



Issue #8
Grammar
February, 2004



Free in NYC, everywhere else \$2.00

Dear Reader,

As laziness and inertia creep upon us, we are no longer able to produce *Octopus Army* on the frequent schedule upon which you were so far able to enjoy our dear publication. Instead of appearing to be flaky in regards to the timeliness of the publication of issues, Ms. Krajewska and I have decided to put *Octopus Army* on a purposeful hiatus, thus repelling the comments of flakiness and attracting the comments of mature foresight and planning.

Another reason for the hiatus is lack of quality submissions; we have decided to let our contributors rest until they feel they can create again. In the meantime, we will be accepting submission for issue #9 themed *Doubles*, which will deal with anything from mirror images through doppelgangers to number theory. Issue #9 will be published when we have enough submission of high quality but not before a six months' time. Please check back with our website in approximately six months to see whether we have picked up enough steam to go on again.

We sincerely apologize for the temporary inconvenience that will be indubitably caused by the lack of a regular *Octopus Army* issues.

Sincerely,
Maggie Krzywicka

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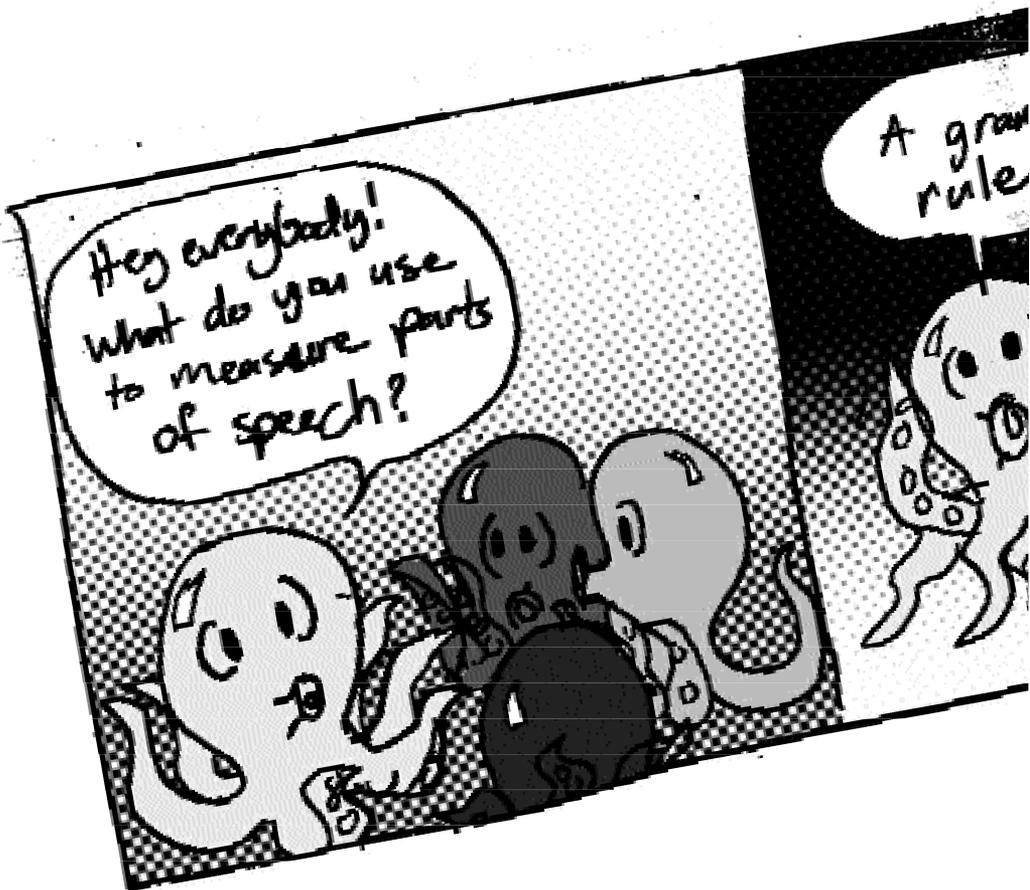
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Octopus Army #8: Grammar

Table of Contents

front cover	<i>Dante's Lesser Known Ain'th Level of Hell</i> by John Weckerle
4	<i>Octocomic</i> by Erin Finnegan and Maggie Krzywicka
6	<i>The Grammar of Life</i> by Lothar D. Schenk
8	<i>The Importance of Good Grammar</i> by Ken Franco
10	<i>An Essay on Dr. Rober Goethe, Pioneer in the Science of Speech Pathology</i> by Phil Guie
back cover	<i>Adjective Order</i> by Brad Cerenzia





Hey everybody!
What do you use
to measure parts
of speech?

A gram
rule



Written by **Maggie Krzywicka**
Illustrated by **Erin Finnegan**

The Grammar Of Life

by *Lothar D. Schenk*

Let's call the being 777. That's not to imply that 777 is its name, nor even that the being can be said to have a name. It just reflects the fact that it would be impossible to talk about it without a name for it, and then there would be no story to tell.

Of course, calling it a being and even referring to it by 'it' is not exactly right either, but saying 'he' or 'she' or 'him' or 'her' would be still more inaccurate.

Then, for the sake of the story, let's call the second being 666 and pretend that they're having a dialogue. Let's just mention that they are really not separate beings, and that the notion of a dialogue between them is inappropriate as well. On the other hand, it would be just as wrong to say that they are one and the same being, and whatever happened between them (in a fashion, so to speak) is best told in the form of a dialogue.

From here on, let your imagination help you, as you see fit.

"Hey!" exclaimed 666. "That looks interesting! What is it?"

"It's called a universe," said 777 proudly. "It's a sort of matter simulator. Do you know 888's Game of Life?"

"Ah, you mean that matrix of positive and negative fluons, activated and deactivated according to some simple rules involving the neighbouring particles, where you get all sorts of self-perpetuating patterns. Right? But this looks different!"

"Yeah, well, it's a little bit more advanced." 777 was obviously pleased with its creation. "It's got higher-dimensionality and is considerably larger than ordinary Game of Life substrates. But, what's really important is that the rules I use are different, too."

Together, they examined the universe and watched what was happening

there. 666 was impressed.

"Wow, cool!" it said. "This looks almost like a real-world scene. Amazing! These shapes look like feeding force-carriers. Wonderful! And hey, over there! These bipedal things with two arms and a head. Don't they look like real beings!" Its voice had an excited ring to it. "Absolutely fantastic! How did you do it?"

"Would you believe that the rule set governing this simulation is hardly more complicated than the rules of 888's Game of Life? It's all built from a few basic building blocks according to some simple rules. A grammar of life, one could almost call it. Simple, yet powerful. It's almost a literal adaptation of the IHVH principle governing our own existence, translated into matter code, of course. The results are spectacular, don't you think? A grammar of life it is, indeed!"

Before 666 could give an answer, it was interrupted.

On another plane, in another place, Carl exclaimed: "Hey, that looks interesting! What is it?"

Ross, sitting before the computer screen, turned around in his chair with a barely concealed sparkle of pride in his eyes. "It's a program I wrote. It's a sort of cellular automaton simulation, only in 3D and with a special twist. Do you know Conway's Game of Life?"

"Ah, I remember that. You have that matrix of black and white dots, and you turn them on and off according to some simple rules involving the neighbouring cells, and you get all sorts of weird self-perpetuating patterns, gliders, guns, blinkers and so on. But this looks entirely different!"

"Yeah, it's a little bit more advanced," Ross said with a smile, which indicated that he thought that it was much more advanced. "As I said, it's in 3D and the 'world' that's simulated is considerably larger than what you usually get with ordinary

implementations of the Game of Life. But, what's really important is that the rules I use are different, too."

Together, they bent over the screen and watched what was happening there. Animal-like shapes in different colours were apparently roaming over a simulated landscape. There was the suggestion of an open plain, bordered by hills and mountains. There were what looked like weird trees and other plants scattered all over the plain, and the walls rimming the scene had openings here and there, suggesting the presence of hidden spaces or maybe even of entrance points into other, more remote parts of a wider world. And everywhere there was movement.

"Wow, cool!" was Carl's excited commentary. "This looks almost like a real-world scene. Amazing! Here, doesn't this look like a herd of grazing antelopes? And here. These could be a pack of lions following them. And hey, over there! Bipeds!" He was getting more and more excited. "They almost look like real people. These are huts, no? A village! Absolutely fantastic! How did you do it?"

"Would you believe that the rule set governing this simulation is hardly more complicated than the rules of Conway's Game of Life? It's all built from a few basic building blocks combined according to some simple rules. A grammar of life, one could almost call it. Simple, yet powerful. I tried a lot of things first, but they were all too complicated and didn't lead to anything interesting. Finally, I had the idea to use something like DNA, you know, the stuff that human genes are made of. DNA consists of only four amino acids, and a few combination rules. Thyamine, Adenine, Cytosine and Guanine. T, A, C, G, like letters of an alphabet, combined into words and sentences. And look what can be built that way!" Ross smiled and raised both arms, first pointing at himself, then at Carl.

"Actually", he continued, "the rules I use in my simulation are an almost literal adaptation of the way DNA functions. Translated into program code, of course. And the results are spectacular, don't you

think? A grammar of life it is, indeed!"

Before Carl could give an answer, he was interrupted. The light in the room flickered and went out. The whirring of the computer's fan ceased and the screen went dark. Ross and Carl sat in semi-darkness and shocked silence.

Then the light went on, again. The computer started up with a blank screen, then a boot-up message.

"Oh, shit!" groaned Ross. "I've had this running for almost half a year, and now that it's produced something interesting - now, this this Gone, all gone!"

With a shuddering sigh, he drew a deep breath.

He looked at Carl, still half unbelieving, then gave a shrug of defeat.

"Oh, well. I guess I'll just have to start all over, again."

666 was just about to give an answer, when something happened. 777's universe ceased to emit its continuous sparkling force flow, became opaque and faded into nothingness.

Both beings remained in stunned silence.

"***", groaned 777, after a while. "A Force Discontinuity! I've had this universe running for almost half an eternity, and now that it's produced something interesting - now, this..... this..... Gone, all gone!"

It took a deep aural influx, then rephased into a resignation pattern.

"Oh, well. I guess I'll just have to start all over, again."

The Importance of Good Grammar

by *Ken Franco*

One sunny summer afternoon, Passive Voice, Split Infinitive, and Genghis Khan were skipping hand in hand through a forest, harmonically humming a merry tune. As they skipped, Passive Voice, who due to the width of the trail was forced to skip on the rough countryside, tripped over a dull brass object sticking up out of the grass. Genghis Khan pulled him to his feet and asked if he was all right, then bent over for a closer look at what he'd tripped over. It was an old-fashioned oil lamp, empty and tarnished.

"Would I be able to perhaps take a look at that?" asked Split Infinitive. Genghis Khan handed it over. After a few seconds of looking at it, Split Infinitive said, "Look, there's some kind of writing on this thing. If I had something to vigorously wipe it with, it'd probably be easier to read."

"There's a handkerchief in my pocket that could possibly be used," said Passive Voice. Split Infinitive passed the lamp over to him and he began to rub the slightly raised letters with his handkerchief. After only a few rubs the lamp began to shake violently in his hands, and he dropped it. All three companions moved back a step from the lamp, which was now emitting a cloud of thick gray smoke.

When the smoke cleared, there was a man in purple pants standing in front of them and smiling psychotically. "Hello!" he shouted so loudly that even Genghis Khan flinched. "I am the genie of the lamp!" Then he stood there smiling, showing all his teeth, apparently waiting for something.

"I-" Split Infinitive started, but the genie immediately interrupted him.

"I will now grant you three wishes! However, since there are three of you, one of you must kill the other two and take all the wishes. Although, I suppose another option would be to settle for one wish each!" He smiled at them.

The three friends stepped away from the genie and decided that two extra wishes would not be worth killing for. Rock-Paper-Scissors determined that Passive Voice would wish first, followed by Split Infinitive and then Genghis Khan.

With a small amount of nudging from his friends, Passive Voice stepped forward and addressed the genie. "Okay, it looks like the first wish will be made by me. I would like to be granted grand emperorship of most of Asia."

The genie clapped his hands and said, "It shall be done!" Then he pointed at Genghis Khan, who suddenly said, "I hereby grant you grand emperorship of most of Asia," in a voice that was not his own. The three friends shrugged at each other, then at the genie, who smiled at them.

Split Infinitive asked, "So, is he emperor of Asia or what?"

"No!"

"So what gives?"

"He didn't ask to be emperor of Asia! He wished to be granted emperorship, and while I didn't grant him the emperorship, someone did, so I did grant the wish! Who's next?" Split Infinitive took a deep breath. It seemed to him that with every passing second the genie grew more delighted with

everything around him, and he was afraid that the genie might literally explode any second. But it was his turn, so he stepped up.

"Okay. I wish to as soon as possible be emperor of most of Asia." He reached behind him with one hand and Genghis Khan slapped him five.

"Your wish is granted!" the genie said and clapped his hands.

"So...I'm the emperor of most of Asia?"

"No!" the genie shouted, then began giggling and jumping up and down.

"But-"

"You wished to be emperor as soon as possible. I'm sorry, but the earliest possible time at which I can make you emperor of most of Asia will be seventy-eight hundred fifty-six years from now. But at that point, I promise you, your bones will be exhumed and worshipped as the emperor of nearly half the people in the world. Congratulations!"

Split Infinitive kicked the ground in front of him.

"I suppose that makes you next!" the genie said to Genghis Khan, who, rather than stepping forward to meet the genie as the other two had done, closed his eyes and visualized his wish before saying it. The genie smiled patiently at him until he was ready.

"Okay," said Genghis Khan, "I wish to be emperor of most of Asia."

"Your wish is granted!"

The three travelers once again shrugged at each other. "So," Split Infinitive said, "is he emperor of most of Asia?"

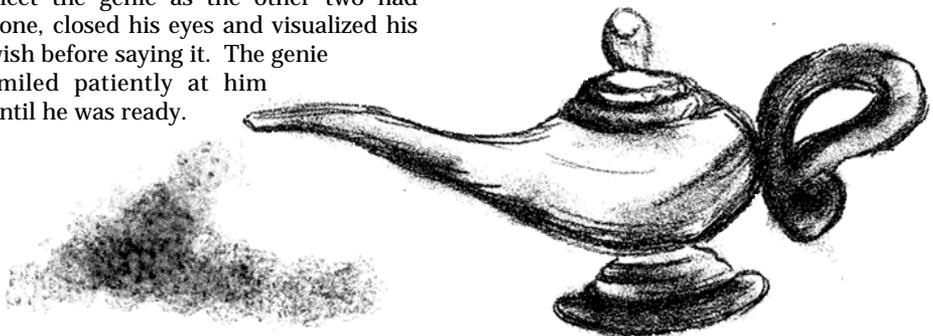
"Yes!"

Genghis Khan pumped his fist in the air and looked to his two friends for high fives, but neither seemed to be in the mood. Fortunately, the genie stepped up and slapped his hand. "Congratulations, Mr. Emperor!"

"But wait," Split Infinitive said. "You said the soonest I could possibly be emperor would be in seventy-whatever hundred years. So how come you were able to so quickly make him emperor?"

For the first time since he appeared, the genie stopped smiling. He looked gravely at Split Infinitive and said, "It's not just what you wish for. It's also how you wish for it." Then he picked up the lamp from the ground in front of Passive Voice, tossed it to Split Infinitive, and disappeared into it. Split Infinitive looked at the place where it had been polished by Passive Voice and read the words "GRAMMAR GENIE".

The End



An Essay on Dr. Rober Goethe, Pioneer in the Science of Speech Pathology

by *Phil Guie*

People often ask me how I came to study speech pathology. These questions usually arise while I am exploring their cleft palate with my fingers. I tell these patients of mine that Speech Pathology seemed like a natural fit for someone like myself, someone whose ambitions involved helping my fellow man improve his lot. After all, what could be more tragic than to be afflicted with stuttering, mispronunciation, and other speech impediments?

Truth be told, however, I ended up a speech pathologist for one very simple reason: My license to teach English was taken away. Yes, I am that Dr. Phillippe Guie, the one who was involved in that tedious scandal at the Westmore Academy for Girls. I won't get into the specifics of the scandal. I shouldn't have to, as the gossip-mongers have already done enough information-disseminating for us all. But I will say this in my defense: Any impropriety that may have occurred between myself and "Miss Molly" (I have been advised by an attorney never to mention her by actual name, in order to preserve her reputation-such as it is.) did not in any way dampen my respect for her, either as a student or a potential academic. Secondly, what gams she had! And I suppose all you hypocritical plebeians out there are made out of stone!

So, as you doubtlessly know, I was dismissed from Westmore. While I was still a relatively young ex-instructor, I had saved up a modest nest egg, which allowed me to spend a year traveling abroad and cursing the name of God. Ultimately, I returned to college and took up the study of Speech Pathology, mostly to the advice of my mother. I believe her exact words to me were along the lines of: "Christ, Phillippe! If you're a speech pathologist, you can stick parts of your anatomy-fingers, I assume-in-

young women's mouths and it won't be considered a crime!" I conceded her the point, and subsequently enrolled at King's College.

And yet, for many years the bitterness and anger never left me. It had been my lifelong dream to become a teacher at a fine academy. I had achieved my dream, only to have it shattered by a moment's impropriety. As a result of my repressed frustration, I shunned my fellow graduate students during my first year of study, and practically secluded myself in the library. A few instructors became very much concerned, but my academic work wasn't exactly suffering. I was throwing myself fully into my new prospective profession, boning up on past case studies, theories, that sort of thing. Certain members of the faculty actually changed their opinions of me, and went as far as to expect some great new discovery as a result of all my research, some lasting contribution to academia. And I didn't let them down, though even I had no idea what I had stumbled upon at first.

During one of my lengthy sojourns in the library, I began reading the many diaries of Dr. Rober Anastasia Goethe, whose work in linguistics during the mid-1800's contributed greatly to the establishing of Speech Pathology as a science. Dr. Goethe had studied linguistics at university, and had been a well-known grammar instructor. His passion for education reminded me of my own, and I felt an immediate affinity for this deceased predecessor. I put the diaries aside momentarily, only to seek out a critical biography of the man I felt strange kinship with. Locating such a text, I soon discovered that he and I had something else in common: Dr. Goethe had his own little dalliance with a female charge at Monmouth School. The discovery of the affair led to his dismissal, and severely set back his career.

You can imagine my euphoria upon reading about the affair. Here was a man whose

fire for teaching mirrored my own, who had jeopardized his livelihood by taking the instructor-student relationship a step too far. But Dr. Goethe's Fall from Grace did not prove fatal; on the contrary, his later work had a shockwave effect on the science of speech pathology, the ripples of which are still being felt by students to this day. So I should not have felt so bad after all. If Dr. Goethe's example taught me anything, it is that life goes on, and with hard work, improves. I began to realize that there was yet hope I would live down my misdeeds within my own lifetime, that one day, I could walk down Trafalgar Square, and those who recognized me would call out, "Dr. Guie! Thanks to you, my little girl does not stutter anymore!" A welcome change from, "Dr. Guie! Because of you, my daughter is ruined, and now no man will have her!" which I had grown accustomed to.

So how did the famed Dr. Goethe rehabilitate his reputation, you ask. The Road to Redemption began on a humid, tropical island out in the Caribbean. You see, Dr. Goethe could find no work at any institution on the European continent. However, his friend and former roommate, Mr. Nigel Starling, (Yes, that Mr. Nigel Starling,) helped him to a teaching post on the tiny ex-British colony of Camdbibdia, which at that time was undergoing a transition from military dictatorship to a more democratic government. Mr. Starling was already a successful businessman at this time. (No surprise to anyone who has studied his remarkable achievements in the history of European business.) He had convinced prominent landowners in Holland to back his venture, the exporting of clog-dancing, which Mr. Starling argued was unavoidable if the Dutch intended to keep trying to pick up French girls. For he correctly predicted that new connotations for the word "dike" loomed just over the horizon, and these would inevitably make the Dutch unintentionally hilarious, so they would need something else to talk about at the bar.

At any rate, the clog-dancing troupe Mr. Starling employed made regular stops at Camdbibdia en-route to other parts of the world. During one particular visit, Mr. Starling himself rode along. Local legend—as well as his own best-selling autobiography—indicate that Mr. Starling stepped down from his ship onto the powdery white Camdbibidian beach, glanced up at the chocolate-brown natives with their thatched huts and hammocks slung between palm trees, and was possessed by a singular thought: "This would make a great place for an English language school."

Camdbibdia, after all, lay on the outside of the Caribbean archipelago, where trade was flourishing. Mr. Starling knew that the tribal rulers of the various islands would want their children to learn English, the better to integrate into the white man's world. The English clog-dance-peddler wasted no time. He requested an audience with the new, democratically-elected president of the island, a chipped beer bottle, and laid down his plan for a school. The president gave Mr. Starling permission to build his school right along the beach, adjacent to the largest village. Within months, the school was finished. Now all Mr. Starling needed was an instructor, and he found one with excellent credentials in the embattled Dr. Goethe.

Dr. Goethe wasn't exactly looking forward to spending an indeterminate number of years stranded in the Caribbean. The diaries of friends and relatives reveal that Dr. Goethe thought of himself as a metropolitan; he enjoyed evenings at the theater, nights discussing politics at the corner pub. While some of the Camdbibidian natives had been turned company men by Mr. Starling, their grasp of English was fleeting at best. Most likely, Dr. Goethe would have found himself terribly isolated on the island.

And yet, I can tell from his diaries that Dr.

Goethe thought himself up to the challenge. Faced with an extended period of loneliness, he endeavored to make the best of his situation. Here, on the date of his voyage out to Camdbibdia, he wrote,

"August 17th, 1861,

Dear diary,

Back in college, I never saw myself as destined for missionary work. But what could be more noble, when you think about it? Bringing forth a ray of light into the darkness, so to speak... Ah, if only mother could see me now, on a rickety ship echoing with the excitable cacophony of wooden shoes, about to be jettisoned on a island thousands of miles away from civilization. But you need not worry about me. No, sir! I am definitely prepared to 'rough it,' as they say. As long as there's a nearby place that serves good baguettes, and gaslight to read by, I will be just fine."

When Dr. Goethe arrived at Camdbibdia, he was practically boiling over with optimism. Unfortunately, through the course of several outbreaks of mild malaria, severe diarrhea, and windy days which caused coconuts to fall from the palm trees and land on his feet, the optimism dried up, and was replaced by anger and bitterness towards his present circumstances. I cannot be sure of the exact length of time it took for Dr. Goethe's optimism to dissipate and for anger and bitterness to take its place, but I estimate it to be around one year, given the following diary entry:

"August 9th, 1862,

Dear diary,

I have been on this island for approximately one year, and my optimism has dissipated and anger and bitterness has taken its place. I constantly write to that twit Nigel Starling, reminding him that I am here, and to let me know the minute that tedious scandal has blown over. But all I get from him are these cryptic replies- Wait it out a few more months, old boy. Enjoy the sunshine. How is the teaching going?

How the bloody hell does he think the teaching is going? The 'teaching' is going fine. The problem isn't the 'teacher,' it's the 'students!'"

It's true that Dr. Goethe had endured a great deal of frustration in his first year trying to teach English to the native children. His main obstacle? He was the only English speaker on the entire island. Without any reinforcement at his pupils' homes, their process of learning could not help being very, very slow. Dr. Goethe valiantly attempted to gather the entire island's populace together-the adults and elderly along with the children-with hopes of teaching the entire island English at once. Unfortunately, by bringing everyone to the school's beach-front location en-masse, the weight of the island shifted, causing it to tilt over, and an entire harvest's worth of coconuts rolled out into the sea. The natives disliked this effect, and from that point on, whenever Dr. Goethe invited them for another lesson at the school, they politely declined.

Meanwhile, Dr. Goethe would work his charges day and night, rewarding them for each little success, punishing them severe-

ly for every mistake. But after two years, he still saw no improvement.

And he still did not receive any word from Mr. Nigel Starling saying he could go home.

"October 1st, 1863,

Dear diary,

This horrible place is beginning to drive me mad. Driving me especially mad are these horrible Camdbibdians, whom God himself could not teach English! Why can't you Camdbibdians learn how to speak? English is a perfectly beautiful, melodic language! But you insist on adhering to your Camdbibdian mumbo-jumbo. Perfectly incomprehensible! That goddamned Nigel Starling! These goddamn black-skinned voodoo-"

I have purposely left out the rest of Dr. Goethe's diary entry, as it is horribly racist. He penned this particular outburst during his third year on the island, a period which Goethe historians refer to as, "The Slow Maddening." Leading up to years four and five, Dr. Goethe became increasingly intolerant towards the Camdbibdians, particularly to the way they talked. In one of his fourth year entries, he writes about,

"...covering (his) ears in order to shield out the slow-vomit sound of Camdbibdian speech."

One would expect a man who made English grammar his life to be extraordinarily sensitive to the sounds of another person's speech. But sensitivity to the point of developing a psychological phobia was unprecedented. Until recent years, speech scientists still found Dr. Goethe's speech-phobia fascinating, abandoning research

only after discovering that they could no longer tease him with it after he died.

To read the first five years' worth of Dr. Goethe's diary entries, one cannot help but feel that one is witnessing the irreversible unraveling of a man. Once a brilliant instructor, he falls further and further into an abyss of despair. There seems to be no hope. And then, at right about the end of the fifth year, everything changes. Dr. Goethe undergoes an amazing transformation, from angry, self-pitying outcast to the absolute picture of contentment. The process is mysterious, but the results as plain as the page they were written on:

"August 1st, 1866,

Dear diary,

It has been five miserable years on this island, but I woke up this morning and everything changed. I have found the secret to happiness."

He must not have been bluffing, because his diary entries for the next ten years are as tranquil as the ocean surface on a calm day. That's right, Dr. Goethe spent another decade in Camdbibdia before he finally returned home to take his place among the pioneers of the future science of Speech Pathology. But what was this "secret to happiness" he bragged about? My colleagues, to whom Dr. Goethe is no less than a god, have ignored that question entirely. They have placed faith in the idea that Dr. Goethe simply "saw the light," as they say, that he got used to Camdbibdia. But I could not accept so simplistic an answer.

And thus, my great project came about: uncovering the secret behind the transforming of Dr. Robert Anastasia Goethe.

I began my quest by leafing through Dr.

Goethe's diaries again, only in reverse. When that failed to yield fruit, I went down to the Starling Company, Inc., main headquarters on the West End, in hopes of perusing the diaries of the various Camdbbidian company men. As everyone knows, Mr. Nigel Starling requested that all his employees abroad keep diaries of their daily activities, which were collected after employment was terminated, and stored in the company library. With the help of a skilled librarian, I found the diaries of several Starling chiefs at Camdbbidia. Most helpful was the diary of Mr. Andres Pierre-Vallon, who was both headmaster at the Starling English Language Institute, as well as headwaiter at the Starling Country Club & Bistro, est. 1823.

While Mr. Pierre-Vallon's English is crude and oft-times difficult to understand, I managed to discern an urgent request for a doctor for Dr. Goethe. A doctor for Dr. Goethe? But why? I immediately went in search for the registry of the Dutch clog-dancers' ship, for any trips in which a doctor was aboard.

After a few more days' research, I compiled a list of travel dates, as well as a list of physicians and surgeons. With more help from the librarian, I began leafing through the medical professionals' diaries, cross-referencing them with the dates wherein they traveled abroad. At length, I narrowed the list down to one man, Dr. Elliot Abbot Spitzer. Dr. Spitzer's diary states that he traveled to Camdbbidia July 28th, 1866, for the purpose of examining one Dr. Rober Anastasia Goethe, resident grammar teacher. It seemed Dr. Goethe had been badly intoxicated two days before, slipped on the beach, and hit his head on a coconut. He fell in and out of consciousness for the next day or so, then developed a bad fever, prompting Mr. Pierre-Vallon to send out for a physician. The fever broke shortly after Dr. Spitzer arrived, and as Dr. Goethe complained of no lingering prob-

lems, Dr. Spitzer went home.

So was that it? Dr. Goethe got ill, and in the course of recovering from his illness, his personality changed? I began reading all of Mr. Pierre-Vallon's diary entries after Dr. Goethe's recovery, as well as those of other company men. I paid special attention to those entries having to do with how they interacted with Dr. Goethe. Soon I began to detect a similarity amongst them, as the following excerpts show:

"...Today was the first time I have seen Dr. Goethe since he took ill. He seems to be doing well, and looks strong and happy. He was standing on the beach, letting the foam envelop his ankles, gazing out towards the horizon. I stood a short distance behind him, and began talking aloud about the beauty of the ocean, the beauty of the waves, and the sky. I stood there talking for many minutes, then became silent. Only then did Dr. Goethe turn around and see me. The look on his face was surprise, like the man who walks into his hut and finds his wife having relations with his neighbor. But Dr. Goethe quickly smiled, and said, "Oh. Hello there."

"...I went to the school today to tell Dr. Goethe that Malcolm had been eaten by the shark. He would no longer go to the school to learn English. I went to the teacher's office, and began to tell him, but the words became stuck. I began to cry, and I saw his face become concerned.

'Oh, doctor!' I said. 'Oh, doctor! Malcolm is gone! My son is dead!' I fell to my knees, sobbing like a baby.

Then Dr. Goethe walked over towards me, put his hands on my

shoulders, and looked me steadily in the eye.

'It was only one exam,' he said. I could see that he was smiling. 'Don't worry about it, my friend. Your son Malcolm is a very bright boy. He'll be fine. Not to mention he is an excellent swimmer, I hear.'

"...Today all the parents got to meet Dr. Goethe, and ask him how their children are doing in school. He told us that all the students were bright and exceptional, that he was very lucky to be their teacher. That's all he said. He kept repeating that over and over, whenever he was asked something. It was as though he couldn't hear what you were saying. When it was my turn, he told me that my daughter was one of the most promising students in the class. But I have no children, and I had asked him where the bathroom was."

After reading enough journal entries like the ones listed above, I began to suspect that Dr. Goethe had in fact become deaf. It seemed a reasonable enough theory; if he couldn't hear, he wouldn't have to listen to the Camdbibdians butcher the English language. What a reprieve that would have been! True, that would have made Dr. Goethe a horrible grammar teacher, but it would explain why the Camdbibdians' English-speaking skills consistently flat-lined at zero during Dr. Goethe's latter tenure, and why exports ultimately had to shift from English-speaking domestics to cadavers for medical research.

But the only way I could reasonably claim that Dr. Goethe had gone deaf was to simulate the conditions of his injury. I rounded up five test subjects, gave them each a blow to the head similar to the one Dr. Goethe had suffered, and sure enough, all

five became deaf! Deaf like stones! I wrote up all my discoveries and experimental results, collected them together, submitted them to the Speech Pathology department, and just like that, I had my doctorate. Mother would be proud.

Now, I know what you're going to say: I earned my Ph.D. by arguing quite convincingly that the esteemed Dr. Goethe was stone deaf during his latter years abroad. Don't I feel the slightest compunction, garnering accolades for myself at the expense of another man's reputation, one who died years ago, and therefore cannot defend himself? But, you see, whatever I revealed about Dr. Goethe hasn't harmed his reputation. If anything, I have enhanced it.

Dr. Goethe was one of the first documented examples of Feigned Attention During Interaction Syndrome. Millions still suffer from FADIS today. Symptoms consist of staring blankly at the other person while they talk, and pretending to be paying close scrutiny to every word they say-while in fact you're not taking in a single word. Not every case is the result of actual deafness, but you can still see FADIS everywhere, between instructors and students, parents and children, and especially interpersonal relationships. So the next time you're in a conversation, and your mind spaces out while your head keeps nodding, remember who you have to thank: Dr. Rober Anastasia Goethe.

Adjective Order

by *Brad Cerenzia*

English adjectives should be used in this order:

1. Opinion

-- beautiful, ugly, easy, fast, interesting

2. Dimension

-- small, tall, short, big

3. Age

-- young, old, new, historic, ancient

4. Shape

-- round, square, rectangular

5. Color

-- red, black, green, purple

6. Nationality

-- French, Asian, American, Canadian, Japanese

7. Material

-- wooden, metallic, plastic, glass, paper

8. Purpose or Qualifier

-- foldout sofa, fishing boat, racing car

The "beautiful green octopus army" sounds correct, but the "octopus greenbeautiful army" sounds wrong.

Go figure. Or figure go?