

# Preface

This book is intended to offer the reader a comprehensible and perhaps in part provocative picture of the global diffusion of English and some of the most typical linguistic consequences for the language across the range of locales where it came into use. The aim is to be reasonably complete – not encyclopaedic in scope, but contained. It should be accessible to any interested reader, but it should also offer established and emerging scholars in the field an original perspective on the varieties of English across the world, world Englishes.

I have not tried to pacify or hide some of the severe conflicts of view, nor some of the contradictory implications and consequences of how English came to be in use so widely, how the language is affected, but also how people are affected. I rely on the major models, particularly Kachru's concentric circles and Schneider's dynamic model, but go beyond their scope and intent in some respects. I have not tried to gloss over hard parts in some sober and detached academic voice, nor tame the story into something with a peaceful denouement after a plot full of crises that led to conflicts, some kind of climax and then an all-lived-happily-ever-after ending. This should not be taken as a political statement, a kind of woke-ness of the type that offends people who may have a more favourable or, I'm afraid to say, triumphalist view of the global spread of English. At the same time, I am not trying to argue for an elusive multilingual dispensation in which English is cut to size and contained to its native speakers who will one day show keen awareness of the fact that English is just another good old language.

The English language presents a most intriguing societal and intellectual puzzle today, one well worth exploring. A thorough understanding, stripped of both triumphalism and defeatism, can do much to aid our understanding of ongoing relations – civil and cordial, as well as acrimonious and antagonistic – between people within and across urban, national or virtual boundaries. In a world of echo-chambers, deplatforming and exaggerated complaints thereof, fake-news and the dismissal of contrary

views as fake-news, a world of ongoing violence, natural disasters, energy crises and poverty, it is more worthwhile than ever to try to understand complicated stuff, even if it brings about inconvenience and erodes comforting certainties and self-perceptions. This book represents an attempt to grapple with some of the complicated issues involving English.

My journey with world Englishes started when several fortuitous turns of events led me to the field and its potential to understand the global spread and diversification of English. These include participating in a workshop on the sociophonetics of Black South African English at the Linguistics Society of South Africa annual conference in Cape Town, January 2000, co-organising the eighth annual conference of the International Association of World Englishes in Potchefstroom in late 2001, and contributing to the first special issue of the journal *World Englishes* devoted to English in South Africa, which appeared in early 2002. From these beginnings, an affiliation with the field and a sense of affinity with the scholarly community developed, which still energises me after more than two decades. Despite severe differences of opinion, the open and engaged community of world Englishes scholars is exemplary of what academic scholarship and citizenship should be in very many ways.

Along the journey, I have benefited from the collaboration, assistance, feedback and sometimes just engaged conversation of many people that contributed to giving shape to the ideas in this book, but none of those people is responsible for the remaining oversights and other shortcomings.

First and foremost, three people have been collaborating with me closely for many years, reading my work and volunteering their time to engage me on my ideas and analyses, in addition to various pieces of research we have undertaken jointly: Susan Coetzee-Van Rooy, Haidee Kotze and Gerhard van Huyssteen. Baie dankie.

The North-West University (NWU) was my professional home for more than two decades. Much of the work and thinking that informed this book took place while I worked there. I want to thank colleagues and postgraduate students who challenged me, encouraged me and in many cases also collaborated with me and, in doing so, helped me to understand aspects of world Englishes better. Some are no longer with us, some work at other universities or in other careers, although many are still at the NWU. I would like to acknowledge my former students Debra Adeyemi (PhD 2017), Ian Bekker (PhD 2009), Lande Botha (PhD 2012), Jim D'Angelo (PhD 2016), Melanie Law (PhD 2019), Henk Louw (PhD 2012), Keoneng Magocha (PhD 2010), Ansie Maritz (PhD 2019), the late Thadeus Marungudzi (PhD 2017), the late Madoda Nkani (working on his PhD at the time of his passing in 2003), Maristi Partridge (PhD 2019), Caroline Piotrowska (PhD 2022), Karien Redelinghuys

(PhD 2019), Anke Schumacher (MA 2005), Lize Terblanche (MA 2012) and Ronel Wasserman (PhD 2014). In the same breath, I also want to acknowledge a number of current or former NWU colleagues, especially Anneke Butler, Gustav Butler, Wannie Carstens, Attie de Lange, Ulrike Janke, Johanita Kirsten, Jan-Louis Kruger, the late Themba Ngwenya, Johann van der Walt, the late Herman van Wyk and Daan Wissing, as well as Linda du Plessis, the deputy vice-chancellor of the NWU on the Vanderbijlpark campus, for her support and the space she always tried to create for me.

Beyond the NWU, I want to acknowledge colleagues from elsewhere who collaborated with me, offered feedback, and/or made the time to talk to me about world Englishes and linguistics: Lawrie Barnes, Kingsley Bolton, Werner Botha, Carrol Clarkson, Daniel Davis, Sylviane Granger, Rusandré Hendrikse, Hilton Hubbard, Christiane Meierkord, Rajend Mesthrie, Arne Peters, Josef Schmied, Edgar Schneider, the late Larry Smith, Rias van den Doel and Hans-Georg Wolf. I wrote most of the eventual manuscript while in the employment of the University of Amsterdam, which offered me space to explore world Englishes in some depth in my classes, and allowed me time (the basic unit of measurement in the Netherlands) to write this book. I thank my colleagues in English Language and Culture for their encouragement and interest in the project, and for picking up quite a few tabs in the last six months of writing. I also want to acknowledge Ellen Rutten, the chairperson of Modern Foreign Language and Cultures at the UvA, for her support during the period I was writing. The team at Edinburgh University Press did an incredible job to support and guide me through the writing process. I want to thank all of them, including Heinz Giegerich, Sam Johnson, Laura Quinn and Eliza Wright.

On a personal note, I offer my gratitude to my family and close friends. The two-year period during which I wrote this book was a tough one, in which my father-in-law, brother-in-law and mother passed away, while several family members confronted very severe health challenges. I completed the first full draft of the manuscript two days before my mother's birthday in July 2022, while I was technically on holiday with my wife, children and parents in St Francis Bay, South Africa. It cleared a few precious days without work, what turned out to be the last few days under the same roof with my mother Jacoba, who passed away six weeks later. To Susan, Jonette and Herrie, to my parents, siblings, in-laws and friends: thanks for being part of my life, and for all the encouragement and support. This book is a testimony to all of you, and I would like to dedicate it specifically to Susan and my parents.