SZ

Universität Stuttgart
Sprachenzentrum

English Revisited:
Tips, Tidbits & Tutorials

In this issue

Glossary

what with (informal): because of

stance: attitude

contentious: causing disagreement

what's up with (informal): what's the matter with

plumb the depths (literary): investigate in detail

byzantine: complex

register: language level (i.e. formal/informal)

juxtapose: place side by side for comparison

Editorial

Tumultuous times lie ahead this year in the English-speaking world, <u>what with</u> the upcoming referendum on the United Kingdom's <u>stance</u> towards the EU and the most <u>contentious</u> US presidential elections in recent memory. You might be forgiven for wondering <u>what's up</u> with English speakers.

In this issue of our newsletter, we won't be able to <u>plumb the depths</u> of Anglo-Saxon discontent, but we will try to make the rather <u>byzantine</u> electoral system in the US more understandable to our readers.

In our vocabulary section, we will turn our attention to academic English and touch on <u>register</u> in academic writing by <u>juxtaposing</u> Anglo-Saxon and Latinate words.

Lastly, our grammar article will point out alternative ways of expressing condition, a follow-up to our article in our last issue on if-clauses.

John Nixon

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Comments

Check it out! NEW!

[Academic Writing Handbook](#) for Academic Staff

Upcoming Issues :
- Dr. Who?
  (academic titles)
- mixed conditionals
- British English

Do you have any ideas for future issues?
Please contact us.

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Subscription

Currently on Offer

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

- **Workshops from April to June:**
  Speaking English on the Job (for Academics, Researchers and Scientists):
  April 22 (8:30 to 11:45)
  Accent Reduction and Voice Training: May 3,10 (9:30 - 13:00), May 25 (13:30 to 17:00)
  Academic Writing in English: May 27, June 3 and 10 (8:30 to 11:45)
  Academic Vocabulary Expansion: June 23 (8:30 to 11:45)

- **Free Mini-Workshops for Administrative and Technical Staff:** (see offerings [here](#))

- **Editing Service and Coaching:** 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.

Grammar

Conditional Sentences without *if*

In the last issue of our newsletter, we took a look at the standard types of conditional sentences or if-clauses. There are, however, a number of ways to express condition without using an if-clause as the following examples illustrate:

Provided we get the money for the project, we will continue for another year.
If we get the money… .
Unless you work harder, you will fail the test.
If you don't work harder… .
(Note here we have to add *not* because *unless* means "if something does not happen".)
So long as the chemicals have been properly dissolved, they cannot do any harm.
If the chemicals have been… .
In case of an emergency, ring 911.
If there is an emergency… .

Occasionally *if* can be dropped, provided that the word order of the subject and verb is reversed:

Were this to happen, we would be in dire straights.
If this were to happen, … .
Had I known you were here, I would have invited you to lunch.
If I had known, … .
Should you decide to enrol in this course, you will need to take the placement test.
If you decide to enrol…

This reversal of subject and verb to express condition is similar in German, but note that it only can be used in the three cases above, i.e. *were*, *had* and *should*.

Sometimes in spoken, colloquial English *if* can be dispensed with:

You want to get ahead in life, be sure to get a good education. (spoken English, usually only used with *you*)
If you want to get ahead in life, be sure… .

Conditionals Using Modal Verbs
Conditional sentences do not always follow the standard patterns described in the last issue of our newsletter. Often modal verbs are used in the main clause to qualify or tone down what the speaker wishes to express or even to offer possibilities:

If we study hard,	we **can** improve our grades.	→ Conditional I
If we studied hard,	we **could** improve our grades.	→ Conditional II
If we had studied hard,	we **could have** improved our grades.	→ Conditional III

Present	Past Tense
can	could
may/might	might

Dr. Ines Böhner /
John Nixon

@ **Practice Exercises**

Glossary

illustrate:
show

dissolved:
aufgelöst

in dire straights:
in a very bad or difficult situation

dispense with sth.:
no longer use sth. because it is not needed

qualify (a statement):
to adjust/change (a statement) slightly in order to be more precise

Listening and Writing Exercise

Listen to this podcast and summarize the content in 100 words. Then send your text to our newsletter team and we will give you feedback on your writing. (Start at 25:55 in the podcast.)

Audio

Intercultural Communication

The Ins and Outs of the US Primary Process[1]

In the past few months we have all been looking across the pond and wondering how the United States elects its president. Many have been wondering how someone like Donald Trump, who seems so disconcerting, has become the front-runner of a major political party; how Hillary Clinton the presumptive nominee for the Democrats continues to have to fight for her position; and possibly how the voters are left with a choice between only two candidates rather than a plurality. The two-party system has a long history starting from around the time of the Civil War. One of the reasons for the continuing existence of this system is the fact that the states in the US are divided into districts, each with its own representative[2].

Caucuses and Primaries
But how does this system apply to the presidential election? To answer this question we need to examine the primary system. There are a number of factors affecting the primary system that are determined by state governments along with the different parties[3]. The first is a distinction between a primary, which is a vote by secret ballot, and a caucus, which is similar to a meeting of people from the same party who openly discuss their choice and may try to convince others to vote the same way[4].
A second factor affecting the primary process is who is eligible to vote. All registered voters may take part in the primary; however they may only vote in one primary, i.e. the Democratic or Republican primary or caucus. Some states have closed primaries[2, 3], where only registered Democratic and Republican voters may vote in their primary, while others have mixed primaries[2], where registered party voters must vote in their primary but independents may vote in either primary, and yet others have open primaries, in which all eligible voters may participate in caucuses and choose which party to vote for on the day of the election.

Delegates
The final aspect of the primary system, which makes things much more complicated, is the allocation[3] of the delegates. The Democratic Party has a proportional system, according to which the delegates are awarded a number of delegates based on the percentage the candidate won. Thus, Bernie Sanders continues to be competitive while still lagging behind Hillary Clinton at the polls. In addition to the delegates awarded by voting, there are the so-called superdelegates.

These are high level Democratic Party members, elected officials at the federal level, governors as well as delegates elected during the primary process. These superdelegates vote according to their own conscience. Since many of these superdelegates have already pledged to vote for Hillary, she has an added advantage over Bernie Sanders.

The Republican Party has a different system for awarding delegates[3]. First of all, the states have more influence on how the delegates are awarded. Some states follow a proportional system similar to that of the Democratic Party. Others are "winner takes all", in which the top vote-getter is awarded all the delegates, or "winner takes most", where a number of delegates are reserved for the winner and some are divided proportionally. A final type is an unbound election, which is found in caucuses and foreign territories, where the delegates may decide how they wish to vote.

National Convention
The primary cycle culminates in the national convention. Each political party holds a national convention to determine which candidate will become the official candidate to represent the party in the presidential election. In recent years, the presumptive candidate had the delegates necessary to become the official candidate well before being crowned or nominated by acclamation at the convention.
This year may be different, in which case there are a number of scenarios which could possibly play out.

Further information can be found at:

Overview of the above article in video form @

Explanation of what happens if there is no presumptive candidate at the time of the convention, or the party does not like the presumptive candidate

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References:
1. https://votesmart.org/education/presidential-primary#.VvuqlhHoupo
2. http://www.britannica.com/topic/two-party-system
3. http://www.uspresidentialelectionnews.com/2016-presidential-primary-schedule-calendar/
4. http://www.factcheck.org/2008/04/caucus-vs-primary/

Gretchen Chojnacki-Herbers

Glossary

the ins and outs: the details

the US elects: (the US is singular in English; one country)

disconcerting: feeling upset and confused

front-runner: *Spitzenreiter*

presumptive: believed to be likely (verb: presume)

allocation: *distribution*

lag behind:: to be/fall behind s.o.

polls: (here) voting; in other contexts survey (*Umfrage*)

*culminate **in**:* end **with**

acclamation: election or approval by applause or shouts instead of ballots

Watch Barack Obama being selected by acclamation

play out: unfold (sich ergeben)

Vocabulary

Phrasal Verbs and Academic Writing: How to Get Better

As we all know academic writing differs from the language we use or speak every day.
Academic writing should be relevant, accurate and objective (*Forget the I when you write an academic assignment.); clear and concise (Never waffle!*); and involve the use of the "right" words. But what does this imply?

On the one hand it means you should choose subject-specific words, i.e. words that relate to your topic. On the other hand it means avoiding idioms (*Before my finals I was really rushed off my feet.*), informal language, especially colloquial expressions (*Don't use any dodgy methods when it comes to writing your dissertation!*) and slang (*A First-Class Honours ? Wicked!*). You should also minimize the usage of everyday phrasal verbs (*I really have to cut out the errors in my next assignment or I'll be marked down.*) and use one-word Latinate equivalents instead.

This may sound daunting at first, but a very brief look at the history of English makes this distinction easy to understand. Phrasal verbs such as *get away* (escape), *get by* (manage), *put aside* (save; ignore) or *put up with* (tolerate) are Germanic in origin. Germanic invaders settled in Britain as early as in the fifth and sixth centuries. Today when we speak or use informal ("natural") language we normally use Germanic words. Most words of Latin origin, by contrast, came into English by way of the French-speaking Normans, who invaded Britain in 1066. These new words joined the existing language. That's why there are often two words for more or less the same thing in today's English. You could for instance say *Jack came into the office* or *Jack entered the office.* The former (Germanic verb) sounds natural; the latter (Latinate word) – well, you can probably feel it - sounds rather formal. Academic writing style requires precisely this formal language.

As way of example, let's concentrate on the ubiquitous *get* and some of its phrasal verbs.
The first sentence in each case is more everyday speech, whereas the second is more typical of academic writing.

Practice Exercises

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For more information see:
McCarthy, M. and O'Dell, F. (2008) *Academic Vocabulary in Use. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 20-21.*

*The new pipeline will **get** gas supplies for the EU.*
*The new pipeline will **secure** gas supplies for the EU.*

*Her academic reading technique is **getting better**.*
*Her academic reading technique is **improving**.*

*Weather conditions are **getting worse**.*
*Weather conditions are **deteriorating**.*

*I will **get back to** that question at the end of my report.*
*I will **return** to that question at the end of my report.*

*The student tried to **get** every word of the lecture **down**.*
*The student tried to **record** every word of the lecture.*

*With such poor A-level results, he was lucky to **get in**.*
*With such poor A-level results, he was lucky to **be admitted** to college.*

*Let us now **get on to** the main point of my assignment.*
*Let us now **proceed to** the main point of my assignment.*

*The government does not know yet how to **get rid of** the country's nuclear waste.*
*The government does not know yet how to **dispose of** the country's nuclear waste.*

While phrasal verbs with **get** should in general be avoided when writing about academic subjects, there are some which can be quite appropriate. As you might want to vary your language, use both.

put forward a theory, a view, an opinion or idea (phrasal verb)
present a theory, a view, an opinion or idea

carry out research or an experiment (phrasal verb)
conduct research or an experiment

something **is made up of** something (phrasal verb)
something **consists of** something

somebody **points out** that … (phrasal verb)
somebody **observes** that …

somebody **sets out** to do something (phrasal verb)
somebody **aims** to do something

Bearing these points in mind (and glancing back to the title of this article), you now know one way to **IMPROVE** your academic writing.

Sylvia Grade

Glossary

to waffle:
to use a lot of words but without saying anything important

i.e. (Latin id est):
that is, namely

to be rushed off one's feet:
to be extremely busy

*dodgy
(BE, informal):*
likely to be dishonest

a First-Class Honours:
highest British undergraduate degree classification

wicked (slang):
very good

to cut sth. out:
to remove

to be marked down:
to get a lower mark/grade

daunting:
intimidating, causing fear

ubiquitous:
very common

A levels:
British exams taken in the final year of school