

UOW College Hong Kong / Community College of City University
Student English Enhancement Unit (SEE U)
Daily English Practice

Week 3

#113 Praising someone for his/her good English may cause anger

Skills/ Objectives: Reading, Listening and Writing Skills

PART 1: Before you read...

Preparatory questions

Qt 1: Will you feel pleased if somebody says your English is very good?

Qt 2: Can you imagine why someone would feel offended when you praise him/her for speaking good English?

Qt 3: Do you agree that we can't judge people by the colour of their skin? Some people with Chinese-looking faces are also native English speakers!

Vocabulary

- descent (noun): the state or fact of being related to a particular person or group of people who lived in the past.
- impulse (noun): a sudden strong desire to do something.
- schoolmarm (noun): female school teachers in the old style.
- patronising (adjective): speaking or behaving towards someone as if they were stupid or not important.
- simmer (verb): to become less angry or excited about something.
- clanger (noun): something that you say by accident that embarrasses or upsets someone.
- foot-in-mouth (adjective): saying the wrong thing by accident that embarrasses or upsets someone.
- Back-handed (adjective): looking nice but may really be a criticism or meaning something unkind.
- lament (noun): a song or writing to express sadness over somebody's death.
- extol (verb): to praise someone or something strongly.
- beseech (verb): to ask for something in a way that you want it very much.

PART 2: Article for Reading

The following article posted on SCMP web-site tells a story of how somebody may feel very angry when you praise him/her for speaking good English:

Racism in Hong Kong: why 'your English is very good' is not a compliment, it's actually very insulting

<https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/short-eads/article/2146707/racism-hong-kong-why-your-english-very-good-not>

PART 3: Listening Comprehension

Listen to the following short video clip to learn more about this interesting topic while practicing your listening skills at the same time:

Why You Should Stop Giving This "Compliment"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQwJNYIkQA>

PART 4: Writing Practice

Did you notice the humorous introduction in the main text? It says as follows:

There are many ways to respond to a compliment, but stabbing the flatterer is rarely recommended. Yet that was the impulse I once felt when a colleague commented that my English was "pretty good".

The interesting thing about this introduction is that it is making a joke with "stabbing the flatterer" by describing it like one of the proper options to choose from in response to a compliment. One immediately feels amused by the fact that such crazy idea would never appear in the mind of a normal person. This is a writing skill making use of humour. Following this humorous pattern, you may also write as follows:

There are many ways to drive away a housefly but trying to do so with your cheese cake is rarely recommended.

Can you write a short introductory sentence of your own using this idea of humour? Send your writing to: **see.u@cccu.edu.hk**. Remember! Our **SEE U** teachers are always ready to give you feedback.