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English Revisited:

Tips, Tidbits & Tutorials

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Many of our readers not only wish to improve their English, but also learn more about the English language. With that in mind this issue of our newsletter will certainly not disappoint. The grammar section identifies typical mistakes made by German speakers of English and how to avoid them. As part of our <u>series</u> on global Englishes, we present this time round the particularities of Welsh English, which has of course been influenced by the native Celtic language and culture of Wales. Finally, in our vocabulary section we explore <u>agile</u> meetings and their specific terms and techniques.

John Nixon

GLOSSARY

series:
(be careful with the pronunciation of this word; it only has two syllables and is pronounced differently than serious)
series

agile:
moving easily and smoothly (here related to project management)

Style Guidelines for Writing Official University Texts in English

Guidelines

If you are interested in any of the following, please click on the links or **contact us**.

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- English Graduate Upgrade Certificate

- Workshops for PhD Candidates

- *Schreibwerkstatt* / Writing Center

- *Englischkurse für Uni-Beschäftigte*

- Workshops on Anti-Bias Training

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Typical Mistakes for Germans to Avoid

There are some common mistakes German native speakers keep making when both speaking and writing English. Let's have a look at six aspects.

1) Adverbs
When you modify a verb or an adjective, you have to use an adverb.
The vast majority of employees want to work flexible these days.   (incorrect)
The vast majority of employees want to work flexibly these days.   (correct)
A lot of graduates are not good-prepared to join the world of work.   (incorrect)
A lot of graduates are not well-prepared to join the world of work.   (correct)

2) Uncountable Nouns
Uncountable nouns have no plural form:
This website provides valuable informations about enrolment.   (incorrect)
This website provides valuable information about enrollment.   (correct)
Uncountable nouns cannot be used with the indefinite article:
Could you give me an advice on online presenta-tions?   (incorrect)
Could you give me some advice on online presentations?   (correct)

3) Punctuation
a) Overuse of Commas
Never put a comma before a "that" clause and indirect speech in English.
Most employers agree, that quiet quitting is a trend that is here to stay.   (incorrect)
Most employers agree that quiet quitting is a trend that is here to stay.   (correct)

b) Wrong Usage of the Apostrophe
When you form the third person singular of the present tense, you simply add "s". This is not a contraction.
The notice say's that the class has been cancelled.   (incorrect)
The notice says that the class has been cancelled.   (correct)

c) No Usage of the Apostrophe
An apostrophe signals possession or ownership.
The chairs opening of the meeting was very effective.   (incorrect)
The chair's opening of the meeting was very effective.   (correct)

4) Gender-inclusive Language
Traditional gender stereotypes should not be perpetuated. Instead, we should use inclusive language.
The applicant received his job interview invitation via email. (incorrect)
The applicant received their job interview invitation via email. (correct)

5) Prepositions
In contrast to "talk about" the verb *discuss* has no preposition.
Let's discuss about the issue over a cup of tea. (incorrect)
Let's discuss the issue over a cup of tea. (correct)

In contrast to German the verb *arrive* does have a preposition in English.
We're arriving Stuttgart on platform 6 today. (incorrect)
We're arriving at Stuttgart on platform 6 today. (correct)

6) False Friends
German enjoys absorbing English words. However, they are often used wrongly when you compare what they express in German to their correct meaning in English.

a) home office
On Friday I'll be doing home office. (incorrect)
In Britain the *Home Office* is a government department responsible for domestic security. It also denotes a room in someone's home where they work, e.g. a study or a den.
On Friday I'll be working from home. (correct)
My home office is really tiny. (correct)

b) public viewing
People gathered in the square for the public viewing of the match.   (incorrect)
In English *public viewing* refers to when a dead person is laid out in an open coffin for friends and family to pay their last respects.
People gathered in the square for the live/outdoor screening of the match.   (correct)

It is best to stop translating German into English and instead immerse yourself in the language. With enough time and practice – and by reading our newsletter – correct English will come naturally.

Sylvia Grade

Welsh English

Wales is a devolved nation[1] with a distinct cultural and historical identity within the United Kingdom and presents a unique linguistic environment where English and Welsh coexist and interact. Welsh is the oldest language spoken in Britain, dating back possibly 4,000 years to the Celts.[2] The English spoken in Wales, often referred to as Welsh English or Anglo-Welsh, is characterized by distinctive features that reflect the influence of Welsh (Cymraeg) and the region's socio-historical context.

According to the 2021 UK Census, approximately 29.2% of the population of Wales reported being able to speak Welsh. This bilingualism fosters a dynamic interplay between the two languages, influencing the evolution and characteristics of Welsh English.

Educationally, efforts to promote the Welsh language have had a notable impact on the linguistic environment. The Welsh Government's policies aim to increase the number of Welsh speakers and integrate the language into various spheres of public life. Consequently, many young people in Wales are growing up with a strong command of both languages, further blending Welsh linguistic features into their English usage.

Phonologically, Welsh English exhibits several features that distinguish it from other varieties of English in the UK. One prominent feature is the intonation pattern, often described as a "sing-song" accent, which reflects the influence of Welsh prosody. Welsh vowel sounds are drawn out and stretched, which gives rise to a tendency for pitch to rise and fall more dramatically than in other English dialects. Another notable phonological characteristic is the pronunciation of certain consonants and vowels. For instance, the consonant /r/ in Welsh English is typically pronounced as a rolled or tapped "r", akin to the Welsh "r". Additionally, the vowel sounds can differ; the short "a" in words like "cat" may be pronounced more like the vowel in "cart", which aligns more closely with the Welsh vowel system.

Grammatically, Welsh English also bears the imprint of Welsh syntax and structure. One prominent feature is the use of tag questions, which are more frequent and varied than in other English dialects. For example, phrases such as "You're coming, aren't you?" may appear with different tags, like "isn't it?" or "isn't she?",

reflecting the flexible tag usage in Welsh. In addition, verb phrases may come at the end of the sentence, which also reflects the Welsh roots hence giving rise to phrases like "Fed up, I am." Moreover, the influence of Welsh can be seen in the structure of negative sentences. Welsh often uses a double negative for emphasis, a feature that can be observed in Welsh English. For instance, a speaker might say "I didn't see nothing," where Standard English would typically use a single negative.

The lexicon of Welsh English is enriched by borrowings from Welsh, especially in areas related to culture, geography, and everyday life. Words such as "cwtch" (a cuddle or a cozy place) and "eisteddfod" (a literature and music festival) are commonly used and understood by Welsh English speakers as well as those outside Wales. Additionally, place names and personal names often retain their Welsh forms. Some English words also take on alternative meanings. For instance, we often hear the expression "that's tidy, that is," which means that is great rather than well-organised.

Furthermore, certain idiomatic expressions in Welsh English reflect direct translations from Welsh. Phrases like "to give someone a row" (to scold someone) and "to be after doing something" (to have just done something) show further syntactic patterns influenced by Welsh.

In summary, the English spoken in Wales is a rich and multifaceted variety shaped by historical, cultural, and linguistic factors. Its phonological, grammatical, and lexical features reflect the deep influence of Welsh, while the bilingual context of Wales continues to drive its evolution.

Cheryl Stenzel

Examples of Welsh English:
How To Speak With A Welsh Accent

How to Speak WELSH ENGLISH: The Accent the Vocabulary and the History

Footnotes:
[1] New Publication: 20 years as a devolved nation - how has Wales changed? (senedd.wales)
[2] BBC - Cymru - Cymraeg - Yr Iaith - The Welsh language

Agile Meetings

GLOSSARY

superfluous:
not needed

to drone on (colloquial):
to talk for a long time

to hone in on (colloquial):
to focus on

agenda:
a set of items to be
discussed at a meeting

scrum:
from rugby; when play-
ers huddle together at
the start of each play

a plethora of:
very many

At some point in our working life, we have all sat in a meeting (maybe many) that we thought was superfluous, boring or at worst ineffective. There are many things which can cause a meeting to be unsuccessful: colleagues droning on and not getting to the point, action points being missed, or maybe even not providing or sticking to an agenda. Agile methods have been introduced to help improve meeting success as well as get all interested parties involved, encouraging continuous collaboration and improvement. Agility, in the sense it is used here, actually comes from an idea developed in the 1950s in sociology and became a mind-set followed by software developers at the beginning of the 21st century. Compare the business-suited hierarchical types versus the hoodie-wearing software engineers. (The mind-set rather than the clothing is the important factor in agility.) This visual helps to exemplify the difference between a traditional hierarchical organization and an agile team. The practice of an agile model is a network of teams, which collaborate and network in brief, rapid decision-making meetings rather than the old-fashioned, sluggish meetings of a hierarchical organization.[1]

Under the umbrella term 'agility' there are a number of philosophies and practices which are used to disrupt the status quo and create a more agile organization. The focus in this article is on meetings in particular; therefore we will hone in on agile practices for meetings. While agile ideas may break the status quo, they certainly do not leave the meeting structures behind; an agenda and a timekeeper are mandatory for any agile meeting.[2]

The first practice we will investigate is Liberating Structures, created by Henri Lipmanowicz and Keith McCandless in 2014.[3] The concept, as the name suggests, are structures that allow people to be free to act in the most effective way possible and encourage innovation. Liberating Structures are simple techniques that help groups work together more effectively. They encourage everyone to participate, share ideas, and shape the direction of meetings or discussions. These methods promote collaboration, creativity, and engagement in group settings. There are in excess of thirty-three microstructures, which can be used to increase engagement and participation in meetings.

The following two frameworks include ideas for collaboration on projects, which include meetings and events (daily, stand-up, weekly, review and retro), but encompass more than a single meeting.

Scrum is an agile framework that can solve complex problems through transparency, review and customization. The process is based on a strict set of rules with a few basic principles, including organizing the process into interactive sprints. There are three standard roles in a scrum: the product owner, the scrum master and the developer (or developers).

The final framework is OKR (objectives and key results). Objectives and key results are a good method to get the team to pull in the same direction. This is because they are derived from the organization's strategy, vision and mission and are defined together. For OKR to be successful, participants agree on two to four goals. This provides sufficient focus without being too restrictive.

Listed here are only a few of a plethora of agile tools. The Agility Lab at the University of Stuttgart works with individuals, teams and organizations which want to create a more effective meeting culture. They also have more information on the meeting structures mentioned above.

Footnotes

[1]Ajibola Omonije. 2024. "Agile Methodology: A Comprehensive Impact on Modern Business Operations." ResearchGate. International Journal of Science and Research. February 6, 2024.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/377979833_Agile_Methodology_A_Comprehensive_Impact_on_Modern_Business_Operations
[2]"Agilität an Der Universität Stuttgart | Projekt Agility Lab | Universität Stuttgart." 2014. Uni-Stuttgart.de. 2014. https://www.project.uni-stuttgart.de/agility-lab/agility-uni-stuttgart/#7cdf9e84S.
[3]Henri Lipmanowicz, and Keith McCandless. 2014. The Surprising Power of Liberating Structures : Simple Rules to Unleash a Culture of Innovation. Seattle, Wa: Liberating Structures Press.

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