

Idiom by Lon Yan

旁若無人

pang2 ruo4 wu2 ren2

When you are in a hurry, which is the state most people are in when they are on their way to work, you need to make good use of your time.

You can actually do a lot while riding public transport, like putting on make-up, combing your hair, eating breakfast, and dyeing your hair.

Yes, hair dyeing. That was what a young woman was filmed doing on a subway train, not in Hong Kong, of course, where you can't even eat on the train, but in New York, where practically anything goes.

It wasn't a minor touch-up, but the whole elaborate process in which, as the Daily Mail reported, the woman was seen "casually douses her hair with dye on the Manhattan-bound 4 train", "wearing plastic protective gloves as she applies the hair dye from the

bottle", oblivious to anyone around her."

Such behavior can be described as "旁若無人" (*pang2 ruo4 wu2 ren2*).

"旁" (*pang2*) is "side," "by the side of," "若" (*ruo4*) "as if," "see," "無" (*wu2*) "without," "nil" and "人" (*ren2*) "people," "others," "other people." "旁若無人" (*pang2 ruo4 wu2 ren2*), literally, is "like no one by the side."

The idiom means "to act as though there were nobody else present", "unselfconscious," or "without regard for others."

There hasn't been reports about people dyeing hair on trains in Hong Kong, but the behavior some can also be classified as "旁若無人" (*pang2 ruo4 wu2 ren2*), like singing totally off-tune while wearing earphones, and putting their legs on bus chairs.

Terms containing the character "旁" (*pang2*) include:

旁邊 (*pang2 bian1*) – side; by the side of; near by

旁白 (*pang2 bai2*) – a voice-over; background narrator in a play

旁觀 (*pang2 guan1*) – to observe at the side

旁人 (*pang2 ren2*) – other people; bystanders; outsiders