

English support
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NB: If you received this newsletter by e-mail, it is (hopefully) because you have expressed a wish to do so. If this is not the case, and/or you do not wish to receive it in future – *please let us know!*

No. 19 – May 2006

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Dear friends

This month there seems to be so much happening that it is difficult to know where to begin. We are holding a seminar in Jutland (18th May in Kolding), marketing the new booklet for researchers on *How to write a scientific paper*, running a telemarketing campaign aimed at Danish exporters, fighting to find time to develop the web site(s) in the direction outlined *News & Tips* in January, and have just signed freelance partners numbers 60 and 61 and can now offer **Chinese**.

Language support

English support can now offer mother-tongue help with Chinese, Danish, English, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Russian, Serbo-Croat, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish.

The importance of the mother-tongue

Language is all about *association*: the association of meaning with sounds or groups of sounds (otherwise known as words), and the meaning of words in association with the context of their use.

Dictionaries can give a false picture of the ease with which one can go from one language to another. An equals-sign can seldom be set between the meanings associated with a word from *one* language and those associated with a word from *another* language. The only clear exceptions to this rule are the numbers above one. And some meanings simply *cannot* be translated fully from one language to another.

It is also easier to understand a language than to speak it, to read it than to write it. So the people who have the best chance of making sure that the meaning of a translated or corrected text is as close as possible to the original are themselves *native speakers of the target language*. They are also the people who are most likely to be able to put sentences together in a way that *sounds right* to other native speakers.

That is why *English support* uses only native

speakers of the target language – at least for the final proofreading and language check, but wherever possible also for the actual translation.

The whole issue of “**danglish**” (Danish English) illustrates how difficult it is even for Danes, who rightly pride themselves on how good they are at English, to get it completely right and sounding good. The mother tongue has a nasty habit of tripping you up even when you think you are ready for it!

Six months ago there was an exchange of views over a classic case: the use (in Denmark) of the phrase “state-authorized” in connection with translators, lawyers, accountants, estate agents, etc. (see *News & Tips* Nos. 12–13). This month we take up the issue again in an **open letter** to *Dansk Translatørforbund*, which still translates its name (in English) as the *Danish Association of State-Authorised Translators and Interpreters*.

Please turn over!

Dear Dansk Translatørforbund

Six months have gone by since Dee Shields and I exchanged e-mails on the expression “state-authorised”. The entire correspondence was published in the pages of this newsletter (nos. 12–13) and forwarded to Dansk Translatørforbund. I am sure there has been a lot of internal discussion, especially after Dee Shields’ scurrilous negative marketing campaign against me and my company in MDTnyt 5/05. [Interested readers can find it here: <http://www.onlineart.dk/mdtnyt03-05.pdf>]

Since Dansk Translatørforbund is currently in the process of renewing its web site, perhaps this would be a good time to give a lead and change the English version of your name.

May I briefly recap why I think this would be a good idea? In Danish, “statsautoriseret” is almost always positive in meaning. But in English “state-authorised” is almost always used negatively: “state-authorised phone-tapping”, “state-authorised assassination”, “state-authorised terror”, and so on. The expression is *never* applied to translators, lawyers, accountants, estate agents, etc. Not in the English-speaking world. *Only in Denmark.*

Is this use in Denmark justifiable? I don’t think so. It conveys the wrong message (suggesting that something like the *Stasi* is alive and well and living in Copenhagen!) and its special Danish meaning has to be explained anyway. So why not drop the “state” and use “authorised” on its own (like they do in the rest of Scandinavia and like Translatørforeningen in Denmark)?

Interestingly enough your new web site uses the Danish word “statsautoriseret” only once and in brackets. The French, German and Spanish versions of your organisation’s name do not mention the state at all. The *only* place where it figures with any prominence is in the *English* translation!

Now this is very strange, not to say perverse. As I tried to convince Dee Shields, English speakers are (to put it mildly) much more *sensitive*, not to say *negative*, about the state than Danish, French, German or Spanish speakers. This has deep historical and cultural roots, which might wittily be summed up in the contrast between the “hellish” Hobbes and “heavenly” Hegel.

So I am asking you to give a lead to other professional organisations in Denmark who use the term, and *leave the state out* – also in the *English* version of your name.

Best wishes

Lawrence White

www.englishsupport.dk

Your natural language partner...

English support invites you to a seminar...

The grammar of “danglish”

A brief account of how the Danish mother-tongue can trip you up in English grammar

TIME: 3 – 5 pm, Thursday, 18th May 2006.

PLACE: University of Southern Denmark, Kolding

INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION: www.englishsupport.dk

IMPORTANT: **You must register for this seminar**

“Academy Profession” (AP) programmes – a note to the Min. of Education

The relatively new term “Academy Profession” is now featured in a great many educational institutions’ programmes. The problem is that it sounds very odd in English. We do use nouns as adjectives, but seldom where there is a perfectly good adjectival form, as here: “academic” and “professional”. An “Academy Profession degree” should logically be an “Academic Professional degree”.

But the Danish AK (*Akademiuddannelse*) would be better translated “Academy Programme”. Here the word “academy” is clearly used (or would be) to refer to the kind of *institution* as in “University Programme”, and I would argue is clearer than “Academic Programme”.

The key point is that the word “academy” or “academic” applies to the *programme*, not the *profession* or *vocation*.

We are once again in danger of ending up with a peculiar (only found in Denmark) expression, “Academy Profession” programmes, on the web sites of our poor long-suffering education institutions for years to come! And it won’t even be their fault. ☺

Put it in your diary ...

KOMMUNIKATIONS- OG SPROGFORUM 2006

Tuesday, 26 September, at a venue to be announced, **Copenhagen**

Information and booking: www.kommunikationogsprog.dk

Education

This word causes a lot of trouble. For one thing it is *uncountable* in English. Its usual meaning is a general reference to school and university education in all its forms, but *not* to the individual courses or programmes. So if you are lucky, you have an education, but you do not have more than one, no matter how many postgraduate degrees you may have taken.

And the word is not normally used about the acquiring of the knowledge and skills *to perform a particular job*. That is usually called “training”, as in “teacher training”.

Programme or program?

In American English, this word is always spelt *program*. In British English, it is spelt *programme* (e.g. *a TV, theatre, political or education programme*), except if we are talking about *a computer program* – when we always use the American spelling.

In case of emergency ...

This is an expression often seen on emergency exits: “*In case of emergency, break glass*”. But it is not appropriate in an e-mail AutoReply. Here what you probably want to say is something like: “*If the matter is urgent, please contact ...*”. Something that cannot wait is described as “urgent”, while an “emergency” is normally a *life-threatening* situation.

Lose and loose

Many non-native speakers confuse these two. The word “lose” /lu:z/ is a verb meaning to no longer have something or not be able to find it, while “loose” /lu:s/ is an adjective meaning “not tight” or “not firmly fixed”. The verb “loosen” means to make something loose.

Part and divide

The fundamental idea in the *verb* “to part” is to separate. A teacher might *part* two boys who are having a fight. The verb is often followed by “from” or “with”. *To part from* someone is to leave them, and *to part with* something is to give or sell something to someone else – usually something you would rather keep. In each case there is a sense of reluctant separation.

The *noun* “part”, however, does not have this sense at all. Indeed, if you are part of something, it usually means you are *not* separate from it. And the verb “to divide” is used to split things up or “separate” them into parts. So you might *divide* a cake into eight equal parts so as to give everyone a share.

Translators, secretaries, teachers ... **English support Hotline** ... helps you get it right!

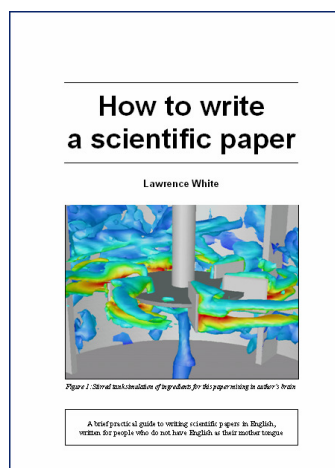
You ring or write and we drop everything to concentrate on your problem for the time it takes.
Register now (FREE) – per minute charge: 10 kr. – invoicing once a quarter (minimum 120 kr.)

Use and used

The *noun* “use” /ju:z/ means the act of using something and the *verb* “to use” /ju:z/ means to do something with something for some purpose: “*I use English in my work*”. Note that the past form is “used” /ju:zd/.

But there is *another* verb with the same spelling, “use” /ju:z/, with a quite different meaning. It is used to express general facts about the past: “*I used to work in the City*”, “*I did not use to wear a bowler hat*”. And there is also an *adjective*, “used” /ju:zɪd/, which is followed by “to” plus a noun; this expresses familiarity with something: “*I am used to driving on the right*”.

English support publishes a booklet for science researchers



Abstract

English is the main language for international science publication, but not the native language of the majority of scientists. Writing well in a foreign language can be difficult. Some good existing material on how to write scientific papers was therefore blended with empirical data from English teaching pre-stored in the brain of a professional linguist and educator. This mixture was fermented at temperatures in the range of 35–40°C over a period of 28 days, after which essentials were extracted. The result is a practical manual for people who wish to publish in English but are not native-speakers. Conclusion: *Read on!*

Keywords

Writing – English – Science – Journal – Articles

Orders have yet to exceed expectations (so I still have a big hole in my bank balance!), but they have started coming in from individuals and research institutions both in Denmark and abroad.

You can order the booklet from the web site.

Best wishes

Lawrence White

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

Proofreading • Copy editing • Teaching