

## Usage and China

This issue begins with the Fowlerian heritage: from *The King's English* in 1906 to *A Dictionary of Modern American Usage* in 1999.

In *ET* 60 (Oct 99), I wrote a fairly well-disposed but nonetheless mildly exasperated review of the second of these titles, compiled by the Texas lawyer Bryan Garner, published by OUP New York, and chosen as a special selection of the Book of the Month Club in the States. In this issue, Garner replies both to me and to Richard Bailey of the University of Michigan, who wrote a rather more scathing review of *DMAU* in a recent issue of the journal of the Dictionary Society of North America (No. 20, 1999).

Garner's welcome article is followed by a historical piece by Rachel Ware, who is a master's student at the Dictionary Centre in the University of Exeter. Together, the two items tell an intriguing century-old tale about describing, prescribing, and proscribing. If anyone wishes to add to it, I will be happy to see the matter go further. The issues involved are larger than just usage books, fascinating as these works are; they relate to writing, editing, copy-editing, proof-reading, the nature of the written and printed word, the question of whether we have or do not have a standard for world English, the question of whether languages in general need guardians, and whether *this* particular mammoth of a language needs a lot more guarding than most.

Which brings me to the other two complementary articles in this issue: the pieces on E-mail/e-mail/Email/email (and the realia I have added to them). These are the first significant features in *ET* on this subject, and both are by 'non-native' users of English: two mainland Chinese women scholars who have never met, who submitted their papers at about the same time, and who are both markedly alike and unlike in how they review the literature and their data. At the same time, both of them graphically demonstrate how the e-line blurs between English and other languages: in their specimens, we can see Putonghua mixing with English in remarkable ways. And this is only a tiny part of the vast and growing Chinese interface with English, likely to be one of the linguistic wonders of the new century. Watch this space.

Tom McArthur

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