

# Editorial

On September 8, 2021, the then German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, met Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie for a dialogue in Düsseldorf's Schauspielhaus theatre. Adichie had just published *Notes on Grief*, but the two women's talk largely centred around her commitment to feminism.

Adichie rose to fame after her novel *Americanah* was published in 2013. Both the *BBC* and the *New York Times Book Review* acclaimed it as one of the most influential books of the decade, establishing Adichie firmly among the most important English-language writers. TEDx talks, Beyoncé's sampling her 2013 TEDx speech 'We should all be feminists' in her song 'Flawless' and the use of exactly that slogan on t-shirts by luxury brand Dior have established her well beyond the intellectual writers' scene.

Adichie's contemporaries include Ayobami Adebayo, Sefi Atta, Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani, and Chibundu Onuzo, among many others. In fact, Nigerian novelists have successfully contributed to the international English-language literature scene for decades, ever since Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). As well as in high literature, Nigeria has also established itself in the film and music industry. Known around the world as Nollywood, Nigerian films continue to spread across and influence the film scenes elsewhere on the African continent, such as Wakaliwood, a film studio located in Uganda's capital Kampala.

These developments indicate that English in Nigeria is no longer the sole provenance of elites, giving rise to an English-medium cultural scene. Nativised Nigerian English has strongly established itself both in an institutionalised and standardising variety as well as in its pidginised form, Nigerian Pidgin English, and a number of other sub-varieties. It is particularly Nigerian Pidgin English, for which world-wide influence has been documented (Mair, 2013).

Of course, these developments are mirrored in research on varieties of English. When the concept of world Englishes originated at two conferences in 1978, at the East-West Center in Hawaii and at

the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign, Nigerian English was part of the endeavour, at the time represented through Ayo Bamgbose, who is now in his early 90s. A decade later, when Sidney Greenbaum (1988) proposed the collection of corpora of English to complement those covering British and American English, Nigeria was, besides India, singled out to represent countries where English is an official language in what today is known as the *International Corpus of English* (ICE). However, it took until 2007 for the idea of a Nigerian component to be (re-)conceived by Ulrike Gut. When the Nigeria component became available to the research community in 2014, the corpus was presumably the fastest collected one within the ICE family. This was due to the excellent work of Ulrike Gut, who lead the ICE-Nigeria team, but particularly to a highly successful collaboration with local Nigerian colleagues.

This success is matched by a substantial field of research in the country, carried out by scholars as emancipated as Adichie. Over the last decades, there has been a huge increase in research on varieties of African English in general. Pleasingly, this has recently involved contributions by African colleagues, resulting in research from and with Africa, including from Nigeria. Numerous universities, both on the African continent and world-wide have contributed to this development, encouraging open access initiatives and helping raise successful PhD candidates towards completing their degrees. Today, many of these have established courses at their home universities that raise MA and PhD students in the country itself, making research truly Nigerian.

We are pleased in this issue to collect together four papers about Nigerian English. These papers were not solicited by the editors, but were submitted independently for review and eventual publication. In particular, the four papers demonstrate *English Today's* commitment to publishing the best scholarship on the English language in all its incarnations around the world. First, Foluke Olayinka Unabonah examines the use of *mehn* as a discourse particle in Nigerian English.

Eyo O. Mensah examines the Englishisation of Efik and Ibibio personal names within Nigerian Christian communities. Turning attention to the pronunciation of Nigerian English, Aderonke Akinola and Rotimi Oladipupo use a corpus of Nigerian English to examine the particular word stress patterns that have developed in Nigerian English. Finally, a team of five authors – Foluke Olayinke Unuabonah, Adebola Adebileje, Rotimi Olanrele Oladipupo, Bernard Fyanka, Mba Odum and Oluwateniola Kupolati – introduce a new *historical* corpus of Nigerian English that aims to enable more diachronic study of the variety. Two additional papers round out the current issue: Xia Yu and Chengyu Liu consider some of the challenges and opportunities related to the teaching of English as a lingua franca in China, and Javier Calle-Martín examines possible changes internationally related to the variable spelling of *-ise* and *-ize* in what he calls ‘eyes words’. Book

reviews by Shaopeng Li and Gang Wang are also included.

*The editors*

### References

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