Hints for Learners of English

向学习英语者讲话

葛传槼

四川人民出版社

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前　言

这本选集是从我自己的三本书——《葛传槼英文集（Man and Student）》（1937年），《英文刍言（A Word to the Wise）》（1939年）和《英文作文教本（A Textbook of English Composition）》（1941年）——中选出论述学习英语的三十七篇文章编成的。每篇揭示一个或两个问题，大都是英语语法书和英语修辞学书所不曾讲到的。内容谈到什么读物是初学者需要读的和什么是不宜读的；怎样才能读得精细；说、读和写的关系；掌握常用词汇，选用语词和写的关系；以及拘泥语法条条，一概类推所造成的错误等问题。

各篇文字，重新校订了一遍，作了一些更动，并加汉译和注解。编排方面得到田雨三同志的帮助，特此致谢。

葛传槼　一九八〇年

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1

What to Read

Suppose you have two friends, A and B, both of whom have been learning English for some years. Both are clever young men, and both are anxious to acquire a good knowledge of the language. But now they have got very different results from the several years of study: A can write short letters and read easy news items but cannot read any passage[1] in the classics, while B can read here and there in some classics but cannot write short letters or read easy news items. Reader, which of your two friends would you prefer to be like?

I believe you would prefer to be like A rather than[2] B. You should[3]. I am sorry to find that among Chinese learners of English there seem to be more like B than like A. The trouble lies chiefly in[4] what is read.

Well, what do you read? I mean to ask what you take as your chief reading matter. Is it a

novel or a volume of essays written more than a hundred years ago? If it is, my advice to you is to change it for something else. Your chief reading matter must have been written far less than a hundred years ago, a few weeks ago if possible, must have been written in simple English, and must have been written by an Englishman or an American.

I am not going to give a list of books here. But I think I have to make some general remarks. Your chief reading matter need not be a literary masterpiece[5]. Nor need it be written by a famous author. A volume of short pieces of narration or exposition is better than a novel or some long argumentative essays[6].

You must have noted that in the above I have talked about only what your chief reading matter should be. You have a book or two for your chief reading matter. You should also read something else, which may be a little more difficult, but which still had better not[7] be a classic of more than a hundred years ago.

*

NOTES

1. passage （一段）文字。
2. rather than 而非。

3. should=should prefer to be like A rather than B.
4. lie chiefly in ... 主要在于……。
5. literary masterpiece 文学杰作。
6. argumentative essays 辩论文。
7. had better not ... 最好不……。

2

Reading Aloud

Do you ever read aloud? The chances are[1] that you do not now read aloud. You used to read aloud when you were a small child. But you ceased to read aloud at fourteen or fifteen. If I'm not mistaken, among certain boys and girls late in their teens[2] reading aloud is now a lost art[3].

You may protest, "What[4] if I were to read aloud, when I do not read aloud and yet understand?" Well, much would come of[5] reading aloud. Reading aloud helps you to learn by heart, and learning by heart is essential to all who aim at writing well. Reading aloud helps you to cultivate good pronunciation and good intonation, and good pronunciation and good intonation are essential to all language learners. Reading aloud helps you to discover certain beauties of language that you may fail to see in your silent reading. Unless you read aloud, you cannot learn to write naturally or to appreciate literature.

And I think that it is partly because they do not read aloud that many Chinese learners of English cannot read poetry. A certain English man of letters[6] has said that a poem is not a poem until it is read; and evidently by "read" he means read aloud. A poem *is*[7] something to read aloud. There are many poems that you may learn to like and enjoy by reading them aloud, though you find several difficult points in them. On the other hand, you may understand a poem merely as you understand a piece of matter-of-fact prose[8], if you do not read it aloud. "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe[9], for example, is a very beautiful poem. But its beauty depends largely upon its wonderful music. Below is its first stanza. Try first to read it silently as though it were a business letter[10] and then to read it aloud, and compare the two impressions.

"Once upon a midnight dreary[11], while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore[12],
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping
As of[13] someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
"Tis[14] some visitor", I muttered, "tapping at

my chamber door;
Only this and nothing more."

*

NOTES

1. The chances are ... 大约……。
2. their teens 从十三到十九岁时。
3. lost art 不复存在的艺术。
4. What 有何效果。
5. come of ... 由……而来。
6. man of letters 文人。
7. *is* 实在是。
8. matter-of-fact prose 乏味的散文。
9. "The Raven" of Edgar Allan Poe (1809—1849) Poe 是美国诗人。"The Raven" 是追念已死情人的诗。"Raven" 是"乌鸦"。
10. business letter 事务信。
11. midnight dreary=dreary midnight 凄凉的半夜。
12. many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore 许多讲述旧闻的奇书。
13. As of=like that of
14. 'Tis=It is

3

Can You Read Englishmen's English?

I have heard several people tell me that in reading English-language newspapers they find Chinese news far easier to read than foreign news, and that they are often at a loss to discover[1] the meaning of even a very short piece of news from some little town in England or America. I also feel that there are many who can read without much difficulty articles written by Chinese on Chinese subjects but cannot read those written by Englishmen on English subjects.

The trouble with such people is that while they have acquired a knowledge of the English language, they have not learnt much about the English mind[2], the English character[3], English life, the English traditions, and so forth. They have not got, so to speak[4], the spirit of the language. Imagine a man who knows several thousand Han characters[5] and a great deal of Han syntax and yet is entirely ignorant of the Chi-

hese mind, the Chinese character, etc. Do you think this man could read even the ordinary Han-language newspaper and general literature in Han?

Reader, do you think you are among those who know English but as a rule find great difficulty in reading Englishmen's English? I am afraid you are. I would advise you to read as much as possible in general English literature and to cultivate the habit of thinking in English.[6] I would also advise you to read some concise history of England and commit to memory[7] every bit of knowledge about English life and thought that you may find in reading or study.

•

NOTES

1. are often at a loss to discover 往往不能看出。
2. mind 心理状态。
3. English character 英国的民族性格
4. so to speak 可以这样说。
5. Han characters 汉字。
6. cultivate the habit of thinking in English 养成以英语思维的习惯。
7. commit to memory 记入心中。

4

What Kind of English?

There are English English, American English, Scotch English, Irish English, and other kinds of English. Examples; "half past three" is English English, "half after three" is American English, "bairn"[1] is Scotch English, "I am after having my dinner"[2] is Irish English, "nor gold nor silver"[3] is archaic English, "Thank you for same"[4] is business English, and "I don't know nobody here"[6] is vulgar English.

Advanced learners of English ought to pay attention to such details, and I think they will find it very interesting to go into the subject[7]. But every learner of English is not an advanced one[8]. I call it foolish of one to[9] attempt the subject before one has acquired the ability to speak, read, and write English as it is used by the average educated Englishman or American of today. One has yet much to learn before one can be properly called an advanced learner of

English so long as one cannot read the news[10] or cannot express oneself[11] intelligibly to Englishmen or Americans in speaking and writing.

By "English as it is used by the average educated Englishman or American" I mean[12] everyday idiomatic English. It is practical, if that means *actually used*, but not if that means *specially adapted to Chinese psychology*[13]. I have to mention this because it seems that many Chinese students have the mistaken idea[14] that while what is written about things Chinese[15] is practical, what is written about things foreign[16] is not practical. The fact is, however, that, one cannot master English — that is, what I call practical English — by reading about things Chinese only. I would advise those who are in the habit of[17] confining themselves to[18] Chinese news when reading newspapers in English, to give up[19] the habit.

•

NOTES

1. bairn: child
2. I am after having my dinner. 我刚吃完饭。
3. nor gold nor silver 既无金，又无银。
4. same=the same 此物。
5. business English 商业英语。

6. I don't know nobody here=I don't know anybody here =I know nobody here.
7. go into the subject 研究这个问题。
8. every student of English is not an advanced one=not every student of English is an advanced one.
9. call it foolish of one to ... 认为……是愚笨的事。
10. the news 每天的新闻。
11. express oneself 表达自己的意思。
12. By "English as it is used by the average oducated Englishman or American" I mean .... 我所说"一般受过教育的英国人或美国人用的英语就是……。
13. *specially adapted to Chinese psychology* 特别合于中国人的心理。
14. mistaken idea 错误的观念。
15. things Chinese 中国的事物。
16. things foreign 外国的事物。
17. in the habit of 有……的习惯。
18. confining themselves to 自限于。
19. give up 放弃。

5

The Question of Background

If your reading in English is not confined to[1] things written by Chinese about Chinese life — I hope it is not[2] — you must often meet with difficulties quite apart from[3] the meanings of words and phrases. These difficulties arise from what I call for want of a better term[4] the background[5] of English, which I believe deserves the attention of[6] all learners of English — all[7] but those who do not care to[8] read anything in English that is not written by Chinese writers on Chinese subjects.

By the background of English I mean[9] the sum total[10] of all points other than[11] linguistic that are quite natural to those born to the language and brought up on it[12]. For example, the name Grub Street — a London street (now called Milton Street) formerly much inhabited by[13] writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems and so giving rise to[14] its use as

an epithet referring to[15] literary hackwork.

The subject is indeed a very large one. It includes history, geography, mythology, the Bible, characters and facts in fiction, proverbs, customs, games and sports, superstitions, and other things. And in order to understand fully the works of any author, one needs to possess as much knowledge of these things as he does. This is practically impossible[16] with the average Chinese learner of English.

What I think must be considered carefully[17] is what parts of the background of English are more important and how they may be made available to Chinese learners so as to enable them to read general literature in English. Would you like to acquire such a knowledge?

•

NOTES

1. is not confined to 并不限于.
2. not=not confined to things written by Chinese about Chinese life.
3. apart from 与……无关的.
4. for want of a better term 因为没有更好的名称。
5. background 这是"call"的补语.
6. deserves the attention of 值得……的注意.
7. all=all students of English.
8. do not care to ... 不想……,不喜欢…….

9. By the background of English I mean ... 我所说的英语的背景就是……。

10. sum total 总量

11. other than 不是。

12. those born to the language and brought up on it 那生来就用英语而用了英语长大起来的人们。

13. inhabited by 被……居住的。

14. giving rise to 致成。

15. referring to 关于。

16. practically impossible 几乎不可能的。

17. What I think must be considered carefully 我认为必须仔细考虑的。

6

Books on English and Books in English

"On" and "in" — well, there is often a wide difference between these two little words. A book on English is one that deals with the English language; a book in English is one that is written in the English language. The former may be written in Han, French, German, or any other language; the latter may deal with any subject under the sun[1].

Books on English are intended for learners of the language[2]; and it is very gratifying to note that far more such books are now available than fifty years ago or more. I myself have written several, and am glad to say that I often receive letters telling of their usefulness to learners of English.

But I must give a word of warning here. *Language is not an exact science, nor a mere matter of principles, rules, exceptions, definitions, formulas, and diagrams.* Books on English are helpful, but no one can master English by read-

ing such books only. Perhaps the very fact of[3] there being so many such books today accounts for the frequency with which we meet with people who can talk and write about English without being able to talk and write it[4]. This is due to their ignorance of the fact that *without wide and careful reading the mastery of English is impossible.*

I would advise all learners of English to devote more time to reading books *in* English and less time to reading books *on* English. What book in English are you reading? Is it a book of stories or essays or travel sketches? Or is it a biography or a diary or merely a textbook of history or geography? Well, if you happen to spend your days and nights on books on English, it is time you acted on my warning[5].

•

NOTES

1. under the sun 在天下。
2. the language=the English language
3. the very fact of 恰恰是……这个事实。
4. account for the frequency with which we meet with people who can talk and write about English without being able to talk and write it. 就是我们时常碰到能在谈话和写作中讲述英语但(他们自己却)不能讲英语和写英语的原因。
5. it is time you acted on my warning 现在你该实行我的警告了。(注意"it is time ..."中动词用过去式。)

7

An Easy Sentence to Study

Before reading on[1], please consider the following short sentence: "They cannot see enough of each other".

What do you think this sentence means? Well, please consider and consider before reading on.

This is a very easy sentence, indeed, and I think every English or American schoolboy or schoolgirl understands it. In fact, it occurs in a story-book for children. But I have been asked to explain it by a young man who, so far as I can see[2], has been learning English earnestly for years and has acquired a fair knowledge of grammar and a fairly large vocabulary.

Why, after all, did the young man fail to understand this short sentence? My answer is that it is beeause its way of expression[3] does not have its corresponding way in our own language. There are many ways of expression in English

that have no corresponding ways in Han. These are puzzling to most Chinese learners of English.

The above-quoted sentence means that the two persons love each other so dearly that though they see each other often, they think they see each other but[4] seldom. By the way, the *of* in the sentence also deserves attention.[5] "See enough *of* each other" means *see each other often enough.* "See much *of* you" means *see you often.*

In your reading you will do well to pay special attention to those ways of expression for which you do not find corresponding ways in Han. This will help you both in reading and in writing. I am sorry to find that many Chinese learners do not realize the importance of doing this, with the result that[6] while they can read English by Chinese authors and write long and tolerably grammatical essays, yet they may not be able to understand an Englishman's social letter thoroughly or write a short paragraph in purely idiomatic English.

•

NOTES

1. reading on 读下去。
2. so far as I can see 据我所知。
3. way of expression 表达方式。

4. but=only

5. deserves attention 应该注意。

6. with the result that ... 结果是……；以至于……。

8

What Does "Would of Come" Mean?

Once a young man found the expression "would of come" in a magazine and asked me to explain it.

Do you understand it, reader? Have you ever seen such expressions as "would of come", "should of gone", "might of done", "could of learnt", "ought to of known"?

You may or may not have seen such expressions. They are not uncommon in short stories and dramas. But grammars do not usually mention them. So I am afraid that you do not understand them. You think they are simply ungrammatical.

Well, they are ungrammatical. But there are many ungrammatical expressions that are worth knowing[1]. You ought to learn to use English correctly. But you ought as well[2] to learn to understand the incorrect expressions that are common among Englishmen or Americans. It is partly owing to their ignorance of such incorrect expres-

sions[3] that many Chinese learners can parse and analyse well without being able to read a single page in an English-language magazine published in England or America.

Substitute[4] "have" for the "of" in each of the abovementioned expressions, and you will understand what it means.

"Why is 'of' used instead of 'have'?" you may ask. Well, the mistake is but[5] natural. In "would have", "should have", etc., the "have" is unemphatic and is often pronounced like the unemphatic "of". On the other hand, the "have" in "I have it" is emphatic, and such a sentence as "I of it" is never spoken or written.

Need I add that "of" used instead of "have" is always wrong and that you should not use "would of", "should of", etc. in your own writing? There are many mistakes that are common among Englishmen or Americans but from which we Chinese are absolutely free. As I have said, you ought to understand them. but you ought not to adopt them as ornaments of style[6].

•

NOTES

1. are worth knowing 有知道的价值。
2. as well 也。

3. partly owing to their ignorance of such incorrect expressions 一部分因为他们不知道这种不正确的表达式。

4. Substitute ... 以……代入。
substitute "have" for the "of" 以 "have" 代这个 "of"。

5. but=only

6. ornaments of style 文体上的装饰品。

9

"More Presently"

A friend of mine called my attention to[1] what he called a mistake in a biographical sketch[2] of a literary man; the name of a person followed by "of whom more presently". In fact, there is no mistake at all in the expression. "More presently" is elliptical[3] for "more will be said presently". My friend did not know this idiomatic ellipsis, having apparently taken "more" to be the adverb modifying "presently" and thought a subject and verb ought to have been supplied so as to make a complete clause.

Equipped with[4] a knowledge of grammar, Chinese learners of English are apt to think they are quite able to read general literature without much difficulty so long as they have a good dictionary within reach[5]. What is more[6], they are too ready to[7] dismiss as wrong[8] any combination of words that does not seem to him to be capable of grammatical analysis[9].

Important as grammar is[10], there are many turns of expression[11] that are generally considered blameless English though they are not quite defensible[12] from a narrowly grammatical point of view[13]. So that[14] the mastery of English grammar in its narrow sense does not enable one so much as[15] to read English intelligently.

When you come across[16] in good writing any construction that you do not find grammatical, I would advise you to note it down instead of[17] calling it a mistake, and to see if[18] you will not meet with a similar one[19] in your reading. You will[20] very soon, perhaps, and then you will most likely understand the construction.

•

NOTES

1. called my attention to 使我注意。
2. biographical sketch 传略。
3. elliptical 省略语的。
4. Equipped with 备着……；有了……。
5. within reach 在附近的；可以取用的。
6. What is more 而且。
7. too ready to ... 太易于……的。
8. dismiss as wrong 把……看作错误而置于不顾。
9. capable of grammatical analysis 可能在语法上分析的。
10. Important as grammar is 虽然语法是重要的。
11. turns of expression 结构；说法。
12. defensible 可被辩护的。

13. narrowly grammatical point of view 狭隘的语法观点。
14. So that 因而。
15. so much as 即使。
16. come across 碰到。
17. instead of 而不。
18. if=whether
19. one=construction
20. will=will meet with a similar one in your reading

10

Double Negatives[1] in Current English

An English editor of a famous classic says in his notes to the book: "Double negatives in Elizabethan[2] grammar amount, not to an assertion as they do[3] in current English, but to[4] an emphatic negation".

It is true that in Elizabethan literature, a double negative amounts to an emphatic negation, rather than to an assertion, as the man in the street[5] may think. Thus, "I don't want nothing" is only an emphatic form for *I don't want anything* or *I want nothing*. This sounds[6] quite unreasonable, but it is the fact.

What I wish to tell you is that this unreasonable fact is not peculiar to[7] Elizabethan literature. It exists at present. Double negatives used as an emphatic assertion may be said to be found in current English, unless by current English is meant English current among educated people alone[8].

Have you ever found such double negatives in your reading, reader? I believe you have, if you have read a modern novel or drama or short story. I do not want you to use this unreasonable construction (I want you to talk and write like an educated person). But I believe every learner of English should know it.

There are several English usages that every learner of English should know, but which many, or even most, Chinese learners do not know, because these are not to be understood by means of mere logic[9] and are not to be found in ordinary grammars[10]. The double negative is one of them.

*

NOTES

1. Double Negatives 双重否定。
2. Elizabethan 英国女王 Elizabeth I (1533—1603) 时代的。(现在英国女王的名字也是 Elizabeth，一般称作 Elizabeth II (1926—)。
3. do=amount to
4. amount, not to ..., but to ... 不等于……而等于……。
5. man in the street 一般人。
6. sounds 听来似乎。
7. peculiar to ..... 所独有的。
8. by current English is meant English current among educated people alone 所说的当代英语就是指只通行于受过教育的人们中间的英语。
9. are not to be understood by means of mere logic 并非只靠逻辑就能被理解的。

11

About the Study of Grammar

I have been told by more than one bookseller that, here in China, so far as books on English are concerned[1], grammars sell better than other kinds of books except readers[2] and dictionaries. And it seems to me that nearly every Chinese who learns English at all reads a grammar. I myself am a serious student of grammar; I have read I cannot tell how many English grammar books, by Chinese, English, American, Japanese, Danish and Dutch authors, and am always on the look-out for new ones[3].

The object of this article, however, is to advise you not to devote too much time to the study of grammar. I study grammar for grammar's sake[4], but I do not think every student of English should do so. You study English in order to be able to make practical use of it. This object is not to be attained by mere study of grammar. I do not even think I should now be able to

write such simple English as that of this book, if I had read nothing but grammars.

Grammar tells you some general rules, some exceptions to rules, and perhaps some idioms. But the correct use of English is not a mere matter of such[5]. For example, grammar has what is called the double object, as in "He gave her a pen"; but it would be wrong to say "He introduced her a friend", in which "her" and "friend" seem to form the double object. The fact is that "introduce" cannot take the double object; *but this point is not to be learnt from grammar but only from careful reading*. Many Chinese students write sentences that might be justified[6] by one grammatical rule or another but are certainly wrong.

I believe you have already read a few grammars, and probably have spent a great deal of time on the subject, though you may not now be able to write anything — say[7] a short letter — grammatically perfect. Grammar may help you to use English, but only to a certain extent[8]. *Do not look on the study of grammar as[9] all or nearly all that you have to do in order to master English. Careful reading and constant practice are far more important.*

•

NOTES

1. as far as books on English are concerned 就论述英语的书而论。
2. readers 读本。
3. new ones=new grammar books
4. study grammar for grammar's sake 为语法而读语法。
5. such=general rules, exceptions, and idioms.
6. justified 视为正当。
7. say 例如。
8. to a certain extent 到某种程度。
9. look on ... as ... 把……看作……。

12

Knowing Just Enough Grammar to Go Wrong[1]

Many Chinese learners of English know just enough grammar to go wrong. "It seems[2] I have seen such an expression several times", they say to themselves[3], "but surely it is not grammatical. I must alter it so as to make it grammatical." Their narrowly grammatical conscience[4], however, often causes them to change idiomatic English into unidiomatic English. For example, they may find "The boy acts contrary to his parents' wishes" ungrammatical, and to make the sentence grammatical change the "contrary" into "contrarily"— with the result that[5] the sentence would not read like an English sentence to an Englishman. It is true that from a narrowly grammatical point of view, the adjective contrary here should be replaced with the adverb "contrarily". But idiom has decided that the adjective is the word required here, and idiom there is no disputing[6]. (Perhaps it would be hetter to say

that here idiom insists on the use of the adverb "contrary" instead of the adverb "contrarily".)

There are several forms of expression that are purely idiomatic and do not admit of[7] grammatical analysis. The word "busy", for example, may be used immediately before a gerund looking like a participle, as in "He is busy writing letters".

In your reading, reader, take care to note down[8] those idiomatic constructions that you do not find grammatical enough. Commit them to memory and try to use them in your writing. Above all[9], remember that you may happen to be one of those who, as I said in the above, know just enough grammar to go wrong.

You must not think, however, that idiom and grammar are always incompetibles. What is idiomatic is far more often grammatical than ungrammatical. I mean simply that not every idiomatic construction is grammatically explainable, nor is every strictly grammatical construction idiomatic.

*

NOTES

1. Go Wrong 错误.
2. It seems=It seems that

3. say to themselves 想。
4. narrowly grammatical conscience 对于语法的狭隘的观念。
5. with the result that ... 结果是……；以至于……。
6. idiom there is no disputing=there is no disputing idiom 不能反对习语。
7. admit of 可能；容许。
8. note down 记下。
9. Above all 尤要者。

13

The Language Is the Main Thing

When you read a story in English, do you read it for the story or for the English? This is a question that is not so foolish as it may seem[1]. For I find that many learners of English pay far more attention to the story than to the English. They read and enjoy and for a long time afterwards remember the story, but do not care to[2] study the use of words and phrases in it. For instance, they keep in the memory[3] how the mystery of the eternal triangle[4] is solved, but do not remember a single sentence in the story and cannot tell[5] what preposition is used before or after a certain word in the speech of a certain character.

Of course, it is all right to read and enjoy and remember a story, and so long as one wants to know the story only, one need not bother about[6] the language. But the case[7] is quite different with[8] a learner of English. I mean a

student of English as distinguished from[9] a student of stories or what is called the general reader.

Whatever a learner of English reads, he should, in my opinion, regard the language as the main thing. For instance, on reading this preceding sentence, besides[10] understanding its meaning, he should notice such points as the concessive use of "whatever", "in my opinion", "regard ... as ..." and "the main thing". In this way, he does learn some English[11] though what he reads may happen to be otherwise[12] uninteresting or uninstructive. It may safely be said that this is a far better way of learning English composition than to read and consider the so-called principles of the subject[13].

Incidentally[14], I would advise teachers of English to question their pupils on points of diction[15] and construction as well as on facts and thoughts.

•

NOTES

1. is not so foolish as it may seem 并不象它表面的那样愚笨。
2. do not care to ... 不肯……。
3. keep in the memory 继续牢记。

4. eternal triangle 三角恋爱。
5. cannot tell 说不出。
6. bother about 关心于；因……而费心。
7. case 情况。
8. with 关于。
9. as distinguished from 跟……分别的。
10. besides 除了……以外。
11. does learn some English 确实学到些英语。
12. otherwise 在别方面（指在文字以外的方面）。
13. subject 科目（指英语作文）。
14. Incidentally 顺便说一句。
15. diction 语词的选用。

14

Logic and Usage

What do you think is the real meaning of the often quoted line from Shakespeare[1] "All that glisters is not gold"?[2] The strict sense would be that glistering proves a substance to be not gold. But the real sense is that glistering does not necessarily[3] prove a substance to be gold. In other words, the proverb should, logically speaking[4], be "Not all that glisters is gold".

But Shakespeare wrote in the illogical way, and this illogical construction is not now uncommon. For example, if you hear an Englishman say "All my friends do not know the Han language", you must not understand him to mean that all his friends are ignorant of[5] Han. He may very well imply that most of his friends can speak and write it very well.

This is indeed illogical. There are Englishmen who do not use this construction and fall foul of[6] those who do[7]. Probably it will pass away

in time[8], for logic has time on its side[9]. But it is natural and idiomatic English today, and I think every learner of English should know it.

There are a number of other illogicalities in English that are quite idiomatic. Please read the first sentence of the second paragraph of this article again. Perhaps you will think that "is not now uncommon" is not so good as "is now not uncommon" would be. According to logic, indeed, "not" ought to modify "uncommon" instead of "now". But according to idiom "is not now uncommon" is more usual.

With the word "only", illogical and idiomatic constructions are also common. An Englishman may say "I only arrived a few days ago", when he means that he arrived only a few days ago.

As I have said, logic has time on its side. But how many years the English language will take to become a perfectly logical speech[10]!

*

NOTES

1. Shakespeare 指 William Shakespeare (1564—1616) 莎士比亚，英国剧作家和诗人。
2. "All that glisters is not gold" 一切闪光的东西不都是金子。
3. does not necessarily 未必；不一定。
4. logically speaking 按照逻辑讲。

5. ignorant of the Han language 不懂汉语。
6. fall foul of ... 与……争吵。
7. do=use this construction
8. will pass away in time 将来总须消灭。
9. has time on its side 有时间为它支持;日久后它必将胜利。
10. But how many years the English language will take to become a perfectly logical speech! 但英语须待多少年才能成为一种完全合于逻辑的语言!

15

Something Unnatural

H. G. Wells[1] calls Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt*[2] "one of the greatest novels I have read for a long time". I do not think Wells has ever believed it possible for his remark to be misunderstood[3]. Indeed, it is very simple and very clear, and perhaps no Englishman or American would ever think it capable of a meaning other than[4] the real one[5]. But a Chinese learner of English, who reads and writes English carefully enough, has recently told me of his imperfect understanding of that remark. "Why 'for a long time'?" he said. "I simply cannot[6] understand what Wells thinks the greatness of a novel has to do with[7] the length of the time he has spent reading it."

The learner misunderstood Wells's remark. As a matter of fact, the critic does not mean to say how much time he has ever devoted to reading any novel. The remark might be paraphrased[8] as: "For a long time past[9] I have read many

novels, some of them being great ones. *Babbitt* is one of the greatest."

The learner, being a careful one, doubted whether he was not somehow twisting[10] Wells's words. I should fancy[11] that he would have eventually got the right meaning even if he had not asked me.

Chinese learners of English often misunderstand or fail to understand a group of simple words put together in a simple way. My advice is to stop to think again[12] when you find something unnatural in an expression. That something is perhaps not in the expression itself but in your interpretation of it.

•

NOTES

1. H. G. Wells 指 Herbert George Wells (1866-1946), 英国文学家.
2. Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951) 是美国文学家. *Babbitt* 是章回小说.
3. believed it possible for his remark to be misunderstood 以为他的话有被人误解的可能.
4. other than ……以外的; 非……的.
5. one=meaning
6. simply cannot 竟然不能.
7. what Wells thinks the greatne ss of a has to do with ... Wells 以为一本章回小说的伟大跟……有什么关系.

8. paraphrased 解释。
9. for a long time past 在过去的长时期以内。
10. twisting 曲解。
11. fancy 以为。
12. stop to think again 停了再想。

16

A Good Knowledge of Bad English

So many books and persons profess to[1] teach good English! But none profess to teach bad English. I am almost sure that anyone who should advertise lessons in bad English would be called crazy and would get no pupils at all. Nor do I think you have ever thought of learning it. Perhaps you think that bad English is not worth learning, and that the English of the average Chinese learner of the language[2] is bed enough without his ever making any effort to learn to be bad. Well, please read the following story:

An old Negro approached a white man in a Southern town and asked: "Marse Tom[3], you ain't[4] seed[5] anything of dat[6] ole[7] mule of mine, is you?"[8]

"Why[9] no, Henry, I haven't seen that mule. Have you lost it?"

"Well, Ah[10] doan[11] know ef[12] Ah've[13] lost

him or not, but he is shore[14] "nuff[15] gone."

"Henry, I think the best way you can find that mule would be to put a want ad in the paper[16] for him."

"Shucks![17] Dat wouldn't do no good[18], Marse Tom."

"Why not?"

"Why, Marse Tom, you all know puffickly[19] well dat dat mule cain't[20] read."

Do you understand the Negro's speech without the help of my notes? If not[21], you have not got much knowledge of bad English, and I hope you realize[22] that as a student of English you ought to get more of it.

By bad English I mean[23] English as used[24] by English-speaking persons who somehow do not use good English. It may be called illiterate[25] or uncultured English. It is not found in formal writing, but is very common in modern fiction and drama and in the writing and speech of uneducated English-speaking persons. It is quite different from your English, which, if it is bad, is bed in the Chinese way, so to speak[26].

Bad English means bad grammar, bad spelling, bad usage, and bad pronunciation. All these things form[27] an interesting and useful study. Without a good knowledge of these one will

miss much in modern literature and will fail to understand any uneducated Englishman or American one man have occasion to[28] have anything to do with.

•

NOTES

1. profess to... 自称为……。
2. the language 指英语。
3. Marse Tom=Master Tom. Tom 先生。
4. ain't=haven't=have not
5. seed=seen
6. dat=that
7. ole=old
8. is you?=have you?
9. Why 语助词。
10. Ah=I
11. doan=don't=do not
12. ef=if=whether
13. Ah've=I've=I have
14. shore=sure
15. 'nuff=enough
16. put a want ad in the paper 在报纸上登征求广告。
    ("want" 是 noun。ad=advertisement)
17. Shucks! 瞎说!; 呸!
18. wouldn't do no good=would not do any good=would do no good 没有用。
19. puffickly=perfectly
20. cain't=can't=cannot
21. If not=If you do not understand the Negro's speech without the help of my notes.

22. realize 确知。

23. By bad English I mean ... 我所说的不好的英语就是……。

24. as used=as it is used

25. illiterate 不识字的。

26. so to speak 可以这样说。

27. form 构成。

28. has occasion to ... 有……的必要。

17

Reading Dictionaries

At the very sight of[1] this title you would perhaps say to yourself[2], "Only fools would do that. I know better[3]." But I have read of[4] several famous men who did[5] read dictionaries. They gloried in[6] dictionaries and read them with the delight that some travellers find in guidebooks and timetables. Robert Browning[7], the English poet, when he determined to make poetry his career[8], read every word in Johnson's dictionary[9]; John Ruskin[10], the English author, wrote to the editor of the *Great Oxford Dictionary*[11] that he had read and studied every word in its first volume. Henry Thomas Buckle[12], the English historian, once solemnly stated[13] that a certain dictionary was "one of the few dictionaries I have read through with pleasure".[14]

These men were not fools! I can hardly say[15] that they could not have been the masters of English they were[16] had they not been dictionary

readers, but I am sure that reading dictionaries is, after all, not so foolish as you might think.

I myself have never read any dictionary through; no, not[17] even those[18] that bear my name[19] on the title-page. But, I used many years ago to read through many articles on common words in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. I found that very helpful in the mastery of common words and phrases.

Such common words and phrases can be very easily picked up[20] by English-speaking boys and girls. But they are not likely to be acquired by Chinese students without any special effort in this respect[21]. The reading of articles on common words in dictionaries is no doubt[22] a great aid.

*

NOTES

1. At the very sight of 一见到。
2. say to yourself 想。
3. know better 是聪明些（而不做那个）。
4. read of 读及。
5. did ... 确实曾经……。
6. gloried in 把……当作可乐的。
7. Robert Browning (1812-1889) 英国诗人。
8. make poetry his career 把诗歌做他的事业。
9. Johnson's Dictionary Johnson 指 Samuel Johnson (1709—1784)，英国文学家，他编过一本大词典。

10. John Ruskin (1819-1900) 英国文学家。

11. *Great Oxford Dictionary* 即 *An English Dictionary on Historical Principles.*

12. Henry Thomas Buckle (1821-1862) 英国历史家。

13. solemnly stated 郑重地说。

14. one of the few dictionaries I have read through with pleasure 我所曾经快活地读完过的若干词典中的一本。

15. can hardly say (几乎)不能说。

16. could not have been the masters of English they were 不会是他们那样精通英语的人。

17. not=I myself have never read through

18. those=those dictionaries

19. bear my name 有我的名字。

20. picked up 随时学得。

21. in this respect 在这一方面。

22. no doubt 无疑。

18

Make Your Own Dictionary

I must thank very sincerely the many readers who have written to inquire about my *Dictionary of English Usage*[1]. It was always going to[2] be published, and it has not yet been published. This is partly because of my occupation with[3] other literary matters; in fact[4], I work on[5] the book only off and on[6]. But the chief reason is that being a conscientious[7] learner of English I am always careful to avoid slipshod[8] or perfunctory[9] work. I take notes[10] for the book almost every day — both from reading and from the questions about usage that I am asked by persons interested in the subject[11]. Very often a seemingly simple question reminds me of[12] some important point that I might not otherwise[13] think of. I hope that the delay in publication will be compensated for[14] by the richer and better contents of the book.

Now I think that every learner could make

his own dictionary of usage. He could keep a notebook in which to record, in alphabetical[15] order, such points of usage as he might find of particular interest to him. Such a book would serve *him*[16] as a constant companion to composition, though many things in it might seem quite dull or useless to others.

And I think that every learner could make his dictionary of usage as large as the sum total[17] of the books he reads. I mean that he might make a usage index[18], so to speak, to those books. For a particular point he would have to record only the book, the page, and the line concerned.[19] He would some day[20] be able to point to his library and say "This is my dictionary of English usage". What a great work![21]

Indeed, I wish I could[22] find time to do this. And I believe that I could thus lay the foundation of[23] a live[24] and original[25] dictionary — quite different from those[26] based on nothing but[27] one or more dictionaries.

•

NOTES

1. written to inquire about my *Dictionary of English Usage* 给我写信，问到我的《英语惯用法词典》。（这篇短文是一九三八年写的，当时我的《英语惯用法词典》正在编

著中。）

2. going to ... 将要……。
3. occupation with 忙于；从事于。
4. in fact 在事实上。
5. work on 著作。
6. off and on 时作时辍地；断断续续地。
7. conscientious 认真的。
8. slipshod 粗心的；不精细的。
9. perfunctory 敷衍了事的。
10. take notes 作札记；作笔记。
11. interested in the subject 注意这件事的。
12. remind me of 使我想起。
13. otherwise 否则（就是说"要是没有人提醒我"）。
14. compensated for 补偿。
15. alphabetical 依照字母次序的。
16. *him* 这个字印作斜体，该重读。
17. sum total 总量。
18. usage index 惯用法索引。
19. concerned 有关的。
20. some day 在将来的某天。
21. work 著作。
22. I wish I could 我但愿我能；我恨不能。
23. lay the foundation of 立……的基础。
24. live 活的。
25. original 创作的。
26. those=dictionaries
27. nothing but ... 只有……；在……以外没有什么。

19

Make Another Dictionary of Your Own!

Some time ago I suggested that every learner of English could make his own dictionary of usage. I have since thought of another kind of dictionary that every student of English could make for his own use. For want of a better name[1], I think we may as well[2] call it a topic[3] dictionary. I mean a dictionary in which a certain number of topics are arranged in alphabetical order and useful phrases and sentences about each topic are grouped together. For instance, under the topic "books" may be grouped phrases and sentences having to do with[4] books but not necessarily containing the word "beok(s)".

This can be done by reading and making notes. It is not necessary to copy the phrases and sentences. It is enough to jot down[5] the page number and the line number, and give one or two words as a hint. In this way, any book may be turned into a topic dictionary by merely

providing it with a topic index. And several such dictionaries may be turned into a fairly complete topic dictionary.

What I call a topic dictionary does not seem ever to have appeared in this country before. I wonder why nobody has even thought of compiling one. It would be of great use to all who write English. For we are often at a loss for[6] the right expression about a certain topic, and an ordinary dictionary cannot meet our need.

I wish I could have time to carry out my own suggestion!

•

NOTES

1. For want of a better name 因为没有一个更好的名称。
2. may as well 不妨。
3. topic 题目。
4. having to do with 跟……有关系的。
5. jot down 录下。
6. at a loss for 想不着……的；想不起来……的。

20

More about What to Read

Since it is with a view to[1] learning composition that you read, and since it is in present-day English prose that you ought to learn to express yourself, what you read must be present-day English prose. Expressions in common use a hundred years ago may not be so at the present day. Likewise, expressions in common use in verse[2] may not be so in prose.

The term "present-day English prose", however, requires qualification[3] here. Since it is in standard English that you ought to learn to express yourself, what you read must not contain too much slang, whatever significance one may attach to the word. Again, since it is things in everyday life that you ought to learn to write about, what you read must not be of a technical character[4].

One limitation more[5]. What you read must be fairly easy[6] for you; too much time and energy

spent in reading between the lines[7] and finding out all kinds of references and allusions[8] would very likely distract your mind from your purpose[9], which is to learn English composition.

•

NOTES

1. with a view to 以……为目的（后面通常接动名词）。
2. verse 诗歌体。
3. qualification 限制。
4. of a technical character 一种专门性的。
5. One limitation more 还有一个限制。
6. fairly easy 相当容易的。
7. reading between the lines 揣摩言外之意。
8. references and allusions 出处和引典。
9. distract your mind from your purpose 使你从你的目的分心开来。

21

Reading to Learn the Art of Expression

When you read a short story, you may read it merely for pleasure. When you read a biographical sketch, you may read it merely for information. But as you are a learner of English, I think you should often read to learn the art of expression. And for this purpose you may read either a short story or a biographical sketch, either an essay or a news item, indeed, anything that is written in good current English.

Even from a short paragraph you may learn several forms of expression if you are observant enough. Try to read the following paragraphs *from BBC Mcdern English* and notice the points of usage listed below;

Over 100 years ago she opened the first British hospital for women. There are still very few of these hospitals in England. This hospital is in Euston Road in London. Its situation means that women from all over England can reach it

quite easily.

Her aim when she opened the hospital was to provide a place where women could go and receive treatment from female doctors and nurses. She also wanted the hospital to provide jobs for female doctors at a time when it was very difficult for them to find work. Recently the authorities have tried to close the hospital. They say that it is old-fashioned and wastes a lot of money. However, the Government has decided that the hospital will stay open. Many people feel very glad that the valuable service offered by this hospital will continue.

1. "Over" More than.
2. "in Euston Road" "in ... Road".
3. "means that ..." "Means" takes an object clause introduced by "that".
4. "from all over England" "*all over* England" "*from all over* England".
5. "receive treatment". Patients receive treatment.
6. "wanted the hospital to provide ..." "We *want* them *to do* it".
7. "at a time when ..." "*at a* time when ..."
8. "Recently the authorities have tried." The present perfect is here used with "recently".

9. "the Government has" "the Government" can be considered singular.

10. "decided that ..." "Decide(d)" takes an object clause introduced by "that".

11. "stay open". "Stay" can be a copulative verb.

In this way you will learn the art of expression very quickly; perhaps one or two paragraphs a day will teach you hundreds of forms of expression in a month, and these forms of expression will greatly improve your writing. And if you can — I believe you can — commit to memory[2] one or two paragraphs a day that you have already read in this way, the results will be still greater.

•

NOTES

1. *BBC Modern English* 英国杂志名. (BBC = British Broudcasting Corporation)
2. commit to memory 把……牢记.

22

Learning English Conversation by Imitation

I know some people who once studied in England or America and yet do not speak English correctly; they make mistakes in grammar, idiom, and pronunciation. But the other day I met a Chinese woman who spoke perfect English[1]. She does not seem to be very well up in English[2], but I believe she speaks it more like an English person than I do[3]. Upon inquiry I was given to know[4] that she had never even been to college but had been taught English by English teachers only. She does not speak English as a foreign language. She speaks it in the way she does[5], not because she thinks it is the right way but because she knows no other[6]. She is free from[7], and probably ignorant of, the thousand and one[8] mistakes peculiar to Chinese students of English.

This woman learnt to speak English by imitating unconsciously. It is no doubt[9] the best

way. But not all Chinese learners have the chance of learning in this way. Well, there is the second best[10] way; I mean learning by imitating *consciously*. If there are people who spent years in England or America but who do not speak English correctly, it is because they did not do much conscious imitating when abroad[11]. They have carried their mistakes over and then carried them back, though they ought to have left them there.

I am perhaps in danger of being understood to mean[12] that all who go to England or America ought to do so for the sole purpose of learning English conversation. No; I simply mean that by careful imitation one can very well[13] learn it — and that[14] not only in countries where English is the mother tongue but also in some places in China. Nor do I mean that one's object in learning English is simply to speak it. But it needs to be generally realized[15] among Chinese learners of English that good speaking leads to good writing and that language is essentially something spoken.

•

NOTES

1. a Chinese woman who spoke perfect English 一个讲完美的英语的中国女子。

2. very well up in English 英语水平很高。
3. do=speak it
4. was given to know 被告知。
5. does=speaks it
6. other=other way
7. free from 没有。
8. thousand and one 无数的。
9. no doubt 无疑。
10. second best 不得已而求其次的。
11. when abroad = when they were abroad
12 in danger of being understood to mean 有被人以为有……的意思的危险。
13. well 容易。
14. that = one can very well learn it.
15. needs to be generally realized 必须被大众认识。

23

Imitation, Good and Bad

Too often a learner of English who has read one or two classics tries to imitate their style. The fact, however, is that style cannot be imitated. Different authors have different styles. They do not endeavour to write the way they write[1]. So the imitation of any style often results in[2] affectation.

And the result will be till worse if the style imitated is that of a work written a hundred years ago or more. We are of the eighties[3] of the twentieth century, and we should not write the English of the eighties of the nineteenth century.

I would advise you not to aim at a special style. Take care to write correct, simple, idiomatic, and clear English, that's all[4].

But imitation is not always bad. Very often it is important to imitate something. Where personal style is out of place[5], imitation is the only means by which correctness may be secured.

In writing an advertisement about something, for example, you have to imitate some such advertisement that you have read. You cannot possibly[6] write a good one if you have never read any, though you may have read very widely in general literature.

You will do well to[7] collect a number of[8] short advertisements, formal invitations[9] and announcements, receipts, IOU's[10], business contracts[11], etc. When you have occasion to[12] write one of such, you have simply to do a little imitating and adapting[13]. The following is an ordinary formal invitation:

Mr and Mrs M. S. Adams request the pleasure of Mr and Mrs L. J. Williams's company[14] at dinner on Saturday evening, May the seventeenth, at seven o'clock, 86 Star Street.

This invitation is from Mr and Mrs M. S. Adams to Mr and Mrs L. J. Williams. Surely, with this piece before you[15], you can write a new one. You have simply to change the names, the day, the date[16], the time, and the address.

•

NOTES

1. the way they write = the way in which they write
2. results in 结果导致。

3. the eighties 八十年代。
4. that's all 只有那样，别无它法。
5. out of place 不适宜的。
6. cannot possibly 必不可能。
7. will do well to ... 这样干是有益的。
8. a number of 若干。
9. formal invitations 请帖。
10. IOU's = I owe you 欠款凭证；借据。
11. contracts 合同。
12. have occasion to ... 有……的必要。
13. do a little imitating and adapting 做一些模仿和改变。
14. request the pleasure of ...'s company 请……光临。
15. before you 放在你的面前。
16. the day, the date 星期几，几月几日。

24

Tongue and Pen

"Do you speak English?" This is far more commonly asked by Englishmen and Americans of the Chinese with whom they come into contact[1] than "Do you write English?" They would perhaps laugh at the idea of[2] having studied English for years without being able to speak it.

In fact, language is essentially a spoken thing. To study English without trying to speak it is not advisable. And it is absurd to read a conversation book in just the same manner as to read a grammar.

Besides, as *ordinary written English is not quite different from ordinary spoken English, to learn to speak is a very good way to learn to write.* One who speaks good English writes good English too. *The pen cannot go wrong where the tongue goes right*[3]. Many everyday phrases and everyday constructions come natural to[4] one who uses them in speaking. For example, one who

says "in fact" and "as a matter of fact" cannot possibly write the non-existent phrases "in a fact", "as a fact", and "as a matter of the fact". And if the surest sign of those[5] whose English is not perfect is their misuse of prepositions, good speaking is of great help in learning the idiomatic use of those little tricky words[6]. One who says "sick *of*"[7], "interested *in*", "prefer ... *to* ..."[8] will write the same right prepositions in right places without any conscious effort.

I think it would be a very good method of learning writing as well as[9] learning speaking for a pupil to talk to his teacher in English about whatever subject the former[10] is interested in and to have himself corrected[11] whenever he makes a mistake. I am only sorry that I do not think it practicable in a classroom where there are many pupils.

•

NOTES

1. with whom they come into contact 他们所遇到的。
2. laugh at the idea of 听到……的诺而笑。
3. The pen cannot go wrong when the tongue goes right 在说得不错的场合，决不会写错。
4. come natural to 对于……是自然的。
5. those 那些人。
6. those little tricky words 那些难用的小词(指一切 prep-

osition）。

7. sick of 对于……厌倦的。

8. prefer ... to ... 要……而不要……。

9. as well as 不但……；加在……上。

10. the former 指那 "pupil"。

11. have himself corrected 使他自己受到（那教师）矫正。

25

Simply Didn't Know

You have a fairly good knowledge of grammar. You have a vocabulary of three or four thousand words. You know one or two thousand idioms. You are rather careful about usage. You ought to be able to write fairly well.

But are you[1]? If you are not[2], why not[3]? One of your troubles, I think, is that you often cannot express what you want to say. You cannot[4], but when you have seen your meaning expressed by someone who can express it, you will most probably say to yourself[5] "That seems easy enough. I simply didn't know."

You are right. You simply didn't know. Just a few common words arranged in a simple grammatical order by someone who is at home in[6] English. That expresses your meaning, and yet you simply didn't know which common words to choose and how to arrange them.

This is a very common trouble with Chinese

learners of English. *It is due to the fact that they do not read widely enough, nor carefully enough.* There are thousands of useful expressions that are not generally considered idioms. They are so easy to understand that they are apt to be neglected[7]. But those who neglect them will forget them, and fail to use them when they need them.

You cannot learn to write with much freedom of expression[8] till you have laid in[9] a stock of useful phrases and sentences, and *you cannot do it without reading widely and carefully.*

NOTES

1. But are you? = But are you able to write fairly well?
2. not = not able to write well
3. why not? = why are you not able to write fairly well?
4. cannot = cannot express what you want to say
5. say to yourself 想。
6. at home in 精通。
7. are apt to be neglected 易于被人忽略。
8. freedom of expression 表达的自由；写作自如
9. laid in 储藏。

26

So Many Points!

Having read much of what I have said about points of usage, some readers have given me to understand[1] that they think it simply impossible to remember so many points, about which there seem to be no rules at all. They wonder whether all who[2] write correct English know them all by heart[3] and pay regard to them whenever they write, and whether it is at all possible for one to learn to write English fairly well without bothering about[4] these tiny points.

Yes, most of the points seem to be tiny ones[5]. But it is just these points that show whether one is really at home in[6] English or not. Occasional errors in grammar, which should of course be avoided by all means[7], may most probably be due to mere carelessness and not at all peculiar to[8] those whose English is imperfect. But lapses in idiom always betray[9] one's unfamiliarity with[10] correct English. It follows that[11] the seemingly

trifling[12] points of usage are well worthy of the attention of[13] all who wish to write English corretcly;

As to knowing them by heart, those who are born to the language[14] may not need to make any conscious effort. They learn correct usage by intuition, so to speak[15]. They speak English every day, and the use of many idiomatic expressions and constructions are second nature[16] with them, so that when they write they cannot possibly be[17] incorrect where they are correct when speaking[18].

The case is certainly different with[19] Chinese learners of English, who are most of them English-reading rather than English-speaking. They must take care to master many points of usage that are quite natural to those whose mother tongue is English.

What I call points of usage, however, are not so formidable[20] an enemy as they may seem to you. Close attention to them helps to conquer them. Besides, what English-speaking persons get from speaking you may get from reading aloud[21], which will help you in the same way as speaking would[22], though perhaps less quickly. And there is an advantage in reading aloud over speaking[23] in the fact that in reading good written English

you are not in danger of[24] getting those common solecisms, barbarisms, and improprieties in the speech of persons of limited culture.[25]

*

NOTES

1. given me to understand 使我知道。
2. all who ... 一切……的人。
3. know them all by heart 牢记它们全部。
4. bothering about 因……而操心。
5. ones = points
6. at home in 精通……的。
7. by all means 必然。
8. peculiar to ……所特有的。
9. betray 显露。
10. unfamiliarity with 对于……的不熟悉。
11. It follows that ... 因而有……的结论；所以……。
12. seemingly trifling 似乎不重要的。
13. well worth of the attention of 很值得……的注意的。
14. are born to the language 生出来就用这语言；把这语言用作本族语言。
15. so to speak 可以这样说。
16. second nature 第二天性；习惯。
17. cannot possibly be 决不会。
18. when speaking = when they are speaking
19. with 关于。
20. formidable 难于对付的。
21. what English-speaking ... reading aloud = you may get from reading aloud what English-speaking persons get from speaking

22. would = would help you

23. advantage in reading aloud over speaking 朗读的胜于谈话的地方。

24. in danger of 有……的危险的。

25. of limited culture 所受教育不多的。

27

How to Say It

Your question is not what to say but how to say it. You may often have an idea or a thought that you do not know how to express. For instance, you may not be able to express the idea of the glass tube measuring temperature[1] if you do not happen to know the word "thermometer". To take another example, suppose you wish to apply for a position[2] that requires the applicants to apply in written English, but you feel you cannot do so. Now suppose you ask a friend to write the letter for you, and he writes it. You read it and understand it all right. You come to realize that[3] you did not think of arranging those simple words in that simple order. You did have something to say, but you did not know how to say it! Hence the importance of studying composition[4].

As a matter of fact[5], *many of the ideas and thoughts you often have occasion to express*[6] *have*

already been expressed by others before you. Read any page in any book carefully, and you will perhaps find some expressions that will help you to say things. Many such expressions may seem to you to be too simple to deserve much attention, but the fact is that you cannot invent them, nor can you use them unless you have noted them[7]. There appear to be many Chinese learners of English who have read a number of books on grammar and composition and done many exercises in correcting and improving sentences and yet cannot write even tolerable[8] English. *The trouble is that they may either not have read widely enough or not have read carefully enough or not have committed to memory enough words, phrases and sentences that they may have found too easy to understand to be worth remembering.*

*

NOTES

1. the glass tube measuring temperature 即 thermometer (温度计)的一种解释说法。
2. apply for a position 申请工作岗位。
3. you come to realize that ... 你开始认识到。
4. Hence the importance of studying composition 所以有研究作文的重要性。
5. As a matter of fact 其实。
6. have occasion to express 有表达的需要。
7. unless you have noted them 除非你已经注意它们。
8. tolerable 过得去的。

28

A "Foolish" Principle of Composition

Books on rhetoric may tell you many principles of composition. But the principle that I am going to explain is one[1] that I have not found in any book on rhetoric. I discovered it myself, and I acted up to[2] it as soon as I discovered it, many years ago. I have found it so helpful that I believe you will do well to adopt it. The principle is that *you should use no construction, no form of expression, and no combination of words, that you have not seen in your reading.*

It seems to me that the average chinese learner of English has a fair knowledge of grammar and a fairly large vocabulary, and that when he writes English, he makes sentences according to his knowledge of grammar and his understanding of the meaning of words. The result is that his English often seems to be correct enough but is not really correct. For correct English is a matter of usage, not merely a matter of grammar and

vocabulary. In composition correction I have often been asked why I had changed a certain word or construction to another. Well, I cannot always say why. I have substituted that word or construction simply because that is the word or construction that an Englishman would have used there.

Suppose you are on the point of[3] writing "He was rich to live on luxury". Is this sentence correct? "He was" is certainly correct; you have seen it many, many times. "He was rich" is also correct; you have seen it more than once. "He was rich to . . ."— well, you have never seen it, have you? No, you have never seen it, and therefore you should not let it pass.[4] "On luxury" — well, you have never seen this expression, and so you should not use it. Now, the correct sentence is "He was rich enough to live in luxury".

Do you think my principle very foolish? It does look so. But I regard it as very helpful, and I hope that you will try to put it into practice.

The question may naturally arise: Shall I not find it practically[5] impossible to write anything because I do not always remember whether I have ever seen a certain construction or form of expression or combination of words? Well, you

should remember. You should read carefully. You should learn the art of expression from your reading. I hope you have not forgotten my article entitled "Reading to Learn the Art of Expression".

*

NOTES

1. one = a principle
2. acted up to 实行。
3. are on the point of 将。
4. let it pass 任它过去。
5. practically 几乎。

29

An Aid to Composition

Do you often meet with a word or phrase or construction that you understand fully without being able to translate it into readable Han? I believe you do[1]; I believe you have read enough English to have this experience. I myself often meet with such[2].

You have perhaps seen such a sentence as "They will not return for many days to come". You know that it means that they will return many days from now, or that they will return only after the passage[3] of many days. But can you translate it into readable Han? In the very common expression "simply cannot", I find the word "simply" very hard to translate into Han. I also find it very hard to translate into Han the very common word "probable" as contrasted with[4] "possible". As to such a sentence as "You cannot be too careful"[5], I think it is even untranslatable.

All these and many other words and phrases

and constructions do not seem to have what we call Han equivalents. You understand them, but you cannot translate them into readable Han; that is, you cannot translate them both exactly and clearly.

I do not mean to advise you to try and translate such hard things. Do not try to translate them, I say[6]. Just commit them to memory.[7] They will often come in useful[8] when you write. They will help you to write more idiomatic English.

By the way, "society" is a much used word among Chinese learners of English. But I have seldom seen it used by any of them in the sense of companionship, as in "The old man enjoys the society of young people". This is because Chinese learners do not usually use an English word in a sense that cannot be easily translated into Han. I hope you will now profit by[9] my hint.

•

NOTES

1. do = often meet a word or phrase or construction that you understand fully without being able to translate it into readable Han
2. such = a word or phrase or construction that I under-

stand fully without being able to translate it into readable Han

3. passage 过去。
4. contrasted with ... 与……相比；与……区别。
5. You cannot be too careful. 即"愈谨慎愈好"的意思。
6. I say 注意我的话。
7. commit them to memory 把它们牢记。
8. come in useful 变成有用。
9. profit by 得益于。

30

Some Mistakes to Consider

Do you, reader, find any mistakes in the following sentences?

1. He is studying for serving the people.
2. I have met him for five times.
3. Pardon me for I give you so much trouble.
4. For I am a Chinese, I love China.

If you do not find any mistakes in them, you have yet a poor knowledge of English. All these sentences are wrong, and, so far as I know, are not to be found in any Englishman's English, though I believe you may think they are quite grammatical.

Let me explain: (1) "For" expressing purpose may take a noun (as in "for pleasure"), but not usually a gerund. (2) While "for the ... time" is right, "for ... times" is wrong. (3) "For" as a conjunction is very weak and cannot introduce any important reason. (4) "For" is a coordinating conjunction, not a subordinating one.

Now read the sentences as corrected:

1. He is studying (in order) to serve the people.
2. I have met him five times.
3. Pardon me for giving you so much trouble.
4. I love China, for I am a Chinese.

Now that[1] you have been told of these four common mistakes in regard to[2] the use of the word "for", I hope you will take care to avoid them in your own writing. Such mistakes are not usually mentioned in books on grammar and composition. But they are not uncommon among Chinese learners of English. And I find that there are similar mistakes in the use of many other common English words. I am of opinion that[3] discussion of such mistakes ought to form a large part of every composition book specially intended for Chinese learners, and it is a matter of regret[4] that many, many Chinese learners are studying rules and principles of grammar and rhetoric without caring a bit about[5] such mistakes.

A good English composition book remains to be written[6]. Would you like to see such a book published?

•

NOTES

1. Now that 既然。
2. in regard to 关于。
3. am of opinion that ... 认为……。
4. matter of regret 可惜的事。
5. without caring a bit about 毫不介意。
6. remains to be written 尚待著作。

31

Some More Mistakes to Consider

After reading my article "Some Mistakes to consider", a reader wrote to ask me to give more mistakes to consider. I hope you will be interested to read the following four sentences and see what mistakes they contain:

1. May I introduce you my brother?
2. Please favour me an early reply.
3. I will inform you the result by and by[1];
4. He has presented me a book.

I think you have read about the double object in grammar. You have been told that a verb may take two objects, one called the direct and the other called the indirect. You have seen such sentences as:

1. Can you recommend me a tailor?
2. Please send me an early reply.
3. I will tell you the truth by and by.
4. He has lent me a book.

But have you ever seen sentences like those

in the first group? I have often seen them in the English written by Chinese learners of English, but never in any Englishman's writing. In an Englishman's writing, these sentences would read:

1. May I introduce my brother *to* you?
2. Please favour me *with* an early reply.
3. I will inform you *of* the result by and by.
4. He has presented a book *to* me.
   He has presented me *with* a book.

Now you can see that the verbs "introduce", "favour", "inform", and "present" cannot take the double object, though the verbs "recommend", "send", "tell", and "lend" can. Grammars mention the double object and give examples of it, but they do not tell you that only a few verbs can take the double object, nor do they mention any verbs with which this construction is impossible. It seems to me, therefore, that the four mistakes that I have just mentioned are quite common among Chinese learners, even among those[2] who have studied grammar carefully.

To tell the truth[3], grammar does not help you much in writing. It tells you what is right, but it does not tell you much about what is wrong. When you have seen a certain construction in your grammar, you try to make use of[4] it in

your own writing. Possibly you have made no mistake, but it is also possible that you have made a mistake.

*

NOTES

1. by and by 不久以后。
2. those = learners
3. To tell the truth 老实说。
4. make use of 利用。

32

Better Short Than Long

Once I read an essay by Hilaire Belloc[1] in which the author says "I cannot refrain from remarking[2] that all the discussions of the silly critics as to whether sentences in English should be long or short are mere spoiling of paper"[3].

I fully agree with him. A sentence is not good or bad merely because it is long or short. Length is a false test of a sentence. It is wrong to think that a series of long sentences is a proof of one's good command of English[4]. It is equally wrong to think that simple and clear English requires every sentence to contain a certain number or words at most[5].

I remember that I myself formerly acted on[6] these wrong opinions one after the other. For some time I tried to use as many words in a sentence as grammar and sense could justify[7]. The result was an obtrusively dignified style[8]. Then followed a period[9] in which I tried to make

every sentence a grammatically simple one[10] and as easy to understand as those[11] in first books[12] for beginners. The result was affected[13] simplicity.

However, while I would warn all learners of English composition against these two mistakes, I think that that[14] of writing long sentences is the commoner one[15]. And learners ought to take more care to avoid it, not merely because in the hands of those who[16] have not had much practice in the use of words and phrases and idiomatic constructions, long sentences are much harder to manage than short ones[17]. It must not for a moment[18] be supposed that an error in grammar or idiom embedded in a long sentence can easily escape detection[19].

•

NOTES

1. Helaire Belloc (1870-1953) 英国文学家。
2. remarking 说。
3. spoiling of paper 白费纸张。
4. one's good command of English 某人的精通英语。
5. at most 至多。
6. acted on 实行。
7. use as many words in a sentence as grammar and sense could justify 就语法和意思所允许的范围以内在一句里尽量多用词。
8. obtrusively dignified style 过分庄严的文体。

9. followed a period = a period followed
10. one = sentence
11. those = sentences
12. first books 入门书。
13. affected 做作的；不自然的。
14. that = the mistake
15. one = mistake
16. those who ... 那……的人们。
17. ones = sentences
18. must not for a moment 决不可。
19. escape detection 不被发现。

33

Something More Important Than Enlarging One's Vocabulary

"How to enlarge my vocabulary" — this is one of the commonest questions that I have been asked. True, the average Chinese learner of English has a very limited vocabulary, but[1] I think he has something more important to do about his limited vocabulary than to enlarge it[2]. He has yet to know many more words before he can master English[3]. Nor can he master English till he has acquired a better understanding of most of the words that *are*[4] in his vocabulary.

For he may think he knows a word when he does not really know it. By knowing a word I mean[5] knowing its true sense or senses instead of merely knowing one or more of what we call its Han equivalents[6]. Take[7] the word "student". Very often it is misused and misunderstood by us Chinese. It is misused and misunderstood by those who call all schoolchild students and take

offence at[8] being called students of English simply because they are no longer[9] at school. As a matter of fact, a schoolchild is not a student, but one who studies English is a student of English though he may be an old man and may have already written many books on it.

We are apt to neglect common words. Apart from the possibility of misuse and misunderstanding we are apt to neglect their various senses, or rather idiomatic uses. Take the word "read", which you of course think you know very well. But do you know all the senses (or uses) as illustrated below?

Can your *read* dreams?[10]

The baby cannot *read* the clock.[11]

He is *reading* her thoughts.[12]

The sentence *reads* like a paraphrase.[13]

Don't *read* too much *into* the text.[14]

The thermometer *reads* 68°.[15]

If not, you can hardly yet be said to know the word "read".

•

NOTES

1. True ... but 的确……，可是……
2. has something more important to do about his limited vocabulary than to enlarge it 对于他的有限的词汇，有

比使它增加更为重要的事要做。

3. has yet to know many more words before he can master English 尚须多识许多词，然后能通英语。
4. *are* 实在；确然。
5. By knowing a word I mean 我所说的认识一个词，是……。
6. what we call its Han equivalents 我们所说那个词的汉语对应词。
7. Take 举……为例。
8. take offence at 因……而不悦。
9. no longer 不再。
10. read dreams 详梦。
11. read the clock 看得懂钟。
12. reading her thoughts 猜度她的思想。
13. like a paraphrase 象一个解说。
14. Don't read to much into the text 勿以文中所无之义附会上去。
15. The thermometer reads 68° 这个温度计指出六十八度。

34

Make the Word Your Own

A word is not your own until you can use it correctly. You may know one or more Han equivalents for a word and yet you may not be able to use it correctly. I am afraid that of all the English words that the average Chinese learner can translate into Han, less than half may really be called his own.

To give a few common words at random[1], "wise", "probable", "congratulate", "equip", "personality", "novel", "nevertheless", "meanwhile" — all these words many Chinese learners may "know" without being able to use them correctly. Do *you* think you can use them correctly, reader? Please read the following sentences carefully and see whether you find any mistake in any of them. I have to tell you beforehand[2] that all the words in italics[3] are misused, and that if you fail to find any one of these wrong, that proves that that word is not yet your own.

1. The boy reads the book very well, and so he may be called a very *wise* boy.
2. He is *probable* to pass the examination.
3. Let's *congratulate* her success.
4. A radio has been *equipped* in the hall.
5. He never pays his debts; his *personality* is bad.
6. I don't like such *novels* as these short stories.
7. *Nevertheless* poor, the girl was neatly dressed.
8. I bought some bananas and *meanwhile* some apples.

How many of these italicized words are your own? And how many are not? Look up[4] those that are not your own in a good dictionary in order to find out why they are wrong in these sentences, and to learn their correct uses.

Remember that not every word that you think you understand well is really your own.

•

NOTES

1. at random 随便地。
2. have to tell you beforehand 必须预先告诉你。
3. in italics 用斜体。
4. look up 查出。

35

A Warning Regarding the Use of Words

Once in an essay written by a man who had studied in England for several years I saw the word "destruct", which was evidently used in the sense of "destroy". At another time, I saw the same word, evidently used in the same sense, in an illustrated magazine[1] published in Shanghai. At still another time I saw the word "destroyal" used in the sense of "destruction" by a man apparently well educated in English.

In fact, however, the verb is "destroy" and the noun is "destruction", and there do not exist the words "destruct" and "destroyal."

I do not think that the users of these non-existing words did not know the correct words. They were careless enough, though[2]. They just seized upon a combination of letters that looked like the word they wanted. It is true that these non-existing words may be understood by all who see them. But, of course, they cannot therefore

justify themselves[3].

Often in the English written by Chinese I find words that do not really exist. They use such words either because they do not know the correct words or merely because they are careless — or even because they believe they have a good knowledge of English word-building[4]. At any rate[5], this is a very bad fault peculiar to those who are not at home in English[6].

I would therefore advise you *to use no word that you are not sure you have seen used by standard authors, and to consult your dictionary in cases of doubt.*

One word more[7] of warning. It is possible that you sometimes use a word that *is* recorded in your dictionary, but which is not in common use, and which you use not because you are sure of its existence but simply because you think it is the word you want. For instance, because you know the noun "aggression" and the adjective "aggressive", you may use the verb "aggress" — which, however, is a very uncommon word.

*

NOTES

1. illustrated magazine 有图画的杂志。
2. though 但（副词）。

3. cannot therefore justify themselves 不能因此而有存在的理由。
4. word-building 词的构造。
5. at any rate 无论如何。
6. at home in English 精通英语的。
7. One word more 尚有一言。（上文所举"destruct"，现在偶尔见到；但用法有限，不可随意取代"destroy"。）

36

The Word

In doing a piece of translation the other day[1], I experimented with[2] several words before I got the word that expresses the shade of meaning intended[3]. The word was "admonish", and the words I had experimented with were "advise", "counsel", "warn", "exhort", "reprove", "rebuke", and "reprimand". "Admonish", roughly speaking[4], means "exhort" or "reprove", but it carries the implication of kindness or gentleness coupled with[5] seriousness, and also of warning and counsel.

Sometimes I fail to get the exact word in spite of much thinking and weighing[6]. In such cases I have to content myself with[7] using the word that I regard as being nearest to the meaning I want to express. This is a common experience with writers of English, and is one[8] they ought to feel sorry for.

The study of synonyms is no doubt[9] very

helpful in the careful choice of words, which is essential to precision, one of the qualities of good writing. But there are two mistakes against which I think learners ought to be warned. One is that[10] of trusting to the so-called Han equivalents as given in English-Han dictionaries. The other is that[11] of studying the explanations in articles on synonyms but neglecting the illustrative examples[12].

Correct English, however, is largely a matter of the use of common words, the correct use of which depends not so much upon their "meanings" as upon[13] what is known as[14] usage. For instance, a writer of correct English may not be able to tell you in detail how "for" and "to" differ from each other, but he never fails to use the right one instead of the other. He uses *the* word[15] as a matter of habit rather than[16] as a result of[17] the careful choice of words. The study of synonyms is of no help in this matter. One can improve only by the careful reading of idiomatic English — which no amount of word study can supplant[18].

•

NOTES

1. the other day 不久前几天。

2. experimented with 把……试验。
3. the shade of meaning intended 要表达的那个微细的意义。
4. roughly speaking 大略说来。
5. coupled with 和……合并。
6. in spite of much thinking and weighing 虽然想了许多和斟酌了许多。
7. content myself with 使自己把……当作满意。
8. one = an experience.
9. no doubt 无疑
10. that = the mistake
11. that = the mistake
12. illustrative examples 例证。
13. depends not so much upon ... as upon ... 靠着……的少而……的多。
14. is known as 被叫做。
15. *the* word 准确的那个词。
16. rather than 而不是。
17. as a result of 作为……的结果。
18. no amount of word study can supplant 不论怎样多的词的研究也不能代替。

37

What "Literary English" Means

Books on rhetoric and composition tell us that English may be roughly classified as (1) literary English and (2) colloquial English[1], and that literary English should, and colloquial English should not, be used in writing.

Yes, we — I mean you — should learn to write literary English. But what, after all, does "literary English" mean? What is literary English? I am afraid that many Chinese learners of English may think that literary English is a distinctly elegant sort of English. They think that it is absolutely different from English used in speaking, in addressing[2] a class of students, or in writing to a business house[3] to order goods.[4] They think that in literary English a face is not a *face* but a *visage*[5] and a man never *goes* but always *repairs*[6], and that it consists mainly, if not entirely[7], of figurative expressions[8].

The idea is wrong, however — and this wrong

idea prevents one from writing natural and pure English. Literary English, if you please[9], does not mean English confined in its use to literature[10]. It is not a distinctly elegant sort of English. It is just the ordinary English that well-educated Englishmen and Americans use in writing — not necessarily for literary purposes, but often for practical purposes. In literary English, a face is almost always a *face* and very rarely a *visage*, and a man almost always *goes* and very rarely *repairs*.

While[11] "colloquial English" means English used in conversation, it does not follow[12] that English used in conversation is necessarily too colloquial to be used in writing. The majority of the words and idioms used by well-educated English and American people in conversation are certainly literary English.

•

NOTES

1. colloquial English 口语。
2. addressing ... 向……演说。
3. business house 商店。
4. order goods 定货。
5. visage 面容。
6. repairs 去。
7. mainly, if not entirely 虽然非完全如是，却大部分如是。

8. figurative expressions 藻语。
9. if you please 竟然如此。
10. confined in its use to literature 仅用于文学上。
11. While 虽然。
12. it does not follow ... 并不因而有……的结论。

汉 译 文

1

该读什么

假定你有两个朋友，甲和乙，两人在过去几年中都继续在学习英语。两个都是聪明的男青年，都急切地希望获得这个语言的知识。可是现从这些年的研习中得到了很不相同的结果。甲能够写短信和读简易的新闻条目，但不能在古典作品中读任何一段文字；乙能够在古典作品中这里或那里读一些，但不能写短信或读简易的新闻条目。读者，你想你要象这两个朋友中的哪一个？

我认为你想要象甲而不象乙。你应该这样。我不高兴地看到在中国的学习英语者中间似乎象乙的比象甲的多些。症结主要在于他们读的是什么。

喂，你读什么？我要问你把什么当作你的主要读物。是一百多年前的一本章回小说或是一本文选？要是是的，我对你的劝告是：把它换掉。你的主要读物必须是远少于一百年前写的，可能的话，最好是几个星期前写的，必须是用简单的英语写的，

必须是英国人或美国人写的。

我并不想在这里开个书单。但是我想我该讲些一般的话。你的主要的读物不必要是文学杰作。一本短篇纪事文或说明文选集比一本章回小说或者几篇长篇辩论文好。

你一定已经注意到我在上文讲的只是关于你的主要读物该是什么。你有一、两本书作为你的主要读物。你也该读些别的东西，这些可以难一些，但最好还不是一本一百多年前的古典作品。

2

朗　读

你有时朗读吗？大概你现在不朗读了。你小时惯常于朗读。可是你在十四、五岁时停止朗读了。要是我不看错的话，在有些十八、九岁的孩子中间，现在朗读是一个失去了的艺术。

你可能抗议着说："我既然不朗读也能理解，要是我朗读了又怎么呢？"喂，朗读的效果可多呢。朗读帮助你记入心中，而记入心中对于志在写得好的一切人是必需的。朗读帮助你养成好的发音和语调，而好的发音和语调对于一切学习语言者是必需的。朗读帮助你发现某些在你的默读中可能见不到的语言优点。假使你不朗读，你不能学到写得自然或者欣赏文学。

而且我认为许多中国的学习英语者不能读诗歌，在一定程度上正是因为他们不朗读。某个英国文人说过一首诗到了被读了才算是诗；他所说的"读"显然是指朗读。一首诗确是准备被朗读的东

西。有许多诗你可能朗读了会由喜欢而爱好起来，即使你还在它们中见到有些难点。从另一方面讲，假使你不朗诵它，你可能会理解它只是象你理解一篇平淡无奇的散文一样。举个例来说，埃德加·阿伦·波的“乌鸦”是一首很美的诗。但是它的美在一大程度上依靠着它的奇妙的音乐。下面是它的第一节。你可以先把它象一封事务信一般默读一下，然后把它朗读，再把两个印象比较起来。（下面的汉语翻译目的在于帮助读者理解原诗。不论默读和朗读，指的都是原诗。）

有一次在一个凄凉的半夜，当我，衰弱而疲倦，
思考着一本一本的讲述旧闻的奇书时，
当我在打盹，几乎要睡去了时，忽然来了一阵轻拍声，
好象是有人在轻轻地叩着，叩着我的房门。
“这是某个来访者”，我咕哝着，“轻叩我的房门：仅仅是这个，并没有什么别的。”

3

你能读懂英国人的英语吗？

我曾经听到一些人对我说，阅读英语报纸时，他们觉得读懂中国新闻比读懂外国新闻容易得多；来自英国或美国某个小镇的即使很短的一段新闻，他们往往看不出它的意思。我也觉得有许多人对于中国人写的谈到中国题材的文章读起来没有多大困难，但读不懂英国人写的谈到英国题材的文章。

这些人的困难是：虽然他们获得了英国语言方面的一些知识，但他们不大知道英国人的心理、英国人的性格、英国人的生活、英国人的传统等等。可以这样说，他们没有得到英语的精神。设想一个人识了几千个汉字和大量的汉语句法，但是完全不知道中国人的心理、中国人的性格等等。你认为这个人能够读懂即使是普通的汉语报纸和用汉语写的一般读物吗？

读者，你认为你属于这一类人，就是懂得英语，但在读英国人写的英语时通常困难重重吗？我恐怕

你是属于这类人。我想劝你尽量多读一般英语读物，并养成用英语思维的习惯。我也想劝你读一本简明的英国史，把在阅读和学习中可能找到的关于英国人生活和英国人思想的每一点知识都记入心中。

4

什么样的英语?

有英国英语、美国英语、苏格兰英语、爱尔兰英语以及别种英语。举例来说:"half past three"是英国英语,"half after three"是美国英语,"bairn"是苏格兰英语,"I am after having my dinner"是爱尔兰英语,"nor gold nor silver" 是古老的英语,"Thank you for same"是商业英语,"I don't know nobody here"是粗俗的英语。

高级的学习英语者应该注意这种微细之处,我认为他们会感到深入研究这个问题是很有趣味的。但是并不是每个学习者都是高级的。一个人没有学会讲、读和写象今天一般受过教育的英国人或美国人所用的英语的时候就去搞这个课题,那么我认为是愚蠢的事。一个人还不能读懂每天的新闻,或者在讲话和写作中向英国人或美国人表达自己的意思,他就还得学习许多东西才能算作一个高级的学习者。

我所说的“一般受过教育的英国人或美国人所用的英语”就是日常用的合于习惯的英语。它是实用的，要是“实用的”的意思是“确实被用的”，而不是“特别合于中国人的心理的”。我不得不说起这一点，因为看来有许多中国的学习英语者有这种错误的看法，认为谈到中国事物而写的英语才是实用的，谈到外国事物而写的英语是不实用的。可是事实却是这样的：一个人不可能只靠读讲到中国事物的文章来精通英语——指我所说的实用英语。我要劝习惯于在读英语报纸时自限于读中国新闻的人们放弃这个习惯。

5

背景问题

要是你的英语读物不限于中国人写的谈到中国人生活的东西——我希望不是——你一定时常碰到跟单词和短语的意义无关的种种困难。这种困难发生于我因为没有更好的名称而叫作英语的背景。除了对于那些不想读任何不是中国作者写的关于中国题材的任何东西的人们以外，我相信对于所有的英语学习者来说，英语背景是值得注意的。

我所说的英语背景，就是指语言点以外的那些对于生来就用英语而且用英语长大起来的人们看来是十分自然的所有各点的总量。举个例来说，"Grub Street"这个名称——一条伦敦的街道（现在叫 Milton Street），从前住着简易历史书、词典和应时诗歌的作者们，因而这个名称被用作对于雇佣文人们的工作的称呼。

这确然是一个大题目。它包括历史、地理、神话、基督教圣经、小说中的人物和事迹、谚语、风

俗、游戏、运动、迷信以及其它。而且要充分理解任何作者的著作，一个人必须对于这种种有着象那个作家一样多的知识。这对于一般的学习英语的中国人来说是几乎不可能的。

我认为必须仔细考虑的问题即英语背景的哪些部分是更加重要的，和怎样把这些部分交给中国学习者来使他们能读一般的英语读物。你想得到这种知识吗？

6

论述英语的书和用英语写的书

"on" 和 "in" ——喂，这两个小小的词中间往往大大不同。"a book on English"是"一本论述英语的书"；"a book in English" 是"一本用英语写的书"。前者可能是用汉语、德语、法语或者任何别的语言写的，后者可能论述天下的任何题目。

论述英语的书是为了学习这一语言者写的；现在这种书比五十多年前多得多，这是令人满意的。我自己写过几本，可喜的是我时常接到来信说起它们对于学习英语者是有用的。

但是我必须在这里发出警告。语言并不是一门精确的科学，而且也不仅是一件原则、规则、例外、定义、公式和图解的事。论述英语的书是有助益的，但是没有人能够只读这种书而精通英语。也许正因为现在这种书这么多，所以我们时常碰到有人能够在谈话和写作中讲述英语而自己却不能讲英语和写英语。这是因为他们不知道这一事实：没有广泛而

仔细的阅读，精通英语是不可能的。

我要劝告一切学习英语者花较多的时间读用英语写的书而花较少的时间读论述英语的书。你正在读什么用英语写的书？它是一本小说选、杂文选或者游记选吗？还是一本传记、日记或仅仅是历史或地理课本？喂，要是你恰巧在日日夜夜读论述英语的书，你就该根据我的劝告行事了。

7

准备研究的一个简易的句子

在读下去以前请考虑下面这一短句："They cannot see enough of each other"。

你认为这句是什么意思？喂，请读下去以前考虑再考虑。

这的确是一个很简易的句子，我想每个英国或美国的男女学童都是理解它的。事实上，它出现在一本给儿童读的故事书中。可是曾经有一个青年请我解释它，据我所知，这个青年是已经认真地读过英语好几年，得到了不少语法知识和相当大量的词汇。

究竟为什么这个青年不懂这个短句呢？我的回答是因为这句的表达方式在我们自己的语言中没有跟它相当的表达方式。英语中有许多表达方法在汉语中没有相当的表达方式。这些对学习英语的中国人是费解的。

上面引的这句子的意思是：这两个人这样相互

亲爱，以至于虽然他们时常相见，他们总觉得相见得太少。顺便说一说，这句中的“of”也值得注意。“see enough of each other”的意思是“相见得够多”。“see much of you”的意思是“时常见到你”。

在你的阅读中，你将得益于特别注意在汉语中没有相当的表达方式的那些表达方式。这样做在读和写中对你都有帮助。我不高兴地见到有许多中国的学习者不体会到这样做的重要性，结果是他们虽然能够读懂中国作者写的英语，而且能够写出长而语法上还算可以的文章，却也许不能彻底理解英国人写的社交信或者用纯粹合于习语的英语写一段短文。

8

“Would of Come”是什么意思？

有一次一个青年在一本杂志中见到“would of come”这一个表达式，请我解释一下。

你懂得它吗，读者？你见过“would of come”、“should of gone”、“might of done”、“could of learnt”、“ought to of known”这种表达式吗？

你可能见过或者没有见过这种表达式。它们在短篇小说和剧本中并不是不普通的。但是语法书通常不说起它们。所以我恐怕你不知道它们。你认为它们简直是不合语法的。

喂，它们是不合语法的。可是有许多值得知道的不合语法的表达式。你应该学会正确地使用英语。但是你也应该学会理解在英国人和美国人中间通行的那些不正确的表达式。许多中国学习者能够描述好单词和分析好句子，却不能在英国或美国出版的杂志中读懂一页，其部分原因是他们不知道这种不正确的表达式。

在上面说起的几个表达式的每一个中用“have”代替了“of”，你就懂得它的意思了。

你也许会问为什么“of”被用来代替“have”呢？喂，这个错误是自然不过的。在“would have”“should have”等中的“have”是不加重语气的，往往发音好似不加重语气的“of”。与此相反，“I have it”中的“have”是加重语气的，所以象“I of it”这种句子是永远不讲也不写的。

我还必须补一句说“of”用来代替“have”总是错误的，你在你自己的写作中用“would of”、“should of”等吗？有许多错误在英国人和美国人中间是普通的，但我们中国人是绝对不会犯的。正象我刚才说过的，你应理解它们，可是你不该采用它们来作为文体上的装饰品。

9

"More Presently"

一个朋友要我注意在一个文人传略中的他所说的一个错误：一个人名后面接着"of whom more presently"。事实上这个表达式中并没有错误。"more presently"是"more will be said presently"的省略形式。我的朋友不曾知道这个合于习惯的省略，显然把"more"看成了修饰"presently"的副词，因而认为该补入主语和动词来做成一个完整的从句。

具备了些语法知识，中国的学习英语者易于认为只要手头有一本好词典，他们完全能够没有多大困难地读懂一般的英语读物。更有甚者，他们过于容易把任何他们看来似乎不能作语法分析的词组看作错误而置于不顾。

语法固然是重要的，可是确有许多结构，虽然从狭隘的语法观点看来是不可加以辩护的，但是一般地被人们看作是无可非议的英语。所以精通了从

狭义上所说的语法并不使人能读懂一般的英语读物。

当你在良好的写作中碰到你看来不合语法的任何结构时，我要劝你把它记下来，别叫它错误，看看是否你在阅读中不会碰到相似的结构。也许，你不久就会碰到的，那时候你很可能了解这个结构了。

10

当代英语中的双重否定

一本著名古典著作的英国校订人在他为这本书作的注解中说道："在伊丽沙白时代的语法中双重否定并不象当代英语中那样等于一个肯定而是等于一个加重语气的否定"。

确然如此，在伊丽沙白时代的文学中，一个双重否定等于一个加重语气的否定，并非象一般人可能认为那样等于一个肯定。例如"I don't want nothing"只是"I don't want anything"或"I want nothing"的着重式而已。这点听来十分不合理，但这是事实。

我要告诉你的是：这个不合理的事实并不限于伊丽沙白时代的文学。它现在也存在。只要所说的当代英语不是指只通行于受过教育的人们中间的英语，那么被用作加重语气的否定的双重否定在当代英语中也是见得到的。

你在阅读中曾经见到过这种双重否定吗，读者？

假使你读过现代的章回小说、剧本或者短篇小说，我想你是见到过的。我不要你使用这个不合理的结构（我要你讲得和写得象一个受过教育的人）。但是我相信每个学习英语者应该知道它。

有一些英语习惯用法，每个学习英语者都该知道，可是有许多，或者竟然可以说大多数，中国学习者并不知道，因为这些并非只靠逻辑就能理解的，而且在一般语法中是见不到的。双重否定就是这些中的一个。

11

关于语法的学习

我曾被不止一个书商告知过：在我们中国，就论述英语的书而论，除了读本和词典以外，语法书的销路比别的书好。而且似乎几乎每个学习些英语的人总读一本语法书。我自己是一个认真学习语法者。我读过我说不出几本语法书，其中有中国人、英国人、美国人、日本人、丹麦人和荷兰人写的，而且时常注意找新出版的语法书。

可是这篇文章的目的是劝你不要花太多的时间在学习语法上。我为语法而读语法，但并不认为每一个学习英语者都该这样做。你学习英语的目的在于学会实际使用英语。这个目的是不可能从只读语法来达到的。我甚至不认为要是我以前只读语法书而不读别的东西现在会能够写出象这本书中的这种简易英语。

语法告诉你一些规则、一些例外、也许还有一些习语。可是词的正确使用不只是关于这些东

西的一件事。举个例来说，语法有叫做双重宾语这东西，例如在“He gave her a pen.”这句中；但是要是说“He introduced her a friend.”(这句中“her”和“friend”好象构成双重宾语)就错了。事实是这样的：“introduce”不能带双重宾语；但是这一点不能从语法中学到，只能从仔细的阅读中学到。许多中国的学习者写出可能被某条语法规则证明为对的但是必然是错的句子。

我相信你已经读了些语法书，而且很可能花了许多时间在这个学科上，虽然你现在也许还不能把任何东西（例如一封短信）写得在语法上完美。语法可能帮助你使用英语，但是只有在一定程度上。别把语法的学习看作你以精通英语为目的而必须干的全部（或者几乎全部）的工作。仔细阅读和经常实习比学习语法更为重要得多。

12

只知道足够的语法来犯错误

许多中国的学习英语者只知道足够的语法来犯错误。他们想："似乎我见过这样一个表达式好几次，可是它当然是不合语法的。我必须把它改成合于语法。"可是他们的狭隘的语法观念往往使他把合于习语的英语改成不合习语的英语。举例来说，他们可能把"The boy acts contrary to his parents' wishes."看作不合语法，要使这句变成合于语法，就把"contrary"改作"contrarily"——结果是这句就对于英国人读起来不象一个英语句子。的确，从狭隘的语法观点来看，这里的形容词"contrary"应该换用副词"contrarily"。可是习语已经决定这里需要的是这个形容词，而习语是不能反对的。（或者这样说更好：在这里习语坚持要用副词"contrary"而不用副词"contrarily"。）

有许多纯粹地合于习语而不可能语法分析的表达方式。例如"busy"这个词可以直接用在看来象分

词的动名词的前面，例如在“He is busy writing letters.”中。

读者，在你的阅读中，记下合于习语而你看来不够合于语法的那些结构。把它们记入心中，并设法用在你的写作中。尤其重要的是：你可能恰巧是正象我在上面说过的只知道足够的语法来犯错的人们中的一个。

可是你不可认为习语和语法总是不相容的东西。合于习语的东西，合于语法的大大多于不合语法的。我的意思只是：并非每个合于习语结构都是可以用语法来解释的，也不是每个严格合于语法结构的都是合于习语的。

13

语言是主要的东西

当你读一篇用英语写的故事时，你为了故事还是为了英语而读它？这是一个不象它表面上看来那样愚笨的问题。因为我见到有许多学习英语的人们注意故事多于注意英语。他们读了故事，欣赏它，在以后的一个长时间中记住它，但不肯研究它里面的词和短语的用法。举个例来说，他们牢记着那个三角恋爱的秘密是怎样解决的，但是故事中的句子连一句也不记得，也说不出在某个人物的谈话中什么介词用在某个词的前面或后面。

当然读了故事，欣赏它，记住它是好事；要是一个人只要知道那个故事，他就不必要关心语言。但是学习语言者的情况就不同了。我的意思是学习英语者跟学习故事者或所谓一般读者应有所区别。

不论一个学习英语者读什么东西，我认为他该把语言看作主要的东西。举个例来说，读了前面这一句(当然指英语原文)，除了解它的意思以外，他该

注意到“whatever”的让步用法。“in my opinion”、“regard... as...”和“the main thing”这样，他的确学到一些英语，虽然他所读的东西在别的方面也许恰巧既没有趣味又没有教益。可以可靠地说，这是一个比读而思考作文的原则更好得多的学习作文的方法。

顺便说一句，我要劝告英语教师们向他们的学生提问而且关于选词和结构方面的要点不但关于事实和思想方面。

14

逻辑和惯用法

时常被人引用的莎士比亚的"All that glisters is not gold"这一行诗的真实意思，你认为是什么？严格的意思可能是闪耀证明一个物质不是金子。可是那真实的意思是闪耀未必证明一个物质是金子。换句话说，按照逻辑，这个谚语应该改成"Not all that glisters is gold"。

可是莎士比亚写得不合逻辑，而这个不合逻辑的结构现在并不是不普通的。举个例来说，假使你听到一个英国人说"All my friends do not know the Han language"，你必不可认为他在说他的朋友们都不懂汉语。他很可能暗示说他们的大半的朋友能够讲和写汉语都很好。

这个确然是不合逻辑的。也有英国人不用这个结构而且很不赞成用这个结构的人们。这个结构将来总会消失，因为逻辑日久后必将胜利。可是今天它是自然而合于习语的英语，我认为每个学习英语

者应该知道它。

英语中还有不少别的不合逻辑而完全合于习语的东西。请再读一遍本文第二段第一句（指英语原文）。也许你会认为"is not now uncommon"不及"is now not uncommon"好。依照逻辑，"not"的确该是修饰"uncommon"而不是修饰"now"。但是依照习语，"is not now uncommon"比较普通。

关于"only"这个词，不合于逻辑而合于习语的结构也是普通的。一个英国人可能说："I only arrived a few days ago"，而他的意思实在是他"arrived only a few days ago"。

正象我刚才说过的，逻辑日久后必将胜利。可是英语必须经过多少年才能成为一种完全合于逻辑的语言啊！

15

不自然的什么东西

H·G·韦尔斯把辛克莱·刘易斯的 *Babbitt* 称作"我在长久以来读过的最伟大的章回小说之一"。我并不认为韦尔斯曾经想到他的(原)话可能会被人误解。的确，它是很简单也很明白，也许没有哪个英国人或美国人想到它会有一个跟它的真实的意思不同的意思。可是有一个中国学习英语者，他读英语和写英语都是够仔细的，最近告诉我他对那句话不大理解。他说"为什么说'for a long time'?"。"我简直不懂韦尔斯认为一本章回小说的伟大跟他在阅读它时花了多少时间有什么关系。"

这个学习者误解了韦尔斯的话。事实上，这个评论家的意思并不是说他曾经花了多少时间读任何章回小说。那句话可以解释作："一个长时间以来我读过许多章回小说，其中有些是伟大的。*Babbitt* 是最伟大的中间的一本。"

那个学习者是仔细的，怀疑到他是否不是正在

曲解韦尔斯的话。我以为即使他不曾问我，他最后也会得到那个真正的意思的。

中国的学习英语者时常会误解或不解由几个简单词简单地用在一起而形成的一个词组。我的劝告是当你在一个表达式中碰到有不自然的什么东西时停下来再想一想。那个东西也许不在那个表达式中而在你对它的理解中。

16

关于坏英语的好知识

有这么多的书和人自称为教授好英语！但是没有自称为教授坏英语的。我几乎可以肯定，要是有任何人刊登广告说教授坏英语课程，将会被人认为他是痴子，连一个学生也得不到。而且我也认为你从来不曾想到要学习坏英语。大约你认为坏英语是不值得学的，而且认为一般中国人学习英语者，他不作任何努力去学坏的就已经够坏的了。喂，请读下面的故事：（下面的译文只能表达原文的意思，并不表达原文的好坏。）

一个年老的黑人在（美国）南方的一个镇上去看一个白人，问道："汤姆先生，你没见过我的那只驴，见过吗？"

"并没有，亨利，我没见过那只驴。你丢了它吗？"

"喂，我不知道我丢了它没有，可是它是一定去了。"

“亨利，我想你能够找到那只驴的最好的方法将是在报纸上登一个找寻告白去找它。”

“呸！那是没有用的，汤姆先生。”

“为什么没有用？”

“哎呀，汤姆先生，你完全知道那只驴是不会阅读的。”

你没有我的注解的帮助就了解这个黑人的话吗？要是不，你还没有得到关于坏英语的多少知识，我希望你认识到作为一个学习英语者你该得到更多的关于坏英语的知识。

所谓坏英语，我指的就是那些用英语讲话而为了某种原因不用好英语的人们所用的英语。它可以叫作不识字的人们用的英语或者没有文化的人们用的英语。它在正式的写作中找不到，但在现代小说、戏剧和未受过教育而用英语讲话的人们的写作和语言中都很普通。它跟你的英语大大不同；你的英语，要是它坏，可以说是中国式的坏。

坏英语意味着坏语法、坏拼法、坏惯用法和坏发音。这一切构成一个有趣而有用的研究对象。没有关于坏英语的好知识，一个人将错过现代文学中的许多东西，而且将不能理解他可能有必要接触到的任何未受过教育的英国人或美国人的话。

17

读 词 典

一见到这个题目，你也许会想："只有笨人才会干那个事。我却是聪明得不可能干那个的。"可是我在阅读中知道有好几个确实曾经读词典的名人。他们在词典中得到大乐，把它读得津津有味，正象有些旅行家在导游书和公共交通时刻表中得到乐趣一样。当英国诗人罗伯特·布朗宁决意把诗歌作为他的事业时，他在约翰逊的词典中读过每一个词。英国作家约翰·拉斯金写信给《大牛津词典》的编者说，他读过而且研究过在它的第一卷中的每一个词。英国历史家亨利·托马斯·巴克尔有一次郑重地说，某本词典是"我曾经快乐地读完过的几本词典中的一本"。

这些并不是笨人！我几乎不能说要是他们不曾读过词典，他们就不可能成为那样精通英语的人，但是我相信读词典毕竟不象你可能想的那样愚笨。

我从来不曾读完过任何词典；不，即使在书名

页上载有我的名字的词典我也不曾读完过。但是我在许多年以前惯常读完过《简明牛津词典》中的许多常用词的词条。我觉到那样做法对于精通常用词和短语是很有帮助的。

这种常用词和短语可能被用英语讲话的男女孩子们很容易随时学到。可是它们不大会被中国的学习者不在这方面作出特别的努力而学到。读词典中常用词的词条无疑是一个大大的助益。

18

编写你自己的词典

我必须很诚恳地对曾经写信来问起我的《英语惯用法词典》的许多读者表示感谢。它总是即将出版，而事实上尚未出版。这一部分是因为我正忙于别的写作的事；事实上我对于这本书的工作只是断断续续干的。但是主要的原因是：我是一个认真的学习英语者，我总是注意到避免粗心的或敷衍了事的工作。我几乎每天为了这本书作些笔记——这些笔记既从阅读中来，也从被关心惯用法这件事的人们向我提出的问题中来。往往一个似乎简单的问题使我想起有某个重要的一点，要是没有人提醒我，我可能不会想到的。我希望出版的推迟将被这本书的较多和较好的内容所补偿。

现在我想每个学习者可以编写他自己的惯用法词典。他可以备一本笔记簿，把他认为对他有特殊兴趣的惯用法各点按照字母次序记入其中。这样的一本书将为他服务，作为一个写作良伴，虽然它里面有

许多东西对于别人看来可能是乏味或没用的。

而且我想每个学习者可能使他的惯用法词典大到他所读的一切书的总量。我的意思是他可能为他所读的书做一个可以称得惯用法索引的东西。关于每个点，他只须记下有关的书、页和行。将来有一天他将能够指着他的藏书说："这是我的英语惯用法词典。"这是一个何等伟大的著作！

的确，我但愿我有时间干这件事。而且你可以相信我可能这样为一本活的而且有创造性的词典打下基础——完全不同于只靠一本或几本词典作依据的那种词典。

19

编写另一本你自己的词典

若干时间以前我说过每个学习英语者可以编写他自己的惯用法词典。后来我想起每个学习英语者可以编写为他自己用的另一种词典。因为没有一个更好的名称，我想我们不妨叫它题目词典。我指的是这样的一本词典——里面按照字母次序排列着若干题目，把关于每个题目的有用的短语和句子聚集在一起。举个例来说，在"books"这个题目下可以聚集着关于书的短语和句子，但不必每个短语或句子中有"book(s)"这个词。

这件事可以用阅读和作笔记的方法来干。不必要把短语和句子抄下。把页数和行数记下，再写出一、二个词作为暗示就够了。这样办法，任何书可以只给它作一个题目索引而变成一本题目词典。若干本这样的词典可以变成一本相当完备的题目词典。

我所说的题目词典在我国似乎从来不曾出现

过。我不知道为什么没有人想到过编写一本。这种词典对于一切写英语的人们将是大有用处的。因为我们时常想不起来关于某个题目的那正确的表达式，而一般的词典不能满足我们的需要。

我但愿能够有时间来完成我自己的建议！

20

再论该该什么

因为你为了学习写作而阅读，也因为你该学会用现代英语散文来表达你的意思，你读的东西必须是现代英语散文。一百年以前通行的表达式今天也许不通行了。同样地，诗歌中通行的表达式可能在散文中不通行。

可是“现代英语散文”这个名称也得限制一下。因为你应该学会用标准英语来表达你的意思，你读的东西必不可有太多的俚语，不论对俚语这个词人们可能付与什么意义。再有一点，因为你该学会写的是日常生活中的事物，你读的东西必不可是专门性的。

还有一个限制。你读的东西必须对于你是相当容易的；花在揣摩言外之意和找出各种出处和引典，很容易使你分心，你的目的是学习英语写作。

21

为了学习表达的艺术而阅读

当你读一篇短篇小说时，你可能只为了乐趣而读它。当你读一篇传略时，你可能只为了知识而读它。但是因为你是学习英语者，我认为你该时常为了学习表达的艺术而阅读。而且为了这个目的，你可能读短篇小说或传略，读杂文或新闻，竟然可能读任何用好的当代英语写成的任何东西。

假使你注意的话，即使读一短段，你也可能学到好几个表达式。努力读下面《英国广播公司现代英语》的几段文字，注意下列的各点惯用法。(指英语原文，不指译文。)

一百多年以前，她开办了专为妇女服务的第一个英国医院。在英格兰这种医院现在还很少。这个医院在伦敦的尤斯顿路。它的位置意味着来自全英格兰的妇女能够十分容易地到达它。

当她开办这个医院时，她的目的是向妇女们提供一个能够受到女医生们和女护士们医疗的地方。

她也要这个医院在女医生们很难找到工作的一个时期内为她们提供职位。近来当局曾经企图关闭这个医院。他们说它是老式的，浪费着许多钱。可是政府已经决定这个医院继续开着。许多人因为这个医院所提供的有价值的服务将继续下去而感到很高兴。

用这个方法，你将很快地学习表达的艺术，也许每天一、两段会在一个月内教你几百个表达式，而这些表达式将大大改进你的写作。而且要是你能够——我相信你能够——每天把已经用这个方法读过的一、二段文字记入心中，效果就将更大。

22

用摹仿学习英语会话

我认识几个曾经在英国或美国学习过，可是并不能把英语讲得正确的人；他们在语法、习语和发音方面作出错误。但不久前的一天我碰到一个讲完善英语的中国妇女。她的英语水平似乎并不很高；但是我相信她讲英语比我更象一个英国人。经我问了，方知道她从未进过高等学校，但只被英国教师教过她英语。她讲英语不象讲外国语。她这样讲英语并非因为她认为这样讲是对的，而是因为她不知道任何别的讲法。她没有，而且大概不知道中国学习英语者所特有的无数的错误。

这个妇女用不自觉的摹仿的方法学会了讲英语。这个无疑是最好的方法。但是并非所有的学习者都有这样学习的机会。喂，有不得已而求其次的方法；我指的是自觉的摹仿。假使有人在英国或美国度过好几年而不能讲英语讲得正确，这是因为他们在外国时并不曾作过多少自觉的摹仿。他们把

他们的错误带了过去，再把它们带了回来，虽然他们该把它们留在那里。

我大概不会有被人误解的危险，被人认为我的意思是一切到英国或美国去的人们应该只是为了学习英语会话这个目的而这样做。不；我的意思只是：通过仔细的摹仿，一个人能够容易学到它，而且不但在以英语为母语的国家中，也在中国的某些地方。我也不是认为一个人学习英语的目的只是在于讲它。但这点必须在中国的学习英语者中间被大家认识到：讲得好导致写得好，而且语言主要是一个用口讲的东西。

23

摹仿：好的和坏的

竟然时常听到有学习英语者读了一、两本古典文学努力去摹仿它们的文体。可是事实上文体是不能摹仿的。不同的作家有不同的文体。他们并不努力去写得象他们写的那样。所以摹仿任何文体往往导致矫揉造作。

而且被摹仿的文体要是一百多年前的著作的文体，结果更加不好。我们是二十世纪八十年代的人，不该写十九世纪八十年代的英语。

我要劝你别把某个特殊的文体作为目的。注意写正确的、简单的、合于习语的、明白的英语，如是而已。

但是摹仿并不是总是坏的。往往摹仿某个东西是重要的。在个人的文体不适宜的场合，摹仿是做到正确的唯一的方法。举个例来说，在写关于某事物的广告时，你必须摹仿你所见过的某个这类广告。虽然你可能很广泛地读过一般读物，要是你不曾读到

某种广告，你不可能写出一个好的这种广告。

你这样做将是有益的：收集若干短的广告、请帖、布告、收条、借据、商业合同等。当你需要写这种东西中的一种时，你只须做一些摹仿和改变。下面是一个普通的请帖：

M·S·亚当斯先生和夫人请L·J·威廉斯先生和夫人光临，在五月十七日星期六晚上七点钟进餐。地址是明星街八十六号。

这个请帖是M·S·亚当斯先生和夫人写给L·J·威廉斯先生和夫人的。看来把它放在你面前，你就能写出一个新的。你只须改变一下姓名、星期几、某月某日、时间、和地址就行了。

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舌 和 笔

英美人向他们所接触的中国人问“你讲英语吗？”远比问“你写英语吗？”要多得多。他们也许在听到有人学习了几年英语不能讲它而觉得可笑。

事实上，语言主要是一件讲的东西。学习英语而不尝试去讲它是不足为训的。而且读一本会话书正象读一本语法书那样是荒谬的。

不但如此，因为普通写的英语并无十分不同于普通讲的英语，学习讲是学习写的一个很好的方法。讲好英语的人也就是写好英语的人。在用舌用得正确的场合用笔也就用得正确。许多日用的短语和结构对于在谈话中使用它们的人说来是自然而然的。举个例来说，一个讲出“in fact”和“as a matter of fact”的人不可能写出并不存在的“in a fact”、“as a fact”和“as a matter of the fact”。而且要是英语不完美的人们的最可靠的标志是介词误用的话，那么好的讲话对于学习那些难用的小词的合

于习语的用法是大有帮助的。一个讲出“sick *of*”、“interested *in*”、“prefer ... *to* ...,”的人不用故意努力就会在正确的地方写出同样正确的介词。

我认为，一个学生向他的教师用英语讲他所关心的任何东西，每当表达错误的时候由教师改正，这将不但是学讲而且是学写的很好的方法。可惜的是，依我看来在有许多学生的教室中是行不通的。

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只是不曾知道

你有相当好的语法知识。你有包含三千或者四千个词的词汇。你知道一千或者两千个习语。你对于惯用法多少是仔细的。你应该能够写得相当好。

可是你是否能够？要是你不能，为什么不能？我想你的困难之一是你往往不能表达你所要说的话。你不能，可是当你见到了你的意思被能表达它的人表达出来了，你大概会这么想："那个看来是够容易的。我只是不曾知道。"

你是对的。你只是不曾知道。只是被某个精通英语的人把几个普通词按照一个简单的语法次序排列起来，那就表达了你的意思，可是你不知道选择什么普通词和怎样去排列它们。

这是中国的学习英语者的一个很普通的困难。这是因为他们读得不够广泛，也不够仔细。有着几千个一般不被看作习语的有用的表达式。它们很容易理解，所以易于被人忽略。可是忽略它们的人们

将会忘记它们，而且在需要它们的时候想不到用它们。

你在储藏了许多有用的短语和句子以前不能学到写作自如，而要储藏这些东西又非广泛而仔细的阅读不可。

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这么多的点!

读了许多我所说过的关于若干点惯用法的话，有几个读者告诉我，他们认为要记住这许多看来并没有什么规则的要点简直是不可能的。他们想知道，是否一切写正确英语的人们都牢记着这许多点，而且每当写作的时候都注意到它们；是否还有人可能不去注意这类小小的点而学会把英语写得相当好。

是的，大部分的这种点看来是小小的点。然而正是这种点显示出一个人是否精通了英语。偶然的语法错误当然必须避免，它们很可能只是由于不小心，也很可能并不是英语不完美的人们所特有的。但是习语上的失误总是显露出某人不熟悉正确的英语。所以，看来不重要的惯用法点是值得所有想把英语写得正确的人注意的。

至于把它们牢记在心，生来就用这个语言的人们也许不必作出任何自觉的努力。可以说他们凭着

直觉学到惯用法。他们每天讲英语，许多合于习语的表达式和结构的使用对于他们来说是第二天性，所以他们在讲话的时候讲得正确的写起来也决不会错。

对于中国的学习英语者，情况必然不同，因为他们大多数是读英语而不是讲英语的。他们必须细心去掌握对以英语为母语的人们说来是十分自然的许多惯用法点。

可是我所说的惯用法点并不象你可能看作的那样难于对付的敌人。密切注意它们有助于人们去征服它们。还有一点，用英语讲话的人们从讲话学到的东西你可能从朗读中学到；朗读会象讲话一样帮助你，虽然也许慢一些。而且朗读也有胜于讲话的方面，因为你在读好的书面英语时，没有从所受教育不多的人们中学到那些普通的语误、不规范的语式和用词不当的危险。

27

怎样表达达个意思

你的问题不是说什么而是怎样说。你也许时常有不知道怎样表达一个概念或者一个思想。举一个例来说，假使你恰巧不知道“thermometer”这个词，你可能不能够表达量温度的那个玻璃管的概念。举另一个例，假定你要申请一个职位，需要申请者用书面英语来申请，而你感到自己不能这样做。假定你请一个朋友代你写了那封信。你读了而且把它理解得不误。你认识到你不曾想到把那些简单的词按照那个简单的次序来安排。你的确有什么事要说，可是你不知道怎样来说它！所以有必要学习写作。

事实上，你时常需要表达的概念和思想，有许多已经在你以前就被人表达过。假使你在任何书中仔细地读任何一页，你大概会见到几个会帮助你表达事物的一些表达式。这种表达式中有许多可能由你看来是太简单而不值得多加注意，可是事实是这

样的：你不可能创造它们，要是你不曾注意它们，你也不能使用它们。看来有许多中国的学习英语者读过不少语法书和作文书，也作过改正句子和改善句子的习题，可是不能写出即使只要过得去的英语。症结所在是：他们或者读得不够广泛，或者读得不够仔细，或者不曾把足够的你也许曾经认为太容易理解而不值得牢记的词、短语和句子记入心中。

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一个“愚笨的”写作原则

修辞学书也许告诉你许多写作原则。但我将解释的那个原则是我不曾在任何修辞学书中见到过的。我自己在多年前发现它，而且发现了它就实行它。我已经见到它很有用，所以我相信你采用了它将会得益。这个原则是：你不该用在你的阅读中未见过的任何结构、表达式和词组。

我看来一般的中国的学习英语者有相当好的语法知识和相当大的词汇，而且当他写英语的时候，他按照他的语法知识和他对于词义的理解造句。结果是：他的英语往往似乎是够正确的但并不真正正确。因为正确的英语是一件惯用法的事，不只是一件语法和词汇的事。在修改作文中，我时常被问为什么我把某个词或结构改作了另外一个。喂，我不能每次说出为什么。我改用了那个词或结构只因为那是英国人将会在那里用的那个词或结构。

假定你将写“He was rich to live on luxury”

这一句。这个句子对吗？“He was”必然是对的；你见过它许多许多次。“He was rich”也是对的；你见过它不止一次。“He was rich to ...”——喂，你从来没见过它，见过吗？不，你从来没见过它，所以你不该放它过去。“on luxury”——喂，你从来没见过这个表达式，所以你不该用它。你该知道，正确的句子是：“He was rich enough to live in luxury”。

你认为我的原则很愚笨吗？它看来是这样的。可是我把它看作很有帮助的，而且我希望你将设法实行它。

这个问题当然会发生的：因为我并不总是记着我是否见过某个结构或者表达式或者词组，我不会弄得几乎不可能写任何东西吗？喂，你应该记着。你应读得仔细。你应该从你的阅读中来学习表达的艺术。我希望你不曾忘记我的以“为了学习表达的艺术而阅读”为题的那篇文章。

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对于写作的一个帮助

你时常碰到你完全理解但不能把它译成易读的汉语的一个词、短语或者结构吗？我相信你是时常碰到的；我相信你读过足够的英语使你得到这种经验。我自己时常碰到这种东西。

你大概见过象“They will not return for many days to come”这样的一句。你懂得它的意思是：他们将在许多天以后回来，或者他们将只在许多天过去以后才回来。可是你能够把它译成易读的汉语吗？很普通的表达式“simply cannot”中的“simply”这个词我看很难译成汉语。我觉得别于“possible”的“probable”这个很普通的词也很难译成汉语。至于象“you cannot be too carefoul”这一句，我想它竟然是无法翻译的。

这一切和许多别的词、短语和结构似乎没有我们所说的汉语对应语。你理解它们，可是你不能把它们译成汉语；就是说，你不能把它们译得既准确

而又明白。

我并不要劝你试译这些难弄的东西。请注意我的话：不要试译它们。只要把它们记牢。当你写作的时候，它们会对你有用。它们将帮助你写出更合于习语的英语。

顺便说一点，“society”是一个中国的学习英语者中间多用的词。但是我很少见过它被他们中间有人想把它用于“companionship”一义，例如在“The old man enjoys the society of young people”中。这是因为中国的学习者通常不把一个英语词用在不容易译成汉语的一个词义中。我希望你现在将得益于我的暗示。

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提供考虑的几个错误

读者，你在下面几句中发现任何错误吗？

1. He is studying for serving the people.

2. I have met him for five times.

3. Pardon me for I give you so much trouble.

4. For I am a Chinese, I love China.

要是你在这些句子中没有发现任何错误，你的英语知识还不够。这些句子都是错误的；据我所知，它们不会在英国人的英语中找到的，虽然我相信你可能认为它们是十分合于语法的。

让我解释一下：(1) 表示目的的“for”后面可以接名词（例如在“for pleasure”中），但通常不接动名词。(2) “for the ... time”是对的，但是“for ... times”是错的。(3) “for”用作连词是很弱的，不可引导任何重要的原因。(4) “for”是并立连词，不是从属连词。

现在请读改正后的这些句子：

1. He is studying(in order)to serve the people.

2. I have met him five times.

3. Pardon me for giving you so much trouble.

4. I love China, for I am a Chinese.

既然你被告知了关于"for"这个词使用中的四个普通的错误，我希望你将注意到在你写作中避免它们。这种错误通常并不在语法书和作文书中说起。可是它们在中国的学习英语者中并不是不普通的。而且我见到在许多别的普通英语词的使用中有着相似的错误。我认为这种错误的讨论应该组成每一本专为中国的学习者写的作文书的一大部分，这是一件可惜的事：许多许多中国的学习者在学习语法和修辞学的规则和原则，却完全不注意这种错误。

一本好的英语作文书尚待著作。你希望见到这样一本书出版吗？

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提供考虑的另外几个错误

读了我的那篇“提供考虑的几个错误”以后，一个读者写信请我给些别的提供考虑的错误。我希望你将有兴趣读下面的四句，看看它们是否包含着错误。

1. May I introduce you my brother?
2. Please favour me an early reply.
3. I will inform you the result by and by.
4. He has presented me a book.

我想你读到过语法中的双重宾语。你曾经被告知一个动词可能带两个宾语，一个叫直接宾语，一个叫间接宾语。你见过象下面各句那样的句子。

1. Can you recommend me a tailor?
2. Please send me an early reply.
3. I will tell you the truth by and by.
4. He has lent me a book.

可是你见过象第一组中的那种句子吗？我在中

国的英语学习者写的英语中时常见到它们，可是从来不曾在任何英国人写的东西中见到过。在一个英国人写的东西中，这些句子将是：

1. May I introduce my brother to you?
2. Please favour me with an early reply.
3. I will inform you of the result by and by.
4. He has presented a book to me.
   He has presented me with a book.

现在你可以知道“introduce”、“favour”、“inform”、“present”这几个动词不能带双重宾语，虽然“recommend”、“send”、“tell”和“lend”可以。语法书说到双重宾语，给几个例，可是它们并不告诉你只有几个动词可以带双重宾语，也不说到任何不可能有这个结构的动词。所以在我看来，我刚才说到的四个错误在中国的学习者中是十分普通的，甚至在曾经仔细读过语法的人们中。

老实说，语法不能在写作中给你多少帮助。它告诉你什么是对的，可是它不大告诉你什么是错的。当你在你的语法书中见到了某一个结构，你在自己的写作中就试用它。可能你没有犯错误，但是也可能犯了一个错误。

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短比长好

我曾经读过希莱埃·贝洛克的一篇杂文，在里面作者说："我不能不说愚蠢的评论家关于英语中的句子应该长还是短的一切讨论简直是浪费纸张。"

我完全同意他。一个句子并不因为长或者短就好或者坏。长短是检验句子好坏的假标准。认为一串长句是某人精通英语的证明是错误的；认为简单而明白的英语要求每句至多只可有若干个词也是错误的。

我记得我自己曾经前后按照这两个错误的想法行事。在一段时间中，我在一句中就语法和意思允许的范围中尽量多用词。结果是一个过分庄严的文体。后来又有一个时期，我努力做到每一句是语法上的简单句，而且象入门书中的句子那样容易懂。结果是不自然的简单。

但是，我要向一切学习英语写作者对这两种错

误提出警告，我认为写长句的错误是两者中更普通的。学习者应该更加注意去避免它，这不是只因为在那些没有多少实践的人们手中，使用词、短语和合于习语的结构，长句比短句难于处理得多。决不可假定包藏在一个长句中的语法或习语上的错误可能容易不被发现。

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比扩大词汇更重要的一件事

“怎样扩大我的词汇”——这是我曾经被问过的最普通的问题中的一个。的确，一般的中国的学习英语者有很有限的词汇，可是我认为对于他的有限的词汇，有比使它增加更为重要的事要做。他还得识许多另外的词才能精通英语。但是，在他对他的词汇中的大多数词获得进一步了解之前，他也不能精通英语。

因为他会在他并不真正懂得一个词的时候以为他懂得了它。我所说的懂得一个词，是指懂得它真正的唯一的意义或各个意义，而不是指一个或多个我们所称为的它的汉语对应语。请拿“student”这个词为例。它极多地被我们中国人误用和误解。它被那些人误解和误用，他们把所有的学童都称作“students”，而且只因他们自己不在校，当被人称作“students of English”时就感到生气。事实上一个学童并不是一个“student”，可是一个研习英语者

是一个“student of English”，虽然他可能是一个老年人而且可能已经写了许多论述英语的书。

我们易于忽略普通词。除了误用和误解以外，我们易于忽略它们的各种意义，或者宁可说各种合于习语的用法。请拿“read”这个词为例，你当然认为你对它很熟悉。可是你知道下面例解的各种意义（或用法）吗？

Can your *read* dreams?

The baby cannot *read* the clock.

He is *reading* her thoughts.

The sentence *reads* like a paraphrase.

Don't *read* too much into the text.

The thermometer *reads* 68°.

要是不，你几乎还不能说已经熟悉了“read”这个词。

34

把这个词成为你自己的

一个词在你能够正确地用它以前还不是你自己的。你可能知道某个词的一个或两个汉语对应语，但也许不能正确地用它。我恐怕一般中国的学习者所能译入汉语的英语词，不到一半真正可以说得上是他自己的。

随便给几个例："wise"、"probable"、"congratulate"、"equip"、"personality"、"novel"、"nevertheless"、"meanwhile"——这些词有许多中国的学习者可能"认得"而不能正确地用它们。你认为你能正确地用它们吗，读者？请仔细地读下面各句，看看你在任何一句中是否有任何错误。我必须预先告诉你一切印作斜体的词是误用的，要是你不能见到它们中的某一个是错误的，那就证明那个词还不是你自己的。

1. The boy reads the book very well, and so he may be called a very *wise* boy.

2. He is *probable* to pass the examination.

3. Let's *congratulate* her success.

4. A radio has been *equipped* in the hall.

5. He never pays his debts; his *personality* is bad.

6. I don't like such *novels* as these short stories.

7. *Nevertheless* poor, the girl was neatly dressed.

8. I bought some bananas and *meanwhile* some apples.

这些用斜体印的词中有多少是你自己的？有多少不是你自己的？在一本好的词典中查出那不是你自己的词来，找出它们为什么在这些句子中是错的，而且学习它们的正确用法。

牢记着：不是每一个你认为你理解的词真正是你自己的。

35

关于用词的一个警告

有一次，我在一个曾经在英国学习多年的人写的一篇文章中见到“destruct”这个词，它明显地被用作“destroy”解释。另外一次，我见到同一个词，在一本上海出版的有图画的杂志中明显地用在同一个意义。再在另外一次，我见到“destroyal”这个词被一位显然受过良好的英语教育的人用作“destuction”解释。

可是事实上动词是“destroy”，名词是“destruction”，并不存在“destruct”和“destroyal”这两个词。

我并不认为用那些不存在的词的人们不曾认识那些正确的词。但是他们是粗心的。他们只抓住了看来象他们所要的词的一组字母。这些并不存在的词确然也会被见到它们的一切人所理解。但是它们当然不能因此而有存在的理由。

在中国的学习英语者写的英语中，我时常见到

并不真正存在的词。他们用这种词，或者因为他们不认得那些正确的词，或者只因为他们是粗心的——或者竟然因为他们相信他们自己有着构词法的良好知识。无论如何，这是并未精通英语的人们所特有的一个很不好的毛病。

所以，我要劝你别用任何你不能肯定你见到过被标准作家们使用的词，有疑问便查词典。

另有一言相告。可能你有时用一个词，它的确载在你的词典中，但并不通用，而且你用它并非因为你确定它是存在的，而只因为你以为它是你所要的那个词。举个例来说，因为你识得名词“aggression”和形容词“aggressive”，你可能就用了动词“aggress”——可是这是一个很不普通的词。

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准确的那个词

不久前某天我作一篇翻译，我尝试了好几个词才得到了那个表达我所要的微细的意义的词。那个词是“admonish”，我尝试过的词是“advise”、“counsel”、“warn”、“exhort”、“reprove”、“rebuke”和“reprimand”。大略说来“admonish”的意义是“exhort”或“reprove”，但是它带有亲切或和善跟严肃结合的含义，也带有警告和规劝的含义。

有时我想了又想，斟酌了又斟酌，还想不出那个准确的词。在这种情况下，我只得用我认为最近于我所要表达的意义的那个词。这是写作英语的人们的一个普通的经验，也是他们应该引以为憾的一个经验。

同义词的研究无疑对于仔细选词很有帮助；仔细选词对于精确那良好写作的特质之一是必要的。但是有两个错误我想学习者应该警惕的。一个错误是依赖英汉词典中所给的所谓汉语对应语。另一个

错误是研究同义词条中的解释而忽略那些例证。

可是正确的英语大部分是一件使用普通词的事，普通词的正确使用，依靠它们的“意义”少，而依靠所说的惯用法多。举个例来说，一个写正确英语的人也许不能详细地告诉你“for”和“to”有什么区别，但是他永远不会不用那个对的词而并非另一个。他用那个准确的词是一件习惯的事而不是由于仔细选词的结果。在这件事中，研究同义词是没有帮助的。一个人只能靠着阅读合于习语的英语而进步——这件事不论多少词的研究也不能替代的。

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“文学英语”指什么

修辞学和作文书告诉我们，英语可以约略分成(1)文学英语和(2)口语英语，而且文学英语应该，而口语英语不应该，用于写作中。

是的，我们——我指你——应该学习写文学英语。但是“文学英语”究竟指什么？什么是文学英语。我恐怕有许多中国的学习英语者认为文学英语是一种明显文雅的英语。他们认为它绝对不同于用于谈话、向一班学生演说、写订货事务信中的英语。他们认为在文学英语中面孔不是“face”而是“visage”，一个人永远不是“goes”而总是“repairs”，虽然不是全部，却大部分是藻语。

可是这个想法是错误的——而且这个想法阻碍人写出自然而纯粹的英语。文学英语，实际上并非限用于文学中的英语。它不是一种明显文雅的英语。它只是受过良好教育的英国人和美国人在写作中用的普通的英语——所说的写作，不一定为了文学的

目而的写作，往往是为了实用的目的而写作。在文学英语中面孔几乎总是“face”，很难得是“visage”，一个人几乎总是“goes”，很难得是“repairs”。

虽然“口语英语”指会话中用的英语，并不因而可以说会话中的英语必然是太口语化而不可用于写作。受过良好教育的英、美人用于会话中的大部分词和习语必然是文学英语。