

中央人民广播电台英语教学节目专用教材

Selects of Radio English on Sunday

星期日广播英语 精选

编译 王丽君

北京语言学院出版社

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编者的话

《星期日广播英语》节目已经开办12年了。她采用节目主持人的形式播放,运用多种体裁,广泛介绍英语国家的社会情况、文化特点、风土人情和礼仪习俗等方面的内容,并邀请英美等国专家撰稿、演播,是广大听众了解世界的一个窗口。目前,她已成为中央人民广播电台的名牌节目。

7年前,我和该节目的创办人张力同志去美国采访考察时,发现许多中国留学生都曾是《星期日广播英语》的热心听众。通过这个节目,他们不仅学到了英语知识,而且了解了许多关于美国的经济、政治、文化、科学技术、风土人情、社会习俗等方面的情况。因此,来美后他们能很快地适应那里的学习生活。作为《星期日广播英语》的编辑,使我感到极大的欣慰。

我从1983年起参与该节目的采编、翻译、制作工作。为了能对更多的英语爱好者在英语学习方面有所帮助,我从1987年到1993年播出的稿件中精选了50篇汇集成本书,并对难点加以注释。

中央人民广播电台高级编辑张力同志审阅了本书全部稿件,并提出了宝贵的意见,特此表示感谢。在此也感谢其他合作的同志。

当然,由于本人水平有限,书中如有错误,理当由个人负责,并请大家指正。

王丽君

1993年9月

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English: A Crazy Language

By Alice Parker Johnson

I read an article, not long ago, in the *Reader's Digest*. I had a good laugh over it and so, apparently, did my friends in the United States because some of them took the time to mail me copies of it. I wonder if you will find it as funny as I did, or if it will just be a painful reminder of your years of studying this wildly unpredictable language called English.

The author, Richard Lederer, tells you what you probably already know: that English is the most widely used language in the history of this planet; that one out of every seven people can speak it; that more than 50% of the world's books and 75% of international mail are in English; and that English has the largest vocabulary of all languages, perhaps as many as two million words.

In spite of its popularity and wide usage, English is a crazy language! Let's look at a few humorous examples. There is no egg in *eggplant*^①, there is neither pine nor apple in pineapple, and there is no ham in *hamburger*, which is actually ground beef^②. *French fries*^③ weren't invented in France but rather in Belgium. Sweetmeats^④ are a kind of candy, not a meat. *Boxing rings* are square in shape, not round or ring-shaped; in public

bathrooms, such as in restaurants or airports, you can't take a bath, but at home you can take a bath in your bathroom; and a *guinea pig*[®] is neither a pig nor is it from Guinea, which is a West African republic. In reality, a guinea pig is a rat-like animal-without a tail, and it is often kept as a pet or used in scientific experiments.

Some nouns, as you know, always end in -s. Isn't it crazy that you can *make amends to*[®] someone by apologizing for your bad behavior, but you can't make just one amend nor even one piece of amend! But when listening to the *news*, although you never hear one *new*, you can hear one piece of news. Or why can we comb through the *annals* of history—the records of history—but never can we search through just one annal or one piece of annal?

Now let's talk about a few plural forms. If the plural of *tooth* is *teeth*, isn't it logical that the plural of *booth* should be *beeth*? Instead we say one booth, two booths. If there is one *goose* and two *geese*, shouldn't we be able to speak of one *moose* and two *meese*? Of course not! We say one moose and two moose. In all fairness, we do have one *mouse* and two mice as well as one *louse* and two *lice*, but then again, one man can be a *louse* and two *lice*, but then again, one man can be a *louse* and two men are *louses*, which means that they are really worthless fellows.

Remember your study of irregular verbs? Do you recall the verb *to fly*, as in *fly*, *flew*, *flown*? Well, we also have *fly*, *flied*, *flied* when we talk about the game of baseball. For example: The batter hit the ball hard, but unfortunately, he flied out!

If you put a *horsehair* mat by your front door to wipe your shoes on before entering the house, it is made from the hair of horses; and if you put on a *camel's hair* coat, it is made from the

hair of camels. From what, then, is a *mohair* coat made? Give up? It's made from the hair of the Angora goat, not from the hair of the non-existent "mo".

If a *vegetarian* eats vegetables, what does a *humanitarian* eat? Not humans, for goodness sakes! A humanitarian is just a guy who is dedicated to improving the living conditions of us humans. He probably eats whatever you and I eat!

Let's look at expressions which would seem to be opposite in meaning but are actually almost synonymous. How can a *slim chance* and a *fat chance* be the same? Both expressions mean there's a very low probability that something will happen, but a *slim chance* is standard, formal English and a *fat chance* is an informal, amusing interjection.

Then we have expressions which would seem to be the same in meaning but are actually almost opposite or very different in meaning. Why are a *wise man* and a *wise guy* opposites? Notice that *man* is stressed in the former and *wise* is stressed in the latter; wise man, wise guy. Let me explain. A wise man is a man with much wisdom or knowledge about the world. A wise guy is a smart aleck. In informal English, he's a fellow who's not very wise at all. He pretends to know everything, and he tries to sound very clever. In fact, he is neither wise nor clever. *Wise guy* is definitely a negative label.

And how can the weather be *hot as hell* one day and *cold as hell* the next? Hell, in certain Christian religious myths, is a fiery place of punishment after death, so literally, or in accordance with^⑦ that religious belief, the weather is hot as hell some days, or VERY hot! However, the word *hell* is also used to intensify our feelings about people or things, so in that sense, the weather can be cold as hell or even windy as hell, meaning VERY cold or VERY windy. And a person or a language can be crazy as hell! But remember that this intensifier is strong and

informal.

We also have expressions which are used only in the negative. They are classified as idioms. I can only say that someone is *no spring chicken*^① which means that he or she is probably over 45 or 50 years of age; that he *wouldn't hurt a fly* which means he's kind and gentle; that he *can't cut the mustard*,^② which means he's not up to the task; that I *wouldn't touch something or someone with a ten-foot pole*^③, which means the thing or person is highly undesirable.

As Mr. Lederer says in his article, English was invented by people, not computers, and it reflects the creativity of the human race. That is why, when *stars are out*, it means they have appeared or are visible in the sky at night, but when the street *lights* or house *lights are out*, it means they are invisible. And why, when I *wind up* my watch, I start it or it begins to work, but when I *wind up* this talk, it means I end it?

Now, how do you feel? Do you agree with Mr. Lederer that English is a crazy language? Do you think it's an amusing language? Or are you just more confused than ever?

注 释

①eggplant n. 茄子

②ground beef 意思是“碎牛肉”，这里的“ground”是grind的过去分词（grind的意思为：磨碎，磨成粉状）

③French fries 炸土豆条，美国人常用：potato chips

④sweetmeat n. 糖果（通常用糖或巧克力做成）；甜品；蜜饯

⑤guinea pig n. 豚鼠（常供科学实验用）；供医学或其它实验的人

⑥make amends to（为某事）（对某人）赔偿；赔罪

⑦in accordance with 依照；根据

例：in accordance with custom 依照惯例

in accordance with regulations 依照规章

- ⑧spring chicken 童子鸡;〈美俚〉年轻而无经验的人;年轻幼稚的女子
⑨cut the mustard 〈美俚〉符合要求(也可以说成 be up to the mustard)
⑩wouldn't touch sb. (或 sth.) with a ten-foot pole (或 with a barge-pole) 〈口〉碰也不想碰某人(或某事物),根本不想同某人(或某事物)沾边

英语——一种古怪的语言

艾丽斯·帕克·约翰逊

不久前,我读了刊登在《读者文摘》上的一篇文章,我一边读一边笑。很显然,我在美国的朋友们也和我一样,因为他们中有些人不惜花费时间把这篇文章给我寄来几份。我不知道你们是否会和我一样觉得这篇文章滑稽可笑,或者它只会勾起你多年来为了学习这种叫做英语的语言所经历的痛苦的回忆——英语是一种极其难以预料的语言。

文章的作者理查德·莱德勒所说的也许是人们都已经知道的东西,那就是:英语是世界历史上使用范围最广的一种语言,世界上每七个人中就有一个会说英语;世界上50%的书籍和75%的国际邮件是用英语写的;在所有的语言中,英语的词汇量最大,它拥有的单词几乎多达二百万个。

尽管英语具有普及性,使用得很广泛,但它却是一种古怪的语言!让我们来看一些可笑的例子:在“eggplant”(茄子)里并没有“egg”(鸡蛋);在“pineapple”(菠萝)里,既没有“pine”(松树)也没有“apple”(苹果);在“hamburger”(汉堡包)里并没有“ham”(火

腿),实际上,汉堡包是用碎牛肉做的;“French fries”(法式炸土豆条)不是出自法国,而是在比利时发明的;“sweetmeats”不是肉食,它是一种糖果;“拳击比赛场”(boxing rings)的场地是正方形而不是圆形或环形的;在餐馆或机场的公共盥洗室(bathroom)里是不能洗澡的,但是在家里,你就能在洗澡间(bathroom)里洗澡了;“guinea pig”(豚鼠)既不是猪,也不是从几内亚来的,几内亚是西非的一个共和国。实际上,“guinea pig”是一种像老鼠一样的动物,这种动物没有尾巴,人们通常把它作为玩赏动物来豢养,或者用来做科学实验。

就像你所知道的那样,有些名词总是以“s”结尾的。当你为自己的错误行为向某人道歉、赔不是时,你可以说向某人“make amends”。但是你既不能用“make one amend”,甚至也不能用“make one piece of amend”,这不是奇怪吗?在听新闻(news)时,虽然你绝不能把听到一条新闻说成是听到“one new”,却可以说成“one piece of news”。为什么我们可以查阅编年史(annuals)——编年史就是历史的记载——但我们却不能探索“one annual”或者“one piece of annual”呢?

现在我们来谈谈一些名词复数形式。如果“tooth”(牙齿)的复数形式是“teeth”,那么把“booth”(货摊,公共电话亭)的复数形式说成是“beeth”不是很合乎逻辑吗?然而我们却要说“one booth”,“two booths”。既然一只鹅是“one goose”,两只鹅是“two geese”,那么我们能不能把一只驼鹿说成“one moose”,两只驼鹿说成“two meese”呢,这当然是不行的,我们得说“one moose”,“two moose”。公正地说,我们确实把一只老鼠说成“one mouse”,把两只老鼠说成“two mice”,我们也把一只虱子说成“one louse”,两只虱子说成“two lice”。不过这种变化也有例外:一个卑鄙的人是“a louse”,两个卑鄙的人却是“two louses”,意思是他们确实是不值得一提的人。

你还记得学习不规范动词的情形吗?还能想起“to fly”这个动

词的变化形式是“fly, flew, flown”吗？不过当我们谈到棒球比赛时，我们也说“fly, flied, flied”。请看例子：“The batter hit the ball hard, but unfortunately, he flied out!”（击球手猛击一球，但不幸的是，他打了一个高飞球而被接杀出局了！）

你要是在家门口放一块马鬃垫(horse hair mat)，进屋前在上面蹭蹭鞋子，那个马鬃垫就是用马鬃做的；你如果穿一件骆驼毛外套(camel's haircoat)，这件外套就是用骆驼毛做成的。那么马海毛(mohair)外套是用什么做的呢？猜不出来吧！它是用安哥拉山羊毛做的，而不是用“mo”的毛做的，“mo”这个词是不存在的。

如果素食者(vegetarian)只吃蔬菜，那么人道主义者(humanitarian)吃什么呢？天哪，可不是吃人！人道主义者指的恰恰是那些献身于改善人类生存条件的人。他的饮食可能和你我的一样。

我们来看一些词语的用法，它们看上去意思是相反的，但实际上它们几乎是同义词。“slim chance”和“fat chance”怎么会是一样的意思呢？这两种说法都表示某件事情发生的可能性很小，但是“slim chance”是标准、正规的英语表达法，而“fat chance”则是非正规的表达法，它是一个有趣的感叹词。

英语中还有一些说法，它们的意思似乎是一样的，但实际上几乎相反，或者完全不同。为什么说“wise man”和“wise guy”的意思相反呢？注意：在“wise man”中“man”是重读的，而在“wise guy”中“wise”这个词是重读的：wise man, wise guy。这里我解释一下：“a wise man”指的是一位充满智慧、知识渊博的人，而“a wise guy”则指的是一个自作聪明的人。在非正规的英语里，它的意思是某人根本就不聪明。他装出一副无所不知的样子，来表现自己很聪明，实际上，他既无智慧又不聪明。说某人是个“wise guy”完全是贬义的。

天气怎么会在某一天热得要命(hot as hell)，另一天又冷得要命(cold as hell)呢？在基督教的某些传说中，地狱(hell)是在人死

后对其施以火刑的地方。所以按照字面的意思,或者按照宗教信仰就说有时天气热得要命(hot as hell)或者热得不得了(very hot)!不过“hell”这个词还可以用来强化我们对人或事的情感。根据这个意思,我们可以说,天气冷得要命(cold as hell),甚至还可以说,风大得要命(windy as hell)。一个人或一种语言可能会古怪得要命(crazy as hell)!但是要记住,这个强化词的语气是强烈的,而且是非正规的用法。

英语中还有一些说法只能用来表达否定的意思,它们被归纳为成语。我只能说某人是“no spring chicken”,意思是他或她的年龄也许已经超过45岁或50岁了;“He wouldn't hurt a fly.”意思是此人心地善良;“He can't cut the mustard.”意思是此人干不了某件事;而“I wouldn't touch something or someone with a ten-foot pole”的意思是指一个极不受欢迎的人或令人讨厌的事。

正如莱德勒先生在文章里所说的,英语是由人类而不是计算机发明的。它反映的是人类的创造性活动。因此当我们说“stars are out”时,意思是星星出来了,人们在夜空中可以看到它们。但是当说到街上的或屋里的“lights are out”时,意思是看不见灯光了。那么为什么当我“wind up”我的手表时,意思是给表上紧发条,让表开发始走动,但是当我说“wind up”这次谈话时,意思却是结束这次谈话呢?

现在,你的感觉如何?你同意莱德勒先生所说的英语是一种古怪的语言吗?你认为这种语言很有意思吗?或者你对它比以往更加迷惑不解了呢?

Weddings in America

By Carolyn Weaver

Almost five-million people are married each year in the United States. About one in every eight of these weddings takes place in June—the traditional month for weddings.

Getting married can be as simple as a five-minute ceremony performed by a judge in a law office. Or it can be a traditional religious ceremony at home, or in a church or synagogue^①.

The average age of an American woman being married for the first time is about twenty-four years. The average age for a man is twenty-five. Most young men and women decide to marry about a year before the wedding.

In the Nineteen-Sixties and Seventies, many young Americans decided not to have traditional, formal weddings. Many brides and grooms wrote their own wedding ceremonies. These often included poetry and personal statements about their goals in marriage. Some grooms wore old blue jeans to their weddings. More than a few brides were married in their bare feet. It was not unusual to be married on a sandy beach or on a mountainside.

In the last ten years, however, big formal weddings have become popular again. Experts say the average size of formal