



*A Dictionary of
Cultural Background on
North American Spoken-English*

北美英语
口语背景知识
词典

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复旦大学出版社
Fudan University Press

复旦金石词典系列

北美英语口语 背景知识词典

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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

北美英语口语背景知识词典/[美]凯利(Kelley, A.)编著;
林伟,郁文蕾翻译. —上海:复旦大学出版社, 2003. 8

(复旦“金石”词典系列)

ISBN 7-309-03694-8

I. 北… II. ①凯…②林…③郁… III. 英语, 北美洲-口语-
词典 IV. H319.9-61

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2003)第 056312 号

北美英语口语背景知识词典

[美]凯利(Allyn Kelley) 编著

出版发行 复旦大学出版社

上海市国权路 579 号 邮编 200433

86-21-65118853(发行部) 86-21-65109143(邮购)

fupnet@fudanpress.com http://www.fudanpress.com

责任编辑 栾 奇

装帧设计 孙 曙

总 编 辑 高若海

出 品 人 贺圣遂

印 刷 江苏句容市排印厂

开 本 787×960 1/32

印 张 11.75

字 数 303 千

版 次 2003 年 8 月第一版 2003 年 8 月第一次印刷

印 数 1-5 100

书 号 ISBN 7-309-03694-8/H·737

定 价 21.00 元

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内 容 提 要

不了解一个国家的语言文化背景,就不可能真正掌握这个国家的语言。这就是长期从事大学文科教学的美国教授,也是本书的编者 A·凯利博士编写此书的理念,更是本书译者多年在中国讲授大学英语的深刻体验。

A·凯利博士曾在中国做过多年客座教授,此后又多次来华参加学术会议和旅游,对中国的语言文化及教育现状有一定的了解。因此,他能够针对中国英语学习者的具体情况有的放矢地编写此书,以便有效地帮助他们通过了解北美语言文化,快捷而准确地掌握北美英语口语。

本书为使用者提供了充分的北美(美国和加拿大)语言文化的背景知识,在此基础上编排了内容丰富实用的对话、词语和句子,是学习和活用北美口语最理想的工具书。

An Introduction to English Usage

And How to Use This Book

Welcome to English!

Hello and welcome to a fascinating, complex, important and fun language. This guide will help you as you learn to speak, use and improve your spoken English in a variety of situations, ranging from the formal to the casual encounter.

Is learning English hard? Yes, no and maybe! It depends on how serious you are, how much time you are willing to spend practicing and how often you use the language on a daily basis. Obviously, the younger you are, the easier it is, but anyone, of any age, can learn to speak and communicate in English with native speakers and others who have English as a second or further language.

Why should I learn to speak English? If you want to communicate with people outside of China, talk with foreign visitors to your country or travel overseas for business, study or tourism, this is the language to learn. While Chinese is spoken by more people throughout the world as a first language, English, by far, is spoken by more people as a second language, than at any time in human history. You may be from China, the person next to you from Canada, her friend from Germany and his friend from Sweden,

but chances are, you can all talk together in English. By the way, if you have understood all that I have written so far, you are well on your way to mastering the English language!

Frequent Questions and Comments about English

Is English the same everywhere?

No, it is not. The major countries where English is the native or first language (The United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) all have different ways of pronouncing words, forming sentences, spelling and special uses for words. Despite this, all can understand one another (except when they are talking about special topics, such as sports, food, etc.). The sound of an English word will be different, depending on what country-or even what part of that country-you are in, or where your English teacher or friends come from. The English contained in this book is based mainly on the spoken language of the United States and Canada.

I think I can speak some English, but I am afraid people will make fun of me if I do.

Don't worry! No one speaks perfect English every day or every moment. Even Shakespeare had his bad days. The important thing to remember is that you have to keep trying. The more you speak, the more confident you will become, the easier it will be and the more you will enjoy it.

Can I simply translate a Chinese word into English and be understood?

Yes and no. It depends on the word, the situation in which you are using it and what kind of response you are expecting. For example, you are eating in a restaurant. The waiter asks if you want anything to drink : in your mind, you think “shui” and you respond, “water.” This is fine in most cases, but in some situations you might want cold water, hot water or bottled water, so you have to be more specific, and you should try to speak in a real sentence.

Also remember that some words and phrases do not translate exactly from one language to another. We will discuss examples of this throughout the book, but here are some examples *for now*.

1. Your friend says, “I’m feeling blue today.” Strictly speaking, you should check his or her color. What your friend is really saying, is that he or she is feeling sick, depressed, tired or something along these lines. More information is required to find out what is wrong. If a person says, “I am feeling white today,” then that individual has a problem with English, not you.
2. “Let’s grab a bite to eat.” There are several problems with this phrase. You are not going to grab your food. You are not going to eat a “bite.” You are, however, going to visit some restaurant, food stand or place where food is sold, buy it and eat the food.

You probably have noticed that in many of my sentences, I use

contractions instead of spelling out several words. This is normal for every day casual speech and for casual written communications with friends. For example, "don't" instead of "do not," "I'm" instead of "I am," and "let's" for "let us." Do not use contractions in formal communication, be it speaking or writing.

Formal and common English usage

I have just mentioned the use of contractions in common speaking situations, and there are many other differences encountered between formal and common spoken and written English. You will see many examples of this as you read through this book. In general, you will be using common English in most personal encounters, but when speaking to a teacher, an official, someone older than you or someone you do not know well, it is always better to use formal English. The English you hear on the radio or on TV can be either, as is the case when you are reading English books, newspapers or magazines. After a period of time, you will get used to both ways, and know which situation is right for which usage.

There are many phrases and idioms used in every day speech which are not always taught in standard English books. Here we will try to go over and explain some of the most common and illustrate how, where and when they can and should be used. Also, be aware that the meaning and usage of words in English change over time and in different countries and social settings. Only practice and experience will help you with these words and phrases.

Ways to practice your English

There is no correct, simple or easy answer to this. You have to practice and practice often, but how you do this is your choice. Whatever works for you and feels comfortable, then do it. I can only give you examples of the ways I have approached learning other languages. It has worked for me and it may for you, but then again, it may not. Try a variety of study methods until you find the correct approach

Here are some suggestions:

Try to learn a certain number of new words or phrases every day (5, 10 or as many as you can handle).

Use these words and phrases in sentences of your own making, and speak them aloud.

Read as much English as you can : books, newspapers, magazines, advertisements, menus in foreign restaurants and so forth.

Speak English as often as you can; even if you are alone, speak English. People may think you are strange, but you will be making progress.

When you are doing something, try to think and explain what you are doing in English, no matter how simple or serious it might be.

Listen to English on the radio and try to imagine what is being talked about. Then try to summarize what was said in English and try to describe it in your own words to others and aloud to yourself.

Watch English language movies and television programs. Try to match the words to the actions and try to invent different ways of saying the same thing in English.

It may sound odd, but act out your own plays or situations ; use your imagination to create scenes and events.

Speak English as often as you can with friends and teachers. Develop and take part in English language discussion groups. For example, if you are studying science, get a group together to talk about questions you have with a particular topic or discuss the life, activities and accomplishments of a particular scientist in your field. If you are studying physics, discuss the approaches of Albert Einstein and Steven Hawking.

Listen to English language music. This is harder than you might think. The sounds, the speed, the idioms, will test you to the fullest. If you can understand and comprehend rock, folk and rap, then you are well on your way to mastering the language.

How this book is organized

This book is divided into a series of chapters. Each is a separate and independent topic. You can read them in order or in any sequence you like.

Each chapter contains general comments about the subject matter and gives examples of phrases, sentences and words to be used in specific situations. Each chapter also contains a series of exercises, vocabulary, idioms and phrases, suggestions for further practice, and sample sentences to learn, which are relevant to

that chapter's subject(s).

This book is a guide to English in the current world. It is a mixture of the formal and the informal in English usage and does not pretend to be comprehensive. It will, however, get you started and give you the necessary skills to make yourself understood and to understand others.

Final thoughts

The very fact that you are considering using this book shows that you have the desire and need to express yourself in another language other than your own. No language is superior to another nor is the culture it represents or portrays better than others are. English, as is the case with all languages, is simply a method or means of communication. It is communication with others, of different backgrounds and origins that makes the study of foreign languages useful and necessary.

All that is required of you is some time, work and patience. Good studying and good luck

Dr. Allyn Kelley

前 言

如今,我国有越来越多的英语学习者开始重视语言的实际运用能力,尤其是口头表达能力。他们迫切地希望提高自己的口语水平,因此,一批又一批的口语书便应运而生,以满足不同层次的学习者的各种需要。

本书的原文作者是个美国人,所以书中的语言流畅、地道自不必说,更重要的是作者曾在中国工作过,通晓中国国情,了解中国英语学习,特别是那些有意出国深造或因工作和其他原因需到北美的学习者在英语学习中的某些薄弱环节和实际需求。这更使本书的编写极富针对性,为中国的英语学习者开辟了一条易学、好用、高效的学习途径。

与同类书相比,本书独具特色:

一、语言特点

本书的语言为地地道道的北美英语。口头练习和范例的句子结构简单,且很少出现生僻词语,因而使学习者在记忆和操练中不会有词汇障碍。书中的中文译文更加方便学习者使用,他们想要表达的意思和佳达此意的英语一目了然。

二、内容

书中内容涵盖广,实用性强,从与陌生人打招呼交谈,邀朋友一起吃饭、看电影、乘公交车买票、到买二手家具、去银行办理开户等等。

三、文化背景

本书的文化背景知识丰富。作者在每一章节都有针对性地向学习者介绍了北美的文化、风俗。例如,与他人谈话时各种头衔的使用;在闲聊时哪些语可以说,哪些话不宜;作者还对欲往北美的学习者提出了建议和忠告,比如短期旅游和长期居留应带哪些物品;到达目的地机场后应注意的问题;在飞机上遇到邻座乘客向你唠叨没完,你应如何应对等等,令读者感到亲切。

四、结构

本书共十章,但十章的内容围绕几个人物的活动,按其发生的时间顺序贯通起来。每章聚焦一个主题,如机场、银行、商场购物等。各章由一系列相关部分组成。以第二章为例,这一章的活动从国内机场开始;办理登机手续;托运行李;安检;经过海关;登机;乘飞机;到达目的地机场;取行李;经海关/移民局;离开机场去住地。全书是有机的统一体。

另外,每章后配有相应的练习、例句和词汇表。值得一提的是,词汇表中有相当多的看似简单、熟悉的词语,如 shapes and forms(各种各样)、bad light(留下不好的印象)。此类词正是英语学习者需要掌握的口语精道之所在。

本书适合各类英语学习者,对有意赴北美者,更不失为必读之作。

书中译文如有疏误,敬请各界同仁和读者赐教指正。

林伟

2003年7月于上海

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