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News & Tips

from

English support

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Dear friends

So here at last is the first issue of *News & Tips*! Some of you have been waiting a long time for your first copy, and some of you have been hoping to receive a brochure or leaflet or *something* from *English support* even longer. I can only apologise. My only excuse is that business has expanded much more rapidly than I expected or had planned for. The newsletter has had to wait.

Started as little more than an idea in January, *English support* doubled its admittedly modest first quarter's sales in the second quarter. In the third quarter sales more than doubled those of the second quarter, and this final quarter of the year is threatening to more than triple the third quarter's sales. This is quite some welcome for a newcomer to the market!!

So naturally I am busy building a network of native speakers who can do some of the work! But not only that. I find that customers often want some translation done, too. So I am also looking for partners amongst translators.

Do you know any native speakers of Estonian and Latvian,
who can translate to and from English and/or Danish?
If so, please get in touch!

Need help with
Hungarian?
Just ask!

The core competence of *English support* is and will remain English proofreading, copy-editing and teaching. But customers will in the future be able to do 'one-stop shopping' at *English support*. If they want to market in other languages too, we will find native speakers to carry out the work – to the same high standard we aim at in English.

And in the meantime, Danish translators who hesitate to take translation work into English can come to *English support* and get their work polished up by native speakers before delivery to the customer. In the future, the same will apply to other languages too.

HOTLINE SERVICE?

Whether you work as a translator, a secretary, a technical writer, a teacher, or just write a lot of CV's in English, you might like a *hotline service* you can phone or e-mail to get help with the right word or phrase. Suggested charges:

Let me know what you think!



Registration: 200 kr. (to put off time-wasters)
Per-minute charge: 10 kr. (minimum 20 kr.)
Invoicing once a quarter (minimum 200 kr.)

Please turn over!

From the workshop...

Future will

In days of old, long, long ago (when I was at school), it used to be taught that future forms using “will” should be “shall” in the first person singular and plural. This sounds distinctly old-fashioned today. Use “will” for the future, and reserve “shall” for (somewhat pompous) legal instructions like “the tenant shall keep the flat clean and tidy” and expressions like “Shall I go on to something else now?” – neither of which is a future at all.

Being competent

Words like “competence” / “competences” and “competency” / “competencies” do exist, but are used rather less by native speakers than by others. “Competence” is the most common and often means little more than “the condition of being capable”. The Danish word “kompetencer”, for instance, is stronger and usually best rendered by “qualifications” or even “expertise”.

Don't just co-operate – collaborate!

Danes (and others) are often afraid to use the words “collaborate” and “collaboration”. These words have negative connotations from those who collaborated with the Nazis in World War II. But that is because *actively* working together is *collaboration*. “Co-operation” is much weaker and often means little more than refraining from active resistance...

Are you specialised or specialising?

Surprisingly many translators (and companies) describe themselves as “specialised” in English or medicine or computing, etc. This sounds a bit like some clever doctors have fitted them with a special brain implant that allows them to do what they do. “Specialised” is the *passive* form. “Specialising” is the *active* form more appropriate to an agent like you... Machines may be *specialised*, but people *specialise*.

A question of focus

Whether the verb should be plural or singular in English is often a matter of *meaning* rather than “grammar”. Consider the following two sentences:

A number of cases of typhus were reported.
The number of cases was 65.

In the first sentence, the focus is on the *cases*. There were several, more than one, at any rate. In the second sentence the focus is on the (word) *number*, which is clearly singular.

Tell, tell me, do...

The Danish equivalents of words like “tell” and “inform” are often used without the indirect object, but in English you must normally tell or inform *someone*. If you don't want to mention *who* was told or informed, you can use the word “say”.

And I hope you will tell (or inform) *me* about any areas of English you would like looked at in next month's *News & Tips*. Otherwise I will just have to see what mistakes we end up correcting this month... ;-)

Best wishes
Lawrence White
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www. **English support** .dk

When it has to be perfect...

Proofreading • Copy editing • Teaching

Dear friends

I'm absolutely delighted - and already look forward to receiving the next newsletter! – AP

I sent the first issue of *News & Tips* in the post to most of Denmark's certified translators, and the response was extraordinarily encouraging – see examples in the boxes. This issue is a Christmas greeting that is going out to all *English support's* customers – including some who ought to be, but aren't yet! ☺

Who are our (direct) customers?

Thank you for an inspiring newsletter – GD

So far just over 11% have to do with **tourism** in one form or another. Over 20% of our business has been work done for **certified translators** – usually proofreading and copy-editing, but also some translation. Nearly 25% of our turnover has come from **the IT sector** and just over 25% has been in-house **teaching** at local companies. The remaining customers represent **business services, charities and pharmaceuticals**.

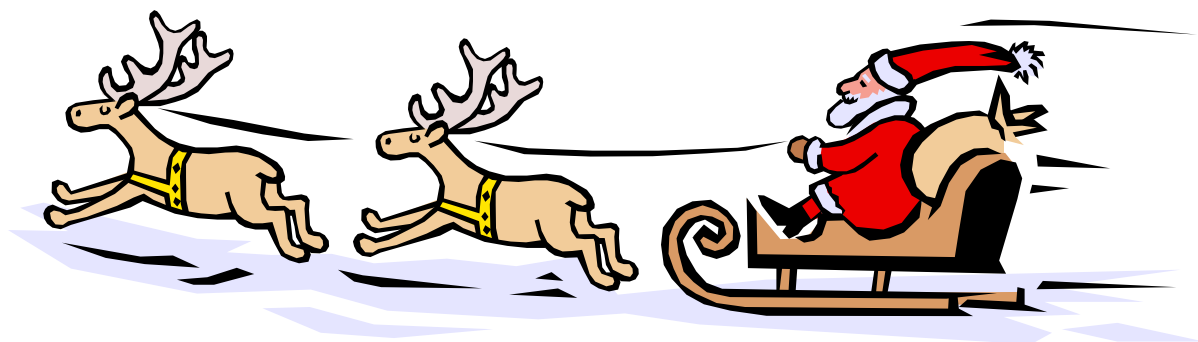
We have worked on web pages, brochures, business letters, EU documentation, restaurant menus, hotel and apartment descriptions, computer manuals and sales material, PhD theses, job applications and CV's. *Variety is the spice of life!*

I thoroughly enjoyed the issue you sent me in the mail, so I hasten to ask you to add my name to your mailing list!! – HF

The geographical spread is also interesting. Not surprisingly, many of our customers have come from Roskilde, Greater Copenhagen and the rest of Denmark, but also from Italy and the US. We have good prospects in the UK and Hungary, too – not to mention our high hopes for Russia and China... *English support* is nothing if not ambitious!

And we wish you *all* – our customers (including those who aren't, but should be!), collaborating partners, and all the other members of our growing network (that's you, Anna! ☺) – a very ...

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Please turn over!

From the workshop...

Denglish as she is spoke (and wrote) *

December in Denmark is the month of “Christmas calendar” TV serials. One particularly popular example a few years ago was “*The Julekalender*”, in which a lot of fun was had with Scandinavian-style English – *Are you with?*

What a great idea! I have read your newsletter and I will certainly think of some “pitfalls” that could be reviewed in your next newsletter. – AC

But such “denglish” is all too common on Danish web pages. By “denglish” I mean English written with Danish constructions or typical mistakes. Every non-native speaker has a tendency to take his/her native language into English, so Danes are not unusual in this. For the Japanese equivalent, take a look at www.english.com!

How you speak is (often) how you write

Danes seem to love the joke “*Are you finished?*” – “*No, I’m Danish!*” The joke depends on the word “finished” being pronounced “finish” (=Finnish), but this sort of (typical) mispronunciation often leads to mistakes in written English. Many non-native speakers find it difficult to say “six months”, so they say “six month” – and end up writing it too!

Of course, **th** in front of **s** is not the only difficulty. Can you say “*probably*” so it doesn’t sound like “*properly*”? Do you pronounce the **d** clearly when you say “*I’d like a coffee*”? And when asked how you are, do you just say “*Fine!*”, or do you practice keeping **v** and **w** distinct and clear and say the more English “*Very well, thank you*”? So here is a little linguistic gymnastics you can practice in front of the mirror (!):

*I’d like to be able to say **probably properly!**
William behaved **well** during the visit over the **weekend**.
The computer costs £1,000 **pounds**, but we have six **months** to pay.*

Use the spelling checker – but don’t rely on it!

Finally, it must be said that it is amazing how many web pages show absolutely no sign of having come within a million miles of a spelling checker. The software available with *WordPerfect* and *Word* may not be perfect, but is worth using. Often it will also help with grammar points. But, if in any doubt, don’t rely on it.

No one has yet developed the perfect proofreading software, so there’s still a bit of work left for *English support* to do!

Best wishes
Lawrence White
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When it has to be perfect...

* Just to be on the safe side, I’d better point out that this heading is in *deliberately incorrect* English. I once ran a course called, *Please, you speak English?* – and received complaints from people who thought the English teacher *really* ought to know better!