English Today

The International Review of the English Language

*ET*70 Volume 18 Number 2 April 2002

The English of shop signs in Europe 3

Maria Schlick reviews the influence of English on shop signs in three mainland European cities

'I learn English since ten years': the global English debate and the German university classroom 8

Elizabeth J. Erling reports on German university students learning and working in English

People's English, codification, function, and logic 14

Peter Titlestad responds to Pearl Ntlhakana's 'People's English' in South Africa in *ET*62

English in a historical perspective – a neglected inheritance? 28

Paul Rastall assesses current issues and possibilities in studying the history of English

Singaporeans' reactions to Estuary English 33

Chia Boh Peng and *Adam Brown* of the National Institute of Education in Singapore investigate local attitudes to changes in southern British English

In search of a home: identities in transition 39

Jane Jackson excerpts and comments on 'cultural identity narratives' among ethnic Chinese majors at the Chinese University of Hong Kong

REGULAR FEATURES

Comment 2
Themes and dreams

Usage 21
Betty Boop's Ready! – Some aspects of South African rhyming slang
Isabel Diaz and *Antonio Lillo*

Varieties 1 46
Reading, writing, listening, and thinking in English
X. Z. Shao

Varieties 2 51
English polymorphs of Chinese personal names
Li Lan

Lexicon 58
Marketspeak
Gerry Abbott

Review 61
What's in a name?
Robert Allen

Post & (E)Mail 64

Editor TOM McARTHUR
Editorial Board
JAMES E. ALATIS
Georgetown University, Washington D.C.
FRANÇOIS CHEVILLET
Université Stendhal, Grenoble
DAVID CRYSTAL
University College of North Wales, Bangor
ALAN S. KAYE
California State University, Fullerton
PAM PETERS
Macquarie University, New South Wales
LORETO TODD
University of Ulster, Coleraine
KATIE WALES
School of English, University of Leeds
Design/DTP Peter Ducker

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Themes and dreams

Some topics just run and run, and in *ET*'s 18 years there have been many. Probably the best-known is the grammarians' debate initiated by Tony Fairman in 1989, which morphed into the Quirk/Kachru debate of 1990–91, which in turn recently prompted a request for permission to reproduce both the Quirk and Kachru articles in a collection of papers about contemporary issues in English.

The present issue is also a good case in point. Without even a smidg(e)on of editorial planning, every contribution to *ET*70 belongs in at least one on-going theme, in whose evolution the editor has had no planning or prompting role whatever. Just four examples:

- From Austria, Maria Schlick takes us back to (and goes forward with) the study of 'shop-sign' English in mainland Europe, a kind of reporting that began with Nigel Ross's 'Signs of international English' in Italy in *ET*50 (Apr 97) and took in my own 'Interanto' in *ET*61.
- From Germany, Elizabeth J. Erling looks at the English of German university students, adding to a theme that can now be straightforwardly called 'Euro-English', which was valuably and controversially discussed by Marko Modiano, Jennifer Jenkins, and Barbara Seidhofer in *ET*68 (Oct 01).
- From South Africa, Peter Titlestad responds to Pearl Ntlakana's 'People's English' (which appeared in *ET*62, Apr 00). Both papers constitute part of a theme of tensions and uncertainties in 'African English', a topic that has generated over 20 contributions since Tony Fairman's 'Prestige, purity, and power' in *ET*7 (Jul 86).
- From Singapore, Chia Boh Peng and Adam Brown have (without intending to) contrived to blend two apparently unrelated lines of discussion: on the one hand, the evolution of the Englishes of Singapore and Malaysia; on the other, the commentaries we have published on what David Rosewarne in the early 1980s called 'Estuary English'. Their presentation is an unexpected and valuable demonstration that 'the global village' is more than just a catchy phrase coined by Marshall McLuhan.

I can already see how some of *ET*'s thematic chains are likely to develop later in 2002. For example, our discussions on email English are already prompting further comment which acknowledges that in this area *ET* is comfortably in the vanguard of reporting on research. In addition, I am delighted to have been able to showcase in this issue a whole medley of Roger Berry's whimsical linguistic poems, which are also in an important sense thematic. The truth is in there, somewhere. *Tom McArthur*

The editorial policy of *English Today* is to provide a focus or forum for all sorts of news and opinion from around the world. The points of view of individual writers are as a consequence their own, and do not reflect the opinion of the editorial board. In addition, wherever feasible, *ET* generally leaves unchanged the orthography (normally British or American) and the usage of individual contributors, although the editorial style of the journal itself is that of Cambridge University Press.

© Cambridge University Press 2002. No contents may be reproduced by any means without the permission of Cambridge University Press.

English Today (ISSN 0266-0784) is a quarterly.

Publisher: Cambridge University Press, The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, United Kingdom. Telephone (01223) 312393 Email: journals_marketing@cup.cam.ac.uk
Subscriptions: The 2002 subscription price (excluding VAT) for four issues for libraries and institutions, which includes print and electronic access, is £73.00 outside of North America; £30.00 for individuals; £23 for students and the retired. The electronic-only price available to institutional subscribers is £70.00. Prices include delivery by air where appropriate. Apply to Jane Crossland at the above address.
Advertising Sales: write to the Advertising Promoter at the above address.

USA, CANADA AND MEXICO:
Publisher: Cambridge University Press, 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA. Telephone (212) 924 3900.
Subscriptions: The 2002 subscription price (excluding VAT) for four issues for libraries and institutions, which includes print and electronic access, is $114.00 in USA, Canada and Mexico; $50.00 for individuals; £36 for students and the retired. The electronic-only price available to institutional subscribers is $108.00. Apply to Marianne Headrick at the above address.
Advertising Sales: write to the Advertising Coordinator at the above address.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: send address changes in USA, Canada and Mexico to *English Today*, Cambridge University Press, 110 Midland Avenue, Port Chester, New York, NY 10573-4930, USA.

Japanese prices for institutions are available from Kinokuniya Company Ltd, P.O. Box 55, Chitose, Tokyo 156, Japan.

Letters to the Editor: write to Dr Tom McArthur, Editor, *English Today*, 22–23 Ventress Farm Court, Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge CB1 8HD, UK. Tel 01223 245934, Fax 01223 241161. Email: Scotsway@aol.com

Internet access This journal is included in the Cambridge Journals Online service which can be found at http://uk.cambridge.org/journals. For further information on other Press titles access http://uk.cambridge.org.

Printed in the United Kingdom by the University Press, Cambridge

S0266078402002080

Betty Boop's Ready! – Some aspects of South African rhyming slang

ISABEL DIAZ and *ANTONIO LILLO* follow Lillo's account of drug users' rhyming slang in *ET*66 (17.2), Jan 01, with a novel report on such slang in Africa

The geographical spread of rhyming slang (RS) around the English-speaking world has been described in considerable detail by Maurer and Baker (1944), Franklyn (1961), Lillo (1998a), Görlach (2000) and Green (2000). The overall picture that emerges from all these studies is that this process of word-formation is unevenly distributed throughout Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Still, its spread in other Englishes is not, so far as we are aware, fully understood and has received scant attention in the literature on the subject. Both its relatively low productivity when compared to other types of word-making and its very transient nature may well explain this lack of scholarly attention, but in our view does not justify it.

Researching into RS in different varieties of English is an unusually difficult task, since it not only requires hunting for lexical transfers from Cockney, Australian or American slang, but also, as far as possible, proving convincingly that the rhyming principle of those loans has been used productively in the formation of indigenous items. In the case of South African English, this category of word-formation has been briefly dealt with by Barnes (1992:1–3), who illustrates it with fourteen specimens found in the language of ex-convicts from Central and Zonderwater Prisons in Pretoria. However, we believe there is more to it than can be gathered from Barnes's paper. Our intention here is to present an overview of the RS used in South Africa and illustrate it with as many examples as possible, thereby shedding some light upon one of the less well-illuminated aspects of the international distribution of this kind of word use.

Tracking down rhyming slang in South Africa

It comes as no surprise that the latest dictionary of RS (Green 2000), thorough though it is, makes no mention of the existence of this form of slang in countries other than the afore-listed. It does list the South African *paraffin* 'gin' and the West Indian *Billy Button* 'a gullible fool' (rhyming on 'gets nutten' [nothing])[1], but the RS origin of both these items is rather questionable. Bearing in mind that the existence of only one RS term in any one dialect would no doubt be a bit of an oddity,[2] we are inclined to believe that *paraffin* is just a metaphorical coinage (see Branford 1980), while *Billy Button* appears to be a derisive nickname, the rhyme probably being fortuitous.

In like manner, Görlach's (2000) thought-provoking article, which gives the best overview of the distribution and social history of RS, points to the almost total absence of

ISABEL DÍAZ holds a PhD in English Studies from the University of Alicante, Spain, where she has been a lecturer in English and Translation Studies since 2000. She has also taught Spanish language and literature at Arizona State University and has published several articles on postcolonial literature. As well as working on a second PhD on code-switching in Chicano literature, she is currently researching into bilingualism and language contact in the USA.

ANTONIO LILLO is a senior lecturer in English Language and Linguistics at the University of Alicante, Spain. He is the author of 'Aspectos lingüísticos de la rima en el argot inglés' (Universidad de Alicante, 1995), co-author of 'Nuevo diccionario de anglicismos' (Gredos, 1997), and has published a number of articles on lexicology, etymology and phonetics, with particular reference to Cockney and London English. He is currently preparing a monograph on rhyming slang and a textbook in English phonetics for Spanish university students.

S0266078402002080

rhyming expressions in Canadian and South African English. As it was this article which prompted us to search for information about the traces of this type of slang in the latter variety, we quote the relevant passage (Görlach 2000:19–20) verbatim:

> The lack of RS evidence, by and large, from SAfE is again difficult to explain. The English variety used in the country shares many features with Australia, lower-class Cape settlers coming from the same class and region as those around Sydney (but of course not including convicts); however, the beginning of the 19th century was of course too early for RS. At the time when RS might have been exported to South Africa, the staunchly middle-class society of Natal in 1860–80 would not have been friendly to such acquisitions, and around 1900, the time of the Boer War, may not have been favourable for other reasons. However, if we consider how important the army was for the development of RS, and how much colonial interchange there was in World War I, a spread of RS to Canadian and South African soldiers (whether of British- or Australian-based RS) would seem to have been a likelihood. Are there still sources to document such items, if only in the specialized jargon of the army and including items now obsolete, because the type of slang was not cultivated?

Indeed, RS being one of the most conspicuous and picturesque features of British slang, one may at least expect to find some traces of it in those varieties where the influence of British English is most apparent. South African English is, to be sure, a good case in point. Two telling examples are the words *bird* 'a prison sentence', from *birdlime* 'time' (hence *to do bird* 'to serve a prison sentence'), and *loaf*, from *loaf of bread* 'head' (hence *use your loaf* 'use your common sense'), whose history in South African English dates back respectively to the late 19th century (Franklyn 1961) and to the Second World War (Lumsden 1946).

Other terms of British provenience are china 'mate' (from china plate 'mate'),[3] *tart* 'prostitute' (possibly from *jam tart* 'sweetheart'), the South African derivative *jammy* ~ *jammie* 'car', itself a spin-off of the well-known Cockney phrase *jam jar*, and the Australian and South African *rammies* 'trousers', from the Cockney *round me houses* (cf. the intermediate forms *round me's* [Franklyn 1961] ~ *round-mys* [Partridge 1961] and *rammy rousers* [Meredith 1991]).

Other things being equal, these and other familiar examples of abbreviated RS can be accounted for as a result of the influence of British and Australian English since the mid-19th century. The early appearance of usages common to Australian slang (e.g., *rammies*) is probably indicative of the linguistic influence of the miner-adventurers and fortune seekers who had previously joined the Australian gold rushes (see Bailey 1996:207–8). Yet the evidence suggests that South African slang also has a set of expressions which retain the last (rhyming) element. These are neither very numerous nor common, are confined almost wholly to criminal usage and most have been attested in other varieties of English. These factors, added to the noticeable absence of British expressions coined after the Second World War, suggest that this form of slang entered, or was reintroduced to, South African English mainly through the Ducktail subculture: a criminal or quasi-criminal youth movement that emerged in post-Second World War South Africa. The Ducktails[4] were, in fact, defined not only by sartorial fashion and crime, but also, as pointed out by Freed (1963:105) and Moonie (1998:759), by a lingo which was partly modelled on the speech of other working-class youth subcultures in Britain and the US, thus including a sprinkling of RS.

The scope of the glossary

In the following glossary, we have culled a number of RS items that have been recorded at some time or other in South African slang, especially as part of the vocabulary of criminal groups. A cursory glance at the terms will readily show that only a small handful can be acknowledged as South African (e.g., *Betty Boop* 'soup'; *hip McCoke* 'bloke'; *Jack Slatch* 'match'), and some of them may even have arisen as alterations of already existing phrases of British, Australian or American origin. These latter include: *float* 'jacket' (cf. Cockney *I'm afloat* and *bucket afloat* – *bucket and float* 'coat', and American *hairy float* and *ivory float*); *hammer and rack* 'back' (cf. American and Australian *hammer and tack*); and *Jack Slatch* 'match' (cf. American *Jack Scratch*). Nevertheless, to suggest a certain source dialect for some expressions might be foolish indeed, for the documentary evidence available is often scanty, and their earliest occurrence in different varieties may accordingly be misleading. In this connection, cf. *pen and ink* 'drink': 1967 in

AusE, 1963 in NZE (Ramson 1988), and 1963 in SAfrE (cited in Freed 1963:83).

Because of the difficulty of finding written evidence for South African underworld slang, the materials in the glossary have all been gleaned from only three sources, viz. Freed (1963), an anonymous article written by a former prisoner of Central Prison in Pretoria (Anon. 1974), and Barnes (1992). These are identified in the glossary as (1), (2) and (3) respectively. However, in order to provide a first-hand report on the phenomenon, the materials found in these sources have been verified with the help of twelve informants from Johannesburg and Pretoria.[5] Three of these informants were ex-convicts from Central Prison; the rest did not conform to a specific profile, but all of them were somehow conversant with the criminal underworld culture of South Africa. Since no single informant knew all the RS items mentioned in this paper and there were often disagreements on the use and/or currency of several, we have marked with an asterisk only the terms known by at least six subjects.

Although it is not part of this glossary's purpose to provide an exhaustive account of the history and usage of each item, we have thought it worthwhile to furnish information about its geographical distribution, the sources in which it is recorded and, wherever possible, the date of its first recorded use and approximate lifespan in British, Australian and American slang. Similarly, whenever we have been unable to locate any other record in the sources that we have consulted, we state that the item in question is not otherwise recorded. This means that in all likelihood the expression is a South African coinage.

Glossary

***babbling brook**. Crook. (1)
Also American and probably Australian. First recorded in America in the 1920s (Partridge 1950). In Australia this phrase has been used as a slang equivalent of 'cook' since the early 20th century (*OED*2). From the sources available to us it is difficult to ascertain whether the sense 'crook' is, or has been, in use in Australian slang. This use is not recorded by Ramson (1988) and Wilkes (1990), and in Simes (1993), Thirty-five (1955) claims that "this expression is not used for crook in the Argot nor in Australia generally". Yet both Franklyn (1961) and Partridge (1950) note that the phrase is used in both Australia and America. Cf. Partridge (1950): "the term comes from Australia, where, however, only criminals equate *b*[*abbling*] *b*[*rook*] with 'crook; to most Australians it means 'cook'."

ball of chalk. Walk. (3)
Originally British. Recorded by Opie and Opie (1959:320), Franklyn (1961) and Partridge (1961).

***bees and honey.** Money. (1)
Originally British, later American. The expression has been in use in Britain since the late 19th century (*OED*2's first citation is 1892). In America it is first recorded in 1919 (Lighter 1994) and is included in Chicago May (1928), Maurer and Baker (1944) and Cardozo-Freeman (1984).

***Betty Boop**. Soup. (3)
Not otherwise recorded. Based on the American cartoon character created by Max Fleischer in 1915.

Bob Hope. Soap. (2, 3)
Originally Australian. This expression, based on the famous British-born American comedian (b. 1903), dates from the 1960s and is still heard. It is also used in the sense of 'dope' in both British and Australian slang.

Bonnie Fair. Hair. (3)
Originally American. First recorded by Chicago May (1928) and still in use in American conlingo in 1980 (Cardozo-Freeman 1984). *Bonnie Fair* — *Bonny Fair* is the American phonetic spelling of Cockney *Barnet Fair*.

***bottle and stopper**. Copper. (1)
Originally American. First recorded by Chicago May (1928) and still in use in 1980 (Cardozo-Freeman 1984).

***chevy chase**. Face. (1)
Originally British, later American. From the ballad of Chevy Chase, a place on the Scottish border. First attested in Britain in 1857 (Franklyn 1961; cf. *OED*2: s.v. *chevy* n. 4.b.), still fairly widespread in the first half of the 20th century and not yet obsolete. In America it is recorded by Maurer and Baker (1944).

***china.** Mate. (2, 3)
Originally British, later Australian. Since the late 19th century (*OED*2). Shortened from china plate 'mate'. The word is now widely used in both British and South African slang.

***club and stick**. Dick (detective). (1)
Originally American. First attested in 1934 (Franklyn 1961). This expression is also recorded by Maurer and Baker (1944), but is not included in Cardozo-Freeman (1984).

***cows and kisses**. Missus. (1)
Originally British, later American. First recorded by Hotten (1859) and now obsolete in Britain (Franklyn 1961). In America its use is recorded by Maurer and Baker (1944) and Cardozo-Freeman (1984).

***darby kelly**. Belly. (1)
Originally British, later American. According to Franklyn (1961), this item has been in use since the late 19th or early 20th century. *OED*2's first citation for the shortened form *Darby Kel* is from 1906. In American criminal slang the expression goes back to the late 1920s and is recorded by both Chicago May (1928) and Maurer and Baker (1944).

***Dicky Dirt**. Shirt. (1, 2, 3)
Also ***Dicky.** (2)
Originally British. As rhyming slang the expression has been in use since the late 19th century, but it arose as an elaboration of *dicky*, which is far older. On the origin of this item, see Lillo (1998b).

***false alarm**. Arm. (1)
Originally British, later American. Current among British soldiers during World War I, but rare or obsolete by 1960. In America the phrase is recorded in *The American Thesaurus of Slang*, 1952 (Franklyn 1961).

***Fanny Blair**. The hair. (1)
Also American and British. The expression is recorded earliest in a US source (Matsell 1859), but its presence in Hotten (1865) suggests contemporaneous currency in Britain. In America it is also recorded by Maurer and Baker (1944) and is apparently still lingering in prison parlance (witness Cardozo-Freeman 1984). In Britain it was already obsolescent by 1960 (see Franklyn 1961).

float. Jacket. (1)
Not otherwise recorded. Possibly an abbreviation of one of several phrases rhyming *float* with 'coat': Cockney *I'm afloat* (an Americanism too), *bucket afloat* ~ *bucket and float* 'coat'; American *hairy float*, *ivory float*.

German bands. Hands. (1)
Originally British, later American. Since the early 20th century. In America its use is recorded by Chicago May (1928) and Maurer and Baker (1944).

God forbid. Kid. (1)
Originally British, later Australian and American. First recorded by Ware (1909) and still current in Britain (see *OED*2 and Thorne 1997). In Australia the phrase is first attested in 1944, but it seems to have had a very limited usage and is now obsolete (see Simes 1993). In America it is recorded by Ernest Booth (*The American Mercury*, May 1928), Maurer and Baker (1944) and Cardozo-Freeman (1984).

***hammer and rack**. Back. (1)
Not otherwise recorded. Presumably an alteration of the American *hammer and tack* (recorded by Maurer and Baker 1944 and Cardozo-Freeman 1984).

hip McCoke. Bloke. (1)
Not otherwise recorded. The term was used in gambling argot to refer to a gambler. Cf. the British and American equivalent *heap o' coke* (Partridge 1950).

hoot and toot. *(a)* Boot; *(b)* suit. (1)
Not otherwise recorded.

***hopscotch**. Watch. (3)
This word is recorded by both Puxley (1998) and Green (2000), but neither provides an indication of its time of origin or geographical location.

***I suppose**. Nose. (1)
Originally British, later Australian and American. First recorded by Ducange Anglicus (1857) and now obsolete in Britain and Australia. In America its use is recorded by Chicago May (1928) and Cardozo-Freeman (1984).

***Jack Slatch**. Match. (3) Also **jack**. (2)
Not otherwise recorded. Cf. Australian *jack scratches* (Green 2000) and American *Jack Scratch* 'match' (Cardozo-Freeman 1984). Anon. (1974) points out that in the language of Central Prison this expression has bifurcated into two distinct terms, *jack* 'match' and *slatch* 'the striking side of a matchbox'.

jam-jar. Car. (1)
Originally British.Whence the South African forms jam and jammy 'car' (cf. Silva 1996: s.vv. jammy, chaff; Partridge 1950: s.v. jam). In South African slang jam-jar and jam are now obsolete.

***lump of lead**. Head. (1)
Originally British, later American. The expression is first recorded by Anglicus (1857), and it was already obsolescent in Britain by 1960 (see Franklyn 1961). In America it is recorded by Chicago May (1928) and Maurer and Baker (1944), but is absent from Cardozo-Freeman (1984).

***meatball, over the**. Over the wall. (2, 3)
Not otherwise recorded. Used in the expression *to go over the meatball* 'to go over the wall (i.e., to escape from prison)'.

mince pies. Eyes. (1)
Originally British, later Australian and

American. First recorded by Ducange Anglicus (1857) and still current in Britain and Australia. In Australia the expression has been in use since the late 19th century (Baker 1945:269–70). In America it is recorded by Chicago May (1928) and Maurer and Baker, but is not included in Cardozo-Freeman (1984).

mother and daughter. Water. (1)
Originally British, later Australian and American. This phrase, recorded by Hotten (1859), Meredith (1991; in a letter of 1905) and Maurer and Baker (1944), has been long obsolete in English (see Franklyn 1961).

Nancy Lee. Tea. (3)
Originally British. According to Green (2000), this expression was in use from the mid-19th century to the 1930s.

***north and south**. Mouth. (1)
Originally British, later American and Australian. First attested in Britain in 1858 (*OED*2) and current to this day. In America its use is recorded by Chicago May (1928) and Maurer and Baker (1944). Apparently, the phrase entered Australian slang at a later date, since it appears in such modern slang dictionaries as Meredith (1991), Johansen (1991) and Lambert (1996), but Baker (in Maurer and Baker 1944) claimed that it was not used in Australia.

one and eight. Mate. (2)
Not recorded elsewhere. In Cockney the meaning is 'plate'.

***ones and twos**. Shoes. (1, 2, 3)
Originally American. Recorded by Chicago May (1928), Maurer and Baker (1944) and Cardozo-Freeman (1984).

pat, on one's. alone. (2)
Originally Australian, later New Zealand, American and British. From *Pat Malone* 'alone'; whence *on one's Pat Malone* 'on one's own'. The expression is first attested in Australia in 1908 (Ramson 1988) and in New Zealand in 1937 (Orsman 1999); it is still current in both countries. In America it is recorded by Maurer and Baker (1944). The usual British equivalent *is on one's tod* (from *Tod Sloan*), but see quotations in OED2 (s.v. *Pat Malone*).

***pen and ink**. Drink. (1)
Also recorded in New Zealand and Australian English since 1963 and 1967 respectively. In Cockney slang the meaning is 'stink'.

Peter Bell. Cell. (3)
Not otherwise recorded. Barnes (1992) gives the second element of the expression in brackets, but that should not be taken to imply that peter is an abbreviation of *Peter Bell*. In fact, the etymology is quite the reverse: *Peter Bell* is an elongation of the already existing word *peter* 'prison cell' (originally Australian, but also used elsewhere; from the earlier British slang *peter* 'portmanteau, trunk'). The false etymology *peter* < *Peter Bell* occurs in a number of slang glossaries and dictionaries (e.g., Tempest 1950).

plates of meat. Feet. (1)
Originally British, later Australian and American. First attested in Britain in 1874 (Partridge 1961) and still current in both Britain and Australia. In America its use is recorded by Chicago May (1928) and Maurer and Baker (1944).

***pot and pan**. Man. (1)
Originally British, later Australian and American. In British and Australian slang the expression *old pot and pan* is usually applied to one's father or husband. The elliptical form *old pot* is first attested in Britain in 1893 (Farmer and Henley 1890–1904). The American use of *pot and pan* 'man' is recorded by Maurer and Baker (1944). However, Cardozo-Freeman (1984) gives it as an equivalent for 'can'. See quotations in *OED*2 and Simes (1993).

***pot of glue**. Screw (' a prison warder). (2)
Not otherwise recorded in this sense. Cf. American *pot of glue* (and British *potter*) 'Jew'.

rammies. Trousers. (1, 2)
Also Australian. This word represents the broad Australian pronunciation of *round me's* (also attested in Britain), which itself derives from Cockney *round me houses* 'trousers'. *Rammies* is first recorded in Australia in 1906 and in South Africa in 1946 (Silva 1996). However, cf. the first quotation in Silva (1996): "1946 J.B. Fisher in E. Partridge *Dict. of Underworld* (1950) 554 *Ramese*, Trousers: South Africa: Late C19–20." The word is still current in Australia and South Africa.

raspberry tart. Heart. (1)
Originally British. Current in the late 19th century (recorded by Farmer and Henley, 1890–1904, and Partridge, 1961, with quotation of 1892).

***rattle and jar**. Motor-car. (1)
Originally American. Recorded by Chicago May (1928) and Cardozo-Freeman (1984).

rocks and boulders. Shoulders. (1)
Originally American. Recorded by Maurer and Baker (1944).

***Rosie Lee**. Tea. (1)
Originally British. First attested in 1925 (*OED*2)

and still in use, although almost always in the shortened form *Rosie – rosie*. This coinage was reinforced by the name of the American stripper and actress Gypsy Rose Lee (1914–70).

sky rocket. Pocket. (3)
Also **sky**. (2, 3)
Originally British, later American and Australian. Barnes gives the second element of the expression in brackets. First attested in Britain in 1879 (*OED*2) and still current. In America *sky rocket* is recorded by Maurer and Baker (1944). Baker's (in Maurer and Baker 1944) claim that the word was not used in Australia should perhaps be taken with a pinch of salt, for Simes (1993) records it in 1950 and illustrates it by a citation from 1968.

steamer. A gullible person; the dupe or victim of a criminal. (2)
Originally British. From *steam tug* 'mug'. First attested in Britain in 1932 (*OED*2) and still current in criminal slang (witness Morton 1989 and Devlin 1996).

***tea leaf**. Thief. (1)
Originally British, later Australian. First attested in Britain in 1899 (*OED*2) and still current in both British and Australian slang.

***these and those**. Toes. (1)
Originally American. Recorded by Maurer and Baker (1944) (see Franklyn 1961).

thick and thin. Chin. (1)
Originally American. Recorded in *The American Thesaurus of Slang*, 1952 (Franklyn 1961).

tit for tat. Hat. (3)
Also **titfer**. (2, 3)
Originally British, later Australian and American. This expression has been in use in Britain since the early 20th century (see Brophy and Partridge 1965 and *OED*2) and in Australia since at least the 1940s (see Maurer and Baker 1944); it is now invariably heard in the shortened, one-word form. In America *tit for tat* is recorded by Chicago May (1928) and Maurer and Baker (1944). Although Barnes (1992) gives the rhyming part of the expression in brackets, i.e. *tit for* (*tat*), the ordinary spelling of the short form is *titfer*.

Tommy Noddy. Body. (1)
Not otherwise recorded in this form. A variant of the American *Tom Noddy*, recorded in *The American Thesaurus of Slang*, 1952 (Franklyn 1961).

***trouble and strife**. Wife. (1)
Originally British, later Australian. Since the late 19th or early 20th century (Partridge 1961). See quotations in *OED*2.

Uncle Willy. Silly. (2)
Originally British, later Australian. Since the early 20th century. Recorded by Phillips (1931), Franklyn (1961), Delbridge (1991) and Simes (1993).

***very best**. Chest. (1)
Originally American. First recorded by Maurer and Baker (1944).

***whip and lash**. Moustache. (1)
Originally American. Recorded by Maurer and Baker (1944).

Notes

1. Green (2000) defines *Billy Button* thus: 'a gullible fool, esp. one who performs a job of work without first making sure that they will be paid. [*Billy Button* '(gets) nutten, i.e. nothing', plus jocular use of a 'proper name'].' This author also lists the West Indian expression *Auntie Flora* 'the floor' (especially in the phrase *knock/take Auntie Flora* 'to sleep on the floor'). However, though marked in the dictionary as 'partial rhyming slang', this item in no way qualifies as RS.

2. Note that all the dialects of English that have developed their own RS creations seem to have done so through the direct or indirect influence of English English (especially Cockney) and/or Australian English, and consequently their rhyming vocabulary invariably displays several imports from England and/or Australia.

3. The word *china* is also very much alive in British slang. Cf. Hughes (2000:309), who notes that this is one of those "English words which have survived in South Africa but died out in their homeland".

4. The name alludes to the *ducktail* (also known as *D.A.* or *duck's arse*), the style of haircut so much favoured by the British Teddy Boys and the American zoot-suiters.

5. We are especially indebted to Clara Tilve and Melissa Walsh for their assistance in locating informants.

References

Anon. 1974. "South African Gaol Argot." In *English Usage in Southern Africa* 5, 1: 2–13.
Bailey, Richard W. 1996. *Nineteenth-Century English*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
Baker, Sidney J. 1945. *The Australian Language.* Sydney: Angus and Robertson.
Barnes, Lawrie. 1992. "Rhyming Slang and Other Boop Lingo". In *English Usage in Southern Africa* 23: 1–13.
Branford, Jean. 1980. *A Dictionary of South African English.* Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
Brophy, John and Eric Partridge. 1965. *The Long Trail. What the British Soldier Sang and Said in the Great War of 1914–18*. London: Andre Deutsch.
Cardozo-Freeman, Inez. 1984. *The Joint: Language and*

Culture in a Maximum Security Prison. Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas.

Chicago May [pseud. of May Churchill Sharpe]. 1928. *Chicago May — Her Story.* London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co.

Delbridge, Arthur, ed. 1991. *The Macquarie Dictionary.* 2nd edn. Sydney: Macquarie University. (1st edn 1981)

Devlin, Angela. 1996. *Prison Patter.* Winchester: Waterside Press.

Ducange Anglicus [pseud.]. 1857. *The Vulgar Tongue.* London: Bernard Quaritch.

Farmer, John S. and W.E. Henley. 1890–1904. *Slang and its Analogues: Past and Present.* 7 vols. Published for subscribers at London and Edinburgh.

Franklyn, Julian. 1961. *Dictionary of Rhyming Slang.* 2nd edn. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. (1st edn 1960)

Freed, Louis Franklin. 1963. *Crime in South Africa.* Cape Town: Juta.

Görlach, Manfred. 2000. "Rhyming Slang World-Wide: Homegrown or Imported?" In *English World-Wide* 21, 1: 1–24.

Green, Jonathon. 2000. *Cassell's Rhyming Slang.* London: Cassell.

[Hotten, John Camden]. A London Antiquary. 1859. *The Dictionary of Modern Slang, Cant, and Vulgar Words.* London: John Camden Hotten.

Hotten, John Camden. 1865. *The Slang Dictionary.* London: John Camden Hotten.

Hughes, Geoffrey. 2000. *A History of English Words.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Johansen, Lenie (Midge). 1991. *The Dinkum Dictionary.* 2nd edn. South Yarra, Victoria: Viking O'Neil. (1st edn 1988)

Lambert, James. 1996. *The Macquarie Book of Slang.* Sydney: Macquarie Library.

Lighter, Jonathan E., ed. 1994. *Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang.* Vol. 1, A-G. New York: Random House.

Lillo, Antonio. 1998a. "Estudio lingüístico del rhyming slang". Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Alicante.

—. 1998b. "Origin of Cockney Slang Dicky Dirt" In *Comments on Etymology* 27, 8: 16–20.

Lumsden, J. 1946. "Will War Slang Remain?" In *The Nongqai*, June 1946: 721.

Matsell, George W. 1859. *Vocabulum; or, The Rogues' Lexicon.* New York: George W. Matsell.

Maurer, David W. and Sidney J. Baker. 1944. "Australian Rhyming Argot in the American Underworld". In *American Speech* 19: 183–95.

Meredith, John. 1991. *Dinkum Aussie Slang.* 2nd edn. Kenthurst: Kangaroo Press. (1st edn 1984)

Moonie, Katie. 1998. "'Ducktails, Flick-knives and Pugnacity': Subcultural and Hegemonic Masculinities in South Africa, 1948–1960". In *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24, 4: 753–74.

Morton, James. 1989. *Lowspeak.* London: Angus & Robertson.

OED2: *Oxford English Dictionary*. 1992. 2nd edn on CD-ROM. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Opie, Iona and Peter Opie. 1959. *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Orsman, Harry W., ed. 1999. *A Dictionary of Modern New Zealand Slang.* Auckland: Oxford University Press.

Partridge, Eric. 1950. *Dictionary of the Underworld.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

—. 1961. *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English.* 5th edn. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. (1st edn 1937)

Phillips, I. 1931. *A Dictionary of Rhyming Slang.* London: I. Phillips.

Puxley, Ray. 1998. *Fresh Rabbit.* London: Robson Books.

Ramson, William S. 1988. *The Australian National Dictionary.* Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Silva, Penny, ed. 1996. *A Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles.* Oxford: University Press.

Simes, Gary. 1993. *A Dictionary of Australian Underworld Slang.* Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Tempest, Paul. 1950. *Lag's Lexicon.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Thorne, Tony. 1997. *Dictionary of Contemporary Slang.* 2nd edn. London: Bloomsbury. (1st edn 1990)

Ware, J. Redding. 1909. *Passing English of the Victorian Era.* London: George Routledge & Sons.

Wilkes, G.A. 1990. *A Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms.* 2nd edn. South Melbourne: Sydney University Press. (1st edn 1978)

Poems and trees

I'm sure that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree
But then I never had the power
To grow a tree in half an hour

— Roger Berry,
Lingnan University, Hong Kong

Reading, writing, listening, and thinking in English

X. Z. SHAO, who teaches English at Xiamen University in the province of Fujian in China, 'reads, writes, listens, and thinks' in English as well as Chinese. He may represent a shape of things to come.

[*Editor's note* I met X. Z. Shao in early January 2002, while on my second visit to Xiamen University, in its beautiful campus on the edge of the city of Xiamen (formerly Amoy), on the eastern coast, not far from Taiwan. In one of the lectures I gave during that visit I talked – carefully – about English becoming 'a Chinese language', in the sense of a 'language of China', like Mongol or Uighur, but one that might become for many Chinese a 'second first language', much as it is in several of the countries of northwestern Europe. The response then and later was lively and varied, and I got the impression that matters were moving even faster in the direction I was discussing than I had thought. Shao's poetry and prose, and to a lesser extent the excerpts in the panel, seem to me to be more than just straws in the wind.]

I WAS born on August 22, 1964, in Zhouning county, Fujian province, in the People's Republic of China. I attended Shanghai Electric Power Institute from 1980 to 1983, and developed an interest in the Chinese literature of the first half of the 20th century. When I graduated in 1983, at the age of nineteen, the authorities arranged for me to work for Fujian Electric Power Construction Company. I read Chinese versions of Shakespeare, Romantic poetry, Goethe, and works of Western philosophy, developed a strong interest in English, and determined to 'internationalize' myself. In 1988, I took the national entrance examination for graduate study in economics as a means of escaping from an uncongenial job – a free choice in one's work was not allowed at that time.

During the graduate program from 1988 to 1991 at the Department of Finance and Banking at Xiamen University, I came to understand China and the world better from the perspective of economics and politics. I also read Bertrand Russell's *History of Western Philosophy* in Chinese and other works of philosophy, as well as books about Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. After the students' movement in 1989, I spent a year in the Sino-US Economics Training Center at Fudan University in Shanghai, as part of its graduate program, read extensively in both Chinese and English, and wrote poems in Chinese. After graduation, I taught economics in English and Chinese at the same department until early 1995, when I was accepted as a teacher of English in the Department of Foreign Languages. In the summer of 1993 I shifted completely to English in reading, writing, listening, and thinking, took English literature seriously, and began to practice creative writing in that language. I also started a course for students called 'Listening to English News', using CNN, BBC World, and VoA materials.

I strongly believe that English literature created by native Chinese-English users will become a reality, and that English in China is a movement which will help transform China. By communicating with the various Western civilizations, the Chinese will become aware of their own cultural strength and will bring about a cultural renewal in the foreseeable future. Below is a poem of cultural contrasts and part of an essay reflecting on the birth of my son.

To a girl from the USA

You walk around the campus, so naturally –
like a breeze from the West. Lonely
you may be, with no one to understand your
voice.
You smile at the trees, the grass and the
flowers,
But they all remain silent, without motion –
The East is always silent and shy.

From childhood you harboured a dream.
Was it a fairy story you'd been told,
Or the haunting memory of a previous life?
You came to China alone for something lost.
But the men who once knew you have long
gone,

S0266078402002080

And your familiar buildings were torn down.

Tired of cowboys' pretence to be men,
Pop-singers' madness, noisy campaigns for
president,
And the freedom to keep guns, you may need a
rest.
Fed up with busy streets, modern machines,
Luxurious life, and cold sophisticated minds,
You may need a land of innocence and peace.

Go to the East, where a poet used to roll
downhill
Like a lamb, where recluses were said
To live in high mountains close to heaven,
Where philosopher kings governed humanely,
Nature and mankind went hand in hand in
harmony,
Where the lives of all creatures had the same
meaning.

The East is such a luring dream!

I, an even greater dreamer over many lives,
Said the same prayer, hoping for that land of
wonder.
Come, here I am, a speakless boy with a long,
long
tale to tell. Like the blind singer walking
Among the ruins, I stand in empty mountains,
Overwhelmed by thunder and deadly silence.

Meaningless to tell, unable to sing,
Until you came in sight, bouncing and smiling,
As if a spring overflowed into the dry valley.
You seem to me a girl finding, in your own way,
Relics of a glorious East, or herbs or flowers,
Or even just the dust here, to cure your man
fever.

But, as I know too well, there's no more magic
here.

There is no more wisdom than your carefree
eyes,
No more happy excursion than your buoyant
steps,
No more music in nature than the flow of your
voice,
No more tranquillity than your peaceful smile.
And as you walked along you threw little rocks
Into silent and deadly lakes, and met many eyes

that admired what they'd never enjoyed.
As a hermit, self-exiled in a land of sickness,
I dream once more of where I used to be.
Here you come: Is there any good news you
bring?
Maybe not. Maybe your carefree bearing is the
message.
You walk through the campus, dancing and
singing.
And you throw what you've gathered into the
wind.

Picking up a spot of sunshine

Being a father is not at all as bad as I imagined it to be. The moment I saw my baby held by a nurse, coming out of a caesarean section, my heart lifted. The cloud that had been hanging over my head as I watched my pregnant wife carrying her big belly around, with that strange life inside it, waiting to be born into this world of uncertainty – full of suffering and death – suddenly dispersed.

It was my first encounter with such a natural life out of my own. I felt nervous as I looked at that hour-old baby wrapped in a white sheet and sleeping calmly in its baby carriage. He had a big head and a round face and his eyes when open were bigger than his small mouth. For the few hours he was awake that first day, he looked up in one direction at the ceiling.

On the second day I saw him smiling as he slept. I never doubt that he came from a mysterious place and possessed great wisdom beyond my comprehension. He was naturally calm and peaceful, while I have been treading the path of knowledge for a long time and have never, not for even a moment, enjoyed such a serene state. The world I live in has been haunted by fear created by my fellow human beings. In front of such a natural thing as our child I feel shabby and self-conscious. We adults have already changed the physical appearance of the earth beyond recognition. So many have deciphered the code of nature, have established or are establishing their kingdoms or authority. Yet the broadcasts keep telling me of new wars, conflicts of all kinds, and famines. *How can I wash away my sense of guilt for bringing him here? How can I dispel my loneliness and become an ally with him in this battle of life which offers no chance of victory?* Fortunately, as I become more familiar with my baby, fortunately, the world has gradually seemed more hopeful and less frightening.

One day I came home, was startled by the scene in front of me, and stood still for quite a long time. Our eight-month baby was sitting on the ground trying again and again to pick up a spot of sunshine which had pierced through a small opening in the roof. He was completely engrossed and serious about his every action, looking at the spot, carefully grasping it, raising his hand and then losing it. I threw my briefcase aside, held and kissed my son, then sat on the ground playing the game with him. I did this not as a father playing with his son but as a pilgrim suddenly enlightened. Yes, why not pick up sunshine?

Experience had developed in me the habit of doing something "meaningful", of gathering knowledge with the aim of formulating ideas and delightful words to explain the phenomenal world and my thoughts about it. Anything that departed from this aim would make me restless, for life is like an easily broken cup waiting to be filled.

For most people, undertaking enormous projects is respectable and understandable: each building erected in a development zone is a symbol of the spirit of a newly-emerging entrepreneurs. How lofty human pride is! How many handshakes, speeches, and exchanges of insults have to be made in order to become a world leader. But picking up a spot of sunshine on the ground is not an inferior way of achieving the same effect.

After finishing the game, I turned on the TV and saw a mother monkey holding her baby in the mist of snow-covered mountains and staring at us. She looked almost the same as me, with eyes like the beads of a Chinese abacus installed in her long, sad and skinny face. I took my baby out to the yard and stood on a plot of grass I have grown, trying to forget the monkey. I stared into space and a breeze blew by.

In the years when I was a wild dreamer, I regarded young couples who devoted all their attention to their babies as people who had lost the battles of their own lives. I had been told that as soon as a baby was born the father became dead as a philosopher. I felt that one must create meaning from one's own life. For me life was like a slab of raw marble and I should be a skillful sculptor. How therefore could I give up the freedom of a cloud and imprison myself in a Chinese-style apartment which reminded me of a bird cage, simply for the sake of producing a baby? Yet sometimes it seemed to me that the books lying everywhere around me were like gossips chattering to me interminably about their authors' vanity and mine.

How amazing that my attitude should shift so much the moment I saw my baby! For several months I listened tirelessly to his mysterious sounds, observed his face as if I were a pious worshipper observing a Buddha. Sometimes he raised up his hands, waved, smiled, and made sounds. *Er-gu-gu* is a universal sound. So is *ba* and *ma*, which people all over the world use to call their parents. Isn't it indicative of a great wisdom seldom achieved by even the most wise to be naturally calm? A baby is able to smile in his or her sleep from the very beginning of his or her life – if normal and healthy. Why do we adults have to try so hard to be happy and so often go astray? I turned a new eye to my baby and was healed.

I secretly vowed not to raise my baby in the tyrannical way some fathers in China have done. He smiles and plays with everyone so much that he sheds a light of innocent happiness on every heart. It is not easy for adults to create such pools of sunshine in which people can remove their disguises and refresh themselves, but a baby can do this just as when the hand of spring touches a bud and it blooms. Shortly before he could walk, I took my son out for a walk and he saw a shaky old lady in her eighties, bending her back and leaning on a cane, in an open space between buildings. He headed towards the lady while I held one of his hands. He grasped the cane and smiled and took it from her. This put me in a difficult situation, for I had to take care of both this extremely young boy and the old woman at the same time., but she stood still and enjoyed his playfulness immensely.

She talked to him in a local dialect, which I could not understand. From then on every time he saw her he did the same thing. When he could barely say some simple words he called the old lady 'grandma', as all parents in China tell their children to do, addressing people as family members whether they are or not. He has become a comfort to the short, toothless lady, who does not of course usually receive much attention. Once she walked to my doorstep to see the child. I helped her carefully up the steps and she took a seat on the sofa. My child played the same game with her.

The meeting seemed to me to represent the circle of life – a meeting of beginning and end.

I wonder why a child can make parents sacrifice their life for him or her whenever necessary, why a baby has such a power to remind us of our innocent nature and makes adults forget the cold world which we have so many times tried and failed to make a warmer place. Maybe it is because of a baby's forgetfulness and its essential ignorance of a code of right and wrong, ugly and beautiful, true and false. My son may have a past before he was born, but he has forgotten it. At the same time, he is completely unaware of his future. ☐

Excerpts from *Life Stories*

The following excerpts are taken from *Life Stories: A book of biographies and portraits of classmates and friends by postgraduate students of Xiamen University*, June 2001. The stories were written by students of aesthetics, anthropology, chemisty, chemical engineering, commerce, finance, literature, law, management, material science, chemical engineering, and Marxist-Leninism. The collection was made by *JOHN CROSS* of the College English Department*, and in the introduction he notes:

> "These stories were created this spring when I asked my students to interview a classmate and then, based on the interview – and imagination – to write a short biography or portrait. Never did I expect such a rich and fascinating response. It would be a great shame, I felt, not to share these stories with a wider audience. The stories are of many kinds: funny, sad, warm-hearted, fantastic and inspiring; and they cover all aspects of life from love and future dreams to beer drinking and football. I enjoyed reading them very much. I hope you can too."

From a "A portrait of 'Pepper Girl'", by Liu Peng

> "Are you boys free to have a dance tonight?" To our surprise this invitation came from a girl-classmate. As we know, it is very unconventional in China that females invite males to dance. What an interesting girl!
>
> Miss H. comes from Sichuan Province, where people are famous for being fond of eating peppers. Pepper has some additional meanings in China such as 'vigour or being enthusiastic and unrestrained'. Miss H. is just this kind of a girl….
>
> After graduation from college Miss H. entered a big company in 1999 but still kept studying in her spare time to prepare for the entrance examination for postgraduate studies. Due to too little time for studying the marks she got were not very good and she only qualified for self-financed tuition. It was a dilemma for her: her family were very poor and unable to help her – in fact, she occasionally had to send money to them last year. In spite of poverty and the great pressure from part-time jobs, she didn't give up the chance of further study.
>
> Miss H. has to do much part-time work every day, but at the same time must try her best not to allow it to influence her study. What a difficult life! But she always looks happy. She said, "I'm really busy and have to combat stress – mentally and physically. I manage to change what I can and accept what I cannot change. What I can do is just to keep optimistic, in this way I can help myself to overcome difficulties." She smiled and added, "Crying every day would lose me a great deal of water, wouldn't it?"

From "Myself by S"

> … My life is a boat in the calm sea, no misery and no happiness….

From "A good football player," by Jiang Fei

> …. I love football. I met W on a football pitch. We began to know each other. Playing games brings us together. He is always very direct, honest and open in his manner, so I know exactly what he is thinking when we are playing football. He is right back, and I am left back, but he has better skills than me. He seldom blames me, even if I make a mistake. He always helps me tackle difficulties. In a game, you'll see what a man is. I think he is a good football player.

From "My classmate," by Cheng Qiuhu

[From a description of a student, Liu Zhihong, whose father died young and who could not continue his studies because he came from a poor family and needed to help his mother, sisters, and brothers.]

> I felt his gloominess when I saw him at my first glance. It was always as if there was something in his eyes. At that time, I was a naughty boy, just coming into middle school. To say a word from my heart: I didn't like him… and to my regret, he became my same-desk classmate. Even more awful, my teacher made us both sleep in the same bed at night in our dormitory…. We began chatting…. The conditions of my school were very poor at that time. The toilet was far away from the dormitory room. For a long time in the winter, my stomach felt unwell and I always got up to go to the toilet at night. All classmates were in their dreams. Dark and silent it was out of the room! I was very much afraid. Every time, he accompanied me. When we came back to the room, his nose was red and he was panting

white air from his mouth. I held his cold hand and asked: “Are you cold?” He always shook his head quietly. We became good friends indeed.

From “My classmate,” by Zhao Cuiyang

Do you want to make friends with a girl who always wears a smile on her face?…. She comes from Hunan, a beautiful province in the middle of China. She is my fellow townswoman. You know that the people in Hunan are always intelligent, friendly and loyal. So is she. She is a postgraduate student of Xiamen University. She majors in anthropology. If you hope to talk to her, you should read some books on anthropology…. You say that anthropology is too difficult and complex? Don’t worry, you can talk about something like happiness, family, freedom and so on…. If you succeed in making friends with her, don’t forget me. I only request that you should treat me to lunch sometime.

From “Live because of love,” by Hu Chanxia

You’ll always be deeply impressed by her: lovely small smile on her face all the time, looking like a Japanese doll and always quiet. Yes, here she comes – D, the protagonist of this biography. Imagine her as she is nowadays, one dusk, dressed in a blue coat, wandering everywhere around the campus, a little quiet and at a loss…. D fell in love with W when she became a senior. After a period of honey time, she began to fling herself into preparation for the examination for entrance to graduate study.

From “L’s biography,” by Zhang Wei-guo

L is a good friend of mine. He was born in Fujian Province. He’s of the same age as me. He’s always happy. Every person around him will be affected deeply and they’ll become more optimistic. He can always bring us happiness. Joke-making is his strong point. He’s also self-confident. He can be self-confident because he’s so bright. He’s so bright that he can always have a lot of time to do what he likes to do. What does he like to do? The answer is that he likes to be pursued by girls. He can achieve this because he is so handsome and humorous. He’s always surrounded by all kinds of girls. He has already got the nickname – James Bond 007. I’m proud of having such a friend.

From “A strange girl,” by Ben [a woman student]

Her English name is Garfield, because her face is very much like the cartoon character – Garfield the cat…. Many people say Garfield and me are a pair of best friends, but I don’t think it’s the truth. For my part, I think Garfield’s best friend is medicine. She has always been taking all kinds of medicine from the day we entered the same room till now. She takes more medicine than food. When she’s ill, she takes medicine; when she’s tired or sleepless, she takes medicine; when she’s healthy, she still takes medicine like vitamin C or vitamin B or others…. I’m glad to see these various medicines don’t hurt Garfield’s mind. She’s the best joke-maker I’ve ever met. Her thinking is quick and strange. Thinking things from a special way and making normal things distinctive is Garfield’s best trick.

From “Portrait of C,” by Huang Xin

C is one of my classmates. He comes from Hubei Province. That is the center of China.

He likes smoking. Every day, at least 5 cigarettes are burned. He once said that cigarettes are his second life.

Drinking is another important hobby of his. But he knows he can’t drink as frequently as he smokes. After all, he has much work to deal with. He likes drinking but has to restrict it. It seems a torment to him.

For a long time, C has wanted very much to have a girlfriend. But that dream has not been realized…. He has loved a girl for nearly 3 years. Many times he decided to express his love to her. But he never succeeded to open his mouth. Now that girl has a boyfriend. Not him.

C often said to me that he will go to the Northwest after graduation. He said that Xiamen is so comfortable that he can’t find the excitement of life here. He wants to go through the desert. That is C.

*John Cross’s response to Zuo Biao’s article ‘Lines and circles, West and East’ (*ET*67, 17:3, Jul 01) appears in *Post and (E)Mail*, p. 64.

English polymorphs of Chinese personal names

LI LAN discusses variation in Chinese names as used in English, following on from Peter Tan's 'Englishised names? – An analysis of naming patterns among ethnic-Chinese Singaporeans', in *ET*68 (17:4), Oct 01

In its global spread, the English language has not only exercised a profound influence on other languages but also created mosaics in nomenclature – a phenomenon that has however been largely neglected. In 1995, in his book *Japan's Name Culture: The Significance of Names in a Religious, Political, And Social Context*, H. E. Plutschow found it surprising that names have received little or no attention, despite being so significant in social, political, economic and religious life. Chinese names as used in English are a good case in point, especially because they can have different versions when translated into, or simply presented in, English. By and large, there are three reasons for this:

1 the different systems of romanization available for use
2 the different pronunciations in different Chinese dialects
3 the kinds of hybridization that can occur between English and Chinese.

This paper discusses the use and translation of Chinese names in terms of the four systems of romanization adopted for Chinese at different times and in different places. The question raised is whether there should be a unified form for all such names in both English in particular and romanization in general, so as to reduce difficulties and confusions for governmental and financial institutions, for foreign learners of Chinese, and for Chinese people seeking to use a consistent version of their name for international purposes.

Personal experience

My interest in Chinese names in English started six years ago when I was engaged at the University of Exeter in the UK in the literature search for my doctoral thesis. I noticed an increasing number of publications by Chinese scholars in international journals and in fact that, through the way a name is spelt, one can tell where an author is from: a Chinese name in English bears information of one's origin. I did some research in databases of different subjects and was surprised by the great variety among the same family names. However, this interest remained idle until I read Peter Chan's article in *ET*68, in which he described Chinese names in Singapore. I would like to respond here to that article, with regard to Chinese English names in other places.

My data has been collected through the following sources: publications related to the romanization and pronunciation of Chinese; electronic databases on the Internet; the CD-ROM interlibrary network; Chinese–English dictionaries published in different ethnic Chinese communities; reports of government population censuses; and the staff directory of Hong Kong Polytechnic University, where I work.

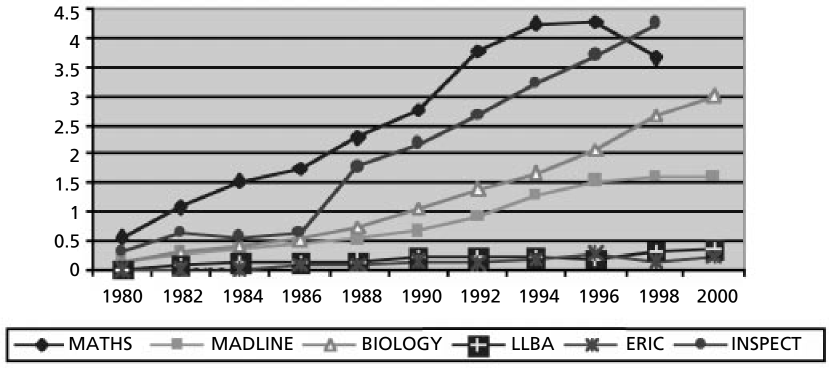
Varieties of Chinese names in English

The international publication in English of scholars with Chinese backgrounds started about two decades ago, after China opened its door to the world in 1978. I have searched 33 databases of both natural and social sciences, in terms of 10 unique mainland Chinese surnames[1] that are among the top 50 most common in China: Zhang, Zhao, Zheng, Zhou, Zhu,

LI LAN is currently a Research Fellow at the Department of English, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and holds M.Phil. and PhD degrees in applied linguistics from the University of Exeter (1989, 1998). She has taught English at university level in mainland China and Hong Kong for over 15 years and has published a range of papers, especially on both lexicography and English for Specific Purposes.

S0266078402002080

Fig 1: Percentage of total publications by 10 Chinese family names



Zen, Xiao, Xie, Xu, and Xue. I worked out the above chart with the data from six leading databases (MathSciNet, MadLine, Biological Abstract, LLBA, ERIC, and INSPECT), so as to demonstrate the surge of publications by Chinese scholars in international journals from 1980 to 2000.

Before the year 1978, few mainland Chinese would have imagined their names appearing in English-language documents and were hardly concerned with how they would – or could – occur other than in traditional Chinese characters. In the last twenty years, however, over 270,000 Chinese students and scholars have studied in about 100 countries, where in many instances their families also joined them. As a result, bearing an English or romanized name has become commonplace.

Chinese characters used worldwide in ethnic Chinese groups are the same, whether in their simplified or complex forms. However, when a name is presented in English, the words represented by those characters tend to have several spellings. Such Anglicized (or, more properly, romanized) names may come from a government registrar, the recommendation or decision of a teacher, a bilingual dictionary, or some other such source. In addition, individuals sometimes change the spelling of their names when they see one that better suits their personal inclination – or even whim. The fact that a single Chinese character can have several spellings in English and other Western languages often causes confusion, and for this reason has become a significant matter for immigration departments, banks, insurance companies, and other such institutions.

Differences in word order and capitalization

The first confusion arises from word order. Traditionally, a name in Chinese consists of a family name followed by a given name, but in English this ordering becomes uncertain. I always tell people 'My name is Li Lan', but when I fill in a form with a separate surname and given name, it will automatically become Lan Li in an English document. As a result it becomes difficult to be consistent: from different data sources, 12 distinct name-styles can, as it were, be generated from Chinese names rendered into English. They are:

1. names, composed of two characters, that follow the Chinese pattern, surname first: Li Lan
2. names composed of three (or more) characters represented by three (or more) roman words, family name first, in open form: *Gao Xiao Ping*
3. hyphenated disyllabic personal names, the second character in lower case: *Gao Xiao-ping*
4. hyphenated disyllabic names, the second character in upper case: *Gao Xiao-Ping*
5. the family name and the given name in reverse order, in open form: *Lan Li, Xiao Ping Gao*
6. the family name and the given name in reverse order, the given name as one word: *Xiaoping Gao*
7. the combination of a Christian/English name, then a Chinese given name, then the family name: *Jane Fung Yee Mok*
8. the combination of a Chinese given name with a Christian/English middle name in middle position: *Sao-yin Connie Lam*
9. the Christian/English name first, then the

family name, then the Chinese personal name: *Robert Law Chung-hung*

10 the Christian-cum-English name first, then initials for the disyllabic Chinese given name, then the family name: *Tracy S.Y. Wong*

11 the use of only one initial for the disyllabic Chinese given name: *Tracy S. Wong* (where the *S* stands for *Siu-Ying*)

12 increasingly commonly, in (especially academic) institutions and publications, the family name (in whatever position) presented in upper case and the given name(s) in lower case: GAO Xiaoping., Jane MOK Fung Yee, Sao-yin Connie LAM.

In addition, married women now tend to use both their husbands' family names and their maiden names. Thus, after marriage, adding the husband's surname *Lam*, *Susan Mok Fung Yee* may become *Susan Lam Mok Fung Yee*. One fortunate thing is that, however confusing the overall system may be, individuals tend to be consistent with regard to the English/roman form of their names (much as most Euro-Americans are consistent about their own names, so that for example *Sarah Macdonald* does not suddenly become *Sara McDonald* (unless it is someone else's mistake).

Differences derived from spelling systems

In addition to differences in word order and among individual preferences, a name written as a single Chinese character may have different roman spellings because four distinct systems of romanization have been employed for Chinese in different countries, regions, and periods of time. Indeed, from the way a Chinese name is spelt, one can often tell a great deal about someone's background. Several systems of romanization for Chinese have been invented for purposes of pronunciation.

1 The Wade-Giles system

The oldest in current use is known as Wade-Giles, introduced by Sir Thomas Wade in 1859, and developed by his successor in Chinese Studies at Cambridge University, Herbert Giles. This is the system that is most familiar to Western eyes and for many years it has served as the standard transcription in scholarly sinological works in English. People in Taiwan and Hong Kong continue to use the Wade-Giles system.

2 National Romanization

During the period 1912–49, the first Chinese system of romanization, the National phonetic alphabet (*guoyin zimu*) was devised by Lin Yutang and Chao Yuen-ren and based on the Beijing dialect. It was approved by the government in 1918 and became obligatory in the teaching of Chinese at secondary schools. In 1930, its name was officially changed to *zhuyin fuhao*, using phonetic symbols. It continues to be used in teaching Chinese in Taiwan. *Zhuyin fuhao* has been regarded as an unhappy compromise: it employed symbols derived from the traditional script, and in reality is not a writing system at all. Its drawbacks were obvious: it was hard to learn, hard to write, hard to remember, and hard to print. 'In short, it was in outmoded and cumbersome nuisance' (Norman, 1988:259). When it comes to international communication, this system still needs interpretation. The parallel National Romanization also had complicated spelling rules to indicate four tones, and was regarded as more difficult to learn. The government paid little attention to it and it failed a few years after its creation.

3 The Yale system

During the Second World War, Yale University introduced an intensive programme of Chinese training for Air Force pilots and introduced a new system, related more clearly to American pronunciation. The Yale system was later widely used in teaching in the US for a period of time. It has also influenced spellings of Chinese names in some regions.

4 The Pinyin system

The *Pinyin* alphabetic scheme was promulgated in 1957 in China. It is based on the Beijing dialect and used as an aid in the teaching of the standard language and not as a fully-fledged autonomous writing system. The system employs 21 *shengmu* (consonants) and 35 *yunmu* (simple and compound vowels). The tone mark is placed on top of each vowel and there are four tones altogether. *Pinyin* is compulsory in learning Chinese in primary education in the People's Republic of China. In English-language publications in China, all Chinese personal and place names are spelled following the rules of *Pinyin*.

For historical reasons and because of political and geographical separation it has been difficult for Chinese ethnic communities to apply a unified spelling system in their communication through English and other languages. With the recent rapid development of China and the implementation of the 'open-door policy', an increasing number of Chinese people and places are known to the world in the field of science, politics, economics, and the like. The older, widely-used *Wade-Giles* system 'is now slowly but surely yielding its place to the newer *Pinyin* system' (Norman, 1988:173), and Pinyin has gradually been recognized worldwide.

The Library of Congress of the United States, in 1979 and 1980, recommended that the library community undertake conversion from Wade-Giles to Pinyin for the romanization of Chinese. It anticipated that 'more and more people will, in the future, approach Chinese through Pinyin romanization,... because fewer and fewer library users will have a working knowledge of Wade-Giles' (Melzer, 1996). In 1990, the Library of Congress again investigated the feasibility of converting from Wade-Giles to Pinyin, and since October 2000 all US library materials in Chinese have been catalogued in Pinyin form. This has been a huge conversion project for American libraries with Chinese collections (Lin, 2001: personal communication).

The United Nations has been using Pinyin for Chinese personal and place names for many years. After Pinyin was adapted as the U.N. Mandarin Phonetic Symbol (U.N.MPS) system, more and more government agencies, as well as most scholarly and international communities, have used Pinyin to romanize Chinese names. Dictionaries published in the UK and the US now consistently use Pinyin for Chinese names, for example *Mao Zedong* instead of *Mao Tse-tung*. International news agencies are doing the same. When Deng's death was reported in February 1997, most leading newspapers and magazines in America and Britain used the Pinyin forms *Deng Xiaoping* and *Beijing* rather than the Wade-Giles *Teng Hsiao Ping* and *Peking*.

Singaporeans now use Pinyin as a pronunciation tool for language learners and as a system for inputting Chinese characters into a computer (Kuo & Jernudd, 1994:82). In 1999, Taiwan also decided to adopt Pinyin as used by the mainland to romanize Chinese names, dropping Wade-Giles (*Asiaweek*; Hong Kong, 6 Aug. 99). Pinyin has also increasingly gained international recognition for diplomatic and official purposes as well as in the media.

Table 1: Consonant differences in the four spelling systems

Pinyin	W-G system	National Romanization	Yale
b	P	B	b
d	T	d	d
c	Ts	ts	ts
g	K	g	g
J	ch	j(i)	j(i)
Q	ch	ch(i)	ch(i)
R	J	r	r
X	hs	sh(i)	s(i)
Z	ts, tz	ts	dz
Zh	ch	j	j

Pinyin differs significantly from Wade-Giles and also has differences from the National Romanization and Yale systems. The major differences are:

Spelling differences in consonants (shengmu)

In the four spelling systems, consonants are the same with *p*, *m*, *f*, *t*, *n*, *l*, *k*, *h*, *ch*, *sh*, *s*. In Wade-Giles, the consonants *ch*, *zh*, *j* and *q* all have the same spelling *ch*; *c* and *z* both use *ts*; *d* and *t* are both spelled *t*; *g* and *k* are both *k*, all posing problems in distinguishing some sounds.

Spelling differences in single and combined vowels (yunmu)

As for the vowels, *a*, *o*, *ai*, *ei*, *ou*, *an*, *en*, *ang* and *eng*, all four systems employ the same spellings. The differences are listed in Table 2.

Differences arising from the dialects

The multidialectal nature of the Chinese language strikingly affects its spelling. Dr Chao Yuen Ren has listed nine main Chinese dialect groups. This great variety has impeded spoken communication among people from different parts of the country, but the written lingua franca provides an essential unity. However, the English versions of Chinese names, and especially surnames, can vary because of wide sound differences among dialects, the sounds

Table 2: Vowel differences in four spelling systems

Pinyin	W-G system	National Romanization	Yale
ian	ien, yen	ian	yan
Ie	ieh	ie	ye
Uo	o	uo	wo
A	a	a	a
O	o	o	o
I	i	i	yi, i
I	ih	ih	z, r
U	u	u	w
E	e	e	e
E	eh	eh	
E	erh	erh	
ua	wa, ua	ua	wa
ue	ueh	ueh	
ue	uo, wo	uo	wo
ue	io	io	
ia	ya, ia	ia	ya
ie	yeh, ieh	ie	ye
iao	yao, iao	iau	yau
iu	yu, iu	iou	you
ian	yen, ien	ian	yan
in	yin, in	in	yin, in
iang	iaug	iaug	yang
iong	iung	iung	iung
ou	on	on	ou
ong	ung	ung	ung

being phoneticized by means of different combinations of roman letters.

In mainland China, the spelling is unified, based on Pinyin, permitting a standard Chinese pronunciation. It is noted that the spelt-out forms vary from place to place in Chinese communities outside mainland China, even though the characters are the same. The following table shows the spelling variants of a set of family names (among the fifty most common), and is taken from a national survey carried out in China in 1990.

Other varieties are recorded in the book *Chinese American Names: Tradition and Transition*, Emma Woo Louie (1997:39)

Table 3: Spelling variants in different dialects and regions

Putonghua	Cantonese	Taiwan	other
Zhang	Cheung	Chang	Cheong
Zheng	Cheng	Cheng	Ti
Qian	Chin, Chen	Chien	Chi
Zhao	Chiu	Chao	Toi
Li	Lee	Li	Li
Wang	Wong	Wang	Ong
Huang	Wong	Hwang	Hong, Ong, Ooi
Wang	Wong	Wong	Ong
Zhou	Chou	Chou	Chiu
Xia	Ha	Hsia	Ha
Xiao	Siu	Hsiao	Seow
Xu	Hui	Hsu	Kho, Chee
Jiang	Kong	Chiang	Kang
Jia	Ka	Chia	Ka
Qiu	Yao	Chiu	Khu
Zeng	Tsang	Tseng	Chan
Chen	Chan	Chen	Tan
Zhu	Chu	Chu	Chu
Guo	Kwok	Kuo	Keh
Yang	Yeung,	Yang Young	Iu
Wu	Ng	Wu	Goh
Yan	Ngan	Yen	Yam
Yan	Yim	Yen	Giam
Ni	Ngai	Nee	Ge
Ye	Ip, Yip	Yih	Gak
Hong	Hung	Hung	Ang

Conclusion

The spelling in English of names of Chinese origin reveals the layered history of this ethnic group, including different spelling systems, dif-

Table 4

Selected spelling	Dictionary meaning	surname character
Bai, Bock, Pai	white	—
Be, Ma, Mah, Mar	a horse	
Cai, Choy, Tsai	herbs, weeds	
Chiang, Ging, Jiang, Kiang	a large river	—
Chu, Gee, Jee, Zhu	red, vermilion	—
Hsiung, Hung, Xiong	a brown bear	—
Hwang, Huang, Hwang, Wong	yellow color	
Lam, Lin, Ling	a forest	—
Lei, Loui, Louie	thunder	
Mei, Moy, Mui	a plum	—
New, Niu	an ox	—
Ngan, Yan, Yen	a color	
Shek, Shi, Shih	a stone	—

ferent dialects, and influence from the English language itself. There is every reason for someone formulating a unified and standard means of romanizing Chinese names and other Chinese proper nouns. Such an attempt would not only benefit the Chinese but also the rest of the world, of whose population the Chinese constitute one-fifth. While there are various Chinese romanization systems, there is only one Pinyin, providing 'the spelt-out sounds' of Putonghua. Pinyin certainly answers the call for the systematization of Chinese names. The struggle to obtain worldwide recognition for Pinyin has been more or less a political one, and in spite of some resistance the adoption of Pinyin has become a world trend.

However, although attempts have been made at various times to standardize the romanization of Chinese names, it would be difficult to change the history of a family name, and the Chinese names of major individuals have long been internationally recognized and recorded, regardless of how they have been spelt at different times and in different places. It is important therefore that each name should be regarded as existing in its own right. As Elsdon Smith once observed, the owner of a name is the one who is 'most intimately concerned with its shape and form and is accorded the authoritative voice.' This advice should be applied to the individual's choice in name-style. The variants of Chinese English names might remain for a fairly long period due to the native dialect, regional norm, and personal preference of a Chinese person, but Pinyin will probably slowly and steadily serve to clear up the many current confusions in Chinese names. ■

Acknowledgement

My special thanks to Ms Lin Bin, a PINES Cataloging Coordinator at Georgia Public Library, USA, for her valuable help during the preparation of this article.

References

Chao, Y.R. 1976. *Aspects of Chinese Sociolinguistics.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Editing Group. 1990. *General Chinese–English Dictionary*. Hong Kong: Chung Hwa.

Hu, Q. L. 1994. 'How to distinguish and catalog Chinese personal names.' In *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 19/1, 29–47.

Ingulsrud, J. E. 1999. *Learning to read in China: Sociolinguistic perspectives on the acquisition of literacy.* Lewiston, N.Y: E. Mellen.

Ingraham, H. 1997. *People's Names: a cross-cultural reference guide to the proper use of over 40,000 personal and familial names in over 100 cultures.* Jefferson, N.C.: McFarlan.

Jones, R. 1997. *Chinese Names: The traditions surrounding the use of Chinese surnames and personal names.* Malaysia: Pelanduk.

Kaplan, J., & A. Bernays. 1997. *The language of name.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Kuo, C.Y., & B.H. Jernudd. 1994. 'Balancing macro-

and micro-sociolinguistic perspectives in language management: the case of Singapore.' In Kandiah. K. ed., *English and Language Planning: a Southeast Asia Contribution*, 71–91.

Li, D.C.S. 1997. 'Borrowed identity: signaling involvement with a Western name.' In *Journal of Pragmatics*, 28/4, 489–513.

Liang, S., ed. 1995. Far East Concise Chinese–English Dictionary. Taibei: Far East.

Louie, E. W. 1998. *Chinese American names: tradition and transition.* Jefferson, N.C : McFarland.

McArthur, T., ed. 1996. *The Oxford Companion to the English Language.* Oxford: University Press.

Melzer, P. 1996. 'Pinyin romanization: new developments and possibilities.' In *CLIEJ* 30, 22–28.

Plutschow, H.E. 1995. *Japan's Name Culture: The Significance of Names in a Religious, Political, And Social Context.* Kent: Japan Library.

Smith, E. 1952. *Personal Names: A bibliography.* New York: New York Public Library.

Tan, P.K.W. 2001. 'Englished names?' In *English Today* 68, 17/4, 45–53.

The Spokesperson's Manual, Chapter 1: Denial

Your first move is to scoff
And laugh the whole thing off
Dismiss it all as "idle speculation"
Attribute it to rumour
Throw in a touch of humour
And no one will believe the accusation

Next rubbish the accuser
Imply he's quite a boozer
And bears a grudge against his old employer
Inform them he was sacked
And if he won't retract
He'd better have a darn good libel lawyer

And if the hacks start pressing
Confuse them by digressing
No question is impossible to handle
Sheer force of repetition
Will blunt their inquisition
And soon they'll start to look elsewhere for scandal

There's just one golden rule
To learn in PR school:
No matter what, you must go on denying it
But if that line falls through
Then turn to Chapter Two
To find out how you switch to justifying it

— Roger Berry,
Lingnan University, Hong Kong

Marketspeak

GERRY ABBOTT looks at some of the linguistic consequences of global consumerism

For two decades now, British society has been moulded by a political view based on faith in the efficacy of market forces. In this article, I first outline the influence of that ideology upon the everyday language that Britons (and others, I am sure) see and hear all around them; this influence has resulted in what, Orwell-fashion, I call *Marketspeak*. I then offer some of my reactions to Marketspeak, in the hope that they will be of interest to teachers of English, among others.

In 'the market-place' (which nowadays seems to mean 'the world', commercial activity consists of five processes. Saleable goods are: (1) produced, (2) packaged, (3) marketed, (4) delivered, and (5) bought. In Marketspeak, however, all of these verbs – along with their cognate nouns – extend into areas *outside* the provision and acquisition of goods. Let us look at each step in turn and consider a few examples.

1 Production

A spokesman for the tourism *industry* (a significant term) was bemoaning the state of many British hotels: improved hotel rooms were described as 'a better quality *product*'. A Department of Health official, referring to the number of hospital patients that were being successfully treated, called this *hospital productivity*. (In passing, we may also note that Government ministers and other officials frequently describe social innovations and reforms as being *on stream*, as if they were rolling off a conveyor belt or gushing through a pipeline.)

2 Packaging

Members of Parliament and others have for years been announcing one *package* of measures after another. They often stress that it is a *whole package*, as if we might be expecting only half measures. (True, they just as often announce a *whole raft* of measures; half a raft would clearly be dangerous.) Again, we should note that, at the close of negotiations, agreements are *wrapped up* like parcels.

3 Marketing

The phrase *a market-place* used to refer simply to a small area, usually part of a town, where local goods were bought or bartered. For the politician, however, '*the* market-place' means 'anywhere in the world where money can be made by whatever means'. In everyday conversation, ordinary people expressing a lack of interest in something – a type of music, a fashion, a sport or other activity, for instance – will often use Marketspeak and say that they aren't *in the market* for it.

4 Delivery

This is my pet hate. As I write, the government and people of Britain are embarrassed at the poor quality of many public services – in health care, transport and education especially. In Marketspeak, the need for rapid changes to be put into action is expressed by means of the word *deliver* and its cognates. Once again, however, such expressions have crept into everyday non-political English, with the result that the word's meaning has become extremely elastic. From the wealth of examples in my chrestomathy, I have selected just eight, and, because of that 'elasticity', I offer in the right-hand column a translation of the Marketspeak word or phrase. In considering these examples, the reader may wonder how anyone could 'deliver the removal' of anything, and consider why *deliver* has even invaded the acts of writing novels and making music (see Table 1).

To *deliver on* something is a Marketspeak way of indicating success in a certain venture. As I write, the New Labour government, for example, is saying that it has 'an instruction to deliver on public services', and its transport secretary has just said, 'I am … happy to be

S0266078402002080

Table 1

Example of usage	Translation
… *delivering improvements* to the railway system (Stephen Byers, UK Transport Secretary)	improving
…a railway system *that delivers trains on time* (Rail spokesman)	whose trains are punctual
… *deliver* the service which will bring them* back (Railtrack official)	provide
…finding the staff to *deliver the care to* patients (Department of Health spokesperson)	care for
… to *deliver the removal of* this scourge (Farmer's Union speaker, about foot-and mouth disease)	eradicate
… the clear and *deliverable* set of conditions (Jack Straw, UK Foreign Secretary)	achievable? reasonable?
… we will be capable of *delivering* that piece (Musician, about a difficult piece of music)	performing
(The author) has *delivered* an overwhelmingly profound masterpiece. (Borders bookshop catalogue)	written

(* NOTE: *them* means 'passengers', who in Marketspeak have become 'customers')

judged on whether I have delivered on that passengers', agenda.' Again, a radio commentator on health matters has questioned the government's ability 'to deliver on the time that people are waiting (for operations)'.

Furthermore, *deliver* is commonly used without a complement, again with a range of meanings which are dependent on context but which generally deal with success/failure. The following examples were all heard on BBC Radio 4:

Pakistan is beginning to deliver.	(Reporter, 'co-operate')
… our capacity to deliver.	(Teachers' spokesperson, 'teach well')
…pressure on …Arafat to deliver.	(Reporter, 'comply')
…guilty of …under-delivering.	(Member of Parliament, 'failing')
Can Mr Blair deliver?	(Reporter, 'succeed in doing')

We now come to the final stage in the commercial process.

Buying

In a market-place, you can buy goods; in *the* market-place, you can buy your way into a multinational company by purchasing shares; in Marketspeak, you can also *buy* (or *buy into*) ideas and concepts: 'I don't *buy* that it's difficult for women in Parliament,' said Ann Widdecombe MP, on one TV programme. On another, the comedian and actor Billy Connolly, speaking of one of his youthful pursuits, said 'You *buy into* it at the time, but …'. Marketspeak is even used in religious contexts. During an Easter Day discussion on BBC Radio 4, a churchgoer was asked whether he agreed with a certain Christian belief. 'Yes, I'll *buy into* that,' he replied; and later, a churchman said he thought that there were certain 'niche markets' open to Christian churches in the UK. Even beliefs, then, can be sold now – unless, of course, they are 'past their sell-by date'.

At this point, the reader may begin to appreciate why the spread of Marketspeak has made me sufficiently uneasy to write this article. It is not simply that I am against linguistic change. We are told by descriptive linguists that living languages change all the time (which is true) and that it is useless to resist such change (which is not true). A language doesn't change of its own accord: *people* change it. Indeed, there are sociolinguists who tell us how successful their deliberate language *planning* activities have been. If enough people are persuaded to say or write something in a new way, then that way will prevail. Conversely, if enough people are persuaded to avoid that new way of saying it, the new way will fade out. For all of us, the art is to know when to stop resisting the change.

For the present, I am resisting the spread of Marketspeak, and I hope others will, too. Why? Mainly because I deplore its 'lazybones lexicon' and its deceptiveness: *deliver*, for example, is used not only lazily, to save the speaker the effort of finding a more accurate word, but also dishonestly, to make listeners think that they are going to receive something really solid, like a Christmas parcel. George Orwell ('Politics and the English language', *Horizon*, April 1946) wrote about this sort of problem. In his view, our English can become 'inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts'. Some say that this idea is past its sell-by date, but I tend to agree with it. What about you? □

Fatal Attraction

Some things are and some things
  aren't
Though nobody has planned
  them
No matter how we try, we can't
Explain or understand them

Let's take a case
That on its face
Could puzzle to distraction
Where's the catch
That makes us match
Fatal with *attraction*?

Is it chance
That makes them dance
To mutual satisfaction?
Could it be
Mere euphony
Or chemical reaction?

Why can't *deadly*
Form a medley
With, let's say, *allure*?
Why can't *mortal*
Pass the portal
Of their sinecure?

And does *attraction*
Mind the action
Fatal gets elsewhere?
A thing for *shore*
A fling with *flaw*
It seems a strange affair

Yet now the pair
Are everywhere
Immortalised on screen
Like a certain
Taylor/Burton
Used to rule the scene

Many questions
No suggestions
Why they're so impacted
It's quite bizarre
That two words are
So fatally attracted

But some things are and some
  things aren't
Though nobody has planned
  them
No matter how we try, we can't
Explain or understand them

— Roger Berry,
Lingnan University, Hong Kong

It's elegant, but is it valid?

From: John Cross
College of Foreign Languages and Cultures
University of Xiamen,
Fujian, China
<swag61@hotmail.com>

With all due respect to Professor Zuo ('Lines and circles, West and East', *ET*17:3, Jul 01), this is an elegantly-written re-working of a simplistic notion of uncertain validity. Certainly, such vast concepts as 'philosophical and linguistic differences between Western and Chinese cultures' are not easily demonstrated by data, but neither are they illuminated by repeating stereotypical metaphors.

Professor Zuo supports his line and circle hypothesis with many dubious examples, and in general this seems to be a case of shaping evidence to fit the concept. Rather than refuting examples item by item, I will confine my remarks to the section on language (pages 7 and 8). It is claimed that Chinese sentence structure is more flexible than English. This is controversial, to say the least, but the suggestion that this is evidence of the flexible, synthetic and intuitive nature of the thinking of Chinese-language users cannot be sustained. The whole thrust of what Zuo Biao is trying to show could be turned on its head by plausible counter evidence fabricated along these lines:

> 'Chinese is an isolating language in which individual lexical items do not change their form in a clear display of rugged individualism so typical of Chinese culture generally, whereas inflecting English melds and mutates its words to express the interconnectedness of all things, the unimportance of individual units and the deference individuals must show to greater sentence harmony. Chinese word order is relatively more fixed than English, demonstrating the compartmentalization and linear progression inherent in Chinese thought. ...'

This type of 'evidence' is, in short, of little value. Language is not caused by, or the cause of, cultural and philosophical differences. It is a symbol of them. Culture itself is shared knowledge, of which language knowledge is one of the most important aspects. Indeed, I would argue that the greatest barrier to mutual understanding between Chinese and Western societies is language, not culture. Furthermore, the differences within these two societies are far greater than the differences between them. No doubt there are far fewer 'cultural differences' between Zuo Biao and myself (both intellectual workers at Chinese universities) than between Professor Zuo and a migrant peasant doing construction work on either of our university campuses, or indeed between the Professor and this hypothetical labourer's wife.

And finally, much of what is attributed to 'culture' is the result of laws and regulations. Many behavioural phenomena which seem such an entrenched part of public life or 'culture' in the People's Republic are curiously absent from the 'culture' of Singapore, which is as much a Chinese city as New York is a Western one. These 'cultural' differences between Singapore and the People's Republic are created by the structure of social rules which, given sufficient motivation, can be learned, as culture can be learned, very quickly indeed.

Call for Papers

The ERIC® Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics invites you to submit papers, reports, curricula or other materials for inclusion in the ERIC® database.

Submissions should be sent to:

Acquisitions Coordinator
ERIC/CLL
1118 22nd Street NW
Washington DC 20037

TEL: 202-429-9292
EMAIL: ERIC@CAL.ORG

S0266078402002080
English Today 70, Vol. 18, No. 2 (April 2002). Printed in the United Kingdom