

INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

David Crystal

IT is a widespread literary trope to anthropomorphize English—to talk about its ‘remorseless advance’ (around the world) or its ‘insatiable appetite’ (for new words). If we were to continue this trope at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we would have to select much less assertive metaphors. For, as a result of the unprecedented trends which affected the language during the twentieth century, and especially during its final decade, we would need to talk of ‘tentative steps’ and ‘uncertain directions’. We can see these new perspectives chiefly in relation to three themes: globalization, the Internet, and education.

THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF GLOBALIZATION

As the preceding chapter has stressed, the impact of globalization brought a widespread acknowledgement during the 1990s that English had achieved a genuine world presence, receiving special status in the usage or educational systems of every country. Books and journals whose titles described English as a ‘world language’ or a ‘global language’ became ubiquitous. But because there has never been a language of such global reach and magnitude, it is unclear what happens to one in the long term when it achieves this status, or what happens to other languages as a consequence. Certainly, we saw during that decade an increase in the number of concerned reactions from other-language communities

which were anxious to preserve the functional standing or formal character of their language in the face of the growing dominance of English. Anxiety over reduced functionality related chiefly to such domains as science and higher education, where English was widely used; issues of linguistic character were chiefly focused on the amount of English lexical borrowing which was taking place—words such as *email*, *shop*, and *AIDS*—which were entering several European languages.¹ At the same time, within English itself, the first effects of global spread were beginning to be analysed.

The immediate linguistic consequences of English becoming a global language have been reviewed in Chapter 13. The recurring pattern is one of language spread resulting in language change. As new communities adopt English, and give it an increasingly central place in their lives, so they adapt it to reflect their circumstances and needs. As it accretes functions within their society, there is a growing sense of local identity articulated through its use, in addition to whatever other languages may be available. In due course, regional literatures emerge which not only express themselves through English but also—via their themes and characters—comment upon it, and upon the linguistic situation which the communities are experiencing.

The countries of the world are at varying stages in relation to this course of development. Those which reflect a long history of divergence, such as Britain and the USA, show the emergence of distinct regional standards and a highly diverse and mature literature manifested by writing in every genre. But it is important to appreciate that all countries—even those whose separate political identities are relatively recent, such as Singapore and Nigeria (the so-called ‘New Englishes’)—display a use of the language which is sociolinguistically highly varied. Regional dialects reflect the often extensive geographical spread of English throughout a country. Social dialects reflect the ethnic diversity of the population, a diversity which is often reinforced by the use of separate or mixed languages (such as the Chinese and English mixing which comprises Singaporean English, or ‘Singlish’). New pidgins and creoles emerge. Whatever ‘Nigerian English’ is, for example, it could never be a homogeneous entity, given the great size and population of Nigeria and the fact that it contains over 400 languages, each of which influences the form of English in individual ways through the use of local loanwords, pronunciations, and grammatical patterns. In addition, any New English soon evolves a set of formality levels, which depend largely on the closeness of the relationship between a variety and standard English.

¹ See, for example, M. Görlach, *A Dictionary of European Anglicisms: A Usage Dictionary of Anglicisms in Sixteen European Languages* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Although futurologists have varied opinions about the very-long-term role of English as a global lingua franca, we are unlikely to see a reversal of current trends in the course of the present century. All the evidence at present points to a steady growth in the number of New Englishes, and—within these—an increase in new forms, new functions, and new literatures. There is one main reason for this, which has been acknowledged in Chapter 13: the increasing global presence of non-native speakers, now outnumbering native speakers in a ratio of three to one. But the nature of the non-native speaker bias is changing. Whereas fifty years ago most non-native speakers of English belonged to ‘second-language’ nations, where the British Empire had left a legacy of official language use, today most belong to countries which have had no political relationship with Britain or any other English-speaking nation. This seems to be the pattern for the future. Because there are more of these nations, we must therefore anticipate a considerable increase in the kind of inter-linguistic effects which have been repeatedly observed in earlier contact situations. Just as South African English displays large numbers of words borrowed from Afrikaans, Xhosa, Zulu, and other local languages—such as Afrikaans *agterkamer* (‘back-room’), Zulu *ngoma* (‘type of drum’), and a distinctive range of pronunciations which reflect the syllable-timed pattern of those languages (the name *South Africa*, for example, being pronounced by many speakers as four equally stressed syllables)—so we must expect to find an evolving linguistic distinctiveness in China, Egypt, Sweden, and the other 120 or so countries where English has status only as a ‘foreign language’ (‘EFL countries’).

At a colloquial level, this influence, seen in lexical borrowing or more extensive code-mixing, has already been institutionalized through the use of such names as ‘Spanglish’ and ‘Japlish’. These labels, however, have to be used with caution because they have been applied to a variety of different language situations on the ground, and they are often used stereotypically. The term ‘Spanglish’, for example, has been used in four main senses: for a balanced mixing at all levels between Spanish and English; for the use of a large number of Spanish loan words in English; for the use of a large number of English loan words in Spanish; and for a situation where any kind of mutual influence, no matter how small, generates a public outcry from purists. For the present chapter, it is the first two senses that are relevant, such labels drawing attention to the way English vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, or patterns of discourse have altered under the influence of other languages. Once upon a time, such variations would have been dismissed out-of-hand as ‘interference errors’ produced by people whose command of the standard language was imperfect. Today, as increasing numbers of highly educated people accommodate to each other in the use of such features, these ‘errors’ gradually take on the character of regional spoken standards. For example, in

Egypt, the universal greeting 'Welcome in Egypt' was once perceived to be an error, displaying the influence of Arabic. Today, it is in universal use, produced by native English speakers living in Egypt as well as by native Arabic speakers. Its status has even been sanctioned by its appearance in some English-language textbooks written for the Egyptian market. This process is no different, of course, from the emergence of *quarter of* instead of *quarter to* in American time-telling, or any other distinctive local use, such as *toward* vs. *towards*, which has achieved status as a regional standard.

However, the fact that such a usage has emerged in Egypt, an EFL country, and has moreover crossed the native/non-native divide, is highly significant. It is, I believe, a sign of things to come. The driving force is probably the need for linguistic accommodation. The language of people in rapport with each other readily converges. It is only natural for native speakers of English, living as a (less powerful) minority in a non-native community, and wishing to integrate within that community, to accommodate in the direction of the linguistic norms which they hear around them. And it is only a matter of time before features of this integration—vocabulary, most obviously, but also subtle features of grammar and even pronunciation—begin to be institutionalized, written down by those who listen most carefully: the novelists, poets, dramatists, and short-story writers. While at the outset these writers produce styles which are personal and idiosyncratic, over the course of time shared features inevitably emerge, and these then become models for other kinds of written language use. The similarities in vocabulary and grammar are often obscured by the diversity of spelling practices—as in the case of contemporary Scots or Caribbean writing—but we might expect a gradual standardization of spelling to emerge in the course of time.

'New Literatures' do not develop overnight. The evidence from earlier Commonwealth manifestations is that fresh literary voices take a considerable while to mature. Authors are always at first somewhat uncertain about the way to handle the non-standard or innovative varieties of English evolving in the community about which they are writing. But over time the writing gains in confidence. In relation to the presentation of non-standard varieties, there seem to be four stages:

- 1 All characters express themselves in standard English, whatever their linguistic background; the author makes no comment. Example:
 'How long do you intend to stay with us,' said the Colonel.
 'As long as you will have me, sir,' replied Manuel.
- 2 Characters express themselves in standard English; the author tells the reader what variety or language they are really using. Example:
 'I'll leave as soon as I can,' said Manuel in pidgin.

- 3 Characters express themselves in a local variety; the author additionally tells the reader what the variety is. Example:

'Me go quick-quick,' said Manuel in pidgin.

- 4 Characters express themselves in a local variety; the author makes no comment. Example:

'Me go quick-quick,' said Manuel.

It is this last stage, a stage of 'showing', not 'telling', which is a sign of real literary confidence. We can see it emerging early on (as far as the history of New Englishes is concerned) in Milton Murayama's novel *All I asking for is my body* (1959), which tells a story from the viewpoint of Kiyoshi, a young Japanese boy growing up on a sugar plantation in Hawaii. It used standard English and varieties of Hawaiian pidgin and creole English, as well as pidgin and code-mixed Japanese.² The extract below displays features both of showing and of telling. Standard English is used (with occasional deviations) for the main narrative as well as to express the thoughts of older people speaking in Japanese—the latter including some code-mixing, as in the last sentence of the extract.

'Kiyoshi, you understand, you're not to eat anymore at Makoto's home,' Father said evenly, now his anger gone.

I was going to ask 'Why?' again but I was afraid. 'Yes,' I said.

Then Tosh said across the table in pidgin English, which the old folks couldn't understand, 'You know why, Kyo?' I never liked the guy, he couldn't even pronounce my name right. 'Because his father no work and his mother do all the work, thass why! Ha-ha-ha-ha.'

Father told him to shut up and not to joke at the table and he shut up and grinned.

Then Tosh said again in pidgin English, his mouth full of food; he always talked with his mouth full. 'Go tell that kodomo taisho to go play with guys his own age, not small shrimps like you. You know why he doan play with us? Because he scared, thass why. He too wahine. We bust um up.'

'Wahine' was the Hawaiian word for woman. When we called anybody wahine it meant she was a girl or he was a sissy.

... 'Mama, you better tell Kyo not to go outside the breakers. By-'n'-by he drown. By-'n'-by the shark eat 'um up.'

'Oh, Kiyochan, did you go outside the breakers?', she said in Japanese.

'Yeah,' Tosh answered for me. 'Makoto Sasaki been take him go.'

'Not dangerous,' I said in pidgin Japanese; 'Makato-san was with me all the time.'

'Why shouldn't Makoto-san play with people his own age, ne?,' Mother said.

² This is discussed in more detail in S. Romaine, 'Hawai'i Creole English as a Literary Language', *Language in Society* 23 (1994), 536.

As the number of English-language speakers in EFL countries increases, and as their confidence to use the language in distinctive ways grows, we must surely anticipate a major growth in the expressive range of English arising out of new literary uses. There is no reason why the Hawaiian or West African novel (in English) should not have its equivalent one day in the Scandinavian novel (in English) or the Oriental novel (in English), or Caribbean poetry eventually be matched by Russian poetry (in English) or Chinese poetry (in English). An indication of the correspondingly wider linguistic and cultural perspectives needed to interpret them can already be seen in the English-language newspapers from any of the EFL countries that produce one, for example, Egypt, Japan, or Greece. A wide range of topic areas has generated an extensive local vocabulary of common nouns and proper names which have acquired local overtones (the equivalent of such forms as *Whitehall*, *Soho*, and *West End* in British English). I do not know what the equivalent of *West End* and *East End* is in the English-language description of its corresponding locations in Tokyo, Bangkok, or Berlin, but every city has names which reflect social realities, and the English which is used in these areas will include those resonances. We would need to know what they were if we were to interpret correctly any English-language novel or newspaper in Japan, Thailand, or Germany which incorporated them.

As with the literary example above, English-language newspapers uncertain of the level of awareness of their readership take pains to 'tell' their readers what they are talking about by translating potentially obscure vocabulary, especially in relation to proper names. Here is an example from a Russian English-language publication:

Russia's Ded Moroz (Grandfather Frost) whose official residence is in Veliky Ustyug [a town in Russia's northwest], Santa Claus from Lapland's village of Rovaniemi and their Yakutian counterpart Ekhee Dyyl are meeting this Saturday in the Yakutian village of Tomtor in the Oimyakon district (the Far Eastern Federal District) on the last day of the first Cold Pole-2002 festival. (*Pravda*, 2003)

This is a very high level of 'telling'. At a more mature stage of expression, there is no 'telling', only 'showing':

Wakonahana, facing one of the few rikishi smaller than himself, had little trouble with No. 6 maegashire Mainoumi, who could use none of his tricks against the technically-sound sekiwake. (*The Daily Yomiuri*, 1993)

This is confident writing, assuming an aware readership which does not have to be written down to. Those who understand Japanese sumo wrestling of course find such sentences transparent. They are no more difficult, in essence, than is a

baseball or cricket report to enthusiasts of either sport, as in these American and British examples:

Brown was hit in the helmet by a Jim Taylor pitch in the top of the eighth inning and was down at home plate for three minutes.

Hussein has placed two slips and a gully and a backward short-leg for the occasional ball zipping in off the seam.

Newspapers, creative literature, and printed ephemera (such as restaurant menus) involve a very wide range of subject matter, reflecting the physical environment, history, society, and life style of the host country. As a result, the number of culturally distinctive lexical items which accumulate is extensive, as demonstrated by the 'New English' dictionaries—of South African English, Jamaican English, Australian English, and so on—which, as mentioned in Chapter 13, have already been compiled. These usually include well in excess of 10,000 entries—and this figure does not take into account encyclopaedic data, such as the names of people, places, and events, which most modern dictionaries tend to exclude. To come to terms with all this, a rapprochement between linguistic and cultural studies, at a comparative and global level, is likely to be one of the major intellectual developments in twenty-first-century English-language studies.

Linguistic terminology can hardly fail to be influenced by these new perspectives. The kinds of issue presented by code-mixed and culturally-induced lexical variation raise serious questions for the distinction between 'native' and 'non-native' English, and for the relevance of such notions as 'EFL'. Quite plainly, the experience of a Japanese speaker learning English as a foreign language in Japan is very different from that of someone learning French as a foreign language in that country. The fact that English is part of the Japanese environment in a way that French is not means that the learning experience is very different. Young children cannot avoid being exposed to English in such domains as advertising, television, the Internet, and pop music, and inevitably develop a considerable passive knowledge of (some domains of) English. There is an increased awareness of English vocabulary through the assimilation of loanwords into Japanese. And the popular appeal of English motivates a degree of spontaneous active (albeit often non-standard) use, both in speech and writing, as when children (or adults) imitate discourse exchanges they have encountered in English-language films or make use of idiomatic expressions they have seen in Internet interactions. And for 'Japanese' here, read 'people from any EFL country'. We need a term for the state of a language which arises out of its status as a *lingua franca* in a community. 'Nativized

English' is one which has been suggested, as by Prcic in 2003.³ Other terms, describing the varying types of situation in different communities, must follow.

THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF THE INTERNET

The trend towards electronic communication in the second half of the twentieth century also made its public impact during the 1990s, when the world wide web and mobile telephony arrived, and interaction through email and chatroom became routine. As earlier chapters in this volume have illustrated, a new technology always has a significant effect on the character and use of language, but when a technology produces a medium that is so different from anything we have experienced hitherto, the linguistic consequences are likely to be dramatic, involving all areas of English structure and use, and introducing new considerations into the methodology of its study.

The impact of technology has been evident at every stage in English linguistic history, from the arrival of pen and ink onwards. Writing introduced a graphological dimension to English, with all that this involved in terms of spelling, punctuation, and styles of handwriting. Printing added another dimension to written language, in the form of typography and graphic design, of further developments in the orthographic system, and of a huge expansion of language varieties through books, magazines, newspapers, advertisements, and printed ephemera. The telephone introduced new techniques of spoken discourse, and the telegraph added new written styles, such as 'telegamese' (see further p. 276). Radio broadcasting did analogously for the spoken language what print had done for the written, extending phonological expression, and introducing several fresh varieties such as announcements, sports commentaries, and news broadcasts. Over the twentieth century, film and television continued this process, adding cinematic or televisual speech varieties and also such forms of written expression as programme titles, screen credits, and commercials. In the late twentieth century, the mobile phone (or cell-

³ See T. Prcic, 'Is English Still a Foreign Language?', *The European English Messenger* 12 (2003), 35-7.

phone), with its space-restricted screen, motivated the development of a further written variety, based on linguistic abbreviation, in the form of text-messaging. And the Internet has taken this process even further, with emails, synchronous (real-time) chatrooms, asynchronous discussion groups, and the many types of Web-based text showing English moving in new stylistic directions, partly in response to the personalities and group dynamics of the participants, and partly because of the constraints introduced by the controlling hardware and software.

But the Internet has done more than earlier technologies in altering our perception of what language is and how it is used. There are plainly considerable differences between the kind of language used on the Internet—*Netspeak*, as I have elsewhere called it⁴—and those used in traditional forms of speech and writing. Indeed, the extent of the difference is so great that it amounts to the arrival of a new medium, often called *computer-mediated communication*, which blends properties of traditional written and spoken language. Netspeak is not like traditional writing. It permits people to do things routinely to the written language which were not possible before, such as to interpolate responses into a message (as in emails) or to cut and paste from one document to another without the results clashing graphically. And it offers new dimensions of contrast which were not previously available, notably in animated graphic presentation. Nor is Netspeak like traditional speech. It lacks the simultaneous feedback which is an essential part of face-to-face conversation. It permits the carrying on of several conversations simultaneously in chatrooms, where it is possible to attend to many interlocutors at once, and to respond to as many as taste and typing speed permit. And it allows people to participate in several totally different speech situations simultaneously—a computer may have a number of windows open at the same time, allowing the user to participate in a multi-user chatroom, engage in a one-to-one conversation using Instant Messenger, role-play an imaginary character in an Internet game, and much more. Participants are well aware of what they are doing, as the following conversation shows. It took place in 2003 between a group of established adult members of a chatroom and a newcomer (a 'newbie', Artman), puzzled about how to behave. (Nicknames have been changed, but the text is otherwise exactly as it appeared.)

⁴ See D. Crystal, *Language and the Internet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edn 2006).

- Artman: how can you listen and chat at the same time? it boggles the mind.
 Toots: for now anyway
 Mo: add chewing gum and you can try for Mensa
 Deedee: It takes skill artman
 Toots: HEy, we love Boggle
 Artman: heheh
 Pluto: you're a mere newbie. You'll get the hang of it. Just realign both halves of the brain and stuff
 Hop: I've been chatting/listening/watching tv shows at the same time for long time
 Artman: well, I'm impressed. :)
 Deedee: Sometimes I listen, chat, AND play Bejeweled
 Benj: Throw in fic writing, and I hear ya.
 Hop: it's kinda overwhelming at first
 TKD: after a couple of go-arounds, you find that having 7 conversations at once is perfectly normal
 Artman: sure
 Benj: Not necessarily 7 perfectly normal conversations
 DIY: you will often write in the wrong window
 DIY: but we don't care
 TKD: well, its when you start having them without the computer that people start to stare
 Artman: oh yeah, that happens all the time
 Artman: lol [= 'laughing out loud']
 Mo: It makes the conversation more interesting

It is linguistically interesting too, for the practices break most of the traditionally understood conventions governing how successful conversations are supposed to proceed. The general concept of the conversational exchange, for example (as discussed by Stubbs in his 1983 analysis of the structure of discourse), or the more specific notion of the 'adjacency pair' (i.e. a privileged sequence of sentences, such as question + response), has to be fundamentally revised to cope with such material.

Just as radical a development is the way the Internet is altering our conception of what the written language is for. The vast majority of traditional writing has represented the language of public record and debate, as manifested in administrative, academic, and expository material (e.g. newspapers, ephemera). It is formal in style, for the most part constructed with care, and expressed in standard English (in one of its regional incarnations). Creative literature, displaying a wider range of styles, forms only a small part of the written output over the centuries, as the relative proportions of texts in any modern corpus

show.⁵ Informal writing (as seen in letters) forms an even smaller part although, as Chapters 7 and 9 have shown, its linguistic importance is great. All kinds of imbalances exist. Texts written by men far outnumber texts written by women, at all stages in the history of the language. Texts written by young children or teenagers hardly ever achieve a public presence; nor do texts written by handicapped people or marginalized groups. It is difficult to find public examples of unedited regional or dialect writing after standard English is established. Likewise, the written language of many social groups, such as ethnic minorities, rarely achieves an outside audience. At any stage in the history of English, if I wanted to find out what an in-group was saying, or how it used the language, as an outsider the task would be virtually impossible. The Internet has changed all this.

Probably the most important linguistic effect of the Internet is the way it offers an unprecedented degree of written public presence to small-scale regional and social groups, and thus a vast potential for representing local identities. At the level of regional dialect, developments have taken place both intranationally and internationally, corresponding to the way the Internet has—since the late 1990s—become increasingly multilingual, offering opportunities for self-expression to all languages, including many that are seriously endangered. At the level of the social group, every conceivable interest group now has an Internet presence, fostering new styles of linguistic interaction and giving rise to a range of fresh social concerns (see below). The opportunities are unlimited even at the level of the individual: anyone with access to the medium can now present a personal diary-type statement to the world, of unlimited length, in the form of a *blog* or ‘Web log’—one of the most proliferating functions of the Web in the early 2000s.

The representation of dialect was an early manifestation. Any intranational regional dialect which has a history of enthusiastic support will now have its web pages. In the UK alone, there are hundreds of sites devoted to the local English of Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland, as well as dialect sites focusing on Yorkshire, Lancashire, Newcastle, London, and elsewhere. A major BBC-inspired web-based project, ‘Voices 2005’, a nationwide interactive survey of regional variation, and including transcriptions of dialect usage and sound recordings, began in January 2005 (and was aired on BBC Radio 4 in August 2005). And at an international level, many of the New Englishes now have available a written electronic identity which previously could be achieved only through conventional creative literature. Because the Internet is uncontrolled by the hierarchy of grammarians, lexicographers, publishers, printers, copy editors, and proof-readers who have traditionally established,

⁵ See D. Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 451.

disseminated, and controlled standard English (see Chapters 9 and 10 for earlier manifestations of this particular domain of language activity), it seems likely that we will see a much greater presence of informal written interaction than at any previous stage in the history of the language, and thus the rapid emergence and consolidation of local group norms of usage—several of which will privilege non-standard forms. These new varieties are bound to achieve a more developed written representation than would ever have been possible before, and through the global reach of the Internet they may well extend their influence beyond their locality or country of origin. A whole new range of Internet-mediated regional written standards is the likely outcome. And as the amount of written language on the Internet will eventually far exceed that available in traditional print form, a new type of relationship between non-standard varieties and standard English will one day emerge.

What is especially interesting, from a linguistic point of view, is that most of this material will be unedited. Editorial involvement represents the biggest difference between speech and writing. By 'editing' I mean the presence of an intermediate stage of adaptation (usually by a professional) of a speaker/writer's output before it is received by a listener/reader. Most of the spoken language around us is unedited, in this sense, the only real exception being certain kinds of broadcast and cinematic material where producers, directors, or recording specialists may be heavily involved. By contrast, most of the written language around us is edited, often several times over. The exceptions include only informal letter-writing, graffiti, and a few other manuscript phenomena, which in modern times comprise a very small proportion of written English. The Internet is changing this balance—not so much on the web, where a great deal of editing takes place, but in email, chatroom, and instant messenger interaction, and especially in blogging, where the most 'naked' forms of writing appear. There is no single style. Even in the short extract above, we can see different principles at work in the use of capitalization, punctuation, abbreviations, and non-standard spellings. These personality-influenced variations will certainly increase, as the population-base of the Internet grows, and the present generation of Internet-literate individuals grows old. But in all genres, from web diaries to fantasy games, we will expect to find writing which reflects the speech rhythms, regional and class backgrounds, ages, personalities, and education levels of the participants. There has been nothing like it since the manuscript era of Middle English. And the renewal of connection with medieval times may in due course be complete, for digital representations of handwriting already exist, and may well become routine—assuming of course that, at this point in the future, people are still being taught handwriting!

At the same time, the long-term linguistic character of the Internet remains unclear. This is partly because the technological revolution is in its earliest phase. Given the changes that have taken place in the last decade or so (the web itself is a creation from as recently as 1991, and mobile phone technology more recent still), we must expect there to be further innovative developments, especially of an interactive kind, which will push the language in unexpected directions. A spoken dimension of Internet use, supplementing the present graphic dimension, is in prospect. It is never possible to predict language outcomes. Text-messaging, with its array of idiosyncratic abbreviations such as *lol*, used on p. 403, or *c u l8r* ('see you later'), was a totally unexpected linguistic innovation in the UK in the late 1990s. And since 2000 we have seen even more esoteric forms of usage arising out of the way in which the Internet is being used in unpredictable ways. In relation to emails, for example, the early years of the new millennium have seen most email users suddenly having to cope with the arrival in their inboxes of large numbers of unwanted messages ('spam') which have been distributed in huge quantities from a single source. Efforts to prevent such messages through automatic filtering of their subject lines have resulted in ingenious efforts on the part of spammers to evade the filters. A whole new genre of English has been the consequence, chiefly seen in the subject-line of emails, and illustrated by such usages as:

supr vi-agra online now znwygghsxp
 VI @ GRA 75% off regular xxp wybzz lusfg
 fully stocked online pharmac^y
 Great deals, prescription d[rugs]

Many of the bizarre graphological expressions have been generated randomly, in itself an unprecedented procedure in everyday written communication.

Chatrooms provide another domain of innovation which has led to unexpected linguistic outcomes. I am not here referring to the distinctive use of rebuses and colloquial abbreviations which characterize 'textspeak'. It was perhaps not surprising to see the emergence of such forms in the technically constrained environment of a mobile phone, where there was a limit of 160 characters per screen, and space was at a premium. Nor was it surprising to see such abbreviations taken up universally in teenage interaction, where they are widely used as an economical and 'cool' style of communication. Much more unexpected was the way users adapted so quickly to the communicative potential of the medium and exploited it as part of a newfound virtual identity in which anonymity is the norm and the choice of personality (as expressed through a nickname or an on-screen character, or 'avatar') is limited only by imagination.

The uncontrolled nature of many sites (especially teenage chat sites) has motivated their participants to indulge in every kind of fantasy, regularly resulting in written representations of language which previously would have been confined to maximally informal speech, and which would never have been included in traditional publishing outlets in the interests of public decency.

Obscene or aggressive exchanges have presumably been part of youngster communication since the invention of the teenager, and have been given some study. For example, sociolinguists have long known about the kind of ritual street confrontations described under the heading of 'verbal duelling',⁶ in which participants try to outdo each other in flights of linguistic fancy exploiting taboo language to the full. Competitive joke rituals similarly have an ancient history. What is unusual is to see such rituals carried on, at great length and often with great verbal skill, in the written language—especially when such material is spelled and punctuated according to the conventions of standard English, as happens in a surprising number of cases. It is a new genre of English writing—and one which will be very difficult to research, as many of the interactions are accompanied by the exchange of webcam images which, if downloaded to a researcher's computer, would bring obvious risks. There is, understandably, immense concern over the opportunities presented by chatrooms to paedophiles, who simulate the language found there as a preliminary to gaining the trust of the participants. It is perhaps the first time in the history of linguistics that a domain of language has become off-limits (especially to male researchers) without a sophisticated system of protective legal safeguards being first put in place. And it may well be that several domains of Internet use will eventually be incapable of unimpeded investigation.

This, then, is a necessary qualification about the linguistic character of future Internet English. Editing, in the traditional sense, there may not be. But moderating, in the modern sense, there certainly will be. Many chatrooms are now moderated—watched over by a person whose role is to exclude unacceptable submissions to a site being seen by other participants. The notion of acceptability is very wide-ranging: it includes people who send in messages which are irrelevant ('off-topic'), aggressive ('flaming'), misleading ('trolling'), blasphemous, or obscene. It focuses on content, rather than linguistic structure (although doubtless there is a punctuation chatroom site somewhere where a moderator is sanctioning apostrophes), and usually takes the form of the deletion of a whole message rather than an editing of it. But the natural evolution of the discourse is inevitably

⁶ See, for example, A. Dundes, J. W. Leach, and B. Özkök, 'The Strategy of Turkish Boys' Verbal Duelling Rhymes', in J. J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (eds), *Directions in Sociolinguistics* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 130–60.

affected by such activity. How much, it is difficult to say. It is practically and economically impossible to moderate everything and, even in moderated sites, the attention-span of the moderator has its limitations—especially when dozens of messages are arriving simultaneously from many members, and being displayed at various locations on screen. The degree of sanitization varies greatly across the records of chatroom interactions, and also depends greatly on the personality of the moderators, whose censorship reflects to a degree their individual beliefs and tastes. Many sites publish logs of what their participants have said. However, many of these logs are a remove or two away from what actually went on in the session. Coping with this kind of material will be a new challenge for corpus linguistics.

THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

During the latter part of the twentieth century, a noticeable trend towards a more egalitarian society began to reduce the severity of social-class distinctions, recognize the value of diversity, safeguard the rights of minorities, and revitalize demotic values. The immediate linguistic effect was a move away from the prescriptive ethos of the past 250 years which has been described in Chapters 9 and 10, and it brought the introduction of new educational paradigms of language study. But in an age when the prescriptive tradition is still very much part of the language consciousness of older members of society, the transition between old and new paradigms presents the new generation (and their teachers) with an uncertain linguistic climate whose character is still evolving.

The new climate has particularly called for a reassessment of the relationship between standard and non-standard language and for a fresh and realistic appraisal of just what a 'standard' language involves. We seem to be at a transitional point between two worlds. The 'old world' is one where a tiny number of rules, selected and defined by prescriptive grammarians, totally conditioned our sense of acceptable 'standard' usage, so that all other usages were considered to be inferior or corrupt, and excluded from serious consideration. The 'new world' is one where non-standard regional usage is achieving a new presence and respectability within society, reminiscent of that found in Middle English when, as we have seen in Chapter 4, dialect variation in literature was widespread and uncontentious. It is not a question, in this new climate, of non-standard in any sense replacing standard. Rather, the two dimensions of language

use are being brought into a new relationship, in which the essential role of the standard language (as a means of guaranteeing intelligibility and continuity among educated people) is seen to complement the essential role of the non-standard language (as a means of giving expression to local identities). It is a move away from the confrontational situation which has had so many traumatic consequences for individual language users, most of whom have been brought up to believe that there is something seriously wrong with their demotic speech.

Eliminating such feelings from public consciousness will nevertheless take some time. As Chapter 13 has pointed out, once people have been given an inferiority complex about the way they speak or write, they find it difficult to be rid of it. But it is only a matter of time. In the later decades of the twentieth century there were clear signs that institutionalized prescriptivism was already beginning to come to an end. The most important area of change was in educational practice—especially significant because it was only through the school system that prescriptivism had been able to propagate itself. In the UK, from the 1970s, changes in school syllabuses and examination systems introduced a new dispensation. The unthinking adherence to mechanical sentence analysis and old-style canons of correctness began to be replaced by a broad-based investigation of the functions of language in all their social manifestations—a ‘language in use’ era of linguistic pedagogy. By the end of the 1990s, in the new National Curriculum, as well as in the syllabuses which were being devised for higher examinations, the study of linguistic forms had been added to functions, with a complete change in emphasis. Similar educational changes took place in other parts of the English-speaking world.

The new emphasis integrated the insights of the ‘language in use’ approach with aspects of the earlier tradition of structural analysis, now seen through linguistic spectacles. Classes and exam papers no longer asked students to parse sentences or to make decisions about correctness in relation to such issues as split infinitives. Instead, the questions began to make students *explain* what happens when language is used—to go beyond the mere ‘spotting’ of a linguistic feature (a passive, a simile, a piece of alliteration) to a mode of inquiry in which they explored the reasons lying behind the linguistic choices being made by language users. It was no longer enough to say, ‘I see an unusual adjective order in that poem’. The interesting answer—and the one which gained the marks in an exam—was to be able to say why it was there. Only in that way, it was reasoned, would students be able to develop a sense of the consequences of choosing one kind of language rather than another (such as formal vs. informal), when it came to using language themselves or evaluating the effect of a language choice upon other people. The aim, in short, was

to promote a more responsive and responsible approach to language, in which students would come to understand why people use language in the way they do, and would put this knowledge to active use to become more able to control language for themselves.

This change in emphasis is now being realized in the form of textbooks and teaching materials,⁷ but the new approach does not yet have an agreed name. It is not a matter of a 'prescriptive' approach being replaced by a 'descriptive' one, as has sometimes been suggested, for this pedagogy goes well beyond description into a world of explanation and evaluation. A better term would be 'pragmatic' (as opposed to 'dogmatic'), with all that this implies—an ability to adapt knowledge to meet the needs of differing circumstances and a readiness to judge cases on their merits. The pragmatic approach instils an awareness that variation and change are normal features of linguistic life, demanding recognition and respect. And it carries with it the corollary that those who make use of this variation must themselves be recognized and respected. In its strongest and most positive manifestation, the pragmatic approach replaces the concept of 'eternal vigilance' (beloved of prescriptivists and purists) by one of 'eternal tolerance'.

Although an educational perspective is crucial, in moving away from an institutionalized prescriptivism towards a more egalitarian linguistic era, it cannot operate alone. Other social institutions need to be involved. Indeed, without a sense of linguistic disquiet within society as a whole, it is unlikely that any change in educational practice would have taken place at all. What is interesting about the later decades of the twentieth century is the way that different social trends began to reinforce pragmatic educational linguistic thinking. In the UK, for example, leading media organizations such as the BBC opened their doors to regional speech, partly as a reaction to the emergence of independent local radio and television stations. A fine radio presenter, Susan Rae, had to stand down from Radio 4 in the early 1980s because of antagonism towards her Scots accent, but she was back reading the news on Radio 4 at the end of 2003. Business management recognized the importance of speech variation in interacting with clients: the regional accents of a new linguistic order (international as well as intranational) may be heard now at the end of a telephone at many a call centre. Organizations such as the Plain English Campaign focused attention on the linguistic responsibilities of organizations towards the needs of the individual. Political correctness, in the

⁷ See, for example, D. Crystal, *Making Sense of English Grammar* (London: Pearson Education, 2004).

best sense, fostered notions of gender and racial equality. And there was a fresh awareness of the nature of regional and ethnic identity, which led to a greater valuing of linguistic diversity. These trends had their parallels in other English-speaking countries.

But changes in linguistic attitudes and practices are not accepted overnight, or even over a decade. The cumulative effects of ten generations of prescriptive teaching are still around us. Organizations which were set up to 'safeguard' the English language, with their founding ideals in the prescriptive era, continue to exist and to attract members. Usage manuals presenting an idealized vision of standard English as a uniform, unchanging, and universal norm of correctness continue to be published. And senior managers today, whether in government, law, medicine, business, education, or the media, cannot rid themselves entirely of prescriptive thinking, because they are the last generation to have experienced this approach in their schooling. Their influence is considerable, because they unconsciously pass on their linguistic anxieties and preoccupations, often half-remembered and poorly understood, to subordinates who, in the absence of linguistic knowledge of their own, accept their opinions as dictates. In a few years time, the new generation of schoolchildren, well-grounded in pragmatic principles, will be out there in society, able to counter unthinking prescriptive attitudes; and once they are in senior positions, the confrontation will be over. But in the meantime, innumerable schoolchildren and adults have developed feelings of inadequacy and inferiority about their natural way of speaking, or about certain features of their writing, being led to believe that their practice is in some way 'ugly' or 'incorrect'. We are coming towards the close of a linguistically intolerant era, but—as happens in last-ditch situations—conservative reaction can be especially strong as seen in the Trussian promulgation of 'zero tolerance' in *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* (2003).⁸

The intellectual achievement of the prescriptive writers of the eighteenth century was to give definition to the future character of the standard; but their emotional legacy was to instil in everyone guilt about everyday usage and a fear of 'breaking the rules' which can reach paranoid proportions. It was they alone who chose which features of grammar were to be the sign of an educated writer, and their prescriptions were sufficiently powerful to persuade generations of writers how to behave, right up to the present. The main contribution of linguistics to this debacle has been to develop a fresh conception of standard English—one which gets away from prescriptive preoccupations, occupying as they do only a

⁸ See L. Truss, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves. The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation* (London: Profile Books, 2003).

tiny proportion of grammatical 'space', and allows us to concentrate on the core areas of grammatical structure that actually do govern the way we express and respond to meaning and style. In a typical reference grammar of 1,500 pages, only a dozen or so pages will be taken up with the issues that so worried the prescriptive grammarians. What linguistics has done is underline the importance of the topics covered by the remaining pages—topics which turn out to be much more closely bound up with questions of intelligibility, clarity, precision, and elegance of expression than could ever be found in the pages of a prescriptive grammar.

A transition between linguistic eras is not a comfortable stage. It takes time for people to adjust their mindsets to assimilate new ways of thinking, and for teachers to be prepared to cope with this thinking. It took half a century for the prescriptive era to become firmly established, and it will probably take a similar period to be fully weaned away from it. In 2005 we are perhaps half-way through this period. But a new social climate has emerged, in which new linguistic mores are being formed by the impact of globalization and technology. It is a world where intranational preoccupations have been firmly put in their place by an international presence of unprecedented proportions—with the population of world English-language users approaching two billion. No one nation can any longer be said to 'own' English, and no one nation's anxieties over local norms of usage will make much impact in a world where diverse regional standards are the norm, and where the Internet provides these varieties with new levels of public display. A new intellectual sociolinguistic climate is slowly but surely being formed, to which the present volume will no doubt make a significant contribution.

REFERENCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

The long-term consequences of globalization

There is little as yet published on linguistic trends in the new century, as the period has hardly begun; but the globalization and technological trends noted in this chapter were repeatedly anticipated in the 1990s. I have discussed these trends in some detail in Crystal (2001, 2004c) and the literary trends in Crystal (2004a). On the changing role of English, see McArthur (1998a), Graddol and Meinhof (1999), and Burns and Coffin (2001), as well as Chapter 13 in this volume. On the evolution of standard English, see the papers in Wright (2000). The position of English in Europe is discussed in a series of essays edited by Görlach (2002), and overseas in several papers in Volume 5 of the *Cambridge History of the English Language* (Burchfield 1994).

The long-term consequences of the Internet

On computer-mediated communication, see the collection of essays edited by Herring (1996) and the volume by Baron (2000); for its impact on general English usage, see especially Crystal (2006) and also Crystal (2004*d*).

The long-term consequences of educational change

Doughty *et al.* (1971) provide a useful example of the 'language in use' era of linguistic pedagogy. Recent educational trends are discussed in Crystal (2004*a*), which is a development of the position adopted by the papers in Watts and Trudgill (2002).