

ASPECTS OF

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

英语语言研究

张克勤 编著



云南大学出版社

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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

英语语言研究 = Aspects Of The English Language/  
张克勤编著. —昆明:云南大学出版社, 2002. 8  
ISBN 7-81068- 453-1

I. 英... II. 张... III. 英语—研究 IV. H31

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2002)第 027599 号

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ASPECTS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

编著者:张克勤

责任编辑:叶枫红

封面设计:刘雨

出版发行:云南大学出版社

E-mail: yupress@sina.com

地址:昆明市一二一大街云南大学英华园(650091)

电话:发行部(0871)5031071

印装:昆明理工大学印刷厂

开本:850×1168毫米 1/32

印张:10.125

字数:263千字

版次:2002年8月第一版 2002年8月第一次印刷

印数:0001—1000

书号:ISBN 7-81068-453-1/H·57

定价:25.00元

# 前 言

语言是随着人类社会产生而产生，随着人类社会的发展而发展的一种特殊社会现象。它具有表达思想的交际功能，也具有反映一个国家历史文化的社会功能。英语语言的发展也正好反映出英国社会发展的全貌。自从古英语形成以来，英语从一个“出身”不显赫，地位略显卑微的小语言，发展成为当今世界上最重要、使用最广泛、最具影响的全球性语言，它经历了大约 1500 年的漫长岁月。也就是说，英语从一个生命力微弱的婴儿成长为一个年富力强的巨人，这不能不引起人们对它的社会发展、历史背景和语言内部变化的关注和研究的兴趣。对于涉足英语学习或英语语言研究的人来说，有意识或下意识、或多或少地都想了解一些有关英语语言发展的历史和现状。

关于语言发展的研究，一般说来有两种方法：宏观语言研究和微观语言研究。在宏观方面，以社会历史发展为主线，研究某个语言体系的起源、演变和湮灭。在微观方面，研究某个语言系统中具体的词和语法规则的起源、演变和废弃。为了让英语学习者在英语学习中注意观察、研究“活的英语”（living English），本书从宏观的角度，以社会历史发展为线索，展开对英语演变过程的研讨，主要探讨的内容有：英语的起源；英语与其他语言的关系；英语的几个发展阶段；世界主要英语变体的状况；现代英语的语言特点；当今世界英语的地位；21 世纪英语的展望等。本书通过探讨英国社会的发展及历史的变迁，阐述英语语言的变化，说明语言与人类历史的密切关系。我们应该认识到，了解英

语语言变化的基本状况，不仅有助于我们了解英语民族和国家的历史文化，学会从历史发展和语言演变的角度来分析语言现象，也有助于我们掌握和认识英语这门语言。

最后，有一点需要说明的是，本书借鉴了许多学者的研究成果，如果没有他们的著作，我不可能完成本书的编写。在编写过程中，对借用过其成果的作者，我本人表示衷心的感谢。由于我不可能在每一处都注明我所受惠前人之处，敬请详见本书的参考书目。

张克勤

2002年2月

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# General Considerations

## 综 述

### 导读：

英语从6世纪形成至今，已有1500年的历史。它经历了古英语、中古英语、现代英语（早期现代英语和晚期现代英语）三个主要发展阶段。在这期间，英语的内部结构发生了许多深刻的变化，现代英语的大部分词汇和语法结构都是多个历史时代的产物。它们反映出不同时期、不同社会的历史影响。同时，在长期的发展过程中，这些变化呈现出语言发展的特点和内部规律。从语音方面看，英语语音演变的过程就是从一种音位体系过渡到另一种音位体系的历史。从词汇方面来看，新词的产生和旧词的消亡直接而敏感地反映着社会生活和日常生活的变化，同时，也是词汇系统内部矛盾运动的结果。从语法方面看，英语从一种综合性语言演变成为一种分析性语言，这是质的飞跃。值得强调的是，引起语言变化的基本条件是社会的变革与发展。当今世界进入了21世纪，经济全球化和网络信息技术正在把世界编织成一张紧密的大网，英语在国际交往中正起着世界通用语的作用。

Among the many living forms of human speech, and those countless tongues which have arisen and perished in the past, the English language, which has now spread over so many parts of the world, is as humble and obscure in its origin as any other. It is, of course, in no sense native to England, but it was brought by the German tribes — Jutes, An-

gles, and Saxons, who conquered the island in the 5th and 6th centuries; and its nearest relations are to be found among the humble dialects of a few barren islands on the German coast. When the Anglo-Saxon ancestors came first to ravage Britain, and finally to settle there, they found the island inhabited by a people weaker, indeed, but infinitely more civilized than themselves. For several centuries the Celts in England had enjoyed the benefits of Roman government, and shared in the civilization of the Roman Empire; they lived in walled cities, worshipped in Christian churches, and spoke to a certain extent, at least, the Latin language; and it is possible, if this Teutonic invasion had never happened, that the inhabitants of England would be now speaking a language descended from Latin, like French or Spanish or Italian. It is true that English has become almost a half-sister to these 'Romance languages', as they are called, and a large part of its vocabulary is derived from Latin sources: but this is not in any way due to the Roman conquest of Britain, but to the later causes.

English carries the story of its origin as an independent language in this name. The *Engl-* part of the word goes back to the Angles. The *'-ish'* part means 'belonging to' in this case, the language that belonged to the Angles — the *'Angle-ish'* language. The history of the English language begins with the migration of the Jutes, Angles, and Saxons to Britain. But in fact there is no record of the English language until the year 597, when the Anglo-Saxons were converted to Christianity and learned the Latin alphabet. The Christianizing of Britain in 597 brought England into contact with Latin civilization and made significant additions to the English vocabulary.

It is customary to divide the history of the English language into three periods: Old English, Middle English, and Modern English. Old English runs from the earliest period from the 5th century to about 1100;

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Middle English from 1100 to 1500; Modern English from 1500 to the present day. Sometimes Modern English is further divided into Early Modern, 1500 – 1700, and Later Modern, 1700 to the present.

The English language from the 5th century to 1100 is called Old English, which seems like a foreign language to us. When English came into history, it was divided into several more or less autonomous kingdoms, some of which at times exercised a certain amount of control over the others: In the 8th century, Northumbrian power declined, and the center of influence moved southward to Mercia, the kingdom of the Midlands. A century later the center shifted again, and Wessex, the country of the West Saxons, became the leading power. The most famous king of the West Saxons was Alfred the Great. In the military sphere, Alfred's great accomplishment was his successful opposition to the Viking invasions. In the 9th and 10th centuries the Norseman emerged from their homelands in Denmark and the Scandinavian Peninsula. After many years of hit-and-run raids, the Norsemen landed an army on the east coast of England in the year 866. On the eastern side the Norse rule prevailed. This was called the Danelaw. The Scandinavian invasions resulted in a considerable mixture of the two peoples and their languages. The linguistic result to all this was a considerable injection of Norse into the English language. It is supposed that the Norsemen influenced the sound structure and the grammar of English. But this is hard to demonstrate. Some of the differences between Old English and Modern English are merely differences in orthography. In grammar, Old English was much more highly inflected than Modern English is. In vocabulary Old English is quite different from Modern English. Most of the Old English words are what we may call native English: that is, words which have not been borrowed from other languages but which have been a part of English ever since English was a part of the Indo-European. Old English did certainly contain borrowed words.

Now, on the contrary, the majority of words in English are borrowed, taken mostly from Latin and French. The Old English vocabulary was not.

The Norman Conquest (1066) explains many of the shifts in vocabulary that have taken place since the time of the Anglo-Saxons. After Normans came to England, French became the language of the court, the language of the nobility, the language of government, the language of literature. It is in vocabulary that the effects of the Conquest are most obvious. Thus French words came into English, all sorts of them between 1100 and 1500, until at the end of that time many people must have more French words than English at their command. Despite the many French loanwords, English remains English, not a dialect of French. The very heart of the vocabulary remained English. Most of the highly frequently used words — the pronouns, the prepositions, the conjunctions, the auxiliaries, as well as a great many ordinary nouns and verbs and adjectives — were not replaced by borrowings. English grammar, as opposed to vocabulary, remained virtually unaffected by French, and grammatical developments that had begun much earlier during Anglo-Saxon times continued without interruption through the Conquest. Although 1066 in no way marks a change of languages for the people of England, the event can be adopted as a divider between two periods of English: Old English and Middle English. Middle English is characterized both by its greater French vocabulary and, more importantly, by the loss of inflections. By the close of the Middle English period, however, only two of these inflections remained in use, ‘-es’ for plural nouns and the past tense marker ‘-ed’.

The transition from Middle to Modern English started at the end of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th century. The beginning of Modern English witnessed three important developments: the rise of Lon-

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don English, the invention and practice of printing, and the spread of new learning. Then the Renaissance produced many scholars, who were knowledgeable in foreign languages, especially Greek and Classical Latin. Their liberal attitude towards language made possible the introduction of a great number of words into English. Modern English then was still a Germanic language, but it differed from Old English in many ways. The sound system and the grammar changed a good deal. Modern English is remarkable for the way in which other superfluous forms and unnecessary terminations have been discarded. Another great characteristic of Modern English is the use of word order as a means of grammatical expression. This is said to be a simplification, but it isn't really. Languages don't become simpler; they merely exchange one kind of complexity for another. One change was the elimination of a vowel sound in certain unstressed positions at the ending. Another change is what is called the Great Vowel Shift. These two changes then produced the basic differences between Middle English and Modern English. Also there were several other developments that had an effect upon the language. One was the invention of printing, which was introduced into England in 1476. The period of the 16th and 17th centuries was the period of the English Renaissance. New ideas multiplied, and new ideas meant new language. Englishmen had grown accustomed to borrowing words from French as a result of the Norman Conquest; now they borrowed from Latin and Greek. The greatest writer of the Early Modern English period is of course Shakespeare, and the best-known book is the King James Version of the Bible, published in 1611. The Bible has made many features of Early Modern English perfectly familiar to many people down to present times, even though we do not use these features in present-day speech and writing.

The history of English since 1700 is filled with many movements and counter-movements, of which we can notice only a couple. One of these

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is the vigorous attempt made in the 18th century, and the rather half-hearted attempts made since, to regulate and control the English language. Many people of the 18th century, not understanding very well the forces which govern language, proposed to polish and improve and restrict English, which would rule on what people could and could not say and write. The academy never came into being, but the 18th century did succeed in establishing certain attitudes that, though they haven't had much effect on the development of the language itself, have certainly changed the native speaker's feeling about the language. In part a product of the wish to fix and establish the language was the development of the dictionary. Another product of the 18th century was the invention of 'English grammar'.

Probably the most important force in the development of English in the modern period has been the tremendous expansion of English-speaking peoples. In 1500 English was a minor language, spoken by a few people on a small island. Now it is perhaps the greatest languages in the world, spoken natively by over 370 million people and as a second language by many millions more. When we speak of English now, we must specify whether we mean American English, British English, Australian English, Indian English, South African English or what, since the differences are considerable.

The English language of today reflects many centuries of development. The political and social events that have in the course of English history so profoundly affected the English people in their national life have generally had a recognizable effect in their language. In the modern time the development of England as a maritime power, the expansion of the British Empire, and the growth of commerce and industry, of science and literature, have, each in its way, contributed to make the English language what it is today. Today English is widely regarded as having be-

come the global language. The importance of the English language is naturally very great. The importance is not just a matter of first language speaker numbers or territory; it depends also on the importance that those speak English as a second or foreign language will determine the world future of the language. The English language is greatly influenced by international information technology caused by the computer revolution. It is also experiencing a social, economic and demographic transition in a worldwide extent. In short, the English language reflects in its entire development the political, social, and cultural history of the English people and international scientific development as well.

Therefore, it is certain that without a notion of the history of English, the understanding of the English language cannot be very satisfactory as language development is determined by historical change. The following chapters will just hit the high spots in the history of the English language.

# Chapter I Indo-European Family of Languages

## 第一章 印欧语系

### 1. Observations of the Indo-European Family

#### 第一节 印欧语系的描述

##### 导读：

使用语系这个概念，既可以说明一种语言是由另一种语言经历若干世纪演变而来，也可以表明各种语言彼此之间的关系。世界上大多数语言可归属成十大语系。其中印欧语系是最大的一个语系，它的语言地域跨越欧亚大陆的大片地区。印欧诸语言归属为一个语系，其主要根据是，这些语言有共同的基本词汇，这一语系中不同语言的语法词缀在语音上有相互对应关系，尤为重要是有共同语音交替模式。19世纪20年代的“格里木定律”提出研究语音对应规律，对印欧语系中诸语言的辅音规则音变作了描述。之后，19世纪70年代的“维尔纳定律”对“格里木定律”的例外作了补充解释。印欧诸语言源发于5000年前黑海以北的草原地区，是一种没有文字记载的印欧原始语言。大约在公元2000年前后，印欧原始母语分化成不同的方言或语言。从5世纪后期，印欧诸语言传到世界其他许多地区，分为12个主要语族。其中，英语属于日尔曼语族。



**Division Of Languages .** If one compares a number of languages, it probably soon appears that some of them have some sort of relationship to one another, while others may seem quite isolated. If then we are able to trace a group of these apparently related forms in several languages to a common ancestor by means of older writings, it may sometimes become almost certain that these forms must be branches, as it were, from a common root. By doing further back, we may sometimes be able to compare a number of early forms each of which is the ancestor of later developments in the different languages, so as to establish a strong probability that they in their turn must all be descended from a common prehistoric original. This supposed original will be must older than the earliest written languages, so that it can never be verified with absolute certainty, but if other qualities in the languages we are comparing corroborate the relationship and common ancestry which we have arrived at the above method, we may find ourselves well on the way to being able to construct a genealogy of our languages — in other words to clarify them into families.

According to linguists, most of the languages in the world fall into ten families: Sino-Tibetan, Indo-European, Altaic, Hamito-Semitic, Finno-Ugric, Dravidian, Ibero-Caucasian, Malayo-Polynesian, Austro-Asiatic and Bantu. Of all these ten, Indo-European Family is the largest one. As English belongs to the Germanic branch, which represented itself as a member of the Indo-European family, it is worth observing the Indo-European family and the Germanic branch in details.

**Idea Of The Division .** The idea of a genetic relationship between certain of the Indo-European languages (Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Germanic, and Celtic) was first proposed in 1786 by the British orientalist Sir William Jones, who suggested that these languages all derive from some single 'common source'. In the following century the detailed evidence underlying Jones' s assertion was presented, and a number of other