



Confused Words in English: Words That Sound or Look Almost the Same

Sonjai Chaiburuang¹

Gawisara Nilmongcol²

Thawatchai Chaibunruang³

Kemapasae Chanawongse⁴

Abstract

Besides homophones or words with the same sounds, words that sound or look almost the same can be a big problem for students who study English as a foreign language. The writers, therefore, would like to help them pay closer attention to those words so that they can carry out their intended meanings for effective communication. The meanings of words are presented both in English and Thai (for our Thai students), but the sample sentences are in English only.

Keywords : English confused words, words that sound almost the same, words that look almost the same

Introduction

From our teaching experience at all levels, we have found that many Thai students have problems in understanding English, for they have problems understanding English words. One of the biggest problems is the understanding of words with the same sound (which have been presented in the earlier issue). Another big problem is the understanding of words that sound or look almost the same, thereby resulting in miscommunication, especially in writing. To help our students or learners ease such a problem, we will present such words with the meanings in English and Thai (for our Thai students) and sample sentences to show how they are used. We believe that to learn a foreign language effectively and to be able to be confidently use it, learners must know a lot of vocabulary, and certainly, they must know how to properly use them in a variety of context.

For part of speech, we use “adj for adjective, adv for adverb, n for noun, prep for preposition, and v for verb.”

Some of the words that sound or look the same

- | | | |
|---------|---|---|
| accept | (v): receive, take responsibility for | รับ ยอมรับ ตก
ลง |
| except | (prep): leaving out, excluding | |
| exclude | (v): exclude | ยกเว้น |
| | Would you <i>accept</i> my offer to work for me? If you do, you would have to work six days, because no one works only five days a week, <i>except</i> pregnant workers. | |
| access | (n): a way to a place; right, opportunity, or means of reaching | ทางเข้าไปสู่ สิทธิโอกาสที่จะ
เข้าสู่ |
| excess | (adj): too much; too great | |
| excess | (n): an amount of something which is more than reasonable | ปริมาณที่เกิน |
| | This is the only <i>access</i> to that building. Thus, if you have to walk, do not carry anything in <i>excess</i> of your needs. You can leave your <i>excess</i> things in the car. | |
| affect | (v): have an influence on | มีผลกระทบ |
| effect | (n): a result; an outcome | ผลกระทบ |
| effect | (v): bring about; accomplish | ก่อให้เกิด |

¹Dean, the Faculty of Liberal Arts, the College of Asian Scholars

^{2,4}Lecturers of English, the College of Asian Scholars



	The <i>effects</i> of thunder storms are too depressing for many people. They have lost their beloved ones and properties. Needless to say, the severe storms have <i>affected</i> the survivors' feelings and ways of living. They <i>effect</i> changes in people's lives	cloths (n): material made by weaving ผ้าเป็นชิ้นๆ ผ้าปู (รูปพหูพจน์ของ cloth) Janet wants to buy some new <i>clothes</i> for her new job; she also wants some <i>cloths</i> for other purposes.
allusion (n): an indirect reference การพูดเป็นนัยๆ		conscience (n): an inner sense of the moral rightness or wrongness ความรู้สึกผิดชอบชั่วดี สติสัมปชัญญะ
illusion (n): a false idea or belief ภาพลวงตา ภาพหลอน ความเชื่อ ความประทับใจที่ผิด		conscientious (adj): done carefully and honestly; showing great care, attention, or seriousness of purpose มีสติสัมปชัญญะ ทำด้วยความระมัดระวัง รอบคอบและซื่อสัตย์
Sometimes people just do not say things directly. They make <i>allusions</i> , especially about weight and age. In addition, they can create an <i>illusion</i> about the age by plastic surgery.		conscious (adj): aware; knowing, understanding, or recognizing something รู้ตัว รู้สึกตัว ตระหนักรู้ว่ามีบางสิ่งบางอย่างอยู่ Nowadays many people do not have a clear <i>conscience</i> of what they are doing. Some can commit very bad things without the sense of a guilty <i>conscience</i> . We should get rid of them. We do need more <i>conscientious</i> people; we do need more people who are <i>conscious</i> of their actions.
almost (adv): nearly เกือบ		considerable (adj): great; much จำนวนมาก
most (adj, adv): the greatest in number, quantity, the majority เกือบทั้งหมด ส่วนใหญ่ ชั้นสูงสุดที่สุด We <i>almost</i> left the house when <i>most</i> of our friends surprisingly stopped by to say hello to us.		considerate (adj): thoughtful of the feelings of others เกรงใจ (ใส่ใจในความรู้สึกของคนอื่น) We do not live by ourselves in society. When we are with a <i>considerable</i> number of people, we cannot do whatever we want; we must learn to be <i>considerate</i> if we want to live peacefully together in the same society.
baht (n): the Thai unit of currency บาท = หน่วยเงินของไทย		custom (n): a common tradition, an established and habitual practice ประเพณี ความเคยชิน กฎ customs / Customs: a place where travelers' belongings can be search when leaving or entering a country ด่านศุลกากร We all know that it is a <i>custom</i> to go through the <i>Customs</i> before leaving or entering a country. Besides, before visiting a foreign country, we should learn about its <i>custom</i> so that we will not unknowingly offend anyone there.
bath (n): washing of the body การอาบน้ำ Be careful when you write the Thai unit of currency; it is <i>baht</i> , b-a-h-t. But when you take a <i>bath</i> , that is b-a-t-h.		
beside (prep): at the side of; close to ข้างๆ ใกล้ๆ		
besides (prep): in addition to; as well as นอกเหนือจากนั้น Come and sit <i>beside</i> me. Then I will tell you what else we will have to do <i>besides</i> our research project.		
breath (n): air taken into and sent out of lungs ลมหายใจ		
breathe (v): take air into the lungs and send it out again หายใจ When the doctor tells us to take a deep <i>breath</i> , we have to <i>breathe</i> in deeply, and sometimes we have to hold our <i>breath</i> for a few seconds.		
clothes (n): garments worn to cover the body เสื้อผ้า (ไม่มีรูปเอกพจน์ ใช้ในรูปพหูพจน์เสมอ)		



council	(n): a group that governs สภา คณะกรรมการ ผู้ทำหน้าที่บริหาร	devise	(v): think out; plan คิดค้นแผนการออกมา ออกแบบ		
counsel	(n): advice; consultation; suggestions คำแนะนำ (v): advise; give counsel to ให้คำแนะนำให้ คำปรึกษา The university <i>council</i> will meet and discuss the <i>counsel</i> to be given to the university, especially during this era of the new educational system.	Some engineers have tried to <i>devise</i> a <i>device</i> to cope with the heavy dust particles in the air.	difference	(n): the state of being unlike; a way of being dissimilar ความแตกต่าง	
damage	(n): harm or injury ความเสียหาย การบาดเจ็บ	different	(adj): not the same; unlike ไม่เหมือนกัน แตกต่าง It is hard for people to tell the <i>difference</i> between these identical twins, but their best friends say like <i>different</i> kinds of food.	diner	(n): a person who dines; a restaurant with a long counter and booths
damages	(n): money claimed from or paid by a person causing loss or injury เงินชดเชย ค่าเสียหายหรือจากการบาดเจ็บ The natural disasters this summer have caused a lot of <i>damage</i> to several families including properties and lives of their family members. The <i>damages</i> they have received can never replace what they have lost.	dinner	(n): main meal of the day, whether eaten at midday or in the evening That <i>diner</i> on Main Street is popular among <i>dinners</i> . They enjoy having their <i>dinner</i> there.	economics	(n): science of the production and distribution of goods; the way in which something is influenced by economic considerations เศรษฐศาสตร์
decent	(adj): right and suitable; respectable เหมาะสม น่าเคารพนับถือ	economy	(n): the system by which a country's wealth is produced and used; avoidance of waste of valuable things เศรษฐกิจ การ หลีกเลี่ยงไม่ให้เกิดความสูญเปล่าของสิ่งที่มี คุณค่า Susan has planned to study <i>economics</i> at college. She hopes she can help improve the <i>economy</i> of the country somehow.	elicit	(v): draw out; cause to come out หาข้อมูล เอาออกมาล่อให้ตอบออกมา
descent	(n): coming or going down; ancestry; sudden attack การลง เชื้อสาย การจู่โจม A <i>decent</i> person will not do such a bad thing like that. He should wait for the girls to take their <i>descent</i> of that safe landing first.	illicit	(adj): unlawful; forbidden ผิดกฎหมาย ผิด ทำนองคลองธรรม Some people have intentionally tried to <i>elicit</i> ideas that the sale of marijuana is <i>illicit</i> .	emigrant	(n): a person who/emigrates (goes away from one's own country to settle down in another country) ผู้ที่อพยพออกไปอยู่อีก ประเทศหนึ่ง
desert	(n): waste land, waterless and treeless ที่ แห้งแล้ง ทะเลทราย (v): go away from ละทิ้ง				
dessert	(n): any sweet dish served at the end of a meal ของหวาน A gang of teenagers took an old car to a <i>desert</i> , but then the car broke down. They had to <i>desert</i> it, and then walked miles and miles until they found a house. The owner of the house is an old lady. She gave them something to eat. They said it was the best, especially the <i>dessert</i> .				
device	(n): a plan; a trick; a piece of equipment for a particular purpose แผน กลวิธี เครื่องมือ อุปกรณ์เพื่อวัตถุประสงค์เฉพาะ				



<p>immigrant (n): a person who immigrates (comes as a settler into another country) ผู้ที่อพยพเข้าไปอยู่ต่างประเทศ Many <i>emigrants</i> from all over the world have happily settled down as <i>immigrants</i> in the U. S.</p>	<p>formal (adj): in accordance with rules, customs, and convention เป็นทางการ แบบทางการ</p>	<p>City of Khon Kaen tried very hard to <i>form</i> a cheerleading team.</p>
<p>example (n): a fact thing, etc., which illustrates or represents a general rule; a piece of behavior or way of acting that may be copied by other people ตัวอย่าง แบบอย่าง</p>	<p>former (adj): of an earlier period ในอดีต (ใช้นำหน้าคำนามเท่านั้น) (n): the first (of two people or things) คนแรก สิ่งแรก (ของสองคน สองสิ่ง)</p>	<p>They are requested to wear a <i>formal</i> dress to the party tonight. The party is for the <i>former</i> and the new presidents of the company. The <i>former</i> is going to retire, and the new one is going to carry on with all the duties.</p>
<p>sample (n): a small part representing the whole; one of a number, part of a whole showing what the rest like ตัวอย่างของบางสิ่งบางอย่าง/คน This is an example of a good research study. The samples of the study represented a wide range of the whole population.</p>	<p>hard (adv): with great energy; with all one's force ด้วยพลังกำลังอย่างมาก อย่างหนัก ขยันมาก hardly (adv): seldom, rarely; scarcely แทบจะไม่เกือบจะไม่</p>	<p>hardly</p>
<p>exist (v): be real; continue living มีอยู่ ดำเนินชีวิต</p>	<p>exit (n): a way out ทางออก (v): go out; leave We cannot <i>exist</i> without more food and water. We should find an <i>exit</i> as soon as possible so that we can get out of this place. We can get more food and water out there!</p>	<p>Tim and Tom are completely different. Tim works <i>hard</i>. That's why he succeeds in everything he does. On the contrary, Tom <i>hardly</i> works, and that's why he fails.</p>
<p>farther (adv): comparative of far, used chiefly for distance</p>	<p>hang (v): 1. support, be supported, from above so that the lower end is free แขนง (hang, hung, hung) 2. put, be put, to death by hanging with a rope round the neck แขนงคอ ผูกคอตาย (hang, hanged, hanged)</p>	<p>hang</p>
<p>further (adj): additional, more (adv): often used for farther Let's stop here. I cannot go any <i>farther</i>. If you need <i>further</i> information, you can go by yourself.</p>	<p>imaginary (adj): existing only in the mind; unreal ที่อยู่ในจินตนาการ ไม่เป็นจริง</p>	<p>imaginary</p>
<p>form (n): shape; visible appearance แบบฟอร์ม รูปแบบ (v): give shape to; make; produce ก่อตัว เป็นรูปร่าง ทำหรือจัด</p>	<p>imaginative (adj): of, having, or using imagination ที่มีจินตนาการ</p>	<p>imaginative</p>
<p>from (prep): used to introduce the starting point; used to indicate the starting of a period or time จาก จากจุดเริ่มต้น สถานที่หรือเวลา Before becoming a great team of cheerleaders, those youngsters <i>from</i> the</p>	<p>Little girls enjoy playing and talking to her imaginary friends. They are always full of</p>	<p>Little girls enjoy playing and talking to her imaginary friends. They are always full of</p>



	imaginative ideas, and they act like they are playing and talking with real friends.		even try to find a <i>locale</i> for their future home.
immoral	(adj): wicked and evil ไม่ดี ผิดศีลธรรม	lonely	(adj): without friends; sad or melancholy because there are no friends around เหงา เศร้า และโดดเดี่ยว
immortal	(adj): ไม่ตาย ออมตะ It is a fact of life that nobody is <i>immortal</i> . We should therefore do as many good deeds as we can in our lives; we should avoid all <i>immoral</i> conducts.	alone	(adj, adv): without the company or help of others; by oneself อยู่คนเดียว ตามลำพัง Old people often feel <i>lonely</i> if they have to live <i>alone</i> . They are happy when their children, grandchildren, or relatives visit them.
industrial	(adj): of industries เกี่ยวกับอุตสาหกรรม (ใช้หน้าคำนาม)	loose	(adj): free; not tight or tense; not firmly or tightly fixed เป็นอิสระ ไม่กระชับ ไม่แน่นนอนหลวม
industrious	(adj): diligent; hard-working ขยัน Those engineering students are very <i>industrious</i> . They plan to work in <i>industrial</i> areas after their graduation.	lose	(v): no longer have; not continue to have ทำหาย สูญเสีย มีน้อยลง ไม่มีอีกต่อไปแล้ว แพ้ I like to wear <i>loose</i> clothes. I feel more comfortable in them; and there is no need for me to <i>lose</i> weight to be able to wear them.
inspiration	(n): someone or something which gives others the urge or the ability to do something แรงบันดาลใจ	mark	(n): something such as a line or scratch that spoils the appearance of something else รอยตำหนิ เครื่องหมาย (v): put or leave a mark on something ทำเครื่องหมาย เป็นรอยตำหนิ
aspiration	(n): desire to do something or have something ความใฝ่ฝัน ความทะเยอทะยาน My English schoolteacher was my <i>inspiration</i> to learn more English. Since then, my <i>aspiration</i> to share my knowledge in English with others has been in my soul.	mask	(n): covering for the face หน้ากาก (v): cover the face with a mask, conceal สวมหน้ากาก ซ่อนหรือปกปิด
intelligent	(adj): having or showing powers of learning, reasoning, or understanding ฉลาด ที่มีความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ การให้เหตุผล และการเข้าใจ	intelligible	(adj): that can be easily understood ที่เข้าใจได้ดี (เกี่ยวกับการพูดและการเขียน) Sometimes <i>intelligent</i> people give some <i>intelligent</i> suggestions that are <i>intelligible</i> only to their peers, not to the general public.
local	(adj): of a place or district ท้องถิ่น ที่อยู่ในท้องถิ่น (n): someone who live in the area คนในท้องถิ่น	local	(adj): concerning principles of right and wrong; good in character and behavior ที่เกี่ยวกับศีลธรรม (n): a piece of guidance on how to live one's life, how to act more effectively, that can be learned from a story บรรทัดฐานทางศีลธรรม บทเรียนจากเรื่องเล่า หรือประสบการณ์
locale	(n): a place where something particular happens or is done สถานที่ที่เกิดเรื่องราว Many foreigners enjoy living in the Northeast of Thailand. They like the <i>locals</i> and <i>local</i> food in this area. They	locale	(n): the condition of courage, determination, and pride in someone's mind; state of discipline and spirit ขวัญ กำลังใจ There are certainly <i>moral</i> principles for people to follow if they want to lead a



<p>happy life. Moreover, they can learn more about <i>morals</i> from what they have read and their experiences. They should be able to keep their <i>morale</i> as high ideals then.</p>	<p>proceed (v): go forward; continue, go on ทำต่อไป ดำเนินการ ต่อไป</p>
<p>part-time (adj, adv): for only a part of the working day or week ช่วงเวลาซึ่งเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของทั้งหมด ไม่เต็มเวลา ไม่ประจำ</p>	<p>The very hot and humid weather usually <i>precedes</i> thunderstorms which can cause a lot of damage to people's properties and lives. Later on, the government must <i>proceed</i> to do something to help those victims to recover their morale.</p>
<p>pastime (n): anything done to pass time pleasantly; game สิ่งบันเทิงใจ เกม สิ่งที่ชอบทำ เวลาว่าง</p>	<p>quiet (adj): with little or no movement or sound เงียบ</p>
<p>The reason why she takes a <i>part-time</i> job because she wants some extra money for the family; it is not her <i>pastime</i>.</p>	<p>quite (adv): completely; rather เต็มที่ มาก (ในการเน้นความหมาย) ค่อนข้าง ... ที่เดียว Why is everyone so <i>quiet</i> today? Is there anything wrong? Are you <i>quite</i> sure that everything is okay?</p>
<p>personal (adj): private; individual; of or for a person ที่เป็นส่วนตัว ส่วนบุคคล</p>	<p>raise (n): increase in salary เงินเดือนขึ้น (v): life up; move up; bring up ยกขึ้น เลื่อนขึ้น เลี้ยงดู หยิบยกมาพูด (ต้องการกรรม)</p>
<p>personnel (n): staff; persons employed in any work บุคลากร Most actors and actresses have a <i>personal</i> manager to help them their work and take care of them; but for people working for an organization, they have a <i>personnel</i> manager to deal with the relationships among the employees.</p>	<p>rise (n): upward progress; increase in value and temperature (v): appear above the horizon; get up; get out of bed; come to life again ขึ้น ลูกขึ้น ฟิ้นคืนชีพ (ไม่ต้องการกรรม)</p>
<p>play (v): have fun; do things to pass time pleasantly เล่น (n): a drama ละคร</p>	<p>The teacher says to the students, "<i>Raise</i> your hand if you know the answer or if you have a question. The clerk says to everyone in the courtroom, "Please rise," when the judge comes in. How about you? What do you say you want a <i>raise</i> in your salary? Anyway, we say the sun <i>rises</i> in the east, and the temperature <i>rises</i> every day this summer. Right?</p>
<p>pray (v): speak silently to God or Lord Buddha to show respect, give thanks, or beg for something สวดมนต์ Children enjoy themselves when they <i>play</i> together in the playground, or when they watch a <i>play</i> for kids, They can also enjoy themselves when their parents teach them how to <i>pray</i> at home or at a temple. (The switch of the letter "l" and the letter "r" in words can cause a lot of problems in communication. Many Thai students unknowingly do this. For example, they write "frame" for "flame," or "fly" for "fry.")</p>	<p>sensible (adj): having or showing good sense; reasonable มีเหตุผล รู้เหตุรู้ผลดี ใช้ประโยชน์ได้</p>
<p>precede (v): come or go before มาก่อน</p>	<p>sensitive (adj): quick to receive impressions; easily hurt in the spirit; easily offended มีอารมณ์อ่อนไหว ใจน้อย รู้สึกไว <i>Sensible</i> people can give <i>sensible</i> answers to questions. They also know how to deal with <i>sensitive</i> people. They will avoid hurting their feelings.</p>



sign (n): a mark, object, used to represent something; a movement of the hand, head, etc, used instead of words ป้าย สัญญาณ
(v): write one's name to show that one is the writer เซ็นชื่อ

sing (v): make musical sounds with the voice ร้องเพลง
Can you see that *sign* on the door? What does it say? It says "Sign in." That means we have to *sign* our names before entering the room. Oh, yes, we are going in to learn how to *sing* songs for our play next month.

sleep (n): a condition of rest with the eyes closed; a period of sleep การนอนหลับ
(v): rest in the condition of sleep นอนหลับ

asleep (adj, adv): sleeping หลับ นอนหลับ
Children need at least 10 hours *sleep* each night. When they are *asleep*, do not make too much noise so that they can sleep soundly.

sometime (adv): at some time; formerly เวลาที่ไม่ได้ระบุแน่นอน

sometimes (adv): now and then; from time to time บางครั้ง บางคราว
Can you spare me sometime tomorrow? We need to talk. I want to talk to you *sometime* tomorrow. It is important for us to talk *sometimes*.

suppose (v): guess; think คาดว่า คิดว่า
(be) supposed (to): be expected to คาดคะเนว่าน่าจะต้องทำเช่นนั้น
I *suppose* all of us will have to work harder academically. That is to say, besides teaching, we are *supposed* to do more research and more articles or books.

tired (adj): weary in body and mind เหนื่อย ว่าง

tried (v): the past tense of try พยายาม
Almira *tried* very hard to finish her project on time. She became very *tired* afterwards.

thorough (adj): complete in every way; detailed รอบคอบ ละเอียดถี่ถ้วน

through (adv): from end to end, side to side, beginning to end ผ่านจากด้านหนึ่งไปอีกด้านหนึ่ง ตั้งแต่ต้นจนจบ
You should be *thorough* about this. Be a *thorough* reader, and read *through* it by tomorrow.

Conclusion

It can be clearly seen that each of the words that sound or look the same has its own meaning. It could create a lot of misunderstanding or miscommunication if one word is used in place of the other. For example, if we say:

1. The children love to **pray** in the playground.

The listener or the reader may wonder why the children love to pray there. That is not a place for an activity like that. (Actually, the intended meaning is the children love to **play** in the playground.)

2. Jane is very excited about wearing her new **cloths** to work.

What? How can Jane wear her new cloths? Cloths cannot be worn unless they have been made into blouses, skirts, or dresses. (The intended meaning is Jane is very excited about wearing her new clothes to work.)

3. Ms. Jackson is the new **personal** manager of our organization.

Whose **personal** manager is Ms. Jackson? Our organization does not need a **personal** manager. In an organization, a **personnel** manager is needed. (The intended meaning is Ms. Jackson is the new personnel manager of our organization.)

Therefore, we would like to seriously point out again that for effective communication, correct words must be appropriately used, or else misunderstanding or miscommunication could occur.



Bibliography

1. Hornby, A. S., Gatenby, E. V., and Wakefield, H. (1963). **The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English**. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Summers, Della. (Ed.). (1992). **Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture**. Essex, England: Longman Group UK Limited