

LIFE

Not dad, dude or dud — the word is dord, and it's worth saving

Population dord is a major consideration for city planners in determining how many primary schools are needed in an area. If the dord is extreme, far more classrooms will be needed.

What's that? You don't know what dord means? Well, look it up in the dictionary.

John Lydon
Second Thoughts

Oh wait, it's no longer listed. I learned about the word dord from a daily vocabulary email I get from Merriam-Webster, the publisher of one of the premier United States English dictionaries.

Dord, it turns out, is not a word,

but in 1934 it had passed unnoticed by editors, etymologists and proofreaders and was accidentally listed in the second edition of the 7.7 kilo Webster's New International Dictionary.

One of the editors had submitted information for an entry concerning the abbreviation "D or d" used in chemistry and physics for "density". Somehow, that note became the 1934 dictionary entry: Dord, noun. Physics & Chem. Density.

In 1934, Webster's New International was the undisputed sovereign of US English dictionaries, yet the mistake went unnoticed until 1939. Even then, the "ghost word", as Merriam-Webster calls it, continued to lurk in the shadows. It

wasn't removed from the dictionary until the 1947 edition.

I can't tell you how often it comes up in the China Daily newsroom that one or another editor will ask "Is such and such really a word?" and the question gets answered by someone checking whether it stands in the dictionary. And, by the way, such and such is listed in the dictionary I use at home, Merriam-Webster's Collegiate.

For editors, whichever dictionary is chosen as the "house dictionary", the standard for the publication, wields that boundless power exercised by the ancient Greek gods or the wizards in European fairytales. You might occasionally question the wisdom of one of its decrees,

but to willfully ignore it could summon the editorial equivalent of the wrath of a fairytale sorceress turning you into a frog — in our case, say, a jackass.

That authority is understandable, considering how reliable they are. It's exceedingly rare that a dictionary includes a non-word among its listings. I know of only one other example.

After the New Oxford American Dictionary published its second edition in 2005, word got around that it included a made-up entry in the listings for the letter E.

Many US editors began searching the listings to identify the pretender. After all, the bragging rights that would come with the discovery were considerable. At length, the

Holy Grail was found.

Apparently, one of the NOAD's editors invented the word "esquivalence", which was given the tongue-in-cheek definition "the willful avoidance of one's official responsibilities".

The word was added to protect the NOAD's copyright. Any dictionary listing esquivalence would have obviously filched it from the NOAD, thus shirking the responsibility of doing its own work, and a few online dictionaries did just that.

"Its inherent fakeitude is fairly obvious", said Erin McKean, NOAD's chief editor, when she confirmed the ruse.

Kudos to McKean, by the way, for coining the non-word word — at

least according to my dictionary — fakeitude.

Getting back to dord, considering that it was able to hold its own in such a heavyweight US English dictionary for 13 years, doesn't it deserve another chance?

Maybe it would be asking too much to have it listed under its original definition. But for a word of such unique heritage, that might be too confining. Why not expand its powers to that of a catchall you can use to mean anything when the actual word escapes you?

After all, it's much more deserving than thingamajig.

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Candid camera: Season to reflect



A villager from Changchun village, Shazhenxi township, Zigui, Hubei province, balances rice seedlings on his shoulders as dusk falls over the local paddy fields on May 15. This is the season to plant the seedlings which are first grown in a nursery and then planted in wet fields. ZHENG JIAYU / XINHUA



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'River' football star dreams of career goal

KUNMING — Ai Kanxiang, a high school student from the Xishuangbanna Dai autonomous prefecture, Southwest China's Yunnan province, has become an online sensation after several videos of his creative way of practicing football in a river surfaced on the internet.

In a recent video, Ai is seen standing in the middle of a river with the flowing water up to his knees. A friend plays a ball in his direction and Ai delivers a precise bicycle kick that smacks off the river bank. He lands back in the river with an almighty splash.

Ai, 19, of the Blang ethnic minority group, was born in a remote mountainous village in Menghai county of Xishuangbanna. His first kick of a football was only his first year in junior high school.

"I only came across football in textbooks in my childhood. But I fell in love with it in September, 2015 when I made my debut," Ai says, adding that all his troubles faded away on the pitch and he especially liked to be sweaty after a long match.

But in the sloping, mountainous region of his hometown, finding a flat area to play can prove challenging. "We create a small pitch with tree branches and stones or even play football in the river," he says.

At the beginning, Ai recalls, playing in the water was mostly for staying cool. "The tropical weather in my hometown is too hot in the summer and I can play for longer in the river."

He then discovered that playing in the water is not only fun, but also has certain benefits. Whether it is a header or a bicycle kick, you're less likely to get hurt, Ai says.

After two years of practicing in the water, he found that the explosive power in his legs has improved drastically. He was faster and stronger, even scoring nine goals in a single game.

Ai attends a boarding school and only has three days off every two weeks. Every time Ai goes home, he helps his parents to pick tea-leaves and hoe the fields. Aft-



The tropical weather in my hometown is too hot in the summer and I can play for longer in the river ... My ultimate goal is to play for the Chinese men's national football team!"

Ai Kanxiang, high school student, Xishuangbanna Dai autonomous prefecture, Yunnan province

er finishing his farm chores, he always plays football with other children in the village. He organizes football games in the water and teaches them new tricks. "I hope they can truly feel the joy of football."

Ai's favorite player is Chinese football star Wu Lei, followed by Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and Kylian Mbappe. Although he only stands at 1.68 meters, Ai believes that it won't prevent him from becoming an excellent forward. "Short forwards are always more flexible and good at breaking through the defense. I think I can do it too," he says.

Many people have gotten to know him through the online videos and sent him footballs, jerseys, football boots and other training equipment. "I really want to say thanks to them for their encouragement," Ai says. "I will take the college entrance examination next year and I will try my best to get a good grade in the exam, just like how I approach football games."

Ai never shies away from talking about his dreams. He expects to get specialized guidance and become a professional in the future. "My ultimate goal is to play for the Chinese men's national football team!"

XINHUA



Ai Kanxiang, a high school student from the Xishuangbanna Dai autonomous prefecture, Yunnan province, training with a club in Kunming on Tuesday. WANG YUHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Doll symbolizes better lifestyle as people move

By **WANG RU** in Beijing and **YANG JUN** in Guiyang

Luo Yinghe, a deputy at the third session of the 13th National People's Congress from Huishui county, Southwest China's Guizhou province, brought several dolls wearing the traditional clothes of the Miao and Buyi ethnic groups to this year's two sessions and showed them to journalists and other deputies.

For the 42-year-old Party chief of Xinmin community, Huishui, the dolls are more than just local products. They are also a symbol of the life changes experienced by people moving from deep in the mountains to a new community.

Luo used to live in Doudi village, one of the poorest regions in Guizhou where there was no road, no water supply or communication equipment.

"We used to hike in the mountains for a long time to buy salt or oil. The land was not suitable for growing crops, and we could only grow some corn in stone cracks, but that wouldn't be enough to eat," says Luo.

In 2016, Luo and more than 5,000 Doudi villagers moved off the mountain at the request of the government to Xinmin community where there are hospitals, schools and markets meeting people's various needs.

"Some villagers had misgivings about the move. Some worried they would not live better than before, some considered they might not be acclimatized to the new environment, and others doubted whether they would find proper jobs," says Luo.

Luo and other community officials made every effort to dispel their misgivings. "As one of those

who moved out, I totally understand their hesitation and fear, and want to help them to get used to the new environment."

For example, before moving, villager Luo Guozhi, who was nearly 70, had never been out of the village. He found it difficult to leave where he grew up. However, Luo Yinghe persuaded him by explaining the benefits of the move for both him and his family, and how much better life would be for all of them in the new community.

"Now, Luo Guozhi's family lives a happy life. His son, daughter-in-law and grandson have all found jobs in the community, and their family can earn more than 10,000 yuan (\$1,398) each month," says Luo.

They also went to people's homes and told them how to arrange furniture, how to use the water, electricity and new utensils in the new houses.

Luo also established a training school, where people can learn technical skills like electric welding, housekeeping, sewing and computer literacy, to help them get jobs. So far more than 3,800 people have received such training.

Additionally, to help local people find work, the community now cooperates with Beijing Tang Ren Fang Culture Development Co, a doll company based in Beijing, and has established two poverty-alleviation workshops to make the dolls. The community sent some young people to receive training for a year at the company, and then they returned to teach other villagers. Now more than 300 villagers man the workshops, and each of them can earn 3,000 to 5,000 yuan a month by making dolls.

"Most people in our village are from the Miao and Buyi ethnic



Most people of our village are from the Miao and Buyi ethnic groups, and we want to show features of our groups by making dolls wearing our traditional clothes."

Luo Yinghe, Party chief of Xinmin community, Huishui, Guizhou province

groups, and we want to show the features of our groups by making dolls wearing our traditional clothes. At first we mainly made dolls showing features of Miao and Buyi, now we are making dolls of all the 56 ethnic groups and of Peking Opera characters," says Luo.

"Our dolls sold well in Beijing. This year, we have received orders worth 1 million yuan. We want to enlarge the scale of the business and find more sales channels for our products."

By the end of 2019, Guizhou had relocated 1.88 million people from inhospitable places to resettlement areas.

As a deputy to the 13th NPC who is also "a beneficiary of poverty alleviation relocation policy", Luo's proposals during the two sessions are always related to the policy. After investigating more than 50 relocated communities of Guizhou in 2019, this year he proposed that the government establish more poverty-alleviation workshops and offer more favorable policies to help their development.

When the COVID-19 hit China earlier this year, Luo took the lead in disseminating information about the pandemic in the community, inspecting and registering the situations of every household and keeping people's mobility in the community under surveillance.

"Since Feb 18, people started to return to work. They were required to wear masks and sit in a dispersed way in the workshops. The workshops were also well ventilated. Now people's work and life have almost returned to normal," says Luo.

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