

外语语言文学系列教材

英语词汇学教程

张维友 编著

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前 言

学习语言必须学习语音、语法、词汇。在这三要素中,词汇占有举足轻重的地位。著名学者 Wilkins(1972)说过,没有语法,表达甚微;没有词汇,表达为零(Without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed)。词汇学家 McCarthy (1990)说得更干脆,一个学生学习第二语言,其语法无论学得多么好,语音无论掌握得多么漂亮,没有词汇来表达各种意义,语言交际就难以实现(No matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully he masters the sounds of a L2, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in that language cannot happen in any meaningful way)。正因为如此,词汇学习愈来愈受到师生的重视。英语词汇学是研究英语词汇形态、意义和整个词汇系统的科学。学一点词汇学知识,有助于总结整理所学过的词汇素材,有意识地扩大词汇量,加深对词语的理解,提高语言运用能力。对于教师,学一点词汇学,可以运用这些知识,对词汇归纳分类,增强词语释义和辨析能力,加深语言教学的深度,提高教学效果。所以,在高校英语教学中,词汇学显得格外重要。

《英语词汇学教程》(以下简称《教程》)是笔者在多年的教学实践基础上整理而成的。《教程》在保留词汇学传统的知识结构基础上,尽可能融进本学科新的研究成果,着力反映词汇的新发展,并首次引进了篇章词汇语义学的内容。本书的着眼点在于实用,因此,理论上阐述深入浅出,删繁就简。同时博采例证,提供丰富的素材。该书配备了相当数量的练习题和思考题,以便巩固学习内容,学以致用。《教程》自1997年问世以来,深受广大师生的欢迎,先后重印六次。

21世纪到来,科学技术日新月异,信息知识瞬息万变。近几年来,词汇学领域出现了不少新的研究成果。为了紧跟时代步伐,与时俱进,笔者感到有必要对《教程》进行修订。本书把原第三章的某些内容独立成章,进行了重写。第二章新增两节,阐述当代英语的特征和发展趋势。对辞书部分进行了较大的改动,不仅增加了20世纪90年代末期和21世纪前三年出现的新辞书,还专辟一节详尽地介绍四部优秀词典,

大大增加了该书的时效性和实用价值。修订过程中得到华中师范大学出版社的关心和大力支持,编辑廖国春同志对该书的付梓作出了努力,在此表示真挚的谢意。

由于编者水平有限,修订版也无从汲取所有新成果,难免遗漏和谬误,恳请同仁和各位读者批评指正。 编者

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20世纪末以来,英语词汇学的发展呈现出新的面貌。首先,在词汇学理论方面,出现了新的流派,如构词学、语义学、语用学等。其次,在词汇学应用方面,出现了新的领域,如词典学、辞书学、辞书编纂学等。再次,在词汇学研究方法方面,出现了新的方法,如语料库语言学、计算机语言学等。最后,在词汇学研究成果方面,出现了新的成果,如《牛津英语词典》、《剑桥英语词典》等。这些新的面貌,反映了英语词汇学在20世纪末以来的快速发展。

Short Forms

a(A, adj)	adjective
A. D.	Anno Domini (after Christ)
adv	adverb
ALD	Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (1984)
AmE	American English
apprec	appreciative
Arab	Arabic
attr	attributive
AusE	Australian English
B. C.	Before Christ
BlackE	Black English
BrE	British English
CCELD	Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary (1987)
CH	Chinese
CH dial	Chinese dialect
COD	The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1982)
colloq	colloquial
conj	conjunction
DAI	A Dictionary of American Idioms (1975)
derog	derogatory
Eng(E)	English
e. g.	exempli gratia (for example)
et al	et alii (and others)

etc.	et cetera (and so on)
euph	euphemism
F	French
fig	figurative
G	German
Gr	Greek
Hin	Hindi
ibid	ibidem (from the same source)
i. e.	id est (that is)
inf	infinitive
IT	Italian
Jap	Japanese
L	Latin
LDCE	Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1987)
n (N)	noun
num	numeral
ODCIE	Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English, Vol. 2 (1983)
OE	Old English
OF	Old French
ON	Old Norse
Per	Persian
poss	possessive
prep	preposition
pron	pronoun
Russ	Russian
sb	somebody
Scot	Scottish English
sth	something
Sp	Spanish

StandE	standard English
Tib	Tibetan
v	verb
vi	intransitive verb
Vol	volume
vt	transitive verb
WNWD	Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language (1980)

WNDS	Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms (1978)
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WTNID	Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the American Language (1961)
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Chapter 1 The Basic Concepts of Words and Vocabulary

In the beginning of the book on lexicology, the study of meanings and origins of words (WNWD), it is necessary to expound and define some basic concepts concerning words and vocabulary. The *word* itself is an elusive notion, which needs immediate consideration. The relationship between words and vocabulary, between sound and meaning, and between sound and form demands explanation as well. Language is not a fixed list of words but a growing and developing store, which is quite formidable. However, the huge unstable vocabulary of English can be classified into a few manageable categories by different criteria. This is also part of our concern in the first chapter.

1.1 The Definition of a Word

What is a word? This question has occupied the attention of scholars and experts for ages. The definition of the word has always been controversial. Although numerous definitions have been suggested, none of them seem to be perfect. Experts and linguists still do not agree on all aspects of the word.

When we talk about a word, we tend to think in visual terms. In this way a word can be defined as a meaningful group of letters printed or written horizontally across a piece of paper. As defined in terms of spoken language, a word is viewed as a sound or combination of sounds which are made voluntarily with human vocal equipment. According to semanticists, a word is a unit of meaning. Grammarians, however, insist that a word be a free form that can function in a sentence, etc. To sum up, the

definition of a word will cover 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.

Therefore, we can say that 'a word is a minimal free form of a language that has a given sound, meaning and syntactic function'.

Words can be simple and complicated, yet all must comply with these criteria. *Man* and *fine* are simple, but they each have sound, meaning and syntactic function, and each can be used alone in a sentence. Naturally they are words. There are words which are morphologically complex such as *mis·for·tune* and *man·age·ment*. Both are polysyllabic words and can be used as 'subject', 'object' and 'predictive'. Though *misfortune* can be divided as *mis-* and *fortune*, the former cannot stand alone as a word. Similarly, *management* can be broken down as *manage* and *-ment*, the latter cannot be used freely, either. *Blackmail* can be segmented into *black* and *mail*, and both are freestanding, the meaning of each, however, is by no means the sum total of the combination of the two. *Black* is a colour, opposite to 'white', and *mail* denotes 'something sent by post', yet when they are put together, the combined form means 'compel, compulsion, to make payment or action for concealment of discreditable secrets, etc.'. Hence *blackmail* is a different word (COD).

1.2 Vocabulary

All the words in a language make up what is generally known as its vocabulary. The term 'vocabulary' is used in different senses. Not only can it refer to the total number of the words in a language, but it can stand for all the words used in a particular historical period, e. g. Old English vocabulary, Middle English vocabulary and Modern English vocabulary. We 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. English is one of the world's highly developed languages. Naturally the vocabulary is one of the largest

and richest. The general estimate of the vocabulary is over one million words.

1.3 Sound and Meaning

A word is a symbol that stands for something else in the world. Each of the world's cultures has come to agree that certain sounds will represent certain persons, things, places, properties, processes and activities external to the language system. This symbolic connection is almost always arbitrary, and there is 'no logical relationship between the sound which stands for a thing or an idea and the actual thing and idea itself' (Lodwig and Barrett 1973). A *dog* is called a dog not because the sound and the three letters that make up the word automatically suggest the animal in question. It is only a symbolic connection. The relationship between them is conventional because people of the same speech community have agreed to refer to the animal with this cluster of sounds. In different languages the same concept can be represented by different sounds. *Woman*, for example, becomes *Frau* in German, *femme* in French and *fù nǚ* in Chinese. On the other hand, the same sound [mi:t] is used to mean *meet*, *meat*, *mete*. *Knight* and *night*, though denoting entirely different things, yet have the same sound.

1.4 Sound and Form

It is generally agreed that the written form of a natural language is the orthographical record of the oral form. Naturally the written form should agree with the oral form. In other words, the sound should be consistent with the form. This is fairly true of English in its earliest stage, i. e. Old English. The speech of the time was represented much more faithfully in writing than it is today. With the development of the language, more and more differences arose between the two.

One reason for this is that the English alphabet was adopted from the Romans, and it 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. In the last five hundred years, though the sounds of speech have changed considerably, there have been no corresponding, radical changes in spelling. In the early days the spelling differences did not matter very much as people were not so used to seeing words in print, and the ideal of spelling uniformity had not been formulated. No one was quite sure how some English words should be spelled. Sometimes, people deliberately changed the spelling of words either to make a line even or for easier recognition. Before the printing press was brought to England, everything was written by hand. Those scribes, who made a living by writing for other people, often worked in haste to meet the needs of the king, church, and merchants. One problem was that several letters written with short vertical strokes such as *i*, *u*, *v*, *m*, *w* and *n* looked all alike. Consequently, their handwriting caused misunderstanding. To solve the problem in part, they changed the letter *u* to *o* when it came before *m*, *n*, or *v*. This is how *sum*, *cum*, *wuman*, *wunder*, *munk* came to be written as *some*, *come*, *woman*, *wonder*, *monk*. At some point, too, the scribes seem to have decided that no English word should end in *u* or *v*. Thus, in time, an *e* was added to such words as *live*, *have*, *due*, and *true* but not pronounced (Deighton 1979).

In the late 1500, printing became well established. It helped to freeze and standardize the spelling of words. The standardization makes spelling sacred. Dictionaries did their share in stopping spelling changes. Meanwhile, sounds continued to change as usual, thus bringing more differences.

Finally comes the borrowing, which is a rich source for the English vocabulary. When words were borrowed from other languages, Latin, Greek, French, etc., both meanings and spellings were borrowed. The early borrowings were assimilated and the later ones, however, do not conform to the rules of English pronunciation and spelling, e.g. *stimulus* (L), *denouement* (F), *fiesta* (Sp), *eureka* (Gr), and *kimono* (Jap).

The written form of English is, therefore, an imperfect representation of the phonemic elements of the spoken language (Quirk 1978). From time to time in history, some British and American scholars have made efforts to reform the English