

### Early Well-wishers

Good luck with *English Today*.

○ William Safire, *The New York Times*, Washington D.C., the United States

I congratulate you warmly.

○ Professor Sir Randolph Quirk, Vice-Chancellor, University of London, London, England

Welcome to *English Today*!

○ R G Carr, Translators' Guild, London, England

Good luck with this timely undertaking.

○ David K Barnhart, Lexik House, Cold Spring, N.Y., the United States

I am most impressed.

○ Professor A J Aitken, Editor, *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, Edinburgh, Scotland

Naturally, my colleagues and I are most glad to learn of the appearance of your review . . . I thought the selection of subjects very well done, well-balanced, and the articles all good.

○ George Hay, The English Language Society, London, England

I look forward to reading *English Today* – the international flavour could be particularly appealing.

○ James P Hynes, Mold, Clwyd, Wales

I think *English Today* is a splendid publication! It is very much as I hoped it would be – well-presented, informative and with greatly varied contents, and the articles written in a conversational manner (a sharing of interests) rather than academically; a delight for anyone concerned with, and curious about, our beloved language.

○ W Vernon Noble, Brockholes, West Yorkshire, England

### Singulars and Plurals

I take this opportunity to enclose an article from yesterday's *Observer* (David Owen, 'The Rust on the Iron Lady', 18 Nov 84) illustrating a questionable habit which I find very prevalent, i.e. the treatment of collective nouns as singular and plural in close propinquity: 'The essence of Thatcherism has

been that the Government *has* no responsibility for levels of unemployment. They are determined by international and domestic forces outside *their* control . . . The fuse that will eventually force the Government to change *its* policies can be sped on its

way by . . . a persistent refusal to allow the Government to escape *their* responsibilities.'

It would be interesting to have comments from experts on this habit.

○ Daisy Loman, Surbiton, Surrey, England

### The Treasure of Our Tongue?

It may be significant that one of the first statements that combines confidence in the vernacular with a missionary faith in the spread of English to less fortunate areas overseas shows a remarkable fusion of the educational and the mercantile: Samuel Daniel in 1599 talking about taking 'the treasure of our tongue . . . t'inrich vnkowing Nations with our stores'.

Such a mixture of interests does not appear to be restricted to bygone ages, however. C Brumfit, with laudable frankness, calls the English language 'a rich commercial asset' in *English for International Communication* (Pergamon, 1982). And of the questions asked on the front page of the preview issue the first is 'English – who owns it?'

This letter is to appeal to speakers of English not to regard the 'treasure' of English as a commodity to be dealt in on the Exchange but as a unique asset promoting *cultural* exchange, and to interpret the possessive 'our' as inclusive – *tok bilong yumi* ('our language', including the person spoken to) and not *tok bilong mipela* ('our language', excluding her and him and them). Yours sincerely, one of 'them'.

○ Professor Manfred Görlach, Editor, *English World-Wide*, University of Köln, West Germany

### We've Gotten the Pit Bulls

The preview copy of *English Today* looks absolutely fascinating. I was intrigued by the *Kaleidoscope* piece on Dirt-Bikes. I presume you are aware that 'gotten', as a past participle form of 'get' is also very common in Scotland, so it is not entirely an Americanism. In fact, even as a Scot whose English has been honed by a long stay in the south, plus an upbringing in the Celtic part of the country, I find it very difficult to get away from 'gotten' in my speech.

The entry 'pit bull' was also interesting. I think you may have it

Readers' letters are welcomed. *ET* policy is to publish as representative and informative a selection as possible in each issue. Such correspondence, however, may be subject to editorial adaptation in order to make the most effective use of both the letters and the space available.

wrong. I have heard of the 'pit bull' as a breed of terrier, bred in America specifically for the purpose of dog fighting. Chaining two Pit Bulls to the fence outside is equivalent to placing a couple of Dobermanns on guard. My very best wishes for the future of *English Today*.

○ Iain Bain, Editor, *The Geographical Magazine*, London, England

### The Fate of the Future . . .

This gives me the chance to raise the question of the future of the future, which seems to have almost disappeared. The use of the present tense instead of the future is, to me, the most irritating of all the numerous misuses of the English language. When I read or hear that so-and-so 'goes to the U.S.A. on Wednesday next' I could scream, and sometimes do so. Is 'will go' so much more difficult to say? I hope you will try to save our future.

○ R Dallas Brett OBE, Binfield, Berkshire, England

### . . . and the Future of Parsing

The article by David Crystal in the Preview Issue took me back to when I taught parts of speech, sentence construction, *précis*, etc. I believe that the study of grammar helped my pupils to have a better critical awareness of the language used not only in any literature we studied, but also on the TV to which they were glued for so many hours, and the language used around them. It also helped them to express with greater accuracy, anything they wrote or said.

That they fared well in their written applications for job interviews, and in the interviews, and then in their jobs, is a fact. Employers would ring the school to ask for our leavers (girls), because they could spell, for one thing.

○ Sybil Sarel, Sandwick, Stromness, Orkney

I was surprised to learn from Professor Crystal that parsing of words and analysis of sentences are no longer taught in schools as these are essential not only for speaking correct English but for learning a foreign language. As I am now almost blind, I cannot read very much but I listen to TV and Radio and I am appalled. I think *English Today* should have a rubric entitled 'English as She Is Broadcast', in which readers can give examples of wrong English.

○ J W Nixon, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, England

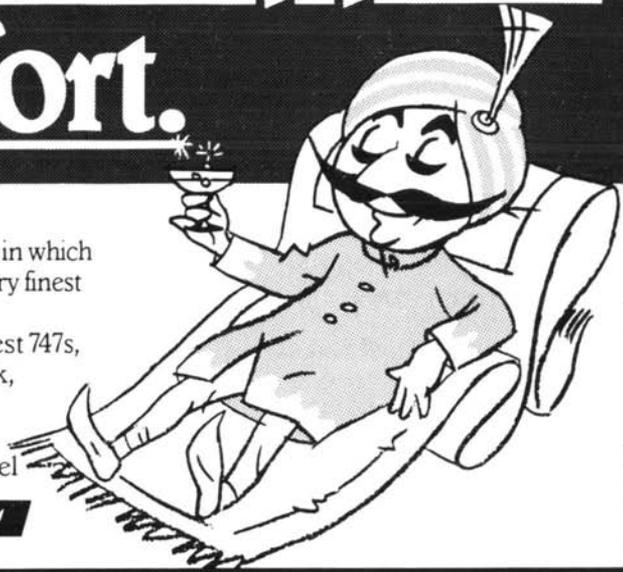
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# Basil Blackwell

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