

TOWARDS A GOOD READER

英语阅读与提高

第一册

邹启明
朱友兴

薛明玉 合编

广东教育出版社

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BOOK I

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前 言

根据教育部“中学教师进修高等师范专科英语专业教学计划”的要求，我厅与广东人民广播电台联合举办的广播英语师专班开设了英语泛读课。

在广播节目中开设英语泛读课，在国内还是一次新的尝试。由于目前流行的各种英语课本都不大适合作该课程的教材，我们委托广州外贸学院外语教学部主任陆锐祥，和邹启明、朱友兴、薛明玉等同志编写了Towards A Good Reader (《英语阅读与提高》)一书。全书共三册，分别供广播英语师专班二年级第二学期和三年级第一、第二学期使用。

本书将在广东人民广播电台的“广播英语师专班”节目中播讲。

广东省教育厅教材编审组

编者的话

阅读是掌握任何一种语言所必须具备的基本技能之一。广泛大量的阅读可以开阔视野，丰富知识，扩大词汇量，对提高运用语言的能力有极大的促进作用。

泛读不是泛泛而读。成功的阅读是建立在科学的阅读方法之上的。因此，泛读课的目的旨在让学生掌握必需的阅读技巧，并通过大量的阅读和练习，逐渐养成良好的阅读习惯，掌握正确的阅读方法，逐步提高理解能力和阅读速度，最终能象阅读本国文字一样阅读外文书刊。

Towards A Good Reader正是基于上述目的而编写的一套阅读教材。它的对象是大学英语专业二、三年级的学生。

本书共分三册，每册集中讲授一组阅读技巧。

第一册是初级阅读教材，主要讲授两种基本阅读技巧——如何抓段落大意和文章大意，以及如何通过上下文和词的构成来分析生词的涵义。此外，还附有略读和浏览两种速读技巧的材料和练习，以及关于作结论和综合大意方面的练习。

第二册是中级阅读教材，它进一步阐述作结论和综合大意的方 法，例如预测、综合、判断等分析手法，以进一步提 高学生的阅读理解能力。同时还附有大量的练习，帮助学生

进一步巩固两种基本阅读技巧和速读技巧。

第三册是高级阅读教材。它除了提供大量练习帮助学生巩固所学过的技巧外，还将重点放在启发学生对文章进行分析和评论上，帮助他们养成边阅读边分析、评论的良好习惯，进一步提高他们的阅读理解能力。

本书的特点是将各种不同的阅读技巧分阶段地进行讲授。我们在编写过程中参考了国内外大量的阅读教材及有关论文，并根据中国学生的语言能力和阅读水平，将阅读技巧按难度分为几个阶段，辅之以相应的阅读材料，这样就可以更有效地逐步提高学生的阅读理解能力。我们还注重阅读速度的训练，从第一册起就安排了速读练习，并与其他阅读技巧结合起来，使练习更加生动，更有效益。

编写这样的教材，是一种尝试，可能会有不少缺点，欢迎读者批评、指正。

中山大学外语系王宗炎教授和北京对外经济贸易大学姚念庆教授，对本书的编写提过宝贵意见。特此致谢。

编 者

1984. 12.

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An Introduction to Some Basic Reading Skills

Everyone wants to be a good reader, that is, to be able to read quickly and effectively; but not all of us are successful. It all depends on our reading methods. In this respect, *Towards A Good Reader* can be your friend, for it is going to show you some skills that will lead you to rapid and successful reading.

There are various skills in reading, some of them are basic and some advanced. *Towards A Good Reader* (Book I) will show you two of the most important basic reading skills—how to catch the main idea and how to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words. At the same time, it will also introduce to you the methods of *skimming* and *scanning*, which can quicken your reading speed, and the methods of drawing conclusions and making summaries, which will improve your understanding.

In order to give you a general idea of these reading skills, we are going to introduce them here, so that you will not

begin your reading without knowing what you are going to learn.

I. How to Catch the Main Idea

How to catch the main idea is one of the most important basic skills you need to acquire. Usually one reads for the general meaning of an article, not for every detail in it. To form a general idea without being confused by the details, you must learn to identify the topic sentences, key words, and main paragraphs in an article.

A topic sentence presents the topic of a paragraph. In most cases one paragraph deals with one idea only. If you can find out the topic sentence, you will understand what the paragraph is about.

A paragraph usually has one, and very seldom, two topic sentences. Other sentences serve the purpose of developing or illustrating the topic. Quite often the topic sentence is placed at the beginning of a paragraph. Sometimes, however, you will find it in the middle or at the end. Draw a line under those sentences which you think are the most important while you read, and you will not miss the topic sentence.

Sometimes a topic sentence only introduces to you the topic of the paragraph but does not tell you the main idea. And sometimes you will not find a topic sentence in a paragraph at all, especially in a story. But that will not prevent

you from understanding the text, for you still have key words that will give you clues to the main idea.

A key word is usually a noun or a verb that tells you what happens in the passage. It can also be an adjective, or an adverb, or a phrase that gives you the specific information you need to understand the main idea. If you can find out these key words and put them together, the meaning of the text will become clear to you.

In function, the main paragraph in an article is somewhat like the topic sentence in a paragraph in that it presents the topic, the most essential idea, or the conclusion of the article.

There are usually several main paragraphs in a well-organized article. The beginning paragraph often gives an introduction to the topic of the article; the paragraph at the end may present the conclusion of the topic discussed; while the main paragraphs in the middle constitute the main ideas of the article. Try to find out these main paragraphs but just glance over the supporting paragraphs, and you will not get confused but will be able to read quickly and effectively.

II. How to Guess the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words

How to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words is also one of the indispensable skills in rapid and successful reading. By using proper methods for guessing, you will be able to get the meaning of a word in a particular context and to read

quickly without constantly consulting the dictionary.

Not all the new words in a text need guessing. You only guess those key words without which you will not understand the main idea. As for technical terms or uncommon nouns which are difficult to guess without sufficient knowledge in the particular field, you'd better consult your dictionary.

There are two principal methods for making reasonable guesses. One is to guess by following context clues.

A word is not an isolated unit in a sentence. It is closely related to the words in the same sentence, even to the words in the preceding and following sentences. These words are called context clues, for they will always help you to discover the meaning of an unfamiliar word.

Look at the following sentence:

He picked up a heavy *encyclopedia* from the bookshelf. Although the word "encyclopedia" may be strange to you, you will not hesitate to say that it must be a very thick book. Why? Because it is heavy and is put on a bookshelf.

Look at the following sentence again:

He was riding on a *pulka*, a sled pulled by reindeer. "Pulka" may be a new word to you, but you can understand its meaning perfectly, because the phrase behind it gives you a clear definition of the word.

Explanation and description can also lead you to the

meaning of a word.

Look at the following sentences:

- a. I played a *dual* role in the play. In the first act I was a teenager, and in the second act I was middle-aged.
- b. *Walrus* is also a sea animal. It has two long teeth, like the ivory tusks of an elephant.

Can you guess the meaning of “dual” and “walrus”?

Synonyms and antonyms are also important clues for guessing. Look at the following sentences:

- a. Unlike his brother, who was quite friendly and lovable, Stephen was quite *standoffish*.
- b. A sad and *pathetic* sense of being lost hangs over the city.

Can you guess the meaning of “standoffish” and “pathetic”?

Comparison and contrast can also shed light on the meaning of a word. Look at the following sentences:

- a. The child is as *fragile* as chinaware.
- b. My friend is *diligent*, but her brother does not like working at all.

Can you guess the meaning of “fragile” and “diligent”?

Consequence and result, cause and effect are also important clues. Look at the following questions:

- a. Jim poured a bail of water on the fire. It was *extinguished* shortly after, *smoldering* only for a while.

b. John had worked continuously for 48 hours. That was why he was so *exhausted*.

c. All the houses in the city *collapsed* during the earthquake.

Can you guess the meaning of “extinguished”, “smoldering”, “exhausted” and “collapsed”?

Keeping an eye on the affixes and stems is another way for making sensible guesses. Sometimes you will come across such “big words” as psychology, bilateral, electrocardiogram, etc., which are very difficult to guess even with context clues. But if you know that “psycho” means minds, “ology” means science or study, “bi” means two, “lateral” means side, “electro” means electric, “cardio” means heart, and “gram” means record, you will not find it difficult to guess their meaning. These words in fact, are made up of stems and affixes of Latin or Greek origin.

A stem is the root of many words. If you can recognize the root of the word, you can at least know half its meaning. In this textbook about 50 stems are offered to you. Study them and try to memorize them. They will help you to learn many new words.

An affix is a group of letters placed before or after the stem of a word to modify its meaning or use. For example, *dishearten*, *independent*, and *inactivity* are words made up

with affixes and stems. About 50 affixes are offered to you in this textbook. They will also help you to recognize many strange words.

III. Skimming and Scanning

Skimming and *scanning* are two important speed-reading skills. Skimming is quick reading for the general idea of a passage. Scanning is quick reading for specific information.

To skim you must move your eyes across the line quickly to locate the key words or topic sentences in the passage. You should not stop or look back but must always look forward until you come to the end. When you come to those sentences or paragraphs that give examples, definitions, or descriptions, skip them. In such a way you will get the general idea of a passage in the shortest possible time.

To scan, you must first decide what kind of information you are looking for and what words in the passage can probably show you the answer. Then move your eyes as quickly as possible from left to right, or from top to bottom. When you come to the word or sentence that is closed to the answer, stop and check. If it gives you the information you want, stop reading any more. If it isn't, go on reading until you find the answer.

For example, if you are asked to find out the information about some religion in a book, first check the list of contents

to find the chapter about religion. And if you are asked to find out the name of a book in a booklist, go quickly through the list bearing the book's name in mind. This is somewhat like consulting a dictionary for a word. But the words you are looking for are not always those with the information you want.

IV. Drawing Conclusions and Making Summaries

If you want to improve your understanding, you must learn to draw the correct conclusions and to make a concise summary. Reading is not a process of passive reception. It is active participation. To read successfully, you should always anticipate what is going to happen next, or what will be the outcome, or what is the reason or cause of the event. And when you finish reading, you should have your own idea of the passage and express it in your own words. If you try to form the habit of drawing conclusions and making summaries, you will notice that your understanding power is getting better and better.

To draw a correct conclusion, you should be very careful about those negative words, such as "no", "not", "without" as well as those negative affixes such as "dis-", "un-", "-less". Also you must try to memorize the sequence of the events to decide what will be the outcome or result. Most importantly, you must be able to read between lines,

that is, to find out the implications or hidden meanings of the passage, and to recognize those ironies, similies, and metaphors which may confuse your understanding.

To make a concise summary, you should bear in mind the most essential things in the passage. You can note down those key words or topic sentences when you are reading and put them together, adding some words to make the meaning complete or cutting off the unnecessary words. In this way, you will learn how to write a good summary.

Reading is fun. It should not be a heavy burden. If you can use the proper reading skills, you practise them conscientiously whenever you read, you will find reading very enjoyable. And you will become a good reader without knowing it!

1 The Eskimos

1. There are many places on the earth where life is difficult for man. It is hard in the high mountains of Bolivia and Tibet; it is hard in the jungles of the Amazon. But there are very few places on earth where man does not live. Only on the great sheets of ice that cover Greenland and Antarctica, and on the highest mountain tops, where the air is too thin to breathe, are there no people. Man has even gotten used to living in deserts, in rain forests, and in frozen regions near the North Pole.
2. The people who live in the Far North are called Eskimos. They live by hunting and fishing. In their world of ice and snow it is impossible to grow plants for food. In the summers the top of the ground thaws, but only to a depth of a foot or two. The only plants that grow in this cold land are a few kind of grass and moss.
3. The winters are long, cold, and dark. Indeed, in December the sun never appears above the horizon.