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# 英语习语与人际意义

常晨光 著

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## Abstract

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This book studies English idioms from the Systemic Functional perspective, focusing on how idioms are actually used in the communication of interpersonal meanings in discourse. Using authentic written and spoken texts as our data, the study investigates the functions of English idioms in relation to the three sub-systems by which recent Systemic Functional theory models interpersonal semantics, viz. Negotiation, Involvement and Appraisal.

It is argued that the choice of English idioms reflects how interactants position themselves and their fellow interactants as sociocultural subjects. Idioms are selected as lexical items for communicative reasons and they have crucial roles with respect to maintaining the interaction and negotiating relationships between the communicative partners.

The use of English idioms is also linked to Involvement in that they often influence the degree of solidarity and intimacy between the interactants. It is argued that the use of idioms can serve as “a membership device”, indicating degrees of “otherness” and “in-ness”, especially when idioms are intentionally manipulated in discourse. The punning or word-play memberships participants as “belonging” to a community with shared linguistic and cultural values, as well as providing interest and novelty to the text, which further increases solidarity.

The study also explores the ways in which English idioms are used to express personal attitude and evaluation. Working with the Appraisal framework developed by Martin and his colleagues, it is shown that English idioms are used to express different types of Attitude: Affect, Judgment and Appreciation. It is also demonstrated that evaluative idioms differ from other types of evaluative lexis in that idiomatic expressions, especially proverbs and idioms involving metaphors, often convey the evaluation of the speaker in an implicit or indirect way, and that in many verbal idioms this can be explained partly through the notion of grammatical metaphor.

This book addresses an area that is relatively neglected in the study of English idioms. The central contention of this study is that English idioms are a resource for making interpersonal meanings and that the use of such items contributes to both the interactive and the personal aspects of interpersonal management.

## 内 容 摘 要

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习语是英语词汇的重要组成部分，是具有相对固定的句法、词汇或语音形式，在语义和话语功能上被作为独立单位来运用的词组、短语或小句，其意义一般不能由各组成部分推断出来。语言学界对英语习语的研究已经有很长的历史，除传统的词汇学/词典学方面的研究外，英语习语研究大致可分为以下几个主要的流派：(1) 语义学派；(2) 句法学派；(3) 心理语言学派。它们所关注的问题主要是英语习语的类型、语义、句法特征等，而对习语在正常交际中的作用和话语功能探讨不多。传统的习语研究所使用的例子多为凭直觉编造的、脱离上下文的孤立的句子，很难说明英语习语在语篇中所起的作用或功能。本书根据系统功能语言学纯理功能的思想，利用真实的口语和书面语语料研究英语习语在表达人际意义时的作用。研究的具体问题主要包括：(1) 英语习语与人际意义的表达具有什么样联系？(2) 英语习语在表达交际双方的互动、协商交际双方的关系以及表达个人态度和评价等方面有哪些作用？

本书的第一章对本研究的目的、重点、所使用的语料及研究方法进行介绍。第二章综述了英语习语研究的几个主要流派，分析其贡献及不足，并说明利用真实语料研究英语习语的必要性。

在第三章中，作者首先确定本研究的理论框架，并对与本书关系密切的几个系统功能语言学重要理论观点进行简要评述，然后重点从概念纯理功能和语篇纯理功能的角度对英语习语的意义和功能进行分析。我们认为，与非习语性词汇相比，英语习语蕴涵着丰富的历史文化信息，在表现形式上常具有形象、生动、具

体等特征。从语篇功能的角度来看,英语习语在语篇中具有组织和指示信息的功能,其评价功能与语篇结构也有一定的联系。这些探讨对研究英语习语与人际意义表达的关系具有一定的启示作用。

本书第四章讨论的重点是英语习语在语篇中的使用如何体现交际双方的互动,主要包括以下几个方面:(1)英语习语作为体现交际互动的标志;(2)英语习语与交际双方的角色、地位及权力关系;(3)英语习语的使用与语境的关系;(4)英语习语的使用与语篇中意义的协商。研究发现,英语中部分习语体现了明确的言语功能,在语篇中能反映交际双方不同的言语角色。英语习语的使用在建立、保持或协商交际关系等方面有时甚至能起到关键性的作用。另外,英语习语的使用与语境的关系也在一定程度上反映了交际双方人际关系的亲疏。

作者在本书的第五章中从更广义的角度讨论交际双方的互动,将语篇中英语习语的使用看作缩短交际双方之间距离的一种手段。由于习语是经过长期反复使用后在语言中自然沉积形成的相对固定、简洁明快的表达方式,为语言使用者所熟知,且蕴涵着丰富的历史文化信息,因此习语的使用从一个侧面体现了语言与身份/群体认同之间的关系。文章主要通过分析语篇中的英语习语的变异及活用现象,说明说话者对英语习语的“操纵”(manipulation)之所以能达到独特的文体效果,有赖于交际双方共有的语言文化背景知识。同时,英语习语的变异及活用所产生的一语双关和幽默的文体效果更进一步增进交际双方的认同和一致(solidarity)。

本书第六章讨论英语习语在表达个人态度和评价等方面所起的作用。首先,我们根据马丁等系统功能语言学者最近提出的“评价系统”(Appraisal system)理论分析了英语习语在表达情感(affect)、判断(judgment)和鉴赏(appreciation)等态度

时的作用以及在介入 (engagement) 和级差 (gradation) 子系统 中的体现, 指出英语习语在表达评价时的一个重要特征是其间接性。由于习语所表达的价值观念在语言和文化中已经约定俗成, 语言使用者常可以通过习语间接地表达评价意义, 隐藏真正的评价来源。这对语篇分析显然具有重要的意义。同时, 习语的评价功能也反映了评价意义与群体意识的关系。作者还利用韩礼德功能语法中语法隐喻理论对评价性英语习语进行语法分析, 试图从另一个角度探讨习语评价的间接性特征。

本研究根据系统功能语言学纯理功能的思想, 探讨了传统英语习语研究中被忽视的一个方面: 英语习语在表达人际意义中的作用。我们的结论是: 英语习语是表达人际意义的重要资源, 在体现交际双方互动和表达说话者个人态度和评价等方面均起到相当重要的作用。本书在一定程度上丰富了英语习语的研究, 对揭示英语习语的特征提供了一个新的视角, 具有一定的理论意义。从系统功能语言学的角度对英语习语进行研究也反过来揭示了语言作为社会符号系统的本质。同时, 英语习语的人际意义研究对英语词汇教学也有一定的启示作用和参考价值。

本书适合英语教师、对英语习语研究感兴趣的英语专业研究生和高年级本科生阅读。

## 序

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第一次与常晨光有零距离接触（仪式性握手）是1996年初我来中山大学工作的第一个星期，是在外国语学院的新春“团拜”上，当时别人介绍他是院长助理。由于我们在不同的系里工作，平时不多见面，所以也谈不上有什么了解。1997年春夏我在为王宗炎先生85寿辰编辑《语文研究群言集》时，第一次认真读了晨光写的题为“超音段音位与听力理解”的论文，当时印象很深。这些年国内外从事语言（学）研究的人不少，对语音感兴趣的人却不太多，而年轻人就更少。但我感到惊讶的是，晨光原先居然是做文学研究的，他的硕士论文研究的是《小说〈傲慢与偏见〉主题与技巧之探讨》。我发现，晨光的研究兴趣很广泛，研究生毕业后，他又开始了应用语言学与外语教学方面的研究。他对词典编写情有独钟，参与编写了多部英汉词典。他独立编撰的《最新英语短语动词词典》（外语教学与研究出版社，1999）还获得了第12届“中国图书奖”。

这几年常常有人问我，报考中山大学英语语言学方面的博士是否硕士学位论文一定要做语言（学）方面的。我的简单回答是“不用”。如果一个人的文化功底深，语言修养好，有悟性，有学术研究潜能，无论硕士阶段是做语言还是文学、文化、翻译等研究，在博士阶段都可以在语言学研究方面做出成绩。在我已经培养出的8名博士生中，就有3位原先是学文学的（晨光是其中的一位）。事实上，我自己的硕士论文导师王多恩教授也是搞文学研究的专家。晨光他们这些年所做出的成绩也验证了这点。

晨光的博士论文选题是从系统功能语言学的人际功能思想来