

ENGLISH READING

A TEXTBOOK OF
ADVANCED
ENGLISH READING

高级英语阅读教程

主 编 姜登祯 杨丽娟



世界图书出版公司

——出国人员短期英语强化培训用

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前 言

短期英语强化培训教材是西安外国大学出国留学人员培训部的教师为出国留学人员、研究生、大学生及自学者在较短时间内提高英语应用能力而编写的教材。

该系列教材是我们在总结多年来短期英语强化培训教学经验的基础上,根据教育部“出国留学人员英语强化教学大纲”修订本及我国留学生在英语国家学习、工作、生活需要编写的。它既体现了短期外语强化培训“大剂量、高时效、重交际、讲灵活”十二字教学主导原则,又为学生提供了一个较快适应新教学的过程。

高级系列教材于九十年代初面世,共包括听力、口语、阅读、写作四本教材。纵横相互衔接,循序渐进,有利于学习者全面、快捷地提高英语听、说、读、写能力。

经过十多年的使用,在征求广大读者以及使用单位师生的意见之后,编者感到原有高级阅读教材内容有些陈旧,已不能满足二十一世纪读者的要求。因此,我们重新编写了阅读教材,新编写的教材具有以下特点:

一、内容新颖、覆盖面广

本书共有 22 篇文章,课文内容涉及社会、文化、地理、科技、教育等方方面面,既可以帮助读者提高对英语原版文章的阅读能力,又可以扩大视野,了解国外风情。

二、编排合理、循序渐进

本书课文编排由浅入深,词汇覆盖面广,适合学习者安排学习。

三、练习充实、灵活多样

本书每课后设有与本课主题相关的思考题,可以帮助读者培养阅读的兴趣、激发思维和想象力。课后附有词汇、语法、完型填空、翻译等多种形式的练习,帮助学生巩固掌握每课内容的重点和难点。教材最后附带的词汇表和参考答案可以帮助学习者检查自己的学习情况。

四、体裁多样、语言实用

本书课文体裁多样,语言地道。可以帮助读者充分了解正宗的外国各类体裁文章的语言,为出国学习和科研做好准备。

由于编者水平有限,错误和缺点在所难免。热切欢迎同行及读者提出宝贵意见,以便在以后的修订版中予以改正。

编者

2009年10月6日

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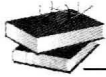
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Chapter 1

Geography and Culture

Unit 1

Maldives

Part I

1 Turquoise-Blue, crystal-clear water, powdered white sand, coconut palms in a gentle wind and a unique underwater world—this is the Maldives. With your first look the islands are hardly differing from each other—apart from their size: tropical vegetation with palms, mangroves, Frangipani or Hibiscus bushes, powder-white sandy beach, surrounding the turquoise-blue seas.

2 The Maldives is situated in the South-west of Sri Lanka, on the equator. The numerous coral reef islands, 1,190 in total, form an archipelago of 26 natural atolls (groups of neighboring coral islands). These 26 atolls are organized into 19 administrative atolls with the capital island of Male' established as an entity of its own forming the twentieth division. Seen from air, the atolls and the islands form breathtakingly beautiful patterns against the blue depths of the Indian Ocean.

3 The country stretches 823 km north to south and 130 km east to west. Out of the incredibly large number of islands only 200 islands are inhabited, with 88 islands adapted as exclusive resort islands. The sea forms over 99 percent of the Maldives. Only 0.331 percent, 115 square miles, of its 34,750 square miles is land.

4 Together with the Lakshadweep formerly called Laccadive Islands (formerly part of the Maldives, and now part of India) to the north and the Chagos Islands to the south, the Maldives forms part of a vast submarine mountain range, on the crest of which coral reefs have grown. The Maldivian atolls are a classic example of its kind. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word 'atoll' as "an adoption of the native name 'atholhu' applied to the Maldives Islands, which are typical examples of this structure". Each of these atolls is enclosed by a coral reef cut by several deep, natural channels and a lagoon. The reef structure, peculiar to the Maldives and consisting of a series of circular reefs in a line, is known as 'faru'. Strong currents, swinging round with the monsoon winds, flow among the atolls, though a journey between the atolls is often easy to navigate.

5 Most of the islands can be walked across in ten minutes; only a few are longer than two kilometers. The longest, Hithadhoo in the Southernmost Addu Atoll is eight kilometers (5—6 miles). Although most other islands are less than a mile long, one feels no sense of brevity as the merging of beaches, crystal waters, and crisp blue skies create an infinite vastness—a natural openness that is rare and a peacefulness that is always welcome.

6 The usual surface covering of the islands is a six inches deep

layer of dark humus composed of a mixture of sand and organic matter accumulated from animal and vegetable matter through the millennia. Sand stone about 2 ft deep is found below, after which it changes to a layer of sand where fresh water can be obtained. On some islands where the natural water table is high, you may find several fresh water lakes. The popular tropical look is finally completed by the green vegetation such as coconut trees towering above dense shrubs and flowering plants.

7 Rarely being more than six feet above sea level, the coral based islands are protected by atoll reefs. However, they are all susceptible to erosion, especially those lying comparatively close to the windward reefs. Indeed, in 1812 and again in 1955, devastating gales destroyed many northern islands. In 1964 the island in Alifu Atoll “Hagnnaameedhoo” was inundated by high waves, while the capital, Male’, was flooded by a severe storm in 1987. If, as some scientists predict, the sea level continues to rise as a result of global warming, then Maldives, with its ancient and unique culture, may all be swept away within fifty years. As a precautionary step the government, with aid from Japan, has undertaken the biggest projects ever in the Maldives—the building of a breakwater on Male’s southern reef. With the help of artificial measures, such as the new artificial breakwater and the natural coral reefs, the islands have started to enjoy more protection from natural calamities than they have ever done before.

8 As to the origin of these unique atolls, it still remains a mystery despite years of research. In 1842, after studying other similar atolls in the Pacific and Atlantic, Charles Darwin

suggested that they were created when volcanic land rose from the sea and a coral reef grew around its edge. The volcano gradually sank back into the sea leaving the coral reefs to encircle a shallow water-filled lagoon. Islands, then, developed when currents and tides swept coral and other organic debris into sand bars, which eventually, were colonised by plants and trees. When Darwin, continued his studies into the Maldivé Islands, he had to admit that there was something special about the Maldivé islands. Nevertheless he added that his theory of coral island formation was applicable to the Maldivés in a general sense, and most scientists accept his theory. More recently, however, Hans Hass has suggested that over hundreds of thousands of years a platform of coral reefs built up on the submerged mountain chain in the Indian Ocean until they burst through the surface. Porous and unstable, the coral platform sagged in the middle, leaving only a ring of the hardest and highest coral—the rims of the atolls where debris and sand accumulated and vegetation took hold to form islands. Years and years of the sea moving with shell and coral particles around the islands have ground the debris into minute grains of sand. It is clear that the tiny specks of land separated by great stretches of water have long been a great puzzle.

9 Just as the early history of Maldivés is obscured in mystery, so is the exact number of islands in the archipelago. The British Admiralty chart lists some 1, 100 islands, while a recent government count found 1, 196. If sand bars and coral outcrops were included, the figure would have been close to 2, 000. Obtaining an accurate is further complicated by the fact that

islands come and go. Some combine, others split in two and occasionally islets emerge from the coral reefs. A 1955 storm created three new islands in Shaviyani Atoll, while others have slowly eroded. Around 1960, for instance, the fairly large island of Feydhoo Finolhu in Male' Atoll almost vanished through a combination of natural erosion and inhabitants taking away sand. It was later rebuilt.

10 To compound matters, as yet there is no agreement on what exactly constitutes an island in the archipelago; what, for instance, is the status of a large sand spit? Yet all this is part of the mystique of travelling through the Maldives, where you may come across an island which has no name, is not shown on any map and has no human footprint on its shores. Many more show signs of past settlement, and some desert islands are used regularly by neighboring islanders for collecting firewood, coconuts, and even cultivation. Also, some islands (like the island of Kuda Bandos, near the capital) are often used as a destination for weekend / holiday breaks.

Part II

11 The country's 2000 population census shows a total of 270, 101 people living in the country. Almost 2/3 of this figure resides in the capital island Male'.

12 Origins of the Maldivians are not very certain. However, it is believed that the history goes as far back as BC 1000. Early settlers were travellers on the Silk Route, and from the Indus

Valley Civilisation. The Maldivians are inherently warm, friendly and hospitable by nature, and anyone can easily establish a casual conversation with the Maldivians.

13 Dhivehi, a fantastic language not spoken anywhere else on the globe, is the language spoken in all parts of the Maldives. English is widely spoken and can be recognised on sign boards, neon lights and even in the main newspapers and in some radio and TV programmes. In the resorts, a variety of languages, including English, German, Italian, French and Japanese, are spoken by the staff.

14 Dress is generally casual. T-shirts and cotton clothing are most suitable. In the inhabited islands, it is recommended that women wear modest clothing without baring too much.

15 The Maldives economy is growing at an average of over 10 percent since the past two decades. Tourism is the main industry, contributing almost 20 percent to the GDP. Fisheries and trade follow close behind. The Maldivian economy is regarded as exemplary in the region, and welcomes foreign investment.

16 The Maldivian currency is Rufiyas and Laaris (1M Rf = 100 Laaris). The exchange rate for US Dollars is Rufiya 11.72 for one US Dollar (1997). The Rufiya comes in notes of 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 and 500. The American Dollar is the most common foreign currency. Payments in the resorts can be made in most hard currencies in cash, traveller's cheques or credit cards. The most commonly used credit cards are American Express, Visa, Master Card, Diners Club, JCB and Euro Card.

17 The functional literacy rate is 98 percent. Educational standards are among the highest in the region, and most schools teach via

the English Medium and follow the British education system, while in some schools Dhivehi (the Maldivian Language) or Arabic is the medium of instruction.

18 Health care facilities are improving on a daily basis. The Indhira Gandhi Memorial Hospital in Male' is the biggest hospital in the country providing sophisticated medical care. ADK Hospital is the biggest private health care facility, and follows high medical standards. Experienced European doctors work at the AMDC Clinic. Regional hospitals are distributed throughout the country and Male', the capital, has several well-established private general practitioners. Some resorts have an in-house doctor. Decompression chambers are within reach of most resorts in case of a diving emergency.

19 Telecommunication has developed very fast in this decade. Up-to-date technology and international satellite links allow Maldives to have a sophisticated communications system. IDD facilities are available on all resorts, and card phone facilities are available on all islands. Dhiraagu, the Maldives telecommunication company, an affiliate of the British Cable and Wireless Company, provides mobile telephones for rental on a daily basis. Dhiraagu is also the Internet service provider.

20 Being on the Equator, the country enjoys more or less constant day lengths (6 : 00 am—6 : 00 pm) throughout the year. People wake up early in the morning. Business hours are from Sunday to Thursday 7 : 30 am—14 : 30 pm in the government sector, and generally from 9 : 00 am to 5 : 00 pm in the private sector. Weekend falls on Friday and Saturday. The local time is GMT +5 hours.

21 White sandy beaches sparkling in the sun alongside crystal clear lagoons would be an idyllic place to spend a perfect holiday. While this is true in most aspects, the degree of fragility of our environment is gaining much attention within national and international levels.

22 The fragile marine and terrestrial environment including the reefs and bio-diversity would be greatly affected unless careful management of the environment is done. Our beauty and natural resources are strongly linked with economic development of the country. Such awareness has raised many concerns and the Government is taking extensive measures towards protecting the environment.

23 In 1989 the first National Environmental Action Plan was developed forming a base for future actions to prevent environmental hazards. Over exploitation of natural resources are restricted. For example coral mining is banned in certain areas. Killing of turtles, which are under threat of extinction, is banned and visitors are discouraged from buying objects made from turtle shell. The entire capital island is enclosed with sea walls, a protection measure to reduce the impending hazards of climatic change and sea level rise. Projects on regeneration of ecosystems are conducted in some areas and a "Million Tree Programme" was initiated by the President of Maldives, his Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom in 1996. Small nurseries are established in atolls to spread the programme countrywide and many trees are planted all over the country in an effort to "greening the environment". Sport fishing practiced by some islands is now confined to tag and release method.

24 In 1997 many activities were carried out under the theme “Independent Maldives, Clean Maldives,” where cleaning and waste collecting activities were carried out nationwide. The spirit still continues in an effort to keep our environment clean. Many resort islands retain the natural vegetation providing an environmentally sound atmosphere in the island. While effective waste management would completely take shape after a few years, efforts are made to reduce risks of environmental health problems. The concept of recycling is progressively taking shape and composting is gradually introduced in agriculture.

25 Maldives proudly hosted a ministerial level meeting, Small State Conference on Sea Level Rise in 1989 calling for many actions incorporated in the Male’ Declaration. Also, the Maldives participated in the Second World Climatic Conference in 1990 and the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. In 1994 Maldives participated in the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and in 1997 participated in the Kyoto Conference. Also in 1997 the 13th Intergovernmental Panel on Climatic Change was held in the Maldives. Apart from these conferences, the Government has attended small preparatory meetings on environment. The Maldives’ approach to environmental issues as with many other small states, stays in harmony with the concept “Think globally and act locally”.

26 Maldivians have great national pride. In all festival planning a feeling of family is sensed as women, men, and children sharing in the preparation of food, decoration, and entertainment programmes. Most celebrations will find a blending of tradition and modern entertainment. Folk dances and music using wooden

instruments may be followed by modern jazz or pop music. People from all professions work side by side in a spirit of co-operation for these celebrations.

27 Besides important religious holidays celebrated following the lunar calendar, traditional celebrations provide a festive atmosphere. Independence Day brings days of festive activities with school and government holidays. Festivals usually have two types of parades: the usual marching of bands and the parade of children smartly groomed for viewing by all neighbours and sundry spectators.

28 Whether commemorating a marriage or circumcision, the drummers, dancers, and singers keep pace with the rhythm of traditional music. Most celebrations offer an excuse for a feast. Gula (fried fish balls with tuna and coconut), kuli boakiba (spicy fish cakes), foni boakiba (coconut milk and rice pudding), and kiru Sarbat (sweet milk drink) are popular dishes. The special after-dinner treat is made from bileh leaves, foah nuts, and cloves. A festival may also include a tour group of young Maldivian women and musicians, who provide a special entertainment, Bandiya Jehun: the beating of metallic water pots to the tune of an accompanying song. The island poet may be called upon to recite Raivaru, a traditional form of poetry sung in a slow, even tune which expresses various sentiments.

Excerpt from the Maldives.com

Exercise

I. **Questions:** Answer the following questions.

1. Why are people all over the world attracted to Maldives each year?