

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. 44 – June 2008

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Dear friends

As the summer period begins, our teaching load eases, but we are still very busy. In fact, turnover this quarter is already the second highest we have ever had – second only to the “tsunami” we experienced in the final quarter last year. Translation and proofreading work continues to pour in, and our extensive network of freelancers takes up the strain. But we can always use more help, so if you would like to join the team, get in touch.

The *Sea Stallion* sets course for home

At 12 noon on 29th June, a very special ship will cast off from Custom House Quay in Dublin and set course home to Roskilde in Denmark.

The *Sea Stallion from Glendalough* is a reconstruction of a Viking longship built in Dublin in 1042 found with four other Viking wrecks at the bottom of Roskilde Fjord during excavations in 1982.

The reconstruction was built over a four-year period from 2000–2004, using Viking tools and methods as part of a scientific project at the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde.

After extensive sea trials, the ship was sailed last year from Roskilde to Dublin, where it has been on display for nine months at the National Museum of Ireland.

And now the *Sea Stallion* is coming home. Last year, the voyage went round the north of Scotland; this year the ship will be sailing up the English channel.

The entire effort is a huge archaeological experiment to gain as much insight as possible into how the Vikings built and sailed their longships.

For the 65-man crew, it is also an experiment in learning how to live in extremely close proximity to each other for six weeks in an open ship only 30 metres long! And last year it rained six out of every seven days they were at sea.

Of course, they will stop off on the way (just like the Vikings did) and camp for the night on land whenever possible, but the trip across the North Sea will be non-stop for obvious reasons.

English support is currently working hard on the translation of all the new material (now coming in ever larger amounts) and getting the English on the *Sea Stallion*'s website shipshape as the final stage of this historic voyage (Roskilde to Dublin and back) gets under way.

Follow the progress of this fantastic archaeological research project at www.havhingsten.dk.



The *Sea Stallion* sailing round Scotland last year. Photo: Werner Karrasch. Copyright: Viking Ship Museum,

What makes science science?

The Viking Ship Museum's project around the *Sea Stallion* is a shining example of science at its best. In my view, the people involved have a really firm grip on the very essence of the matter.

When I teach scientific writing, I tease my students with the question: "Why do we write scientific papers?" Well, it's a good question and it needs a good answer – especially if all the effort of describing your work on paper is not going to seem like an irritating interruption of your "real" work ...

The fundamental answer is that science is not science until it is described so clearly and in sufficient detail that it can be checked by others and at least in principle repeated by others. That is the only real basis for any claim to *objectivity* science might make.

Look at what the Viking Ship Museum has done. Every step of the project has been described in detail, not only for archaeologists and specialists, but also for the general public. They call it making dissemination an integral part of the research, but what it means is that each step and indeed the entire project could (in principle at least) be repeated by another similarly dedicated team elsewhere.

And often a not insignificant by-product of such clear dissemination is being able to obtain the money to continue the research. Tens of thousands of ordinary people have been able to see the work being done, watch

the ship being built, and follow its sea trials and the voyage to Dublin. Such publicity generates sponsorship and other financial support, also from the general public.

Clarity (and funds)

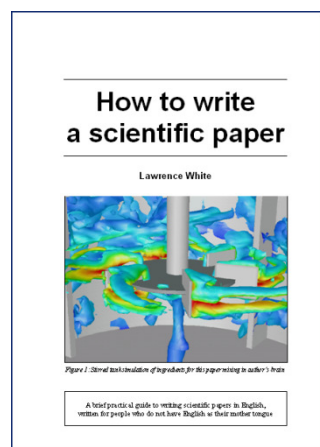
There is an important message here for scientists everywhere, and that is that you must *explain*. The word *explain* means *make clear* – that is, to *other* people. ☺ Now an awful lot of scientific papers are not written like that. On the contrary, a great many are written in a style that makes them very difficult to read – *even for people working in the same field!*

First of all, that means the work becomes virtually unrepeatable and therefore remains merely the *subjective* opinion of the author(s).

But it also means you are much less likely to get funds to continue your research, because people can't see what is so important about it.

Moral: Always write as clearly and simply as you can. Explain your work to your readers as you might if they were sitting opposite you over a cup of coffee. Don't adopt some alleged special "scientific-paper" style. The only correct style for scientific research writing is one that makes it easy to understand why you did it, how you did it, what you achieved, and what it means.

And that is what the Viking Ship Museum has done, and continues to do, so well.



Do you 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

From the workshop...

Affect and effect

These two words are often confused and each has more than one meaning, so let's see if we can disentangle them:

The linked meanings ...

In their most common senses, the word *affect* is a verb and the word *effect* is a noun. For example: “*The beer affected my balance*” and “*My loss of balance was the effect of beer*”. So the verb *to affect* means *to have an effect upon something or somebody*.

Note how this is not the same as the verb *to cause*. The beer *affected* my balance; it did not *cause* it. On the contrary, what it *caused* was my *imbalance*!

Another meaning of affect

But the verb *affect* can also mean to *put on a show* of something, as in a sentence like “*He affected innocence*”.

Other meanings of effect

The noun *effect* is also used in the theatre and film worlds for things and techniques that give the illusion of something, as in *special effects*.

The plural *effects* is also used as a formal word for *possessions*, as in “*Please take all your effects with you when you leave the hotel*”.

The expression *in effect* means the same as *for all practical purposes*.

Finally, the word *effect* is sometimes used in rather formal language as a *verb*, meaning to *bring about* as in: “*To effect a real change, the board was replaced*”.

Tip: Always use “*bring about*” here instead!

Apologise and apologies

The confusion here is generally a matter of spelling (and perhaps pronunciation). *Apologise* is the *verb*, meaning to *say you are sorry about something you take responsibility for*. *Apologies* is the plural of the noun *apology*, which refers to what you said when you *apologised*: you gave an *apology*. So it looks odd if you *apologies* for a mistake or ask someone to accept your *apologise*!

Broadcast and programme

While the verb *to broadcast* is commonly used of both TV and radio, the noun is rare today and a *broadcast* is usually referred to as a *TV (or radio) programme*. See also *News & Tips* no. 19.

Numbers and of

When we use *hundred*, *thousand*, *million*, etc. in numbers, they are always singular: e.g. *a (or one) hundred people*, *two hundred people*. But when used as pronouns, these words take a plural form with *-s*, e.g. “*How many people were at the party?*” “*Hundreds*”.

However, the answer to the same question could have been, “*Three hundred and seventeen*”. So the plural form is used only when these words are employed in a vague way and not when giving an actual number. And when they are used in this vague way, the word *of* is added to link to any following noun, e.g. “*There were hundreds of people at the party*”.

Note how the word *several* is treated as a number in this context, whereas the word *many* requires the plural:

“*Many hundreds of people came*”, but “*Several hundred people came*”.

Please note this date in your diary ...

KOMMUNIKATIONS- OG SPROGFORUM 2008
Thursday, 25 September, in “Ovnhallen”, CBS Copenhagen

Information and booking:

<http://www.kommunikationogsprog.dk/Forum/>

Tel. 33 91 98 00 or e-mail:

forum2008@kommunikationogsprog.dk

See you there!

Reciprocals

Dear Lawrence

Thank you for the clear exposition of reciprocals last month. But what about **replace** and **substitute**? You have written about them before [see News & Tips No. 22], but not as reciprocals. Could you explain how they fit in?

Yes, the reader is quite right! The verbs **replace** and **substitute** are reciprocal in meaning, though in a way that differs slightly from the examples I gave last month. So we should add a point 2a to what was written in *News & Tips* No. 43 ...

2a Like **give** and **take**, **sell** and **buy**, etc., the verbs **substitute** and **replace** also take two objects (a direct object and a prepositional object), but they differ in that if you rewrite the sentence using the other verb *the subject remains the same while the objects change places*:

e.g. *I substitute a red colour for the green.*
I replace the green colour with a red.

SUBSTITUTE → REPLACE

If we think of a football match, we can see the point of the direction of the arrow:

e.g. *The trainer substituted Jones for Smith.*
The trainer replaced Smith with Jones.

In the first sentence, the direct object of the verb (Jones) moves *away from* the subject (the trainer), whereas in the second sentence, the direct object of the verb (Smith) moved *towards* the subject (still the trainer) when he comes off the pitch.

Now comes the complication! Suppose we leave out the trainer? The sentences would then have to be:

e.g. *Jones substituted for Smith.*
Jones replaced Smith.

This has led a lot of dictionaries to list these two reciprocal verbs as synonyms! But note that it is *only in this limited case*, where the decision-maker (the trainer in this case) is not mentioned in the sentence, that the two verbs can be treated as meaning much the same.

And, as noted in *News & Tips* No. 22, the verb *substitute for* is more “active” than the verb *replace*. It implies some kind of agent – which is probably why the people who replace other players in team games are called *substitutes*. They don't just *happen* (like *night replaces day*) but are *actively sent* on to the pitch to replace another player.

If you would like an exercise on using reciprocal verbs, get in touch!

Did you know?

English support can offer you **native-speaker** translation and proofreading help with not only English, but also Bangla, 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.

More next month!

Best wishes

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