BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

Q and A of the Week 你问我答

Silent, mute, reticent

三个表示"无声"的形容词



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Feifei

大家好,欢迎收听 BBC 英语教学的"你问我答"节目,我是冯菲菲。这档节目回答大家在英语学习中遇到的各种难题和疑问。本集"你问我答"要回答的问题来自 Cici,我们来听一下她的问题。

Question

Hello. I'd like to know the difference between 'silent', 'mute', and 'reticent'. Moreover, if I want to describe someone who can't speak, should I use 'mute', 'dumb', or either? Looking forward to your reply. Thanks!

Feifei

听众 Cici 想知道表示"沉默的"三个形容词"silent、mute"和"reticent"之间有哪些区别,以及在英语中,应如何称呼有语言障碍的人士才比较合适。

我们先来听一段音频,这段音频讲的是一个不爱说话的人—— Jingwen 的故事。来边听边体会单词"silent、mute"和"reticent"在音频中的意思和用法。

Example

Jingwen wasn't much of a talker. When someone asked her something she felt was pointless, she often remained **mute**. She had had an unhappy upbringing with a lot of shouting. She was very **reticent** about her childhood. She loved that she worked in a library, where people were required to be as **silent** as they could.

Feifei

上面这段话对 Jingwen 这个不太爱说话的人进行了描述。我们先来看这段音频中用到的形容词"silent",它用来指"人或者是事物是安静的,无声的"。在"silent、mute"和"reticent"当中,只有"silent"可以描述"一个地方的氛围、环境很安静"。我们来听一个例句,句子的意思是:"上个周日的早上,大街小巷十分安静,空无一人。"

Example

At 6am on Sunday morning, the streets were silent and empty.

Feifei

除了形容"一个地方很安静"以外,"silent"还可以指"一个人因不说话而沉默",或者"人的行为举止安静"。比如,前面的音频中说到,Jingwen 很喜欢自己在图书馆的工作,因为这个地方要求人们尽可能地安静"be silent"。我们再来听一遍这句话。

Example

She loved that she worked in a library, where people were required to be as silent as they could.

Feifei

如果想表示"变得安静下来,沉默下来",我们就可以用搭配"fall silent"。如果想表示"对一件事情保持沉默",那么可以用搭配"be/remain silent about/on something"。来听两个例句。

Examples

When the dog saw his owner's angry face, it stopped barking and fell silent immediately.

If you're arrested, you have the right to remain silent about whatever you've been accused of.

Feifei

上面我们讲到,在形容"一个人的活动、举止安静"的时候,可以用形容词"silent"。 "Silent"还可以用来形容"人的性格很安静,不爱说话"。来听一个例句,句子的意思是:"Kai 是内心强大、少言寡语型的男朋友。"

Example

Kai is the strong and silent type of boyfriend.

Feifei

接下来我们来看一看单词"mute"。"Mute"用来描述"一个人不愿说话"或者"说不出话来",它可以指"因为受到一件事情的冲击而在短时间内变得哑口无言"。比如,下面这句话用"mute"描述了一个因为受到了无端的指责而惊讶得"说不出话"的男孩。来听一下这句话。

Example

The boy stood mute, unable to believe that he'd been blamed for something he hadn't done.

Feifei

形容词"mute"可与不同的动词搭配使用。比如: be mute 沉默的; sit mute 一句话都不说地坐着; stand mute 一言不发地站着; fall mute 变得一声不吭; remain mute 保持沉默不语。下面,我们就来听三个分别包含这些搭配的例句。

Examples

When someone asked her something she felt was pointless, she often remained mute.

The criminal stood mute as the judge read the sentence.

When I asked about his family, he fell mute on the subject.

Feifei

接下来我们转看形容词"reticent"。"Reticent"的意思也和"沉默、安静"有关,它突出一个人不愿就一件特定的事情谈及自己的情感、想法或是拒绝提供信息。我们常用搭配"be reticent about something"来表示"闭口不谈一件事情"。来听一个例句。

Example

She had had an unhappy upbringing with a lot of shouting. She was very reticent about her childhood.

Feifei

我们来总结一下形容词"silent、mute"和"reticent"在表示"沉默"的时候有哪些区别。在这三个词语当中,只有"silent"可以用来形容"一个地方很安静"。此外,"silent"还可以表示"人的言行举止以及性格很安静"。"Mute"在形容人的时候,突出了一个人因为震惊而变得安静不语的、一声不吭的。而形容词"reticent"强调一个人不愿意谈及一件事情,从而沉默、安静。

最后,我们来回答 Cici 的第二个问题,她问道: "我们能不能用单词'mute'或'dumb'来描述一位因为有语言障碍而无法说话的人?"记住,我们不能用"mute"或"dumb"来称呼他们,因为"mute"和"dumb"是英语中已经过时的旧式说法,而且这两个词都带有贬义色彩,所以是非常不礼貌的。如果需要描述一位因为有语言障碍而无法说话的人,那么则可以说: a person who is unable to speak。

好了,如果你在英语学习中遇到了疑问,可以把问题发送到我们的邮箱,邮箱地址是questions.chinaelt@bbc.co.uk,你也可以通过微博"BBC英语教学"与我们取得联系。谢谢收听"你问我答"节目。我是冯菲菲。下次再见!