

## TRANSITIONAL ENGLISH FOR EVERYONE

## Reading Four

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Talk Given at the  
FULBRIGHTERS' RECEPTION  
at the University of Kentucky

*Prof. John Lihani*

Part 1. "Talk, talk, and more talk is good for international relations," said William Jefferson Clinton, 42nd President of the United States of America, speaking in Shanghai, Peoples Republic of China, 30 June 1998. Many people consider this to be a truism. My own studies fall in this field of talk, which produces, and of itself is, a product of language.

My hobby is the study of languages, and my Fulbright Research Project in 1996 was to experiment with simplified English in the classroom, to see if simplification would hasten and improve the learning process of English as a foreign language.

Ever since the collapse of the biblical tower of Babel and the subsequent linguistic debacle, people have tried, without much success, to undo the chaotic linguistic geography.

Over a thousand planned and artificial languages have been invented to overcome this linguistic chaos, again, with no success. The problem is that planned languages are more difficult to learn than are natural languages, and if anyone learns an artificial language, he has hardly anyone to talk to. That is not the case with natural languages. Although no language is easy to learn, some are easier than others.

Part 2. Earlier in this century, some language planners began to devote their energies to simplifying natural languages. In the 1930's C. K. Ogden created Basic English, which gained the support of the World War II leaders like Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin and Nehru. After WWII, Basic English revolutionized the teaching of foreign languages by giving rise to texts that used basic vocabulary which was taught with the audio-lingual method.

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Yet despite the simplification of vocabulary, little had been done in simplifying grammar and syntax, which are more difficult to learn than is vocabulary. This has changed in the last 30 years. Hundreds of linguists have published their research on pidgin-creole languages, and they have tried to relate the simplified grammar of pidgin-creoles to second language learning. In our research we are also seeking a simplified method of face-to-face communication that can be understood globally, across cultural barriers.

Part 3. Our activity is concentrating on simplifying English. English is now spoken around the world by more people than speak any other of the more than 6700 languages that exist on the face of the earth today. Though there are those who do not particularly care for some of the politics behind the English language, the language itself, nevertheless, has great prestige around the world.

Twenty percent of the world's population speaks English. We could say that English is doing very well spreading on its own, and needs no help from anyone. But there is an awareness that many more people would like to learn English. They constitute much of the 80% of the world's population that is interested in learning enough English to satisfy their basic human and social needs wherever they may find themselves in the world. These cosmopolitan people are the target of simplified English.

As we approach the new century, it appears that the world is on the brink of charting new paths in intercultural communication. The new approach to improving global, interpersonal discourse lies not in creating artificial languages, but in simplifying the most popular, and most widely spoken natural languages like Chinese or English, and using modern technology to make them available to large numbers of people.

Part 4. These two super-languages have a much simpler grammar than most other languages. But even some of my Chinese friends say that English, because of its less complex writing system, is a better choice of the two to serve as a global *lingua franca*, a global common language.

Six years ago, I felt compelled to simplify English to make it easier to learn. In a year we produced the very first text, anywhere, of simplified English grammar and combined it with Ogden's "Basic Vocabulary." We then needed to experiment with this revolutionary text. The Slovak Republic and the Fulbright Research Award gave us that opportunity in September and October of 1996.

We flew from Atlanta to Vienna, Austria, where we were picked up by a Slovak driver and a military interpreter. In half an hour, we were driven

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directly to our apartment across the Danube in Bratislava, the capital of the Slovak Republic. The next day we met with the Major General in charge of the foreign affairs section of the Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic, who showed us the classrooms and the brand new language laboratory, which became the home of our experimental *Transitional English* class.

Part 5. In Slovakia, we taught two classes of English. One was the experimental class in simplified English, for which we provided the newly written unorthodox texts. The other class we taught was in advanced Standard English, for which we used the standard texts of the U. S. Air Force Language School.

After eight weeks of instruction, for comparison purposes, we gave both classes the same final examination. The exam had been prepared by a British Council representative. We felt that the results of the exam were significant, because the neophyte class in simplified English scored 80% of the average grade achieved by the advanced class members who had from four to eight times as much study of Standard English.

As a result of this experiment, we felt that the simplified English approach supported the theory, proposed by linguists, like Braj Kachru of the University of Illinois, and Joshua Fishman of Stanford University, that beginning instruction in a simplified English may be much more efficient and effective than instruction in standard English, and that, moreover, it is theorized that not only will students learn quicker on the beginning level with simplified grammar, but will also subsequently acquire the standard language more rapidly.

Part 6. Through the experiment, we also discovered some deficiencies in our *Transitional English* text, which we are now trying to rectify. There's half a dozen of us here at the University\* working on the simplified English project, which we call *Transitional English*, and we are anxious to undertake further experimentation on the new simplified English text with the help of the World Wide Web technology. By the year Two Thousand we hope to have *Transitional English* available on the Internet, without charge, for speakers of Spanish, Chinese, Russian, and Hindi.

Along with the work in the Slovak Republic, we had a lot of enjoyment. We ate meals at the officers' dining hall at the Ministry of Defense, and we were taken on three different tours of Slovakia. We found the Slovaks to be very cooperative; they are fond of the United States, very well educated, and they are eager to become a military ally in the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance.

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Their troops already form part of the United Nations' forces enforcing peace in the former Yugoslavia. Slovakia is full of tourist attractions, like the imposing Tatra Mountains, that rival the American Rockies and the Swiss Alps. There are many popular health and hot springs spas, and Slovakia remains a great bargain for the tourist.

Part 7. Before I close, I would like to point out that in the next century, there will be a much greater emphasis placed on global, intercultural, interpersonal, face-to-face communication.

It is anticipated that contemporary thought in the new millennium will concentrate on the global social interplay of culture, economics, and politics. This, we believe, will cause the emergence of a natural language as a simplified means of global communication across cultural boundaries.

Talk is good not only for international relations, but for all human relations, and we believe that a form of simplified English, perhaps *Transitional English* itself, will be that means of cross-cultural, global communication in the next century. Nevertheless, if our current experiment proves to be unsatisfactory in the long run, then other people, possibly more experienced than we are, will generate a better idea. The collective human mind ultimately will find a solution to the linguistic chaos, and permit an asymptotic approach to a desired universal means of communication.

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\*) Prof. Robert W. Kiser, Professor Burnis Morris, Professor Thomas Clayton, Professor Anibal A. Biglieri, Mrs. Gayatri Govindarajulu, and Mr. Murat Taishibayev.

## 阅读材料之四

### 在肯塔基大学

欢迎富布莱特研究人员大会上的讲者

约翰·李哈尼 教授

第一部份：“谈话，谈话更多的谈话有助于改善国际关系，”-----  
这是美利坚合众国第四十二届总统威廉·杰弗逊

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• 克林顿一九九八年六月三十日在中华人民共和国上海市的一次讲话中说的。许多人认为这是自明之理。我本人的研究就属于谈话这一领域，而谈话本身就是语言的产物。

研究语言是我的爱好，而我的1996年

福布莱特研究项目是采用过渡英语进行课堂教学实验，以观察简化是否能加快和改进英语作为外语的教学过程。

自从圣经中的巴别通天塔倒塌以及相继而来的语言混乱之后，人们试图消除这种混乱的语言地理划分，但都没有成功。

以后已有逾千个经过设计的人造语言发明出来以求消除语言混乱现象，但依然没有成功。问题是，人为设计的语言比自然语言更难学，同时如果每个人都去学一种人造语言，他就很难与别人交流。自然语言就没有这个问题。虽然任何语言都是不容易学的，但是也有一些语言会比较容易一些。

**第二部份：上世纪初，有一些语言设计者开始投入精力简化自然语言。三十年代C. K.**

奥格登创建了基本英语，获得像罗斯福、邱吉尔、斯大林和尼赫鲁等二战领导人的支持。二战后，由于采用使用基本词汇的文本，并采用听力训练方法，基本英语给外语教学带来了革命性的变化。

然而，除了简化词汇外，在语法和句子结构上却少有改变，而它们要比词汇更难学。近三十年来情况有所改变。许多语言学家纷纷出版关于洋泾浜混杂语的研究成果，并且他们尝试把洋泾浜混杂语的简化语法用于学习第二语言。在我们的研究中，我们也在寻求一个面对面交际简化的方法，以求它可以跨越文化障碍而在全球通用。

**第三部份：我们工作的中心是简化英语。当今世界上讲英语的人要比现存地球上其它6700多种语言中的任何一种语言的人要多。尽管有一些人，他们并不关心英语后面的政治，然而英语本身在全世界是有巨大影响的。**

全世界人口的15%到20%讲英语。我们可以说，英语自身的传播做得非常好，它无须任何人的帮助。但是众所周知，还有许多人想学英语。大约世界人口的80%有兴趣学习足够的英语以便无论他们处在什么地方能满足他们基本人权和社会需要。这些遍布世界的人们是推广简化英语的对象。

在我们进入新世纪的前夕，显示出世界正处于为跨文化交流制订新路径的边缘。改善全球性的人际交流的新方法不在于创造人造语言，而是设法简化最流行和最广泛使用的像中文或英文那样的自然语言，并利用现代技术使其能让大量人员来使用。

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第四部份：这两个超级语言与其它一些语言相比，语法都比较简单。但是即使我的一些中国朋友也说，由于英语书写系统相对地不复杂，它应更合适选作为全球性的通用媒介，一种全球通用语言。

六年前，我迫切感到需要简化英语，使其更容易学习。一年内我们写出了第一个文本，真正意义上的第一。它是简化英语语法与奥格顿的“基本词汇”相结合的产物。然后我们需要试用这个革命性的文本。1996年10月斯洛伐克共和国和福布莱特研究奖给了我们这个机会。

我们从亚特兰大飞往奥地利的维也纳，在那里一位斯洛伐克司机和一位军队的翻译迎接了我们。半小时后，我们直接去了位于多脑河对岸的斯洛伐克首都布拉迪斯拉发的我们的公寓。第二天我们和斯洛伐克共和国国防部负责外事处的少将会晤，他带我们看了教室和全新的语言实验室，这里后来就成了我们过渡英语的实验之家。

第五部份：在斯洛伐克我们教两个班的英语。一个是简化英语实验班，用的是我们提供的新编非正统的文本。另一班我们教高级标准英语，采用美国空军语言学校的标准文本。

八周教学后，为了比较，我们为这两个班安排了同样的课程终结考试。考题是由英国文化处的一位代表准备的。我们认为考试的结果是有意义的，因为采用简化英语的初学者的成绩达到高级班成员平均分数的80%，而高级班成员化在学习标准英语的时间要比他们多四至八倍。

根据这一实验的结果，我们认为简化英语方式支持了一些语言学家的论述，如伊里诺斯大学的勃拉奇·卡契罗、史丹佛大学的乔舒亚·菲舒曼等人所提出的理论。他们认为，对初学者来说，学习简化英语也许要比学习标准英语收效更大，同时从理论上来说，学生不仅在初级阶段用简化语法学习收效更快，而且在今后他们将能更迅速地学会标准英语。

第六部份：通过实验我们也发现在过渡英语文本中存在的一些不足，我们目前正设法加以改进。我们大学里有六人以上正为简化英语项目，也就是过渡英语，而工作着，而且我们渴望今后能在万维网技术的帮助下对新编的简化英语文本作进一步的实验。到2000年，我们希望能在互联网上不但能给讲西班牙语人员免费提供过渡英语文本，而且能提供其它语言的文本，例如：阿拉伯语、汉语、法语、印地语和俄语等文本。

在斯洛伐克工作的同时，我们有很多乐趣。我们在国防部军官食堂就餐，我们去了斯洛伐克三个旅游景处。我们感到斯洛伐克人非常合作；他们喜欢美国，很有教养，同时，他们渴望成为北大西洋公约联盟的军事成员。他们的军队已是联合国维和部队驻前南斯拉夫的一员。斯洛伐克有很多旅游景处，如壮观的泰塔拉山脉，它可与美国的洛基山脉和瑞士的阿尔卑斯山相媲美。那里有很多有益健康的温泉游览地，而且斯洛伐克目前旅游的价格依然很便宜。

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第七部份：在我结束之前，我想指出，下一个世纪中，全球性跨文化的，人际间交往的和面对面的沟通将是一个至关重要的课题。

可以予期，与新千禧年相适应的当代思想将会集中讨论全球社会文化、经济和政治的相互影响和作用。我们相信，这将导致出现一个自然语言，作为跨越文化界限的全球交际的简化手段。

谈话不仅对改善国际关系有好处，而且也有益于改善人类的各种关系。因此，我们相信，一种简化英语形式，也许就是过渡英语本身，作为跨文化的方式，将成为下一个世纪全球的交际工具。不过，如果我们目前的实验从长远来看不能令人满意的话，那么其他人，那些或许比我们更有经验的人们将会提出更好的主意。全人类集体的智慧最终一定会找到介决语言混乱的途径，同时也使逐步寻求一个理想的全球性的交际工具成为可能。