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Chinese Accent 3/ 中国人的英语口语: 口语语法篇

Wang Fei: 大家好, 欢迎收听 BBC Learning English 为您制作的 Question and Answer of the Week. 我是王飞。

Alice: And hello again I'm Alice Castle. Today we continue to answer our listener Clare's question about Chinese learners' English accents.

Wang Fei: Alice, are we going to talk more about pronunciation problems today?

Alice: Today our focus isn't on pronunciation. Today we are going to talk about spoken English grammar.

Wang Fei: 英语口语的语法。Alice, it sounds like a very fresh concept.

Alice: It does. Today we are going to interview Ken Paterson, who is the director of the Centre for English Learning and Teaching at the University of Westminster.

Wang Fei: 今天我们将听到一位语法专家, 英国威斯敏斯特大学英语教学中心主任 Ken Paterson 的采访。他发现他的中国学生在说英语时常出现什么语法问题呢?

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Ken: In terms of tenses, the kinds of problems my Chinese students have are when, for example, English speakers use the present tense to express the future, which confuses students. For example, a sentence like, "My plane leaves at 10 tomorrow morning", is problematic for Chinese intermediate students.

Wang Fei: But what do they usually say then?

Ken: They would say, "My plane will leave", a standard future tense, which is ok but not the most natural way to express a certain future, like a timetable.

Alice: Ken said some Chinese students would say "My plane will leave at ten tomorrow morning." However, many British people would say "my plane leaves at ten tomorrow morning."

Wang Fei: 这是英语中一个很典型的用一般现在时态表示将来的句子。

Alice: Sometimes British people might say "I am leaving soon." "I'm going for lunch in 5 minutes" "The bus is leaving in an hour". All these progressive sentences are actually talking about something that is going to happen soon instead of actually happening.

Wang Fei: 对，这些都是在英语中用现在进行时表示将来的例子。中国的学习者往往会说 "I'll leave soon" "I'll go for lunch in 5 minutes" 听起来就不太自然了。

Alice: Let's hear from Ken Paterson again and see what problems he's found when Chinese learners are speaking English.

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A big area which is a problem is modal verbs, because modal verbs are often connected with politeness. To give an example of a non-polite problem, then a Chinese student might say, "This isn't correct" and that's a perfectly good English sentence but what you would be looking for in a more natural speaker would be, "This can't be correct."

In order to be very carefully polite, you need to have a good command of modals. So a Chinese student may say something which seems polite and is quite polite, like for example, they may say, "Please read this text."

An English person in a similar circumstance who is in a situation with someone they don't know very well would say something like, "You might like to read this text." So there's a problem there and sometimes Chinese learners can seem a little bit rude. That's not their intention but that's how it comes across.

Alice: He said Chinese learners can sometimes seem a little bit rude because they're not using modal verbs.

Wang Fei: Ken 感觉很多中国人的口语听起来不够有礼貌，不是因为他们没有礼貌，而是因为他们不太会用情态动词。

Alice: Ken gave a typical example: "Please read this text".

Wang Fei: "Please read this text". 听起来很有礼貌啊？

Alice: That's the problem. Some Chinese people might think 'please' is a very polite word. It is. So when I was in China, people would say "Alice, please do this, please do that". Actually, 'Please' at the beginning of the sentence sometimes sounds very direct to a native speaker and it sounds a bit like it's an order.

Wang Fei: Alice 说 'please' 这个词太直接了，在句首的时候，听起来有点儿像是命令的意思。所以看来我们在说英语的时候，不要觉得说了一个 **please** 就很有礼貌了，你还需要再加上 **modal verbs** 才能够得上英国人礼貌的标准。

Alice: Ken gave another example about disagreeing with other people: "This isn't correct". In English it sounds quite a strong sentence. So it would be better if you said something like "This can't be correct", or "I'm not sure this is

correct," or "I think it's not correct." You can use the modal verb "can", and the tone of the sentence sounds more polite.

Wang Fei: 英国人的文化就是不太直接。 So Alice, I'll use some sentences Chinese learners of English might say. Can you help make these sentences more polite?

Alice: Of course I'll try.

Wang Fei: 在咖啡店点咖啡的时候, 我们可能会说 I want to have a coffee, please.

Alice: Can I have a coffee please?

Wang Fei: 在餐馆结账的时候, 我们可能会说 Bring me the bill, please.

Alice: May I have the bill please?

Wang Fei: 在问路的时候, 我们可能会说 Do you know how to get to the British Museum?

Alice: Could you please show me how to get to the British Museum?

Wang Fei: 希望你能体会到这些情态动词的用法, 同时也学会使用情态动词让你的英语更有礼貌。

Alice: Welcome back to the programme. Ken also noticed that many Chinese people make one particular mistake when they are speaking. However, they might not make this mistake when they are writing because it's a simple one.

Wang Fei: That's interesting. So let's hear what the problem is?

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Ken: Gender is still a problem, because of the gender pronouns. I have a friend who is a superb speaker of English – a Chinese friend. But he will still say, "That's my sister, have you met him?"

Alice: Ken said his Chinese friend is a superb speaker of English but he still makes mistakes using 'he' and 'she'.

Wang Fei: A superb speaker of English, 说英语超级棒的人。仍然会弄错英语中最简单的两个词 he 和 she.

Alice: Many Chinese learners of English find this difficult. I'm guessing you also sometimes have this problem, Wang Fei?

Wang Fei: That's right. I do have this problem. It's so easy but I repeatedly make this mistake. So why is that?

Alice: According to Ken, it's because of interference from your mother tongue.



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These are all problems of interference from your own mother tongue; which means that your own mother tongue has such a strong control over your linguistic expression that it begins to have its effect on the language you're learning. This is the same for everybody, it's not a Chinese problem; it's a problem for any language learner. The difficulty is that the Chinese and English languages are so different and therefore Chinese students have extra problems.

Alice: Ken explains the interference very clearly. It means your mother tongue has such a strong control over your language usage that it influences the language you're learning.

Wang Fei: Ken 解释说你的母语对你的语言表达有极强的控制力，所以就造成了你很容易通过母语的表达方式来使用你学习的外语。

Alice: It's easy to understand why you keep on making mistakes when using 'he' and 'she', isn't it?

Wang Fei: 我明白了。汉语中 **he** 和 **she** 的发音是相同的，所以中国人也就容易忽略 **he** 和 **she** 在英语中的不同发音。这是母语的干扰造成的。

Alice: Similarly, because of this strong interference from your mother tongue, Chinese people tend to have a similar accent, and a similar way of speaking English.

Wang Fei: I see. So Alice, we've talked a lot about accents. Do you think it's possible for a Chinese learner to get rid of his or her Chinese accent?

Alice: It's a good question and I don't think there's a yes or no answer. In the next programme we will speak to some language experts about their attitudes towards Chinese accents.

Wang Fei: 我们在下期节目中，将邀请数位专家谈一谈对中国人的英语口语的态度。

Alice: I hope to see you next time. Bye for now.

Wang Fei: Bye.