

Editorial

A BBC announcer was recently heard to pronounce the word *discriminatory* with heavy stress on the third syllable from the end, thus: *discrimi'natory*. Does that seem odd to you? If not, if you are instead wondering just why anyone should notice this and think it remarkable, you are certainly not alone. Lots of English speakers, whether they are native- or non-native users, do use this pronunciation all the time. However, perhaps you would have noticed this as a feature which you yourself do not use: it might not seem odd to you, but it could go against your own usage. We have here a phenomenon that rejoices in the label 'antepenultimate stress shift'. That is, there has developed a tendency over time for the primary stress in polysyllabic English words to settle on the third syllable from the end, irrespective of how they might once have been stressed.

Laurie Bauer, in his *Watching English Change* (London: Longman, 1994), includes this among a sizable set of phonological, lexical, grammatical and pragmatic features worthy of exploring. Drawing upon general- and pronouncing-dictionary evidence, Bauer is able to trace the rise of antepenultimate stress over a considerable period, his many examples ultimately settling on a discussion of just three, earlier *'controversy* versus recent *con'troversy*, *'kilometre* versus *ki'lometre*, and *'comparable* versus *com'parable*. Which do you say, and what is your practice on similar words such as *inextricable*, *militarily*, *Caribbean*? Still more interestingly, perhaps, for us as linguists, what do we hear around us as regards such behaviour? Is antepenultimate stressing now the more usual where you are? What are the social profiles of those who might be leading the change? Who are the people most inclined to hold to older forms of pronunciation? For someone looking for a worthwhile linguistic project, for themselves or for students, Bauer's various topics provide starting points for purposeful, well-structured examination of apparent changes in progress: as suggested above, there are many other aspects of likely change covered besides stress shift, including concord with collective nouns, the

origin and makeup of new words, and spelling variations such as *-ise/-ize*.

With work among students in mind, this is a good point at which to refer again to two suggested innovations launched in issue 29.2 of *English Today*, back in June 2013. One of these, 'English Language Bachelor of Arts' (ELBA), has so far not been seized upon by any contributors. If anyone has a particularly interesting undergraduate English Language programme running which they would like briefly to tell readers about, the offer to do so remains open: perhaps some Bauer-like projects form part of such a course? The other suggestion in 2013 was for 'English Language Initiatives' (ELI), in which contributors were invited to promote a particular line of study in which they are engaged. This has since been enthusiastically taken up by the University of Leiden's 'Bridging the Unbridgeable' research team, with each *English Today* issue now containing a contribution encouraging readers' responses to a topic they are investigating. We are delighted to learn that this has proved a real help to the Leiden researchers, and hope that others might follow their example.

Otto's contribution from Leiden in this issue concerns how people might pluralise 'octopus'. Nevitt's article on language contact emphatically demonstrates what can result from committed university study, while language-perception research conducted among pre-university British school students is the theme of Braber's contribution. Student testing in Korea concerns Ahn, and language policy issues provide the subject of the article by Wei and Feng too, their focus on China also being that of Pastor and Calderón writing on business English and Sonqing Li on English in Suzhou. Modern versus traditional spelling in Australia occupies Korhonen, and Achiri-Taboh investigates the current state of the English tag question. Fennell's review of the innovative *History of English in 100 Places*, product of the Winchester 'English Project', and Marks's of *Introducing second Language Acquisition*, conclude the issue.

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.