

Englishes in a multilingual South Africa

As mentioned in our last issue *ET* enters a new era with a new editor, Clive Upton. The journal is also moving to a partially peer-reviewed format: for future issues we hope to have a mix of longer peer-reviewed articles and shorter popular pieces of the kind that *ET* is well-known for. Scholars submitting articles to *ET* in future should indicate whether their pieces are intended for peer review or are to be considered for the more popular section. In order to give the new editor the time to settle in and make the new plan effective, one of the outgoing editors, Rajend Mesthrie, undertook to produce a special guest issue on English in a multilingual South Africa. This issue falls in line with the new *ET* policy of peer review; in fact all articles in this issue were commissioned by the editor and then subjected to anonymous peer review and revisions as necessary.

South Africa is well-known as a country that has undergone enormous political, social, educational and economic change since the days of apartheid. Independence and democracy can only be said to have arrived as late as 1994, with the negotiated settlement that led to a new non-racial constitution. The constitution recognises eleven of the country's languages as official; and multilingualism remains a strong force in South African life. Yet while indigenous languages like Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho continue to grow as the majority languages of the country, so too has English, as a first language and – to a larger extent – a second language. The papers in this special issue focus on the sociolinguistics and linguistic characteristics of the main varieties of English in the country. The first, by Ian Bekker, discusses the social history of English as a first language offshoot of British English. Bekker explores the role played by the gold-mining city of Johannesburg in the development of a distinct South African English, suggesting that the role of cities established before Johannesburg may have been over-estimated. Black South African English is the variety that has prospered the most since 1994, being a major variety

to be heard in the media, in parliament, at public gatherings and so forth. Grammatical characteristics of this variety spoken as a second language are discussed from the vantage point of corpus linguistics in two contributions – by Bertus van Rooy and Yolande Botha respectively. The sociolinguistics surrounding the use of English – often as a first language or joint first language – by younger Black South Africans attending schools formerly reserved for Whites is the focus of the article by Carolyn McKinney. Whether such speakers are participating in language shift is a moot issue; the next paper, by Christine Anthonissen, explores a shift in dominance amongst young Coloured people in the Western Cape from a bilingualism that previously had English as a second language to one that plays down Afrikaans in favour of English.

The next two papers focus on Asian migrants in South Africa. Ana Deumert and Nkululeko Mabandla present the first sociolinguistic study of the adaptations made by new Chinese migrants in South Africa, showing the importance of Xhosa as well as English in rural Eastern Cape settings. Rajend Mesthrie writes on the older Indian community of South Africa, discussing their social history in terms of lexicographical work that culminated in the *Dictionary of South African Indian English*. Lobke Minter writes on bilingualism, literary translation and South African literature by analysing a translation of the Afrikaans novel *Agaat*. Staying on a literary-cum-linguistic theme, Jeffrey Murray contributes a review article of a translation of the *Iliad* into South African English by Richard Whittaker. We close this special issue with three book notices, the first two taking us back to Black South African English, focusing on aspects of the syntax of this variety, and a third one of a popular history of English in the country.

Rajend Mesthrie and Clive Upton
The Editors

The editorial policy of *English Today* is to provide a focus or forum for all sorts of news and opinion from around the world. The points of view of individual writers are as a consequence their own, and do not reflect the opinion of the editorial board. In addition, wherever feasible, *ET* generally leaves unchanged the orthography (normally British or American) and the usage of individual contributors, although the editorial style of the journal itself is that of Cambridge University Press.