

Worksheet (Grammar in Use)

Do you know why English is so difficult? Just take a look at the following example:

- ✧ I like fine art, fine food, and of course, a fine day.
- ✧ We can feel fine and fine others.
- ✧ This kind of arrangement will suit me fine.
- ✧ She has to pay a \$200 fine.

Text 1

What makes English so unique is the richness of its vocabulary. English is unique in having a synonym for so many words. We can go up, rise, mount, or ascend; we will feel fear, terror, or trepidation, and give, offer, or grant something.

Yet, a critic could argue that English is an untidy language, which is full of needless words. And one single word may have a whole galaxy of meanings. Fine, for instance, has fourteen definitions as an adjective, six as a noun, and two as an adverb. We can talk about fine art, fine gold, a fine day. We can feel fine and can fine others. In the Oxford English Dictionary, it fills two full pages and takes 5000 words of description.

Text 2

Another thing that makes English difficult is the collocations. Take pay as an example. We can pay somebody money. And we can pay somebody compliments. We can pay somebody a visit, but we don't give somebody a visit. The strangest expression of pay is to pay your way, which has something to do with money, but still it seems strange.

Text 3

But the champion of multiple meanings is set. It seems totally simple, but it has 58 uses as a noun, 126 as a verb, and 10 as a participial adjective. Its meanings are so various that it takes the OED 60000 words—the length of a short novel—to discuss them all. No wonder, to know set is to know English, according to some linguists.

Text 4

One more thing makes English more confusing: a word may have opposite meanings. For example, To wind up a meeting is to finish it; to wind up a watch is to start it. We consider “trying one's best” agreeable, but trying one's patience is a bad thing. “I could care less” means the same thing as “I couldn't care less”.

Non-English speakers may find pronunciation an even bigger headache. If there is one thing certain about English pronunciation, then there is almost nothing certain about it. No other language in the world has more words spelled the same way and yet pronounced differently.

Worksheet (Assignment)

1. Can you figure out all the sentence structures of the underlined sentences in the following text?

In English, we have at least six ways of expressing negation with prefixes: a-, anti-, in-, il-, im-, ir-, un-, and non-. Whether this is a sign of great variety or just untidiness is quite arguable. Foreign English learners must find it desperate to learn that a thing unseen is not invisible, but invisible; something that cannot be reversed is not irreversible, but irreversible; a thing not possible is not nonpossible but impossible.

Furthermore, they must learn not to make the mistake of assuming that because a word contains a negative suffix or prefix it is necessarily a negative word. For instance, in- almost always implies negation, but not with *invaluable*; -less is also negative, but not with *priceless*.

Things are so confusing that even native users leave us two forms that mean the same thing: *flammable* and *inflammable*, *habitable* and *inhabitable*, *ravel* and *unravel*.

2. How do you tell SVOC and SVOiOd apart, and how do you tell SVO from SVC? Use examples to prove your point.