

'-(g)lish names' and other matters

On the broadening interface between English and Chinese I wrote at the end of *Comment* in *ET*64: 'Watch this space.' However, none of the three China-related pieces in this issue were in my mind when I issued that invitation, yet they well represent the range and vitality of commentary on developments in the world's most populous nation. Zuo Biao considers some almost mystical questions about differences between English and Chinese; Gregory James describes a startling English/Cantonese 'cyber-pidgin' that has grown up among Hong Kong's students, while Gao Liwei deals not only with the hybridizing of English and Putonghua but also with email issues raised by two other Chinese contributors in *ET*64: Li Lan and Li Yongyan.

Significant contributions all three, yet only straws in a typhoon blowing across East Asia. Kinds of 'Chinglish' are evolving fast, including 'Putonglish' in mainland China and 'Cantonglish' in Hong Kong, adding to the ever-lengthening list of *-(g)lish* names that were once exotic, jokey, and low, but are now almost casual and conventional. What else can one call them? So many millions are learning English in the People's Republic that, when China is added to the Indian subcontinent, it is easy to see where the majority statistics of English will be in just a few years' time. And it will be English in a multilingual setting: a true lingua franca.

This news from China continues to tie in, remarkably, with email and ICQ, the Net and the Web. There was no direct response to Li Lan and Li Yongyan from any American, European, South Asian, or African, but fortunately, for balance, we have from a previous American contributor, Paul Bruthiaux, an intriguing analysis of verbs that are used 'unaccusatively' in the dialog boxes of screens near you. Yet still we have hardly lifted the lid on computer usage. There are many more aspects to cover, building on this remarkable start.

After all that, it might be relaxing to turn to some new angles on several of *ET*'s regular topics: what's happening to RP, or the condition of Pidgin in West Africa, or (in a new twist on an old theme) 2001, the European Year of Languages, and whether world English is a blessing or a curse.

Tom McArthur

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English in bereavement advertising in India

RAJA RAM MEHROTRA discusses the distinctive style of a special register in Indian English newspapers

A SIGNIFICANT corollary of sociolinguistic enquiry and research in recent decades has been the focus of scholarly attention received by register studies, particularly single register analysis. Register variation is a basic characteristic of language use in all speech communities. As a matter of fact, “language is used and exists only in its use” (Darbyshire 1967: 29). In the registral approach, variation in language is governed not by users but by uses in a given context or situation with a fair degree of conventionalization or what Ferguson calls “pre-fabricated modules” (Ferguson 1983:167). The associated linguistic features co-occurring with a specific social situation or a particular subject matter give the register a distinct form and character. Notwithstanding several perceptive theoretical frameworks suggested by Hymes, Halliday and Crystal, among others, register studies remain largely atheoretical. There is considerable weight in Ferguson’s argument for an ad-hoc approach in register studies, since the existing theoretical frameworks, he believes (Ferguson 1983), are found wanting in so far as they are incapable of conveying the delicate nuances of the register and capturing differences between one register and the other. The approach in the present study is inspired by this argument.

There are numerous studies of synchronic single registers. These include: sports announcement (Ferguson 1983, Romaine 1994), baby talk (Ferguson 1964), legalese (Mellinkoff 1963, Atkinson *et al* 1979, Danet 1980, Bhatia 1987), restaurant menus (Zwicky & Zwicky 1980), testament language (Barr 1961, Brook 1965, Samarin 1976, Finegan 1982), medical discourse (Frankel 1984), note-taking (Janda 1985), auctioneering (Kuiper & Haggio 1984, Kuiper and Tillis 1986), personal ads (Bruthiaux 1994), matri-

monial advertising (Mehrotra 1975), and film advertising (Mehrotra 1984).

Description

This paper sets out to locate the register of bereavement advertising in Indian English contextually and describe its linguistic features in relation to the relevant situational factors. The classified personal ads which constitute the corpus of the present study appeared in *The Times of India* (New Delhi), a leading national daily, during 1998–99. The bereavement ads are published regularly under various captions: *Remembrance, Obituary, In Memorium* and *Condolences*. The length of a single personal ad in this column ranges from 10 to 150 words. The text of a bereavement ad, which is generally accompanied with a photograph of the person being mourned, contains some biographical information about him/her, the dates of birth and death, occupation, relationship with the advertiser, main accomplishments, the praiseworthy qualities of head and heart and finally a wish or prayer for the departed soul. The principal function of remembrance advertising is not to inform the reader, as is the case with other classified ads, including personal ads, but to remember and admire someone publicly after his/her death, with a good deal of emotional colouring. It needs to be pointed out at



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the outset that the register of bereavement is conceptualised and verbalised in Indian English very differently from its counterpart in British and American English, presumably because of the vast difference in the socio-cultural milieu associated with these varieties.

In bereavement ads the most private feelings of pain and separation find expression in the most public form, the newspaper. When in a shocking state of bereavement, people resort to various means to give vent to their agony and also to keep alive the memories of the dead. Advertising in the popular press offers them one such opportunity. It enables them to share their feelings and thoughts about a deceased relative or friend with a large number of people. What Bruthiaux says about the register of personal ads is fully applicable to a bereavement ad: "It is in effect a monologue directed to an unknown reader who chooses to read but cannot co-construct text through immediate feedback" (Bruthiaux 1994: 139).

Wide choice

It is customary in British English to announce the death of someone in an obituary or in memoriam column of a newspaper by using a stereotyped word or phrase such as *to die*, *to pass away*, *to breathe one's last*, *to lose one's life*, *to become a martyr*, or *to expire*. The advertisers have a limited choice. They seldom take liberty with these formal and fixed forms. With a view to maintaining the sobriety of the sad solemn event, they avoid using colloquial expressions such as *to give up the ghost*, *to peg out*, *to bite the dust* or *to pop off* or the slangy expressions like *to cash in one's chips* or *to kick the bucket*.

In my Indian English corpus of bereavement ads the standard and fixed forms of British English, mentioned above, have the minimum frequency of occurrence. In their place there is an unlimited number of phrases to denote the death of someone, allowing ample scope for individual choice. These phrases and sentences reflect numerous aspects of Indian culture, social norms, folk beliefs, customs and rituals relating to death. My list, which is by no means exhaustive, contains as many as 120 items to denote someone's death.

The phrase most frequently used to refer to the death of a relative or friend in the remembrance column is "to leave for (someone's) heavenly abode", which is non-existent in modern British or American English. The advertis-

ers often take liberties with this form and come out with the following variants:

He left for his eternal abode.
 She departed for her heavenly abode.
 He entered the portals of the Lord's abode.
 She joined her husband in her journey to her heavenly abode.
 He left us for his eternal home.

The word 'home' ('eternal home') has been used only once while its formal and literary variant 'abode' ('heavenly abode') figures in very many ads. In modern British English the use of 'abode' is considered archaic and even jocular. Even in Indian English its use is restricted to the phrase "to leave for (someone's) heavenly abode."

John Spencer (personal communication) is of the view that the phrase 'to leave for (someone's) heavenly abode' belongs to Victorian and early 20th century non-conformist chapel or missionary terminology similar to the archaic and outdated phrase "safe in the arms of Jesus" signifying "died and gone to Heaven." The phrase, he perceptively observes, could be labelled as a "transfer into Indian English from Victorian missionary pulpit rhetoric." Yet another possibility of the origin of the phrase could be its Hindi equivalent *swarga sidhaaraana* ('to leave for Heaven, to die') which is widely used in North India. Most Hindus believe that their relatives, friends and other distinguished persons become *swargawaasee* or *swargeeya* ('residents of Heaven') after death. There is thus a religio-cultural undertone about the phrase, so popular with Indian advertisers.

The advertisers in general appear fatalistic and blame destiny, fate or God for the death of their near and dear ones, often presenting these supernatural/divine powers in bad light.

The cruel hands of fate snatched him away.
 He was stolen away by fate for ever...
 The wind of fate blew, making her lifeless.
 Cruel fate grabbed him.
 Destiny whisked him away.
 We were robbed of our most precious possession.
 Destiny took your benign presence and our breath away in an air crash.
 Nature recalled him to his fold.
 God took you away from us.
 God snatched my father.
 God took away his precious gift from us.
 He was plucked from God as he was the best flower on earth.

It is obvious that the words *destiny*, *fate*, *nature*

and God are used here as synonymous, signifying the power/agent responsible for someone's death. The advertiser suffering from depression and deprivation perceives fate or God as a rapacious thief, robber, abductor, tyrant and destroyer involved in an unjust and unkind act.

Philosophical stance

In some cases, however, the advertisers derive consolation from the fact that their deceased kin, after death, has become one with God:

He left us all to abide for ever with the
Almighty.
He attained the lotus feet of the Almighty/Lord
Mahavir.
We handed God's gift back to him.
He passed on to the eternal glory.
She attained eternity.
He became more dear to God than to us all.
My precious gift flew away from my own lap to
the Heavenly Father.
God withdrew him to light up a world
elsewhere.
The greatest of the great called him.
He became one with Parmatman.

The statements are inspired by the belief that life in this world is a temporary sojourn preceded and followed by a state in eternity in which a human being is one with God.

It is natural therefore that the metaphor of a journey figures prominently in remembrance advertisements. Life is imagined to be a journey or voyage, the ultimate destination being eternity. Referring to the death of a close relative or friend the advertisers write:

He left his earthly sojourn.
She travelled on a voyage of no return.
He made his journey to heaven.
She took departure from this world.
He left for his ultimate journey.
He left us for that journey to the unknown.
She departed from the ethereal to the celestial.
He left for an unknown destination never to
return.
He completed his earthly journey.
He crossed over...
He slipped into the other world.
He glided away in a silvery flash.
His river of life reached its final destination on
this day.
He entered the realm of immortal bliss.
His soul migrated from the ephemeral world.
He left this mortal world with Hari Om Namō
on his lips.

Brooding over someone's death in such a philo-

sophical mood mitigates to some extent the personal grief and suffering in so far as death implies a change for the better: from the mortal ephemeral world to the realm of the immortals. Entry into the divine world, it is believed, becomes a certainty if one utters the name of a god or goddess while breathing his last, as in the sentence *He left this mortal world with Hari Om Namō on his lips* (the phrase *Hari Om Namō* signifying "Salutation to the Lord Hari (Vishnu)"). The sentence *His soul remigrated* alludes to the cycle of rebirth which has found adequate expression in a Sanskrit verse *Punarapi janamam, punarapi maranam*, ('repeatedly being born and repeatedly dying').

In a similar philosophical vein the mourner ponders over the uncertainty, transitoriness and meaninglessness of life together with a sense of his utter helplessness in the matter:

The book of luck is written by the Lord right at
time of birth. But we are not able to read it.
Come what may, we cannot regain the paradise
lost.
With the certainty of death goes the uncertainty
of time, place and circumstances.
Just as grains of sand gather together and they
separate by the ebbs and flows of a river, so
are living creatures brought together and
then parted by time.

He however derives consolation from the fact that death brings redemption to the deceased from the cycle of rebirth by the grace of God:

Lord Sai declared "no rebirth" for you after you
were gone.
You must have attained Siddhi by now,
becoming one with Paramatman [God].

Yet another source of solace and strength is the belief that

Death ends life, not a relationship.

The philosophic stance and spiritual musings provide strength and comfort to the members of the bereaved family.

Register marker

Language has a strongly indexical aspect; more so still in a register. The remembrance advertisements mourning and commemorating army personnel who meet their death prematurely in the battlefield contain certain hints which tell unmistakably about the person being mourned or remembered.

He attained martyrdom.

He laid down his life.
He embraced death for the honour of his
country.
He went away to God while in uniform.

Yet another register-marker in the present context is the expression of a wish or prayer for the departed soul. The verbalisation of a wish or hope is done both with or without a modal. What the advertiser generally wishes for his dead relative or friend is peace, happiness, God's protection or a merger with Him or else a reunion after rebirth:

May your soul rest in Heaven!
May your departed soul rest in eternal peace
and tranquillity!
May God protect his soul under His wings!
May you always be happy in your new abode!
May God grant you place near Him!
May you remain in God's bliss!
May you merge with Paramatman!
May he twinkle like a star in the galaxy above
and sway in the breeze of happiness in the
lap of Nature!
If there is rebirth, may we be together again!
We hope our paths will cross again.

The prayer to God is either for the deceased person or for the mourner himself:

We pray to Almighty to grant him eternal
peace.
We pray to God with folded hands to give
eternal peace to the departed noble soul.
Let us pray for his Maafrat and Almuquaam in
Jannat ul Firdaus.
I pray to God for rebirth only to ask you what
was in your mind on the fateful day.

A mourner on an occasion such as this cannot help thinking wishfully:

I wish I have you as my mother in all my future
births.
Wishing God could have spared you just for a
few more years.
Wish you were here to lit our pyres.
I wish some miracle could get you back.

The sentence *Wish you were here to lit our pyres* calls for a little explanation. It is the earnest wish of every devout Hindu parent that his/her last rites including cremation be performed by his/her son and this, it is believed, will ensure redemption from a particular kind of hell called *Pun*. The belief is based on an entry in *Manusmriti* which lays down: *Punnamno narakadyasmat trayate pitaram sutah* ('It is only a son who rescues the whole body of his ancestors from the hell named Pun').

One of the basic tenets of Indian thought is to consider the whole world as a family (*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*) and hence a mourner prays not for the peace of his relative alone but also of the others who are no longer alive:

On this day we also bow our heads to other
departed souls and pray to God to keep them
in peace.

It may be reiterated here that what the advertiser desires and prays for is in keeping with the social/spiritual aspirations and cultural ethos of the Indian people in the context of death and bereavement.

Unusual features

Although most of the lexical and grammatical features of the personal ads under scrutiny are the same as those of Indian English at large, the register has certain characteristics which are not noticeable elsewhere. Among new coinages in our corpus mention may be made of *workship* (dedication to work), *after-life* (the next life in the cycle of rebirth), *home-maker* (builder of the family, guardian). The new formation "workship" reminds one of "hateships" used by John O'Hara in *Ten North Frederic*. The register is particularly rich in unusual collocations. My list of curious-looking collations includes *life partner*, *saint soldier* and *revered memory*. *Life partner* is a literal translation of the Hindi phrase *jeevan saathi* which denotes a wife or husband. *Saint soldier* means a soldier with saintly qualities and spiritual leanings. Similarly, *revered memory* is a typical Indian collocation, not usually to be found in the native varieties of English. One can say *revered teacher* or *revered classics* but not *revered memory* which, incidentally, comes very close to the popular Sanskrit/Hindi phrase *punya smaran* ('sacred remembrance'). Curiously, sometimes even an idiom is used in its literal sense: *we hope you look down upon us and guide us from above*. What is intended to be a sombre expression may well provoke laughter among readers.

The advertisers who do not possess adequate command over English manage to communicate their meaning by manipulating the limited number of words they are familiar with. Consider, for instance, the phrase "an inch of pain" as in "you never gave us an inch of pain" implying "the slightest pain". Among instances of unusual/deviant usage and lapse of grammatical accuracy mention may be made of:

Entertaining people was your lifeline.
 Because of you we walk taller with pride.
 We had no time to speak to you a few departing
 words.
 Now we are thirsting for your love and
 guidance.
 Life is lifeless without you.

Many of the lapses here may be attributed to the advertisers' ignorance of English grammar and usage and also, in some cases, to the pull of their mother tongue.

Registral confusion

A few statements referring to someone's death result in registral confusion as the texts are written in a language that does not belong to the register of bereavement and remembrance:

Death was never on agenda in her conversation.
 This is your second birthday in absentia
 (addressing a dead relative).
 God summoned him for reasons best known to
 him.
 Bless us to an ounce of your being
 Dear Kamal, Jai Shri Hanumanji.
 Goodbye till we meet again (referring to a dead
 relative).
 She vanished into the sky leaving behind trails
 of sorrow.
 She left us silently without saying goodbye.

Obviously, the phrases *on agenda*, *in absentia*, *for reasons best known to him*, *Jai Shri Hanumanji* are misplaced and inappropriate in the contexts in which they have been used. Expecting a person to resort, at the time of his death, to phatic communion and say farewell words like 'goodbye' sounds unapt and even ridiculous. Similarly, the vanishing of a person in the air or sky belongs more appropriately to the register of magical tricks. Such confusions in the present context arise mainly from the advertiser's lack of adequate control over registral variety of the language and also from the fact that the mourner while writing the draft advertisement is under the sway of strong emotions.

The foregoing description and analysis of the registral features of the bereavement ads serves to demonstrate how a living language is used and misused in a culturally alien context. It is also an affirmation of the fact that the use of language cannot escape from its temporal and spatial, social and religious context. It further reinforces the correlational association between linguistic and situational characteristics, both influencing each other. ■

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OED update

The following sections are a composite selection from the *Oxford English Dictionary News* (2:16, Mar 2001)

As the editors work their way through the *OED* text, one of the issues which arises from time to time is the question of whether a particular entry, or pair of entries, should be treated as one word or two.

At what point should two prominent variants of what appears to be the same word part company, so the individual history of each can be clearly told? Semantic 'twins' which have had to be extensively thought about in this way over the past 12 months include the pairings *madam* and *madame*, *megrin* and *migraine*, *mask* and *masque*, and *marzipan* and *marchpane*. *Marzipan* and *marchpane* were in fact treated as a double headword in the First Edition of the *OED*, on the understanding that the two words derived ultimately from the same Italian etymological roots. While this is indeed the case, additional research has shown that

both variants have distinct enough histories to justify inclusion in the *OED* as separate headwords. Peter Gilliver, in his *Tale of Two Treats*, shows how the *OED*'s treatment of *marzipan* and *marchpane* has changed in the light of this extra evidence.

As well as the publication of the range *mast* to *meaty*, this quarter we celebrate the first anniversary of *OED Online*. Mark Dunn, of the *OED* Publication Group, describes some of the highlights of that year. The success of the electronic version has demonstrated beyond doubt that the decision to take the *OED* into the 21st century with the technology of the era was the right one. Curiously, however, the publication of electronic sections of *OED* text as it is revised mirrors the OUP's decision over a century ago to publish the First Edition of the *OED* in fascicles, as James Murray and his editors completed each section of the alphabet. Contemporary technology, then, has served to enhance *OED*'s established editorial traditions, while making the text available to a wider public than ever before.

Bernadette Paton, Newsletter Editor and Principal Editor, *Oxford English Dictionary*

Marzipan and marchpane

As each fascicle of the original *OED* was published, it became customary for it to be prefaced by notes drawing attention to some of the words included which were of particular interest, especially as far as etymology was concerned.

For example, when the range of words published in *OED Online* in December 2000, *marciaton-massyamore*, appeared in print in 1905, particular mention was made of the following words as being 'interesting on account either of etymology (on which in many instances new light has been thrown) or of sense-development': *marmalade*, *marquis*, *marriage*, *marry*, *marshal*, *martinet*, *martingale*, *martlet*, *marvel*, *marzipan*, *mask sb.3*, *mason*, *masquerade*, *mass sb.1*.

A striking illustration of the extent of the revision work we are now carrying out is the fact that all of these entries, selected by editor

Henry Bradley as 'highlights' of the range, now contain so much new material of interest 'on account either of etymology... or of sense-development'. Much of the new information comes directly from our own primary research, examining the historical record of English; but much also depends on the new light cast by recent scholarship on the history of other languages, as we can see by looking at just one example from this list.

The *OED*'s coverage of the word *marzipan* has undergone profound change. In the First Edition of the *OED*, if you looked under *Marzipan*, you would find only the cross-reference 'Marzepa(i)ne, Marzipan: see MARCHPANE.' The entry for this word carried a double headword 'Marchpane, marzipan', and all the different spellings – *marchpane*, *marzipan*, and over a dozen others – were all placed together in a single entry, with only the general comment in the etymology that 'the Eng[lish] forms [of the word] come from various continental sources'.

In fact the spelling *marchpane* was predominant throughout the nineteenth century (and indeed long before that), so the decision to place the entry under this heading must have seemed reasonable. However, in the course of the twentieth century the spelling *marzipan*, and the three-syllabled pronunciation which goes with it, have almost completely replaced the older *marchpane*: certainly the latter is now rarely found outside historical contexts.

Although *marchpane* and *marzipan* both derive ultimately from Italian *marzapane*, they have a claim to being distinct words, and in the revised *OED* they are treated as such: the entry for *marchpane* was published online in September 2000, and *marzipan* appeared in the next batch, three months later. The entry for *marchpane* now offers an explanation of how this form of the word – first found in English in 1516, spelled ‘march payne’ – came to be so different from its Italian etymon. The first element, as well as showing an English sound change, may have been influenced by *March* (the month, named after the god Mars). The etymology cites parallel forms in Latin dating from around 1500 (*martiapanes* and *panis marcius*), both suggesting that the word was thought to be linked to March or to Mars in some way. And the second element, *-pane*, seems to have been assumed to be the same word as Latin *panis* or French *pain*. Certainly this ‘more Anglicized’ form of the word seems to have been in more general use in English than the ‘foreign-looking’ *marzipan*: we do know of spellings similar to the latter from as early as 1542 (‘marzepaines’, in an English translation of Erasmus), but they remained rare until the 19th century.

What, then, is the ultimate origin of *marzipan* (and its cousin *marchpane*)? The original *OED* entry comments that ‘Its etymology is obscure’, and does no more than mention one scholar as having ‘ingeniously’ suggested a link with ‘Arabic mauthabān “a king that sits still”’. Once again, recent scholarship allows the new *OED*

entry to put forward a new derivation: in this case Italian philologists have furnished the basis for a link with – remarkably – the Far East. In Myanmar (Burma) there is a port, near the town of *Moulmein*, called *Martaban*, which was famous for the glazed jars which it exported to the West, often containing preserves and sweetmeats. Delicacies are often associated with the containers in which they are traditionally imported (*ginger* being an obvious example); it seems plausible enough that a name associated with a special container should transfer its association to the thing contained.

Plausibility would not, however, be enough were it not for a curious aspect of the words which correspond to *marzipan* in some of the other European languages: Italian *marzapane*, Spanish *mazapán*, French *massepain*. In each case the relevant word once also had another meaning, denoting various kinds of container – a casket in 15th-century French and 14th-century Spanish (specifically for confectionery in the case of French), and a container of a certain capacity in Venetian documents in the 13th. And then there is also the fact that *Martaban* is still known for its pottery: the same batch of recently published *OED* entries which contains *marzipan* also contains an entry for *Martaban jar* (sometimes simply *Martaban*), this being a kind of large glazed earthenware jar. (The same jars have also arrived in English via Afrikaans: the ships of the Dutch East India Company carried them to South Africa, where even English speakers came to call them *Martevaans*. By the same exacting criteria that separated *marchpane* and *marzipan*, we distinguish *Martaban* (jar) from *Martevaans* – the latter has its own entry in the *OED*, now published for the first time.) Thus in these entries, as in almost every entry published online to date, we can demonstrate that we have learnt, and can pass on, more information about ‘etymology... or... sense-development’ than ever before.

Peter Gilliver, Associate Editor,
Oxford English Dictionary

oed.com – the story so far

Since the launch of *OED Online* in March last year, four batches of new and revised entries, hot off the workstations of the editors, have been published on the web site in a smooth quarterly cycle.

Every three months, the *OED* Technology Group extracts the latest completed batch from the database and processes it, in order to simplify the complex tagging used by lexicographers into a more streamlined form suitable for the online version of the Dictionary. The Publication Group checks the processed text, mak-

ing sure (among other things) that revised entries are correctly linked to the corresponding Second Edition entries. The text is then passed back to the Technology Group for a final electronic spit and polish, before being whisked across the world to HighWire Press in California, who insert the entries into the web site's database. The Publication Group previews the updated site, which, when it has been approved, is made 'live' to subscribers. By this time the next batch is due for extraction by the Technology Group.

The range of entries covered by the new edition now runs from *M* to *meaty*, a total of 5474 entries, of which 759 are new to the *OED*. The size of the text is approximately double that of the corresponding range in the *OED*'s Second Edition.

One of the advantages of publishing the Dictionary online has become apparent in the last year, namely the ability to update and republish an entry when further information on the word comes to light. This has been the case with the entry *machicote* (a skirt worn by native American women). The discovery of recent evidence has enabled us to remove the 'Obs.' label, and to give a contemporary spelling for the headword. Similarly, earlier evidence was found for the mathematical term *Maclaurin's series*, which also provided a reference to Maclaurin's first publication of the series. Both the antedating and the reference can now be seen in the entry.

As well as the Dictionary itself, other material has been published on the site. In June 2000 we added the Bibliography to the Second Edition to the Help text, and in September the

OEDonline
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prefatory material from the printed Second Edition was converted into HTML and placed in the public part of the site (<http://oed.com/public/archive>). Also added to the public pages was an appeal for help with locating quotations cited from Dr Johnson's Dictionary (<http://oed.com/public/readers/johnson.htm>). These were originally accepted on Johnson's authority, but we are now attempting to check the quotations, some of which have proved difficult to trace owing to their incomplete bibliographical references.

To help users of *OED Online*, we have produced a Quick Reference Guide, which is available as a downloadable PDF file from the Help text. The last three issues of *OED News* have also been available in PDF form (see <http://oed.com/public/news>), and the newsletter is now published quarterly, to coincide with each update of the Dictionary.

Mark Dunn, Senior Editor,
OED Publication Group



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Pidgin English in anglophone Cameroon education

PAUL MBUFONG

The present writer recognizes the value of English in Cameroon education. He does, however, argue the case that because for the vast majority of Cameroonians in the North West and South West provinces (former British Cameroon) the L1 is Pidgin English, the best medium for teaching children at the initial stages of their education should be Pidgin English.

Introduction

The importance of the L1 (first language) in the education of a child especially at the early stages, cannot be over-emphasized. Psychologically, the proper development of the child is closely bound with the continued use of the language he has spoken from birth, the language of his parents, his brothers and sisters, and friends he is used to. It is the language in which he has acquired his first experience of life, the one in which he dreams and thinks, and in which he can easily and conveniently express his feelings.

For the vast majority of anglophone Cameroonians, that language is Pidgin English (P.E.). The Koenig, Chia, and Povey (1983) Sociolinguistic survey of the major urban centres of Cameroon (1977–78) led to the discovery of the following percentages of children who acquired English and PE as their first languages respectively:

	English	Pidgin English
Bamenda	1%	22%
Mamfe	0%	25%
Kumba	1%	19%
Buea	7%	26%
Limbe	4%	31%

Alobwede's (1998) survey uses the principles in the 1977–78 survey and comes out with the following figures. They contrast the geometrical progression of the acquisition of English as a first

	English	Pidgin English
Bamenda	3.5%	24%
Mamfe	1%	25%
Kumba	3%	22%
Buea	13%	28%
Limbe	9%	30%
Douala	6%	10%
Yaounde	8%	15%

language, with the arithmetical progression of the acquisition of PE as a first language. In the words of Alobwede (1998:59) Pidgin English "is the only language in Cameroon which expresses Cameroonian reality without provoking vertical or horizontal hostilities. Secondly, it is conveniently flexible and as such can be acquired at no cost. Finally, because of its horizontal spread, it is the language of consensus... It is estimated that more than 70% of our population speaks PE. To discourage PE is to alienate 70% of the population from that basic collective identity."

To ignore this familiar language and begin to teach a foreign and unfamiliar language when children come to school is like taking them away from their homes and putting them among strangers. Most of what is said, they cannot understand. They cannot express what they want to say and become tongue-tied and inhibited.

Educationally, too, children cannot learn the most elementary facts until they have understood the foreign language in which those ideas are expressed. As language is the most powerful tool of learning, children will learn very little until they have mastered the language of instruction. There is also considerable linguistic confusion on the part of these children, as they think in Pidgin English but try to express themselves in English.

Another reason why our children's education

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should begin in PE is that although PE started as a contact language it has become the language of anglophone Cameroon culture. It is the first language for a good majority of our children. It might be fair to say Cameroon Pidgin is fast assuming the status of a Creole. Language and culture are inseparable, and to separate children from their language and culture at an early stage of their school education is to make them have no regard for their culture. This does not only create a barrier between them and their less educated parents, but what is worse, it may cause them to despise the language of their community, in our case, Pidgin English, in favour of a foreign one, English. In Cameroon schools a very common warning teachers often give to children is: Don't speak Pidgin! There is, however, no doubt that any educational system which makes a child ashamed of his own language is at best unrealistic and at worst suicidal.

The place of English in Anglophone Cameroon education

The arguments that I have advanced so far do not imply that our children should not learn English or a world language. In fact, as one of the official languages in Cameroon, as the language of science and technology, as a passport to educational advancement and prestigious employment, as the language of commerce, law, administration, and as a means of national and international communication, it is most important that English should be taught and learnt in our schools. The point, however is that the best medium for teaching children at the initial stages of their education is their mother tongue, and it is after a firm linguistic foundation has been laid in it that there should be a change to the use of English as a medium of instruction at later stages.

Unfortunately, instead of pursuing this sound linguistic and educational policy in our schools, the tendency now is to go straight for English (and French). The reason for this is, of course, the enormous prestige of English and French. Success in these languages is the key to decent employment. Admission to post-primary institutions, including the university of Buea depends on one's performance in English, which is the medium of instruction in the North West and South West Provinces from elementary school to the university. Parents are naturally anxious that their children should become doctors, lawyers, engineers, architects, gradu-

ate teachers, etc. They feel that the earlier their children start to learn English, the greater will be their chances of getting on in life. That is why many parents sacrifice a large part of their income in order to send their children to nursery and other fee-paying private and mission schools where they are usually taught by qualified and devoted teachers. There is also usually standard equipment which facilitates the progress of the children attending such expensive private and mission schools. Children from expensive private/mission schools like Saker, Sasse, and Sacred Heart, usually do better in English than children from Government schools.

Problems of multilingualism in Cameroon

The number of languages spoken in Cameroon is not known for certain. Chia (1983:23) proposes 123 mutually unintelligible languages while Dieu *et al.* (1983:164) suggest 236 languages. What is certain is that there are hundreds of languages used in Cameroon, and the disadvantages of having such a diversity and multiplicity of mutually unintelligible languages in a single country are obvious.

The first is that there is no unity. When a country speaks with 200 or more different voices, mutual understanding becomes extremely difficult. This has been a major cause of bitterness and suspicion among the different linguistic groups in the country, as it is very easy to misinterpret what the other person has said. It has also encouraged favoritism, nepotism, tribalism and other social ills because many Cameroonians in positions of influence naturally tend to favour, at the expense and to the annoyance of other linguistic groups, those who can speak their language and who usually come from the same ethnic group(s). The recent 'come-no-go settler' phenomenon is a sad case in point.

Secondly, it is impossible to establish an efficient network of communication throughout the country. Only about 10% of the population speaks English or French. Although Pidgin English has been very useful as a language of communication between persons who do not share the same language, the masses of our people, situated at over 70 percent, have no means of communicating with one another. Communication between the government and the people breaks down easily, thereby giving room to

tribalists and others who have an axe to grind, to mislead the people. It inhibits the communication of new ideas and techniques from the government to the masses thereby slowing down the economic, political, social and cultural development of the country. Innovation in agriculture, industry, and health, which would have helped the masses of the people to combat disease, ignorance, want, obscurantism and superstition, are rendered impossible through the barriers created by the multiplicity of languages in the country.

Above all, it makes the use of indigenous languages in Cameroon education difficult, as it is not possible to use all the languages spoken in the country, nor is it easy to decide which of them to choose and which to ignore. It is certainly easier to eradicate mass illiteracy, ensure mass communication and make the education of our children richer and more realistic through the use of PE than through English or French, as only about 10% of Cameroonians can speak or read these foreign languages.

Unfortunately, owing to our mutual suspicion and jealousy, no linguistic group would like to give up its own language in favour of another in the interest of the nation. Every linguistic group wants its own language to be chosen as the national language, and, if that is not done, then no other language must be chosen, except foreign languages.

The success claimed for the experiment at Ife (See Afolayan 1982) of teaching the whole of

primary education through the medium of Yoruba while English is taught as a subject on the curriculum could be instructive. A child is not likely to forget forever the language he is born into, the language of his parents and the language of his youth, especially if he has learned to read and write it at the beginning of his school education and he continues to use it as the occasion demands after school. But this would demand, among other things: the standardization of PE, the honest recognition of PE as our language, the training of teachers, and the preparation of teaching materials.

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SNIPPETS 5

Anyone here speak anything else?

(From Diana Jean Schemo, 'In U.S., a Lack of Linguists Weakens Security', *International Herald Tribune*, 17 Apr 01)

NEW YORK – As a band of trained terrorists plotted to blow up the World Trade Center, clues to the devastation ahead lay under the nose of law enforcement officials.

The FBI held videotapes, manuals and note-books on bomb-making that had been seized from Mohammed Ahmad Ajaj, a Palestinian serving time in federal prison for passport fraud. There were phone calls the prison had taped, in which Mr Ajaj guardedly told another terrorist how to build the bomb.

There was one problem: They were in Arabic. And nobody who understood Arabic listened to them until after the explosion at the Trade Center on Feb. 26, 1993, which killed six people and wounded more than 1,000.

The tale is but one illustration of what intelligence and law enforcement officials describe as an increasingly dire lack of foreign language expertise that is undermining U.S. national security.

Technology helps dyslexic and dyspraxic children

Following from her article 'ICT Teaching' (*ET*63, Jul 00), **SHEILA BURKE** describes some technological developments that have made school life much easier for some children

In a previous article I outlined some of the challenges faced by established teachers in our attempts to close the technology gap that can exist between teacher and pupil. While my own journey seemed long, winding, and beset with difficulties, it quickly became apparent to me that many of the children who use computer technology the most effectively are those who experience various specific learning difficulties.

These children are quick to appreciate the many liberating features that the new technology offers them, in contrast to their often protracted and frustrated efforts to communicate with paper and pencil.

The term 'Specific Learning Difficulty' covers a range of difficulties. This article is principally concerned with the learning opportunities afforded by computers for dyslexic and dyspraxic pupils. The particular difficulties that are experienced by these pupils can seriously hamper an otherwise normally or highly intelligent individual when expressing him/herself using conventional forms. The British Dyslexia Association defines the term 'dyslexia' in editions of *The Dyslexia Handbook* as follows:

Dyslexia is a complex neurological condition which is constitutional in origin. The symptoms may affect many areas of learning and function, and may be described as a specific difficulty in reading, spelling and written language. One or more of these areas may be affected. Numeracy, notational skills (music), motor function and organisational skills may also be involved. However, it is particularly related to mastering written language, although oral language may be affected to some degree.

In recent years I have been supporting dyslexic pupils between five and nine years of age with literacy skills and have been impressed with their ability to learn and retain essential computer skills. The computer with

its icons, built-in spelling and grammar check, thesaurus, and cut and paste facility has revolutionised the writing process for dyslexic pupils and they have been quick to appreciate this. Ideas can now be drafted and then re-drafted in a matter of minutes. Of greater importance to dyslexics, many of whom also experience severe difficulties with handwriting, is the knowledge that they can produce a piece of work that will be legible and can be enjoyed by a wide audience. If asked to write and then redraft their work by hand, these pupils would probably simply give up when faced with the sheer enormity of the task.

It has been heart-warming to work with children keen to use the computer to contribute to class collections of poems and stories and to observe their enjoyment at becoming 'authors'.

The carefully staged introduction of computer skills in our school begins in the Reception year and by the time the pupils reach the Junior Department they have a sound grasp of a junior version of *Word* called *Textease*. This programme offers excellent support to dyslexics because they can listen carefully as their work is read back to them and this process gives them the valuable opportunity to correct some of their own spelling errors through the auditory route. The words that they are still unable to correct can then be corrected through the spell check facility.

CD-ROMs, which present information interactively and audibly, have enabled dyslexic pupils to gain greater access to the school cur-



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riculum in all areas. Learning facts by this method has the advantage that information can be repeated over and over again or revisited at a later date by those dyslexics who have difficulty with transferring information from the short-term to the long-term memory. To make the full and best use of all the features that a computer offers, pupils need to learn to touch-type at an early age. If they can master this skill, they can take a laptop from classroom to classroom, if the school is well provisioned, and in special cases they may take these machines into examinations. Pupils may also be granted extra time to complete examinations. These concessions are agreed after an assessment by, and on the recommendation of, a teacher holding a Dip.SpLD.

It is a key feature in the teaching of dyslexic pupils that they are taught using what is known as the VAK method. This means that the curriculum is delivered in a multi-sensory way that uses visual, auditory and kinaesthetic means to make full use of all the routes to learning and incorporates features that personalise the delivery of the curriculum to the individual. For example, a child is able to create memorable mnemonics as spelling triggers using the highly visual Clip Art facility or the drawing tool.

Pupils with a dyspraxic profile are also winners in the technology revolution. They are children who were frequently referred to in the past as 'clumsy'. Today *developmental dyspraxia* is the term used to describe youngsters who have co-ordination difficulties but who, in the majority of cases, also show evidence of perceptual problems.

The definition of this condition offered by the Dyspraxia Foundation is as follows: 'Dyspraxia is an impairment or immaturity of the organisation of movement. Associated with this there may be problems of language, perception and thought' (From the *Information for Parents* leaflet produced by the Dyspraxia Foundation).

In the classroom, the young child who cannot sit still on the chair, dress and undress, tie shoelaces, catch a ball, skip, or produce legible writing will be familiar to almost every Early Years teacher. In just a year or two, a dyspraxic child will become very frustrated with his/her efforts to write and draw and if the situation is not carefully managed the downward spiral will soon begin. When computer skills are

taught early, the child can soon produce pleasing pictures using Dazzle Plus, a junior version of the Paint programme. A specially designed enlarged keyboard is available and introduces the youngest pupils to the physical movements needed to depress the keys for typing and thus enables them to produce satisfying written work at an early stage. At a later stage the pupil can be taught to touch type using a conventional keyboard.

It is far easier for the dyspraxic pupil to depress keys to produce written work than to grip a pencil that appears to have a will of its own and produces writing that is often indecipherable to all but the writer. There are many Touch Typing courses on the market. I particularly enjoyed experiencing the visual, auditory and kinaesthetic method selected for use in my own school. We were encouraged to close our eyes and concentrate on images for the letters as our calm and soothing trainer described them to us. Not only did we learn the position of the letters on the keyboard but also we found the process fun and highly enjoyable. Naturally, practice plays a major part in the success of any touch-typing programme, as does careful management and target-setting if children are to achieve speeds that will make it possible for them to type in class as a worthwhile alternative to writing.

Ideally, dyslexic and dyspraxic pupils need laptops or access to a computer in every classroom and the facility to send their work to a printer. Where schools are networked, pupils can move freely from classroom to classroom and are able to save, retrieve, modify and print out work later.

Thirty years ago, dyslexic and dyspraxic children suffered because the nature of their specific difficulties was misunderstood and there were no remediation programmes to help them move forward. They were frequently thought to have limited intelligence and to be badly behaved. Their frustration with schools that did not meet their needs led to academic failure and behavioural problems, hence creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. We now know a great deal more about the brain and the ways in which people learn. We know that interactive learning plays an important role in the education of these children and that technology is a liberating tool for many of our young people with specific learning difficulties. It is a remarkable and liberating development. □

World English: a blessing or a curse?

TOM McARTHUR reflects on what English may be doing in and to the world

[This article is the text of a presentation made as the UK speaker at the joint European Union and Japan Foundation symposium 'Language diversity', held to celebrate the European Year of Languages, in Tokyo, 11 May 2001.]

In the year 2000, the language scholar Glanville Price, a Welshman, made the following assertion as editor of the book *Languages in Britain and Ireland*:

For English is a killer. It is English that has killed off Cumbric, Cornish, Norn and Manx. There are still parts of these islands where sizeable communities speak languages that were there before English. Yet English is everywhere in everyday use and understood by all or virtually all, constituting such a threat to the three remaining Celtic languages, Irish, Scottish Gaelic, and Welsh... that their long-term future must be considered... very greatly at risk. (p.141)

Some years earlier, in 1992, Robert Phillipson, an English academic who currently works in Denmark, published with Oxford a book entitled *Linguistic Imperialism*. In it, he argued that the major English-speaking countries, the worldwide English-language teaching industry, and notably the British Council pursue policies of linguistic aggrandisement. He also associated such policies with a prejudice which he calls *linguicism* (a condition parallel to *racism* and *sexism*). As Phillipson sees it, leading institutions and individuals within the predominantly 'white' English-speaking world, have (by design or default) encouraged or at least tolerated – and certainly have *not* opposed – the hegemonic spread of English, a spread which began some three centuries ago as economic and colonial expansion.

Phillipson himself worked for some years for the British Council, and he is not alone among Anglophone academics who have sought to point up the dangers of English as a world language. The internationalization of English has

in the last few decades been widely discussed in terms of three groups: first, the ENL countries, where English is a native language (this group also being known as the 'inner circle'); second, the ESL countries, where English is a second language (the 'outer circle'); and third, the EFL countries, where English is a foreign language (the 'expanding circle'). Since the 1980s, when such terms became common, this third circle has in fact expanded to take in the entire planet.

For good or for ill, there has never been a language quite like English. There have been many 'world languages', such as Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit. By and large, we now view them as more or less benign, and often talk with admiration and appreciation about the cultures associated with them and what they have given to the world. And it is fairly safe to do this, because none of them now poses much of a threat.

English however is probably too close for us to be able to analyse and judge it as dispassionately as we may now discuss the influence of Classical Chinese on East Asia or of Classical Latin on Western Europe. The jury is still out in the trial of the English language, and may take several centuries to produce its verdict, but even so we can ask, in this European Year of Languages, whether Price and Phillipson are right to warn us all about the language that I am using at this very moment.

It certainly isn't hard to look for situations where people might call English a curse. An example is Australia, which is routinely regarded as a straightforward English-speaking country. The first Europeans who went there often used Latin to describe and discuss the place. The word *Australia* itself is Latin; evidently no one at the time thought of simply calling it 'Southland' (which is what *Australia* means). In addition, in South Australia there is a wide stretch of land called the *Nullarbor Plains*, the first word of which sounds Aboriginal, but *nullarbor* is Latin and means 'no trees'. And most significantly of all, the early settlers called the continent a *terra nullius*. According to the *Encarta World English Dictionary* (1999) the Latin phrase *terra nullius* means:

Origins and development of the idea of a Year of Languages

(Excerpted from Lid King, who works at CILT, the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research: 'The European Year of Languages', published in the quarterly international abstracting journal *Language Teaching*, Cambridge University Press, 34:1 (Jan 01).)

The idea of a languages year originated with the Council of Europe's modern languages project and its long-term endeavours to develop policies and frameworks in support of language learning, most notably of course the Common European Framework and associated European Language Portfolio. The Year was adopted by the Council's Committee of Ministers in January 1999. The concept has also been enthusiastically supported by the European Commission, with final approval

by the EU's Council of Ministers and the European Parliament being given in the summer of 2000. The Year of Languages is also supported by UNESCO and other international organisations.

During the preparatory year 2000 appropriate committees and co-ordinating bodies have been established throughout Europe, and in September 2000 a high level 'information coordinator' was appointed to develop and promote the message of multilingualism on a European level.

This in itself raises one of the central challenges of the Year – the potential tension, even paradox, between a 'European' message and the sometimes very different needs and aspirations of the 45 countries and many more peoples involved in the Year. The issue of diversity and coherence is one which has already exercised those seeking to promote the Year, whether on a

European Commission objectives

- to raise awareness of the riches of diversity of languages in the EU. This implies attention to the less widely taught and spoken languages of the EU. Entertaining and interactive activities – perhaps performances – aimed to attract television coverage are envisaged;
- to make the widest possible public aware of the advantages of language competence – employability, career prospects, mobility, job satisfaction, productivity, competitiveness, etc. The aim will be to persuade people that it is in their interests to learn languages;
- to encourage lifelong learning of languages including related skills such as interpretation, translation, etc. The availability of information – web sites, contact points, open days – will play a key role.
- to publicise information about teaching and learning languages. This includes information on new methodologies and the use of ICT, etc.

... the idea and legal concept that when the first Europeans arrived in Australia the land was owned by no one and therefore open to settlement. It has been judged not to be legally valid.

But that judgement was made only recently. When the Europeans arrived, Australia was thinly populated – but populated nonetheless – from coast to coast in every direction. There were hundreds of communities and languages. Many of these languages have died out, many more are in the process of dying out, and these dead and dying languages have been largely replaced by either kinds of pidgin English or general Australian English. Depending on your point of view, this is either a tragic loss or the price of progress.

At the same time, however, can the blame for the extinction of Aboriginal languages be laid

specifically at the door of English? The first Europeans to discover Australia were Dutch, and their language might have become the language of colonization and settlement. *Any* settler language could have had the same effect. If for example the Mongols had sustained their vast Eurasian empire, Mongolian might have become a world language and gone to Australia. Again, if history had been somewhat different, today's world language might have been Arabic, a powerful language in West Asia and North Africa that currently affects many smaller languages, including Coptic and Berber. Spanish has adversely affected indigenous languages in so-called 'Latin' America, and Russian has spread from Europe to the Siberian Pacific. If English is a curse and a killer, it may only be so in the sense that *any* large language is likely to influence and endanger smaller languages.

national or international level, and it is one to which I shall return.

It must be said, however, that one of the most unusually inspiring aspects of the Year – especially in this time of renewed hope and fears in the Balkans – is its truly international nature. The involvement of the Council of Europe means that it includes countries from Portugal to Azerbaijan and from the Arctic to the Mediterranean. All have differing cultural and educational traditions but share a view of languages as a pathway to mutual understanding and tolerance. Such an aspiration is underlined in the central aims of the Year, as adopted both by the Council and by the Commission. In brief these are:

- to celebrate and promote linguistic diversity
- to motivate the widest possible number of people to learn languages
- to encourage and support lifelong learning of languages

In addition it is intended to provide information about teaching and learning languages.

Council of Europe objectives

- to increase awareness and appreciation among young people and adults, including parents, policy deciders and those responsible for language teaching, of the richness of Europe's linguistic heritage;
- to celebrate linguistic diversity and to promote it by motivating European citizens to develop 'plurilingualism', that is, to diversify their learning of languages including less widely used and taught languages, whilst also protecting and encouraging multilingualism in European societies;
- to encourage language learning on a lifelong basis, not only by creating an awareness of its necessity, but also by providing sufficient information concerning ways and possibilities of learning, depending on regional and national situations and possibilities.

Yet many people see English as a blessing. Let me leave aside here the obvious advantages possessed by any world language, such as a large communicative network, a strong literary and media complex, and a powerful cultural and educational apparatus. Let us instead look at something rather different: the issue of politics, justice, and equality. My object lesson this time is South Africa. Ten years ago, South Africa ceased to be governed on principles of racial separateness, a system known in Afrikaans (a language derived from Dutch) as *apartheid*. The system arose because the Afrikaner community – European settlers of mainly Dutch descent – saw themselves as superior to the indigenous people of the land they had colonized.

English-speaking South Africans of British descent were not particularly strong in opposing the apartheid regime, and the black opposi-

The intention is to meet the Year's objectives through a range of activities targeting not mainly the 'professionals' (teachers and trainers, translators and policy makers – all 'experts' of various hues) but, more importantly, the general public. This is what we have rightly but slightly nervously identified as the great opportunity of the European Year of Languages, and its link with the Nuffield Inquiry. We have often said that everyone is interested in language and languages – 2001 will be an opportunity to prove it.

To this end in addition to the Europe wide information campaign involving all kinds of media – broadcast, newspapers, Internet – there will be conferences at European, national, regional and local level. There will be competitions of various kinds. Three specific ideas are for an 'Adult Language Learners Week' held simultaneously all over Europe from May 5–11 2001, for Festivals of Languages for young people, and for a European languages Day in September 2001.

tion, whose members had many languages, was at first weak and disorganized. However, the language through which this opposition gained strength and organization was English, which became for them the key language of freedom and unity, not of oppression. There are today eleven official languages in South Africa – English, Afrikaans, and nine vernacular languages that include Zulu, Ndebele, and Setswana. But which of these nine do black South Africans use (or plan to use) as their national lingua franca? Which do they wish their children to speak and write successfully (in addition to their mother tongues)? The answer is none of the above. They want English, and in particular they want a suitably Africanized English.

So, a curse for the indigenous peoples of Australia and something of a blessing for those

in South Africa. But what about the wider world, and English as its lingua franca? Perhaps that is more straightforward. This time let me introduce two Japanese commentators on English, both of them writing in that language. The first is Mikie Kiyoi, who formerly worked as an executive in Paris. She published an article in the *International Herald Tribune* (3 November 1995), under the heading 'Dear English Speakers: Please Drop the Dialects'. In the article she notes:

It is incontestable that English is the world's most accepted working language.... I have to live with this unfortunate fate: My native tongue is remote from European languages. Yet I believe I have the right to request that my Anglo-American friends... not abuse their privilege, even though they do not do so intentionally. First of all, I would like them to know that the English they speak at home is not always an internationally acceptable English... I sincerely believe there exists a cosmopolitan English – a lingua franca, written or spoken – that is clearly different from what native English speakers use unconsciously in their daily life.... We non-natives are desperately learning English; each word pronounced by us represents our blood, sweat and tears. Our English proficiency is tangible evidence of our achievement of will, not an accident of birth. Dear Anglo-Americans, please show us you are also taking pains to make yourselves understood in an international setting.

The second commentator is Yukio Tsuda, Professor of International Communication at Nagoya University, in his paper 'Envisioning a Democratic Linguistic Order', in the journal *TESL Reporter*, 33:1 Brigham Young University, Hawaii, April 2000:

English is no doubt a lingua franca, a global language of today, but the hegemony of English is also very threatening to those who are not speakers of English... Because English sells well, English is now one of the most important products of the English-speaking countries. So, English is not merely a medium, but a proprietary commodity to be marketed across the world... Having to use English can result in a kind of existential crisis as well as a loss of human dignity. I, for one, as a non-English-speaking person, have experienced these crises in English-speaking environments... A democratic linguistic order is a vision which aims for democracy among all languages, rather than democracy plus English.

English isn't *quite* a curse here, but if it is a blessing it is a mixed one. These are powerful,

heart-felt pleas from polite people asking native speakers to do better, at least in international circles. I have great sympathy for such pleas, as you may also have, but the solution is not easy, and has at least four aspects. First, it is argued that native speakers must amend their usage in the company of non-natives, and indeed more and more of them seek to do that, within a framework called EIL, English as an International Language, in which everyone is a learner. Second, non-natives need to be taught to *hear* native English better – and there are ways in which that can be done. Third, there has to be a greater awareness of the kinds of English that occur in different settings. Fourth, we all need to be aware that everybody (native and non-native alike) must negotiate meaning and be ready for problems. English is not such a unity as many suppose: it is a highly diverse entity worldwide, and an international standard for spoken English and its appropriate social behaviour is not yet a solid thing.

One approach to achieving greater confidence and success in international company is varied listening-comprehension projects. Teachers can still use a particular pronunciation model for their students (typically, British or American), but they also need to widen the range of their students' listening experience and focus more attention on being able to hear the rhythm and stress of spoken English, and understanding the use of the weak vowel (or *schwa*) and syllabic consonants.

Perhaps, if there had been greater success in disseminating the principles of EIL, people like Kiyoi and Tsuda would have been happier, and English would be perceived as more of a blessing for foreign learners. But is it so great a blessing for its many and varied *native* users? Let me deal here with only one of many possible examples: my own life. I am Scottish, and the Scots are manifestly part of the world of native speakers of English, but with a twist. It is now increasingly appreciated that we have three languages in Scotland: first, Gaelic, a minority Celtic language as different from English as Ainu is from Japanese; second, Scots, a Germanic vernacular which is often described as a northern dialect of English but has also been called 'the Germanic language closest to English', with seven centuries of its own literature. Third, there is English used in Scottish ways, comparable to English used in English or American or Australian or Irish ways.

Gaelic was once a language in my family, but

my parents did not speak it. However, they spoke Scots and wrote English, which they – and I – acquired at school. English is therefore very much a second language for me, and as a child I routinely mixed it with Scots. Many people have told me firmly over the years that Scots is not a language, but I am happy to report that it is now officially recognised by the European Union as one of its minority tongues – something that would not easily have happened if the UK had been left to itself. I would like therefore to take the opportunity here, today, within the framework of the European Year of Languages, to say ‘thank you’ to the EU for this unexpected gift. For me, English is now much less of a curse than it was.

But English is obviously a useful thing, and so is it *really* such a curse? Some older Japanese people may well think so, and in saying this I have in mind the subsystem of Japanese words known as *gairaigo*. The Japanese borrowed large quantities of Chinese usages centuries ago, then elements of Portuguese, Dutch, French, and German – then quantities of English. Such borrowings are commonly written in katakana, a script designed for such tasks, and katakana English often co-occurs in menus and elsewhere alongside English in Roman letters (romaji). I have been told that 10% or so of the vocabulary of current Japanese is made up of adoptions of this kind. They may be directly borrowed, like *erekutoronikkusu* (‘electronics’) and *purutoniumu* (‘plutonium’), and some are abbreviated, such as *engejiringu* for ‘engagement ring’ and *sekuhara* for ‘sexual harassment’. And some indeed are *wasei eigo* (‘made-in-Japan English’), such as *bakkumira* (‘back mirror’) for ‘rear-view mirror’ and *pureigaido* (‘play-guide’) for ‘ticket agency’. Is this a blessing or a curse? If it is a curse, then it is a curse that English itself suffers from, through the immense quantities of foreign material that have for centuries been entering the language. No living language is an island.

These days, some people in mainland Europe may also be thinking about blessings and curses, because large quantities of English have in recent times been passing into Dutch, German, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Spanish, Italian, and even French. The French government and the Académie française apparently don’t like this development, but they have notably failed to limit it. In one sense, English is only paying back the debt it has for centuries owed to French for so many words and

phrases. But beyond such matters as paying French back, there is a new kind of English loose in mainland Europe. It is sometimes called *Euro-English*, used by Finns talking to Portuguese and Greeks doing business with Danes, and is the working language for example of the Swiss-Swedish conglomerate ABB (Asea Brown Boveri). Euro-English is developing its own style, in which there is often more of the US than the UK – to the extent that some scholars in Europe now refer to the outcome as ‘mid-Atlantic’.

This English also blends with other languages, leading to jokes such as the name given by the translator Diego Marani to a wild mixing of European Union languages. He calls it *Europanto*, on the analogy of Esperanto, and notes: ‘No es Englando, no est Germano, no este Espana, no est keine known lingua aber Du Understande!’ (‘It isn’t English, it isn’t German, it isn’t Spanish, it isn’t any known language, but you understand!’). So count your blessings.

My friend and colleague David Crystal recently wrote a book entitled *Language Death* (Cambridge, 2000), in which he has graphically described the problems facing several thousand languages around the world – all of them small but each unique. Many such languages have already disappeared and many others will disappear in the near future. We cannot now stop this happening; but others *can* be rescued, and his book (along with other such initiatives) will help in this. Crystal wrote the book in English, through which it therefore has the chance of reaching many people, and many more through the relative ease of translation from English. It may therefore save other languages by being in English, which would indeed be a blessing.

How then should we think of English in our globalizing world with its endangered diversities? The answer, it seems to me, is Crystal clear. Like many things, English is at times a blessing and at times a curse – for individuals, for communities, for nations, and even for unions of nations. The East Asian symbolism of *yin* and *yang* might serve well here: There is something of *yang* in every *yin*, of *yin* in every *yang*. Although they are opposites, they belong together: in this instance within the circle of communication. Such symbolism suggests that the users of the world’s lingua franca should seek to benefit as fully as possible from the blessing and as far as possible avoid invoking the curse. □

The last straw

From: Professor Richard W. Bailey
Department of English,
University of Michigan, USA

In *ET* 66 (Apr 01) there appeared a sidebar titled 'Good at Finding Weak Points' in which Andrew Dalby of *The Linguist* (London) is quoted as making observations about Bryan Garner's *Dictionary of Modern American Usage*. In the previous issue of *ET*, Garner had adroitly and selectively extracted from my review of his book. Dalby represents my name with a fictitious middle initial, and, though I was willing to let Garner's diatribe pass, I am unwilling to have my initial confused along with my views.

Garner makes essentially two points in combating my review. One is that I am a snob; the other is that I am a prescriptivist.

I deny the former, and the accusation sounds especially horrid when represented by Dalby as "Bailey is shot down, trapped by his own unpleasant anti-Texan innuendo."

I made a very simple point about Garner's origins. He is a Texan, and he ought to be proud of using English like a Texan. He should not, I said in my review, have attempted to mimic Fowler in opinion and style. "Fowler was a Victorian writing in Georgian times. A Texan shouldn't ... have tried" to pass himself off as a Fowler.

Myself, I am a Michigander, and easily recognized as a Michigander. I wish Bryan Garner the same pride in his speech. In his "response" to my expression of that opinion in *ET*, Garner inserts some views about "hillbillies" that were apparently, through careless reading, attributed to me. I have spent much of my career lambasting linguistic prejudice, so this idea is especially repugnant.

Garner's second accusation is that I am a prescriptivist, and, based on my review, he has me

there. I had suggested that it was a mistake to devote a lot of space to the spelling of *waistband* as *wasteband*, and I had two reasons for making that claim. First, no one who would spell the word *wasteband* would every think of looking in Garner's book to see that it was wrong. Second, I could only find five instances of *wasteband* in a large newspaper database.

No usage writer before Garner had ever gotten on his high horse about *wasteband*, and that seemed quite reasonable to me: "it would hardly seem worth the space to fulminate against a mistake that has hardly ever been seen in print," I wrote.

In his reply to me, Garner declared he was proud of *wasteband* and similar entries in his book. As against my five examples, he had discovered 34 instances of the mistake.

"If many years from now scholars have occasion to say something about the confusion of *wasteband* for *waistband*, I hope that they'll say, 'Garner was the first to note this point – in 1998.' Maybe they'll add: 'Oddly, a Michigan professor attacked Garner for pointing out the confusion over the words.'"

I had taken the too uncritical view that *waistband* was just a rare mistake, and I did what prescriptivists do: I scorned it. Now Garner ingeniously comes back with the idea that I might be stamping down on an emergent language change that "many years from now" will seem quite normal, and I will be regarded as we now view, say, Alexander Gill who ridiculed the early seventeenth-century women who rhymed *pray* with *say* rather than with *try*.

I had not thought of a usage dictionary as a place to store mistakes to be trotted out as trophies once the language has shifted in their direction. So I was wrong and Garner right. As he writes in *ET*, "there's some lexicographical value in documenting these usages."

I'm just not persuaded we have to cram our usage books full of such things, but, in ridiculing *wasteband*, I was more of a prescriptivist than I had thought.

A descriptive/prescriptive truce

From: Martin Edwardes
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Yes, Bryan Garner is right when he calls for a truce in the Descriptive–Prescriptivist war: both are valid and useful treatments of language. Description is needed to define the usage of a language, Prescription is needed to "internally police and maintain its borders". The metaphor is deliberate: Description seems to correspond to the Nation as Prescription corresponds to the State.

However, to extend the metaphor, there are good and bad State practices, and there are good and bad prescriptions. Prescriptivism has done itself no favours in the past and, by failing to acknowledge current language trends, it does itself no favours nowadays. The prescriptions of Reverend Lowth are commonly quoted as risible examples, but what of the injunction that the abbreviating apostrophe should not be used in written forms? Or the note seen on an essay that "all right is all right but alright is all wrong"? How should the closing "not" be defined when used in the "Bill and Ted" form: "You're looking stunning tonight. Not!". Should this form be proscribed in written English, or not mentioned in classroom English?

Which brings up another issue: Garner deals with many types of English and recognises the different registers involved in all of them. But do each of those registers have their own standard forms (like the complete lack of commas in legal texts)? If so, what (or who) defines the standard standard to

which English should be taught?

Garner gives eleven things that writers need to learn, and says that all but the last three (omit unnecessary words, observe recognised grammatical niceties, observe recognised distinctions between similar words) are accepted by Descriptivists. However, as a lawyer, Garner probably also recognises the difficulties in defining these three things. What words are unnecessary? What are the grammatical niceties? When does a recognised distinction cease to be recognised (“effect” and “affect” seem to be in transition currently)? Any drug prescribed for a medical condition carries a “use by” date. Perhaps language prescriptions need similar caveats attached.

Garner is also right when he calls for a new name for Prescriptivism. *Stylistics* is commonly used and seems to fit the bill: it allows for both an achievable standard and individual variation. However, “Stylistics” does not have the same authoritative quality of “Grammar”, would it be as acceptable to the gatekeepers of the language?

Style in writing is important, as Jakobson and many other linguists recognise. But an effective style can be achieved in mysterious ways: William Burroughs did not write conventionally, but many find his books enjoyable. We recognise the importance of style by valuing some texts over others, but often these values are personal. Jeffrey Archer is considerably more popular than Noam Chomsky: Which is the greater writer? Which the more readable? Which the more grammatical?

Proficiency with a purpose

From: Paul Rastall
University of Portsmouth,
England

I have been struck by the on-going debate in the pages of *ET* sparked off by Marko Modiano’s proposal of “English as an International Language”. It seems to me that

Modiano’s proposals are not really that radical, but present a certain perspective on the emerging form of English as a medium of world communication, and on the relationship between that incipient form and the developing local acrolectal/mesolectal standards and forms. Those issues will certainly be important for some time to come. Modiano certainly has a point when he maintains that speakers of “core” Englishes have no inherent right to prescribe the emerging form of English for world communication, although I think he was somewhat out of date in the way he put the matter (as Loreto Todd pointed out).

The very heated response of some “defenders of English language and culture”, which I have personally come across in reaction to Modiano’s comments, shows that some people at least feel a certain “ownership” of English and that Modiano’s views are something like a subversive attempt to downgrade English (British?) culture and the English language by an anti-British member of the liberal-academic establishment. I suspect some of David Crystal’s rather oblique references in his recent contribution hint at similar reactions.

Perhaps, both Modiano and his detractors should bear in mind that language change is inevitable and not under conscious control. Also, language change is not necessarily either “progress or decay”. It is the differences which emerge from changing needs in changing generations with varying social backgrounds and contacts. English as a World Language will emerge as a consequence of multiple forces, just as the English of Jane Austen’s time emerged from the developments after Shakespeare’s time, and the English of his time from that of Chaucer’s, etc. “World Standard Written English”, as David Crystal has said, is pretty uniform, while “World Standard Spoken English” does not exist. There are various standards of pronunciation available. The choice for the learner is largely a practical matter

and no doubt largely dictated by circumstance. The main issue for the learner, however, is to have access to forms of spoken communication which are well within the range of mutual comprehensibility among speakers of the standard pronunciations available. Of course, that is just as true of L1 speakers of English as of L2 speakers of whatever degree of proficiency. It may be that standards of (World) written and spoken English will change in the coming years, but changes will come about from a complex range of social and linguistic forces, not from planning or prescription of any form (Modiano’s included).

Proficiency in English must be proficiency with a purpose. For many, the purpose will be access to national and global communication in business, political, scientific and technical, social and cultural affairs. That implies having skills in a range of varieties of English, perhaps from local basilectal forms through local mesolectal and acrolectal to World standard forms. Many Malaysians already operate in that way, and with dialectal variations and complex code-switching as well. Similarly, many British people operate with several varieties – so there is not so much that is new there. It is more like an added dimension. What we must ensure is that people are not excluded from opportunities. That is not achieved through prescription or through artificial linguistic creations, but by creating access to practical communicative and learning solutions. While that involves making choices about forms of English, teachers are generally very aware that they must be sensitively handled choices for clearly specified (and differing) purposes.

No longer bemused

From: Leila Ward
Bath, England

Many thanks to Frank Palmer for his entertaining *CrossworLd* challenges, and best wishes for his

future. I have taken *ET* since the first issue, and was at first totally bemused by the puzzles, but gradually things improved: I now have nine reference books awarded over the years as prizes. The CrossworLd will, I am sure, be sadly missed by many readers besides me.

CrossworLd and contrasts in style

From: Michael Ferguson
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I was sorry to read in the *ET66* editorial that F. R. Palmer is going into retirement and that his quarterly cryptic challenges under the title 'CrossworLd' will be coming to an end. I have been a regular solver of his puzzles for many years and am lucky enough to have won several prizes. I will sorely miss this feature in future. Will there be a

replacement I wonder? I do hope so, as I am sure many other crossword fans around the world will agree. By the way, how many solvers regularly sent in solutions to 'CrossworLd'? I have often wondered. Please convey my very best wishes to Frank Palmer and please do try and find an adequate replacement for his crossword puzzles in future.

Many thanks for an excellent magazine. I have much enjoyed your dialogue with Bryan Garner regarding the descriptive/prescriptive schools of thought. What strikes me (as a Brit) is that there would appear to be actually very little difference between you in substance; it's in your styles that you differ. Americans – and in this respect I must say Garner is very American – often go at their prescriptivism in an aggressively unobtrusive way. One might agree with the message, but the way it's delivered tends to put people's hackles up. It somehow smacks of

self-righteousness, and that is not a very endearing trait.

Editor Many thanks for the tributes to Frank Palmer, which no doubt express the feelings of many others. At present we have no plans to replace this feature, in part because it is in a real sense irreplaceable, in part because anything new would have to be different (because attempting to re-create something that was in fact unique is likely to be less than the original, and pressure of editorial and other work gets in the way of many worthy things these days). As regards, the Garner/McArthur (and now Bailey) debate, all concerned would be happy to see others take the discussion further. The development of a creative rapprochement between prescriptivism and descriptivism in the pages of *ET* in the first years of the 21st century could prove worthwhile – and even contagious. □

CROSSWORL D

ET66 CrossworLd solution

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14	M	A	R	T	I	N		15	S	C	R	E	A	M	E	R	
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29	R	O	A	D	S	I	D	E	S		30	N	E	L	L	Y	

ET65 CrossworLd winners

The winners of *Grammar for English Language Teachers*, Martin Parrot, 2001, Cambridge University Press, the prize for our January 2001 crossword, are:

H. E. Bell, Reading, England
John Kirk, Belfast, Northern Ireland
M. Skeggs, London, England
Ean Taylor, Doncaster, England
Leila Ward, Bath, England

