

Idiom by Lon Yan

失驚無神

shi1 jing1 wu2 shen2

Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po (陳茂波) was reading out his first, and likely last, budget, in the Legislative Council chamber and councillors were listening with unusual quietness.

Exactly at paragraph 68, it was later reported, a disembodied voice spoke out. There were two versions as to what was actually said. One version was: "It there anything I can do for you?" Another one was "I don't see anything connected."

The interjection, whatever it was, was out of place and out of line. Connected or not, you've got to let the guy finish.

It turned out that was Siri, the iPhone feature that has a habit of interrupting with awkward timing. Disrupted, Chan was embarrassed. The way Siri jammed in can be called "失驚無神" (*shi1 jing1 wu2 shen2*).

"失" (*shi1*) is "to lose," "to fail to," "驚" (*jing1*) "to startle," "be startled," "to frighten," "be frightened." "失驚" (*shi1 jing1*) is "to be frightened," "to be startled." "無" (*wu2*) is "no," "nil," "without," and "神" (*shen2*) "mind," "spirit," "a deity." Literally, "失驚無神" (*shi1 jing1 wu2 shen2*) is "startled and lose mind."

"失驚無神" (*shi1 jing1 wu2 shen2*) is a Cantonese expression that means "suddenly," "without warning," "startlingly," "unexpectedly," and describes things that are not pleasant.

When Siri's voice suddenly rang out, it was "失驚無神" (*shi1 jing1 wu2 shen2*) because it was not expected and obviously startled everyone. You don't want to do things "失驚無神" (*shi1 jing1 wu2 shen2*), like slapping someone on the back suddenly, because you might induce a heart attack!

Terms containing the character "神" (*shen2*) include:

神秘 (*shen2 mi4*) – mysterious

神奇 (*shen2 qi2*) – magical

神仙 (*shen2 xian1*) – a supernatural being

神經病 (*shen2 jing1 bing4*) – a mental case (derogatory)