

Editorial

Whose standard is it anyway?

In this issue of *English Today*, once again we have a very wide range of articles spanning such societies across the globe as Canada, Ireland, the Shetlands, the Gulf, Hong Kong, and mainland China. It is notable that, in a number of articles, issues of ‘Standard English’, with or without upper case for Standard, attract the attention of a number of contributors. In Stefan Dollinger’s article, the question of Standard Canadian English is seen as one of key importance for the recognition of Canadian English among linguists, as well as the public. Using Jack Chambers’ socially-based definition of a standard Canadian accent, Dollinger speculates on how many Canadians speak a Standard Canadian English dialect, in a society characterised by linguistic tolerance and *laissez-faire*. At the same time, he also expresses concern about the limited space given to the study of Canadian English in the nation’s universities and colleges, arguing for a more inclusive dialogue between professional linguists and the general public. The issue of Standard English is also raised, in rather different form, in Sundkvist’s article on Shetland English, where he notes that a continuum exists between ‘Scots’ and ‘Scottish’ Standard English. Traditionally, Scots was widely spoken on the Shetlands, but Sundkvist’s research suggests that the spread of a form of Scottish Standard English is now noticeable, particularly among younger people in Lerwick, Shetland’s capital. A third article where the issue of a Standard surfaces is that of Deirdre Murphy, who comments on the choices faced by teachers of English as a foreign language in the Irish context, where her research reveals that almost half of all teachers polled claimed to be teaching ‘both British and Irish’ English norms of pronunciation. Blair Fussell’s article moves us away from such Inner Circle varieties to provide a description of English in the

Gulf, an area which is not only prominent for economic reasons, but which has also emerged as an educational hub in recent years. Other varieties of English that receive coverage in this issue include Hong Kong English and China English. China has, in recent years, become the most populous society in the world where English is learnt and taught, and although Hong Kong English has received a good deal of recognition, there is still much debate about the status, functions and future of English in the People’s Republic of China. Given that it is now estimated that over 200 million people are learning the language in China, Eaves discusses whether ‘China English’ may be recognised as ‘a developing world variety of English’. Questions related to the relationship between English in second language (or Outer Circle) contexts, such as India or Singapore, as opposed to English in societies such as China and Japan (the Expanding Circle) are raised by Rajagopalan in his contribution. However, not all articles in this issue are concerned with varieties of English around the world. Jürg Schwyter’s essay on aphasia gives a first-hand account of the cognitive and linguistic effects of experiencing a stroke, and how to survive this, with courage and humour. Rachel Smith’s fascinating contribution on the Urban Dictionary reminds us that some varieties can be socially and stylistically defined, thereby introducing us to some of the latest trends in youth slang, even providing us with a definition of that most slippery of words, *meep*. By contrast, moving away from contemporary youth slang, Michael Bulley’s article finally provides us with insight into the impact of Classical Greek on the English lexicon.

*Kingsley Bolton, David Graddol,
and Rajend Mesthrie
The Editors*

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