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English Revisited:

Tips, Tidbits & Tutorials

In this issue

Currently on Offer 1

Grammar 2
Phrasal Verbs

Intercultural Communication 3
Cultural Differences in Presentations

Vocabulary 4
Checking Understanding and Seeking Clarification in British English

Glossary

in full swing: to be operating fully

encounter: come across

come across: encounter

brush up on: refresh or improve one's knowledge of something

point out: to draw attention to something

Editorial

Summer is over and the university is back in full swing. In this issue of the newsletter, we will take a look at three topics that anyone in academia or the business world is likely to en-counter.

In this introduction, you have already come across phrasal verbs, but what are they exactly and when is it better to use their one-word equivalents? The grammar section will help you to brush up on your knowledge of phrasal verbs.

Presentations are a part of academic and business life everywhere around the globe. Our intercultural section points out how cultural differences play a role in determin-

ing styles of presenting in Anglo-Saxon countries, continental Europe, and Asia.

Lastly, just to clarify/to make sure you got it, we will go over a number of formal and informal phrases for checking understanding.

Dr. Joseph Michaels

University Glossary

The latest version of our university glossary is available on our [website](#).

Upcoming Issues:

- punctuation
- academic uncountable/countable terms
- reader friendliness



Comments

Do you have any ideas for future issues or would like to give us feedback? Please contact us.



Subscription

Currently on Offer

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

- **Open Online Office Hours** – Beginning November 6, the Sprachzentrum will offer **free online office hours** for academic staff and doctoral students. Appointments will be available by following the link on our [workshops page](#): For questions: workshop-english@sz.uni-stuttgart.de
- **English-to-go**: You and your colleagues have a lot to do. Let us come to you! We offer 90-minute mini-sessions for small groups on a variety of academic English topics for free at your workplace. We'll bring expertise, you bring the coffee.

Grammar

Let's Get Down to Business

In our May 2016 issue of English Revisited we pointed out that academic writing avoids everyday phrasal verbs. Quite in contrast, idioms and colloquial expressions can play a key role in English used in the workplace. So, let's get cracking!

In academia you'd probably go for more formal one-word verbs in the following collocations whereas in a business setting you might use a phrasal verb:

formal / phrasal verb

I'd like to **postpone / put off** our meeting.

I **will not tolerate / put up with** my colleague's bad temper.

We need to **verify / check up on** the result

You will have to **complete / fill in** this form.

Catering and cleaning **are being outsourced / are being contracted out**.

Our company decided to **diversify / to branch out**.

Remember that when the object of a phrasal verb is a noun, it can usually come before or after the adverbial particle if the phrasal verb is separable.

My supervisor **figured out** the problem. / My supervisor **figured** the problem **out**.

However, if the object is a pronoun, it has to be put before the particle:

My supervisor **figured it out**.

As seen in the collocations given above, there are also combinations where a preposition follows the particle (put up with / check up on). In our examples both phrasal verbs are inseparable and the object, whether a noun or pronoun, has to go after the preposition.

Phrasal verbs can have literal or figurative implications:

We **went up** that hill. (literal)

Food prices **have gone up** again. (semi-literal)

If you had lit a match, the whole building **could have gone up**. (figurative/abstract)

In a final step phrasal verbs can also be used in idioms:

The whole house **went up in** smoke.

The more semi-literal or figurative phrases you use, the more idiomatic and thus natural your English is.

Always remember **to back up** your files.

to make a copy

Thanks for **backing me up** in the meeting.

to support someone

Here the meaning of the phrasal verb changes according to whether the object is human or non-human.

We might have **to bring** the meeting **forward** to Wednesday.

to make something take place at an earlier time than planned

Some interesting questions **were brought up** at the conference.

to mention something, to start talking about something

Could you **copy me in on** your staff's emails, please?

to send someone a copy of an email / memo

I'm **filling in for** Sue, who is ill.

to do someone's job for a short time

Let me **fill you in on** the new developments.

to tell someone the latest news

The rate of increase appears **to be levelling off / out**.

to stay at a steady level of development

The new training assistant **reports** directly **to** the marketing director.

the marketing director is responsible for the assistant's work

It was quite a number of years before our business really **took off**.

to become successful

Some phrasal verbs can also be used as nouns. You are probably familiar with **breakdown, burnout, close-down, drop-off** (decrease), **update, handover, outlay** (amount of money spent on something) or **rip-off** (something that costs more than it is worth). The particle sometimes comes first as in **downfall** and **outset**.

I have made **back-ups** of all of my files.

The economy is **poised for** recovery and **take-off**.

Phrasal verbs are often the exact expression that you need in a sentence; moreover, they offer you a vast choice of vocabulary. They will definitely get you ahead in business. But for now - let's call it a day.

Sylvia Grade

Glossary/Notes

get cracking:
let's make a move /
let's start working
on it

Here "will not"
means refuse to do
something.

"Fill in" is British
usage. "Fill out" is
used in American
English.

British English. The
equivalent in American
English is "copy
me on your..." or
"cc me on your..."

Nouns with -out and
-over are normally
written as one
word.

poised for:
to be ready for
something



Exercises

Intercultural Communication

Cultural Differences in Presentations

All good presentations, no matter where in the world one is, utilize visual aids to emphasize information and avoid lengthy texts on slides. For the latter, there are a number of general guidelines: a maximum of five bullet points per slide, five words per bullet point, a maximum of approximately ten words at one time, and “a picture is worth a thousand words.” The tools provided by PowerPoint platforms can assist in following these guidelines. There is a great difference, however, in what exactly is expected in a presentation. As you may know, there is a difference in how Anglo-Saxons and continental Europeans give presentations. Many times Anglo-Saxons may feel as though continental Europeans are dumping large amounts of uninteresting information on them, while continental Europeans may feel that Anglo-Saxons, especially Americans, are only there to entertain rather than share information.

Principles first

Alongside these differences in style, there is also a difference in the type of reasoning which is prevalent in each of these cultures. In continental European culture (e.g., Germany, France, Italy, Russia) emphasis is given to the principles of deductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning focuses on the background and facts followed by conclusions. Therefore, a principles-first presenter will present the facts, the methodology, and the results before moving on to the implications and applications.

Applications first

In Anglo-Saxon (e.g., UK, US, Canada and Australia) culture, on the other hand, the style of reasoning is inductive or “applications first.” Inductive reasoning generalizes trends from the research and forms a hypothesis based on those trends. The presenting style of inductive reasoners focuses on the applications of these trends. Less attention is given to the methodology in an applications-first presentation, stressing rather the implications. Jens Hupert, a German who has lived in the United States for several years, explained to Harvard Business Review how this different approach caught him off guard in the beginning. “In the U.S., when giving a talk to my American colleagues, I would start my presentation by laying the foundation for my conclusions, just like I had learned in Germany: setting the parameters, outlining my data and my methodology, and explaining my argument.”

Jens was surprised when his American boss said, “In your next presentation, get right to the point. You lost their attention before you got to the important part.” (See sources)

Linear versus circular communication

There is not only a difference in how different cultures reason, but also a difference in the communication styles. One distinction is linear versus circular, also known as low-context versus high-context communication. In the West (both Continental Europe and Anglo-Saxon cultures) a linear communication style is common. It is important to clearly and directly come to the point. It is expected that the information will be explicitly presented. In the East (e.g., China, Japan, Korea and Saudi Arabia) stating the information explicitly is insulting to the listener. While it is generally considered a good presenting technique to repeat key information, in circular communication repetition can denote importance. The more often a fact is repeated, the more important it is.

Once one recognizes the differences in the reasoning and communication styles, it is not difficult to see what expectations the audience will have. As a presenter: think about your audience when creating your presentation. Will they be expecting you to give the reasons behind your conclusion? Will they expect you to come to the point quickly and explicitly? Or will they be anticipating the applications and expecting important information to be repeated? As an audience member: are you expecting a clearly defined application and explicitly stated fact? Or the repetition of important facts which come from principles? Recognizing who is in your audience is the first step in giving a successful presentation.

Gretchen Chojnacki-Herbers

Sources

Meyer, E. (2014) Tailor Your Presentation to Fit the Culture. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved on September 12th 2017 from <https://hbr.org/2014/10/tailor-your-presentation-to-fit-different-cultures>
Lubin, G. (2015) These 8 Scales Reveal Everything You Should Know about Different Cultures. *Business Insider*. Retrieved on September 19th 2017 from <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-culture-map-8-scales-for-work-2015-1?IR=T>

Glossary

prevalent:
widespread

catch someone off guard: to surprise

distinction:
difference

denote:
to mean

anticipate:
to expect

Vocabulary

Structures Used to Check Understanding and Seek Clarification in British English

When working internationally, misunderstandings amongst different nationalities, all coming from different cultures and speaking different flavours of the English language, are often rife.

Saying nothing is not really a valid option either since even a simple silence can be open to interpretation. Silence could be taken as a form of tacit agreement in Scandinavia or Germany, whereas in the UK remaining silent is often a sign that one's counterpart either profoundly disagrees, is too polite to argue, or even worse, has an axe to grind.

Explicit communication and avoiding ambiguity are therefore of paramount importance if a group of mixed nationals are to have any hope of understanding one another in an international context. During a conversation or presentation it can help to check understanding and seek clarification by using a phrase like "Was I clear?" or "Do you follow?"

The following tables summarise a series of both formal and informal phrases to help establish clear communication lines. These can be very useful for international meetings and presentations.

Formal	Informal
Do you follow?	You follow me?
Was I clear?/ Was that clear?	Did you get that?
Do you have any questions?	Did you catch that?
Shall I elucidate on that?	Do you get my drift?

Question Tags

Question tags are very commonly used in English when it is highly probable that the meaning has been understood, but the speaker would like to double-check. Most often the opposite form of the helping verb of the original sentence is used at the end of the sentence.

Examples of phrases using question tags:

- So you can't make the meeting on Tuesday, can you?
- So I shouldn't wear a tie to the office, should I?
- She doesn't travel by tube, does she?
- They don't sell mobiles, do they?

Sometimes the question tag is not always apparent when looking at the beginning of the sentence.

Examples of phrases using less apparent question tags:

- Nobody phoned, did they?
- Let's review the data from the second quarter, shall we?
- Nobody received this private e-mail, did they?
- Somebody picked up Ms. Williams at the airport, didn't they?

Clarifying

"To clarify" means to make a statement clear or free it from ambiguity. This requires providing an explanation using your own words.

Formal	Informal
To clarify,	You mean ...
To clarify what I have understood,	What you're saying ...
In other words,	To put it in a nutshell,
If I understand you correctly, you're saying that...	In order to wise you up,
To elucidate what he/she is saying/you are saying,	Basically, what you're saying is...
To clear up the confusion about...	What you mean is...
To summarize,	What you wanted to say was...
In summary,	To sum up,

When asking for clarification, one should avoid these common mistakes:

- Using phrases like "I beg your pardon" when a shorter phrase would be more suitable.
- Using "What?" when something more formal and polite would be more suitable.
- Using very vague expressions like "I don't understand," which don't give any information on which parts are not understood or why.
- Using expressions like "Do you understand?" too often or directly. This can sound like teachers disciplining children!

Cheryl Stenzel

Glossary

rife:
to be common, especially for something negative

tacit agreement:
unspoken

profound:
completely, deeply

to have an axe to grind:
to have a problem with someone

explicit communication:
direct, stated clearly

paramount:
more important than anything else



Exercises