

# Editorial

Like many pastimes (fashion, cookery and popular music would offer equally rich pickings), sport generates a wealth of expressions used enthusiastically by participants and aficionados that can mystify the uninitiated, sometimes intentionally. Cricketing terminology is particular renowned for being impenetrable to outsiders, so the prospect of the 2015 Ashes series between England and Australia prompts the revisiting of lexical items particularly related to cricket.

[Moeen Ali] will be leaving his *doosra* delivery firmly in the locker for the foreseeable future (Guardian Sport, November 2014)

[Tim Southee] sends down an absolute *jaffa* which cuts Dilshan in half (BBC online Cricket World Cup live update: New Zealand vs. Sri Lanka, February 2015)

[Martin Guppill's] massive six to cow corner (Guardian Sport, May 2015)

*chin music* (Nasser Hussain commentating on Sky Sports: England vs. New Zealand Lords Test, May 2015)

there has been a conspicuous absence of *sledging* (Guardian Sport, June 2015)

*we're not playing for sheep stations* (Jason Gillespie interviewed on Radio Five Live: 'Tuffers and Vaughan Cricket Show', June 2015)

This set of six throws up a range of linguistic research enquiries. One is a loan word: *doosra* [Hindi/Urdu for 'second/other one'] – a ball in cricket which spins away from a right-handed batsman but is delivered with a bowling action that suggests the reverse. This and the term *sledging* – targeted verbal abuse designed to distract/unnerve an opposition batsman (once famously described by former Australian captain, Steve Waugh, as 'mental disintegration') – are typical of the jargon that inevitably occurs in descriptions designed for a specialist audience. The other four demonstrate how vernacular forms occur even in relatively formal sports discourse. Of these *not playing for sheep stations* is Australian dialect for a friendly sporting contest in which pride, but no significant prize, is at stake, i.e. roughly equivalent to 'it's not a matter of life and death'. The other three are international cricketing slang: *cow corner* – area on the leg-side boundary to which a batsman plays an 'agricultural', i.e. unconventional slog; *jaffa* – an unplayable delivery; and *chin music* – short-pitched bowling designed to intimidate.

This deliberate use of jargon, slang and dialect is typical of sports discourse between enthusiasts, and creates a sense of shared conversation between presenter/journalist and viewer/listener/reader. Half are documented in authoritative dictionaries: OED (online) includes *doosra* and *sledging*, while Collins (online) records *chin music*. *Cow corner* was a favourite of a 1970s school cricket coach, who viewed the shot with utter contempt, but we have yet to find this or *jaffa* in print dictionaries. Both, however, warrant entries in Wikipedia's 'Glossary of Cricket Terms', and several online sports outlets offer T-shirts bearing a 'cow corner' logo. Wikipedia also has an entry for *we're not playing for sheep stations*, and it was also the slogan of a publicity campaign in Australia which sought to promote more respectful behaviour among parents and spectators in junior rugby league.

The global appeal of sport, the dominance of English in sporting terminology, the willingness of English to absorb loan words, the enduring (increased?) influence of the Indian subcontinent and other varieties of World English, and the role of communities of practice in shaping individual and shared vernaculars seem to encapsulate the rich variety of linguistic themes typically covered by *English Today*.

This issue of *English Today* sees a further item from the 'Bridging the Unbridgeable' series on debateable matters of usage, and it also contains the first of what we hope might become an occasional series in which Simon Elmes considers aspects of broadcasting about the English language. Language attitudes concern Tanda and Salakhyan, the former focusing on the English-based pidgin of Cameroon, the latter on native- and non-native-speaker English varieties considered by Slavic speakers. English put to use is the focus of Inagawa in Japan, of Dashti in Kuwait, and of Awuku in Togo. Like Awuku, whose article concerns English and French, Sui brings together two languages, in this case English and Chinese with contemplation of the creation of 'contact literature'. Torres-Martinez's article on a constructionist approach to phrasal verbs chimes directly with the review by Laws of a major new text on Construction Grammar, while Chen's review evaluates a recent collection of innovative approaches to ELT.

*The editors*