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难对付的A和The

Difficulties in English

Grammar

Series

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英语语法释疑

难对付的A和The

Difficulties in Articles

颜庭苹 编著



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《英语文法释疑》

总 序

英语教学实行了多年交际法 (communicative approach), 老师们渐渐觉得这种方法虽然能引起学生的学习兴趣, 使他们在某些环境中能略为应对, 可是在掌握文字的正确性 (accuracy) 方面似乎出了很大的问题。学生在应用英语时常常不知该用哪一个时态 (tense), 不知道一些特定的 verb form, 而在“呼应” (agreement) 方面更是极为疏忽, 譬如老是忘了在现在时态 (present tense) 第三人称 (third person) 单数 (singular) 的动词后面加 s (例如: Tom go to school.), 更不用说掌握正确的句子结构 (sentence structure) 了。而学生自己由于对语法没有系统的认识, 说到正确性, 似乎茫然无所依归, 其实心中也极想抓到些什么以作准绳。

由于上述情况, 英语老师们虽然仍然使用 communicative approach, 但渐渐觉得语法还是需要的, 尤其对以英语为第二语言来学习中国学生来说, 更是如此。所以笔者觉得三联书店(香港)有限公司出版的这套有关语法的丛书, 应是非常切合中国学生的需要的。它针对中国学生在语法上常犯的错误, 作了深入浅出的解释, 令学生极易明了, 有的还以故事的形式带出各种问题, 文体极

为生动活泼。所以这套丛书除了令学生在学习上得益之外,更是极有趣的精神食粮。

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序 言

a 是英语字母表的第一个字母,也是英语词典上的第一个单词。但是,这个最“浅”的词却使无数学英语的人束手无策。甚至一些从事英语教学数十年的老教师也自叹“搞渠唔掂”。

a 和 the 叫做冠词(article)。“冠”者,帽也。帽子戴得好,人就显得潇洒大方,或雍容华贵;戴得不好,或“张冠李戴”,人就变得像个小丑,甚至男女不分。a 和 the 也是如此,如果用不好,就会闹笑话。如某君向人描述一位男性官员如何与民众打成一片。他说:“He is in the family way.”话音刚落,便引起哄堂大笑。一查字典,不对了!“in the family way”意即“怀孕”,或我们通常说的“有了 baby。”难怪被人取笑。究其原因,就是用错了一个“the”。此类例子,举不胜举。

本书的目的,就是通过一些日常生活中的实例,分析学生在冠词使用方面常犯的错误,并配以一定分量的练习,帮助读者掌握 a 和 the 的正确用法。

希望本书能帮助读者用好这些“帽子”。

作 者

目 录

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. A 还是 An? | 1 |
| 2. “铁”还是“熨斗”? | 4 |
| 3. 可以说 A Coffee 吗? | 6 |
| 4. Pleasure 与 A Pleasure | 8 |
| 5. Few, A Few, Little 与 A Little | 10 |
| 6. A 还是 One? | 13 |
| 7. Means 还是 A Means? | 17 |
| 8. She Is A Boy Of A Girl 对吗? | 18 |
| 9. 可以说 A John Smith 吗? | 20 |
| 10. Most 前面可以加 A 吗? | 22 |
| 11. What Book 与 What A Book | 24 |
| 12. Many 与 Many A | 25 |
| 13. 可以说 A Heavy Snow 吗? | 27 |
| 14. Such 与 Such A | 29 |
| 15. Half A 还是 A Half? | 31 |
| 16. A Second... 对吗? | 33 |
| 17. A Cup And Saucer 还是 A Cup And A Saucer? | 36 |
| 18. Flu 还是 A Flu? | 39 |
| 19. Apple 还是 An Apple? | 41 |
| 20. Act As An Interpreter 对吗? | 43 |
| 21. Poor Boy Though He Is 与 A Poor Boy Though | |

| | |
|--|----|
| He Is | 45 |
| 22. Pipe In Mouth 还是 A Pipe In His Mouth? | 47 |
| 23. “马是有用的动物”英语怎么说? | 49 |
| 24. 可以说 On A Move 吗? | 51 |
| 25. 可以说 Listen To A Radio 吗? | 53 |
| 26. Dinner, A Dinner 和 The Dinner | 55 |
| 27. Man, A Man 和 The Man | 57 |
| 28. Composition, A Composition 和 The Composition | 59 |
| 29. Take A Chair 与 Take The Chair | 61 |
| 30. A Cinema 还是 The Cinema? | 64 |
| 31. A Full Moon 还是 The Full Moon? | 65 |
| 32. Go To School 与 Go To The School | 68 |
| 33. The Smith 还是 The Smiths? | 70 |
| 34. English 还是 The English? | 72 |
| 35. Philippines 还是 The Philippines? | 74 |
| 36. Lake Michigan 还是 The Lake Michigan? | 76 |
| 37. London University 还是 The London University? | 78 |
| 38. Same 前面一定要加 The 吗? | 80 |
| 39. Play Football 与 Play The Piano | 82 |
| 40. 部分还是全体? | 84 |
| 41. Mayor Of 还是 The Mayor Of? | 86 |
| 42. 可以说 He Hit My Head 吗? | 88 |
| 43. In Town 与 In The City | 90 |
| 44. The King And Queen 还是 The King And The Queen? | 92 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 45. Taller 与 The Taller | 94 |
| 46. 母亲与母爱 | 96 |
| 47. The Poor 与 The Poor People | 99 |
| 48. Public 还是 The Public? | 101 |
| 49. North 还是 The North? | 103 |
| 50. A Pound 还是 The Pound? | 105 |
| 51. Room, A Room 和 The Room | 107 |
| 52. Next Month 还是 The Next Month? | 110 |
| 53. Winter, A Winter 和 The Winter | 112 |
| 54. On Sunday, On A Sunday 和 On The Sunday | 114 |
| 55. Hyde Park 与 The Children's Park | 117 |
| 56. New Year's Day 与 The Spring Festival | 119 |
| 57. Busiest 还是 The Busiest? | 121 |
| 58. Host And Guest 还是 The Host And The Guest? | 123 |
| KEY TO THE EXERCISES | 125 |

1. A 还是 An ?

谈到 a 与 an 的用法,不少学生说:“这不是很容易吗?在以 a、e、i、o、u 开头的单词前面用 an,在以其他字母开头的单词前面用 a。”如果按他们的说法,下列句子则错误无疑:

My sister is a university student.

She is an honest girl.

My elder brother is an M. A. .

*My sister is a
university
student.*



然而,这些句子并没有错,为什么呢? 因为以 a、e、i、o、u 开头是指他们的发音,而不是指他们的拼写形式。

如 university 前面的 u 读字母名称音,即辅音(consonant)开头,因此该说 a university。又如:a useful tool。one 前面的 o 虽然是元音(vowel)字母,但 one 的读音却是辅音开头,因此说 a one-eyed man。umbrella 第一个字母也是 u,但这个 u 是读元音的,因此应该说 an umbrella。

有些单词以 h 开头,但 h 不发音,实际上是以元音开头,因此该用 an。例如:an hour, an honest girl。

所以在确定用 a 还是用 an 之前,一定要弄清后面单词,包括阿拉伯数字的准确发音。弄清这一点后,你就不难理解为什么是 an M. A., an 8,而不是 a M. A., a 8 了。

Exercise

Fill in the blanks with “a” or “an”:

1. It is ____ useful weapon.
2. The man has ____ ugly face.
3. Please give me ____ envelope.
4. Jenny couldn't catch ____ early bus.
5. He saw ____ oil-painting on the wall.
6. We are going to put on ____ one-act play.
7. He is ____ history teacher.
8. I have ____ uncle in the United States.
9. There is ____ English book on my desk.
10. They are staying at ____ hotel nearby.
11. There is ____ “n” in the new word.
12. We must have ____ honourable peace.
13. I saw ____ one-armed boy over there.
14. He'll be back in ____ hour.

15. ____ even road makes driving easy.
16. Perfect happiness is ____ illusion.
17. There is ____ 8 in the telephone number.

2. “铁”还是“熨斗”?

有一次,一个学生拿了两个句子给我看:

1. Iron is a useful metal.
2. She pressed her clothes with an iron.

他问我,为什么第一句的 iron 前面没有 an,而后一句的 iron 又有 an 呢?

我说这个问题不难理解,只要把它们翻译成中文就能明白了。上面两句的译文如下:

1. 铁是一种有用的金属。
2. 她用熨斗熨衣服。

可见,第一句的 iron 是“铁”的意思,是一个 uncountable noun,不能加 an;而第二句中的 iron 是“熨斗”的意思,前面要加 an,因为它已变成了 countable noun。这样的例子还有很多,例如:

- | | |
|---|---|
| { | a. 纸是中国人发明的。 |
| | Paper was invented by the Chinese. |
| { | b. 老师给我一张试卷。 |
| | The teacher gave me an examination paper. |
| { | a. 这只碗是玻璃做的。 |
| | This bowl is made of glass. |
| { | b. 桌子上有一只玻璃杯。 |
| | There is a glass on the table. |

- { a. 这座房子是用石料做的。
 The house is made of stone.
 { b. 他朝我扔了一块石头。
 He threw me a stone.

英语的一个重要特点是一词多义,所以切忌望文生义,一个词的确切意思往往要由上下文来决定。

Exercise

Put in "a" or "an" where necessary:

1. The naughty boy threw ____ stone at me.
2. ____ stone is often used in building.
3. In early times men made tools out of ____ stone.
4. She had ____ stone removed from her kidney.
5. "The Workers' Weekly" was ____ paper of the workers.
6. ____ important paper has been stolen.
7. ____ paper was invented in China a long time ago.
8. The teacher set us ____ English paper.
9. Professor White read ____ paper on how to teach English.
10. The knife is made of ____ iron.
11. My father bought ____ electric iron yesterday.
12. This district is rich in ____ iron.
13. Is that box made of ____ tin?
14. He opened ____ tin of fish.
15. Windows are usually made of ____ glass.
16. I'll get you ____ glass of beer.
17. There was ____ air of excitement at the meeting.
18. ____ cold air blew in through the open window.

3. 可以说 A Coffee 吗？

有个学生说他曾经在餐馆里听见一个美国人对 waiter 说了这样一句话：

May I have a coffee?



根据书本上学到的知识,应该说 a cup of coffee 才对,那位美国人是不是说错了呢? 不,他没有说错。在餐馆这样特定的场合下,某些物质名词常用不定冠词表示“一份”、“一杯”、“一碗”等,并不会产生误会。类似的还有:

an ice 一份雪糕

| | |
|-------------|------|
| a soup | 一碗汤 |
| a black tea | 一杯红茶 |
| a cocoa | 一杯可可 |

不过,注意不要在任何场合下都这样用,正如 bikini 可以在游泳场穿,可不能穿着在大街上到处跑。此外,物质名词用来表示同一类中的各种,也可用 a。例如:

It is a very good cheese.

Exercise

Tell whether the following sentences are correct or not:

- () 1. Please bring me a black coffee.
- () 2. A coffee is roasted and ground.
- () 3. She is eating a soup at home.
- () 4. I want a tomato soup.
- () 5. She has built a fire there.
- () 6. Cotton catches a fire easily.
- () 7. The boy is eating a bread.
- () 8. Maotai(茅台酒) is a famous Chinese wine.
- () 9. Do you prefer wine or beer?
- () 10. "I would like a tea rather than a coffee." he said to the waiter.

4. Pleasure 与 A Pleasure

有一天,我请一个学生帮我找资料,他用英语说:

I will do it with a pleasure.

我指出他应该去掉 a,正确的说法是:

I will do it with pleasure.

资料找齐后,我对他表示感谢时,他说:

It is pleasure to help you.

这下他又错了。正确的说法是:

It is a pleasure to help you.

他要求我解释为什么一个要带 a,而一个不带 a。我就告诉他,前者是抽象的概念“愉快”、“快乐”,是 uncountable noun;而后者已具体化为“一件令人愉快的乐事”,成了 countable noun。又如:a success 指“成功的事”。

Exercise

Put in “a” or “an” where necessary:

1. I think it ____ honour to be invited to your country.
2. My father won ____ honour in the war ten years ago.
3. He was not much of ____ success as a novelist.
4. He has had great ____ success in his life.
5. The visit was ____ failure.
6. His plans ended in ____ failure.
7. Nobody has shown me such ____ kindness.