

Responding to needs and pressures – from a distance

ET is driven only in part by editorial intent. I meet and hear from many people, and discuss many possible articles and projects with them, some of which mature swiftly and some more gently, while others gestate like an elephant or never get going at all. The key driving force is, however, from outside, from those who send in all kinds of material for all sorts of reasons, professional and personal. In the present issue, for example, four of the five main articles were entirely unplanned for:

- a sociolinguistic and lexicographical bombshell from Jaan Lilles in Canada
- a powerfully (and sadly) thought-provoking piece from Pearl Ntlhakana on South Africa's languages
- Stephen Levey's intriguing glimpse of new usage in *Wantok* in Papua-New Guinea, where English is influencing its own off-spring Tok Pisin
- and a detailed, ground-breaking essay on English as an international language for accountants, by Robert H. Parker.

The only pre-planned main article is Marko Modiano's further response to invited comments on his first piece in *ET* 58 (Apr 99). And, as *Post & (E)Mail* indicates, his articles on a standard for English worldwide and the status of competent non-native users of the language continue to attract responses.

Selecting and arranging the content for 64 pages every quarter can be a delicate business, but actually filling the space at my desk in Cambridge has never been a problem. On this occasion, however, the filling is being done from afar, during a January-through-March visiting professorship at the beautiful hillside campus of the Chinese University of Hong Kong – an undertaking in which electronic contact is more significant than ever. Wonder of wonders, however, the same editorial email address still applies: see across. During the gestation of this issue, I have been going through a steep learning curve on the rim of a China whose dual use of English and high tech is bursting all bounds – as may become clear in the later issues of the year 2000.

Tom McArthur

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Letters to the Editor: write to Dr Tom McArthur, Editor, *English Today*, 22–23 Ventress Farm Court, Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge CB1 4HD, UK. Tel 01223 245934, Fax 01223 241161. Email: Scotsway@aol.com

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