

English support
Business House (PO Box 618)
Jernbanegade 23 B
4000 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. **50** – January 2009

© English support 2009

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

Dear friends

We enter 2009 with the **50th** issue of this newsletter. The first issue of *News & Tips* came out in November 2004 and, except for the slight hitch in October-November last year, it has appeared every month since. The start of this year also marks 5 years of our existence as a company, which we hope you will come and help us celebrate on **Thursday 22nd January** (see page 4 for more details).



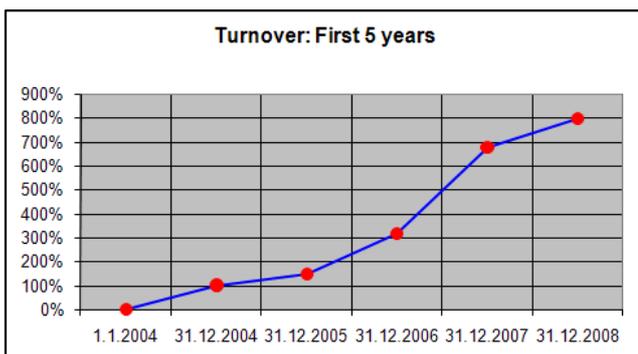
Good, but could do better!

2008 was a good year for *English support*. Turnover was up 17% over the previous year. But this is, of course, a rather modest increase compared with those of the previous two years.

We cannot blame the banking crisis; our customers are extremely loyal and we already have pre-orders and sales this year for more than two-thirds of last year's turnover.

But we do seem to be reaching the limits of what can be achieved with our current company structure.

While our network of native-speaker language experts continues to expand, we have neither been able to make full use of their skills nor develop our website as planned and projected over the last two years. These two things hang together and reflect a time problem.



Vision for 2009

Clearly some changes are necessary. For one thing, I cannot continue to work such long hours as I currently do. On the other hand, this business is as solidly based as any company our size could hope to be in the current economic climate. So changes will be deliberate, gradual, and unfold month by month over the course of the year.

By the end of 2009, the aim is to fulfil the entire range of goals presented in these pages in January over the years. These include a reworking of our web pages so that they more fully represent our teaching activities and the language capacities of our network. Our customers, not least those who sign up for our *Hotline* service (see below), will receive an even better service. Our network of freelancers will experience increasing opportunities to work for us. And you, our readers, will see improvements in this newsletter to make it even more useful in your work.

In short, we want to gear up for continuing rapid growth in our turnover and impact. ☺

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 12 kr. – invoicing once a quarter (minimum 200 kr.)

From the workshop...

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!

Do and make

There are a lot of expressions that use one or other of these verbs, but the fundamental meaning difference between them is that you *do actions* and you *make things*.

Do

So we use *do* when talking about an *action* of some kind – even if you do not know what it is:

- e.g. *What are you doing?*
- I like doing nothing.*
- I don't know what to do*
- Do something!*

And *do* is usually the right word when talking about any kind *work*:

- e.g. *Have you done your homework?*
- I am not going to do any work today.*
- I hate doing the cooking and shopping and cleaning and washing up!*
- Let's get a maid to do all the boring jobs.*

Do is also used in a relatively *small* number of common expressions, all concerned with actions:

- e.g. *do business*
- do good / harm / damage*
- do one's best / worst*
- do someone a favour / a good turn / a good deed*

Make

Make is usually more concerned with the product than the process:

- e.g. *Let's make some bread.*
- My grandfather once made me a small sailing-boat.*

This can also be seen in some of the very *large* number of expressions using *make*:

- e.g. *make a plan / a noise / a profit / a loss.*

But in many other expressions using *make*, this focus on the product is, shall we say, less clear:

- e.g. *make a phone call / a mistake / an offer*
- make a suggestion / an arrangement*
- make an attempt / an effort / a mistake*
- make an exception / an excuse*
- make an appointment / a decision*
- make money / love / war / peace*
- make the most of something / the best of something, etc., etc., etc.*

There is even an expression to *make do*, which means to *put up with having very little*.

Since there are so many expressions with *make*, one way of picking up some very useful vocabulary quickly is to look up the word *make* in a dictionary and see how many expressions using it you know!

Economics revisited

As I was preparing this newsletter, including the answers to last month's Christmas quiz (page 5), I discovered that *News & Tips* no. 5 contains a mistake that could mislead people trying to sort out sentence no. 5 in the quiz.

While the word *economics* is normally treated as a singular (as stated in *N&T* no. 5), this is not the case in quiz sentence no. 5, which read: "*The economics of the agreement mean that the staff gets a pay rise every year*". Here the word refers not to the *subject* or *field* of economics, but to the *financial aspects* of the deal. In this sense, the meaning is plural.

Please note that this does not mean that this sense of the word *economics* has a singular form, as with the plural meaning of *ethics* (see *N&T* no.5), *lyrics* and *statistics* (see no. 28). On the contrary, *economics* in the sense of *financial aspects* is always plural and always preceded by the definite article: **the economics of the agreement**. This makes it a bit like *the police* ☺ [see next page].

BusinessHouse.dk

For office space in Roskilde contact Johnny Schäffer, tel. 70 27 89 10 or e-mail johnny@businesshouse.dk.

Options currently available:

Your own 15-square-metre office
Time-share office, one day a week
Rent-a-desk

From the workshop...

Plural uncountables

Talking about *the police* brings us naturally on to plural uncountables.

Most uncountables are singular (*education, money, progress, etc.*) and this applies to words that look as though they might be plural (*gymnastics, news, politics, etc.*) – see *News & Tips* no.5.

But English (like Danish) also has plural uncountables. These are words that are always plural but cannot be counted. Danes often laugh when I tell them that *money* is uncountable in English, but the Danish word *penge* is also uncountable; the only difference is that the Danish word is also plural.

Examples of plural uncountables are *clothes, credentials, earnings, outskirts, surroundings, thanks, etc.* In each case, these words are both plural and uncountable.

The police are a special case. Unlike most uncountable plurals, it does not look plural. In fact it looks as if it might be a collective noun, like *crowd* or *family* or *government*, and take a singular verb when the focus is on the *group*, but a plural when the focus is on the *members* of the group (see *News & Tips* no. 4).

But *the police* are not like that. The noun is always plural and always uncountable and always preceded by the definite article. So even if just *one* policeman called round to see you, we might say “*The police were here to see you*”. And if there were two of them, we could **not** say “*Two police were here ...*”, but would have to say “*Two policemen were here to see you*”.

So watch out for the police! 😊

Care and caution

These two words overlap a little in meaning, which sometimes leads people to choose the wrong word in the context.

If I treat something (or someone) with *care*, the focus is usually on the way I am trying to avoid causing damage or injury to the thing or person. Just occasionally, however, the context may make it clear that I am avoiding harm to myself.

If I treat something (or someone) with *caution*, on the other hand, it definitely means I am trying to avoid the risk of harm to myself.

Careful and cautious

The adjectives retain the basic meaning difference of the noun forms, except that *careful* is used much more often in the sense of avoiding harm to oneself, as in: “*Be careful!*” So the use of the word *cautious* often implies a psychological state of hesitation or uncertainty, as in: “*He was cautious about buying shares in the company*”.

Did you know?

English support can offer you **native-speaker** translation and proofreading help with not only *English*, but also *Bangla, Bulgarian, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Farsi, Finnish, French, German, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Kurdish, Malay, Nepali, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Rumanian, Russian, Serbo-Croat, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, Ukrainian* and *Urdu*.

And if YOU can translate from at least one foreign language, speak English or Danish, and are a native speaker of Arabic, Greek, Greenlandic, Swahili, Welsh, etc., we'd like to hear from you!

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!

More on challenge!

Hi Lawrence

Isn't it "face the challenge" and "take up the challenge"?!

Last month, in answer to another reader, I suggested *meet the challenge*, as in "She met the challenge of being self-employed with her characteristic courage".

The two suggested above are also possible, but the second in particular conjures up more of the original metaphor of responding to a challenge to duel to the death.

Being self-employed is not *really* like facing a medieval knight in full armour, but if you like that image, use it! The nice thing about *meeting challenges* is that no one is likely to think of the original blood and gore. ☺

University names and job titles

The same reader says:

My dictionary says vice-chancellor for "universitetsrektor" – how about that?

Vice-chancellor is certainly the usual British equivalent, but we don't call all the finance ministers in other European countries the *Chancellor of the Exchequer* either! ☺ *Rector* is the normal word in respect of European universities and some British ones.

Where there is some special term in Britain, we do not usually use that in the context of another country. For instance, we don't call the *Metro* in Paris, Moscow or Copenhagen *the Tube* or *the Underground* just because that is what we call it in London.

So extreme care needs to be taken in such cases. Another example in my view is the common translation of the Danish *Lov* with *Act*, as in *Act of Parliament*. I cannot really think of any justification for calling laws passed by the Danish Parliament *Acts*, and it does not reflect normal English-speaking practice with respect of the laws passed by other non-English speaking parliaments. We have a perfectly normal word, *Law*, which seems much more appropriate, since the word *Act* is a special term in the British legal system.

Come and help us celebrate the first FIVE YEARS of English support!

English support will be holding an open house arrangement to celebrate our fifth birthday.

The company officially started on 1st January 2004, but we had this sneaking feeling not many people would come on New Years Day, so we are holding it from 3–6 pm on **Thursday 22nd January**.

The programme will include welcome drinks, a little talk on the past five years, a buffet "high tea" (that means standing up in this case) with lots of very English things to eat and drink, a bit of entertainment from "the office staff" (and maybe others), and closing remarks on the next five years, before we finish.

So we are very much hoping you'll come and join us! ☺

Please let us know via the website, using this link: <http://www.englishsupport.dk/EN/fiveyears.htm>

We look forward to seeing you then.

Best wishes to all our readers in the year to come!

Lawrence White
LW@englishsupport.dk

OPEN HOUSE
An afternoon's entertainment starring
Claire Clausen
Michael de Laine
Lawrence White
(and, with a bit of luck, others, too)
on
Thursday 22nd January
roughly between the hours of 3 and 6 pm
at
English support
Business House
Jernbanegade 23 B
Roskilde
Denmark
(that's the bit sticking out of the top of Germany)
Please let us know you're coming!
[\[http://www.englishsupport.dk/EN/fiveyears.htm\]](http://www.englishsupport.dk/EN/fiveyears.htm)

www. **English support** .dk
Your natural language partner

(4)

Proofreading • Copy editing • Translation • Teaching

Xmas quiz answers

Test your English... (See News & Tips No. 49)

The "proofreading corrections" below show answers to last month's quiz. ☺

1. We would like to inform you that we specialise in English.
2. We will have finished in six months.
3. The people for who m he worked thought he was good at his job.
The people he worked for thought he was good at his job.
4. The news is that a number of cases of piracy have been reported.
5. The economics of the agreement mean that the staff get a pay rise every year.
6. I am working hard at the moment, because we have a lot of customers.
7. I look forward to hearing from you, but will get back to you if I do not.
8. He claimed that the Sun is about ninety-three million miles away.
9. She saw an ad in the paper the other day for a film with Mr Bean.
10. I will be out of the office until 2nd January.
11. The staff drink all kinds of beer after work.
12. Some of the apprentices should stay on after completing their apprenticeship.
13. There are things you should buy, for example an umbrella, in case it rains.
14. Where were the boxes with a length, width and height of 30 cm?
15. While in Paris he had the opportunity to visit / option of visiting the Louvre.
16. We have considerable knowledge and experience about Danish society.
17. Please note that I lived in London for many years before I moved to Denmark.
18. I would appreciate it if you would let me know about your experience in teaching.
19. If you have no training as a book-keeper, you may lose your job.
20. Please note that the various requirements are in accordance with the regulations.
21. He could not get a job because he failed his exams.
22. To a considerable extent, wind energy can replace fossil-fuel energy.
23. I would appreciate hearing from you whether you are capable of doing / able to do this job.
24. He was looking forward to seeing her although he had difficulty in understanding ing her English.
25. She suggested drinking a toast to success.
26. A substantial number of paintings were stolen.

- Slettet: are
- Slettet: d
- Slettet: be
- Slettet: for who
- Slettet: are
- Slettet: has
- Slettet: s
- Slettet: are having
- Slettet: revert
- Slettet: ,
- Slettet: s of
- Slettet: d
- Slettet: m
- Slettet: .
- Slettet: am
- Slettet: l
- Slettet: s
- Slettet: A part
- Slettet: like
- Slettet: an
- Slettet: the
- Slettet: that
- Slettet: h
- Slettet: whit
- Slettet: h
- Slettet: possibility
- Slettet: hold
- Slettet: Be aware
- Slettet: have
- Slettet: with
- Slettet: do not
- Slettet: an education
- Slettet: o
- Slettet: ic
- Slettet: different
- Slettet: ing to
- Slettet: missed having
- Slettet: passing
- Slettet: d
- Slettet: substitute
- Slettet: to
- Slettet: to
- Slettet: to
- Slettet: was

More than 600 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 it is also possible to download a whole year at a time by clicking on the year heading.

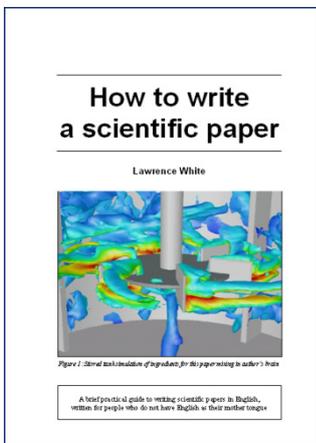
Xmas quiz answers

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!

(Continued from previous page)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 27. He <u>probably</u> worked in close <u>co-operation / collaboration</u> with someone in the company. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: properly"/>
<input type="text" value="Slettet: corporation"/>
<input type="text" value="Slettet: the"/> |
| 28. I saw an environmentally <u>friendly</u> radio last week – isn't progress wonderful! | |
| 29. I spent yesterday playing golf, drinking beer, and talking about the meaning of life. | |
| 30. In <u>recent</u> years, I have had my own company. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: the last"/> |
| 31. In the <u>following</u> , you will find a description of the cottage. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: hereafter"/>
<input type="text" value="Slettet: Y"/> |
| 32. After this course, you will have knowledge <u>of</u> all our products with <u>prices</u> as low as £10. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: on"/>
<input type="text" value="Slettet: z"/> |
| 33. He held a party on Saturday with <u>a</u> few friends. | |
| 34. The <u>principal</u> was wearing his <u>everyday</u> clothes at the time. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: principle"/>
<input type="text" value="Slettet: daily"/> |
| 35. When he <u>comes</u> , tell him I'm not in! | <input type="text" value="Slettet: is coming"/>
<input type="text" value="Slettet: isolating"/> |
| 36. If you are going to Greenland, make sure you take some <u>insulating</u> clothing with you. | |
| 37. If I may <u>advise</u> you, I suggest you check the <u>prices</u> carefully before you buy anything. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: advice"/>
<input type="text" value="Slettet: prizes"/> |
| 38. The transport company had a <u>number</u> of different kinds of vehicle for hire. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: series"/>
<input type="text" value="Slettet: only"/> |
| 39. Mozart was <u>just</u> brilliant. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: well"/> |
| 40. I thought the tea tasted <u>good</u> , and I said so. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: in"/> |
| 41. Please write your name <u>at</u> the top of the sheet. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: of"/> |
| 42. Is she still dependent <u>on</u> him? | <input type="text" value="Slettet: un"/> |
| 43. It is <u>impolite</u> to speak like that. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: a"/> |
| 44. My loss of balance was the <u>effect</u> of drinking too much beer. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: were"/> |
| 45. Three-quarters of the city <u>was</u> destroyed in the earthquake. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: reach"/> |
| 46. Did you <u>catch</u> the train all right the other day? | <input type="text" value="Slettet: to"/> |
| 47. You shoot <u>at</u> a target and hopefully hit it in the middle. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: despite"/> |
| 48. He kept smiling <u>although</u> he was very angry. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: parted"/> |
| 49. She <u>divided</u> the Christmas cake into 12 equal pieces. | |

For more information, check the issue of *News & Tips* with the same number.



Do you need to 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

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

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.51 – February 2009

© English support 2009

Dear friends

I think everybody enjoyed themselves at our 5th anniversary party (see page 6), but now it's back to the grindstone. To help with the workload, three new part-timers are joining us in the office this month: **Kim Parfitt** will be helping us with teaching, **Angela Stonier** is coming in to help with software, and **Pia Møller** will help us run the office. Pia also specialises in translation from legal and technical French, so if you're battling with that kind of thing, you know who to ask for! ☺

Final solutions and smiles

The young girl on the hill top watches with a few friends as Israeli jets pound the densely populated Gaza strip just across the border. "I think they should wipe them off the face of the earth! – I'm just a little bit fascist" she adds, with a pretty smile for the TV camera.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the conflict is the demonstrator (right), whose command of English is much less convincing. But when we've stopped smiling, the message is just the same: "final solution" meets "final solution"! Absurd and horrific.

After more than 60 years of death and destruction caused by the (in every sense) **hopeless kill-them-and-drive-them-out** politics pursued on both sides, from Menachem Begin's Irgun terrorists to Hamas today, it must surely be time for something different.



There have been people on both sides arguing for another approach, but they keep being sidelined by the deadly populist mix of revenge and religion. It is the framework that needs to change. The European Union proclaims itself as an example of how to make war impossible between neighbours with centuries of conflict behind them. This rhetoric needs translation into renewed effort to make a difference in the Arab-Israeli conflict. And the world could really do with some *Change-we-can-believe-in* from the USA on this question too! A temporary cease-fire is not it!

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 12 kr. – invoicing once a quarter (minimum 200 kr.)

A law on language? – No thank you!

All sorts of people seem to be toying with the idea of what we might call *language protectionism*. That's where you start passing laws about what languages people should or should not use in a country – usually with the aim of "protecting" one particular language against dropping out of use. This idea has been tried in France and elsewhere, and is increasingly being raised in Denmark.

So *Dansk Sprogævn*'s director, Sabine Kirchmeier-Andersen, argued recently for a law to force Danish universities to use Danish rather than English in some subjects. An interesting idea. You might get the impression that English is chosen (in 25% of classes) for some *other* reason than

the purely practical one of being able to communicate in courses with international students. This is also why scientific papers are written in English, and why 25% of Danish companies have English as their company language. Universities and large companies live in a globalised world.

For Sabine Kirchmeier-Andersen, the advance of English is at the *expense* of Danish and other languages. She makes it sound like a war.

The DSFF (*Dansk Selskab for Fagsprog og Fagkommunikation*) is more subtle. In the latest issue of its journal, "LSP & Professional Communication" (Vol. 8, No. 2), the editorial argues that "the supporters of one single language in Europe to the detriment of the national languages are seeking a return to the 15th century" (when Latin was the inter-European language).

Note here how English is not just *advancing* at the expense of other languages; people are actually *advocating* that it become the "one single language in Europe to the detriment of the national languages". Just who this enemy is, is never mentioned – and for good reason! *Ce n'existe pas!*

The comparison with the use of Latin, however, is a good one. Latin remained the language used in inter-European communication for centuries, *despite the fact that it was dead!* The reason is obvious: *international communication was necessary*, and the language of the last big empire in the region lingered on – especially in educated circles – so it was used.

English plays that role today in the world as a whole – because of the relative dominance for a long time of the British Empire, subsequently followed by the overwhelming dominance of United States power in our own day. One key difference with Latin, then, is that English is still very much alive.

The DSFF editorial refers to the "famous Villers-Cotterêts Decree, which was signed by François I in 1539 and replaced Latin with French" in the territory under the French crown at the time. Somewhat disingenuously, the editorial argues that the "overriding priority for those exercising political power was to make

themselves understood by populations who did not speak or understand Latin". In fact, most of these populations did not understand French either, and the decree led to the *forcible suppression* of their native languages, including most notably the famous *langue d'oc*, which represented the first flowering of non-Latin literature and culture in Europe.

Although very successful, this is not, to put it mildly, a very happy example of the use of law on the question of language!

Of course, neither DSFF nor *Dansk Sprognævn* is arguing for the suppression of English! But they do argue for the use of the law in this area. DSFF wants to make it "obligatory" for people to learn *two* foreign languages, i.e. not *just* English. That is also much the view expressed by Niels Davidsen-Nielsen, chairman of *Dansk Sprognævn*.

Now, as a teacher of language, I want students who are *encouraged* to learn, but not students who are *forced* to take part in lessons!

People learn languages in order to *communicate* in them. The "advance" of English is not at the *expense* of other languages but as a means of international communication. Other languages play this role too, but none to the same degree. And the fact that English can play this role, and on a scale way beyond that of Latin in the 15th century, is clearly a *plus* not a minus!

Is Danish in danger of dying out? Hardly! Latin did though. Paradoxically, the language most under threat from the advance of English may be English itself. *Linguae francae* have a tendency to degenerate to some lowest common denominator. *English support* is dedicated to the not always easy task of preventing that happening to English at the hands of Danes! ☺

But if anyone thinks *Danish* is under threat, the answer is to promote it! *Dansk Sprognævn* should be arguing for free Danish lessons to *anyone* who wants to learn the language, not just people who already have a residence permit. Many foreigners wait for months for a CPR number. And universities should promote summer courses in Danish and Danish culture. *Stop bemoaning the widespread use of English and start promoting the use of Danish!*

From the workshop...

Sick and ill

When a language has two words which mean much the same, there is a tendency for them to develop subtle differences in usage which may not be logical.

So to *be sick* can mean exactly the same as to *be ill*, but it also can mean to *throw up* or *vomit*, as when you've had a few too many beers. Similarly, you can *feel sick* meaning the same as to *feel ill*, but to *feel sick* can also mean to *feel as though you are going to throw up*. The word *sick* also has other metaphorical meanings, as in “*a sick joke*”, while “*ill*” is more literal (but see other meanings below).

On the other hand, if you are ill, you might take *sick leave* from work and be *off sick*. The word *ill* cannot be substituted here. Note too that although being *injured* or *hurt* does not count as being *ill* or *sick* (see below under *injury*), time off work is still described as *sick leave* or being *off sick*.

Another subtle difference is that we seldom use *ill* on its own to qualify a noun, but prefer to say *sick* instead, as in “*a sick child*”.

But when the word is preceded by an adverb, it is more common to use *ill* as in “*a terminally ill patient*” or “*she is seriously ill*”.

Where the word *sick* is preceded by an adverb, it is usually has one of those meanings that *ill* does not have, as in “*he was violently sick*” (meaning he vomited violently) or “*an extremely sick joke*”.

Other uses of ill

Unlike *sick*, the adjective *ill* can also have the quite different and slightly archaic meaning of *bad* or *evil*: as in *ill will*, *ill repute*, *ill manners*, an *ill omen*, etc.

The word can also be an adverb, meaning the opposite of the adverb *well*, as in “*Do not speak ill of the dead*”, “*He ill deserves such a reputation*”, and even “*He can ill afford to take time off work*”. It appears in a small number of expressions such as *ill at ease*. Like the adverb *well*, it can also be hyphenated with a past participle used as an adjective, as in *ill-disposed*, *ill-advised* or *ill-mannered*.

Finally, the word *ill* can also be a noun meaning misfortune, as in “*May no ill befall you!*” and “*all my ills and misfortunes*”, but again we are in the realm of the more or less archaic here.

Sickness and illness

The word *sickness* is the opposite of *health*. It is usually used only as an uncountable (like *health*) in modern English. The word *illness* is usually used as a countable: *an illness*. If you have an illness, there is something wrong with your health (though not just an *injury*, see below).

Note that the word *wellness* is a modern invention, which should not be used outside of the very limited context of *health* that is not just the absence of *illness*, but also *feels good*.

Disease and injury

A *disease* is a particular type of *illness*, caused by a bacteria or a virus. If you have a *disease* you are *ill*. But an *injury* of any kind, like a broken leg or a dislocated shoulder, is not considered an *illness* in English, though any accompanying *infection* or *fever* would count as *illness*.

Aches and pains

Somewhere in between being *injured* and being *ill*, there are *aches* and *pains*. Basically, if they are bad enough, you are *ill*, but otherwise they don't count as an *illness*, even though you may have to take *sick leave* (see *sick* or *ill* above). 😊

Not ... nor

A lot of people go wrong with *nor*. It combines *not* and *or*, but should only be used where there is either another verb after it (to which the *not* in *nor* applies) or at least punctuation indicating a pause of some kind that separates what comes after from the verb and its *not*:

- Contrast: “The gallery will **not** be open on Sundays **or** public holidays”
with: “The gallery will **not** be open on Sundays, **nor** will it be open on public holidays”
and: “The gallery will **not** be open on Sundays, except in May, **nor** on public holidays”
and: “The gallery will **not** be open on Sundays – **nor** on public holidays”.

In the first sentence, repeating the *not* by using *nor* would be a double negative. In the second sentence, the *not* is needed for the second verb. In the third sentence, the parenthetical insertion separates the last phrase from the verb making it necessary to repeat the *not* by using *nor*. In the final sentence, the last phrase is, as it were, added as an afterthought; the pause is sufficient to play the same role as the parenthetical insertion in the third sentence.

To simplify, we can say that the *phrasing* of the sentence, which determines the punctuation, also determines when *nor* should be used.

The same pattern can be seen with other negatives such as *no*, *never*, *nothing*, *nowhere*, and even sometimes with some words with negative prefixes, such as *un*-:

- Consider: “**None** of our galleries will be open on Sundays **or** public holidays”
and: “He was **unable** to move his arms **or** his legs”
and: “She was **unable** to say what had happened, **nor** why the knife was in her hand”.

The exception is *neither*...

Neither ... nor

The word *neither* is normally followed by *nor*, and it normally links only *two* things. These patterns are sometimes broken in informal speech, and I am aware that examples of this can also be found in written texts from all of the last four centuries, but they are few and far between. So my advice is: *Do the normal thing*, especially in formal writing:

“The gallery will be open **neither** on Sundays **nor** on public holidays”.

Et al.

This is one of the most common abbreviations found in scientific or academic writing, and it is very often written incorrectly. It is of course Latin, and it is short for *et alii* meaning *and others*. It can also be short for *et alia* (meaning *and other things*) and *et alibi* (meaning *and elsewhere*). In each case, the same abbreviation is used and the context usually makes clear which is meant.

But what often goes wrong is that the abbreviation is written with a full stop after the *et* as well as the *al*. Since the *et* (meaning *and*) is not abbreviated, I'm afraid it just looks silly. ☺

Did you know?

English support can offer you **native-speaker** translation and proofreading help with not only *English*, but also *Bangla*, *Bulgarian*, *Chinese*, *Czech*, *Danish*, *Dutch*, *Farsi*, *Finnish*, *French*, *German*, *Hindi*, *Hungarian*, *Icelandic*, *Italian*, *Japanese*, *Kurdish*, *Malay*, *Nepali*, *Norwegian*, *Polish*, *Portuguese*, *Rumanian*, *Russian*, *Serbo-Croat*, *Spanish*, *Swedish*, *Turkish*, *Ukrainian* and *Urdu*.

And if YOU can translate from at least one foreign language, speak English or Danish, and are a native speaker of Arabic, Greek, Greenlandic, Swahili, Welsh, etc., we'd like to hear from you!

Questions & Answers

(Edited)

E-mails

Hi Lawrence

In one of your forthcoming newsletters, could you write about how to end an e-mail explaining what the difference is between for example:

Regards

Best regards

Kind regards

Best wishes

Warm wishes

Etc.

That would be most helpful.

Thanks for your e-mail. Actually there's no difference between them, except that "Warm wishes" is maybe a little warmer than the others. All these endings are informal. If you are on first-name terms with the person, you could use any of them even in a business letter. You could also end with "Love and kisses to the wife and the cat", if you feel that is appropriate. But the first four are all in very common use.

The real problem is that sometimes we need to send e-mails that are more formal or written to complete strangers.

E-mails are fundamentally informal – sort of electronic notes. But in today's business world, they are increasingly used as a replacement for the formal business letter. (There are some very useful tips and hints on business letters at [www.englishsupport.dk/How to No 3.pdf](http://www.englishsupport.dk/How_to_No_3.pdf) and in *News & Tips* No. 31).

Now there are some fundamental differences between an e-mail and a letter. For one thing, your postal address and telephone number will not normally appear at the top, so it is quite a good practice to add them under your signature. Another obvious difference is that the subject heading has a box of its own in an e-mail, above the text – which means that (unlike in a business letter) it comes before the initial *Dear ...*

But there are also other differences. In a business letter, what you write after *Dear* is something you might actually call the person(s) you are writing to. But because e-mails are fundamentally informal, it can feel a little odd to use *Dear Sir or Madam* with *Yours faithfully* at the end or *Dear Mr White* with *Yours sincerely* at the end. This can be appropriate, as in the rather cold exchange between Mette Aarslew and me in *News & Tips* No. 21, but usually we like to get on first name terms as soon as possible.

So a kind of compromise has arisen, especially in Europe, in which we often tend to start an e-mail with *Dear* + the full name, as in *Dear Lawrence White*. This would be unusual in a business letter, but seems to be a trend that has come to stay in e-mails.

Such a beginning sort of half legitimises using one of the more informal endings at the end, such as *Best regards* or *Best wishes*. In a formal business letter to someone you are not on first-name terms with, that would sound odd, but in an e-mail it feels more normal.

This not to say that there is no place for the formalities in an e-mail. For instance, a lawyer writing to client or an employer writing to an employee might well make use of the full strength of the formal business letter usage in an e-mail. They might feel it creates the right "distance". On the other hand, most of them would probably send a letter instead in such circumstances.

All the other words and phrases from business letters can also be used in e-mails, because as noted in *News & Tips* No. 31, the difference between the written word (even in formal business letters) and the spoken word is much less in English than in most other languages (including Danish).

Did you know?

Did you know that by far the cheapest, most effective and simplest way of doubling your visibility on the Internet is to have your website translated to English and/or other languages? English support is holding a workshop on this subject at Roskilde's Store Erhvervsdag on 28th April 2009, where we will tell you why it works and how to do it. Information on this business event at <http://www.storeerhvervsdag.dk/dk>.

It was party time!



*Business consultant Mogens Lundbech gets a big **Merci** for his role as sparring partner when **English support** was little more than a gleam in Lawrence White's eye. (Photo: Fjordbyerne)*

What they said about it...

“Thank you so much for a fun-filled anniversary celebration. And for the marvellous High Tea – what a sumptuous spread! I was really pleased to have this opportunity to meet you and learn a little more of the history, people and philosophy behind *English support*. To have made such a success of the company in only five years is indeed impressive. Again, my thanks to you, Claire, Michael and all the other contributors to an entertaining and inspiring afternoon.

Thank you for a wonderful afternoon last Thursday. I enjoyed myself very much and got the opportunity to talk to a lot of interesting people. But most of all, I really enjoyed the entertainment.

I really enjoyed your party last week. I attended partly because I was curious about your company as I have so much enjoyed reading the newsletters (and learning about tricky phrases and expressions).

Thanks to you for an entertaining afternoon. You were all great, I met a lot of interesting people and the high tea was delicious.

Thanks for holding a party! It was delightful, and a wonderful audience. :-) Always a pleasure to sing for people who understand and listen! And you lot were so amazing in your play! It was a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon.”

English support celebrated its first five years of existence in style!

You can't see it from the press photo (left) but some 40-50 well-wishers – friends, customers and freelance partners – came by to have a glass of wine, a cup of tea, and a cucumber sandwich or six.

The buffet was actually quite luxurious, with cake, and scones with cream, as well as a variety of sandwiches and drinks. No one went home hungry!

In his welcome speech, Lawrence paid tribute to business consultant Mogens Lundbech for his sage advice when *English support* was born.

One of the crazy things that came out of discussions with Mogens was the idea for this newsletter. Now there's an idea that has certainly caught on!

Next came live music from the beautiful voice and guitar of Bodil Ashkenazy, who sang a Gaelic version of *Auld Lang Syne* and a moving love song of her own composition.

Finally, there was some – er – “theatrical entertainment” from the office staff (Claire, Michael and Lawrence).

In short, a good time was had by all, and we look forward to seeing even more people next year! ☺

More news and tips next month!

Best wishes

Lawrence White

LW@englishsupport.dk

www. **English support** .dk

Your natural language partner

(6)

Proofreading • Copy editing • Translation • Teaching

English support
Business House (PO Box 618)
Jernbanegade 23 B
4002 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.52 – March 2009

© English support 2009

Dear friends

Wow! This year has certainly had a flying start. As I write, the first quarter looks as if it is going to be our third best ever, only exceeded by the fourth quarters of the last two years. Since the first quarter is now usually our weakest in the year, that is very promising indeed. It is already clear that turnover will be more than double any previous first quarter. At a time when, as in many other countries, the Danish economy as a whole is shrinking, our continued growth signals real strength.

Freelancers – would you like to come and join us?

Growth means that we are going to need more space, so we are on the look-out for new offices. And there are a lot to choose between right now. The question that arises is: *How big should we think?* ☺

This is the idea. We rent some really nice office space (*not* open-plan), but more than we need, and invite translators, proofreaders and language teachers to come and rent a desk with us. We aim at a good mix of skills and languages, so that we all get the maximum out of the arrangement.

For just 2500 kr. a month, you get to work in the heart of Roskilde within easy walking distance of the station and in a beautiful building with excellent facilities, including a large ergonomic desk, fast internet connection, full-size and well-equipped kitchen, two rooms for teaching, and much more. And if you only want a desk *one* day in every week, you can rent it for 700 kr. a month.

You also get to work alongside people in the same business and we get colleagues just down the corridor we can give work to as we expand our business. It should be a *win-win* situation.

So we are looking for some 20 freelance partners who would like to work a little closer with us! Perhaps you are already a freelancer and would like to be able to continue with your own business, but under a larger marketing “umbrella”. If you can also teach, that’s a big plus. We are looking for native-speakers of major languages, who speak at least one other language and are prepared to deliver top quality work. We will not tie you down, but will try to tempt you to stay with us!

We pay better than the average bureau, because we are *not* a bureau, and if there are enough good people who want it, we can offer *really* good working conditions for your business and ours. Interested? Get in touch as soon as possible!

Grand Business Day in Roskilde – Tuesday 28th April 2009

Every year, Zealand Business Development and Roskilde Business Forum organise a free get-together for local business: *Store Erhvervsdag* or Grand Business Day. It’s a B2B day with lots to see and hear: stands, workshops, talks, prize-giving for the year’s best new businesses, and of course a lot of networking!



Let’s meet at Roskilde’s
Grand Business Day!

English support will be there as usual with a stand. We will also be holding a workshop (also free) on how to double your website’s Google-visibility with foreign languages. You might find that interesting! And there’s a **10% discount offer** on your next job. Find out more on pages 3 and 5

Three languages for everyone?

Last month I argued against the idea of a law to “protect” Danish against the advance of English. Recently, both *Dansk Sprognævn* and DSSF (*Dansk Selskab for Fagsprog og Fagkommunikation*) promoted the use of some kind of law on language. And in both cases, the target was English.

As I argued last month, if any language is under threat from use of English as a *lingua franca*, it is English. After all, the most widely spoken language in the world is *bad English*.

So how about a law to protect Danish schoolchildren from English schoolbooks full of “danglish”? Or a law to force people who publish in English to use a native-speaker proofreader?

But no! Instead, we have people like Lone Dybkjær arguing for a scaled-down form of English for international use – *without all the culture*, as she put it! (Cf. *News & Tips* no. 48).

When I try to stop appalling abominations like “*professional bachelors*” or “*state-authorized translators*”, I am often told (usually by highly educated Danes, who ought to know better) that I must accept that *this is how we speak English here!*

So when people start talking about how *everyone* should learn *two* foreign languages, i.e. “*not just English*”, as Niels Davidsen-Nielsen, chairman of *Dansk Sprognævn*, puts it, I start feeling sorry for my German, Spanish and French colleagues... ☺

The European Union and multilingualism

Writing in the DSSF journal, “LSP & Professional Communication” (Vol. 8, No. 2), EU Commissioner **Leonard Orban** argues strongly for three languages for everyone:

“Young Europeans ought to have the option of being taught a large palette of languages and not just one lingua franca that creates as many problems as it solves”.

This one sentence touches on all the elements of what is good and bad about the current debate on this subject!

1. The European Union is a political entity uniting European countries. But like them, it contains not *only* “Europeans”. The EU has people *from all over the world*.

2. Yes, young people should have “*the option of learning a large palette of languages*”. I agree 100%! No obligation and no limits.
3. But then comes the sting in the tail: “*not just one lingua franca that creates as many problems as it solves*”.

Let’s take them from the back: English does *not* “create problems”! The fact that English is understood and spoken by so many *solves* problems. What the Commissioner is thinking of are the problems of national pride, which, being unmentionable, remain unmentioned. ☺

The big plus is that – *unlike the editor of the journal he is writing in* – the Commissioner does *not* go down the road of compulsion. Excellent! And he sets no limits on the choice of languages. Excellent again! Bravo!

The plus side of globalisation

And this brings me to the use of the word “Europeans”. The current slogan of the EU is “*Unity in diversity*”, but this is generally understood in terms of the cultures of the EU countries. Even universal values, like human rights and democracy, are often spoken of as *European* values.

To me, this is like shooting yourself in the foot! Globalisation is bringing more and more diversity to the melting pot of the EU, which needs to redefine itself along more universal lines. The last thing we need is some kind of *European* “nationalism”.

One greatly positive thing about globalisation is the way it brings people with different cultures and languages together. This means that native speakers of all the major languages of the world are already present in all the countries of the European Union.

This is a resource these countries could use in business, science and education, but which is currently *chronically* underused – not least here in Denmark.

From the workshop...

Danes (and other people)

When the figures are given for how many people die on the roads in Denmark, have you noticed how, they are almost always given as the number of *Danes* who died? It's the same with all the statistics: the number of *Danes* out of work, the number of *Danes* with cervical cancer, and so on.

I have never heard of any reasonable excuse for this strange national habit, and I think it should be dropped – especially since the one place it is *not* used is in crime reporting. There, the national origin of the people in the statistics is almost always mentioned – even if they have been Danish citizens for two generations!

So whenever I see the misuse of *Dane* or *Danish* in this way, my red pen comes out! The usage might go unnoticed in Danish, but not when you write in English.

Don't get me wrong. It's perfectly OK to refer to the *Danish climate*, *Danish citizens*, the *Danish economy*, the *Danish tax system* or *Danish taxes*, for instance, because here *Danish* refers to Denmark as a political or geographical entity. But I actually don't like the use of the term *Danish taxpayers* because I pay taxes in Denmark too – and so do tens of thousands of other foreign citizens living and working in Denmark. We do not wish to be “disappeared” in this way! ☺

Here are some other examples (all taken from academic papers) of what I consider misuse:

The Danish population	Danish infants in day-care
The Danish labour force	Danish gynaecological cancer patients
Danish consumers	Danish energy consumption
Danish adolescents	The total Danish emission of GHGs

In each case, the writer was neither referring specifically to Danes, nor carefully excluding foreign citizens living in Denmark. *Tip*: Whenever you feel like writing *Danish* or *Dane*, ask yourself:

- 1) Is it really necessary or is it obvious from the context you are talking about Denmark?
- 2) Is it really true that you are referring to the political or geographical entity of Denmark?
- 3) Do you really mean to exclude people who are not Danish citizens?

Once it's brought to their notice, Danes are often astonished to realise how often they use these words. But then they sometimes ask: What is the alternative? Well, it's very easy: you write “*the total emission of GHGs in Denmark*”, “*people killed on the roads in Denmark*”, etc.

Get 10% off your next job with us!

If you come to *Grand Business Day* in Roskilde on Tuesday 28th April (no charge for admission), you will get the opportunity of a 10% discount on your next translation or proofreading job!

Three local companies, *UniRus*, *GoodTranslations.dk* and *English support*, have combined to make this unusual offer. We have special focus on *Russian*, *German* and *English* respectively, and the *English support* network of 200 freelancers allows us to offer 28 other languages too.

To get your discount, you must come to *Grand Business Day* in person and fill out a coupon giving your contact details and the language you are interested in. The offer covers one language and one job per applicant.

And if you send me an e-mail, I will add you to our special mailing list for this event.

Welcome to Grand Business Day!



Elena Wahl, Bernd Reuss and Lawrence White

Bacteria, cafeteria and criteria

Did you spot the mistake in last month's newsletter? No one has actually mentioned it, but there is a howler I call the *bacteria-cafeteria-criteria mistake*!

Unlike the word *cafeteria*, which is singular, the word *bacteria* is a (Latin) plural. The singular form is *bacterium*. So the sentence, "A disease is a particular type of illness caused by *a bacteria or a virus*", is a bit of a mess. Either the "a" should not be there or *bacteria* should be *bacterium*. (By the way, this is not the only problem with this sentence – see the correspondence on page 5).

Now it is true that probably half the English-speaking world wouldn't notice this mistake, because the singular form *bacterium* is hardly ever seen outside of scientific texts, but my toes curl when I think of how many times in my teaching I have warned researchers against making this blunder!

Note that the plural form for *virus* would be *vira*, which again is rare outside of scientific texts.

The word *criteria* is also a (Greek) plural in English and the singular form is *criterion*. So, "two *bacteria met in a cafeteria to discuss the various criteria for a really good infection*". ☺

Did you know?

English support has **native-speaker** experts in translation and proofreading for legal, medical and other technical texts, including scientific papers (in English, Danish, Russian and Czech). We can translate or proofread legal contracts, pharmaceutical catalogues, medical records, engineering proposals, architectural descriptions – in short virtually any kind of text. And our capacity is enormous.

Nordic and Scandinavian

A great many Danish writers use the word *Nordic* where English would prefer *Scandinavian*.

In English, the word *Nordic* is a rather vague word used to describe the (blue-eyed, blond and long-headed) people traditionally supposed to inhabit northern Europe, from north-western Russia down to Holland and even beyond. It is not usually applied to modern nations or countries or geographical areas.

The Danish word, *nordisk* is commonly applied only to the countries of Scandinavia (including Finland) plus Iceland and the Faeroes. Sometimes Greenland is also included, although it is really part of the North American continent.

This usage corresponds most closely to that of the English word *Scandinavian*.

Town and City

Danish has one word here, and it is usually translated as *city*. This can give rise to smiles when tourists arrive in the "city" of Farum or Lejre.

In the British Isles, a *city* is traditionally a town with a royal charter, and usually a cathedral. So Roskilde and Ribe can legitimately call themselves *cities* in British English.

In the wider world, a city is a large town with *millions* rather than thousands of inhabitants.

So normally, with a few fairly obvious exceptions, the best word to use in Denmark is *town*.

Did you know?

English support can offer you **native-speaker** translation and proofreading help with not only *English*, but also *Bangla, Bulgarian, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Farsi, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Kurdish, Malay, Nepali, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Rumanian, Russian, Serbo-Croat, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, Ukrainian* and *Urdu*.

And if YOU can translate from at least one foreign language, speak English or Danish, and are a native speaker of Arabic, Greek, Greenlandic, Swahili, Welsh, etc., we'd like to hear from you!

Questions & Answers

(Edited)

Disease and illness

Dear Lawrence,

I would like to comment on one of your sentences in News & Tips No. 51:

A *disease* is a particular type of *illness*, caused by a bacteria or a virus.

I fully agree that a *disease* is a particular type of *illness*, but it is not necessarily caused by infection. Let me share some examples with you to support my opinion:

cardiovascular disease

a heart attack is a disease

Wikipedia is not always a good reference, but I prefer the definition I found there:

The term **disease** broadly refers to any abnormal condition that impairs normal function. Commonly, this term is used to refer specifically to **infectious diseases**, which are clinically evident diseases that result from the presence of pathogenic microbial agents ... An infection that does not produce clinically evident impairment of normal functioning is not considered a disease. **Non-infectious diseases** are all other diseases, including most forms of cancer, heart disease, and genetic disease.

I feel that “*illness*” has a focus on the condition of being ill, while “*disease*” has a meaning that refers to medical phenomena as such (causes, aetiology, symptoms, etc.). “*Disease*” is more impersonal and objective, “*illness*” implies sympathy. Therefore, in medicine we prefer to use the term “*disease*”.

I would appreciate your comments on these arguments.

You are quite right. My “definition” is not accurate enough. It also contains a grammatical mistake you were delicate enough not to mention! ☺ [*Bacteria* is the plural of a *bacterium*.]

In the field of medicine, it is clear that “*disease*” is used in most of the ways you mention (though not for a heart attack, I think) – and even in ordinary language, as with *cancer* and *heart disease*. *Genetic disease* is of course different, because there is no such thing as genetic disease (= disease in your genes), but there are diseases (of various kinds, e.g. heart disease, cancer) which may have a genetic cause.

I liked the distinction you drew between *illness* and *disease*: that *illness* focuses on the suffering patient and invites sympathy, while *disease* focuses on the medical condition (and perhaps how frightening it is for others around). I don’t like the argument that *disease* sounds more impersonal and objective and is *therefore* to be preferred in medicine! *Scientific objectivity is not based on language and how you sound, but on the reproducibility of your results!* In that sense, pain and suffering are as *objective* as anything else in the world of human experience and knowledge, and sympathy is the basis for all human medicine.

But the Wikipedia definition, “*The term disease broadly refers to any abnormal condition that impairs normal function*”, simply won’t do. A broken leg is such a condition, but it is neither a disease nor an illness. So it’s not that easy!

Towards a better definition:

I think one thing is that both illnesses and diseases have to be distinguished from *injuries*, which are sudden events, usually followed by either a natural healing process or death.

Secondly, there is the *sympathy vs. threat* distinction my reader made. If I say I have an *illness*, most people will probably react with sympathy, whereas if I announce I have a *disease*, the first reaction of people around me might be to take a step back.

But there is another aspect. The word *illness* makes the problem sound temporary (I am either likely to recover even without major medical intervention, or any medical intervention has become irrelevant and my illness is *terminal*), whereas a *disease* is something which will not go away without medical treatment.

Maybe *that* is why doctors tend to make more use of the word *disease* than *illness*!

Municipality and local authority

The Danish word *kommune* is often translated as *municipality*. Again, this is directly comparable to the overuse of the word *city* (see page 4). A *municipality* is the local authority of a city or town. The Danish word, however, is used for country districts as well. So using the word *municipality* for *kommune* makes Denmark sound as if it is completely covered with urban areas!

In the English-speaking world there are many different words for the equivalent authorities, but there is one term that pretty much covers them all, and that is *local authority*. I recommend it as the general term.

You can, of course, talk in more specific terms about a town or city council where appropriate.

Lord Mayors and other British oddities

I realise that everything I have written about words like *Nordic*, *city*, *municipality* and so on is probably pretty much anathema to the established *that-is-how-we-speak-English-here* brigade, but there is more.

As I argued in *News & Tips* No. 50, you can't just take some special term that is used in Britain (or the US) and apply it to a similar institution in another country. My favourite is the *Chancellor of the Exchequer*, but so far as I know *no one* has ever applied that to a finance minister in another country! Nor would the Danish foreign minister ever be referred to in English as Denmark's *Secretary of State* (the US equivalent).

But Ritt Bjerregaard calls herself the "Lord Mayor of Copenhagen" in English. I have to say that this sounds very odd – an anachronism (the spatial equivalent of an anachronism). The *Lord Mayor of London* and the *Lord Mayor of Dublin* are titles with a peculiarly *British* history. I suggest she switches to *City Mayor*, which is in much more widespread usage.

Did you know?

Did you know that by far the cheapest, most effective and simplest way of *doubling your visibility on the Internet* is to have your website translated to English and/or other languages? *English support* is holding a workshop on this subject at **Roskilde's Store Erhvervsdag on 28th April 2009**, where we will tell you why it works and how to do it. Information on this business event at <http://www.storeerhvervsdag.dk/dk>.

Don't forget Grand Business Day in Roskilde!

One last word on the **Grand Business Day** in Roskilde on 28th April. I very much hope that many of you will come, especially those of you who live in and around the Greater Copenhagen area. You can find out more about it at <http://www.storeerhvervsdag.dk/dk>.

The guest speaker this year is **Sepp Piontek**, who will be talking about management, and there are lots of stands to visit and workshops to attend.

If you would like to come to the *English support* workshop, **please register for it** by sending us an e-mail. You can also use the website for this. It does not cost anything to register and you can just turn up on the day, but I need to be able to show that people *will* be coming. ☺

More exciting news and tips next month!

Best wishes

Lawrence White
LW@englishsupport.dk

www.  .dk

Your natural language partner

English support ApS
Business House (PO Box 618)
Jernbanegade 23 B
4003 Roskilde

News & Tips
from

English support

No. 53 – April 2009

© English support ApS 2009

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!*

Dear friends

Those of you who have been paying *very* close attention to our website may have noticed that *English support* has become an *ApS*, which is now owned by *Language support ApS*. This is a part of the restructuring hinted at in our *Vision for 2009* (see *News & Tips* No. 50). Another vital step in the same process is the new **Language Support Centre** in the centre of Roskilde. Now that the necessary contracts have been signed, we can reveal the exciting location of our new offices.

The new Language Support Centre – in the heart of Roskilde



The eleven windows of the forthcoming LSC on the first floor look out over the historic centre of Roskilde: *Stændertorvet*

To be any more central, the offices would have to be right out in the middle of *Stændertorvet!* But it's not just a good location – close to all the amenities – it is also in a block of buildings, called *Købmandsgården*, which has been lovingly restored and modernised by its owners, a pair of master carpenters. In other words, the forthcoming *Language Support Centre* will be housed in top-quality premises that are among the very best in Roskilde.

Find out what the new *Language Support Centre* will mean for YOU on page 2.

Grand Business Day in Roskilde – Tuesday 28th April 2009

Come to Grand Business Day in Roskilde this year and we will give you a **10% discount** on your next job with us! Three local companies have joined forces to make this unusual offer. We have special focus on English, German and Russian, but the *English support* network of 200 freelancers allows us to offer 28 other languages too. All our freelancers translate into their mother tongue.

All you have to do is visit one of our stands at Grand Business Day. *English support* will also be holding a workshop on how to **double your website's Google-visibility** with foreign languages.

Grand Business Day is being held in *Roskilde Kongrescenter* from 12 noon. There is no charge for admission, and the same applies to the workshops.

See you there!

What it means for you

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!

The new *Language Support Centre* – opening in September

This is the physical beginning of the realisation of an ambitious project to create a multilingual centre for teaching and translation into a wide range of languages by native-speaker experts. Our customers will range from companies and organisations of all sizes to schools and universities.

Schools and universities

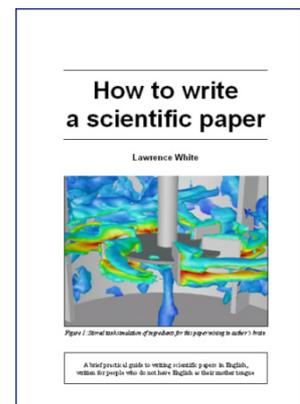
More and more educational institutions are running courses in English to attract foreign students. This applies most obviously to universities and other research institutions, but also to business colleges, technical schools and other upper secondary educational institutions.

But can the teachers teach in English? Do they feel comfortable explaining their subject in English? Do they understand the English of the students they teach?

The new *Language Support Centre* will run courses for teachers. We can also help proofread teaching materials and visual aids, so that students can focus on the subject and not the teacher's mistakes in English.

Science and technology

Scientists and researchers often have to publish their results in English. We will run courses in *How to apply for a research grant* and *How to write a scientific paper*, based on the booklet (see right) published by *English support* in 2006), and we will also provide proofreading of scientific papers, research presentations, etc.



Companies large and small

A great many Danish companies are also science-based. They often need to express themselves clearly in English and other languages. Many others also need to produce brochures and product catalogues and websites in foreign languages. We can help with over 30 different languages, and that figure is rising – all with native-speaker experts.

And we will offer tailor-made courses in the languages companies need to be able to cope with, including staff training in everything from sitting in reception to selling and negotiating.

Private individuals

The new centre will also allow us to run classes for private individuals who want to learn a language from a native speaker.

Freelancer translators and teachers

We are not another translation bureau! We are freelancers working together and enjoying shared facilities. We pay good rates and we deliver good translations and teaching. If you have your own company or you want to start one up, we can offer you a desk in offices that are some of the best available anywhere and colleagues in the same business to talk to.



One of two rooms available for teaching

Rent a desk for just DKK 2500 per month!

The new *Language Support Centre* will officially open on 3rd September. You can apply now to be among the first to share its facilities. In addition to your own marketing, *Language support* will promote your services so we can offer you work. This means you not only get a fine workplace in the middle of Roskilde with other interesting colleagues, but you also increase sales by being just down the corridor from *Language support* and *English support*.

If all this sounds interesting to you, get in touch here: LW@englishsupport.dk

(2)

Proofreading • Copy editing • Translation • Teaching

From the workshop...

Complement and compliment

These two are pronounced exactly the same, so it is not surprising that people mix them up. Both the noun and the verb *complement* contain the idea of something *completing* something else. And if things are *complementary*, it means they *complete* each other: “*Her looks are complemented by her intelligence*”.

A *compliment*, however, is a polite or praising remark freely given, and if I *compliment* someone on their good taste, I praise them for it. The adjective *complimentary* is often used to mean *free*, as in “*complimentary tickets*”.

Quite a vs. a quite

Someone asked me the other day what the difference is between “*a quite*” and “*quite a*”. The first thing to note is that while you can use *either* in front of an adjective, only the latter is possible in front of a noun without an adjective:

e.g. *It was a quite big horse,*
and It was quite a big horse,
but only *It was quite a horse.*

There is often not much difference in meaning between the first two, except that the “*quite a*” often expresses the idea that it was more than ordinarily big, just as the final sentence suggests that it was an unusual horse in some way, whereas “*a quite big horse*” simply means that it was fairly big.

Quite and quiet

While we are talking about *quite*, it is really *quite* important to mention *quiet*. The one is quite frequently written in place of the other. Sometimes this is a typing error, but since non-native speakers of English often find it difficult to pronounce these two words distinctly, the mistake can be due to actual confusion between the two words.

So while she could be “*quite a girl!*” or “*a quiet girl!*” or perhaps “*quite a quiet girl!*” or even “*a quite quiet girl!*”, other combinations are entirely excluded! ☺

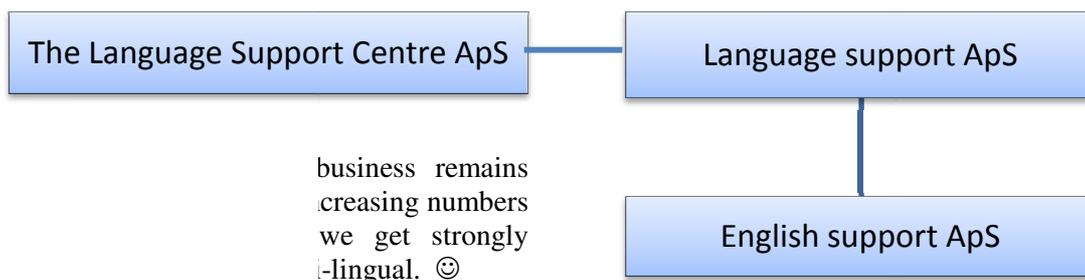
Quite

The word “*quite*” is also used on its own (without “*a*”). Here too there are traps to be avoided. In American English, it usually means “*very*”, so when Americans say something is “*quite interesting*”, they usually mean it is “*very interesting*”, whereas in British English it would only mean “*fairly interesting*”. On the other hand, “*quite right*” means “*completely right*” on both sides of the Atlantic.

So in British English, when “*quite*” is used with a *gradable* adjective or adverb, it usually means “*fairly*”, whereas when it is used with an *absolute* adjective it means “*very*”: contrast “*quite good*” and “*quite perfect*”.

But ambiguity can arise with some adjectives, e.g. “*She was quite beautiful*”. Here much depends on the tone with which the sentence is spoken. ☺

Our new organisational structure



That is why we have erected the superstructure of *Language support*, and that is the logical place for both the new centre and all work in languages other than English.

Easter and other names

As we come up to Easter, it is worth remembering the rule about capital letters in English. Apart from the word *I*, which is an exception, the words that are written with a capital letter are all names (and titles when used as part of a name or a substitute for a name):

e.g. *King George I*, the *Prime Minister*, *Mr*, *Mrs*, *Miss* or *Ms*, *Professor Higgins*, etc.

English is different from most other European languages in that it treats the names of the days of the week, the names of the months, and the names of times of the year as proper names:

e.g. *Tuesday*, *April*, *Christmas*, *New Year's Day*, *Easter*, *Whitsun*, *May Day*, etc.

English is also different from most other European languages in that all words *derived* from proper nouns (including adjectival forms) are also written with a capital letter:

e.g. *English*, *European*, *Londoner*, *Christian*, *Buddhist*, *Muslim*, *Marxist*, etc.

So I hope you enjoy your *Easter Eggs* this year! ☺

Did you know?

English support can offer you **native-speaker** translation and proofreading help with not only *English*, but also *Bangla*, *Bulgarian*, *Chinese*, *Czech*, *Danish*, *Dutch*, *Farsi*, *Finnish*, *French*, *German*, *Greek*, *Hindi*, *Hungarian*, *Icelandic*, *Italian*, *Japanese*, *Kurdish*, *Malay*, *Nepali*, *Norwegian*, *Polish*, *Portuguese*, *Rumanian*, *Russian*, *Serbo-Croat*, *Spanish*, *Swedish*, *Turkish*, *Ukrainian* and *Urdu*.

And if YOU can translate from at least one foreign language, speak English or Danish, and are a native speaker of Arabic, Greek, Greenlandic, Swahili, Welsh, etc., we'd like to hear from you!

Oblige and obligate

These two words overlap a great deal in meaning, and American English uses the latter more often than British English. Here are some pointers to help you.

In general, the difference between the two (especially in British English) is that when *obligate* is used, it implies *legal obligation*, whereas *oblige* is less specific.

Legal philosopher, H.L.A. Hart, makes this distinction clear in the example where a gunman orders someone to hand over their money.

If the person obeys, we might say she was *obliged* (i.e. *forced*) to do so, but we would *not* that she was *obligated* to do so.

This distinction is also seen in American English in expressions like "*the obligated parent*" meaning the one *legally obliged* to provide child support.

But having said that, *obligate* is still often seen in American English where British English would use *oblige*:

e.g. "*We're all **obligated** to help the rest of mankind*".

Obligate (adjective)

Just to complicate matters, there is a special use of the word *obligate* as an adjective in biology.

An *obligate parasite* is one that cannot complete its life cycle without the presence of its host; an *obligate cellular parasite* is only capable of reproducing inside a host cell; an *obligate anaerobe* is an organism that dies in the presence of atmospheric levels of oxygen; an *obligate carnivore* is an animal that must eat meat to survive; and so on.

This adjectival usage, however, is strictly restricted to biology. The usual (roughly) equivalent word in other contexts might be *compulsive*, as in "*He was a compulsive gambler*".

Questions & Answers

(Edited)

By and with

Dear Lawrence,

I want to ask you about the difference between instrumental "with" and "by".

The instrumental case (in many languages) is normally best translated with a phrase beginning with "with": *she opened the box **with** a screwdriver*. But there are exceptions, e.g. means of transport: *he travelled to Moscow **by** plane*, and even ***on** foot*.

Maintaining a sharp difference between *by* and *with* is particularly important after past participles. Contrast:

1. *The book was translated **with** a dictionary and a lot of hard work.*
2. *The book was translated **by** an old man **with** a dictionary.*

In all these sentences, *with* means *using*, whereas *by* explains who did the translating. Of course, a lot of books *do* look as if they were translated *by* dictionaries, but that is another story... ☺

Nordic and Scandinavian

Dear Lawrence,

Thank you for yet another interesting discussion of English terms and idioms [see last issue].

Geographically speaking, Finland is not a part of Scandinavia, which is made up of Norway and Sweden, the two countries on the Scandinavian peninsula, plus Denmark.

The 'Nordic' countries often referred to in English around here are the member states of the Nordisk Råd including their autonomous regions. Whether or not this fact is recognized widely enough abroad to make it a proper and practical definition, however, I would not know.

Yes, but geographically speaking it's hard to see how Denmark can be part of Scandinavia either. Of course, when it had territory on the peninsular, it made sense, but now... And then there's Iceland and the Faeroes. But wouldn't you call them Scandinavians? If we were talking about Scandinavian rocks, they would in the Scandinavian peninsular, but when it comes to people and their culture, I think Finland is generally thought of as Scandinavian too, even though they are in many ways quite different.

Outside this broader Scandinavian area, which corresponds to *nordisk*, I don't think the word "Nordic" is very common at all, especially not among native speakers of English – except in the vague (and archaic) sense I mentioned in *News & Tips* No. 52.

Freelancers – would you like to come and join us?

Dear Lawrence,

I was a little surprised by the idea you presented in the March issue that people might like to pay 2500 kr. a month to come and work for you! Isn't that a little far out?

Well, yes, it would be! ☺ But, of course, that is not what my offer is about.

Like everybody else, I *pay* people to do work for me. The 2500 kr. a month is to rent a desk in the *Language Support Centre* from which you can run your own (language-related) business. This may *include* working for me, but not exclusively.

The only preconditions are that you have a collaboration agreement with me and work in your own language, i.e. if you translate into Russian, you are a native-speaker of Russian, and if you want to teach Italian, you are a native speaker of Italian.

This stipulation is part of the "branding" of the *Language Support Centre* itself.

The back page

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!

Freelancers: Where would YOU like to sit?



This is a rough plan of the layout of the *Language Support Centre* that will open in Roskilde in September.

Six offices facing north (top) look out on *Stændertorvet*. Their doors open on to a corridor from the cloakroom area at one end to the entrance and the reception area at the other.

A classroom/meeting room and another office are on the other side of the corridor. From these, double doors open on to a glass-enclosed veranda, beyond which is an open terrace facing south.

At the eastern end of these, there is a second classroom/meeting room, which can also be entered directly from a

second entrance from the stairwell. On the other side of this classroom is the kitchen, immediately south of the reception area, and a storage and archive room.

The rent-a-desk system will mean that two or three people share an office, each with its own printer, shelving and cupboard space. You can also rent a desk for just one or two (fixed) days in the week. Prices are as follows:

1 day a week	700 kr. per month
2 days a week	1300 kr. per month
3 days a week	1800 kr. per month
4 days a week	2200 kr. per month
7 days a week	2500 kr. per month



View from a north-facing window

The price includes use of all other common facilities: kitchen, veranda and terrace, and the opportunity to book a classroom/meeting room, or use one for study when it is not in use. The price also includes a fast internet connection and normal electricity consumption. Parking spaces are available, but not included.

Double your Google-visibility with foreign languages!

Roskilde's **Grand Business Day** on 28th April opens at Roskilde Kongrescenter at 12 noon.

Our workshop is at 1:30 pm in room D. We will tell you how by far the cheapest, most effective and simplest way of doubling your Google-visibility on the internet is to have your website translated into English and/or other foreign languages. Learn why it works and how to do it right.

If you are coming to the *English support* workshop, **you can register now** by sending us an e-mail. You can also use the website for this.

More exciting news and tips next month!

Best wishes

Lawrence White

LW@englishsupport.dk

www. **English support** .dk

Your natural language partner

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!*

Dear friends

There was considerable enthusiasm among the small group who recently visited the offices where the new **Language Support Centre** will be. The present tenants kindly gave me the opportunity to show people interested in renting a desk in the Centre what it's like. The sheer quality of the craftsmanship is striking, but the facilities are also excellent (see more pictures in this issue), and the location in the centre of Roskilde is quite amazing. Everyone present wanted a desk! ☺

The new Language Support Centre gets its first freelancers

“Wow!”, “It's beautiful”, “Fantastic!” were just some of the comments that flew around as the first group of freelancers to express an interest in renting a desk in the new Centre looked around the office space we will soon be taking over. →

I reacted the same way the first time I saw it too. It's not that it is in any way pretentious. On the contrary, the style is clean and modern, but there is something very special about the detail and care that is incorporated in every feature.

Seventeen of the work spaces will be in the six offices whose windows face north on to the market place (*Stændertorvet*) and, beyond it, the cathedral.

Having windows facing north is ideal for people who work a lot with computers, because it minimises the risk of direct sunshine that can make it difficult to see what's on your screen.

To compensate, facing south is an open roof-terrace for relaxing breaks in the sun. And if it's too cold or rainy to go outside, there is a glass-enclosed veranda. Both terrace and veranda look out over a cobbled yard with a water fountain. Other small businesses are all around, including shops.



The eleven windows of the forthcoming LSC on the first floor look out over the historic centre of Roskilde: *Stændertorvet*



Both the veranda and the roof-terrace look out over an enclosed yard surrounded by other small businesses



The cobbled backyard seen at ground level with the small water fountain to the right of the central path

What it means for you

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!

The new Language Support Centre – opening in September

This is the physical beginning of the realisation of an ambitious project to create a multilingual centre for teaching and translation into a wide range of languages by native-speaker experts. Our customers will range from companies and organisations of all sizes to schools and universities.

Freelance translators and teachers

This place is designed for you! Perhaps you're thinking of going freelance, or perhaps you've had your own one-(wo)man business for a while, but are fed up with having no colleagues to talk to.

Either way, we're trying to create an ideal environment for your language business. The rent for a work space has been set as low as possible to make it as attractive as possible. We will not be making any money on renting space out. But we do expect to gain from the **synergy** (see page 3) from having a variety of different self-employed people working in the same place.

For just 2500 kr. a month (+ VAT) you get an ergonomic desk and chair, a lamp, bookcase and cupboard, and a quiet, friendly office with one or two others. We assume you will have your own laptop and mobile phone for your business. You share the rest of the facilities, kitchen, veranda, roof-terrace, classroom/meeting rooms, etc. with about 20 people in all.

If you want a desk just one or two days in the week, we will accommodate you. This means you can be a *part-time* freelancer – which is not a bad way to start. Here is the table of charges:

These charges include water, heating and lighting, normal electricity use, a fast internet connection, and a common reception. And your company gets a very fine address in the centre of Roskilde!

1 day a week	700 kr. per month
2 days a week	1300 kr. per month
3 days a week	1800 kr. per month
4 days a week	2200 kr. per month
Full time	2500 kr. per month

Who are we looking for?

From our point of view, the ideal freelance partner will have several skills to contribute. If you can teach as well as translate or edit text in your mother tongue, that is a real plus. We want to offer native-speaker teaching.

But other skills (marketing, accounts, IT, etc.) are also useful in such a community. ***This is not yet another translation bureau!*** We are independent freelance partners working together, helping each other, and enjoying shared facilities.



Parking spaces are available, but not included.

English support and Language support

English support already has a large number of customers who need translation, proofreading and teaching. Much of our translation work now is to other languages, including Danish, and we have carried out quite a few orders for multi-language translation. With the launch of *Language support*, that trend will continue and expand.

Our network of over 200 freelance partners covering 33 languages means that we only ever say 'no' to work we really wouldn't want anyway. And we get a lot of work. Some of that work will come your way, because you are right there in the same building!

The new *Language Support Centre* will officially open on 3rd September, but you can apply now to be among the first to share its facilities (from 1st August).

If all this sounds interesting to you, get in touch here: LW@englishsupport.dk.

The new Machinery Directive

An example of synergy

A great many engineering companies in Denmark will have a particular interest in one of the half-day seminars we will be running at the *Language Support Centre* this autumn. It will focus on the requirements of the new Machinery Directive which comes into force on 29th December this year.

Two of our freelance technical writers have made a point of studying the requirements of this new EU directive. As a result we will be able to offer the following assistance:

1. Seminar on: ***What the new Machinery Directive means for your company.***
2. Individual consultancy help tailored to the needs of your particular business.
3. Technical-writing assistance with preparing original documentation in Danish or English.
4. Translation assistance with the task of providing documentation in the languages needed.

Is it really new?

Much of the content is not new, but Directive 2006/42/EC is termed a “recast” of the Machinery Directive, and the modifications are presented in the form of a new directive.

DIRECTIVE 2006/42/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 May 2006 on machinery, and amending Directive 95/16/EC (recast)

(Text with EEA relevance)

The main thrust of the changes is aimed at improvements in health and safety, including risk assessment at design stage and manufacturing stage, and risk prevention in use (including risks to the health of operators). And the new directive introduces the concept of what is ‘reasonably foreseeable’ with reference to risk, hazard, misuse, etc.

Quality assurance

One major problem for many manufacturers and importers of machinery will lie in fulfilling the new requirements with regard to documentation: *‘The contents of the instructions must cover not only the intended use of the machinery but also take into account any reasonably foreseeable misuse thereof’*. The instructions and declarations of conformity and incorporation must be given in the original language (authorised and verified by the manufacturer) and (if different) the official language(s) of the EU countries where the machinery is to be put on the market and/or used.

And all this documentation will be part of the quality assurance requirement for the machinery as from 29th December this year.

This means that between now and the end of the year, a lot of technical writing has to be carried out and approved – all of which will then need translation into the language(s) where the machinery is going to be put on the market and/or used.

A complete package

Our strength in this area is that we will be able to offer *one-stop shopping*. A seminar to help you understand the new requirements, and then advice tailored to your company on the documentation needed, followed by assistance with the technical writing and the translation work as required.

We do not pretend we will know all the answers, but we will be able to help you find them.

What the new Machinery Directive means for your company

The new *Language Support Centre* will be offering a **half-day seminar** to explain the significance of the new Machinery Directive on the following dates throughout September: 7th, 8th, 15th, 16th, 23rd, 24th, 28th and 29th. The seminar will start at 1 pm each day and finish around 4 pm. The dates and times have been chosen to enable as many as possible to attend, because we think this issue is of vital importance for a great many companies who manufacture, import, or sell machinery in the European Economic Area.

That little word *to*...

The little word *to* causes a lot of trouble. It is used in two distinct ways: to form the infinitive of the verb (e.g. *to be*, *to do*, *to form*, *to speak*, etc.), and as a preposition (e.g. *the train to London*). But it is not always so easy for non-native speakers to keep these two quite different ways of using that little word distinct! Here are examples of the contrast:

	After a verb:	After an adjective/adverb:
Infinitive:	<i>I hope to see you soon.</i>	<i>I will be happy to see you.</i>
Preposition:	<i>I look forward to seeing you soon.</i>	<i>I came close to seeing you yesterday.</i>

Note that when *to* is a preposition, it must be followed by a noun or by something that plays that role in the sentence – here a phrase starting with the gerund (*ING*-form).

1. *To* as part of the infinitive

I suppose the first thing we have to say about *to* as part of the infinitive is that it *isn't* – at least, not always. 😊

There is something called the *bare infinitive*, or the *infinitive without to*, which is used after modal verbs (*can*, *must*, *will*, etc.) and in quite a few other cases too. This is a complex question in its own right, so I will take it up separately (see page 5).

But what we are concerned with here is the *full infinitive* – often called the *to-infinitive*, because it includes *to*.

A great many verbs can be followed by the *to-infinitive*: e.g. *aim*, *begin*, *continue*, *decide*, etc. Sometimes, the *to-infinitive* is called a *to-infinitive clause*, especially when it takes an object: e.g. '*She seemed to like me*'. It can also be passive or perfect: e.g. '*He wanted to be liked*' or '*I'd prefer to have been in Paris*'.

Similarly, quite a lot of adjectives can be followed by the *to-infinitive*: e.g. *good* (*to eat*), *difficult* (*to do*), *beautiful* (*to look at*), etc.

And again, the *to-infinitive* can sometimes take an object, be passive or perfect: e.g. '*Mary was glad to find her key*', '*John was anxious not to be arrested*' or '*Madoff is probably sorry to have been found out*'.

2. *To* as a preposition

But there are some adjectives that are followed by the preposition *to*: *amenable to*, *averse to*, *close to*, *conducive to*, *similar to*, etc. *Tip*: We can tell the *to* here is prepositional, because it is possible to put a noun after it: *amenable to reason*, *close to madness*, *similar to marzipan*, etc.

Once it is clear we are dealing with a preposition, *to* is like any other preposition. It cannot be followed by an infinitive. If it is to be followed by a noun form of the verb, it must be the gerund: e.g. '*He was averse to being stared at*' or '*Her manner was not conducive to people liking her*'.

And, of course, there are a number of phrasal verbs which end with *to* (e.g. *to admit to*, *be up to*, *object to*, etc.). The same tip applies. If you can put a noun after the *to*, it is a preposition, and the noun is what is known as a prepositional object. Someone can *admit to murder*, *be up to a marathon*, *object to a punishment*, etc.

So if a phrasal verb that ends with *to* is to be followed by a noun form of the verb, it must be the gerund: someone can *admit to killing a man*, *be up to running a marathon*, *object to being punished*, etc.

For more on the gerund (or *ING*-form), see especially *News & Tips* nos. 25 and 26.

Did you know?

English support has special expertise in medical, juridical, financial and many other areas of technical writing, including less common ones such as hunting and martial arts?

From the workshop...

The infinitive without *to*

The bare infinitive (without *to*) is actually quite common. One simple case is where we do not repeat the *to* in a list of *to*-infinitives: *I asked the waiter to go and get a cup of coffee*. The same applies to the infinitive forms of verbs listed in dictionaries. Here are some other cases:

1. After *do*

The bare infinitive is used with *do* to make the simple forms (in both present and past tenses) of most verbs when they are negative or questions: e.g. *Mary has a car, but she does not have a boat. Do you have a boat?*

2. Modal verbs

The modal verbs *can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will* and *would* are also followed by the bare infinitive: e.g. *Mary might come*, and *John will come*. The same applies to the modal form *had better*: e.g. *Jane had better come*. Note that the negative of these forms is formed by putting *not* immediately after the modal: e.g. *Jane had better not come*. Note too that, in the case of the modal *can*, it always combines with the modal into one word: *Brian cannot come*.

But there are other modal verbs that take a *to*-infinitive, such as *be able, have, ought*: e.g. *Fred is able to come*, *Ann has to come*, and *David ought to come*. Note how the negative forms here are different: *Fred is not able to come*, *Ann does not have to come*, and *David ought not to come*.

And just to complicate matters, there is even a special modal form, *need not*, which is a shorter alternative to *does not have to*, but which takes the bare infinitive: e.g. *Ann need not come*.

This modal use of *need* is only ever seen in negative statements like this, or in questions: *Need I come?* It is also often replaced with the normal verb *need*, which is followed by a *to*-infinitive: e.g. *Ann needs to come*, *Ann does not need to come*, and *Do I need to come?*

The *to*-infinitive without the infinitive ☺

Yes, it may sound strange, but in some circumstances we can even have a *to*-infinitive without the infinitive! This happens when words are left out to avoid unnecessary repetition: e.g. *Don't tell me if you don't want to*. It is crystal-clear that the *to* here is part of the *to*-infinitive, *to tell me*, but we don't repeat the *tell me* part, which has already been said.

The same thing often happens in dialogue: *'Did you think she liked you?'* – *'Well, she seemed to'*.

A date for your diary...

On **Thursday 3rd September**, the Mayor of Roskilde will open the new *Language Support Centre*. The celebrations start at **2 pm**, and all our readers are most welcome! See www.englishsupport.dk.

From the workshop...

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

A letter from Singapore

Dear Lawrence,

In the course of my work, I have to do a monthly Correspondence Audit on the team of correspondence officers. One officer wrote: "We would like to inform that we were unable to..."

I spotted the error – it should have been: "We would like to inform you that we were unable to...". However, my boss told me that there was nothing wrong with the officer's statement, with which I disagreed. So, I was told to justify my position.

Please advise how I should explain it to my boss. To put it simply, can I just say that the object (i.e. "you") was missing from the statement?

Thank you very much for your question. Yes, the simplest way is to say that in English (unlike some other languages) the verbs *inform*, *tell* and *advise* all normally take an (indirect) object, as in three common expressions in business English:

*I am delighted to inform **you** that ...*

*I am pleased to tell **you** that ...*

*I am happy to advise **you** that ...*

Contrast three other similar verbs:

I am delighted to announce that ...

I am pleased to say that ...

I am happy to give advice on ...

When the verb *inform* is used without an indirect object, it has the different and specific meaning of to inform the authorities, police, occupying power, etc. E.g. *She is going to inform on you.*

This is also the meaning contained in the noun *informer*, e.g. *a police informer*, who is someone who informs the police – not for instance a police spokesman, who might be called an *informant*.

I hope that helps! But you are very welcome to refer your boss to me for further clarification.

The Language Support Centre

Dear Lawrence,

Many congratulations on the new Language Support Centre. It looks terrific. What a location! My only concern is that it begins to look as if you will only be giving work to people who have office space. I do hope this is not so, as I could not afford the time or money needed to drive into Roskilde every day, let alone rent desk space (much as I would love to).

Let me assure you that I will **not** be only giving work to people who rent office space! We have more than 200 freelance partners now, and that figure is rising. And you will remain one of them.

Obviously there will be a tendency for people who are working in the same building to get offered work that is in their area of expertise first, if only because they are just down the corridor. But that works both ways. So there will almost certainly be more work for us all.

But you are right – it does look terrific! Here are some more pictures to whet your appetite:



The glass-enclosed veranda



Even the entrance is beautiful!



And the city centre is just outside...

More exciting news and tips next month!

Best wishes

Lawrence White

LW@englishsupport.dk

www. **English support** .dk

Your natural language partner

(6)

Proofreading • Copy editing • Translation • Teaching

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!*

Dear friends

Please note our new address! The company moved twice in our 5 years at *Business House*, both times into a slightly larger office, but this time we have moved right into the centre of Roskilde and have taken over more than 350 square metres of office space to create our new *Language Support Centre*. The aim is to make the native-speaker language skills of our large network of freelancers both more visible and more valued – and to gain the benefits of increased synergy.

Steady as she goes! – 2nd quarter shows continued growth

Of course, the *Language Support Centre* project is going to take a certain amount of time to get up to steam. So the good news is that *English support* is showing continuing growth, despite the crisis.

Turnover for the 2nd quarter is nearly 14% up on the same quarter last year and 9.5% up on the exceptionally good first quarter this year. While not fantastic, it is enough to keep us on course for the expansion involved in the new centre.

But expenses will also be high. Higher rent, a lot of new furniture and equipment. And at the same time we want to keep the cost of renting a work space in the new Centre as low as possible.

So what does the future look like? Well, the 3rd quarter is already looking good and the 4th quarter is usually the best of the year, so with a bit of luck and a following wind *English support* should be able to cope even if the new Centre has a difficult start-up period due to the current crisis.

But, in fact, freelance interest in renting space is growing as people come back from their summer holidays and start thinking about how they would like their working day to be ... ☺



One corner of the “reception” area under construction. This is the only “open-plan” part of the office space (with just two work spaces), but those who sit here will enjoy rather more space, as well as playing a role as a reception for visitors.

On **Thursday 3rd September**, the Mayor of Roskilde, Poul Lindor Nielsen, will officially open the new



**LANGUAGE
SUPPORT CENTRE**



The celebrations start at **2 pm**, and all our readers are most welcome! See www.englishsupport.dk.

In case you missed it ☺, the address is:

**Stændertorvet 2, 1
4000 Roskilde**

Open already now for freelancers!

Roskilde’s Mayor, Poul Lindor Nielsen, will be officially opening the *Language Support Centre* on 3rd September, but we are already open now for freelancers.

So, whether you are already in business or are considering becoming a freelance professional, come and see what we have to offer!

For more information, see page 2.

For pictures, see www.englishsupport.dk.

The new *Language Support Centre* – opening in September

This is the physical beginning of the realisation of an ambitious project to create a multilingual centre for teaching and translation into a wide range of languages by native-speaker experts. Our customers will range from companies and organisations of all sizes to schools and universities.

Freelance translators and teachers

This place is designed for you! Perhaps you're thinking of going freelance, or perhaps you've had your own one-(wo)man business for a while, but are fed up with having no colleagues to talk to.

Either way, we're trying to create an ideal environment for your language business. The rent for a work space has been set as low as possible to make it as attractive as possible. We will not be making any money on renting space out. But we do expect to gain from the **synergy** (see page 3) from having a variety of different self-employed people working in the same place.

For just 2500 kr. a month (+ VAT) you get an ergonomic desk and chair, a lamp, bookcase and cupboard, and a quiet, friendly office with one or two others. We assume you will have your own laptop and mobile phone for your business. You share the rest of the facilities, kitchen, veranda, roof-terrace, classroom/meeting rooms, etc. with about 20 people in all.

If you want a desk just one or two days in the week, we will accommodate you. This means you can be a *part-time* freelancer – which is not a bad way to start. Here is the table of charges:

These charges include water, heating and lighting, normal electricity use, a fast internet connection, and a common reception. And your company gets a very fine address in the centre of Roskilde!

1 day a week	700 kr. per month
2 days a week	1300 kr. per month
3 days a week	1800 kr. per month
4 days a week	2200 kr. per month
Full time	2500 kr. per month

Who are we looking for?

From our point of view, the ideal freelance partner will have several skills to contribute. If you can teach as well as translate or edit text in your mother tongue, that is a real plus. We want to offer native-speaker teaching.

But other skills (marketing, accounts, IT, etc.) are also useful in such a community. ***This is not yet another translation bureau!*** We are independent freelance partners working together, helping each other, and enjoying shared facilities.



Parking spaces are available, but not included.

English support and Language support

English support already has a large number of customers who need translation, proofreading and teaching. Much of our translation work now is to other languages, including Danish, and we have carried out quite a few orders for multi-language translation. With the launch of *Language support*, that trend will continue and expand.

Our network of over 200 freelance partners covering 33 languages means that we only ever say 'no' to work we really wouldn't want anyway. And we get a lot of work. Some of that work will come your way, because you are right there in the same building!

The new *Language Support Centre* will officially open on 3rd September, but you can apply now to be among the first to share its facilities (from 1st August).

If all this sounds interesting to you, get in touch here: LW@englishsupport.dk.

NOTE

*This page is reprinted from
News & Tips no. 54.*

The new Machinery Directive

An example of synergy

A great many engineering companies in Denmark will have a particular interest in one of the half-day seminars we will be running at the *Language Support Centre* this autumn. It will focus on the requirements of the new Machinery Directive which comes into force on 29th December this year.

Two of our freelance technical writers have made a point of studying the requirements of this new EU directive. As a result we will be able to offer the following assistance:

5. Seminar on: ***What the new Machinery Directive means for your company.***
6. Individual consultancy help tailored to the needs of your particular business.
7. Technical-writing assistance with preparing original documentation in Danish or English.
8. Translation assistance with the task of providing documentation in the languages needed.

Is it really new?

Much of the content is not new, but Directive 2006/42/EC is termed a “recast” of the Machinery Directive, and the modifications are presented in the form of a new directive.

*DIRECTIVE 2006/42/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE
COUNCIL of 17 May 2006 on machinery, and amending Directive 95/16/EC (recast)*

(Text with EEA relevance)

The main thrust of the changes is aimed at improvements in health and safety, including risk assessment at design stage and manufacturing stage, and risk prevention in use (including risks to the health of operators). And the new directive introduces the concept of what is ‘reasonably foreseeable’ with reference to risk, hazard, misuse, etc.

Quality assurance

One major problem for many manufacturers and importers of machinery will lie in fulfilling the new requirements with regard to documentation: *‘The contents of the instructions must cover not only the intended use of the machinery but also take into account any reasonably foreseeable misuse thereof’*. The instructions and declarations of conformity and incorporation must be given in the original language (authorised and verified by the manufacturer) and (if different) the official language(s) of the EU countries where the machinery is to be put on the market and/or used.

And all this documentation will be part of the quality assurance requirement for the machinery as from 29th December this year.

This means that between now and the end of the year, a lot of technical writing has to be carried out and approved – all of which will then need translation into the language(s) where the machinery is going to be put on the market and/or used.

A complete package

Our strength in this area is that we will be able to offer *one-stop shopping*. A seminar to help you understand the new requirements, and then advice tailored to your company on the documentation needed, followed by assistance with the technical writing and the translation work as required.

We do not pretend we will know all the answers, but we will be able to help you find them.

What the new Machinery Directive means for your company

The new *Language Support Centre* will be offering a **half-day seminar** to explain the significance of the new Machinery Directive on the following dates throughout September: 7th, 8th, 15th, 16th, 23rd, 24th, 28th and 29th. The seminar will start at 1 pm each day and finish around 4 pm. The dates and times have been chosen to enable as many as possible to attend, because we think this issue is of vital importance for a great many companies who manufacture, import, or sell machinery in the European Economic Area.

For the time being ...

As noted in *News & Tips* no. 30, this expression is often used in Denmark where what is meant is *at the moment*. Here are some recent examples of the mistake:

She is for the time being participating in ...

For the time being, he is working on a project dealing with ...

The first sentence also has the adverbial phrase misplaced in the middle of the sentence. Adverbials of more than one word should normally be placed at the end or the beginning of the sentence (as in the second example). See *News & Tips* no. 7.

In both cases, what the author wanted to emphasise was the *temporary* nature of the participation or work. The most common way of doing this in English is to use *at the moment* in combination with the continuous form of the verb (see *News & Tips* no. 6):

She is participating in ... at the moment.

At the moment, he is working on a project dealing with ...

When to use for the time being ...

While *at the moment* is used to focus on the temporary nature of something that is going on *now*, the phrase *for the time being* is used to focus on the *future extension* of such a temporary situation. So *for the time being* is often used in relation to temporary disruptions of services or options:

Gale winds have led to the bridge over the Great Belt being closed for the time being.

For the time being, I want you to share this desk. Next week, you will get your own.

Note: You can always use *at the moment* instead of *for the time being*, but this sense of future extension is lost. On the other hand, this does not usually matter very much, so if in doubt, use *at the moment*. ☺

Did you know?

English support has special expertise in medical, juridical, financial and many other areas of technical writing, from architecture to nanotechnology and aircraft engineering

“Only few”

In *News & Tips* no. 33, we looked at the difference between *few* and *a few*, and between *little* and *a little*, and in *News & Tips* no. 39, we looked at the use of the word *only*. Recently I came across some examples of “*only few*”.

This is almost always a mistake and should be corrected to “*only a few*” in normal English (as opposed, for example, to what we might call “headline” English, where small words disappear). But in some cases, what is meant is “*very few*”.

The point is that the word *few* is negative, while *a few* is positive: “*He has few friends*” means he doesn’t have many, while “*He has a few friends*” means he does have some. When we qualify with the limiting word *only*, we must qualify the positive version: “*He has only a few friends*”.

Contrast qualifying with the strengthening word *very*, which must come immediately before *few* and where the sense strengthened is always negative: *a very few* = *very few*.

More neutral is the qualifying word *quite* which can strengthen either the negative or the positive version: “*He has quite few friends*” means he really doesn’t have very many, while “*He has quite a few friends*” means he actually has quite a lot of friends.

Note: Very similar patterns apply to *little* and *a little*. So I hope that explanation was *only a little* confusing! ☺

From the workshop...

Comprehensible and comprehensive

It is not unusual for non-native speakers to use the wrong word. Here we have two words that come from the same Latin root, but whose meanings are quite different.

Comprehensible means understandable. So, “*The text was comprehensible*” means the text could be understood.

Comprehensive means “including everything or everyone”. “*The text was comprehensive*” means it covered all the relevant points.

Ameliorate

This verb means to “make something better”, but not so long ago I found someone offering to “ameliorate” the English in scientific papers. The service on offer was proofreading and editing, but the word *ameliorate* simply won’t do. Why not?

Well, the problem is that *ameliorate* is only ever used in a very general sense and never in relation to anything concrete. You can “take steps to ameliorate the situation”, but while you can *treat* a patient, *improve* a painting or a plan, or *resolve* a conflict, you can’t “ameliorate” any of them!

The word “improve” would be, well, an improvement. ☺

Problems and challenges

I recently had a proofreading job in which the writer had consistently used the word “challenge” where I would use “problem”.

Almost everyone knows the uplifting view that there are no such things as *problems*, only *challenges*, but of course that view only has meaning if problems and challenges are *not* the same thing!

A *problem* is an objective difficulty to be overcome, while a *challenge* is a something you can accept or refuse – a matter of choice. So seeing problems as challenges is a way of taking control. But they are *not* synonyms.

Efficient and effective

These two words are often used as if they were interchangeable, but they have quite distinct meanings in most contexts. A system is considered *efficient* if the input (in terms of energy, cost, resources, etc.) is low in proportion to the output gained. A system is considered *effective* insofar as it achieves the results aimed at.

So an engine can be *efficient* but not *effective* (if, for instance, it is simply not powerful enough for the job). The reverse is also true. An engine can be *inefficient* (requiring inputs far exceeding outputs), but *effective* because it easily gets the job done.

Efficiency and effectivity

You might expect that the abstract nouns *efficiency* and *effectivity* would reflect this distinction, but in fact they are mostly used metaphorically and *efficiency* (outside of engineering texts) often refers merely to the smooth running of a system, while *effectivity* has taken on the relationship between inputs and outputs (e.g. in business texts).

Did you know?

The *Language Support Centre* can now offer you **native-speaker** translation and proofreading help with not only *English*, but also *Arabic, Bangla, Bulgarian, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Farsi, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Kurdish, Malay, Nepali, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Rumanian, Russian, Serbo-Croat, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu* and *Vietnamese*.

And we can translate and proofread scientific papers in *English, Danish, Russian* or *Czech*.

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!

Danish-English in hospitals

Hi Michael

Could I humbly :) ask you if you might know what "afsnit" is in English? It is somewhere in a hospital. Could it be station? ward? – but ward is "afdeling", I believe ... Could one say section? It is some form of subdivision ...

The problem arises because the subdivisions in a hospital are treated differently in Danish and English. In Danish, the terminological focus is on administrative hierarchy, while in English the focus is on the physical space.

A ward in English is a room with beds for patients, usually requiring similar treatment. Often a ward is quite big (like a Danish *afdeling*), but some wards are smaller (like a Danish *afsnit*).

In non-hospital contexts, e.g. universities, companies, etc., the word *afsnit* usually = section, and this can also be the case with parts of a large ward in a hospital, but remember the difference in focus. But a large hospital might also be divided into sections, e.g. for different age groups, each of which contains one or more wards.

So you cannot rely on these words being used in a strictly hierarchical way as you might expect from the use of "equivalent" words in Danish.

Focus or emphasis?

Dear Lawrence

I hope that you have time to an answer a very short question, which is whether we should use the word "focus" or "emphasis" in the following sentence:

Physical activity in the Danish population with **focus/emphasis** on recommendations.

A subtle one! In the context, I feel *focus* is the right choice. The word *emphasis* is heavier and tends to suggest that the recommendations are the main content. The word *focus*, on the other hand, suggests more that a study was made in order to be able to make some recommendations.

The Language Support Centre

Finally, here are some new pictures of the new centre taken by my two daughters:



The south-facing roof terrace



The view from the roof-terrace



And the view to the north ...

More exciting news and tips next month!

Best wishes

Lawrence White

LW@englishsupport.dk

www. **English support** .dk
Your natural language partner

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. 56 – December 2009

© English support ApS 2009



Dear friends

Quite some time has gone by since my last newsletter! In August, we were preparing to open our new *Language Support Centre* in the middle of Roskilde. And more than 100 people came to our opening party when the City Mayor came and opened the Centre on 3rd September. But the small band of enthusiastic freelancers that took up the challenge was far too small, and it soon became clear that the Centre would not survive. It will finally close on 31st December.

So what went wrong?



The **LANGUAGE SUPPORT CENTRE** in Roskilde (anno 2009)



A detail over the entrance

The premises were beautiful, the location fantastic, the facilities good, and the price for sharing them extremely reasonable. Yet what seemed like the beginnings of a lot of interest *before* the summer had petered out to very little by the time we opened. Everybody thought the idea of a Centre for language freelancers was good (brilliant even), but only *five* people actually signed up.

We spent August getting everything ready to open in September – getting the furniture delivered and assembled, the internet and telephone system connected, and the alarm system installed – and the opening party was a big success. But with so few freelancers renting space, the financial problems were mounting up, and the dream was fast turning into a nightmare.

At this point, I went down with stress. Now, I don't know how many of you have experienced serious stress, but amongst other things you find you cannot focus, you cannot sleep, and you cannot work. You can also spend enormous amounts of time completely paralysed and shaking. I had to cancel my extensive schedule of teaching, and I could neither translate nor proofread. This obviously deepened our liquidity crisis considerably.

I cannot and do not blame the worldwide financial crisis; the situation was entirely due to my own miscalculation. But obviously the economic conjuncture was not one favourable for borrowing more money, and my wife and I had already put all our available cash into the project.

So we were going to have to close down the *Language Support Centre* just as it had got started...

Closure – and rebirth

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

Were there any other options to closure?

In retrospect, there are a number of things we could have done differently, but calculations show that any improved cash flow that we might have achieved with the benefit of hindsight would still have been massively outweighed by our failure to attract enough freelancers to rent space.

The target was about 20, but ten would have been enough to keep me sane in the crucial start-up period. As it was, there were just five of us, plus one who opted for one day a week. And when I went down with stress, there was no income to speak of from *English support* to tide us over.

Language support ApS had taken out a loan of DKK 500,000 to cover start-up costs. If we had borrowed a million from the beginning, we might have survived while we got up to target – but, on the other hand, we might not. And then the hole in my pocket would have been even bigger!

The real miscalculation took place much earlier. I was so convinced that the project would create an ideal framework for language freelancers, that I didn't wait until I had at least ten signatures on paper before signing the long-term lease. This was what is sometimes called a "calculated risk" – there seemed such a lot of interest in the project – but it proved a very expensive *miscalculation*.

The other miscalculation was more excusable: I hadn't reckoned on being knocked out by stress.

So what now?

Well, we lost a lot of money. It's expensive to get out of a long-term lease before time. But the fact that we reacted so quickly means the company will survive. And our creditors will be paid.

The fast reaction was in no small measure due to help from *Early Warning*, a government-backed voluntary organisation that helps companies find a way through problems like ours. Once I could see a way forward, my health recovered reasonably quickly.



In fact, I've almost entirely stopped shaking now!

So the next thing is to get back on track. I don't want to ditch the idea of the *Language Support Centre*, but "Version 2.0" will be constructed in cyberspace, where the rents are lower. ☺

Your ideas welcome!

One of the central aims of the *Language Support Centre* project was to make our considerable network of native-speaker freelance partners more visible. *Native speakers of foreign languages are an under-used resource in Denmark!*

Of course, it is not enough to be a native speaker. But the process of self-selection means that the percentage of foreigners living in Denmark with good language skills is much higher than for the native population. People who are prepared to move to live and work in a foreign country are often people who are also good at languages.

But we need top-quality people. We have a system of product quality assurance, and our aim is quality that is *second to none* in all the (currently 35) languages we offer. And we need people with all sorts of skills connected with language and communication, including teachers and interpreters as well as translators, editors and specialist technical writers of all kinds.

So if you have ideas or want to become one of our freelance partners, get in touch! Further information at: www.englishsupport.dk.



From the workshop...

A or an and one

Quite a lot of European languages use the same word for the indefinite article (*a* or *an*) as for the number *one*. English does not. So how can you tell when to use one or the other?

The trick is to listen to the stress in the spoken language. All European languages use stress, and numbers are always stressed in a spoken sentence, while the indefinite article is not.

If your native language does not have an indefinite article, you will automatically use the number in the right place – though you might have problems with the indefinite article in English.

Here is a pair of contrasting sentences. The first one is a case where English uses an indefinite article and most other European languages do not:

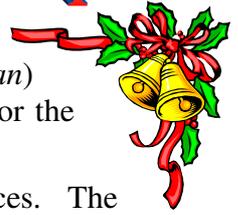
She is a professor

She is just one professor out of many in her field

And here is a sentence where the difference might not be so clear:

One argument for the point I want to make is ...

If I write *an* here, it sounds weak because the word would not be stressed. So *a* or *an* is not = *one*.



Too meaning also

The word *too* is an adverb which is used in two ways in English: it can mean the same as *also* (as in: “*I want one, too!*”), and it can be an intensifier (as in: “*The box was too heavy*”). In both cases it has some rather unusual aspects.

When *too* means *also*, its position in a sentence is unusual. While *also* is one of a small group of adverbs that always go in the middle of the sentence, *too* usually goes at the end of the sentence:

Mary also caught the train.

Mary caught the train, too.

Both these sentences are strictly speaking ambiguous. Did Mary catch something else (e.g. the plane) as well as the train, or was there someone else who caught to train (e.g. John) as well as Mary? Usually the meaning is clear from the context, because either the plane or John would have been mentioned just before this sentence. But where the meaning would still be unclear, we can place *too* immediately *after* the word, phrase or clause it applies to:

Mary, too, caught the train.

The train, too, was caught by Mary.

This is admittedly a little awkward, but it can be done. Note that US English sometimes uses *also* where British English always uses *too*.

Too as an intensifier

Intensifiers go immediately *in front of* the word they intensify: *too fast*, *very well*, *most kind*, and so on. But while “*a very fast car*” or “*a most kind thought*” are complete ideas, if a box is “*too heavy*”, it is too heavy *for someone or something to do something with it*: e.g. “*too heavy to lift*”.

So something odd happens when we use articles with *too* + an adjective. We cannot say “*a too heavy box*” or “*the too heavy box*”. Instead, we must complete the meaning by adding what it was too heavy *for*: “*a box too heavy (to lift)*”. The change in word order is due to the implied relative clause: “*a box (which was) too heavy to lift*”. With the definite article, this relative clause (or at least a verb) is almost always required: “*the box (which) was too heavy to lift*”.



Did you know?

English support has special expertise in medical, juridical, financial and many other areas of technical writing, from architecture to nanotechnology and aircraft engineering

Assure, ensure and secure

To be fair, there is often a certain amount of overlap in modern usage between these words. But non-native speakers should probably take care to use them on the basis of their basic meanings.

The verb *assure* always has a *person* as its object. Its most common usage is to try to convince someone of something or to guarantee that something is or was or will be the case. So I might assure the police that I was not driving too fast. Note that using the verb *assure* does not imply that they were convinced.

In British English, the verb *assure* and the noun *assurance* are also often used in connection with personal life insurance – again, the object is a person.

The verb *ensure* means the same as to *make sure*. So if I *ensure* that things will be ready on time, I *make sure* they are. Note that in US English, this meaning is often written *insure*, which in British English is only used in connection with insurance policies.

The verb *secure* means to take or maintain possession of something (or someone) and/or make it free from danger or criminal damage. Cf. the contrast and overlap between *security* and *safety* examined in *News & Tips* no. 47.

Back-up you don't have to think about

One thing everybody who uses a computer has to worry about is what happens if (when) the thing stops working.

You know, one day the screen is just black and you can't recover your hard disk. So you need to take back-ups, right? *But do you?* And if you do, how often? *And is it enough?*

The scope for sleepless nights is enormous, especially if you are self-employed and all your data is on one machine. *So take back-ups!*

Give yourself a treat!



And the neat way to do it is over the Internet.

There are several such systems. I use one called **Carbonite**. It starts automatically and works quietly and continuously in the background, backing up your changed data. Everything is encrypted before it leaves your machine and is therefore safe in more than one way.

And, no, the system does not slow down your computer or your internet connection. Nor does it cost the earth ...

How to write a scientific paper
GET A FREE COPY IN JANUARY!

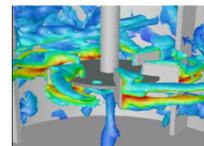
Yes, we're giving them away until 31st January 2010. Order now from:
www.englishsupport.dk.

TERMS: Only *ONE* free copy per address, including institutions, companies and other organisations.



How to write a scientific paper

Lawrence White



Page 1: Street level view of a road in a city with a car in the foreground.

You can try it out here! If you use this link to download a free 15-day trial subscription, and you get an extra free month of service when you buy:

<http://www.carbonite.com/raf/signup.aspx?RAFUserUID=213288&a=0>

We will hit the ground running next month!

To conclude this very late issue, let me just say that, despite the catastrophe of the last six months, we are back and will soon be up to full steam again!

*Best wishes to all our readers
for Christmas and the New Year!*

Lawrence White
LW@englishsupport.dk

www. **English support** .dk

Your natural language partner