

Comparing similar nouns

HSK 6 Grammar

Use the examples with their context and limits. Recall a sentence before reading the model. Original teaching additions accompany examples adapted from Chinese Grammar Wiki (AllSet Learning, CC BY-NC-SA); see the course reference provenance.

彼此 vs 对方 (each other vs the other party)

■ The other side's reply is a one-sided event

- You call someone, and the person at the other end speaks first.
- 电话接通后，对方先开了口。 – 对方 identifies the counterpart, not both sides together.

The other side's reply is a one-sided event

SITUATION

You call someone, and the person at the other end speaks first.

SPEAKER MEANING

对方 identifies the counterpart, not both sides together.

CHECK THE LIMIT

彼此信任 describes mutual trust; 对方信任我 describes the other person's trust in me without asserting that I trust them.

■ Locate the pattern in real examples

- 彼此 vs 对方 (each other vs the other party): 老朋友之间应该 ____ 信任。; 我们 ____ 了解，不用多说。
- Read the whole clause before choosing a translation. The examples show the pattern in use; the context below determines what the speaker claims.

■ Follow the speaker

我们彼此信任。

wǒ men bǐ cǐ xìn rèn

Word guide: 我们 – we; 彼此 – each other; 信任 – trust.

- In the opening situation: 电话接通后，对方先开了口。
- 对方 identifies the counterpart, not both sides together.

■ Check the limit of the explanation

- 彼此信任 describes mutual trust; 对方信任我 describes the other person's trust in me without asserting that I trust them.
- Track who acts on whom.

■ Repair the form before interpreting it

- The form 我们此彼信任 needs repair here. Write 我们彼此信任 instead; keep the word or frame in its demonstrated order.
- Form and meaning are separate checks. After the repair, explain the sentence in its situation rather than treating a familiar translation as a universal rule.

■ Keep the distinction

- 对方 identifies the counterpart, not both sides together. Check the relevant speaker, time or group in the surrounding context.
- 彼此信任 describes mutual trust; 对方信任我 describes the other person's trust in me without asserting that I trust them. Track who acts on whom.

■ Try it with help closed

You call someone, and the person at the other end speaks first. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson's pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

One possible response: 电话接通后，对方先开了口。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 彼此信任 describes mutual trust; 对方信任我 describes the other person's trust in me without asserting that I trust them.
- Track who acts on whom.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

人家 vs 别人 (others – colloquial vs neutral)

■ Identify the referent before translating

- A friend asks you to forgive a person who has already apologised.
- 人家都道歉了，你就原谅他吧。 – 人家 refers to the person under discussion, with sympathy or an appeal.

Identify the referent before translating

SITUATION

A friend asks you to forgive a person who has already apologised.

SPEAKER MEANING

人家 refers to the person under discussion, with sympathy or an appeal.

CHECK THE LIMIT

别人 neutrally means someone else or others.

■ Locate the pattern in real examples

- **人家 vs 别人 (others – colloquial vs neutral):** ____ 的东西不能随便拿。; 不要在背后说 ____ 的坏话。
- Read the whole clause before choosing a translation. The examples show the pattern in use; the context below determines what the speaker claims.

■ Follow the speaker

这是别人的事。

zhè shì bié rén de shì

Word guide: 这 – this; 是 – is; 别人 – other people; 事 – business.

- In the opening situation: **人家都道歉了，你就原谅他吧。**
- 人家 refers to the person under discussion, with sympathy or an appeal.

■ Check the limit of the explanation

- 别人 neutrally means someone else or others.
- 人家 can refer to another person or, in certain familiar styles, the speaker; tone and context decide. It is not automatically warmer or more polite.

■ Repair the form before interpreting it

- The form **人家都了道歉** needs repair here. Write **人家都道歉了** instead; keep the word or frame in its demonstrated order.
- Form and meaning are separate checks. After the repair, explain the sentence in its situation rather than treating a familiar translation as a universal rule.

■ Keep the distinction

- 人家 refers to the person under discussion, with sympathy or an appeal. Check the relevant speaker, time or group in the surrounding context.
- 别人 neutrally means someone else or others. 人家 can refer to another person or, in certain familiar styles, the speaker; tone and context decide. It is not automatically warmer or more polite.

■ Try it with help closed

A friend asks you to forgive a person who has already apologised. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson's pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

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