

The contents of this issue reflect the diversity of English today, as a world language, and as a language of diverse functions and possibilities, with contributions from Asia, South Africa and Europe. The first article by Kingsley Bolton looks at issues related to Asian Englishes, and attempts to survey major questions relating to the spread of English in the region. The second article by Rajend Mesthrie focuses on the role of English in contemporary South Africa and debates relating to the maintenance of African languages among young people in the post-apartheid era. One point that emerges from both articles is that English in both locations is seen as a middle-class language, or, at least, a language of middle-class aspiration.

The three contributions from Mario Saraceni, Andy Kirkpatrick and Beyza Björkman all deal with the notion of English as a lingua franca, although from very different perspectives. Saraceni's article is based on his recent book, *English in the World: Global Rules Global Roles* (with Rani Rubdy, Continuum, 2006), and begins with a critical discussion of relevant concepts. This ranges from the Quirk-Kachru debate of the early 1990s through recent attempts to promote the English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) perspective in a number of expanding-circle contexts. Saraceni then proceeds to discuss the epistemology of the term itself, in order to disambiguate and unravel a number of conceptual and terminological tangles. Saraceni argues convincingly that much previous argumentation in the ELF debate has been muddled by an essential confusion between form and function, between ELF as (putative) variety (or varieties) and ELF as a ranges of uses, or contexts of use. Overall, his article provides a useful and illuminating discussion of many of the key concepts in this area. Andy Kirkpatrick's and Beyza Björkman's two articles then provide fascinating case studies of lingua franca contexts in Asia and Europe respectively.

We also have two articles dealing with English and the electronic media. Philip Shaw's article on linguistic variation in Internet communication employs a dialectal approach to look at the representation of speech on the web, whereas Evelyn Ch'ien tackles the wider issue of English across a number of new media, including ipods, the Internet and video conferencing. Following this, David Nunan's article deals with a central topic in text analysis, and critically examines the notions of register and genre, and, finally, Alex Tulloch provides a fascinating account of the etymologies of various words related to the weather. *The Editors*

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