

A moving and mystifying target language?

This issue presents a selection of articles on English in various contexts and settings, with a significant focus on education in the first four. Susan Van Rooy describes the language experiences of South Korean academics and their families in a small town in South Africa, and the consequences of their stay abroad for their English language proficiency. She reminds us that not all EFL learners of English have the 'Inner Circle' mainstream as their model: Potchefstroom, South Africa offers a mix between Inner and Outer Circle, probably having more features of the latter. Christian Burrows writes about methodologies of EFL classrooms in Japan, where cultural constraints make TBL (Task-Based Learning) more challenging than its Western proponents realise. The next two articles emphasise the need to pay attention to colloquial spoken language. Manfred Markus writes about the need to focus on phonetic accuracy in EFL teaching, or at least to try and replicate mainstream norms as much as possible. Fan Xianlong contributes a paper on the ever-changing spoken norms of the mainstream, based on his experiences as a visiting scholar in the United States. Although many of the features he describes are well known to Western sociolinguists, the article presents a refreshing perspective of how complex the notion of 'target language' must be to users of ESL and EFL. More often it is a moving and mystifying target, with its cultural and political minefields that find their way into everyday usage.

Both these papers will prove provocative to EFL theorists and practitioners.

The next four papers discuss features of English. Jiang Yajun and Ren Zaixin give an informative overview of translation into English, with their main focus on the characteristics that make this a 'third code' different from source and target language. Stefanie Pillai ponders over the pros and cons of promoting the localised variety of Malaysian English in more public spheres like education. Fang Fan undertakes internet research on the use of novel English idioms translated from Chinese, arguing that these idioms point to new developments in EFL and are crucial in building a cultural identity on the net.

The last three contributions cover genres that we hope will become a regular feature of *ET*. Rama Kant Agnihotri provides a detailed report of a symposium in Mysore on the native speaker, a topic of great interest and an ongoing controversy in the era of globalisation and World Englishes. Alex Tulloch continues his column on etymology, this time concentrating on the fascinating origins and links between some basic religious terms in English and other Western languages. Lakshmi Padmanabhan contributes an engaging letter from India, light heartedly giving us giving us serious insights into the dilemmas of English users in her country. We welcome more such short contributions – reports of conferences relevant to *ET*'s readership, short pieces on new words and etymologies and letters from the global village of English users.

The Editors

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