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**British People's English Mistakes 英国人说英语会出错吗?**

**Wang Fei:** 大家好, 欢迎收听 BBC Learning English 的《英国问答》节目 Ask about Britain. 我是王飞。

**William:** And I'm William Kremer.

**Wang Fei:** William, I have to warn you that you should be very careful in today's programme.

**William:** Why's that?

**Wang Fei:** Because today's topic is about British people's English mistakes. Our listeners will check whether you make mistakes in your English.

**William:** Wow! That's terrifying! So shall we hear the question first?

**Insert**

*Hello, I am Patrick Chan. I'm from Hong Kong. I want to ask that (whether) British people make grammatical mistakes when they're talking?*

**Wang Fei:** 我们的听友 Patrick Chan 想知道英国人说英语的时候, 会不会出语法错误? It sounds like a very simple question, doesn't it?

**William:** Well yes, it does seem like a simple question. And the simple answer is yes, British people do make mistakes when they're speaking. But if we go a bit further, it's not quite as straightforward as it sounds.

**Wang Fei:** 为了回答 Patrick Chan 的这个问题, 我们还采访了英语教育方面的专家和业内人士, 希望能给大家一个全面的解答。William, you said English people DO make mistakes when they're speaking. Can you give me some examples?

**William:** Well let me think... There are many examples, but I can't think of anything just off the top of my head. What about hearing from some others first?

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*One of the key ones which is a real bugbear of mine is the difference between less and few. So you would say, "There were fewer people at this year's barbeque than there were last year". You would not say "There were less people at this year's barbeque than there were last year".*

**William:** Yes. So she said, "This is a real bugbear of mine". People often make mistakes when using less and fewer.

**Wang Fei:** Bugbear 就是令人心烦的东西。让那为被采访者心烦的一件事就是人们用 less 和 fewer 的时候，经常会出错。

**William:** We can't say less people because 'people' is countable. We should say fewer people. But, this is a mistake that a lot of British people make.

**Wang Fei:** 其实这也是很多中国人经常犯的一个错误，不能说 less people 应该说 fewer people, 因为 people 是可数的。Now let's listen to some other examples:

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*A: one thing that really annoys me is when people are talking about the cost of something, and they tend to say, "Oh, that only cost me five pound, four pound" and it cost three pound, and it should be pounds plural but they just knock off the s for some reason.*

*B: I am German, 我是德国人。Sometimes people don't say "you weren't there yesterday." They say things like "you wasn't there" or "we wasn't there". This is clearly wrong.*

*C: People say I done that very often rather than say I did that, which is the wrong tense.*

**Wang Fei:** It seems British people make many mistakes when they're talking. William, are these typical mistakes made by British people?

**William:** It cost me five pound... I done that... you wasn't there.... These aren't grammatically correct sentences. But I wouldn't necessarily say these are mistakes.

**Wang Fei:** This is strange! They're not correct but they're not mistakes either. Why not?

**William:** It sounds weird, doesn't it? The thing is, this is just the way that people speak, especially working class people in Southern England. We could even call it a dialect. And some of the people who say those things probably know the correct way to talk but they choose to say "it cost me five pound... I done that... or you wasn't there". It's their way of talking. But for foreigners like the German interviewee we heard from, it just seems like wrong grammar. And they definitely wouldn't choose to speak in this way.



**Wang Fei:** Yes, I've got it. William 的解释真是让我很吃惊。他认为这些不规范的英语用法，在英国的很多方言中，都已经被广泛接受了，而且很多 **working class people** 也就是蓝领劳动阶层，他们选择这样说，因为这是他们的说话方式。所以人们也都不觉得是什么错误了。但是我们作为英语学习者，特别是在书面英语中，可不能学这些不规范的用法。

**Wang Fei:** Just now we talked about some mistakes British people make when they're speaking. So, why do people make mistakes?

**William:** Aha. Everyone is human, Wang Fei. No one is perfect. So people make mistakes when they are speaking. Now let's get some professional explanation here, let's hear from Dr John O'Regan who is a lecturer in Education from IOE, Institute of Education University of London.

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*Dr John O'Regan:*

*British people do make mistakes when they're speaking. But that's because speaking is an unplanned activity. So when you speak, you know, we talk, we speak quickly. And when we're trying to think about what we're going to say, we sometimes make slips, we sort of not say exactly what we meant to say. And this can result in an ungrammatical sentence possibly or just a mispronunciation or something.*

**William:** So Dr O'Regan has an interesting point of view. He said people make mistakes because speaking is an unplanned activity.

**Wang Fei:** An unplanned activity 就是没有事先计划的活动。人们说话通常是没有准备的。

**William:** So we make slips.

**Wang Fei:** Make slips 就是“出错误”的意思。

**William:** This is one of the reasons people make mistakes when they're speaking. Now let's listen to another language expert, Alison Konieczny, from BBC Learning English.

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*Alison Konieczny:*

*I think one of the reasons people make mistakes when they're speaking English is because it is more informal than written English. So people will take liberties with the language. An example of this might be double negative, I didn't do nothing. Of course, it should be I didn't do anything. Now I do think there are probably some young people who speak like that in London. It is more like a dialect, some people might argue. It's just the way they pick up languages on the streets.*

**William:** Alison explains that spoken English is more informal than written English, so people tend to take liberties with spoken English.

**Wang Fei:** Take liberties with 就是随意对待的意思。Alison 认为由于英语口语不如书面英语正式，所以人们说英语的时候就比较随便了。

**William:** Actually she didn't just say it's wrong. She said it might be more like a dialect and it might just be the way people pick up languages on the streets.

**Wang Fei:** Dialect 方言, pick up languages on the streets 在街头上学到的语言。So Alison shares William's idea.

**William:** Not only Alison shares my idea, Wang Fei. Dr O'Regan also does. Let's hear what he has to say about making mistakes and dialects.

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*There're different kinds of English or of Great Britain, if you go from the south to the north of England or of Great Britain, you'll find very many different dialects. So you have the English of Birmingham, for example. You have the English of London. You have the English of Yorkshire. If you go to Birmingham you might hear somebody says "where yam going?" That means "where're you going?" And in Northern Ireland, which is where my mother is from, they say "yous" instead of you. So, for example, I haven't seen yous for ages.*

*Now strictly speaking in terms of standard English, you could say that's an error or a mistake. But in terms of Northern Irish English, it's not a mistake. It's absolutely correct and it conforms to the dialect of that part of the United Kingdom.*

**William:** Dr O'Regan suggests people shouldn't just say dialects are mistakes. To some extent, dialects are correct because they conform to the language of that region.

**Wang Fei:** Conform to 是符合、遵循的意思。方言与其地域是相适应的。

**William:** So in answer to your question, Patrick, yes, some English-speaking people do make mistakes. Sometimes this is because of their way of talking and sometimes they are genuine grammar mistakes – like with less and fewer.

**Wang Fei:** 在节目的最后，William 总结了一下，英国人说英语时的错误有两种，一种是有语法错误的英语，这是 **genuine mistakes** 真正的错误。另外一种就是方言 **dialect** 中的小错误，但是它是人们选择的一种说话方式，不能算是真正的错误。既然英国人说英语都会出错，那听众朋友们就更不用担心说英语出错了。我们今天节目中的采访比较多，如果没有听懂，您可以下载我们的文字稿，然后对照着听就会容易多了。

**William:** I hope all these interviews are helpful to you. That's all for today's programme. See you next time! Bye!

Wang Fei: Bye bye.

### Glossary

grammatical 语法的	bugbear 令人烦的东西或事情
knock off 敲掉、漏掉	dialect 方言
make slips 出错误	take liberties with 随意对待
conform to 遵循、符合	MA 文学硕士