

## Avail

I have just received *ET* 34 (Apr 93) and am answering your request in *Comment*.

In the mid-1980s, a Kathmandu advertisement on a sign by the side of a main road proudly invited 'diplomats and other entitled people' to 'avail the opportunity [to buy duty free goods at . . .]'.  
 In addition, two neologisms in Gurkha English are *disqualiful* from *disqualify* and, after an *interview* on arrival, an *outerview* on departure.

May I say I greatly enjoy *ET* and pass my copies on to a Nepalese friend.

John Cross,  
 Pokhara, Kaski District, Nepal

## A return to the native?

It might be interesting to explore the changes in geographical names in English:

Eg Frankfurt → Frankfurt  
 Leghorn → Livorno  
 Basle → Basel  
 Majorca → Mallorca

This seems to be an accelerating trend. I don't think it will be long before we are writing Brasil rather than Brazil, and Ellas rather than Greece. A story broadcast on BBC radio recently referred to the river Ganga rather than Ganges.

Robert Craig,  
 Weston-super-Mare, Avon,  
 England

## Guarding and tackling noses

The term *nose tackle*, reported by Paikeday in *ET* 34 (Apr 93) is surely an analogical offspring of *nose guard*, listed in the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (1987), dated from

1975. The two terms are synonyms, and are synonyms of *middle guard*, which is less vivid.

It is interesting, and puzzling, that the same position on the defensive squads of U.S. football teams has three names. *Tackle* and *guard* are long-lived names of once distinctly different positions, but in a three-man or five-man defensive line the middle man blurs the difference between tackle and guard.

In team rosters in newspapers I find that some teams have nose tackles and others have nose guards, but I have not seen both on any one team. Evidently some coaches prefer one term, other coaches another for the same position.

James B. McMillan,  
 Tuscaloosa, Alabama, U.S.A.

## Computer-driven advice

I enjoyed Whitney Bolton's article on spelling-checkers (*ET*34) and am chuffed to have 'inspired' it. Time, however, has moved on since I wrote my piece on grammar-checkers (*ET*32). They are fast becoming fully integrated into word-processors, not additional programs as Whitney Bolton suggests. (The latest releases

of Word for Windows, Amipro and WordStar contain Correct Grammar, and WordPerfect has Grammatik built in.) This brings grammar-checkers functionally closer to spelling-checkers. Perhaps they even replace them: Correct Grammar contains *The American Heritage Dictionary* (anglicised in the now-available British version).

Of course, since these program units rely on pattern-matching, and have no semantic understanding, they can only ever hope to save word-processing writers from moments of inattention. This, in itself, can be useful. In a paper presented in April at the Computers and Writing Conference, Professor James Hartley and I examined two of our own texts to see how advice given by grammar-checking programs compared with suggestions made by colleagues. As expected, human readers tended to offer ideas on content and points for clarification, whereas the programs could only help with low-level editing. However, the computer did pick up four times as many useful mechanical points as the readers (grammar, spelling and usage). Unfortunately, we had to wade through a great deal of dross to get to the 10 per cent of the computer's suggestions that were worth implementing – Grammatik found an astonishing 550 'problems' in Hartley's 3,000-word text, most of them irritatingly inappropriate; Correct Grammar flagged a more modest 170.

There is an interesting contradiction here. With such a high hit rate, the writer must have a secure editorial grasp in order to sort the chaff from the grain, and therefore has no need of computer-driven advice. However, as noted, the computer intervention did offer improvements that colleagues had either neglected or failed to notice. Per-

### Addled agents

You might say an adder's a  
 summer,  
 And someone with 'go' is a  
 comer,  
 And water's a flower,  
 A tug is a tower,  
 But don't look for plums  
 from a plumber!

P.G. Thornhill,  
 Newmarket, Ontario,  
 Canada

haps, despite the reservations about mechanical help expressed by myself and Whitney Bolton, the small amount of extra time running a text through the grammar-checker is well spent – for those who have the unit installed within the newest breed of word-processor.

Jane Dorner,  
London, England

## A shameful situation

Having read the section on teaching English in *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* and articles on the subject in *ET*, I write to draw your attention to the difficulties encountered by many overseas students who attend so called Schools of English in the United Kingdom.

I am not, of course, referring to the schools which meet the British Council's standards for recognition and have passed an inspection by British Council inspectors, but to the unrecognised schools which have not been inspected or have failed their inspection.

During the past year or so I have had the opportunity of talking to a number of overseas students and found what I consider to be serious deficiencies in the standards of teaching and the equipment provided by some of these unrecognised schools. I accept that standards vary and that the list of complaints I give below have come from students who have attended the very worst of their kind.

**Premises.** Shabby – Often in run-down basements – Uncomfortable furniture.

**Teaching.** Fast turn-over of staff, which interrupts continuity –

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Readers' letters are welcomed. *ET* policy is to publish as representative and informative a selection as possible in each issue. Such correspondence, however, may be subjected to editorial adaptation in order to make the most effective use of both the letters and the space available.

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## Paging Ogden Nash, armour, Rosenfield, McGinlet, etc.

Does all the clever verse  
you've written  
Tend to make you smug,  
Or is it more as though  
you're bitten  
By the humor-bug  
And every line you hatch  
Is just another scratch?

Dick Hayman,  
Salinas, California

Many teachers come from overseas and have lived for far too short a time in this country to refine their own English – Different accents and pronunciation confuse students – Beginners and more advanced students mixed together if a teacher is absent or a number of students fail to attend class – No weekly tests conducted – No individual help or advice given.

**Equipment.** Generally poor or inadequate – Repairs to broken machines delayed – One report stated that one set of equipment (blackboard, tape recorder etc.) was provided for a school of three classrooms. This had to be carried continually from one room to another, causing quarrels

between teaching staff – Not enough textbooks – Never sufficient paper or hand-outs.

I have written to my Member of Parliament and hope that *ET* readers in Britain will also take up the fight against a very bad situation which shames us all.

Peggy Allen, Editor,  
*Good Company Magazine*,  
The Burton Group Plc, London

## Quasi-English

Having read the article *English on Dis-play: a fractured language* by Glyn Hughes in *ET* 31 (Jul 92), I thought you might appreciate what I've enclosed with this letter. It's part of a bilingual newsletter (I've omitted the Arabic part) produced by the *Ajou Group*, an organisation which owns the rights to a number of Western & Far-Eastern dealerships in Saudi Arabia. I picked up this particular copy when I visited the *Canon* franchise here in Riyadh. I think it perfectly illustrates the *linguistic resistentialism* that Hughes mentions. Anyway, good luck with deciphering it!

P.J. Hewitt,  
British Aerospace, Riyadh,  
Saudi Arabia

*Ed.* Below is a representative extract from the newsletter in question (*The Ring*, Apr/May 92):

## From the Heart

To my children and my worker brothers, for whom I have the real Fafuerly feelings, I say, we all in El Ajou Group always norished the dream of issuing a private bulletin of our group to complete through it the contacting, the acknowledging and the caring, as well as to know from it some of the information and news which affect all the employees of the Group.

Our group has expanded during three decades and its employees and clients have spreaded every where.

There is the main seat in Riyadh, and there are branches here and there in distant areas, even in towns that to move to them one needs travelling and

an encounter between management and staff, between every new we do, reflect on or aim at In addition to that there is another goal which is culture and preparations.

From here, this periodical bulletin will form a union to all. It will be the mirror against which we see ourselves, consider our complexion and our one body which is distributed in more than one place.

This bulletin would be the witness to our successful firm paces with God's permission - towards what we aim for of progress and development. It will also be a record of our work in addition to that, for our aim of this bulletin is



## CROSSWORD

### ET35 CrossworLd solution



### ET34 CrossworLd winners

The winners of the *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*, edited by Della Summers, the prize for our April 1993 crossword, are:

Velma Jean Carter, North Hatley, Quebec, Canada

Thomas Doherty, Coleraine, Northern Ireland

Richard Lennon, Dublin, Eire

Nigel Pearce, London, England

Theodor Teichmann, Upton, New York, USA