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# English Revisited:

## Tips, Tidbits & Tutorials

### In this issue

**Currently on Offer** 1

**Grammar** 2  
 Predicting the Future

**Intercultural Communication** 3  
 Small Talk is BIG:  
 How to Avoid that Awkward Silence

**Vocabulary** 4  
 Beginning and Ending Business Letters and Emails

### Glossary

*interjection:*

a word expressing emotion that is typical of spoken language and is often accompanied by an exclamation mark (!), for instance ouch!, ah!, what?!

*grateful:*

thankful

*to oblige:*

to help someone by doing something he/she wants

*to delve into:*

to go deeper into  
 to be at a loss for words:  
 to be speechless, to be unsure what to say

## Editorial

Wow!

This three-letter interjection can only begin to convey our surprise and pleasure at the overwhelmingly positive response to the launch of our English newsletter in November. We are heartened to know that our choice of topics, our explanations and the format of the newsletter went over so well. We are also grateful for the constructive feedback on how to improve our newsletter and for the suggestions for future issues. Many of our readers expressed the wish to receive this newsletter on a quarterly basis and we are pleased to be able to oblige.

In this issue we will continue to delve into the future. As was mentioned in our first issue, there are numerous expressions for the future, each with a set of rules. This time we will explain the rules that govern predictions in English.

Under Small Talk is Big we will provide you with further vocabulary and phrases that you can use to initiate and maintain a conversation so that you will never be at a loss for words.

In our vocabulary section we will deal with sin and faith. Not to worry; we will not be engaging in a

religious discussion, but rather focusing on business letter conventions in both Britain and the US. Curious? Read on to find out more!

Feel free to send us your comments and any ideas for future issues.



**Comments**

John Nixon

If you wish to receive future issues of our newsletter, you will need to **subscribe** to it. Only those who have signed up will receive our newsletter in the future. A subscription is free of charge.



**Subscription**

## Currently on Offer

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

- **The Bilingual Classroom:** Do your students require in-depth knowledge of their subject area in English? If so, we can assist you with creating a bilingual classroom in the following ways: online vocabulary exercises, tutorials in English, writing labs and co-teaching.
- **Coaching and Workshops:** 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. Customized group workshops (e.g. academic writing, presenting conference papers in English, negotiating in English, intercultural communication) are also possible.
- **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.

## Grammar

### Predicting the Future

#### opinion vs. evidence

As we saw in the last edition of our newsletter, the future in English is tricky and must not be confused with the present tense! Predictions about the future are a particularly thorny business. Look at the following two sentences:

A "Be quick or you'll miss your train."  
will future

B "It's 6 o'clock already. You're going to miss your train"  
going to future

How does the perspective of each speaker differ?

In sentence A the speaker is of the opinion that his or her colleague has to hurry to get to the station in time. If not, he or she might miss the train.

In sentence B the speaker knows that the train leaves shortly after six and his or her colleague probably will not make it. There is evidence that something will (not) happen.

Further examples include:

"Look at those dark clouds (evidence)! It's going to rain."

"I'm graduating this spring with an MA (evidence). I'm going to have an easier time finding a job now."

"Your slides look perfect (evidence). It's going to be an excellent presentation."

To sum up, *will* is used for predictions based on opinion and *going to* for predictions based on evidence seen at the moment of speaking.

In everyday speech the *going to* form is very common and often replaces *will* in opinion-based predictions. And do not be surprised when you hear the colloquial *gonna*!

"I've no idea if flights to Manchester are expensive, but I guess I'm gonna find out this afternoon."

(It is not advisable to write the word *gonna* even though this word is quite normal in spoken English.)

#### Future Perfect

Often predictions are made about something that we think we will have completed before a particular point in the future. In this case we use future perfect which consists of the expression *will have* + past participle. The following are some examples:

"Don't worry! I'll have finished the report by 5 pm."

"I'm pretty sure I'll have found a new job by May!"

In these examples the preposition *by* is used to express that I predict that at 5 pm at the latest the report will be ready and that I will likely have found a new job before May.

#### Why by and not until ?

You might ask yourself why we use the preposition *by* in the sentences above and not *until*. This is a common question asked by German speakers of English. After all, you often translate the German preposition *bis* with *until*.

When the deadline or time of completion is stated we use the preposition *by*, whereas when we stress that a situation will continue up to a certain moment we use *until*.

Compare:

"I'm worried my grant funding will have run out by the time I finish collecting enough empirical data."

(The phrase "finish collecting...data" is a reference point in the future.)

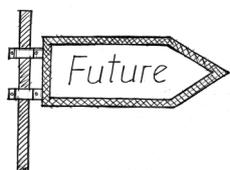
"You have until Monday to submit your writing assignment."

(Here the duration is stressed, i.e. from now until Monday.)



Exercises and  
Explanations

Sylvia Grade



#### Glossary

*thorny business:*  
(In this case)  
complicated matter

*to submit:* to hand in

*pretty:*  
rather (this informal  
usage should be avoided  
in academic writing and  
presentations)

## Intercultural Communication

### Small Talk is BIG: How to Avoid that Awkward Silence

As discussed in the first edition of the newsletter, small talk is BIG and requires various skills in order to smoothly navigate the communication landscape. A review of the first article reminds you to be aware of potential missteps.

One dilemma involves how to avoid awkward moments of silence once you have discussed the weather. You are ready to explore further topics. But, which topics? The choices are many and varied: sports, vacation, air travel, entertainment, hobbies, education, and books. The list is endless. You would be well served to ready yourself by preparing diverse subjects. The following tips are general and apply to most situations. Keep these in mind and you can proceed. You will be ready to carry on a conversation.

#### May I introduce you to...?

First encounters will include an introduction. Should you be at a professional or social event, it is often expected that an introduction will take place. It is important, therefore, to follow the prescribed customs and etiquette. First impressions can have lasting effects. Also, a simple greeting or introduction will often yield some commonalities, for example, a seminar venue, a favorite restaurant, interest in the theater, hobbies, or even living in the same part of town.

#### Introduction example:

“Dr. Jones, (the senior person) I’d like to present/I’d like you to meet/allow me to present/may I introduce to you Mrs./Mr./ Professor/Dr. Smith from the Biology Department at the University of Stuttgart. She is one of our workshop leaders today. She’ll be discussing ..... She’s come a long way. She’s from Seoul, Korea.”

A good communicator is a good listener and will notice subjects that interest the

other party. Questions that require explanations will expand a topic. Questions that are answered with a simple *yes* or *no* will stop a conversation cold.

#### Small Talk Topic Exhausted?

It is important to show interest and conversely to realize when the other person is bored. A polite transition to another topic (if you cannot change seats) or an equally polite excuse to leave can extricate you from an uncomfortable situation. Examples:

Transition: “Well, enough about my adventures in Hawaii, tell me about your trip to Puerto Rico. What was the most memorable part of your trip? I’ve never been there. I understand that the food has Spanish and Indian influences. Is that true?”

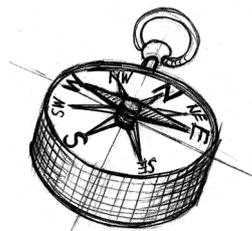
Extrication: “I have to go now, but it was nice talking with you. I hope you enjoy the conference.”



#### More Small Talk Phrases

There are a myriad of possibilities for small talk topics. Future newsletters will include topic-specific small talk dialogues and examples. However, remember that it is not simply a matter of memorizing phrases and possible responses. True sensitivity to people, along with a real desire to connect, will lead to successful communication

through small talk. Have confidence in yourself, develop a genuine interest in others and start talking!



Teresa Bernards

**Allow me to present Prof. Smith from the Biology Department.**

#### Glossary

**awkward:**  
embarrassing,  
uncomfortable

**missteps:**  
faux pas

**prescribed:**  
approved

**venue:**  
place where events are held

**conversely:**  
on the other hand

**to extricate:**  
to set free of a difficult situation

**myriad:**  
too numerous to count

## Vocabulary



**Sir Faith and  
Mr Sin**



**To close a  
letter use  
Sincerely  
followed by a  
comma.**

### Glossary

*adjunct*:  
(adjective) additional,  
but not essential  
(noun) an assistant

## Beginning and Ending Letters and Emails British English (BE) - American English (AE)

In the feedback received from our first newsletter, many of our readers requested an overview of the correct forms of address to use when writing formal letters or emails.

The opening and closing statements reflect both the degree of formality of the situation and the familiarity of the correspondents with each other. The table attached to this newsletter (see link below) outlines the correct forms of address for British English (BE) and American English (AE) correspondence. We have also included a section on letters and emails to friends.

(Note that email and e-mail are both possible)

### Punctuation.

**BE** has now adopted the open punctuation system of letter writing. This means that there are **no punctuation marks** following the opening or the closing address. Now all you have to remember is to forget them!

In **AE** any abbreviated words are followed by a full stop, e.g. Mr.

(Note that a full stop is called a period in AE.)

The salutation for business correspondence is followed by a colon, e.g. Dear Mr. Smith:

### Closure

**BE:** When closing a formal letter or email, remembering the “Sir Faith and Mr Sin rule” can be a helpful reminder of the correct closing address.

**AE:** The most frequently used expression to close a letter is *Sincerely* followed by a comma.

### Ms or Mrs

The most common errors are made when addressing women. The term *Mrs* should **only** be used if the writer is sure that the lady in question is married. The equivalent of *Frau* is generally *Ms*. The term *Miss*, on the other hand, is commonly only used for young girls (under 18). So, if you want to be politically correct, stay with *Ms*. In the UK, it is thought to be more courteous to address women as *ladies* (e.g. “the lady behind me in the queue”). In North America, do not forget to place a full stop or period after *Ms*. and *Mrs*.

### Addressing academics: students’ perspective

In the US, any teacher or freelance lecturer may be addressed as *Professor* both in writing and in conversation. For example, freelance university instructors are called adjunct professors. As a result, some university professors may prefer to be addressed as simply *Doctor* to stress the fact they have completed a PhD. However, the two, i.e. *Professor Doctor XYZ*, (or even *Mrs./Mr. Professor*) should not be used together as is the case in German. In the UK, *Professor* is the preferred form of address.

### Among peers

Professors are generally on a first-name basis with one another once a working relationship has been established. At conferences, you would introduce other professors, however, with their title.

### Capitalization

Unlike in German letters, in English correspondence the first word after the salutation is capitalized. Example:

Dear Mr Smith

The University of Stuttgart is pleased to inform you that ...

Cheryl Stenzel



**Opening and  
Closing  
Phrases**