

我与英语有个误会

交际失误

戴丹妮 主编



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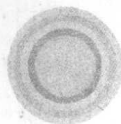


我与英语有个误会

☹ MISUNDERSTANDING IN ENGLISH ☺



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前



PREFACE

许多对英语兴趣浓厚却又知之不足的读者，不是抱怨貌似简单的英语令他们产生误解，就是因无法避免“中式英语”而感到委屈，再不就是用自以为正确的英语交际时却屡屡碰壁。有的人下了很大的功夫学英语，但还是不能完全听懂“老外”间的日常对话和电影里的英语对白，更不要说体会其中的韵味和幽默所在了。

现在讲词汇、教语法的英语书很多，但能解决读者上述苦恼和困惑的又有多少呢？如何用英语进行无障碍交流，如何使自己的英语说得地道，这才是当前广大读者迫切需要知道的！而这也正是我们精心策划这套丛书的初衷！

《我与英语有个误会》丛书共3本，分别是《望文生义》、《交际失误》和《中式英语》。它们均由中国人在接触英语时常犯的一个个典型错误构成，旨在教给读者正确的理解和地道的英文表达，通过分析其中的误区来为他们指点迷津。

英语与中文一样，常常一词多义，有些隐藏在上下文中的意思即使在词典中都难以查到！更何况，有些词语的正确含义和用法许多人一开始就误解了，一直在想



PREFACE

当然地错误使用。《望文生义》一书就是针对此类问题编写的。

语言的目的是为了交际，但我们用英语沟通时有时候却并不成功或无法令人愉快。例如：如果你在婚礼上对一位新娘说 Congratulations，她可不会认为你是在祝贺她，而会以为你是在讽刺她费尽心机地高攀了。《交际失误》一书用一个个生动的例子，阐释了常见的交际失败，以及其后深藏的语言误区和文化差异。

“望子成龙”能说成 Hope to see one's son to become a dragon 吗？当然不能！要知道 dragon 在英语里可是邪恶的象征，所以，那样用“老外”不误解才怪呢！但令人遗憾的是，类似的表达在我们身边却随处可见。《中式英语》一书就是针对这些令人尴尬的英语，教读者最地道的英语说法，令他们的英语更加完美！

本丛书内涵丰富，轻松有趣，适合初中英语水平的各类读者阅读。

最后，感谢陈慧文、邱瑜若、雷云、黄雄老师在编写过程中给予我们的热情帮助。

编者

2003年12月

1 Congratulations! 祝贺你!

Direction: It's Tom and Mary's wedding ceremony.
Tom's best friend Peter is going towards them.

Peter: Hi, Tom, congratulations!

Tom: Thank you, Peter. I'm really glad you can come.

Peter: Yeah, I didn't think of coming here myself. I just came back from China yesterday. And now let me introduce you my girlfriend Lily, a Chinese girl.

Tom & Mary: Glad to meet you.

Lily: Glad to meet you, too. **Congratulations** to you both.

(At that moment, it seems Mary is not so pleased, but she doesn't say a word.)

说明 对新郎致祝词时可说“Congratulations!”,但对新娘却不行,因为该语是对“经过努力而获得成功的人”说的,如果用来祝贺新娘,无异是说:“你总算成功地抓住了这个男人,我祝贺你!”这岂不让新娘难堪?所以应换成“I hope you'll be happy!”或“I wish you every happiness!”

2 Do you have the time? 现在几点了?

Direction: Jason and Xiaomei are in the classroom.

Jason: Oh, it's such a busy day.

Xiaomei: Yeah, so much homework to do.

Jason: Have you finished yours?

Xiaomei: Almost.

Jason: Oh, by the way, **do you have the time?**

Xiaomei: (A little bit shy.) Sure. I have nothing to do this evening.

Jason: Oh, I'm sorry, what I mean is what time it is right now?

说明 千万不要以为 Do you have the time? 是问你有没有时间出去约会, 否则可要闹大笑话了! 如果人家想约你, 会说 “Would you like to have a cup of coffee with me tonight?” 之类的话, 而 “Do you have the time?” 只是在问你 “几点?”。

3 Would you please tell me...? 您能告诉我……吗?

Direction: Xiaomin is in New York for the first time.

Xiaomin: Excuse me, can you tell me the way to the Wall Street?

Woman: (A little bit annoyed.) You don't think I know the way?

Xiaomin: (Surprised.) I haven't even thought of that. I'm just wondering if you can tell me the way.

Woman: But try to be polite next time.

说明 初到国外, 问路是少不了的体验。初学者常会说 “Can you tell me the way to...?” 之类的话, 其实这很不礼貌, 别人还以为你怀疑他认路的能力呢! 所以,

正确的说法应该是“Would you please tell me the way to...?”。

4 Give me a ring. 给我打电话。

Direction: Cathy and Xiaoli are at a party.

Xiaoli: Hi, Cathy, you look so pretty today.

Cathy: Thank you!

Xiaoli: (The music is on.) Shall we have a dance?

Cathy: Sure. By the way, where are you going this weekend?

Xiaoli: Nothing special yet.

Cathy: Why not join our surprise party? You may **give me a ring** if you make up your mind.

Xiaoli: A ring? (Puzzled.)

说明 Give me a ring 在这里可不是“给我一个戒指”，它跟求婚更是没有关系。在日常生活中这句话经常听到，它表示“Give me a call”或“Phone me, please”，也就是希望对方能来个电话。如果真要求婚，传统的说法应该是“Will you marry me?”。对，就这么直截了当。

5 You give me quite a start! 你真让我大吃一惊!

Direction: Peter and Xiaomei are talking about their trip.

Peter: Where are you planning to go this summer vacation?

Xiaomei: I haven't decided yet. What about you?

Peter: Oh, I hear Tibet is a wonderful place.

Xiaomei: I quite agree with you. I went there last summer by myself.

Peter: Really? I think it's extremely hard for a girl to be there alone. **You give me quite a start!**

Xiaomei: Yes? You mean you are going to follow me?

说明 Xiaomei 跟 Peter 谈到她独自一人去西藏旅行的事儿, Peter 惊讶地说了句 “You give me quite a start!”, Xiaomei 误以为他是说 “你给我开了个好头”, 接下来他也要效仿呢。其实, start 的意思很多, 在这里就表示 “惊讶”。

6 have your name on it 对你非常合适

Direction: Lily is shopping in a big department store.

Salesgirl: What can I do for you?

Lily: I want to have a look at that red dress.

Salesgirl: Oh, you really have good taste. That's the latest fashion.

Lily: Can I try it on?

Salesgirl: Sure. Oh, it looks great on you and **has your name on it.**

Lily: My name? Where?

说明 这里的 “has your name on it” 可不是服装上真有你的名字, 而是说这件衣服非常适合你, 就像是为你量身

定做的一样,非你莫属。Lily 对这一说法不了解,自然就觉得莫名其妙了。

7 You don't say! 真的吗?

Direction: Tom and Mary are talking about the coming picnic.

Tom: Do you know anything about the coming weekend?

Mary: Yes. The Smiths are inviting us to join their picnic.

Tom: Wonderful. Well, what do you think we should give them as a present?

Mary: Don't worry about that. I've already had a good idea.

Tom: **You don't say!** What's it?

Mary: Look, it's a bottle of wine.

说明 如果你与外国人交谈时正说得起劲,这时对方的一句“You don't say!”可千万别让你有什么误会,以为对方是让你“住口”。但看到对方脸上欣喜的表情,相信你能猜到几分。没错,其实这是一句地道的美式英语,意思就是:“真的吗?”

8 It's a piece of cake. 小事一桩。/小菜一碟。

Direction: Tom and Xiaoming are doing their homework together.

Xiaoming: Excuse me, Tom, would you please do me a favor?

Tom: Yes, what's it?

Xiaoming: I wonder if you could tell me how to read the word in English?

Tom: Oh, it's a **piece of cake**.

Xiaoming: A piece of cake? Eh, of course, I'll buy it immediately.

Tom: Oh, you don't see what I mean.

说明 如果哪天你请老外帮个忙,而他对你说 "It's a piece of cake",切莫以为他是要你给他买块蛋糕作为酬劳。其实这位老兄是相当够义气的,他的意思是“这事很简单,轻而易举”,就像吃蛋糕一样容易,有点儿像汉语里的“小菜一碟”。还有一种说法与 a piece of cake 意思相同,那就是 to take candy from a baby (从婴儿手中抢糖),这你知道吗?

9 engaged 很忙,抽不开身

Direction: Miss Wang is making a phone call with Mr. Smith's secretary.

Miss Wang: Hello, is that Mr. Smith's office?

Secretary: Yes. Can I help you?

Miss Wang: I'm Wang, Mr. Smith's old friend in China. Can I speak to him right now?

Secretary: Oh, I'm afraid you can't talk to him now. He's **engaged**.

Miss Wang: Is he going to get married soon? Oh, I can't wait to give my congratulations to him!

Secretary: I'm sorry, what I mean is that he is busy right now.

说明 这里的 engaged 可不是“订婚”，而是“很忙”的意思。难怪初学英语的王小姐纳闷了半天，以为西方人订了婚就不能与异性通话了，比我们中国人还要封建呢！

10 break a leg 祝你好运

Direction: Xiaoli is getting prepared for the 100-meter-race.



Mary: Hi, Xiaoli, is everything OK?

Xiaoli: Yes, the only thing is that I'm a little bit nervous.

Mary: Don't worry about it. I hear you are one of the best among the racers.

Xiaoli: Thank you. I'll try my best.

Mary: I hope you **break a leg**.

Xiaoli: Break a leg? But why?

说明 别人对你说“I hope you break a leg”你可千万不要误解他的好意，以为他希望你摔断腿。其实，他是在“祝你好运或成功”。说实在的，不是对英语文化非常了解的人，这句话还真不好理解。这个短语的来历据说是这样的：在中世纪的时候，戏院里的演员都很迷信，认为说话的时候会有邪恶的幽灵在一旁偷听，而且他们听到祝福的话语就会使灾祸发生。于是，人们干脆正话反说，祝别人倒霉，因为在他们看来，这样反而会有好事发生。

11 You bet. 一定。/毫无疑问。

Direction: Fangfang is inviting Jerry to come to her birthday party.

Fangfang: Hi, Jerry, I'm going to have a birthday party this Saturday evening. Are you free to come?

Jerry: **You bet!**

Fangfang: How do I know your schedule? You must be joking.

Jerry: Oh, what I mean is I'm sure to come.

说明 芳芳问一位外国朋友能不能参加她的生日晚会,可对方说了句“You bet”,令芳芳顿时不知所措,以为是要跟她打赌,猜他会不会去,这可太难为人了。经过进一步交谈,芳芳终于明白了,“You bet”相当于“Sure”,是表示他去定了。看来自己的顾虑是多余的。

12 You're telling me. 我早就知道了。

Direction: Tom and Xiaoli are discussing about their weekend.

Xiaoli: What are you going to do this weekend, Tom?

Tom: I haven't made up my mind yet. What about you?

Xiaoli: Me? I hear there's a wonderful movie this weekend. It's starred by Leonardo and Tom Hanks.

Tom: **You are telling me.** I hear it's not that worth seeing.

说明 当你给朋友讲述一件事时,他却来了一句“You're telling me”,你可能会纳闷,心想“我是在告诉你呀”。其实“You're telling me”还有一个意思,那就是“这还用得着你说吗,我早就知道了”。下次如果再听到这样的话,赶紧转换话题就对了。

13 public school 公立学校(美)/私立学校(英)

Direction: Tom, Brad and Xiaoli are talking happily at a party.

Xiaoli: Welcome to China. By the way, is it the first time for you two to come here?

Tom: Yes. It's my first time in China. I love China. But to tell you the truth, I also miss my hometown!

Xiaoli: I see. Where are you from?

Tom: I'm from Chicago. I'm a **public school** student.

Xiaoli: Oh, I hear Brad is also from a **public school**, but it's in Britain.

Brad: Sounds true. But my **public school** is different from his.

Xiaoli: Really? Why?

说明 如果一个英国人和一个美国人同时向你介绍说自己是一名 public school student,你可千万不要误以为他们都是“公立学校”的学生,因为只有美国人才把公立中学称为 public school,而英国人口中的 public school 却是“私立中学”的意思。因为在他们看来,public 就是“人民大众”的意思,所以由老百姓自己创

办的学校当然是“私立学校”了！而公立学校在英国倒没有一个固定的说法，但 *governmental school*（官办学校）总是可以接受的。至于美国人，他们的私立学校就是大家熟悉的 *private school* 了。

14 **be too glad to have you** 非常乐意雇用或接纳你

Direction: Tom and Jerry happen to meet in the street.

Tom: Why, Jerry, you look upset.

Jerry: Oh, you know, I've just lost my job, so I'm in a very bad mood lately.

Tom: Never mind, cheer up! You are always one of the best among us.

Jerry: Thanks, while I still can't find another opportunity to fill up the vacancy.

Tom: Don't worry about that. I'm sure many firms would only **be too glad to have you**.

Jerry: I hope so!

说明 大家都知道 *too...to...* 是“太……而不能……”的意思，那“I'm sure many firms would only be too glad to have you”岂不是表示“我可以肯定很多公司都会因为太高兴而不雇你了”。这不是明显地在讽刺人吗？但为什么听到这话的人不生气呢？其实，在口语当中，这句英文的意思刚好相反，是说“很多公司都会非常乐意雇用和接纳你”。

15 I'll buy it. 满意的话我也许会买。

Direction: John is in a bookstore. He seems to be interested in one of the books.

Store Keeper: Good morning, what can I do for you?

John: I'm quite interested in this book. I'll buy it.

Store Keeper: Oh, thank you, you may pay at the cashier's.

John: Well, you don't see what I mean. I'm wondering if you can tell me something about the book.

Store Keeper: Oh, I'm sorry...

说明 这家书店的老板显然对英语一知半解。说“I'll buy it”不见得就会真的买下来,这句话是有条件的,你的服务令他满意他才会买。这个句子一般用于服务性场所。如果对方决定要买的话,他一般会直截了当地说“I'll take it”,而不是“I'll buy it”之类让人误解的句子。

16 It's better than coming here earlier! 迟到比早到好!

Direction: Meimei is going to pay Nancy a visit at the weekend.

Nancy: Oh, hello, Meimei, glad to meet you. Do come in!

Meimei: Thank you! And this is for you! (She gives Nancy a bunch of flowers!)

Nancy: Oh, what lovely flowers! You are really so kind.

Meimei: Oh, I'm sorry for keeping you waiting so long.

Nancy: It's OK. **It's better than coming here earlier!**

Meimei: Oh, really?

说明 虽然西方人时间观念很强,但到别人家做客却是宁可迟也不宜早。因为这种家庭聚会主人都会做一番精心的准备,如果你去得太早,对方会措手不及,那时屋里也许还是乱七八糟的,主人的衣服还来不及换,妆也没化好,被你撞见岂不尴尬? 所以,去晚一点倒是良策,但也不可去得太晚,让人觉得你架子大。

17 You are cooking up a storm. 你把菜准备得真丰盛。

Direction: Lily is inviting Joan for a lunch at her house.

Lily: Help yourself, Joan!

Joan: Thank you.

Lily: How do you like my way of cooking?

Joan: Well, it's really wonderful! **You are cooking up a storm.**

Lily: A storm? (She is a little bit confused.)

说明 “You are cooking up a storm”可不是批评你做的饭菜像暴风雨一样的乱七八糟,而是在夸你的菜做得丰盛,就像暴风雨那样包罗万象。看来,西方人对“暴风雨”的遐想跟我们是截然不同的。