

under the label Black South African English must become a focus of research; black attitudes towards these and other language varieties must also be investigated. But in addition, Wright notes a 'tremendous imbalance' in research into language in South Africa, in so far as '(l)anguage policy has been emphasised to the virtual exclusion of any attention to language cultivation' (Lanham et al. 1995: 5). This is certainly true; but the publications under review here should

perhaps be seen as an indication of a new interest in issues of language cultivation: the clarification and implementation of the standard-to-be, and the development of strategies to facilitate and enhance the acquisition of L2 English, especially in the multicultural classroom.

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Ayo BAMGBOSE, et al. (eds.). *New Englishes: A West African Perspective*. Ibadan: Mosuro, 1995. xvii + 417 pages.

This volume is a compilation of several talks presented at the international conference on «Communicative Competence and the Role of English as a Second Language» organized by the British Council in December 1993 in Ibadan, to commemorate its fiftieth anniversary in Nigeria. It contains a tasteful and timely collection of papers and opening addresses, the bulk of which discuss the role of English in Nigeria. On a broad level, the papers reflect three geographical perspectives —that of noted Nigerian linguists, language teachers, and administrators; that of the British representatives of the British Council and the British High Commission in Nigeria; and the view of a few Cameroonian and Ghanaian linguists.

The book contains 21 articles (14 of which are written by Nigerians) and is organized into five parts, viz. «English in Language Policy» (Part I), «English Language Teaching» (Part II), «Varieties of English and Domains of Use» (Part III), «Literature in English» (Part IV), and «Corpus Research on English» (Part V). Four opening addresses delivered at the conference are also included in this volume. They include the one given by the Director of the British Council in Niger-

ia, the speech delivered by the vice-chancellor of the University of Ibadan, the British High Commissioner's opening address, and the one given by the Nigerian Minister for Education and Youth Development. The powerful foreword is written by none other than the guru of New Englishes, Braj Kachru. Attention will be drawn to points of interest in the different articles.

The volume emphasizes the pivotal role English plays in Nigeria (and also in Cameroon and Ghana) and identifies legitimate linguistic concerns such as the need for a current language census in Ghana and in Nigeria (see Dolphyn: 27-33; Jowitt: 34-56), the need for a curricular change to address the «mass failure syndrome» at the Nigerian secondary level (see Mohammed: 130-52), the nonchalance displayed by the English language examination boards such as WAEC and JAMB in Nigeria toward Nigerian English (see Jowitt: 34-56; Adekunle: 57-86; Bowers: 87-98; Brumfit: 99-112; Afolayan: 113-129; Akere: 178-202), and the continued stigmatization of Nigerian Pidgin, in spite of its widespread use, its inherent creativity, and the unique process of «de-pidginisation» it appears to be undergoing (see Ji-

bril: 232-247; Elugbe: 284-299). What adds authenticity to the issues raised in this volume are the varieties of English employed; most of the Nigerian writers use Nigerianisms. Take, for instance, the use of the verb *sanctioned* in the sentence «[C]ode-mixing involving English and the not-so-statusful Nigerian languages is seriously sanctioned in Nigeria» (273), and on page 281 (line 15). Numerous lexical mirrors of the mesolectal variety of Nigerian English (see Bamiro, 1991) can also be found.

A most detailed repudiation of the linguistic status quo in Nigeria is provided in Mohammed's article, which addresses a fundamental problem — the ineffectiveness of the Senior Secondary School (SSS) English curriculum. As Mohammed rightly observes, the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) creates English tests that are «dysfunctional and inappropriate» (139). Nigerian universities require a credit pass in English, but statistics indicate that 70-75% of Nigerian students get F9 — a failing grade. Poor performance in English in the WAEC English test and in the General Certificate in Education test are also reported for Ghana (see Dolphyn: 33). Another important point Mohammed raises is the faulty assumption that Standard British English is being taught by the teachers. This is clearly not the case, as most speak Nigerian English. A few speak Indian English. Having attended high school and college in Nigeria and having sat for both the WAEC and JAMB examinations, I recall being tested on idioms that contained items (italicized) foreign to the culture and natural environment. Examples included the following: having a finger in every *pie*, comparing *apples* and oranges, looking for a needle in a *haystack*, and over the *grapevine*. I also recall being tested on noncount nouns like *information*, and *equipment* and hearing every Nigerian use the plural Nigerian English forms.

The SS1 English curriculum lists (un)countable nouns and phrasal verbs as the focus areas. One is tempted to ask: «In which dialect?» The mismatch between what is taught and what is expected of the students in English examinations therefore deserves immediate attention. While Mohammed makes valid suggestions, he advocates primarily methodological changes and some structural ones. Like Bamgboṣe (9-26) and Akere (178-202), he does not give examples of inappropriate test items or of how the curriculum can be redesigned. In other words, only passing reference is made to this paradigm gap (see Sridhar and Sridhar, 1982). Interviewing the students who fail, and their English teachers, would be a good start. Holding national and regional conferences in which language teachers, English examination preparers, and examiners are invited to exchange ideas and arrive at a solution is another possibility. What is quite surprising is that this golden anniversary conference did not have a panel discussion on this very important topic. Ironically, in the September 1991 «Report of the Language Group», the Committee, chaired by an advocate of Nigerian English, concluded that: «The English Junior Secondary School and SSS curricula are adequate as they are at the moment». In view of the fact that these reviews are conducted only at 10-year intervals, one can expect no major curricular changes in Nigeria in the near future.

Another surprising thing about this volume is that the contributors refer to Nigeria as an ESL environment. This is a misnomer, and so is the use of the term ESL in the theme designated for the conference. The theme should have read «...the Role of English as a Nativized/Indigenized Language». After all, English does serve as the L1 for some Nigerians (see Adekunle: 86), and as the third for others, so the terms «bilingual»

and «second» are not as appropriate. Having lived in Nigeria for 12 years, I know from personal experience that early English acquisition is the norm in Nigeria. Several of my Nigerian friends were most fluent in English and, even though they had a receptive knowledge of one or more Nigerian languages (their L1(s) in theory), in practice, English was their L1.

Essien (269-83) provides interesting examples of code-mixing involving Ibibio and English. He observes that «[I]t appears that the bilingual mind keeps track of items which are alike in the two languages and selects only one of them at a time, thereby avoiding embarrassing repetition» (277). However, this interpretation does not account for why such code duplication is common in cases of Hindi-English code-mixing and switching. Essien makes an interesting point —that Ibibio speakers tend to use English when they quarrel and lie. In fact, there is even an Ibibio proverb which 'condones' lying in English. This says something about the Ibibio speaker's associations with English.

One of the strengths of this volume lies in its presentation of multiple themes and perspectives. Brumfit makes a very valid point, namely, that «debates about the future of English, in any part of the world, are arguments, in part, about the potential for power of the use of English» (105). The articles that focus on the role of English in Ghana and Cameroon are particularly insightful. Dolphyn observes that, in Ghana, «These days, among secondary school and university students, pidgin has become very fashionable» (32). This is true of Nigeria, too, but this point is not mentioned in any of the articles on Nigerian Pidgin. That the Ghanaian youth refer to Ghanaian Pidgin as 'Harvard', «thus giving it prestige» (Dolphyn: 32) is truly admirable and creative. A suitable nickname for Nigerian Pidgin might help with de-stigmatization. An

interesting difference between the two settings is that, in Ghana, «it is mostly the boys who speak it» (Dolphyn: 32). Bobda's article (248-68) is eye-opening, as it draws attention to the false features of Cameroonian English reported in a couple of studies, and to the tendency toward overgeneralization. In his words, «There is ...the temptation to make Nigeria a reflection of the whole of West Africa as far as English is concerned... National varieties like Cameroon English, Ghanaian English, Sierra Leonean English and Gambian English are conspicuously ignored» (268). In the volume under review, none of the articles focuses on Sierra Leonean English and Gambian English.

This being the first edition, it is not surprising that there are quite a few typos. The publishers acknowledge the three that appear in the foreword. The following are some of the others spotted: «if» instead of «of», on page 53 (lines 21 and 23); «into» instead of «on» on page 73 (line 22); «less» instead of «fewer» on page 94 (line 16, although this could be an error); «the» has been omitted on page 144 (line 4; i.e., «through *the* content of...»); the auxiliary verb has been omitted on page 146 (line 2); the word «relationship» should be pluralized in line 20, and line 27 erroneously contains the noun phrase «nouveaux riches». These and other typos will need to be corrected in the next print. Cross-referencing between related articles in this collection would also be in order. For instance, some points made by Adekunle are echoed in Jowitt's article. Such connections should be acknowledged.

On the whole, however, this volume is very informative. The article by Adekunle is one of the first to mention the names of several minority Nigerian languages, such as Amo, Angas, Birom, Chip, Chella, Mada, Nabor, Tera, and Yergam. The contributors bring several burning issues to the forefront, and most

attempt a bold break away from the British English tradition. Even Bowers admits that «it is part of the role of the British Council to be British» (88) and that the Council has «a vested interest in maintaining the roles of English as a language, and British ELT as a trade and a profession» (88). He envisions an «agenda for the future» in which the Council will continue to work as «a partner with the Ministry, WAEC, the English language teaching profession, the media and

employers» (90). The Council's «English 2000 project» is a five-point plan that includes acculturation, via «broadcasting» and «British cultural studies, including literature» (95). So, in many ways, this volume signals the need for a *West African Council*.

Anita Pandey  
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Richard ALLSOPP. *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. vii + 697 pages.

Because of the provincialism of such dictionaries as *Dictionary of Jamaican English* and *Dictionary of Bahamian English* on the one hand, and the parochialism of standard British and American desk dictionaries on the other, the *Dictionary of Caribbean English* (hereafter, *DCEU*) sets out to provide as complete an inventory as practicable of the Caribbean environment and lifestyle, as known and spoken in each territory but not recorded in many Western dictionaries such as *Webster's* or *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

The lexical inventory of *DCEU* is drawn from the following anglophone Caribbean and rimland territories: Anguilla; Antigua and Barbuda; Bahamas; Barbados; Belize; Dominica; Grenada and Carriacou; Guyana; Jamaica; Montserrat; St. Kitts and Nevis; St. Lucia; St. Vincent and Grenadines; Trinidad and Tobago; Turks and Caicos; Vir-

gin Islands (British); and Virgin Islands (US). The sources of material include data-collection workshops, transcription of tape-recorded spontaneous speech, field-notes, individual responses, excerpts from written sources such as newspapers, novels, and short stories, and specially commissioned vocabulary collections.

According to *DCEU*, the vocabulary of Caribbean English comprises «the whole active *core vocabulary of World English* as may be found in any piece of modern English literature, together with all *Caribbean regionalisms* produced by the ecology, history, and culture of the area» (1996: 1, original emphasis). The sources of the regionalisms, with examples, are as follows: Amerindian survivals (e.g., *cashew*, p. 139); African survivals (e.g., *Anancy* 'tricky spiderman in Anancy tales, originating in West Africa, especially Ashanti folklore', p. 29); archaic English (e.g., *stupidness* 'nonsense',