Standards of English

The notion of a ‘standard’ variety of English has been the subject of a considerable body of research. Studies have tended to focus on the standard features of British and American English. However, more recently, interest has turned to the other varieties of English that have developed around the world, and the ways in which these have also been standardised. This volume provides the first book-length exploration of ‘standard Englishes’, with chapters on areas as diverse as Canada, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, New Zealand and the South Pacific. This is a timely and important topic, edited by a well-known scholar in the field, with contributions by the leading experts on each major variety of English discussed. The book presents in full the criteria for defining a standard variety, and each chapter compares standards in both spoken and written English, and explores the notion of register within standard varieties.

RAYMOND HICKEY is Professor of Linguistics in the Department of Anglophone Studies at the University of Duisburg and Essen. His recent publications include Legacies of Colonial English: Studies in Transported Dialects (Cambridge, 2004), Irish English: History and Present-Day Forms (Cambridge, 2009) and Eighteenth-Century English: Ideology and Change (Cambridge, 2010).
The aim of this series is to provide a framework for original studies of English, both present-day and past. All books are based securely on empirical research, and represent theoretical and descriptive contributions to our knowledge of national and international varieties of English, both written and spoken. The series covers a broad range of topics and approaches, including syntax, phonology, grammar, vocabulary, discourse, pragmatics and sociolinguistics, and is aimed at an international readership.

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Standards of English
Codified Varieties Around the World

Edited by
RAYMOND HICKEY
University of Duisburg and Essen
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Contributors

CAROLIN BIEWER studied English, Mathematics and Philosophy at the University of Heidelberg where she completed her Diploma in Mathematics in 1999 and her PhD on the semantics and pragmatics of passion in Shakespeare in 2005. She taught English Linguistics in Heidelberg before becoming lecturer for English Linguistics at the University of Zurich, Switzerland, in 2008. Her research interests include corpus linguistics, variationist sociolinguistics, statistics for linguists, late Modern English and English in the Pacific, Australasia and South-East Asia. She has done extensive field research in Fiji, Samoa and the Cook Islands which is the basis for her forthcoming book *South Pacific Englishes: The Dynamics of Second-Language Varieties of English in Fiji, Samoa and the Cook Islands*.

CHARLES BOBERG is Associate Professor of Linguistics at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, where he teaches sociolinguistics, dialectology and historical linguistics. His research focuses on variation and change in Canadian English, especially on regional phonetic and lexical differences, and on the phonological nativisation of loanwords in varieties of English. He is the author of *The English Language in Canada: Status, History and Comparative Analysis* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) and a co-author, with William Labov and Sharon Ash, of *The Atlas of North American English: Phonetics, Phonology and Sound Change* (2006).

SEAN BOWERMAN is Lecturer in Linguistics at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, where he teaches and researches syntactic theory, syntax and semantics, morphology, language planning and policy, as well as the history of linguistics. English in South Africa is a central research interest of his, from both a sociolinguistic and formal point of view. He has contributed the sections on White South African English to *Varieties of English: Africa, South and Southeast Asia* (2008). He is particularly interested in first-language varieties of English in South Africa, and his current research projects include the growth and development of Black South African English in formal, especially written, contexts.
Notes on contributors  xv

JOHN CORBETT is Professor of English at the University of Macau, China. He has published widely on Scottish language and literature, and was Principal Investigator of the AHRC-funded Corpus of Modern Scottish Writing (1700–1945) and The Scottish Corpus of Texts and Speech (www.scottishcorpus.ac.uk). With Jane Stuart-Smith and J. Derrick McClure he co-edited The Edinburgh Companion to Scots (2003).

FELICITY COX is a researcher and academic in the Department of Linguistics at Macquarie University. Her research focus lies in the phonetics of Australian English, a field in which she has published extensively, most regularly with Sallyanne Palethorpe. She is the author of Australian English: Pronunciation and Transcription (Cambridge University Press, 2012) and co-author of the Australian edition of An Introduction to Language with Fromkin, Rodman, Hyams, Collins, Amberber and Cox (2008). She is engaged in a range of research projects including AusTalk, Australian Voices and Australian Ancestors which explore sociophonetic variation and the origins and evolution of Australian English.

HUBERT DEVONISH is Professor of Linguistics at the University of the West Indies (Mona, Jamaica). Among his publications are Language and Liberation: Creole Language Politics in the Caribbean (2007 [expanded edition]), Talking Rhythm, Stressing Tone: The Role of Prominence in Anglo-West African Creole Languages (2002), Talking in Tones (1989) and numerous articles in scholarly journals and in collected works. His areas of special interest and research include sociolinguistics, language policy, phonology and the history of Caribbean Creole languages. He currently serves as Coordinator of the Jamaican Language Unit (JLU)/Unit for Caribbean Language Research (UCLR), Department of Language, Linguistics and Philosophy, University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica.

ELIZABETH GORDON is Former Professor of Linguistics at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. She is one of the foremost authorities on English in New Zealand and has authored many monographs, including handbooks on this variety with a specific educational purpose. For many years she was associated with the Origins of New Zealand English project which used valuable recordings of speakers born in the nineteenth century to investigate the early stages of English in that country. Together with a number of other colleagues she wrote a monograph on this subject: New Zealand English: Its Origins and Evolution (Cambridge University Press, 2004) as well as a general introduction to English in New Zealand with Jennifer Hay and Margaret Maclagan: New Zealand English (2008).

ULRIKE GUT holds the Chair of English Linguistics at the University of Münster in Germany. Her main research interests include worldwide varieties of English, corpus linguistics, second-language acquisition and phonetics/phonology. She is currently involved in the compilation of the
Nigeria component of the *International Corpus of English*. Among her recent publications are *Bilingual Acquisition of Intonation* (2000), (with Jürgen Trouvain) *Non-Native Prosody: Phonetic Description and Teaching Practice* (2007), *Non-Native Speech: A Corpus-Based Analysis of Phonological and Phonetic Properties of L2 English and German* and *Introduction to English Phonetics and Phonology* (both 2009). She is currently preparing the *Handbook of Corpus Phonology* with Jacques Durand and Gjert Kristofferson as well as the volume *Mapping Unity and Diversity of New Englishes World-Wide* with Marianne Hundt.


**William A. Kretzschmar, Jr.** teaches English and Linguistics as Harry and Jane Willson Professor in Humanities at the University of Georgia, USA. His major publications include *The Linguistics of Speech* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), the *Oxford Dictionary of Pronunciation for Current English* (2001), *Introduction to Quantitative Analysis of Linguistic Survey Data* (1996) and the *Handbook of the Linguistic Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States* (1994). He is the Editor of the American Linguistic Atlas Project, the oldest and largest national research project to survey how people speak differently in different parts of the country. He maintains an active community-language field site in Roswell, GA, which complements the survey research of the Atlas. These interests branched naturally into corpus linguistics, where he has directed corpus- and text-encoding activities. He served as editor of *Journal of English Linguistics* for fifteen years and has been President of the American Dialect Society.

**Manfred Krug** studied English, German, classical Latin and Greek at the Universities of Exeter (from which he holds a Master’s degree) and Freiburg, where he completed his PhD and worked until 2005, when he became Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Mannheim. Since 2006 he has been Chair of English and Historical Linguistics at the University of Bamberg, Germany. His current research interests include varieties of Modern and Early Modern English, grammaticalisation and

CLAUDIA LANGE is Professor of Modern English Linguistics in the Department of English at the University of Dresden, Germany. Her current research interest focusses on varieties of English, specifically Indian English, and on processes of standardisation in the history of Englishes. She has recently published (together with Ursula Schaefer and Göran Wolf) a volume on Linguistics, Ideology and the Discourse of Linguistic Nationalism (2010).

LISA LIM is Assistant Professor in the School of English at the University of Hong Kong, China. She directs the Language and Communication programme and teaches there as well as in the English Studies programme. Her current research interests include New Englishes, especially postcolonial Asian varieties in multilingual ecologies, with particular focus on contact dynamics, involving both a sociohistorical and a linguistic approach. Her research also concerns issues of language choice, shift and identity in minority/diasporic Malay-speaking communities, such as the Peranakans. Some of her (edited) volumes include The Typology of Asian Englishes (special issue of English World-Wide, 2009), and English in Singapore: Modernity and Management (2010). She is currently co-authoring (with Umberto Ansaldo) Languages in Contact for Cambridge University Press.

CHARLES F. MEYER is Professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, USA. He received a PhD in English Language in 1983 at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He is the author of numerous books and articles on English linguistics, including Introducing English Linguistics (Cambridge University Press, 2000) and English Corpus Linguistics: An Introduction (Cambridge University Press, 2002). He is former editor (and later co-editor) of the Journal of English Linguistics and former director of the International Corpus of English (ICE).

SALLYANNE PALETHORPE is a member of the Macquarie Centre for Cognitive Science and has for many years co-authored, with Felicity Cox, papers on sociophonetic studies of Australian English, using acoustic and physiological methods to focus on sound change, regional variation and ethnocultural varieties. She has been associated with the Australian Voices and the Australian Ancestors Projects both of which aim to provide an overview of historical changes in Australian English that have resulted in current dialect variation.
Anna Rosen studied English and French at the University of Freiburg where she worked in English linguistics until 2007, when she moved to the University of Bamberg, Germany. She also holds an MA from the University of Kent (UK). Her research interests include language change, specifically morphosyntactic change, sociolinguistics and language identity. She has been working on varieties of English in the Channel Islands for some years and has recently completed her PhD thesis on grammatical variation and change in Channel Island English with special emphasis on Jersey.

Josef Schmied has held the Chair of English Language and Linguistics at Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany, since April 1993. He completed his PhD on English in Tanzania in 1984 and his postdoctoral thesis on relative constructions in British and Indian English in 1991. His main research interests are sociolinguistics, English in Africa and Sout-East Asia, academic English as well as corpus linguistics, e-learning and English on the internet. He has been active in the International Corpus of English and European Society for the Study of English networks. His major publications are Englisch in Tanzania. Sozio- und interlinguistische Probleme (1985), English in Africa: An Introduction. (1991) and (with Barbara Korte and Klaus-Peter Müller) Einführung in die Anglistik (2004).

Daniel Schreier has taught and lectured in Switzerland, New Zealand, Germany and in the USA, and he is currently Associate Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. He is the author of Isolation and Language Change (2003), Consonant Change in English Worldwide: Synchrony Meets Diachrony (2005) and St Helenian English: Origins, Evolution and Variation (2008) and co-author (with Karen Lavarello-Schreier) of Tristan da Cunha and the Tristanians (2011). He has also published research articles in a number of international, peer-reviewed journals.

Jane Stuart-Smith is Reader in English Language at the University of Glasgow, Scotland. She is the author of a number of articles on variation and change in the Glaswegian accent, the impact of the media on language change, the phonetics and phonology of British Asian English, and British varieties of Panjabi, as well as historical linguistics and sound change. She has directed several research projects on phonological variation and change in Scottish English, focussing particularly on sociophonetic and sociolinguistic factors. She is currently writing a book on the influence of the broadcast media on language change, Mediating the Local: The Role of Television for a Changing Urban Vernacular.

Ewart A. C. Thomas is Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, USA. He was born in Guyana, and received his BSc degree in Mathematics from the University of the West Indies, Jamaica in 1963. He then went to Cambridge University in England, where he received his PhD in Statistics.
in 1967. Since 1972 he has been on the faculty of Stanford University. His research interests include the development and application of mathematical and statistical models in many areas including sociolinguistics.

**Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Oostade** holds a Chair in English Sociohistorical Linguistics at the University of Leiden Centre for Linguistics, Leiden, the Netherlands. Her most recent books include *The Bishop’s Grammar: Robert Lowth and the Rise of Prescriptivism* (2012) and *An Introduction to Late Modern English* (2009). For several years she conducted the research project ‘The Codifiers and the English Language: Tracing the Norms of Standard English’ and has recently initiated a further project on prescriptivism: ‘Bridging the Unbridgeable: Linguists, Prescriptivists and the General Public’.

**Clive Upton** is Professor of Modern English Language at the University of Leeds, England, specialising in present-day and historical language variation. His research centres on English dialects, and on developments in phonetic transcription models used for Received Pronunciation. He acted as consultant to the BBC in its UK-wide *Voices* investigation of language varieties, 2004–7, and is pronunciation consultant to Oxford University Press, for the *Oxford English Dictionary* and other major English dictionaries. He was also responsible for the British element of the *Oxford Dictionary of Pronunciation for Current English* (2001).
Preface

Speakers of English around the world will all have a notion of standard English. This may stem from English classes in their schooldays, for those who are native speakers in countries which have historically continuous forms of English, or from their first formal contact with the language, often as young adults in countries where English is an additional language alongside one or more other languages. In either case speakers have an idea of what this entity standard English is. On closer inspection, however, it is clear that this varies greatly across the anglophone world. What Canadians, South Africans or New Zealanders regard as standard English will be coloured by the publicly accepted forms of English in their own countries. This applies especially to spoken varieties of the language. What is considered standard English in the countries of Asia and Africa which use the language will also vary from country to country. So, in effect, one is dealing not with one, but several standards of English, all sharing a common core of features but still subtly different in a number of distinctive ways.

The reality across the anglophone world is that there is a plurality of standard varieties of English. These varieties are dynamic entities which are continually changing and which show inherent variation all the time. Indeed, the change results from some elements of variation moving to the fore and becoming established with others receding and eventually dropping out of the standard in question.

For the current volume a team of twenty-two scholars came together to discuss the type of standard English found and used in those countries and regions of the anglophone world which represent their area of expertise. The editor is grateful to these colleagues for agreeing to contribute to this volume, helping to make it a comprehensive and linguistically insightful work on a topical subject in English linguistics.

In the preparation of this book the editor received great assistance from Prof. Merja Kytö, Uppsala University, who as series editor took particular care in reading the manuscript before it went to print, and from both
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Kay McKechnie as copy-editor and Thomas O'Reilly as production editor for the book. Helen Barton, commissioning editor for linguistics at Cambridge University Press, was, as always, a great source of assistance and encouragement and ready to answer any questions which arose in the course of the project.

Raymond Hickey
November 2011