

Different kinds of English

Making sense of English around the world

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Forward Foreword



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Those who work at OUP, especially on our Secondary team, are what you may call 'true believers'. It's an article of faith with them that the English language is a subtle instrument, and all its users must strive to improve the way they employ it by understanding better how it works. That's why we take what we do seriously, and take serious pride in what we do. We are keenly aware of the fact that since our trade is in the printed word, we have exceptional influence over language. The way our books are written stands as a reference to others. Students who are still learning to grasp how words are chosen and sentences constructed easily absorb what they come across in reading.

We therefore strive to make everything that appears in our titles not only grammatically correct but also stylistically appropriate. Deliberate efforts, for example, are made to avoid ambiguity and render the writing unobtrusive, so that its meaning can be readily understood. 'There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed, said Hemingway. That is an exaggeration. We do, however, believe that books that can help teachers teach and students learn are worth sweating over.

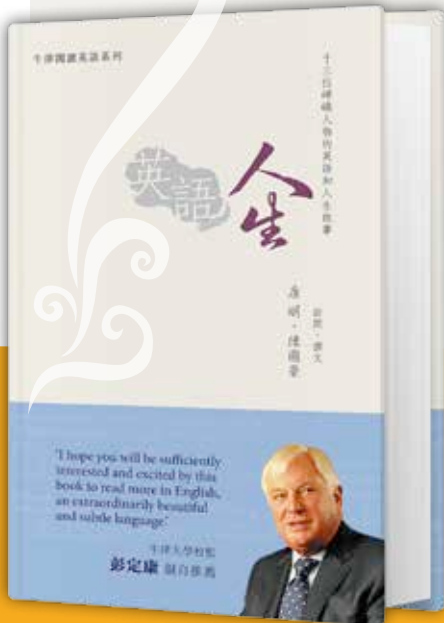
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Perry Lam
Editorial Director, English Language
Teaching Department



English and I shines at the Hong Kong Book Fair

The much-anticipated title 《英語•人生》 was a star attraction at the Hong Kong Book Fair in July. This brainchild of our ELT department takes the reader on an inspirational journey through the illustrious lives of 13 distinguished men and women (Prof. Yu Kwang-chung, Cardinal Joseph Zen, Prof. Pai Hsien-yung, Hon. Anson Chan, Prof. Felice Lieh-Mak, Hon. Jasper Tsang, Mr Peter Chan, Ms Karen Mok, Prof. Gabriel Leung, Ms Tanya Chan, Prof. Simon Shen, Ms Gigi Chao and Mr Perry So). Revealing how the English language and Western civilization have enriched and empowered these personalities, *English and I* became an instant bestseller and occasioned a flurry of media coverage. If you haven't got your copy yet, *English and I*, brimful of elegant prose and acute reflections on the English language, would make a captivating autumn read or a thoughtful Christmas present. A special order form will soon arrive at your school.



English and Jasper Tsang

One of the 13 interviewees of *English and I*, The Hon. Jasper Tsang, President of the Legislative Council, enthused over his relationship with English before an audience of over 100 people on 20 July at the Hong Kong Book Fair. He chatted with our Editorial Director, Mr Perry Lam, about all things English: the origins of his English name, his first encounter with English, his love

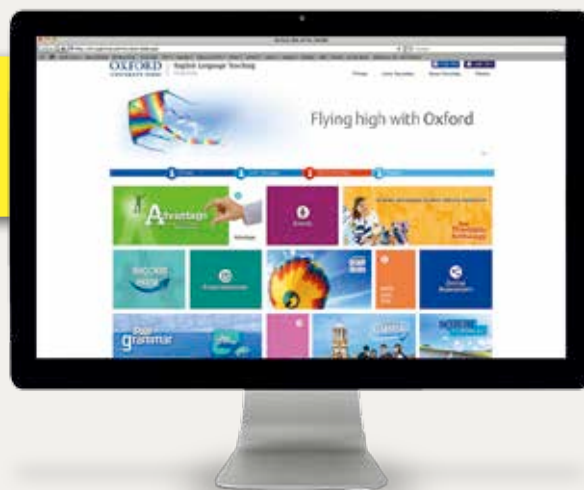
of 'Queen of Crime', Agatha Christie, his interview with CNN's Larry King in English, plus English's importance to Hong Kong as a 'world city'.

If you are curious to find out what Mr Tsang's three favourite books are, what Prof. Yu Kwang-chung says about the differences between English and Chinese, what musical Ms Karen Mok took part in while still a university student in London, get hold of a copy of *English and I*!



Check out our new-look homepage

Visit www.oupchina.com.hk/elt for information and support for all our ELT titles. And don't forget to visit www.oupchina.com.hk/elt/free-resources for mock papers, HKDSE exam analyses and online versions of *Oxford Forward*.



What is Hong Kong English?

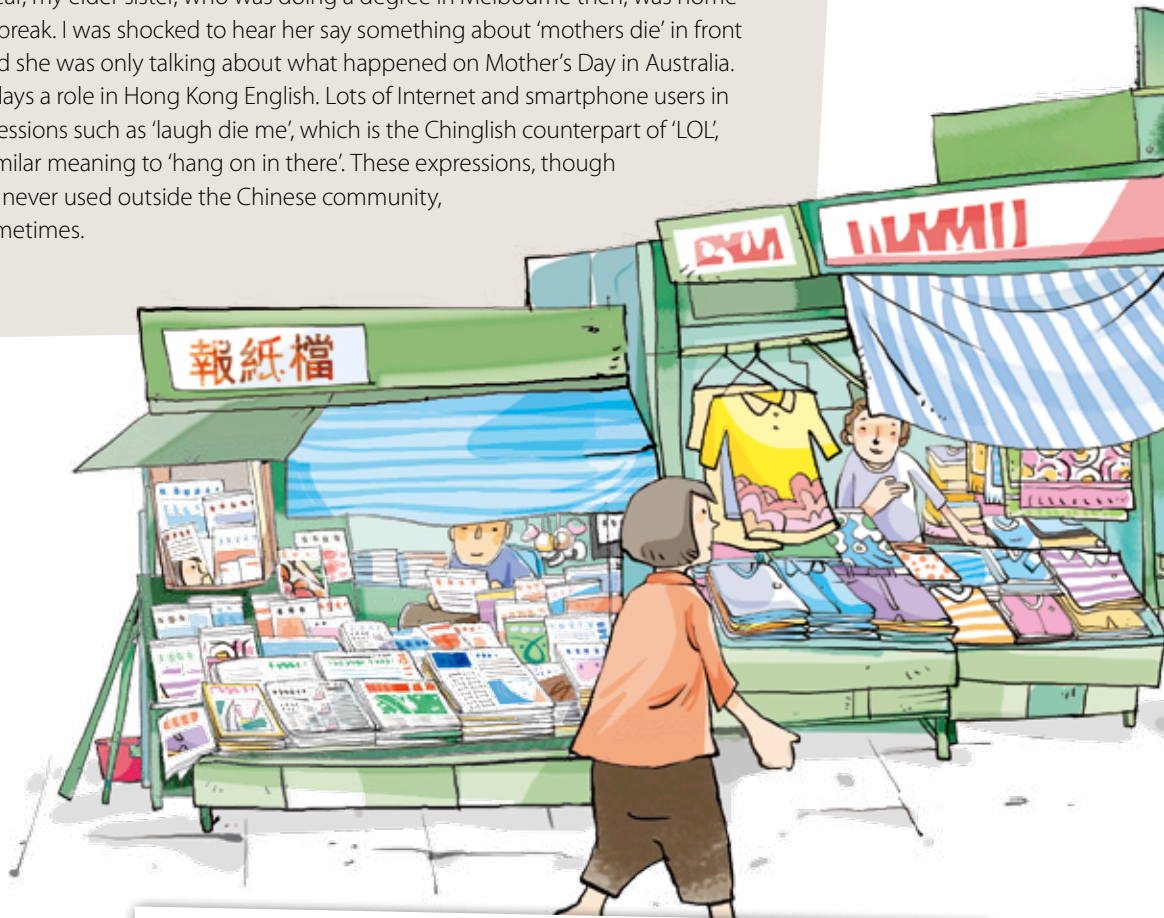
What distinguishes the English spoken in Hong Kong from that spoken elsewhere in the world? Oxford's ELT editors tell us what they think.

Even having been living in Hong Kong all my life, I don't think I can define what exactly Hong Kong English is. Some think Hong Kong English is predominantly British English, but since Hong Kong is an international city, influences from American, Canadian and Australian English do exist. When I was a primary school kid, I was taught to use 'shop' instead of 'store' and 'sweets' instead of 'candies'. But then when I visited fast-food restaurants, I was a little confused when I saw 'French fries' instead of 'chips' on the menu. One year, my elder sister, who was doing a degree in Melbourne then, was home in Hong Kong during term break. I was shocked to hear her say something about 'mothers die' in front of my mother! I later realized she was only talking about what happened on Mother's Day in Australia. And then Cantonese also plays a role in Hong Kong English. Lots of Internet and smartphone users in Hong Kong like to use expressions such as 'laugh die me', which is the Chinglish counterpart of 'LOL', and 'add oil', which has a similar meaning to 'hang on in there'. These expressions, though ungrammatical and almost never used outside the Chinese community, can be quite interesting sometimes.

Rosa Wan



Claudia Cheung



Since people in Hong Kong use English mostly for professional or academic purposes, I think Hong Kong English tends to sound more formal compared to other types of English. Even in text messages and personal emails, people like to write in clear and complete sentences rather than short phrases. The use of contractions is kept to a minimum and sign-offs in emails are usually quite formal, e.g. the ubiquitous 'Best regards'. Messages are also straight to the point without any unnecessary small talk, which I think is a typical trait of our city—wasting no time, or in this case, no words.

One of the features of Cantonese is to combine English and Cantonese in a sentence. This has led to the use of Cantonese final particles in spoken English. Examples as terrible as 'let's go shopping la' and 'I don't have money wor' are numerous. This mistake has long been identified in public exams and it is quite frustrating to find it repeated every year in exam reports.

Karen Yeung

Due to the very different language structures of English and Cantonese, you may find Hong Kong English more problematic than other kinds of English in the world. Hong Kong English is inevitably influenced by the mother tongue of most Hongkongers: Cantonese. For example, there is no tense or verb agreement in Cantonese grammar, so when people speak Hong Kong English, they directly translate the language in their mind, which sometimes makes it ungrammatical. The misuse of prepositions is another characteristic in Hong Kong English, simply because there is no direct equivalent in Cantonese in most cases.

Iris Hung

Both British and American spellings and pronunciations are in common use, e.g. 'colour'/'color', 'tomahto'/'tomayto'. Most people don't realize or care about the difference.

Shaun Luk



Hong Kong English Phrasebook

Many 'English' words used in Hong Kong have different meanings elsewhere, or are not used anywhere else. Can you match the descriptions on the left to the 'Hong Kong English' words on the right?



- 1 A seal or stamp, mostly used in business: it is used to 'sign' official documents on behalf of a company.
- 2 Most often seen in car parks, hospitals and government offices, this is another name for a cashier.
- 3 An old-fashioned term for a domestic helper. It originates from a Macanese term meaning 'nurse'.
- 4 In the UK and US, this is a small room or walk-in cupboard where food and supplies are stored; in Hong Kong, this word refers to a room in a workplace where staff prepare their meals or take a break.
- 5 This old-fashioned word for a warehouse comes from a Malay word meaning 'store room'.
- 6 This word originates in India, where it is used to refer to a steep mountain valley. In Hong Kong, it refers to a concrete-lined channel which carries water away from high ground during heavy rain, preventing flooding.
- 7 This word for *juk* or rice porridge comes from the Tamil language of southern India.



amah

chop

congee

godown

nullah

pantry

shroff



British or American English?

To most English language learners, British English (BrE) and North American English (NAE) appear the same. But ask any native English speakers in the UK or US and you will find that there are many common objects that have different names in British and American English.

Below are some common objects with their British and American English names — all you have to do is decide which is which! For each object, write 'BrE' next to one word and 'NAE' next to the other.



- 1 a) rubbish _____ b) garbage _____
- 2 a) sidewalk _____ b) pavement _____
- 3 a) biscuit _____ b) cookie _____
- 4 a) elevator _____ b) lift _____
- 5 a) nappy _____ b) diaper _____
- 6 a) candy _____ b) sweets _____
- 7 a) vest _____ b) waistcoat _____
- 8 a) flashlight _____ b) torch _____



Watch this space

Things to look out for in the coming months



Events



In the next issue of *Oxford Forward*

- Focus on the HKDSE
- Review of OUP's Mock HKDSE English Language Exam and Sharing Session
- More news, interviews and students' activities

Look out for the next issue of *Oxford Forward* in March 2015

Oxford HKDSE English Language Mock Exams and Sharing Sessions

Following the success of last year's event, Oxford University Press will hold Paper 1 (Reading) and Paper 3 (Listening and Integrated Skills) HKDSE Mock Exams in November 2014.

Exam Papers HKDSE English Language Paper 3 (Listening and Integrated Skills)

HKDSE English Language Paper 1 (Reading)

Date 22 November 2014 (Saturday)

Time Morning session (Paper 3): 8.30 a.m.–1 p.m.
Afternoon session (Paper 1): 2–5 p.m.

Exam Centre Lee Kau Yan Memorial School, 596 Prince Edward Road East, San Po Kong, Kowloon

Format The morning and afternoon sessions will follow the same format:

Part I HKDSE English Language Mock Exam

Part II Sharing session on the mock exam and HKDSE English Language Exam strategies by education professionals



Word Play (Answers)

Hong Kong English Phrasebook

1 chop 2 shroff 3 amah 4 pantry
5 godown 6 nullah 7 congee

British or American English?

1a BrE 1b NAmE 2a NAmE 2b BrE
3a BrE 3b NAmE 4a NAmE 4b BrE
5a BrE 5b NAmE 6a NAmE 6b BrE
7a NAmE 7b BrE 8a NAmE 8b BrE

For enquiries, please contact the OUP Account Executive for your school.