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# English Revisited:

## Tips, Tidbits & Tutorials

### In this issue

**Currently on Offer** 1

**Grammar** 2  
 As versus Like

**Intercultural Communication** 3  
 US Cover Letters and Resumes

**Vocabulary** 4  
 German Words in English

### Editorial

The other day I had to schlepp myself out of bed and a certain angst came over me. Was I falling ill? Had I been eating properly? Too many gummi bears? Too many spicy noodles?

I had all but stopped drinking schnapps and I had never made it a habit of drinking beer by the stein (well, ok at certain regional fests). So, off to the doctor's I went and when I sneezed a fellow patient wished me "gesundheit".

My doctor, who is a sort of wunderkind, went through

his usual spiel about getting enough rest and eating a balanced diet as if I had just arrived from the hinterland. I almost sensed a bit of schadenfreude in his admonishments....

As you have probably guessed from this kitschy, cheesy story, a number of German words have made their way over the years into the English language, some having changed their meaning along the way. Read on to find out more.

**Contest:** Can you spot all of the words above that have

#### Upcoming Issues :

- Past perfect
- High vs. low context communication: the UK vs. Germany
- Coping with commas

come into English from German in the last two hundred years or so? Enter our draw by sending me the correct list of words by e-mail by June 1st (**contact us**). The winner will receive a bottle of Sekt. 🍷

John Nixon



Comments



Subscription

### Currently on Offer

If you are interested in any of the following, please **contact us**.

- **Workshops in May and June :**  
**Socializing and Networking in Academic Settings:** May 22 (8:00 to 11:15)  
**Accent Reduction and Voice Training:** June 8, 12 and 15 (9:30 to 12:30)  
**Academic Writing in English:** June 11, 18 and 25 (9:00 to 12:15)
- **Editing Service:** Do you have a paper, abstract or other document that needs to be looked over by a native English speaker before it is published? If so, we can help.
- **Coaching:** One-on-one coaching is available upon request. This is especially helpful if you are preparing for a presentation or planning a new course in English.
- **One-Week Intensive English Courses in August and September:**  
**Registration:** www.sz.uni-stuttgart.de (July 17 -21)  
 General English, Business English, Effective Communication in the Workplace,  
 Communicating in Interviews and Negotiations

#### Glossary

come over s.o.: have a sudden feeling  
 all but: almost completely  
 stein: Maß (from *Steinkrug*)  
 spiel: idle talk, salesman's pitch (from *spielen*)  
 admonishment:  
 light criticism  
 cheesy (slang):  
 kitschy, lacking good taste, silly  
 pick up on:  
 talk in more detail about sth. s.o. has mentioned (*aufgreifen*)

## Grammar

### Did you know?

The word **like** is related to the German words *gleich* and *Leiche*: *ge* (with) + *leich* (body, shape).



The verb **like** originally meant to be pleasing to someone (as is the case with the German verb *gefallen*), e.g. "His countenance likes me not" (from Shakespeare's King Lear).

**Like** is used today in spoken American English in many innovative ways, including to mean *say* when recounting a story, the "quotative like", e.g. "And she was like 'no way would I buy that!'"



Audio

(Section: 36.22 to 38.22)

### Glossary

*rule of thumb*: rule that is generally true (Faustregel)

*in place of*: instead of

*avid*: enthusiastic, keen

*countenance*: face

*recount*: tell (a story)

## As You Like It

A source of confusion for learners of English is differentiating between the words *as* and *like*, both of which often correspond to *wie* in German when making comparisons. A general rule of thumb is that a noun or noun phrase follows *like* and a clause (a sentence fragment including a subject and a verb) follows *as*.

**He writes like a lawyer.**  
**He writes as a lawyer would.**

What makes matters more troubling is the fact that the above-mentioned distinction is not always observed by English speakers. More often than not, you will hear in informal contexts the word *like* in place of as. Some examples are:

**He didn't complete the homework assignment like he was supposed to.**  
**Like I said,...**  
**You look like you saw a ghost.** (*instead of ...as if you saw a ghost.*)

Furthermore, there are certain instances where a noun follows *as*. Compare the following two sentences.

**She works as a civil engineer.**  
*(She is a civil engineer. This is not a comparison, but indicates the function or job of an individual.)*

**She works like a civil engineer.**  
*(The way she works is similar to that of a civil engineer. This is a comparison.)*

There are yet further problem areas for learners of English when it comes to the proper use of *as* and *like*. These include comparative adjectives (*as ... as*) and the verbal expression *look like*. See if you can spot the mistake in both sentences below and correct it. You will find the answers at the end of our newsletter.

**The food is so good like a home-cooked meal.**  
**How does a dandelion look like?**

### Other Uses of Like

As you probably noticed, the title of this article, which is incidentally the title of one of Shakespeare's plays, contains both *as* and *like*. However, is *like* in this case used for comparison? In actual fact, it is a verb here. Another example would be **He likes chocolate**.

The word *like* can also be used to mean *for example* and *such as*, as can be seen in the sentence

**She is an avid fan of winter sports, like downhill skiing.**

John Nixon



More Exercises

## Intercultural Communication

### Preparing US Cover Letters and Resumes

Are you applying for a position with an American company?

In the following, you will find some tips on what distinguishes cover letters and resumes in the US from those in Germany as well as some general tips to help you no matter where you are applying.

The first thing to know is the differences in terminology. One small difference is that a *cover letter* in the US is called a *covering letter* in the UK. In Germany, one hears the term *CV*, which is generally called a *resume* in the US and which is also spelled with accents, i.e. *résumé*. One does also hear the term *CV* in the US, but this is reserved for academia.

The first impression you make is based on the appearance of your application. If the position is at a large company, personnel in the HR department are trained to skim through applications in a matter of seconds to weed out anyone who shows signs of a lack of professionalism. A plain, basic design might tell them that you did not spend enough time preparing.

There are a number of websites available where you can download templates to help spruce up the appearance of your cover letter and resume. Refer to, for example, [www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com), [www.cvtips.com](http://www.cvtips.com) or simply do a google search.

Furthermore, read through your application several times and have friends and colleagues proofread to help check for typos or anything else you may have missed.

There are a number of small differences between American and German resumes. Here is a list of what to avoid for your American resume:

- While it is the custom to include a picture on a German resume, this is not the case in the US (to protect against discrimination).

- American resumes generally do not have an objective at the top. That information should appear in the cover letter.
- German resumes will often contain information about grade school and high school. American resumes might include information about your final grade point average in high school, especially for younger applicants, but there should not be anything from before that.
- Do not include your parents' names. This is unnecessary information.
- The information should be listed in reverse chronological order. Begin with the most recent events and go backwards.
- Although it is uncommon in the US to include your hobbies or achievements outside of work, you may wish to do so if it gives the employer a better picture of your character.

Perhaps what is most important to bear in mind when applying for a position is that adequate preparation greatly increases your chances of getting an interview. Besides working on a typo-free and visually appealing application, you should also research the company and the position you are applying for. You can go through the company's website or contact someone who works there with specific questions. If you have had contact with an employee, it can help to namedrop in the cover letter, for instance, "After having spoken with Ms./Mr. X about the position, I am confident that my qualifications could serve your company well."

More information on applying for jobs in English will be published in future issues of our newsletter.

Dr. Joseph Michaels

### Glossary

*academia*:  
the academic world,  
universities  
(also **academe**)

**personnel**:  
staff (pronounced  
differently than  
personal; the stress is  
on the last syllable)

*weed out (colloquial)*:  
to get rid off

*spruce up (colloquial)*:  
improve; make more  
attractive

*typo*: short form for  
typographical error  
(i.e. *Tippfehler*)

*bear in mind*: consider

*namedrop (colloquial)*:  
mention someone's  
name who is  
important so that  
you can look good

## Vocabulary

### Glossary

*come across*: meet by chance, encounter

*mother tongue*: (the expression mother language does not exist in English)

*germanophone*: German-speaking

*telling*: significant, revealing

*dwell*: live

*first and foremost*: above all

*brainy*: intelligent, educated

*glum*: in a bad mood

*disposition*: temperament, tendency



rucksack



autobahn

### Answers to Grammar

#### Questions on p. 2

The food is **as good as** a home-cooked meal.

**What** does a dandelion look like?

## From A to Z and Angst to Zeitgeist German words in the English

“Oh it was just wanderlust!”, my Irish friend once told me when I had asked her why she had come to Germany to study. Wanderlust! It was the first time I had heard that expression in English and like so many who learn English as a foreign language, I was happy to have come across an expression from my mother tongue in English – and one that carries a positive meaning and is not a false friend like gift.

Obviously German words, like wanderlust, fernweh and rucksack, all of which you need when travelling, are a rare sight in the vast English dictionary. Though the germanophone Angles, Saxons and Jutes and later the Danish Vikings (speakers of North Germanic) gave the English language its basic vocabulary—e.g. finger, water, sun and sky—today it is the French who have an advantage when it comes to learning English, as words of French origin are still much more common.

While the basic vocabulary of English is rooted in its Germanic past, approximately 6,000 words, according to the historical dictionary of J. Allan Pfeffer and Garland Cannon (which unfortunately is not based on current newspaper or web research but compiled entries of several older dictionaries), have been borrowed directly from German and almost all were borrowed between the 18th and the 20th centuries. Funnily enough, a number of those are quite telling.

Words of German origin borrowed into English mainly fall into three categories:

- the sciences, arts, humanities: leitmotif, sprachgefühl, weltanschauung
- organizing/living life: kindergarten, pretzel, kitsch
- disaster and warfare: weltanschmerz, panzer, blitzkrieg. (Makes one think, doesn't it?)

In recent decades several words and expressions from the automotive sector (e.g. autobahn and fahrvergnügen) have entered the English language as Germany has excelled in this area.

And an area in which another culture excels is usually where words are borrowed from.

Foreign words, loanwords and calques usually enter a receiving language when there is no concept there to express what they stand for.

### For those who are not linguists...

*Foreign words* are straight borrowings. They are spelled the same way as in the donor language. Think of the **fingerspitzengefühl**, **Möbius band** or the **umlaut** (i.e. ä, ö, ü), which have maintained their German spelling while happily dwelling in the English dictionary.

A *loanword* then is a word adopted from a foreign language. Here a word or phrase is borrowed from a language and its components are translated to create a new lexeme, examples are **loanword** and **masterpiece**, **forget-me-not** or **flea market**. The latter two are of French origin, the first two of German stock.

In the *calque* **long time, no see**, for instance, a whole phrase was translated. Would you have known that this greeting is originally Chinese?

But what about the Germans? Where have they excelled so much that words were borrowed?

Well, **first and foremost** in the sciences, arts and humanities. In Wikipedia you can find a substantial list of German expressions in English. Whether Wikipedia is closer to the “pulse of time” or not, reading over the lists one gets the impression that Germans – albeit very brainy – are perceived as glum, having a rather melancholic outlook on life and generally a more negative than positive disposition. Or what would you make of expressions such as angst (a constant anxiety, a gloomy, depressive and neurotic feeling), grübeln, masochism (named after the Austrian novelist Leopold von Sacher-Masoch), death instinct, death wish, frightfulness (a straight translation of *Schrecklichkeit*), the spooky doppelgänger or torschlusspanik?

For more on German loanwords in English, [click here](#).

Dr. Ines Böhner



More Exercises