

PITFALLS FOR DANES

Here is a collection of some of the problems Danes encounter when writing (or speaking) English. All these examples are real. In other words, these are all things I have corrected in the English texts produced by Danes working at AU (including both academic and technical/administrative staff). The sentences have all been anonymised to ensure that nobody could possibly work out who fell into the pitfalls described here.

I hope you find this useful. Please feel free to get back to me with any comments and feedback (positive or negative). You are also more than welcome to send me any additional pitfalls for Danes, or any questions about the English language that you would like to be included in this collection. The collection will be updated on an ongoing basis.

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afhandling

You should translate *afhandling* into “dissertation” and not “thesis”. The term “thesis” is normally used as a translation of *speciale*.

afhænge af/afhængig af

Note the use of the correct preposition in the examples below. And note that there is a difference between “dependent” (which means *afhængig*) and “a dependant” (someone who depends on another person for financial support, for instance).

✗ Your interpretation of Merleau-Ponty’s theories depends of your knowledge of the subject

✓ Your interpretation of Merleau-Ponty’s theories depends on your knowledge of the subject

✗ Your interpretation of Merleau-Ponty’s theories is dependent of your knowledge of the subject

✓ Your interpretation of Merleau-Ponty’s theories is dependent on your knowledge of the subject

afvise

Note the difference between “to refuse” something (which means to say no to some kind of offer) and “to deny” something (which means to fail to accept something). “To decline” means more or less the same as “to refuse”, although it is perhaps slightly more formal. “To reject” also means more or less the same as “to refuse”. The main problem for Danes seems to be the difference between “to deny” and “to refuse”. Here are a couple of examples:

The dean made me an offer I couldn’t deny

✓ The dean made me an offer I couldn’t refuse

✗ The prime minister refused the allegations made against her

✓ The prime minister denied the allegations made against her

akronymmer

Acronyms are words that are actually pronounced as words, consisting of the first letters of the name of something (NATO, OPEC, UNESCO). They should be written without the definite article (“the”). See *forkortelser* for other details about other kinds of abbreviation and their use/non-use of the definite article.

✗ I am applying to the OPEC for extra funding

✓ I am applying to OPEC for extra funding

aktualitet

Try to avoid “actuality” and especially “actualness” for this. There are normally better options. Note the following examples:

- ✗ The course demonstrates the actuality of robot technology
- ✗ The course demonstrates the actualness of robot technology
- ✓ The course demonstrates the current relevance of robot technology
- ✓ The course demonstrates the topical nature of robot technology

aktuel

Don’t translate this into “actual” in English, because “actual” in English means *faktisk* or perhaps *egentlig* in Danish. Use “present” or “current” instead. In many cases, “contemporary” may be the best choice.

aktør

I think you should try to avoid the English term “actor”. It’s not exactly wrong, but the problem is that the reader will think of Shakespeare and people performing on a stage. The term “stakeholder” is a better option in many cases. Or perhaps “figure”.

- ✗ This particular research project will require contributions from many different actors
- ✓ This particular research project will require contributions from many different stakeholders
- ✗ Habermas was a central actor in the development of the offside rule
- ✓ Habermas was a central figure in the development of the offside rule

allerede

You can’t necessarily use “already” as a translation of *allerede*. In many cases, there are better options. There are also differences between Danish and English in terms of the position of “already” in a sentence. And when translating *allerede eksisterende*, note that it is enough to say “already”. You don’t need to add “existing” (see examples 3 and 4 below). Note the following examples:

- ✗ Already Napoleon believed in European unity in 1805
- ✓ Napoleon believed in European unity as long ago as 1805
- ✗ We need to consider already existing examples of this phenomenon
- ✓ We need to consider existing examples of this phenomenon

- ✗ These religions were introduced already in the 18th century
- ✓ These religions were introduced back in the 18th century
- ✓ These religions were introduced as long ago as the 18th century
- ✓ These religions had already been introduced by the 18th century
- ✗ Already before the pandemic, things were looking bad in the UK
- ✓ Even before the pandemic, things were looking bad in the UK
- ✓ Already, before the pandemic, things were looking bad in the UK (I don't think this is a great solution, but it's OK)
- ✓ Things were already looking bad in the UK before the pandemic

ansvarlig

This may be a small point, but you could say that in some contexts the position of this adjective in English may have an impact on the meaning of the sentence. Note the following examples. In the first example, “responsible” is an attributive adjective (occurring in front of the noun), while in the second it is a predicative adjective (occurring after the noun). Most adjectives can occur in both positions, but sometimes their position has an influence on the meaning.

- ✓ The responsible professor (which COULD mean the professor who is not the irresponsible professor, implying that there is also an irresponsible professor involved here)
- ✓ The professor responsible (which definitely means the professor who is responsible)

ansætte

Note the difference between “appoint” (referring to the moment when your employment starts) and “employ” (referring to the entire period of your employment):

- ✗ I was employed on 1 June 2013
- ✓ I was appointed on 1 June 2013
- ✓ I have been employed at AU since 2013

ansøger

I think you can argue that in job adverts there is a difference between “an applicant” (a person who is applying for a job) and “a candidate” (an applicant who is in some sense a real contender for actually getting a job). AU job adverts tend to mix the two indiscriminately. AU job adverts also

sometimes struggle to distinguish correctly between “the applicant”, “applicants” and “the successful applicant”, which is sometimes confusing.

antal

See *mængde*.

anvende

This can be translated into either “use” or “apply”, although in some cases “use” is better (perhaps when some kind of physical or literal use is involved). Note the following examples:

- ✗ This particular theatre director applies lighting techniques in her own particular way
- ✓ This particular theatre director uses lighting techniques in her own particular way
- ✓ You are welcome to apply these methods in your analysis of Foucault’s alcohol consumption
- ✓ You are welcome to use these methods in your analysis of Foucault’s alcohol consumption

arabisk

Note that there is a difference between “Arab” (a person, culture etc.) and “Arabic” (a language).

- ✗ The new professor is an expert on Arabic culture
- ✓ The new professor is an expert on Arab culture
- ✗ So it is extremely surprising that she can’t speak Arab
- ✓ So it is extremely surprising that she can’t speak Arabic

artikler

A great deal could be said about the use of the definite article (“the”) and the indefinite article (“a/an”) in English. One of the big problems for Danes is remembering to add “the” in front of phrases that contain “of”:

- ✗ The aim of this association is to increase digitisation of our products and services
- ✓ The aim of this association is to increase the digitisation of our products and services
- ✗ I am going to have tea with Queen of Denmark tomorrow
- ✓ I am going to have tea with the Queen of Denmark tomorrow

✗ I've been working at Faculty of Health for a few years now

✓ I've been working at the Faculty of Health for a few years now

See *en/et*.

Arts

It's dangerous to refer to the Faculty of Arts as "Arts" if you are talking to anyone outside AU, because they will think you are talking about *kunst*. They will not think you are talking about *humaniora*. It's best to use the full title whenever possible.

✗ I am delighted to be working at Arts

✓ I am delighted to be working at the Faculty of Arts

bedre

This is a false comparative. Don't translate it into "better" unless you are actually comparing two things.

✗ I am pushing the boat out and have invited her out for a better dinner

✓ I am pushing the boat out and have invited her out for a really good dinner

✓ Monica's dinner was better than Chandler's

begyndelsen, i begyndelsen

Note the use of the correct preposition:

✗ In the beginning of April, things really started to go pear shaped

✓ At the beginning of April, things really started to go pear shaped

✓ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God

begyndende

You can't use "beginning" as an adjective in front of a noun in English. Try to find better alternatives.

✗ The students sensed a beginning weariness as they approached the end of their fifth semester

✓ The students sensed an incipient weariness as they approached the end of their fifth semester

✓ The students started to feel weary as they approached the end of their fifth semester

behandle

There are various good options for a translation of this word, depending on the context. You could consider the following: “process”, “deal with”, “discuss”, “review”. Your choice depends on how the word is used in the sentence in question.

belyse

You might be able to use “illustrate” or perhaps “illuminate” for this, but in many cases “shed light on” is a clearer way of expressing what the Danish term means.

benytte

People are occasionally tempted to translate this into “exploited”, but I think this is wrong because “to exploit” means “to take advantage of”, or even “to misuse”. In Danish this would be *at udnytte*. It’s much better to just translate this term into “to use”.

✗ In our analysis we have exploited many different sources

✓ In our analysis we have used many different sources

bestå, bestå af

Note the following examples:

✗ The committee comprises of some pretty brilliant people, actually

✓ The committee consists of some pretty brilliant people, actually

✓ The committee comprises some pretty brilliant people, actually

besøgende

See *gæst*.

betragte

Translate *betragte som* into either “regarded as” or “considered to be”. But avoid “considered as”:

✓ Einstein is regarded as the greatest scientist in human history

✓ Einstein is considered to be the greatest scientist in human history

✗ Einstein is considered as the greatest scientist in human history

bibliografi

See *litteratur/litteraturliste*.

bidrage med

This should be translated into “contribute” and not “contribute with”. And note the difference between “contribute to XXX” (where “XXX” is a noun or a gerund), and “help to YYY” (where “YYY” is a verb in the infinitive form). In other words, the verb “contribute to” should be followed by a noun or a gerund, while the verb “help to” should be followed by a verb in the infinitive. Some researchers prefer “contribute to XXX” instead of “help to YYY” because they feel it is less direct/specific and therefore more accurate in relation to what they are trying to say. Here are some examples:

✗ The professor contributed with plenty of new ideas to the research field

✓ The professor contributed plenty of new ideas to the research field

✗ The professor contributed to provide an answer in this complex area of research

✓ The professor contributed to providing an answer in this complex area of research

✗ The professor helped to providing an answer in this complex area of research

✓ The professor helped to provide an answer in this complex area of research

Bildung

See *dannelse*.

bindestreger

In many cases, the function of a hyphen is to help the reader to understand the relationship between the words in compound noun phrases. For instance, there is a difference between “physical education institutions” (tangible education institutions as opposed to virtual ones) and “physical-education institutions” (institutions for physical education). And between “15 year-old students” (15 students who are one year old) and “15-year-old students” (students who are 15 years old). And between “English language students” (language students who are English) and “English-language students” (students of the English language). One of the mistakes that Danes tend to make is putting hyphens in compound nouns which are written as one word in Danish but not in English (see the

“TV-screen” example below). Note the following examples. For hyphens in words at the end of lines, see *orddeling*.

- ✗ Aarhus is the second largest city in Denmark
- ✓ Aarhus is the second-largest city in Denmark
- ✗ He had the mind of a three year old child
- ✓ He had the mind of a three-year-old child
- ✓ The child was three years old (no hyphens because the meaning is clear)
- ✗ Denmark has a unique approach to upper secondary education
- ✓ Denmark has a unique approach to upper-secondary education
- ✗ You will see what I’m talking about if you turn on your TV-screen
- ✓ You will see what I’m talking about if you turn on your TV screen
- ✗ The issue could be resolved if we used a private sector supplier
- ✓ The issue could be resolved if we used a private-sector supplier
- ✓ The supplier was involved in the private sector (no hyphen because the meaning is clear)

bjerge

I think it’s OK to translate *Mols Bjerge* into “the Mountains of Mols” and *Himmelbjerget* into “the Heavenly Mountain”. It’s true that they would be regarded as hills in the USA, and almost flat land in Nepal, but they are mountains by Danish standards. So it’s OK to call them mountains in my view. Doing this even adds a touch of Danish humour, which is surely good (“We know our country is extremely flat, but we’re proud to call them mountains because they are mountains to us”).

blandt andet

The Latin term “inter alia” and the abbreviation “i.a.” exist in both Danish and English, but I often think there are better options (“among other things” is one of these). The position of “among other things” in a sentence also presents a problem for Danes sometimes. Note the following examples:

- ✗ Mette Frederiksen asked inter alia Søren Brostrøm about the new corona restrictions
- ✗ Mette Frederiksen asked i.a. Søren Brostrøm about the new corona restrictions
- ✓ Mette Frederiksen asked Søren Brostrøm and other experts about the new corona restrictions

bringe

See *tage*.

bruge

See *anvende*.

bukser

Note that in British English *bukser* are called “trousers”, while in American English they are called “pants”. There is the potential for confusion here, because in Britain “pants” or “underpants” means *underbukser*. When translating *bukser* for an international audience, it is probably safest to stick with “trousers” to be on the safe side.

byer

In general you can say that the difference between a “town” and a “city” is that a “city” is a large “town”. But actually the original difference was that a “city” was a political or religious centre for the surrounding region. For instance, St. David’s in Wales is a village in terms of its size. But there’s a cathedral in St. David’s, so St. David’s is officially a city because it is a religious centre in the Anglican Church. I would say that Viborg and Ribe are “cities” on this basis. But that Randers and Horsens are “towns”. And if you’re judging the size of a place (this is conventionally done on the basis of the size of the population), I think you should decide whether it’s big by Danish standards. Most towns and cities in Denmark are small by American standards, so they might be regarded as “towns” if they were located in the US, but this is not the way to judge them. PS: There are no cathedrals in Muslim countries, so this distinction won’t help much in those cases. And note that a “village” (*landsby*) is really very small.

både

You can use “both” to refer to two things, but there must only be two things involved – not more than two. Note the following examples:

✗ Stalin had been to both the Crimea, Siberia and St. Petersburg

✓ Stalin had been to the Crimea, Siberia and St. Petersburg

ca.

This is the Danish abbreviation for *cirka*. It can be abbreviated either “ca.” or “c.” in English. It is also fine to use “approx.” or even “circa”.

campus

Note the difference in word order: *Campus Emdrup/Campus Aarhus* in Danish should be written “Emdrup Campus/Aarhus Campus” in English, because “campus” normally comes last in such English names.

✗ I love working at Campus Birmingham

✓ I love working at the Birmingham Campus

censor

Avoid the use of “censor” in English when talking about co-examiners, because a “censor” is someone who checks whether films should be shown to children, or whether prisoners should be allowed to send letters without having certain sections deleted (for instance). Use either “internal co-examiner” or “external co-examiner”, or just “co-examiner” if you don’t know whether the person is internal or external.

✗ In case of doubt, the censor always has the last word

✓ In case of doubt, the co-examiner always has the last word

censurform

This is often translated into “form of co-examination”, but I think this is problematic because there is no such thing as a “co-examination”. So the idea of having different forms of co-examination makes no sense. There are better alternatives:

✗ Form of co-examination: internal

✓ Type of co-examiner: internal

✓ Co-examiner: internal

citater

When translating quotations in news articles (for instance), it’s best to use contractions in English to try and make your words sound like something someone would actually have said (“he isn’t, I didn’t, we can’t” etc.) In addition, it’s worth pointing out that Danish tends to repeat the full name of the people who say things in such articles every time they are quoted (*Jesper Søgaard Hansen sagde, at ... tilføjede Jesper Søgaard Hansen*). English tends to state the full name of the people who are quoted the first time they are mentioned (“Jesper Søgaard Hansen said that ...”). But subsequent references to the same names will only use the surname (“Hansen added that ...”) There may also be a tendency to use the present tense rather than the past tense more frequently in English

than in Danish (“Hansen says that ...”) But I don’t have any statistics to prove this, and whatever you choose I think you should be consistent.

citationstegn

You can use either single or double quotation marks. But if you are publishing something in an academic journal, check the preferences of the journal first. For quotations within quotations: use single quotation marks if you started with double quotation marks, and double if you started with single. Quotation marks to indicate that you are using a word in an ironic or special sense are known as “scare quotes”. But they can easily be over-used. Try to avoid them as much as possible.

- ✓ The theatre director commented: “Hamlet said ‘To be or not to be’”
- ✓ The theatre director commented: ‘Hamlet said “To be or not to be”’
- ✗ His problem is that he has never experienced the ‘real’ world
- ✓ His problem is that he has never experienced the real world
- ✓ His problem is that he has never experienced what some people call the ‘real’ world

dannelse

This is tricky to translate, because it is such a specifically Danish concept. There are various options: “self-education”, “self-formation”, “formative education”, or perhaps the German term *Bildung* (best written in italics). In some contexts, you can use the term “literacy” (for instance, “digital literacy” is not bad for *digitaldannelse*, and “media literacy” can be used as a translation of *mediedannelse*).

data

This is the plural form of the Latin “datum”. But it is generally regarded as an uncountable noun.

- ✗ How many data have you gathered in your investigation?
- ✓ How much data have you gathered in your investigation?
- ✗ I have collected a lot of data, but I’m afraid they are unreliable
- ✓ I have collected a lot of data, but I’m afraid it is unreliable

datoer

British English puts the day first, then the month, then the year. American English puts the month first, then the day plus a comma, then the year:

✓ Today's date in British English is 2 October 2020

✓ Today's date in American English is October 2, 2020

decimaler

Note that Danish and English have opposite conventions when writing decimals. Danish uses a comma, while English uses a full stop.

✗ My investment gave me a 98,7% return

✓ My investment gave me a 98.7% return

den/denne/det/dette

Note that "this" means close at hand, while "that" means further away in some sense. The difference is often hard to define. It's a grey area. But there seems to be a difference between Danish and English usage here, and Danes should probably choose "this" when they actually feel like choosing "that". In many cases, "this" is preferable to "that" because you are talking about something close to you rather than underlining the distance between you and the thing you're talking about:

✗ However, that will not prevent the department from investing in new IT equipment

✓ However, this will not prevent the department from investing in new IT equipment

dessert

See *ørken*.

direkte

Some confusion may arise regarding the difference between "directly" and "direct", depending on the word order in the sentence concerned. Note the following examples:

✓ I will send you an email directly (I will send you an email soon)

✓ I will send an email directly to you (I will send an email straight to you)

✓ I will send an email direct to you (I will send an email straight to you)

diskret

Note the difference between "discreet" and "discrete":

- ✓ Please be discreet – we don't want to cause any trouble (please don't arouse any undue attention)
- ✓ I regard this as an entirely discrete argument (an entirely separate argument)

dispensation

This cannot necessarily be translated into “exemption”, because “exemption” means *fritagelse* in Danish. It's fine to say “exemption from the rules”, though. And it is true that the term “dispensation” is somewhat unusual in the English language. Note that both “dispensation” and “exemption” are normally regarded as uncountable nouns (you shouldn't talk about “a number of dispensations”, for instance).

- ✗ I was given exemption for this exam, so I got an extra hour to submit my assignment.
- ✓ I was given dispensation for this exam, so I got an extra hour to submit my assignment
- ✗ I don't have to do that exam – I've been given dispensation
- ✓ I don't have to do that exam – I've been given exemption
- ✗ You can't apply for several dispensations in the same semester
- ✓ You can't apply for dispensation for more than one exam in the same semester

doktorafhandling

The best translation of this is probably “doctoral dissertation”, to indicate that it is a level above a PhD dissertation.

doktorgrad

The best translation of this is probably “higher doctoral degree”, to indicate that it is a level above a PhD degree.

effektiv

Note the difference between “effective” (which means having an effect) and “efficient” (which means being very productive in relation to the amount of effort invested). The difference is small but may be important.

efterskole

The term “continuation school” is a pretty good translation of this, although you may need to explain that in Denmark these are also boarding schools, and that they generally have their own

profile, offering other special courses in addition to ninth and tenth grade. On the *efterskole* website in English, they use the Danish term *efterskole*. But this makes no sense to an international reader without a long explanation, so I think “continuation school” is fine.

egen/eget/egne

In Danish the personal pronoun can often be dropped in front of *egen* or *eget*, but this is not the case in English, where you can only use “my own”, “his own”, “her own”, “its own”, “your own”, “our own” or “their own”. Note the following examples:

- ✗ Students must learn to apply a theoretical approach in own practical work
- ✓ Students must learn to apply a theoretical approach in their own practical work

eksisterende/allerede eksisterende

See *allerede*. And note that the Danish *allerede eksisterende* is actually tautologous (it says the same thing twice):

- ✗ It was obvious that he was talking about an already existing problem
- ✓ It was obvious that he was talking about an existing problem

Emdrup

You should not assume that an international audience knows where Emdrup is. In fact, although Danes in Copenhagen may know where it is, most other Danes will not know either. So there is a very good argument for writing “Copenhagen” instead of “Emdrup” if you want your international readers to know where the Emdrup Campus is.

- ✗ The Danish School of Education is based in both Emdrup and Aarhus
- ✓ The Danish School of Education is based in both Copenhagen and Aarhus

en/et

Note that the choice between “a” and “an” depends not on the first LETTER of the following word, but on the first SOUND made in pronouncing the next word. In many cases, if a word starts with a vowel the first sound will also be a vowel. But not always. Some words (“university” is a good example) start with a vowel (u), but the first sound is NOT a vowel, but the phoneme /j/ (like the first sound made in “young”). This is why “a university” is correct and “an university” is wrong. Similarly:

- ✗ She was an unique horse whisperer with almost magical powers

✓ She was a unique horse whisperer with almost magical powers

✗ I have always wanted to work for a NGO

✓ I have always wanted to work for an NGO

✗ The new coronavirus is a RNA virus

✓ The new coronavirus is an RNA virus

en eller flere

I'm not sure whether this is a pitfall for Danes or not, but it may cause some confusion owing to the presence of "or" in "one or more", which indicates that there is a choice between two individual things. The expression "one or more" should be followed by a plural noun and not a singular noun. This is probably because the presence of a clear plural ("more") right next to the noun influences the choice of singular or plural.

✗ The department is currently studying one or more Scandinavian language

✓ The department is currently studying one or more Scandinavian languages

enkelt

Note the difference between "single" (which means one only) and "singular" (which means unusual or odd in some way). Some Danes are tempted to use the second option when they actually mean the first.

erfaring med

Note the use of the correct preposition in English:

✗ Applicants must have considerable experience with the academic world

✓ Applicants must have considerable experience of the academic world

et al.

Note that "al." is an abbreviation of the Latin "alii" (which means "others"), which is why there should be a full stop after "al". But no full stop is needed after "et", because it is not an abbreviation. Occasionally you see "et alii" written in full, and this is certainly not wrong. But if you choose to write "et alii" in full, you should do so consistently throughout your text.

✗ Smith, Jones, Brown et al

- ✗ Smith, Jones, Brown et. al
- ✗ Smith, Jones, Brown et. al.
- ✓ Smith, Jones, Brown et al.

eventuelt

Don't translate *eventuelt* into "eventually" (which means after a long period of time, or after doing other things first). Use "possibly" or "perhaps" instead. You can also translate *eventuelt* by using "may".

- ✗ Thank you for the invitation. I will eventually come to the party (this would mean you will come to the party after doing lots of other things)
- ✓ Thank you for the invitation. I may come to the party
- ✓ Thank you for the invitation. I will possibly come to the party

faglig

This term is used to mean many different things, so the correct choice often depends on the context in which you are using the term. Here are some examples:

- ✓ What we need now is some academic input
- ✓ What we need now is some expert input
- ✓ What we need now is some professional input
- ✓ What we need now is some subject-related input

fagligt miljø

I suppose "subject environment" is OK for this, but in many cases I think "department" is better, and it is often what people mean when they say *fagligt miljø*.

feltarbejde

Like *arbejde*, this is an uncountable noun, so you can't add an "s" in the plural or talk about "a fieldwork" in the singular. If you need to talk about fieldwork in the plural, you have to rephrase your sentence in some way. Note the following examples:

- ✗ I did several fieldworks in the 1990s, but never managed to produce an article on my findings

- ✗ I did a fieldwork in the 1990s, but never managed to produce an article on my findings
- ✓ I did fieldwork on several occasions in the 1990s, but never managed to produce an article on my findings
- ✓ I went on several fieldwork trips in the 1990s, but never managed to produce an article on my findings

Folkeskolen

This is a bit tricky to translate because it is a culturally specific term covering what is known as primary and lower-secondary education in the UK. You could consider translating it into “Danish state school”, or even leaving it in the Danish: *Folkeskolen*. Be careful with terms like “primary school/secondary school/grammar school/comprehensive school/public school” unless you know exactly what you’re talking about. This is because they all reflect specific British or American school systems. For instance, the term “public school” means “state school” in the US; but it means “private school” in the UK.

for eksempel

Note that you don’t generally need both “for instance” and “etc.” in the same sentence:

- ✗ We will study (for instance) climate change, the environment today, recycling etc.
- ✓ We will study (for instance) climate change, the environment today and recycling

See *såsom for eksempel* for a similar example of tautology.

I think it is normally better to write “for instance” or “for example” rather than using the abbreviation “e.g.” And be careful about the position of “for instance” in a sentence:

- ✗ This point is e.g. expressed in Heidegger’s theory about beer brewing
- ✓ This point is expressed in Heidegger’s theory about beer brewing, for instance
- ✓ This point is expressed in Heidegger’s theory about beer brewing, and elsewhere

forhindre

Note that “to prevent” means “to stop something happening or existing”, whereas “to avoid” means “to keep away from something”. Note the following examples:

- ✗ We need to make this degree programme more interesting to avoid students dropping out (this sounds like the student drop-outs are falling from the sky and potentially landing on your head)
- ✓ We need to make this degree programme more interesting to prevent students dropping out

- ✓ The accident could have been prevented (to stop it happening at all)
- ✓ The accident could have been avoided (we could have steered our car around the accident)
- ✓ We are asking the students to avoid litter in the Nobel Park (please walk around it)
- ✓ We are asking the students to prevent litter in the Nobel Park (please stop litter occurring)

forholdsord

Prepositions are difficult. In many cases, you can find some good tips regarding their use in good English-English dictionaries. There is no room here to present them in full. But note the following difference between “in”, “on” and “at”:

- ✓ I’ll see you in the restaurant (this means inside the restaurant)
- ✓ I’ll see you at the restaurant (this means inside the restaurant or on the pavement outside)
- ✓ I’ll see you on the restaurant (this means on the roof of the restaurant)
- ✗ We met on a conference about genetic engineering
- ✓ We met at a conference about genetic engineering

forhåndsgodkendelse

Note the difference between “advance approval” (which means approval before doing something), “preliminary approval” (approval before or after doing something, but not final approval), “provisional approval” (approval before or after doing something, but only subject to certain conditions), and “prior approval” (which means roughly the same as “advance approval”). Students signing up for courses at universities outside Denmark need to ensure that they will be able to transfer the ECTS credits gained to their degree programme at AU. So they normally need to gain “advance approval” of these courses to ensure that they will be able to do this.

forkortelser

One of the problems about abbreviations is whether to put the definite article (“the”) in front of them. In general, you should put the definite article first if the full name also uses the definite article. You may have to Google this name to find out whether this is so. There is also a tendency to drop “the” if you are so familiar with the abbreviation that you regard it as a name (“CNN”, for instance). See *akronymer* for examples of abbreviations which are normally pronounced as words. Note that the plural form of English abbreviations does not take an apostrophe before the final “s” (see the example with NGO’s/NGOs below). And note that if an abbreviation is used as a classifying adjective, you do not need to add “the” – even though you do need to do this when the abbreviation is used as a noun (see the final two examples below).

- ✓ You can watch my documentary on the BBC (the British Broadcasting Corporation)
- ✓ I recommend that you apply for funding to the EU (the European Union)
- ✓ For God's sake don't tell the FBI (the Federal Bureau of Investigation)
- ✓ I refuse to buy my petrol from BP (British Petroleum)
- ✓ I love working for AU (Aarhus University)
- ✓ The Corona pandemic has resulted in huge problems for BA (British Airways)
- ✗ The situation will only improve if we involve a number of NGO's in the work that lies ahead
- ✓ The situation will only improve if we involve a number of NGOs in the work that lies ahead
- ✗ Barnaby did not believe in observing the FBI regulations
- ✓ Barnaby did not believe in observing the FBI's regulations
- ✓ Barnaby did not believe in observing FBI regulations

formidle

There are various ways of translating this into English, and I think the decision should depend on exactly what the word means in the context in which it is being used. Some of the options are: "disseminate", "communicate" and "present". I often end up thinking that "disseminate" sounds excessively formal, and tend to use "communicate" and "present" instead.

formål

This is a pretty small difference, I know. But I think it is true to say that there is a difference between your "objective" (underlining WHAT you are trying to achieve) and your "purpose" (underlining WHY you are trying to achieve it). See *mål*.

forsikre/at forsikre

Note that "to ensure" means to promise or guarantee something, to make something happen. The verb "to secure" means to make safe, to guard or protect. This is sometimes a problem for Danes because *at forsikre* covers both these meanings. Here is an example of this pitfall:

- ✗ The idea of doing oral exams is to secure that fewer students drop out
- ✓ The idea of doing oral exams is to ensure that fewer students drop out

forskellig

Note the difference between “different ideas” (which means different in relation to a group of other ideas”) and “various ideas” (which means ideas which are different in relation to each other). You could say that “various” means *indbyrdes forskellige*, while “different” often means *anderledes*. However, this is a bit of a grey area, and the two terms are not always easily distinguished from each other. But note that “many different” and “three different” are correct, while “many various” and “three various” are incorrect. And note that “a variety of different” is tautologous (you don’t need both).

forskningsophold

See *ophold*.

fortælle

Watch out for the Danish verb *fortælle* in constructions like *denne historie fortæller, at* The problem here is that the English verb “tell” normally requires an indirect object (*hensynsled*) as well as a direct object (*genstandsled*). The indirect object in the example below is “us”. And drop the comma in front of “that”, as well (see *kommaer*):

- ✗ This narrative tells, that the Vikings did not actually rape and pillage every woman they met
- ✓ This narrative tells us that the Vikings did not actually rape and pillage every woman they met

forvejen, i forvejen

Note the following examples:

- ✗ The students were given the exam questions in beforehand
- ✓ The students were given the exam questions beforehand
- ✓ The students were given the exam questions in advance

forvente

Note the (slight) difference between “to expect” (which means to think or believe that something will happen) and “to anticipate” (which means to guess something in advance, or to think something is **likely** to happen). In other words, there is a greater sense of prediction and certainty about the future in “anticipate” than in “expect”. The verb “to anticipate” can also be translated into *at imødesæ/regne med/foregribe*, all of which indicate some kind of greater certainty about the future than *at forvente*. However, not everyone agrees that there is necessarily a difference between “to expect” and “to anticipate”, and the difference is certainly often very hard to spot.

- ✓ Are you expecting any trouble at the football game? (Do you think there will be any trouble?)
- ✓ Are you anticipating any trouble at the football game? (Do you think that it is likely that there will be any trouble?)

fremmed

It is best to avoid “foreign” and “foreigner”, because these terms could be regarded as derogatory and indicate that the speaker regards Denmark as the centre of the universe. It’s even worse to use “alien”. Use “non-Dane” instead, perhaps, or an expression like “international student”. See *udenlandsk* and *udlænding*.

- ✗ We are hoping to attract applications from many foreign professors
- ✗ We are hoping to attract applications from many alien professors
- ✓ We are hoping to attract applications from many international professors
- ✓ We are hoping to attract applications from many professors from outside Denmark

friskole

The term “independent school” is probably best for this. Note that the term “free school” could mean that you do not have to pay for the school, which is misleading.

fyldt

Note the difference between “full” (an adjective) and “filled” (a verb which is sometimes used as an adjective, but which has retained some sense of the action involved in the filling process instead of just describing something).

- ✓ Professor Hansen was full of good ideas (he had lots of good ideas)
- ✓ Professor Hansen was filled with good ideas (someone had poured good ideas into him)

fænomen

Note that the plural of “phenomenon” is “phenomena”.

før

Note the difference between “before” and “until”:

✓ This particular thesis was not explained before the 1990s (the thesis was not explained before the 1990s, and it may not have been explained after the 1990s, either)

✓ This particular thesis was not explained until the 1990s (the thesis was not explained before the 1990s, but in the 1990s it was definitely explained)

føre til

Some Danes (and even some English people) fall into a spelling pitfall when writing the verb “to lead” in the perfect and past tense. This verb is conjugated lead–led–led:

✗ The new rule has lead to a situation in which too many students failed the grammar exam

✓ The new rule has led to a situation in which too many students failed the grammar exam

✗ The new rule lead to a situation in which too many students failed the grammar exam

✓ The new rule led to a situation in which too many students failed the grammar exam

førnævnt

Note the following examples, and see *tillægsord*:

✗ This idea is also presented in the before-mentioned article by Brown et al.

✓ This idea is also presented in the above-mentioned article by Brown et al.

✓ This idea is also presented in the article by Brown et al. mentioned previously

✓ This idea is also presented in the article by Brown et al. mentioned above

førstnævnt

Note that you can only translate this into “former” if two things are involved (and only two). See *sidstnævnt*, which can only be translated into “latter” when two things are involved (and only two).

✗ There were three options, and it is the former that I have decided to accept

✓ There were three options, and I have decided to accept the first of them

få

Note the difference between “few” and “a few” in the following examples:

✓ The department has few permanent members of staff (hardly any permanent members of staff)

✓ The department has a few permanent members of staff (not many, but at least some)

godkende

This can usually be translated into “approve”. But there may be some confusion in Danish expressions like *titlen på specialet skal godkendes af den ansvarlige vejleder*. If you write “the title of the thesis must be approved by the supervisor responsible”, you are indicating that this supervisor will be forced to approve the title, which is not actually what the Danish means. The meaning is “the title of the thesis is subject to the approval of the supervisor responsible”, so this is a more accurate translation.

gymnasium

Note that a “gymnasium” in English is a place you go to exercise or play some kind of sport. The best translation of *gymnasium* is probably “high school”. But you can also use “upper-secondary school” in a British context, because this is the corresponding level in the UK.

gæst

There is a small difference between “guest” and “visitor”, although this difference is not always clear. It’s a difference in connotations. A “visitor” is perhaps the more neutral of the two terms – it’s someone who visits a place or person. A “guest” is someone who has actually been invited and who will receive some form of hospitality (often staying overnight). So “guest” sounds more welcoming, and you may well expect more of your hosts. I think it’s true to say that the same difference applies in Danish (the difference between *besøgende* and *gæst*). But sometimes Danes seem to be tempted to use “guest” when they really should use “visitor”.

halvanden, halvandet

Any number more than one is regarded as a plural, so you need to add an “s” to the noun. And “one and a half” is more than one. The most frequent problem for Danes occurs in sentences like:

✗ I have been studying cognitive science for one and a half year

✓ I have been studying cognitive science for one and a half years

halvt/et halvt år

In English there is a tendency to use “six months” instead of “half a year”:

✗ I’ve been studying Chinese for half a year now, and it’s all Greek to me

✓ I’ve been studying Chinese for six months now, and it’s all Greek to me

Health

It's dangerous to refer to the Faculty of Health as "Health" if you are talking to anyone outside AU, because they will think you are talking about *sundhed*. They will not think you are talking about an academic faculty. It's best to use the full title whenever possible.

- ✗ Health has attracted huge research investments in recent years
- ✓ The Faculty of Health has attracted huge research investments in recent years

hensyn, med hensyn til

Try to avoid starting sentences with expressions like "with reference to", "with regard to" or "as regards" in examples like the following:

- ✗ With reference to students on the Master's degree programme, they should register immediately
- ✓ Students on the Master's degree programme should register immediately
- ✗ With regard to the development of green energy, it is going very slowly in Denmark
- ✓ The development of green energy is very slow in Denmark

historisk

Note the difference between "historical" (which means related to history) and "historic" (which means something that will be remembered).

- ✗ Donald Trump's visit to Denmark was historical
- ✓ Donald Trump's visit to Denmark was historic

hjælper/det hjælper på det

Note that you can't just translate the Danish idiom *det hjælper på det* directly:

- ✗ It's been a long, cold, lonely winter – but now it's helping
- ✓ It's been a long, cold, lonely winter – but now things are improving

hver

The difference between "every" and "each" is that if you choose "each" you are underlining each individual thing or person involved, whereas if you choose "every" you are underlining that the

things or people you are talking about can be considered as a single group. This is something of a grey area, and in many cases both are fine. Here are a couple of examples which might help:

✓ Each time I asked Merleau-Ponty about this, he refused to comment (here the emphasis is on each individual time I asked him)

✓ Every time I asked Merleau-Ponty about this, he refused to comment (here the emphasis is on all the times I asked him)

hverken ... eller

Note the following examples:

✗ This cannot be justified, neither in terms of ethics, nor in terms of justice

✓ This cannot be justified, either in terms of ethics, or in terms of justice

✓ This can be justified neither in terms of ethics, nor in terms of justice

In other words, if you start with a negative (in this case “cannot”), you cannot then use “neither” and “nor” because they are also negatives and will result in a double negative. If you start with a positive (in this case “can”), “neither” and “nor” are fine (example 3).

hvor

Danish often uses *hvor* without referring to a place, and this is less common in English. Try to avoid using “where”, unless you are actually referring to a place. It is often better to use an “-ing” form of the verb following “with ...” in examples like the following:

✗ The situation was cultural and religious, where diversity was regarded as an advantage

✓ The situation was cultural and religious, with diversity being regarded as an advantage

✗ This was a period of my life where I was particularly vulnerable

✓ This was a period of my life during which I was particularly vulnerable

✗ Habermas was forced to face a situation where his goldfish wanted its freedom

✓ Habermas was forced to face a situation in which his goldfish wanted its freedom

hvordan

You can't always translate *hvordan* into “how”, because it is sometimes used in Danish without actually meaning “how”. Note the following examples. The second and fourth sentences are what the writer actually means to say.

- ✗ We have already seen above how Foucault denied the presence of true dialogue in education
- ✓ We have already seen above that Foucault denied the presence of true dialogue in education
- ✗ I wish to emphasise how Bourdieu always preferred marmalade on his toast in the morning
- ✓ I wish to emphasise that Bourdieu always preferred marmalade on his toast in the morning

høj

There is a difference between “high” and “tall”, although this is not always easy to define. Note that “high” is used for mountains and for anything that is a long way above the ground, while “tall” is used for things and people that are high and thin, especially things and people that are above average height. Note that “high” is not normally used about people (unless these people are high on drugs or other stimulants). Here are some examples:

- ✗ There are a lot of tall mountains in Nepal
- ✓ There are a lot of high mountains in Nepal
- ✗ In the heart of New York you’ll find a lot of high buildings
- ✓ In the heart of New York you’ll find a lot of tall buildings

højskole

Note that “high school” in English is the equivalent of Danish *gymnasium*, so it is not a good translation of *højskole*. The Danish *højskole* is a uniquely Danish institution, and is therefore hard to translate. Try keeping it in the Danish (in italics), or write “Danish folk high school”, which is what the website for *højskolerne* uses.

ibid.

Note that “ibid.” is an abbreviation of the Latin “ibidem”, which means “the same place”. So it should end in a full stop. And note that it indicates a reference to the last source that has just been used above.

ifølge

Note the following examples:

- ✗ Following Luhmann, the taste of cheese is vastly overrated
- ✓ According to Luhmann, the taste of cheese is vastly overrated

See *sensu*.

imellem

See *mellem*.

imidlertid

It is tempting to translate this into “meanwhile”. But note that you can only use “meanwhile” in English if you are actually talking about a period of time. If you are in fact talking about a contrast between two things, use “however” instead:

- ✗ The crisis was inevitable. Meanwhile, I think it can be resolved
- ✓ The crisis was inevitable. However, I think it can be resolved
- ✓ Why don't you make the dinner? Meanwhile, I will powder my nose

inden for/indenfor

Instead of writing “within XXX”, it is often a good idea to write “in/within the field of XXX” or some other option. This depends on what “XXX” is. The question is whether “XXX” is something that you can actually be “within” in some sense. Note the following examples:

- ✗ Professor Jespersen has made great progress within project management
- ✓ Professor Jespersen has made great progress in the field of project management
- ✓ Professor Jespersen has made great progress with regard to project management

indsigt i

Note the use of the correct preposition here:

- ✗ Merleau-Ponty never had much insight in the way wine was produced in Central Europe
- ✓ Merleau-Ponty never had much insight into the way wine was produced in Central Europe

And note that “insight” is normally used in the singular form, although the plural form “insights” is not exactly wrong.

informationer

Note that “information” is an uncountable noun in English:

- ✗ The professor presented many informations to support her argument
- ✓ The professor presented a great deal of information to support her argument

institut

At AU this should be translated into “school” at the Faculty of Arts; but into “department” at BSS, Health, Natural Sciences and Technical Sciences. In other contexts, the term “institute” is also used.

inter alia

See *blandt andet*.

involveret

Be careful about the position of “involved” in a sentence, because changing the position also changes the meaning. Note the following examples:

- ✓ An involved explanation (a complicated explanation)
- ✓ The explanation involved (the explanation in question)

især

The translation “especially” is not always the best option for this. The Danish *især* often occurs in front of the noun to which it relates, but the English “especially” generally sounds strange in this position. Try to find a better alternative. Note the following examples:

- ✗ Especially Habermas seems to disagree about this point
- ✓ Habermas in particular seems to disagree about this point
- ✓ Habermas seems to disagree about this point more than anyone else
- ✗ The government needs to do something about the marginalisation of especially immigrants
- ✓ The government needs to do something about the marginalisation of immigrants in particular

japansk

It is true that the term “Japan Studies” sounds slightly odd, and that “Japanese Studies” sounds better. The problem with the latter term is that it could mean the study of the Japanese language only, and “Japan Studies” includes much more than the study of the language. So “Japan Studies” is preferred.

jvf.

This is an abbreviation for *jævnfør* in Danish. The English equivalent is “cf.” (the abbreviation of the Latin “confer” or “conferatur”, which mean “compare”).

kan

Modal verbs are often difficult to translate, but there is only space here for a few examples. The following sentences demonstrate the difference between “can” and “may” as a translation of the Danish *kan/må*:

- ✓ Can I smoke in here? (Do the rules allow me to smoke in here?)
- ✓ May I smoke in here? (Will you allow me to smoke in here?)

kandidat

Note the difference between “candidate” (someone applying for a job, for instance) and “graduate” (someone who has completed a degree programme). The term “graduate” can also be used for someone who has completed a Bachelor’s degree programme – it is not only used for people who have completed a Master’s degree programme. I think you can also argue that in job adverts there is a difference between “applicants” (everyone who is applying for a job) and “candidates” (the applicants who are in some sense real contenders for actually getting a job).

kinesisk

It is true that the term “China Studies” sounds slightly odd, and that “Chinese Studies” sounds better. The problem with the latter term is that it could mean the study of the Chinese language only, and “China Studies” includes much more than the study of the language. So “China Studies” is preferred.

klassisk

Note the difference between “classical” (which means related to ancient Greece/Rome, or “classical music”, for instance), and “classic” (which means high quality, or very typical and well known, or memorable and significant).

- ✗ This is a classical example of the deficiencies of the US healthcare system
- ✓ This is a classic example of the deficiencies of the US healthcare system
- ✓ I normally prefer classical music, but that was a classic Rolling Stones concert

kollega

Watch out for the spelling pitfall here, especially when *kollega* is used in the plural:

- ✗ I attended the conference with seven of my colleges
- ✓ I attended the conference with seven of my colleagues

kommaer

You could write a whole book about commas. The basic rule in English is that commas should be placed in the natural breaks. Reading a sentence aloud often helps to decide where these natural breaks are. One of the biggest challenges for Danes concerns the use of commas in connection with relative clauses. Danish always puts a comma in front of relative clauses, but English only does so if the relative clause adds extra information and does not define the antecedent (the thing to which the relative clause relates). If the relative clause defines the antecedent and is necessary to know what you are talking about, there should be no comma in English and you can use “that” to replace both “who” and “which”. You cannot use “that” as a relative pronoun after a comma, though. Another problem for Danes is that English does not normally put a comma in front of other types of clause starting with “that” (see the last four examples below for this point).

- ✗ I must remember to tell my mother who lives in Australia
- ✓ I must remember to tell my mother, who lives in Australia
- ✗ I have chosen a degree programme, which I love
- ✓ I have chosen a degree programme which I love
- ✓ I have chosen a degree programme that I love
- ✗ I never realised, that Heidegger liked two lumps of sugar in his tea
- ✓ I never realised that Heidegger liked two lumps of sugar in his tea
- ✗ Of course this means, that Foucault never really enjoyed ice cream
- ✓ Of course this means that Foucault never really enjoyed ice cream

In lists you should put a comma in front of “and” if you are writing American English, but not if you are writing British English (unless the item after “and” is long and quite different from the other items in the list).

kompetence

Note that “competences” is the plural form of “competence”, while “competencies” is the plural form of “competency”. Both forms of this word are fine (and synonymous). But try to be consistent.

korps

Note the (huge) difference between a “body” (which can be used to mean a group of people) and a “corpse” (which means a dead body).

- ✓ The students were simply not happy about the new body of co-examiners
- ✗ The students were simply not happy about the new corpse of co-examiners

kort

Note the difference between the following two sentences:

- ✓ I will summarise the arguments presented in this paper shortly (I will do this in a minute)
- ✓ I will shortly summarise the arguments presented in this paper (I will do this in a minute)
- ✓ I will briefly summarise the arguments presented in this paper (I will do this quickly)

kortere

This is a false comparative. Don’t translate it into “shorter” unless you are actually comparing two things.

- ✗ He gave a shorter lecture, so most of the audience could go home early
- ✓ He gave a shorter lecture than the previous speaker

kriterier

Note that “criteria” is the plural form of “criterion” in English.

- ✗ The decision will be based on the following four criterias
- ✓ The decision will be based on the following four criteria
- ✓ The decision will be based on a single criterion

kritik

Note the difference between “criticism” (which can be personal and potentially destructive, and may also be provided by non-experts) and “critique” (which is intended to serve or even help the

person on the receiving end, and is provided by experts). You can also use “critique” as a verb, while the verb from “criticism” is “criticise”.

kronik

Note that a “chronicle” is an account of historical events, normally presented in chronological order. So it is a translation of the Danish *krønike*, not a translation of the Danish *kronik*.

✗ Professor Jensen wrote a very convincing chronicle in *Politiken* last week

✓ Professor Jensen wrote a very convincing feature article in *Politiken* last week

krønike

See *kronik*.

kursiv

Italics can be useful – particularly if you want to keep a non-English term in your English text. The italics act like a kind of warning to the reader, indicating the presence of a foreign word. They can also be useful when referring to specific legal documents, to ensure that the reader knows exactly what you’re referring to.

✓ The Danes are very keen on *Bildung*, which means self-education or formative education

✓ My kids attend the Danish *Folkeskole*, and they love it

✓ All the activities of Aarhus University are subject to the Danish University Act (*Universitetsloven*)

kvalificere

Note that the Danish *kvalificere* is sometimes used to mean “to improve”, “to support” or “to add substance to”. It is problematic to translate it into “qualify” when this is what you are trying to say. Note the following examples. The second example is problematic because the English verb “to qualify” can also mean “to limit” or “to modify”, which is not what the third and fourth examples mean.

✓ I think my background means that I qualify for this particular job

✓ Merleau-Ponty uses this method to qualify his arguments relating to learning processes (this means that he uses the method to modify or limit his arguments, which may not be what is meant)

✓ Merleau-Ponty uses this method to add substance to his arguments relating to learning processes

✓ Merleau-Ponty uses this method to support his arguments relating to learning processes

lidt

Note the difference between “little” and “a little” in the following examples:

- ✓ This study has little relevance for us (the study has hardly any relevance)
- ✓ This study has a little relevance for us (not a lot of relevance, but at least some)

ligesom/som

Note the difference between:

- ✓ He lived like a king (he wasn't a king, he just lived like one)
- ✓ He lived as a king (he was actually a king, and that is also how he lived)
- ✗ This might look as a protest, but actually I agree with most of the points you make
- ✓ This might look like a protest, but actually I agree with most of the points you make

This is sometimes a complicated area. But in principle “like” compares the thing you are talking about with another word (in this example “king”), whereas “as” compares what you are talking about with a sentence (in this example “as a king lived”). Danish does not make this distinction.

ligge/lægge

I'm not sure whether this is really a specifically English pitfall for Danes, because it is also a Danish pitfall for Danes. But note that the difference between “lie” and “lay” in English is the same as the difference between *ligge* and *lægge* in Danish. The English “lie” (*ligge*) is an intransitive verb (it cannot take a complement – you cannot “lie” something). The English “lay” (*lægge*) is a transitive verb (it takes a complement – you can “lay” something). The English “lie” is conjugated as follows: “lie – lay – lain” (*ligge – lå – ligget*). The third form in English is rarely used. For instance, it would be more usual to say “I have been lying here for two days” than “I have lain here for two days”, although both would be correct. The English “lay” is conjugated as follows: “lay – laid – laid” (*lægge – lagde – lagt*).

ligne

Don't translate this into “look as”. Translate it into “look like”. Note the following examples:

- ✗ This might look as a protest, but actually I agree with most of the points you make
- ✓ This might look like a protest, but actually I agree with most of the points you make

lille

Note the difference between “small” (which is a neutral or objective description of the size of something) and “little” (which also indicates some kind of cute quality).

- ✓ Mary had a little lamb (it was cute)
- ✓ Mary had a small lamb (it was not cute)

litteratur/litteraturliste

Make sure you spell “literature” right in English. And when you want to list your sources at the end of an article, use “references”, “list of references” or “bibliography” instead of “literature”, “literature list” or “used literature”. Note that a “list of references” contains sources that have actually been used, while a “bibliography” contains sources that have actually been used plus other sources which the reader may like to consult, but which have not actually been used. So “bibliography” is normally used in a broader sense.

længere

This is a false comparative. Don’t translate it into “longer” unless you are actually comparing two things.

- ✗ He gave a longer lecture, so most of the audience fell asleep
- ✓ He gave a lengthy lecture, so most of the audience fell asleep
- ✓ He gave a longer lecture than the previous speaker

løbende

Try to avoid “running” for this, because there are normally better options. Note the following examples:

- ✗ The students will be required to present their work on a running basis
- ✓ The students will be required to present their work on an ongoing basis
- ✓ The students will be required to present their work on a regular basis

løn

Note the difference between “wages” or perhaps “pay”, which are generally used about payment on a weekly or fortnightly basis, and “salary”, which generally indicates a more permanent kind of employment and payments each month.

løse/løsning

These terms are widely used in Danish, but they cannot always be translated into “solve/solution” in English. English tends to use “solve” and “solution” when talking about “problems”, and “solve/solution” sometimes sounds odd when used as a translation of *løse/løsning* in other contexts. There are almost always better options. Note the following examples, and note that “resolve” may be a good translation – for instance if you are talking about “issues” (*problemstillinger*):

- ✗ It is too late for the faculty to solve these tasks – the semester is almost over
- ✓ It is too late for the faculty to perform these tasks – the semester is almost over
- ✗ I can’t solve these challenges because my brain has gone on strike
- ✓ I can’t cope with these challenges because my brain has gone on strike
- ✓ I can’t resolve these issues because my brain has gone on strike

løsningsmodel

I don’t think “solution model” is a very good solution for this. The term “model for a solution” or “models for solutions” in the plural are better.

låne

Note the following differences:

- ✗ I asked the dean if I could lend DKK 4 million from the Faculty of Arts
- ✗ I asked the dean if I could loan DKK 4 million from the Faculty of Arts
- ✓ I asked the dean if I could borrow DKK 4 million from the Faculty of Arts
- ✓ I told the dean that I could lend the Faculty of Arts DKK 4 million

Note that “loan” should only be used as a noun, and not as a verb (see the second example above). Its use as a verb would be regarded as sub-standard English by many people (including Americans). Especially in written English.

Masteruddannelse

Note that the Danish term *Masteruddannelse* should be translated into “professional Master’s degree programme” (or perhaps “executive Master’s degree programme”, which may be best for BSS graduates because it sounds so businesslike). The English term “Master’s degree programme” is a translation of *kandidatuddannelse*.

Masterprojekt

The term “professional Master’s project” is OK for this. And some people may prefer to use “project” to distinguish a *Masterprojekt* from a *kandidatspeciale* (which is a “Master’s thesis”). But a “project” is not normally just a piece of written work. It could involve months or even years of fieldwork or research. So it may not be the best choice if you want to underline that you’re talking about a piece of written work, so it’s probably best to translate this term into “professional Master’s thesis”.

medarbejder

I think there’s a small difference between “employee” and “staff”. The term “employee” is perhaps a little more formal and underlines that the person concerned is actually getting paid by an employer (which you may not want to emphasise). The term “staff” is less formal and perhaps more general or neutral. In many AU contexts, “staff” is therefore preferable. And note that “staff” is a collective noun, so it can be regarded either as a singular noun (underlining that the staff constitute a single united body of people), or as a plural noun (underlining the individuals in question). Both are OK, depending on the context, but I mostly end up regarding “staff” as a plural:

- ✗ The staff is upset about the new coffee machine (I think that a number of individuals are involved here)
- ✓ The staff are upset about the new coffee machine
- ✗ The academic employees are upset about the new coffee machine
- ✗ The academic staff is upset about the new coffee machine
- ✓ The academic staff are upset about the new coffee machine

medier

Note that “media” is the plural form of “medium”:

- ✗ In my opinion, TikTok is a useful media
- ✓ In my opinion, TikTok is a useful medium
- ✗ TikTok is just one of many useful medias available today

mellem

Note the difference between “between” (which should be chosen when talking about clearly one-to-one relationships) and “among” or maybe “amongst” (which should be chosen when talking about unclear or unspecific relationships). And it’s fine to use “between” when talking about more than two things.

- ✓ The difference between studying at BA level, MA level and PhD level is huge
- ✓ Habermas always wanted to go swimming among the dolphins in Florida

metode/metodologi

Note that in research a “method” is a tool or technique employed by the researcher concerned (the method used could be a survey or an interview), while the “methodology” is the reason behind or justification for using certain methods. So based on a certain methodology (phenomenology, for instance), a researcher could then choose which methods to use (interviews, for instance). Phenomenology is not a method – it is a methodology. In other words, your methods are chosen on the basis of your methodology, and not vice versa.

metodisk/metodologisk

Note that “methodical” can mean *grundig* or something similar in Danish, so it may be misleading and the term “methodological” may be a safer bet.

militæret

The best translation of this term is not “the military”, because “military” is normally an adjective and not a noun. If you know which branch of the armed forces you are referring to, write “the army”, “the navy” or “the air force”. This is the kind of noun that can take either a singular or plural verb (“the army thinks this is a bad idea”, or “the army think this is a bad idea”). This depends on whether you are referring to “the army” as a single unit or a group of individuals, and this may vary (though not within the same text). If you don’t know exactly who is involved, you can use “the armed forces” (this takes a plural verb only).

- ✗ The military patrols the borders at regular intervals
- ✓ The army patrols the borders at regular intervals
- ✓ The armed forces patrol the borders at regular intervals

mindre

This is a false comparative. Don't translate it into "smaller" unless you are actually comparing two things.

✗ The subject is so narrow that a smaller conference will be enough

✓ The subject is so narrow that a small conference will be enough

✓ This conference is smaller than last year's conference

If you want to avoid the term "small" because it sounds TOO small, you can sometimes use "minor", which implies some kind of comparison. Or maybe the term "small-scale".

modsat

Note that "contrary to" means "the opposite of", while "unlike" means "different from". And things can be different from other things without necessarily being their opposite, so there is a difference between the two terms. In many cases, the Danish *modsat* is actually used to mean "different from" and not actually "the opposite of". So "contrary to" may not be correct. In addition, "contrary" is a noun or adjective, while "unlike" is a preposition. So "unlike" is generally correct when placed in front of names, for instance. Note the following examples:

✗ Contrary Stephenson, Blake believes that the death sentence is wrong

✗ Contrary to Stephenson, Blake believes that the death sentence is wrong

✓ Unlike Stephenson, Blake believes that the death sentence is wrong

mulighed

Although the three are sometimes used interchangeably, there is a small difference between a "possibility" (which is something that might happen if you do it yourself), an "opportunity" (which is something that might happen if someone else creates a framework which enables you to do it), and an "option" (which is one of the choices that are available to you). So in many cases, "opportunities" is a better translation of *muligheder* than "possibilities", while "options" should be used when specific choices are mentioned in a text. Note the following examples:

✗ The department provides its staff with excellent possibilities for research collaboration

✓ The department provides its staff with excellent opportunities for research collaboration

✓ The department provides its staff with three options: work from home, work on campus, or take early retirement

mytisk

Note the difference between “mythical” (which means “existing in myth”) and “mythic” (which means “larger than life”). So as with *historisk* and *klassisk* (see these entries), the ending which includes “-al” reflects the literal meaning of the word, while the ending without “-al” reflects some kind of metaphorical meaning of the word. However, I think it is true to say that this difference is less pronounced for “mythical/mythic” than it is for “historical/historic” and “classical/classic”. So “mythic” is used regularly to mean “existing in myth”.

mængde

There seems to be a tendency to use *mængde* in Danish for plural nouns instead of using *antal* (this means saying things like *der var en stor mængde bøger på fortovet uden for butikken i dag* instead of saying *der var et stort antal bøger på fortovet uden for butikken i dag*). Although this is fine in Danish, “number” should be used for plural and countable nouns in English, and “amount” for uncountable nouns. This is a bit of a grey area, though. Note the following examples:

- ✗ The conference attracted a large amount of participants
- ✓ The conference attracted a large number of participants
- ✓ The conference presented a large amount of information

må

Modal verbs are often difficult to translate. Note the following examples about the translation of the Danish *må/kan*:

- ✓ Can I smoke in here? (Do the rules allow me to smoke in here?)
- ✓ May I smoke in here? (Will you allow me to smoke in here?)
- ✓ I must finish my degree soon (the need to finish it comes from within me)
- ✓ I have to finish my degree soon (someone or something is forcing me to do this)

mål

I think it is true to say that “goal” and “target” are good translations of this term, whereas “purpose” and “objective” are less specific than “goal” or “target” and may be more accurate as a translation of *formål*. But see *formål*.

nedennævnt

It's fine to use "above-mentioned" for *ovennævnt*. But for some reason, you can't use "below-mentioned" for *nedennævnt*. And "below" must be placed after the noun it describes.

✗ I'm afraid that the below-mentioned arguments simply cannot be defended

✓ I'm afraid that the arguments mentioned below simply cannot be defended

✗ I'm afraid that the below arguments simply cannot be defended

✓ I'm afraid that the arguments below simply cannot be defended

nemlig

Try to avoid "namely". It's not exactly wrong, but a colon is often a better choice:

✗ There are three options, namely "yes", "no" and "maybe"

✓ There are three options: "yes", "no" and "maybe"

nuancere/nuanceret

It's not exactly wrong to write "nuance" as a verb and "nuanced" as an adjective. But it sounds pretentious and is best avoided in my view. It's not always easy to find better alternatives, and it depends on what the Danish term means in the context in question, but here are some suggestions:

✗ It is vital that the students learn to write nuanced Danish

✓ It is vital that the students learn to write Danish in suitably varied fashion

✓ It is vital that the students learn to write Danish in a variety of different styles

✗ I wish you would nuance your answer, because I don't understand what you mean

✓ I wish you would add further details to your answer, because I don't understand what you mean

nyere

This is a false comparative. Don't translate it into "newer" unless you are actually comparing two things:

✗ Applicants must demonstrate knowledge of newer research methods

✓ Applicants must demonstrate knowledge of recent research methods

næsten ingen

This is expressed differently in English, although I can't explain why:

- ✗ Nearly no students actually bought this extremely expensive book
- ✓ Hardly any students actually bought this extremely expensive book

offensiv

You need to be careful when using the English “offensive”, because (depending on the context) it may mean *fornærmende*, which is probably not what you mean.

- ✗ When talking to the press, we need to be offensive
- ✓ When talking to the press, we need to go on the offensive
- ✓ When talking to the press, we need to adopt an attacking approach

og så videre

I'm not sure that this is really a pitfall for Danes writing English. It might just be a pitfall in any language. But be careful about using “etc.” at the end of lists. It might be best to avoid “etc.” altogether. But if you do use it, you need to make sure that it is clear what it refers to. In the examples below, it is an advantage to be more specific instead of leaving the reader to wonder about what “etc.” might cover.

- ✗ I'm talking about carbon emissions, rising temperatures etc.
- ✓ I'm talking about carbon emissions, rising temperatures and other aspects of climate change

også

Be careful about where you put “also” in a sentence. The rules for this are complex, but you need to ensure that “also” is placed in the right position to underline the part of the sentence to which it refers. The examples below show that in many cases “also” should be placed in front of the verb to which it refers (“Hitler also regarded” and “argument also includes”), and after the first auxiliary verb in complex verb phrases (“has also been criticised”). So avoid the “Also Hitler” construction, which would be quite acceptable and even common in Danish.

- ✗ Also Hitler regarded World War II as a disaster
- ✓ Hitler also regarded World War II as a disaster
- ✓ Hitler regarded World War II as a disaster, as well
- ✗ The university has been criticised also in the media
- ✓ The university has also been criticised in the media

- ✓ The university has been criticised in the media, as well
- ✗ This particular argument includes also the ideas presented by Merleau-Ponty
- ✓ This particular argument also includes the ideas presented by Merleau-Ponty

ophold

In many cases the English noun “stay” is not the best choice for the Danish *ophold*. There are better options.

- ✗ Are you interested in a research stay at the University of California?
- ✓ Are you interested in a research visit to the University of California?
- ✓ Are you interested in a research semester at the University of California?
- ✗ Freemovers are students who go on study stays to universities outside Denmark
- ✓ Freemovers are students who go on study trips to universities outside Denmark

opleve

I think you should be very careful about translating the verb *at opleve* into “to experience”. In many cases, it is better to use “to feel” in English – particularly when *opleve* is used to describe the way someone perceives something. Note the following examples:

- ✗ The students experience that the teachers do not know what they are doing
- ✓ The students feel that the teachers do not know what they are doing

opnå

See *realisere*.

orddeling

Note that English divides words at the end of lines based on the syllables in the words concerned. But there are also other considerations, such as the root or derivation of a word (for instance, don’t write “suitab-le” or “suita-ble” but “suit-able”). You also need to check that your division does not make the word concerned difficult to understand, or misleading in any way. The Longman Dictionary of English shows hyphenation in the words it contains, so that may be a great help. Here are some of the rules:

- Do not divide words consisting of one syllable only

- Do not divide words by syllables if this means that a syllable is then composed of a single letter only (for instance, don't write "a-part" or "a-bove")
- Do not divide short words (for instance, don't write "ci-ty")
- Do not divide a word in the past tense leaving "-ed" on the next line, however many syllables are involved, and even though "-ed" is actually a syllable (for instance, don't write "walk-ed" or "invent-ed")
- Do not divide a word if it means that only two letters are left on the next line
- If a word contains a double letter, make the division between these two letters (for instance, write "pos-sible", "syl-lable" and "exag-gerate")

organisk

See *økologisk*.

osv.

See *og så videre*.

ovennævnt

- ✓ The above-mentioned arguments are explained in section five
- ✓ The arguments mentioned above are explained in section five
- ✗ The above arguments are explained in section five
- ✓ The arguments above are explained in section five

passende

There is a small difference between "suitable" (which means having the properties needed to perform a specific task or fulfil a specific purpose) and "apt" (which means suitable or appropriate in general, or perhaps having a natural tendency to do something). So if you want to say that something is *passende* for a specific task or purpose, "suitable" is better than "apt". And in general, avoid "apt" unless you are sure you are using it correctly.

- ✗ Seminars are an apt way to discuss academic issues
- ✓ Seminars are a suitable way to discuss academic issues
- ✓ The professor is apt to shout at the students when he loses his temper

pege på

- ✗ Smith and Jones point to how poetry never really became popular in the Baltic region
- ✗ Smith and Jones point to that poetry never really became popular in the Baltic region
- ✓ Smith and Jones point out that poetry never really became popular in the Baltic region

pensum

Note the difference between “curriculum” (which means the overall content of an entire degree programme) and “syllabus” (which describes the specific content of a particular course). The term “curriculum” is prescriptive (laying down the rules for a degree programme), whereas “syllabus” is descriptive (describing the actual things that the students will be studying in a specific course). The plural of “curriculum” is “curricula” or “curriculumms”, and the plural of “syllabus” is “syllabi” or “syllabuses”.

person/personer

It’s not exactly wrong to write “persons”, but it’s nearly always better to write “people”. And note that the plural form “peoples” means *folkeslag* in Danish and not *personer*.

ph.d.

Note that this is written “PhD” in English, and that the term is not used in exactly the same way in the two languages. Drop the hyphen when writing “PhD student” in English. Also in the following examples, note that you are a student “of” a subject, but have a degree “in” a subject.

- ✗ She is a PhD in history
- ✗ She is a PhD-student of history
- ✗ She is a ph.d.-student of history
- ✓ She is a PhD student of history
- ✓ She has a PhD in history

PI

This abbreviation stands for “principal investigator”, the lead figure and main applicant in a research project. Be careful how you spell this: “principal” means *ledende*, whereas “principle” means *princip* (see *princip*).

- ✗ I have no idea what’s going on – you will have to ask the principle investigator of the project
- ✓ I have no idea what’s going on – you will have to ask the principal investigator of the project

politi

“Police” is a collective noun and could therefore refer either to the police as a single unit (singular) or to many policemen (plural). However, for some reason “police” is always regarded as a plural noun:

- ✗ Please tell Habermas that the police has arrived
- ✓ Please tell Habermas that the police have arrived

politik

Note the difference between “politics” (the theory and practice of government) and “policy” (a specific political line or idea which does not necessarily have anything to do with politics). And note that “politics” is regarded as a collective noun, so it should be followed by a third-person singular verb even though it ends in an “s”:

- ✗ The faculty has adopted a number of new research politics in this area
- ✓ The faculty has adopted a number of new research policies in this area
- ✓ Call me paranoid, but I think politics is a dirty business

praktisk

You sometimes need to be careful about the position of the English word “practically” in a sentence, because this position sometimes influences the meaning. Note the following examples:

- ✓ Lionel Messi practically destroyed Chelsea’s defence during the first half (he almost destroyed it)
- ✓ Lionel Messi approached the task of destroying Chelsea’s defence practically (he did it in a practical manner)

princip

Note the difference between a “principle” (a rule, law or guideline) and a “principal” (the head of a school or college). And note that “principal” can also be an adjective, meaning “most important” or “leading”.

- ✗ I refuse to acknowledge these findings, and this is a matter of principal for me
- ✓ I refuse to acknowledge these findings, and this is a matter of principle for me
- ✗ I can’t possibly take this decision – we will have to ask the principle to decide the issue for us

- ✓ I can't possibly take this decision – we will have to ask the principal to decide the issue for us
- ✓ The principal question at stake here is whether Bobby Fischer was a genius or a madman

principiel

See *princip*.

pris, prisvindende

Note the following:

- ✗ Professor Jensen is a price-winning author on this particular subject
- ✓ Professor Jensen is a prize-winning author on this particular subject

There is also a slight difference between a “prize” (something which is presented as the result of some kind of competition) and an “award” (something which is presented in recognition of excellence without necessarily being the result of a competition). So if you want to underline that no actual competition has been involved, “award” is better than “prize”.

problematik

The best way to translate this is “issue”. Note that “problematic” is wrong, because “problematic” means *problematisk* in Danish. And note that many Danes use *problematik* when they actually mean *problem*. If you think the meaning is *problem*, translate it into “problem”. If you think the meaning is *problematik*, translate it into “issue”. The Danish *problematik* means a complex of different but related problems, comprising a single “issue”. See *løse/løsning*.

professionshøjskole

The term “university college” is best for this.

program

This is a spelling pitfall. In British English the correct spelling is “programme”, while American English uses “program”. However, when talking about computer software, the correct spelling is “program” in both British and American English.

projekt

A “project” normally involves more than just a piece of written work. A piece of written work is in fact normally the result of a project, rather than being the project itself. So there may be better terms, depending on the context (for instance “thesis”, “assignment”, or “paper”). See *Masterprojekt*

pædagogik/pædagogisk

The terms “pedagogy” and “pedagogical” undoubtedly exist and are used in the academic literature on the subject, so they are fine in academic contexts. However, the man on the street will probably not know what these terms mean, so other options may be better in texts which are designed for the general public (“educational theory” for *pædagogik*, and “educational” for *pædagogisk*).

påvirke

Note the difference between “affect” and “effect” when translating *påvirke* into English. “Affect” is generally used as a verb, while “effect” is a noun.

✗ The Communist Party has effected the history of Russia since the early 20th century

✓ The Communist Party has affected the history of Russia since the early 20th century

Incidentally, “affect” can also be used as a noun in another meaning (as a translation of *affekt*). And “effect” can also be used as a verb in another meaning (to “effect” change means to “cause” change).

Note also the following pitfall:

✗ The lack of available vaccines will influence on the speed at which Denmark recovers

✓ The lack of available vaccines will influence the speed at which Denmark recovers

✓ The lack of available vaccines will have an influence on the speed at which Denmark recovers

realisere

I think you need to be a bit careful about translating *realisere* into “realise”, because “realise” can also mean *erkende* or *blive klar over*. Sometimes people are tempted to use “realise” in English when “achieve” would be better because it removes all doubt about the meaning. The following examples (both of which are correct) illustrate this problem:

✓ The government realised the savings involved in shutting the embassy in Kabul (this means that the government found out that they could save money by shutting the embassy in Kabul)

✓ The government achieved the savings involved in shutting the embassy in Kabul (this means that the government actually made the savings involved in shutting the embassy in Kabul)

realisering

See *realisere*. The distinction that applies to “realise” and “achieve” also applies to “realisation” and “achievement”.

rejse

Note the difference between a “journey” (which just means the actual journey between two points) and a “trip” (which means the whole experience, including hotels, meals etc.) And note that “travel” is normally only used as a verb (“to travel”), not as a noun, although it is sometimes used as a noun in the plural form (for instance: “I am going on my travels”).

✓ I had a great trip, but a bad journey (the trip as a whole was great, but the travelling was bad)

✓ I had a great journey, but a bad trip (the travelling was great, but the trip as a whole was bad)

råd

Note that “advice” is an uncountable noun in English:

✗ The professor gave me a good advice that made me feel quite dizzy

✗ The professor gave me so many good advices that I felt quite dizzy

✓ The professor gave me so much good advice that I felt quite dizzy

And note a spelling problem in this connection. The verb “to advise” is spelled with an “s”, while the noun “advice” is spelled with a “c”.

sammenhængende

There is a small difference between “cohesion” (which refers to the ways in which the elements of a text are linked together) and “coherence” (which refers to the overall sense of a text). So “cohesion” is like the glue that keeps something together, while “coherence” covers the overall meaning of something. For instance, even though there are plenty of clear grammatical links in a text (plenty of “cohesion”), this is no guarantee that there is also “coherence” if the text makes no sense overall. There is an example of this below. Sometimes the Danish *sammenhængende* can also be translated into “consistent”, because in some contexts this is what it actually means and may therefore be preferable to both “cohesion” and “coherent”.

A computer is a much-derided spaceship of intentions that failed to convince the president on his first acquaintance (plenty of “cohesion”, but no “coherence”)

sammenligne med

Use “compare with” to underline that you are focusing on the differences between the things you are talking about. Use “compare to” to underline that you are focusing on the similarities. Note the difference between:

- ✓ I compare these ideas to the ideas presented by Einstein (underlining the similarities)
- ✓ I compare these ideas with the ideas of a three-year-old child (underlining the differences)
- ✓ I compare my wife to the most beautiful flower in that field over there (a compliment)
- ✓ I compare my wife to that monkey over there (an insult)

samt

You can often translate *samt* into “as well as”. But note that “as well as” should be followed by a verb in the “-ing” form. And note that in lists, “as well as” should be added as an addition after all the other items have been mentioned, including the final item after “and”. In addition, note that “as well as” connects things in a slightly different way (or on a slightly different level) than “and”. For instance, in the final example below, it is assumed that we already know that this person is an expert on E.M. Forster. His other qualities (tall, handsome, intelligent, brave and athletic) are regarded as being an addition to this assumed knowledge about him.

- ✗ We are confident that you will strengthen our research as well as contribute to our teaching
- ✓ We are confident that you will strengthen our research as well as contributing to our teaching
- ✗ He was tall, handsome, intelligent, brave, athletic, as well as being an expert on E.M. Forster
- ✓ He was tall, handsome, intelligent, brave and athletic, as well as being an expert on E.M. Forster

samtidig

The temptation is to translate this into “simultaneously” or “at the same time”. But these two options in English actually mean what they say (literally simultaneously), whereas Danish uses *samtidig* in a looser or more metaphorical sense. In many cases, I think that *samtidig* can be translated by “also”, because it doesn’t literally mean “at the same time”.

- ✗ He’s certainly good at football, but simultaneously I think he could be good at billiards
- ✗ He’s certainly good at football, but at the same time I think he could be good at billiards
- ✓ He’s certainly good at football, but I also think he could be good at billiards

selv om

Note the difference between “even if” (which expresses uncertainty about what you are saying, an uncertainty which generally relates to a future situation) and “even though” (which expresses certainty about what you are saying, a certainty which generally relates to a current situation). For instance:

- ✓ Even if the number of participants is low (we aren’t sure yet: the number may or may not turn out to be low)
- ✓ Even though the number of participants is low (we are already sure: the number is low)

selvstudium

- ✗ This course will involve self-study (this sounds like you will be studying yourself)
- ✓ This course will involve autonomous/independent study

selvvalgt

- ✗ The students must produce a self-chosen problem statement
- ✓ The students must produce a problem statement that they have chosen themselves

sensu

I’m not sure whether this is actually a pitfall for Danes or not. It may be a pitfall for everyone. But the Latin term “sensu” should be used correctly. It means “in the sense of” and should be placed in front of the name of the person to whom you are referring. I think it’s best to write it in italics (“*sensu* Sørensen”, for instance). It is rarely used but may actually be better than “following Sørensen”, for instance. See *ifølge*.

serie

Note the difference between a “series”, which is a number of stories involving many of the same characters, stories which can be seen independently of each other (for instance “Friends”); and a “serial”, which is only one story involving many of the same characters, a story which must be seen in the right order because it continues in a logical or chronological progression (for instance *Forbrydelsen*). And note that the plural form of “series” is also “series”.

sidste, de sidste

Note the following examples:

- ✗ The changes have been dramatic during the last decades

✓ The changes have been dramatic during recent decades

✓ We are fast approaching the last days of 2020

sidstnævnt

Note that you can only translate this into “latter” if two things are involved (and only two). See *førstnævnt*, which can only be translated into “former” when two things are involved (and only two).

✗ There were three options, and it is the latter that I have decided to accept

✓ There were three options, and I have decided to accept the last one

sikre

Note that “to ensure” means to promise or guarantee something, to make something happen. The verb “to secure” means to make safe, to guard or protect. The verb “to assure” means to state something with confidence with a view to putting someone else’s mind at ease. And the verb “to insure” means to take out some kind of insurance for something. This is sometimes a problem for Danes because *at sikre* can be used in all these senses. Here are some examples:

✗ The idea of doing oral exams is to secure that fewer students drop out

✓ The idea of doing oral exams is to ensure that fewer students drop out

✓ I assure you that you will never be forgotten

✓ I have decided to insure my house – the risk of flooding is simply too great

skal

Modal verbs are often difficult to translate, and *skal* is one of the most difficult. Especially when *skal* is used in Danish to indicate the purpose of doing something (see the last five examples below). Note the following examples, all containing translations of *skal*:

✓ I must finish my degree soon (the need to finish it comes from within me)

✓ I have to finish my degree soon (someone or something is forcing me to do this)

✗ The new academic regulations shall ensure that students finish their degrees on time

✗ The new academic regulations must ensure that students finish their degrees on time

✗ The new academic regulations will ensure that students finish their degrees on time

✗ The new academic regulations should ensure that students finish their degrees on time

✓ The aim of the new academic regulations is to ensure that students finish their degrees on time

skæbne

There is a small difference between your “destiny” (which depends to some extent on your own choices), and your “fate” (which is predetermined by the universe and completely beyond your control).

slags

Note the usage of “types of/kinds of” in the following example:

✗ I offered Habermas two types/kinds of biscuits, but he refused them both

✓ I offered Habermas two types/kinds of biscuit, but he refused them both

som/ligesom

Note the difference between:

✓ He lived like a king (he wasn't a king, he just lived like one)

✓ He lived as a king (he was actually a king, and that is also how he lived)

✗ This might look as a protest, but actually I agree with most of the points you make

✓ This might look like a protest, but actually I agree with most of the points you make

This is sometimes a complicated area. But in principle “like” compares the thing you are talking about with another word (in this example “king”), whereas “as” compares what you are talking about with a sentence (in this example “as a king lived”). Danish does not make this distinction.

sparring, sparre

It is best to avoid “sparring” and “spar” in English. They are not exactly wrong, but your reader might start thinking of boxing. Try using something like “feedback and discussion” for *sparring*.

speciale

You should translate *speciale* into “thesis” and not “dissertation”. The term “dissertation” is normally used as a translation of *afhandling*.

spise

In English you don't "eat" meals. You "have" them. Note the following examples:

- ✗ I will start by eating breakfast at 8, then I'll eat lunch at 12 noon, and I'll eat dinner at 6 pm
- ✓ I will start by having breakfast at 8, then I'll have lunch at 12 noon, and I'll have dinner at 6 pm
- ✗ If I promise to pay, will you eat dinner with me at that posh restaurant on Thursday?
- ✓ If I promise to pay, will you have dinner with me at that posh restaurant on Thursday?

spørgsmålstejn

Note that you should only use question marks for statements which are actually formed as questions. For instance, there should be no question mark after the following sentence, which is a statement and not actually a question (although a question is implied):

- ✗ The question is whether Coronavirus will continue to cost lives and jobs?
- ✓ The question is whether Coronavirus will continue to cost lives and jobs.

stadig flere

- ✗ Oral exams are used for still more courses
- ✓ Oral exams are used for an increasing number of courses

stor

Note the difference between "big" (which is normally used as an objective description of size) and "great" (which indicates more than size alone, and may include excellence or magnificence, for instance – more like *storslået* in Danish). In some cases, a term like "significant" may be useful if you need a word which is more metaphorical than "big".

- ✓ Donald Trump is a great man (this is highly debatable, although some people actually believe it)
- ✓ Donald Trump is a big man (this is undeniable)
- ✗ Make America big again (America has not shrunk, so this makes no sense)
- ✓ Make America great again (this is OK if you think America was great once but is great no longer)

store begyndelsesbogstaver

See *versaler*.

større

This is a false comparative. Don't translate it into "larger" unless you are actually comparing two things.

- ✗ The subject is so big that we will need a larger conference to cover it
- ✓ The subject is so big that we will need a big conference to cover it
- ✓ This conference is larger than last year's conference

If you want to avoid the term "big" because it sounds TOO big, you could use "major", which implies some kind of comparison. Or maybe "large-scale".

svigerinde

Watch out for the plural form of "sister-in-law":

- ✗ I've got two sister-in-laws, and they are both completely crazy
- ✗ I've got two sisters-in-laws, and they are both completely crazy
- ✓ I've got two sisters-in-law, and they are both completely crazy

svoger

Watch out for the plural form of "brother-in-law":

- ✗ I've got two brother-in-laws, and they are both completely crazy
- ✗ I've got two brothers-in-laws, and they are both completely crazy
- ✓ I've got two brothers-in-law, and they are both completely crazy

sygdom/syg

Note that a "disease" is the underlying cause of an "illness", so "illnesses" are caused by "diseases", and not vice versa. In British English, "ill" is often used to mean "unwell". In American English, "ill" is rarely used except in formal style perhaps. And "ill" is generally used after a verb. In British English, "sick" is often used in front of the noun it refers to ("She did her best to take care of her sick mother"). And in both American and British English, note the following usage:

- ✗ In the third quarter of 2020, one-third of the department were off ill
- ✓ In the third quarter of 2020, one-third of the department were off sick

sympatisk

This should normally be translated into “likeable” or something similar. Avoid “sympathetic”, because it means *medfølelse* in Danish.

synlig/synlighed

You can translate these terms into “visible/visibility” if you like, but there is a risk that the reader might think that you are talking about literal visibility instead of metaphorical visibility. Especially if your sentence ends in the word “visible” (see the first example below). So it might be a good idea to think of better alternatives:

- ✗ The Faculty of Arts wants its researchers to be visible
- ✓ The Faculty of Arts wants its researchers to have a visible presence
- ✓ The Faculty of Arts wants its researchers to have a high profile
- ✓ The Faculty of Arts wants its researchers to attract attention in the public eye

synspunkter

- ✗ We are interested in hearing many different point of views
- ✗ We are interested in hearing many different points of views
- ✓ We are interested in hearing many different points of view

såsom for eksempel

These both mean the same thing, so you don't need both:

- ✗ There are many problems involved, such as for example the cost of the changes
- ✓ There are many problems involved, such as the cost of the changes

således

Be careful about using “thus” as a translation of *således*. And in general, try to avoid the use of “thus” to link sentence B to sentence A (it sounds rather formal and perhaps outdated). Instead, start by thinking about the actual relationship between sentence A and sentence B, then start sentence B with the correct link (this could be “For instance,” or “In other words,” or perhaps “So”).

- ✗ The kettle is boiling and the cake is on the table. Thus, it is time for tea.

✓ The kettle is boiling and the cake is on the table. In other words, it's time for tea.

✓ The kettle is boiling and the cake is on the table. So it's time for tea.

tage

Note the difference between “to bring” (underlining the point of view of the place to which something is to be brought from another place) and “to take” (underlining the point of view of the place from which something is to be taken to another place). This is often a rather fine distinction. It's a slight difference in emphasis depending on whether the speaker is in a location to which someone else is coming (“bring”), or whether the speaker is in a location which they will be leaving to go somewhere else (“take”). Some native speakers may not even make this distinction, and there may be a difference between British and American usage, too. Here are a couple of examples:

✗ Please take a bottle to the party at my house on Saturday

✓ Please bring a bottle to the party at my house on Saturday

✗ I will bring my passport with me when I go to the Faroes

✓ I will take my passport with me when I go to the Faroes

TAP

Note that the Danish abbreviation for *teknisk/administrativt personale* can't be used in English. In English “TAP” means *VANDHANE*.

✗ The faculty should really ask its TAP staff before deciding on this issue

✓ The faculty should really ask its technical/administrative staff before deciding on this issue

tidligere

Note the difference between:

✓ The previous professor (the professor immediately before the current professor)

✓ The former professor (this person used to be a professor, but is a professor no longer)

In addition, note that it is often better to translate *tidligere* into “previous” rather than “earlier”. This may just be a matter of context/style/idiom. But there is a sense that “earlier” relates more specifically or precisely to time (“I plan to go to the earlier of the two meetings”), while “previous” may relate to time in a more vague manner, and may therefore more accurately reflect the meaning of *tidligere* (“I underlined this point in a previous lecture on the same subject”).

til trods for

This sometimes causes a bit of confusion. Note the following examples:

- ✗ I refuse to change my mind, despite of the evidence
- ✗ I refuse to change my mind, inspite of the evidence
- ✓ I refuse to change my mind, despite the evidence
- ✓ I refuse to change my mind, in spite of the evidence

tilfælde, i tilfælde af

Note the difference between:

- ✓ I'll shoot the cat if it eats that bird (I will only shoot the cat if it actually eats the bird)
- ✓ I'll shoot the cat in case it eats that bird (I will definitely shoot the cat, to stop it eating the bird)

tillade

Sometimes Danes may be tempted to translate *tillade* into “allow for” instead of “allow”, and this is not normally correct. Note the following examples. The fourth example shows how “allow for” can be used correctly in English (this meaning could be translated as ... *hvis du tager højde for* ...)

- ✗ The philosophy presented by Habermas allows for a wide variety of interpretations
- ✓ The philosophy presented by Habermas allows a wide variety of interpretations
- ✓ The philosophy presented by Habermas permits a wide variety of interpretations
- ✓ Your conclusion is only valid if you allow for the uncertainty of your statistics

tillægsord

This is a huge area. But one of the biggest problems for Danes involves the use of past participle verb forms as adjectives. It's the position of these adjectives that causes difficulties. They can be put in front of the noun in Danish, but most of them need to go after the noun in English. Note the following examples:

- ✗ The submitted articles proved that the applicant had excellent qualifications
- ✓ The articles submitted proved that the applicant had excellent qualifications
- ✗ The produced knowledge will be used in our next research project
- ✓ The knowledge produced will be used in our next research project

- ✗ The discussed problems were absolutely fascinating
- ✓ The problems discussed were absolutely fascinating
- ✗ The gained knowledge can be used in many different fields
- ✓ The knowledge gained can be used in many different fields
- ✓ The excited students looked at the surprised professor in astonishment

In the second, fourth, sixth and eighth of these examples, the past participles (submitted/produced/discussed/gained) retain their meaning as verbs in a relative clause (“The articles which have been submitted”, “The knowledge which is produced”, “The problems which were discussed”, “The knowledge which was gained”). This is why the participle used as an adjective must come after the noun. Try using the “very” test. You can’t say “The very submitted articles” or “The very produced knowledge”, or “The very discussed problems”, or “The very gained knowledge”. So “submitted”, “produced”, “discussed” and “gained” cannot be regarded as adjectives and must therefore be placed after the noun. But in the final example you COULD say “The very excited students” and “The very surprised professor”, so these two participles have lost their verbal meaning and become adjectives, and can therefore be placed in front of the nouns they describe. So the “very” test is a pretty good way of deciding whether the past participle you want to use can be placed in front of the noun it describes or not. If you can say “the very XXX”, then the “XXX” can come in front of the noun.

tusinde

Note that Danish and English have opposite conventions when writing figures in thousands. Danish uses a full stop, while English uses a comma.

- ✗ We haven’t seen anything like this for 2.000 years
- ✓ We haven’t seen anything like this for 2,000 years

type/typer

See *slags*.

uanset

Note the following examples:

- ✗ War is wrong, no matter the motivation for going to war
- ✓ War is wrong, no matter what the motivation for going to war is
- ✓ War is wrong, whatever the motivation for going to war is

uddannelse

Note the difference between “education” (a general term: “education is bad for you”, for instance), and “degree programme” (a specific term: “I am very happy with my degree programme”, for instance). Note also that if you are studying for a specific profession (doctor, nurse, teacher, lawyer, accountant etc.), you should use the verb “train” and the noun “training”. For instance:

✗ She is an educated teacher

✓ She is a trained teacher

udenfor/uden for

Note that “outside” is used primarily in British English, while “outside of” is more common in American English.

udenlandsk

Try to avoid phrases like “foreign student” and “foreign university” when translating *udenlandsk studerende* and *udenlandsk universitet*, for instance. This is because the term “foreign” could be regarded as derogatory. Use something like “students from outside Denmark/students from abroad” and “university outside Denmark/university abroad” instead.

✗ We are hoping to attract applications from many foreign professors

✗ We are hoping to attract applications from many alien professors

✓ We are hoping to attract applications from many international professors

✓ We are hoping to attract applications from many professors from outside Denmark

udgangspunkt

✗ Discourse theory provides an excellent parting point for further studies in this field

✓ Discourse theory provides an excellent starting point for further studies in this field

✓ Discourse theory provides an excellent point of departure for further studies in this field

udlænding

It is best to avoid “foreigner” because this term could be regarded as derogatory and may indicate that the speaker regards Denmark as the centre of the universe. The term “alien” is even worse. Use

“non-Dane” instead, perhaps, or an expression like “international student” for *udenlandsk studerende*.

udmeldte studerende

✗ The faculty had 78 withdrawn students last semester (this sounds as if the 78 students were vaguely depressed in some way)

✓ 78 students withdrew from their studies at the faculty last semester

udnytte

See *benytte*.

udråbstegn

Exclamation marks are used in English to express a sense of shock or surprise of some kind. In Danish they can be used more broadly, almost like a smiley in an attempt to establish a more intimate connection between the sender and receiver. So be careful how you use them in English.

✗ I hope we can meet again soon, after the corona pandemic is over!

✓ I hope we can meet again soon, after the corona pandemic is over.

✗ Dear Bente!

✓ Dear Bente,

✗ A Happy Christmas to all our readers!

✓ A Happy Christmas to all our readers.

✓ Oh My God! Look at that idiot walking around without a face mask!

ugenumre

The Danish system of numbering the weeks works fine in Denmark, but this system is not used worldwide. For instance, British people will have no idea what you mean if you say “I’m on holiday in week 27”. So you need to name the actual dates if you want to be sure that people will understand you.

✗ I’m on holiday in week 27 this year

✓ I’m on holiday 5-11 July this year

uinteresseret

Note the difference between “uninterested” (which means “not interested”) and “disinterested” (which means “objective” or “impartial”).

- ✗ What we really need is an uninterested co-examiner (this is possible, but highly unlikely)
- ✓ What we really need is a disinterested co-examiner (this is much more likely)

umiddelbart

The temptation is to translate this into “immediately”, and this may be correct in some contexts. But in many cases, the Danish *umiddelbart* does not contain a reference to time and does not actually mean “immediately”. So you need to consider what *umiddelbart* means in the context in question. Note the following examples:

- ✗ His hypothesis seems immediately to be incorrect
- ✓ At first sight, his hypothesis seems to be correct

underbukser

See *bukser*.

undgå

Note that “to prevent” means “to stop something happening or existing”, whereas “to avoid” means “to keep away from something”. Note the following examples:

- ✗ We need to make this degree programme more interesting to avoid students dropping out (this sounds like the student drop-outs are falling from the sky and potentially landing on your head)
- ✓ We need to make this degree programme more interesting to prevent students dropping out
- ✓ The accident could have been prevented (to stop it happening at all)
- ✓ The accident could have been avoided (we could have steered our car around the accident)
- ✓ We are asking the students to avoid litter in the Nobel Park (please walk around it)
- ✓ We are asking the students to prevent litter in the Nobel Park (please stop litter occurring)

ungdom/unge

Note that “youth” cannot always be used as a translation of *ungdom/unge*. It is used as an uncountable noun (“In my youth I travelled widely, but now I stay at home”), or as a collective

noun (“The youth of this country are going to the dogs”). So in many cases, the best option is to translate *ungdom/unge* into “young people”:

✗ I blame the youth for the troubles of society

✓ I blame young people for the troubles of society

✗ Four million children and youth are severely malnourished at the moment

✓ Four million children and young people are severely malnourished at the moment

✓ He showed great academic promise in his youth, but faded badly in middle age

utvivlsomt

Note the difference between “undoubtedly” or “indisputably” (which mean “without any doubt”), and “doubtless” (which means “very probably”).

valgfag

Note the difference between “elective course” (a course which the students choose themselves from a list of courses) and “optional course” (a course which the students can take if they want to take it). At AU we normally mean the former, not the latter.

vant til

Note the small but important difference between “I am used to playing football” (*jeg er vant til at spille fodbold*) and “I used to play football” (*jeg har spillet fodbold, men jeg gør det ikke længere*). In the first example, “to” is a preposition (so it must be followed by an “-ing” form of the verb). In the second example, “to” is part of the infinitive verb “to play”.

vejledning

Note the difference between “supervision” (which normally involves academic staff providing guidance for students writing a project, thesis or dissertation) and “guidance” or “student counselling” (which normally involves administrative staff giving students advice about their study options). In the latter sense, it is probably best to write “student counselling” instead of just “counselling”, because “counselling” could indicate the kind of assistance given by psychologists to help people with mental health issues.

velfungerende

It's not exactly wrong to translate this into "well-functioning", but there are often better options. Note the following examples:

- ✗ Thank god we had a well-functioning system – otherwise things would have gone badly wrong
- ✓ Thank god we had an effective system – otherwise things would have gone badly wrong

venlig hilsen

You should use "Yours sincerely," if you know the name of the receiver, and "Yours faithfully," if you do not know their name. If you have a (relatively) close relationship with the receiver, you can use "Best wishes," or "Kind regards,". If you have a very close relationship, you can use ("Love,"). Different cultures judge the closeness of relationships differently, and this is a hugely complex area. In English "Love" does not necessarily mean that you literally love the receiver. Danes are in general informal, but you should be careful about being too informal in professional contexts.

Dear Mr Trump,	Yours sincerely,
Dear Mr President,	Yours faithfully,
Dear Donald,	Best wishes,
Dear Don,	Love, Stormy

versaler

You will find guidelines about the use of upper-case letters in the AU Style Guide. In theory, the rule is simple. Titles must be written with upper-case initial letters for all the main words (not articles and prepositions, for instance). Descriptions of things must be written with lower-case letters. In practice, however, it is sometimes really difficult to decide whether what you are writing is a title or a description, because the same word could be a title in one context and a description in another. But you have to make this decision, and it's important to be consistent throughout the text once you have made it. In newspaper headlines the conventions differ: British newspapers tend to use lower-case letters for headlines, while American newspapers tend to use upper-case. Here are a few examples which might help:

- ✓ I'm studying history at AU (this is a description of a subject area)
- ✓ I'm studying Scandinavian studies at AU (this is also a description of a subject area)
- ✓ My sister is an associate professor of Scandinavian studies at Aarhus University (this is a description of her job)
- ✓ Bettina Petersen, Associate Professor of Scandinavian Studies at Aarhus University (this is her title)

videospeak

- ✗ She produced a fantastic video speak
- ✓ She produced a fantastic video voice-over

VIP

Note that the Danish abbreviation for *videnskabeligt personale* can't be used in English because in English it stands for "very important person".

- ✗ The faculty should really ask its VIP staff before deciding on this issue
- ✓ The faculty should really ask its academic staff before deciding on this issue

vise sig at være

Note the following examples:

- ✗ This particular research method has shown to be highly effective
- ✓ This particular research method has proved/proven to be highly effective
- ✓ This particular research method has proved/proven highly effective

yngre

This is a false comparative. Don't translate it into "younger" unless you are actually comparing two things:

- ✗ Hitler was a painter when he was a younger man
- ✓ Hitler was a painter when he was a young man
- ✓ Hitler was a younger man than Churchill
- ✓ The younger the students, the better

ældre

This is a false comparative. Don't translate it into "older" unless you are actually comparing two things:

- ✗ Churchill painted watercolours when he was an older man
- ✓ Churchill painted watercolours when he was an elderly man

✓ Churchill was an older man than Hitler

✓ The older the students, the better

øjeblikket/i øjeblikket

Note that “presently” is not a correct translation of *i øjeblikket*, even though it may be tempting to think that it is because “the present” does mean *nutiden*. The English “presently” actually means “in the near future”. And note the following examples:

✗ These theories really do not give us what we need presently

✓ These theories really do not give us what we need at the moment

økologisk

The two terms “organic” and “ecological” often overlap, but there is a difference. “Organic” farming uses organic fertiliser instead of chemical fertiliser, and does not use chemicals to combat pests and diseases in plants. And “organic” products can only carry the organic label if they comply with a range of specific production standards. “Ecological” is a broader term because ecological farming uses all possible methods (including organic methods) which protect the planet as a whole, such as preventing waste, soil erosion and carbon emissions.

økonomisk

Note the difference between “economic” (this is OK when you are talking about what is called *nationaløkonomi* in Danish), “economical” (which means inexpensive in relation to the amount of money invested), and “financial” (which is often the best term to use – for instance “the university’s financial situation”):

✗ My economy is in a dreadful state – perhaps I should call *Luksusfælden*

✓ My finances are in a dreadful state – perhaps I should call *Luksusfælden*

✓ My financial situation is dreadful – perhaps I should call *Luksusfælden*

✓ The economic outlook for Denmark after the COVID-19 pandemic looks rosy

✓ This new hybrid car is extremely economical in terms of petrol consumption

✓ The current financial difficulties facing the Faculty of Arts may make further cuts necessary

ørken

Note the small (but important) spelling difference between “desert” (*ørken*) and “dessert” (*dessert*):

✗ It took Habermas two weeks to cross the Sahara Dessert on foot

✓ It took Habermas two weeks to cross the Sahara Desert on foot

å/ær

Danes sometimes feel that there are no “rivers” in Denmark because there are no *floder* in Denmark. So they try to avoid using “river” when describing their watercourses in English. This is a misunderstanding in my view. British people and Americans will look at a watercourse and call it a “river” if they feel that it’s wide enough (or long enough). Small rivers could be “creeks” (US English) or “streams” (British English), but these are really quite small (*bække* in Danish). This is a grey area (how wide or long is a river?) However, any native speaker of English looking at *Gudenå*, for instance, would feel that it is big enough to be called a “river”. Particularly in the broadest sections. So Danes should not be worried about calling *Gudenå* a “river” in English. The same applies (for instance) to: *Storå*, *Kongeå*, *Brede Å*, *Karup Å*, and *Ribe Å*. They might not be big by American standards, but they are big by Danish standards, and this is what counts. And I recommend writing the full Danish name for rivers, for instance: “the River Gudenå” instead of “the River Guden”, and “the River Ribe Å” instead of “the River Ribe”. This will make it easier for tourists to find these rivers on a map if they need to.