

English support
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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!*

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Dear friends

Turnover last quarter was up by 12% over the previous quarter, and this coming quarter promises the highest turnover yet. This does not mean that we're rich, but it does mean that more and more people are using our services, which is very positive. It also means we are very busy. So, for the first time ever, we didn't manage to get this newsletter out at all last month. Sorry about that folks! We will try not to do it again – promise. After all, our readers are important ambassadors for the company's value, just like our customers and our freelance partners. We value you all. ☺

We've been doing a lot of teaching lately...

English support walks on three (main) legs: proofreading (including copy-editing), translation and teaching. The latter is looming rather large at the moment!

We are running courses in English for *administrative staff* and for *technical staff* at Denmark's Technical University (DTU) both in Lyngby and at Risø, a special course for DTU Informatics staff, and courses in *Scientific Writing* at both DTU and Copenhagen University's Faculty of Life Sciences. We have also run one-day introduction courses in *Scientific Writing* at DTU and made contributions on the same theme on courses for new PhD students at Copenhagen University.

The University College of Engineering in Copenhagen has asked us to run brush-up courses for their staff, we are starting a special course for DTU Human Resources staff, and we recently started two new courses in *Scientific Writing* at DTU. All these courses will continue into the new year. November–December we are running a completely new course we call *Talking Science* for PhD students at Copenhagen University. Finally, there is yet another course in *Scientific Writing* we are running for the Danish Association of Masters and PhDs (*Dansk Magisterforening*).

Fortunately, we've got Michael holding the fort at the office when Claire and I are out teaching, so we can still answer enquiries. ☺

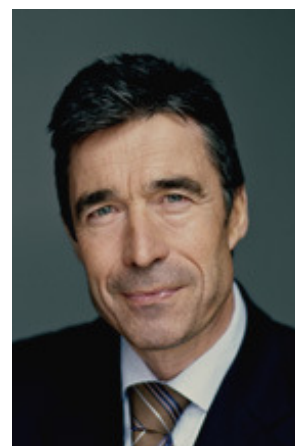
But with all those courses in *Scientific Writing*, we've had to print extra copies of *How to write a scientific paper* to cope with demand! So we've got some in stock now if you'd like one.

As the Prime Minister was saying, only the other day...

I was fortunate enough to have about a one-minute conversation with Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who spoke at a business meeting I attended the other day. I told him how *English support* helps researchers at Danish universities write better scientific papers. The PM talks a lot about how important research is for Denmark's future. He took a copy of *How to write a scientific paper* and he said: **“That's just what we need!”**

So now we are looking forward to a really big order from Helge Sander (Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation). Mind you, he got one last time I saw *him*, too... ☺

Note to the Minister: *Order 800 or more and you get 'em HALF PRICE.*



From the workshop...

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Although, despite and in spite of

The fundamental meaning of these words is very similar, but the way they are used is not. The vital difference lies in the fact that *although* is a conjunction, while *despite* and *in spite of* are prepositions.

So the latter can be used (interchangeably) in front of nouns and gerunds, e.g. “*In spite of the rain, she cycled to work*” or “*Despite being angry, he spoke very quietly*”.

But *although* introduces a subordinate clause, e.g. “*Although it was raining, she cycled to work*” or “*Although he was angry, he spoke very quietly*”.

If you wish to use *despite* or *in spite of* to introduce a subordinate clause, you have to add *the fact that*, so that the sentence becomes: “*In spite of the fact that he was angry, he spoke very quietly*”. This rather longwinded construction is quite common and preserves the prepositional character of *despite* and *in spite of*.

Although and though

In speech and informal writing, people sometimes use *though* instead of *although* to introduce a subordinate clause, as in: “*Though he was angry, he spoke very quietly*”, and this would often be shortened to “*Though angry, he spoke very quietly*”. *TIP*: When the meaning is the same as *in spite of the fact that*, always use *although*, or the stronger *even though*, with a subordinate clause.

The word *though* is more correctly used as a contrastive (like the stronger *but*), as in: “*He gets on with most people, though not with James*”.

This is seen most clearly when it is used as a contrastive adverb (like *however*), as in: “*I wouldn't stake my life on it, though*”.

As though

The combination *as though* (like *even though* and *although*) is a conjunction and introduces a subordinate clause, e.g. “*He was smiling as though he hadn't a care in the world*”. Its meaning is virtually indistinguishable from *as if*.

Implied clauses

English often uses a past participle or a gerund or even an adjective instead of a clause. We had an example above in the sentence “*Though angry, he spoke very quietly*”, in which the words “*though angry*” substitute for “*although he was angry*”. In *News & Tips* No. 25, we looked at how the gerund or *ING*-form can replace a whole clause, as in “*They spotted Jack walking down the street*”, in which the gerund substitutes for “*as he was walking down the street*”.

What is often less understood is the way a past participle can do the same. For instance, in the sentence, “*International courses are courses taught in English*”, the word *taught* substitutes for “*which are taught in English*”. When the past participle plays this role, it comes *after* the noun it refers to, whereas when it plays the role of an adjective, it comes *before* the noun it modifies.

For example, in the sentence “*The completed report was sent to head office*”, the past participle *completed* plays the role of an adjective, whereas in the sentence “*The study performed shows that DNA can be copied in this way*”, the past participle substitutes for the clause “*which was performed*” and it must therefore come after the noun the implied relative clause refers back to.

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From the workshop...

Big, large and great

These three adjectives have overlapping meanings, but must be carefully distinguished because they are used in different contexts:

Used to modify:	BIG	LARGE	GREAT	Examples
Amounts	No	Yes	Yes	a large amount of money, a great number of cases
Countables	Yes	Yes	Yes	a big tree, a large rock, a great meal
Uncountables	No	No	Yes	great beauty, great dignity, great progress
Feelings	No	No	Yes	great anger, great expectations, great sorrow
Sudden feelings	Yes	No	Yes	a big surprise, a great shock
Problems	Yes	No	Yes	a big problem, a great threat

NOTE: The word *great* is often used to say that something is important or impressive in some other way than its size, e.g. “The **great** man was not very **big**” or “How was the party? – **Great!**” In fact, this usage is the most common in modern English.

Largely and greatly

There is no adverbial form of *big*, and the adverb *largely* has come to mean the same as *mostly* or *chiefly*, as in “Her warnings went **largely** unheeded” or “Richard was **largely** responsible for the success of the play”. In both cases, the meaning is “mostly, but not entirely”.

The adverb *greatly*, however, retains the full force of the meaning of *great*, as in “Michael **greatly** enjoyed the concert” or “Susan was **greatly** upset by the news”.

This difference is also reflected in adverbial phrases containing the adjectival forms; contrast “to a **large** extent” with “to a **great** extent”.

Most and mostly

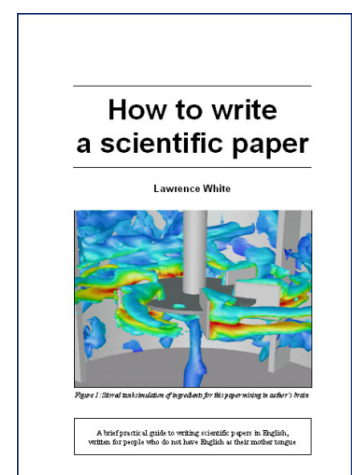
Someone invited me to a meeting the other day and added I would be “**mostly** welcome”. What he meant to say (I think) was that I would be “**most** welcome”. The word *mostly* contains the idea of *not entirely*, whereas the word *most* is used to make the superlative forms of many adjectives, as in “*most beautiful*” or “*most famous*”.

Do you write scientific papers?

“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, Risø

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News & Comment

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The best trade fair we've been to so far!

The thing about *Iværk08* is that there is no question that the stands are the most important attraction. And, with more than 4000 visitors, this trade fair for small businesses and self-employed people on 13–14 September was clearly a great success.

It was the first time *English support* has taken part, but it won't be the last! We met a great many potential customers, both among visitors and other exhibitors, and a lot of interest from other language professionals.



The Communication and Language Forum 2008

We also had a stand at the *Communication and Language Forum*, where the focus this year was on the communication of knowledge. The forum is organised by the Union of Communication and Language Professionals.

Knowledge only has value insofar as it is communicated in such a way that it can be used by others – a point made by Peter Kastberg from Aarhus University at the Forum. The importance of language and communication for the “knowledge-based” society should be clear for all.

Unfortunately, the final discussion about whether English is enough (or good enough) in Denmark for the communication of knowledge to the wider world focused on how many languages Danes should learn in school. Thomas Harder argued for multi-lingual standards to be maintained, while Lone Dybkjær thought English was sufficient (though she would prefer Esperanto) as a kind of “technical language” – without all the culture, as she put it, such as “outside water pipes”!

Neither speaker seemed to grasp the idea that there are native speakers of other languages living in Denmark who could help communicate its knowledge to the rest of the world. The multi-cultural society is already here and gives tremendous opportunities if looked at in the right way.

If the Danish Tax Office, for instance, wants to communicate to the Arabic-speaking population, the chances are that they will do the logical thing and get a native speaker of Arabic to translate the Danish. But unfortunately this is not what they do in the case of English, although there are rather more expert native speakers of English in Denmark than of Arabic.

Part of the explanation for this is the argument repeated by Harder that “if I want my car fixed, I choose a qualified mechanic”. He used it to argue for Danish qualified language people. The implication is that the best kind of “language mechanic” you can get is one with a Danish qualification in that language.

Apparently, getting expert *native-speaker* help is only something you do as a last resort (like the Tax Office), or if you can't find anyone with a Danish qualification...

We will continue to argue for the importance of making use of native-speaker language skills to improve Danish schoolbooks, websites, scientific papers, etc., etc., despite the sadly narrow “little Denmark” views on foreign languages represented by Dybkjær and Harder.

Best wishes

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Your natural language partner

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