

English support
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News & Tips

from

English support

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Dear friends

Well, it had to happen. For the first time in our 3½-year history we have had to turn away work because of sheer lack of capacity! Normally, the rather extensive *English support* network of freelancers is more than enough to tackle any job, but since the last issue, turnover from work done and work ordered for this quarter has risen from 41% to more than 90% up on last quarter's record! So with the summer holidays coming up, we need more resources.

How you can help ...

English support has a mission: that of providing language services *second to none*. [We don't mind at all if others are just as good, but we draw the line at anyone providing *better* proofreading, translation or teaching than we do.☺] So naturally we do not like turning away work.

This means we need **more** freelance assistance – *especially from native speakers of English*. There is increasing demand for other languages too, but what is most difficult is finding enough people with the time and ability to make really good translations into English.

This month we had to turn down a long, semi-technical job with short deadlines, because it was simply not possible to assemble a large enough team of people for that particular job. Of course, this is partly due to the holiday season, but even so, this is a situation we do not like to be in.

So if YOU know anyone (who knows anyone, etc.) who is a native speaker of English, has a good command of Danish (and/or other languages), and would like to have some freelance translation work, *please ask them to get in touch!* They can write to me at LW@englishsupport.dk. Thanks!



English support needs YOU!

Did you know?

English support can offer **native-speaker** help with not only *English*, but also *Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Rumanian, Russian, Serbo-Croat, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish* and *Ukrainian*.

Erratum

There was a very silly mistake in last month's issue, and I didn't spot it until it was too late.

As a reader at Novo Nordisk put it:
You seem to have mixed up 'De' and 'Sie'. ;-)

Yes, under the heading **You and you and You**, I attributed the common tendency to write “you” with a capital letter in the middle of a sentence to a carry-over from the German *De*. I hope all my German friends will forgive me! I meant, of course, the German *Sie*, of which *De* is the *Danish* equivalent.

Please turn over!

Politics and policies

Politics and *policy* have a common root in the Greek work *polis*. So, for that matter, does the word *police*. But in modern English they all are quite separate.

Politics is one of a group of uncountables ending in *-ics*. Other examples are *aerobics*, *athletics*, *economics*, *logistics*, *mathematics*, *physics*, etc. There are all singular. So are *ethics* and *statistics* when considered as subjects. But they are also plural forms for *ethic* and *statistic* [cf. No. 28].

No such complexities accompany the word *policies*. It is simply the plural form for the countable noun, *policy*. Like many other countables in English, *policy* can also be used as an uncountable. It is possible to talk about *the formation of policy* and, of course, *foreign policy*, without implying that the parties or countries concerned have only *one* policy.

So when do we say *politics* and when do we say *policy*? Well, *politics* is the general art of state or government power (including local government). It is true that word is also used (ironically) in other connections, e.g. *office politics*, but this is exceptional. *Policy*, on the other hand, can be used in almost any connection (e.g. *honesty is the best policy*, *he had a policy of never borrowing from his friends*) as well as in politics (e.g. *the new party has a policy on taxation*).

Economics and financial matters

The noun *economics* refers to the subject in general and the *economy* almost always refers to the *national* or *international economy* – the stuff of *politics*! Companies and individuals do not have *economies* – they have *financial situations*. But the plural word, *economies*, is also used for *cuts* and *savings* – e.g. *economies of scale* – and in this sense it can be used in any context.

Economical and economic [cf. No. 28]

The adjective *economical* is usually connected with this latter sense of the word *economies*. So being *economical* means being *thrifty* or *careful with consumption*, while being *economical with the truth* means keeping some of it back! If we are talking about *economics*, or the *economy* in the other meaning of the word, the adjective is *economic* – e.g. *economic laws* or *economic policy*.

Perform: a question of overuse

Do you *perform* measurements, analyses, or experiments? This verb gets used heavily in a lot of scientific and other technical writing. In normal (everyday) English, the word *perform* is more commonly used as an *intransitive* verb (no object) as in “*The actors (or the car) performed well*”, though a transitive form is also possible as in “*The actors performed **the play** well*” or in the expression “*to perform a service*”.

So here are some useful alternatives: *make measurements*, *carry out analyses*, and *do experiments*.

More than three 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 also download a whole year at a time (if you want to) by clicking on the year heading.

From the workshop...

Participate and participation

Here some other words that get overused – especially in the field of education. People *participate* in meetings and courses and conferences, where they are known as *participants*, and later they write up the results of their *participation*. And there is nothing wrong with it, except that English has a lot of other expressions that are more down-to-earth and which we tend to use more often.

First of all, there is the phrasal verb *to take part in*. Substituting this for *to participate* in most cases will immediately help. The 3000 or so phrasal verbs in English are a much under-used resource and learning to use them would vastly improve the quality of a lot of non-native-speaker English. And *those taking part* is much more natural English than *the participants*.

But you can also *go to* meetings, *go on* courses, and *attend* or *speak at* conferences.

Price and prize

There is no /z/ sound in Danish, so there is a strong tendency for Danes to pronounce both these words with an /s/ sound. This leads to confusion between them on countless websites, resulting in strange things like offers of prizes as low as 10 kr!

Made and maid

Pronunciation is not the problem here. These two are pronounced exactly the same. But despite the fact that “Made in China” and “Made in France”, etc. can be seen printed or stamped on large numbers of the products we buy, many non-native speakers still have problems with the irregular verb *to make*. And the spelling checker, of course, finds no fault with “Maid in France”.

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Ashamed and shameful

These two words are often confused, although the difference in meaning is sharp and clear. The word *ashamed* is used to describe *how a person might feel*, while *shameful* is used to describe *acts that a person ought to feel ashamed of*. Like beauty, both these concepts exist in the eye of the beholder, so a person may not be *ashamed* of acts other people consider *shameful*, or vice versa.

Information and knowledge

Information and *knowledge* are not the same thing. There is a lot of *information* available on the Internet and in books, but not one scrap of *knowledge*. That is because knowledge is information that a living being (whether human, animal or extraterrestrial) has acquired and made their own.

Both words are *uncountable* in English, so you cannot have *informations* or *knowledges*. To get round this problem, you can speak of *pieces of information* and *pieces of knowledge*.

Both words can be followed by the word *about*, and each can be followed by another preposition linking to what they are *about* – you can have *information on* a topic and you can have *knowledge of* a topic. I stress this, because the **Danish Ministry of Education** seems to be very fond of the somewhat unusual combination, *knowledge on*, and uses it all the time – whenever they want to define the *information* students are supposed to acquire as *knowledge* by the end of a course.

This practice should *not* be imitated! The Ministry has clearly received incorrect information on this point – perhaps from someone lacking native-speaker knowledge of English. ☺

Please turn over!

Questions & Answers

(Edited)

If you did not receive this newsletter by e-mail, you will need to subscribe if you want it again. It's FREE. Get on the mailing list via the website!

Put on your Marigolds and get stuck in!

I am subtitling some short clips of film. In one of them, we see an interviewer enter a house and say, "Not wanting to be seen in your marigolds" to a lady coming out of another room.

I get the feeling that the lady was surprised by the visit (and the cameras!) and therefore wanted to freshen herself up or something before going on camera. But I can't find anything that confirms my suspicion. So does the above sentence have some special meaning? Or was the lady just working in her flowerbed when the interviewer and the cameras arrived?

The sentence most likely means the lady had been doing some cleaning or washing up. *Marigolds* are indeed flowers, but they are also a well-known make of protective gloves (from heavy industrial and chemical resistant to household cleaning), which she really did not want to be seen in on camera.

Gyldendal's Industrial Dictionary

You mentioned 'Industrordbogen' last month.

It is available on the Internet at www.ordbogen.com, but you need to subscribe if you want to look up more than two words a day.

Thank you very much! I've had a link to www.ordbogen.com on my *Useful links* page for years, but I was not aware it was based on Gyldendal's *Industrordbog*. So there may be a lot of other people who do not know it as good source for specifically *technical* English. ☺

Before or after?

I have a lot of trouble deciding when an adjective should come before and when after the noun it applies to. Should I write, "the investigated concrete" or "the concrete investigated"?

This problem is not about the position of adjectives in English. Adjectives, like other modifiers, normally come before the word they modify. But English also uses past (and present) participles to replace whole clauses. Here the meaning is, "*the concrete (which was) investigated*", which is why the word *investigated* should come after the word *concrete*. The word *investigated* in this sentence is not an adjective, but plays the role of a (shortened) relative clause. Contrast the common use of the past participle, *reinforced*, as an adjective in, "*the reinforced concrete*".

More next month!

Best wishes
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And don't forget to register for the

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