

# Editorial

Towards the end of the year, we've come to realise that, preceded as it were, 2021 has been another year of the pandemic of COVID-19 and its many variants and mutations, e.g., the Alpha, the Beta, the Gamma, and the Delta. However, 2021 has also been a year when we build resilience and hope, and develop contingency strategies to battle with the seemingly ongoing global health crisis and persistent mental health issues. In a global crisis like the current one, we tend to focus on our own individual existential and psychological explorations of life experience and choices. And yet, we remain connected as a shared community via different media platforms, continuing our commitment to understanding the changing world, be it physical or virtual, through the lens and window of *English Today*.

Taking a retrospective view throughout the year of the issues of *English Today* published so far, we are pleased and indeed grateful to see a sustained and growing interest in our collective endeavours to explore and understand the English language around us, from English in Cuba to Korean English. Our *English Today* contributors and readers, and indeed our editors as well, have been exploring the changing landscape of the English language, involving the media, workplace, education, pop culture, micro-blogging, EMI in classes, ELT reform, fiction writing, signage in public buildings, English fever and American dreams, and various functions of English in different societies around the world. We have also been exploring our moving mindscape in terms of how we perceive the ever expanding English-speaking world, what our attitudes are, and how we negotiate our identities as speakers of English around the world.

The drastically changing linguistic landscape and mindscape throughout 2021 have reminded us of Louise Glück's poem titled 'Landscape', published in *Averno* (Glück, 2006). In 2021, we appreciate in particular Glück's 'unmistakable poetic voice that with austere beauty makes individual existence universal', a comment by the committee of the 2020 Nobel Prize for Literature.

In Glück's own words, she thinks of the 'Landscape' as a poem about 'a human life, from the beginning to the end' (Bermejo, 2020). Taking a few lines and stanzas from the 'Landscape' and sharing them here, we encourage our *English Today* community to reflect on our respective existential and psychological struggles throughout the pandemic and the extent to which our individual existence becomes universal. Talking about 'time' and how we 'fell into it', Glück lamented in her 'Landscape': *It was a time / of waiting, of suspended action. // I lived in the present, which was / that part of the future you could see. / The past floated above my head, / like the sun and moon, visible but never reachable. // It was a time governed by contradictions, as in / I felt nothing and / I was afraid.* Glück then raised a rhetorical question for herself: *In the silence of consciousness I asked myself: / why did I reject my life? And I answer / Die Erde überwältigt mich: / the earth defeats me.*

The line in German, *Die Erde überwältigt mich*, with the verb *überwältigen* – cognate with the English 'overwhelm', but equally translatable as 'defeat' – is particularly intriguing in light of the current pandemic. In 'Landscape', Glück followed up this line with '*the earth defeats me*', crafting a stronger, and more compelling and resonant voice in herself and amongst her readers, and indeed amongst all of us who have been overwhelmed, if not defeated, by the many issues associated with the current pandemic.

In our first editorial of the year for the issue of 37.1, we hoped that 2021 would bring health and peace to us all. As the year comes to an end, we hope that our *English Today* will continue to be an oasis throughout the pandemic as a place of calm in the midst of chaos, and that it will bring us new faith, hope and love.

In this issue of *English Today* the editors are pleased to present a number of highly relevant studies related to the current state of the English language. Amanda Roig-Marín examines neologisms related to COVID-19 and the ensuing pandemic that have recently infected the English

language. Michael Pearce uses a corpus of data derived from football fans to describe pronouns in North East England. James M. Stratton examines the emerging intensifier *proper* in contemporary England, and Laura R. Baily and Mercedes Durham track changes in the use of *cheeky* across time and space. Thomas McKiernan documents the use of English in the landscape of Johor Bahru around the border between Malaysian and Singapore, and Lindsey N. Chen discusses English hotel names in Taipei, Taiwan. *English Today* has also included a debate between Michael Bulley and Blasius Achiri–Taboh about rules to understand the spelling of *-tion* and *-sion* words. Bulley’s reply is to Achiri–Taboh’s (2018) original article on the subject, and Achiri–Taboh responds to Bulley. Finally, the last

issue of Volume 37 concludes with two book reviews.

*The editors*

### References

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- Glück, L. 2006. *Averno*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Achiri–Taboh, B. 2018. ‘English spelling: Adding /ʃən/ (or /ʒən/) to base-words and changing from *-tion* to *-sion*: Alleviating the yoke of memorization for English spellers.’ *English Today*, 34(3), 36–42. <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078417000591>
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