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0521830206 - Legacies of Colonial English: Studies in Transported Dialects

Edited by Raymond Hickey

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Legacies of Colonial English

As a result of colonisation, many varieties of English now exist around the world. *Legacies of Colonial English* brings together a team of internationally renowned scholars to discuss the role of British dialects in both the genesis and subsequent history of postcolonial Englishes. Considering the input of Scottish, English and Irish dialects, they closely examine a wide range of Englishes – including those in North and South America, South Africa, Asia, Australia and New Zealand – and explain why many of them still reflect nonstandard British usage from the distant past. Complete with a checklist of dialect features, a detailed glossary and set of general references on the topic of postcolonial Englishes, this book will be an invaluable source to scholars and students of English Language and Linguistics, particularly those interested in sociolinguistics, historical linguistics and dialectology.

RAYMOND HICKEY is Professor of Linguistics at the Department of English, Essen University. His main research areas are computer corpus processing, extraterritorial varieties of English (especially Irish English) and general questions of language change. He has published over eighty articles on various issues in linguistics, and most recently published books include *A Source Book for Irish English* (2002) and *Motives for Language Change* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

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earlier New Zealand English on which he has written extensively in the last few years. He is one of the authors, together with Elizabeth Gordon, Lyle Campbell, Jennifer Hay, Margaret MacLagan and Andrea Sudbury, of *New Zealand English: its Origins and Evolution* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

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Foreword

The subject of this book is the development of English at various overseas locations during the main period of colonialism, between the early seventeenth and the late nineteenth centuries, and up to the present-day. There are as many scenarios as there are locations, each of which underwent a different kind of exposure to English and hence experienced different developments of the language later. Some major distinctions can be made, however, chiefly that between English which arose from the large-scale settlement of the overseas locations by native speakers and forms of English which arose from the functional need for a means of communication in societies with many different background languages but without a significant tradition of settler English. In both these scenarios the question of interaction with native languages looms large and is treated in detail in many contributions. The current volume is also centrally concerned with the manner in which regional forms of English developed further at new locations, interacting with each other and possibly with other languages already present at the overseas sites.

Linguistic studies which deal with such issues have appeared in the past few decades. Some have been concerned with the effects of language contact and some with the formation of pidgins which led to later creoles. The specific approach of the current volume concerns the continuity of dialect features and their later alteration and realignment at overseas locations as well as the interaction of background languages with incipient forms of English, be they continuations of the language of settlers or not. The terminology employed here is one which frequently references Britain as the source of input for the 'extraterritorial' locations. This is not intended to imply an anglocentricity which for many speakers of English, for instance in South Asia and South-East Asia, is regarded as not of relevance to their forms of the language and may be seen as embodying possible remnants of colonial attitudes. Nonetheless, attitudes to the major anglophone countries do play a role for various postcolonial countries, for instance in the Caribbean, where the emulation of an American or British accent in standard varieties is often an expression of attitude towards the countries from which these accents stem.

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The use of the word ‘legacies’ in the title of the current book is quite deliberate. When one looks at the forms of English in the northern and southern hemispheres, which historically derive from English in the British Isles, then one can recognise features which have clear parallels with forms of English in the area of origin. It is the continuation of regional and/or archaic features of British English overseas which in the main constitutes the ‘colonial legacy’ in the context of transported forms of English. The term ‘legacies’ can be also understood in another sense with reference to English in South Asia and South-East Asia. In these regions the existence of English is due to contact with England as a colonial power and the role which the language played in the public life of these areas and which it continues to play. Indeed the domains of English have, if anything, expanded throughout the twentieth century and in the case of a country like Singapore this has led to a recent generation of native speakers.

In the linguistic examination of features in this volume more than one suggestion has been put forward for their sources. Indeed the attempt to provide convincing arguments for such sources is a major concern of all the contributions. All scholars agree that the unfolding of English at the overseas locations involved a variety of factors: language contact, sociolinguistic mixing and, of course, the retention of inherited components of colonial English. Many of these have, however, been shifted and rearranged. Some have been discontinued, others have been favoured and furthered by the new communities and still others have arisen through the interaction with background languages. It is the unravelling of these strands in overseas English, and understanding the motivation for the realignments which have taken place as well as for the new constellations which have arisen, which form such a central part of the chapters to be found in this book. As the specific approaches adopted for the contributions have not been unified into a single volume before and as a comprehensive treatment of the continuation of colonial English has not been presented in this form to date, it is hoped that the current book will fulfil a very real need in the field of variety studies.

During the genesis of this book the contributors and the editor have enjoyed the tireless support of the former linguistics editor at Cambridge University Press, Dr Kate Brett, to whom I wish to express my sincere thanks and that of the others as well. My thanks also go to her successor Helen Barton as well as to Jackie Warren and Kay McKechnie for their untiring assistance with typesetting and corrections. I also thank Professor Merja Kytö, English Department, Uppsala University, for her continuing support and advice. The contributors, who I have had the pleasure and privilege of working with over the past few years, also deserve the thanks of the editor who they entrusted with their contributions and which have hopefully been properly incorporated into the volume as a whole. For various reasons, chiefly the current commitments of other scholars, a number of chapters have had to be written by the editor who hopes his contributions go some way towards doing justice to the subject matter treated.

Raymond Hickey

April 2003