

阶梯英文丛书

# 用英语思考

HOW TO THINK IN ENGLISH

明 炜著

阶梯英文杂志社  
世界图书出版公司



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## 前 言

这不是一本理论性的书。笔者只是想用平实的分析，并提出一些切实可行的建议，让有志学好英文的读者，能以轻松有效的方法，达到正确掌握英语的目的。

笔者从发愤自修英文，到就读英语系，毕业后又从事英文教学，以及以英文为主要工具的文化工作，至今已有二十多年历史了。“用英语思考”，是笔者的切身体验，因为深感这种思考习惯，是英文能力能否突破瓶颈的一大关键，而目前似乎还不曾有一本书能指导读者用循序渐进的练习方法，来培养“用英语思考”的习惯。因此，笔者不揣浅陋，怀着抛砖引玉的心情，草就本书，希望有助于初学英语者，更盼英语大师们不吝教正。

本书融合了一些师长、朋友成功的经验和笔者本人自修英语时痛苦摸索、尝试错误的经验。部分练习取材于美国新闻总署英语教学部所出版的一些单册。

本书之成，蒙前台湾大学外文系客座教授 Jack Estes 提供宝贵建议并协助部分校订工作，谨此致谢。

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## 为什么要用英语思考

这是一本帮助你用英语思考的书。

很多人学了十几年英语，还不能说几句寒暄的话，或写一封简单的信，最根本的原因之一，是没能养成用英语思考的习惯。

当然，我们是中国人，用中文思考是天经地义的事，但是在英语的学习活动中，或是在使用英语交谈、写作时，如果“思考语言”也能使用英语，那么可想像其效果会是多么不同凡响了。

用英语思考，一个显而易见的优点是直接了当。多数人学习外语，最常使用的方法是翻译，有些人甚至把翻译当作唯一的学习方式。这样养成的思考习惯使外语学习变成事倍功半。阅读一篇文章时，要逐字逐句地把它译成中文，才能了解它的意思；和外国人讲话时，更要把他的话在心里译成中文，再把自己想回答的话在心里译成英语，打好腹稿以后再说出口。这种复杂的过程使阅读速度缓慢而无效率，谈话更是难以跟上对方的速度，往往等你想好一句话，说出口时，对方早已改变话题了。

用英语思考，使你能直接理解书上看到的、耳朵听到的英语，更使你能把自己的心思、意念，用英语作直接而清晰地表达。

## 妨碍“用英语思考”的因素

哪些原因阻碍了我们“用英语思考”的习惯？

第一，是刚才谈过的，在阅读、交谈、写作时，心里先经过一道翻译手续（mental translation）的问题。这可能是因为在一般英语教学，普遍采用阅读——翻译（reading-translation）为主要（甚至唯一的）教学方法的结果。通常老师都要求学生把每课的单词、短语、句子译成中文再把它们记在心里，许多学生也以为做到这一点，就真学会那一课了。考试时，单词、短语解释、英译中、中译英都占很重的分量，学生自然也以此为准备重点。

这种动辄依赖翻译的习惯，容易造成学习和应用英文时，难以克服的心理障碍。它的问题和影响，在上一节“为什么要用英语思考”中，已经说明过了。

“用英语思考”的第二重障碍，是学习者过度受到英语文法的羁绊。文法告诉我们字形变化、用字遣词、组字成句的一些规则，是英语学习的基础课目之一，每个学生都应该熟悉的。但是我们也要了解，文法与其说是语言的铁则（iron rule），不如说是一些语言现象（language phenomena）的归纳。语言是约定成俗的事，因此文法规则常常不是一成不变的。所谓“条件规则都有例外”（Every rule has its exceptions.）就是这个道理。

我们国内过去的文法教学，往往流于复杂繁琐，教师花很多时间讲解文法规则，学生要背许许多多的文法“公式”，使语言学习，变得片断支离，在应用上又觉得处处“犯忌”，动辄得咎。

因此学生们每次要开口或下笔,在心里先要考虑一大堆语法问题,甚至越想越怕,乃至感到“不做不错”了。

事实上今日英语,尤其是美式英语(American English),讲求简单、清楚而直接了当(simple, clear and direct),就象海明威(Ernest Hemingway)的文体一样,不必挖空心思去套一些复杂而又啰嗦的文法规则。

“用英语思考”的第三大障碍,是过度依赖视觉的文字。中国学生在英语学习上的通病之一,是听力太弱。一些简单的英语,只靠耳朵来听,就常觉得无法了解,但若是把它写下来,用眼睛一看,却又感到简单得很。这个问题的产生,又是和英语的教和学有关。如果太过偏重阅读,忽略听、讲,自然会形成这种后果。

对于有志进修英文,改正这一缺点的人,笔者在这里先提几点建议。这些建议可以靠自修达成,而且会有立竿见影的效果。

1. 注意读音:你眼睛看到的字,不要只看得“懂”,要能把它“读”出来。这种“音感”的训练,对于听力的增进功效无比。
2. 多练朗读:在你自修的教材中,选择读来顺口舒畅的篇章或段落,朗读至滚瓜烂熟,能够背诵更佳。
3. 听录音带和广播:这原则人人都知道,但方法不见得很见效。您不妨试试以下的建议:
  - (1)把录音带和广播的内容预习几遍,听时则不看教材,全凭听力。
  - (2)如果没有教材可事先预习(例如收听ICRT或美国之音的广播、或英国BBC英语广播),则不必想把每个字



都听懂，必须把握重读的单词或词组（通常念的音调较高较重），从了解大意入手。

最后要指出，妨碍“用英语思考”的另一因素，可能是过于要求完美（perfect）的心理。中国人生性本较含蓄保守，加上在课堂练习时常因犯错而受老师指责或同学嘲笑，变得更加戒慎恐惧。事实上语言学习就是一种尝试错误的过程，每个学习外语的人都有犯错的权利（Every learner is entitled to make mistakes.），不但不该受指责，而且应该为勇于从错误中学习而受鼓励。

“思考”靠行动来养成，“思考”也在行动中体现。“用英语思考”是使您英语更上一层楼的关键，您既然有志于学好英语，那就赶快行动吧！

## 训练“用英语思考”的几个有效方法

### 一、选择性的思考

用选择性的问题来训练思考，可以说是最基本的方法。问一个五岁小孩：“你想喝什么？”他可能难以回答；但你如果问：“你想喝牛奶还是桔子汁？”可能就容易多了。对于成人，也是如此。选择性的问题，使我们的思路比较能有范围、有条理。以此训练“用英语思考”，更是容易见效。

下面有20个问题，是笔者假设您在日常生活上遭遇到的一些小难题，每个难题下面，都有四个假设的答案，这四个方案从不同的观点来看，都各有道理，因此不会有所谓的标准答案。这个练习的目的，只是希望你看了问题和可供选择的答案，能产生直接的了解和反应，立刻加以选择，因为“选择”就是“思考”的方法之一。（Choosing is one way of thinking.）

请记住：阅读题目和选择答案时，都尽可能不查字典，不翻译成中文，尽量凭直接的反应去理解每个问题；然后假设你是遭遇这些小难题的人，设身处地的采用其中的一个方案（前面已说过，每个方案都可言之成理，没有是非对错之别）。

当然，进行的速度越快越好。现在请开始：

**SOLVING PROBLEMS IN ENGLISH**

1. You see a thousand-dollar bill lying in the doorway of a neighborhood store.
  - (1) You pick it up and give it to the storekeeper.
  - (2) You take it to the nearest police station.
  - (3) You tell the storekeeper about it and let him decide what to do.
  - (4) You just ignore it and walk away.
  
2. When you come home late at night, your wife asks you why you have not called to let her know that you would be so late. You say to her:
  - (1) "I had to work overtime to earn some extra money."
  - (2) "I had such a good time that I forgot to call."
  - (3) "I was at an important meeting and I couldn't excuse myself."
  - (4) "Oh, darling, I'm sorry. I simply forgot to call."
  
3. You have received a bonus of NT\$5,000.
  - (1) You buy a new dress for your wife.
  - (2) You take your family on a weekend tour of the coast.
  - (3) You keep the money for yourself for the time being.
  - (4) You buy some gifts for your parents.
  
4. A friend wants to borrow NT\$1,000 from you.
  - (1) You lend him the money right away.
  - (2) You ask him to sign an I.O.U. before you lend him money.

## 8 用英語思考

- (3) You tell him that you don't have any money with you.
  - (4) You give him NT\$500 and tell him that he doesn't have to return it.
5. Tomorrow you are supposed to pay back the NT\$20,000 which you owe your friend. Unfortunately you still don't have the money and you are not going to have it tomorrow.
- (1) You try to borrow that amount of money from someone else, and return it to your friend.
  - (2) You try to get an extension on the loan from your friend.
  - (3) You pretend to have forgotten about the date, and you go out before your friend comes.
  - (4) You tell your friend to do what he likes with you.
6. When you and your girlfriend arrive at the movie theater, you find that all the tickets have been sold out. You are of course very disappointed. At this time a man, apparently a "scalper", offers to sell you two tickets at twice the normal price.
- (1) You try to bargain down the price.
  - (2) You buy the tickets at the price they are offered.
  - (3) You leave without seeing the movie.
  - (4) You report the case to the police.
7. On your way home, you meet some old friends. They invite you to have a chat at a coffee shop.
- (1) You go with them wherever they want you to go.
  - (2) You call your wife (or parents) and ask for permission.
  - (3) You call your home to let your family know you

will be a little late.

- (4) You tell you friends that you cannot go with them.

8. You hope to spend a quiet evening at home with your family, but suddenly a friend calls you and says he wants to come over.

- (1) You tell him to come on over.
- (2) You tell him that you are about to go out.
- (3) You think up an excuse and tell him to come some other time.
- (4) You suggest that you just chat for a while over the phone.

9. A young man at your door says that he is a college student working part-time as a salesman. He urges you to buy some books from him.

- (1) You turn him down and tell him to go away.
- (2) You take a look at his books and choose some that interest you.
- (3) You just buy a book in order to get rid of him.
- (4) You ask him to leave his name card, and say that you will call him when you want to buy books.

10. After eating a meal at a restaurant with your girlfriend, you find that you are NT\$100 short for the bill.

- (1) You ask your girlfriend to pay the bill.
  - (2) You suddenly suggest that you "go Dutch".
  - (3) You tell her the truth and borrow NT\$100 from her.
  - (4) You quietly tell the cashier, give him(her) all the money you have, and leave your watch there as collateral.
-

11. You are awakened by a telephone ring at midnight. When you answer it, you hear the voice on the other side of the line say, "I'm very sorry to disturb you at this hour, but would you please call your next-door neighbor, Mr. Wang, to the phone?"

- (1) You call Mr. Wang.
- (2) You politely refuse the request.
- (3) You just hang up the phone, pretending that you do not understand him.
- (4) You tell him that he should not have troubled you at this hour.
- (5) You ask why the call is so urgent, and then decide whether you should call Mr. Wang.

12. When you get off at a bus station about 500 meters from home, you find it is raining rather heavily.

- (1) You spend NT\$20 on a taxi ride home.
- (2) You walk home in the rain.
- (3) You phone your home and ask someone to meet you with an umbrella.
- (4) You wait and see if the rain will let up after a while.

13. Mary and you are deeply in love with each other, but you are facing strong opposition from both of your parents.

- (1) You try to find another girl?
- (2) You try to talk your parents into acceptance?
- (3) You make plans to run away with her?
- (4) You wait in the hope that time will change your parents' attitudes.

14. You have been lying on the bed more than an hour, and you cannot fall asleep

- (1) You get up and do something.
- (2) You take some sleeping pills.
- (3) You count sheep.
- (4) You keep lying on the bed, thinking about everything that comes to your mind.

15. A stranger abruptly bumps into you on the street.

- (1) You apologize to him first.
- (2) You look angry and let him apologize to you.
- (3) You just shrug your shoulders and walk away.
- (4) You walk away silently, but you curse him behind his back.

16. Your ten-year-old son refuses to do his homework.

- (1) You threaten to punish him, and force him to do it right away.
- (2) You patiently explain to him why he should do it.
- (3) You call up his teacher and ask her to punish him at school.
- (4) You try to coax him into doing his homework — by promising to buy him a toy or something.

17. Which do you think is more pleasant?

- (1) Going shopping with a lot of money in your pocket.
- (2) Staying home to watch your favorite TV program.
- (3) Going hiking with your family or friends.
- (4) Spending a few hours alone.

18. People next door are making a lot of noise. You think they are either playing mah jong or having a wild party.

- (1) You close your doors and windows and try to shut out the noise.

- (2) You call the police.
- (3) You knock at your neighbor's door and gently protest.
- (4) You turn up your stereo set to its maximum volume.

19. You receive a notice from the city tax office saying that they are holding NT\$300 for you. It is the so-called "tax refund." If you take a taxicab, the round-trip taxi fares will cost you NT\$192. If you go by bus, it will take you an hour one way.

- (1) You forget about it.
- (2) You take a taxicab.
- (3) You go by bus.
- (4) You write the tax office, asking them to send the money to you.

20. You bought two steaks for dinner, but your husband comes home with an unexpected friend. Now you are short on steaks, and it is too late to run to the neighborhood meat market, which is already closed.

- (1) You serve one whole steak to the guest and divide the other between you and your husband.
- (2) You go without your share.
- (3) You serve fish and vegetables, and save the steaks for the next day.
- (4) You propose that you all eat out.



## 二、听力与会话

对有志进修英语的我国学生来说，会话能力是他们最弱的一环，连许多英（外）文系毕业生，都会有这方面的障碍。

会话是听（listening）和说（speaking）两种能力的综合表现。细分起来，困难的主要症结在“听”而不是“说”。

让我们回顾一天当中的交谈情形，就可知道 listening 是多么的重要。一般人每天的语言生活中，有一大半的时间是在“听”，把本国话“听”得正确已不容易，要听懂外邦之语更是难上加难。但是学英语的人却往往误认“说”才是最重要的，忽略了更基本的“听”的重要性。

语言的沟通（Communication）是由信息的传达和接收两方面所构成的。再怎么善于自我表达，若是无法了解对方所说的话，也达不到沟通的目的。

“听”的困难主要在于四个方面。第一、因为无字可看，只有全凭耳朵的接受的领悟。第二、对方说过的话立刻消失，除非你一再要求对方“Would you say it again?”或“I beg your pardon.”否则对方是一路讲下去的，有时听的人一分心，就会不知所云了。第三、各人讲话的口音、习惯都不相同，“善听者”的耳朵需要相当大的适应能力。第四、语汇和语法结构的问题。语汇的数量众多、范围广泛，口语文法的结构又往往不像书写文法一般严谨，更增加听者理解的困难。

现在让我们进一步探讨怎样改进自己的听力和会话能力，从而增强“用英语思考”的效果。

1. 了解英语“节奏”的特性 我们的国语是单音节字，每个