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庄和诚 编 著

英语习语探源

WJ
外教社

English Allusions

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上海外语教育出版社

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前 言

许国璋先生在谈语言符号的任意性与理据时曾经指出:“文明社会时期创造的新词新语,就不再是任意的了,而是立意的了,甚至即使是民间任意创造的词,也有语言文字学家赋予有理可据的形态了。因此可以说,原始时期的语言符号是任意的,部落社会时期是约定俗成的,文明社会时期是立意的。如果说语言有任意性的话,那也只是限于原始时期,在此以后,就不是任意的了。”英语也不例外。现代英语中出现的新词新语一般来说都是立意的,都是有理据的,即便是旧时产生的词语其中不少都有其来源或出处,甚至有一段典故。然而,在语言发展的过程中许多词语在形式上和意义上都发生了变化,原义可能逐渐丧失,因而理据也变得模糊。如今我们在遇到这些词语时,往往会觉得它们喻义隐晦,难以索解。笔者在多年的教学中常常发现一些学生在阅读英美报刊或文学作品时被一些寓意深刻的词语难住,即使在翻查词典之后也往往只知其然而不知其所以然,总觉得这些词语的形式和语义有点古怪,不可理解。可是教员若能及时稍加一点内容,三言两语道出这些词语的来历出处以及来龙去脉,则往往会收到意想不到的效果:不仅可以引发学生的学习兴趣,有助于对这些词语的理解,而且还可使学生从中了解英美的文化、历史、民俗等,从中领略英美人的智慧与幽默,从而获得美的感受。

英语中许多词语带有丰富的含义,从字面上是难以领会的。有些源于文学名著、圣经故事、神话传说和寓言故事,有些源于历史事件、名人轶事、风尚习俗、体育娱乐以及动物习性,还有些源自航海、狩猎、农业、商业等。内容包罗万象,涉及社会生活的方方面面。这些词语往往简练概括而又形象生动,机智幽默而又富于哲理。其含义,其由来或典故即使是大型英语词典也难以尽数收入。本书系《英语词源趣谈》(上海外语教育出版社,1998)的姐妹篇,所选收的只限于习语。本书所谓习语指典故成语、短语动词、固定词组和谚语,包括口头用语和少数常用俚语。选收的习

语中有一小部分(约有数十条)是笔者十多年前撰写的,曾发表在《翻译通讯》(即今《中国翻译》)、《英语世界》、《外语学刊》、《外语与外语教学》、《外国语文教学》、《外语教学》、《英美语文教学》、《英语辅导》等杂志上,这次选收进来笔者作了修改和补充。另有数十条系由黄秀兰所撰写,特此说明。

笔者参考了近 70 种中外辞书和参考书,力求做到材料翔实可信。有些条目翻查的参考书就多达 20 多种。对于各种可能的说法,只要有理可据,言之成理,均兼收并蓄,并就其可信度略加评论,以供读者参考。有的英语习语与汉语表达方式颇为相似,本书对其结构、形象、喻义等的异同也作了一些对比。为了便于读者印证,书中引语以及人名地名等后面多半附有原文。圣经引语和莎士比亚剧作引语的汉语译文系分别取自《莎士比亚全集》和《新旧约全书》(和合本)。在追溯习语的来源时本书采取了一些辞书常用的方式,先对习语做字面的直译或先点出其本义。一是为了保留英语习语形象和修辞手段的特色,二是因为知其字面义就能较容易理解其喻义,知其本义就能较容易掌握其引申义。

本书选收英语习语近 2 000 条(包括异体)。众所周知,要正确使用习语一般说来是不太容易的,而有的习语在普通辞书中,即使是在大型词典中,往往也仅配有一两个例句,甚至完全没有,让英语学习者用起来实在没有把握。为此,本书选收的所有习语几乎都附有例句及其汉译文,以便读者参照。丰富的例句可帮助读者更正确恰当地使用这些习语。为了体现权威性,半数以上的例句是从新近出版的 20 多部英语原版辞书中精选的。

在编写本书时,笔者尽量注意融实用性、知识性、趣味性于一体,并使其带有一定的学术性,试图使之既成为大专院校学生学习英语的工具书,又成为教学、科研和翻译的参考书。

本书是笔者在教学之余写成的,前后历时 7 年。尽管笔者在主观上作了很大努力,但由于水平所限,加之时间也仓促,谬误疏漏恐难避免,恳请读者不吝指正。

庄和诚

2001. 06. 01 于汕头大学

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