

English support
Business House (PO Box 618)
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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. 40 – February 2008

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Dear friends

Half way through this month, we will be moving into a new office, still at *Business House* (same address), but with double the space, so Claire and I will both have room to swing our respective cats. ☺ Indeed, there will be space for *A.N. Other*, too. And we will also be able to offer in-house courses for classes of up to 16 people. This development marks a significant step for us, and we invite all our readers to celebrate the event with us on 14th March. See below.

English support moves into new office

We are not moving very far, just about 20 metres in the same building, but we will be much more visible for the many people who visit *Business House* because we will be in a glass-fronted area directly facing the entrance lobby.

This is important for us because we want to increase our local customer base. It is here we will find the companies that can make use of our local teaching services. At the moment, almost all our teaching is at the Technical University of Denmark or the University of Copenhagen, which is fine, but perhaps a little lop-sided for a company based in Roskilde. Not that we want to stop teaching where we do (far from it!), but we would like to teach more local business people, too

But teaching is only part of our business, and the new office creates the physical framework within which we can realise a real expansion of our network and services in the fields of proofreading and translation, not just for English, but also the 27 other languages for which we have native-speaker support. We call it *Language support*.

So we are in the market for another “workhorse” to join us in the new office and help build the company. Interested? – Please get in touch!

We will be moving into to our new office later this month and we expect to have it more or less shipshape by 14th March. So come and join us for a drink and light refreshments on that day!

Proofreading for translators!

Did you know that *English support* offers native-speaker proofreading services for 28 languages? Naturally this includes Danish. This means that virtually whatever language you translate into, we have a *native-speaker proofreader/translator* who can check your translation for you.

We’ll ensure that the text “sounds” right to the native-speaker audience it is intended for. And, of course, if you are translating into *your* native language, the proofreading check costs much less.

Just ask us for a quote!

www. **English support** .dk

invites you to an

INFORMAL RECEPTION

Friday 14th March, from 3–5 PM

Come and meet us in our new office
– *we’d really like to see you!*

Please turn over!

Which and what in questions

Whether used as a pronoun (as in “**What** is your name?”) or as a determiner (as in “**What name** shall I give?”), the most common choice is **what**. Only where we are talking about one out of a limited number of something will we use **which**.

For instance, we say “**What** is the time?” and “**What time** is it?”, because in principle at least the range is infinite, whereas if my daughter says she has hurt her finger, I might ask “**Which one?**” because the possibilities are limited.

So the difference between “**What** train did you catch?” and “**Which** train did you catch?” is that the latter implies the speaker knows something about the choice of trains available. Similarly, if I take a phone call in a company with a very limited number of departments, I will probably list them and ask **which** one (of this limited list) the caller wants, whereas, in a company with a larger number, I am more likely simply to ask **what** department the caller wants.

Minimally invasive treatment

What sometimes goes wrong here is a special case of forgetting to use an adverbial form when modifying an adjective. In *News & Tips* No. 28, I gave the regrettably very common example of “**environmental** friendly” being used instead of the correct “**environmentally** friendly”. The first word qualifies the second word, “friendly”, which is an adjective, so the qualifying word must be an adverb, “**environmentally**”.

The medical expression “**minimally invasive treatment**” is exactly the same. The word “invasive” is an adjective, so the qualifying word must be an adverb, “**minimally**”. But here the adverbial ending “-ly” gets lost in pronunciation because of the “i” at the beginning of “invasive”. Native speakers *expect* the adverbial form and “hear” two sounds (“-ly” + “i”), while non-native speakers may not be so sure what to expect and may therefore hear “**minimal** invasive treatment” instead of the correct “**minimally** invasive treatment”.

And before you know it, the incorrect form even starts to *sound* right because that is what the non-native speaker seems to hear being said all the time, even by native speakers ... ☺

Looking good and looking well

The verb *to look* has two meanings, one active (“*He looked at her*”), and the other almost passive (“*She looked nice*”) meaning *how she seemed when he looked*. Notice that in, “*She looked nice*”, she didn’t do the looking; she was looked at, which is why I call it “almost passive”.

This pattern applies to a number of other verbs connected with the so-called five senses in modern English: “*He sounded nice*”; “*The tea tasted sweet*”; “*The grass smelled good*”; “*I felt great*”.

In each case, the last word is an *adjective* in English (in contrast to many other languages) because it is thought of as qualifying the subject, not the verb. We do **not** say “*He sounded nicely*” or “*The tea tasted sweetly*”. For more on this point, see also *News & Tips* No.13.

So you can look **good** or look **well**, but in both cases the words are adjectives describing you, so “*well*” here is the opposite of “*ill*”, and not the adverbial form for “*good*” as in “*she sings well*”.

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 now 12 kr. – invoicing once a quarter (minimum 120 kr.)

Questions & Answers

(Edited)

Prepositions: *in* and *on*

Dear Lawrence

*I was wondering if you could elaborate on the use of the word “on”? Can you say “a course **on** statistics”? Or is it “a course **in** statistics”? As I understand the word “on”, it generally means “on top of” – but not always. I think you can be **on** the train, even if you are not sitting on the roof ... I get especially confused with the translation of the Danish words **i** and **på**, and whether to use **in** or **on**.*

Yes, the prepositions are a problem – especially *in* and *on* and *at*!

With regard to school and university subjects, *in* is right: “a course **in** English”, or “a course **in** statistics”, but as soon as you start being more specific, there is a tendency to use *on*: “a course **on** the use of English in business”, or “a course **on** the history of statistics”.

But note that the phrase “a course *in* English” is actually ambiguous, because a course in any subject can also be *taught in English*. And indeed, in almost every other context (i.e. apart from school or university course descriptions), we will use *on* (or *about*): “an article **on** statistics”, “a conference **on** English”, etc.

You are quite right that we say “**on** the train (or bus)”. I suspect that this is due to the fact that the usage came into being for the very *first* trains and buses, where passengers really were more “on” than “in”! Both forms of transport were already slightly more developed when they began to be used in Denmark. But we also speak of being **on** a ship and **on** a plane. Note that the pattern breaks down with smaller means of transport (we say **in** a boat, **in** a car) and in space, where you are definitely **in** a spaceship. But, of course, you ride **on** a horse, a bicycle or a motorbike.

There is obviously a lot more to say on these prepositions, especially if we include *at*, so I will go into some other aspects in the next issue.

More than 500 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.

Store Erhvervsdag in Roskilde

Every year, Zealand Business Development organises a large-scale get-together for local business. This year’s event will be in Roskilde Conference and Sports Centre on Tuesday 8th April. There will be workshops, presentations, prize-giving for the year’s best new entrepreneurs, and lots of networking.

English support will be there with a stand and we will also be holding a 45-minute workshop on how companies can boost their market visibility with English and other foreign languages.

More next month!

Best wishes
Lawrence White
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www.  .dk
Your natural language partner

Please turn over!

Correspondence

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!

A letter to *Translatørforeningen*

On 13th January, I wrote a letter to each member of the Board of Directors as follows:

I am writing to ask you to clarify *Translatørforeningen*'s position with regard to Dee Shields' scurrilous attack on my company and person in the pages of *Translatørforbund*'s magazine MDTNyt in 2005.

The lady concerned shot herself badly in the foot with this article, but the fact remains that a full-blooded attempt to damage and discredit my company was made in the official magazine of *Translatørforbund* with the backing of the leadership. The article had absolutely no academic value and at 11,000 words was much longer than the rest of the issue it was in, or indeed other issues of MDTNyt. And it was dedicated to an attack on one person, me.

You are currently negotiating merger with this organisation. Therefore it is appropriate to ask you where you stand on such vilification of a fellow professional.

I very much hope you deprecate the article as much as I do and will distance your organisation clearly from it. I also hope that you will insist that in the first issue of the magazine of the new merged organisation the right of reply I was denied by Mette Aarslew* and the leadership of *Translatørforbund* should be upheld.

I look forward to hearing your views on these matters.

* Chairman of *Dansk Translatørforbund*. For her letter, see *News & Tips* No. 21

A letter to *English support*

This is what I received (dated 18th January) – *my translation* (their reply was in Danish):

Re: Article in the journal of *Dansk Translatørforbund*

The Board has received your letter dated 13th January 2008 about the above matter.

Translatørforeningen cannot take a position on an article in another organisation's publication.

Translatørforeningen requests that any further correspondence be sent to our secretariat and not to each individual member of the Board.

The reply was signed by a member of the secretariat *on behalf of* the Chairman, Claus Bentsen.

A second letter to *Translatørforeningen*

So on 21st January I replied as follows:

Does the Board of Directors seriously believe that this issue can be dismissed with the wave of a bureaucratic hand?

The only statement of substance in your reply is clearly wrong: the Board of Directors of *Translatørforeningen* not only can but must take a position on an 11,000 word article vilifying a fellow language professional in the pages of the official journal of an organisation *with which you are currently negotiating merger*.

Failure to do so would be a complete abdication of leadership.

To date (4th February), no reply has been received.

Next meeting for their merger negotiations with *Dansk Translatørforbund* is on 7th February.

Proofreading • Copy editing • Translation • Teaching