

or cause to undergo a chemical reaction', and it seems that the less literate chemists have prevailed. He has come reluctantly to tolerate the use of *anticipate* in the sense of *expect* (again condemned in *Plain Words*) and not only in its stricter sense of 'foreseeing an event, and doing something about it before it happens', making the comment: "Defenders of the distinction often make the point that expecting a marriage is not the same as anticipating it. But, at a time when social customs change, can we expect verbal customs to remain unchanged?"

I hope that this excellent book will be read by all those who submit papers in English to the *Journal of Organometallic Chemistry*, or at least by those whose mother tongue is English. And this prompts me to reflect on how pleasant it must be to be the editor of the *Australian Journal of Chemistry* and to have to worry about the choice between *that* and *which* in cases in which common usage would allow either. Most of the papers I deal with are from those who are not writing in their own language, and as I write this review I have in front of me a not untypical manuscript of which the following passage (amended only by removal of names of species which might permit identification of the author) is representative: 'We can suppose that reaction occurs by chlorine substitution and formation of the X monodentate complex. The loss of a bulky Y ligand and evolution to the bidentate complex is the final step. In supporting of this mechanism we have noted that the product of A with B (in order to obtain complex C) shows in some cases an IR spectrum according to a mixture of compounds. A major ability to carbonylation of the X complex respect to the Y complex (carbonylated only under forcing conditions) make the carbonylation possible. Comparison between spectra data suggest a decreasing donor ability to the Z moiety  $A > B > C$  which is according to the ability to substitute the Y ligand. The W ligand has a minor steric hindrance due to a lower size; this fact, along with its minor donor ability, leads to the isolation of the monodentate complex as the only product.' (A final point of interest is that, English being as tolerant as it is, the meaning of this passage can be discerned at every point in spite of the many errors!)

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*Plain Words*; by Sir Ernest Gowers. Revised edition by S. Greenbaum and J. Whitcut. Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1986, vii + 288 pages, £3.95, ISBN 0-11-7011215.

This is a new edition of an excellent publication which first appeared in 1954. It is reviewed here not because it has any special relevance to chemists but because I should like to persuade all those who submit papers in English to me for the *Journal of Organometallic Chemistry* to read it carefully and then keep it at hand for reference. There is probably no writer of English who would not derive some benefit from it.

The emphasis is heavily upon writing simple and unambiguous English, and less on grammatical conventions and niceties of word usage, though these are not neglected. The chemical literature would be much more pleasant to read, and much

more effective in conveying its message, if chemists would take to heart the demonstration in this book that simple words and constructions are always to be preferred, instead of, as so many do, thinking that more complex or fancy words, involved sentences, and the use of the latest jargon will be more impressive. Why, for example, should chemists (and almost no-one else) so frequently use *afford* instead of *give*, and many, even worse, prefer *result in the formation of*?

The book does include a checklist of words and phrases to be used with care. The authors have realistically accepted many changes in usage which have taken place since the first edition appeared, but are still against the use of *due* in a phrase such as 'He failed due to ...', writing: "Many readers feel very strongly against the 'incorrect' use of *due to*, common though it is. Sensible writers should therefore try to form a habit of using it correctly .... If you are in doubt, you may prefer to use *owing to* or *because of*, which is always safe."

They also still oppose the use of *anticipate* for *except*, in spite of the fact, which they acknowledge, that it is now very common, recommending that *anticipate* should be used only in the sense of foreseeing or forestalling an event. In the first paper I submitted (some 38 years ago) for publication, in the Journal of the Chemical Society, I consistently used *anticipate* when *expect* would have been appropriate; the editor, the late R.S. Cahn, who did so much to improve the writing of British chemists, changed this throughout, and finally in frustration wrote in red ink in the margin of the typescript: 'Author. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives thirteen meanings for *anticipate*, and *expect* is not one of them.' He was right, and I have never made the same error since, even though I subsequently noticed, with some unease, since writers are always urged to model themselves on the best authors, that in Jane Austen's novels *anticipate* is regularly used in the sense of *expect*!

This book is an exceptional bargain, and should be in the possession of all those who have to write in English in the course of their profession.

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