



**CALPERLEX**  
Chinese

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## *Zaocheng / Xingcheng*

Learners often find it difficult to tell the difference between Mandarin Chinese words and phrases that are similar in meaning. An example of this is the pair of verbs *zaocheng* (造成) and *xingcheng* (形成), which share the meanings of 'cause', 'lead to', or 'bring about'. Look at the two sets of concordance lines (with word boundaries marked) taken from UCLA Corpus of Written Chinese and see if you can work out the rule.

See Concordances on the next page

**Answer:**

As we can see, *zaocheng* and *xingcheng* are similar in word structure (sharing the *cheng* 'attainment' component) and meaning, but when they are compared in terms of both syntax and semantics in actual context, the differences are rather obvious. Semantically, *zaocheng* is overwhelmingly negative, and shows such a strongly negative preference that even an apparently neutral result may become negative, while *xingcheng* collocates perfectly well with positive results. Also, while *zaocheng* involves more human effort, *xingcheng* refers to a result coming as a natural course. Finally, syntactically, *xingcheng* can function as an intransitive verb, appearing at the end of a sentence whereas *zaocheng* can not.

**Reference:**

Tao, Hongyin and Xiao, Richard (2007). *The UCLA Chinese Corpus*. Lancaster: UCREL.

Xiao, Richard (2006). Collocation, Semantic Prosody, and Near Synonymy: A Cross-Linguistic Perspective. *Applied Linguistics*, 27(1), 103-129.

## Center for Advanced Language Proficiency Education and Research

### zaocheng

1	若不马上清除就要	造成	停机事故。
2	但外部经济环境的恶化给它们	造成	的困难，无疑也是不容忽视的。
3	这种低微的住房消费，	造成	居民消费结构极不合理，形成超前消费。
4	否则会因证据不足而	造成	被动。
5	他俩找了个借口，离开北京，以免	造成	什么矛盾。
6	导致本世纪30年代以后连续发生“黑风暴”，	造成	2000万公顷农田弃耕。
7	海湾战争虽然短暂，但对世界经济也	造成	一定的损害。
8	在日常生活中，这种由于运用了不同标准而	造成	的判断分歧是非常普遍的。
9	你必须对你	造成	的严重后果负责！
10	容易	造成	数据的不一致性。

### xingcheng

1	你们要互相关心，互相配合，协调动作，	形成	一股力量！
2	而欧洲新的格局尚未	形成	。
3	在我国彝族聚居地区，甚至还	形成	丰富多彩的十二生肖文化。
4	在第三纪元里，围绕着地球的蒸汽逐渐凝结	形成	了覆盖全球的海洋。
5	或听别人的口头介绍或看档案，都足以影响 第一印象的	形成	。
6	各级政府应在资金、物资、技术等方面给以 必要的扶持，使之	形成	自我发展的能力。
7	鼓励孩子重复良好的行为，有利于良好习惯的	形成	。
8	每个人所特有的个性也正式	形成	。
9	日子久了，徐帅家里	形成	了到电影院看电影的习惯。
10	二、人脑语义系统的	形成	