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News & Tips
from

English support

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

No. 20 – June 2006

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Dear friends

First let me apologise for the delay in this issue of *News & Tips*. All I can say is that I have been very busy! Amongst other things, we completed our first Chinese assignment to the satisfaction of the client, and the telemarketing campaign is still running. I had hoped to receive a reply from Dansk Translatørforbund to last month's open letter about the phrase "state-authorised", but they have not yet responded in any way. So now I am writing an open letter to the members:

Open letter to members of Dansk Translatørforbund

Last month I wrote an open letter to Dansk Translatørforbund. I sent it by post and by e-mail to both Mette Aarslew and Annie Georgsen. It was also published in my monthly newsletter [*News & Tips* no.19, downloadable here: www.englishsupport.dk/EN/backissues.htm]. My aim was to urge DT to drop the "state" from the English version of your name.

Six weeks have gone by and there has been no response. No letter, no e-mail, not even a phone call. *It seems there is no one home.* So now I am writing to all 96 of you.

Of course, some of you may wonder why DT should bother to discuss its name with someone who is not a member. Fair enough. Let me tell you why.

The last issue of your organisation's official magazine, *MDTnyt*, in 2005 [3 / 05, which you can download from www.onlineart.dk/mdtnyt03-05.pdf] contains a 11,088-word article more or less on the subject, in which Dee Shields has "a long rant" (her choice of words) entirely at my expense. The whole issue is only 17,600 words long, so this thoroughly scurrilous attack on my company, my person, my abilities, etc. is the main feature making up 63% of the entire issue. On its own it is longer than the preceding issue (7607 words) and also the following issue (10,240). So I think we could say that the Editorial Board of *MDTnyt* at least attaches some importance to my opinions on this matter ...

But, you may say, that article mostly consists in your correspondence with Dee Shields. That is true, *but only just!* The correspondence I had with Dee Shields totalled 6687 words (fairly evenly divided between 3602 from DS and 3085 from me). In *News & Tips*, I added a short postscript of 304 words. In *MDTnyt* Dee Shields did not let the correspondence speak for itself, but carefully packaged it in no fewer than an *extra 4401 words*, whose main purpose seems to have been to try to convince the reader that I am some kind of idiot.

OK, I don't mind a bit of fun. But deliberate misunderstanding, insult and mockery do seem somewhat inappropriate in a serious language magazine – aimed at "everyone involved in the business of professional translation" [*"alle, der har med oversættelse på et professionelt plan at gøre"*], as Helle Rust Christensen puts it on the page just in front of Dee Shields' attack.

Please turn over!

Open Letter (contd.)

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

I also think DT ought to offer me space in MDTnyt to exercise my right to reply. Not only have they not done so (at least not yet), but they did not even *inform me* about the publication of Dee Shields' attack on my company last year. To be blunt, I think your leadership has a lot to be ashamed of in this matter.

What the discussion ought to be about is not the alleged inadequacies or otherwise of me, my company and my work (about which Dee Shields – unlike many of you – has absolutely no experience whatsoever), but how to translate the Danish word *statsautoriseret* into English.

The use of “state-authorized” for translators, accountants, lawyers, etc. in English is not found in any English-speaking country. Indeed, as far as I know, it is not found in any *non-English* speaking country either – except Denmark.

The Danish word is positive. Dee Shields and I disagree on whether or not the word has negative connotations in English, so here's an easy empirical test: next time you are in an English-speaking country, go up to the first 10-20 English-speakers you meet and ask them what they associate with the word “state-authorized”. But many of you know this already and have told me you agree with me.

Dee Shields accuses me of impugning “the profession” (she means DT), but nothing was further from my mind when I described this use of “state-authorized” as an example of what I call “danglish”. I was giving a seminar to nearly 50 translators, technical writers, bilingual secretaries and other language professionals. I was just pointing out a common mistake – something I do quite often in my job as a proofreader.

For instance, let us say that I point out that on the DT website there are two printing mistakes in the Danish spelling of Copenhagen in the address of one of your members. Does that mean that I have personally insulted every member of DT? Or the member concerned? Or the DT webmaster? Such a way of thinking is absurd. The real question is: *is it true?* And *that* you can find out for yourselves (if you're quick before the mistakes get corrected).

I did not set out to insult anyone; Dee Shields on the other hand quite deliberately set out to be as insulting as possible in the pages of your magazine. I want to promote a discussion on the widespread use of “state-authorized” in Denmark; Dee Shields wants to run a negative marketing campaign against a fellow language professional. It's up to you. It's your organisation after all. But if I were you, I'd go for the discussion ...

Best wishes

Lawrence White

10th June 2006

How to write a scientific paper

Lawrence White

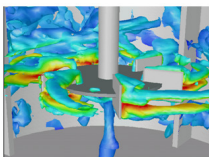


Figure 1. Global taxonomic distribution of species for the paper writing in author's head

A brief guide to writing scientific papers in English, written for people who do not have English as their mother tongue

New booklet for science researchers

“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.

Published by *English support*

Kurt Lauridsen, MSc, PhD
Danish Decommissioning

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From the workshop...

Notice and note

The verbs One mistake that is often seen is “*Please notice*” used where what is meant is “*Please note*”. The verb *notice* might well be used in speech. For example, a tourist guide might use it when pointing out some special feature of the Taj Mahal. In other words, it is usually only used for things you can actually see, not abstractions like information. Here you should use *note*.

The nouns The noun *notice* refers to a formal piece of information in a public place of some kind. The noun *note* on the other hand is used in a wide range of contexts, from short informal messages (including those you make to yourself when listening a lecture, for instance) to the formal world of “Notes” exchanged between diplomats of countries with a difference of opinion.

Please note in your diary ...

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See you there!

Follow with

This combination is just about possible, if *follow* means *follow up*, as in: “*We had a three-course dinner followed (up) with coffee*”. What *follow* normally means, however, is to go *after* or *behind* (and thus **not with**) someone or something. One thing is normally followed *by* another, so the expression, “*it follows*”, is often used to show (logical) consequence.

Different and various

These two words are, well, *different* (but not *various*)! Things that are *different* are unlike each other in some way. They can also be *very different* from each other. Note that in US English it is also possible to say *different than* in some cases, but since *different from* is always right, also in US English, you might as well stick to that ...

The fundamental idea in *various*, on the other hand, is *several different*, where the focus is on the fact that there were *several*, rather than how *different* they were from each other. So you cannot say *very various* or *various from*.

Various and varied

If we wish to focus on how *different* several things (not just two) are from each other, we might speak of their *variety*: “*He has a variety of hobbies: knitting, astronomy and kick-boxing*”. These hobbies are clearly both *various* and *varied*, but to say *he has various hobbies* says nothing about their variety, whereas to say *his hobbies are varied* does.

Several and more

While we are talking about *several*, it is worth clearly distinguishing *several* from *more*. Whereas *several* just means *more than one or two*, the fundamental idea in *more* is always an *additional* number or amount of something. *More* also always implies *than*. If I want *more* apples, then it implies that I want *more than* I already have. The word *than* does not have to figure in the sentence, but some kind of comparison is always implied when you use *more*.

Please turn over!

Concerning and regarding

These are two favourites with many non-native speakers! And there is nothing wrong with them, except that an English speaker will usually use *about* instead: “I am writing to you concerning (or regarding) your holiday” would be better changed to “I am writing to you about your holiday”.

Both words have a tendency to make you sound very stiff. Using them a lot, when you could just as well have used *about*, makes you sound foreign. However, there is a place for stiff formality, and their use may be appropriate on occasion. To be used sparingly!

Note that the little word *Re* sometimes used in the headings for letters and e-mails is **not** a short form for *regarding* (and should not be replaced with either *concerning* or *regarding*). It is *Latin* and means: “In the matter of”. It is also completely unnecessary.

Use and spend

Last month we looked at the various ways the word *use* is used, but one common problem did not get a mention. In British English we do not *use money* or *time*; we *spend* them. US usage allows both *use* and *spend* here, but *use* is more colloquial. So keep it simple, use *spend*! ☺

In accordance with and according to

These two expressions are often mixed up. If I wish to express the idea that something *follows* or *is in compliance with* a set of rules, regulations or laws, I might say it is *in accordance with* them.

The expression *according to* has a quite different meaning: it means that something is somebody’s opinion or account: “According to Fred, that bridge could fall down any minute” or “The Gospel according to Mark”. So you might say “According to the regulations, this is what we must do”.

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Control and check or inspect

The word *control* implies *power over* something. The **verb** *control* thus means to *exercise that power*. You can control a country, a company, a car, a bicycle, and even yourself – with luck.

The abstract **noun** *control* means the *exercise of power* over something or the *power itself*, and *controls* are the physical instruments used (e.g. in a car, ship or aircraft) to exercise that power.

There are two places in the English language where the **noun** *control* is used in the sense of a *check* of some kind. One is in scientific experiments, where “controls” are, for example, subjects not given a drug that is being tested. Data from these “controls” is used to check that the drug has an actual measurable effect on the patients given it. The other place is at the effective borders of a country, e.g. passport control in airports, at border crossings, and so on. But even here we do not use the *verb* in that sense. When I go through *passport control*, for instance, I have my passport *checked* or *inspected* (but *not* “controlled”).

More next month!

Best wishes
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Your natural language partner