

Idiom by Lon Yan

以假亂真

yi3 jia3 luan4 zhen1

Electronic notepads – or digital paper – have been around for some time now. The device is environmentally friendly as it saves paper, hence trees, but the green technology has not been embraced by all because people still like writing on paper.

Now a Norwegian firm has come up with a digital paper with a difference. The ReMarkable, as it is called (a clever pun for a brand name, by the way) – can be written on using a stylus, which is not remarkable, but its texture feels like paper, which is remarkable. The idiom “以假亂真” (*yi3 jia3 luan4 zhen1*) comes to mind.

“以” (*yi3*) is “to use as,” “假” (*jia3*) “fake,” “false,” “亂” (*luan4*) “in disorder,” “confused,” “to confuse,” and “真” (*zhen1*) “real,” “true,” “genuine.” Literally, “以假亂真” (*yi3 jia3 luan4*

zhen1) is “use fake to confuse the real.” The idiom means “to mix the spurious with the genuine.”

“以假亂真” (*yi3 jia3 luan4 zhen1*) is what dishonest merchants do, like selling fake jewelry as real, or counterfeit products as genuine. “以假亂真” (*yi3 jia3 luan4 zhen1*) is used mostly in a negative context – describing cheatings, frauds and scams.

But in the case of the new digital paper, it is a beneficial case of “以假亂真” (*yi3 jia3 luan4 zhen1*) because that is exactly what the designers set out to do – using fake pen and paper (stylus on screen) to imitate the feeling of pen on paper.

What people pay for is the real feeling of fakeness, and no one is fooled.

Terms containing the character “亂” (*luan4*) include:

暴亂 (*bao4 luan4*) – a riot; a violent disorder

忙亂 (*mang2 luan4*) – to be in a rush and a muddle

亂世 (*luan4 shi4*) – troubled times

胡亂 (*hu2 luan4*) – carelessly; untidily