May a man learn a language so soone, by reading?

Yea sir, a man may learn it.

Certis I wold not haue thought it: what thinke you of this English tongue, tel me, I pray you?

It is a language that wyl do you good in England, but passe Douer, it is woorthe nothing.

Is it not vised then in other countreyes?

No sir, with whom wyl you that they speake?

With English merchants,

English merchantes, when they are out of England, it liketh them not, and they doo not speake it.

But yet what thinke you of the speach, is it gallant and gentle, or els contrary?

Certis if you wyl beleve me, it dooth not like me at all, because it is a language confudled, bepeved with many tongues; it taketh many words of the lastine, & mo fro the French, & mo fro the Italian, and many mo fro the Dutch, some also fro the Greece, & fro the Britaine, so that if every lenguage had his owne wordes againe, there woulde but a fewe re-maine for English men, and yet euery day they adde.

How is this thing possible?

It is true, and very true.
Figure 2.4 McArthur’s model of Engishes

Foreign (in the OED)

à la mode

en fête

nil desperandum

Dialectal (regionalisms)

addle v./1, to earn or merit something, (northern England);
alcatote, a silly or foolish person (Devon);
handsmooth, completely, flatly, thoroughly (East Anglian);
mouldwarp, a mole (Sc. and northern);

snicket, an alleyway (northern) (called a jigger in Merseyside, a pass in Sc. and Irish English (north.), a trance or vennel (Sc.), a wynd (Sc. and northern Eng.).

bergie — regional (W. Cape)
titihoya — regional (KwaZulu-Natal)

Slang

Abyssinia — “I’ll be seeing you”

AC/DC — bisexual

axeman — a guitarist

banjaxed (Irish) — ruined, destroyed

bovver boy (Brit.) — a hooligan or member of a skinhead gang

Examples of ‘colonial’ words in the OED

hartebeest, karee, knobkerrie, laager, meerkat, outspan, paauw, tickey from South Africa

boomerang, dingo, fossick, gibber, kookaburra from Australia

huia, kahikatea, manuka, and Maori from New Zealand
Questions

How should one treat the English of second-language speakers in dictionaries?

How does one decide which scientific and technical words are in common enough use for inclusion?

How much of the local English of regions of (say) South Africa does one include?

What factors make SAE different from the rest?

Will the different varieties of English within South Africa, the result of decades of apartheid and separate education, slowly merge into one South African English as children mix in schools and adults work together more freely? Should they merge?

What about the language of children? It is so ephemeral and difficult to document: how can we capture it? (SAE words include arlie, arvie, doedoe, dabbies, ghoen, kiepie, puttysticks.)

Is there a variety called ‘Southern African English’ which includes, for instance, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Swaziland, and Botswana? Do our Englishes overlap?

How can a large and inclusive English dictionary cover all international varieties of English efficiently, with limited resources and staff based in only two geographical areas?

How should dictionaries treat ‘incorrectness’?

Where do the creole and pidgin Englishes fit in?
References and further reading


Examining the OED (website) [http://oed.hertford.ox.ac.uk/main/content/view/24/169/](http://oed.hertford.ox.ac.uk/main/content/view/24/169/)


