of future acquisitions to special groups should become an even greater factor. Anthony Burgess's novel *A Clockwork Orange*, which presents teenage-English so thoroughly infiltrated by Russian borrowings (*devotychka* "girl," *malchik* "boy," *moloko* "milk," *Bog* "God") that it is hardly intelligible to anyone who has not studied at least some Russian, is exaggerated but, in principle, far from

impossible.

The future possibility of further separation than now exists between varieties of English — at least the well-known British and American varieties — seems even greater than in the past. Ability to “speak English” will less and less guarantee perfect communication with others who use the same language, even fluently. The use of more than one variety of English is now commonplace in countries like Suriname and Sierra Leone. The development of even more such situations is, at least theoretically, quite likely in the future. If expansion goes on, prescriptive and puristic limitations on what is considered “English” will become increasingly unrealistic and ultimately intolerable.

In short, international utility, not native speaker usage or pronunciation, may be the primary criterion for “good” English in the future. Local and regional varieties, especially, can be expected to diminish greatly in importance. What we know about change in the past will, we hope, enable us to adjust more realistically to what is sure to evolve in the future.

NOTES

1. inflectional endings: 屈折变化词尾
2. etymon: (外来词的) 词源
3. Old Norse: 古斯堪的纳维亚语
4. Danelaw: 施行丹麦法的地区
5. Franglais: 英语式法语
6. Swahili: 斯瓦希里人
7. Bantu: 班图人
8. Suriname: 苏里南 [拉丁美洲]
9. Sierra Leone: 塞拉里昂 [非洲]

10. A Clockwork Orange: 《装有发条的橘子》，20 世纪英国小说家 Anthony Burgess 的小说名，现常用来指（在科学家发明制约下失却个性的）机械人。

EXERCISES

I. True or false statements:

- _____ 1. There are many more inflectional endings in English than in Russian or German.
- _____ 2. Nowadays many Germans use the word *vernsprecher* to express more or less the same meaning as the English term *telephone*.
- _____ 3. The author of the text is sure that English will remain an international language forever.
- _____ 4. There were attempts to replace English by a native language as a language of wider communication in India.
- _____ 5. According to the author it is very likely that Chinese will one day replace English as an important international language.
- _____ 6. It can be deduced from the text that though a language may not hold onto its preeminent position forever, the borrowings from that language will remain permanent.
- _____ 7. The numbers cited for Old English and Middle English are not accurate.
- _____ 8. The English vocabulary is likely to triple in the next two centuries.
- _____ 9. The author believes that the new borrowings from a particular language may not be intelligible to those who have never studied the language.

_____ 10. In the future a person who speaks American English fluently may still have some problems in communicating with British English speakers.

II. Multiple choice:

1. According to the author, many English words are readily comprehensible to speakers of other languages because _____.
 - a. English is in use in almost any corner of the earth
 - b. English is their second language
 - c. these words are of Latin and Teutonic origin
 - d. America has been a technological leader since World War II
2. In the sentence "Many comparable changes have taken place in the lexicons of the world's languages within the second half of the last century" in paragraph 3, the word "comparable" is closest in meaning to _____.
 - a. comparative
 - b. similar
 - c. contrastive
 - d. distinct
3. Most second language learners imitate American English because _____.
 - a. it sounds better than British English
 - b. it is easier to master than British English
 - c. large portions of its word stock are readily comprehensible
 - d. it is popular around the world
4. Which of the following is mentioned by the author in the text as one of the languages that will likely take over the preeminent position of English?
 - a. Chinese
 - b. German
 - c. Swahili
 - d. French
5. 1000 years or so ago, English had a vocabulary of about _____

words.

- | | |
|-----------|------------|
| a. 50,000 | b. 140,000 |
| c. 70,000 | d. 37,000 |
6. Which of the following, as is mentioned in the text, is a factor for the English vocabulary to continue to increase?
- | | |
|--------------|--------------------------------|
| a. wars | b. increased cultural contacts |
| c. invasions | d. political attempts |
7. The primary criterion for "good" English in the future may be ____.
- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| a. native speaker usage | b. American accent |
| c. international utility | d. British accent |
8. "Malchik" is a Russian borrowing which means "____".
- | | |
|---------|--------|
| a. girl | b. boy |
| c. milk | d. dog |
9. The use of more than one variety of English is ____ to develop in the future.
- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| a. inevitably | b. at least theoretically |
| c. to some extent | d. without question |
10. The tone of the author in expressing his ideas in the text is ____.
- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a. overwhelming | b. subjective |
| c. evasive | d. objective |

III. Match the words or expressions in Column A with their synonyms in Column B:

- | <i>Column A</i> | <i>Column B</i> |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. methodology | a. imagine |
| 2. word stock | b. progress |
| 3. headway | c. vocabulary |
| 4. indigenous | d. multiplied by 4 |