

CHOOSE

THE

Right Word

Pat Adler
Wang Ning &

容易

用



的词

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内容简介

这本小册子通过丰富的实例分析说明中国人学英语、用英语时常犯的典型错误。书中的例子主要是作者从国内各种英语出版物中收集的，也有一部分是来自中国学生的作品。这些错误有很大的普遍性，对一般英语学习者都有参考价值。如果你有一定的英语基础，希望使自己的英语更纯正、更地道，相信这本小册子对你会有帮助。



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责任编辑 陈 力

审 稿 龚亚夫

董蔚君

郑旺全

封面设计 于 艳

INTRODUCTION

Let us begin with a short paragraph for you to correct.

** Today , I am very exciting. I had a letter from my old respectable teacher telling me to visit her. I shall go there two days later. She lives in a mountainous village, which has many interested historic buildings.*

There are **seven** mistakes in this short paragraph! They are all common mistakes made by students of English, and we often see them in translations into English from the Chinese. If you can correct these mistakes, you don't need this little book. But if you have difficulty in using English words that look similar but have different meanings, then you will find the book useful. Nearly all the mistakes given in it are real mistakes taken from Chinese publications in English—newspapers and magazines—and from students' work.

The book is by no means exhaustive, i.e. there are many other difficulties in learning the English language that are not included here.

It is not surprising that Chinese students make mistakes in using English words, for one can find many of the same mistakes made by native speakers in publications in English-speaking countries. I recently read an article in an American magazine that spoke of the **Arabic** people of the Middle East. Native speakers often mix up **historic** and **historical**. I had a letter from an English friend who told me what a bad **affect** her father's death had had on the family.

Often these mistakes are because the words confused are so similar. But Chinese students have some special difficulties in translating from Chinese because of the differences between the two languages.

Keyi (可以), *keneng* (可能) and *hui* (会) can all be translated into English as **can**. You all know how to translate into Chinese the following sentence:

I can speak a little English.

But when you are translating from Chinese into English, it is often difficult to choose the right word, especially if one word in Chinese has two or more meanings in English, e. g. how do you translate *jie* (借) into English? This one word in Chinese can be translated as **borrow** or **lend**, and the meanings are different.

Prepositions cause a lot of trouble and sometimes even native speakers make mistakes or don't agree on which to use. Should we say **different from/ different than/ different to**? All are found in English writing. Here, in this book, we explain only a few prepositions which are most commonly used wrongly, especially where one part of speech needs a preposition and another part of speech doesn't take one, e. g. **to discuss** something (no preposition), but **have a discussion about** something.

This book is a LITTLE book. There are many problems in the English language we have not touched upon. We have not dealt with where to put words in a sentence. We have not tackled pleonasm (look up this word in the dictionary!), nor have we helped you with style. These last problems are special problems in translating from Chinese. A book that will help you here is: *A Translator's Guide to Chinglish*, by Joan Pinkham, Published by Foreign

Language Teaching and Research Press.

There is some difference between British and American usage and spelling. It doesn't matter which you use, but try not to mix them up. This book is written in British English.

Abbreviations in this book

adj—adjective

adv—adverb

conj—conjunction

n—noun

p part—past participle

prep—preposition

pres p—present participle

pron—pronoun

v—verb

vi—intransitive verb

vt—transitive verb

Correction of the introductory paragraph

Today, I am very **excited**. I had a letter from my old **respected** teacher **asking** me to visit her. I shall go there **in two days' time**. She lives in a **mountain** village that has many **interesting historical** buildings.



abandon /ə'bəndən/ vt 抛弃；放弃

desert /di'zə:t/ vt 丢弃；遗弃

It was during the SARS crisis that we noticed the mix-up of these two verbs. Several reports said that some people had **deserted** their pets for fear that the cats or dogs would give them the dreaded disease. **Desert** is wrong here; it should be **abandon**.

Desert means to leave, to go away from home or your duty, e. g. in the army, and leave your responsibilities. Sometimes a husband **deserts** his wife and family, i. e. leaves home. Less often a wife and mother will **desert** her husband and children. Members of the armed forces who **desert** are called **deserters**.

When you **abandon** someone or something, you get rid of it—take it away from home. In the past, some poor people **abandoned** their baby, particularly if it was a girl. They might leave it in a railway station waiting room or outside the gate of a rich family, hoping that someone would take care of it and bring it up. So when people **abandon** their pet cat or dog, they take it away and leave it far away from home to let it look after itself.

Wrong:

* Pet dogs and cats were **deserted** and killed in a few cities for fear that they might carry the SARS virus and infect humans.

Corrected:

Pet dogs and cats were **abandoned** and killed in a few cities for fear that they might carry the SARS virus and infect humans.

Other examples:

I hear that Lao Wu has **deserted** his wife and is now living with a younger woman.

She was **abandoned** as a baby and found by a postman who took her home and brought her up as his own daughter.

Note common expressions with **abandon**:

He found that night school after a full day's work was too much, so he has now **abandoned** his studies.

She has **abandoned** all hope of them finding her husband alive in the coalmine.

accept /æk'sept/ *vt* 接受

except /ik'sept/ *prep* 除……之外

Why are these two words confused, for they have completely different meanings? It is because they sound very much alike. Look at the phonetic symbols carefully so that you don't make a mistake.

To **accept** means to take something offered, e. g.

to **accept** a gift.

to **accept** an apology.

The preposition **except** means apart from, e. g.

I like to eat everything **except** fish. I don't like fish.

He's been to every province in our country **except** three. (He hasn't been to three provinces.)

Wrong:

* For 11 years we have never received anything from the government, **accepted** approval, of course.

Corrected:

For 11 years we have never received anything from the government, **except** approval, of course.

be accepted by 被……接受

be admitted to 被……招收

In the following example, these two verbs have been confused:

Wrong:

* The boy has been **accepted** to a primary school.

Corrected:

The boy has been **accepted by** a primary school.

OR:

The boy has been **admitted to** a primary school.

accident /'æksɪdənt/ *n* 事故

incident /'ɪnsɪdənt/ *n* 事件

Both these words mean a happening—something that happens. But an **accident** is nearly always a bad happening, resulting in damage, injury or death, while an **incident** is just something that happens—it is often, but not always, not very important.

The following sentence is about an **accident** that happened at a factory. The **incident** in it should be **accident**.

Wrong

* He said the **incident** occurred at a factory in the city of Nikolayev in Ukraine.

Corrected

He said the **accident** occurred at a factory in the city of Nikolayev in Ukraine.

Here are some correct examples of these two words:

Accident

Her father was badly injured in a car **accident**.

The main news today is of a plane **accident** when all aboard the plane were killed.

I had an **accident** in the kitchen yesterday and hurt my hand.

Incident

There were six **incidents** of bad behaviour in the school last month.

In history, some **incidents** have been of great significance, e. g. The Nanjing **Incident** of 1937; the Xi'an **Incident** of 1936.

acclaim /ə'kleim/ *vt* 以欢呼声拥戴或承认

claim /kleim/ *vt* 要求; 声称

exclaim /ik'skleim/ *vt* 惊呼

To **acclaim** means to praise enthusiastically and often publicly; applaud; to shout approval. To **claim** means to demand or ask for as one's own or one's due; assert one's right to; to state to be true,

especially when open to question; assert or maintain. To **exclaim** means to cry out suddenly or vehemently, as from surprise or emotion or to express or utter something suddenly or vehemently:

Here, in the same news report, **acclaim** is used twice, once wrongly and once correctly:

Wrong:

* He challenges traditional Puccini by **acclaiming** that “Turandot” cannot be set in China.

Correct:

He challenges traditional Puccini by **claiming** that “Turandot” cannot be set in China.

But the next sentence in the report is correct:

Xu... is **acclaimed** as one of the country’s foremost stage directors.

More examples of correct use:

She is **acclaimed** as the most popular actress today.

The children are **acclaimed** for their public spirit in volunteering to pick up garbage in the parks.

They **claim** to be the first to discover the cure for that disease.

We have **claimed** the right to hold the school sports on the public sports ground.

Don’t confuse **exclaim** with **acclaim**, as in the following wrong sentence:

Wrong:

* She couldn’t help **acclaiming**, “How beautiful you are!”

Corrected:

She couldn't help **exclaiming**, "How beautiful you are!"

Note that an **exclamation** needs an **exclamation** mark!

Take care with pronunciation!

accuse /ə'kju : z/ *vt* 指责

In the following example, **accuse** is the wrong verb. We cannot **accuse** an episode. We **accuse** a person or a human agency, e. g. a government, a committee, a city (meaning the city authorities), etc. We do not **accuse** something the person does.

Wrong:

* He Jiadong ... **accused** the first 25 episodes of failing to express the Buddhist allegorical word and its use of deep meditation.

Corrected:

He Jiadong **criticised** the first 25 episodes of failing to express the Buddhist allegorical word and its use of deep meditation.

Other correct examples:

He **accused** the writer of failing to express the Buddhist word... in the first 25 episodes.

They **accused** the city of not providing heat to homes in the winter.

achievement /ə'tʃi : vmənt/ *n* 成就

achieve /ə'tʃi : v/ *vt* 实现; 完成

What verb should we use with the noun **achievement**?

Very often we see **to make achievements**. This is wrong. Just

because it is often wrongly used, there is no reason to repeat this ugly construction. The correct verb is **to score achievements**.

Here are some bad examples:

Wrong

* China **has made remarkable achievements** in improving women's working conditions since the early 1990s.

Corrected

China **has scored remarkable achievements** in improving women's working conditions since the early 1990s.

Wrong

* During his four years at Leeds, Feng **made** remarkable **achievements** in his research.

Corrected

During his four years at Leeds, Feng **scored** remarkable **achievements** in his research.

Note that native speakers of English prefer to use the verb **to achieve** rather than **score achievements**. e. g.

China has **achieved** good results in improving women's working conditions.

During his four years at Leeds, Feng **achieved** great successes in his research.

address /ə'dres/ *vt* 向……致意；对……讲话

speak at /spi:k/ *vi* （在会议上）作报告

One verb takes a preposition, the other doesn't. They are

often confused, as in the following example:

Wrong

* Jenny Clegg also **addressed** at the meeting.

Corrected

Jenny Clegg also **addressed** the meeting.

OR:

Jenny Clegg also **spoke** at the meeting.

admired /əd'maɪəd/ *adj* 受赞赏的

admiring /əd'maɪərɪŋ/ *adj* 赞赏的

Don't confuse these two adjectives from the verb **admire**. If you **admire** someone or something, that person or thing is **admired**.
e. g.

He is a much **admired** leader.

If you are doing the **admiring**, you are **admiring**. e. g.

The **admiring** audience clapped the performers for five minutes.

Wrong

* She is an **admiring** actress.

This is wrong because the actress isn't **admiring** herself; she is **admired** by the audience and her fans.

Corrected

She is an **admired** actress.

affect /ə'fekt/ *vt* 影响

effect /i'fekt/ *n* 结果

effective /i'fektiv/ *adj* 有效的

These words have similar but different meanings and are often confused. **To affect** means to have an influence on or to cause a change in. The noun **effect** means result or influence.

Don't use the wrong word, as in the two wrong examples below.

Wrong:

* About 76 per cent of the Chinese population will be directly **effected** when the railway is opened.

Corrected:

About 76 percent of the Chinese population will be directly **affected** when the railway is opened.

Wrong:

* The medicine... was 96.5 percent **affective** in treating 300 patients.

Corrected:

The medicine... was 96.5 percent **effective** in treating 300 patients.

Other correct examples:

How do you think the new tax will **affect** the farmers?

The **effect** of the new tax will be to help the farmers diversify their crops.