

高等学校教材·英语系列  
TEXTBOOK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION



# PRACTICAL ENGLISH

Lexicology

# 实用英语词汇学

剡璇 编著 李民权 杨达复 Larry G. Olson 主审

西北工业大学出版社

Practical English Lexicology

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荆璇 编著

李民权 杨达复

Larry C. Olson

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# 前言

本书是笔者根据“词汇学”讲稿和读书札记编写而成的,呈献给高校英语学习者和具有一定英语基础的读者参考使用。

本书在编写过程中遵循以下原则:

## ◆结合实际 循序渐进

通过教学观察和实践,针对英语词汇学习中的一些较普遍而实际的问题设计编写思路,认真筛选相关内容。全书围绕“词”展开讨论,首先帮助学习者从总体上了解词汇学习的内容,进而熟悉有关词的构造、意义、功能、演变方式、各种联系等方面的知识和技能,最后通过介绍系列策略促使学习者逐渐形成自己的词汇学习好方法,增强信心,提高学习效率。

## ◆涵盖广泛 实例丰富

在阐述词汇系统理论和方法的同时将有关语义学、文体学、篇章学、二语习得以及语言与文化等领域的研究成果与启示融入其中,并力求实例丰富翔实,富有时代气息。

## ◆目标明确 活动多样

每单元均设定学习目标,告诉学习者学后应能做到什么,结尾注重归纳总结,这样做便于自我监控和反馈整个学习过程。为配合学习内容,书中还设计编写了各种实践活动,或穿插其中或附在每单元之后,为学习者提供消化、吸收新学知识和方法的机会,达到学以致用目的。

## ◆增强信心 激发潜能

每单元都有针对相关内容的汉语提要,文中对某些难点或术语做了必要的注释和说明,便于程度不一的学习者参考使用,以加深

# Practical English Lexicology

## 实用英语词汇学 Practical English Lexicology

理解,提升学习动机和兴趣。每单元均列出相关参考书目,供学习者深入思考,开阔视野,不断提高自主学习能力。

在本书编写中参考了不少国内外著作和文献,借鉴、引用了其中的思想和内容(详见参考书目部分),在此谨向原作者深表谢忱!

本书为长安大学规划资助教材,在编写过程中得到了学校和许多人的关心和支持。成稿后承蒙长安大学外国语学院李民权教授、西安外国语学院英文学院杨达复教授仔细审阅修订,美籍专家 Larry G. Olson 博士通读了书稿,对文字进行了润饰。在此对他们的辛勤工作和慷慨支持表示由衷的感谢!对所有关心和支持本书编写和出版的人表示深深的谢意!

由于编者学识谫陋,积累资料有限,书中难免有不足之处,敬请读者不吝赐教。

荆 璇

2005 年 11 月

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# Unit 1

## Introduction

### 第一单元 导言

词汇是语言的建筑材料。

词汇学是研究语言词汇的一门学科,主要分析、研究词汇的性质,揭示词汇的规律,包括构词、词形和词义、词之间的关系,习语、词汇的演变发展和应用,词典编撰等,并指导语言实践。词汇学不仅与语义学、语法学、音位学等学科互相渗透,而且还与语言发生、发展的社会文化环境有着千丝万缕的联系。

词汇学习是任何语言学习的一个重要方面,其最终目的就是掌握足够的词汇以便顺利进行交流,因此在一定程度上它已成为能否学好一门语言的瓶颈。那么,学习者需要掌握多少词汇才能比较顺利地进行理解和交流呢?许多学者从以英语为母语的人掌握的词汇量入手,通过对词汇量与阅读能力的关系等调查研究,间接地回答了这个问题。根据词汇在实际使用中出现频率(Word frequency)的高低,他们建议学习者应首先掌握英语中最常用的词汇。

比较权威的英国 COBUILD 词典(1995)所收之词选自两亿个词的语料库。它显示其中约 15,000 个词出现频率占英语总词汇的 95%,而其中出现频率最高的 6,600 个词组成了英语最基本、最核心的词汇。美国学者 Diller(1978)认为英语学习者要达到较高阅读能力,掌握 10,000 个词汇是基本要求。

除了量,还有质的问题。掌握一个单词是一个复杂的过程,怎样才算是完整地掌握了一个词呢?学者们从理解和应用的方方面面提出掌握一个词至少应该做到以下几点:

知道它的发音和拼写;

知道它的构造,了解其基本词素、派生和屈折形式;

知道它在短语和句子中的语法或句法特征;

- 知道它的意义,包括所指意义、关联意义和喻义等;
- 知道它与其他词之间的语义联系或连接上所形成的语义网络;
- 知道它的常见搭配形式;
- 知道它的使用频率;
- 知道它的语域特征(各种语言变体)和使用范围;
- 牢固记忆该词并在实际交流中运用自如。

综上所述,认识一个词,既要掌握其形式,又要熟知其用法。学习者应有意识地在不断扩展词汇量的基础上努力丰富自己的词汇知识和技能。



*Knowledge is gained through words.*

*Words are the symbols of knowledge, the keys to accurate thinking.*

*Words are building blocks of thought. (Brown, 1994)*

*Without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed. (Wilkins, 1972)*

*The vocabulary is a resource for talking about the world and life ... One way of looking at words is to see them as packages of information. (Fernando, 1996)*

*Of all languages, English has the largest vocabulary—perhaps as many as two million words and one of the noblest bodies of literature. (Funk W, 2000)*



**Unit 1** is an introduction consisting of three sections. Section one is the general description of some basic concepts of lexical learning. Section two highlights the findings of research on vocabulary size and word frequency. Section three briefly describes the kinds of knowledge necessary to master a word completely. By studying this unit, learners are expected to:

★ understand the basic elements concerning lexical learning which will repeatedly occur in the book.

★ be acquainted with the quantity of vocabulary to be learned and set a sensible goal for learning.

★ be aware of what is involved in knowing a word.

## **1.1 The fundamental concepts of lexical learning**

### **1.1.1 Word**

The definition of “word” has always been controversial. Although numerous definitions have been suggested, none of them seem to be perfect. Generally speaking, the definition of a word will cover the following points:

- a minimal free form of a language;
- a sound unit;
- a meaning unit;
- a grammatical unit.

Therefore, we can say that “a word is the smallest of the linguistic units which can occur on its own in speech or writing.” (Richards et al. , 1998).

### **1.1.2 Vocabulary**

All the words in a language together constitute what is known as its vocabulary. The vocabulary of the language is a continually changing entity with new words and new uses of old words being added and old words falling into disuse. English has a vocabulary of over one million words, or around 54,000 word families when compound words, archaic words, abbreviations, proper names, alternative spellings and dialect forms are excluded, and when words are classified into word families consisting of a base word, inflected forms, and transparent derivations. (Nation and Waring R, 1997)

### **1.1.3 Lexicology**

Lexicology is the study of the vocabulary items (lexemes) of a language, including their meanings and relations, and changes in their form and meaning through time.

## **1.2 Issues on vocabulary size and word frequency**

The lexical competence or word ability, which is often associated with the vocabulary size, vocabulary knowledge and skills in comprehension and

application, is viewed as a reflection of how educated, intelligent or well read a person is. For most language learners, a large stock of vocabulary is usually a prerequisite for the excellent performance of language and therefore is seen as being something valuable. Now the question is: How much vocabulary does a foreign language learner need? According to Nation and Waring R (1997), there are three ways to answer this question. One way is to ask "How many words are there in the target language?" Another way is to ask "How many words do native speakers know?" A third way is to ask "How many words are needed to do the things that language user needs to do?" Let's take a brief look at the answers to each of these questions.

***How many words are there in English?***

The most straightforward way to answer this question is to look at the number of words contained in the authentic dictionaries such as *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) or *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (WTNID). The studies by Goulden (1990) and Zechmeister (1993) conclude that WTNID has about 250,000 entries and the studies of Dupuy (1974), Goulden et al. (1990) and Nation (1997) indicate that it includes a vocabulary of around 54,000 word families (See Section 1.1.2).

***How many words do native speakers know?***

According to some researches, a university graduate will have a vocabulary size of about 17,000 base words, or around 20,000 word families (Goulden et al. , 1990; Zechmeister et al. ,1993; Nation and Waring R, 1997) excluding proper names, compound words, abbreviations and foreign words, etc. These figures are very rough and there is likely to be a very large variation between individuals.

For adult English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, the gap between their vocabulary size and that of native speakers is usually very large, with many adult EFL learners having a vocabulary size of much less than 5,000 word families in spite of having studied English for several years. Some learners do achieve vocabulary sizes similar to those of educated native speakers, but they are not the norm. Although the goal of native speaker vocabulary size is a possible goal, it is a very ambitious one for most EFL

learners.

*How many words are needed to do the things a language user needs to do?*

Although a language makes use of a large number of words, not all of these words are equally useful. One measure of usefulness is *word frequency*, that is, how often the word occurs in normal use of the language. From the point of view of frequency, the word *the* is a very useful word in English. It occurs so frequently that about seven per cent of the words on a page of written English and the same proportion of the words in a conversation are repetitions of the word *the* (Nation and Waring R, 1997).

The good news for EFL learners is that a small number of the words of English occur very frequently and if a learner knows these words, he will know a very large proportion of the running words in a written or spoken text. Most of these words are content words and knowing enough of them allows a good degree of comprehension of a text (Nation and Waring R, 1997). The *Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary* (1995) claims that of all words, 15,000 words cover 95 per cent of the running words of their corpus, of which 6,600 high frequency words constitute the core or base of English vocabulary (See Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1 Vocabulary size and reading comprehension for EFL learners**

Vocabulary size	Reading comprehension
5,000	56%
6,400	63%
9,000	70%

(Laufer, 1989)

Now we are ready to answer the question “How much vocabulary does an EFL learner need?”. Clearly a larger vocabulary size is better. EFL Learners need first to concentrate on the high frequency words or core words of the target language. A vocabulary size of 10,000 words, suggested by Diller (1978), will provide a very good basis for language use.

There are many lists of the most frequently occurring words in English and a few of the most well-known are described in Nation and Waring's

(1997) discussion:

- *The General Service List* (West, 1953): The GSL, developed in the 1940s, contains 2,000 headwords.
- *The Teacher's Word Book of 30,000 Words* (Thorndike and Lorge, 1944): This list of 30,000 lemmas, or about 13,000 word families, is based on a count of an 18,000,000 word written corpus.
- *The American Heritage Word Frequency Book* (Carroll, Davis and Richman, 1971): This comprehensive list is based on a corpus of 5,000,000 running words drawn from written texts used in schools in the U. S over a range of grades and over a range of subject areas.
- *The Brown* (Francis and Kucera, 1982), *LOB* and related corpora: There are now several 1,000,000 word written corpora, each representing a different dialect of English.

A vocabulary consists of words and meanings. As the learner's vocabulary grows, two things happen:

- He adds new words.
- He adds new meanings to familiar words.

The learner's vocabulary continues to grow as long as he has new experiences: He meets new words in his studies, in newspapers, and on radio and TV programs. Of course, he has to do more than just meet them.

### 1.3 What is involved in knowing a word

In most linguistic analyses a word is described as a set of properties or features. By way of summary, it is generally agreed that the following knowledge is necessary in order to know a word in a target language as well as the native speaker knows it (Richards, 1985; Carter, 1987; Nation, 1990; Laufer, 1997).

***Knowing a word means knowing the form—spoken and written, that is pronunciation and spelling of the word.***

Saying words right, and spelling them correct is the first step in

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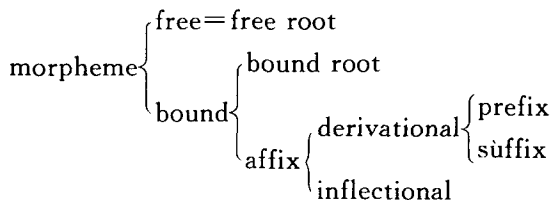
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mastering a word and half the battle in feeling comfortable and assured with all the new words one is going to learn and use. Pay special attention to how the phonetic symbols work, notice the variation in stress between syllables, and work with mnemonics and practices to improve the spelling of words.

***Knowing a word means knowing the word structure—the basic morpheme \* and the common derivations \* of the word and its inflections \*.***

Words, like living trees, have roots, branches (stems) and leaves (derivations and inflections). They may help to unlock the meanings or functions of words in which they appear, and they are the basic fundamentals one should know about vocabulary.

The types of morphemes:



***Knowing a word means knowing the grammatical or syntactic behaviors of the word in a phrase or in a sentence.***

The verb *suggest*, for example, should be used in appropriate grammatical patterns as illustrated in the following sentences:

He *suggested* the theater. (+Object)

He *suggested* a visit to the theater. (+ Object + Preposition + Prepositional object)

He *suggested* going to the theater. (+Gerund)

He *suggested* that we should go to the theater. (+That-clause)

***Knowing a word means knowing the meaning of the word: referential, associative, extended and metaphorical.***

A very large number of words in a dictionary have multiple meanings. For example, *mushroom* can be used to mean:



a. any of several types of plant (fungus) which grow and develop very quickly.

b. anything which grows and develops fast.

c. the shape of the cloud above and after a nuclear explosion.

**a** is the referential or cognitive meaning of the word, **b** and **c** may have arisen from metaphoric usage of the term. Word meaning depends on context, and different contexts give a word different meanings.

***Knowing a word means knowing the lexical relations of the word with other words, or the network associations it has with other words, such as synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, etc.***

Words do not exist in isolation. Their meanings are defined through their relations to other words, and it is through understanding these connections that we arrive at our understanding of words (Richards, 1985). There are a number of ways in which associative links between words are organized;

by contrast or antonym: easy—difficult

by similarity or synonym: blossom—flower

by subordinate classification: animal—dog

by coordinate classification: apple—peach

by superordinate classification: celery—vegetable

***Knowing a word means knowing the common collocations of the word.***

Collocation refers to the restrictions on how words can be used together. For example, the verb *perform* is used with *operation*, but not with *discussion*; *do* collocates with *damage*, *duty*, and *wrong*, but not with *trouble*, *noise*, and *excuse*. The adjective *warm* can be used together with the nouns such as *food*, *day*, *heart*, *clothes*, etc. and *decision* with adjectives like *final*, *right*, *wrong*, *free*, *reasonable*, *acceptable*, and with verbs as *make*, *take*, *come to*, *reach*, *agree with*, *cancel*, *carry out*, etc. Knowledge of collocation means that on encountering the word *fruit* we can expect the words *ripe*, *green* (=not ripe), *sweet*, and *bitter*; and that for *meat* we might expect *tender* and *tough*.