

西方语言学原版影印系列丛书 12



英语语言文化史

*A CULTURAL HISTORY
OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE*

〔英〕Gerry Knowles 著



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A Cultural History of the English Language

Gerry Knowles



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总 序

胡壮麟

“西方语言学原版影印系列丛书”是北京大学出版社外语编辑部建立以来的一个新产品，具有重大意义。随着国内高等教育的发展，这几年来本科生、硕士生和博士生的招生名额都扩大了，教材建设再次提上了日程。除组织国内老师自行编写外，从国外直接引进仍不失为一个有效途径。语言学是一门领先科学，因此本丛书的有些内容对其他专业的老师和学生、研究者，甚至业余学习者也有很高参考价值。例如，像有关语料库、认知语言学的著作除外语老师外，计算科学、统计学、认知科学、词典编辑等专业的研究人员和师生也有一读之必要。

北大版“西方语言学原版影印系列丛书”的问世是意料中的事。早在2002年1月北京大学出版社已出版过“西方语言学丛书”，从剑桥大学出版社引进了六卷本《英语语言史》，Robert D. van Valin 和 Randy J. Lapolla 的《句法：结构、意义与功能》，Andres Radford 的《最简方案：句法理论与英语结构》……共七种，在外语界独树一帜。经过两至三年的摸索，经验更丰富了，视野更扩大了。这表现在选题方面语言学和应用语言学并重，这更符合研究生专业目录中有关“语言学和應用语言学”的基本要求。我们的学生既要有理论知识，也要有如何运用有关理论的知识，只有这样，才能将所学的专业知识更好地为国家建设服务。

2 总序

另一点值得我们考虑的是，全面掌握语言学和应用语言学的专业知识固然是保证教学质量的一个方面，我们还要让高等学校的学生经常站在本学科的前沿，接触本学科的最新成果，掌握本学科的最新动向。这也是保证教材质量，从而保证所培养学生质量的一个重要方面。因此，本丛书既引进有关学科在各时期的经典著作，更注意引进 21 世纪的新著。长江后浪推前浪，许多经典著作最初也是以新著的形式问世的，其作者的年龄往往属于新生代。因此，时代意识是本系列丛书的一大特征。

为了实现这一目标，本丛书采取灵活的出版发行方式，既可系统成套出版，也可成熟一本，出版一本。这样，只要国外有好的新著出版，北京大学出版社根据该书的质量和国内的需要，及时引进。这在信息爆炸的今天，尤为重要。我们还认为，这套丛书的建设与广大读者的监督和支持是分不开的。我们欢迎读者对本丛书不足之处提出宝贵意见，我们更欢迎读者和业内行家向我们推荐有引进价值的著作！

2004 年 5 月

北京大学蓝旗营

导 读

王继辉

1786 年是西方语言学发展史上一个重要年头，这一年，英国语文学者 W. 琼斯爵士 (William Jones) 凭着他对古典语言的周密研究，在他的一篇论文中，就欧洲语言的谱系问题作出了一个划时代的判断。他指出，以语音系统而论，梵语与希腊语和拉丁语之间存在着显著的对应关系，因而它们应该派生自同一个亲本语言 (参见 Fennell 著 *A History of English: A Sociolinguistic Approach* 第 21 页)。他的这一论点对语言学界来说的确具有异乎寻常的意义：一方面，它为历史语言学这一当时的新兴领域提供了科学的比较研究方法，从而为日后的完善与发展奠定了良好的基础，另一方面，它也于有意无意之中为后世的历史语言学学者们勾画出了一个不易突破的研究范围。于是，在此后 100 多年中，无论是注重历时研究的历史语言学，还是同时也关注共时研究的地域语言学及类型语言学，都将其探究的核心界定在诸如语音、音系、形态、句法、词汇等语言的基础结构之上，而对决定或影响语言变化走势的诸多文化因素，却长期没有给予足够的重视。

如果说早期的历史语言学学者们只是在很大程度上没有重视文化因素在语言演变过程中所起到的至关重要的作用，那么，把与语言演变相关的文化环境理性地视为非语言研究领域，并借此试图将此类文化因素与语言研究彻底割裂开的，当是瑞士语言学家索绪尔 (Ferdinand de Saussure, 1857—1913)，以及与他抱有相同或相似结构主义观念的众多语言学者们了。根据索绪尔的理论，“语言为表达观念的独立符号系统” (参见 Saussure 著 *Course in General Linguistics* 第 15 页)，而纯粹的语言研究当是对存在于语言深层的语言结构的观

察、分析与判断,至此,语言系统本身即已被定位为语言学者们惟一应该关注的研究对象(参见威雨村著《现代语言学的特点和发展趋势》第243页)。正是在这一主流语言观念的影响下,于20世纪上半叶相继出版的一批英语语言史专著与教材,虽偶有例外^①,几乎都将其绝大部分篇幅用于分析和讲解英语语音、形态、句法、词汇等在各个时期文学文本中所显示出来的细微变化,而在直接引起这些变化的,或对影响变化走势的种种文化因素上所花的笔墨,要么一章半节,只在对语言变化的讨论中作为背景资料点到为止,要么干脆轻描淡写,读完后读者总会领略到一种无足轻重,完全可以忽略不计的印象。

这种将语言视为封闭自足的符号系统,倾心关注语言内部结构的研究而忽略对语言足以发生强烈影响的各类外部因素的语言学研究倾向,到了20世纪50年代前后才开始有了一些转变,此后的几十年里,随着社会语言学、语用学等新的语言学领域的相继确立,及其在理论上的迅速发展,语言学学者们不断地显露出对语言是文化的载体这一命题实质性的兴趣,并以空前开阔的视角重新审视语言与文化^②之间复杂而多变的联系。这种变化着的语言研究观念当然也在历史语言学界,特别是在英语史学界有着显著的表现。Gerry Knowles 于1979年出版的《英语语言文化史》(*A Cultural History of the English*

① Albert C. Baugh 和 Thomas Cable 在其合著的《英语史》(*A History of the English Language*)第三版前言中,开篇便含蓄地又一次捡起了他们在该书第一版前言中曾涉及的一个话题,其大意是,距这部著作的初版印刷,已过去了二十余年,但他们编写这部大学教科书的初衷仍未改变,即试图以均衡对待语言的“内史”与“外史”的方式,来阐释英语语言在其特殊的政治、社会与文化外力的推动下,所经历的特殊的历史发展过程(参见 Baugh 著 *A History of the English Language* 前言第 xiii 页)。他们在此显然是在特别强调英语史中“外史”的重要性,即导致英语向一特定方向演化的政治、社会、文化等因素在不同时期所起的重要作用。作者在其著作中对英语语言“外史”的特殊关照,实际上在告诉我们,及至20世纪50年代,在英语史的撰写中依然盛行着注重语言系统的变化,忽略文化环境影响的传统结构主义倾向,也正是他们的这种特殊视野,使得这部《英语史》明显有别于此前出版的其他英语史著作。

② 根据美国语言学者萨丕尔(Edward Sapir, 1884—1939)的说法,一个特定社会所做的和所想的即是该社会文化的核心内容(参见萨丕尔著《语言论:言语研究导论》第135页),这一与人们的思想与生活为一体的文化若发生变化,其变化当然会导致该社会所用语言的变化。

Language)即是在这一语言学研究思潮中推出的一部具有代表性,同时又颇具典型特色的英语史专著。

这是一部兼顾语言学研究者和英语专业学生两个读者群体的英语语言史简明教程。与其他同类教科书相比,这部专著确实显示出了它明显与众不同的地方。我们在阅读传统的英语史教科书时,会很容易地看到,它们在内容编排上几乎无一例外地将英语语言的整部历史按时间顺序,清楚地区划为古代英语(Old English)、中古英语(Middle English)、早期现代英语(Early Modern English)、现代英语(Modern English)、当代英语(Present-day English)等章节,而在每一区划清晰的章节中,编撰者也同样依照传统惯例以简短的历史背景介绍开篇,之后便是对这一时期英语的语音、形态、句法、词汇等与语言结构相关的话题进行分节讨论。这种以语言结构变化的介绍为核心的编排框架在英语史撰写中无疑是个长期被广泛认可的定式,而《英语语言文化史》则以其独到的视角将这一定式化的英语史编排框架有效地隐于本书关注点的后面。这部英语史在章节安排上的确令人耳目一新:作者依据英语演变的时间脉络,向读者依次分章介绍了英语自形成后与北欧语言、法语、拉丁语等的接触,以及因接触这些历史上强势种族所使用的语言而带给英语自身的影响,接着便是对英语由英格兰语言,到大不列颠语言,最终成为英国语言的整个过程中,所发生变化的讨论,其中还穿插论述了英史中的农民起义、宗教改革、光荣革命、十七八世纪之间英国文人净化本族语言的一系列努力,乃至20世纪末信息高速公路的出现这些重大历史事件曾给英语带来的深刻影响,从而使读者通过这些别开生面的具体叙述,不仅逐步在头脑中形成了一个明晰的历史概念,同时也看到了英国在政治、社会、文化方面的复杂经历对英语最终变成今天的形态所起到的关键作用。

其实,《英语语言文化史》的作者如此编排其著作的内容是有其坚实的语言学理念所支撑的。Knowles在本书的前言中明确指出,随着近年来语言学研究领域的不断拓宽,英语史的研究者们除更深入地探讨文学语言的变化过程,更细致地研究语音、语法等语言形式的变化外,他们凭着多年的研究积累也愈来愈清楚地看到,深入探究诸如不同语言的交互影响、文本新种类、各方言之间的关系、皮钦语(pidgin),乃至克里奥耳语(creole)的形成等与英语演变密切相关

的诸多问题,并以更为广阔的视野关注这些问题,必将深化我们对英语演变过程的理解,以此为目的编撰出来的这部语言文化史,成为以解释语言结构的变化为主要任务的语言史的重要辅助读物,当然是有它的道理了。

作为一部可读性很强的英语史教材,除了因其视角新而为读者提供了诸多新的材料与新的见解外,《英语语言文化史》还具有如下几个特色。首先,作者将英语的历史一直讲述到20世纪90年代后期,明确点出了文化全球化趋势对英语日后发展走向的决定作用。比如,在本书的最后一章,作者告诉我们,由于后殖民时期英语已演变成了跨国度跨文化的通用商务语言,加上多媒体技术、信息高速公路首先在非英国地区的出现,并迅速在全球范围内得以传播与普及,因此,英语语言不可能继续再以往日“标准发音”(received pronunciation)、“女王英语”(Queen's English)的骄傲来维护自身的“纯粹”与“高贵”,英语仍不可避免地不断变化着,而此时的变化与全球的文化走向愈来愈紧密地联系到了一起。其次,《英语语言文化史》除详细向读者分章讲述特定历史文化环境对英语语言造成的影响外,为便于读者对感兴趣的相关话题作更深入的研究,作者在各章均详细地向读者推荐与所讨论的话题相关的重要文献,并以附录的形式专门为读者指明可继续研究的相关领域与话题。例如,作者在第二章中谈到了凯尔特语言对英语的有限影响这个话题,并表示对这一长期为学界公认的观点有所保留。为进一步引起读者的重视,作者特地在卷尾的附录中再度指出,从表面上看,凯尔特语言除在英语中留下一些地名外,对英语的结构,特别是深层结构似乎没有形成什么影响,但事实并不一定如此简单,单从英语语音的变化上看,其变化规律与凯尔特语言的语音变化多有相同或相似之处,因此,后者对前者没有留下什么实质性的影响这一通行说法或许不够准确,大有继续开展研究的余地。诸如此类研究建议在书中还有很多,这些建议当对阅读者日后的研究工作有相当大的启发作用。再次,由于编撰此书的宗旨在于为英语语言在1500多年的演变历史中发生的变化提供翔实的文化史依据,作者将主要精力放在了对影响英语演变走向的文化因素的描述上,而有意略去了传统英语史教科书对语言结构变化的详细讲解,也正是因为这一独特的讨论角度,全书少有充斥其他同类著作中的那些复杂难记

的专门术语，因而尽管作者在本书中涉及英语史的绝大部分重要话题，但全书的行文却显得深入浅出，通俗易懂，这一显著特征越发增强了整部著作的可读性。

应该说，Knowles 的《英语语言文化史》是部有特色的英语史教科书，它强调语言演变过程中文化因素重要性的特殊角度，它对语言文化史在语言史研究中的准确定位，它简短易懂，颇具可读性的文本特征，加上它所提供的丰富翔实的史料，及其老到雄辩的论述与判断，使这部书成为近年来少见的具有相当学术价值又方便易读的通俗英语史专著。

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Preface

The growth of computer-based technology has already fundamentally changed the role of the textbook. In view of the amount of information now available, particularly the kind of detail appearing in the more specialist literature, it is impossible for one short textbook to provide an exhaustive account of the history of English. The analysis of historical corpora is making us reconsider issues which were previously thought to be long since established. Much historical information does not properly belong in a book at all. Sound changes, for example, belong in a relational database, and they are better presented in hypertext with linked sound files than in a conventional book. The aim of this book is therefore to provide a general framework which will be of assistance in the interpretation of historical data.

It is intended as an outline history of the English language for linguists and for students of linguistics and modern English language. In the past, the history of English has typically been studied in the context of English language and literature, and consequently there are large numbers of textbooks which chronicle the changing literary language. There are also many textbooks which are devoted to changes in linguistic form and which trace the history of English phonology, grammar and lexis. However, the scope of linguistics has increasingly extended over recent years to include the social role of language, and this raises such issues as languages in contact, the development of literacy and new text types, and the relationship between standard language and dialects. These things need to be reflected in the historical study of the language. I have sought to take a wider view of the language, and to show how it came to be the way it is. This wider view means that I have not concentrated on the minutiae of linguistic form, and so I have made relatively little use of technical terminology. As a result I hope this book will be more accessible to the general reader.

A consequence of taking a wider view is that one has to reinterpret much of the history of English. Inexplicable gaps must be filled. The peasants' revolt of 1381 and the English revolution of the 1640s both had profound consequences for the language, but they are scarcely mentioned

in conventional histories. Secondly, one has to confront the popular myths – many of them of considerable interest and antiquity in their own right – which lie behind the received interpretations. I have attempted to find a deeper explanation than is conventionally given for beliefs about English. Why should English people believe their own language to be inadequate? Why was the English translation of the Bible politically contentious? Why were prescriptive attitudes to English prevalent in the eighteenth century? Why should ideas of ‘language deficit’ be taken seriously in the twentieth century? In dealing with myths, I have tried to identify the different interests that people have sought to represent and defend. The attitude of the medieval church towards English, for example, may come across as utterly bizarre until one takes into account the economic, intellectual and political power which churchmen of the time were defending. It is more difficult to deal with myths when the political issues are still alive. I find it difficult, for instance, to say anything positive about the intolerant attitudes to language which developed after 1660, and which have profoundly influenced the form which the language takes today.

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Introduction

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to raise some of the main issues that are involved in the study of the history of the English language. The first section provides a brief outline history for the reader with no previous historical background, and presents some of the basic historical material which (allowing for some necessary simplification) would be generally accepted by language historians. The remaining sections deal with some general points which are developed further in later chapters. I have used cross-references to make explicit the connections between this chapter and more particular instances in the later chapters.

1.1 *An outline history*

A language related to Modern English has been spoken in Britain since the early fifth century. Before the Roman legions left Britain, the east coast of England was already being subjected to raids from Saxon invaders from beyond the North Sea. In the course of the next century, the newcomers began to settle permanently. According to Bede, a monk from Jarrow writing in the late eighth century, they belonged to three tribes, Angles, Saxons and Jutes. The people are now generally referred to as *Anglo-Saxons*, but their language has always been called *English*. Eventually they conquered the whole of what is now England, and English replaced the Celtic language, which was until then spoken by the mass of the population.

The English speakers were themselves subjected to further raids from across the North Sea, this time from Danes. The first raids date from 797, and eventually the Danes conquered a large part of England north and east of a line stretching from Chester to the Thames. At the time of King Alfred, only the land south and west of this line remained in Anglo-Saxon hands. The Danish invasion and subsequent settlement had a considerable

influence on the English language, and many words were borrowed into English, especially into the dialects of the north.

After the Norman conquest in 1066, French became the spoken language of the aristocracy in England, while Latin was adopted as the main written language. English was still spoken by the lower orders of society, but the old written tradition eventually collapsed, and few English written records survive for 200 years after about 1150. French remained in use for some 300 years, until it was gradually replaced by English after the middle of the fourteenth century. The kind of English that emerged, however, was strongly influenced by French, and contained a large number of French words and expressions. The French influence can be seen in the language of Chaucer, who died in 1400.

Caxton introduced printing into England in the 1470s, and written texts became much more widely available than before. Printing was the catalyst for the major upheavals of the sixteenth century which were linked in various ways to the Renaissance and the Reformation. It is from about this time that scholars began to write in English instead of Latin, and as a result many Latin words were borrowed into English. English literature flourished at the end of the sixteenth century, the time of Shakespeare (1564–1616). The Authorized Version of the English Bible was published in 1611.

Modern Standard English can be traced to about the time of Chaucer, but was for a long time variable in spelling, in the use of words, and in the details of English grammar. After the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, there was considerable interest in fixing the language, and in 1712 Jonathan Swift proposed the setting up of an Academy to do this. By default, however, it was left to scholars to decide on what should be included in Standard English. Johnson's dictionary of 1755 did much to standardize spellings and fix the meanings of words. Several grammars were produced, among the more influential being Lowth's grammar of 1762. From the 1760s there was increasing interest in fixing a standard of English pronunciation, which resulted in a tradition of pronouncing dictionaries, of which the most influential was Walker's dictionary of 1791. It was not until the present century that a standard pronunciation was described in detail. This is Daniel Jones's *Received pronunciation*, which was adopted by the BBC in the 1920s as a standard for broadcasting.

1.2 Language and social change

Even from this broadly sketched outline it is immediately clear that the history of the language has been determined in various ways by social change. For most of the 1500 years of its history English has been subjected to a pattern of continuous small-scale change interrupted by major