
虫牙！

Tooth Bugs!

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有一天，我正在跟我中国的寄宿家庭吃早饭，我发现家里的小弟弟一直在看着我。我每吃一口，他都会往我嘴里看。真的很讨厌！

最后，我受不了了，“你在看什么？”我几乎叫了出来。

“呃.....虫牙！哥哥，我觉得你有虫牙！”

我很糊涂，也很担心。我以前从来没有听说过这个中文单词，但是我知道虫和牙分别是什么意思：虫子的虫，牙齿的牙。

那虫牙是什么意思呢？

我的心情糟糕极了。我是不是得了什么奇怪的中国的病？现在我的嘴里是不是住着很可怕的虫子？他们会不会慢慢吃掉我的牙，然后开出一条可以通到我的脑子的路，一直到我疼死？

我寄宿家庭的父母注意到了我和弟弟之间的交谈。

“张开你的嘴。”我寄宿家庭的妈妈说。

“嗯.....”她边想边说，“我觉得他说的没错，亲爱的，你看看。”

寄宿家庭的爸爸检查了我的嘴，“没错，确实是虫牙。”他肯定地说。

我要死了。

我不知道该怎么办。我在想我还剩多少天？多少个星期？我妈妈会很难过，她会哭很久。

最糟糕的是，我需要写信给我的女朋友，我会告诉她：“亲爱的，我们有过很多美好的回忆，我很爱你，但以后没有我你也要好好生活下去.....”

我的这些想法被我寄宿家庭的爸爸的声音打断了。

“你觉得我们今天要不要约牙医？”

牙医？我以为我们得直接去医院急诊科。

“等等.....虫牙是什么？”我犹豫地问。

“在你牙里的洞，是虫牙！因为你刷牙刷得不够多，但主要的原因是你吃太多奶奶做的月饼！你以为我没发现你去厨房偷吃吗？”

所以，我不会死。

弟弟在桌子下面拿给我一个月饼。

“这是我们的秘密。”他悄悄地说。

生词 Vocabulary

Nouns

寄宿家庭	jìsù jiātíng	host family
心情	xīnqíng	state of mind; mood
急诊科	jízhěn kē	the emergency room
月饼	yuèbǐng	mooncake
秘密	mìmì	secret

Verbs

讨厌	tǎoyàn	disagreeable; repugnant
担心	dānxīn	worry; feel anxious
分别	fēnbié	separately; individually; respectively
交谈	jiāotán	talk with each other; converse; chat
剩	shèng	be left over; remain
回忆	huíyì	recall; recollect
生活	shēnghuó	life
打断	dǎduàn	interrupt; cut short
约	yuē	make an appointment
偷吃	tōuchī	to eat on the sly

Adjectives

糊涂	hútu	muddled; confused; bewildered
糟糕	zāogāo	too bad; how terrible; what bad luck
可怕	kěpà	fearful; frightful; awful; terrible; dreadful
肯定	kěndìng	positive; affirmative; definite; certain
犹豫	yóuyù	hesitate; be irresolute

Adverbs

几乎	jīhū	almost; nearly
确实	quèshí	really; indeed
悄悄	qiāoqiāo	secretly; stealthily

Phrases

受不了	shòubùliǎo	cannot stand; cannot endure
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语法点 Grammar Points

1. 几乎 (jīhū) versus 差不多 (chàbùduō)

几乎 (jīhū): **adv.** almost, nearly, practically

差不多 (chàbùduō): **adv.** almost, nearly, practically; **adj.** about the same, similar

几乎 (jīhū) and 差不多 (chàbùduō) have similar meanings and are sometimes used in similar ways. Therefore, it's common for students to struggle to tell them apart.

Let's start by analyzing their similarities. 几乎 (jīhū) is an adverb that means "almost," "nearly" or "practically." Likewise, 差不多 (chàbùduō) can also be used as an adverb that means "almost" or "nearly." When both function as adverbs, these two words can sometimes be interchangeable.

For example:

他唱歌唱得很好，差不多和职业歌手一样。

Tā chàngē chàng de hěn hǎo, chàbùduō hé zhíyè gēshǒu yīyàng.

He sings very well, almost as well as a professional singer.

他唱歌唱得很好，几乎和职业歌手一样。

Tā chàngē chàng de hěn hǎo, jīhū hé zhíyè gēshǒu yīyàng.

He sings very well, almost as well as a professional singer.

In the sentences above, 差不多 (chàbùduō) and 几乎 (jīhū) are interchangeable. They are both acting as adverbs meaning “almost.” Note that the meaning of the sentence stays the same no matter which is used.

It isn't always possible to use these two words in the same way, though. For example, it's OK to add a single syllable adjective directly after 差不多 (chàbùduō), but it's not OK to do so directly after 几乎 (jīhū). If you want to use 几乎 (jīhū) followed by a single adjective, you must say 几乎一样 (jīhū yīyàng) instead of just 几乎 (jīhū).

For example:

这件衣服和那一件差不多贵。

Zhè jiàn yīfu hé nà yī jiàn chàbùduō guì.

This piece of clothing is nearly as expensive as that one.

这件衣服和那件几乎一样贵。

Zhè jiàn yīfú hé nà yī jiàn jīhū yīyàng guì.

This piece of clothing is nearly as expensive as that one.

Note that in the second of the two sentences above, 几乎 (jīhū) cannot stand alone. It must be paired with 一样 (yīyàng). Writing the sentence without 一样 (yīyàng) is incorrect. 差不多(chàbùduō), on the other hand, can stand alone here.

Another difference between these two words is that, unlike 几乎 (jīhū), 差不多 (chàbùduō) is also often used before words that express numbers or time. In this case, it also means “almost” or “nearly.”

For example:

差不多7:00了，你怎么还没到家呢？

Chàbùduō 7:00 le, nǐ zěnmě hái méi dào jiā ne?

It's almost 7 o'clock, why aren't you home yet?

There are several other situations where 差不多 (chàbùduō) and 几乎 (jīhū) differ. For instance, while 差不多 (chàbùduō) is commonly used as an adjective in everyday speech, 几乎 (jīhū) can only function as an adverb.

When used as an adjective, 差不多 (chàbùduō) most commonly means “about the same” or “similar.”

For example:

这两张桌子大小都差不多，不管买哪一个都可以放得下。

Zhè liǎng zhāng zhuōzi dàxiǎo dōu chàbùduō, bùguǎn mǎi nǎ yī gè dōu kěyǐ fàng de xià.

These two tables are about the same size, so no matter which one we buy, it will fit.

Another difference is that 几乎 (jīhū) can be used to mean that something unwelcome or undesirable almost occurred, but then didn't in the end. 差不多 (chàbùduō) is not used in this way.

Let's look at some examples to understand this special usage of 几乎 (jīhū):

“你在看什么？”我几乎叫了出来。

“Nǐ zài kàn shénme?” Wǒ jīhū jiàole chūlái.

“What are you looking at?” I almost yelled.

In this example, the speaker is using 几乎 (jīhū) to highlight how he almost yelled, but didn't actually yell in the end. Yelling is somewhat undesirable, since it is impolite, so the use of 几乎 indicates that the speaker didn't want to yell, was so annoyed that he almost did, but stopped himself from doing so in the end.

Let's look at another example:

他刚刚没看路，几乎摔了一跤。

Tā gānggāng méi kàn lù, jīhū shuāile yī jiāo.

He wasn't looking where he was going just now and so he almost tripped.

In the sentence above, the undesirable action that almost happened, but then didn't, is tripping. The use of 几乎 (jīhū) indicates that “he” was about to trip, but was able to catch himself in time.

When all's said and done, it's also worth noting that 差不多 (chàbùduō) is the more commonly used than 几乎 (jīhū). This isn't surprising considering that 差不多 (chàbùduō) can function as both an adverb and an adjective, while 几乎 (jīhū) can only be used as an adverb.

2. 从来 (cónglái)

adv. always; never (when used in the negative)

从来 (cónglái) is a useful Chinese adverb that by itself means “always.” It is also frequently used as part of a negative sentence with 不 (bù) or 没有 (méiyǒu). When used in this way, its meaning flips, becoming the opposite of always: never.

Let's start with the positive meaning. If you want to use 从来 (cónglái) to mean “always,” use the following structure:

Subject + 从来 (cónglái) + 都 (dōu) + Predicate

Note the addition of the word 都 (dōu; all) which helps emphasize that the situation being described has been the case all along.

For example:

他工作从来都很认真。

Tā gōngzuò cónglái dōu hěn rènzhēn.

He's always been a very diligent worker.

In this sentence, 从来 (cónglái) is used in a straightforward way to indicate that the worker has always been a diligent worker.

Sometimes, you will hear people add 是 (shì) to this structure for emphasis, like so:

Subject + 从来 (cónglái) + 都是 (dōu shì) + Predicate

For example:

他从来都是买最便宜的东西。

Tā cónglái dōu shì mǎi zuì piányí de dōngxī.

He's always only bought the cheapest things.

从来 (cónglái) is also frequently used in its negative form to mean “never” in the context of talking about things you never do or have never done. When used in this way, it's necessary to add 不 (bù) or 没有 (méiyǒu) after 从来 (cónglái). This negative use of 从来 (cónglái) is perhaps even more common than the positive use.

Note that the meaning of 从来 (cónglái) changes slightly depending on whether it's used with 不 (bù) or 没有 (méiyǒu). We use 从来不 (cónglái bù) to say that, as a rule, you currently never do something. To say that you have never done something in the past, on the other hand, we use the phrase 从来没有...过 (cónglái méiyǒu...guò).

Let's first look at how to say that you never do something as a rule. When using 从来 (cónglái) in this way, employ the following structure:

Subject + 从来 (cónglái) + 不 (bù) + Verb

For example:

我**从来**不看电视。

Wǒ **cónglái** bù kàn diànshì.

I never watch TV.

Note that this sentence is referring to something that the speaker never does in the present. In other words, this sentence indicates that the speaker is not currently in the habit of watching TV.

If instead you want to say that you have never done something before or that you have never had the experience of doing something before, you should pair 从来 (cónglái) with 没有...过 (méiyǒu...guò) instead of 不 (bù).

In this case, use the following structure:

Subject + 从来 (cónglái) + 没有 (méiyǒu) + Verb + 过 (guò)

For example:

我**从来**没有听说过这个中文单词。

Wǒ **cónglái** méiyǒu tīng shuō guò zhège Zhōngwén dāncí.

I have never heard this Chinese word before.

In the sentence above, the speaker is using the phrase 从来没有...过 (cónglái méiyǒu...guò) when discussing the fact that he has never had the experience of hearing a certain Chinese word in the past.

3. 出来 (chū lái)

result complement. *to tell, to distinguish; to come up with, to figure out*

出来 (chū lái) is a Chinese grammatical construction that is most commonly used in a literal sense to mean that something physically comes out of something else.

If you have achieved an HSK 4 level of Chinese, you've probably been using the literal form of 出来 (chū lái) for quite some time in sentences like 我从包里面拿出来了一把钥匙 (Wǒ cóng bāo lǐmian ná chū lái le yī bǎ yàoshi; I took a bunch of keys out of the bag).

Instead of focusing on this more literal sense, however, this grammar point explores how to use 出来 (chū lái) in a metaphorical sense. When used this way, 出来 (chū lái) functions as a result complement. Like the more common result complements 到 (dào), 见 (jiàn) and 完 (wán), 出来 (chū lái) appears directly after the verb to describe its result.

Luckily, the more figurative meanings of 出来 (chū lái) are clearly related to its literal meaning of something physically coming out of something else. Instead of talking about two physical things, though, it's used to refer to something less tangible, like a smell, taste, feeling, or answer that comes out of an action like smelling, touching, thinking or guessing.

出来 (chū lái) can be used to talk about actions succeeding or reaching completion. It can also be used to talk about getting information from an action or recognizing or guessing something.

In English, this figurative sense of 出来 (chū lái) is often translated as to tell/distinguish or to come up with/figure out/guess. It is often used with verbs like 猜 (cāi), 听 (tīng), 想 (xiǎng) and 闻 (wén).

For example:

你能猜**出来**这一个礼物是谁送的吗？

Nǐ néng cāi **chūlái** zhè yīgè lǐwù shì shéi sòng de ma?

Can you guess who gave us this gift?

In this sentence, 出来 (chūlái) functions as a result complement in the common phrase 猜出来 (cāi chūlái; to guess successfully). In this case, 出来 (chūlái) is modifying the verb 猜 (cāi; to guess).

Guessing is the action, and 出来 (chūlái) is being used in the figurative sense to talk about something (in this case, an answer) coming out of the action (guessing).

Let's look at another example:

“你在看什么？”我**几乎**叫了出来。

“Nǐ zài kàn shénme?” Wǒ **jīhū** jiàole chūlái.

“What are you looking at?” I almost yelled.

In this case, the result complement 出来 (chūlái) is paired with the verb 叫 (jiào; to yell). The action being discussed is the act of yelling, while the thing that (almost) resulted from or “came out” of this action is the sound of the yell.

测试 Quiz

1. 谁先发现“我”有虫牙?
 - a. 寄宿家庭的父亲
 - b. 寄宿家庭的母亲
 - c. “我”自己
 - d. 寄宿家庭的小弟弟

2. 刚发现自己有虫牙时,“我”:
 - a. 很高兴
 - b. 很兴奋
 - c. 很生气
 - d. 很害怕

3. 发现自己有虫牙之后,“我”认为需要写信给谁?
 - a. 他的妈妈
 - b. 他的弟弟
 - c. 他的女朋友
 - d. 他的寄宿家庭

4. 寄宿家庭的父亲认为“我”要去哪里?
 - a. 牙科
 - b. 医院急诊科
 - c. 卖月饼的地方
 - d. “我”女朋友的家

5. “我”有虫牙主要的原因是什么?
 - a. 因为住在中国
 - b. 因为喜欢吃月饼
 - c. 因为不经常看牙科
 - d. 因为牙齿里面有虫子

Answer key on final page of PDF.

Chóngyá!

Yǒu yī tiān, wǒ zhèngzài gēn wǒ Zhōngguó de jìsù jiāting chī zǎofàn, wǒ fāxiàn jiālǐ de xiǎo dìdi yīzhí zài kànzhe wǒ. Wǒ měi chī yī kǒu, tā dōu huì wǎng wǒ zuǐlǐ kàn. Zhēnde hěn tāoyàn!

Zuìhòu, wǒ shòubùliǎo le, “Nǐ zài kàn shénme?” Wǒ jīhū jiào le chūlái.

“E...chóngyá! Gēge, wǒ juéde nǐ yǒu chóngyá!”

Wǒ hěn hútu, yě hěn dānxīn. Wǒ yǐqián cónglái méiyǒu tīngshuōguo zhège Zhōngwén dāncí, dànshì wǒ zhīdao chóng hé yá fēnbié shì shénme yìsi: chóngzi de chóng, yáchǐ de yá.

Nà chóngyá shì shénme yìsi ne?

Wǒde xīnqíng zāogāo jíle. Wǒ shì bù shì déle shénme qíguài de Zhōngguó de bìng? Xiàn zài wǒ de zuǐ lǐ shì bù shì zhùzhe hěn kěpà de chóngzi? Tāmen huì bù huì mànman chī diào wǒde yá, ránhòu kāi chū yī tiáo kěyǐ tōng dào wǒ de nǎozǐ de lù, yīzhí dào wǒ téng sǐ?

Wǒ jìsù jiāting de fùmǔ zhùyì dào le wǒ hé dìdi zhījiān de jiāotán.

“Zhāng kāi nǐde zuǐ.” wǒ jìsù jiāting de māma shuō.

“En” Tā biān xiǎng biān shuō, “Wǒ juéde tā shuō de méicuò, qīn’ài de, nǐ kànkàn.”

Jìsù jiā tíng de bàba jiǎnchá le wǒ de zǔ, “ Méicuò, quèshí shì chóngyá.” Tā kěndìng de shuō.

Wǒ yào sǐ le.

Wǒ bù zhīdao gāi zěnmebàn. Wǒ zài xiǎng wǒ hái shèng duōshǎo tiān?
Duōshǎo gè xīngqī? Wǒ māma huì hěn nánguò, tā huì kū hěn jiǔ.

Zuì zāogāo de shì, wǒ xūyào xiěxìn gěi wǒ de nǚpéngyou, wǒ huì gàosu tā: “
Qīn’ài de, wǒmen yǒuguò hěn duō měihǎo de huíyì, wǒ hěn ài nǐ, dàn yǐhòu
méiyǒu wǒ nǐ yě yào hǎohao shēnghuó xiàqù...”

Wǒ de zhè xiē xiǎngfǎ bèi wǒ jìsù jiā tíng de bàba de shēngyīn dǎduàn le.

“ Nǐ juéde wǒmen jīntiān yào bù yào yuē yáyī?”

Yáyī? Wǒ yǐwéi wǒmen děi zhíjiē qù yīyuàn jízhěn kē.

“ Dēngdēng...chóngyá shì shénme?” Wǒ yóuyù de wèn.

“ Zài nǐ yá lí de dòng, shì chóngyá! Yīnwei nǐ shuāyá shuā de bùgòu duō,
dàn zhǔyào de yuányīn shì nǐ chī tài duō nǎinai zuò de yuèbǐng! Nǐ yǐwéi wǒ
méi fāxiàn nǐ qù chūfáng tōuchī ma?”

Suǒyǐ, wǒ bù huì sǐ.

Dìde zài zhuōzi xiàmian ná gěi wǒ yī gè yuèbǐng.

“Zhè shì wǒmen de mìmi.” Tā qiāoqiāo de shuō.

Tooth Bugs!

One day while having breakfast with my host family in China, I noticed that my little host brother was watching me closely. Every time I took a bite, he would intentionally try to look into my mouth. It was so annoying!

Finally, I had had enough, “What are you staring at!?” I almost yelled.

“Uhhh... Tooth bugs (虫牙)! Big brother, I think you have tooth bugs!”

I was confused. I was also alarmed. I had never heard this particular Chinese word before but I did know the meaning of the two Chinese characters that made it up: 虫子, meaning “bug” or “worm,” and 牙, meaning “tooth.”

But what did 虫牙 mean?!

I felt my heart sink. Had I caught some strange Chinese disease? Were there now horrible bugs living inside my mouth? Would they slowly eat away at my teeth and then chew their way into my brain until I died a painful death?

My host parents had now noticed the exchange occurring between me and my little host brother.

“Open your mouth,” my host mother said.

“Hmm...” she murmured thoughtfully, “I think he might be right. Honey, take a look.”

My host father carefully inspected my mouth, “Yup, yup, there’s no doubt about it: tooth bugs,” he said with certainty.

I was going to die.

I was utterly lost. I wondered how much time I had left. Days? Weeks? My mother would be so sad. She would cry for days.

Worst of all, I'd have to write to my girlfriend. I would tell her: "My sweetheart, we shared something beautiful and I love you but you must now go on without me—"

My thoughts were interrupted by my host father's voice.

"Do you think we should make an appointment with the dentist today?"

The dentist? I'd assumed we'd have to go straight to the emergency room.

"Wait... what are tooth bugs?" I asked hesitantly.

"Holes in your teeth. Cavities! It's because you don't brush them enough, but mostly it's because you've been eating too many of grandma's mooncakes! You think I don't notice you stealing them from the kitchen, but I do!"

So, I wasn't going to die.

Under the table, my little host brother handed me a mooncake.

"Our little secret," he whispered.

Quiz Answer Key:

1. d 2. d 3. c 4. a 5. b



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