

From Brazil and Turkmenistan to the mystery of English in China

After two special issues on key topics, this issue returns to the traditional format with a spread of articles, opinion pieces, a book review, and the *ET* column. First off among the articles, Eduardo H. Diniz De Figueiredo contributes a timely study of the ways in which English loanwords are making their presence felt on Internet websites in Brazil, including such slang items as *brother*, *dread*, *nerd*, *roots*, and *vibe*, and such hybrid Brazilian-Portuguese items as *bikear* (to ride a bike), *nerdear* (to surf the net), and *linkar* (to link). The second article from Kirk Hazen, Paige Butcher, and Ashley King provides a detailed study of contemporary Appalachian English, noting that a number of stereotypical dialect features – such as perfective *done*, *for-to* infinitive, *a-prefixing*, demonstrative *them*, and *was* levelling – now appear to be on the decline. Other features (all of which are present in other varieties of English) appear to be enduring, including pleonastic pronouns, quotative *like*, consonant cluster reduction, and vowel mergers. This very interesting study presents a picture of dialect variation in West Virginia which ‘reveals a much more diverse language variation landscape’ than previous research. By contrast, Deborah Schaffer’s article which follows provides an up-to-the-minute overview of prescriptivist websites online, guiding us through a score or more of grammar blogs and related sites.

Valerie Sartor’s article on teaching English in Turkmenistan represents another first for *English Today*, as her article is the only article dealing with English in this country to be published in the journal so far. Massrura Mostafa’s contribution on idioms utilises dic-

tionary and corpus searches to explore the ways in which creative idiom modifications take place in present day English. For example, the idiom *spill the beans* may occur in a number of variant forms, including *spill their beans*, *spill some beans*, *spill those beans*, and even *spill fresh beans*, and Mostafa illustrates her article with a number of insightful examples. Equally insightful is the description of ‘lexical traps’ in Julie Groves and Hei Tao Chan’s article on Hong Kong English usage, which illustrates the ways in which commonly occurring phrases, such as *sleep late*, may be used and/or interpreted by speakers of different varieties of English in different Hong Kong contexts. Gerry Abbott’s article looks at euphemisms relating to death and killing in modern English, particularly in news reports, where expressions such as *friendly fire* and *collateral damage* routinely disguise tragic events. Martin Wolff’s article on China’s English ‘mystery’ challenges much of the rhetoric we hear about the rapid spread of English in China, with the author concluding that, despite much rhetoric about the teaching of English in China, many students finish their studies ‘functionally illiterate’ in the English language. The final article in the issue comes from Michael Bulley, a regular contributor to this journal, who provides a spirited defence of Strunk and White’s classic book *The Elements of Style*. Finally, James Lambert contributes a review of a recent volume on Australian English. The column in this issue is penned by one of *ET*’s co-editors, David Graddol, who provides us with a meditation on the rise of standard languages, and the dynamics of language spread from his current base in Hong Kong. *The editors*

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