

We like to think that *English Today* provides a record of the changing fortunes of English in different parts of the world – evolving patterns of its use, changes in status and attitudes towards it, and developments in local forms. In this issue our contributors provide us with such reports from Europe to Asia.

ET has, over the years, carried many articles about English in mainland China and Hong Kong, but we have published very little about Hong Kong's close neighbour, Macau. As Andrew Moody now tells us, Macau is a small place, in which the former colonial language is Portuguese. Portuguese, not English, offers civil servants career advancement. Yet English, in the last decade, has acquired a *de facto* official status.

The rising focus on English in Macau schools will mean, Andrew Moody tells us, that 'the percentage of English speakers in the region will undoubtedly rise dramatically'. Indeed, right around the world, English has become an educational priority and the future of English will depend very much on the success, or otherwise, of the extraordinary educational experiment, now in progress, to teach the world's children English. But more students and teachers than ever are wondering what kind of English they should be learning and teaching, and what place English should have in their own society. In this issue, we hear from researchers in Bangladesh and Taiwan.

English Today does not publish articles on English teaching which would be better placed in one of the many ELT journals, but we do recognise that the teaching of English now represents an important arena which is transforming the status of the language, the number of people who speak it, and the kind of English they use. We welcome contributions from educational practitioners and researchers who can provide us with insights which might be of interest to *English Today's* wider readership.

Antonio Lillo takes us into a very different territory: investigating one of the ways in which slang expressions are formed in English. He calls these 'knock-knock words' (after the joke format loved by many children), though, like so much of slang, the themes are rather adult. Keith Davidson, meanwhile, updates us on the use of English expressions in Swiss newspapers and Alexander Tulloch – rapidly becoming our resident etymologist – explores the history of words related to water.

Alessia Cogo, meanwhile, responds to Mario Saraceni's piece in our last issue on lingua franca English. If you want to respond to anything which appears in this issue, do not hesitate to write. We would like to increase the number of shorter contributions, and restore a place for letters to the editor.

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.

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