

# Editorial

As of 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020 Britain has formally began a withdrawal process from the European Union. While the effects of Brexit are already seen in English language use, for example through the introduction of new words as *breferendum* or *regrexit* (Lalić-Krstin & Silaški, 2018), a question remains as to whether the status of the English language will change in the post-Brexit world. Focusing on the language's homeland, we ask what it would mean to use English in post-Brexit Britain.

It is not the first time that London has divorced from a committed relationship with its continental spouse. After being defeated at the Battle of Hastings in 1066, England was governed by the Norman French. Normans took over the country through a brisk operation of replacing administrative and religious heads. What followed was a period of French influence on British administration, culture, and language. To this date, around 45% of words in the English language come from French. For comparison, the Old English vocabulary constitutes only 32% of the current English stock (Stockwell & Minkova, 2009).

The intensive connection of France and Britain came to an end after disputes regarding territorial rights, such as the loss of Normandy (1204), the Barons' Wars (13<sup>th</sup> c), and the Hundred Years' War (14/15<sup>th</sup> c). The bitterness about that divorce was seen in everyday interactions as those who were using French started to be called traitors. In contrast the status of English language began to grow, to the extent that it moved from the language of the street to the language of kings. In following years, the foundation of standard English emerged from the amalgamation of Englishes used in London, especially in the Chancery Office, and Englishes used by merchants from East Midlands. This selected variety soon was used in such high domains as religion (through Bible translations),

education, and politics. The first monolingual dictionaries and grammars emerged, with the aim of codifying the rules and guiding the 'unlearned' public on the use of 'hard words'. For many people this variety of Standard English was as good as it could be and they wanted to fix this language forever. But not everyone was so confident that English was as good as other languages. Individual writers came up with ideas for improving 'the English idiom', such as making English look more closely related to prestigious Latin. They inserted the letter *l* in words such as *calf*, *salmon*, so that these words would look as if they descended directly from Latin (e.g. *salmon*), rather than French (e.g. *saumon*).

In years to come, public figures continued debates over whether the English language was good enough to constitute a high language. Ultimately, these debates were not about language *per se* but about the national identity. After separating from France, and later from the Vatican (Act of Supremacy, 1534) England became an independent nation and the insecurities about the newly forming national identity were expressed through insecurities about the English language.

Post-Brexit Britain will also go through a phase of redefining and renegotiating its new national identity. The history tells us that in such contexts standard language ideology may re-emerge as a prominent tool. We may witness the selection and intensive promotion of a particular version of the Standard English as an emblem for the New Britain. This may also mean that non-standard dialects will be discouraged.

In this issue we are pleased to include five research papers that examine the growth and development of the English language internationally. Kachoub and Hilgendorf consider English within the linguistic landscape of Morocco, while You, Kiaer and Ahn investigate British students'

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.

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attitudes to English-language borrowings from East Asian languages. Arik and Arik look at the use of English in Turkish movies, and Stojičić sees how European Union terminology has entered into the Serbian language from English. Lastres-López explores the phenomenon of *insubordination* as a possible use of *if*-clauses in English.

Finally, it is with great sadness that we acknowledge the passing of *English Today*'s founding editor Tom McArthur. Professor McArthur was a relentless scholar who had worked at the Universities of Bombay, Edinburgh, Exeter, Quebec and the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and promoted a balanced and historically grounded understanding of the spread of English internationally. In addition to his scholarship on the Sanskrit *Bhagavad Gita*, he compiled the Longman Lexicon of Contemporary English, a work that is usually regarded as the first thematically oriented monolingual learner's dictionary. He authored the *Oxford Guide to World English* (McArthur, 2002) and edited *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* (McArthur, 1992). In a volume entitled *The English Languages* (McArthur, 1998) that was extremely relevant - almost prescient - in its understanding of how English would develop internationally, McArthur wrote:

The monolithic linear model that takes us from Old English through Middle English to Modern English (culminating with Darwinian elegance in the standard international language of newspapers and airports) has, it seems to me, been asked to bear more weight than it can reasonably support. The emergence therefore of plural, non-linear models is a

positive development, among whose advantages are a more accurate depiction of the diversity in which we are embedded and also a more democratic approach to the social realities of English at the end of the twentieth century. (p. xvi)

For more than three decades since its founding *English Today* has sought to openly and earnestly explore 'all aspects of the English language, including its uses, abuses, its international variations, its history, literature and linguistics, and its uses and neologisms' (see 'Instructions for Contributors'). We owe an immense debt of scholarship to Professor McArthur's contributions on English language scholarship, and a debt of gratitude to his open-minded and rigorous approach to others' scholarship. Indeed, there would be no *English Today* without Tom McArthur. Our heartfelt condolences go to Tom's family and to all whose lives he touched.

*The editors*

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