

实用英语系列教程

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当代高级英语阅读

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编写说明

《实用英语系列教程》是一套高起点英语学习教程,包括《当代高级英语阅读》、《当代高级英语写作》、《当代高级英汉互译》三个分册,对象为各类非英语专业研究生、英语专业高年级学生,以及具有相当基础的英语自学者。

本册为《当代高级英语阅读》,着重培养学生阅读难度高、内容新的英语文章的能力。与同类教材相比,它有如下特征:(1)编写理念先进。以当代阅读的认知理论为指导,突出题材的实用性和时效性,注重内容的广度和深度,练习形式多样,将客观信息的记忆和主观思考能力的发挥相结合。(2)内容新,范围广。书中课文大多选自近五年来的英美国家的出版物,内容涵盖了语言、文化、科技、经济、教育、文艺等十多个学科。(3)语言地道、规范。文章作者均为美、英著名专家、学者。

本册编写具体分工如下。朱巧莲:第3、6、10、11、12单元;姚喜明:第1、17、18、20单元;马莉:第5、7、13单元;王红:第4、14单元;冯江鸿:第15、16单元;杨兆明:第2、9单元;冯国平:第8、19单元。全书编写体例由王红、姚喜明负责确定,最后由姚喜明负责统稿。

由于编者水平有限,不足之处在所难免,欢迎读者批评指正。

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Text A The Magic of Language

The magical influence of language is a theme which reverberates throughout the literatures and legends of the world. Language, especially in its written form, is thought to contain special powers, which only the initiated are allowed to understand or control. The beliefs are often linked to a myth about the divine origins of language, but they extend beyond this, to influence religious activities of all kinds, and to reflect a widespread primitive superstition about objects and events which have a symbolic meaning and use. 5

The belief that words control objects, people, and spirits can be seen in the use of magical formulae, incantations, litanies of names, and many other rites in black and white magic and in organized religion. The language is thought to be able to cure sickness, keep evil away, bring good to oneself and harm to an enemy. Such language usually has to be used with great exactitude, 10 if an effect is to be obtained; meticulous attention is paid to pronunciation, phraseology, and verbal tradition. There often has to be a great deal of repetition, in order to intensify the power of the words. The language, however, does not have to be 15

20 intelligible to have its effect: many magical formulae are
meaningless to those who use them, but there is still great belief in
their efficacy.

Cases of linguistic superstition abound. To primitive peoples,
the written language must appear to be omniscient, when
25 encountered for the first time. Several stories tell of illiterate
people stealing an object from a parcel, and being found out when
they delivered the message which accompanied it. The writing, it
would seem, had a voice of its own — or perhaps a god lived in
the letters. Such ideas are found throughout history. The search
30 for mystical meaning in alphabetic script can be seen in the use of
runic charms, or in the systems, still in use, which relate letters to
numbers.

At another level, the mystique of language is something
which we encounter throughout modern society, especially in the
35 field of advertising. Conquerors, too, well know the power that
exists in words. Napoleon, it is said, preferred newspapers to
battalions. And what better way is there to remove a nation's
influence than to burn its writings? Cortez did this to the Aztecs in
1520; and the Nazis and Allies did it to each other in World War II.

40

Verbal Taboos

The word *taboo* has been borrowed from Tongan, where it
means “holy” or “untouchable”. Taboos exist in all known
cultures, referring to certain acts, objects, or relationships which
45 society wishes to avoid — and thus to the language used to talk
about them. Verbal taboos are generally related to sex, the
supernatural, excretion, and death, but quite often they extend to
other aspects of domestic and social life. For example, certain
animals may be considered taboo: the Zuñi of New Mexico

prohibit the use of the word *takka* (“frogs”) during ceremonies; 50
until recently, many southern Americans avoided the word *bull* in
polite speech, replacing it by a euphemism, such as *he-cow* or
male beast; in Lappish and Yakuts, the original name for *bear* is
replaced by such phrases as *our lord* or *good father*, and wolves,
weasels, rats, lice, snake, and many other animals have been 55
given name-taboos by various cultures. Even people can be
affected; certain members of the family are considered taboo
among Australian aborigines; either a special language has to be
used to them, or they are not directly addressed at all.

The use of a taboo word can lead to a variety of sayings, 60
practices, and responses. The mention of a devil or unclean spirit
can evoke a verbal or physical reaction, such as a divine
invocation, or the sign of the cross. An obscenity can be the cause
of shocked recrimination (“go and wash your mouth out”),
physical violence (especially if “ladies” are present), or legal 65
action (as in the trial over the publication of the unexpurgated D.
H. Lawrence’s novel, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*). The influence of
taboo words can even extend across language boundaries. It has
been noted that Creek Indians avoid their native words for ‘earth’
and ‘meat’ because of their phonetic resemblance to English taboo 70
words, which is the dominant language around them. A similar
phenomenon has been recorded with Thai learners of English,
where English *yet* closely resembles Thai *jēd* (an impolite word
for “to have intercourse”). And Chinese people called *Li* (a
common family name) can find their name a source of embarrassment in 75
Rangoon, in view of the Burmese word *lî* (“phallus”).

The usual way of coping with taboo words and notions is to
develop euphemisms and circumlocutions. Hundreds of words and
phrases have emerged to express basic biological functions, and

80 talk about death has its own linguistic world, with its morticians, caskets, and innumerable ways of dying. English examples include *to pass on*, *pass over*, *make one's bow*, *kick the bucket*, *snuff the candles*, *go aloft*, and *cut the painter*. French has *fermer son parapluie* (“to close one's umbrella”), the indescribably final
85 *n'avoir plus mal aux dents* (“to have no more toothache”), and many more.

Proper Names

The use of words as personal labels is a matter of particular
90 significance — a fact which is early learned by children, who are often anxious to conceal their own names, and who so easily hurt, and are hurt, by name-calling. Many primitive people do not like to hear their name used, especially in unfavorable circumstances, for they believe that the whole of their being resides in it, and
95 they may thereby fall under the influence of others. The danger is even greater in some Australian tribes, where people are given two names — a “public” name, for general use, and a “secret” name, which is known only to God, or to the closest members of their group. To get to know a secret name is to have total power over its owner.

100 The Todas of southern India dislike uttering their own names, to the extent that, if they are asked for their name, they will ask someone else to give it. The Sakalavas of Madagascar do not communicate their own name, or the name of their village, to strangers, in case mischievous use should be made of it. In
105 folklore, there are many examples of forbidden names which, when discovered, break the evil power of their owners.

The process of personal naming can even affect the whole of a language. Stories are common of tribal chiefs who change their name when they take office, as a result of which any everyday

words which resemble that name have to be replaced, so that the 110
name will not be used in inauspicious circumstances. It is reported,
for example, that when Queen Rasoherina of the Anemerina tribe
in Madagascar came to the throne, the word *sopherina* (“silk
worm”) was forbidden, and replaced by *zana dandy* (“silk’s
child”). 115

Death can lead to major taboo effects on the use of names.
Often, the names of the dead are not to be uttered — though this
may well be out of fear rather than respect: while a name
endures, it is believed, the dead person does also, and those who
utter the name bring the evil of death upon themselves. In some 120
cultures (such as the Polynesian), therefore, when a person dies,
other people of the same name have to be renamed, or, if the
name happens to correspond to a word in the language, that word
would have to be changed. By contrast, some cultures (such as the
Greenlandic) place great store by the names of dead people, who 125
are thought to be unable to rest in peace, unless a child has been
named after them. In yet others, if a child dies, the next by the
same mother will be called by some evil name, to show the death
spirit that the child is not worth bothering about.

Sophisticated societies have had their superstitions too. In the 130
Roman levies, the authorities took good care to enroll first those
men who had auspicious names, such as Victor and Felix. The
names of Greek gods were carved on stone and sunk in the sea, to
guard against profanation. In Plato’s *Cratylus*, debaters worry
about using the names of gods as etymological examples, and in 135
the Christian era there are longstanding prohibitions over taking
the name of the Lord “in vain”. Older Hebrew names usually had
meanings, such as Nathaniah (“Yahweh has given”) or Azzan
(“Strong”). When Adrian VI became pope, he was advised not to

- 140 retain his own name on the grounds that all popes who had done so had died in the first year of their reign. People in the 20th century may find it easy to dismiss such attitudes, but things have not greatly changed. It is unlikely that popular opinion would ever allow a new ship to be named *Titanic*.

Exercises

I. Answer the following questions.

1. Why is language often thought to have a special power? What power do people think language has?
2. What linguistic superstition did primitive people have?
3. What is the power of language in advertising?
4. Can you list some taboo words in Chinese? Why do you think they have become taboo words?
5. What would happen if taboo words were used in social communication?
6. Can you list some euphemisms we often use in everyday life?
7. What is the difference in calling a person's name between Chinese and Americans?
8. In ancient China, emperors' names were forbidden to be called. Please explain the reason.
9. What do people in Greenland do after a person dies?
10. Do people in modern society have language superstition? Please give some examples and explain why.

II. Tell whether each of the following statements is true or false according to the text.

1. The magic power of language was linked to religion.

2. Witches or wizards often use simple and concise words in ceremonies.
3. In primitive times, people believed that written language had a supernatural power.
4. Taboos only exist in the primitive tribes.
5. The person who uses taboo is doomed to be punished by supernatural power.
6. Euphemisms are words that are often used to replace the taboo words.
7. Many primitive people do not like to be called by their names, because they fear to be controlled by others.
8. In some Australian tribes people have two names: one is used only at home and the other is used in churches.
9. In Madagascar if you ask the name of a village, the villagers are ready to tell you.
10. In Roman legions, soldiers were more likely to have Victor rather than Felix as their names.

III. Multiple Choices

1. This text implies that in ancient times _____.
 - A. people had found out the true nature of language
 - B. people had learned a lot about the nature of language
 - C. people didn't believe that language could cure the sick
 - D. the literate people had a higher status
2. The word *reverberate* in line 2 is closest in meaning to _____.
 - A. recoil
 - B. repeatedly appear
 - C. have sound echoes
 - D. show emphasis

3. Incantations are more likely to be used in _____.
A. daily communications
B. formation of magical formulae
C. treatment of the sick
D. amusement activities
4. Words are often repeated in ceremonies to _____.
A. make people hear clearly
B. enhance the mysterious effect
C. frighten people
D. make people remember the words
5. The primitive people believed that the written language _____.
A. could help catch thieves
B. appeared to have a supernatural power
C. was useless
D. facilitated communications
6. According to the text, Napoleon realized that _____.
A. incantations could be used to fight against enemies
B. the enemy's newspapers were more interesting
C. newspapers could produce a greater effect in defeating enemies
D. his soldiers should read newspapers
7. Verbal taboos are usually connected with all the following EXCEPT _____.
A. physiological phenomena
B. natural phenomena beyond human knowledge
C. recreation activities
D. some animals
8. The use of a taboo word can cause _____.
A. a legal action
B. excoriation

- C. divine invocation
- D. all of the above
9. The author mentioned *Lady Chatterley's Lover* to show that books with pornographic contents might lead to _____.
 - A. a rise in sales
 - B. the curiosity of readers
 - C. a legal action
 - D. good fortune
10. Thai learners of English don't like to pronounce the word *yet* because _____.
 - A. in Thai it refers to a god
 - B. in Thai it refers to bad communications
 - C. in Thai it is quite similar to the pronunciation of a word meaning sexual activity
 - D. in Thai it means to have more girl friends
11. Euphemisms are made to help people _____.
 - A. understand taboo words better
 - B. avoid using taboo words
 - C. develop more taboo words
 - D. make taboo words more difficult to understand
12. In French *parapluie* means _____.
 - A. umbrella
 - B. close
 - C. death
 - D. taboo
13. People do not like to utter the names of the dead mostly out of _____.
 - A. respect
 - B. fear
 - C. sympathy
 - D. sadness
14. A mother often changes her children's name after a child's death to _____.
 - A. memorize the dead one
 - B. make her children more healthy

- C. keep away the death spirit
D. make her children happy
15. A new ship is unlikely to be named as *Titanic* because _____.
- A. it is the name of a god
B. it reminds people of a terrible disaster
C. the name will cause ship to sink
D. no one will buy it

IV. Cloze

For the past two years, I have been working on students' evaluation of classroom teaching. I have kept a record of informal conversations 1 some 300 students from at least twenty-one colleges and universities. The students were generally frank and direct in their comments 2 how course work could be better 3. Most of their remarks were kindly 4 — with tolerance rather than bitterness — and frequently were softened by the 5 that the students were speaking about some, not all, instructors. Nevertheless, 6 the following suggestions and comments indicate, students feel dissatisfied with things-as-they-are in the classroom.

Professors should be 7 from reading lecture notes. “It makes their voices monotonous.” If they are going to read, why not give out copies of the lecture? Then we 8 need to go to class. Professors should 9 repeating in lectures material that is in the textbook. “Once we’ve read the material, we want to discuss it or hear it elaborated on, not repeated.” “A lot of students hate to buy a 10 text that the professor has written only to have his lectures repeat it.”

1. A. involving B. counting C. covering D. figuring

2. A. over B. at C. on D. of
3. A. presented B. submitted C. described D. written
4. A. received B. addressed C. made D. taken
5. A. occasion B. truth C. case D. fact
6. A. though B. whether C. as D. if
7. A. interfered B. interrupted
C. discouraged D. disturbed
8. A. couldn't B. wouldn't C. mustn't D. shouldn't
9. A. refuse B. prohibit C. prevent D. avoid
10. A. desired B. revised C. required D. deserved

Text B A Brief History of English

No understanding of the English language can be very satisfactory without a notion of the history of the language. But we shall have to make do with just a notion. The history of English is long and complicated, and we can only hit the high spots.

5

At the time of Roman Empire, the speakers of what was to become English were scattered along the northern coast of Europe. They spoke a dialect of Low German. More exactly, they spoke several different dialects, since they were several different tribes. The names given to the tribes who got to England are *Angles*, *Saxons*, and *Jutes*, who are referred to as Anglo-Saxons.

10

Not much is surely known about the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in England. We do know, however, that the Angles,

Saxons, and Jutes were a long time securing themselves. Fighting
15 went on for as long as a hundred years before the Celts in England
were all killed, driven into Wales, or reduced to slavery. By 550
or so the Anglo-Saxons were firmly established. English was in
England.

It is customary to divide the history of the English language
20 into three periods: Old English, Middle English, and Modern
English. Old English runs from the earliest records — i. e.,
seventh century — to about 1100; Middle English from 1100 to
1450 or 1500; Modern English from 1500 to the present day.

When England came into history, it was divided into several
25 more or less autonomous kingdoms, some of which at times
exercised a certain amount of control over the others. In the sixth
century the most advanced kingdom was Northumbria. Two
century later, Wessex, the country of the West Saxons, became
the leading power. The most famous king was Alfred the Great,
30 who was famous not only as a military man and administrator but
also as a champion of learning. He founded and supported schools
and translated or caused to be translated many books from Latin
into English.

In the military sphere, Alfred's great accomplishment was his
35 successful opposition to the Viking invasions. The linguistic result
was a considerable injection of Norse into the English language.
Norse was at this time not so different from English as Norwegian
or Danish is now. Probably speakers of English could understand,
more or less, the language of the newcomers who had moved into
40 eastern England. At any rate, there was considerable interchange
and word borrowing. Examples of Norse words in the English
language are *sky*, *give*, *law*, *egg*, *outlaw*, *leg*, *ugly*, *scant*, *sly*,
crawl, *scowl*, *take*, *thrust*. There are hundreds more. We have