

# **Orders of reality: CANCODE, communication, and culture**

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*This article is concerned with the topic of language awareness in relation to spoken texts and their cultural contexts. The topic has become more relevant in recent years, as we have witnessed the development of more and more corpora of spoken English; more exciting developments in the work of COBUILD; the growth of the British National Corpus, with its spoken components; and the development of CANCODE by the author and Michael McCarthy at Nottingham University, with the support of Cambridge University Press. The data in this paper are drawn from everyday situations of language use collected for CANCODE and developed with an eye to their potential relevance for ELT.*

**Real English** The CANCODE<sup>1</sup> data is, of course, real data. Now 'real' is a word I'd like to dwell on for a moment because it is widely used at present in our cultures, particularly in our ELT culture. For example:

Real ale  
Get real!  
Enjoy that real country taste of Crackerbarrel cheese  
You're out of touch with reality  
Real English  
Coca Cola . . . The Real Thing

The word 'real' invariably carries positive associations. People believe they want or are told to want or, indeed, *actually* want what is real, authentic, and natural in preference to what is unreal, inauthentic, and unnatural.

**Three questions** Three significant concerns have emerged in the course of our research at Nottingham University. First, there are many features of real, naturally-occurring, spoken standard English grammar which are not recorded in the standard grammars of the English language. The major standard grammars are, of course, based largely on the written language and on examples drawn from single-sentence, sometimes concocted, written examples.<sup>2</sup> This raises the first question: in the light of new evidence, should we make any changes to the grammar we teach? Second, all the data collected so far have been collected in specific cultural contexts, almost all involving native speakers of English. CANCODE is soon to be extended to include several other international varieties of English, but at present all the examples illustrate standard British spoken English and aspects of British English cultures. This raises the second question: do we want the native speaker as our model, particularly if it means that we have to take the native speaker's culture as well? Third, is there an

automatic transfer from natural, real, corpus-based spoken English to the textbooks and pedagogies used for the teaching of English as a second or foreign language? In other words, and this raises the fourth question: in the light of all this new information, should we modify our teaching materials or not?

***What can real spoken English reveal?***

There is a focus in CANCODE on interpersonal communication in a range of social contexts and, wherever possible, differences and distinctions are drawn between the kinds of language used in those contexts. By providing many examples of English used in informal contexts, comparisons can be made which are of potential use to language teachers and learners, since they illustrate how speakers make different choices according to the situation they are in.

The key theoretical and practical concerns are not with general sociological categories but with specific language choices: which forms of language do we choose for which purposes, and which interpersonal choices do we make according to whom we are interacting with? The key issue for materials writers and teachers, therefore, is whether we can generate and teach materials which help learners to choose and interact appropriately, particularly along a continuum from written to spoken discourse.

Here are some examples of what CANCODE shows us about choices in the spoken language:

***Three-part exchanges***

Question and answer sequences in many real conversations are never simply questions and answers because they are accompanied by a follow-up move in which, in the third part, the questioner offers some kind of comment on or even evaluation of the answer:

**A:** What part of London are you staying in?

**B:** In Hyde Park.

**A:** Oh, are you? That's a nice district.

**A:** What time is it?

**B:** A quarter past six.

**A:** Is it? I thought it was later.

(CANCODE)

The third part in such exchanges is regularly filled by what Lewis (1993) would call 'lexical chunks', that is, fixed or routinized phrases such as 'Really?', 'That's interesting', 'That's nice', 'I thought so', or 'I guessed as much'. Indeed, it is worth noting that the absence of a follow-up comment can make a question and answer sequence rather cold and impersonal. It is worth scrutinizing English language coursebooks to check whether there are more three-part than two-part exchanges. Our research at Nottingham University suggests that in some ELT materials and English language coursebooks, at least, two-part exchanges may be more common. (For further discussion see McCarthy and Carter 1994, Chapter 5; Tsui 1994.) However, in materials based on real English, such

as the Collins *Cobuild English Course* (Willis and Willis 1988), we note that three-part exchanges are more common. Clearly there are issues here of a tension between truth to the language and pedagogic judgement. Or it may just be that you don't know these things about the spoken language until you collect real data.

**Vague language** We are overwhelmed in our data by examples of what Channell (1994) has termed 'vague language'. Several English language coursebooks do not exhibit many examples of vague language, even though it is always pragmatically highly significant, and nearly always enables polite and non-threatening interaction. For example:

See you *around six*

**Q:** What time are we meeting?

**A:** Oh, seven-thirty *or thereabouts*.

There were *about twenty or so* people at the dinner.

(CANCODE)

In the case of time and number reference, vague language is non-authoritarian and puts speakers on an immediately casual and equal footing with their interlocutors. Comparison with utterances marked by their precision (e.g. 'See you at seven-twenty') reveals how much more formal and directive they are (see also Carter 1987).

**Ellipsis** Ellipsis is one of the most frequent grammatical features found in our data, and its pervasive and endemic character is in inverse proportion to the sparse treatment it receives in many traditional grammars and course materials. (More detailed description is given in McCarthy and Carter 1995). Preliminary exploration of data from other varieties of informal, spoken, international English reveals that ellipsis is also pervasive in these varieties.

**Realities and coursebooks** In the examples below, real conversational data collected in a hairdressing salon (Example 1) is contrasted with an invented dialogue in a similar situation (Example 2), taken from a widely used and internationally renowned coursebook.<sup>3</sup>

Example 1

[In the hair salon]

**A:** Do you want to come over here?

**B:** Right, thanks (3 secs) thank you

**A:** Tea or coffee?

**B:** Can I have a tea, please?

**A:** Do you want any sugar?

**B:** Er, no milk or sugar, just black thanks

**C:** Right.

**B:** I hate it when your hair just gets so, you know a bit long

[**C:** Yeah] and it's just straggly.

**C:** Right.

**B:** It just gets to that in-between stage  
[**C:** Yeah] doesn't it where you think oh I just can't stand it any more (2 secs) I think when it's shorter it tends to, you notice it growing more anyway [**C:** Mm] you know it tends to grow all of a sudden . . .  
(CANCODE)

Example 2

[At the hairdresser's]

**Jane:** . . . Oh, yes, my husband's wonderful!

**Sally:** Really? Is he?

**Jane:** Yes, he's big, strong, and handsome!

**Sally:** Well, my husband isn't very big, or very strong . . . but he's very intelligent.

**Jane:** Intelligent?

**Sally:** Yes, he can speak six languages.

**Jane:** Can he? Which languages can he speak?

**Sally:** He can speak French, Spanish, Italian, German, Arabic and Japanese.

**Jane:** Oh! . . . My husband's very athletic.

**Sally:** Athletic?

**Jane:** Yes, he can swim, ski, play football, cricket and rugby . . .

**Sally:** Can he cook?

**Jane:** Pardon?

**Sally:** Can your husband cook? My husband can't play sports . . . but he's an excellent cook.

**Jane:** Is he?

**Sally:** Yes, and he can sew, and iron . . . he's a very good husband.

**Jane:** Really? Is he English?

(Hartley and Viney, *Streamline English Departures*, Unit 14) (1978)

The real data in Example 1 contains features familiar to anyone who has scrutinized real English spoken discourse: a preponderance of discourse markers ('right' as an acknowledgement); ellipsis; the use of hedges (particularly the adverb 'just'); vague language ('you know', 'that in-between stage'); supposedly ungrammatical forms ('a tea'); as well as the use of 'tend to' to describe habitual or regular actions and events. ('Tend to' is one of the most frequent verbs in the CANCODE data, but while several of the standard grammars recognize its semi-modal status, they give more attention to the more central modals, and do not differentiate the verb's provenance in spoken compared to written discourse.)

Example 2 works well pedagogically. One of the main points of the exchange is to teach the modal verb 'can', and this point of presentation overrides other features of the situation. There is thus a further pedagogic reality to be noted: that in some successful coursebooks, rather than the dialogue taking precedence over the linguistic features to be learnt, the language teaching points take precedence over the reality of the dialogue. Many materials writers and teachers would say that in most circumstances such design features are inevitable. In other words,

we should look at how much practice is given in this material, particularly in the posing and answering of questions, and in the use of the modal *can*, as well as at how much vocabulary is introduced and practised. In this respect, compare it to the real hair salon data, where the exchanges are natural but not lexically rich—as is common in informal conversations, the same words tend to be recycled, and the topics are seldom noted for their interesting content. In many classrooms, straggly hair which grows too quickly may have a limited topic life.

There are a number of general observations which can be made about the nature of interpersonal interaction in Example 1 which marks it off as naturally-occurring discourse. For example, speakers interrupt each other and speak at the same time. There are longish pauses, back-channelling, and the use of contentless utterances such as ‘yeah’, and ‘Mm’ which indicate that contact is being maintained, and serve to oil the wheels of the conversation; utterances are incomplete or are completed by the other speaker; and the conversation drifts along without any marked direction. By contrast, the language of some coursebooks represents a ‘can do’ society, in which interaction is generally smooth and problem-free, the speakers co-operate with each other politely, the conversation is neat, tidy, and predictable, utterances are almost as complete as sentences, no-one interrupts anyone else or speaks at the same time as anyone else, and the questions and answers are sequenced rather in the manner of a quiz show or court-room interrogation.

The two texts therefore represent different orders of reality. The scripted text is *unreal* English, which is unlikely to be reproduced in actual contexts of use but is easier to comprehend, and more real pedagogically; the unscripted text is *real* English, but more difficult to comprehend and to produce, and therefore likely to be considered less real pedagogically. It is worth scrutinizing the spoken materials we use in our teaching in the light of these poles of reality.

Here are two more samples of the corpus data, both taken from service encounters of the kind which are regularly reproduced in teaching materials.

### Example 3

[In the post office]

**A:** Right, send that first class, please.

**B:** That one wants to go first class, right we’ll see if it is, it’s not 41, it’s a 60, I thought it would be, I’d be in the . . . 60 pence . . . there we are.

**A:** Lovely, thank you.

**B:** Okay, 70 80 whoops 90 100.

**A:** Thanks very much.

**B:** Thank you

(CANCODE)

Example 4

[In the post office]

**A:** Can I have a second class stamp, please.

**B:** You can . . . there we are.

**A:** Thank you.

**B:** And one penny.

**A:** That's for me to spend is it?

**B:** That's right.

**A:** I bought a new book of ten first class when I was in town today  
and I've left them at home in me shopping bag.

**B:** Have you?

**A:** And I've got one left.

**B:** Oh dear.

**A:** Bye.

**B:** Bye.

(CANCODE)

These data are interesting, in particular, for the number of exchanges which are interpersonal rather than simply transactional and informative. Examples 3 and 4, for instance, illustrate the extent to which the exchanges are three-part rather than two-part exchanges, and with a third part which is markedly interactive and affective in some way, sometimes to the point of inserting personal anecdotes, discourse markers, or non-propositional language ('whoops'). Notice again how the spoken grammar breaks the rules of textbook grammar ('Right, send that first class please'), in that real spoken standard English not infrequently combines politeness markers and imperatives. Or 'That one wants to go first class', when a modal verb is used ungrammatically (but, in spoken standard British English, perfectly normally) with a non-animate subject such as a parcel.

In Example 5, also a service encounter, the situation is markedly different:

Example 5

[In a fish and chip shop]

**A:** Can I have chips, beans, and a sausage?

**B:** Chips, beans, and a sausage.

**A:** Yeah.

**B:** Wrapped up?

**A:** Open, please.

(CANCODE)

In terms of speaking cultures, the data illustrate some of the possible dangers of real speech, which is often messy and untidy, and embedded deeply in cultural understandings of various kinds to the point where individual words and choices of grammatical form can be of considerable cultural significance. Notice here, for example, how the word 'open' becomes contextually constructed into an antonym of 'wrapped up', and carries a specific cultural meaning of food being served in paper so that it can be eaten immediately, even perhaps while walking home. How far should such allusions be removed, and how relevant is it to learn to

make cultural observations of the kind that fish and chip shops in Britain are just as likely, if not more, to sell sausages, burgers, and curry with chips as they are to sell fish and chips?

The language of the fish and chip shop is mainly transactional and, in fact, anything more interactive and interpersonal would be out of place because there are normally long queues of hungry customers in the shop. We should note in this respect how appropriate the ellipsis is, and how in such circumstances the full forms would be unnecessarily elaborated and even long-winded. However, some coursebook exchanges employ full forms, on the perfectly realistic pedagogic premise that you cannot elicit utterances until you know and have first practised the full forms from which the reductions are made. Having said that, ellipsis is not particularly pervasive, even in intermediate to more advanced coursebooks, and learners are rarely presented with opportunities to understand which choices of which alternative forms are appropriate for which communicative purposes.

### ***Speaking cultures***

One common feature of the CANCODE data is the large number of formulaic, fixed phrases that are used in spoken discourse. The findings again endorse the view expressed in Lewis (1993) that the language is made up of lexical chunks, and that language teaching and learning should give more systematic attention to such high profile features of the language. Many of the most fixed of fixed expressions are, of course, quite culture-bound. And learners who are taught to read and see through such language can learn quite a bit about the cultures in which the language is embedded.

For example, what can we learn about English culture from the following idioms and fixed phrases, all of which involve some reference to foreign, in this case mainly European, nations?

Dutch courage  
to go Dutch  
double-Dutch  
Dutch cap  
If that's true, then I'm a Dutchman  
Dutch auction  
  
It's all Greek to me  
Beware of Greeks bearing gifts  
  
French leave  
French letter  
French kiss  
French lessons

Here we learn several useful and widely used phrases, but we can also learn something about British insularity, and that distrust of foreigners to the point where the British can be interpreted as believing almost all of them to be either unintelligible, untrustworthy, or 'unreal'. The phrases also reveal attitudes towards other languages than English, such

as a feeling of linguistic superiority, and the suspicion that foreigners engage in sexual practices we dare not even mention, except by giving them a foreign name.

Other examples could, of course, be enumerated. One major issue here is the extent to which such cultural particulars are removed from data developed for purposes of classroom teaching and learning. It is argued below that such particulars can and should be retained in materials, provided a discovery-based language awareness component is used simultaneously to develop sensitivity to language and to enhance cultural understanding. Such skills are a not inessential component of 'seeing through', i.e. reading and learning how to interpret all cultural features and products, whether that culture be constructed with a small or a large 'c'. (See Brown 1990, Carter 1995, Carter and Nash 1990, Kramsch 1993.)

**Conclusions** What conclusions can be drawn from the discussion so far?

**1** On the one hand, we have real English which, as far as classroom treatment is concerned, can be unrealistic; and on the other hand, we have unreal textbook English which, as far as classroom treatment is concerned, is frequently handled in pedagogically viable and realistic ways.

**2** Much spoken English is impregnated with cultural values. On the one hand, it is patronizing of teachers, coursebook writers, and materials designers to say to learners that we know what you should have and will therefore remove and neutralize all but the most accessible cultural reference. Is this realistic, when learners seem to want to know what real English is, and are generally fascinated by the culturally-embedded use of language of native speakers? Above all, learners know from their L1 experience when they are in the presence of concocted and culturally-disinfected dialogues.

On the other hand, we might want to argue that roughly 80 per cent of all spoken interaction in English is between non-native speakers, for example between a Turkish secretary and a Japanese supplier. For most learners, therefore, interactions with native speakers will be rare. It is surely unrealistic, and at the same time an imposition, to expect learners to acquire naturalistic, real, native-speaker English when they simply don't need it (Prodromou 1990, Rampton 1990, Phillipson 1992).

**3** Those who argue that non-native speakers do not need exposure to real English assume that language learners only need to learn to transact, and have no real need to interact in the target language. On the other hand, it can be argued that, more often than is realized, language users at all levels also need to build relationships, express attitudes and affect, evaluate and comment, and make the propositional content of a message more person-oriented.

**4** There are thus issues of power and empowerment at stake here. On the one hand, real English advantages and empowers the native-speaker



teacher, but disempowers the non-native speaker teacher. It is yet another version of cultural and linguistic hegemony. On the other hand, it would be clearly disempowering, and once again patronizing to teachers and learners, to say that we can ignore a lot of these informal and interactive meanings, because one outcome would be to deprive the learner of pedagogic, linguistic, and cultural choices. Which strategy and ideology is the more disempowering?

***Correctness and variable rules***

It is, of course, misleading to suggest to learners of English that grammar is simply a matter of choices. Grammatical rules exist; they have been extensively codified, and form the core of the structure of (both spoken and written) language. Rules exist, for example, that prescribe that in Standard British English a plural subject has to be followed by a plural form of the verb, and that it is simply and unequivocally *incorrect* for us to write or say, therefore, that 'the buildings is very high'. Within a central core, choices are not possible.

As we have seen, however, there are areas of meaning which are selected within the grammar. Within the domain of spoken grammar we have also seen that it may be more accurate to speak in terms of variable rather than absolute rules for certain choices.

My own position is simply to say that teachers and learners can always choose *not* to teach and learn those areas of language where rules are more probabilistic than determinate, but that they have no choice at all if such options are not made available. Learners should not be patronized by being told that they do not need to bother with all this real English. They should not be disempowered, and syllabuses should not be deliberately impoverished. Also, learning a language should, in part at least, involve developing something of a 'feel' for that language. The folk-linguistic term 'feel' has been around for many years in language teaching, but it has remained a largely unanalysed concept. Learners who concentrate on the more rule-bound and referential domains are unlikely to develop the kind of sensitivity, personal response, and affect which probably underlies 'feel', and which goes some way to helping them discover, understand, and begin to internalize the expressive as well as the referential resources of a language.

Corpora of real, naturally-occurring English are not going to go away, and will become increasingly sophisticated and accessible. What are some possible solutions to these dichotomies? What might then be on our agenda as far as pedagogies for speaking Englishes and speaking cultures are concerned?

***Pedagogies for speaking Englishes and speaking cultures  
Language awareness***

Recent research in the field of second language acquisition and development (Fotos 1994; Ellis 1991) has pointed to some advantages in procedures which raise learners' consciousness of particular grammatical forms. In spite of numerous pedagogic advantages, communicative teaching has not encouraged in students habits of observation, noticing, or conscious exploration of grammatical forms and function. In the case of

the examples here such procedures may be especially appropriate, since we are attempting to introduce understanding of tendencies, variable rules, and choices according to context and interpersonal relations.

Thus, learners need to be made more aware of the differences in the use of different forms by exploring different Englishes in different contexts. Coursebooks might focus on particular learning priorities but also ensure that some opportunities are built in for students to learn to observe differences between coursebook and real English, preferably by focusing on passages with more or less the same content: for example, two dialogues in a hairdresser's shop or in a post office. We can all see, I am sure, a number of interesting ways in which modern communicative methodologies such as gap-filling, information gap, rewriting, and role play could help to enhance language awareness of the different grammatical choices, the different Englishes involved. Recent publications by McCarthy (1991), Nunan (1993), Bolitho and Tomlinson (1994), Brazil (1995), Woods (1995), and Van Lier (1995), in particular, offer a number of interesting possibilities, especially if the primary concern is with the development of reception and comprehension skills.

*Text modification  
and modelling*

Example 6 is a further illustration of the issues involved. It is a sample of data from CANCODE selected to illustrate tails in use. A is telling B what route he took in his car to get to B's house. Both A and B engage in a kind of phatic exchange, commenting on and reinforcing each other's remarks on the journey in a friendly, informal, and suitably interactive, interpersonal style. Repeated tails ('nice it was' and 'nice run that') figure prominently in the exchange:

Example 6

**A:** And I came over Mistham by the reservoirs, nice it was.

**B:** Oh, by Mistham, over the top, nice run.

**A:** Colours are pleasant, aren't they?

**B:** Yeah.

**A:** Nice run, that.

(CANCODE)

One conclusion reached so far in the preparation of discourse grammar materials is that a middle ground between authentic and concocted data might be occupied which involves modelling data on authentic patterns. (See also McCarthy and Carter 1994: 197–8.) Here is an example of a possible re-modelling of the data above:

**A:** And I came over by the village of Mistham. It was nice it was.

**B:** Oh, you came over the top by Mistham. That's a nice journey.

**A:** The colours are pleasant, aren't they?

**B:** Yes.

**A:** It was a nice journey that.

The attempt here by the materials developer is to achieve clarity, tidiness, and organization for purposes of learning, but at the same time

to ensure that the dialogue is structured more authentically and naturalistically by modelling on real corpus-based English. It remains to be seen whether this is a weak compromise or a viable strategy. It could be argued that modelling data involves tampering with it to an extent that produces distortion; for example, if in the above data ellipsis is removed and difficult lexis and reference tidied up, then distortion may be introduced. Ellipsis may be a natural syntactic partner for tails structures (we do not yet know enough about such phenomena), and should therefore be retained. Similarly, tails and ellipsis may in turn sit more naturally alongside informal lexis such as 'run' (rather than 'journey'). At present research and materials development are continuing on the basis that text modification and modelling are viable strategies.

One interesting research possibility which may emerge from this process is a description of acceptable degrees of approximation to spoken English norms on the part of second and foreign language learners of English at different levels of development.

I have already reported that preliminary research indicates that ellipsis is a resource for expressivity and for contextually-sensitive informality in a number of Englishes as well as in British English. Which forms of ellipsis and in which combinations with other forms might be learnt by learners at which levels, and what would constitute acceptable use in the process of developing more complete control of the relevant forms? I comment below on a research paradigm for applied linguistics which may help us begin to develop such research.

### *Use of literary/ drama dialogues*

As far as teaching spoken Englishes is concerned, literary dialogues, either dialogues in contemporary novels or modern plays, can be very effectively exploited for purposes of developing more authentically-based speaking and listening skills. If we look at the dialogue from Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* (Example 7), we can see that, as with most contemporary playwrights, Pinter writes naturalistic dialogue, but it is dialogue which does not include the usual interruptions, hesitations, false starts, or speaking at the same time which characterize real spoken English. Such a practice makes such dialogue highly suitable for classroom exploitation. Witness the excellent literary materials, which make much use of dialogue (Tomlinson 1994, Maley 1993, Maley and Duff 1990). Such books bring text modification and language awareness closer together. At the same time, literary dialogues usually involve some kind of problem to which the dialogue is either directly or, as is often the case with Pinter, indirectly addressed. (For example, in this dialogue Stanley has to try to resolve how and why McCann, a relative stranger, appears to know so much more than he does about his, Stanley's birthday.) Such dialogues can be used to help learners to develop skills of interpretation, reading between the lines, and problem-solving of the kind which can be of use in interpersonal interaction—a point made extensively in recent writings on the value of stylistics in the

teaching of language and literature, (Widdowson 1983, 1992; Carter and Long 1991; and Cook 1993, who discusses dialogic types in literary and advertising discourse). And we should not forget how problem-free and co-operative some coursebook dialogues are.

#### Example 7

MCCANN *is sitting at the table tearing a sheet of newspaper into five equal strips. It is evening. After a few moments STANLEY enters from the left. He stops upon seeing MCCANN, and watches him. He then walks towards the kitchen, stops, and speaks.*

STANLEY. Evening.

MCCANN. Evening.

*Chuckles are heard from outside the back door, which is open.*

STANLEY. Very warm tonight. (*He turns towards the back door, and back.*) Someone out there? . . .

MCCANN. I don't think we've met.

STANLEY. No, we haven't.

MCCANN. My name's McCann.

STANLEY. Staying here long?

MCCANN. Not long. What's your name?

STANLEY. Webber.

MCCANN. I'm glad to meet you, sir. (*He offers his hand. STANLEY takes it, and MCCANN holds the grip*) Many happy returns of the day. (*STANLEY withdraws his hand. They face each other.*) Were you going out?

STANLEY. Yes.

MCCANN. On your birthday?

STANLEY. Yes. Why not?

MCCANN. But they're holding a party here for you tonight.

STANLEY. Oh really? That's unfortunate.

MCCANN. Ah no. It's very nice. (*Voices from outside the back door*)

STANLEY. I'm sorry. I'm not in the mood for a party tonight.

MCCANN. Oh, is that so? I'm sorry.

(Harold Pinter, *The Birthday Party*, Act Two: 37–8)

#### *Living in the real world: paradigms for applied linguistic research and development*

The findings described in this paper are the findings and observations of linguists whose aim is to extend descriptions of the spoken English language, with particular reference to ELT. One established paradigm in this enterprise is for researchers to describe the language, and then to pass over the findings to practitioners in order that they can seek appropriate applications. The dangers inherent in such a paradigm are that the process is monologic, that linguists pursue their own agenda in isolation from the practical problems of teaching and learning, and that there is a mismatch between theory and practice which can result in potentially valuable insights being dismissed by teachers, teacher trainers, and materials designers, because they do not accord with existing orders of reality, and may therefore be perceived to be threatening.

Even though our research team at Nottingham University is exploring pedagogies and extending the varieties of spoken English which form its database, and is involved in textbook development, the same dangers are none the less inherent. Researchers do not own the teaching learning process any more than native speakers own the language.

If applied linguistics research in general, and in particular cases, is not to forfeit any real claim to being applied linguistics, then, as Prodromou (1996) argues, a new, more dialogic paradigm needs to be developed in which linguist, materials developer, and teacher work together to set an agenda and jointly to trial and review the pedagogic potential of new descriptive findings. Promising beginnings such as the Materials Development Association (MATSDA) have been made,<sup>4</sup> but if some of the issues raised in this article are to be properly pursued, this paradigm, or something like it, will need to be made a reality. In the meantime, we should continue to think about the best ways of 'getting real' about speaking Englishes.

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### **Notes**

- 1 The corpus referred to is based at the Department of English Studies at the University of Nottingham and at Cambridge University Press as part of the Cambridge International Corpus. The working corpus from which examples can be drawn will soon total five million words, though the main aim is to construct a qualitative corpus and not simply a large quantitative corpus. (For further discussion of corpus design, see Carter and McCarthy 1995, McCarthy and Carter 1995, Hudson, Carter, and McCarthy 1996). CANCODE stands for 'Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English'. All data collected is the property of Cambridge University Press. Plans are already laid to extend the corpus to include a wider variety of international Englishes produced in different discourse communities, and to compare non-British spoken Englishes with the kinds of British English data reported on in this article.
- 2 An exception is the revised edition of *Practical English Usage* (1995) by Michael Swan, which contains a very thorough treatment of more spoken and informal grammatical forms such as ellipsis.
- 3 There is no intention here to criticise the authors of *Streamline English*, who would have not have had systematic access to any 'real' data and who, in any case, produced a pedagogically innovative and internationally successful

coursebook which is still widely in use today.

4 MATSDA was founded by Brian Tomlinson of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Luton, 75 Castle Street, Luton, Beds LU1 3AJ, UK, from whom further information may be obtained. A first publication bringing together work by descriptive linguists, materials developers, and classroom practitioners is Tomlinson 1997.

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