

英汉对照读物

美国 词语的 掌故



**WORDS AND
THEIR STORIES**

美国词语的掌故

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WORDS AND THEIR STORIES

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译校者的话

《美国词语的掌故》不是一部辞典，也不是从学术上讲解词源、词义或词的用法的书。但它通俗而有趣地介绍了美国英语中许多生动的词语、广泛流传的用法和娓娓动听的掌故，读起来引人入胜，开阔眼界，却是一般词书所不及。你知道美国几近一半的州名和难以数计的地名原来是印第安人的遗产吗？你了解开拓时期和狂热的淘金生涯在美国语言中留下的痕迹吗？Gerrymander, gobbledegook, filibusterer, mugwump……这样一些奇形怪状的庞然大物怎么会进入美国英语而取得它们的奇特含义的？而日常生活中一些很不起眼的词，包括猫、狗、马、牛和凡士林、黄鼠狼、黑马、跛鸭，又怎样演变出出人意料的含义和用法来的？读者在轻松的浏览中，不仅学到了饶有兴味的掌故和生动活泼的语言，而且从这个角度，增加了对美国文化、历史、传统和现况的了解——这正是本书主要优点之所在。为了便于我国读者参考，我们将全书配以译文，在必要的地方加了注释，以补充有关的背景知识，并在书后附英文索引，供查阅。

本书的一百篇文章原来都是“美国之音”特别英语节目的广播稿，写得短小精悍、生动有趣，即可以从头到尾阅读而不觉得枯燥或重复，也可以根据需要，选看有关篇章而不致感到零碎、费解。

本书谈的多是习惯用语，而且在同一篇中出现的同一词语往往还有不同的含义和用法，这就不能不给翻译造成了极大的困难。自然，有些词语已有，或者可以找到对应的汉语说法。其中有些本身就已为汉语吸收，如凡士林、扬基佬、黑马、跛鸭……以至“火中取栗”一类的成语。还有一些英语词语可以直译过来，而不会构成理解上的障碍，如“骨中之骨”、“捺在某人的拇指之下”等。但是，更多的情况是由于汉英文字的巨大差异和文化、传统迥然不同，很难找到适当的对称的汉语译法，译文难以

做到形、声、意、神完全符合。因此,考虑到读者参阅译文首先需要解决对原文的理解问题,其次还可能希望找到一二可供参考的译法,我们分别做了以下的处理:

为了传达原文的意图(如词语的历史渊源)和照顾上下文的行文(如一个词的不同用法之间的关系),我们往往采取“直译”的办法,并于必要时在括弧内提供参考译法。例如,Indian Summer译为“印第安之夏”,而不用中文里类似的“小阳春”,否则就无法引述有关的印第安人的美丽传说了。All thumbs则译为“全是拇指”,而在括弧里写上“笨手笨脚”、“手脚不听使唤”等参考译法。

有时,为了行文的需要,还只能采取“音译”,甚至用英语原词,同时再用括弧标明适当的译法。例如,“犹犹豫豫”一篇讲到 Shall I? Shall I? (我该不该? 我该不该?) 发展为 Shall he? Shall he? (他该不该? 他该不该?) 再变为 Shilly-shally (犹犹豫豫),就只好照抄原文了——好在这种情况下是极其个别的。

在不涉及上述情况时,我们一般尽量从汉语习惯出发,采取“意译”的办法。毕竟这是汉语的顽强特点:“德律风 (telephone)”之让位于“电话”,“德谟克拉西”(democracy)之被“民主”取代……都是例证。即使有时不能完全意译,也尽量采取直译、意译相结合的做法,略添一二个字,使其意义明显。

总之,由于原文讲解词语十分形象,一语双关或谐音谐意的情况比比皆是,我们在翻译中只能不拘一格,力求顾及原文神韵、译文行文和读者需要几个方面。但是译校者水平毕竟有限,顾此失彼之处在所难免,有待改进,以至难以令人满意的地方一定更多,殷切地希望广大读者、专家批评指正。无论如何,这本《美国词语的掌故》总算翻译出来与读者见面了。如果它在一定程度上能有助于我国读者“提高对美国口语的理解能力”和“对美国英语的感觉”,那就是对译校者和出版者的莫大鼓励了。

潘 绍 中

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HELLO

Hello. This is as good a way as any to welcome you to these pages.

The word "hello" is probably used more often than any other one in the English language. Everybody in the United States—and elsewhere—uses the word, again and again, every day of the week.

The first thing you hear when you pick up the phone is "hello" unless the caller is an Englishman, who might say, "Are you there?"

Where did the word come from? There are all sorts of beliefs. Some say it came from the French, "ho" and "la"—"Ho, there!" This greeting may have arrived in England during the Norman Conquest in the year 1066.

"Ho, there" slowly became something that sounded like "hallow" (accent last syllable), often heard in the 1300's, during the days of the English poet, Geoffrey Chaucer.

Two hundred years later, in Shakespeare's time, "hallow" had become "halloo." And later, sounds like "halloa," "halloo" and "hollo" were often used by sailors and huntsmen. "Halloo," is still used today by fox hunters.

As time passed, "halloo" and "halloa" changed into "hullo." And during the 1800's this was how people greeted each other in America.

The American inventor, Thomas Alva Edison, is believed to be the first person to use "hello" in the late 1800's, soon after the invention of the telephone.

At first, people had greeted each other on the telephone with, "Are you there?" They were not sure the new instrument could really carry voices.

Tom Edison, however, was a man of few words. He wasted no time. The first time he picked up the phone

he did not ask if anyone was there. He was sure someone was, and simply said, "Hello."

From that time on—only about 100 years ago—the "hullo," became "hello," as it is heard today.

Strangely enough, when the first telephone system was put in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1878, people did not say "hello" or "hullo" or even "halloo." They answered the phone the way sailors hail a ship, "Ahoy, ahoy there!" Thank God, that telephone greeting did not last long.

Of course, there are other ways Americans greet one another. Not long ago, people often said, "How are you?" when they first met someone. This later became "hiyah." Then, someone thought that two syllables were too much and "hiyah" became "hi." Laziness is a strong force in changing language.

Answering a telephone call in America still presents problems, however. Telephone companies think that Thomas Edison's short "hello," is too long. Why waste time? the phone companies say. Simply pick up the phone, give your name, and start talking.

哈 啰

哈啰(“喂”)! 我们用这个词来欢迎你读这本书,是再好也没有了。

“哈啰”大概是英语中用得最多的一个词。在美国,以及在别的地方,每个人每天都在不断地使用它。

你拿起电话,首先就听到“哈啰”,除非给你打电话的是个英国人——他也许会说:“你听见了吗?”

这个词到底是从哪儿来的呢?众说不一。有人认为它来自法语的两个字ho和la,意思是:“喂,那边的!”这个打招呼的用语也许是在1066年诺曼底人^①征服英国时带去的。

Ho, la的读音渐渐变得类似hallow(重音在后一个音节上)。在十四世纪,英国诗人乔弗利·乔叟^②生活的时代,人们常常听到这个词。

又过了二百年,在莎士比亚的时代,hallow已成为halloo。后来,水手和猎人常常用halloa,halloo,hollo之类的呼唤声。至今,猎狐的人们仍然用halloo。

随着时间的推移,halloo和halloa变成了hullo。十九世纪时,美国人见面时,就用它互相打招呼。

据说,美国发明家托马斯·阿尔瓦·爱迪生是第一个使用哈啰的人,那是在十九世纪末叶电话发明之后不久的事。

起初,人们拿起电话后首先相互询问:“你听见了吗?”他们还不大有把握这种新设备是否真的能传送说话的声音。

然而,汤姆^③·爱迪生是个沉默寡言的人。他从不浪费时间。他第一次拿起电话筒,就不问别人是否听得见。他确信总有人在听,于是简单地说了声:“哈啰”。

从那时起,只不过大约过了一百年,当时用的hullo就变成了现在听到的哈啰。

非常奇怪,当1878年在康涅狄格州纽黑文市安装了第一个

电话系统时,人们打电话不说哈啰或哈喽,甚至都不说哈噜。他们打电话时就象水手吆喝别的船那样,说:“啊 嗨,啊 嗨,那边的!”谢天谢地,这种打电话的开场白总算没过多久就消失了。

当然,美国人还使用其它一些方法来打招呼。不久以前,人们初次遇见某人时常说:“How are you?”(“你好吗?”)这句话后来缩短为hiyah(“嗨呀”)。再往后,有人觉得两个音节也太多了,就把“嗨呀”进一步缩简为“嗨”。可见,偷懒是促使语言变化的强大因素。

然而,听电话在美国仍然是个问题,电话公司认为托马斯·爱迪生简短的“哈啰”还是太长。它们说,为什么要浪费时间呢?拿起话筒,报一下你的大名,然后开始讲话就行了。

① Normans: 原称 Norsemen (北欧人), 住斯堪的纳维亚半岛, 强悍善战, 于10世纪时侵略现法国的诺曼底地区, 接受了法国的文化和语言, 1066年征服英国, 给英国文化和语言带来了极大的影响, 历史上叫做“诺曼底征服”。——译注

② Geoffrey Chaucer: 约1340-1400年, 重要的英国诗人, 被认为是摆脱拉丁、法文传统、开拓近代英语文字的代表, 主要作品是叙事诗《坎特伯雷故事集》(The Canterbury Tales)。——译注

③ Tom 是 Thomas 的简称。——译注

YANKEE

The word "Yankee" is about 300 years old. It was first used as a nickname for the colonists who settled in New England. But where did the word come from? What does it mean? How did it get into the language?

There are 20 stories explaining where "Yankee" came from. But the experts say only two of these stories are believable.

A number of people believe that it came from a Scottish word meaning sharp and clever. Even today, anyone who is a sharp trader is called a "Yankee trader." But most experts agree that "Yankee" came from Holland.

Many years ago, the Hollanders who made cheese were called Jan Kees by the Germans. Some of these Hollanders came to America in the early 1600's. They settled near the New England colonists. The Hollanders were great farmers. They laughed at the colonists in the north who tried to build farms on the mountain rocks. And so, the Hollanders gave their own nickname to the New England colonists. The British quickly picked up the nickname and the New Englanders became Yankees.

During the American Civil War "Yankee" took on a wider meaning. The soldiers in the northern states were called Yankees by the men of the southern army.

During World War One the word was shortened to "Yank." The song, "The Yanks Are Coming," brought tears and joy to the peoples of the hard-pressed Allied nations.

Today, "Yankee" is known throughout the world as another name for an American.

Of course, one cannot talk about "Yankee" and not mention "Doodle" or "Yankee Doodle." This phrase