# Note

## What's wrong with 'expeditioner'?

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Some – particularly Australasian – authors who have published in *Polar Record* may be familiar with the debate around the acceptability of the word 'expeditioner'. The term is regularly used by Australians and New Zealanders, in both casual and official contexts. In *The Antarctic Dictionary*, Bernadette Hince (herself Australian) classifies the word as particularly (although not solely) Australian, notes its regular use by the Australian national programme, which publishes an *Expeditioner Handbook*, and defines it as 'A member of an [A]ntarctic expedition, including a government expedition' (Hince 2000: 118–119). However, 'expeditioner' appears in the *Oxford English Dictionary* only as a rare and obsolete term. The sole example cited in the *OED Online* is from 1758, in a non-polar context; the definition provided is 'One engaged in an expedition'. Neither *The Australian Oxford Dictionary* (2nd edition, 2004) nor *The New Zealand Oxford Dictionary* (2005) includes 'expeditioner', although the term is included in the Australian *Macquarie Dictionary* (5th edition, 2009) and the US-based *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (1993). There is clearly significant national variation in the term's acceptability and its use in an academic publication can draw negative attention (Stone 2003: 172 – not coincidentally, a British review of a book by an Australian author). This note argues that 'expeditioner' should not be dismissed as an idiolectic ungrammatical term unsuitable for use in British publications. We make a case for the use of 'expeditioner' on three grounds: conceptual appropriateness, precedence and convenience of expression.

Linguistically, 'expeditioner' is an '*-er* nominal' – that is, a noun formed by the addition of the suffix *-er* to a base. Linguists Klaus-Uwe Panther and Linda Thornburg point to the difficulty of identifying syntactical rules around of the formation of these words that take all the empirical data into account (2001: 159). One of the problems is the variability of the base from which the *-er* nominal is derived. Students of English, they note, are taught that the suffix is added to an action verb to form a noun meaning 'one who performs the action denoted by the verb' (Panther and Thornburg 2001: 150). A relevant example for *Polar Record* readers is 'explorer'. 'Expeditioner', however, is formed not from an action verb but from a noun – 'expedition' – and thus might seem at first glance unacceptable English usage.

However, Panther and Thornburg (2001: 150) note that there are literally hundreds of *-er* words that do not conform to this rule: they can be formed from non-action verbs ('believer') and also non-verbs ('foreigner', 'New Yorker'). They argue that this group of words are better accounted for conceptually rather than syntactically, suggesting that the 'central sense of *-er*' is 'a human Agent who performs an action or engages in an activity to the degree that doing so defines a primary occupation' (Panther and Thornburg 2001: 154). In the case of non-verbal bases (such as 'expedition') the 'evocation of an action scenario' inherent in the *-er* nominal functions metonymically – that is, by association. The category is complex and flexible (think, for example, of the different relationships between base and action scenario in 'whaler', 'philosopher' and 'prisoner'). The further the distance of an *-er* nominal from the central sense defined above, the less likely it will occur (for example, 'exister' or 'happener') (Panther and Thornburg 2001: 186).

Although Panther and Thornburg do not mention 'expeditioner' explicitly, it fits their central sense extremely well. An expeditioner is indeed a human agent engaging in an activity that defines a primary occupation, and the noun base 'expedition' is metonymically connected with this activity, referring to the context in which the activity occurs: an expedition. Depending on the nature and formality of the expedition the term can thus evoke an occupation, a characteristic activity or an affiliation (corresponding to several of Panther and Thornburg's subcategories). There is thus no conceptual barrier to its usage, and given that the 'extreme formal and referential diversity' of the group has rendered syntactical classifications very difficult (Panther and Thornburg 2001: 153), objections cannot be made on this ground.

Our second argument relates to precedence. While the *OED* might classify 'expeditioner' as rare, a survey of *Polar Record* (Cambridge University Press) alone reveals two dozen publications, dating from 1972–2007, in which the term is used once or more, in either Arctic or Antarctic contexts. Of these, there are twelve research articles, three book reviews (one of them Stone's review of Rossiter mentioned above), three obituaries and three notes or bulletins of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR). In some cases, such as Taylor and McCormick (New Zealand-based researchers), the term is very prominent, mentioned in the title and multiple times in the text (Taylor and McCormick 1987). While most of the research articles are by Australians and New Zealanders, the anonymous SCAR bulletins have no obvious national affiliation (SCAR 1995; SCAR 2005). No publications using the term appear after 2007, when Ian Stone took on the role of the journal's Editor-in-Chief. *The Polar Journal*, which like *Polar Record* is produced by a British publisher (Taylor and Francis), features eight articles using 'expeditioner' since its founding in 2011, all but one (Legler 2011) by Australia-based researchers.

Outside of these journals, a number of uses of the term by non-Australasian researchers can be located, particularly in polar medical contexts (for example Mishra and others 2011; Mishra and others 2014; Chen and others 2016). Hince (2000: 119) cites examples in the *Antarctic Journal of the United States* from 1993 and the late British novelist Jenny Diski's *Skating to Antarctica* (1997). British-born, Canada-based polar researcher Mark Nuttall (2010) uses the term in the title of his chapter 'Narratives of history, environment, and global change: expeditioner-tourists in Antarctica', which appears in a collection published by another British publisher, Routledge.

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This last example, with 'expeditioner' used as part of a compound noun, points to a third reason to adopt the term: the lack of acceptable alternatives. The *OED Online* lists 'expeditionist', but this word has less currency than 'expeditioner'. A Google search produces four times as many results for the latter than the former (neither of the *OED* entries appears to have been updated since the 1894 first edition). While 'expedition member' or 'expedition personnel' may be appropriate substitutes in some contexts, in others (including attributive nouns, as in 'expeditioner life' [SCAR 2005]), these phrases are awkward. When such phrases are used repeatedly, as they often must be in historical, medical or psychological articles dealing with individual experience, the resulting text becomes very wordy. 'Expeditioner' provides a concise solution.

A final objection to 'expeditioner' may simply be that the word sounds awkward or unattractive. This aesthetic judgement is subjective and dependent on the writer's national, social and academic context. We do not advocate the compulsory use of the term – those who wish to use 'expedition member' or even 'expeditionist' are of course free to do so – but rather that it be an allowable option for those who prefer it.

We have argued that resistance to 'expeditioner' is unwarranted. This resistance, possibly due to an unnecessary adherence to the rule-of-thumb that *-er* nominals are formed from action verbs, is illogical in the face of large numbers of counterexamples to this rule, the conceptual suitability of 'expeditioner' as an *-er* nominal, the numerous precedents and its usefulness in avoiding awkward expression. We hope that, despite the term's close association with Australasians, *Polar Record* readers, authors and editors will henceforth embrace 'expeditioner'.

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