

#EclecticChair

From the eclectic chair



Put down the red pen ... and relax

During a recent Coffee Conversation, some members shared their reluctance to post on the PEGforum for fear that other members are 'not so silently' judging their grammar, or worse, calling them out on it. These fears aren't unfounded: we've seen members respond to *how* a question is asked or answered rather than answering the question or adding to the advice given. These responses have varied from vague and off-topic to sarcastic and sometimes even downright rude.

So, where do we draw the line between helpful and disdainful? Before you bear down on your keyboard to point out a typo or a misplaced comma, consider these points.

'Put down the red pen' is one of the rules of an editors' Facebook group I belong to, and it's stuck with me. We are not on these forums to edit contributions; we are here to make them. The rules of that Facebook group continue: 'We're off-duty [*sic*]'. In a way, that's true in our context too: contributing to the PEGforum is not a paid editing assignment; we're simply conversing with colleagues. And while we need to keep it professional, that doesn't mean we must adopt a hyper-formal and often unnatural style, and we can certainly forgive the odd spelling error, repeated word or missing punctuation.

Remember that not all members are first-language English speakers and we are all at different stages in our careers and continuing development. We also have different areas of interest and expertise: some of us are grammar experts, others are tech whizzes, while others have business savvy. It is a great shame that people might be holding back on sharing their knowledge because they fear a backlash from what is supposed to be an inclusive community of practice.

If you choose to reply, please contribute with a genuine desire to assist. Answer the question, back up your answer with resources, and avoid using the PEGforum as a platform for your personal language preferences and bugbears. A little kindness goes a long way – and it's catching!

I call on all members to 'put down the red pen' and contribute to the PEGforum in a way that is constructive and positive. Doing so will encourage everyone to ask and answer questions, comment on matters that concern us as language practitioners, and even have a bit of a laugh sometimes.

I would like to thank all the people who continue to share their time and expertise so freely, not just on the PEGforum, but in webinars and Coffee Conversations, at regional meetings, writing PEGblogs and *PEGboard* content, and volunteering their service to PEG. Your contributions make our community what it is. On that note, I wish to recognise Kim R² for the superb job she does as egroups coordinator (which includes reviewing and forwarding the job submission requests)! Thank you for your role in keeping the PEG community connected, Kim.

Finally, for those members who find the avalanche of mails from the PEGforum overwhelming, did you know that you can change the volume and frequency of the mails you receive? Please see page 5 of the guide that Kim sends out every month (available [here](#)) for instructions.

I wish you all the best as we wrap up 2025 and may you have a safe and happy start to 2026.

Kevin Walker

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#PEGboardQuiz

Edit and earn with your very own PEGboard quiz!

PEGboard will be featuring a quiz in its forthcoming issues that will give you the opportunity to test your editing knowledge and earn a CPD hour – in a two-for-the-price-of-one giveaway!

The 'edit and earn' quiz will feature a wide variety of questions covering grammar gremlins, comma-tastrophes and appalling apostrophes, pesky prepositions, common confusables, spot the typo and so much more for you to find and fix. We're estimating that each quiz will include about 10 questions, and if you score over 80% your prize will be a free CPD hour.

There will be a deadline for your entries to be submitted – and once that has passed (or is it past?!) the quiz and the answers will be published on the PEG website.

But before we get there, here's a pre-competition opportunity for you to earn ... some kudos and your name in lights ... well, at least your name in *PEGboard* in about 10-point italics. Two things, please.

1. We need a fun name for this quiz column. Please send your suggestion to the *PEGboard* editor at janicehunt@xsinet.co.za. (T's and C's: No correspondence will be entered into and the judges' decision will be final.) The deadline for suggestions is 16 January 2026.
2. More importantly, please also keep sending the editor your personal grammar gremlins – those things that just don't seem to stick and have you second-guessing yourself every time they crop up – and we will do our best to incorporate them into the quizzes.

To whet your appetite for this upcoming excitement, here's a mini-quiz for you to try your hand at. No prizes or points for this one, except the pleasure of getting it right. We will include the answers in our first issue of *PEGboard* in 2026.

1. Which is correct, a or b?
 - a. As the ship began to sink, the officers as well as the crew took to the lifeboats.
 - b. As well as being super fit, the team are gelling well and giving of their best as never before.
2. Which is correct, a or b?
 - a. Ten dogs comprise the litter.
 - b. The litter comprises ten dogs.
3. Which is correct, a or b?
 - a. I had no possibility to eschew the confusion.
 - b. The opportunity to eschew the confusion escaped me.
4. Which is correct, a or b?
 - a. A deaf person's upbringing and family background can impact their mental health.
 - b. A deaf person's upbringing and family background can affect their mental health.
5. Which is correct, a or b?
 - a. The Treasury has just decreased the interest rate *with* 50 basis points, or 0,5%.
 - b. The Treasury has just decreased the interest rate *by* 50 basis points, or 0,5%.
6. Which is correct, a or b?
 - a. Indispensable
 - b. Indispensible 🍌

Them pesky prepositions – and how to use them correctly

John Linnegar



As their name suggests, prepositions usually appear before nouns and pronouns and generally indicate the position of one thing in relation to another, usually physically but also in other ways.

Prepositions introduce **prepositional phrases** in which the headword (a preposition) is followed by one of the following:

- a noun: below ground
- a pronoun: after me
- a noun-verb: without leaving
- a noun phrase: in the previous year.

Examples of prepositions:

about, above, according to, across, against, along, among, around, as, at, behind, beneath, between, beyond, by, by means of, despite, due to, except, for, in accordance with, in front of, inside, in spite of, in terms of, into, like, near, of, off, on, over, owing to, past, round, since, through, till, to, towards, under, underneath, until, up, upon, with, with regard to, within, without.

From this it should be apparent that prepositions can be both single words and phrases.

They relate nouns, noun phrases, noun-verbs (gerunds) and pronouns to other words in a sentence:

Have you heard from her?

Apart from Johannes, is there anyone else?

That must be done in accordance with our agreement.

Prepositional phrases can also function as adjectives or adverbs in a sentence:

The chap in the red sweater is my brother. (which chap? – adjectival)

The stamp with the red emblem on it is quite rare. (which stamp? – adjectival)

He stood before me. (where? – adverbial, of place)

We sat silently throughout the concert. (when? – adverbial, of duration)

Owing to the rain, the match was postponed. (why? – adverbial, of reason)

Look, it's right in front of you! (where? – adverbial, of place)

During the last month it has been terribly hot and humid. (when? – adverbial, of time)

Adjective phrases can also complement verbs or adjectives:

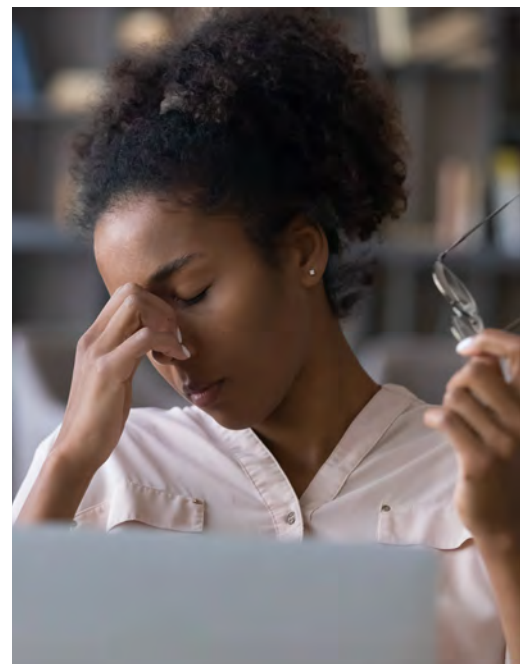
Pete relies on his brother.

I'm overjoyed to be obtaining my degree at last.

Prepositions often occur in set combinations with a particular noun, verb, adjective or adverb. For instance, we say *by mistake* but *in error* or *on purpose*; and while we travel *by bus* we get there *on foot*. And whereas we may *take a dislike to* something, we may *display a dislike of* cats.

Usually, our choice of prepositions is not a free one: the context or the intended sense requires the use of one preposition over another. For instance, something that is composed of something else *consists of* it or is *made up of* it, but if it *consists in* something, it has it as a basis:

The beauty of our town *consists in* its ancient oak trees that line every street. ➤



Note: 'due to' or 'owing to'?

In much current writing, the two prepositional phrases are used interchangeably, as if they have precisely the same meaning and function in a sentence. Their meanings and functions are, however, different. Strictly speaking, 'due to' functions as an adjective (often an adjective complement that follows forms of the verb to be: is, are, was or were) and 'owing to' functions as an adverb:

- due to = attributable to/caused by: The accident was *due to* / *attributable to* alcohol.
- owing to = because of: *Owing to* / *because of* your negligence, the dog ran away.

For this reason, as illustrated above, 'owing to' usually begins a sentence, introducing a subordinate adverbial clause of cause; 'due to' should usually follow the forms of the verb 'to be' ('was' in the sentence above) as an adjective complement.

Around: a problematic preposition

Do not use 'around' when 'on' or 'about' is idiomatically correct:

- * This morning's talks centred around East-West problems.
- * They debated long and hard around the topic.

In both cases, 'around' should be replaced: in the first sentence by 'on', in the second sentence by 'about'.

Between: a problematic preposition

In two respects, the preposition 'between' is sometimes the cause of problematic usage: 'between you and I' and 'between' used when 'among' is more appropriate, and vice versa:

- * That is a problem which must be resolved between you and I.
- * The group of five scouts shared the instructions between themselves.
- * Two youngsters shared the sweets among themselves.

In the first sentence, because 'you and I' follow the preposition 'between' as its objects, they must be expressed in the accusative case: *between you and me*.

The convention that applies to 'among' versus 'between' generally is that 'between' should be used for two individuals or things and 'among' should be used for three or more. In the second sentence, therefore, 'between' should be replaced with 'among' and the opposite should apply in the third sentence.

Essential, important, critical, crucial, vital, relevant to

The correct preposition to use in conjunction with these words is usually 'to', not 'for':

- It is *essential to* the success of this project that we complete it on time.
- Critical to* the effective interpreting of speeches is a solid command of both the source and the target language.
- The inclusion and analysis of these transcripts is *of paramount importance to* this study.

With, not within

Nowadays, authors appear to be sorely tempted to prioritise 'within' over 'with'; too often, they do so at their peril, because it is used incorrectly. Unless the meaning 'enclosed in' or 'incorporated in' is being specifically conveyed, then 'with' should be preferred.

- * It should be understood within the context of social acceptability. (in the context)
- ✓ With our neighbourhood, security is on 24-hour alert. (in our community)
- ✓ That type of conduct is within the legal limits.

Prepositional and phrasal verbs

These are verbs that are followed by an adverb or a preposition to form a phrase that has a specific meaning. For example:



- Money worries and overwork led to illness. (phrasal verb+adjective)
- After breakfast, we took to the riverbank with fishing in mind. (phrasal verb+noun)
- After considering the options, we decided on going for a walk. (phrasal verb+gerund)
- The plane took off after a long delay. (phrasal verb+adverbial phrase)
- They decided to give up smoking. (phrasal verb+gerund)

These usages tend to be idiomatic, which means that only a specific preposition or adverb may accompany certain verbs. For instance, *to give in* versus *to give up*.

Sometimes both an adverb and a preposition can follow a verb: the first is part of the phrasal verb; the second introduces an object (pronoun or noun):

- That behaviour is impermissible: I refuse to put up with it.
- Please do not lean out of the window.

Another important point about such verbs is that they are always (at least) two words. But when they are used as nouns, they become either one word or hyphenated:

- at takeoff/take-off; your login requires a password.

These forms should not be used as verbs themselves, but many authors commit this error:

- * Let's watch the plane takeoff.
- * I'll login now.

Superfluous or unnecessary adverbs/prepositions

There is an increasing tendency to create phrasal verbs that mean no more than the verb on its own; these usages should be avoided. For example:

- I checked out the following usages. (checked)
- We met up with some friends. (met)
- He consulted with her. (consulted)

At the end of sentences

In current usage, it is perfectly permissible to end a sentence with a preposition if to move it into the sentence sounds either unnatural or too formal:

- These are the edited reports you asked for.
- That is the speech we should be ending the function with.

As opposed to the more formal, less natural:

- These are the edited reports for which you asked.
- That is the speech with which we should be ending the function. ➤

Onto or on to; into or in to

These are a special case of adverbs and/or prepositions forming phrasal verbs. Again, authors tend to write them as one or two words indiscriminately, and so the wily editor will be relied upon to ensure that they are correctly used in every instance. Consider these examples:

- Let's move on to the next item on the agenda.
- He is tuned in to his favourite radio station.
- We piled the furniture onto the truck.
- The swimmer dived into the river.
- 'We'll have to look into the matter,' the CID man said.

The first two are examples of phrasal verbs, the verb and the adverb forming a prepositional phrase (move on; tune in). In each case, 'to' introduces a prepositional phrase.

In the second group of sentences: 'onto' and 'into' are both prepositions introducing a prepositional phrase ('onto the truck' and 'into the matter'), so they are headwords of adverbial phrases that modify their respective verbs.

It's worth remembering that the closed forms tend to be associated with movement rather than static position.

Incorrect attribution of prepositions to two verbs or nouns

A common error that authors tend to commit when using two verbs or nouns together in a sentence, is to attribute only one preposition to them both when each verb or noun should have its own idiomatically correct preposition. For example:

- Many regional organisations around the world have collaborated to counteract the illicit manufacturing and trafficking of small arms and light weapons.
- We gained great appreciation and insight into his method of designing jewellery.
- The Council does not hold itself responsible for the loss or damage to any article.

In the first sentence, 'manufacturing of' and 'trafficking in' are the correct phrases. This means that the preposition 'of' should be inserted after 'manufacturing' and after 'trafficking' the preposition 'in' should replace 'of'.

In the second sentence, the preposition 'of' fits idiomatically with 'appreciation', so it should be inserted. 'Into' is correctly paired with 'insight'.

In the third sentence, the preposition 'of' is missing after 'loss'.



Prepositions are very important connectors in any language. Typically, they introduce 'prepositional phrases', at the head of which is either a noun (on the table) or a pronoun (on him). The components of 'preposition' are 'pre' + 'position'. This tells us that they indicate either the physical position of one thing relative to another (the vase is on the table) or they indicate a relationship of one thing to another (he is related to her; his attitude towards me is good). Arising from this, prepositional phrases perform three functions:

- As an adjective, they describe a noun or a noun-like word: the cat in my garden is my neighbour's; that chap over there is my teacher; running on the spot.
- As an adverb, they tell us more about verbs or actions in answer to questions such as where?, when?, how? and how much?: that meeting took place on Monday afternoon; he invested in new equipment during April.
- Adjective complement: a follow-up meeting is on the cards; are you feeling up to it?

Some idiomatically correct prepositions

The preposition we choose is usually determined by the noun, adjective or verb that precedes it. Here are a few sentences that illustrate the use of some common idiomatic prepositions:

- a. The Act provides **FOR** the construction **OF** a new toll-road.
- b. He is responsible **TO** me for meeting his targets but he alone is responsible **FOR** meeting them.
- c. It is incumbent **ON/UPON** him to perform his duties effectively.
- d. Complete the job **IN** good time, please.
- e. The actual figure lies somewhere **BETWEEN** 65 and 75.
- f. It is a matter **OF** great concern that he's been so ill.
- g. We'll have to look **INTO** the matter before commenting **ON** it.
- h. It's **BENEATH** my dignity to do such work.
- i. Are you **UNDER** the impression that I'm leaving?
- j. **SINCE** his arrival, things have gone **FROM** bad **TO** worse.
- k. He was a teacher **AT** our school **FROM** 2000 **TO** 2011.
- l. **IN** her writing, Sam displays great insight **INTO** her chosen subject.
- m. That software is not relevant **TO** my work. 🐦



A former teacher of English at both secondary and tertiary levels, John has been an avid 'improver of authors' words' for more than four decades now; he remains dedicated to making their texts read as clearly as possible (and in the process saving a reputation or two!). John is the (co-)author of several texts dealing with matters

grammatical and stylistic, including *Engleish, our Engleish: Common errors in South African English and how to resolve them* (Pharos, 2013), *Oxford English grammar: The advanced guide* (OUP, 2015) and, most recently, with Ken McGillivray, *grammar, punctuation and all that jazz ...* (MLA Publishers, 2019). He currently offers a personalised online English Grammar for Editors course aimed at those who need to brush up their English grammar and use of punctuation to support authors' intended meaning. Since 2000, he has been training copy editors and proofreaders for South Africa's book publishing industry and championing the professionalisation of our craft and its practitioners. To this end, he co-authored *Text editing: A handbook for students and practitioners* (UPA, Brussels, 2012) and has micro-published its translations into isiZulu and Sesotho.

Doing diversity: D&I → DEI? Time to insert equity into PEG D&I? (Part 1)

Ursula Arends

In 2023, when PEG foregrounded diversity and inclusion in its identity and practice, it assumed that 'equity' governs the practices and principles in the legal and financial sectors, hence its exclusion from all official PEG D&I statements. This exclusion has been questioned increasingly, both inside and outside PEG. This edition of *Doing Diversity* peels back the layers around equity as a foundational principle for professional editors, translators and other language practitioners. It illustrates how equity governs the way we collaborate with peers, serve clients and contribute to a more inclusive and ethical academic and linguistic landscape. It acknowledges that in a globalised and multilingual world, equity ensures that, as language professionals, we are not only respected for our expertise but are also empowered to support diverse voices and knowledge systems.

Equity among peers

Within our professional community, equity promotes fair treatment, recognition and opportunity. Editors, translators and language practitioners often work across borders, cultures and institutions where disparities emerge in pay, access to resources and professional visibility. Equity requires that all practitioners – regardless of their location, language background or identity – are compensated fairly and given equal access to professional development, accreditation and leadership roles.

Equity also means valuing linguistic diversity and different modes of expertise. For example, translators working with indigenous or minority languages may face marginalisation despite their critical role in preserving cultural knowledge. An equitable professional environment acknowledges and uplifts these contributions, fostering collaboration across linguistic and disciplinary boundaries. Peer networks that embrace equity become spaces of mutual learning, where knowledge is shared rather than subjected to gatekeeping.

Equity in client relationships

When working with clients – whether scholars, students, publishers or institutions – language professionals must uphold equity by ensuring that the services they render are accessible, respectful and tailored to clients' needs. This includes transparent pricing, adhering to ethical boundaries and a commitment to preserving the client's voice and intent.

Equity is especially vital when serving clients from marginalised or non-dominant linguistic backgrounds. For instance, multilingual speakers whose primary language is not English often face systemic bias in academic publishing. Editors and translators who practise equity offer culturally sensitive support, advocate the use of inclusive language and resist editorial practices that erase linguistic identity. In addition, clients from under-resourced institutions may lack access to high-quality language services. Equitable practitioners offer sliding scales, flexible timelines and/or referrals to ensure that support is not reserved for the privileged few.

Broader implications

Equity in language work has far-reaching consequences. Editors, translators and other language practitioners are gatekeepers of clarity, credibility and cross-cultural understanding. Their choices influence whose voices are heard, how knowledge is disseminated and which perspectives are legitimised. By practising equity, they help to democratise scholarship and communication, making space for diverse epistemologies and linguistic traditions.

Moreover, equity strengthens the integrity of the profession. It encourages ethical standards, transparency and accountability. It also fosters trust – between peers, clients and the broader academic and publishing communities. In a world where language can be both a bridge and a barrier, equity ensures that it is used to connect rather than to exclude.

In essence, equity is not a passive value but an active practice. For editors, translators and other language practitioners, it serves as the compass that guides ethical collaboration, client service and professional growth. It is the way in which we honour the diversity of human expression and ensure that every voice has the opportunity to be heard.

Please share your responses and provide motivations for your insights. Do you agree that equity is essential to creating a fair, inclusive and sustainable professional landscape? Or do you disagree with any (or all) of the content in this article? Do you think that the time is ripe for PEG to transition from diversity and inclusion (D&I) to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), or not?

Answers are anonymous. You can access the link here: [PEG D&I](#).

Relevant PEG links related to D&I:

[PEG's commitment to D&I](#)

[PEGblog on editing for conscious and inclusive language](#) 🌱



Ursula Arends is a lifelong social justice activist, committed to the creation of a more just, inclusive world. For more than a decade, she has used her platform as an academic editor to engage with the work of interdisciplinary

scholars across the humanities and social sciences to live out this commitment. She has been a PEG member for the past six years and invests her energies in the achievement of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging for all PEG members.

Kaaps – *moviese* future for a *kwai* language

The vibrant Kaaps language is gaining recognition and popularity in South Africa, marked by the imminent launch of the first Kaaps dictionary in the new year, spearheaded by the Centre for Multilingualism and Diversities Research, University of the Western Cape.

In October, Prof. Quentin Williams, director of the centre and professor of linguistics, presented an inspiring webinar titled 'If it looks like Kaaps, and you read and edit it like Kaaps, it's definitely Kaaps' to PEG members on the origins of the language, editing it and its formalisation.

During the presentation, he offered the following brief bio in Kaaps: 'Quentin Williams (selfstannige naamwood) naam vanni kwai professor: Quentin Williams, daise kwai professor wati biechie kennis hettie, somma a moviese klomp.' Essentially that means he's cool, knowledgeable and impressive – all of which the attendees wholeheartedly agreed with.

That set the scene for an exhilarating journey that started in 1510 at the Battle of Salt River with the Khoi versus Dom Francisco Almeida's Portuguese. Kaaps is defined as:

- An African language formed out of a slave lingua franca.
- Used first among the indentured indigenous and enslaved populations in the Cape Colony.
- Having a linguistic structure, the sound system, word formation, syntactic structure and meaning-making character, historically formed through the use of Cape Dutch mixed with the phonological-lexical variations of Arabic, Low and High Portuguese (also known as Malay, Creole-Portuguese), Bahasa-Malay, and the Khoi and San languages in the early 1600s to 1700s.
- Later influenced by English and standard Afrikaans, and gradually marginalised as a result of colonial and apartheid nationalist policies.

Donor languages to Kaaps beyond 1652 include Khoi, Malay, Creole (Low) Portuguese, Arabic, Javanese, Buginese, Hokkien Chinese, Balinese, Ambonese, Boni and Veonouw.

In unfolding the long and riveting history, Quentin also explained that in the 1980s, Kaaps was a language of resistance, used in poetic protests against apartheid, and he read Shamiela Francis's poem 'Untitled', which gives a raw account of a desperate encounter with a policeman.

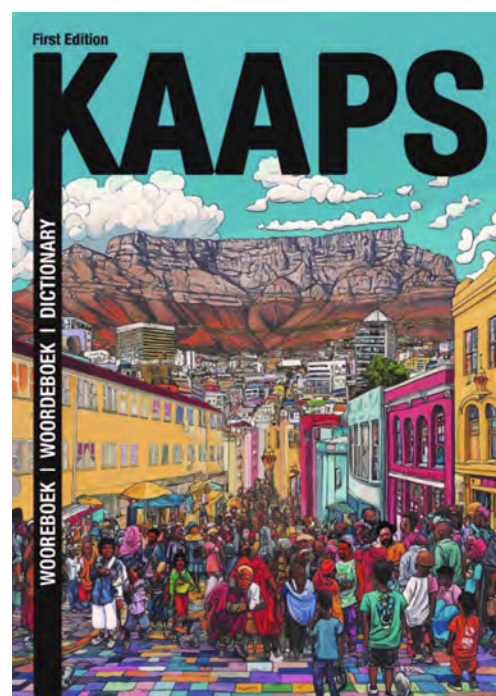
The *Trilingual Dictionary of Kaaps* and *Kaaps Grammar: The Basics* by the Societe virrie Advancement van Kaaps (SAK) are soon to be published, which will make editing Kaaps a lot more accessible to PEGgers keen to take on such work.

In a preliminary guide to editing vowels and consonants, Quentin explained some spelling principles to remember:

- Consistent use of vowels /i/ and /a/: the letter /i/ is used to indicate the sound often manifested by the letter /e/ in Standard Afrikaans, which now is represented as /i/, for example in *giroek*.
- The letter /a/ is used in some words that should end in a higher vowel (i-sound) to highlight the historical manifestation, the musicality of the word or the influence of the preceding letter /r/ or /s/, for example, *agtimirrag* (=agtimirrig), *biesag*. ➤



Quentin Williams



- Vowel shifts: the long e-sound and o-sound are represented as /ie-/ or /oe/, respectively. See *afbiene, giroekiry*.
- Words with or without circumflex: the /ê/ as in *giwêk* marks the effect manifested by the deletion of the r-sound. The e-sound is elevated as a result of deleting the r-sound that would be in a neutral position if the r-sound were pronounced.

Discussing the reconstruction and formalisation of Kaaps, Quentin outlined the process:

1. Define and develop a formalisation framework for the Kaaps language that goes beyond Einar Haugen's standardisation model (selection, codification, elaboration).
2. Perform Kaaps historical (socio-)linguistic studies.
3. Develop a Kaaps orthography (spelling system), allowing for different variations of Kaaps. This is not the same as standardisation, which excludes variation.
4. Continue Kaaps general linguistics studies with a stronger focus on phonetics, phonology, rhythm and tone.
5. Promote the intellectualisation of Kaaps in the education sector and industry.
6. And advance language policy research.

There was more. Lots more – and over time, *PEGboard* plans to cover developments and items of interest in Kaaps. In the meantime, here are a couple of perspectives from PEGgers who attended the webinar.

Sandra Smook

Quentin made us feel at ease with his passion and friendly manner. I so appreciate his sharing some of his vast knowledge in this way. I'll be following the progress and can't wait to buy the dictionary!

What caught my attention when I started reading and hearing about Kaaps is the similarity with some of the words or ways in which I speak Afrikaans, *daai, is* (and not *dis* or *dit is* as in *is so* and not *dit is so*), the shortening of long sounds as in *gan* and making words just sort of flow into one another. I also say *hane* instead of *hare* (possessive pronoun). I did not even realise these were unusual ways of speaking (or not the 'right' way) until much later. Perhaps I was influenced by having lived in Cape Town for a while as a child. And then, also, my mum had a unique way of speaking, often telling the most beautiful stories. She grew up on a farm in the Karoo. So, I believe the language has been here for a long time and is deeply ingrained in many of us.

I am glad it is being formalised. It would be important to have this codification in order to gain recognition and develop it to such an extent that it can be used as a medium of instruction in schools. It breaks my heart to think it took so long. My vote is for Kaaps to become an official SA language.

Gudrun Kaiser

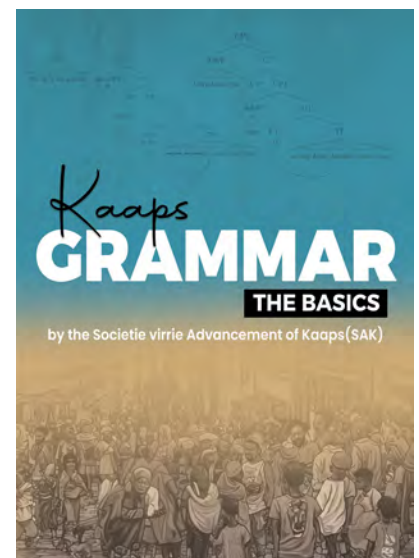
I found it fascinating to hear about the history behind Kaaps (and Quentin speaks with such passion, which kept me glued).

I have always thought that knowing any language helps one to learn and understand other languages, seeing as they are often intertwined, which I discovered donkey's years ago when speaking German and knowing French (from having spent my formative years in Canada), for example: the original word *portemonnaie* (purse) came from French – like many other words in German (also *etui* – sewing kit).

Then, coming to this country at age 12, Afrikaans was easy for me, as was understanding some Dutch, Flemish and even some of the Scandinavian languages. I felt strongly in the Kaaps webinar that the history of the language, as well as that of Afrikaans (because that also has a history), should be introduced into the school curriculum. Learners would surely be more interested in learning this compulsory subject if they knew how it came about. From recently helping my granddaughter with Afrikaans, I found that many of the poems do use Kaaps, for which 'translations' are given in the margin; but to engage a teenage learner, a story would surely help them to take more of an interest. 🍷



Francisco d'Almeida at the Cape of Good Hope, 1510
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Salt_River#/media/File:Death_of_Almeida.jpg)



Kaaps online

Visit these websites for more enlightenment about Kaaps: www.kaapsculture.org, www.dwkaaps.co.za and www.sakaaps.co.za.

#PEGWesternCape

PEG WC:

Inteviu orie Kaaps Drietalige Woodeboek

John Linnegar



In a break with tradition, our members were invited to this meeting, which featured an interview between Western Cape member Monica Bosman and the University of the Western Cape's professor Quentin Williams both on and sometimes in the language being discussed: Kaaps. (There was, admittedly, also an English version of the invitation.)

The Kaaps wording is, we believe, worth repeating here – it is something we Kaapenaars hear almost daily, but it is likely to be almost a foreign language to those PEGgers who reside elsewhere in South Africa.

Aweh, my ma se kinnes vannie Wes-Kaaptak!

Kykie, os invite jou om os te join vi osse vōgene branch meeting waa os bietjie off the beaten track gan praat. Monica Bosman gat vi prof. Quentin Williams, direkteur vannie Centre for Multilingualism and Diversities Research byrie Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland, inteviu orie ontwikkeling van Kaaps ennie *Drietalige Woodeboek van Kaaps* wat een vannie dae veskyn. Along the way, gat os Prof Williams se eie linguistic journey discuss en oek sy wêk as academic en language activist, en likely gan ons woode soes 'minoritisation', 'standardisation' en 'laaitie' gebruik. Die interview sal mainly in Engels gehou wod, ma dji moet jou reghou vi some codeswitching *gamiëks* in between – ja, ons gan bietjie ôse tale mieks.

As always, salla opportunities wies vi Q&A en further discussion narie interview, asoek tyd om te netwok met jou tjommies. Os sien oek yt om enige new members wat virrie eeste kee hie is te vewelkom, en oek om daais te sien na wie os al beginne velang het.

Toegang: Mahala, although, as jou van mette lette uitie eeste helfte vannie alfabet (A–M) begin, moet dji asseblief 'n botjie van jou favourite sweet or savoury snacks bring. Da sal tie, koffie, juice en wate, asoek 'n urn, briekgoed, ietgerei en glase wies.

Parking: Da is veilige paking reg vorie library.

CPD hours: Kykie, dji kan core CPD hours kry omdat dji hierie fomele PEG event bywoon. Dan, net 'n friendly reminder om asseblief enige vrae wat dji vi prof Williams of Monica wil vra tien Maandag, 28 Julie, vi os branch secretary, Tania Wait, te forward.

RSVP: As dji event wil bywoon, lat wiet asseblief Tania tien Maandag, 28 Julie.

Dit sal kwai wies om jou da te sien!

And so we all arrived, our appetites whetted to learn more about the origins and usages of this unique 'language of the Cape' from a person who has not only grown up on the Cape Flats speaking it but who has made it his mission to document and formalise the *taal* and, ultimately, to have it recognised as an official language. One of the most pervasive and challenging problems faced by speakers of Kaaps, prof Williams explained, is that both English and Afrikaans are like foreign languages to them. To the extent that Kaaps should never be equated to Afrikaans or even considered an offshoot or dialect of it: it is a separate, unique language. Indeed, it has been shown to be older than Afrikaans and its origins much more varied: Dutch, High/Low Portuguese, Malay, Javanese, the languages of the Khoikhoi and the San, to name but a few.

So having to learn out of school and university textbooks in either English or Afrikaans is seriously disadvantageous to such learners and students – as their less than acceptable grades demonstrate (they may also not write assignments or tests in their mother tongue). In an attempt to resolve this pervasive problem among Kaaps speakers, a UWC project has been launched to produce school textbooks on subjects such as physics, chemistry and maths in the language in the hope that this will be the small beginning of a much bigger undertaking to have Kaaps officially recognised as the language of instruction in South African schools for reasons of equity and fairness.

As it happens, Monica and prof Williams have had a long academic relationship and so their interactions on the day were as relaxed and animated as they were informative as they went about educating us about the distant origins and unique lexical elements of the language. And while it is predominantly a language of the Cape Peninsula, we learned, it is also spoken in the Boland areas, in the Eastern Cape and even in pockets of Gauteng among those for whom it is the preferred and natural lingua franca.

What a stimulating and thought-provoking meeting this turned out to be, with our guest speaker having to field a good number of questions after the formal presentation. And could any of those present edit or proofread texts penned in Kaaps? That remains, for most of us Capies, a burning question, of course!

Our thanks must go to Monica for both initiating and conducting this wonderfully engaging presentation for PEG Western Cape members. Thanks must also go to the committee members who so stalwartly prepared for the meeting, set up the venue and restored it to its pristine state afterwards, and to all the attendees who made it so worthwhile. 🍀



Monica Bosman and Quentin Williams in conversation

Glossary:

Kaaps – one of the oldest varieties of Afrikaans, and still spoken around the Cape Peninsula
Aweh – Hi there!; Kykie – Look here; laaitie – boy or young man; *gamiëks* – mixing (of languages)

#PEGKwaZuluNatal

KZN PEGgers explore South African English

Debbie Haywood



Do not assume. Instead, consult. This was the theme of the KwaZulu-Natal PEG meeting held on 18 September 2025 entitled 'South African English: How to resolve some common errors'. Facilitated by Wendy Weyermüller and inspired by John Linnegar's book *Engleish, our Engleish – Common errors in South African English and how to resolve them*, the meeting was nothing short of highly engaging, interactive and eye-opening. It was also our best-attended KZN Zoom meeting to date.

Before the presentation officially began, we unanimously agreed that as editors we need to have an understanding of our clients' challenges. Some may have little to no resources at their disposal and others may have physical challenges, such as visual impairment.

Apostrophes, adjectives and more

If time had permitted, I am certain that we would have discussed more common errors in South African English, but Wendy took us through some examples of grammatical structures that non-native speakers of English sometimes get wrong in their speech and writing. She touched on the following issues: subject-verb agreement; wrong verb usage; incorrect use of the past tense; use of the infinitive instead of the gerund; apostrophes for plurals (otherwise referred to as the greengrocer's apostrophe); direct translation of prepositions; a comma separating subjects from their verbs; word order and correct use of personal pronouns; personal pronouns versus reflexive pronouns; using adjectives instead of adverbs; confusion of 'could of', 'could have' and 'could've', and the same for 'would of', 'would have' and 'would've'; use of the present continuous tense instead of the simple present; use of incorrect pronouns; incorrect use of the word 'much'; incorrect idiomatic usage; and chopping the suffixes off past participles. Each error was accompanied by examples with their corrections.

Interactions and insights

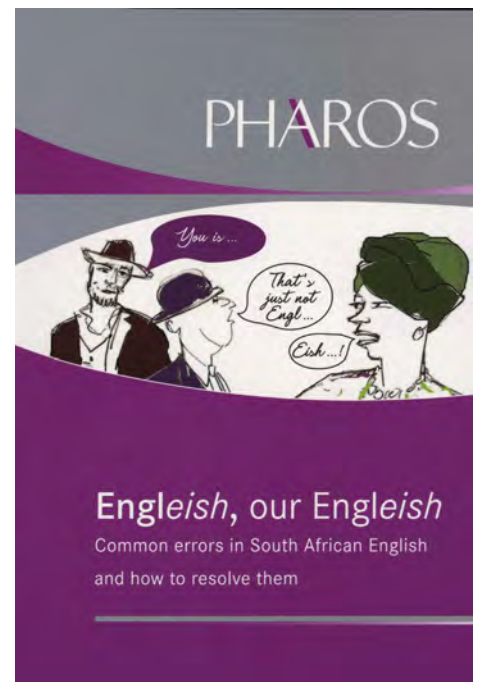
Even though time was limited, the presentation was quite comprehensive and generated some much-needed discussion. The first point that surfaced was that although non-native speakers of English may generally be the ones to make some of these mistakes, mother-tongue English speakers are equally capable of committing the same errors. To remedy this, Graham Alston suggested one might ask oneself, 'Does this sound right when spoken? If it doesn't sound right, what can make it better?'

We also briefly discussed the puzzling issue of whether to use full stops in 'i.e.' and 'e.g.' or not, and whether or not to use the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) *Editorial Style Guide*, which seems to have become outdated since its publication in 2013. Shanitha Ramharak touched on not assuming people's pronoun preferences, and An De Fortier and Wendy agreed by emphasising the importance of querying gender preferences with writers for the sake of accuracy. Vanessa-Lynn Neophytou highlighted the increasing prevalence of Americanisms creeping into everyday South African English.

Overall, this presentation was a sound reminder of some important grammar rules – something that all editors need. Wendy's use of comic relief (cartoons and cartoon strips) between slides was particularly relevant, as the illustrations she chose demonstrated the importance of correct language usage.

Other than developing ourselves as editors in our region, this meeting gave us another opportunity to interact and connect with each other. It prompted us to assume nothing and to acknowledge that our clients do not all come from the same linguistic backgrounds. By the end of the meeting, we were inspired to ensure that our services bring out the best in writing.

The KZN regional committee is to be commended for organising such a necessary and successful meeting. 🍷



NOTE: The edition of *Engleish, our Engleish – Common errors in South African English* mentioned here is now out of print. The good news is that the second, revised and updated, edition is due to be published during the first quarter of 2026.



Debbie Haywood is a qualified English (HL) and Afrikaans (FAL) teacher. She holds a BEd degree (FET English and Afrikaans majors) and a BA Honours degree in English Studies (cum laude).

This lover of words and books currently manages a business that provides Afrikaans educators with teaching resources, and she invigilates at Emeris. She finds joy in helping other educators to develop their assessment skills.

#PEGEasternCape

From supervisors to sea views: Eastern Cape round-up

Kate Davies



There has been a whirlwind of activity in the Eastern Cape PEG group, from beach walks to blogs, AI, articles and academic troikas.

In June, Kleinemonde resident, poet and editor, **Carol Leff**, shed light on the dynamics between supervisor, student and editor. As a supervisor herself at Rhodes University, she has an insider's perspective on this sometimes thorny, sometimes sweet relationship, and noted that, in many cases – just as in the Bermuda Triangle – this vital connection is simply missing. Emphasising the importance of the 'invisible editor' in academia, she provided a comprehensive list of do's and don'ts and highlighted the ethical dilemmas this troika faces.

Carol also kindly offered to share several universities' dissertation guidelines, which led to the creation of the PEG EC Resource Library. All PEG EC members have access and may contribute to this Google Drive, which houses the guidelines, templates, referencing guides, slides from online learning sessions and a folder full of editing tips. We hope this resource grows even richer with our combined editing knowledge over time.

Collaborating with Carol in the June online session, **Richard Steele**, an editor and homoeopath from Gxarha/Morgan's Bay, mesmerised us with examples of the wildly incorrect entries he has found in reference lists produced by EndNote. It's a sobering thought that there may be published articles citing authors named 'Gazette, G.' or 'Johannesburg, U.O.'

It's a sobering thought that there may be published articles citing authors named 'Gazette, G.' or 'Johannesburg, U.O.'

Richard also took us through his process of identifying AI-generated, hallucinated sources. He noted that AI often uses the names of real authors in a given field but conjures up titles or articles that have never been published. Imagine an academic marking a thesis that cites them for a non-existent work – an error that could discredit the whole paper enterprise and see the student's qualification disappear into the ether.

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In August, we welcomed (virtually) two speakers from the Western Cape – **Anne Taylor**, a freelance writer and editor, and **Renee Moodie**, PEG member and founder of In Safe Hands. Having lived and worked through many major tech upheavals, they were well placed to speculate about a world in which editing and AI could comfortably cohabit.

Renee explored the 'pleasures and pains' of AI. Its ability to help you overcome the terror of the blank page, find that word on the tip of your tongue or rearrange a text's structure to improve readability, are all 'pleasures'. And it's also pretty good at taking the sting out of that angry email you were about to send. Obvious pitfalls are the hallucinations – both factual errors and fabricated sources – and the big talking points of data privacy, copyright and climate. Renee emphasised that AI is not a search engine. In fact, many AI tools are up to two years behind real time, and we need to consider this when using the technology.

Anne introduced us to several AI personalities – ChatGPT, the hoodie-wearing, eager-to-please office assistant; Claude, the thoughtful analyst in a suit and tie; Gemini, the bespectacled research integrator; >



Anne Taylor introduced us to several AI tools and their personalities

and Perplexity, the bearded librarian. True to their personalities, each tool has its own set of special talents and blind spots, and it's up to us to choose the best tool for the job. Anne also highlighted the importance of providing clear instructions to AI tools, recommending that we provide a detailed editorial brief when prompting AI platforms. She reminded us that AI is, quite literally, a machine: it can't understand or appreciate context, but it is surprisingly efficient in those tedious tasks we all love to hate.



In September, **Ricky Woods**, retired teacher and editor, revealed her Toastmaster and teaching expertise in an excellent presentation titled *Volunteer a PEGblog. Who? Me?* Providing us with a clear outline for writing a blog, she highlighted the importance of captivating an audience with a compelling headline. Once the reader is in the palm of your hand, she said, it's crucial to give them maximum value by writing in an engaging, open tone and offering clear takeaways or practical advice and a coherent argument or opinion.

In the same session, **Janice Hunt**, the editor of *PEGboard*, gave us a brief history of the publication from its inception as a newsletter in 1994. She described its purpose and how it had shifted to keep pace with technology and provide a valuable product to a new generation of readers. Outlining what makes a good *PEGboard* article, she suggested exploring past issues for inspiration. Both Ricky and Janice emphasised the importance of keeping the intended audience in mind before putting pen to paper.

In September, a small group gathered for an **in-person get-together** at my home in Boknesstrand – a close neighbour to Cannon Rocks and the Addo Marine Conservation Area. We met at the beach for a stroll along the rocky shore exposed by the spring low tide. The more energetic folk ventured further along the beach towards the kite-surfing area of Cannon Rocks, and a determined group dipped their toes in the water, searching for sea anemones, urchins and octopi. For others, a peek at the eclectic 'library-with-a-sea-view' preceded a quick coffee at Stoepstories.

Lunch was served on the banks of the Bakanas River, which hugs the little coastal village. Energised by the sea air and buoyed by homemade bread, Scotch eggs, quiche, salads and more, we happily shared editing tales of woe and wonder, swapped shortcuts and tips, and learnt much about one another. **Elly Grossman**, a supervisor and Cannon Rocks dweller, shared insights into the unrealistic expectations that universities have of students, editors and supervisors. We discussed the Turnitin saga, and **Paul Mason**, lecturer and author, revealed some university departments' astonishing attitudes to AI use and plagiarism. The ethics of editing second- or third-language English speakers was also a popular topic. Coffee, pavlova and *melkert* sealed the deal on an excellent outing. Next time, Nanaga, Hogsback or Makhanda! The choices in our beautiful province are endless!



In October we look forward to an in-house technical editing session and, in November, poet **Jeannie McKeown Wallace** and children's author **Lori-Ann Preston** will be joining EC PEGgers **Caroline van der Mescht** and **Paul Mason** on a panel to talk about the experience of being edited. In December, we'll be waving goodbye to the 2025 editing year with a short pub quiz or a game of online Scattergories and a glass or two of wine. 🍷



Boknes beach (photo by Kate Davies)



Mike McCoy pondering gerunds and participates on the Boknes beach (photo by Lorna McCoy)



From left: Ricky Woods, Mike McCoy, Anne Peltason, Simone Wray, Elly Grossman, Lorna McCoy, Carol Leff and Paul Mason (photo by Kate Davies)



Pavlova for pudding (photo by Mike McCoy)



From left: Ricky Woods, Anne Peltason, Simone Wray, Elly Grossman, Lorna McCoy, Carol Leff, Kate Davies and Paul Mason (photo by Mike McCoy)

Who's your colleague anyway?

Barbara Basel – from track changes to Shakespeare-with-a-twist

Hester von Wielligh

Who wears saucy red shoes and at 87 is front and centre stage of her life and career? It's Barbara Basel, a PEG member, who is also well-known in Cape Town's am-dram circles. She wields her track changes 'red pen' with the same aplomb that she produces Shakespeare-with-a-twist. Moreover, she wears a PhD cap gained in 2001 with a thesis titled 'The use of chiasmic configurations as a satirical tool in selected works by Pieter-Dirk Uys'.

Before we delve into Barbara Basel the editor, tell us more about what made you decide to analyse the work of Pieter-Dirk Uys.

First: chiasmus (as in the thesis title) is 'more than just ... a skeleton upon which to hang thoughts and words'. It is 'a forceful style of speaking and writing' that through 'rigorous and abrupt juxtapositions of contrasting forms within a unified literary system ... focuses the receiver's attention on the central concerns', as described by John W Welch, who has published extensively on the history and role of chiasmus in sacred literature.

My thesis explored Pieter-Dirk Uys's double identity as a political satirist. He constantly crosses over from being Pieter-Dirk Uys, author, newspaper columnist, playwright and director, to being a stage and television personality. In his satirical revues and films, he brings to life his various alter egos, notably Evita Bezuidenhout, 'the most (in)famous White woman in Africa' and, through these portrayals, draws attention to what he considers to be the folly of apartheid.

How did you get into editing?

A friend of mine recommended it to me.

What are your areas of speciality?

Academic editing of students' work and journal articles, non-fiction books and teaching modules.

When and why did you join PEG?

About 10 years ago, I think, because I thought I should gain more knowledge about editing.

What's the best part of your work?

It's great learning about new disciplines. Also hearing from students that, with my editing assistance, their work has been accepted and they are moving on to the next stage.

What do you like least?

Very repetitive and carelessly written research documents.

What tools of the trade or equipment can you not do without?

My laptop, track changes, comments from other PEG members, editing books and a *very helpful* son and granddaughter who solve all my IT problems!

As a language practitioner, what is your aim for the year ahead?

To attend PEG workshops and meetings and continue editing for students and helping them achieve their dreams. ➤



Barbara Basel



Lead actors in *Taming of the Shrew* (photo by John Linnegar)



Above: Barbara Basel and the cast of *Taming of the Shrew*

Right: *Taming of the Shrew's* programme with director's note, cast list and cast photo (photos by John Linnegar)

FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Taming of the Shrew was Shakespeare's second play written during 1591. This play has long been the subject of heated discussion amongst historians, academics and directors regarding whether or not Shakespeare is advocating a woman's total subjection to her father, husband and other male relatives.

In his later plays, Shakespeare presents many strong female characters such as Lady Macbeth (*Macbeth*), Cleopatra (*Anthony and Cleopatra*), Portia (*Judith Casanova*), Catherine of Aragon (*Henry VIII*) and Portia (*Merchant of Venice*). Today in the 21st century we pride ourselves that gender equality is the order of the day and women now hold very powerful positions, such as prime ministers and bank managers, and are often the main 'bread winner'.

Unfortunately, this situation is not the case for all women. Many countries still have gender repressive laws and social practices that deny women control of their lives as a matter of custom, religion and/or physical and psychological male abuse.

I have chosen to set my production of *The Taming of the Shrew* sometime in the future when 'the boot is on the other foot' and men have to wait until their mothers choose their marriage partner, who in most cases is the woman with the largest bank balance! I have swapped the gender of the main characters but left most of the servants to be played by males.

I'm still focusing on the play's humour because we usually pay more attention to something that makes us laugh than to a moralising sermon.

I should like to dedicate this production to all women whose rights have been eroded and intelligence undermined by gender prejudice, especially those currently living in Afghanistan.

— BARBARA BASEL

CAST

Lucentio	Alex Silberbauer
Tranio	Hannah Molyneux
Baptista	Andrea Grant
Hortensio	Catia Cicognani
Gremio	Kaulana Williams
Katherine	Jason Bailey
Bianca	Geoffrey Muller
Petruchio	Kim R2
Grumio	Kathryn Griffiths
Curtis	Andy Rabagiatti
Nathaniel	Zoë Fontaine-Rainen
Merchant	Linda Steele
Vincenzo	Lisa Fontaine-Rainen
Widow	Sean Kayton



What important lessons have you learnt so far in your career?

You are never too old to learn and it is important to continually deal with challenges (such as just having learnt to use WeTransfer with help from my son).

In your PEG profile, you state that you continued after your retirement with academic editing to stimulate your brain – do you choose specific fields, such as the humanities or sciences?

No, I edit whatever material is sent to me – at times this really stretches the brain – I do quite a lot of work for UCT accounting students, and also had one thesis from CPUT's Engineering Department on how to create lightweight water-resistant materials for building boats.

How does your thespian, even playful, side mesh with the traditionally more 'serious' roles of lecturing, teaching and editing?

Both tasks require considerable creative thought, hard work – but the bottom line is that you must enjoy what you do. Directing plays gives me plenty of fun along with the headaches.

How did you get into theatre and directing?

I've been interested in acting since I was a child. When my children started taking drama lessons, their teacher persuaded me to take the teacher's drama course through Trinity College in London. I acted in, and directed, plays for local drama groups while living in Pretoria and so when I came to Cape Town in 2005, I just continued doing the same.

What do you love about the theatre?

It's challenging. I enjoy interacting with fellow thespians (actors and directors) and receiving applause from the audience.

What was particularly significant or fun about *The Taming of the Shrew* for you?

An innovative idea, working with some really strong women and three charming men, all of whom had the same vision as me, namely, gender abuse in any form is not acceptable.

What prompted you to reverse the gender roles in the play?

I have always been lucky enough to have a supportive husband, son and brothers-in-law who believe women can think and make decisions but realise that this is not the norm for all women. I am also very concerned about the terrible way women are currently treated in Afghanistan in the name of religion.

Was the *Shrew* the play you most enjoyed doing, or is there another one that stands out for you?

I have acted in and directed numerous plays – I think my favourite was *Twelfth Night* in which one of my granddaughters played Viola at the request of the rest of the cast. I set *Twelfth Night* in a night club in the hedonist Weimar Republic after World War I because I thought it represented the topsy-turvy world of *Twelfth Night* celebrations in Shakespeare's day. We all won many awards for that play.

What is your message to others who may be interested in taking part in the am-dram world?

It's a wonderful way of being creative while making friends, but it does require commitment and lots of hard work – both of which are really worth it when you hear the audience clapping. 🎭



Hester von Wielligh has been a translator, editor, journalist and public relations officer since the early 1970s and has never tired of working with words, people and language. She became a member of PEG in 2006 when she was communication officer of the then State Library, which is now the National Library of South Africa. In 2008, while *PEGboard's* editor, she helped the newsletter become fully digital, eliminating its former unwieldy 'spoege-n-plak' and snailmail production process. Nowadays, she is semi-retired, but still a member of the mentoring team and the Gauteng branch committee.

Big in Japan

Alison Downie

I was surprised to be told that fellow PEGgers were keen to learn about my recent escapade in Japan, but, then again, we all need some good news, don't we?

I recall wanting to do karate from the age of about four, but to no avail ('No, you can't. Anything from the East is strange'; 'Sorry, we don't offer karate at this school'; 'Nope, we have don't have a karate instructor at this university'). It was only when I moved to the small town of McGregor that I spotted schoolchildren in their gi's (karate uniforms) and made enquiries.

At the age of 36

When I started out in the sport, at the age of 36, I had no idea about the different styles, etiquette and history one learns as one advances from one belt to another. I was extremely fortunate in having joined a very traditional style called Goju-Kai. It is one of the few remaining styles directly linked to a very old Japanese karate lineage, originating in Okinawa.

Being an editor equipped me well for the sport, which also involves complex manoeuvres, putting in many hours at night and copious amounts of perseverance and patience. In 2017, after hundreds of hours in the dojo and much sweat, tears and blood (in that order), I obtained the rank of shodan (black belt). I graded to nidan in 2021 and, at the end of 2024, to sandan (third black belt, when one obtains the title of sensei, simply meaning 'teacher'). Karate has taught me so many things ... about life, about perseverance, about friendship, about myself. It's also the hardest thing I've ever done (including studying for and undertaking PEG's Accreditation Test!).

Karate has taught me so many things ... about life,
about perseverance, about friendship, about myself.

Representing one's country at an international tournament costs between R60k and R80k, and it was my freelance editing work that gave me the push, knowing I would be able to earn extra income. Nonetheless, I started early with fundraising efforts to raise the remaining funds. It astounded me how generous South Africans – and PEGgers – are, even in such difficult times. Every donation, raffle ticket bought, marketing suggestion and message of encouragement made a huge difference in keeping the spirits up during many months of long days and hard work. ➤



The Boland contingent, representing the towns of Montagu, Robertson, Worcester, Ceres and Villiersdorp



Winning a bronze in kumite for the country was a huge highlight in my karate career. South Africa was placed third overall, after Japan and Indonesia



In the veterans category, we tend to be a little less competitive and a lot more social. At our age, we can't take things too seriously, can we? The oldest competitor was in fact a Japanese sensei in his eighties, who received a huge round of applause from everyone present after his kata

Fun and waffles

Through such open hearts, I was also able to contribute to two team members' campaigns, make a sizeable donation towards a shelter for women and children in Worcester and treat our Worcester team to a night of fun and waffles – much needed after months of intense training. (Isn't it remarkable how doors open when one chooses to bless others?)

Being selected for the South African team involved taking part in the national competition in 2024. The team was announced a few weeks later, followed by more than a year of preparation. Training for the 8th Karate-do Goju-Kai World Championships required many sacrifices: hours of training every week, late nights catching up on admin and other responsibilities, skipping social events and giving up precious time with family and friends (sound familiar, dear editing colleagues?). Syncing my work as an editor with my training was second nature – we editors are used to juggling many balls, dealing with scope creep and working into the wee hours, aren't we?

Another senior karateka and I handled the admin and arrangements for the Boland participants. The two of us had six minors between us and, for most of them, this was their first flight and first trip overseas.

Off to Japan

We finally set off for Japan in early August, a contingent of 501, with 230 competitors, plus parents, support staff, referees and coaches. We had superb flights with Qatar and were accommodated in a hotel in Chiba, about 20 minutes away from Tokyo and within walking distance of the arena where we were to compete. The daily breakfasts were in the form of a buffet, with familiar Western cuisine, along with a fascinating variety of traditional Japanese foods.

We arrived in the middle of a heat wave that I can only describe by taking our Karoo summer and multiplying it by about four. Almost every Japanese citizen we came across was wearing a cooling gel bandana or carrying a handheld fan. Fortunately, we had two days before the opening ceremony and spent them exploring the town, weighing in and training. We managed to navigate the train network fairly well (ending up on the wrong train only once!).

1600 competitors

The tournament took place over three days, with 1600 competitors from a total of 37 countries. The opening ceremony included a sword demonstration and a kata bunkai being demonstrated by our founder, Saiko Shihan Gogen Yamaguchi, now in his 80s. All those with black belts were then called onto the floor to do Sanchin, a breathing kata. The days were long, beginning at 08:30 and usually finishing at 22:00 or later (so much for that Japanese precision!).

Competitors could take part in kata, kumite (fighting with point scoring), bunkai (pre-arranged sparring with a partner), team kumite, unison kata and jiu kumite (freestyle fighting, where competitors basically beat the daylights out of one another for a certain period of time; this is restricted to those 16 years and older and is not for the fainthearted).

The competition was extremely stiff, especially against the Japanese, who begin karate almost as soon as they can walk, but I felt we acquitted ourselves remarkably well, with two Boland karateka winning medals and others coming very close in divisions that were often very large indeed. The tournament ended with a dinner at a local hotel with all the teams, along with a few speeches and photographs with Goju-Kai VIPs.

Broadening horizons

We had a day or two before we flew home, which we spent finding gifts for sponsors and family members, visiting a few more locations and enjoying the local cuisine. We thoroughly enjoyed sushi at a small restaurant where each order arrived on a small conveyer belt system. There were several things in particular that I noticed about the Japanese, which I found somewhat surprising: the astoundingly extensive range of foods available, local people standing in the 'naughty corner' in lifts, the unsocial tendency on trains and in restaurants, the affordability of the country once there and the fantastic selection of cold drinks and ice creams available from vending machines in neighbourhoods and transit stations.

There is nothing quite like travelling to a distant country to broaden one's horizons, as clichéd as that may sound, and there is nothing quite like the camaraderie of travelling as a sports team, but it also gives one an appreciation of just how lucky we are to call South Africa home. It was good to return to Mzansi, hang up my gloves and settle back into a gentler rhythm after all the excitement. The conclusion I have come to – and I'm sure many of my fellow editors can identify with – is ... old dogs can learn new tricks! 🐾



My karate partner Sensei Mario and I found Hachikō, a big highlight for the two of us



The kids absolutely loved Disney World (so did the adults!) and the attention to detail was simply astounding. We also made a point of eating as much ice cream as we could wherever we went