



**Sprachenzentrum**  
Universität Stuttgart  
Breitscheidstraße 2  
70174 Stuttgart

www.sz.uni-stuttgart.de

**Contact Us:**  
newsletter@sz.uni-  
stuttgart.de

# English Revisited:

Tips, Tidbits & Tutorials

## In this issue

**Currently on Offer** 1

**Grammar** 2  
Make It Work!

**Intercultural Communication** 3  
Collectivism vs. Individualism

**Vocabulary** 4  
Deleted Scene from *Schultze Gets the Blues*

## Glossary

*commonplace*: frequently found or used

*how something/someone ticks*: how it/he/she functions

## Editorial

In our third issue of the 2018 newsletter, we will see if you can tell the difference between words like “say,” “tell,” “see,” “look,” “make,” and “do,” which are commonplace but nonetheless sometimes used incorrectly by non-native speakers of English. Our cultural section will point out distinctions between Eastern and Western societies and how they tick. We will also revisit the topic of so-called “false friends,” which are a seemingly endless source of misunderstandings.

Finally, since it is that time of year, a short lesson on etymo-

logy: You may know that in American English one usually says “fall” while “autumn” is preferred in British English. To find out why there is this difference, you can click [here](#) to find an explanation.

Dr. Joseph Michaels

### New Layout

We are in the process of adopting the new university layout for our newsletter.

### Upcoming Issue:

Infinitives vs. gerunds, collective nouns, and cultural differences in asking for help



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 click on the links or [contact us](#).

- For those interested in **online self study**, information about various offerings can be found [here](#).
- **Tailored workshops** for you and your team at your workplace. Please contact us at the following e-mail address for a reasonably priced offer: [workshop-english@sz.uni-stuttgart.de](mailto:workshop-english@sz.uni-stuttgart.de)
- **Free Spring 2019 seminar offerings for PhD students and academic staff** are now available online. Click [here](#) for more information.

## Grammar

## Make It Work!

Words with similar meanings are some of the hardest things to conquer in a new language. Take, for example, *tell*, *say*, *speak*, and *talk*. All of them involve the production of language, but they belong in different contexts. *Tell* is used for conveying information and needs an interlocutor. *Telling* requires someone to receive the information, as in “I need to tell you something.” *Say* is essential for oral and written reported speech: “Freud said that ‘the unconscious mind governs behavior.’” *Speak* is more general and does not need a recipient. We use this word for giving presentations: “I am happy to speak at the conference.” If someone’s voice is too low, you might ask them to “speak up.” *Talk* is even more general, and essentially means that a person produces language orally. *Talking* could involve a conversation partner, but it does not require one: “He talks all day whether anyone is listening or not.” There are a few common collocations with *tell*, *say*, *speak*, and *talk*. You always *speak* a language, *tell* a story, and *say* your name. You *speak* your mind, *say* what you’re thinking, *tell* someone about your project, and *make* small *talk*.

Another common problem is *listen* vs. *hear*. *Hearing* is passive while *listening* is active. You can *hear* without intent, but *listening* requires effort. “When I listen to music, I try to keep the volume down so that my neighbors can’t hear it.” With small children, we say that there is a difference between a *hearing* problem and a *listening* problem. A *hearing* problem requires a doctor’s help, whereas a *listening* problem is a question of behavior.

There are also differences between *see* and *look*. *Looking* requires intent, while *seeing*, like *hearing*, focuses on the ability more than the action. For example, “I’ve looked at the graph, but I can’t see the data points because they are so small.” Both *look* and *see* can also have more casual meanings. *Look* is a way of calling someone’s attention to something regardless of whether you mean for that person to literally *look* at something or not. *Telling* someone that you see something can mean that you understand: “Look, Tim. I see your point, but I’m

afraid I can’t agree.” *Look* is also useful when discussing appearances, as in “We want to look as knowledgeable as possible.” Also, consider the following: “Can you take a look at this?” vs. “Can you see this?” The former is a request, asking someone to direct his or her attention somewhere. The latter is a question which tries to verify the person’s ability.

*Make* and *do* also present challenges because they have similar meanings but differ by context. *Make* is used mostly when something abstract or concrete is produced. You *make* a cup of tea, but you also *make* time or *make* a mistake. *Make* is also for when someone forces someone to act or causes a reaction: “The server failures *make* me angry. They *make* me restart the system repeatedly.” *Do* tends to focus on the action more than the product. This is why it is often used to replace another verb that is assumed. For example, we *do* (wash) the dishes or *do* (complete) the assignment. Researchers should note that this word collocates with research as with other tasks, as in “It is important to do each step of the instructions in sequence.”

To conclude, consider the following: “We usually do excellent research, but my supervisor says we made mistakes in the last grant report. We need to do more proofreading this time. Please *make* sure to *make* time in your schedule next week so that we can do all of the tasks and see if there is anything left to do before we send it. It’s a tight schedule, but we will just have to make do with what we have.”

For further practice with these words, click below to be directed to an exercise.

Dr. Lucy Blaney-Laible

## Glossary

*to convey*:  
to express a thought or idea

*interlocutor*:  
a person involved in a conversation

*reported speech*:  
an accounting of what was said exactly

*to collocate with*:  
words that tend to be used together and that sound natural to native speakers

*to make do with*:  
an expression meaning “to get by with”



Exercises

## Intercultural Communication

### Collectivism vs Individualism

The Gauls in the Asterix and Obelix cartoons shake their heads at the Romans' quirky behaviour and the Romans fail to comprehend what the Gauls are all about. Obelix's statement, "These Romans are crazy!" has become a household expression for failed communication in the face of cultural incompatibility. We laugh about it because we know it all too well: Where people from many cultural backgrounds work together and communicate, critical incidents (CIs) can occur – even if all members concerned have a fair command of the same language. Some of these CIs can be hilarious and we laugh about them afterwards. Others can be quite hurtful if what is expected is neither familiar nor accepted by the interacting parties.

In an effort to understand what can cause confusion in intercultural communication, interculturalists like Geert Hofstede, Fons Trompenaars, Charles Hampden Turner, and many others have written about the idea of "cultural dimensions", i.e. parameters that determine and explain seemingly irrational and non-conformist behaviours of communication partners who have been socialized in different cultural settings and whose "scripts" (elements for communication and action) differ. What the above-mentioned interculturalists all point out is that many misunderstandings arise from group orientation and the values underlying it, i.e. whether a person thinks and acts as an individualist or a collectivist.

Individualistic cultural settings assume that a person's life belongs to her/himself alone. Everybody should make their own choices, live as they like, rely on their own judgement, and pursue the values they choose. Communication may be very direct and blunt. There are clear rights and wrongs and a task-oriented style of working usually prevails. Achievements are personal triumphs and displayed proudly. In collectivistic cultural settings, in contrast, the social network is the all-determining factor. Someone's life is there to serve the purposes of the group s/he is born or socialized into. Personal desires are sacrificed for the group's greater good and choices can be externally influenced by a family and social system. The style of communication is meant to achieve harmony

because relationships tend to be long term. Communication in settings like these tends to be more indirect and there is more of a contextual truth than a clear right and wrong. The notion that honest people should speak their mind just does not always work in this context as it could cause a loss of face. People do not stick out and rewards are for the group. Likewise, mistakes fall back onto the social network and the wrongdoing of an individual results in shame – and although guilt is rectifiable, shame sticks.

The two orientations result in decidedly different communication styles in business. While business people in individualistic settings go in, talk, and strike the deal, in collectivistic settings business people build up a relationship to find similarities, which is the deal. Hence, a contract's rules and regulations are binding for an individualist. For a collectivist it is the relationship. This explains why building rapport takes comparatively little time in individualistic, task-oriented settings, yet it takes quite some time in relationship-oriented settings.

This also explains why working styles at university can vary. In task-oriented settings, "group work" means that everybody has an individual task, works on it, and the result will be implemented into the final product (a student presentation or similar). In group-oriented settings, "group work" implies that the group discusses and communicates non-stop to achieve a result, though individual members may do research on their own. The result will most likely be one that has been achieved by collaborating in the process.

To see whether you can differentiate between collectivist and individualist behaviours, click below to the right for an exercise.

Dr. Ines Böhner

#### Glossary

*household expression:*  
a common expression

*hilarious:* very funny

*to pursue:*  
to go after

*task-oriented:*  
individuals focus on a task to achieve a goal; as opposed to relationship-oriented in which there is a group effort towards a common goal

*loss of face:*  
social standing; in Asian settings a much deeper concept than the German *Gesichtsverlust*

*rectifiable:*  
able to be set right again

*rapport:*  
a good understanding of someone



Exercises

## Vocabulary

### Deleted Scene from *Schultze Gets the Blues*

The following story is a fictitious deleted scene from the 2003 German film *Schultze Gets the Blues*, in which the protagonist Schultze, a retired miner who cannot speak English, explores the South of the United States. Some of the words have been replaced with mistakes derived from false friends in English and German. There are mistranslations from words that sound alike ("aktuell", "actual") as well as definitions of false friends placed in incorrect contexts. For example, there is the false friend pairing of "Dose" and "dose", or "can" and "amount of medicine" respectively: "The nurse wasn't sure what can to give the patient." Thus, if a word seems out of place, then one has to think of the false friends it is based on. Once you have read the story, click on the link below to be directed to an exercise where you can check to see if you know the correct words (numbered below). For further information about false friends, click [here](#) for an article from a previous newsletter.

It was still early in the morning as Schultze's eyes began to 1) flatter. After wiping the sleep from his 2) whimpers, he stood up, stretched, and marveled at the nearly impenetrable 3) dung that enshrouded his boat. Not wanting to press his luck since he was completely clueless when it came to navigating the intricate maze of the bayou, he decided to stay put for the time being and have breakfast. The exotic-sounding 4) fires Brownberry and Smuckers of the bread and jam he munched on reminded him of just how far away he was from home. But Schultze did not feel the slightest hint of alienation, even while his thoughts 5) hiked back to Teutschenthal, to his friends Manfred and Jürgen, and to his mother. It suddenly occurred to him that the fog surrounding him was not unlike the dementia that clouded his mother's thoughts.

Before too long, the grey 6) wand lifted, though not entirely. Anxious to explore, Schultze decided to start the motor up anyway. He proceeded with 7) security deposit, the corners of his lips stretched into a content grin. More and more the details of the surroundings revealed themselves as the foggy morning gave way to a glorious, 8) hell day. The drooping Spanish moss, so characteristic of the bayou and the American south, reminded Schultze of the saying, "Ohne Moos, nix los," and a

roaring laughter burst forth from the depths of his soul. Here he was, barely a penny to his name, yet for the first time in many years he felt fulfilled and invigorated.

The sputtering motor was soon accompanied by the sounds of children playing nearby. Eager for company, he aimed the boat at the source of the gleeful voices. On the right and up ahead there was a clearing where a small, humble home sat and two young boys chased each other in the 9) garden.

"Hallo!" Schultze yelled to them.

"Hi!" the children shouted back. Schultze motioned that he was thirsty, and the 10) pickle-faced older boy motioned for him to park his boat on the shore. The children ran inside and were soon followed out by a woman who Schultze assumed was their mother. She handed him a tall glass of cold water.

"Sank you," Schultze said and quickly emptied the glass in one gulp. The three friendly hosts began to ask questions, and once again Schultze regretted that his knowledge of English was so limited. They noted the look of 11) irritation on his face and realized that he could not understand them. The mother gestured to her mouth to ask him if he was also hungry. Not wanting to intrude further, Schultze smiled and pointed to his boat to show that he would be leaving.

As the boat pulled away, the family stood on the shore and 12) winked. Schultze felt a tinge of melancholy to be alone again, but his spirits quickly lifted as he looked ahead at the expanse of the bayou.

Dr. Joseph Michaels

#### Glossary

*to marvel:*  
to be full of wonder

*impenetrable:*  
impossible to pass through

*to enshroud:*  
to surround and hide from view

*alienation:*  
a feeling of loss of identity

*to droop:*  
to hang down

*invigorated:*  
full of strength and energy

*to sputter:*  
to make a series of soft, explosive sounds

*gleeful:*  
full of joy

*intrude:*  
to force oneself into a situation or place

*gleeful:*  
full of joy

*tinge:*  
a hint of something



Exercises