

English support
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News & Tips
from

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!*

Dear friends

A large and growing number of customers, translators, proofreaders, secretaries, teachers, students, researchers and others are now reading this newsletter. It is your support that has been decisive in making this year a fantastic success. We may not be rich, but we *are* happy in our work!

MERRY
CHRISTMAS!

Will Danish (“state-authorized”) translators unite in one organisation?

The two organisations of *statsautoriserede translatører* [“state-authorized” translators] in Denmark are talking about merging. The negotiations have been going on for some time and may well take a lot more time, because there has been a long history of conflict between them, but both parties seem to be taking the talks seriously.

Such a merger may or may not be a good thing, but one thing is clear from where I am sitting and that is that the new organisation, if it comes, will have to take a position on the utterly scandalous article on *English support* that appeared in MDTnyt, *Dansk Translatørforbund’s* official magazine, in 2005 [still on public view at www.onlineart.dk/mdtnyt03-05.pdf].

We are talking about an 11,000-word article, in which Dee Shields had “a long rant” (her choice of words) entirely at my expense. This thoroughly scurrilous, vituperative, and totally undocumented attack on my company, my person, my abilities, etc. was the *main feature*, making up 63% of the entire magazine!



A question of credibility

Should the new, merged organisation not repudiate this article as the disgusting verbal diarrhoea it truly is, then we would have to assume that it had decided to incorporate this particularly unpleasant bit of the history of *one* of the organisations into the *joint* history of the new organisation. Such a decision would, I fear, be very expensive in terms of credibility.

So I very much hope that this issue will become a part of the negotiations – something that needs to be cleared up. And while they are about it, I suggest they also drop the use of “state-authorized” in the English names of their organisations. Its retention, long after its total unsuitability has been so fully explained, is *already* very expensive in terms of the credibility of both organisations.

For the full discussion on this issue, download the newsletters listed under “state-authorized” in the index at <http://www.englishsupport.dk/EN/backindex.htm>. Key points are summarised in No. 21.

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

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Please turn over!

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!

Working in, on and with

Do you work *with* medicine? Well, no one can say that is incorrect English, but it is worth noting that we normally use “*work with*” when talking about (collaboration with) people or animals, so you might *work with* John Smith or *with* horses or dogs.

When we are talking about a field of work, the more usual expression would be “*work in*”, as in the question “*Do you work in medicine?*” – NOTE: **not** “*within* medicine” (see Nos.18 and 29).

But the preposition *with* can also mean “*using*”. If I actually handle medicines in my work, I might say “*I work with medicines*”. So while the Managing Director of ICI can be said to *work in chemicals*, he almost certainly does not *work with chemicals*: he has laboratory assistants for that.

When we are talking about specific projects or tasks, we usually use “*work on*”. So I may know someone *in* research and development who is working *on* (the project of) a new breed of pea.

A series of

The word *series* is much over-used in translations from Danish into English. This is mostly due to a common Danish expression (*en række af*), which is often translated as “*a series of*”. This is not usually appropriate, because a *series* is a group or succession of related things arranged in order, like a set of TV programmes, books, articles, pictures or films. The Danish expression, however, usually has a looser meaning corresponding to the English expression “*a number of*”.

Between and among

The confusion that arises here is due to the fact that the word *between* is used in more ways than the word *among*. When we are talking about *location*, both words can be used. For instance, you may put your plate *between* your knife and your fork (two things) and you may picnic *among* the trees (more than two things).

But when we speak of *differences*, *choices*, or *interactions*, the correct word is *between* – no matter how many things are involved. For instance, we may speak of the differences *between* six products, the choice *between* three options, competition *between* 15 companies, and trade *between* large numbers of nations.

The word *among* may still be seen occasionally in the last two cases, but is a little old-fashioned and is best avoided by non-native speakers. More common is *divide among*, but here too modern English favours *divide between* even when what follows is more than two: “*The inheritance was divided between the three children equally*”.

So the *safe* rule is: If you are talking about *location*, use *between* for two things and *among* for more than two, but otherwise, when choosing between *among* and *between*, choose *between*! ☺

More than 450 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 you can also download a whole year at a time (if you wish) by clicking on the year heading.

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Xmas gift ideas

All I want for Christmas ...

Since I am currently undergoing extensive open-mouth surgery, I feel rather like the boy in the song – all I want for Christmas is my two (three, four) front teeth! But I thought you might like some other ideas to think about – at least until the moment finally arrives and you open the packet with the usual pair of socks, scarf, or lumpy jersey that you will never, ever wear... – *Oh, thank you very much! – That's just what I've always ...*

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

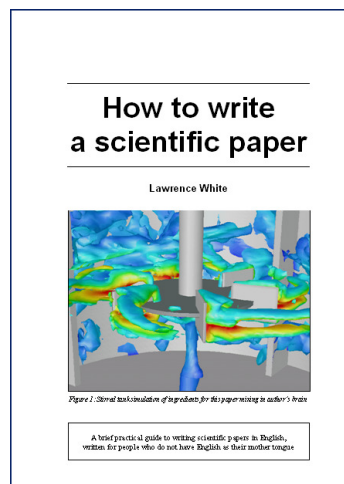
There are several such systems. I use one called *Carbonite*. It starts automatically and works quietly and continuously in the background, backing up your changed data, which is encrypted before it leaves your machine and is therefore safe in more than one way. And, no, the system does not slow down your computer or your internet connection. Nor does it cost the earth ...

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

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



And the perfect Xmas gift for the rocket scientist in your life!



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

“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.

Order it now from *English support* at www.englishsupport.dk

Kurt Lauridsen, MSc, PhD
Danish Decommissioning

HAPPY CHRISTMAS EVERYONE!

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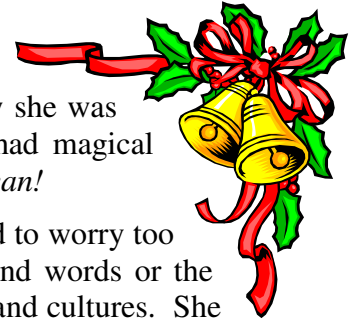
Please turn over!

The princess who wasn't

(A fairy tale for Christmas)

Any resemblance between a character in this story and any real person is purely intentional – but she'd probably better keep a low profile anyway! 😊

ONCE UPON A TIME, in a faraway country (let's call it Cloud-Cuckoo Land), there lived a princess. Well, *she* knew she was a princess, at any rate. Everybody *else* thought she worked as a translator. But she knew she was something really special. She was not only a princess, but she also had magical powers. *She could make any word mean exactly what she wanted it to mean!*



Now, this gave her a tremendous advantage in her work. She didn't need to worry too much about all those difficult things like the *meanings* that cluster round words or the *associations* and *connotations* that words might have in other languages and cultures. She could just concentrate on the *words*, which made it all so much easier.

For instance, she could take a job title like *Adjunkt* in Danish, and she knew at once that *Adjunct* would sound just fine in English. If she sprinkled her translation with a little of her special SAT-powder, no one would ever notice. At least they wouldn't *say* they noticed. You see SAT-powder has the effect of shutting people up. People tend to think that if something has SAT-powder sprinkled over it, then it *must* be OK.

And the truth is that SAT-powder usually really *does* mean that a translation is OK. This is because the people who have it have spent a long time studying how to translate words from one language into another and usually have a pretty good idea what they are talking about. Otherwise they don't get given the powder in the first place.

But our princess used it to cut corners. The Danish *Revisor* was easily translated with *Revisor* and *Folkeskolelærer* became *People's school learner*. The new English usages just flowed off her pen! *Administrating Directors, School Inspectors, Vice Inspectors*, and, of course, the *State's Minister*. It was dead easy!

Everything was just so wonderful, but you know how it is – there is always *someone* who goes and spoils it all, isn't there! *Someone* started claiming that these translations were all very well, but no one would understand them in England.

"Where?" she asked.

England. You know, where they speak English.

"Well, what does *that* matter?" she said, "This is how we say things in Cloud-Cuckoo Land, and that's that!"

But it wasn't, because more and more people started noticing that although there was plenty of SAT-powder sprinkled all over these translations, they still didn't sound quite right somehow.

So the princess decided to hire Saatchi and Saatchi to convince people she was right. With enough money it ought to be possible to change the so-called connotations and associations and usages and all that rubbish so they conformed to her ideal world where words meant just exactly whatever she wanted them to mean.

But Saatchi and Saatchi said no, they wouldn't take it on, because they only liked to do things which were actually possible.

And that's when the princess discovered she wasn't a princess after all and that she didn't really have any magic powers at all, but was "merely" a translator.

"Ah well", she thought, "never mind! – I've got a good imagination, so I can always take up writing fiction instead!" And she lived happily ever after, writing fiction in Cloud-Cuckoo Land.

THE END

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