# The Proof Angel Summary of

## Opinion: December 2013

### The space debate

I don't mean are we alone, I mean how many we should use. Read all about it here:

http://ow.ly/sNDCq

It always fascinates me when people get hot under the collar about something trivial. I like consistency, & I understand the reason behind the fashion change on the number of spaces after a full stop. But as long as it looks tidy in something important, why does it matter? Surely what comes before the full stop is the interesting bit? If detail really matters this much to "everyone" how come so many people can't grasp the basic idea of the apostrophe?

For what it's worth, I favour the single space, as it takes half the effort. I used to go for two, to demonstrate I knew what was correct. Then I found my colleagues didn't know. Most didn't even notice.

And how they can call it grammar beats me entirely.

### The changing face of regular

Regular used to mean something that happened at similar intervals. The bus comes regularly every half hour. I regularly go to the library on a Wednesday. It still means that.

But now it means standard as well. Most frequently a drink size or an alternative to large.

Which is weird when you think about it. My regular coffee used to be the one I have each morning for breakfast, or the one I have when I meet my friend on Tuesday afternoons. Now it means the sort I always have or the middle size one.

How did that happen? Who started it? How did the first person they said it to know what they meant? Isn't natural change interesting?

## What is the point of pre-owned?

Obviously this is a marketing phrase. Now I understand that using different language can influence both the listener and the speaker. We pick up on underlying themes suggested by the words used and draw our own conclusions.

Using nouns rather than a verb to describe likes & specialisms gives a more positive message. Studies have shown that the first in the following pairs of statements are more likely to impress the listener & make the speaker feel more confident about themselves:

- I am a historian.
- I like history.


- I am an artist.
- I'm interested in art.

We are all familiar with the positive language of estate agents, compact meaning small etc. Those of us who have studied anything about sales literature will know that there are certain expressions to avoid.

- Use may, not might.
- Use should, not if

• Use as much as, not up to.

For example the second of the statements below sounds more positive:

- Save up to 50%.
- Save as much as 50%.

Studies have shown we feel we are getting better value when we save up to...

So why is pre-owned a good alternative to second hand? Are we supposed to be pleased that someone else has prepared the way for us by using this book, car, or dining room table?

Ah yes, I have it. It is shorter.

Just don't get me started on pre-loved.

# The value of editing

One of the problems with this line of work is that a lot of people think they can do it. After all, it is just reading, and we can all read, can't we? I'm sure most people understand that there is more to it than that, but sometimes it is difficult to make the connection with the value of the service

http://ow.ly/sNEWR

# A silent English alphabet

Is it any wonder we get confused with spellings? Not only do some letters represent more than one sound, but all of them appear in words to which they make no contribution whatsoever.

Apart from showing the world we know how to spell those particular words, of course...

Here is a list of examples of silent letters:

- A in BREAD
- B in LAMB
- C in INDICTMENT
- D in HANDKERCHIEF
- E in GIVE
- F in HALFPENNY
- G in DEIGN
- H in HONOUR
- I in FRIEND
- J in MARIJUANA
- K in KNOT
- L in YOLK
- M beginning MNEMONIC
- N in HYMN
- O in PEOPLE
- P in PSALM
- Q in COLQUHOUN
- R in FORECASTLE
- S in ISLAND

- T in LISTEN
- U in GUARD
- V in MILNGAVIE
- W in WREATH
- X in SIOUX
- Y in PEPYS
- Z in RENDEZVOUS

How many more can you spot?

No wonder we need a phonetic alphabet for English and authors of pronouncing dictionaries get rich.