

# A Reader of English Lexicology

## 英语词汇学教程读本

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# 前 言

英语词汇教学在英语教学中的地位已经越来越受到重视,必要的理论知识和大量的实践是学好英语词汇的必要途径。自从《英语词汇学教程》于1997年出版以来,已经重印了十余次,在读者中造成了一定的影响。我曾多次收到读者来信和当面听到建议,《英语词汇学教程》作为大学本科英语专业的一部教材,还应该有英语的原版论述作为进一步学习的内容。但是,英语词汇学的专门论著在西方只有少量的几本,多数内容散见于各种著作之中,有必要对零碎的材料加以收集、整理和归纳,《英语词汇学教程读本》就是在这样的背景下应运而生的一本书,也是我国出版的第一本这种性质的英语词汇学书籍。

《英语词汇学教程读本》的内容选自西方出版的60余部有关的原版英文著作和从30余个因特网站上下载的材料,章节安排跟《英语词汇学教程》完全一致,既可以与《英语词汇学教程》配套使用,又可以作为其他教材的参考读物,还可以独立使用。本书尽量选择文字通俗易懂的材料(更多的学术性较强的内容将收入《英语词汇学高级教程读本》),而且多为最新出版的书籍,以追踪英语词汇学的最新动态。所以,本书不仅适用于大学本科英语专业的师生,而且适用于大学公共英语的师生和广大的英语自学者。

这本书是我跟杭州师范学院王之江教授、吴晓维先生等通力合作完成的,还有朱越峰、骆玉峰等年轻教师一丝不苟的治学态度同样给我留下了非常深刻的印象。我在杭州师范学院外语学院两年多的工作期间感到非常愉快,并期待着我们会更多的合作成果问世。

在此,我们特别要对所选文献的原作者及其出版者表示衷心的感谢,感谢他们对这一选编工作的支持。我们相信,他们的这些成果将对促进我国英语词汇学教学与研究的发展起到积极的作用。

汪榕培

2004年7月于苏州幽兰斋

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# Chapter 1

## *Introduction*

员洞瑶栽梁赫水昂登梁灾梁善道梁增

赫昂登梁栽梁增

Four hundred years ago, at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, English was spoken almost exclusively by the English in England, and by some speakers in Wales, Ireland and Scotland, and this had been so for hundreds of years since the language was first brought to Britain in the 5th century.

English today is a worldwide international language. It is spoken as a mother tongue by about 400 million people in the British Isles, Canada, the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand. It is a second language for many others in, for example, India and Pakistan and in some African states, where it is used as an official language in government and education.

晕赠 赫昂登梁栽

Many different national and regional varieties of English have therefore developed, and will continue to do so. They have been called “new Englishes,” with their own characteristics of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation, in the different states of Africa, India and Pakistan, Singapore

and the Philippines for example.

### 杂藏性非性非水最圣录

In Britain there are many regional and social dialects, but there is one variety which is not confined to any geographical region. It originally developed as a common system of writing, but it is also the dialect of what is called “educated speech”:

Educated English naturally tends to be given the additional prestige of government agencies, the professions, the political parties, the press, the law court and the pulpit — any institution which must attempt to address itself to a public beyond the smallest dialectal community. It is codified in dictionaries, grammars, and guides to usage, and it is taught in the school system at all levels. It is almost exclusively the language of printed matter. Because educated English is thus accorded implicit social and political sanction, it comes to be referred to as 杂藏性非性非水最圣录 ... (R. Quirk, et al., *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. Longman, 1985)

— 云册建果性重河援六况恩最云册性 韵性非水最圣录 录杂藏性非性非水最圣录

### 栽梁非水最圣录 栽梁非水最圣录 栽梁非水最圣录

In the glorious reign of Queen Elizabeth (the first, that is, from 1558 to 1603), the number of English speakers in the world is thought to have been between five and seven million. At the beginning of the reign of the second Queen Elizabeth, in 1952, the figure had increased almost fiftyfold: 250 million, it was said, spoke English as a mother tongue, and a further 100 million or so had learned it as a foreign language.

Thirty-five years on, the figures continue to creep up. The most recent estimates tell us that mother-tongue speakers are now over 300 million. But this total is far exceeded by the numbers of people who use English as a foreign language — at least a further 400 million, according to the most conservative of estimates, and perhaps a further billion, according to radical ones. “Creep,” perhaps, is not quite the right word, when such statistics are introduced.

— 悦册建果性重河援六况恩最栽梁非水最圣录 栽梁非水最圣录 栽梁非水最圣录

### 栽梁非水最圣录 栽梁非水最圣录 栽梁非水最圣录

In numbers of speakers as well as in its uses for international

communication and in other less quantifiable measures, English is one of the most important languages of the world. Spoken by more than 370 million people as a first language in the United Kingdom, the United States, and the former British Empire, it is the largest of the occidental languages. English, however, is not the most widely used language in the world. Chinese is spoken by more than a billion people in China alone. Some of the European languages are comparable with English in reflecting the forces of history, especially with regard to European expansion since the sixteenth century. Spanish, next in size to English, is spoken by about 240 million people, Russian by 210 million, Portuguese by 125 million, German by 110 million, French by 85 million native speakers (and a large number of second-language speakers), Italian by 65 million. A language may be important as a *lingua franca* in a country or region whose diverse populations would otherwise be unable to communicate. This is especially true in the former colonies of England and France whose colonial languages have remained indispensable even after independence and often in spite of outright hostility to the political and cultural values that the European languages represent.

French and English are both languages of wider communication, and yet the changing positions of the two languages in international affairs during the past century illustrate the extent to which the status of a language depends on extra-linguistic factors. It has been said that English is recurrently associated with practical and powerful pursuits. Joshua A. Fishman writes: "In the Third World (excluding former Anglophone and Francophone colonies) French is considered *more suitable* than English for only one function: opera. It is considered *the equal of English* for reading good novels or poetry and for personal prayer (the local integrative language being widely viewed as superior to both English and French in this connection). But outside the realm of aesthetics, the Ugly Duckling reigns supreme." The ascendancy of English as measured by numbers of speakers in various activities does not depend on nostalgic attitudes toward the originally English-speaking people or toward the language itself. Fishman makes the point that English is less loved but more used; French is more loved but less used. And in a world where "econo-technical superiority" is what counts, "the real 'powerhouse' is still English. It doesn't have to worry about being loved because, loved or not, it works. It makes the world go round, and few indeed can afford to 'knock it.'"

If "econo-technical superiority" is what counts, we might wonder about the relative status of English and Japanese. Although spoken by 125 million people in Japan, a country that has risen to economic and technical

dominance since World War II, the Japanese language has yet few of the roles in international affairs that are played by English or French. The reasons are rooted in the histories of these languages. Natural languages are not like programming languages such as FORTRAN or LISP, which have gained or lost international currency over a period of a decade or two. Japan went through a two-century period of isolation from the West (between 1640 and 1854) during which time several European languages were establishing the base of their subsequent expansion.

— 月 葬 帝 靈 粵 悅 愛 葬 惜 葬 禮 靈 裁 爰 力 氣 德 靈 粵 勻 豎 喇 曾 樂 夙 藥  
 秘 皇 靈 靈 靈 皇 皇 靈 靈

裁 藥 之 費 藥 昔 樂 秘 皇 靈 靈

The English language developed out of Germanic dialects that were brought to Britain, during the course of the 5th and 6th centuries, by the Jutes (from modern Jutland, Denmark), Angles (from modern Schleswig, Denmark/Germany), Saxons (from modern Holstein, Germany), and Frisians (from modern Friesland, Netherlands /Germany). By mediaeval times, this Germanic language had replaced the original Celtic language of Britain in nearly all of England as well as in southern and eastern Scotland. Until the 1600s, however, English remained a language spoken by a relatively small number of people and was confined geographically to the island of Britain. Indeed, even much of Britain remained non-English-speaking. The original Celtic language of Britain survived in the form of Welsh in nearly all of Wales and as Cornish in much of Cornwall. The Highlands and Islands of western and northern Scotland spoke Gaelic, another Celtic language which had been brought across from Ireland in pre-mediaeval times. And the populations of the Northern Isles — Orkney and Shetland — still spoke the Scandinavian language, Norn, which they had inherited from their Viking ancestors. It was not until the 17th century that the English language began the geographical and demographic expansion which was to lead to the situation in which it finds itself today, with more non-native speakers than any other language in the world, and more native speakers than any other language except Chinese.

This expansion began in the late 1600s, with the arrival of English-speakers in the Americas — North America (the modern United States and Canada), Bermuda, the Bahamas, and the Caribbean — and the importation of English, from Scotland, into the northern areas of Ireland. Subsequently,

during the 1700s, English also began to penetrate into southern Ireland, and it was during this time, too, that Cornish finally disappeared from Cornwall, and Norm from Orkney and Shetland. During the 1800s, English began making serious inroads into Wales, so that today only 20 per cent of the population of that country are native Welsh-speakers; and in Scotland, English also began to replace Gaelic, which today has around 70,000 native-speakers.

It was also during the 1800s that the development of Southern Hemisphere varieties of English began. During the early 19th century, large-scale colonization of Australia began to take place and, at slightly later date, New Zealand, South Africa and the Falkland Islands also began to be colonized from the British Isles. The South Atlantic islands of St Helena and Tristan da Cunha also acquired English-speaking populations during the 1800s, as did Pitcairn Island and, subsequently, Norfolk Island in the south Pacific.

— 孕藥藥藥栽愛葬惱允藥藥重勻援方說怨雷部賦藥賦轉藥藥登露社息葬藥

栽藥云制制藥藥部傳書卷水昂藥藥

Even if the new Englishes did become increasingly different, as years went by, the consequences for world English would not necessarily be fatal. A likely scenario is that our current ability to use more than one dialect would simply extend to meet the fresh demands of the international situation. A new form of English — let us think of it as “World Standard Spoken English” (WSSE) — would almost certainly arise. Indeed, the foundation for such a development is already being laid around us.

Most people are already “multidialectal” to a greater or lesser extent. They use one spoken dialect at home, when they are talking with their family or talking to other members of their local community: this tends to be an informal variety, full of casual pronunciation, colloquial grammar, and local turns of phrase. They use another spoken dialect when they are away from home, traveling to different parts of their country or interacting with others at their place of work: this tends to be a formal variety, full of careful pronunciation, conventional grammar, and standard vocabulary. Those who are literate have learned a third variety, that of written standard English which (apart from a few minor differences, such as British vs. American spelling) currently unites the English-speaking world.

In a future where there were many national Englishes, little would

change. People would still have their dialects for use within their own country, but when the need came to communicate with people from other countries they would slip into WSSE. So, a multinational company might decide to hold a conference at which representatives from each of its country operations would be present. The reps from Calcutta, sharing a cab on their way to the conference, would be conversing in informal Indian English. The reps from Lagos, in their cab, would be talking in informal Nigerian English. The reps from Los Angeles would be using informal American English. Any one of these groups, overhearing any other, might well find the conversation difficult to follow. But when all meet at the conference table, there would be no problem: everyone would be using WSSE.

People who attend international conferences, or who write scripts for an international audience, or who are “talking ” on the Internet have probably already felt the pull of this new variety. It takes the form, for example, of consciously avoiding a word or phrase which you know is not going to be understood outside your own country, and of finding an alternative form of expression. It can also affect your pronunciation and grammar. But it is too early to be definite about the way this variety will develop. WSSE is still in its infancy. Indeed, it has hardly yet been born.

Which variety will be most influential, in the development of WSSE? It seems likely that it will be US (rather than UK) English. The direction of influence has for some time been largely one-way. Many grammatical issues in contemporary British usage show the influence of US forms, US spellings are increasingly widespread (especially in computer contexts), and there is a greater passive awareness of distinctively US lexicon in the UK (because of media influence) the vice versa. On the other hand, the situation will be complicated by the emergence on the world scene of new linguistic features derived from the L2 varieties, which as we have seen will in due course become numerically dominant. No feature of L2 English has yet become a part of standard US or UK English; but, as the balance of speakers changes, there is no reason for L2 features not to become part of WSSE. This would be especially likely if there were features which were shared by several (or all) L2 varieties — such as the use of syllable-timed rhythm, or the widespread difficulty observed in the use of *th* sounds.

The development of WSSE can be predicted because it enables people, yet again, to “have their cake and eat it.” The concept of WSSE does not replace a national dialect: it supplements it. People who can use both are in a much more powerful position than people who can use only one. They have a



for this: (1) There is no corpus available in a countable form which represents the whole language. (2) Even if there were, it would only indicate what was available at the time the count started. It would therefore be a static assessment of a dynamic process. (3) The result of the counting would consequently be out of date before the counting was completed. (4) Even with careful safeguards, the total reached would be different for each counter. In practice, counters tend to interpret instances differently and so count items in different ways. (5) The administrative work needed to homogenize the efforts of the counters would be formidable and time-consuming, making the survey even more out of date by the time it appeared.

Points 4 and 5 can be demonstrated by means of one example: the *-ing* form in *running* and *walking*. There are three ways to handle this suffix in a word count: (1) Count every item containing *-ing* as a distinct word. (2) Omit every item, treating *-ing* as an inflected form of the verb, like *runs* and *walks*, and therefore a matter of grammar, not lexis. (3) Count only some instances, like *clearing* and *drawing*, because these are used as distinct nouns with the plurals *clearings* and *drawings*, and ignore the rest. Whatever decision is taken significantly affects the outcome, because there are as many *-ing* forms as there are such verbs as *run* and *walk*. If solution 3 is chosen, it poses further problems, because in the corpus to be counted will appear citations like *rustlings and twitterings among the trees*. If *rustling* and *twittering* are taken as distinct words on this occasion, how will the counters handle the fact that many *-ing* forms can be so used, even if they are not recorded in the corpus?

In effect, the overall vocabulary of English is beyond strict statistical assessment. Nonetheless, limited counts take place and serve useful ends, and some rough indications can be given about the overall vocabulary. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) defines over 500,000 items described as “words” in a promotional press release. The average college, desk, or family dictionary defines over 100,000 such items. Specialist dictionaries contain vast lists of words and word-like items, such as the *Acronyms, Initialisms & Abbreviations Dictionary* (Gale, 1989), which contains over 450,000 accredited abbreviations. When printed material of this kind is taken into account, along with lists of geographical, zoological, botanical, and other usages, the crude but credible total for words and word-like forms in present-day English is somewhere over a million items.

— 醞糟刃城則熏裁爰六眾認墨音管樂對仇綠壯醫藥劑果責執錄土燥  
 燦藥冰昂登藥編藥昂專專暖

奈審藥寒城蘇水昂登藥穴燦禮志則曾

Reports of the size of the English language in the popular press have a very wide range: from 400,000 to 600,000 words (Claiborne, 1983, p. 5), from a half million to over 2 million (Crystal, 1988, p. 32), about 1 million (Nurnberg & Rosenblum, 1977, p. 11), and 200,000 words in common use, although adding technical and scientific terms would stretch the total into the millions (Bryson, 1990). This discrepancy is due largely to differing definitions of a word, and so a study attempted to produce a more reliable estimate by using word families instead of words as the unit of counting. Goulden, Nation, and Read (1990) counted the number of word families in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (1963), which is one of the largest nonhistorical dictionaries of English. Dictionaries such as this obviously cannot contain every current word family, but they are still the best resource available, and therefore estimates of the number of words in a language have usually been based on them. After excluding entries such as proper names and alternative spellings, Goulden et al. found that the dictionary contained about 54,000 word families. This is a huge number of items (remember that each word family contains several words), and so we as teachers must give up on the idea of ever teaching all of them to our students in a classroom situation. Only a fraction are likely to be acquired through formal study, leaving the pedagogical implication that many others will have to be acquired through simple exposure to the language or not acquired at all. This puts a premium on nonteaching activities that can bolster exposure to a language, with reading being an especially important source.

— 雜書宅彌藥暈爰六眾認墨音管樂對仇綠壯醫藥劑果責執錄土燥  
 裁藥穴燦禮志則曾

裁藥穴燦禮志則曾

The most notable feature of estimates of the vocabulary size of native speakers of English is that there is enormous variation in the estimates. Fries and Traver (1960) and Lorge and Chall (1963) discuss some of these widely varying estimates. Recent research (Nagy & Anderson, 1984; Goulden et al., in press) suggests that estimates of around 20,000 words for undergraduates are most likely to be correct. This suggests that first language learners add between 1,000 and 2,000 words per year to their vocabulary, or 3 to 7 words

per day (Table 1)

栽 曹 蒙 员 瑶 灾 的 外 兑 粤 于 温 粤 晒 再 杂 球 耘 韵 云 晕 粤 栽 耘 杂 球 粤 耘 晒 杂

Age in years	Vocabulary size
1.3	235
2.8	405
3.8	700
5.5	1,528
6.5	2,500
8.5	4,480
9.6	6,620
10.7	7,020
11.7	7,860
12.8	8,700
13.9	10,660
15.0	12,000
18.0	17,600

Source: *Fries and Traver (1960, p.49)*; also in *Seashore and Eckerson (1940)*

