

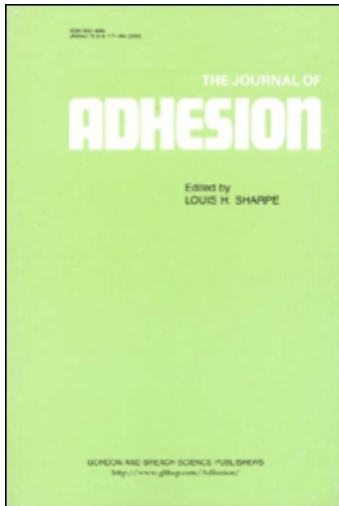
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Letter

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Letter

Sir,

I refer to the letter from Dr. K. L. Mittal which you published recently,¹ about a term to represent materials which adhere to an adherend.

I adhere, that is to say I am an adherent, to the principle that new words should not be introduced unless none exists which will adequately serve. The relevant Latin root is *hære*, of the second conjugation. It seems to me, as suggested above, that "adherent", deriving from the participle, is the proper substantive for materials which stick on others. Admittedly, this meaning, relating to things rather than people, is said² to have been obsolete since 1645. Perhaps we should revive it.

"Adsorb" is a transitive verb,³ so it is reasonable to have a word ("adsorbate") to describe that which is adsorbed: "adhere" is an intransitive verb,³ so nothing, not even an "adherate", may grammatically be adhered. We are, colloquially, stuck with the grammar.

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¹ K. L. Mittal, 6, 377 (1974).

² *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd Edn. (Oxford University Press, 1965).

³ *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, 1961 Edn. (G. Bell & Sons Ltd., London).