

# 中国大学生英语词汇 习得问题研究

Major Factors Influencing Chinese University Students'  
Vocabulary Studies

田育英 著

# VOCABULARY

石油工业出版社  
Petroleum Industry Press

# **中国大学生英语词汇 习得问题研究**

**Major Factors  
Influencing Chinese University  
Students' Vocabulary Studies**

田育英 著

石油工业出版社

## 图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

中国大学生英语词汇习得问题研究

Major Factors Influencing Chinese University Students'  
Vocabulary Studies: 英文 / 田育英著.

北京: 石油工业出版社, 2009.5

ISBN 978-7-5021-7123-0

I. 中...

II. 田...

III. 大学生-英语-词汇-学习方法-研究-中国-英文

IV. H313

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2009) 第 066090 号

## 中国大学生英语词汇习得问题研究

Major Factors Influencing Chinese University Students' Vocabulary Studies

田育英 著

---

出版发行: 石油工业出版社

(北京安定门外安华里 2 区 1 号 100011)

网 址: [www.petropub.com.cn](http://www.petropub.com.cn)

发行部: (010) 64523604 编辑部: (010) 64523615

经 销: 全国新华书店

印 刷: 石油工业出版社印刷厂

---

2009 年 5 月第 1 版 2009 年 5 月第 1 次印刷

850×1168 毫米 开本: 1/32 印张: 4

字数: 100 千字

---

定 价: 15.00 元

(如出现印装质量问题, 我社社会图书出版中心营销部负责调换)

版权所有, 翻印必究

# 前言

词汇是语言的最基本的成分，也是语言学习的基础。一说到词汇，人们会想起一句耳熟能详的话，那就是语言学家 D. A. Wilkins 所说，“Without grammar little can be conveyed; without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed”，没有语法，人们能表达的事物寥寥无几；没与词汇，则无法表达任何事物。词汇的重要性由此可见一斑。

词汇一直是困扰中国学生的一个大问题。在大学阶段，特别是在学生参加各种考试前，这个问题更加突显。我们在校园里会经常看到，无论是在四六级考试前，还是考托福、GRE，学生们通常拿着词汇书反复大量背诵。调查显示，很多学生认为自己通不过英语考试，或者英语没学好，是词汇量太小的原因。此外，词汇的问题除了表现在考试方面，还严重窒碍着学生对英语的运用。同时，学生认为听不懂、说不出、写不来，还是词汇问题。

那么，学生词汇学习困难到底表现在哪些方面？

本书作者通过一项大型问卷调查对中国学生英语词汇学习现状和问题作了分析并提出建议。调查涵盖 9 所城市，110 多所大学，发出约 2000 份问卷，回收有效问卷 1040 份，所得数据通过 SPSS 11.0 因子分析。研究者在文中追述国内外相关英语词汇教学理论研究成果，从词的定义、词的动态特征、词汇教学的历史沿革到 The lexical approach 和 The lexical syllabus，并以此为基础对调查数据作了因子分析。作者将所获得的五个因子划分为两个部分，其一是学生词汇学习的问题和愿望，其二是学生习得词汇时所采取的积极和消极策略。作者最后讨论了词汇教学在 EFL 课

堂中的位置,为什么课堂上要讲词汇,传统词汇教学的弊病和课堂词汇教学应讲授哪些内容等建议。

第一, 学生词汇学习的问题和愿望。

一个很有趣的发现是,当把第一和第二个因子放在一起进行分析时,作者注意到学生词汇学习的困难所在正是他们对教学的希望所归。问卷中反馈的最大问题是学了词汇不会用,学生对此的自我分析是满足于对词汇的一知半解、对词汇的把握停留在表层意义上。所以他们特别希望教师在课堂上能更深入地讲解词汇。此外,不少学生还说,对一个单词有时知道词义,却不知道发音。这表明一些不规则的发音给学生造成困难。在词义的理解方面,学生的困难还表现在有时找不到与英语相应的汉语译文,这些问题也是促使学生要求教师讲解词汇的原因所在。

学生反映的另一突出问题是记忆问题,学生说对有些词汇反复背,都记不住,说明了死记硬背的低效率。也是因此,学生希望教师能讲解一些记忆方法。Brown (2000), Gairns & Redman (1986) 和 Ter-Minasova (1996), 曾经说死记硬背的方法主要特征是记忆词汇的表面意义 (surface meaning), 记的是词汇的译文和形式。用这种记忆方法记单词容易忘记。其实,最好的记忆方法是把词汇放在一个有上下文的环境中去理解和记忆。这一点恰恰与大脑记忆的特征吻合,人脑关注的不是位置或场所或地点,不是外围,不是固定的构造,而是核心,是内容,是要点。只有有意义的东西才能在脑海里建立关联。死记硬背是原始的学习状态,应该说死记硬背对于一些像 desk, train, plane, refrigerator 等一些非常基础的词还是有效的,但是当学习逐渐进入中级水平时,要记的词汇范围扩大了,而简单的、可以一一对应的词相应减少,死记硬背就失去了作用。

此外,学生还反映教材里的生词太多,通常在上新课后就会忘记已学过单元的单词。在复习习惯上,约 30% 的学生从不复习

或很少复习学过的词汇。所以学生还希望教师能在课堂上对学生的词汇学习加强管理，比如多听写、多测试，他们希望借助外界的力量扩大词汇量。还有相当多数量的学生希望学习一些超纲词汇，这一方面说明学生的积极性，另一方面可能还说明了现在大纲规定的词汇量不能满足他们的需要。本调查还显示也有相当多的学生希望学习构词法。

## 第二，学生习得词汇采取的积极和消极策略。

很多学生都知道将单词放在上下文中记忆，理解准确了，单词也就好记了，但是能经常这样做的学生只有 14%，有约 20% 的学生从来没这样做过。有 19.6% 的学生愿意多阅读，而不愿意孤立地背单词；只有 3.5% 的学生经常阅读英文报刊、上英文网站，增加阅读量，但是 80% 的学生知道阅读对扩大词汇量的重要意义。

调查显示只有 9.7% 的学生完全依赖老师上课讲解词汇，39.9% 的学生不依靠课堂，完全独立自主学习词汇。这可以说明学生在词汇学习方面有较强的自主性，也可以理解为教师在课堂上可能很少讲解词汇，或者也可以理解为教师经常讲词汇，但是讲的方法并没有解决实际问题。有趣的是有 38.4% 的学生学习超纲词汇，也就是说占三分之一强的学生词汇学习超过了《大学英语教学要求》的规定的范围。

知道运用词块方法学习并记忆词汇的学生只占 5.6%，37.8% 的学生从来或很少使用词块法。很大比例的学生很少总结词汇的用法。然而，以词块的形式记忆单词，改变传统的记忆词汇的方式，对学生来说十分重要。Lewis 强调，语言是语法化的词汇，而不是词汇化的语法。研究发现，语言产出不是一个受制于句法规则的过程，而是从记忆中提取短语或词块单位的过程。要想有效增加词汇量，并能运用自如，就要打破传统记忆单个单词的方法，这是因为一个单词经常与其他词汇共同出现。

本书所有数据的语言和各个问题的设计视角都源自学生，是

从学生的开放式问卷中获取的。这样做的好处之一是,有利于他们对问题的理解并给予准确的回答(Buckingham & Saunders, 2004);其二,这也能使我们获取的数据更加客观公正,反映学生的真实情况。

除了讨论学生在词汇方面的问题,还讨论了为什么课堂上教师一定要讲解词汇。原因有几点:首先是学生大学期间学英语的时间是有限的,有选择地讲解一些词很有必要;第二,英语和汉语有很大差别,英语是以名词为主的语言,对这种现象的简单讲解会提高学生的学习效率;再者是由于文化上构成的差异,学生在把握词汇意义上有困难,讲解词汇背后的文化也有助于学生掌握词汇;第三,词汇本身的一些知识也需要讲解,如构词法等。

本书对学生词汇问题的探讨与研究只是初步的,还有很多问题值得进一步的调查研究。由于作者水平有限,本书难免出现不当之处,衷心希望各位专家和同行批评指正。

## Acknowledgements ■ ■ ■ ■

I would like to express my most sincere thanks to all those who offered their help in whichever way they could, sparing me as much of their precious time as possible. Their invaluable support has been indispensable in giving this work its final shape.

I am very much grateful

- To Fiona English who has given me a great many help, I still remember and will never forget, who once went to the lecture in IoE given by Susan Hunston about the corpus linguistics especially for me or for directing my dissertation and discussed and asked questions in my angle, and at the moment afflicted with headache; who showed me how to look for the related information through the Internet and also provided me the precious resources while she was on holiday in France and whose emails often brought me joy deep in the night during tedious period of writing my dissertation. I also greatly appreciate her frankness by telling me her different opinions about my questionnaire causing me to reflect it in different perspectives. All these and many others are so valuable and contribute a great deal to my dissertation.
- To Dr Tim Marr whose Sociolinguistics outspreads me a panoramic view of English today and its significance to teaching; to Dr Janet Enever whose Managing ELT has armed me with a precious awareness of being masters of my career and my life;



again to Fiona English whose two modules open my mind to a new as well as a familiar world, a world of language teaching where I have devoted my whole life to; to Inge Weber-newth whose Classroom as context, an indispensable module of this course, empowered me to have gained precious and valuable experience of UK education and to Dr Parvaneh Tavakoli, though I only attended two lectures, whose learning and talent has left us a deep impression, all of which has helped establish the mindset for my dissertation.

- To my husband and my son, without whose support and sacrifice I could not be successful; to Dr Wu Hongyun, Prof Li Shoujing, Ye Xiang, Hu Ping, to the presidents of the schools in 9 cities, to my three-session students and to many more in different cities who helped complete the questionnaire.

# Contents ■ ■ ■ ■

<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Literature Review.....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1	The definition of word.....	12
2.2	The dynamic features of word.....	13
2.3	The historical approach to vocabulary teaching and learning.....	15
2.4	The lexical approach.....	18
2.5	The lexical syllabus .....	21
2.6	The vocabulary instruction in EFL classroom.....	23
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Research Method.....</b>	<b>27</b>
3.1	The aim of the research and its methods .....	28
3.2	The questionnaire design and evolution .....	28
3.3	The questionnaire structure .....	29
3.4	The subjects .....	29
3.5	Reliability of the questionnaire .....	30
3.6	Reliability of the factor analysis.....	32
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Results and Discussion .....</b>	<b>37</b>
4.1	Results and discussion of Factors 1 and 2 .....	39
4.1.1	Where are the students' difficulties.....	39
4.1.2	What do the students wish .....	42
4.2	Results and discussion of Factors 3, 4 and 5 .....	54
4.2.1	The application of contextual strategies (Factor 3).....	54
4.2.2	Learners' habits in acquiring vocabulary (Factor 4).....	58

4.2.3	Learners' approach to reviewing strategy (Factor 5) ....	61
4.3	Why should we give vocabulary a proper place in the classroom.....	65
4.3.1	Limited time and exposure to English .....	66
4.3.2	Nominalized language.....	66
4.3.3	"Differences and distances between the two languages".....	67
4.3.4	The vocabulary knowledge calls for explicit instruction of vocabulary.....	69
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Implications and Conclusions</b> .....	<b>73</b>
5.1	Suggestions for what to improve .....	75
5.1.1	Revise National English Teaching Curriculums .....	75
5.1.2	Improve course books .....	77
5.2	Suggestions for what to teach .....	78
5.2.1	High frequency words.....	78
5.2.2	Lexical chunks and content words .....	79
5.2.3	Vocabulary knowledge.....	79
5.2.4	Memory strategies and language learning strategies ....	80
5.3	The limitation of this research .....	81
5.4	Conclusions .....	82
<b>Appendix 1:</b>	<b>Script of a student's interview</b> .....	<b>84</b>
<b>Appendix 2:</b>	<b>Questionnaire</b> .....	<b>88</b>
<b>Appendix 3:</b>	<b>Five factors</b> .....	<b>98</b>
<b>Appendix 4:</b>	<b>Figures</b> .....	<b>101</b>
<b>Appendix 5:</b>	<b>A typical vocabulary list of an Iranian girl student</b> .....	<b>110</b>
<b>References</b>	.....	<b>111</b>

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### In the Park

‘Pray for the mute who have no word to say.’

Cried the one old gentleman, ‘Not because they are dumb,  
But they are weak. And the weak thoughts beating in the  
brain

Generate a sort of heat, yet cannot speak.

Thoughts that are bound without sound

In the tomb of the brain’s room, wound. Pray for the mute.’

*Stevie Smith quote in Aitchison (2003)*

The short poem vividly depicts the circumstances people sometimes are stranded in when they feel weak in not knowing the words to express themselves. Actually, to have a good command of words and to manipulate them freely is a dream of many people.

Then, what is word?

More often than not people are told that it is the most elementary part of language. However, it is more or less an academic definition. To this question, most of ordinary people, instead of thinking it theoretically, would think about its function. To them, words are magic, which exert multi-polar roles in their daily life. Words make people laugh exultantly, sometimes almost losing control of themselves when comedians like Dawn French, Catherine Tate or Joan Rivers start to speak, witty remarks, exact but common words, flooding out, full of humour, analogy or metaphor, in their programs. Words are also inspiring when Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London lists what London has achieved and what problems and challenges London faces in London Debate. Words are also disappointing both for the audience and the speaker if one is unable to retrieve a right word to express one's ideas clearly. In brief, it is all admiring when one can be the master of words, eloquently in delivering speeches, fluently in reading, writing and comprehensively in listening.

Words also play a similar multi-role in ELT(English Language Teaching) classroom. Students often nickname their course-mates 'living dictionary' to show their admiration for those who have a large vocabulary. However, the most time consuming and annoying

part for an ELT teacher at university level is nothing but have to explain the unknown words one after another to students when reading is being impeded. One cannot help commiserating when seeing many students with dictionaries in their arms trying to load them by heart, or forcing themselves to recite one by one alphabetically, but not long after their embarking on the journey, some of whom, felt extremely dull and suffering, often gave up, half done in A, started with Z next time or just thumbed through somewhere in the middle part of a dictionary and eventually ended up with nothing. To them, it is really an ordeal. Yet, worst of all, the cycle repeats before every exam, national or local.

It is undeniable that many students learn English for further development because a good command of English can be taken as a springboard for a good job or more opportunities in the context of globalization. But what most of the students want at the university level is very practical — to get a certificate of College English Test 4 (CET4) and CET6, a key, for some students, to guarantee their graduation from university; for the majority, to obtain a job or a better job after graduation because many work units only employ those who have these documents.

The connection between the students' ordeal in memorising words and the tests is not the focus of this research but indispensable background for it. The problem is the mismatch between teaching and learning or the students' needs. What the teachers think is different from what the students believe. In the teachers' opinion, the reason that the students cannot pass the CET4 and CET6 lies in the low

proficiency of their 4 linguistic skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. What the teachers endeavour to do is trying to help students improve these skills. In class, for example, teachers explain the texts by discussing or pointing out where the main idea is, what the supporting arguments are and where the language difficulties lie. In the students' eyes, the biggest hindrance for them to pass the tests lies in the limited vocabulary. The reason that they cannot do the reading well, cannot understand the listening material, cannot write and speak well is all because of their limited vocabulary.

Here is a transcript from an interviewee, a first year undergraduate of mine, who related her understanding about EFL(English as a Foreign Language) teaching and leaning at the university level.

*I am from Shandong province. According to my experience, our English class in high school focused on grammar. I believe that there is no problem with my grammar. But we attached no importance to vocabulary. Few students could grasp the whole words in the text books, less alone the words outside the classroom.*

*The reason that I could get enrolled in Renmin University of China is, first of all, that I was the best in my hometown. ... (Read **Appendix 1** for further details.)*

*In brief, our English was based on the knowledge of grammar and on the feeling acquired by accumulation of practice. The amount of vocabulary is rather limited.*

*That is to say my problem is absolutely not grammar. ... as long as I can understand some advanced words, or one hundred percent true English words, my English will go up. The vocabulary is the key problem.*

*If teachers in the university do not teach vocabulary, what's the use of going to classes? I doubt ... basically speaking, if only my vocabulary is large and is of some depth, I basically have no problem. What will the teachers teach if they do not teach vocabulary? Grammar? To be frank, it is unnecessary for the students from Shandong province. Isn't it deplorable? The situation is similar in other provincial areas. Yet it is more evident in Shandong which has been famous for its highest score for the national entrance exam for the university.*

Though it is not a rounded and full account of respondents' feelings, (but rather just what happens to be uppermost in her mind at the time), it is thought-provoking and representative to some extent.

If what is discussed above is intended to project the problem in a nationwide angle lens, what happens in the short focus is also similar. According to my experience, observation, and the data collected and analysis after the evaluation of the term exams, the students also lose their marks mainly in the parts of vocabulary items in their term exams because of the words they don't know, which are included in their teaching materials.



Then a question may be popped up for us to speculate — is it true or a fact that teachers at the university level do not give instructions on words. Actually, this may not be the case. Teachers are not encouraged but there are teachers, not in a small group, who employ a lot of time in class explaining words.

The question that was always hovering in my mind was what on earth the students' problems on vocabulary learning were. Definitely, there might be a reality out there waiting prone to be discovered.

In retrospect, it was not until 2004 did I start to put my focus on the students' problems on vocabulary. The whole survey went through three stages. At first, I simply asked two classes of mine, about 60 students, to write down whatever there were about their problems in vocabulary on a piece of white paper — what problems did they have, how did they learn the new words, any experience and lessons they would like to tell and share, did they have any suggestions for teaching, what did they want most from their teachers — and viewed them as a reference to improve my teaching, to see whether I could do something in class, yet without intention of doing some further research.

The findings of this open questionnaire did render me reflecting some of the problems and ignited me later on to design some tasks on vocabulary to help my students to have a better command of their vocabulary. In 2005, another two classes did the same open questionnaire and the findings were similar and interesting. It was after the second open questionnaire that I started to think about