

The following revisions were made within the course of a week in the written work of two Chinese-speaking students we have already met: the first in Kibbitzers 5 and 7, and the second in Kibbitzer 4:

Original	Revision
However, it is clear that none of the proposed theories [1]-[3] can illustrate superconductivity completely.	However, it is clear that none of the proposed theories [1]-[3] can account for superconductivity completely.
The above reasons illustrate why people do the caring for a relative.	The above reasons explain why people care for a relative.

In Chinese, the verb **shuo¹ming²** (literally, 'speak-bright' or 'speak-clear') serves as a translation of both **explain** and **illustrate**: see, for example, the Concise English-Chinese Chinese-English Dictionary (OUP, p. 420). Where necessary, the verb may be modified to show the meaning conveyed by one of the English verbs (e.g. **shuo¹ming² . . . de li³you²** - literally 'speak-clear cause of' - for **explain, account for**: **tu²biao³ shuo¹ming²** - literally 'diagram speak-clear' - for **illustrate**) but that modification is not obligatory as, in English, is the choice between **explain** and **illustrate**. This difference in the lexical structure of Chinese and English (**shuo¹ming²** in effect behaving as a superordinate without a corresponding term in the other language) may help to explain the difficulty Chinese learners of English have with these two words. The central importance of 'speaking-clear' in academic writing seemed to justify:

- Discussing with both students (i.e. helping them to help me see) the possible linguistic reasons for the difficulty.
- Writing for them and for anyone else with the same problem the following short exercise based on sentence citations from the Guardian for 1994.

Complete the following sentences with **explained** or **illustrated**:

1. Montgomeryshire Memories, which is _____ by attractive drawings and old photographs, will be published on September 29 at pounds 5.95 and should be obtainable from all good booksellers.
2. The intolerance of the British and the Americans of their country's leaders' extra-marital affairs can be _____ by their shared puritan origins.
3. What is tugging at these galaxies is not known, but it may be invisible matter clumped on a much larger scale than can be readily _____ by any current theory.
4. The parliamentary difficulties of the Government have been sharply _____ by the plans to privatise the Royal Mail.
5. As it happens, the power of the Murdoch monopoly is well _____ by today's developments, when the price of the Sunday Times has been cut by 50p to coincide with the serialisation of Jonathan Dimbleby's biography of Prince Charles.
6. The reality behind what Hamilton calls 'genuinely good and selfless motives' is _____ by Truman's 1941 comment: 'If we see that Germany is winning we ought to help Russia, and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany and that way let them kill as many as possible.'
7. Australian researchers, who have examined relationships between pigs and humans for 13 years, have found that variations in output can be partly _____ by differences in the way farmers handle pigs, says Coleman.

8. Radio 1, which remains Britain's most popular radio station, saw its weekly audience fall from 16.546 million to 14.292 million. The decline is partly _____ by increased competition from Virgin 1215 and other commercial stations.
9. He showed that a wide range of the fundamental properties of substances, including metals and organic molecules, could be _____ by one form of the new theory, and he started to place the whole science of chemistry on a quantum mechanical basis, always with a particular bias in his approach.
10. The size of the contracts on offer in the international field was _____ by Thames Water which announced yesterday that it is teaming up with the French combine, Generale des Eaux, to bid for the contract to run, maintain and expand the water and sewage system in the Peruvian capital, Lima.

A final thought: is this, in another guise, the same cognitive/linguistic problem that we encountered in Kibbitzer 7?

17th July 1996

[Back to Kibbitzers](#)

Consultant: Tim Johns