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English Revisited:

Tips, Tidbits & Tutorials

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in the midst of:
 In the middle of

whatsoever:

used to add emphasis in
 a negative sentence;
 synonym: at all

even the best-laid plans
 can go awry (fixed
 expression):

no matter how much
 planning is involved,
 things can still go wrong

shelve (v.): postpone
 scrap (v.): cancel

Editorial

The dog days of summer have arrived and many of us are in the midst of making holiday **plans**. Some have **ambitious plans**, while others have no **definite plans whatsoever**, for **even the best-laid plans can go awry**. **Drawing up** holiday **plans** is sometimes harder than actually **going ahead with them**. Should the weather not cooperate, sometimes they might need to be **shelved** or **scrapped**. Holiday plans might for other reasons **fall through** on their own.

As you can see with the examples above involving the word "plans", in this issue we will be

focussing again on collocations, those natural sounding combinations of words that are the key to fluency.

In our grammar section, we will explore a less widely used verb form, but nonetheless important one, especially for conditional sentences.

Finally, we will report on an intercultural teaching exchange that one of our instructors took part in. In this article further collocations will be identified.

John Nixon



Comments

Upcoming Issues :

- making polite requests
- high vs. low context communication:
the UK vs. Germany
- coping with commas

Contest Winner

Congratulations to the winner of our word etymology contest, Wiltrud Kessler, from the *Institut für Maschinelle Sprachverarbeitung*. Wiltrud correctly identified the German words used in English in our last editorial and has won a bottle of *Sekt*.

Subscription



Currently on Offer

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

Workshops in September and October :

Academic Writing in English: September 4 and 5 (10:00 to 15:15)

Expert English for Academic Staff: October 6 and 7 (8:30 to 16:30)

Conference English/Presenting in English: October 13 and 14 (8:30 to 16:30)

- **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.

Grammar

Past Perfect Simple and Continuous

In its central use the past perfect expresses a situation in the past that is earlier than another situation in the past.

**I hear you went to India last month. Had you been there before?
I thought that I'd locked my door when I left the house, but I was no longer sure.**

The verbs "went" and "thought" above refer to situations which are in the past. Therefore, we use the past perfect to relate back to situations that are further in the past, i.e. "before" and "when I left the house".

THE
PAST

Past Perfect Continuous

The past perfect continuous can be used in the same way that the present perfect continuous is used, that is to indicate an ongoing or repetitive event. The only difference is that the event took place in the past.

**Several years ago I had been getting up at six in order to work, but then my boss changed my schedule so I was able to sleep in. (repetitive action)
I had been writing my thesis for several months when my grant application was finally approved. (ongoing event up to a certain point in the past)**

Where the Past Perfect is Generally Not Used

In many contexts the past simple can replace the past perfect.

The train left before I got to the station.

In the sentence above the past perfect is not necessary because the preposition "before" indicates that the activity of the main clause "the train left" is earlier in the past than the sub-clause "I got to the station". The past perfect "had left" would not be wrong here, but it sounds overcorrect (Close, 1992: 76).

Indirect Speech

In indirect speech the past perfect is used after a reporting verb in the past simple, e.g. "said".

**(1) I had too many appointments. (Jill's original utterance)
(2) Jill said she had had too many appointments. (reporting on Jill's utterance)**

In (2) we place Jill's original utterance with the verb "had" (past simple) further in the past ("had had", past perfect) because the reporting verb is already in the past. Jill's having too many appointments precedes her utterance. (In an upcoming issue of our newsletter, we will deal with indirect speech in more detail.)

Conditional Sentences/If-Clauses

In English, unlike in German, the past perfect is also used for if-clauses expressing a hypothetical situation.

If they had been here yesterday, they would have seen the fireworks at night.

In this example, we could also reverse the word order of the verb "had" and the subject "they" and get rid of "if" and the sentence would still express conditionality. This is similar in German.

Had they been here yesterday, they would have seen the mountains.

This is only possible when you have the third conditional with "had" (as above) or "if-clauses" with "should" or "were". Note that this construction adds a certain stylistic flourish to one's English.

**Should they decide to buy a house, they will have to take out a huge mortgage.
Were I you, I would call the meeting sooner.**

Glossary

sleep in: sleep longer than planned (*ausschlafen*) vs.

fall asleep: *einschlafen*

utterance: statement

precede: come before

flourish: sth. meant to impress people (usually with language, music, art)

take out: to get sth. official (only used with loans, insurance)

call a meeting: *Sitzung einberufen*

Rainer Jerg



More Exercises

Intercultural Communication



Universität
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Polychronic Time

The term polychronic to denote the ability to deal with multiple situations simultaneously was coined by the American anthropologist Edward T. Hall. Polychronic cultures place a great emphasis on building relationships with people and are not put off by working on many tasks at once.

Glossary

secondary education level:
(high school =
Gymnasium)

ubiquitous:
everywhere

whisk:
move quickly

texture:
the feeling of a
material

*to coin (a word/
term):*
come up with
a new word/
term

be put off:
be irritated

Intercultural Teaching Exchange

Ms. Leila Deniz from the Istanbul Kültür University and Dr. Cindy L. Halbert-Seger from the University of Stuttgart participated in an Erasmus Staff Mobility Exchange Program that was made possible by the University of Stuttgart's International Affairs Department. Ms. Deniz was at the *Sprachenzentrum* in Stuttgart from 30 June to 4 July 2014 where she taught two English and two Turkish classes. In return, Dr. Halbert-Seger was at the *Foreign Languages Department* in Istanbul from 9-13 February 2015 where she taught six English classes and peer-observed four others.

The Istanbul Kültür University is a **private university** established in 1997 where the main language of instruction for the majority (~70%) of faculties is English. Thus, the **main purpose** of the English department is to function as a **preparatory year of intensive language instruction** totaling 900 **contact hours**. This is necessary because the **study of English** is not uniformly **regulated** at the secondary education level throughout Turkey. The goal is to reach a B2 level under the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) in order to be admitted to their respective faculties.

By contrast, the University of Stuttgart is a **public university** established in 1829 whose main language of instruction is German. Thus, the **main function** of the *Sprachenzentrum* is to **provide** supplemental language **instruction** with **individualized courses**.

On a Personal Note

This was my first visit to this part of the world. I had no **previous exposure** to the "East". I was immediately **struck by** the **ubiquitous** Turkish **hospitality**. Everywhere you go you are immediately offered Turkish tea **accompanied by** a **genuine desire** to get to know you – In other words, to **establish a relationship**, for which they seem to have **endless time**. This was a culture shock to me as an American who has

lived in Germany for many years, as German culture has a low-context cultural relationship to time. In polychronic cultures such as in Turkey, people generally are not as **strict time managers** as in low-context cultures. If you recognize this, the result is **unbelievable service**.

For example, as I had gotten to "know" the hotel receptionist, when it came time for me to find my way to the university, he ended up accompanying me there the entire way. This was nearly an hour's journey during morning rush hour traffic involving taking the tram and switching buses and figuring out how not to slip on the ice-covered streets and sidewalks. Despite considering myself a world traveler, I was forever thankful for this service as it would have been next to impossible to **navigate** the **metropolis** of 14 million inhabitants on my own!

Once I arrived at the university, I was whisked up to the seventh floor and once again offered Turkish tea and entered into a long chat with the director. Based on **previous negotiations**, it was clear that the **top priority** from their point of view was to **expose** as many of their students to a "native American speaker" rather than to teach something in particular. This was quite a challenge as they have approximately 400 students in 20 classes. We **settled on** a compromise of my teaching six classes and observing four others. In the end, they were very interested in my particular approach to teaching English and invited me to give a lecture to the **entire staff** at the end of my stay. It was of course accompanied by Turkish tea and Turkish delights, the latter having the texture (but not the taste) of German gummy bears.

This exciting exchange provided me with further insight into intercultural communication, which I can apply to my teaching and writing here in Stuttgart.

Dr. Cindy Halbert-Seger



Dr. Cindy Halbert-Seger and
Ms. Deniz Leyla in Istanbul

Verb+Noun Collocations:

to regulate sth.
(e.g. *study of English*);
to provide sth.
(e.g. *instruction*);
to be struck by sth.
(e.g. *hospitality*);
accompanied by sth.
(e.g. *desire*);
to establish sth.
(e.g. *relationship*);
to navigate sth.
(e.g. *metropolis*);
to be exposed to sth.
(e.g. *native American speaker*);
to settle on sth.
(e.g. *compromise*)

Adjective+Noun Collocations:

private/public university,
main purpose/function,
preparatory year,
intensive instruction,
contact hours,
individualized courses,
previous exposure,
ubiquitous hospitality,
genuine desire,
endless time,
strict time manager,
unbelievable service,
previous negotiations,
top priority,
entire staff.

Vocabulary

Collocations of Research

In the first issue of our newsletter this year we discussed collocations of higher learning. A collocation is two or more words that often go together. These combinations just sound "right" to native English speakers, who use them all the time.

On the other hand, other combinations may be unnatural and just sound "wrong". As the academic year comes to a close we will again look at some collocations of higher learning. Last semester we read about the language of exams, and this semester we will look at the language of research.



Library of Congress,
Washington, D.C.

An important aspect of higher learning is **doing/conducting/undertaking research** and the presenting of such research. There is a lot of work which goes into not only the research itself, but also the writing of the research.

Before professors and researchers **select a research topic**, they often **formulate a new idea or theory**, then express it in the form of a **working hypothesis**, and finally **subject the theory to** scientific or **empirical testing**. Through the testing of the hypothesis (hopefully) data will be collected which **supports the hypothesis**.

Reporting on the findings in a published **peer-reviewed journal** is an integral part of **defending an argument** or **presenting one's case**. Such a paper includes a number of sections each with its own purpose.

First, a research report will include information about related research and past work done in the area in a **literature review**. This is not a summary of the **background reading** but an **in-depth analysis of an area or body of research**.



Laser experiment

Second, one must **provide a rationale** for the choice of methods used to **test the hypothesis**, and finally, **back up/support/justify the conclusions** with evidence. These **results are often presented or laid out** in the form of graphs and charts. When **carrying out a study** involving living subjects, **research ethics** must be taken into account to ensure that the subjects are not being abused or taken advantage of.

Hopefully the results of such a publication will result in a **detailed or critical analysis** of the theories which will **provide impetus** for further research and possibly the acceptance of the theory.

Again it is clear that a number of the collocations used may not feel comfortable to you, but the truly dedicated learner who wishes to reach near native-like skills in the foreign language in question will work to learn the collocations necessary to achieve this.

One way to recognize and learn these word combinations is to read authentic texts written for native speakers and note the use of word combinations which sound unusual to your ears. Another possibility is to complete exercises.

Adapted from :

- (1) O'Dell, F. and McCarthy, M. (2008) *English Collocations in Use (Advanced): How words work together for fluent and natural English, self-study and classroom use.* pp. 40-41. Cambridge University Press
- (2) *Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English*, Oxford University Press

Gretchen Chojnacki-Herbers



More Exercises