The Canberra editor

Nuts and bolts...verbs (part 1)

The **verb** is the most important word in any sentence. Without a finite verb, a group of words is not a whole sentence—it is a fragment. 'Verb' comes directly from the Latin 'verbum' meaning 'the word'—just goes to show how important it is.

How often have you read, at the beginning of a letter, *Referring to yours of* (date).? It is written with a full stop at the end, as though the writer thinks it is a complete sentence. It's not. *Referring* is the present participle of *refer*, not a complete (finite) form of the verb. There is no subject either. This string of words is a fragment. To be a complete sentence it should be I refer to yours of (date). That is a complete sentence with a complete form of the verb—in this case in the present tense—and there is a subject 'I'.

A sentence can consist of only a verb, though the sentence then has a hidden (understood) subject anyway, and the mood is imperative (and the sentence type probably exclamatory): *Stop!*, which really means (*You) stop!* where *you* is not written, but understood to be there.

You may well ask where the whole sentence is in the following exchange:

'Morning, Jim. Feeling better?
Yes.

There isn't a whole sentence in sight, but we often speak in fragments. In this instance, Yes stands for the whole sentence I am feeling better. It is acceptable in conversation that may be part of a novel.

Here's another problem that we editors often see when we work on material written by authors who have English as a second language—muddling of verb tenses in English:

I am living in Australia since 1985. The writer is trying to say that they have been in Australia for more than twenty years, and at the same time to say that they are still in Australia. This is a verb tense problem. The sentence should be *I have lived in Australia since 1985,* using the present perfect tense which consists of the present tense of 'have' and the past participle 'lived'

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IPEd notes
News from the Institute of Professional Editors

A diagram showing the Institute's governance structure can be found on the IPEd website <www.iped-editors.org>, under 'Council'. The starting point in the diagram is the societies of editors, which are the creators and members of IPEd. IPEd is the child of the societies.

It is educative and enlightening to browse the websites of the societies. What strikes one from the viewpoint of the Institute is the richness of the activities and resources of its parents, and the opportunities that this presents for further strengthening our profession.

Every society publishes a regular newsletter, maintains a register of editorial services available through its members and has a meeting program that engages topics and speakers relevant to the requests and needs of members.

Several of the websites give lists of documents deemed essential for good editorial practice and provide URLs of sites providing information useful to editors. A section giving reviews of books relevant to editing is a nice feature of the Tasmanian society's site. The Queensland site has a list of editing and publishing courses available at Australian tertiary institutions, very useful for new editors seeking training or for established practitioners seeking to enhance their knowledge and qualifications.

The training programs mounted by the societies themselves are impressive. The Canberra society, for example, has seven training events planned for 2009. They cover diverse topics, from grammar essentials to the business of running an editing business, and move also into areas such as graphic design and advanced on-screen editing techniques that [essentially] expand the horizons of people working in the communication sector. The 2009 training program in Victoria is equally expansive. It was launched in April with a workshop on marketing for freelance editors and, during the year, will move

through grammar (also the topic for the first 2009 training event of the NSW society), graphic design, editing foreign languages, proofreading and building a website, as topics. 'Become a good editor', a WA workshop this month, will take participants back to the basics of editing practice. In a similar vein, last month's meeting topic in WA was 'Starting and surviving as a freelance editor'.

A pioneering achievement of the Queensland society is the implementation of a mentoring scheme, the CAL Editors and Writers Development Project, with the financial support of the Copyright Agency Limited Cultural Fund and in association with the Queensland Writers Centre. This seeks to provide emerging writers with a basic, affordable editing service, and emerging editors with professional development. You can find a progress report on the Queensland site.

In South Australia, the society is hard at work organising our 2009 national conference, the fourth such, which is, in itself, a significant achievement of our profession. Registration for this 8–10 October event is now open, with early-bird rates applying.

The strengths of its members—the societies of editors—are IPEd's prime asset in its work to advance the profession of editing. To be an effective national body promoting and strengthening the profession, it draws on the deep and broad experience of its members. A stronger profession is, in turn, sure to generate more populated and vibrant societies of editors. It's an essential synergy.

Now, news of the next accreditation exam: subject to sufficient registrations, it will be held on Saturday 12 September 2009. You can register online at <www.iped-editors.org>.

Thinking about words for all seasons

'Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.
Close bosom friend of the maturing sun.'
Keats, *Autumn*

When I began writing this, I had just been through the chore of changing the clocks at the end of daylight saving. 'Saving'! What saving? Whatever daylight you gain in the evening you lose in the morning. Whose crazy idea was that?

Actually it was first suggested as a way to economise in candles, by Benjamin Franklin in whimsical vein in 1784 when he was American ambassador to France. The notion was taken up more seriously in 1895 by a New Zealand entomologist, to gain more daylight hours for his collecting, but it didn't attract support. In 1907 an Englishman, William Willett, proposed advancing the clock by 80 minutes in four equal steps during April and back again in September. Again it didn't happen. But in World War I it suddenly seemed a good idea to save fuel by reducing the need for artificial light. Germany led the way in 1916, but she was soon followed by Britain and most of her allies. Things went further in WWII, when Britain kept her clocks two hours ahead of the sun during the summer months ('Double Summer Time') and one hour in winter. I can remember walking to school in the dark for what seemed most of the year, and feeling sorry for the poor farmers whose cows still wanted to be milked at their usual time, regardless of the clock.

The act of changing the clocks brings autumn home to us, and although we Australians like to think of autumn as starting on 1 March and ending on 31 May, a stricter definition is from the equinox of 20 or 21 March (when day and night are equal in length) to the shortest day on 21 or 22 June. But why is it called *autumn* and where do the names of the seasons come from?

Let's start with the word *season*. It reached us from the Latin satio, meaning 'sowing time', via Old French seson (modern *saison*). Italian is *stagione*, which they also trace back to *satio*. Germans are more prosaic: for them a season is just *eine Jahreszeit* (a 'year-time'). The 'proper season' is the best or most appropriate time for something to happen, such as sowing your crops. The word now has a much wider range of applications—your dog may be in season outside while you are seasoning the salad in the kitchen, with the intention, no doubt, of achieving an appropriately perfect flavour. The OED says that names of seasons are often capitalised, but the *Style Manual* advises against this practice unless they are personified—'Winter with his icy fingers'.

The old Romans called autumn *autumnus*. But where did *autumnus* originate? The OED says 'of doubtful etymology', but the French believe that it was an offspring from the Latin verb *augere*, 'to increase, make to grow', linking it to the fullness of harvest. Indeed, the Old English *haerfest* meant 'autumn', and 'harvest' was the preferred term for autumn in England until the 16th century. *Harvest* is very similar to the modern German word for autumn, *Herbst*, whose etymology includes an ancient precursor, *hervist*. The word autumn was borrowed from Old French *autompne* (modern *automne*) and has gradually taken over, but it was used alongside both harvest and fall (of the leaf) for ages, only eventually winning out in England and its colonies, leaving the field to 'fall' in the New World. Why do we keep the 'n' in autumn when we just say *ortum*? That's yet another historical peculiarity—but then the French pronounce their word *otonne*!

Incidentally, that Latin word *augere* (auxi, auctum) also fathered the word *author* (at one time spelt auctor), used in a wider sense than we editors generally think of it, as the originator or inventor of anything new that 'increases' our culture or our material profit. And, of course, *auction*.

Winter and *summer* present no immediate etymological mysteries. They are straight German (*Winter, Sommer*). If you try to push the story a little further back you find that 'winter' has its origins in the Indo-European *wed-* or *wod-*, related to 'wet' or 'water', which shouldn't surprise you. 'Summer' leads us back eventually to Sanskrit *sama*, meaning a half-year—a reminder that in early reckoning the year was divided into halves, not quarters.

So, what about *spring*? Anglo-Saxons called it *lencten* ('long day', referring to the lengthening days after the equinox) and that's where our words Lent and Lenten come from. Modern German emphasises the aspect of early in the year—*früh* means 'early' and *Frühling* or *Frühjahr* is spring. Other Teutonic languages do similarly, such as Danish *voraar*, or Dutch *voorjaar*. The OED puts *spring* under the same rubric as a spring of water, but in 1387 the English spoke of 'springing

of 'live'. This tells the reader that it's a mixture of present and past, but that the situation is ongoing at the moment of writing.

So, what do we need to know about verbs? We need to understand tense; mood; voice; transitivity; the use of verb participles; agreement in number and person between the subject and verb; and some of the more complex forms of verb, using auxiliary verbs and participles, to express finer meaning in verb phrases. There's more, but this is as much as I have space to cover. This will be brief—nuts and bolts only. If you would like me to write in more depth about this topic, please tell me and I will.

Tense

Basically there are three 'simple' tenses—tense means time: present, past and future.
- I *read* books. (present)
- I *bought* a book yesterday. (past)
- I *will sing* with the choir tomorrow. (future)

Have you noticed that, while we can express simple present and past tenses by using one word only, we have to use a helping word like *will* to make the future tense? Don't get me going on languages and cultures that do or don't have certain tenses—it's a whole different story!

Using auxiliary (helping) verbs 'be' and 'have', we can concoct any number of more complex tenses:
- I *have written* a book (present tense of 'have' + past participle 'written' of 'write' = present perfect—means it is completed but only just—I'm still crowing about it!
- He *had written* three books by the time he was 30. (past tense 'had' of the verb 'have' + past participle 'written' of 'write' = past perfect—means it was all over well in the past.
- She *will have written* five reports by the end of this week. (future tense 'will have' of 'have' + past participle 'written' of 'write' = future perfect—means it hasn't happened yet, but by the end of the week all that report writing will be a thing of the past.

There are continuous versions of those tenses too. For those we enlist part of the verb 'be' to help, and we use the present participle (ending in -ing)—just one example of present perfect continuous tense:

- I *have been writing* articles for The Canberra Editor for a number of years.

This means that I have been doing it for some time (past) and that it is continuing (present continuous).

Mood

There are four moods that express the different attitudes of the speaker or the writer to the action or state described by the verb:
- Indicative (makes a statement): *The grass is green. Tom kicked the ball.*
- Interrogative (asks a question): *Is the grass green? Did Tom kick the ball?*
- Imperative (issues a command): *Shut the window. Look out! Be there, or be square.*
- Subjunctive (the 'wishful thinking' mood): *If I were a rich man, I would give money to the poor.* (the 'were' is not in the past—it's expressing a wish for the future).

Some people include the infinitive (to be, to have) as a mood. Mood is a grey area in grammar these days, with the subjunctive mood not being used as much now as in the past.

Transitivity

Verbs are either transitive or intransitive. Many verbs can be either, depending on the context. 'Trans' is Latin and means 'across'. So a transitive verb is one where action passes across from the subject to an object—*The boy kicked the ball* (action passes across from 'boy' to 'ball'). An intransitive verb is one which doesn't have a direct object—*She appears well.* Here's an example of the same verb 'fly' used transitively and intransitively: *Pilots fly aeroplanes* (transitive). *Birds fly* (intransitive).

There's a funny thing about transitivity—passive verbs are always transitive. Why? That's your puzzle for the next few weeks. I'll continue with Verbs next month, starting with **Voice: active and passive**. And I'll explain why passive verbs are always transitive. Will the puzzle have been solved by then? That's a clue!

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time', then in 1495 'spring time'. The 'spring of the leaf' in spring contrasts with the 'fall of the leaf' in the fall. Italians call it *primavera*, literally 'first spring', because ver is the Latin for spring. The French say *printemps*, from Latin *primus tempus*, 'first time', but up to the 16th century they had *primevère* and that's still their name for the primrose. At different times in old England all these words have been used to refer to this first season, coming into fashion and dropping out again. We still have a little souvenir of *ver* in the adjective *vernal*, as in 'vernal equinox'.

So, well into autumn and safely past the pagan festival of the dawn goddess Eostre, we are here in the merry month of May—not, alas, as merry Down Under as in the northern hemisphere where summer is just around the corner. The name *May* (in Latin *Maius mensis*, 'the month of May') seems to have belonged to the Roman fertility goddess *Maia*, daughter of Faunus and wife of Vulcan, but may have links to even older Indo-European *Magya*, 'the great one'—her first syllable comes from magus, 'great'. We derive it directly from the French *mai* (pronounced 'may', as we do) and the German *Mai* (pronounced 'my'—such are the unpredictable phonetics of other people's spelling).

And there we must leave it, with winter just around the corner and, please, some more rain in the offing.

Peter Judge

Sources: As always, the *Oxford English Dictionary* on CD-Rom v. 3.0 and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2009 on DVD. *Le Trésor de la langue française* at <http://atilf.atilf.fr/tlf.htm>.
Deutsches Etymologisches Wörterbuch (1995) by Gerhard Köbler at <www.koeblergerhard.de/derwbhin.html>.
Online Etymology Dictionary <www.etymonline.com/index.php>.
Dizionario Etimologico della Lingua Italiana Online <www.etimo.it/>.

Creative Puns for "Educated Minds"

1. The roundest knight at King Arthur's round table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from too much pi.

2. I thought I saw an eye doctor on an Alaskan island, but it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.

3. She was only a whiskey maker, but he loved her still.

4. A rubber band pistol was confiscated from algebra class, because it was a weapon of math disruption.

5. The butcher backed into the meat grinder and got a little behind in his work.

6. No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.

7. A dog gave birth to puppies near the road and was cited for littering.

8. A grenade thrown into a kitchen in France would result in Linoleum Blownapart.

9. Two silk worms had a race. They ended up in a tie.

10. Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.

11. A hole has been found in the nudist camp wall. The police are looking into it.

12. Atheism is a non-prophet organization.

13. Two hats were hanging on a hat rack in the hallway. One hat said to the other: 'You stay here; I'll go on a head.'

14. I wondered why the baseball kept getting bigger. Then it hit me.

15. A sign on the lawn at a drug rehab center said: 'Keep off the Grass.'

16. A small boy swallowed some coins and was taken to a hospital. When his grandmother telephoned to ask how he was, a nurse said 'No change yet.'

17. A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.

18. The short fortune-teller who escaped from prison was a small medium at large.

19. The soldier who survived mustard gas and pepper spray is now a seasoned veteran.

20. A backward poet writes inverse.

21. In a democracy it's your vote that counts. In feudalism it's your count that votes.

22. When cannibals ate a missionary, they got a taste of religion.

23. Don't join dangerous cults: Practice safe sects!

Scholarly journals

In late 2008 I attended a lecture by Professor Emeritus John Gilbert, as part of the Australian National University's (ANU's) Public Lecture Series. Professor Gilbert is based at the University of Reading, UK, and is the Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Science Education. He talked about his experiences and insights gained from 17 years with the peer-reviewed journal.

Professor Gilbert admitted that he is 'generous' (read 'biased') when he assesses papers from scholars from developing nations. He 'almost always' accepts such authors' papers for publication. Quite often, these papers require extra work from copyeditors to ready the paper for publication. (As chief editor, he does not undertake copyediting; he has an editorial team.) In some cases, a paper is pretty much rewritten by the team as the English is so poor. I raised the issue of the ethics of this with Professor Gilbert and, he conceded that it is an issue, adding later that in some cases one has to question 'who really wrote the thing'.

The International Journal of Science Education is published up to 15 issues a year and, given its broad area of scholarship, receives around 400 submissions annually. To manage this volume, Professor Gilbert's office uses a journal management software called Tower Block, which was developed by a US-based company. The system handles about 44,000 journals worldwide. It can alleviate the administrative burden of correspondence and of maintaining individual management databases. It can generate emails such as automated responses to authors who submit a paper. It also advises when the paper has moved to the next stage, such as 'being reviewed', 'accepted for publication', 'in copyediting', etc. Because of this I think it is of benefit only if you have to deal with a large volume of submissions.

The ANU has trialled an open source version of such software—see <http://pkp.sfu.ca/> and click on 'Open Journal Systems'. This also provides a platform for electronic publishing. Expert users claim it is able to manage subscriptions, but from the demonstration I saw it could not generate renewal notices or address labels.

While aimed chiefly at scholars, I felt that parts of Professor Gilbert's talk would be of interest to editors.

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Australian Style now online

You can now view *Australian Style* (16.1) online at <http://www.ling.mq.edu.au/news/australian_style.htm>

Readers of the printed version of the newsletter will find many familiar elements, some adapted for the new medium; for example, the Feedback questionnaire. Some features are new, such as the Word column, and electronic archive of previous Australian Styles (it currently gives you PDFs of the printed newsletter as far as Volume 11.1, June 2003, but we plan to complete the archive back to 1992 as soon as we can). Another edition is planned for later in 2009, but there will be periodic updates to the current edition, and we will let you know about these via email.

Some of you have already requested that a hard copy be mailed to you. You should receive this in the next few weeks. If anyone else is interested in a black and white printout of the newsletter, please send a stamped addressed envelope (not too small please!) to Adam Smith, Linguistics Department, Macquarie University, N.Ryde, NSW 2109.

We hope you enjoy Australian Style in its new format. Please encourage anyone you think might be interested to visit the site, and particularly to fill out the feedback questionnaire.

Adam Smith
Editor
Australian Style

Paradise for editors

The following is a quote from *The Canberra Times* Wednesday, April 22, 2009

"IN BRIEF

Cemetery Drop-ins

The ACT Government will hold three drop-in consultation sessions on the proposed south Canberra cemetery, in Woden, Tuggeranong and Dickson libraries. ACT Cemeteries general manager Hamish Horne will be available to answer questions about the proposed cemetery, which may include a gas-fired crematorium."

Kathryn Clark

Training News

Turn Skills into Profit..!
Course on 19 June

Presented by: Jean McIntyre and David Grantham

When: 19 June 2009

Where: National Library of Australia

Times: 09:15–16:30

Members: $150

Non-members: $250

Bookings: Martine Taylor: 6260 7104 (ah) or
                martinetaylor@hotmail.com

Ever thought about turning your professional skills into a rewarding and satisfying business?

During this interactive workshop we will explore key requirements such as:
•   business planning and resources
•   registration and structure marketing and promotion
•   financial management.

There will also be opportunities for discussion, networking, and sharing your own business aspirations if you wish.

Your leaders for this informative and enjoyable session will be Jean McIntyre and David Grantham.

Jean McIntyre holds a Graduate Diploma in Marketing and is Regional Director with Marketing Angels. Jean teaches marketing and management at Canberra Institute of Technology and is a presenter with Canberra BusinessPoint. She is a published writer and undertakes many leadership roles in business and the community.

David has qualifications in finance, management and sales. As Manager of Business Education at the Australian National University he was responsible for training in business management, finance and related systems. David is a knowledgeable communicator who is passionate about people learning and understanding.

Jean and David are two of the excellent consultants with "Nurturing Nortons". Founded in 1998, this business seeks to nurture the growth of individuals, teams and organisations through training courses, personal tuition, and counselling.
For more information visit <www.nurturingnortons.com> or email nurtnort@ozemail.com.au

The Don't Panic Workshop—editing annual reports and other large publications, presented by Helen Lewis and facilitated by Elizabeth Henderson, was held at the beginning of May and attracted 18 participants.

The workshop was divided into four sessions. The group exercise for the first session, scoping and planning large publications, involved participants describing the process of making tea which was a very effective exercise in task analysis. The second session, developing a workable project plan, gave participants the opportunity to develop a project plan for this year's annual report or another large publication that they may be producing. The third session explored steps to be taken to establish a sound annual report structure and focused initially on the question - what is an annual report? From this point Helen explored mandatory reporting requirements and a bare bones structure that might include divisions, such as, programs, services, departments, major achievements, changes, significant issues and major stories of the year. This session emphasised the importance of identifying the availability and format of illustrative material and the role of graphic designers. Key points from the fourth session, managing the publishing process, identified the importance of preparing an order of book - a valuable tool that identifies everything in the report from cover to cover in the order that it will appear - and maintaining version control. The day concluded with participants and presenters enjoying a glass of champagne together, courtesy of Helen, a very generous and thoughtful gesture. Helen also invited participants to keep in touch with her and with each other for follow-up discussion.

All the participants indicated that the workshop fulfilled their expectations.

Some of the general comments from the evaluations were:

        'a well presented and informative workshop'
        'well planned, covered many important topics'
        'very useful refresher'
        'very well organised'
        'I was impressed by the physical appearance of
the study kit which was in itself an education!'

A big thank you to presenter Helen and facilitator Elizabeth and to all the participants whose contributions added to the success of the workshop.

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SURFACE MAIL

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