



*Hints
for
Learners
of
English*

向学习英语者讲话

葛传槩

四川人民出版社

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HINTS FOR LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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前 言

这本选集是从我自己的三本书——《葛传槩英文集 (Man and Student)》(1937年),《英文刍言 (A Word to the Wise)》(1939年)和《英文作文教本 (A Textbook of English Composition)》(1941年)——中选出论述学习英语的三十七篇文章编成的。每篇揭示一个或两个问题,大都是英语语法书和英语修辞学书所不曾讲到的。内容谈到什么读物是初学者需要读的和什么是不宜读的;怎样才能读得精细;说、读和写的关系;掌握常用词汇,选用语词和写的关系;以及拘泥语法条条,一概类推所造成的错误等问题。

各篇文字,重新校订了一遍,作了一些更动,并加汉译和注解。编排方面得到田雨三同志的帮助,特此致谢。

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What to Read

Suppose you have two friends, A and B, both of whom have been learning English for some years. Both are clever young men, and both are anxious to acquire a good knowledge of the language. But now they have got very different results from the several years of study: A can write short letters and read easy news items but cannot read any passage¹ in the classics, while B can read here and there in some classics but cannot write short letters or read easy news items. Reader, which of your two friends would you prefer to be like?

I believe you would prefer to be like A rather than² B. You should³. I am sorry to find that among Chinese learners of English there seem to be more like B than like A. The trouble lies chiefly in⁴ what is read.

Well, what do you read? I mean to ask what you take as your chief reading matter. Is it a

novel or a volume of essays written more than a hundred years ago? If it is, my advice to you is to change it for something else. Your chief reading matter must have been written far less than a hundred years ago, a few weeks ago if possible, must have been written in simple English, and must have been written by an Englishman or an American.

I am not going to give a list of books here. But I think I have to make some general remarks. Your chief reading matter need not be a literary masterpiece⁵. Nor need it be written by a famous author. A volume of short pieces of narration or exposition is better than a novel or some long argumentative essays⁶.

You must have noted that in the above I have talked about only what your chief reading matter should be. You have a book or two for your chief reading matter. You should also read something else, which may be a little more difficult, but which still had better not⁷ be a classic of more than a hundred years ago.

*

NOTES

1. passage (一段) 文字.
2. rather than 而非.

3. should=should prefer to be like A rather than B.
4. lie chiefly in ... 主要在于……。
5. literary masterpiece 文学杰作。
6. argumentative essays 议论文。
7. had better not ... 最好不……。

Reading Aloud

Do you ever read aloud? The chances are¹ that you do not now read aloud. You used to read aloud when you were a small child. But you ceased to read aloud at fourteen or fifteen. If I'm not mistaken, among certain boys and girls late in their teens² reading aloud is now a lost art³.

You may protest, "What⁴ if I were to read aloud, when I do not read aloud and yet understand?" Well, much would come of⁵ reading aloud. Reading aloud helps you to learn by heart, and learning by heart is essential to all who aim at writing well. Reading aloud helps you to cultivate good pronunciation and good intonation, and good pronunciation and good intonation are essential to all language learners. Reading aloud helps you to discover certain beauties of language that you may fail to see in your silent reading. Unless you read aloud, you cannot learn to write naturally or to appreciate literature.

And I think that it is partly because they do not read aloud that many Chinese learners of English cannot read poetry. A certain English man of letters⁶ has said that a poem is not a poem until it is read; and evidently by "read" he means read aloud. A poem *is*⁷ something to read aloud. There are many poems that you may learn to like and enjoy by reading them aloud, though you find several difficult points in them. On the other hand, you may understand a poem merely as you understand a piece of matter-of-fact prose⁸, if you do not read it aloud. "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe⁹, for example, is a very beautiful poem. But its beauty depends largely upon its wonderful music. Below is its first stanza. Try first to read it silently as though it were a business letter¹⁰ and then to read it aloud, and compare the two impressions.

"Once upon a midnight dreary¹¹, while I pondered, weak and weary,

Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore¹²,

While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping

As of¹³ someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.

"Tis¹⁴ some visitor", I muttered, "tapping at

my chamber door;
Only this and nothing more.”

•

NOTES

1. The chances are ... 大约……。
2. their teens 从十三到十九岁时。
3. lost art 不复存在的艺术。
4. What 有何效果。
5. come of ... 由……而来。
6. man of letters 文人。
7. is 实在是。
8. matter-of-fact prose 乏味的散文。
9. “The Raven” of Edgar Allan Poe (1809—1849) Poe 是美国诗人。“The Raven” 是追念已死情人的诗, “Raven” 是“乌鸦”。
10. business letter 事务信。
11. midnight dreary=dreary midnight 凄凉的半夜。
12. many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore 许多讲述旧闻的奇书。
13. As of=like that of
14. 'Tis=It is

Can You Read Englishmen's English?

I have heard several people tell me that in reading English-language newspapers they find Chinese news far easier to read than foreign news, and that they are often at a loss to discover¹ the meaning of even a very short piece of news from some little town in England or America. I also feel that there are many who can read without much difficulty articles written by Chinese on Chinese subjects but cannot read those written by Englishmen on English subjects.

The trouble with such people is that while they have acquired a knowledge of the English language, they have not learnt much about the English mind², the English character³, English life, the English traditions, and so forth. They have not got, so to speak⁴, the spirit of the language. Imagine a man who knows several thousand Han characters⁵ and a great deal of Han syntax and yet is entirely ignorant of the Chi-

these mind, the Chinese character, etc. Do you think this man could read even the ordinary Han-language newspaper and general literature in Han?

Reader, do you think you are among those who know English but as a rule find great difficulty in reading Englishmen's English? I am afraid you are. I would advise you to read as much as possible in general English literature and to cultivate the habit of thinking in English.⁶ I would also advise you to read some concise history of England and commit to memory⁷ every bit of knowledge about English life and thought that you may find in reading or study;

NOTES

1. are often at a loss to discover 往往不能看出。
2. mind 心理状态。
3. English character 英国的民族性格
4. so to speak 可以这样说。
5. Han characters 汉字。
6. cultivate the habit of thinking in English 养成以英语思维的习慣。
7. commit to memory 记入心中。

What Kind of English?

There are English English, American English, Scotch English, Irish English, and other kinds of English. Examples; "half past three" is English English, "half after three" is American English, "bairn"¹ is Scotch English, "I am after having my dinner"² is Irish English, "nor gold nor silver"³ is archaic English, "Thank you for same"⁴ is business English, and "I don't know nobody here"⁵ is vulgar English.

Advanced learners of English ought to pay attention to such details, and I think they will find it very interesting to go into the subject⁷. But every learner of English is not an advanced one⁸. I call it foolish of one to⁹ attempt the subject before one has acquired the ability to speak, read, and write English as it is used by the average educated Englishman or American of today. One has yet much to learn before one can be properly called an advanced learner of

English so long as one cannot read the news¹⁶ or cannot express oneself¹¹ intelligibly to Englishmen or Americans in speaking and writing.

By “English as it is used by the average educated Englishman or American” I mean¹² everyday idiomatic English. It is practical, if that means *actually used*, but not if that means *pecially adapted to Chinese psychology*¹³. I have to mention this because it seems that many Chinese students have the mistaken idea¹⁴ that while what is written about things Chinese¹⁵ is practical, what is written about things foreign¹⁶ is not practical. The fact is, however, that, one cannot master English — that is, what I call practical English — by reading about things Chinese only. I would advise those who are in the habit of¹⁷ confining themselves to¹⁸ Chinese news when reading newspapers in English, to give up¹⁹ the habit.

NOTES

1. bairn: child
2. I am after having my dinner. 我刚吃完饭。
3. nor gold nor silver 既无金，又无银。
4. same=the same 此物。
5. business English 商业英语。

6. I don't know nobody here=I don't know anybody here
=I know nobody here.
7. go into the subject 研究这个问题。
8. every student of English is not an advanced one=not
every student of English is an advanced one.
9. call it foolish of one to ... 认为……是愚笨的事。
10. the news 每天的新闻。
11. express oneself 表达自己的意思。
12. By "English as it is used by the average educated
Englishman or American" I mean ... 我所说“一般受
过教育的英国人或美国人用的英语就是……”。
13. specially adapted to Chinese psychology 特别合于中国
人的心理。
14. mistaken idea 错误的观念。
15. things Chinese 中国的事物。
16. things foreign 外国的事物。
17. in the habit of 有……的习惯。
18. confining themselves to 自限于。
19. give up 放弃。