

当代英国 概况

Contemporary British Culture and Society

肖惠云 主编



上海外语教育出版社

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序 言

人类和动物都有交际系统,但是人类的交际系统——语言比其他动物的交际系统更为精细、更为复杂,传递了其他交际系统所不能传递的信息。这些信息就是文化。所以文化和语言实际上是两位一体的,一个是内容,另一个是载体。从 Malinowski 和 Boas 开始,人类语言学经历过一段辉煌的发展史,它不但导致了描写语言学和结构语言学的诞生,而且诱发了现代社会语言学和文化语言学(ethnolinguistics)的出现。Lado 的《跨文化的语言》用了《语言教师的应用语言学》的副标题,更把文化教育的问题提到语言教师的面前。

近年来,在我国也慢慢掀起了一个文化语言学的热潮。邢福义主编的《文化语言学》旨在建立理论框架,邓炎昌、刘润清和顾嘉祖、陆升都编写了《语言和文化》,王宗炎主编的《外语与外国文化丛书》正在陆续问世。在外语院系里,也开设了各个国家的“国家概况”的课程。把文化(亦称为国情)的教育列为外语教育的一个重要的组成部分是有充分的理由的:一是从外语学习的角度看,和外国人交往不但要精通他们的语言,还必须理解他们的文化、思维方式、价值观和生活习惯;二是在一个多元化的社会里,跨文化的理解对促进各国人民的互相尊重和合作,对维护世界和平都是极为重要的。所以 Poyatos 甚至创造了一个和音素、词素并列的“文化素”(culturemes)的词,用以表示基本的文化单位,并提出达到“文化流利”(cultural fluency)的培养目标。而 Schumann 还从社会心理学的角度,提出一个第二语言习得的文化注入模型(The Acculturation Model)。

但是怎样对外语学生进行外国文化的教学却是一个值得讨论的问题。目前在我国学校的做法不外乎是开设“概况”课,或由教师自行掌握,在课堂上结合语言教学来介绍一些文化背景知识。这些做法都存在一些问题,如有的“概况”课请外国教师主讲,缺乏严密组织,主讲人往往不太了解中国的情况,既不能针对中国学生的需要,也无法进行两种文化的比较。而由教师自行掌握往往没有统一的、规范的要求,而且又失之于零碎。总之,既感到文化教学的重要性,但又缺乏具体可行的方法,特别是没有合适的教材。

广东外语外贸大学(原广州外国语学院)英语系和英国文化委员会从 89 年开始建立了一个为期三年的合作项目“英国研究”,在硕士研究生班和本科四年级开设了一系列的课程,效果良好。他们利用这个项目的教学科研成果,由肖惠云教授主编成一套关于当代英国社会和文化概况的教材,供我国大学英语专业高年级学生使用。这个教材很有特点,值得向我国外语院系的师生推荐。

第一、这套教材的编写大纲是在国家教委的指导下,经过充分调查研究,组织了我国主要外语院系的 16 位专家、学者就教材的对象、目的、内容和形式进行了深入的讨论后制定出来的,既反映了我国的需要,又提出了统一的要求。

第二、内容广泛,覆盖了当代英国社会文化的各个方面,共有 18 个单元。这些内

容针对中国学生的需要,提供一些图文并茂的素材,让学生自己阅读和揣摩,领会两种文化的差异。一反过去由教师满堂灌的做法,这个教材强调学生自行消化和吸收。这样学生既了解了文化,又学到了与此有关的语言。

第三、教材的编排新颖,且配以较多的练习。它既强调由学生使用英语来获得信息,又组织学生根据已获得的信息来进行小组讨论或书面总结,以加深他们对英国文化的认识,同时还发展他们的语言运用能力。我们也可以把它看成是一个具有浓厚文化色彩的交际英语教程;它不单有学生用书,还有教师手册,以便于教学。所以它的头十个单元在广东的几所大学试用,受到师生的热烈欢迎。

既然外国文化是外语教育的一个重要的组成部分,接下来要考虑的问题是我们的语言测试是否也应该体现文化这个要求?相信这个教材的编写组会进一步研究这个问题,使外国文化的教学更臻完善。

桂诗春

1995年11月

前 言

广东外语外贸大学英语系(原广州外语学院英语系)英国社会与文化编写组对英国的研究始于89年9月。当时我们和英国文化委员会(The British Council)建立了为期三年的合作项目“英国研究”。我们在硕士研究生班和本科四年级开设出六门课程:英国现代史、当代英国社会、当代英国文化、当代英国经济、英国对外关系。为了能在全国范围内培养更多的面向廿一世纪的英语工作者以适应改革开放的需要,我们向国家教委建议,利用合作项目的教学科研成果编写出一套当代英国社会与文化概况的教材供大学英语专业高年级学生使用。92年6月,《当代英国概况》的编写列为原广州外语学院与英国文化委员会的合作项目。

为了确保教材的实用性,我们于92年9月到全国各地作需要调查,实地考察了卅余所高等院校。93年初,在调查研究的基础上,我们和英国文化委员会联合举办了英国学与教材编写研讨会。国家教委社科司和国际合作司的负责人出席了会议并在会上对教材的编写方向和原则发表了指导性意见。北京外国语大学、上海外国语大学、北京外交学院、南开大学、中山大学、华中师范大学、广州外语学院以及英国兰开斯特(Lancaster)大学共16名专家、学者就教材的对象、目的、内容和形式进行了深入的讨论并制定出编写大纲。

本教材编排新颖、内容丰富、语言生动、全书包括18个单元。分别从概貌、家庭、就业、业余生活、教育、福利、宗教、法律、政治、经济、外交、大众媒介等方面介绍当代英国社会及其变化。每个单元分三部分:信息提供、信息利用、附加部分。在信息提供部分,学生利用英语去获取信息。而在信息利用部分,学生主要利用已获取的信息根据所提问题进行小组讨论或书面总结,从而发展语言应用能力,同时也提高他们的分析、判断能力,为以后的文化交流工作打下坚实的基础。附加部分为学生提供更深度的相关资料和讨论题目。全书配有教师用书一册。

整套教材要求在一学期(36学时)学完。教师可根据学生的实际水平和需要灵活使用。例如可略去附加部分,对信息利用部分也可作适当的删减。但必须保证信息提供部分的重点教学。每个单元的教学目的教师用书都有介绍。

本书虽然专为大学英语专业高年级学生设计编写,但经过试用和广泛征求意见后,证明也适用于进修英语的教师、准备去英语国家的进修人员和从事涉外工作的人士。

《当代英国概况》课本由整个项目组的人员负责编写。肖惠云任主编。参加编写的中英教师有: J Fearon-Jones、Hazel Medd、Rod Lawrence、陈建平、方建壮、毛思慧、周学麟、王义、程岸、周静琼。

本书从编写、试用直至出版,得到校内外、国内外不少人士和单位的支持:

中山大学、原广州外贸学院、原广州外语学院、五邑大学等院校于94年春季试用了头十个单元,并提供了修订意见。

桂诗春教授写了序言,并给予热情的支持。

李筱菊教授担任了主审，英国文化委员会 John Stoddart, 英国兰开斯特大学“英国研究中心”主任 Edward Woods 参加了审阅。

英国文化委员会提供了先进的编写设备、大量的图书、资料、负担了使用英国资料的版税。

上海外语教育出版社承担了本书的出版和发行任务。

对于支持本书编写和出版的所有人士和单位，在此表示诚挚的谢意。

由于编写者水平与经验有限，教材中不妥之处在所难免。希望使用本书的各界人士不吝赐教，以利今后的修订。

主编者

1995年11月

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We have endeavoured to ensure that all those whose work we have reproduced have been contacted regarding copyright matters. Any further enquiries should be made to the British Studies Coordinator at the address given in the Preface to this book.

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Key to symbols used:	
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☞	following a word or phrase indicates that there is an entry for it in the glossary at the end of the chapter
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(SR☞)	shows that there is further information given in the supplementary reading
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(CH6☞)	indicates that there is further information in another chapter (in this example, Chapter 6)
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PREFACE TO STUDENTS

The study of the life and culture of an English speaking country can be one of the most interesting and enjoyable courses in an English degree. This book aims to provide teachers and students with a fresh, lively and up-to-date approach to the study of contemporary Britain.

It is our hope that this book will help you achieve three main objectives:-

- To understand British society and culture.
- To improve your language ability.
- To increase your ability to interpret and analyse evidence.

Each chapter deals with a different aspect of life in Britain. In order to get the maximum benefit from this book, and to achieve these objectives, it is important for you *always to read each chapter carefully before class* and to *think about the questions posed*. Do not be afraid to ask your teacher questions. He or she cannot be expected to know every fact about Britain, but will appreciate knowing what you are interested in. You will also be making the class more lively.

It is also important to be active in all the classroom activities - think about the problems set and use your English vocabulary as much as you can. Think over what you have learned at the end of each unit. Finally, keep alert to what is happening in Britain both during and after you study this course.

Throughout this book you will be encouraged to think about the issues that matter to people in Britain today. What does he or she think about and hope for? It will help if you can imagine yourself in a British person's situation. Then, as well as being able to describe, for example, what a British family might look like from the outside, you are finding out what that family might *mean* to its members. Who do they include within their family? How do family relationships influence their behaviour? As well as being able to describe the functions of the British Parliament, try and understand how an ordinary member of the public might see it. How might they attempt to influence it? How might they be affected by it?

By the end of this course you should have acquired enough cultural knowledge to be able to outline the main features of Britain using up-to-date evidence, explain how British society and its institutions work, understand better what it is like to be British and appreciate better the extent of unity and diversity, stability and change in British society. You should also have a better understanding of the main problems facing Britain and the different sections of British society, so that you will be able to apply this knowledge in your future life outside college or university.

As a student of the English language, you should also be able to recognise and use a wider range of vocabulary and idioms connected with British life and to communicate clearly what you have learned about Britain, in both speech and writing.

More generally, studying another culture also enables you to see your own through different eyes, giving you many fresh insights into habits and customs which you had previously taken for granted. In Chapter 1 'Introduction' you will have the chance to think further about some of these general questions concerning cultural studies (see 'Section C' and 'Supplementary Reading'). Before that, however, please take time to read the notes on the use of the materials below.

Notes on use of different types of source material

It is unlikely that you will have direct contact with many British people to ask them about their country. It is very important, therefore, to think carefully about how you use the evidence which you do have available. How can you get the most out of the information in this book? On the one hand it is important to respect the evidence - to take it seriously even if it contradicts some of your previous impressions about Britain. On the other hand it is important to approach it critically - just because something is printed does not mean it is the whole truth. As writers we have tried our best to provide you with a range of images of Britain; sometimes the detailed personal experiences of an individual, sometimes a more general description, as well as tables and graphs. But remember - *it is inevitable that we have left a lot out, and everything included is based on the perceptions of fallible human beings.*

The notes below are designed to make you aware of what you should be conscious of as you study this 'evidence' of what life is like in Britain.

1. Personal accounts

It can be very interesting to read about the experiences and points of view of other people but, as pieces of evidence contributing to our understanding of Britain, these need to be carefully and critically evaluated. It will help to ask the following questions:-

1. What kind of a person is writing? (sex, age, occupation, etc.)
2. Are there many/few of this kind of person in Britain? Are there any reasons to believe this person is typical/atypical of others in the same category?
3. From the account, what seems to matter to this person? Can you identify any of their assumptions and values?
4. What do you think were their motives in communicating the account you are reading?
5. What is missed out of the account? What else would you like to ask the person?

6. What do you know which that person did not know when the account was given? (e.g. what has happened since, more general statistics, other points of view)

7. Do you think a Chinese person in the same situation would think and react differently? How and why?

2. An observation, description or analysis by a sociologist, journalist or other professional writer

These accounts will often aim to give a systematic and objective picture of a situation. However, the writer is still a human being, so -

What do you know about the observer? First check through the same 7 questions above, as if it were a personal account.

Then, to get the most out of the text, also think about the following questions -

What is being described - a place, a group, an institution, a pattern of behaviour, a sequence of events?

Is what is being described claimed to be representative of something more? (e.g. of the whole of Britain, of trends in middle class families, of the usual way the police work...)

Are explanations of events or of people's activities given or implied? If so, what kinds of explanations - economic or political motives, social pressure, values and beliefs, individual psychology?

Does the description give you any emotional feelings? Are these due to the observer's response, the participants' responses or your own response to what is described?

How does the writer use language? Is the language of the people observed used?

How far are things described in terms of 'academic' concepts?

How well supported by evidence are the writer's statements?

3. Statistics and Charts

Many people are tempted to give greater weight to something expressed in figures - it appears to be more scientific. But ask the following questions before drawing conclusions from a table or graph:-

1. What is the source of the statistics? (e.g. government, university, business, polling organisation?)

2. What section of society do the statistics cover, i.e. what is the statistical *population*? (e.g. everybody in Britain, teenagers, Scottish voters, readers of one particular newspaper?)

3. What kind of a *sample* was investigated? Almost the whole population, as in the government census, or a few thousand, as in public opinion polls? Was it only restricted to one place or only conducted through members of one organisation? Are there any reasons to believe it is not *representative* of the *population* claimed?

4. If a graph, chart or table is shown, does it give a particular emphasis to the figures. Could they have been displayed in any other way to give a different emphasis?

5. If a major trend or majority view is shown, what is the significance of the contrary trends or minority views?

6. Do the statistics really measure what they claim to, i.e. how *valid* are they? Take note if they don't quite measure what you want to know. For example, divorce statistics may not necessarily measure the extent of unhappiness in

marriage, working hours may not measure the actual number of hours worked, court convictions may not measure all the crimes committed in the society, etc.

7. How wide a range of possible meanings could be given to the same answer in an attitude survey? For example, someone who says they 'don't believe in racial discrimination' could be someone who thinks this is the 'correct' thing to say, but still has some personal prejudices in practice, or could be someone actively campaigning for more racial equality. A person who says they 'believe in God' may actively take this into account in all their thinking, or may only think about the question when asked in a social survey.

8. When were the statistics collected? If they present a picture for one point in time, how likely is this to change? Approval ratings for a political leader may change dramatically from one year to another, and so this month's polls cannot be taken to be a fundamental statement of British political attitudes. The proportion of MPs who are women also changes over time, but the statistics for this year reflect something which continues to be of long term significance.

Pictures and Quotations

These are to make the book more lively, but you can also learn something from them:-

1. What is your immediate reaction to the illustration or quotation? Do you find it funny? Can you understand the point being made? Do you agree with or sympathise with this point of view?
2. Is it a 'subjective' view or is it implying some 'objective' fact or insight?
3. What evidence is there in the surrounding text to support or question the point being made? What further evidence would be useful?

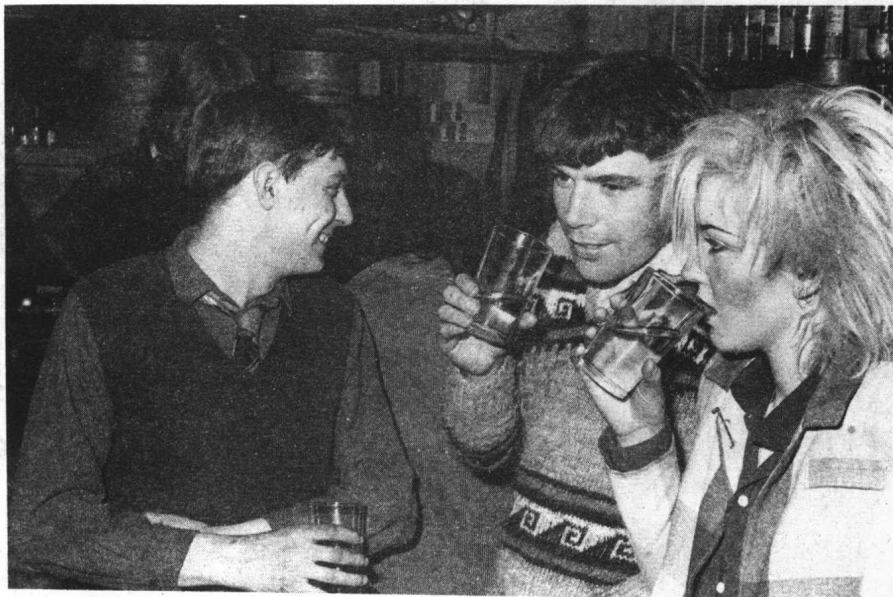
Remember: We only have the space here, as in any book, to give you a selection of images about Britain. If there are areas which you think should be handled differently, or which you would like to see expanded, please let us or your teacher know. We can then learn from you and this book can be improved for later editions. *Contact:* British Studies Co-ordinator, English Department, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Huangpodong, Guangzhou 510421
Good luck with your study. We hope that you find this textbook interesting and rewarding.

Glossary

approval rating	figure calculated after a survey of the general public in which they are asked for their opinions about the political leaders
atypical	untypical / unusual
MP	Member of Parliament, i.e. Parliamentary representative
polling organisation	organisation which carries out surveys of public opinion about the political parties, particularly around election times
public opinion poll	a survey carried out by a polling organisation



City gentleman talking with elderly people in the park



Young people drinking in bar

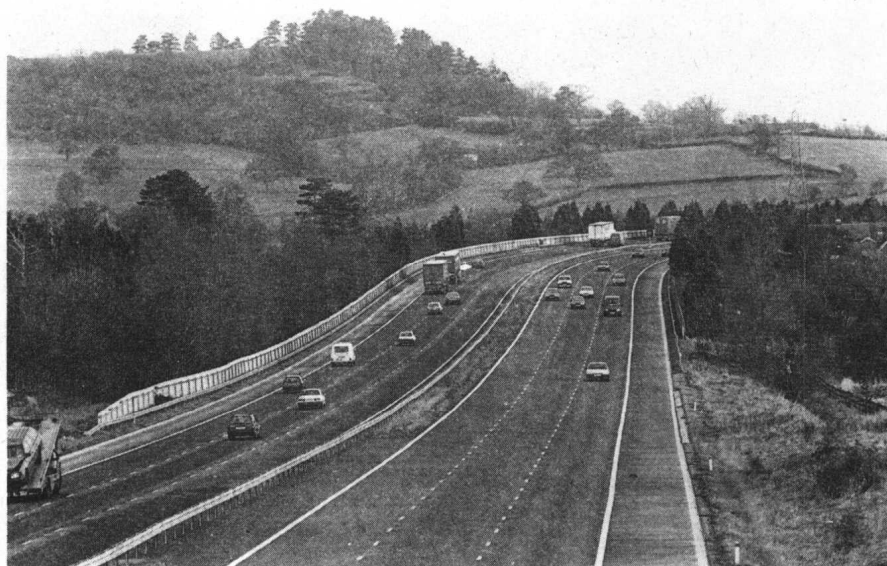


People on platform (London - Docklands Light Railway)



Double-decker buses

116



View of motorway and traffic



Cobble stoned street in North Yorkshire



People at supermarket check-out



Greengrocer's and florist's shop