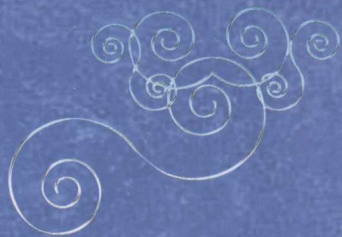# 实用现代英语词汇学

Essentials of Modern English Lexicology
—a Practical Guide to the Study of English Words

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实用现代英语词汇学

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内 容 简 介

本书以现代语言学理论为指导,以英语词汇为研究对象,着重论述了英语词汇的来源、发展、现状及其研究方法;分析了英语词汇结构、类型、意义、理论根据、相互关系、语义的变化方式、过程及用法;研究了英国英语和美国英语等的差异;较详细地阐述了英语习语的特点、分类、语义,以及英语词典的发展和使用,并提供了大量例证。

本书可作为高等学校英语专业教材,非英语专业高年级选修课教材及翻译工作者的学习参考书。

前　　言

英语词汇学是研究英语语言词汇的一门重要学科。英语词汇教学在英语教学中的地位已经越来越受到重视,必要的理论知识和大量的实践是学好英语词汇的必要途径。本书的目的就是揭示词和词汇共有的规律,分析现代英语词汇现象和探讨一些具体的词与词之间的变化关系。系统地学习、掌握英语单词的规律和构词方法,有助于学生们理解和掌握英语词汇,扩大英语词汇量,提高英语语言应用能力。

本书是高等学校英语专业教材,是大学英语高年级学生公选课教材,是非英语专业的本科生、研究生、英语自学者、函授生及翻译工作者学习英语词汇学理论,理解、运用、掌握英语词汇,拓宽英语词汇量和知识面,提高英语语言实践能力不可多得的参考书。

本书以现代语言学理论为指导,以英语词汇为研究对象,着重论述了英语词汇的来源、发展、现状及其研究方法;分析了英语词汇结构、类型、意义、理论根据、相互关系、语义的变化方式、过程及用法;研究了英国英语和美国英语等的差异;较详细地阐述了英语习语的特点、分类、语义,以及英语词典的发展和使用,并提供了大量的例证。

本书是在大家通力合作下完成的。主编曹京华负责联系出版,组织编写,统稿等整个过程。本书共 9 章,其中第 1 章和第 3 章由曹京华编写完成,第 2 章和第 5 章由宋剑祥编写完成,第 4 章由楚存华编写完成,第 6 章由邹霞编写完成,第 7 章由王玲编写完

成,第 8 章由杨兆和编写完成,第 9 章由杨燕编写完成。

　　在编写过程中笔者参阅了大量国内外出版的有关著作和因特网站上下载的材料,追踪英语词汇学的最新动态,除每章附有参考书目外,在此一并表示衷心的感谢。

　　限于编者水平,又加之时间仓促,书中定有不少谬误,敬请广大读者不吝指正,不胜感激。

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《实用现代英语词汇学》编委会

于昆明

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Chapter 1　Introduction（A General Survey of English Vocabulary）

1.1　Definition of Lexicology

First of all, let's study the origin of the word "lexicology". The term "lexicology" was originally formed with two Greek morphemes. The two morphemes are separately "lexicon" and "logie". "Lexikon" refers to "word" and "logie" refers to "learning" or "the study of ". So "lexicology" means "the science of words".

Lexicology is a branch of linguistics concerned with the study of vocabulary of a given language. It deals with words, their origin, development, history, structure, meaning, and application. In short, it is the study of the signification and application of words (AI-TEL). **Lexicology** is a branch of linguistics, inquiring into the origins and meanings of words (WNWD). English Lexicology aims at investigating and studying the morphological structures of English words and word equivalents, their semantic structures, relations, historical development, formation, and usages.

1.2　Importance of Lexicology

As we all know, language study involves the study of speech sounds, grammar, and vocabulary. But most of all, vocabulary has proved to be the most important and the most difficult one in the study of the language.

In the discussion of the relationship between words and struc-

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ture, Wilkins (1972) asserted, "Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed." The lexicologist McCarthy (1990) echoed the same message that no matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully he masters the sounds of L2, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in that language cannot happen in any meaningful way. Therefore, vocabulary has proved particularly important in language learning. The role of vocabulary in communication calls for continuing vocabulary learning.

English lexicology is a theoretically-oriented course. It is chiefly concerned with the basic theories of words in general and of English words in particular. However, it is a practical course as well, for in the discussion, we shall inevitably deal with rich stocks of words, idioms, and usages as well. Naturally, there will be a large quantity of practice involved.

1.3 Significance of Studying Lexicology

The **significance** of the course in English lexicology for language learning is also evident. The study of lexicology will help the learners to enlarge their vocabulary and improve their ability to analyze and use English words effectively. For instance, the study of new words, synonyms, figures of speech, etc. will arouse the interest of the learners on the one hand, and enhance their ability to choose the correct and expressive words in writing and speech on the other hand.

Language learning requires practice. Practice makes perfect. Without practice there would be no theory. English lexicology as a theory of Modern English is surely useful in vocabulary study because it derives from practice and should guide practice. Students

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will use the basic knowledge of English lexicology to understand the material already familiar to them from English classes, and apply it in their further study of English. Since English lexicology deals with English vocabulary — origin, development, history, structure, meaning and application, this course will definitely be beneficial.

1.4 Information on Related Terms— Language, Linguistics and Words

In a book on lexicology, we should first define some related terms such as "language," "linguistics," and "words" and so on so forth before we go into depth. Now lets discuss the following questions.

1.4.1 What Is the Nature of Language?

Language is essential to mankind. Our lives increasingly depend on fast and successful use of language. Language is central to our nature as human beings, for it is the possession of language that distinguishes humans from animals. Language is such an integral part of our life and humanity that too much about it has been taken for granted.

1.4.2 What Is a Language?

Language is a tool for human communication. Language is a set of rules. Linguists are in broad agreement about some of the important characteristics of human language, and most of them would accept a tentative definition like the following:

(1) Language must be a system—Since elements in it are arranged according to certain rules; they cannot be combined at will. In English, "lcgi" is not a possible word. "She table a red" is not

an acceptable sentence. So if language were not systematic, it could not be learned or used consistently.

(2) Language is arbitrary in this sense that there is no intrinsic connection between the word *pen* and *thing* we use to write with. The fact that different languages have different words for it (*bi* in Chinese for instance) speaks strongly for the arbitrary nature of language.

(3) This also explains the symbolic nature of language: Words are associated with objects, actions, and ideas by convention. This is why some people say, "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

We say language is vocal because the primary medium is sound for all language no matter how well developed the writing system. All evidence shows that writing systems came much later than the spoken forms and that they are only attempts to catch sounds and meaning on paper. The fact that children acquire spoken language first before they can read and write also indicates that language is primarily vocal.

The term "human" in the definition is meant to specify that language is human-specific, that it is very different from the communication systems other forms of life possess (such bird/songs and animal cries).

Webster's New Word Dictionary offers several most frequently used senses of the word " language," namely, ① (a) human speech; (b) the ability to communicate by this means; (c) a system of vocal sounds and combinations of such sounds to which meaning is attributed, used for the expression or communication of thoughts and feelings; (d) the written representation of such a system; ② (a) any means of expressing or communicating, as gestures, signs, or animal sounds; (b) a special set of symbols, letters, numerals,

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rules etc. used for the transmission of information, as in a comput-er;.... (Webster's New Word Dictionary p. 759)

To give the barest of definitions, language is a means of verbal communication. In short, language distinguishes us from animals because it is far more sophisticated than animal communication systems.

1.4.3　What Is a Word?

A word may be defined as one of the fundamental units of speech and as having a minimum free form. It is a unit of sound and meaning, capable of performing a given syntactical function.

1.4.4　What Is Linguistics?

Generally speaking, linguistics is the scientific study of language. To be more exact, linguistics is "the study of human speech including the units, nature, structure and modification of language." (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary p. 669)

Linguistics is usually defined as the science of language or, alternatively, as the scientific study of language. Linguistics has firmly established its place as a major branch of social science.

As a recognized academic subject, it is an area with immense research potential, and a scholarly "industry" which produces a large amount of books, dissertations and papers every year; its preoccupations are expressed in such specialized journals as language, Journal of Linguistics, Lingua, Applied Linguistics, and at regular conferences. You may find many useful web sites about linguistics, for example, http: www. Linguist. org. ; http:www. Logos. it/language-today etc.

Language is so valuable to the individual, so critical to the efficient functioning of human societies, and in itself so impressively intricate and profound in structure, that it is bound to attract a great

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amount of intellectual attention.

Since this attention must produce studies which have practical importance (e. g. in speech therapy, education, techniques of translation and many more applied concerns). Linguistics is bound to be an academically and economically favored pursuit.

As a science, linguistics now has a set of established theories, methods and sub-branches.

As for its dada, now the argument over intuition or corpus also fade as people realize the advantages of both and as corpus linguistics develops rapidly with the advent of computer technology. Lyons predicted in the seventies by pointing out that linguistics is empirical, rather than speculative or intuitive: it operates with publicly variable data obtained by means of observation or experiment. (Lyons, 1982:38)

In china the study of language has a long history but modern linguistics still has a long way to go to enjoy a "boom".

1.4.5　What Is Vocabulary?

(1) The term vocabulary usually refers to a complete inventory of the words in a language. But it may also refer to the words and phrases used in the variants of a language, such as dialect, register, terminology, etc.

(2) Vocabulary is one of the three elements of language: speed sound, grammar, and vocabulary. It's the study of the signification and application of words. Broadly speaking, all the words in a language together constitute what is known as its vocabulary.

1.5　Interrelated Linguistic Branches

Linguistics is not the only field concerned with language. Oth-

er disciplines such as psychology, sociology, ethnography, the science of law and artificial intelligence etc. are also preoccupied with language. On the other hand, although "Saussure's goal was to establish the autonomy of linguistics, giving it a well-defied object and freeing it from reliance on other disciplines, with it's coming of age linguistics is developing interactive links with other sciences. The control goal of describing the underlying system remains; this is the province of general, descriptive linguistics. But since language has both individual and social aspects, it is naturally of interest to psychologists and sociologists among others". (Hareley, 1982:16) It is not surprising therefore we have some branches of MACROLINGUISTICS that show an interdisciplinary nature from the very names: ① Psycholinguistics; ② Sociolinguistics; ③ Anthropological linguistics; ④ computational linguistics.

(1) **Psycholinguistics** investigates the interrelation of language and mind, in processing and producing utterances and in language acquisition for example. There is the psycholinguistic study of grammar. The psycholinguistic constraints on the form of grammar are studied. It also studies language development in the child, such as the theories of language acquisition; biological foundations of language; etc.

(2) **Sociolinguistics** is an umbrella term which covers a variety of different interests in language and society, including the social functions of language and the social characteristics of its users. Sociolinguistics is the study of the characteristics of language varieties, the characteristics of their functions, and the characteristics of their speakers as these three constantly interact and change within a speech community. It seeks to discover the societal rules and norms that explain and behavior towards language in speech communities. It also seeks to determine the symbolic value of language varieties for their speakers. That language varieties come to have symbolic or

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symptomatic value, in and of themselves, is an inevitable conse-
quence of their functional differentiation.

(3) **Anthropological linguistics**, as a science, the study of lan-
guage is somewhat older than Anthropology. The two disciplines
became closely associated in the early days of Anthropological field-
work when Anthropologists enlisted the help of linguists to study
unwritten languages. In contrast with other linguists, then, An-
thropological linguists are interested primarily in the history and
structure of formerly unwritten languages. They are concerned with
the emergence of language and also with the divergence of languages
over thousands of years. Because an unwritten language must be
heard in order to be studied, it does not leave any traces once its
speakers died off. Anthropological linguists must begin in the pre-
sent, with comparisons of contemporary languages. Then they may
draw inferences about the kinds of change in language that may have
occurred in the past and that may account for similarities and differ-
ences observed in the present. They typically ask such questions as:
Did two or more contemporary languages diverge from a common
ancestral language? If they are related, how far back in time did
they begin to differ?

(4) **Computational linguistics** is an interdisciplinary field
which centers around the use of computers to process or produce hu-
man language (also know as "natural language" to distinguish it
from computer languages). To this field, linguistics contributes an
understanding of the special properties of language structure and
use. Computer science contributes theories and techniques for de-
signing and implementing computer systems. Some correct applica-
tion areas include translating from one language to another (Ma-
chine translation), finding relevant documents in large collections of
text (information Retrieval), and answering questions about a sub-

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