

# 英语泛读

李雪雁 李春焕 编

李泽民 校审



Readings in  
English

河南大学出版社

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## 前 言

本书是根据《高等学校英语专业基础阶段教学大纲》的要求而编写的泛读教材,适于大专院校英语专业一年级学生使用,同时也可以作为英语专业自学考试、电大、夜大、业大和英语函授的教材或供其他英语爱好者阅读。

本书的选材由浅入深,从易到难,力求做到体裁多样,内容广泛新颖,语言生动活泼,知识性强,趣味性浓,同时确保思想内容健康,语言规范。所选材料多以反映一般生活的故事、小说和有关知识性的读物为主,科普读物为辅,以培养学生的阅读兴趣,最后达到《高等学校英语专业基础阶段教学大纲》所规定的阶段终点阅读的要求。

本书主要特点是:对所选材料分门别类、长短篇相结合,以便在教法上宜采用课前学生预习长篇,课上教师重点辅导;或课上学生快速阅读短篇,教师适当指点的方法。为了提高学生的阅读速度,对在一般词典中查不到的人名、地名和一些较难的短语、句子等,本书作了适当注解。为检查学生对所学文章的掌握情况,每篇文章之后都配有形式多样的练习题。

本书编写过程中,得到河南大学外语系名誉系主任、英语语言文学研究所所长、华籍美国人吴雪莉教授(Professor Shirley Wood)的大力支持与帮助,值本书出版之际,谨向吴教授致以衷心的感谢。

由于时间短促,编者水平所限,错误或不妥之处在所难免,敬请广大读者提出宝贵意见。

编 者  
1992. 4. 15

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# READING ONE



## HOW CAN CHINESE STUDENTS LEARN ENGLISH WELL?

One is not born able to speak a language, one is born able to make a noise. For most of the first year of the child's life he makes noises. He learns that different noises bring different results. When the baby is hungry, a certain noise will get something to stop the hunger pains. If the baby falls or hurts, a different noise brings relief.<sup>1</sup> The child is beginning to learn a language. I have heard babies cry in America and I have heard babies cry in China, I can't tell any difference. But when I hear someone from America speak English and I hear someone in China speaking Chinese, I can tell you there is a lot of difference.

Uncontrolled sound is only noise. When we learn to control and use a sound, the seed of language has been planted. The small baby learns the language from the man he sees often, who talks to him and cares for him becomes known as "da-da." The lady in his life whom he has learned to love becomes "ma-ma." The child has begun to speak a



language. He has learned to use controlled sounds. What you and I call words are used to express our ideas. Words are symbols, controlled sounds which are put together according to certain rules to express ideas. The using of words is a language.

Young children can learn a foreign language easily and quickly because children are great imitators. They love to mimic.<sup>2</sup> Then as they grow up they stop being imitators and develop as individuals. Children easily imitate the sounds they hear. Any one learning a new language must train their hearing in order to imitate the sounds they hear. When a person has difficulty in hearing, he will have difficulty in speaking, too. His pronunciation will be poor. A child who has no sense of hearing must be taught a sign language.<sup>3</sup>

I believe a common problem with Chinese students' learning English is they were not taught to think in English. They hear an idea spoken in English and want to translate the idea into Chinese, then they think in Chinese of the proper reply and translate into English. After a long time speaking the language one begins to think in the foreign language naturally. You will learn faster if you begin to think in English at the beginning of your study.

When you hear the word "hand," you think "hand," the part of the body at the end of the arm. Do not translate "hand" to "shou." Learn "eye," the part of the body through which you see. "Eye" is English, "yan" is Chinese. You are learning English, think in English. You already know Chinese, you want to learn English, so not use Chinese as a crutch.

Many students ask me: What can I do to improve my oral English? My reply is: The More English you speak, the Better English you will speak. There are many things you can do to improve your oral English. Of course the best way you could do was to live where English is spoken as a language of the country. In most cases that is impossible, we turn to substitutes. Here are some:

1. Listen to English on tapes.

2. Listen to TV and radio programs in English.
3. Form English clubs where friends meet and speak English or speak English with your classmates in and out of class.
4. Speak to English-speaking foreigners. I've had several Chinese speak to me in this manner.
5. Get an English-speaking pen-pal. <sup>4</sup> Someone to whom you can write.
6. Read English newspapers and magazines. There are several printed in China.

I have this one warning. Do not think you can wait until you have learned to speak English without making a mistake. Do not worry about making a mistake. One can correct a mistake. Remember you have to make a mistake before you can correct it. I've been speaking English almost 80 years and I still make mistakes sometimes.

You would be wise to set some goals for yourself, like learning some new words every day. If you were to learn just 5 new words every day, in one week you will learn 35 new English words. On one year, you will learn 1,800 new words. I do not think the average person will use more than 1,800 different words in their daily conversations. Remember this: You've not learned a new word until you can pronounce properly, spell it correctly and use it in a sentence.

A beginner studying a foreign language should soon try to read the language. Try to read a newspaper, a magazine or book in the new language. Many Chinese students say to me: How do you say it in English? They are asking me for the ways of expressing it in English, not for the definition of the word. Reading helps to understand patterns of speech; Reading is also the best way to gain knowledge. Much of the knowledge of the past ages have been recorded. We learn when we read.

In today's world English is the most used language. For example; Last December, I visited an exhibition of textile machines and products. There were some twenty exhibitors from many countries of the

world: Japan, Switzerland, Germany, America and others. But the interesting thing is I talked to someone from each exhibit, and I spoke in English.

The beginners in English should pay special attention to idioms. The English language has many idioms. For example: "The teacher told the students to learn the poem by heart." "By heart" is an idiom meaning to memorize.

I believe oral English should be strongly emphasized at the beginning. In every land, people learn to speak before learning to write. The same is true when learning a new language. This is not to say composition should be neglected. Grammar is very important, it can be taught as it is needed.

In a nutshell,<sup>5</sup> my advice to anyone who wants to learn English and speak English well is: **THINK ENGLISH, SPEAK ENGLISH, READ AND WRITE ENGLISH.** Do it often.

That's all.



## BRIEF TALK ON READING SKILL

Why do we read?

There are two main reasons for reading:

—Reading for pleasure;

—Reading for information (in order to find out something or in order to do something with the information we get).

How do we read?

There are two different ways to read a foreign language, depending on your purpose: intensive reading and extensive reading. You will use both at different times. One is slow, careful reading to note the structure of the language and the way words are used so that you can, in turn, use the structures, words, and phrases in sentences of your own. This type of intensive reading is practiced in intensive lessons. This method of reading is very useful in mastering the basic rules of a language and in learning its idioms. However, this is not rapid, fluent<sup>1</sup> reading.

To develop the ability to read rapidly and easily, you need to use a second method --extensive reading. This is rapid reading of a great deal of easy material. Your main purpose here is not to learn new structures and vocabulary so that you can reproduce<sup>2</sup> them in written and oral work of your own, but rather to understand as quickly and completely as possible the ideas being communicated. In reading your own language, you understand more words and sentence structures than you yourself use. You are able to get the meaning even when you are not familiar with all the words. In extensive reading you must get used to looking for ideas without analyzing<sup>3</sup> every word and phrase.

What is reading?

Reading is a process of mentally<sup>1</sup> interpreting written symbols. It involves a series of actions that are related to each other.

The first thing that all of us do (as readers) is to predict.<sup>5</sup> We guess what the subject will be. We read the title, look at pictures, and perhaps read the first sentence or two. We use these predictions to anticipate<sup>6</sup> the information of the reading. With prediction in mind, we are prepared to find answers to a number of questions and specific information or ideas we are interested in. For example, if you need information about map reading, you go to the library to find books. Which of these books would you choose? Which is the best?

*A Traveler's Guide to Asia*

*How to Understand Maps*

*The Geography of the World*

*The Plants of South America*

*The Best Hotels in Europe*

*What to see in Africa*

Do you think any of the other books would help you with map reading? Most of them are books about other places. You know this from the titles of the books. You use your experience to choose a book. In the same way, your experience helps you in reading. You guess the meaning of the next sentence. Predicting, or anticipating, is a part of the reading process and also one of the reading skills.

The next step in the reading process is "testing." As we read, we check the ideas that we had before reading. We all do this testing very fast —so fast that we do not really think about it. If the sentences and ideas are what we expected, or anticipated, we continue reading. If the ideas are not what we anticipated, we change our own ideas or question the ideas we read about. Then we go on to the next sentence. The reading process is a repetition of these steps.

Readers also use many other skills besides anticipating. One is understanding the main idea of a part of an article or of the whole read-

ing. Most paragraphs (but not all, unfortunately) have a main idea. All the other ideas are part of the most important thought. For the purpose of studying well, students must be able to pull out the most important ideas of their books and remember them. For example, the main idea of this paragraph is stated in the second sentence: "One (of the many other reading skills besides anticipating) is understanding the main idea of a part of an article or of the whole reading." Other sentences in this paragraph all support or explain this main idea.

Understanding vocabulary from context<sup>7</sup> and learning other ways to figure out the meaning of words form an important reading skill too. It is learning to find clues<sup>8</sup> and use them to understand new words without having to look each one up in a dictionary. For example, some sentences use words you know to explain a word you do not know.

A formidable enemy is one to be feared.

"Formidable" ---through the clues in the sentence --- means "fearful."

If the ideas are what we expected, or anticipated, we continue reading.

Here "expect" and "anticipate" have the same meaning. We know through the little word "or" and the two commas in the sentence that "anticipate" explains the meaning of "expect."

Words new to you may contain groups of letters that have meaning you know, and these groups of letters may help you guess the meaning of the word. For example, if you know the word "special" and the meaning of *-ist* (which means a person), it will not be difficult for you to get the meaning of the new word "specialist." The same is true with words such as:

<i>refuel</i>	<i>discoverer</i>	<i>useless</i>
<i>reuse</i>	<i>manufacturer</i>	<i>faultless</i>
<i>reread</i>	<i>engineer</i>	<i>meaningless</i>
<i>remove</i>	<i>producer</i>	<i>shapeless</i>

Another reading skill is making inferences<sup>9</sup> and drawing conclu-

sions. This skill is using the information to make other statements about the subject. Drawing conclusions means making inferences after reading. Readers who understand an article also understand the added meanings. For example, if a story tells the reader that a person needs a warm heavy coat because of snow, the reader knows that the weather is cold. Another inference is that the season is winter.

Still another important reading skill is rapid / fast reading. It is especially important for students to learn to read quickly and with understanding. There is another part of the skill of fast reading. It is choosing the right speed. A person might want to read a newspaper fast. He or she is reading only for general information and can slow down any time. However, the introduction of a textbook will need more attention and closer, more careful reading. Being able to change the reading speed is, therefore, necessary.

Skimming<sup>10</sup> and scanning are both kinds of rapid reading. They have different purposes. Skimming is reading very fast to get the gist<sup>12</sup> of a text; scanning is quickly going through a text to find a particular piece of information.

Learning reading skills can help you as a student. You need to be able to read well. Students who practice reading skills can learn to be better readers and more successful students.



## WHY IS THE NATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNT SO WELL?

How does it happen that children learn their mother tongue<sup>1</sup> so well? Let us compare them with adults learning a foreign language, for the comparison is both interesting and instructive. Here we have a little child, without knowledge or experience; there a grown-up person with fully developed mental powers. Here a method of teaching without planning; there the whole task laid out in a system. Here no professional teachers, but parents, brothers and sisters, playmates; there teachers specially trained to teach languages. Here only oral instruction; there not only that, but text-books, dictionaries and visual aids.<sup>2</sup> And yet this is the result; here a complete mastery of the language, however stupid the children; there, in most cases, even with people otherwise highly gifted, a faulty and inexact command. Why is there such a difference?

Some people believe that a child's organs of speech<sup>3</sup> are more flexible<sup>4</sup> than an adult's. This explanation, however, does not really hold water.<sup>5</sup> Children do not learn sounds correctly at once, but make very many mistakes. Their flexibility of the tongue and lips is acquired later, and with no small difficulty.

Others maintain that a child's ear is especially sensitive. But then the ear also needs training, since at first it can hardly notice differences in sounds which grown-up people hear most clearly.

The real answer in my opinion lies partly in the child himself, partly in the behaviour of the people around him.<sup>6</sup> In the first place, the time of learning the mother tongue is the most favourable of all,



that is, the first years of life. A child hears it spoken from morning till night and, what is more important, always in its genuine form, with the right pronunciation, right intonation, right use of words and right structure. He drinks in<sup>7</sup> all the words and expressions which come to him in a fresh, ever-bubbling spring. There is no resistance; there is perfect assimilation.<sup>8</sup>

Then the child has, as it were,<sup>9</sup> private lessons all the year round, while an adult language-student has each week a limited number of hours which he usually shares with others. Besides, the child hears the language in all possible situations, always with the right kind of gestures and facial expressions. Here there is nothing unnatural, such as is often found in language lessons in schools, when one talks about ice and snow in June or intense heat in January. And what a child hears is usually what immediately interests him. Again and again, when he succeeds in his attempts at speech, his desires are understood and fulfilled.

Finally, though a child's "teachers" may not have been trained in language teaching, they always show deep concern for him.<sup>10</sup> They take great pains to<sup>11</sup> make their lessons easy and interesting, always repeating the same phrases and at the same time doing the thing they are talking about. They are greatly pleased at every little advance the child makes. Every attempt meets with sympathy and encouragement, and the most difficult step on the path of language becomes a game. Unfortunately, this is a point often not noticed by teachers of language, who demand faultless accuracy from the beginning. By keeping their pupils working too long at some little part of the subject, they often kill their interest in learning the language. Perhaps one should not only sprinkle<sup>12</sup> the pupil, but plunge him right down into<sup>13</sup> the sea of language and enable him to swim by himself as soon as possible. A great deal will arrange itself in the brain without the learning of too many special rules or the aid of elaborate explanations.