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Editorial

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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.

Sports and words: Parallel journeys of the Olympics and the English language

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The 2024 Paris Olympics are right around the corner as we write this editorial. As we gather to watch the fruits of athletes' relentless pursuit and sportsmanship in full display, we affirm that we all share the same values such as perseverance, fairness, integrity and courage, regardless of race, religion and political stance.

This global event of competition and celebration can strike a familiar tone for us readers of *English Today* when we juxtapose the histories of the Olympics and the English language. One thing that particularly stands out is that both the Olympics and English have gone through a tremendous amount of change in their journey to achieving their pre-eminent positions. A language with humble beginnings and mixed origins has become the global language; what began as a pagan religious festival in ancient Greece has now become the world's premier sports event. The fact that ancient Greeks competed in nude leaves the modern audience bemused. Not everyone may be aware that the origin of the word 'gym' comes from the Ancient Greek adjective 'gymos', which means naked. There are other words whose original meanings were lost. Watching some of the world's best marathoners approaching the finish line in a stadium may be the highlight of the Olympics for the modern audience, but such a notion would have been impossible to comprehend for the ancient audience of the Olympics. 'Marathon' is generally understood to have originated from a place name in Greece, and 'stadium' comes from the Greek word of measurement 'stadion,' which refers to a distance of approximately 180 meters. The 42 kilometer long-distance running we call a full-course marathon was not part of the Olympic sport until 1896, and the large, seated space we call stadium evolved from the foot race that was one 'stadion' in length.

Aside from words, other changes come to our attention. It took thousands of years before women could participate as athletes for the first time in the 1900 Paris Olympics. Even then, only two per cent of the athletes were women. The summer 2024 Olympics mark the first time in history when women and men compete in equal numbers. As the Olympics evolved, many of the once-popular games were eliminated, and new ones were added. Cricket, polo, and baseball are no longer included in the Olympics, but surfing, sport climbing, and skateboarding have been added. The ancient Greeks would be aghast to see women's boxing and breakdancing being played as part of the Olympics.

New perspectives, traditions, and experiences from various regions have informed both the Olympics and the English language. The Olympic games draw from a wide variety of sports traditions from across the globe, and some games combine traditions from various countries. For example, modern day fencing incorporates techniques from Italy, France and Spain. Gymnastics, when first developed in ancient Greece, included wrestling, weightlifting, running and jumping. Through centuries of development, it has reached its current form by building upon the techniques and traditions from Germany, Sweden, the Czech Republic and the U.S. (Sokol Museum & Library). Some sports are vying for inclusion in the Olympics. Kabaddi, a combative contact team sport popular in South Asia, and wushu, a Chinese martial art, are such examples.

Readers of *English Today* are familiar with this hybridity and the strive for inclusion. Many different cultural and historical footprints are woven through the diverse English lexicon. Some global Englishes, such as Indian English and Nigerian English, are vying for recognition as a variety of English rather than learner English.

English Today serves as a metaphorical stadium, where new perspectives spar and evolve, and those seeking recognition are given a fair chance. It is a space where recent developments surrounding the English language are showcased and followed with excitement and curiosity. The Olympics and the English language showcase

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interconnectedness, power dynamics, and the importance of currency at play in their development. For our readers, changes bring more excitement and curiosity than apprehension and despair when the changes showcase and incorporate new trends, perspectives, and experiences.

This issue brings readers four research articles, six shorter articles and four reviews of recently published books. Carrie A. Ankerstein speculates on what it might mean to develop a test of ChatGPT's ability to understand human language. Yilmaz Köylü examines student essay writing to broadly characterize two types of innovative features of Hong Kong English. Katya Haapanen, Antti Saloranta, Kimmo U. Peltola, Henna Tamminen, Lannie Uwu–khaeb and Maija S. Peltola describe vowel duration in Namibian English and how it is influenced by the voicing (or non-voicing) of following consonants. Finally, Satoshi Nambu describes the different ways that English appears with the linguistic landscapes of some contemporary neighbourhoods in Tokyo.

Shorter articles have, for many years, contributed meaningful scholarship to the pages of *English Today*, and this issue includes six of these. Sarah Josefine Schaefer examines the use of anglicisms on German radio broadcasts, especially in contexts that highlight conflicting attitudes about modernity. Matthew W. L. Yeung, Alice H. Y. Yau and Crystal Y. P. Lee explore how new words are added to the English lexicon from Hong Kong and suggest that lexicographers should look beyond traditional media sources for evidence of new lexemes. Lin Pan and Philip Seargeant conduct a survey questionnaire in the People's Republic of China to identify teacher and student attitudes toward the international status of the English language. A group of 11 researchers, led by Anna Kristina Hultgren, critically reviews the status of English-medium education in Nepal to suggest that the institution reproduces more general forms of discrimination and disadvantage in women's education. Mingyou Xian and Xiao Jiang use corpus evidence to explore the acceptance of *aren't I* as an interrogative tag. Finally, Julia Landmann and Yannick Ganz describe the complex history of language contact that can be found in the borrowing of proverbs associated with animals.

Closing the volume are four reviews of recently published books, two of which are related to the development of American English. Matthew J. Gordon reviews Ingrid Paulsen's (2022) *The Emergence of American English as a Discursive Variety: Tracing Enregisterment Processes in Nineteenth-Century US Newspapers*, and Maciej Widawski reviews Małgorzata Kowalczyk's (2023) *Borrowings in Informal American English*. Dong Wang reviews Peter Trudgill's (2023) latest work on the history of English varieties, *The Long Journey of English: A Geographical History of the Language*. Closing the volume, John Considine reviews Heming Yong and Jing Peng's (2022) *A Sociolinguistic History of British English Lexicography*.

Reference

Sokol Museum & Library. n.d. "History of Gymnastics." Accessed June 20, 2024. https://sokolmuseum.org/history-of-gymnasts/.

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