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PAIR OF WORDS CONFUSED & MISUSED

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ABSTRACT

This paper emphasizes the fact that a large vocabulary is an important element in success. Every person who wishes to succeed in life should develop the ability to express himself fluently and accurately of a large vocabulary perfects this skill. This article also stresses that mistakes must be recognized before they can be corrected. Mere recognition of error is not enough. Correct forms must be substituted for incorrect ones. The most common pairs of words often confused are enlisted as sample and a special study and constant watching of such confused and misused words are called for.

Keywords – vocabulary, pair of words, success, misused,

Introduction

The importance of words and the right use of words have been recognized for a long time. Our knowledge or words is all that makes it possible for us to understand our associates or our friends. And it is only by words that we can impart ideas to others or command them to do our wishes. We might have noticed the number of people among our own acquaintances who occupy responsible positions and have a strong command of English, although they never attended college. This is the practical advantage of effective vocabulary. Moreover, we think with words. We can't think without them. It follows then almost like a law of mathematics that the more we know the more clearly and powerfully we will think. And also the more ideas we will invite into our mind. Success and vocabulary go hand in hand; hence every student who wishes to succeed in life should develop the ability to express himself fluently and accurately. This skill may be perfected only through the acquisition of a large vocabulary. In day – to – day life we come across many words that need special study and constant watching.

This paper deals only with those straightforward cases in which one word tends to usurp the place and function of another. Cases in which there is more to be said – generally because the distinction between the words is contentious, subtle, or less than absolute. Many of the following pairs of words are frequently confused in speech or writing because they look like somewhat alike although their meanings are different.

Amount /Number

Amount is used with a unified bulk or lump sum; number suggests separate, countable units.

For Example –

The number of nickels you gave doesn't add up to the amount the candy costs.

The amount of flour here isn't enough for the number of cakes we need to bake.

Anticipate / Expect

Anticipate is used when we mean "to prepare for something". Expect is used when we mean "to think something will occur".

For Example –

They anticipated the storm by going to a safe place.

We expect the mail will be delayed.

Affect/Effect

Affect is usually a verb: Chester's humming affected Posey's ability to concentrate. Effect is usually a noun: Chester was sorry for the effect his humming had. If you find yourself stumped about which one to use in a sentence, try substituting the word "alter" or "result." If "alter" fits (Chester's humming altered Posey's ability to concentrate), use affect. If "result" fits (Chester was sorry for the result his humming had), use effect.

Alone / Lonely

When you say that you are "alone" what you are implying is that there is no other person with you. For example, right now I am sitting all alone at my computer desk and typing away — there is no one else in the room. Being alone is not equal to being sad, it just means that you enjoy being with yourself rather than with a bunch of people.

e.g. I like living alone.

The word "lonely" on the other hand, refers to the state of the mind of an individual. It suggests that the person is sad, feels unwanted, and is longing for companionship. When one sits in a crowded room, one is not "alone", but one can still feel "lonely" because loneliness has nothing to do with physical proximity with other people. When one is "alone", one needn't feel lonely. Some people prefer to be alone.

e.g. He feels lonely now that both my children have left the home.

Brief / Short

These adjectives overlap but are not always interchangeable. Brief applies to duration only and often implies condensation, as 'a brief lecture' and 'a brief article'.

Brief is incorrect when applied to linear extent, as 'a brief distance' and 'a brief road'.

Short applies to both duration and linear extent. As applied to duration Brief and Short are often complete synonyms. But sometimes 'short' implies incompleteness, curtailment or sudden stoppage, as 'a short note', 'a short game', and 'a short account'.

Convince / Persuade

Convince used (with an infinitive) as a synonym for persuade first became common in the 1960s in the US, as in *She convinced my father to branch out on his own*. Some traditionalists deplore the blurring of distinction between convince and persuade, maintaining that convince should be reserved for situations in which someone's belief is changed but no action is taken as a result (*He convinced me that he was right*). While persuade should be used for situations in which action results (*He persuaded me to seek more advice*).

Cause / Reason

A cause is that which produces an effect; it is the indispensable antecedent of the effect. Anything animate or inanimate may act as a cause. Every effect has a cause. A reason is that which explains or justifies a result. This assumed relation between reason and result may or may not be necessary one. Assigned reasons are often not true reasons.

Contagious / Infectious

In practice, there is little or no difference in meaning between contagious and infectious when applied to disease: both mean, roughly, “communicable”. There is however, a difference in emphasis or focus between the two words. Contagious tends to be focused on the person or animal affected by the disease (e.g. *Precautions are taken with anyone who seems contagious*), while infectious emphasizes the agent or organism which carries the disease (e.g. *The infectious agent thought to be responsible for BSE in cattle*).

Early / Soon

Early applies to that which precedes a certain point of time and soon, to that which follows such a point. “He came early” means that he came before the appointed or necessary time: whereas “He came soon” means that he came shortly after some other event that has been mentioned.

“I came early and the others soon began to gather”.

Empty / Vacant

An empty room is one that has no furniture or other contents. A vacant room may be well furnished but it is unoccupied by persons. Empty is the literal term, as an empty chain, house, street, pail, hand or well, as opposed to a full one. Vacant is less literal, as a vacant stare, space, moment, throne, office or position, as opposed to and occupied one.

Habit / Custom

Habit is often misused for custom, as “The News papers have a habit of printing a large paper on Sunday”. Habit applies chiefly to individuals and means a tendency to repeat an action as “He has a habit of reading the paper on Sunday morning”.

Custom applies chiefly to groups and institutions and stresses the actual repetitions of an act.

Happen / Occur

These words mean to come about or come to pass. Happen is a general term and is very widely used to mean to come to pass, especially by chance. *E.g. It happened to rain that day.* The term also means to chance upon or to come or go by chance. *E.g. I happened to be in the town on the night of the public meeting.*

Occur is equivalent to happen in the sense of to come to pass. It can also refer to something accidental or something planned. *E.g. The tragedy occurred only minutes after takeoff.*

Listen / Hear

These words are something interchangeable but not necessarily so, as “I listened carefully, but didn’t hear his name”. Listen means primarily to give close attention and to make a special effort to hear. One may listen without hearing. On the other hand, one may hear without listening, that is, without any special effort or application.

Look / See

To look is to direct the eyes in order to see. Look implies volition but not necessarily result. We can look without seeing what we are looking for.

To see is to perceive with eyes, with or without voluntary attention. We see what is before us without looking for it.

Mistake / Error

These words denote something done, said or believed incorrectly or improperly. In many contexts they are interchangeable, but error often implies deviation from a standard or model, whereas mistake is preferred in the common situation of everyday life;

e. g. I took your umbrella by mistake.

The student made an error in arithmetic.

Error is used also when moral offence is involved.

Student / Pupil

These words refer to someone involved in studies in attempting to gain a set of skills. Student is the most general word for any such person. Though it forms a complementary pair with pupil it refers to one in a university or technical college. (Pupil applies properly to younger children in elementary schools.) Whereas 'pupil', itself has few uses outside this situation. Student can displace pupil and refer to the most advanced or specialized expert or authority in some field.

For Example – He became a keen student of Beethoven's later work.

Request / Requisition

These words refer to oral or written statements asking someone to grant a wish or fulfill a need. Request is the most general and informal. Unless contravened by context, it suggests courtesy and genuine desire, but not necessary certainly that what is asked will be granted.

e.g. 'Catalogues of our books will be sent on request.'

"They've made an urgent request for international aid."

Requisition is a formal word and restricted in meaning to written requests. It indicates a detailed statement of the need for food, supplies or shelter.

e.g. The villagers put in a requisition for the supply of drinking water.

The school authorities have made a requisition for more computing equipment.

Several / Various

These words refer to small groups of more than two numbers. Several is used to emphasize the number, it emphasizes the fact that more than two are involved. Whereas, 'various', is used to emphasize diversity. It is more matter – of – fact about a wide representation of different things, whether actually grouped together or looked at in isolation e.g. various trees dotting the landscape; various sorts of people out for an afternoon walk.

Silent / Quiet

These words are comparable when they are applied to persons or things that make no sound. Silent simply means refraining no sound or being without noise; it does not necessarily suggest serenity or motionlessness: a silent film; a silent conversation between deaf and dumb.

Quiet implies freedom from activity or commotion: a quiet neighbourhood; Quiet Street. In most contexts, silent and quiet are not interchangeable without changing the sense but when referring simply to the absence of speech and especially if used predicatively, they are interchangeable; a child who keeps silent (or quiet)

Shall / Will

The traditional rule is that when writing of future events shall is used with first person pronouns, while will is used with second and third persons, but that when writing of promises, obligations or commands, the will and shall change places.

In practice, however, shall and will are today used more or less interchangeably in statements (though not in questions). One result of this blurring is that confusion can now arise when legal documents use shall in an effort to impose an obligation, e.g. *the tenant shall pay the rent on time*. 'Must' is clearer for this purpose and should be preferred if there is any risk of confusion.

Sympathy / Empathy

Sympathy is a feeling of sorrow for someone else's suffering. A *sympathizer* is someone who agrees with a particular ideal or cause.

My family's sympathy for the death of my father gave me a lot of strength.

She never expressed any sympathy when I was injured.

Empathy is the ability to understand another person's perspective or feelings.

Only a mother can have empathy for her child's pain.

Politicians can never really empathize with the problems of the poor because they themselves lead a very comfortable life.

Till / Untill

In most contexts, **till** and **until** have the same meaning and are interchangeable. The main difference is that **till** is generally considered to be more informal than **until** and occurs less frequently in writing.

In addition, **until** tends to be the natural at the beginning of a sentence. *Until very recently, there was still a chance of rescuing the situation.* Interestingly, while it is commonly assumed that **till** is an abbreviated form of **until**. **Till** is in fact the earlier form.

Conclusion

The ability to make the right use of words is not inherited from ancestors or received as a boon from the Gods. It is acquired or developed by study. All words present difficulties and some words only by special attention, study and constant watching we can master such words and become successful in life. Of course, there are other ways to succeed in life besides building one's vocabulary, but there is none that is easier.

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