



大学实用英语

词汇教程

English Lexicology and Vocabulary Building
for College Students

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北京理工大学出版社

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大学实用英语词汇教程

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前言



词是语言表意的基本单位，脱离词汇，人们无法进行交流与沟通。为了让大学生全面了解英语词汇的演变和发展，以及词汇的内部结构特征，从而扩大词汇量，提高正确使用词汇的能力，我们编写了这本《大学实用英语词汇教程》。

这本教材本着“理论为基础，自主趣味学”的理念，由三大板块构成：词汇学理论，分类词根和主题分类词汇。

第一部分以语言学理论为基础，打破以往词汇学理论只供英语专业学生学习的模式，在本书开始部分向非英语专业的大学生简要介绍英语词的基本概念、词汇发展的历史、词汇的构成方法、词汇的不同含义、词义关系、词义变化、词义和上下文的关系等。让学生的词汇学习有理论基础，且加入了文化内涵。

第二部分以分类方式介绍词根，把零散的词根分成生命之旅、敢作敢为、听说睹写、喜恶悲惧、心灵世界、自然宇宙、战争之束、法治社会等八大领域，方便学生记忆。

第三部分围绕主题，特别设计在语境下介绍词汇的使用，提高学生正确使用词汇的能力。主题的选定考虑有趣、有用、有内涵三个原则，选取和学生日常生活相关的“天气”“疾病”“金钱”“教育”“性格”“运动”“艺术”等话题。借助一些图片，提高学生的兴趣，加深学生对词汇的记忆。

三大部分都设计了形式多样的练习题，使学生的词汇学习脱离了孤立的单词记忆，将学习词汇和巩固练习相结合，从而提高记忆效率。

本书突出实用性，通过向学生介绍词汇的历史、来源等，给学生提供了分析词汇、了解词汇的新途径，使学生在英语学习过程中能利用学到的理论和方法来分析词汇，提高英语学习的乐趣和效率。编者坚信，本书对大学生全面提高词汇能力大有裨益。

本书在编写过程中得到北京理工大学外国语学院和北京理工大学出版社的大力支持，谨在此表示衷心的感谢。

由于水平有限，书中会存在疏漏和欠妥之处，欢迎读者和同行批评指正。

编者

2013年7月

目 录



| | |
|---|----------|
| Part I Lexicology | (1) |
| Chapter One Basic Concepts of Words and Vocabulary | (2) |
| Chapter Two The Development of the English Vocabulary | (8) |
| Chapter Three Word Formation | (14) |
| Chapter Four Word Meaning | (22) |
| Chapter Five Sense Relations | (27) |
| Chapter Six Changes in Word Meaning | (36) |
| Chapter Seven Meaning and Context | (40) |
| Part II Basic Roots and Words | (47) |
| Theme One 生命之旅 | (48) |
| Theme Two 敢作敢为 -1 | (60) |
| Theme Two 敢作敢为 -2 | (72) |
| Theme Two 敢作敢为 -3 | (83) |
| Theme Two 敢作敢为 -4 | (95) |
| Theme Two 敢作敢为 -5 | (106) |
| Theme Three 听说读写 -1 | (118) |
| Theme Three 听说读写 -2 | (129) |
| Theme Four 喜恶悲惧 | (139) |
| Theme Five 心灵世界 | (148) |
| Theme Six 自然宇宙 | (160) |
| Theme Seven 战争之束 | (170) |
| Theme Eight 法治社会 | (182) |

| | |
|---|-------|
| Part III Vocabulary in Context | (193) |
| Topic One Weather | (194) |
| Topic Two Health | (200) |
| Topic Three Character | (209) |
| Topic Four Crime | (214) |
| Topic Five At Home | (219) |
| Topic Six Money | (225) |
| Topic Seven Arts | (233) |
| Topic Eight Education | (238) |
| Topic Nine Sports | (243) |
| Keys to Exercises | (247) |
| Appendix One Indo-European Language Family | (258) |
| Appendix Two Index of Roots | (259) |
| References | (262) |

Part I

Lexicology

Chapter One

Basic Concepts of Words and Vocabulary

1.1 The Definition of a Word

The definition of a word has always been controversial. Experts and linguists still do not agree on all aspects of a word.

In visual terms, a word can be defined as a meaningful group of letters. In terms of spoken language, a word is viewed as a sound or combination of sounds. In the eyes of semanticists, a word is a unit of meaning. To grammarians, a word is a free form that can function in a sentence.

To sum up, the definition of a word comprises the following points:

- (1) a minimal free form of a language;
- (2) a sound unity;
- (3) a unit of meaning;
- (4) a form that can function alone in a sentence.

A word is a minimal free form of a language that has a given sound and meaning and syntactic function.

1.2 Vocabulary

All the words in a language make up what is generally known as its vocabulary. It can refer to the total number of the words in a language, and it can stand for all the words used in a particular historical period. We can also use it to refer to all the words of a given dialect, a given book, a given discipline and the words possessed by an individual person. The general estimate of the present-day English vocabulary is over one million words.

1.3 Sound and Meaning

A word is a symbol that stands for something else in the world. There is a symbolic connection between the sound and the referent, which is always arbitrary and conventional;

there is no logical relationship between the two but people of the same speech community agree to the symbolic relationship. A dog is called a dog not because the sound and the three letters that make up the word just automatically suggest the animal in question. The same language can use the same sound to mean different things and different languages use different sounds to refer to the same thing.

1.4 Sound and Form

The written form of a natural language is the written record of the oral form. Naturally the written form should agree with the oral form—The sound should be consistent with the form. This is fairly true of English in its earliest stage. In Old English, the speech of the time was represented very much more faithfully in writing than it is today. However, with the development of the language, discrepancies arose.

The internal reason for this is that the English alphabet was adopted from the Romans, which does not have a separate letter to represent each sound in the language so that some letters must do double duty or work together in combination.

Another reason is that the pronunciation has changed more rapidly than spelling over the years, and in some cases the two have drawn far apart.

The third reason is that some of the differences were created by the early scribes to make a line even or for easier recognition. The letters of some short vertical strokes such as *i*, *u*, *v*, *m*, *w*, *n* looked all alike. Consequently, their handwriting caused misunderstanding. To solve the problem in part, the letter *u* was changed into *o* when it came before *m*, *n*, *v*. This is how *sum*, *cum*, *wuman*, *wunder*, *munk* came to be written as *some*, *come*, *woman*, *wonder*, *monk*. Later, printing and dictionary helped to standardize and freeze the spelling of words.

Finally comes the borrowing, which is an important channel of enriching the English vocabulary. The large scale of borrowing words from different languages complicated the situation. Some borrowings stay in their former form and pronunciation; others have their pronunciation or spelling assimilated but not quite conforming to the rules of English language.

All in all, the written form of English is not a perfect representation of its spoken form.

1.5 The Classification of Words

Words may fall into the basic word stock and non-basic vocabulary by use frequency, into content words and functional words by notion, and into native words and borrowed words by origin.

1.5.1 Basic Word Stock and Non-basic Vocabulary

Basic Word Stock

The basic word stock is the foundation of the vocabulary accumulated over centuries and forms the common core of the language. Though words of the basic word stock constitute a small percentage of the English vocabulary, yet it is the most important part of it. These words have obvious characteristics.

1) All National Character

Words of the basic word stock denote the most common things and phenomena of the world around us, which are indispensable to all the people who speak the language.

They include words relating to:

Natural phenomena: rain, snow, fire, water, sun, moon, spring, wind, hill...

Human body and relations: head, foot, hand, face, father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter...

The names of plants and animals: oak, pine, grass, pear, apple, tree, horse, cow, sheep, cat, dog, chicken...

Action, size, domain, and state: come, go, eat, hear, beat, carry, good, evil, old, young, hot, cold, heavy, white, black...

Numerals, pronouns, prepositions, and conjunctions: one, ten, hundred, I, you, your, who, in, out, under, and, but, till, as...

2) Stability

Words of the basic word stock have been in use for centuries. As they denote the commonest things necessary to life, they are likely to remain unchanged.

3) Productivity

Words of the basic word stock are mostly root words or monosyllabic words. They can each be used alone, and at the same time can form new words with other roots and affixes.

4) Polysemy

Words belonging to the basic word stock often possess more than one meaning because most of them have undergone semantic changes in the course of use and thus become polysemous.

5) Collocability

Many words of the basic word stock enter quite a number of set expressions, idiomatic usages, proverbial sayings and the like.

Non-basic Words include the following categories:

(1) **Terminology** consists of the technical terms used in particular disciplines and academic areas (penicillin and algebra).

(2) **Jargon** refers to the specialized vocabularies by which members of particular arts, sciences, trades and professions communicate among themselves (paranoid for suspicious).

(3) **Slang** is a substandard language not acceptable in serious speech (buck for dollar). Slang is created by changing or extending the meaning of existing words though some slang words are new coinages altogether. Slang is colorful, blunt, expressive and impressive.

(4) **Argot** generally refers to the jargon of criminals (dip for pickpocket).

(5) **Dialectal Words** are the words used only by the speakers of the dialect in question (beauty Aus E. for excellent).

(6) **Archaisms** are the words or forms that were once in common use but are now restricted only to the specialized or limited use (thou for you, and quoth for said).

(7) **Neologisms** are the newly-created words or expressions, or words that have taken on new meanings (futurology, e-mail, and Internet).

1.5.2 Content Words and Functional Words

By notion, words can be grouped into content words and functional words.

Content words denote clear notions and thus are known as notional words. They include nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and numerals, which denote objects, phenomena, action, quality, state, degree, and quantity.

Functional words do not have the notions of their own. Therefore, they are also called empty words. As their chief function is to express the relation between notions, the relation between words as well as between sentences, they are known as form words. Pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliaries and articles belong to this category.

However, functional words do far more work of expression in English on average than content words.

1.5.3 Native Words and Borrowed Words

Native Words

Native words are the words brought to Britain in the fifth century by the German tribes; the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes, thus known as Anglo-Saxon words. Native words are limited in number, but form the core of the English language.

Apart from the characteristics mentioned of the basic word stock, in contrast to borrowed words, native words have two other features:

(1) **Neutral in style:** They are not stylistically specific. Stylistically, native words are neither formal nor informal, whereas the words borrowed from French or Latin are literary and learned, thus appropriate in formal style.

(2) **Frequent in use:** Native words are most frequently used in everyday speech and writing.

Borrowed Words

Words taken over from foreign languages are known as borrowed words or loan words or borrowings in simple terms. It is estimated that English borrowings constitute 80 percent of the modern English vocabulary. The English language is noted for the remarkable complexity and heterogeneity of its vocabulary because of its extensive borrowings. Borrowed words are divided into 4 types.

(1) **Denizens** are borrowed words early in the past and now assimilated into English words such as *pork* (F) and *change* (F).

(2) **Aliens** are the borrowed words which have retained their original pronunciation and spelling such as *blitz* (G) and *kowtow* (CH). These words are immediately recognizable as foreign in origin.

(3) **Translation-loans** are the words and expressions formed from the existing material in the English language but modeled on the patterns of another language such as *mother tongue* (L) and *long time no see* (CH).

(4) **Semantic-loans** are the native forms with borrowed meaning. The words of this category are not borrowed with reference to the form. But their meanings are borrowed such as *dream* and *pioneer*. *Dream* originally meant “joy” and “music,” and borrowed from the Norse its modern meaning. *Pioneer* originally meant “explorer” and later borrowed the new meaning of “a member of the Young Pioneer” from Russian. In other words, English has borrowed a new meaning for an existing word in the language.

Quiz of Chapter 1

I. Choose the best answer.

- In Old English there was _____ agreement between sound and form.
A. more B. little C. less D. gradual
- Which of the following words is a functional word? _____.
A. Often B. Never C. Although D. Desk

3. The term “vocabulary” is used in different ways because of all the following reasons EXCEPT that _____.
A. it can refer to the common core of a language
B. it can refer to the total number of the words in a language
C. it can represent all the words used in a certain historical period
D. it can stand for words in a given dialect or field
4. Which of the following characteristics of the basic word stock is the most important? _____.
A. Stability B. Collocability C. Productivity D. National character
5. The written form of English is a (an) _____ representation of the spoken form.
A. selective B. adequate C. imperfect D. natural
6. Which of the following is NOT correct?
A. A word is a meaningful group of letters.
B. A word is a unit of meaning.
C. A word is a sound or combination of sounds.
D. A word is a form that cannot function alone in a sentence.
7. Words fall into the basic word stock and non-basic vocabulary by _____.
A. use frequency B. notion C. productivity D. origin
8. The pronunciation has changed _____ spelling over the years.
A. more slowly than B. as quickly as
C. more rapidly than D. not so quickly as
9. The differences between sound and form are due to the following EXCEPT _____.
A. the fact of more phonemes than letters in English
B. the stabilization of spelling by printing
C. the influence of the work of scribes
D. the innovations made by linguists
10. There are _____ functional words in the following sentence: *It is fun to play with children.*
A. 3 B. 4 C. 5 D. 6

II. Fill in the blanks.

1. The basic word stock forms the common _____ of the language.
2. The relationship between the sound and meaning is arbitrary or _____.
3. According to semanticists, a word is a unit of _____.
4. A word is a _____ form of a language that has a given sound and meaning and syntactic function.

Chapter Two

The Development of the English Vocabulary

It is estimated that there are about 5,000 languages all over the world, which can be grouped into about 300 language families, such as Sino-Tibetan Family, Indo-European Family and so on.

Chinese is a member in the Sino-Tibetan Family, while English is a member in the Indo-European Family, which hosts the most languages of Europe, the Near East, and India. The branch of Indo-European (See Appendix 1) that includes English is called the Germanic group.

The English people are of a mixed blood. The early inhabitants of the island we now call England were Celts or Britons. In 55 B. C. Britain was invaded by the Roman conqueror Julius Caesar. In 410 A. D. all the Roman troops returned to the Continent, thus ending the Roman occupation of Britain.

At the beginning of the fifth century Britain was invaded by the three tribes from Northern Europe: the Angles, Saxons and Jutes. These three tribes merged into one people. And the three dialects they spoke naturally grew into a single language—the English language.

The history of the English language is divided into three periods:

The Old English (450 – 1150)

The Middle English (1150 – 1500)

The Modern English (1500 – present)

2.1 The Old English (450 – 1150)

The history of the English language begins with the conquest and settlement of what is now England by the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes from about 450 A. D. The language they spoke was Anglo-Saxon, which replaced the Celtic spoken by the former inhabitants Celts.

The OE (Old English) vocabulary, estimated at the size of 50,000 to 60,000 words, is almost purely Germanic. Although some 85% of it is no longer in use, those that survive all belong to the basic word stock of Modern English.

Owing to the Christianizing of Britain and the Vikings' invasions, the relatively few borrowings

are mainly Latin and Scandinavian. Some 500 Latin words, many of which have to do with religious life (*candle, amen, apostle, altar*, etc.) appear in English writings. At least 900 everyday words of Scandinavian origin (*skill, skirt, egg, get, they, leg*, etc.) have survived in Modern Standard English.

2.2 The Middle English (1150 – 1500)

The Middle English period is from 1150 to 1500. The most important event to affect the history of English, the Norman Conquest (1066), took place at the end of the Old English period. The big changes that this invasion produced in the English society were accompanied by equal effects in the vocabulary of Middle English.

After their victory in 1066 at the Battle of Hastings under William the Conqueror, the Normans quickly assumed leadership and privilege in England. The Normans were originally Vikings—Their name comes from North man (i. e., “Norse”). In a sense, the Norman Conquest can be seen as yet another Germanic invasion. But there was a difference this time. The Normans had earlier been given the control of a large piece of land along the northern coast of France—Normandy. As French subjects, they had adopted French culture. So the language they brought with them was not a Germanic language, but French.

The Norman French imposed a new political and cultural life on the land of Anglo-Saxon, and changed greatly the development of the English language. The Norman Conquest virtually introduced French-English bilingualism into England. The English were defeated, but not killed off, nor were they driven from their country. They were reduced to the status of an inferior people. Norman French became the polite speech. The Norman dialect of French became the language of the upper class, while English completely lost its scholarly and literary importance, and was used only by the peasants and people of the working class.

By the end of the 11th century, almost all of the people who held political or social power and many of those in powerful church positions were of Norman French origin. This resulted in a massive borrowing of French words into the English vocabulary.

By the end of the 13th century, English gradually came back into schools, law courts, and government and regained social status thanks to Wycliff's translation of the Bible and the writings of Chaucer.

Between 1250 and 1500, about 9,000 words of French origin (*state, power, prince, duke, pork, bacon, fry, coat, dress, mercy, peace*, etc.) poured into English. We can find those words relating to every aspect of human society.

2.3 Modern English (1500 – now)

2.3.1 Early Modern English Period (1500 – 1700)

Modern English began with the establishment of printing in England. In the early period of Modern English, Europe saw a new upsurge of learning ancient Greek and Roman classics. This is known in history as the Renaissance.

Thanks to the Renaissance (early 14th C – 1650), great numbers of Latin and Greek words were added to English. Latin and Greek were recognized as the languages of the Western world's great literary heritage and of great scholarship. Scholars translated literature from Latin and Greek into English, so over 10,000 Latin words (*focus*, *status*, *bonus*, *genius*, *criteria*, *species*, etc.) and Greek words (*democracy*, *logic*, *philosophy*, *astronomy*, *mathematics*, *alphabet*, *drama*, *grammar*, *poem*, *chaos*, *method*, *mystery*, etc.) entered the English language.

2.3.2 Late Modern English Period (1700 – present)

This was a time of stabilizing and purifying the English language. Samuel Johnson edited *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), setting standards for using English words in spelling, meaning and usage.

In the mid-seventeenth century, England experienced Bourgeois Revolution followed by the Industrial Revolution and rose to be a great economic power. With the growth of colonization, British tentacles began stretching out to every corner of the globe, absorbing words from all major languages of the world.

The 19th and 20th centuries saw an unprecedented growth in the scientific vocabulary as a consequence of the industrial revolution and the scientific exploration and discovery. Since the beginning of the last century, especially, after World War II, the world has seen breathtaking advances in science and technology. Many new words have been created to express new ideas, yet more words are created by means of word formation.

2.4 Growth of Present-day English

Today, new words sweep in at a rate much faster than at any other historical period of time. New words are being invented or introduced every day to express new things and new changes in society, both material and intellectual. Meanwhile, they are coined and used to arouse public attention and interest. In time they gain acceptance and become part of the English vocabulary. Generally, there are three main sources of new words: the rapid development of modern science and

technology; social, economic and political changes; and the influence of other cultures and languages.

2. 4. 1 Advance in Science and Technology

Since the end of World War II, tremendous new advances in all fields of science and technology have given rise to the creation in the English language of tens of thousands of new words. The great majority of these are technical terms known only to the specialists, but a certain number of them have become familiar to the public and passed into general use.

E. g. The words used in connection with the nuclear bomb: *chain reaction* (连锁反应), *radioactivity* (放射), *fall-out* (放射性尘埃), *clean bomb* (低污染核弹), and *medium-range ballistic missiles* (中程弹道导弹) and so on.

E. g. The words connected with the exploration of space: *astronaut*, *countdown*, *capsule* (太空舱), *launching pad* (发射台), *parking orbit* (驻留轨道), *spacemen*, *space suit*, *space platform* (空间站) and *space shuttle* (航天飞机), etc.

2. 4. 2 Socio-economic, and Political Changes

New social habits and new living conditions bring about an increasing number of new words: *hire purchase* (分期付款购买), *fringe benefit* (福利), *credit card*, *chores*, *house sitter*, *house sitting*, *pressure cooker*, *microwave oven*, *instant noodle*, *fast food*, *talk show*, *supermarket*, etc.

E. g. The words about some subculture: *hippie*, *yuppie* (young urban professional), *gay*, *lesbian*, etc; about Women's Liberation Movement: *Ms*, *chairperson*, *spokeswoman*, *saleswoman*, *feminism*, and *sexism*; in education: *open classroom* (an informal flexible system of elementary education in which open discussions and individualized activities replace the traditional subject-centered studies), *Open University*, etc; in politics and economy: *stagflation*, *Watergate*, etc.

2. 4. 3 The Influence of Other Cultures and Languages

English is characterized by a marked tendency to go outside her own linguistic resources and borrow from other languages, such as *discotheque* from French, *sputnik* from Russian, *Mao tai*, *stir fry*, *Mao jackets*, *kungfu* from Chinese, etc. Although this borrowing has slowed down, it is still an important factor in vocabulary development.

The development of science, the rapid changes in society, the influence of other cultures and languages have all resulted in a dramatic increase in the vocabulary, a growth which in turn contributes to the richness and resourcefulness of the English language.