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English - A language that thrives on diversities

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Editorial

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As every year, June was Pride month, celebrating the history, rights, and culture of the LGBTQIA+ communities in many countries around the world. While there is of course some irony in the fact that societal support be visible during just one month of the year, that month has typically culminated in a cheerful Pride March or Pride Parade, also referred to as Christopher Street Day in Germany and many other European countries.

I still fondly remember Pride March in London in 2022. It was one of the most vivid and joyful days in my life, and I was struck by the many groups that proudly walked as representatives of their various employers.

This year, things were different. Given the current political climates in increasingly many countries, funding for the celebrations had often been drastically reduced, and frequently homo- and transphobic groups had threatened LGBTQIA+ communities. At times to the extent that marches had to be cancelled, as was the case at the Kennedy Center in Washington (US), in Plymouth, Liverpool (both UK), Gelsenkirchen (Germany) or Amritsar (India). When marches took place, individuals were often disallowed to officially march for their employers, the Düsseldorf job centre and the administrative departments of the German Bundestag being two sad examples.

Much different from such derogatory treatment of diversity, the world Englishes paradigm has always celebrated variety. And in fact, queer communities have enriched the English language as much as ethnic and social communities around the world have.

The use of the pronouns *they* and *them* with singular references, originally employed to refer to nonbinary and gender-nonconforming individuals, is increasingly replacing gendered pronouns in mainstream media and public discourse. While this is a recent development, words and meanings that have their origins in queer communities have been captured in dictionaries and glossaries from at least 1910 (Oxford English Dictionary 2025a), today including in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (oed.com), in the *Merriam Webster* dictionary (merriam-webster.com) and the *Urban Dictionary* (urbandictionary.org).

Many of these words and meanings, for examples *serve, shade, slay, tea* and *werk*, come from the drag and ballroom culture of Harlem and from queer slang used by people of colour. *Serve* refers to the 'display of favourable or attractive qualities, especially those related to beauty and fashion', as in 'Taylor Swift serves one of her most breathtaking looks ever' (Cantor 2025). *Slay* means 'to perform exceptionally impressive', as in 'She slayed with this outfit' (bloomythecat 2023). 'Subtle contempt or disrespect' is expressed with *shade* as in 'Ryan Giggs Threw Some Serious Shade At Roy Keane On ITV Last Night' (fiodhna_hm 2016). In phrases such as 'We've spilt the tea! Hayley Pearson to join Max Burford on mix 102.3 in 2025' (Bartlett 2024), tea refers to 'gossip'. And *werk* is used to denote 'to express confidence, celebrate looks or performance', as in 'If you want it, you gotta werk it' (Ang 2019).

Other words, such as *camp, naff* and *zhuzh*, were initially used in Polari, a slang which 'originated in England in the 18th and 19th centuries as a kind of secret language within various groups, including sailors, vagrants, circus people, entertainers, etc., and from the mid 20th century was adopted by some gay men, esp. in London' (Oxford English Dictionary 2005b). The word *camp* stands for 'flamboyant' as in 'I've had this one skirt from a Korean brand called KIMHEKIM on my wish list for ages. It's so camp and that's why I'm obsessed with it' (PAKT 2025). *Naff* refers to things 'uncool' or 'tacky' as in 'It's such a naff thing to talk about Bollywood films' (Kapur Malhotra 2024). And *to zhuzh* means 'to make stylish' as in 'How to use editing to zhuzh up your story' (Radio Boot Camp n.d.).

Today, the above are frequently used in online magazines, popular culture, and on social media, particularly on TikTok, X, Instagram and Facebook, but are spreading into print media, too.

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At English today, we continue to cherish variation of all kinds. In this issue we are pleased to bring readers three research articles, five shorter articles and three book reviews. Carmen Ciancia opens the volume's research articles with a sociolinguistic examination of /t/ glottaling (i.e, the use of a glottal stop [ʔ] in environments where the alveolar stop is expected) in East Anglian English. Xiaochen Wang and Yang Gao describe the roles of English in Laos's linguistic landscape within the popular tourist destination of Luang Prabang. Finally, Sayaka Ogasawara argues that the adjective *robust* has undergone semantic shift to become a 'quasi-intensifier'.

Opening this issue's selection of shorter articles, Laurie Bauer responds to David Li's assertion (Li 2024) that 'Chinese English' is a better descriptor of the English variety spoken in China than is 'China English'. Chiara Marcon describes the language of non-journalistic true crime podcasting. Three shorter articles focus on language policy initiatives in three specific language ecologies. Vu Tran–Thanh explains recent language policy developments and their implications for the teaching of English in Vietnam. In a similar focus on policy initiatives, Satoshi Nambu examines the how Japanese language policy has potentially affected the borrowing of loanwords from English into Japanese. Finally, Muhammad Mosiur Rahman and Guangwei Hu conduct a policy analysis of the English-medium of instruction (EMI) in higher education in Bangladesh.

Finally, we include three book reviews in this issue. Pablo M. Tagarro and Miguel Cuevas–Alonso review Emma Moore's *Socio-Syntax: Exploring the Social Life of Grammar* and Slobodanka Dimova reviews Elizabeth Peterson and Kristy Beers Fägersten's edited volume *English in the Nordic Countries: Connections, Tensions, and Everyday Realities*. Xiaoli Fu and Yaoting Zhang's review of Luke Collins and Paul Baker's *Language, Discourse and Anxiety* closes the volume.

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