

ENGLISH

朱文振 著

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英语简史

Brief Outline
of History
of English Language



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作者简介

朱文振(1914—1993)浙江嘉兴人,英语语言文学教授。自幼丧父。中学读书时曾因经济拮据辍学当过电信工人。1937年毕业于中央大学外文系。先后在中央大学、广西大学、重庆大学和四川大学任教。1952年曾赴哈尔滨外语专进修俄语。为英、俄语本科生、英语研究生授课执教五十年,重建四川大学外文系并兼任系主任二十余年。作品和专论有:《康第达》(译著,1942年)、《翻译与语言环境》(论著,1987年)及《略论翻译》(1942年)、《评翻译莎士比亚》(1943年)、《论诗歌格律与翻译》(1943年)、《莎剧译例》(1951年)、《从句成份和语义两个角度论俄语“独立语”》(1958年)、《仍戏曲体译莎的几个片断》(1981年)等五十余件。

By Way of Foreword

The present booklet is meant, tentatively, to serve as a basis for a series of lectures to students of the undergraduate level as a small but fundamental course of around 50—60 hours. It seems logical that a college student majoring in English should have the chance to attain the basic knowledge about the history of the English language along with the fundamental informations about general linguistics, history of English literature and general introduction to literature—these four forming a necessary theoretic-historical foundation for the advance of studies in the professional discipline. Lack of books that suit the need particularly in the current times in China, however, together with other difficulties in organizing the course, has for several decades hindered its presence in the programme at most institutions of higher education in this country. Could the gap be filled someday? Try—that is the way.

The present material is brief. This, it should

be reminded of, is determined by the aim and purpose, and also by the amount of time given to it, of the course in the programme. Thick volumes of British or American print with "complete" treatment of the subject are good sources, but have not been its models. Students are not expected to spend more time on it than is possible and necessary.

A more important feature of this handbook, perhaps, is its emphasis on points that would raise good questions about language or language history in general, or about the Chinese language in certain respects. One of the questions that never should be counted as already "settled", even among language specialists, is: Are the learners or users of the language of a strong country or nation not bowing before the majestic sovereign? (Or, as in more popularized language, the language of a strong country or nation after all is an imperialist or reactionary language.) The instances thrust into this material aim at, it is hoped, helping clarify such questions. Thinking, thinking by combination of theory and history with practice and reality, is at any rate something any course, especially any theoretic — historical course must not try to neglect. Besides, in

BY WAY OF FOREWORD

a course like the one under discussion here, which practically tells and discusses only foreign matters, it is a big question in teaching how to rouse the students' interest in probing into questions concerning both what is foreign and what is Chinese. So, purely or merely copying or gathering parts or sections from foreign-printed authorities has not been the method of compiling this material. Attempts and efforts to strengthen this emphasis have not been sufficiently made, but work in such a direction has been begun.

This material may also be used for a make-up course for postgraduates who during their college years failed to take up such a subject and want now to fill the blank.

The author

Chengdu

December 1986

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By way of Foreword

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CHAPTER I

STATUS OF ENGLISH IN THE WORLD OF LANGUAGES

English is one of the thousands of speeches or dialects the world knows of, speeches or dialects now in use, or already dead or dying.¹ Languages that have been recognized as independent ones number 2,900, but 70% of them haven't yet their own written forms;² only about 500 of them have been analyzed or studied to one or another degree, and English can well be counted as one among the best or most studied.

1.1 *Language families*

In the course of studying languages people find closer or looser relations between languages and come to consider those of closer relations (in phonological and syntactical aspects mainly) together as a group and call it a "language family." English, then, has been given the position of a member of the "Low

German" subgroup of the "West Germanic" subfamily of the "Germanic" branch of the "Indo-European Family". Following is a chart showing the fundamental structure of the "Indo-European Family":

Indo-Aryan; Sanskrit, Hindi, etc.

Iranian; Persian, Afghan, etc.

Celtic; Irish, etc.

Germanic;

East G; Gothic

North G; Old Norse, Norwegian, Swedish,
Danish, Icelandic, etc.

West G;

Low German — — English, Frisian, Dutch

High German — — German, Yiddish

Romance; French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Latin, Romanian

Slavic; Russian, Polish, Bulgarian, Bohemian, Slovenian, etc.

Baltic; Lithuanian, Latvian

Greek; Greek, Albanian, Armenian

(Armenian; Armenian)

Other language families and languages of which it is not yet clear to which family each belongs include;

Indo-Chinese (Indo-Tibetan) Family:

Chinese (*Han*), Tibetan, Languages of
Miao, Yao, Yi, Zhuang, Li, Tong,
Jingpo nationalities, Vietnamese
(Anamese), *Tai* (Siamese), Burmese,
etc.

Semitic Family:

Hebrew, Arabic, Egyptian, etc.

Ural-Altaic Family:

Turkish, Mongol (ie), Hungarian, Finnish,
Estonian, Languages of Kazakh, Uygur na-
tionalities, etc.

Malayo-Polynesian Family:

Indonesian, Malay, etc.

(Covering a large number of the islands of
the Pacific and Indian oceans, not including
Australia, most of New Guinea and part of
New Zealand)

Japanese It is yet not clear to which family
it belongs.

Korean It is yet not clear to which family it
belongs. Some authors deem it an Altaic
language.

Australian Languages It is said there are

over 100 native languages in Australia and linguists divide them into 3 branches: Northern, Middle and Southern. But there are still disputes about to which family they belong.

American Indian Languages There are 4 groups or sub-families of the Indian languages used in America; USA-Canada-Mexico group, Central America group; South America group and Caribbean group. They seem to form a big language family.

African Languages It is believed there are about 430 speeches or dialects of the black Africans and 3 prominent groups or families for them; Sudanese-Guinean family, Bantu family, Hottentot-Bushman family. They wait to be much further studied.

1.2 *Consonantal correspondence between English and other Indo-European languages*

A German philologist Jacob Grimm (1785—1863), known as one of the authors of the Grimm brothers'

"Fairy Tales", formed in 1822 a "law" about the correlation between a number of consonants in older Indo-European languages and Germanic languages, the "Grimm's Law".³ Such correspondence between consonantal sounds, though not without exceptions, shows that English definitely is a member speech of the Indo-European Family. Following is a table for such correlation:

| Voiceless plosives in I. -E. | Voiceless fricatives in Ger. |
|---|---|
| <p>[p] L. <u>p</u>ater; Gk. <u>p</u>ater; Sans. <u>p</u>iter Rus. <u>p</u>olnəj</p> | <p>[f] E. <u>f</u>ather; Ger. <u>v</u>ater E. <u>f</u>ull; Ger. <u>v</u>oll</p> |
| <p>[t] L. <u>t</u>res; Gk. <u>t</u>reis L. <u>t</u>u; Rus. <u>t</u>e</p> | <p>[θ] E. <u>th</u>ree O. E. <u>þ</u>u</p> |
| <p>[k] L. <u>n</u>octum; Gk. <u>n</u>yktə</p> | <p>[h] Ger. <u>n</u>acht; O. E. <u>ni</u>ht</p> |

| Voiced plosives in I. -E. | Voiceless plosives in Ger. |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| [b] Rus. slab <u>ə</u> j Rus. bol <u>o</u> to | [p] E. sleep E. pool |
| [d] L. du <u>o</u> ; Gk. d <u>y</u> o L. dec <u>e</u> m; Gk. d <u>e</u> ka | [t] E. tw <u>o</u> E. t <u>e</u> n |
| [g] L. iug <u>u</u> m; Rus. i <u>g</u> o | [k] E. y <u>o</u> ke |

| Voiced aspirate plosives in I. -E. | Voiced plosives in Ger. |
|---|--|
| [bh] Sans. bhrat <u>a</u> r | [b] E. br <u>o</u> ther; Ger. br <u>u</u> der |
| [dh] Sans. madhy <u>a</u> s | [d] E. mid <u>u</u> |
| [gh] L. host <u>i</u> s; Rus. g <u>o</u> stj | [g] Ger. g <u>a</u> st; E. g <u>u</u> est |

1.3 *Range of use of the English language*

Various statistics and rough estimations show that English is a very widely spoken or used language in the modern world;

Earliest statistics

in 1066—1,500,000