

杨云升 著

英语重音研究

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杨云升

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前 言

我们经常在听到外国人讲中文时感觉很别扭,怪怪的。究其原因,除了缺乏操练、水平不高以外,主要是他们对中文的四个声调把握不准,运用不当。那么,中国人讲英语是否也存在南腔北调呢?答案是肯定的,其原因也是由于不能正确把握英语的重音和语调,该重不重,该轻不轻,造成表达不清,交流困难。

语言学习的目的是交流,因此,听说能力的培养至关重要。教育部在2004年颁布的《大学英语课程教学要求》中明确指出:大学英语的教学目的是培养学生的英语综合应用能力,特别是听说能力,使他们在今后工作和社会交往中能够用英语有效地进行口头和书面的信息交流,以适应我国社会发展和国际交流的需要。由此可见,非英语专业学生英语口语能力的培养已经引起领导部门的高度重视。

英语作为世界语言在其漫长的历史发展过程中不断丰富和完善,也正是由于其历史悠久、覆盖面广,使得英语从语音、语法到词汇等诸方面都显得复杂和琐碎。作为从事英语教学多年的教育工作者,我们对中国学生英语语音问题进行了追踪观察,分析、归纳、总结了中国人在英语读音方面容易出现错误,感觉有必要让中国学生全面了解英语语音方面的知识,从理论和实践上切实掌握英语读音,以便提高英语的综合素质和英语的形象。基于此目的,我们编著了本书。

本书的特点:分析全面,数据翔实,重点突出。

全书共分五章:第一章是历史回顾,着重探讨了英语重音的发展变化及其原因;第二章是词汇重音,分析了日耳曼语与拉丁语的

词汇重音区别;第三章讲的是词尾重音规则;第四章是关于合成词及其重音问题;第五章分析英语重音转移的规则。

本书采用国际通用的 **Webster** 大词典的注音体系标注单词音标。

本书适用于英语语音学者及其他英语爱好者。

编者

2006 年 5 月

Table of Contents

The Study of English Stress	1
Chapter 1 A Historical Overview	3
1. English Vocabulary	3
1.1 Definition	3
1.2 The Structure of English Vocabulary	4
1.3 Assimilated Forms	8
1.4 Derivatives	12
1.4.1 Different Senses	13
1.4.2 Slang & Regional Variation	13
1.4.3 Abbreviations	14
1.4.4 Ad Hoc Compounds	14
1.4.5 Word Building — Living, Dying, and Dead Words	15
1.5 The Size of English Vocabulary	16
2. Conclusion	17
Chapter 2 Word Stress	26
1. Definition	26
2. Germanic 2-syllable Compound Words	28
3. Latinate 2-syllable Words	30
Chapter 3 Word Ending Stress Rules	34
1. Rules with No Exceptions	34

1.1	-tion	35
1.2	-ity	49
1.3	-ian	52
1.4	-ology	54
1.5	-ious/eous/uous	57
1.6	-sion/cion/xion	61
1.7	-ical	62
1.8	-ify	64
1.9	-graphy/grapher	65
1.10	-esce	66
1.11	-osis/isis/asis	67
1.12	-ician	68
1.13	-path/pathy	68
1.14	-itis	69
1.15	-yl	69
1.16	-lysis	70
1.17	-mony	70
1.18	-nion	71
1.19	-eracy	71
1.20	-genous/genize	71
1.21	-onomy	72
2.	Rules with Exceptions	72
2.1	Endings in “ain”	73
2.2	Endings in “ate”	74
2.3	Endings in “ee”	83
2.4	Endings in “eer”	87
2.5	Endings in “ence”	87
2.6	Endings in “ese”	91

2.7	Endings in “que”	92
2.8	Endings in “ette”	93
2.9	Endings in “eur”	95
2.10	Endings in “ia”	95
2.11	Endings in “iate”	97
2.12	Endings in “ic”	99
2.13	Endings in “ience”	107
2.14	Endings in “io”	108
2.15	Endings in “ium”	108
2.16	Endings in “ive”	109
2.17	Endings in “oon”	120
2.18	Endings in “o”	121

Chapter 4 Compound Words and Stress 126

1.	Compound Words: Stress on the First Word	126
2.	Compound Words: Stress on the Second Word	190

Chapter 5 Shifting Stress 215

1.	Introduction	215
1.1	What Is Functional Stress Shift?	
	— A Definition	215
1.2	Functional Stress Shift — The Latinate Words	217
1.3	Functional Stress Shift — The Germanic Words	219
1.4	Functional Stress Shift — The Hybrid Words	220

1.5	Functional Stress Shift — The Historical Context	221
1.6	The Use of French Words	225
1.7	Pronunciation	226
2.	Noun-Verb Functional Stress Shift: The Latinate Part	234
2.1	No Conversion	237
2.2	Partial Conversion	249
2.3	Conversion	285
2.4	Special Section: 2-syllable words	301
3.	Noun-Verb Functional Stress Shift: The Germanic Part	305
3.1	The Major Pattern	306
3.2	The Minor Pattern	318
3.3	Other Combinations	334
3.4	Germanic Root + Word	335
3.5	Unconverted Noun Forms	341
4.	Noun-Verb Functional Stress Shift: The Hybrid Part	358
4.1	Latinate + Other Words	360
4.2	Germanic + Other Words	370
4.3	Other Multi-syllable Hybrid Words	375
4.4	Other Multi-syllable Words	380

The Study of English Stress

Introduction

This guidebook is a reference tool for students and teachers alike. English distinguishes 2 types of stress: word stress and sentence stress. This guide deals mainly with the former. Word stress deals with the stress of the word itself whereas sentence stress examines which words carry stress within the sentence.

This guide also puts words into their overall historical context in order to help understand the irregularities of English stress patterns. The contradictions and exceptions that we often find have to be explained in the overall context of the peculiar history of this language as a hybrid of Latinate and Germanic forms. For this reason Chapter 1 contains an overview of this history.

The differences between American English and British English will not be analyzed in detail here, but in the part of “variations”. This is because whilst these two variants are broadly the same language and mutually intelligible, there are a number of differences between the spoken forms, and these often cause confusion for students and teachers as well. When starting to learn English it makes sense to follow one of the variants until a fluency is achieved. In the context of English now as a world lingua franca, there is no standard English; however because of the current American influence, the

American English tends to be dominant.

This guidebook uses the phonetic system of transcription as found in the Webster dictionary, and also a convention of showing stress by placing an “accent” mark over the stressed vowel or vowel cluster, for example as below: **revolution**.

The reason for this is to aid reading fluency without having to continually refer to phonetic transcriptions. Over-reliance on phonetic transcriptions both for stress and sound will develop a dependency which is hard to break. Such stress mark is useful to show the stress for words that either have no rule for finding the stress, or for words that are simply exceptions. This convention has long been standard practice in the study of Russian as a foreign language, and so Chinese students that have some experience of Russian will be familiar with it.

Chapter 1

A Historical Overview

This overview provides an introduction to the Latinate-Germanic compound nature of English vocabulary. How we analyze the vocabulary of this compound structure will determine our definition of what is requisite for the purposes of effective communication and influence learning strategies accordingly. To communicate well orally, some knowledge of the structure and history of English is essential. Modern English pronunciation is a product of the ongoing synthesis of this Latinate-Germanic structure. In Marxist terms, it is a synthesis of 2 conflicting structures. The details of this “conflicting structure” can be studied in the chapter on “Shifting Stress”. Here, the aim is to provide the general background.

To aid the understanding of this structure the vocabulary has been broken down into parts, and types of word. This overview introduces each one.

1. English Vocabulary

1.1 Definition

Derived from the same Latin root “vox” that gives us the word “voice”, the sense of “vocabulary” is of something “spoken”, or “voiced”. Most communication still takes place

orally, and as a starting point we could simply define a “vocabulary” as being a group of words that we know how to say, and by implication use. The written word attempts to represent the spoken word albeit imperfectly, however in the modern context, vocabulary generally implies the written and spoken word. The senses in which this word is commonly used now are as follows:

- a. To mean all the words of a language.
- b. To mean the number of words that an individual can understand and use whether in speech or writing.
- c. To mean the words said to be representative of a subject or occupation.
- d. To mean a list of words to serve a specific purpose.

1.2 The Structure of English Vocabulary

Historically, English has always been a compound language. It can be usefully described as having an Indo-European foundation with a Germanic base and a classical superstructure consisting of mainly Latin and Greek. In order to show the proportions of this mix, the vocabulary has been split into the following parts: Germanic, Latinate, Greek, and Miscellaneous. Refer to Tables 1, 2 & 3 to see how this vocabulary breaks down. Within each part we can identify different types of words as follows: base words, base compound words, derivatives, multi-sense words, slang & regional variants, abbreviations, ad hoc compounds, names of people & places, and dead words. To understand English vocabulary is to understand not only all these different types of words but also

the structure of the parts from which they have come.

Table 1 is based on a representative vocabulary of base words, and includes a breakdown by syllable. Compare the percentage breakdown totals for each part in Table 1 with the totals in Table 2 which includes compound words in the count. Clearly, including compound words changes the percentage breakdown of the Latinate and Germanic parts and effectively gives both parts equal status. By including other types of words in the count, the percentage balance may further change, however the equal importance of the dominant Latin and Germanic parts remains largely the same.

For the purposes of communication in the context of English as a living language now, it is important to see vocabulary as words in relation to the frequency of their use in everyday language. In planning a learning strategy, frequently used forms such as the compound word need to be given some priority along with ad hoc forms. One of the main purposes of this overview is to highlight the importance of words formed “ad hoc” as part of the living language; words that can’t be looked up but have to be understood in context. To understand this “ad hoc” vocabulary is to understand the possibilities and limitations of the word building structure both within each of the parts, and when forming hybrids. The word split by origin is therefore necessary because it allows the structure of each part to be more easily analyzed.

It is essential to understand the nature and history of this compound structure before deciding what a requisite vocabulary means in the learning context. Although the words in this

representative base vocabulary may have changed to varying degrees over the long term, a more or less stable base and word building structure remains largely unaltered in Modern English. The large number of compound words can be said to characterize the Germanic part. In the modern context, even simple communication is impossible without an understanding of this structure. This analysis therefore groups words and compound words together as forming the base part of the vocabulary.

Much of native speaker illiteracy stems from a limited understanding of the Latinate and Greek words, while the non-native learner generally struggles with these Germanic compound nouns and verbs, or so-called “phrasal verbs”. The reasons for this difficulty are rooted in the history of both the language itself and the history of how it has been taught. Here, an extract from the preface to Samuel Johnson’s dictionary of the English language will suffice to give some indication of the situation facing the non-native learner 250 years ago:

There is another kind of composition more frequent in our language than perhaps in any other, from which arises to foreigners the greatest difficulty. We modify the signification of many verbs by a particle subjoined; as

to come off, to escape by a fetch;

to fall on, to attack;

to fall off, to apostatize;

to break off, to justify;

to fall in, to comply;

to give over, to cease;
to set off, to embellish;
to set in, to begin a course or journey;
to take off, to copy;

with innumerable expressions of the same kind, of which some appear wildly irregular, being so far distant from the sense of the simple words, that no sagacity will be able to trace the steps by which they arrived at the present use. These I have noted with great care; and though I cannot flatter myself that the collection is complete, I believe I have so far assisted the students of our language, that this kind of phraseology will be no longer insuperable; and the combinations of verbs and particles, by chance omitted, will be easily explained by comparison with those that may be found. (1755)

These difficulties are still here today.

Although there has been some integration over time, each part has largely remained self-contained and more or less insulated from the other parts. One reason for this is because each part has a different word structure: The Latinate words consist mainly of bound “root-words” that have no function on their own. For example, “comprehension” when broken down into “com”, “pre”, “hen” and “sion”. The Germanic words consist mainly of free words as typified by the compound verbs with a moveable particle.

Many 1 - or 2-syllable words of non-Germanic origin became assimilated into the base vocabulary of 1- or 2-syllable words so as to be no longer recognizable as either Latinate or

Greek. Such words underwent a process of vernacularism by changing the spelling, sound, and stress. For example, “push” from the Old French “poulser”, and originally from the Latin “puls”. A few words function within both structures without any apparent change of spelling or pronunciation, for example, “press”. This word has been both assimilated into the base structure and retained as Latinate. Compare the following form.

1.3 Assimilated Forms

The vast majority of Latinate words are clearly distinguishable as not Germanic simply by their spelling. Very few words survive as immediately recognizable cognates of German Latin and Greek.

There are also other historical reasons that have kept the parts separate, and these are rooted in the social change brought about by the collapse of feudal society and the rise of Capitalism. This change created a middle class that set itself above the peasant not only with money, or by occupation, but also by education. The Grammar school system that catered to this new class became synonymous with the study of Latin and Greek, and influenced the speech and choice of words of those who were educated by it. Vocabulary thus came to be a defining factor of class, and this tended to keep the different parts of the vocabulary as distinctly separate, and even created a deep prejudice against the Germanic idiom as being somehow “blunt” or “unrefined”.

The Greek and Latin words that made their way into