

# Re: NRC kwaliteitskrant? Echt niet!

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- *From:* "Ekkehard Dengler" <ED-RS@xxxxxxxxxxxx>
  - *Date:* Sat, 30 May 2009 15:21:15 +0200
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Harlan Messinger wrote:

Ekkehard Dengler wrote:

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Harlan Messinger wrote:

Ruud Harmsen wrote:

Ze leren het  
ook nooit.

[http://www.nrc.nl/buitenland/article2254151.ece/VS\\_en\\_Zuid-Korea\\_in\\_hogere\\_s](http://www.nrc.nl/buitenland/article2254151.ece/VS_en_Zuid-Korea_in_hogere_s)

taat\_van\_paraatheid

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In  
Zuid-Korea  
zijn 28.500  
Amerikaanse  
troepen  
gestationeerd,  
in  
Japan,  
eveneens  
binnen  
bereik van  
Noord-Koreaanse  
raketten,  
zijn  
50.000 man  
gelegerd.  
/====

Re: NRC kwaliteitskrant? Echt niet!

'Troepen' op  
deze manier  
gebruikt is  
een lelijk  
anglicisme.  
Ik  
vind het  
volkomen  
onacceptabel  
om dit in  
het  
Nederlands  
zo te  
doen. Kan  
echt niet.  
Zeker niet  
in een  
zogenaamde  
kwaliteitskrant,  
maar dat is  
het NRC  
allang niet  
meer.

"Manier" = francicism  
"Anglicisme" = francicism  
"Acceptabel" = francicism  
"Kwaliteit" = francicism or  
latinism  
"Krant" = francicism

For that matter,

"Raketten" = italicism  
"Gestationeerd" =  
francicism or anglicism

I hope you don't mean to imply that people  
aren't entitled to take  
exception to new imports from a foreign  
language that their  
language has borrowed other words or  
usages from. Imagine hearing  
"informations" in an NBC news piece about  
Germany.

I mean to imply that if one take exception, the express reason  
should not carry the implication that borrowing is outright  
improper.

It wasn't clear whether "troepen" is an established or a recent

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and  
spreading usage that Ruud either (a) doesn't happen to like it  
at  
all or (b) thinks that sources above a certain level of  
discourse  
should scorn it, or whether it's a brand new usage, as  
"informations" would be on an NBC newscast.

Or simply a mistake (< "Informationen"). If you had actually heard  
it used on the news last night, it would have struck you as  
ungrammatical, wouldn't it? I'm not sure you appreciate the effect  
poor translations from English tend to have on other languages. For  
instance, while the current German government is known as "die  
Regierung Merkel", the Obama administration is often referred to as  
"die Obama-Administration".

I don't understand that. Why would (presumably) native German speakers  
who are paid to translate foreign material into their own language,  
translate it with words that they know perfectly well don't exist in  
their language?

I'm surprised you're surprised; in fact at first I thought you were joking.  
Poor translations are not the exception, but the rule, and the more a  
language is translated into, the more likely it is to be influenced by the  
language or languages of the source texts.

Translators are almost invariably underpaid and under constant pressure to  
meet unreasonable deadlines. Another problem is that translators are paid  
not by the hour, but by the word or page, which effectively rewards sloppy  
work:

The more time you spend looking for the right word, the less you earn. Since  
you're never going to be paid well, though, no matter how fast you work,  
translation is not a very attractive career option. As a result, far more  
untalented and/or lazy people go into translation than you would expect.  
One convenient way of dealing with translation problems is leaving difficult  
bits untranslated. Scientific jargon can be very, very difficult to  
translate because new terms are coined every day but can take years to find  
their way into any dictionary. Ideally, scientific jargon would be  
translated by bilingual scientists, but bilingual scientists are thin on the  
ground and tend to have other, more lucrative things to do.

You may also have overlooked the fact that translations aren't necessarily  
the work of a professional translator. A lot of translating is done  
(sometimes only mentally), by journalists, scientists and other people who  
read English-language texts on a daily basis. The more often you read a  
particular foreign expression, the less likely you are to think of it as  
something to be avoided, which is how things like "die Obama-Administration"  
creep into common usage. In today's media landscape, the ability to express  
yourself well is no longer a prerequisite for reaching a mass audience and

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any expression that has been used a hundred times on national TV will sooner or later become part of most people's vocabulary.

All this is compounded by what I like to describe as the emperor's-new-clothes phenomenon. In Germany, you can get away with peppering your utterances with random bits of English or even pseudo-English, regardless of whether your audience understands what you're saying, because English is felt by many to be a more modern or sophisticated language than German. People are likely to assume that it's their fault if they don't understand something, but less likely to admit that their English isn't good enough. In fact, some Germans no longer think of English as a foreign language, which sadly does not mean that they're anywhere near proficient in it. If you try to correct them, you'll sometimes get reactions of the "Das sagen wir [Physiker/Börsianer/...] aber so" type. To give you an idea of what I'm talking about: the "German English" for "Center of Excellence" is "Competence Center" (< "Kompetenzzentrum"), and "Competence Center" is also used in German to mean "Kompetenzzentrum". Google finds about half a million instances on German websites.

All this may be hard for you to understand because the USA has no foreign language community to look up to and English isn't under pressure from any other language, not even Spanish. Has it ever occurred to you how lucky you are to be a native speaker of perhaps the only language in the world that isn't under pressure from English?

I don't think I'm exaggerating and I'm not a fanatical purist either. Nor do you have to dislike the English language to complain about a "lelijk anglicisme" in the language you grew up speaking. Incidentally, "Administration" does exist in German, but it wouldn't normally be used to mean "Regierung". And yet, judging by Google, "die Obama-Administration" is three times as frequent as "die Regierung Obama".

Regards,  
Ekkehard

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