



Washtenaw Literacy Stars

A newsletter by and for Washtenaw Literacy Learners

Untitled

By: Larry Grover

It took me a long time to get my thoughts together when I was fishing.
Then I thought hook a big fish but it was a small one.
Next day I went down to the river caught three fish.
When bear instantly came out of the woods.
Followed by a bobcat who wanted to fish too and I ran a away without my fish.

Missing a Friend

By: Tyonna

The word fade hurts deep down, but in reality that's what's happening.

I remember being told, "you are like the people you socialize with."

Imagine hanging with someone that you adore as a friend and your other half tells you you can't hang with her cause of her bad reputation with sleeping with the opposite sex every night. But you don't know what to do in that situation. It's like, who do



you keep around. I look at it as people do come and go. But I also didn't want my reputation

messed up as well. I'm still stuck and don't know what to do.

Having friends is a great feeling because you can create many memories with them. You could also think that you will be close with that person forever, just as you would think when you are in a serious relationship with someone. But it could mess up your reputation just by hanging with one person. Crazy right? It's like what do you do? I think of it like this: friends, boyfriends, family, etc. will exit out your life and will reenter your life. But when that happens you will never have that good relationship like the very first moment you met.

"Some relationships just end. Like a star, they burn bright and brilliant, and then nothing in particular goes wrong, they just reach their end. They burn out."

- Cora Carmack, *Losing It*

What I Found In The U.S.

By: Tomoe Koike

I was born in Japan, grew up, got a job, then got married. Therefore I never thought I would live in the U.S. Although I knew the U.S., it was not close to me. The U.S. was a foreign country for me.

But my husband started to work in the U.S. I came here with him. I have lived in the U.S. for 2 years. When I came here, I worried about everything. I thought Americans were not polite to foreigners who could not speak English. But that is wrong. Some people listened to my poor English carefully. I felt their warm hearts. So my worry was gone. I was able to find a lot of interesting things in the U.S.

One of the things, the decoration of houses is very

nice. Especially Christmas season is good. I enjoy the illumination around my house every year. Other things, the amount of everything is so big, for example, dishes at restaurant, groceries etc. And donating is very popular in the U.S. It is surprising to me. I found that many Americans have a heart of service. Naturally, my teacher and friends have warm hearts. I was supported by them in the U.S. life.

If I didn't come here, I would not be able to know these things. I lived in my small world in Japan. But the U.S. broadens my world. I will go back to Japan next year. I want to tell these things to my family and friends in Japan.

A Ride In History

By: Charles Casebeer

There was a raffle at the American Legion for a ride for two people in a B-25 bomber to fly over the Ypsilanti 4th of July Parade. The Yankee Air Force donated the two seats. The Legion raffled them off to help build up its funds. It was something I was very interested in, being in the Air Force. It was a ten dollar raffle. The two tickets would otherwise have cost \$1300.00.

The B-25 is a two-engine bomber from WWII. It has five gun positions: Three forward 50s, and the Waist Guns were twin 50s, one on each side. Just under the top turret was where Betty and I sat and were able to get a good look up at the turret. It is driven by hydraulics. It had twin 50-caliber machine guns.

The 4th was a beautiful day. Visibility was good. We took off at 11:30AM. There was a pilot and copilot, and seven passengers in the plane. We took off from Willow Run Airport. The parade was hard to spot until the pilot banked to both sides, and still we couldn't really see much of it. It looked like a bunch of ants down there! We got a really good look at the Eastern Michigan University

campus.

From my vantage point, it was hard to orientate myself to the ground, and I was also trying to keep Betty up to speed about what was going on in and around the aircraft, and what the aircraft was doing. We were able to more or less experience the cramped quarters and all that the crew had to endure on an eight to ten hour mission in World War II. It was a very smooth ride, and the landing was as soft as I've ever had, like he was landing on eggs.

We ended the day being back in the present. For the culmination of the 4th of July, we went to my place for a cook-out. Betty met my grandkids for the first time, as well as my daughter and son-in-law. Betty was really talking a lot about the flight. Everyone had lots of questions.

My Trip To The Pistons Basketball Game 11-8-13

By: Shemia

I went with the Best Buddies and we met at the student center. We went on a big bus. It was a long trip. I went to sleep.

We got off and we had tickets. They had lot of stairs. I took the elevator. They had seats for handicapped people.

After awhile I got popcorn. I had to stay with someone. The popcorn was good. The snacks were downstairs.

After the game we went on the court. We went back on the bus to go home. I went to sleep before that I called Dad to meet me back at the student center.

When I got off the bus he was waiting for me.

When I got home it was after midnight.

I had lots and lots of fun.

The Most Beautiful Dream “ The Childhood”

By: Sanju De Silva



For nineteen years
I was in a dream.
The most beautiful dream in my life.
Can you believe me?
Dreaming for nineteen years!
There was a time
My mom used to carry me,
My dad used to bring me chocolate,
My grandparents cuddled me, hugged me,
Kissed me until my face became red.
How happy I was!
Running along the meadows,
Soaking my legs in flowing river,
Smelling the blossomed flowers,
Watching the birds singing,
Playing with my sister,
Rising sun laughed with me,
Calming rays of moon brought me princess stories.

The freedom I had!
I had nothing to do.
Nothing to worry about.
Everything was taken care of.
I would cry if I could not do something.
But, someone was always there for me.
My tears would fade away,
The sadness would go away,
In the very next moment
I would be jumping trying to stop laughing.

Today here I am,
Woken up from the beautiful dream.
The world changed.
New world is difficult,
Or maybe different.
The sun does not laugh as it did before.
The moon must be angry with me.
I do not know why.
My life is not a fairytale anymore.

Why? Oh why did I wake up?
Behind me is no one.
Only hope and courage are with me.
The ocean is so stormy,
And my boat is too small,
But, I have to paddle through the storm.
I remember someone told me
That there is always a nice, calm weather
After the storm.
Now I am an adult.

I Love Ann Arbor

By: Jing Yu

For a person who comes from a culture which appreciates implicit expression, love is a solemn word which is not easily spoken. Two years ago, my destiny led me to Ann Arbor and made me fall in love with this small American town. Two months from now, I will have to say goodbye to her and embark on my new journey. If I am asked how I think about Ann Arbor, my feelings towards her contain nothing but love. For me, love is both something that is always in my memory and someone who is never forgotten.

I love Ann Arbor when I look up to the blue sky, seeing geese flying beneath white clouds;
I love Ann Arbor when I watch squirrels chasing around trees and deer running into bushes;
I love Ann Arbor when I kayak on the Huron River, feeling the clear stream gliding over my feet;
I love Ann Arbor when I breathe the fresh air and observe the city's color changing with the seasons.

I love Ann Arbor when people smile at me as they pass by when I am rambling on the streets;
 I love Ann Arbor when someone stops the car and asks me if I need a ride when I am walking on the road carrying a heavy load;
 I love Ann Arbor when I see a driver giving his jacket to a mother with two children waiting for a bus in cold wind;
 I love Ann Arbor when I know that charity and volunteer jobs are so common in people's lives.

I love Ann Arbor when I am hosted by International Neighbors with many interesting activities;
 I love Ann Arbor when I am learning about American culture from China Friends;
 I love Ann Arbor when I am reading books in public libraries with good services;
 I love Ann Arbor when I am learning English at free ESL classes offered by Washtenaw Literacy.

I love Ann Arbor when I am discussing Christianity with many faithful and kind-hearted people;
 I love Ann Arbor when I am having a happy Thanksgiving dinner with an American family;
 I love Ann Arbor when I am meeting friends and conversing about differences of language and culture.

I love Ann Arbor when I am attending lectures around campuses;
 I love Ann Arbor when I am enjoying wonderful music in Hill Auditorium;
 I love Ann Arbor when I am watching independent movies at the Michigan Theater;
 I love Ann Arbor when I am enjoying different styles of great art works at the Art Fair;
 I love Ann Arbor when I am dancing with local people in the townie party.

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In my journey through life, Ann Arbor is like an important stop. In my mind, Ann Arbor is like a peaceful fairyland. In my soul, Ann Arbor is like a cozy haven. I may not be able to stay with you forever, but I will always love you -- Ann Arbor.

Treatment For The Flu

By: YoungJu Ahn

Usually, I try to prevent my family from getting the flu through good food, sanitization, and vitamin supplements. Sometimes these efforts don't work, and my family gets the flu, anyway. At that time, I try to do my best to help them recover, but there is a little difference between the way I help my husband and the way I help my son.

I treat my family's flu alike in some ways. When my family gets the flu, first, I check their temperatures and bowel movements. If it's needed, I let them take medicine. When they are sick, their digestion becomes weak. They lose their appetites, so I cook softer food and give them fruits or juices that contain vitamins. And, I try to make my home cleaner and let them have a good rest.

I use different ways to treat my husband and my son. Usually, I pay more attention to my son when he gets the flu, because he is young and his immune system is not so strong. I pay less attention to my husband. He doesn't get the flu easily, and he can recover very quickly. I try to reduce my son's fever. I give him medicine and check his temperature very often. I also give my husband medicine, but I keep my husband away from my son. I don't want my son to get the flu through contact with my husband. They also understand this precaution. When my son gets the flu, he loses his appetite. So, I make his favorite food and check his bowel movement. My husband is a good eater, and seafood is his favorite. I cook hot seafood soup for him. After he eats it, he sweats, takes medicine, and takes a good rest. Then, he gets better, so, I don't need to worry about him anymore. Eventually, they both get better.

Preventing the flu is the best way, but when my family gets the flu, TLC (Tender Loving Care) is really important. However, who is going to take care of moms like me when we are sick? Sometimes we also need TLC.

Not An April Fool's Joke

By: Charles Casebeer

My brother, who lived in Wisconsin, passed away this year. I went to Wisconsin for the memorial service, and my grandson went along with me to help drive. Due to my COPD, I traveled with portable oxygen. My sister-in-law wouldn't let me do anything because of my own health. My pulse remained high during the whole trip. My grandson drove all the way home. He liked my new car! I stayed home for a whole week and my pulse and oxygen got worse, until on April 1st my pulse was up to 178 due to atrial fibrillation. My O2 was 80. I called 911 and the EMS took me to the hospital.

I was in the hospital for five days for observation. I couldn't understand half of what the doctors were talking about, and apparently they couldn't understand anything that I was talking about. Out of all of them, I was the only one that English was not a second language! They ran all kinds of tests, including x-rays and a CT scan. The doctors speak in brand names about medications, and the pharmacy talks in generics. The doctors didn't listen to what I was trying to say about the medication, and in one case they said they doubled the dose, giving me two pills instead of one on the heart medication, and I was already on two. They didn't know what they were talking about, themselves!

I was discharged after five days on three liters of oxygen. At home, my son seemed more concerned than normal about my heart rate, and paid more attention to my breathing. Maybe this was because he had to sit and wait with me while the EMS came.

Unfortunately, I did not get back to normal life. I was very tired all of the time, and very weak. If I walked from one room to another one, I'd be out of breath. And my heart rate would be way up. I got to where I couldn't do anything for myself,

hardly, and I told my son to take me to the emergency room.

Back in the hospital in the middle of April, they took the blood test, and my hemoglobin was 4.6 when it should have been around 10. They knew they had to give me blood to build up my iron. That first day, they gave me two units of blood and iron intravenously. Then they ran a scope down my throat to check for bleeding and found small bleeders, which they cauterized. On the third day, they gave me two more units of blood and intravenous iron. They waited to see if the levels would come up. Eventually, I was declared healthy enough to come home.

I feel good now. My oxygen levels are good and my pulse is closer to normal. I'm feeling better and everything's back up to where it probably should be.

I never expected to be an "old man." When I was younger, I was an "adrenaline junkie." I drove a race car, jumped out of airplanes, and tried SCUBA diving. I volunteered for three separate combat zones in the Air Force, in the Belgian Congo and other countries in Africa, and then in Vietnam.

I don't have a Bucket List, because I've done everything I could, when I could. I don't have to look back and think that I could've done something I didn't.

My Stomach In The USA

By: Tomoe Koike

I have lived in Ann Arbor for 2 years. When I went to a restaurant for the first time in the USA, I was not able to eat all the food. There was too much food. I felt guilty because I left food on the plate. When I was a child, my mother said you have to eat everything. I tried it every time. Many restaurants served too much food. I didn't know that I could use doggy bags in the U.S.A. I ate a lot every time.

By the time I learned about doggy bags, my stomach had already grown big. Now I usually eat everything. I don't feel guilty about food. But, I have gained weight. I have to lose weight. I have a new problem. I feel guilty about my body.

My First Trip To The Ann Arbor Arboretum

By: Hua Kong

A few months ago, my tutor and I took a trip to Arboretum. We took the bus from Westgate to downtown, we transferred to bus #4 to the hospital and we walked to the Arboretum.

It was very pretty, it was very quiet, and leaves were changing colors. We took many pictures of trees and the Huron River. We had a very good time!



Red petals on shore

Home Is Where The Heart Is

By: Yumie Shiraishi

“Just a dangerous country filled with guns.” This was my attitude toward the U.S. The U.S. has far more gun-related crimes than my country, Japan. I had even thought that everyone carried a gun in the U.S. Such a bad perspective made me afraid when I started living here, and I really missed my hometown.

However, after my stay for more than two years in the U.S., my opinion has completely changed. I have never heard a gunshot or had a

dangerous experience here. In addition, the longer I stay here, the more I like this place. What makes me think like this?

*People are so kind and friendly.

--- Many people here, such as my neighbors and English teachers, warmly welcomed me when I started living here. It really helped me get used to this place. They are all nice people and kindly help me when I am in trouble.

*Ann Arbor has diversity.

---- I can see many people from various countries who provide me a chance to learn about their cultures and traditions. I would not have known about either Thanksgiving or St. Patrick's Day if I had stayed in Japan.

My life here gives me a lot of opportunities to learn new things. It has definitely expanded my knowledge. Also, it has broadened my horizons. I can look at things from both American and Japanese point of views now. I never think of the U.S. as just a dangerous gun-filled country anymore. These improvements make me feel confident. I am sure I can return to Japan with such confidence and satisfaction.

Sadly, the end of my time here is just around the corner. I already miss people here. I will miss huge burgers, beautiful parks, and cute squirrels. I will miss them all. Now, Ann Arbor is my second home and will always have a piece of my heart♥.

The First Step of Beginner

By: Hyunsook Kim

This is the third winter for me in Ann Arbor. My first feelings in America were surprise, worry, and frustration.... America is really 'New Good world', but I always have been facing a language barrier. When I talked with Americans, I didn't

understand completely but I just assumed what they mean.

So I passed a lot of red tape to settle down here. When I went to Kroger for the first time, the clerk said very fast ‘Kroger card? Paper or plastic?’ That simple question embarrassed me, I felt like a child who knows nothing.

Talking on the phone was more difficult, so I preferred direct conversation to a phone call. When my children wanted pizza, I drove to Dominos instead of making a phone order!

My biggest problem was shame and fear. I could not understand or solve the problem, but I should do it by myself.

When a woman is dressed up and is wearing high heel shoes, she wants to look nice. If she falls down when she walks around the market, bank, or school, how does she feel? This is exactly how I felt when I misspoke English. I don’t like to be foolish, don’t like to make a mistake, because I am already a big adult. It is unfamiliar for me to make a mistake and to fix it in my middle age.

But I think there is a solution for every question. Kindness, understanding, consideration and effort. And fortunately I found them in my ESL teachers, friends, and neighbors.....

Even if I am still not good, I am now more comfortable speaking in English. Now I am like a child again, and enjoy learning new things. Sometimes I fall down but there no shame nor fear in my heart. I am just a beginner!

American People Enjoy Their Life

By: Ayako Takabayashi

Before moving away from Japan, I heard that Ann Arbor is safe, liberal and culturally diverse. Therefore, I didn’t have a lot of anxiety about moving to America though it would be my first time

to live in a foreign country. However, once we started our new life here, we faced some difficulties. Setting up the new life in America seemed uncomfortable at the moment for us. It took some time to get used to living here.

Fortunately, there is a lot of green, and this city is family-friendly. So we gained a passion for Ann Arbor. Then, I noticed American people always look happy, and they are enjoying their lives. They share jokes about anything even with strangers everywhere. They are very witty. In addition, I think they value spending time with family or friends very much. They enjoy each season with companions; for example, outdoor activities like a picnic or a barbecue; of course it is because of this nice environment, or watching sports, holding parties. It seems that they are good at switching from working days to weekends and holidays. Looking back, I see we didn’t share such a lot of activities together in Japan.

We have only one life. And the life always has its ups and downs. However, we should enjoy our life as much as possible! Spending time with family is irreplaceable. I learned that in America.

Talking About Shingles And Its Vaccine

By: Guishan Wang

I’m a learner of Washtenaw Literacy. My English is improving. I’m more independent in my life. I can try to write a article talking about a particular subject in English.

Right now I’d like to talk about shingles and its vaccine.

Shingles (also called herpes zoster or zoster) is a painful skin rash, often with blisters. It is caused by Caricella-zoster Virus (VzV). So it is a infectious disease.

Anywhere on your body, even the face and eyes, can occur a painful rash with blisters. The rash and

blisters usually appear on one side of the body or face and last from 2 to 4 weeks. Its main symptom is pain, which can be quite severe. The pain interferes with sleeping and eating. The severe pain can continue for months, or even years. Besides pain, other symptoms of shingles can be fever, headache, chills and upset stomach. Also can occur other symptoms.

Anyone who has ever had chickenpox (Varicella) can get shingles. Because after chickenpox, the virus stays in person's body (the virus hies in person's neurological system). Formal in other words, after chickenpox, the virus is not eliminated out of body or is not killed. A person after middle age or function of immune system is lower, the virus in body arrives to skin and causes shingles. The pathogen of chickenpox and shingles is same virus.

Someone can't catch shingles from another person with shingles. However a person who has never had chickenpox could get chickenpox from patient with shingles. This is not very common.

The best way to prevent shingles it to get vaccinated. Since 2006 singles vaccine is used, in clinical trials the vaccine reduced the risk of shingles by 50%. Someone who still get shingles after get vaccinated can reduce pain.

Attention: Some people should not get shingles vaccine. Please ask your family doctor about this. Could have redness, swelling, pain, or itching at the site of the injection (about 1 person in 3). Also could have a headache (about 1 person in 70).

If you are age 60 years or older, you should get the shingles shot, even if you've already had shingles.

Please feel free to contact your family doctor or pharmacist talking about shingles shot if you are age 60 years or older.

I'm not a doctor. Above article, just for reference.

My Thoughts About Syria

By: LaRue Mason

I realize that the U.S. government cares for the people in Syria and that the U.S. is willing to go in and take action on Syria's government. But if the U.S. takes action on Syria one thing I would not do is put ground troops in Syria. The reason I would not put troops in Syria is because it may cause Syria's allies to act against the U.S.. If the U.S. gets involved a lot of blood will be shed and it may put our economy back into a recession.

Instead of sending troops into Syria I would send drones and planes. If Syria's allies cannot talk to the president of Syria and get him to stop using chemical weapons, the U.S. should send in drones and planes. If the U.S. has sent in military it should be special forces. The way the Syrian government used chemical weapons on his people is like Hitler did to the Jews. No president needs to try their people like this.

These are my thoughts to President Obama because of his care for the people of Syria.

MEXICAN CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

Guadalupe – Reyes

(December 12th to January 6th)

By: Gele Soberanes Castro

VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE (December 12th)

The population census of 2010 in México reveals that the 83.9 % of the Mexicans are Catholics and every December 12th they give reverence to the Virgin of Guadalupe (Virgin Mary in Mother of God of Guadalupe). This is a religious holiday (not official), because the night before millions of people workshop the brunette Virgin, they make a pilgrimage to the Church (*Basílica*) of Our Lady of Guadalupe that is in Mexico City.



The history reveals that in 1531 she appeared on the Tepeyac Hill to *Juan Diego* asking to him to tell the Bishop to build a Church in her honor. At this place he found beautiful flowers (roses), which was strange because this was barren land. He put the roses in his “*tilma*” cloak or poncho, made of cotton and Maguey fibers. He showed it to the Bishop and when he opened the “*tilma*” there appeared in it the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Scientific studies have found that there was no paint or dye to make the picture and therefore this was considered a miracle. In 2002 Juan Diego was canonized by John Paul II, since then he is a Saint.

POSADAS, CHRISTMAS PARTIES (December 16th to 24th)

The word “posada” means inn or shelter in Spanish. It is a celebration with origin in Spain in the evenings that recreate Mary and Joseph’s search for a place to stay in Bethlehem. The nine nights represent the nine months that Jesus spent in Mary’s womb, or alternatively, to represent nine days journey to Bethlehem. It has been a tradition in México for more than 4 centuries. It may have been started by early friars who combined with the December Aztec celebration of the birth of “*Huitzilopochtli*” (Sun God in *Náhuatl*). It consists of a procession with candles, sometimes with individuals selected to play the part of Mary and Joseph. People sing a special song asking for shelter

and the family inside respond singing the part of the innkeeper saying that there is no room. Every night is in a different house, in the first eight people can pray a rosary and have a small party. On Christmas Eve the innkeeper finally decides to let them in. The door is opened and everyone goes inside to have a fancy party. Actually the employers make a fancy party for the workers and make raffles to give them gifts. Sometimes the worker can go with a single guest or with the family. Often the neighbors in the communities make posadas. In some places the final location may be a church.

PIÑATAS



Another important element in the Mexican parties are the “*piñatas*”. There are many symbols and analogies in it. The traditional “*piñata*” need to have 7 tips that represent the Capital Sins. Also called “deadly sins” (lust, gluttony, greed, laziness, anger, envy and pride –or arrogance–). The tips are so colorful because the devil wants that people to succumb to the temptations. Inside the “*piñata*” there are candies and fruits that represent the grace of God. The person that hit the “*piñata*” is blind with a bandana because he or she has faith in God. In the traditional “*piñata*” the candies are hidden in a “barro” pot (“barro” is a typical brown and inexpensive Mexican pottery). Actually is strange use the “barro” pot because is harder to break and not safe for kids. A stick that represents God, is used to hit the “*piñata*”. The rest of the people give directions to who is hitting the “*piñata*” like: left, right, up and down. When the hitter brakes the “*piñata*” the candies fall out and

the grace of God defeats the devil. Because the “*piñatas*” are jolly they are used in Birthday Parties for kids and are made like a replicas of cartoons.

CHRISTMAS EVE (December 24th)

Mexican people like to add to the Christmas decoration with a Nativity Scene, you can see them in different sizes and materials. In the North of Mexico people put the baby Jesus in the Nativity Scene when they start the Christmas decorations. In the South States, where people are more religious, on Christmas Eve they add the baby Jesus to the Nativity Scene. After the Christmas Eve dinner the kids can open the gifts (toys). There are families that prefer to open the gifts in the morning of Christmas Day.

EPIPHANY or

THE THREE WISE MAN DAY, “*Reyes Magos*” (January 6th)

This tradition to came from the Roman Empire. On the night of January 5th many families add to the Nativity Scene the figurines of the Three Wise Men to remember the Three Kings of the Orient: Melchior, Gaspar and Balthazar; kings of Persia, India and Arabia respectively. They traveled to Bethlehem on a camel, elephant and a horse to gift to Baby Jesus gold, myrrh and incense (also called frankincense). This evening or night in the South of Mexico the kids make a letter with their wishes for toys to “*Reyes Magos*”. They put the letter in a sock, a shoe or balloons filled with helium. The morning of January 6th the kids open the gifts and play all day, like the Christmas Day in America.

In the evening of January 6th families are together to taste a “*Rosca de Reyes*” an oval sweetbread decorated with candied fruit.



Inside it there are plastics figurines of the Baby Jesus. He is hidden because it symbolizes the need to find a secure place where baby Jesus could be born, a place where king Herod would not find him. Each person cuts their slice of the “*rosca*”, the knife symbolizes the danger in which Baby Jesus was in. Whoever gets the baby figurine shall be the host, and become the godfather of Baby Jesus.



On February 2nd or Candle mass day (*día de la Candelaria*) the people that found the baby Jesus needs to invite everyone was present in January 6th to a new celebration, where all will taste “*tamales*”, a *Náhuatl* word that means wrapped.



The “*tamales*” have traces back to the Ancient Maya people (1200-250 BC) used as portable food. There are made with a dough of corn-based mixed with vegetable or pork grease and different kinds of chili pepper. They are filled or stuffed with meat, pork, chicken, vegetables, cheese, shrimp, raisins or whatever that people like it. There are salty or

sweet. Sometimes the “*tamales*” are only the dough, without the stuffing. There are wrapped in corn husks or leaves of the banana tree, which is steamed or boiled hours. It is a comfort food that the Mexicans eat all year.

Why English Is So Damn Hard For Chinese

By: Chenxu Feng

Learning a foreign language is never easy. However, learning English is definitely one of the most painful experiences for many Chinese. Frankly speaking, it is just as difficult a job for Chinese to learn a phonetic foreign language since Chinese is really neat and simple as a pictographic language.

Many foreigners would argue it is total nonsense to say that Chinese is simple. Professor David Moser at the University of Michigan has a popular article titled “Why Chinese is so Damn Hard?”¹ in which there are nine critiques to learning Chinese and he can offer more. I believe that it is true for a foreigner to learn Chinese. As a native Chinese speaker, I would like to justify our language and tell you English is much harder to master for us.

First, too many rules in English

Compared with Chinese, English has way too many rules. All the sentences must have a subject and a verb. That is not a problem in Chinese. A sentence can have a subject or not. It is still a sentence with full meaning and people can understand it perfectly.

English has so many different types of clauses and conjunctions. In Chinese, there are no meaningless conjunction words like *that* and *which* functioning as guide words for clauses. Every word is meaningful. So many auxiliaries make the language even more complex. In Chinese, there are also no tenses for verbs, no plural for nouns.

What’s more, each personal pronoun has its unique verb format in English. Chinese people do not have this kind of bother. Verbs are verbs. They can express meaning all by themselves. They do not need tenses or extra assistance.

Second, too extensive vocabulary

An average Chinese uses 2,500 Chinese characters to express himself or herself in daily life and about another 1500 non-common characters. In contrast, most English speakers know about 50,000 words and a reasonably educated person knows about 75,000 words.² Although we use a comparatively much smaller vocabulary, we can completely express the most subtle feelings and the most sophisticated definitions.

In English, there are fewer “public or shared” vocabulary words. For example, squash is squash. It has its own name for squash. People cannot use it to express any other meanings. In Chinese, squash can be part of a vegetable’s name in a shorter version. It can also be used in many other circumstances to show very different meanings. Here are two examples. One table shows the words with a shared root. The other table shows the independent words without any common parts in English. Most Chinese words are in word categories. The specific words are in the minority. (See Table 1 below)

Most Chinese words are like the berry words. So if people use the logic, it is pretty easy for them to memorize and use the word. English is totally different. This also explains the situation of many miserable Chinese students. For them, before they are going to take an English exam, they will start their painful vocabulary memory journey. They really pull their hairs out trying to put the right vocabulary in. As they become more advanced, the vocabulary book will be heavier and heavier. The terrible thing is we still find there are many new vocabulary words. It is like an endless road, which you’ll never reach the destination.

¹ <http://pinyin.info/readings/texts/moser.html>

² http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/8013859.stm

Memorizing English Vocabulary: A Process of Decipher

For people who use the characters language system, learning English is like in a road of decipher. There are 26 codes (letters) and countless combinations. To know the code combination, people really need to have a very strong brain to carry out this tough job. Albeit many non-Chinese curse the difficulty of our written system, we definitely believe it makes sense. If you have patience to learn a little bit history about the characters, I believe you would agree and learn some Chinese too. Our ancestors used mainly six methods to create Chinese characters, which are pictographic, indicative or

self-explanatory, picto-phonetic, semasiographic, synonymous and phonetic loan. (See Table 2) Different from Chinese ideography system, English is a phonetic language. A word does not contain any meaning inside. It is just a designated code of letters agreed by people and pass from generation to generation. As every word is the correspondent of an existing thing, people have to create new words whenever there are new things invented. That is also the key reason why we see English vocabulary has an exploding over time.

In a word, English is really difficult for many Chinese. However, the purpose of the essay is not to complain but to dig deeply to get the reasons why it is miserable for many Chinese to learn English. Knowing the source of the problem is the first step to solve it. (See Table 3)

Table 1

Difference between English and Chinese			Similarity between English and Chinese		
In Chinese, most of the vegetable or fruit with pulp and seeds in are called “Gua”, which can be squash, melon or gourd in English. If a vegetable or fruit with a “Gua” in its name, which even some people have never eaten before, they still have a general idea what it is.			This table describes the similarity between English and Chinese. Even if some people do not know what are raspberry, people still know it is a kind of berry. Compare to the left column English words, these berry names are much easier to memorize and understand. That is the case in Chinese.		
	English	Chinese		English	Chinese
	Pumpkin	Nan Gua 南瓜		Strawberry	Cao Mei 草莓
	Wax gourd	Dong Gua 冬瓜		Blueberry	Lan Mei 蓝莓
	Cucumber	Huang Gua 黄瓜		Raspberry	Shu Mei 树莓
	Watermelon	Xi Gua 西瓜		Cranberry	Man Yue Mei 蔓越莓

Table 2

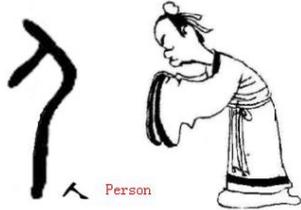
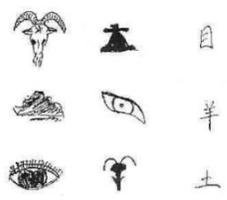
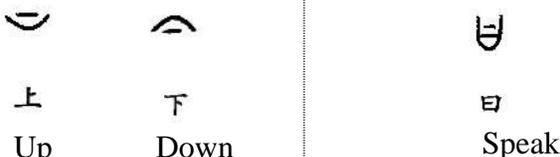
	Methods	Explain	Examples	
<p>Methods to create new characters</p>	<p>pictographic 象形</p>	<p>Mimic the existing things in the reality.</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;">  <p>inscription on bones or tortoise shell in Shang Dynasty (BC18c~11c)</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%; text-align: center;"> <p>A Match Quiz</p>  <p>You can do this, right? Have a try!</p> </div> </div>	
	<p>indicative / self-explanatory 指事</p>	<p>Use an abstract code to indicate some abstract meaning.</p>	 <p>Up Down Speak</p>	
	<p>picto-phonetic 形声</p>	<p>A combination of graph and phonetic characters.</p>	 <p>闷 (门/door) + 心 (/heart) = 闷(bored) A heart is locked in a door, so it is very bored. The outside 门 is the pronunciation of 闷.</p>	
	<p>Semasiography Ideogram 会意</p>	<p>Use the relations between two or more characters to show the meaning.</p>	 <p>林 (lin) wood 寒Cold In the middle (blue), it is a person. The person lies on the grass (green), under the roof, but the feet are on ice. So it means extremely cold.</p>	
<p>Methods to use the existing characters and do not create new characters</p>	<p>Synonymous 转注</p>	<p>Two characters can explain each other.</p>	<p>These are the usages of character, which help gram characters overcome the limit and smoothly inherit by decedents. Both these two methods do not create new characters.</p>	
	<p>phonetic loan 假借</p>	<p>Borrow an existing character with same pronunciation to fulfill the abstract meaning without character.</p>		

Table 3

Match Game

Match the right character with the abstract pictures.
 Eg. Tortoise

English	Picture	Abstract pics	Character
Tortoise			龟
Sun			日
Moon			月
Mountain			山

Register Today for a Winter 2014 Learning Lab!

Learning Labs are small group tutoring sessions that are designed specifically for our learners, meet for a short period of time, and are about a specific topic or goal. **Registration IN ADVANCE and weekly attendance is REQUIRED! Labs are FREE!**

To register for any of the Learning Labs, email: info@washtenawliteracy.org or call (734) 879-1320.

✧ Traveling in the United States

This lab will cover travel destinations in the U.S., including the tutor's personal recommendations. Vocabulary for road and air travel plus sites will be discussed. Learners should come prepared to participate in discussions.

- Meets on the following Thursdays: January 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th, and February 6th from 1-2:30pm
- Labs will meet in Ann Arbor – specific location will be provided once you are registered.

✧ Essay Writing

This lab will focus on writing essays for the TOEFL, GED, or other academic applications. Learners will be expected to bring 3 essays to the lab over the course of the 12 weeks to be shared with other participants for review and critique. The 2 hours sessions will start and end on time!

- Meets on Mondays 1-3pm from February 3rd through April 7th.
- Labs will meet in Ann Arbor – specific location will be provided once you are registered.
- To participate, a learner must be able to write 3 essays.

✧ Finding and Getting a Job

This lab will focus on applying and interviewing for a job. Participants will practice completing applications on paper and online; learn styles, parts, and tips for writing a resume and cover letter; and learn universal do's and don'ts for job interviewing.

- Meets on the following Saturdays: January 25th, February 1st, 8th, and 15th from 9:30-11:30am.
- Labs will meet at WCC – specific location will be provided once you are registered.

✧ Job Hunting

This lab will focus on job hunting. Topics will include identifying potential jobs, writing a cover letter & resume, and interviewing techniques. Discussions will also include online resources.

- Meets on the following Thursdays: March 13th, 20th, 27th, April 3rd, and 10th
- Labs will meet in Ypsilanti – specific location will be provided once you are registered.

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WINTER 2014



Washtenaw Literacy Stars

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Mail articles to:
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Ypsilanti, MI. 48197

Email articles to:
communications@washtenawliteracy.org

Save The Date

- ❖ Celebration of Learning – March 27th, 2014 ~ 6-8pm
- ❖ Location: Grace Fellowship House Of Solutions Community Center [1301 S. Harris Road, Ypsilanti, MI 48197](https://www.google.com/maps/place/1301+S.+Harris+Road,+Ypsilanti,+MI+48197)
 - A potluck for all learners, tutors, and our families.
 - Bring a dish to share with everyone!
 - Share stories with other learners & tutors and help us celebrate everyone's accomplishments.
 - Several learners will receive awards from their tutors in recognition of their achievements!
 - For more information, email Melissa – towle@washtenawliteracy.org.