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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).

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University of Duisburg and Essen



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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
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