

In-Class Activity 8- **Its Time for We to Learn You to Write Gooder**

2 October 2007

Many of you can immediately begin improving your writing based on the following guidelines for some commonly made mistakes (modified from H. Grissino-Mayer, 2003, TRR 59: 3-10)

since ≠ because: The primary definitions for the word **since** are related to elapsed time (Agnes 1995). If causality is implied, use instead the word **because**.

Examples: “**Since** the beginning of the semester, I have had to wake up before noon”

“**Because** I teach a 12:30-1:45 class, I must wake up before noon”

“~~**Since** they are making me teach, I have to wake up before noon~~”

due to ≠ because of: Although common, **due to** is not a satisfactory substitute for **because of**. The primary meanings of the word **due** refer to something owed (Agnes 1995), whereas if causality is implied, use **because of**.

Examples: “A standard monetary kick-back to pass the class is **due to** the instructor”

“Your instructor requires a kick-back **because of** his extravagant lifestyle”

“~~You bribe your instructor **due to** your need to get a good grade~~”

“~~A major water issue is the lack of water filtration devices **due to** the country’s lack of hard currency~~”

because ≠ whereas ≠ while: These conjunctions are not interchangeable. Use **because** if causality is suggested by the second conjoined sentence. Use **whereas** and **while** if the second conjoined sentence contrasts the meaning of the first sentence or phrase, but like the word **since**, **while** conveys the element of time.

Examples: “I drive a Jaguar and Mike drives a Lincoln, **whereas** our TAs drive Kias”

“Although prepackaged confections are good, I prefer to bake my own”

“I normally bake cookies **because** prepackaged confections are beneath me”

“~~**While** a bribe may seem like a good idea, you really better think that one through~~”

“~~**While** the country borders the Indian Ocean, the government has had a difficult time supplying adequate water for the population~~”

that ≠ which: These troublesome words are *not* interchangeable. The pronoun **that** is restrictive, referring to one specific object, whereas **which** is nonrestrictive, referring to a choice that must be made when more than one object exists (Hart 1976; Strunk and White 1979). In most cases, **that** will directly follow without punctuation, whereas **which** is usually preceded by a comma.

Examples: “I keep a top-secret list **that** contains the names of students not attending class”

“It is better to give than receive, **which** is good motto for life”

“The air pressure **that** exists outside the plane at 35,000 feet is about one-fourth of sea-level pressure, **which** is a good reason why the environment in the plane is controlled”

“Over 54 tons of organic pollutants were discharged to waterways in the Dominican Republic every day in 1980, **which** is likely to have since increased.”

A. Proper choice of words. In the sample of written text that follows, choose (**circle**) the correct wording from each pair of possibilities that are within brackets.

Numerous experiments have shown that most plants grow faster and often larger when atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels are increased beyond the ambient level of 380 parts per million by volume (ppmv). This occurs **1**{**because** OR **since**} plants photosynthesize using CO₂ and water (H₂O), the combination of which comprises much of their mass. Typically, plants waste about 40% of **2**{**their** OR **they're**} energy by confusing atmospheric O₂ with CO₂ when they start the photosynthetic process; increasing the quantity of CO₂ in the air decreases the odds that plants will pick up oxygen, an inefficient pathway known as photorespiration.

The experiments showing growth enhancement under elevated CO₂ levels have been undertaken, with few exceptions, in agricultural settings, where plants receive irrigated water and fertilizer. **3**{**Its** OR **It's**} feasible to imagine that plants of the future could require more water and more fertilizer to support **4**{**their** OR **there**} more rapid growth. Perhaps lack of nutrients or water will limit plant growth despite CO₂ fertilization. On the other hand, field experiments indicate that plants grown under enhanced CO₂ conditions tend to require fewer nutrients and **5**{**fewer** OR **less**} water.

Another condition **6**{**that** OR **which**} might not be equal in a world with higher levels is air temperature. CO₂ has an insulating **7**{**effect** OR **affect**} on the Earth's troposphere because it re-radiates outgoing infrared light (i.e., heat) back to the planet's surface. Higher temperatures can influence plant growth in different ways, depending on where and when the temperature increase **8**{**occur** OR **occurs**}. For instance, warmer temperatures in the boreal region during the fall might extend the **9**{**plants'** OR **plants**} growing season and increase plant **10**{**growth**. **While** OR **growth, whereas**} higher temperatures in arid regions during the summer might cause wilting and decrease plant growth.

We can make predictions about how CO₂ **11**{**effects** OR **affects**} plants, "all other things being equal". However, the chances of all other things being equal **12**{**is** OR **are**} actually quite low. We will not fully understand the impact of increasing atmospheric CO₂ levels for many years to come, **13**{**that** OR **which**} means uncertainty will prevail in the near future.

B. Edit Writing. Look at underlined bold words below and fix them (but only if necessary)

During El Niño events abnormally warm water builds up in the eastern tropical Pacific **due to** the shift in wind direction from easterly to westerly, **while** during La Niña, cooler-than-normal water accumulates along the west coast of the Americas. **Since** warmer water supports more evaporation in the eastern Pacific **while** El Niño is in progress, winter precipitation increases along the west coast of S. America and even in the US Southwest. Wildfires in the U.S. Southwest are suppressed **due to** moister plants and fuels. **Since** records have been kept, however, an increase in wildfires has been observed in the year or two immediately after the El Niño year. **While** this might be random chance, it is more likely **due to** moist conditions in the El Niño year promoting high plant growth and build up of abundant fine fuels **which** subsequently dry out.