News & Tips

from

English support

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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!*

Happy New Year to all our readers!

Dear friends

True to tradition, this issue will set out our vision for 2007. However, looking back over previous January issues, it is clear that the vision for 2005 was only really fulfilled in 2006 and that the vision for 2006 was only partly fulfilled. We do have a large and expanding network of freelance partners, all of whom have signed our agreement on collaboration and confidentiality, which protects our customers. Several of these partners are based abroad. But there is a long way to go.

Vision for 2007

Our network of native-speaker freelance partners is now truly extensive. It covers not only proofreading and translation into English and Danish, but also Chinese, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Norwegian, Rumanian, Russian, Serbo-Croat, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish and Ukrainian. We will continue to expand this network.

However, our network far exceeds our current customer base. This is, of course, better than the other way round, but the difference is wasteful. This year we have delivered translations in Chinese, Danish, German, Norwegian, Russian and Swedish, but we have not yet, for instance, attracted custom for our excellent Hungarian or Spanish colleagues.

So the aim this year is to get our *Language support* website up and running on full blast and make sure that our marketing gets the message out to all those who may have need of our services.

Another prominent feature of 2007 is that teaching will constitute a sizeable chunk of our activity, probably as much as 25%. Amongst other things, *English support* will be delivering courses to the Danish Association for Masters and PhDs (*Dansk Magisterforening*), as well as running the following courses for Human Resources at the Technical University of Denmark:

English for Teaching Staff – 10 sessions
English for Administrative Staff – 10 sessions
English for Technical Staff – 5 sessions
How to Write a Scientific Paper – one-day introduction course
How to Write a Scientific Paper – a 6-session course; participants work on their own papers
Improve your English Pronunciation – a 7-session course for foreign staff.

We will be happy to discuss running similar courses in other education/research institutions, as well as tailor-made, in-house courses for private companies. We also have plans to expand our teaching activities in other directions. So just ask! ☺

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.
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Please turn over!

From the workshop…

More pronunciation problems

Last month we looked at some pronunciation problems that can lead to grammar mistakes. Another is the *-ed* ending in the past of regular verbs. In most cases, this is pronounced **/d/** or **/t/** depending on whether the preceding sound is voiced or unvoiced. Thus in *"organised"*, the ending is pronounced **/d/** [**ˈɔːgənaɪzd**], while in *"worked"*, the ending is pronounced **/t/** [**wɜːkt**].

But if the basic form of the verb ends in either a **/d/** or a **/t/** sound, the *-ed* ending must be pronounced **/ɪd/** as in *"loaded"* [**ˈləʊdɪd**] or *"looted"* [**ˈluːtɪd**].

Many non-native speakers are not consistent in pronouncing this **/ɪd/** where it is needed when they speak, which leads to grammatical mistakes in their written English. Here are some examples recently seen:

> *"I am educate in engineering"* (from a CV)
> "It would be appreciate if you could" (from a business letter).

Probably and properly

Here are two words often confused, both in pronunciation and in writing. This is an example from a recent job advertisement in Denmark:

> *"You properly have a degree or acquired knowledge in engineering"*.

So you could say that pronouncing these words *properly* would *probably* help! ☺ Here it is a matter of distinguishing clearly between the voiced consonants [**b**] in the middle of *"probably"* [**ˈprɒbəblɪ**] and the unvoiced consonant [**p**] in the middle of *"properly"* [**ˈprɒpəlɪ**].

Corporation and co-operation

These two words are also often mixed up, probably due to a failure to distinguish them properly in pronunciation. The commonest mistake is to use *"corporation"* where *"co-operation"* is meant:

> e.g. *"In close corporation with our partners"*

But I have also seen: *"This company is a large co-operation"*.

Note that *"co-operation"* can also be written *"cooperation",* but is still a 5-syllable word.

Far and distant

These two words have essentially the same meaning, but are used differently. The usual adjective is *"distant"*, while *"far"* is used predicatively, e.g. *"the distant mountains"* and *"Is it far?"* The reverse it not used, so we do not speak of *"far objects like buildings"*, nor do we ask *"Is it distant to the railway station?"*

This is because, in modern English, *"far"* is really an adverb, and when we say *"Is it far?"* we mean *"Is it far to go?"* The adverb *"distantly"*, however, is only used in a metaphorical sense:

> e.g. *"He gazed at her distantly"* – which means that his thoughts were not on her.

From the workshop...

Some or any

This is a tricky area of English for many foreigners. We use *a* or *an* with singular countables, but we use *some* or *any* with uncountables [see *News & Tips* no.4] and plural countables:

> e.g. *"**an** apple"* (singular countable)
> *"**some** or **any** water"* (uncountable)
> *"**some** or **any** apples"* (plural countable)

Would you like some tea?

Oh dear, I haven't got any!

Some: We use *some* where the meaning focuses on the *positive presence* of an amount of an *uncountable* or a number of a *countable*:

> e.g. *"I have **some** water"*
> *"I have **some** apples"*

When used with an *uncountable*, *some* is an indeterminate but fairly small amount, and it means less than *a lot of*:

> e.g. *"I have **no** water" < "I have **some** water" < "I have **a lot of** water"*

When used with *countables*, it is an indeterminate number, but it means more than *one* or *a couple of*, and less than *lots of*:

> e.g. *"I have **a couple of** apples" < "I have **some** apples" < "I have **lots of** apples"*

Any: We use *any* where the meaning focuses on *the very existence (or not) of an uncountable or a countable*. Here *any* means more than *no* or *none*, but is otherwise quite indefinite:

> e.g. *"I haven't got **any** water"* (Not even a little bit)
> *"Have you got **any** apples?"* (The answer is *Yes*, if you have even *one*).
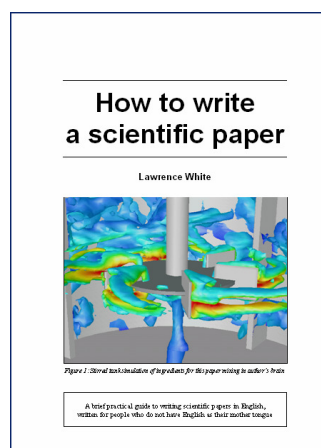
Any can also be used to mean *just one* (out of a *class* of things). When a conjuror says: *"Pick a card, **any** card"*, he means: *"Take **one** card and I don't care which one it is"*.

Note: These differences in meaning between *some* and *any* apply also to *someone* and *anyone*, *something* and *anything*, *somewhere* and *anywhere*, and so on. Here is a typical mistake:

> *"I'll check it through tonight and let you know if something needs changing"*.

This is wrong, because the word *"something"* is being used to focus on the very existence or not of even just *one* thing that needs changing, so the sentence should be:

> *"I'll check it through tonight and let you know if anything needs changing"*.

How to write a scientific paper

Lawrence White

Figure 1: Stirred tank simulation of ingredients for this paper writing in author's brain

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

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.

Kurt Lauridsen, MSc, PhD
Danish Decommissioning

Published by *English support*. Order it now from your local bookshop or direct from *www.englishsupport.dk*

Questions & Answers

Which, who and that

I've been told that to use "that" as in "the house that Jack built" isn't correct and one must use "which". Can you comment on this in a future newsletter? Sometimes I use both in the same sentence to avoid repeating "which" but am not sure if I am making a "mistake".

The people who have told you that *"that"* should not be used in phrases like *"the house that Jack built"* simply don't know what they're talking about. But you do have to distinguish between two kinds of relative clauses: *identifying* and *parenthetical*. [See also *News & Tips* Nos. 8 and 11]. There are three "rules" to remember:

Rule no. 1: You cannot use "that" in *parenthetical* relative clauses, i.e. relative clauses that give *extra* information (as it were, in parentheses). These clauses have a comma before and after:

> e.g. *"Please contact my secretary**, who** can be reached by e-mail."*
> *"Please read this manual**, which** will tell you how to do it."*

Rule no. 2: In *identifying* relative clauses (as in *"the house that Jack built"*), i.e. relative clauses that *identify* the person or thing they refer to, you can always use "that", and there is no comma before or after the relative clause:

> e.g. *"The secretary **that** (or **who**) answered the phone said…"*
> *"The table **that** (or **which**) we normally use has gone."*

Rule no. 3: You cannot use "which" (though you can use "who") in identifying relative clauses that follow superlatives or any of the following words: *all, few, little, much, none, only, way* and *any(thing), every(thing), no(thing)* or *some(thing)*. In these cases you must use "that":

> e.g. *"It's the **best** film **that**'s ever been made about madness"*
> *"Is this **all that** is left?"* [Contrast: *"Are these **all** (the people) **who** are left?"*]
> *"I hope the **little** (**that**) I've been able to do has been of some use"*
> *"The **only** thing **that** matters is to find our way home"*
> *"I went home the same **way** (**that**) I came"*
> *"Have you got **anything that** belongs to me?"*

They for he or she

I regularly translate international adoption files and the child to be adopted may usually be of either gender. Sometimes I end up with a sentence like "Elena (the applicants' biological daughter) is looking forward to the arrival of her little brother or sister. She wants to share all her toys with him or her and teach him or her all that she knows". To avoid the "him or her" (also "his or her") is it correct to put "them"? Also, is it correct to use "themself" to refer to the child instead of "himself or herself"?

The word *"themself"* is definitely *not* correct, but using *"they"* for *"he or she"*, *"them"* for *"him or her"*, *"their"* for *"his or her"* and *"themselves"* for *"himself or herself"* is now in general use in the spoken word. It is also more and more acceptable in (particularly more informal) writing, but where possible this usage should probably be avoided in very formal texts. In your example for instance, you could have used a phrase like *"the new baby"* or *"her new playmate"*.

More next month!

Best wishes

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www. **English** support .dk

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