

English support
Business House (PO Box 618)
Jernbanegade 23 B
4000 Roskilde

News & Tips

English support

N B: If you received this newsletter by e-mail, it is (hopefully) because you have expressed a wish to do so. If this is not the case, and/or you do not wish to receive it in future – *please let us know!*

No. 15 – January 2006

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**Happy New Year
to all our readers!**

Dear friends

We have arrived at the start of English support's third year of existence. The first year was marked by steady growth quarter for quarter. The second year showed clearly that such growth could not be relied upon. The first two quarters were very poor, while the second half of the year more than corrected the shortfall. Our customer base has become much broader, and prospects look good for continued growth. In fact the year has already started on full throttle!

Vision for 2006

At the beginning of 2005, our vision was that by the end of the year we would have agents in several target countries, the web site in the languages of those countries and, most important of all, a broad customer base both in Denmark and abroad. These targets have been only partially fulfilled, so there is still some way to go, especially with activities in other countries.

So this year the aim is not only to broaden the number of languages offered, but also to establish ourselves in specific markets, in Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and Western Europe, e.g. Sweden, Hungary and Spain.

In Denmark, the customer base is expanding well, with new customers coming through seminars, recommendations and Internet searches. The fact that more and more customers are finding *English support* through search engines is particularly encouraging, since it shows there is a demand for native-speaker English proofreading and translation.

Translators, secretaries, teachers ... **English support Hotline** *... helps you get it right!*

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Register now (FREE) – per minute charge: 10 kr. – invoicing once a quarter (minimum 120 kr.)

Other languages

The demand for other languages is also increasing. Customers, pleased with work done in English, ask for similar services in other languages. To facilitate this development, the web site is going to split into two sites: www.englishsupport and www.languagesupport, with the latter devoted to proofreading and translation into other languages than English.

This means that the company mission has been expanded and now reads: *to provide the best possible all-round help to Danish and other companies and individuals who wish to produce written material in good English and other languages.*

And already our rapidly expanding network of freelance collaborators enables us to offer native-speaker help with Danish, French, German, Hungarian, Russian, Serbo-Croat, Spanish and Swedish.

Please turn over!

From the workshop...

Possibilities, opportunities and options ...

English is a language very rich in words. But even where the meanings of words overlap a lot, as with these three, there is a tendency to use the different words in slightly different ways.

- The word *possibility* tends to be used where the focus is quite literally on what is possible or not possible: *There is always the **possibility** that something will go wrong.*
*There was no **possibility** of explosion in the absence of oxygen.*
- We use the word *option* where the focus is on a range of possible choices a person can make, good or bad: *It seems to me you now have three **options** / no **option**.*
- The word *opportunity* is used to focus on a situation in which it is possible to do something (usually positive): *He turned down the **opportunity** to appear on TV.*

Note that only *agents* (people, companies, animals, etc.) can have *options* and *opportunities*.

... and the prepositions that follow

The word *possibility* is never followed by the infinitive. So while we say it is *possible to do* something, we speak of *the possibility of doing* something (or *the possibility of snow*).

The word *option* is also usually followed by *of*, as in: *She has the **option of continuing** to study.* But note the infinitive after *the only/first/best option is* and *no option but*, as in: *Your best option is **to sell** the house,* and: *You have no option but **to sell** the house.*

The word *opportunity* is very often followed by the infinitive: *He turned down the **opportunity to appear** on TV.* But *of* is also common here: *He turned down the **opportunity of appearing** on TV.* In connection with nouns, *for* is often used after *opportunity*, as in: *the **opportunity for** a new life.*

Beware of experiences ...

Caution should be exercised when using the word *experience* – perhaps especially in the tourist industry! In its uncountable form, *experience* can refer to anything a person has done, seen, felt, etc., and is quite neutral: *Some countries have more **experience of dictatorship** than of democracy.*

But in its countable form, *experience* is often negative. You can have *a wonderful experience* or *a delightful experience*, but English speakers very often use the word in a negative context: *a traumatic experience, a terrible experience,* etc., and if they use it without a clearly positive, qualifying adjective, it is almost always ironical: *The camel trip was an **unforgettable experience!***

Seminar: *Do you speak “danglish”?*

Monday, 30 January at Heinze's (Boghandel og Videncenter) in Roskilde.

New time: 5:15 – 7:00 PM. Cost: DKK 60, but FREE for students.

Registration: e-mail to info@heinzes.dk or phone 4635 4375

New post box (PO Box no. 618)

Please note: Changes in *Post Danmark's* charges and regulations mean that *English support* now has a new PO Box number (for early morning delivery).

Best wishes

Lawrence White

LW@englishsupport.dk

www. **English support** .dk

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Dear friends

Numbers were small, but interest was great at the *Do you speak “danglish”?* seminar in Roskilde on 30 January. We had a lot of fun and the response was very positive. One translator who came told me later that while driving home she and her friend had laughed so much they almost cried – but happily they don’t seem to have been stopped by the police. But eight people is not a lot and we hope to attract many more next time – perhaps in Århus? Watch this space!

Teaching activity expands

Short course teaching activities have got off to a good start this year with in-house courses for staff in both companies and institutions of higher education. Sometimes what is needed is just a general brush-up in English, but we also deliver courses tailored to specific needs. In the case of universities and colleges, for instance, we offer special courses for **teaching staff**, **technical staff**, and **administrative staff**. There is also a course devoted to improving **pronunciation**.

And we are going to try something new this spring: a **Saturday morning course** in *Business English Skills*. The course is aimed at **business people** who recognise the need to brush up their English skills to gear up for the challenges of increasing globalisation.

Over four successive Saturday mornings we take you rapidly through all the essentials of doing business in English, from *first contact* and *socialising* through to *formal meetings* and *making presentations*. On the way we will look at *meeting people*, *receiving visitors* and *going on visits*, *small talk*, *telephone English*, *business letters*, *negotiation*, and coping with *cultural differences*.

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Would you like to come closer?

The *English support* network is now well over 50 strong and includes a considerable range of language and communication expertise.

But now there is a special opportunity for partners who would like a base in Roskilde. *English support* has an option on almost 50 square metres of office space in Business House. The idea is that language and communication freelancers working under the same roof can help each other and attain synergic gains.

If you are interested in coming closer, please get in touch as soon as possible! This office space will become available in March, and how much we take on depends on how much interest there is now.

From the workshop...

Do you lack (a) serious behind?

A lot of mistakes in written English are caused by mistakes in spoken English. This is a classic example. In Danish there is no difference between a hard 'g' and a 'k' if they occur in the middle or at the end of a word. So many Danes have difficulty in making a clear difference between *back* and *bag*, *lack* and *lag*, *sack* and *sag*, *tack* and *tag*, and so on.

Another problem is remembering to put the '-ly' on the end of (most) adjectives when turning them into adverbs. That has also gone wrong here.

So while the author intended to make a comment on people *lagging seriously behind*, the actual words used sound rather as though the point was that people's bottoms are simply not big enough nowadays – not a problem widely discussed in the press! ☺

To have and to hold

These two words often get mixed up. When a company writes: “We *hold* considerable knowledge and experience about Danish society”, the wrong word has been chosen. The word *hold* normally means to have something in your hands or arms (literally), e.g. a baby or a book.

It can sometimes be used in the sense of *to have* or *possess*, but only with words like *licence*, *passport* and *permit*, i.e. documents that give the holder authority to do something, and with words like *notion*, *opinion* and *view*, when these are used to express someone's position on some question under discussion. In both cases, *hold* focuses on the long-term nature of the situation.

Course: **Business English Skills**

TIME: 9:00 am – 12:30 pm, four Saturday mornings: 11th March – 1st April inclusive

PLACE: Business House, Jernbanegade 23 B, Roskilde

COST: 2000 kr. (incl. VAT) per person

Can you help the professor?

As noted in *News & Tips* No.9, English uses capital letters for titles, including *Mr*, *Mrs*, etc. But this apparently uncontroversial statement has not gone unchallenged. Students of a certain professor, who will remain nameless, pointed out to me that his book states that *Mr* and *Mrs* can also be written with small letters.

I wrote to the professor and asked him for his sources for this surprising claim. He referred me to “The Economist”, “The Independent”, the “New Statesman” and “other noble publications” and “quite a lot of today's grammar books”. But, like the fairies at the bottom of my garden, none of this evidence seemed to be there when I looked. So I challenged him to find even *one single solitary grammar book, dictionary or style guide* published in the English-speaking world that says *mr* or *mrs* is even possible – and promised him a bottle of wine if he could. He has not responded to my challenge.

Of course, even if such a book or style guide could be found, it would not justify teaching students in Denmark that this is normal practice. It isn't. What we have here is another piece of the *made-in-Denmark* English that I call “danglish”. Nevertheless, a nice bottle of wine might compensate the professor at least a little bit for having to admit a mistake...

Can anyone help the professor win his bottle of wine?

Best wishes

Lawrence White

LW@englishsupport.dk



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No. 17 – March 2006

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Dear friends

Turnover for the first quarter of this year is already well up on the previous quarter, which itself was the previous best. So business is booming, and looks like continuing to do so. This does not mean wealth and riches, of course. After all, we are talking about the language business! But it does promise solid and steady future growth, giving more work to more people. And more and more people are also offering their services to *English support*.

Office space

As mentioned in last month's issue, *English support* has an option on some 50 square metres of office space in Business House. This creates a special opportunity for partners who would like a base in Roskilde. The idea is that language and communication freelancers working under the same roof can help each other and attain synergic gains.

This office space is now expected to become available from the beginning of April. If you are interested in an office or sharing an office at an address in the heart of Roskilde, please get in touch as soon as possible!

Course: *Business English Skills*

TIME: 9:00 am – 12:30 pm, four Saturday mornings: 11th March – 1st April inclusive

PLACE: Business House, Jernbanegade 23 B, Roskilde

COST: 2000 kr. (incl. VAT) per person

No wine yet for the professor!

It's a sad story (see last month's issue), but none of our readers seems to have been able to find even *one single solitary grammar book, dictionary or style guide* published in the English-speaking world that says *mr* or *mrs* is even possible, never mind normal.

Of course, the English-speaking world is a big place, so we should probably allow one more month. *After all, the professor seemed so sure of his case.*

But if no one can help him wade through all the literature to find his "source", he won't get that bottle of wine I've promised him.

And he has personally had all the time since well before Christmas to come up with something or other. *I wonder what's keeping him...* ☺



Be aware!

This is a straight case of mistranslation. Usually all it means is *Please note*. On a notice warning about some danger, the intended meaning is something like *Watch out!* or *Take care!*

Awareness is such a vague, general word that it almost always needs qualification, e.g. *political awareness* or *sexual awareness*. Similarly, the adjective *aware* needs contextual concretisation, e.g. *I am aware of that fact*. The use of either word without qualification sounds oddly vacuous.

To, too and two

There are two combinations that often get mixed up here: *to* and *too*, and *to* and *two*. Until very recently, I had never seen *too* confused with *two*.

The most common confusion is to substitute *to* for *too* used as a submodifier (e.g. in expressions like *a bridge too far*, and *it costs too much*). When *too* is used as an adverb, meaning *also*, there is usually no spelling problem.

The confusion of *to* with *two* is a special blind spot in Denmark, caused by the fact that the Danish for *two* is *to*.

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The present perfect vs. the past

English uses the present perfect tense (e.g. *I have finished*) in a more limited way than Danish, French, German and many other languages. It is best thought of as a present tense. It is used to make a kind of flash-back in time that throws light on the situation now. In a great many other languages, it is also (or even mainly) used to talk about the past. But in English, whenever we focus on a past time, we must use the *past tense*.

If I say, *I have worked as a teacher for many years*, this means that I still do. If I wanted to say that I no longer work as a teacher, I would say, *I worked as a teacher for many years*.

The sentence, *I have lost my keys*, means that I do not have them now. If I had already found them again, I would have said, *I lost my keys*.

So the present perfect in English could be called the “before-now” tense. It deals with *time before now and related to now*, in contrast to *past time*.

You cannot use it where you have a time adverbial in the past (e.g. *yesterday, two seconds ago, in 1851*). You cannot use it when the focus is on an activity completed in the past, which cannot be repeated, or in some other way clearly belongs to the past.

For example: *Steen Kaalø has written a lot of poetry*, while *Shakespeare wrote a lot of poetry*. Steen Kaalø is still writing poetry, unlike William Shakespeare...

Best wishes
Lawrence White
LW@englishsupport.dk

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No. 18 – April 2006

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Dear friends

Well, sometimes you fall flat on your face! Trying to get Danes to come to a course on *Business English Skills* on Saturday mornings (see last two issues) was clearly a mistake. Never mind. We will try again on a normal weekday. Later. We have also had a problem interesting people in the office space in Business House. But everybody thinks it's a really good idea to try to collect language and communication freelancers under the same roof, so we'll keep trying on that one.

Office space

English support still has an option on some 50 square metres of office space in Business House. So if you are interested in an office, or sharing an office, at an address in the heart of Roskilde, please get in touch as soon as possible!

The professor did *not* get his wine

Over the last three issues we have been trying to find *anyone* who knows of even *one single solitary grammar book, dictionary or style guide* published in the English-speaking world that says *mr* or *mrs* is even possible, never mind normal.

This is because I had promised a certain professor, who will remain nameless, a bottle of wine if he could find one independent source for his surprising claim (in a book used for teaching English at university level, no less) that *Mr* and *Mrs* can also be written with small letters.

He never did respond to my challenge. Indeed, he seems to have taken umbrage at being put on the spot. So I thought I might mollify him by advertising for help. Alas, no one has been able to be of any assistance.

So he doesn't get the wine. Still, I might be able to think of a use for it ... ☺



How to write a scientific paper

English support has just published a booklet for people who want to publish in English science journals, but who are not native speakers.

Most of the material already available on this subject is aimed at English speakers. What is new about this booklet is the way it makes the disciplines of the internationally recognised "IMRAD"* approach to writing scientific articles easily accessible for non-native speakers as well. Typical grammar and spelling pitfalls are pointed out and its 36 pages also include useful tips on style.

The new booklet is already in use as teaching material on a course for lecturers and PhD students at the Department of Civil Engineering at the Technical University of Denmark.

Clean and clear

These two words often confused. The adjective *clean* means without dirt and the verb *to clean* means to remove dirt.

The fundamental idea in the adjective *clear*, however, is not *cleanness* but *emptiness*. A clear sky is empty of cloud; a clear skin has no blemishes; a clear glass is transparent; and a clear desk has no papers on it. Notice the emptiness is always positive.

Similarly the verb *to clear* means to create a positive kind of emptiness. Thus I might clear my desk (finish my outstanding work), clear away (after dinner), or clear up (meaning tidy up or put things in order). And the weather might clear up too (brighten up). In each case the focus is not on dirt, but other things that might be in the way in the situation. Even telling someone to “clear off” can be seen as aimed at a positive kind of emptiness – their absence!

Appreciate if

You cannot say “*appreciate if*”. The expression normally being aimed at here is something like: “*I would appreciate it if you would*”. The little word *it* is unstressed, but it must be there. In this respect the word *appreciate* is a little like the words *inform* and *tell* (see *News & Tips* No.1). You must appreciate *something*, just as you must inform or tell *someone*.

Within

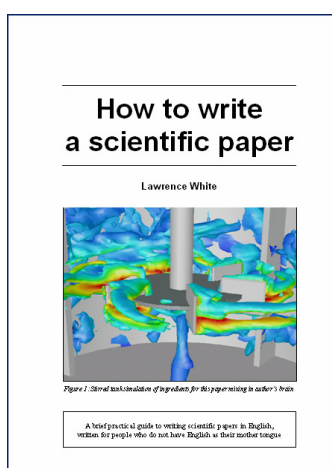
Here is a word that is much overused in Denmark. If something is *within* something, it is inside it or surrounded by it. When talking about location, *inside* is more common, but when we talk about any kind of limits (including lengths of time) *within* is the most usual.

But English speakers do not speak of being *within* a trade or profession: instead, they use *in*.

Invoicing the public sector?

The simple solution to electronic invoicing in Denmark:
EM Faktura

Find it under *Utilities* in
Useful links for professionals
on the
English support web site



Abstract

English is the main language for international science publication, but not the native language of the majority of scientists. Writing well in a foreign language can be difficult. Some good existing material on how to write scientific papers was therefore blended with empirical data from English teaching pre-stored in the brain of a professional linguist and educator. This mixture was fermented at temperatures in the range of 35–40°C over a period of 28 days, after which essentials were extracted. The result is a practical manual for people who wish to publish in English but are not native-speakers. Conclusion: *Read on!*

Keywords

Writing – English – Science – Journal – Articles

You can order the booklet from the web site.

Best wishes
Lawrence White
LW@englishsupport.dk

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No. 19 – May 2006

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Dear friends

This month there seems to be so much happening that it is difficult to know where to begin. We are holding a seminar in Jutland (18th May in Kolding), marketing the new booklet for researchers on *How to write a scientific paper*, running a telemarketing campaign aimed at Danish exporters, fighting to find time to develop the web site(s) in the direction outlined *News & Tips* in January, and have just signed freelance partners numbers 60 and 61 and can now offer **Chinese**.

Language support

English support can now offer mother-tongue help with Chinese, Danish, English, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Russian, Serbo-Croat, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish.

The importance of the mother-tongue

Language is all about *association*: the association of meaning with sounds or groups of sounds (otherwise known as words), and the meaning of words in association with the context of their use.

Dictionaries can give a false picture of the ease with which one can go from one language to another. An equals-sign can seldom be set between the meanings associated with a word from *one* language and those associated with a word from *another* language. The only clear exceptions to this rule are the numbers above one. And some meanings simply *cannot* be translated fully from one language to another.

It is also easier to understand a language than to speak it, to read it than to write it. So the people who have the best chance of making sure that the meaning of a translated or corrected text is as close as possible to the original are themselves *native speakers of the target language*. They are also the people who are most likely to be able to put sentences together in a way that *sounds right* to other native speakers.

That is why *English support* uses only native

speakers of the target language – at least for the final proofreading and language check, but wherever possible also for the actual translation.

The whole issue of “**danglish**” (Danish English) illustrates how difficult it is even for Danes, who rightly pride themselves on how good they are at English, to get it completely right and sounding good. The mother tongue has a nasty habit of tripping you up even when you think you are ready for it!

Six months ago there was an exchange of views over a classic case: the use (in Denmark) of the phrase “state-authorised” in connection with translators, lawyers, accountants, estate agents, etc. (see *News & Tips* Nos. 12–13). This month we take up the issue again in an **open letter** to *Dansk Translatørforbund*, which still translates its name (in English) as the *Danish Association of State-Authorised Translators and Interpreters*.

Please turn over!

Dear Dansk Translatørforbund

Six months have gone by since Dee Shields and I exchanged e-mails on the expression “state-authorised”. The entire correspondence was published in the pages of this newsletter (nos. 12–13) and forwarded to Dansk Translatørforbund. I am sure there has been a lot of internal discussion, especially after Dee Shields’ scurrilous negative marketing campaign against me and my company in MDTnyt 5/05. [Interested readers can find it here: <http://www.onlineart.dk/mdtnyt03-05.pdf>]

Since Dansk Translatørforbund is currently in the process of renewing its web site, perhaps this would be a good time to give a lead and change the English version of your name.

May I briefly recap why I think this would be a good idea? In Danish, “statsautoriseret” is almost always positive in meaning. But in English “state-authorised” is almost always used negatively: “state-authorised phone-tapping”, “state-authorised assassination”, “state-authorised terror”, and so on. The expression is *never* applied to translators, lawyers, accountants, estate agents, etc. Not in the English-speaking world. *Only in Denmark.*

Is this use in Denmark justifiable? I don’t think so. It conveys the wrong message (suggesting that something like the *Stasi* is alive and well and living in Copenhagen!) and its special Danish meaning has to be explained anyway. So why not drop the “state” and use “authorised” on its own (like they do in the rest of Scandinavia and like Translatørforeningen in Denmark)?

Interestingly enough your new web site uses the Danish word “statsautoriseret” only once and in brackets. The French, German and Spanish versions of your organisation’s name do not mention the state at all. The *only* place where it figures with any prominence is in the *English* translation!

Now this is very strange, not to say perverse. As I tried to convince Dee Shields, English speakers are (to put it mildly) much more *sensitive*, not to say *negative*, about the state than Danish, French, German or Spanish speakers. This has deep historical and cultural roots, which might wittily be summed up in the contrast between the “hellish” Hobbes and “heavenly” Hegel.

So I am asking you to give a lead to other professional organisations in Denmark who use the term, and *leave the state out* – also in the *English* version of your name.

Best wishes

Lawrence White

www.englishsupport.dk

Your natural language partner...

English support invites you to a seminar...

The grammar of “danglish”

A brief account of how the Danish mother-tongue can trip you up in English grammar

TIME: 3 – 5 pm, Thursday, 18th May 2006.

PLACE: University of Southern Denmark, Kolding

INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION: www.englishsupport.dk

IMPORTANT: You must register for this seminar

“Academy Profession” (AP) programmes – a note to the Min. of Education

The relatively new term “Academy Profession” is now featured in a great many educational institutions’ programmes. The problem is that it sounds very odd in English. We do use nouns as adjectives, but seldom where there is a perfectly good adjectival form, as here: “academic” and “professional”. An “Academy Profession degree” should logically be an “Academic Professional degree”.

But the Danish AK (*Akademiuddannelse*) would be better translated “Academy Programme”. Here the word “academy” is clearly used (or would be) to refer to the kind of *institution* as in “University Programme”, and I would argue is clearer than “Academic Programme”.

The key point is that the word “academy” or “academic” applies to the *programme*, not the *profession* or *vocation*.

We are once again in danger of ending up with a peculiar (only found in Denmark) expression, “Academy Profession” programmes, on the web sites of our poor long-suffering education institutions for years to come! And it won’t even be their fault. ☺

Put it in your diary ...

KOMMUNIKATIONS- OG SPROGFORUM 2006

Tuesday, 26 September, at a venue to be announced, **Copenhagen**

Information and booking: www.kommunikationogsprog.dk

Education

This word causes a lot of trouble. For one thing it is *uncountable* in English. Its usual meaning is a general reference to school and university education in all its forms, but *not* to the individual courses or programmes. So if you are lucky, you have an education, but you do not have more than one, no matter how many postgraduate degrees you may have taken.

And the word is not normally used about the acquiring of the knowledge and skills *to perform a particular job*. That is usually called “training”, as in “teacher training”.

Programme or program?

In American English, this word is always spelt *program*. In British English, it is spelt *programme* (e.g. *a TV, theatre, political or education programme*), except if we are talking about *a computer program* – when we always use the American spelling.

In case of emergency ...

This is an expression often seen on emergency exits: “*In case of emergency, break glass*”. But it is not appropriate in an e-mail AutoReply. Here what you probably want to say is something like: “*If the matter is urgent, please contact ...*”. Something that cannot wait is described as “urgent”, while an “emergency” is normally a *life-threatening* situation.

Lose and loose

Many non-native speakers confuse these two. The word “lose” /**lu:z**/ is a verb meaning to no longer have something or not be able to find it, while “loose” /**lu:s**/ is an adjective meaning “not tight” or “not firmly fixed”. The verb “loosen” means to make something loose.

Part and divide

The fundamental idea in the *verb* “to part” is to separate. A teacher might *part* two boys who are having a fight. The verb is often followed by “from” or “with”. *To part from* someone is to leave them, and *to part with* something is to give or sell something to someone else – usually something you would rather keep. In each case there is a sense of reluctant separation.

The *noun* “part”, however, does not have this sense at all. Indeed, if you are part of something, it usually means you are *not* separate from it. And the verb “to divide” is used to split things up or “separate” them into parts. So you might *divide* a cake into eight equal parts so as to give everyone a share.

Translators, secretaries, teachers ... **English support Hotline** ... helps you get it right!

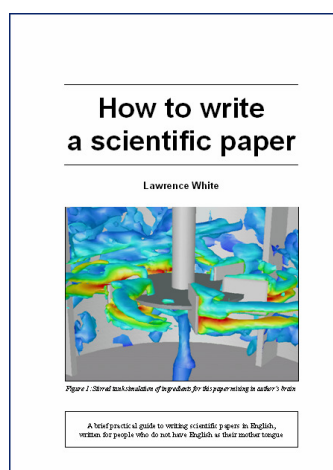
You ring or write and we drop everything to concentrate on your problem for the time it takes.
Register now (FREE) – per minute charge: 10 kr. – invoicing once a quarter (minimum 120 kr.)

Use and used

The *noun* “use” /ju:z/ means the act of using something and the *verb* “to use” /ju:z/ means to do something with something for some purpose: “*I use English in my work*”. Note that the past form is “used” /ju:zd/.

But there is *another* verb with the same spelling, “use” /ju:z/, with a quite different meaning. It is used to express general facts about the past: “*I used to work in the City*”, “*I did not use to wear a bowler hat*”. And there is also an *adjective*, “used” /ju:zɪd/, which is followed by “to” plus a noun; this expresses familiarity with something: “*I am used to driving on the right*”.

English support publishes a booklet for science researchers



Abstract

English is the main language for international science publication, but not the native language of the majority of scientists. Writing well in a foreign language can be difficult. Some good existing material on how to write scientific papers was therefore blended with empirical data from English teaching pre-stored in the brain of a professional linguist and educator. This mixture was fermented at temperatures in the range of 35–40°C over a period of 28 days, after which essentials were extracted. The result is a practical manual for people who wish to publish in English but are not native-speakers. Conclusion: *Read on!*

Keywords

Writing – English – Science – Journal – Articles

Orders have yet to exceed expectations (so I still have a big hole in my bank balance!), but they have started coming in from individuals and research institutions both in Denmark and abroad.

You can order the booklet from the web site.

Best wishes

Lawrence White

LW@englishsupport.dk

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News & Tips
from

English support

NB: If you received this newsletter by e-mail, it is (hopefully) because you have expressed a wish to do so. If this is not the case, and/or you do not wish to receive it in future – *please let us know!*

No. 20 – June 2006

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Dear friends

First let me apologise for the delay in this issue of *News & Tips*. All I can say is that I have been very busy! Amongst other things, we completed our first Chinese assignment to the satisfaction of the client, and the telemarketing campaign is still running. I had hoped to receive a reply from Dansk Translatørforbund to last month's open letter about the phrase "state-authorised", but they have not yet responded in any way. So now I am writing an open letter to the members:

Open letter to members of Dansk Translatørforbund

Last month I wrote an open letter to Dansk Translatørforbund. I sent it by post and by e-mail to both Mette Aarslew and Annie Georgsen. It was also published in my monthly newsletter [*News & Tips* no.19, downloadable here: www.englishsupport.dk/EN/backissues.htm]. My aim was to urge DT to drop the "state" from the English version of your name.

Six weeks have gone by and there has been no response. No letter, no e-mail, not even a phone call. *It seems there is no one home.* So now I am writing to all 96 of you.

Of course, some of you may wonder why DT should bother to discuss its name with someone who is not a member. Fair enough. Let me tell you why.

The last issue of your organisation's official magazine, *MDTnyt*, in 2005 [3 / 05, which you can download from www.onlineart.dk/mdtnyt03-05.pdf] contains a 11,088-word article more or less on the subject, in which Dee Shields has "a long rant" (her choice of words) entirely at my expense. The whole issue is only 17,600 words long, so this thoroughly scurrilous attack on my company, my person, my abilities, etc. is the main feature making up 63% of the entire issue. On its own it is longer than the preceding issue (7607 words) and also the following issue (10,240). So I think we could say that the Editorial Board of *MDTnyt* at least attaches some importance to my opinions on this matter ...

But, you may say, that article mostly consists in your correspondence with Dee Shields. That is true, *but only just!* The correspondence I had with Dee Shields totalled 6687 words (fairly evenly divided between 3602 from DS and 3085 from me). In *News & Tips*, I added a short postscript of 304 words. In *MDTnyt* Dee Shields did not let the correspondence speak for itself, but carefully packaged it in no fewer than an *extra 4401 words*, whose main purpose seems to have been to try to convince the reader that I am some kind of idiot.

OK, I don't mind a bit of fun. But deliberate misunderstanding, insult and mockery do seem somewhat inappropriate in a serious language magazine – aimed at "everyone involved in the business of professional translation" [*"alle, der har med oversættelse på et professionelt plan at gøre"*], as Helle Rust Christensen puts it on the page just in front of Dee Shields' attack.

Please turn over!

Open letter (contd.)

If you received this newsletter in the post, you will need to subscribe if you want it again. See web site for how.

I also think DT ought to offer me space in *MDTnyt* to exercise my right to reply. Not only have they not done so (at least not yet), but they did not even *inform me* about the publication of Dee Shields' attack on my company last year. To be blunt, I think your leadership has a lot to be ashamed of in this matter.

What the discussion ought to be about is not the alleged inadequacies or otherwise of me, my company and my work (about which Dee Shields – unlike many of you – has absolutely no experience whatsoever), but how to translate the Danish word *statsautoriseret* into English.

The use of “state-authorised” for translators, accountants, lawyers, etc. in English is not found in any English-speaking country. Indeed, as far as I know, it is not found in any *non-English* speaking country either – except Denmark.

The Danish word is positive. Dee Shields and I disagree on whether or not the word has negative connotations in English, so here's an easy empirical test: next time you are in an English-speaking country, go up to the first 10-20 English-speakers you meet and ask them what they associate with the word “state-authorised”. But many of you know this already and have told me you agree with me.

Dee Shields accuses me of impugning “the profession” (she means DT), but nothing was further from my mind when I described this use of “state-authorised” as an example of what I call “danglish”. I was giving a seminar to nearly 50 translators, technical writers, bilingual secretaries and other language professionals. I was just pointing out a common mistake – something I do quite often in my job as a proofreader.

For instance, let us say that I point out that on the DT website there are two printing mistakes in the Danish spelling of Copenhagen in the address of one of your members. Does that mean that I have personally insulted every member of DT? Or the member concerned? Or the DT webmaster? Such a way of thinking is absurd. The real question is: *is it true?* And *that* you can find out for yourselves (if you're quick before the mistakes get corrected).

I did not set out to insult anyone; Dee Shields on the other hand quite deliberately set out to be as insulting as possible in the pages of your magazine. I want to promote a discussion on the widespread use of “state-authorised” in Denmark; Dee Shields wants to run a negative marketing campaign against a fellow language professional. It's up to you. It's your organisation after all. But if I were you, I'd go for the discussion ...

Best wishes
Lawrence White

10th June 2006

How to write a scientific paper

Lawrence White

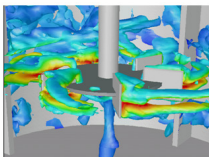


Figure 1: Global distribution of the products for the paper writing in author's brain

A free preview of the guide to writing scientific papers in English, written for people who do not have English as their mother tongue.

New booklet for science researchers

“How to write a scientific paper”, is an excellent guide – even for the experienced author of scientific articles and reports. It is easy to read and gives good advice about the structure of such papers, the writing process, and a number of the many linguistic traps that authors who do not have English as their mother tongue tend to fall into.

Published by *English support*

Kurt Lauridsen, MSc, PhD
Danish Decommissioning

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From the workshop...

Notice and note

The verbs One mistake that is often seen is “*Please notice*” used where what is meant is “*Please note*”. The verb *notice* might well be used in speech. For example, a tourist guide might use it when pointing out some special feature of the Taj Mahal. In other words, it is usually only used for things you can actually see, not abstractions like information. Here you should use *note*.

The nouns The noun *notice* refers to a formal piece of information in a public place of some kind. The noun *note* on the other hand is used in a wide range of contexts, from short informal messages (including those you make to yourself when listening a lecture, for instance) to the formal world of “Notes” exchanged between diplomats of countries with a difference of opinion.

Please note in your diary ...

KOMMUNIKATIONS- OG SPROGFORUM 2006

Tuesday, 26 September, Porcelænshaven, CBS Copenhagen

Information and booking: www.kommunikationogsprog.dk/Forum
Tel. 33 91 98 00 or e-mail: forum2006@kommunikationogsprog.dk

See you there!

Follow with

This combination is just about possible, if *follow* means *follow up*, as in: “*We had a three-course dinner followed (up) with coffee*”. What *follow* normally means, however, is to go *after* or *behind* (and thus **not with**) someone or something. One thing is normally followed *by* another, so the expression, “*it follows*”, is often used to show (logical) consequence.

Different and various

These two words are, well, *different* (but not *various*)! Things that are *different* are unlike each other in some way. They can also be *very different* from each other. Note that in US English it is also possible to say *different than* in some cases, but since *different from* is always right, also in US English, you might as well stick to that ...

The fundamental idea in *various*, on the other hand, is *several different*, where the focus is on the fact that there were *several*, rather than how *different* they were from each other. So you cannot say *very various* or *various from*.

Various and varied

If we wish to focus on how *different* several things (not just two) are from each other, we might speak of their *variety*: “*He has a variety of hobbies: knitting, astronomy and kick-boxing*”. These hobbies are clearly both *various* and *varied*, but to say *he has various hobbies* says nothing about their variety, whereas to say *his hobbies are varied* does.

Several and more

While we are talking about *several*, it is worth clearly distinguishing *several* from *more*. Whereas *several* just means *more than one or two*, the fundamental idea in *more* is always an *additional* number or amount of something. *More* also always implies *than*. If I want *more* apples, then it implies that I want *more than* I already have. The word *than* does not have to figure in the sentence, but some kind of comparison is always implied when you use *more*.

Please turn over!

Concerning and regarding

These are two favourites with many non-native speakers! And there is nothing wrong with them, except that an English speaker will usually use *about* instead: “I am writing to you concerning (or regarding) your holiday” would be better changed to “I am writing to you about your holiday”.

Both words have a tendency to make you sound very stiff. Using them a lot, when you could just as well have used *about*, makes you sound foreign. However, there is a place for stiff formality, and their use may be appropriate on occasion. To be used sparingly!

Note that the little word *Re* sometimes used in the headings for letters and e-mails is **not** a short form for *regarding* (and should not be replaced with either *concerning* or *regarding*). It is *Latin* and means: “In the matter of”. It is also completely unnecessary.

Use and spend

Last month we looked at the various ways the word *use* is used, but one common problem did not get a mention. In British English we do not *use money* or *time*; we *spend* them. US usage allows both *use* and *spend* here, but *use* is more colloquial. So keep it simple, use *spend*! ☺

In accordance with and according to

These two expressions are often mixed up. If I wish to express the idea that something *follows* or *is in compliance with* a set of rules, regulations or laws, I might say it is *in accordance with* them.

The expression *according to* has a quite different meaning: it means that something is somebody’s opinion or account: “According to Fred, that bridge could fall down any minute” or “The Gospel according to Mark”. So you might say “According to the regulations, this is what we must do”.

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Control and check or inspect

The word *control* implies *power over* something. The **verb** *control* thus means to *exercise that power*. You can control a country, a company, a car, a bicycle, and even yourself – with luck.

The abstract **noun** *control* means the *exercise of power* over something or the *power itself*, and *controls* are the physical instruments used (e.g. in a car, ship or aircraft) to exercise that power.

There are two places in the English language where the **noun** *control* is used in the sense of a *check* of some kind. One is in scientific experiments, where “controls” are, for example, subjects not given a drug that is being tested. Data from these “controls” is used to check that the drug has an actual measurable effect on the patients given it. The other place is at the effective borders of a country, e.g. passport control in airports, at border crossings, and so on. But even here we do not use the *verb* in that sense. When I go through *passport control*, for instance, I have my passport *checked* or *inspected* (but not “controlled”).

More next month!

Best wishes

Lawrence White

LW@englishsupport.dk

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4003 Roskilde

News & Tips
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No. 21 – July 2006

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Dear friends

Those of you who are reading this newsletter for the first time should not be deceived. This is not a typical example. But we are in the middle of a “discussion”, for want of a better word, with the leadership of *Dansk Translatørforbund*. The subject is meant to be the term “state-authorized” as applied (in Denmark) to translators, accountants, lawyers, estate agents, and so on. But the other side in the discussion seem unable to keep their eyes on the ball ...

The story so far

In September last year, I held a seminar at Business House in Roskilde entitled *Do you speak “danglish”?* It was a considerable success. There were nearly 50 language-interested people present, many of them translators, including members of both *Translatørforeningen* and *Dansk Translatørforbund*. Everybody enjoyed themselves. No one got upset.

Subsequently, the English support website showed pictures from the seminar including some of the slides. One of the slides referred to “State-authorized translator” as an example of “danglish”. “*It is not*”, wrote Dee Shields, who was completely unknown to me at that time, but turns out to be a leading member of *Dansk Translatørforbund*. She wanted my webmaster (me) to take the example off my website. She quoted herself and *Dansk Translatørforbund* as authorities on the question and accused me of “impugning the profession” of which she is a member.

And so the scene was set. The full correspondence can be read in *News & Tips* Nos. 12 and 13.

Yet Dee Shields *agrees* 1) that “state-authorized” as applied to translators, accountants, lawyers, estate agents, etc. is not normal English, 2) that it is not found in *any* English-speaking country, 3) that is something designed in Denmark for purely Danish purposes, 4) and that it does not communicate those Danish purposes to English-speakers (the usage has to be explained anyway).

So what’s her “beef”, as they say? Well, she doesn’t like me calling attention to all these facts by describing the usage as “danglish” (Danish English). And she doesn’t like me telling people that “state-authorized” has negative connotations in English. (*She doesn’t think it does, you see*). *So she decided to try to shoot the messenger*. She claimed that on my website I was impugning the profession, insulting her personally (!?), telling people that *Dansk Translatørforbund* can’t even translate their own name, and being really quite wicked in general.

Finally she published our correspondence, wrapped in another 4400 words packed to the brim with *real* insults, as the main feature in *MDTnyt* (3/05), *Dansk Translatørforbund*’s magazine. I am not a regular reader of *MDTnyt*, so it was not until May this year, while preparing an open letter to *Dansk Translatørforbund* on the subject, that I discovered this completely scurrilous attack. The leadership of *Dansk Translatørforbund* did not reply to my open letter (*News & Tips* No. 19), so I sent a letter (*News & Tips* No. 20) to each of their 96 members. Suddenly, the DT leadership went into action – *to block further discussion!* Their reply is on the next page.

Please turn over!

Correspondence

If you received this newsletter in the post, you will need to subscribe if you want it again. See website for how.

E-mail exchange with leadership of Dansk Translatørforbund

13 July 2006

Dear Mr White

This is to let you know that the board of Dansk Translatørforbund and the editor of our magazine have decided not to offer you space in the magazine. We are not interested in continuing this discussion but have of course noted your comments on the use of 'state-authorised'.

I assume you conduct a similar crusade against the widespread use of 'state-registered' on UK websites (140,000 hits on Google)? It must be a massive job and I wish you the best of luck.

Yours sincerely
DANSK TRANSLATØRFORBUND

Mette Aarslew
Chair

14 July 2006

Dear Madam

Your e-mail has two parts, one formal, the other foolish.

In the formal part you tell me that your board and your editor have decided not to offer me space in your magazine. This is utterly unworthy. A member of your organisation writes an 11,000-word attack on my person, my company and my work, yet you concede no right of reply. I wonder how you would react if such an attack were made on you and your organisation. Would you not expect the right of reply in the same magazine or newspaper?

The second part of your letter is just foolish. While "state-registered" is normal English, "state-authorised" (applied to translators, accountants, lawyers, etc.) is not. Your attempt at wit here is therefore totally misguided and serves only to underline the fact that you have chosen to hitch your wagon to that of Dee *This-is-my-column-so-I-get-to-do-what-I-want* Shields – a case of really poor judgement.

Frankly, neither part casts very much dignity over you as the leader of Denmark's second largest organisation of translators. Of you, Mette Aarslew, I had expected better.

Yours faithfully
Lawrence White
English support

The above exchange is the entire correspondence on this matter between the official leadership of *Dansk Translatørforbund* and *English support*. Interested readers can find Dee Shields' abusive article at <http://www.onlineart.dk/mdtnyt03-05.pdf>, and my reply is on the next two pages.

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A reply to:

Dee's corner goes ballistic to the bathroom

Sounds really cosy, doesn't it? Dee's corner. Her very own little room where she can do exactly as she pleases: *This is my column, so I get to do what I want.*

But the fact of the matter is that this 11,000-word article is an utter disgrace, both to her and the organisation in whose magazine it is published. It has absolutely zero academic value, evades every argument, and is just Dee Shields letting off steam (to put it politely).

Worse, it is also a huge piece of negative marketing aimed at rubbishing one company and one person. She used the pages of *Dansk Translatørforbund's* magazine not to argue a case for using "state-authorised" in connection with translators, but in order to mock and deride another professional, so people wouldn't listen to his arguments *against* using "state-authorised". Well, it won't work.

It won't work because Dee Shields has already conceded *all* the essential points:

1. The usage is not found in any English-speaking country.
2. It was invented in Denmark by the process of literal word-for-word translation.
3. It was invented for purely Danish purposes.
4. These purposes are not communicated by the usage and need to be explained anyway.

In other words, "state-authorised" in this context has no useful communicative function at all. At best, it is just *noise on the line*.

Dee Shields does not agree with me that "state-authorised" also has *negative* connotations in English, but that is a secondary matter.

It is also an *empirical* question, which anybody and everybody can answer for themselves by asking the first 10 native speakers they meet in an English-speaking country what they associate with the word "state-authorised".

What Dee Shields does not like is that I actually *say* these things. Worse, that I say them without having her (Danish-state) "authority" for having an opinion on them at all. In short, she sees me as a trouble-maker.

So she goes on the attack by deciding that I say these things in order to insult. Here is the real core of her argument:

I truly believe he selected the example of "state-authorized translator and interpreter" and called it a mixture of English and Danish in order to point the finger at us and say, "See, even the professionals do it wrong when they translate their own title!" with the understood message, "Use me! As a native speaker, I won't do that!" I find that insulting, to me and to all of us. This is my opinion, and I stand by it. As always, you readers are free to draw your own conclusion.

It is, of course, very gracious of her to allow us to draw our own conclusions. Here are mine: Dee Shields is a True Believer (she "truly believes"). True Believers are characterised by deciding to adopt as True some proposition that flies in the face of all known facts and common sense. For example, that I stood up in front of a load of translators (all potential customers) and deliberately insulted them. The next stage is missionary. The True Believer has to convince *other* people that her True Belief is indeed True. She might, for instance, write an 11,000 word article deriding the opposition and asserting her Belief. With luck, she might cajole (or hijack) some *influential* people, like Mette Aarslew, into supporting her. At this stage what we have is the beginnings of a crazy cult. If the True Believers manage to convince really large numbers of people (help from some state power is normally required), we might end up with a new religion. Thankfully that seldom happens and usually takes centuries anyway.

Those who think they might agree with Dee Shields should consider the following points:

Discussion

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1. What Dee Shields has decided to “truly believe” is something about what was (allegedly) *going on in my head* at a seminar where she was not even present. Now I realise it’s a wild claim to make, but I think I am the best authority on what was going on in my own head.
2. I did not set out to insult anyone. Dee Shields simply made that up herself. On the other hand, for someone complaining about an (alleged) insult, she is clearly not averse to dishing out insults herself, massively, and quite deliberately.
3. I did not attack *Dansk Translatørforbund*. There are a lot of people and organisations that use “state-authorized” in Denmark. *Dansk Translatørforbund* was not the centre of attention on that day. On the other hand, Dee Shields has clearly done her best to attack *English support*.
4. I have never questioned Dee Shields’ professional skills. Dee Shields, who has absolutely no knowledge of my skills, has taken great care to suggest they are non-existent. How barmy can one get? After all, I do make my living from them!
5. I gave (more than) equal space to Dee Shields in *News & Tips*. She and the rest of the *Translatørforbund* leadership are refusing *any* space in *MDTnyt* for a reply to her scandalous article. And now they want to stop the discussion!
6. Dee Shields claims to be defending “the profession” against an insult. I say I am trying to help Danes correct a mistake which has become accepted (in Denmark). My point was that your native tongue can trip you up when you speak or write a foreign language, so things can “sound right” that aren’t right. That is what has happened with “state-authorized” when used of translators, accountants, lawyers, estate agents, and so on. You don’t believe me? Well, do the *empirical experiment* I suggest and find out *for yourself* whether I’m right or not.
7. Dee Shields does not discuss the issue. She is not interested in the discussion. In

fact, she didn’t even register the fact that I changed my position on “certified” in favour of “authorized” under the influence of one good point she made. She is only interested in uttering derisive remarks in an attempt to *stop* discussion of the issue.

What drives Dee Shields potty is the fact that she is faced with an opinion that is different from her own. (Even her lawyer got a rap over the knuckles for accidentally referring to me as a *translatør*.) Worse still she can’t answer my arguments. So we get this attack of verbal diarrhoea.

Now the thing about diarrhoea, apart from the fact that it is very unpleasant for all concerned, is that it is very revealing. We get the “inside story” as it were. And it’s not a pretty picture. Here’s another gem:

Okay, I thought. Let's write a pseudo-scientific dissertation on "state-authorized" and the reasoning behind it, so we state-authorized folks will have the explanation handy if a client suddenly decides it's wrong.

Just look at the amazing contempt she displays here – for her clients, for her colleagues, and for her readers! The words just spew out and their meaning doesn’t matter (for her), but what use is a “pseudo-scientific dissertation” *for anything*? Except maybe for wiping your bottom. Actually it was more of a pseudo-*historical* dissertation than anything else – pretending that someone somewhere did some really deep thinking about the “translation”. But whichever way you cut it, very revealing.

Perhaps you can see why I compare her to the con-artists in *The Emperor’s new clothes*? She knew she was making it up, and went right ahead anyway. And like them she pretends that those who disagree with her aren’t at her level. Well, we really wouldn’t want to be!

So, next time Dee Shields needs to relieve herself, perhaps someone could take her gently by the arm, guide her in the direction of the lavatory, and persuade her to use the toilet paper provided, rather than the pages of *MDTnyt*. Thank you.

LW

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From the workshop...

Dates

People often ask: What is the correct way to write the date in English? Well, here are a few rules. The names of the months and the days of the week, being names, must be written with a capital letter. If you write the month first, you must put a comma between the day and the year: July 1st, 2006. And if you use the ordinal numbers, you need to get the letters right: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc.

But there are many ways of writing the date. In Europe we usually put the day first, while in the US it is usual to put the month first. So it can be confusing if you write the date using just numbers: 1/7/06. An American will tend to read that as January 7th, 2006. In business letters the day is normally written without the ordinal ending. So today's date is **Saturday, 1 July 2006**.

One last thing. In British English we write the date as 1 July 2006, but we *read* it as "the first of July 2006". You do not *write* "the" or "of", but you must *say* them.

Please note **this** date in your diary ...

KOMMUNIKATIONS- OG SPROGFORUM 2006

Tuesday, 26 September, Porcelænshaven, CBS Copenhagen

Information and booking: <http://www.kommunikationogsprog.dk/Forum/>

Tel. 33 91 98 00 or e-mail: forum2006@kommunikationogsprog.dk

See you there!

Capital letters revisited

In *News & Tips* No. 9 we looked at when to use capital letters in modern English. The basic idea is that you use a capital letter in proper nouns or titles and any words derived from these. Unlike most European languages, English regards the names of the days of the week and months as proper nouns (see **Dates**, above).

But when is a noun a proper noun? Some care is needed here. There used to be something called East Germany, but now we would refer to the eastern part of Germany. Similarly there is no place called "Western Denmark" or "North Europe", so Jutland might be described as western Denmark, and Great Britain and Scandinavia are in northern Europe. On the other hand, there is a place called Northern Ireland, but note that the southern part is called the Republic of Ireland.

And then there are book and conference titles! You do not *have* to use capital letters; I chose not to in the case of my booklet: *How to write a scientific paper*. But if you do want to use capital letters in such titles, put them only on the main words, i.e. the words on which the stress falls when you say them aloud: *How to Write a Scientific Paper*. It looks very odd to have a title like: *A Research Symposium That Rotates Annually Around The World* – quite apart from the image conjured up of researchers in a sort of low (yet impossibly slow) orbit around our planet! ☺

Teachers!

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Please turn over!

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From the workshop...

As well as

Here is an expression that is used far too much in Denmark! In lists of things, it would be better just to use *and*. Where you want to emphasise that two things go together, you can use *both ... and*. The expression *as well as* (used of two things or adjectives) is quite strong and should be limited to where you might have used *not only ... but also*: e.g. “He is fat *as well as* ugly”.

If you use *as well as* to link two *clauses* in this way, be careful to use the *ING*-form (gerund) in the second: “She wrote the play *as well as acting* in it”. The meaning changes completely if I say: “She wrote the play *as well as she acted* in it”. The second sentence focuses on how *well* she did these things – and suggests she probably didn’t do *either* job very well!

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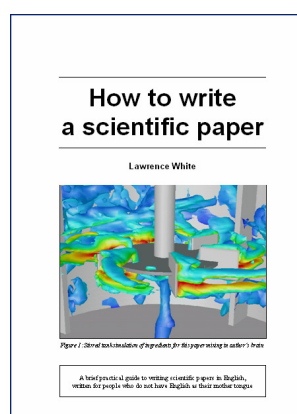
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Miss doing and fail to do

The fundamental idea in the word *fail* is *a lack of success* (in doing something). So you can *fail an exam*, but you can also *fail to understand*. If machines or parts of the body *fail*, it means they stop working. By analogy *fail* can also mean to let someone down, as in: *Words failed me!*

The verb *to miss* is used in two very different ways. The first contains the idea of failing to do some very specific things: *hit a target, catch a train, or reach a goal*. E.g. if I *miss a train*, I fail to catch it. By analogy, you can *miss the point* of something (fail to understand) and “*You can’t miss it!*” means you cannot fail to see or notice something.

But there is a second meaning, which contains the idea of *feeling that something is no longer present, but you wish it was*. If someone asks me whether *I miss London*, they are not talking about my failure to hit it! In this sense you might *miss your mother’s cooking*, or *miss going for a swim every day*, or say of someone who has just died, *He will be sorely missed*. *To miss doing something always* contains this second (subjective emotional) meaning.



New booklet for science researchers

“How to write a scientific paper”, is an excellent guide – even for the experienced author of scientific articles and reports. It is easy to read and gives good advice about the structure of such papers, the writing process, and a number of the many linguistic traps that authors who do not have English as their mother tongue tend to fall into.

Published by English support

Kurt Lauridsen, MSc, PhD
Danish Decommissioning

I hope you have enjoyed reading this unusually long issue.
Normally *News & Tips* does not exceed four pages.

Best wishes
Lawrence White
LW@englishsupport.dk

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Business House (PO Box 618)
Jernbanegade 23 B
4004 Roskilde

News & Tips
from

English support

NB: If you received this newsletter by e-mail, it is (hopefully) because you have expressed a wish to do so. If this is not the case, and/or you do not wish to receive it in future – *please let us know!*

No. 22 – August 2006

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Dear friends

Wow, what a summer! Usually it rains quite a lot during the summer holiday in Denmark, with the good weather coming before and after. But this year even the *Roskilde Festival* was bathed in sunshine instead of the traditional rain. Of course, it is difficult to work in this heat, but there has also been plenty to do this summer. Export-oriented companies seem optimistic about the future. So, lots to do and little energy to do it – you’ve guessed it – this newsletter is just a two-pager!

Last month I bought myself a new chair ...

Like many of you, I spend quite a lot of my day sitting on a chair in front of a computer. This is almost unavoidable nowadays, especially if you work with written communication. On the other hand, it is a somewhat dramatic wrench away from the path of our evolutionary development until historical times (civilisation and all that). So sitting on a chair for long periods every day can seriously damage your health. Most chairs do not encourage you to hold your back in the natural upright posture you have when standing. The result is that one third of adults over 35 suffer from chronic back pains of one sort or another.

The chair I bought is different. It may not look smart, but it does encourage an upright posture. It is also very comfortable to sit on, even for long periods and even for people with back pain. It is called the *Everybody*® chair and you can find out more about it at www.everybody.dk. If you decide to buy one, mention that you heard about it in the *English support* newsletter – rumour has it you might get 5% off the price!

Teachers!

– *Do you sometimes have to go through complex equations for your students in English?*

Speaking maths is a new *English support* leaflet that can help you find the right expressions!

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e-mail: info@englishsupport.dk

Errata

Last month’s newsletter contained some mistakes. I blame the heat. ☺ The e-mail exchange with Mette Aarslew took place in *June*, not July, and my friendly lawyer points out that “state-authorised” is not used in connection with lawyers based in Denmark, even in Danish.

Finally, under **Miss doing and fail to do**, I was a little too categorical in saying that to *miss doing* something *always* contains the idea of *feeling that something is no longer present but you wish it was*. It *normally* does, but you can also have a sentence like: *He missed being caught red-handed by a matter of seconds*. This construction is not uncommon, but it is probably best left to native speakers. It means something very nearly happened to someone or something, but didn’t.

Please turn over!

Substitute and replace

These two verbs are often confused. This is because there is some overlap in meaning. Here is a typical case: *The energy produced **substitutes** an equivalent production based on fossil fuels.*

The key thing to note is that the direct object of the verb *substitute* is never the thing *being replaced*, but the thing *replacing*: If I *replace* X with Y, then I might say I *substitute* Y for X. So the verb *replace* is right here. If we wanted to use the verb *substitute* in this sentence, we would need to say “*substitutes for*”.

The second thing to note is that the verb *substitute* is usually more “active” than the verb *replace*. It usually implies the act of some kind of an agent. As time goes on, night *replaces* day, but we would never say it *substitutes* for day!

And please **note** this date in your diary ...

KOMMUNIKATIONS- OG SPROGFORUM 2006
Tuesday, 26 September, Porcelænshaven, CBS Copenhagen

Information and booking:

<http://www.kommunikationogsprog.dk/Forum/>

Tel. 33 91 98 00 or e-mail:

forum2006@kommunikationogsprog.dk

See you there!

Extend and extent

Keeping these two words apart depends on careful pronunciation of the last letter. *To extend* is a verb and means to increase in length, area, volume or range: *Trajan extended the Roman Empire.* *Extent* is a noun and refers to an area something *extends* to: *The Empire reached its greatest extent under Trajan.* Hence the expression, *to the extent that I understand him ...*

“Environmental friendly”

This is an amazingly popular mistake – and not just in Denmark. A quick check in Google shows over 725,000 hits. Nevertheless it is a mistake. When you want to modify or qualify an *adjective* (e.g. “friendly”), you must use an *adverb* (e.g. “environmentally”). But many people, including even some native speakers, find it difficult to say “environmentally friendly”, and they end up writing the way they speak. Most of the hits seem to be on non-native-speaker websites.

Frame and framework

The noun *frame* is usually used about a physical object, like a *window frame* or a *picture frame*, and (by analogy) for an individual exposure on photographic film. As a metaphor it is used in statistics (defining a population for sampling purposes) and in scheduling (a *time frame*) – and in some special expressions like *frame of mind* and *frame of reference*.

The noun *framework* can also refer to general physical structures (e.g. the girders making up the *framework* of a building), but it is most commonly used in a metaphorical sense, e.g. *the framework of government* or *a framework for future research*. So if you are speaking metaphorically, *framework* is normally the right choice.

How to write a scientific paper

Lawrence White

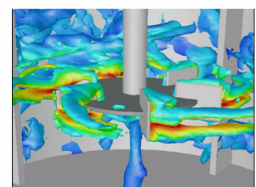


Figure 1. 3D visualization of a protein structure for the paper written by author's friend

A hand-practical guide to writing scientific papers in English, written for people who do not have English as their mother tongue

Published by *English support*

Enjoy the rest of the summer!

Best wishes

Lawrence White

LW@englishsupport.dk

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No. 23 – September 2006

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Dear friends

In the middle of August, when newspapers are traditionally desperate to find something to write about, a proposal to make English Denmark's second official language managed to find its way into the national headlines – and seemingly immediately provoked a storm of discussion in the press for at least twenty-four hours. But is it really just a “silly-season” idea? And what would it take to turn it into reality?

The proposal to make

ENGLISH THE SECOND OFFICIAL LANGUAGE IN DENMARK

The idea that English should become Denmark's second official language was put forward by the Radical Liberal Party. Business organisations, like the Confederation of Danish Industries and Danish Trade and Service were quick to support the plan, while the Conservative Party and others immediately condemned it as a threat to the Danish language.

The threat to Danish

English is a world language – by far the most important means of international communication in both commerce and science. More books, films and pop songs are written in English than any other language, and it dominates the Internet. Any threat it may pose for the existence of the Danish language will still be there whatever the politicians may decide.

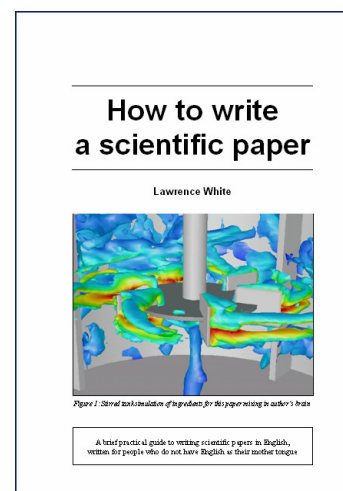
Making English an official language would mean that all official communication would be in both English and Danish. That would make it easier for many foreigners to get by in Denmark without having to learn Danish, but there is no real reason why it should mean the end of Danish.

The plus side

On the contrary, not only is it unlikely that Danes will give up speaking Danish in the foreseeable future, but making English an official language would help make Denmark even more visible on the world stage. As Bjarne Jakobsen from Danish Trade and Service says, “It is a matter of being qualified for a globalised world”. Many large Danish companies, like Novo Nordisk, already use English as their company language for the same reason.

The ultimate aim is for all adults to have a really good command of English. A fully bilingual population would be more open to the world and more competitive in a globalised market.

Not a bad plan, but what would it take to make it work?



Scientific papers published in English reach a world audience

How to make English the second official language

Of course, one view would be that it is just a matter of legislation – a vote in Parliament and that’s it! But to make it real, much more would be required. Here are some suggestions:

1. A certain degree of modesty

As Dee Shields wrote (see *News & Tips* no.12), “Danes generally have a tendency to overestimate their own ability to speak and write correct English”. But that is probably because English speakers in general have a tendency to compliment all foreigners on how good their English is. ☺ And most Danes *do* speak English quite well, but very few come anywhere near native-speaker competency.

This is not a criticism of Danes, Denmark or the Danish education system. On the contrary. *No one anywhere speaks a foreign language like a native.* But how can we get closer?

2. A raising of standards

The very first thing to do, and it should be being done already, is to check the books and materials being used in schools for teaching English. As a parent and a teacher I have seen far too many examples of what I call “danglish” in schoolbooks, and I even came across a university professor teaching that the titles *Mr, Mrs, Miss*, etc. can be written with small letters in English (see *News & Tips* nos. 16-18). The Government should institute a quality check on all text books – using native-speaker linguists.

3. Recruitment of native-speaker teachers

Another place native speakers should be used as much as possible is in the actual teaching.

Every school should have *at least* one native-speaker of English, but more would be better. Any country that wants to raise the quality of the English spoken by its citizens should be in the market for native-speaker teachers!

4. An early start

And children should start learning English very early. The human brain is much more plastic in relation to learning languages in the early years, which is why most of us have no difficulty learning one language before school. Yet most current education systems (all over the world) wait until children *stop* being really good at learning languages before teaching a second language – which is, of course, bizarre. We all know that children exposed to two languages from their early years can grow up fully bilingual. And if that’s what we want, we need native-speaker kindergarten teachers, too!

5. The bilingual workplace

Many Danish companies already have English as their official language, but this does not mean that the English is good. Nor does it mean that all the employees use it or even understand it. Far from it! Better would be to aim at *the bilingual workplace*, where all essential information is available in both languages. “Essential information” should include safety-at-work notices and legislation, much of which is only available in Danish.

Clearly such an ambitious plan would require serious commitment from the Government. And it would also involve the recruitment of large numbers of native-speakers at all levels in the education system and in industry. Many of these people could be found among English speakers already living in Denmark, but whose language skills are not yet tapped (see point 1 above).

If our children grow up surrounded (as far as is practical) by the natural language of two sets of native speakers, are taught (as far as possible) in both languages, and see that both languages are used in Danish workplaces, many more will end up much closer to being fully bilingual as adults.

Then the idea of two official languages might not look quite as daft as perhaps it seems at first sight. ☺ But what do YOU think?

If you received this newsletter in the post, you will need to subscribe if you want it again. See web site for how.

From the workshop...

People often ask...

People often ask why I write “danglish” with a small “d”. Shouldn’t it have a capital letter? Well, yes – if it were a real language, it certainly should, because words made from proper nouns (e.g. *Londoner*) usually take a capital letter (cf. *News & Tips* No. 9). But I am being deliberately perverse here – sorry about that! The words *English* and *Danish* are so often written with a small letter that I couldn’t resist doing the same with my made-up word, “danglish”. ☺

Professional and vocational

Some care needs to be exercised when using the word *professional*. There is some overlap in meaning with *vocational*, but its core meaning applies to *people* and is *engaged in an activity for a living*, e.g. *a professional dancer*. Sometimes it has a clear meaning in other contexts, e.g. you might have a *professional qualification* or join a *professional organisation*, but many universities and colleges in Denmark and other parts of Europe advertise something they call a *professional bachelor* degree, which sounds like a course in how to make your living as an unmarried man!

Vocational, on the other hand, is much more commonly used of things like training, courses, degrees, colleges, etc. and is not used of people. Its core meaning is *related to an occupation, trade or profession*. The contrast can be well illustrated by the difference between *vocational guidance* and *professional guidance*. The former means guidance about choosing a career, while the latter refers to guidance (about anything) from a person who gives such guidance for a living.

And this is what you might call a gathering of professionals ...

KOMMUNIKATIONS- OG SPROGFORUM 2006

Tuesday, 26 September, Porcelænshaven, CBS Copenhagen

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Tel. 33 91 98 00 or e-mail: forum2006@kommunikationogsprog.dk

See you there!

Appreciate

Another word that requires care for quite different reasons is “appreciate”. Except in the sense of “increase in value” (e.g. *my shares appreciated last month*), this verb always requires an object. You cannot say, “*I would appreciate if you would ...*”; you must say, “*I would appreciate it if ...*”

But there is also another potential problem. People often write things like. “*I would appreciate to receive your reply as soon as possible*”. This is not correct. The object can be a verb, but then it must be an *ING*-form: “*I would appreciate receiving your reply as soon as possible*”.

The word “appreciate” can also be followed by a “that”-clause, but only when it has a different meaning. If I say, “*I appreciate that you came in early this morning*,” it does not mean that I am grateful that you did so, but merely that I accept or agree that it is true that you came in early. If I wished to express gratitude, I would say, “*I appreciate you(r) coming in early this morning*”.

Accuse, charge and criticise

Each of these verbs is typically followed by a preposition plus an *ING*-form. You might *accuse someone of doing something*, *charge them with doing it*, or *criticise them for doing it*. The key thing here is to choose the right preposition for the verb in question. Note that if we use the word “attack” instead of “criticise” here, we also use “for”: *attack someone for doing something*.

Please turn over!

Able and capable

Used alone, these two words mean much the same. If a man is described as “able”, he might also be described as “capable”. They mean he has talent or skill of some kind. But “able to do” and “capable of doing” are different. First note the difference in construction. You cannot say “able of doing” or “capable to do”. But there is also a subtle difference in meaning, because “capable” has a more limited application than “able”.

To illustrate the difference, let us suppose I am accused of murder. If I was in another country at the time, then I perhaps I can prove that I was not *able* to do it, no matter how *capable* of murder I might be. On the other hand, I might have been *able* to do it (I was on the spot), but not *capable* of doing it (not being the murdering type).

So using the word *capable* focuses on the capacity of the subject in question, whereas *able* can just mean that it was literally possible for the subject to have done it. My computer might be *capable* of downloading very large files very fast, but is only *able* to do so when it is switched on.

Teachers!

– Do you sometimes have to go through complex equations for your students in English?

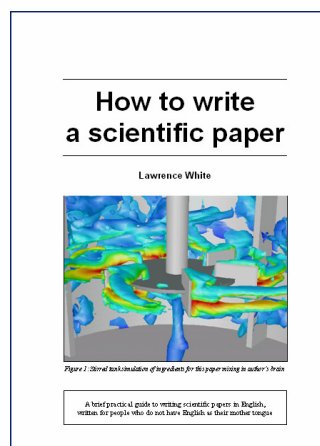
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So-called

Watch out for this one! Non-native speakers often make the mistake of thinking it means exactly the same as “known as” – used to introduce a perhaps more popular substitute for a technical word. But “so-called” is always potentially pejorative. If I speak of “so-called experts”, I mean that some people may call them experts, but I wouldn’t. Just how pejorative the word is depends on the context in which it is used. Use with caution!



Booklet for science researchers

“How to write a scientific paper”, is an excellent guide – even for the experienced author of scientific articles and reports. It is easy to read and gives good advice about the structure of such papers, the writing process, and a number of the many linguistic traps that authors who do not have English as their mother tongue tend to fall into.

Published by *English support*

Kurt Lauridsen, MSc, PhD
Danish Decommissioning

English support will have a stand at the **Communication and Language Forum** in Copenhagen on 26th September (see box on previous page).

We look forward to seeing you there!

Best wishes

Lawrence White

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No. 24 – October 2006

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Dear friends

KomSprog Forum 2006 on 26th September was a considerable success. More than 320 people took part and there were stands from 17 different companies and organisations. There is a short report on the event on the *English support* website at www.englishsupport.dk/EN/komsprog.htm. I want to say a special *Thank you!* to those who helped man the *English support* stand on the day, namely three of our native-speaker freelance collaborators, Eileen, Nancy and Paul.

Should English become the second official language in Denmark?

Last month I wrote about the Radical Liberal proposal to make English the second official language in Denmark. My main point was that this would only make sense in the context of a massive educational effort to raise the standard of English spoken and written in Denmark using a lot of native-speaker teachers and starting children learning English while still toddlers.

Spokespeople for the Confederation of Danish Industries wrote to tell me they do not in fact support the Radical Liberal proposal (as I mistakenly asserted). They believe it would double the cost of administration, which would outweigh any advantage. But they do strongly agree with the need to improve English skills in Denmark.

Now, in my view, that is where the real expense lies. Aiming at a fully, or even largely, bilingual population, so that Denmark (as Bjarne Jakobsen from Danish Trade and Service put it) can be “qualified for a globalised world”, would require a sustained effort and cost a lot of money. This is because genuinely bilingual people have to start learning both languages very early in their lives and from native-speakers. On the other hand, that is also the way to make dramatic improvements in English language skills and reap the advantages.

On a lighter note, a Russian friend warned, tongue in cheek, that at a time when leading circles in Russia spoke French rather than Russian, Napoleon invaded and burnt down Moscow! Well, yes, but that was not long after the British had bombarded Copenhagen without that particular *raison de guerre*. ☺ My friend also argued that many African states have English as an official language without being more visible on the world stage, while China has very few English-speakers yet is very visible.

All this is true, but good English enables you to communicate what you *do* have to offer. Many Chinese companies have websites in English, but since the English is often very poor, it does not communicate what they are offering very well. This makes them less visible than they otherwise would be.

The same applies to Danish companies, organisations and individuals who wish to communicate to the world at large. The fact is that *poor English makes a poor impression* – and weakens the impact of even very good (and very expensive) graphics and layout.

Please turn over!

Kindly

The basic meaning of the adverb *kindly* is *in a kind way*. A person who is kind to another person might be said to have treated them kindly. By extension, I might express gratitude for the way I was treated by saying that someone kindly helped me.

Note that you can (normally) only be kind to people or animals, because kindness is something that is *experienced by a subject*. So if I say that you should treat your computer kindly, I am trying to be a little bit amusing.

But *kindly* can also express annoyance. When *kindly* is used with an imperative, for instance, or in requests, it often suggests impatience with the person addressed. So if I say to the waiter, “*Kindly bring the bill*”, it sounds as if I am fed up with waiting for it. “Please bring” would be more polite. And if someone says, “*Would you kindly take your feet off the chair?*” this has a definite ring of annoyance about it.

And there is an expression, *to not take kindly to* something, which means to be unwilling to accept something. E.g. “*She did not take kindly to being told that her book was boring*”.

Take the liberty of, take liberties with

Another expression to be used with care is to *take the liberty of* doing something. The basic idea in *taking liberties* is that of taking *unauthorised* liberties with someone or something and being presumptuous. So if you write that you have “taken the liberty of doing” something, you want to be pretty sure that in reality the other person won’t mind a bit! ☺

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The *ING*-form after prepositions and phrasal verbs

We use the *ING*-form (gerund) after expressions like *take the liberty of*. This rule applies to all expressions with prepositions including all phrasal verbs: e.g., “*Without **waiting** for an answer*”, “*He had difficulty in **understanding** the letter*”, “*I am looking forward to **hearing** from you*”, etc.

The only exception is the phrasal verb, *to go on*, which has two possibilities: *to go on to do* and *to go on doing*. The phrasal verb, *to go on doing*, means to continue to do, but *to go on to do* describes the next thing that was done. Contrast, “*He went on climbing until he came to the top*”, with, “*He went on to climb Mount Everest*” – i.e. later on he climbed Mount Everest.

The *ING*-form is used after a number of other (non-phrasal) verbs, too, but that is a subject too big for the space remaining in this newsletter. For more on the *ING*-form, see next month’s edition! An unexpected and sudden increase in the pressure of work forces me to keep this particular issue quite short...

Best wishes

Lawrence White

LW@englishsupport.dk

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DK-4000 Roskilde

News & Tips
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No. 25 – November 2006

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Dear friends

One issue that has come up in the public debate over the last month is the suggestion that children should start school earlier in Denmark. The government already has a proposal prepared to make the so-called “kindergarten class” obligatory, thus lowering the age for compulsory school to six. A number of Liberal and Conservative politicians are now talking about starting even earlier and making the kindergarten itself part of the compulsory school system. *Could this be a good thing?*

AN EARLY START IN SCHOOL

So far the discussion seems to have focused around “competition” (when they start school in other European countries) versus “play” (our children should be allowed to “remain children” as long as possible). In other words, it is about whether or not there should be “more of the same”.

The focus has not been on what children are good at learning before the age of seven. Yet that is where the very best arguments for an early start are to be found.

What are young children good at learning? Motor skills and social skills, including music, art, drama, and above all language. Why language above all? Well, it is the first and most important invention of our species – long before the wheel and probably even the use of fire. Without it, none of our other achievements would have been possible. And our brains are incredibly good at picking up languages before the age of seven or eight – especially if exposed to native speakers.

That is why I argued for an early start in school in *News & Tips* No. 23. It is bizarre to wait until children *stop* being really good at learning languages before teaching them a second language.

But the same applies to other skills of self-expression, like music, art, drama and dance, which are all easier to learn before the onset of too much self-consciousness weakens self-confidence.

In a world increasingly dominated by knowledge-based industries, communication skills of all kinds are vital. An early school start that focused on what human beings are best at learning at that age could develop and strengthen such skills out of all recognition, and at the same time allow our children to “remain children as long as possible”, precisely because they would be receiving stimulation appropriate to their age.

Teachers!

– *Do you sometimes have to go through complex equations for your students in English?*

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Please turn over!

From the workshop...

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Short and brief, shortly and briefly

The adjectives *short* and *brief* are not synonyms, but they do have a certain amount of overlap in meaning. A *brief note* or a *brief holiday* might be a little briefer/shorter than a *short note* or a *short holiday*, but there is not really much difference in meaning.

Short is the opposite of *tall* when used of people, but not buildings (or stories ☺). It is also the opposite of *long*, whether used in relation to space or time. In contrast, *brief* is most commonly used in time expressions: *a brief moment*.

The adverbs *shortly* and *briefly* are almost exclusively used of time, but their meaning is quite different. As one might expect, *briefly* means *for a brief time*, but *shortly* means *within a short time*. So if I say, “*Mr Smith will speak briefly*”, I am referring to the length of time he will speak, whereas “*Mr Smith will speak shortly*”, refers to the (short) length of time that will go *before* he speaks.

Documents too big to send?

Try using: **YouSendIt**

You can find it under *Utilities* in *Useful links for professionals* on the *English support* website

More than one

As noted in *News & Tips* No. 4, the words *anyone*, *everyone*, *no one* and *someone* always take a singular verb, e.g. “*Everyone is here*” or “*No one has come*”. I described this as the rare triumph of ‘grammar’ over ‘meaning’, because the sense of these sentences is more plural than singular.

The expression “more than one” follows the same pattern: “*There is more than one way to catch a mouse*” and “*More than one coat of paint is not normally necessary*”.

No one, not one and none

None is a strange word that has clearly developed a certain independence from its origins as a shortened form for *no one* or *not one*. While both the latter always take a singular verb, *none* can take a plural. It also turns up in some expressions of its own.

When it means *no one* or *nobody*, it takes a singular verb: “*There was none to tell the tale*”. But this is rather outdated language. In modern English, we would use *no one* or *nobody* here.

Usually *none* means *not one* (of a group of things or people) or *no part* (of an uncountable thing).

When it is used in connection with an uncountable noun or a singular pronoun, the verb is always singular: “*None of the work has been done*” and “*None of that is important*”.

Some very formal texts and old-fashioned speakers also still prefer a singular verb when *none of* is used with a plural noun or pronoun, but nowadays a plural verb is more usual: “*None of us were there*” and “*None of his books are worth reading*”. The same applies where the focus is clearly on a plural noun: “*Did you buy the cakes?*” – “*No, there were none left*”.

And in expressions like *none other*, *none the* (+ a comparative), and *none too*, the word *none* has developed some special meanings of its own. Here are some examples:

“*Do you know who else came to the party? None other than Nelson Mandela!*”
“*She was none the worse for her ordeal.*” “*He was none too pleased about the matter.*”

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From the workshop...

More on the *ING*-form

Last month (and in a number of previous issues) we looked at some specific aspects of the use of the *ING*-form. In this issue, I will try to sum up the whole topic in one place! ☺

The *ING*-form is complex because it plays so many roles. Sometimes it can play the role of an adjective, e.g. “*running water*”, and it is also used (with the verb “*to be*”) to make the continuous forms of verbs (see *News & Tips* No. 6). But this issue will focus on how the *ING*-form is used on its own as a *gerund* – a form of the verb which can play the role of a noun – or to replace a whole clause in what is sometimes called a *non-finite clause*. Another form of the verb that can play these roles in a sentence is the *infinitive*, but we must distinguish carefully between them.

1. The gerund and the infinitive

Both can be used as noun as in sentences like, “*Writing is fun*”, and, “*To travel is to live*”. The infinitive is more formal, and the gerund more common in such sentences. Both can also be the object of the verbs *to like* and *to love*, e.g. “*She likes to swim*”, and “*He loves playing tennis*”.

In fact, there are a number of verbs which are followed by either the gerund or the infinitive:

attempt, can't bear, begin, cease, continue, *forget, *go on, hate, intend, like, love, prefer, propose, *regret, *remember, start, *stop, *try

There is, however, a difference in meaning when the verbs marked with * above are followed by the gerund or the infinitive:

- e.g. *She went on learning French* (i.e., she continued to learn French)
- She went on to learn French* (i.e., French was the next thing she learned)
- He remembered taking his keys* (i.e., that he had taken them)
- He remembered to take his keys* (i.e. that he should take them)

And some verbs are followed by the gerund when it is the object, but otherwise take the infinitive:

- e.g. *We allow smoking here.*
- But: *We allow people to smoke here.*

This pattern is found, for instance, with the following verbs:

advise, allow, forbid, permit

2. Verbs followed by the gerund

Some verbs can only be followed by the gerund:

avoid, consider, contemplate, defer, delay, detest, dislike, dread, endure, enjoy, escape, excuse, face (up to), finish, forgive, can't help, involve, keep (on), loathe, mind, miss, pardon, postpone, practise, prevent, resent, risk, save (somebody the trouble of), stand (endure)

- e.g. *I enjoy listening to music.*
- Do you mind me smoking?* (Though you can also say: *Do you mind if I smoke?*)

3. Verbs followed by either a gerund or a *that*-clause

With some verbs, you can use either the *ING*-form or a *that*-clause:

admit, anticipate, deny, imagine, mean (when it means ‘involve’), mention, recall, recollect, remember (when it means ‘recall’ or ‘recollect’), suggest

- e.g. *He admitted stealing the bicycle.*
- Or: *He admitted that he had stolen the bicycle.*

4. Phrasal verbs and prepositions

Prepositions are followed by a noun or a pronoun, and in English, if the noun is a verb, the gerund is used, not the infinitive: “*You can’t make an omelette **without breaking** eggs*”.

There are over 3000 phrasal verbs in English. Phrasal verbs are made up of two parts: a basic verb + one or two words (like *up, on, back, through*) which are called *particles*. In one of the three main kinds of phrasal verb, the final particle plays the role of a preposition.

Here are a few examples of this type of phrasal verb:

approve of, carry on, confess to, count on, depend on, focus on, get away with, get over, *go on, insist on, look forward to, object to, put off, put up with, rely on, resort to, start by

When the (prepositional) object of these verbs is a verb, the gerund is used. The only exception is the verb *to go on*, which can also take an infinitive (with a change in meaning – see §1. above).

e.g. *She relies on **being driven** to work.*
*I look forward to **hearing** from you.*

5. The *ING*-form used to replace a whole clause

You can use the *ING*-form in what is known as a *non-finite clause*. A non-finite clause has no finite verb, just the *ING*-form. The subject is implied from the rest of the sentence, so unless it is totally non-specific, it must be referred to in the sentence:

e.g. *When **buying** a house, it is best to seek legal advice* [totally non-specific subject].
*Before **buying** the house, he sought legal advice* [implied subject of *buying* is “he”].
***Walking** down the street, they spotted Jack* [implied subject of *walking* is “they”].
*They spotted Jack **walking** down the street* [implied subject of *walking* is Jack].

These kinds of constructions are very useful, but you must avoid ambiguity – and make sure that the implied subject is the right one:

e.g. *He watched her **considering** the matter* [ambiguous – *Who* considered the matter?]
***Drinking** the beer quickly, his glass was soon empty* [his glass drank the beer!]

Sometimes the subject is therefore explicitly put into the non-finite clause:

e.g. *Her husband **having been declared** insane, Mary had to decide what to do next.*
*He stood there quietly, his broken arm **hanging** limply by his side.*

More than two hundred topics have been tackled so far in the pages of

News & Tips

You can look them up on the website at: <http://www.englishsupport.dk/EN/backindex.htm>, and back issues can also be downloaded at: <http://www.englishsupport.dk/EN/backissues.htm>, where you can download a whole year at a time (if you want to) by clicking on the year heading.

More next month!

Best wishes

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News & Tips
from

English support

NB: If you received this newsletter by e-mail, it is (hopefully) because you have expressed a wish to do so. If this is not the case, and/or you do not wish to receive it in future – *please let us know!*

No. 26 – December 2006

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Dear friends

Well, what a year it's been! It started on full throttle and has been pretty well that way all year. We are coming up to the end of the third year of *English support's* existence. The third year is often make-or-break year for newly-started businesses. It's the year you run out of money if you can't find enough customers. I am happy to report that it looks very much as if we might survive. Thanks to you, our customers, colleagues and friends!

A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL!

Christmas is a funny thing. Its origins have nothing whatsoever to do with Christianity. First there was the Roman *Saturnalia*, starting on 17th December (when little Saturn was born) and ending on 25th December, the birthday (believe it or not) of *Sol Invicta*, the "Unconquered Sun".



And a special greeting to all those who, for whatever reason, have to work over the Christmas period!

Sol Invicta was a minor Roman god, who became very important when a new religion called Mithraism became popular. These people worshipped a Persian god called *Mithra*, who in Rome was identified with Sol Invicta. So 25th December became Mithra's birthday too.

The period between the 17th and 25th December was one long festival of eating, drinking, singing, giving gifts, party games and generally having a good time in every conceivable way.

In more northern parts, among the various Germanic tribes, there was a similar festival to brighten up the long dark winter. It was known as *Yule* – a word still used in English (along with *Yuletide*) for the Christmas period.

No one knows when Jesus was born (never mind Sol Invicta, Mithra or little Saturn), not even the year. But when Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, the Church wanted to ease Mithra/Sol Invicta out of the way, so they picked 25th December – and then tried very hard to stop the traditional debauchery up to and on that date. And they did not believe in celebrating birthdays. The day was just marked with a special service called *Christ's mass* or *Christmas*.

But they never succeeded in *completely* suppressing the old traditions. Have a nice Christmas!

Please turn over!

Number of and Amount of

These two are often mixed up, and not only by non-native speakers, it must be said. You can only use *number of* with plural countable nouns, and *amount of* should only be used with uncountables:

e.g.: a large **amount of** money (uncountable), a large **number of** coins (plural countable).

A common mistake is to write something like “a substantial **amount of sculptures was stolen**”, which should be either “a substantial **number of sculptures were stolen**” or “a substantial **amount of sculpture [uncountable] was stolen**”.

Both these expressions can be written as plurals: “large **amounts of money**” and “large **numbers of coins**”. Note that both of these are followed by plural verbs.

Adjectives followed by infinitives or gerunds

Last month we took a good long look at the gerund and the infinitive after various verbs. Quite a few adjectives can also be followed by infinitives and/or by a preposition plus a gerund, e.g.:

Adjectives	Examples with infinitive	Examples with preposition + gerund
afraid	<i>afraid to go</i>	<i>afraid of going, afraid about going</i>
difficult	<i>difficult to do</i>	X
fond	X	<i>fond of doing</i>
good	<i>good to do</i>	<i>good for doing, good at doing</i>
interested	<i>interested to hear</i>	<i>interested in hearing</i>
sorry	<i>sorry to say</i>	<i>sorry about saying</i>
sure	<i>sure to win</i>	<i>sure of winning</i>
welcome	<i>welcome to come</i>	X



Note that the meaning almost always changes. For instance, “*She was sure to win*”, describes the situation as other people saw it, whereas “*She was sure of winning*”, just describes how *she* felt.

Relations and relationships

In ordinary everyday English, a *relation* is a member of your family (also known as a *relative*), and your *relationships* are your close friendships of the romantic and/or sexual kind.

But the plural word, *relations*, is also used in other contexts, e.g. *industrial relations*, *foreign relations*, *diplomatic relations*, *international relations*, *sexual relations*, etc. The common feature here is that *relations* in this sense always have to do with contacts between people or groups of people (e.g. nations) and their behaviour.

Note that we do not use the singular form, *relation*, in this sense. Instead, we use *relationship*. So we might speak of “*the relationship between India and Pakistan*” or of “*relations between India and Pakistan*”, but not of “*the relation between India and Pakistan*”.

The only exception is the prepositional phrase “*in relation to*”, which can be used in any context.

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From the workshop...

Problems with pronunciation

There are some words that seem to cause a lot of trouble and curiously enough “*pronunciation*” is one of them. A lot of people, including some native speakers, pronounce it “*pronounce-iation*”, and not surprisingly, this can lead to spelling problems.

Now, English is difficult enough to spell in the first place, without making additional problems for yourself by mispronouncing it! ☺

Some students of mine (all teachers) demonstrated the powerful effect of mispronunciation on spelling and grammar recently. They had a written exercise in which the phrase “*several months*” occurred. Despite the fact that the only thing they had to do with this particular phrase was copy it across into another document, nearly all of them wrote “*several month*”.

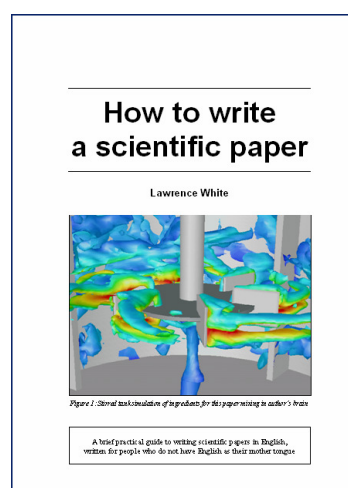
Many non-native speakers find it difficult to say the “th” sounds in English, and especially where followed by an “s”, so they simply drop the “s”. But how you speak is how you write. So they often end up writing it too! The moral is: *Practise your pronunciation* (see next page)!

Extend and Extent

Another very common pronunciation problem that leads to spelling problems is the difference English makes between voiced and unvoiced consonants, e.g. the voiced “d” in the verb “*extend*” and the unvoiced “t” in the noun “*extent*”.

In many languages, the difference between voiced and unvoiced consonants (e.g. the pairs “d”/“t”, “b”/“p”, and “g”/“k”) is small or non-existent at the end of a word and makes no difference in meaning. But in English, “*send*” and “*sent*” are not the same, a “*cab*” is not a “*cap*”, and a “*bag*” is not a “*back*”. Make the difference clear in your pronunciation and you won’t mix up the spelling of words like “*extend*” and “*extent*”.

The perfect Xmas gift for the researcher in your life!



Abstract

English is the main language for international science publication, but not the native language of the majority of scientists. Writing well in a foreign language can be difficult. Some good existing material on how to write scientific papers was therefore blended with empirical data from English teaching pre-stored in the brain of a professional linguist and educator. This mixture was fermented at temperatures in the range of 35–40°C over a period of 28 days, after which essentials were extracted. The result is a practical manual for people who wish to publish in English but are not native-speakers. Conclusion: *Read on!*

Keywords

Writing – English – Science – Journal – Articles

“*How to write a scientific paper*”, is an excellent guide – even for the experienced author of scientific articles and reports. It is easy to read and gives good advice about the structure of such papers, the writing process, and a number of the many linguistic traps that authors who do not have English as their mother tongue tend to fall into.

Order it now from *English support* at www.englishsupport.dk

Kurt Lauridsen, MSc, PhD
Danish Decommissioning

Please turn over!

Tongue-twisters...

If you received this newsletter in the post, you will need to subscribe if you want it again. See web site for how.

Cheers!

It has been known for some people to get a little “merry” at Christmas. In fact, you might even know someone who knows someone who does. ☺

They say that drink loosens the tongue, so here are a few sentences that should get easier to say as you work your way through your next Christmas “lunch”!

1. Charming children fetched chairs from the porch.
2. Charles cheerfully chose to play chess in Chile.
3. The giant was obliged to wear a huge pair of pyjamas.
4. Nigel and Jack played bridge with the surgeon and the juggler.
5. He thought both theories of thermodynamics were worthless.
6. Smith’s last thoughts six months ago were about this theatre.
7. Their mother and father gathered the clothes together.
8. My brother loathes this thundery weather.
9. Sally smiled and kissed Sam sensually on the lips.
10. He glimpsed at the text whilst sipping a glass of cider.
11. There was a vase with a dismal design of flowers.
12. Zealous boys poisoned the prisoners.
13. Russian ships were fishing off the Finnish shore.
14. She showed her galoshes to an ambitious Welshman.
15. Occasionally he had the pleasure of a vision of the treasure.
16. He had no illusions about the closure decision.
17. William walked warily forward to a warm welcome.
18. We watched as the waves washed the cliffs away.
19. Will he behave well during the voyage?
20. Have we invited the veterans from Worthing?



More readers

There are quite a few new readers this month. Welcome! I hope you will enjoy receiving *News & Tips* every month.

And if *you* know someone who might like to receive *News & Tips*, why not send them an e-mail suggesting they subscribe? It doesn’t cost anything and what’s more it’s free. But we only send it to people who ask for it, so they will have to push one of those red buttons marked **Newsletter** at: <http://www.englishsupport.dk/EN/news.htm>.

Best wishes

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