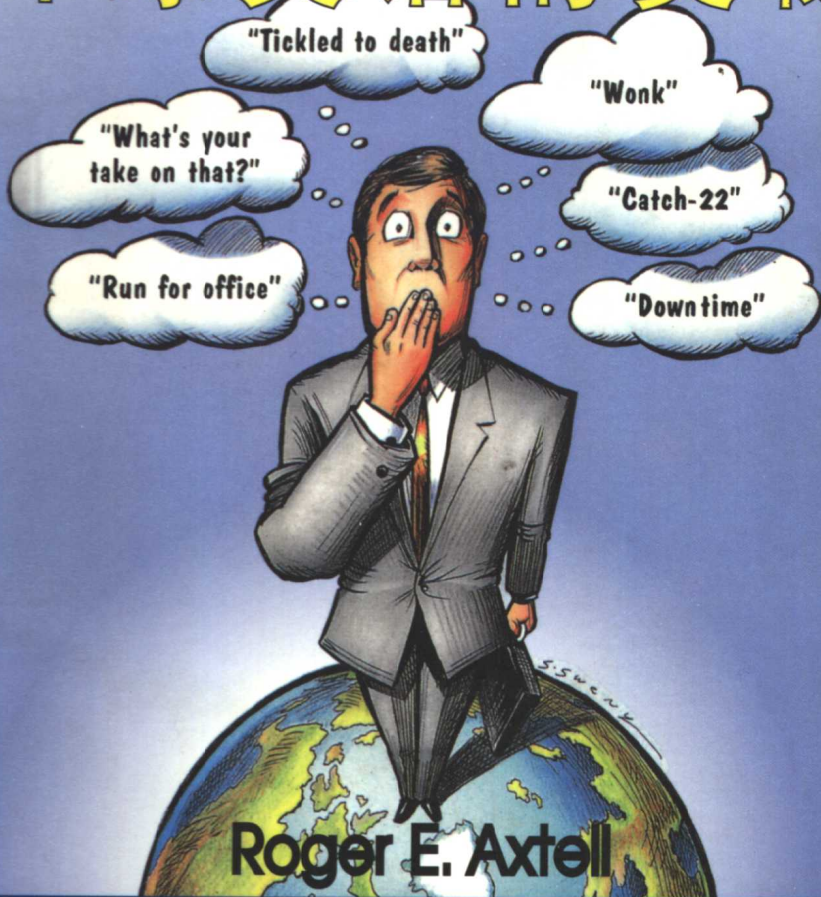


# Do's and Taboos Of Using English Around the World

## 环球英语的奥秘



Roger E. Axtell

上海外语教育出版社

# DO'S AND TABOOS OF USING ENGLISH AROUND THE WORLD

## 环球英语的奥秘

( 该说什么? 不该说什么? )

原著: Roger E. Axtell

译注: 李健儿

审订: 介 明

插图: Mike Fornwald

上海外语教育出版社

## 环球英语的奥秘

李健儿 译注

---

上海外语教育出版社出版发行

(上海外国语大学内)

上海市印刷七厂印刷

上海叶大装订厂装订

新华书店上海发行所经销

---

开本 850×1168 1/32 11.125 印张 4 插页 257 千字

1998 年 1 月第 1 版 1998 年 1 月第 1 次印刷

印数:1-6 000 册

ISBN 7- 81046- 308- X

C·617 定价:15.00 元

(国内发行)

## 评注者序

Roger E. Axtell 曾担任派克制笔公司全球销售部的副总裁，有三十多年国外生活旅行的经历，是一个颇受欢迎的演说家、研讨会组织者、畅销书作家。他所著的《该做什么？不该做什么？》系列丛书在美国十分畅销。

本书原名为 *Do's and Taboos of Using English Around the World*，现改译成《环球英语的奥秘：该说什么？不该说什么？》。作者立足于美国英语，将各英语国家的英语方言与美国英语作了对比，并分析了在非英语国家使用英语可能产生的文化冲突，以一个有长期海外生活经验的美国商人的眼光审视了英语在全球范围内的使用情况。本书取材丰富，语言生动活泼、幽默诙谐，内容包罗万象，文化色彩浓厚，写作手法灵活多变。它所涵盖的信息决非一般教科书或普通读物所能提供。因此，本书不仅对使用英语在全球旅行的人们有现实的指导意义，而且对于想全面深入地了解英语、更好地掌握英语或检验自己英语水平的各类读者来说，也可以从中获取无穷的乐趣。

不过，也正是由于原书内容涵盖面广、文笔生动灵活，并涉及多种语言，体例格式复杂，给普通读者阅读带来一些困难。为了让更多读者能够从此书获益，我们在基本保持原书体貌风格的基础上，特对书中疑难词汇及表达法加以注释，对包含文化特色或修辞意义的语言点作了点评，以方便读者阅读。

在编注此书的过程中，我们采用了以下原则和体例：

一、基本保留原书的体例格式，如英语以外的语言以及

原有的斜体字仍用斜体；原来的章节划分、标题安排照旧。

二、注释和点评以一个含标题的自然段落为基本单位，置于该段之末。注释在文中用阿拉伯数字以上标形式标明，然后在段尾同样按序标识，注释部分中、英文并用。点评内容在原文中用波浪线（“\_\_\_\_\_”）标识；同一段内有多处需点评的，在点评栏内以小写 a、b、c 等按序排列，一般不重复拷贝原文内容。

三、书中有独立情节的小故事及类似内容，单个分别注释点评，小标题系评注者添加。

四、基本保持原作的原汁原味，但对书中与我国实情不相符合的极少数内容作了删改。

本书适合各层次读者阅读。初级读者通过较为详尽的注释和点评，可以了解英语的种类及其各方言的异同，扩大知识面，增长英语学习的兴趣。中、高级读者可以根据需要，略过部分注释点评，自己去理解品味书中的内容，享受其中的乐趣。书后小词汇表(Glossaries)不另附汉语释义，保留索引，目的是便于读者查阅有关信息资料。

总之，评注者本着为各层次读者服务的宗旨，试图以最实惠的形式将此书奉献给读者。

由于评注者水平有限，评注过程中谬误之处在所难免，敬请行家里手不吝赐教，以便重印时改正。在此预先对各方热心人士致以衷心的感谢。

评注者  
于上海外国语大学  
1997年9月

## Acknowledgments

In the Appendix of this book you will find ways to say “thank you” in six different languages. I would like to use *all* of them to thank the following people:

My wife, Mitzi; her mother, Mrs. F; and my good friend Dick Rosenberg—all of whom took the time to carefully read and comment on the manuscript for this book.

Maria Meyer-Netto, graduate student in journalism at the University of Wisconsin (Madison), for her extensive and useful research and reporting.

Mike Fornwald, illustrator, who has now brightened four of my books.

P J Dempsey, Senior Editor at John Wiley & Sons, who entrusted me with this assignment.

Sally Wecksler, my literary agent, who assisted me in rolling what I hope will be this lucky seventh.

Three prominent Britishers who vetted Chapter 4, on the differences between American English and English English: Ian Kerr, who leads his own public relations firm in Greenwich, Connecticut; Reg Abbiss, who is a public relations executive with Rolls Royce Motor Cars; and Norma Davis, who is a journalist in Wesport, Connecticut.

Two people I have never met but greatly admire: Richard Lederer, author of several wonderful books on the English language; and Edward T. Hall, noted social anthropologist and

expert on other cultures.

Ad Hoc Translations, Inc., a national translation service with offices in New York and Los Angeles (phone 212/979-2816). My thanks to Maria Zadunaisky and Bernard Liller for their support and assistance.

William Lutz, who teaches English at Rutgers University, is author of the delightful book *Doublespeak*, and is chairperson of the National Committee on Public Doublespeak.

Two institutions that provided volumes of information on cross-cultural communication: The David M. Kennedy International Center at Brigham Young University, and V. Lynn Tyler; and The Intercultural Press Inc., Yarmouth, Maine. If the subject of cross-cultural communication interests you, I urge you to write both of these first-class institutions and obtain catalogs listing their many publications.

I also wish to thank some wonderful people in scores of audiences across the United States and overseas during the past ten years. Following my after-dinner, keynoter, or seminar programs, they freely shared anecdotes and personal experiences about language that evoked a smile and illustrated a point, and then brightened a page in this book.

Roger E. Axtell

## Introduction

A recent survey<sup>1</sup> conducted by *USA Today*, the national newspaper, posed this question: “What is your biggest worry as an international traveler?”

The following nine “worry” categories<sup>2</sup> were listed:

personal safety	getting lost
lost baggage	hotel room theft
well-being of family <sup>3</sup>	plane bombing <sup>4</sup> /hijacking <sup>5</sup>
inability <sup>6</sup> to communicate	connections or delays
illness	

The result was that the *number one* fear — ranking almost three times greater than the second-place fear — was inability to communicate. In second place came personal safety.

If you share that concern<sup>7</sup>, if you are troubled or worried about communicating with people in other parts of the world, then this book will help you. You will learn — while laughing — about the strengths and weaknesses of American English. You will also learn how to become more sensitive and aware when speaking or listening to English, and how to avoid misstatements<sup>8</sup>, language goofs<sup>9</sup>, gaffes<sup>10</sup>, *faux pas* (French for “mistakes”) and *faux amis* (or “false friends,” meaning words in another language that look like the same as English words but mean entirely different things) when attempting to communicate around the world.

【注释】

1. survey: 调查。 conduct a survey: 进行一项调查    2. category:



类别。list the categories (below) 有以下类别; 类别如下 3. well-being of the family: 家庭平安 4. inability: 没有能力 5. plane bombing: 在飞机上放置炸弹 6. hijacking: 劫持飞机 7. share the concern: 关心同样的问题 8. misstatement: 词不达意 9. goof: 愚蠢的错误 10. gaffe: 失言; 失态; 失礼

## 0.1 THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM

Anthropologists<sup>1</sup> tell us that language — both spoken and written — is what lifts humans above the animal kingdom<sup>2</sup>. “We take language for granted<sup>3</sup>,” writes Dr. Richard M. Restak, author of *The Mind* (Bantam, 1988), “yet it is one of the most complex things we do. Language allows us to convey<sup>4</sup> our emotions, to share ideas, to create fresh forms of expression, and to communicate our most intimate<sup>5</sup> thoughts.” Restak also posits<sup>6</sup> that “the need to communicate with other humans through language seems as fundamental as the existence of the mind itself.”

Now comes the kicker<sup>7</sup>: There are about five thousand *different* languages in the world today, and English is just one of them.

Meanwhile, not only are most Americans monolingual<sup>8</sup>, but our brand of English — American English — has evolved into a special *dialect*<sup>9</sup> that reflects the American obsession<sup>10</sup> with idioms, slang, jargon<sup>11</sup>, buzz words<sup>12</sup>, acronyms<sup>13</sup>, and sports and military terminology<sup>14</sup>. Today two Americans can carry on a conversation that others in the so-called English-speaking world might barely

comprehend. And if our English-speaking cousins can't understand, pity all those people out there struggling to learn English.

Furthermore, American English is growing more complex at an exponential pace<sup>15</sup>. Pick up a newspaper and you'll find (as I did in yesterday's paper) words like *Scram*<sup>16</sup>! Or *cockamamie*<sup>17</sup> or *dis*<sup>18</sup> or *wonk*<sup>19</sup> or expressions like *What's your take on that, Mr. President?*<sup>20</sup> As a reader, you don't raise an eyebrow<sup>21</sup>. Now imagine an international visitor trying to make sense of<sup>22</sup> those words ... or trying to decipher<sup>23</sup> our fast-paced, slurred<sup>24</sup> speech: A gas station attendant inquiring "Fillerup<sup>25</sup>?" ... or a server in a restaurant asking "Watchawanonnit?" (Translation: "What do you want on your sandwich?"), and then delivering the meal with "Hereyago." ("Here you go.") Go? Go where?

There's the problem. In a shrinking<sup>26</sup> world where new lines of communication are multiplying each day, we Americans find ourselves inserting a lingo<sup>27</sup> that clutters<sup>28</sup> all those communication channels with static<sup>29</sup> and incomprehension<sup>30</sup>.

【注释】

1. anthropologist: 人类学家
2. lift humans ... kingdom: 使人类高于各种动物
3. take for granted: 认为……是天生的; 将……想当然
4. convey: 表达
5. intimate: 亲近的; 密切的
6. posit: 认为
7. kicker: 唱反调的人
8. monolingual: 只使用一种语言的; 单语的
9. evolve into a dialect: 发展为一种方言
10. obsession: 老想要做的事; 萦绕心头的想法
11. jargon: 行话; 切口
12. buzz words: (内容空洞、故弄玄虚)的玄妙术语; 时髦词语; 口号
13. acronyms: 首字母缩略语
14. military terminology: 军事术语

15. at an exponential pace: 以指数式的步伐增长; 以极快的速度递增 16. scam: 滚开 17. cockamamie: 荒谬可笑的; 蹩脚的  
 18. dis: 损坏了的; 不管用的 19. wonk: <俚>刻苦用功的学生; 勤学刻苦专注的人 20. What's your take on that, Mr President: 您持什么立场, 总统先生? 21. raise an eyebrow: 竖起眉毛 (表示惊异、怀疑等) 22. make sense of: 理解; 弄懂……的意思 23. decipher: 破译; 解释 24. slurred: 含含糊糊的 25. Fillerup: (给车)加油? (系 Fill her up?在语流中连读的读音) 26. shrinking: 缩小的; 萎缩的 27. lingo: <贬>奇怪难懂的语言; 外国话; (个人的)特征语 28. clutter: 使变嘈杂拥挤 29. static: 静电噪声 30. incomprehension: 不理解, 不懂

## 0.2 HOW THIS BOOK WILL HELP YOU

This book should thoroughly sensitize<sup>1</sup> you to the problems our shipmates on this “spaceship earth”<sup>2</sup> encounter when trying to comprehend American English. It should also help you become a better global communicator<sup>3</sup>, whether you're trying to understand English English (the language spoken in England) while on vacation or whether you're negotiating a business deal in English in Japan.

Throughout this book, the medium for attaining this new awareness about English lingo will be stories — true-life examples that illustrate how confounding<sup>4</sup> our language can be. Stories are our vehicle<sup>5</sup> of choice because such diverse sources as the Bible, Sesame Street, and Paul Harvey each have demonstrated, in their own way, that stories are an effective

means to make a point<sup>6</sup>. The stories in this book will offer tips<sup>7</sup>, provide lessons, and present paradigms<sup>8</sup> — many of which are punctuated<sup>9</sup> with a smile.

Not all the stories are lighthearted, however. Some are tragically serious — like the true account of the Japanese boy visiting Baton Rouge, Louisiana, who did not comprehend the command “Freeze!”<sup>10</sup> and was fatally shot.

To establish the premise<sup>11</sup> that American English is difficult to export, Chapter 1 contains a series of lighthearted anecdotes<sup>12</sup>, each describing some blurred facet<sup>13</sup> of our multisided language. Then, Chapter 2 provides background and evidence on why American English is so difficult.

Chapter 3 returns to the entertaining aspect of American lingo by serving up a variety of memorable “mangled”<sup>14</sup> misstatements.” This chapter shows why trying to understand American English can be like exploring a dimly lit hall of mirrors<sup>15</sup>.

Chapter 4 and 5 examine the boundaries of the English-speaking world. We learn how easily an American, a Britisher, an Australian, a New Zealander, or a South African might come to blows<sup>16</sup> with other English speakers because of misunderstandings in the use of our so-called common language<sup>17</sup>.

Chapter 6 turns to the serious business of how to effectively use translators and interpreters. Once again, there are plenty of humorous examples to show that even the professionals<sup>18</sup> suffer from foot-in-mouth<sup>19</sup> disease.

Chapter 7 enters the language labyrinth<sup>20</sup> of social

conversation. This chapter provides pointers on how to meet, greet, and converse with people in various places around the world. It might help you the next time you find yourself tongue-tied<sup>21</sup> in, say, Thailand.

“The Tower of Business Babel<sup>22</sup>” is the title of Chapter 8, which contains information helpful to anyone traveling outside the United States on business. You will find advice for dealing with everything from brand names to boardrooms<sup>23</sup> to bathrooms<sup>24</sup> around the world.

Chapter 9 acquaints you with confusing cognates<sup>25</sup>, those *faux amis* we mentioned earlier, plus a short but practical tutorial<sup>26</sup> on how people answer the phone around the world.

In Chapter 10, you’ll find the payoff<sup>27</sup>, the solutions, the winning formulae<sup>28</sup> — a list of ten tips for communicating more effectively when dealing with anyone for whom English is a second, or third, language.

There is also a helpful appendix on what to know about other languages. Essays on six key languages are presented from lighthearted perspectives<sup>29</sup>. In addition, a survival list of key words and phrases — complete with phonetic pronunciations — is provided for each of those languages.

【注释】

1. sensitize: 使敏感; 变得敏感    2. shipmates on this “spaceship earth”: 此‘地球宇宙飞船’上的同伴 (点评: 作者将地球比作太空中的宇宙飞船, 地球上的人类比作同乘一条飞船的乘客。)    3. global communicator: 能与全球居民交流的人    4. confounding: 使人不知所措的    5. vehicle: 方式; 媒介, 手段    6. make a point:

说明点问题 7. tips: 解难良策 8. paradigm: 规范; 样式 9. punctuate: 不时打断 10. Freeze: 不许动! 11. premise: 假定; 前提 12. lighthearted anecdotes: 轻松愉快的轶闻趣事 13. blurred facet: 模糊不清的方面 14. mangled: 弄糟的; 损坏的 15. dimly lit hall of mirrors: 灯光黯淡的镜子大厅 16. come to blows: 动起手来; 开始互殴 17. common language: 通用语; 普通话 18. professionals: 专业人员; 职业从事……者 19. foot-in-mouth: <口>说话笨拙的; 说话不得体的 20. labyrinth: 迷宫 21. tongue-tied: 张口结舌的; 笨嘴笨舌的 22. Babel: 巴别(基督教《圣经》中的城市名, 诺亚的后代在此建造通天塔; 上帝怒其狂, 使建塔人操不同语言, 故塔未能建成)。此处“the Tower of Business Babel”指“通向生意成功之途的通天塔” 23. boardroom: (董事会的) 会议室 24. bathroom: <委婉>厕所 25. cognate: 同源词; 同根词 26. tutorial: 辅导课程 27. payoff: 决定性因素 28. formulae: 公式 29. perspective: 方面; 角度

### 【点评】

- a. the Bible 即《圣经》, 基督教的经典, 分为《旧约全书》和《新约全书》两大部分。基督教相信《圣经》中所记述的全部都是上帝的启示和永恒的真理, 是人们信仰的总纲和处世的规范, 因此把它作为教义、教规、神学、礼仪、节庆等的根本依据。
- b. *Sesame Street* 译名为《芝麻街》, 是美国一个电视连续剧, 它利用动画和傀儡, 教学前儿童认字、记数等。
- c. Paul Harvey (1918 - ) 系美国俄克拉荷马州的名人。

## 0.3 SUMMARY

With this book in hand, or in mind, you can eliminate

"inability to communicate" as your number one fear when traveling abroad. With a little time, a bit of study, and hopefully more than a few laughs, you will be able to relegate<sup>1</sup> this fear to the bottom of your list. As you travel, you can get back to worrying about more important things ... such as if you turned the iron<sup>2</sup> off before leaving home, the odds of riots<sup>3</sup> or nuclear bomb threats at your destination, and whether your airline seatmate will have *both* body odor and bad breath.

Roger E. Axtell

**P. S.** If you would like to contribute your experiences and anecdotes when dealing internationally with our wacky<sup>4</sup> language, please send them to the editor of this book: P J Dempsey, Senior Editor, Professional & Trade Division, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 605 Third Ave., New York, NY 10158-0012.

【注释】

1. relegate: 把……降级; 将……退至次要地位      2. iron: 熨斗      3. the odds of riots: 发生暴乱的可能      4. wacky: 古怪的, 疯疯癫癫的

# Contents

**Acknowledgments, v**

**Introduction, vii**

## **Part I**

### **UNDERSTANDING AMERICAN ENGLISH**

#### **1 Exporting American English, 3**

International Travel, 4  
Social Conversations, 8  
Confusing Cognates, 13  
Pronunciation, 15  
Misunderstood American Slang, 19

#### **2 Why American English Is So Difficult, 25**

1066 and All That, 26  
English Spoken Here... and Everywhere, 30  
What Should We Call American English?, 32  
Playing the Word Game, 33  
Oxymorons, 40  
Regional American English 42  
Pronunciation, 44  
Fillers, 47  
Black English, 48  
Youth Slang, 49  
Political Jargon, 51  
Doublespeak, 52



Bureaucratese, 54

Summary, 55

### **3 Mangled Misstatements, 57**

## **Part II**

## **UNDERSTANDING WORLD ENGLISH**

### **4 English English, 79**

Bloody Awful Words, 83

Riding the Highway of Words, 88

Food Is Not Necessarily Foode, 92

Grammar: Garbled or Grand?, 96

Spelling, 98

Is It Briton or Brit?, 99

A Dog's Breakfast, 100

Reference Books, 107

Summary, 108

### **5 English: The Global Language, 110**

The First Faux Pas, 112

Canada, 114

Australia, 121

New Zealand, 126

South Africa, 130

Where Is English Spoken?, 136

What You Need to Know about Other English-speaking  
Nations, 140