

Editorial

Our guest issue for 2011 focuses on Irish English, which enjoys a special position within the constellation of varieties of English world-wide. In the historical spread of English during the colonial period it played a central role alongside forms of Scottish English and English English. Varieties of Irish English have influenced the development of overseas English in the early anglophone Caribbean, in 18th and 19th century North America as well as in the Southern Hemisphere, in Australia and New Zealand. In the different types of New Dialect Formation throughout the world there has been input from English in Ireland.

The language shift, which led to the majority of Irish people becoming native speakers of English by the late 19th century, left distinct linguistic traces in present-day Irish English and these have been the object of interest for a number of scholars. Irish English today is also interesting for other reasons, for instance the sociolinguistic developments in Dublin over the past two decades or so have resulted in new forms of English establishing themselves in the metropolis and spreading to the rest of the country, thus altering the nature of supraregional Irish English spoken today. Our cover for this issue shows a winding road (with Irish stone walls) which hints the way forward for Irish English in today's world.

The issues just referred to are addressed in the chapters of the current volume. An overview of the field of Irish English, with an historical retrospective and a sketch of the present-day situation, is offered in the chapter by our guest editor, Raymond Hickey.

This is followed by Kevin McCafferty's chapter which considers the historical documentation of Irish English and the possible insights into linguistic developments which can be gleaned from this source.

The realm of language policy is examined in the next chapter by Philip McDermott. This is a field which is particularly sensitive, given the political division of the island of Ireland, and is of relevance to other countries where language planning is a central issue.

With the compilation of the Irish component of the International Corpus of English the examination of standard forms of Irish English has received new impetus. The chapter by John Kirk offers an analysis of standard Irish English in both the north and south of Ireland and considers in detail the features which can be found here.

An analysis with a more theoretical approach can be found in the chapter by Karen Corrigan. This shows clearly how Irish English can provide insights of relevance to general linguistics and thus prove its usefulness in a much broader sphere which reaches far beyond Ireland.

A more recent strand of research in anglophone variety studies is that of variational pragmatics. An application of this approach to Irish English is given in the chapter by Elaine Vaughan and Brian Clancy, who consider pragmatic features which are characteristic of English in Ireland and thus contribute to its uniqueness.

Given the background language Irish from which speakers shifted in recent centuries the issue of translation looms large in both linguistic and literary studies in Ireland. This is examined by Michael Cronin, the leading Irish expert on translation, in the penultimate chapter.

Last but not least, the issue of teaching English in an Irish context is considered by Anne O'Keeffe in a stimulating chapter which investigates how features of Irish English could be of relevance to the transmission of English in a modern classroom.

The *ET* editors, with guest editor Raymond Hickey. *The Editors*

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