

T. C. Lai A HANDBOOK OF

English

THE COMMERCIAL PRESS, LTD.



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A HANDBOOK OF ENGLISH

by T. C. Lai

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Mrs. Monica Lai for advice

on the presentation

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of the contents, and

valuable suggestions

towards various improve-

ments in the text.

Messrs. T. Y. Wong and

Ross Lai for reading

over the final proofs.

Mrs. Maranda Yeung for

secretarial assistance

rendered.

PREFACE

A Handbook of English is written for those who have already made some progress in the learning of English as a foreign language but who would nevertheless benefit from a companion to which they can refer in case of difficulty or doubt.

The most formidable obstacles in the learning of English are the idiomatic use of verbs and prepositions. Hence three chapters in this book are devoted to the verb, and a chapter of 40 pages to prepositions and prepositional idioms.

The idiomatic uses of articles, of singular and plural nouns, etc. are less formidable, but also quite difficult to master, as grammatical rules are often found to be inadequate. Hence ample examples, with explanations where necessary, are given in the chapters on various aspects of the language which might still prove intractable.

The rest of the book is designed to help the reader to write simply but effectively, to increase his vocabulary and improve his spelling. If the Handbook succeeds in helping the reader realize that learning English can be an interesting and pleasurable experience, it will have served its purpose.

May, 1979

T. C. L.

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PUNCTUATION

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The importance of punctuation can be seen from the following examples:

1. Woman — without her, man would be a
savage.
Woman, without her man, would be a
savage.

2. Every lady in this land
Has twenty nails upon each hand
Five and twenty on hands and feet
All this is true without deceit.

Every lady in this land
Has twenty nails; upon each hand
Five; and twenty on hands and feet.
All this is true without deceit.

3. The Foreign Minister says the Star Evening
Post is suffering from nervous breakdown.

The Foreign Minister, says the Star Evening
Post, is suffering from nervous breakdown.

It will be seen that the addition of a punctuation mark or the change of place of a punctuation mark alters the sense completely in the above examples.

PUNCTUATION MARKS

The apostrophe is used:

- (a) for contractions.

it's; e'er; shouldn't

- (b) for plurals of letters, figures, symbols

U.N.'s; p's and q's; 2 by 4's
and's; if's; but's

- (c) for the possessive case

John's; Joneses'; Burns'; Schmitz'
Jesus'

Capitals are used in the following:

- (a) Proper names.

Rome; John; England; Park Road

- (b) Names of organized bodies.

Communist Party
United Nations