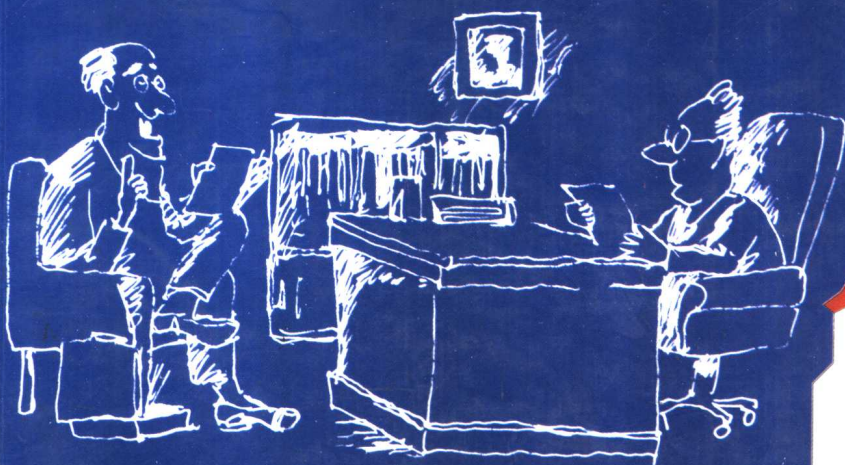


GENERAL OBSERVATIONS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

杨玉林 孙德玉 主编

英语概论



青岛海洋大学出版社



图书在版编目(CIP)数据

英语概论 = General Obsevatons of the English Language/杨玉林, 孙德玉主编.

-青岛:青岛海洋大学出版社, 2000. 5

ISBN 7-81067-002-6

I. 英… II. ①杨… ②孙… III. 英语-概论-高等学校-教材 IV. H31

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(98)第 32467 号

青岛海洋大学出版社出版发行

(青岛市鱼山路 5 号 邮政编码:266003)

出版人:刘宗寅

日照日报社印刷厂印刷

新华书店经销

开本:787mm×1092mm 1/16 印张:23.25 字数:720 千

2000 年 5 月第 1 版 2000 年 5 月第 1 次印刷

印数:1-2600 定价:43.50 元

英语之母语,由朱特、盎格鲁和撒克逊人于公元 449 年从色彩斑斓的北欧大陆带至千姿百态的不列颠群岛;在那里落户以后,仿佛一条神奇的大河,蜿蜒而悠远;吞百川,纳众水,天水相际,奔流在崩剥纷乱的群岛之间,泛着粼粼的波光,越来越波澜壮阔、汹涌澎湃……

英吉利人虽然在音乐方面不如德国,在绘画方面不及法国,然而爱好文字和运用文字的天才使其创造了世界最优美的语言与文学;有笔墨精彩的文章,也有语言多度的鸿篇巨著;有摹拟继承的佳作,也有独辟蹊径、别开生面的新篇;有朴素而绚丽多彩的散文溪涧,亦有美不胜收的诗歌园林;有辞切意深的悲剧,也有妙趣横生的谐谑嬉戏……就是那异乎寻常的各种机智,宛然一缕金丝贯之于英国的历史和文化……

——题记

前 言

《英语概论》是一部综合性的理论专著,也是一本针对中国英语学习者的教科书,读者对象较为广泛:英语专业学生、英语教师及所有英语爱好者。此书已经有关专家论证、教育部认可,由中央广播电视大学电视师范学院作为基本蓝本拍成电视教学片,通过中国教育电视台向全国英语学习者讲授。

根据中国人学习外语的规律,要习得英语这门外语大致应该做到如下几点:

1. 掌握其语言知识,即语音、词汇、语法等系统的理论知识,因为该知识主要解决语言的“对与不对”;
2. 掌握其修辞知识,因为它侧重解决语言的“好与不好”;
3. 掌握其语体及有关的文化知识,因为这两方面的知识重点解决语言的“适不适合”;
4. 在学习上述三方面知识过程中,要有意识地将语言知识转变成语言能力。

1,2 为前者,是基础;3,4 为后者,是前者的深化与升华。两者相辅相成,培养和提高语言交际能力缺一不可。

基于以上理由和多年的教学实践,我们编著了《英语概论》这本书。全书共分十个专题:英语的民族特征与国民特点;英语的起源与发展;英语语言特征纵横;英语的语音;英语的词汇;英语的语法;英语的修辞与各类英语;英语——世界性语言;英语教学;第二语言习得。

本书结合我国英语教学的实际,一方面介绍英语语言、修辞、语体等知识,另一方面还吸取了国内外最新研究成果,充实英语语言理论和教学。另外,通过概述英语民族、英国国民在不同时期的英语语言特征和英语演变及发展历史,介绍英语民族的文化特性。第二语言(包括外语)习得部分着重介绍其基本概念、基本理论和习得的基本策略,旨在指导我国英语(作为外语)学习者更好地学习和掌握英语。本书可使英语学习者从整体上加深对英语语言的认识,更加自觉地进行语言实践,尽快提高语言技能。

在本书编写过程中,我们得到许多同行专家的大力支持。加拿大英语专家 Ted Margrett 教授参与编写并担任了本书的顾问,还承担了电视教学片的部分主讲任务。另外,我们还参阅了大量国内外有关英语文献,并引用了一些颇有价值的资料。中央广播电视大学电视师范学院谢云锦副教授负责编制该电视教学片。对此,我们一并致以深切的谢意!

杨玉林、孙德玉教授负责全书的整体设计。具体分工: Ted Margrett 教授负责 Part Two; 杨玉林负责 Part One, Three, Seven, Eight, Nine, Ten; 孙德玉负责 Part Four, Five, Six。

由于我们水平有限,疏漏、错误之处在所难免,敬请诸位同行及广大读者不吝赐教。

编 者

2000 年 1 月

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Part One

Nature of English Nation and Characteristics of British People

It is hard to write on the nature of the English nation and the characteristics of the British people, for it is such a big subject that it can not be related in a few words. All we could do here is to offer a brief or general description of those closely related to English learning. The description of the national nature tends, in most cases, to be generalized, and that of the people character to be specified, are based on the achievements that predecessors made in their research of the area.

On the problem of the national nature exist various views that are commonly summarized into three divisions: 1) Britain is a poly-national state with the Anglo-Saxon as its main line and a small mixture of immigrants; 2) The Anglo-Saxon are the major nationality because they hold a dominant position in various fields such as in population number, language use, law-making and operation, and other traditions of thinking and culture; this position of theirs is even more important than their blood relationship; 3) The view of "English-speaking nation" is suggested, i. e. the Anglo-Saxon nationality is the genuine English-speaking people, who always stand concentric when the integration of different races, languages and cultures is conducted usually with the participation of the Scottish, the Irish and the Welsh.

I . Nature of English Nation

Whichever viewpoint of the above three they hold, people have little disagreement on the nature of the English nation. Historically, the English nation is, in fact, a heterogeneity or a hybrid composed chiefly of the different races along the coast of North Europe. To be more exact, they are the combination of Angles, Saxons and Jutes who invaded the land in 449 A. D. and the Danish invaders in 850 A. D. The languages they used then were closely related to West Germanic and North Germanic which were both integrated later into the English language. Even in Scotland, Ireland and Welsh during that period, English was widely accepted and applied as the principal language. And just in time North Europeans' language and character or qualities became rooted in England. This dominant foundation was never vacillated by the later strong Frenchification of the Norman French invaders. From the above analysis, it has turned out that the origin of the English nationality is, as a matter of fact, the navigators in North Europe.

The English people are in many ways similar to the other nationalities along the coast of the North Sea: similar in language, in mythology and epic; identical in weapons, ornaments and jewelry, decorative art on daily necessities, customs of fighting and farming, etc. The racial personalities are also the same: tall and sturdy, white skin colour, golden hair, etc.

The ancestors of the English people were actually hard-working shepherds and farmers on the land who cared for plants and trees, and on the sea they were bold and powerful vikings and fishermen as well who

caught fishes, whales, seals, etc. They were loyal to their chieftains and very kind towards their countrymen; they were fierce fighters against their enemies, and had a strong sense of honour in addition.

II. Characteristics of British People

As for the character of the British people, we have here quoted for it a few passages of the commentaries or descriptions by some well-known historians, statesmen and anthropologists in the world. Please read the following.

Hugh Trevor-Roper:

"I don't think that whatever qualities we have as British people come from the blood or from race. They come from the historic continuity of our institutions, which themselves form our identity as long as we remember them."

Ralph Waldo Emerson:

"The English composite character betrays a mixed origin. Everything English is a fusion of distant and antagonistic elements. The language is mixed; the names of men are of different nations—three languages, three or four nations; —the currents of thought are counter: contemplation and practical skill; active intellect and dead conservatism; world-wide enterprise and devoted use and wont; aggressive freedom and hospitable law, with bitter class-legislation; a people scattered by their wars and affairs over the face of the whole earth, and homesick to a man; a country of extremes—Dukes and Chartists, Bishops of Durham and naked heathen colliers: —nothing can be praised in it without damning exceptions, and nothing denounced without salvos of cordial praise. . .

They have more constitutional energy than any other people. . . They box, run, shoot, ride, row, and sail from pole to pole. They eat, and drink, and live jolly in the open air, putting a bar of solid sleep between day and day. They walk and ride as fast as they can, their head bent forward, as if urged on some pressing affair. The French say, that Englishmen in the street always walk straight before them like mad dogs. Men and women walk with infatuation. As soon as he can handle a gun, hunting is the fine art of every Englishman of condition. They are the most voracious people of prey that ever existed. Every season turns out the aristocracy into the country, to shoot and fish. The more vigorous run out of the island to Europe, to America, to Asia, to Africa, and Australia, to hunt with fury by gun, by trap, by harpoon, by lasso, with dog, with horse, with elephant, or with dromedary, all the game that is in nature. . .

An Englishman understates, avoids the superlative, checks himself in compliments. . .

They love reality in wealth, power, hospitality, and do not easily learn to make a show, and take the world as it goes. They are not fond of ornaments, and if they wear them, they must be gems. . . They have the earth-hunger, or preference for property in land, which is said to mark the Teutonic nations. They build of stone, public and private buildings, massive and durable. In comparing their ships, houses, and public offices with the American, it is commonly said that they spend a pound where we spend a dollar. Plain rich clothes, plain rich equipage, plain rich finish throughout their house and belongings, mark the English truth. . .

This vigour appears in the incuriosity, and stony neglect, each of every other. Each man walks, eats, drinks, shaves, dresses, gesticulates, and, in every manner, acts and suffers without reference to the bystanders, in his own fashion, only careful not to interfere with them, or annoy them; not that he is trained to neglect the eyes of his neighbours—he is really occupied with his own affair, and does not think of them. Every man in this polished country consults only his convenience, as much as a solitary pioneer in Wisconsin.

I know not where any personal eccentricity is so freely allowed, and no man gives himself any concern with it. An Englishman walks in a pouring rain, swinging his closed umbrella like a walking-stick; wears a wig, or a shawl, or a saddle, or stands on his head, and no remark is made. And as he has been doing this for several generations, it is now in the blood.

In short, every one of these islanders is an island himself, safe, tranquil, incommunicable. In a company of strangers, you would think him deaf: his eyes never wander from his table and newspaper. He is never betrayed into any curiosity or unbecoming emotion. They have all been trained in one severe school of manners, and never put off the harness. He does not give his hand. He does not let you meet his eye. It is almost an affront to look a man in the face, without being introduced. In mixed or in select companies they do not introduce persons; so that a presentation is a circumstance as valid as a contract. Introductions are sacraments. He withholds his name. At the hotel he is hardly willing to whisper it to the clerk at the booking office. If he gives you his private address on a card, it is like an avowal of friendship; and his bearing, on being introduced, is cold, even though he is seeking your acquaintance, and is studying how he shall serve you. . .

. . . Chaucer's hard painting of his Canterbury pilgrims satisfies the senses. Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton, in their loftiest ascents, have this national grip and exactitude of mind. This mental materialism makes the value of English transcendental genius; in these writers, and in Herbert, Henry More, Donne, and Sir Thomas Browne. The Saxon materialism and narrowness, exalted into the sphere of intellect, makes the very genius of Shakespeare and Milton. When it reaches the pure element, it treads the clouds as securely as the adamant. Even in its elevations, materialistic, its poetry is common sense inspired; or ironraised to white heat.

The marriage of the two qualities is in their speech. It is a tacit rule of the language to make the frame or skeleton of Saxon words, and, when elevation or ornament is sought, to interweave Roman; but sparingly; nor is a sentence made of Roman words alone, without loss of strength. The children and labourers use the colleges and Parliament. Mixture is a secret of the English island; and, in their dialect, the male principle is the Saxon, the female the Latin; and they are combined in every discourse. A good writer, if he has indulged in a Roman roundness, makes haste to chasten and nerve his period by English monosyllables."

Ralph Waldo Emerson: *English Traits*, 1856

Bernard Shaw:

"(Napolean): . . . the English are a race apart. No Englishman is too low to have scruples: no Englishman is high enough to be free from their tyranny. But every Englishman is born with a certain miraculous power that makes him master of the world. When he wants a thing, he never tells himself that he wants it. He waits patiently until there comes into his mind, no one knows how, a burning conviction that it is his moral and religious duty to conquer those who possess the thing he wants. Then he becomes irresistible. Like the aristocrat, he does what pleases him and grabs what he covets: like the shopkeeper, he pursues his purpose with the industry and steadfastness that come from strong religious conviction and deep sense of moral responsibility. He is never at a loss for an effective moral attitude. As the great champion of freedom and national independence, he conquers and annexes half the world, and calls it Colonization. When he wants a new market for his adulterated Manchester goods, he sends a missionary to teach the natives the Gospel of Peace. The natives kill the missionary: he flies to arms in defence of Christianity: fights for it; conquers for it; and takes the market as a reward from heaven. In defence of his island shores, he puts a chaplain on board his ship; nails a flag with a cross on it to his top-gallant mast; and sails to the ends of the earth, sinking, burning, and destroying all who dispute the empire of the seas with him. He boasts that a slave is free the moment his foot touches British soil; and he sells the children of his poor at six years of age to work under the lash in his factories for sixteen hours a day. He makes two revolutions, and then declares war on our (French) one in

the name of law and order. There is nothing so bad or so good that you will not find Englishmen doing it; but you will never find an Englishman in the wrong. He does everything on principle. He fights you on patriotic principles; he robs you on business principles; he enslaves you on imperial principles; he bullies you on manly principles; he supports his king on loyal principles and cuts off his king's head on republican principles. His watchword is always Duty; and he never forgets that the nation which lets its duty get on the opposite side to its interest is lost."

Bernard Shaw: *The Man of Destiny*, 1897

George Santayana:

"What is it that governs the Englishman? Certainly not intelligence; seldom passion; hardly self-interest, since what we call self-interest is nothing but some dull passion served by a brisk intelligence. The Englishman's heart is perhaps capricious or silent; it is seldom designing or mean... it is easier for him to face or to break opposition than to circumvent it. If we tried to say that what governs him is convention, we should have to ask ourselves how it comes about that England is the paradise of individuality, eccentricity, heresy, anomalies, hobbies, and humours. Nowhere do we come oftener upon those two social abortions—the affected and the disaffected. Where else would a man inform you, with a sort of proud challenge, that he lived on nuts, or was in correspondence through a medium with Sir Joshua Reynolds, or had been disgustingly housed when last in prison? Where else would a young woman, in dress and manners the close copy of a man, tell you that her parents were odious, and that she desired a husband but no children, or children without a husband? It is true that these novelties soon, become the conventions of some narrower circle, or may even have been adopted *en bloc* in emotional desperation, as when people are converted; and the oddest sects demand the strictest self-surrender. Nevertheless, when people are dissident and supercilious by temperament, they manage to wear their uniforms with a difference, turning them by some lordly adaptation into a part of their own person.

Let me come to the point boldly; what governs the Englishman is his inner atmosphere, the weather in his soul... Instinctively the Englishman is no missionary, no conqueror. He prefers the country to the town, and home to foreign parts. He is rather glad and relieved if only natives will remain natives and strangers strangers, and at a comfortable distance from himself. Yet outwardly he is most hospitable and accepts almost anybody for the time being; he travels and conquers without a settled design, because he has the instinct of exploration. His adventures are all external; they change him so little that he is not afraid of them. He carries his English weather in his heart where he goes, and it becomes a cool spot in the desert, and a steady and sane oracle amongst all the deliriums of mankind...

England has been rich in poets, in novelists, in inventors, in philosophers making new beginnings, in intrepid travellers, in learned men whose researches are a hobby and almost a secret. The land was once rich in saints, and is still rich in enthusiasts. But the official leaders of the English people, the kings, prelates, professors, and politicians have usually secondary men; and even they have been far more distinguished in their private capacity than in their official action and mind. English genius is anti-professional; its affinities are with amateurs, and there is something of the amateur in the best English artists, actors, and generals. Delicacy of conscience, mental haze, care not to outrun the impulse of the soul, hold the Englishman back midway in his achievements; there is in him a vague respect for the unknown, a tacit diffidence in his own powers, which dissuade him from venturing on the greatest things or from carrying them out in a comprehensive manner. The truth is the British do not wish to be well led. They are all individualistic and aristocratic at heart, and want no leaders in ultimate things; the inner man must be his own guide. If they had to live under the shadow of a splendid monarch, or a masterful statesman, or an authoritative religion, or a deified state they would not feel free. They wish to peck at their institutions, and tolerate only such institutions as they can peck at..."

George Santayana: Soliloquies in England, 1914~1918

E. M. Forster:

"I had better let the cat out of the bag at once and record my opinion that the character of the English is essentially middle class. There is a sound historical reason for this, for, since the end of the eighteenth century, the middle classes have been the dominant force in our community. They gained wealth by the Industrial Revolution, political power by the Reform Bill of 1832; they are connected with the rise and organization of the British Empire; they are responsible for the literature of the nineteenth century. Solidity, caution, integrity, efficiency. Lack of imagination, hypocrisy. These qualities characterize the middle classes in every country, but in England they are national characteristics also, because only in England have the middle classes been in power for one hundred and fifty years. Napoleon, in his rude way called us 'a nation of shopkeepers.' We prefer to call ourselves 'a great commercial nation'—it sounds more dignified—but the two phrases amount to the same. Of course there are other classes: there is an aristocracy, there are the poor. But it is on the middle classes that the eye of the critic rests... the national figure of England is Mr. Bull with his top hat, his comfortable clothes, his substantial stomach, and his substantial balance at the bank. Saint George may caper on banners and in the speeches of politicians, but it is John Bull who delivers the goods...

A note on the slowness of the English character. The Englishman appears to be cold and unemotional because he is really slow. When an event happens, he may understand it quickly enough with his mind, but he takes quite a while to feel it. Once upon a time a coach, containing some Englishmen and some Frenchmen, was driving over the Alps. The horses ran away, and as they were dashing across a bridge the coach caught on the stonework, tottered, and nearly fell into the ravine below. The Frenchmen were frantic with terror; they screamed and gesticulated and flung themselves about, as Frenchmen would. The Englishmen sat quite calm. An hour later the coach drew up at an inn to change horses, and by that time the situations were exactly reversed. The Frenchmen had forgotten all about the danger, and were chattering gaily; the Englishmen had just begun to feel it, and one had a nervous breakdown and was obliged to go to bed. We have here a clear physical difference between the two races—a difference that goes deep into character. The Frenchmen responded at once; the Englishmen responded in time. They were slow and they were also practical. Their instinct forbade them to throw themselves about in the coach, because it was more likely to tip over if they did. They had this extraordinary appreciation of fact that we shall notice again and again. When a disaster comes, the English instinct is to do what can be done first, and to postpone the feeling as long as possible...

... If the English nature is cold, how is it that it has produced a great literature and a literature that is particularly great in poetry? Judged by its prose, English literature would not stand in the first rank. It is its poetry that raises it to the level of Greek, Persian, or French. And yet the English are supposed to be so unpoetical. How is this? The nation that produced the Elizabethan drama and the Lake poets cannot be a cold, unpoetical nation. We can't get fire out of ice. Since literature always rests upon national character, there must be in the English nature hidden springs of fire to produce the fire we see. The warm sympathy, the romance, the imagination, that we look for in Englishmen whom we meet, and too often vainly look for, must exist in the nation as a whole, or we could not have this outburst of national song. An undeveloped heart—not a cold one.

The trouble is that the English nature is not at all easy to understand. It has a great air of simplicity, it advertises itself as simple, but the more we consider it, the greater the problems we shall encounter. People talk of the mysterious East, but the West also is mysterious. It has depths that do not reveal themselves at the first gaze..."

E. M. Forster: Notes on the English Character, 1920

George Orwell:

"Here are a couple of generalizations about England that would be accepted by almost all observers. One is that the English are not gifted artistically. They are not as musical as the Germans or Italians; painting and sculpture have never flourished in England as they have in France. Another is that, as Europeans go, the English are not intellectual. They have a horror of abstract thought; they feel no need for any philosophy or systematic 'world-view'. Nor is this because they are 'practical', as they are so fond of claiming for themselves. One has only to look at their methods of town-planning and watersupply, their obstinate clinging to everything that is out of date and a nuisance, a spelling system that defies analysis and a system of weights and measures that is intelligible only to the compilers of arithmetic books, to see how little they care about mere efficiency. But they have a certain power of acting without taking thought. Their worldfamed hypocrisy—their double-faced attitude towards the Empire, for instance—is bound up with this. Also, in moments of supreme crisis the whole nation can suddenly draw together and act upon a species of instinct, really a code of conduct which is understood by almost everyone, though never formulated... We are a nation of flower-lovers, but also a nation of stampcollectors, pigeon-fanciers, amateur carpenters, couponsnippers, darts-players, crossword-puzzle fans. All the culture that is most truly native centres round things which even when they are communal are not official—the pub, the football match, the back garden, the fireside and the 'nice cup of tea'. The liberty of the individual is still believed in, almost as in the nineteenth century. But this has nothing to do with economic liberty, the right to exploit others for profit. It is the liberty to have a home of your own, to do what you like in your spare time, to choose your own amusements instead of having them chosen for you from above."

George Orwell: *England Your England*, 1941

Anthony Sampson:

"The lasting historical achievement of British institutions has been to hold people together in peace with a sense of identity and mutual respect, to accommodate social change and to provide the political stability on which everything else rests. It was this which has been the basis of Britain's reputation abroad, which has provided the background of past industrial achievements and which has kept the City as a financial centre for five hundred years. It was the balance between political stability and economic drive which was the secret of Victorian Britain—for without the one the other could quickly collapse. And it is the British ability to resolve social conflicts through peaceful political solutions which remains the most valuable element in their patriotism.

Any cure to the British post-imperial malaise must begin with the opening-up to wider horizons and facing the real global challenges of the future. It will not be achieved by trying to recapture the self-confidence and arrogance of imperial Britain, which was based on a military power and industrial supremacy which can never return. It will depend on new opportunities, new kinds of people outside the old classes, who are aware of new opportunities, innovations and new markets abroad. Only if the British people are confronted by their real predicament, without the concealments of politicians and the obstacles of defensive institutions, can they be expected to respond to the challenge."

Anthony Sampson: *The Changing Anatomy of Britain*, 1982

Andrew Gamble:

"There has been growing awareness that Britain is viewed by many in Europe not just as economically backward, but politically and culturally backward also. The assumptions of superiority bred in the imperial era have been slow to weaken. But European integration is hastening the process.

If Britain's integration into Europe does progress, the pressure for institutional reform will intensify. Britain may emerge as a more typical European state, shedding in the process some of the burdens that have

delayed its adaptation in the past. Membership of the European Community might finally enable Britain to modernise successfully and lose the stigma of decline. If this happened it would be because Britain had successfully integrated itself within a regional economy whose main centre of gravity is elsewhere, not because Britain had once again reemerged as a major economic and political power.

Whatever its remaining problems Britain will still be part of one of the richest regional economies in the world. The imbalances within the European Community are negligible compared with the imbalances between the rich and poor regions of the world economy. The task of finding solutions to these imbalances and to the ecological problems associated with the present organization of industrial activities looks set to dominate politics in the 1990s and into the next century."

Andrew Gamble: *Britain in Decline*, 3rd edition, 1990

III. British Mentalities and Attitudes

1. Exclusiveness(孤傲)

The best-known quality of the British people and, in particular, of the English people is their exclusiveness. This means, "I am English. You stay away from me. I am exclusive. I am quite happy to be myself, I do not need you. Leave me alone."

It is difficult to know such a man who does not talk much, never says anything about himself, does not show much emotion and hardly gets excited.

Why do the English people have this feature? Perhaps there are many reasons. Of these reasons, two are very important. One is the special geographical location of Britain; the other is the distinct development of her history.

Britain is an island country which is cut off, separated and isolated from the rest of the world. First, it is cut off by the English Channel from the rest of Europe, and then it is separated from the rest of the civilized world. So the special geographical location isolates Britain, and its people as well. When the British are in Britain, they do not even regard themselves as Europeans for the Europeans are foreigners to them. On the other side of the English Channel, within the country if you say "English" instead of "British", you sometimes annoy the Scots and the Welsh who are very proud of their separate nationality.

Another reason is perhaps a matter of history. The English people are very proud of their history. If you ask an Englishman why he is so exclusive, why he stands offish and thinks himself better than most people in the world, he will say, "Why, I've been educated in that way." He would tell you a lot of things he is proud of. He might tell you that the King James Bible and Shakespeare's plays have given incalculable influence on the Western culture and the culture in the world; the British Parliament is the oldest parliament in Europe; as early as 1215 when the rest of the world was suffering under arbitrary kings and royal power, in England they were able to develop a certain amount of parliamentarism; there was an Industrial Revolution as early as the 18th century and so on and so forth.

2. Conservativeness(保守)

The English people are generally regarded as conservative. The Americans say that the English people always need 20 or 40 years to do things that they do today because the English people are so conservative that they have to wait a long time before they are prepared to try something new.

Englishmen think their way of doing things is always the best, and always the most normal. So an Englishman is not very interested if somebody in America has a new idea. He is very careful. He would say, "Be careful. It might be dangerous." There are many examples to show this. One is that the British people have

been slow in adopting rational reforms, such as metric system. They suffered inconvenience from adhering to the old ways, yet they did not want the trouble of adopting new.

In 1966 it was decided that decimal money would become the regular form in 1971; in the 1960s the twenty-four hour clock was at last adopted for railway timetable. Furthermore, the public attitudes to the monarchy illustrate conservativeness, too. The majority of the English people hold an affection and reverence for it. You seldom hear them complaining about the high cost of the trappings of the monarchy, and in particular of the royal yacht. In fact, you can perceive many sound and reasonable arguments in favour of the monarchy. For the majority of the British people, they accept it and take it for granted.

Another example is that the British people do not accept change because they are told to. They favour the old ways. In Britain, all the houses even in big cities like London, Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham had fire places in the past. When central heating was developed in the U. S. A., the English people thought this was a horrible thing. They said that this was going to ruin the health of the people. Until 1960 they continued to have the fire place in most towns. And then in 1960, a law was passed saying that you could no longer have open fires in the house. Then they installed electric stoves which looked much like fireplaces. This is what some British people consider as "a long-established tradition" they would be most unwilling to lose. Even today, some people build a house with an open fireplace.

3. Politeness

In Britain, all politeness is based on the basic rule of showing consideration for others. The British people do not readily ask you to do anything inconvenient for them, who prefer to wait for such service to be offered, rather than ask for it. If they do want to ask, you would hear them say with an implied apology like, "I know the trouble I am causing you, but would you mind..." or "I don't really like asking you, but..." and so on. Sometimes the British people give offers simply out of politeness, not really expecting them to be accepted, so you reject the offers with the same politeness. Similarly it is often polite to refuse an offer of service by replying "Oh, please don't bother."

In everyday life of the British "Excuse me" is heard as an apology for troubling somebody. "Sorry" expresses regret for an unconscious disturbance; "sorry" also replaces "no" when you cannot accede to a request. And "Pardon" rather than "what" is the normal polite way of asking somebody to repeat what he has said. A bare "yes" or "no" is considered very rude when you reply to an offer. "Please" and "Thank you" are quite common words for the British people who are particular about saying these.

Then, too, the British people are quite particular about the table manners. When you are invited to a person's home, you should not arrive early since the hostess is preparing for you. Five or ten minutes late is excellent. At table, it is advisable to sit up straight, copy everyone else, gaily asking what to do if you are not sure and keep the conversation going. As to when to leave, there is no rule, but it is most impolite to stay too late.

The British people usually do not cry and shout in public. They do not cry even if they are very unhappy. If they say good-bye to their intimate friends, or even their mothers, they would not cry. If they can't help crying, they must cover their faces with their hands or handkerchiefs to restrain their feelings.

4. Love of Privacy

The right to privacy and personal freedom is unquestioned by the British. Perhaps it is the lack of space that has fostered and maintained their fierce individualism. There is a common saying among the British people, "My home is my castle. The wind can come in, but the Kings and Queens and human beings can never come in without my permission."

When an Englishman moves into a new house, the first thing he does is to build a fence around the house

to separate himself from his neighbours. So deeply does the Britishman immerse himself in his private interest that he sometimes can quite ignore the fact that the world is rocking precariously, everything is fleeing just as long as *nothing disturbs his favourite "nesting castle"*.

5. "Phlegm" (冷淡)

There is another quality of the British people showing their mentality which is called "phlegm". It means dull or apathetic coldness or indifference. The British people are cold by nature. They do not show their feelings very much. They do not show their emotion if they are very happy and neither do they if they are sad.

Rigid formality is familiar to everybody. So some people say that the Englishman is like a cold fish that has just come out of the ice. Suppose you travel by underground in London every morning between seven o'clock and nine o'clock. There are six million people in the underground in London, but you can not hear a sound because everybody is sitting in silence behind his or her newspaper. And the only word they speak to each other is "sorry" when they get up and walk out too fast. So when you walk through the underground station in the morning and when there are millions of people moving about, you can only hear their feet, you don't hear them talking.

This reluctance to communicate with others is demonstrated in another case. When you work at a factory, the guy, whom you work with, never tells you anything about himself. You may work for years with him, yet you even don't know where he lives, how many children he has and what his interests are. The English people tend to be like that. Therefore, you inevitably feel that the English people are very cold towards others.

6. Sense of Humour

The English sense of humour is self-deprecating, that is, the act of laughing at oneself. An Englishman laughs at his own faults, his own shortcomings, his own failures and his embarrassment. He even laughs at his own ideals. This is an attitude towards life rather than the mere ability to laugh at jokes. This attitude is never cruel or disrespectful or even malicious.

There is a story connected with this. When someone laughs at a woman who is well over thirty and does not get married, an Englishman would express disapproval by saying, "Why does he laugh at her misfortune?" So the quality is observable in the individual and the criticism. The Englishmen do not laugh at a misfortune, a failure or a tragedy. They do not laugh at a cripple or a mad man, either. Sympathy is felt to be much stronger than laughter in this case. "He has no sense of humour" is often heard in the United Kingdom, where humour is highly valued.

IV. American Mentalities and Attitudes

1. American Thinking

Americans tend to move from the particular and small to the general and large, from personal and local issues to the state and finally to the nation—not the other way around. In other countries, however, it is sometimes common for people to begin with a general idea and then move to more particular facts. Recognizing the difference between these two ways of thinking is not always easy and is often the cause of misunderstandings.

Let us take as simple an example as the addressing of envelopes. In the United States people start with the smallest item, namely the number of the house. The address then moves onto the larger divisions: the street, the town, the state, and finally the country. People say: "Ask an American the time and he tells you how to build the clock!"

2. Individualism

People in the United States generally consider self-reliance and independence as ideal personal qualities. As a consequence, most people see themselves as separate individuals, not as representatives of a family, community, or other group. They dislike being dependent on other people or having others dependent on them. Visitors from other countries sometimes view this attitude as "selfishness." On the other hand, they may view it as a healthy freedom from the constraints of ties to family, clan, or social class.

3. Movability

Americans like to move from place to place trying new jobs, meeting new people, and living in different parts of the country. Born in one city, they may attend school in a second, enter business in a third, and perhaps move several more times during their lives. Today, most Americans fully expect and accept the fact they will move frequently.

4. Pace

In the United States everyone is in a rush. City people always appear to be hurrying to get where they are going and are very impatient if they are delayed even for a brief moment.

Bus drivers will rush you; storekeepers will be in a hurry as they serve you; people will push past you as they walk along the street. You will miss smiles, brief conversations with people as you shop or dine away from home.

Americans who live in cities such as New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles, often think that everyone is equally in a hurry to get things done; they expect others to "push back".

However, outside the big cities, life is much slower, as is true in other countries as well.

5. Time Consciousness

Considerable importance and value are placed on punctuality in the United States, and people in all walks of life tend to organize their activities by means of schedules. As a result, to the foreign observers they may seem hurried, always running from one thing to the next and not able to relax and enjoy themselves. Indeed, some visitors from other countries have concluded that the United States society is "ruled by the clock". Others see this as a helpful way of assuring that things get done in an orderly fashion.

In the Western world, particularly in the United States, people tend to think of time as something fixed in nature, something from which one cannot escape. As a result, Americans think of time as a road or a ribbon stretching into the future, along which one progresses. The road has many sections, which are to be kept separate. . . "One thing at a time." People who can not plan events are not highly regarded. Thus, an American may feel angry when he has made an appointment with someone and then finds a lot of other things happening at the same time.

Promptness is valued highly in American life. If people are not prompt, they may be regarded as impolite or not fully responsible. In the U. S., no one would think of keeping a business associate waiting for an hour; it would be too impolite. A person who is five minutes late is expected to make a short apology. If he is less than five minutes late, he will say a few words of explanation, though perhaps he will not complete the sentence. To an American, waiting for forty-five minutes is the beginning of the "insult period". No matter what is said in apology, there is little that can remove the damage done by an hour's wait in an outer office. In social life, time plays a very important part. In the U. S., guests tend to feel they are not highly regarded if the invitation to a dinner party is extended only three or four days before the party date.

6. Informality

American informality is well known in the world. They often use first names upon meeting a stranger

and so not always shake hands. They often just smile and say "Hi" or "Hello", rather than using a more formal handshake. It is good to remember that to an American such an informal greeting really means the same thing as a more formal handshake at some place else. Similarly, Americans do not usually give a special "farewell" or handshake to each person when they leave a party or business meeting. They will often just wave good-bye to the whole group or perhaps say, "Well, so long everybody, I'll see you tomorrow." They will leave. No hand shakes.

Americans often work at office desks without their suit coats and ties. They may lean far back in their chairs and even put their feet up on the desk while they talk on the telephone. This is not meant to be rude. Once Americans leave the busy streets, they are easy and informal. Americans do not bow more deeply, or more frequently, to some people than to others to show respect. They do not usually seat an honored guest at a particular place at home or in an automobile. One of the few formalities you may observe is that an honored guest will usually sit to the right of the host or hostess at the dinner table. In an automobile, the rear seat is considered the honored place in some countries. In the United States, the front seat next to the driver is considered the best in a private car, partly because the driver is likely to be the host himself, and partly because the front window offers the best view.

Except for certain holidays, such as Christmas, Americans do not usually give gifts. Thus, you will find Americans embarrassed as they accept gifts, especially if they have nothing to give in return. They are generally a warm but informal people.

7. Plain Talk

Americans do not "waste words". This means that Americans frequently prefer to answer with a brief "Yes", "No", "Sure", or the very popular "Yeah", rather than with a longer reply. But brief replies do not mean Americans are impolite, rude, or limited mentally. Very often, Americans are rushed and may greet you with a hurried "Hi". Indeed, this is a greeting you will hear again and again during your stay in the United States. It is used by everyone, regardless of rank, age, or occupation. However, those accustomed to longer, beautifully worded phrases may require a little more time before they feel comfortable with American "plain talk".

Americans sometimes use plain talk when they are embarrassed. If people praise them or thank them in an especially courteous way, they may become embarrassed, and not know what to say in reply. They do not intend to be impolite or rude; you can be sure that they liked what was said about them.

8. Privacy

Americans have no desire for privacy. They are not a nation of walled gardens and closed gates. Their yards normally run into one another without fences; they often visit one another's homes without being invited or telephoning first; they leave their office doors open while they work.

Their lack of desire for privacy probably results from their history as a nation. America is a big country. There have never been walled cities in the United States, nor was there the need for Americans to protect themselves from neighbouring states. During the early years, America had so few settlers that neighbours were very important; they were not to be shut out by doors and fences. Neighbours offered protection and helped in the hard work of settling the land. They depended upon each other. From the nation's early history has come the desire for openness rather than privacy.

9. Truth

In many countries, people will tell you what they think you want to hear, whether or not it is true. To them this is the polite thing to do. To Americans it is considered confusing—even dishonest—to avoid telling the true facts, even if avoiding the truth is done only to be polite.