

The missing continent

Ten years ago, in *ET5* (Jan 86), we published a letter from M. J. Nash in London entitled 'the Argentine connection', in which he wrote: 'I would welcome an article on English as spoken by the largest British community outside the Commonwealth, a million strong in Argentina. It's about time that this community be properly studied.' I agreed with him then and still do, but was never able to find anyone qualified and willing to write the article.

Much more recently, in *ET47* (Jul 96), in the editorial 'Continental Englishes', I reflected on how English has become the pre-eminent second language of the middle-classes (older and newer) in South and East Asia, and increasingly of the movers and shakers of the European Union and neighbouring countries. This journal has also in various ways recognised the dominance of the language in North America and Australasia/Oceania as well as its vigour and variety across Africa, but throughout twelve years of publication as the international review of the language we have been virtually silent on South America.

With the last issue (*ET48*, Oct 96) things began to change, when we published Herman Wekker's article on the English creoles of Surinam (former Dutch Guiana). And in this issue there is a significant further breakthrough with Annick Mompean's 'Pronouncing English in Brazil' and Graciela Moyano's 'English in Argentina'.

Something else to observe these days in South America is Mercosur ('southern market'), an incipient common market formed by Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Argentina. Traditionally, Portuguese-speaking Brazilians have been set apart from the Spanish-speaking states of the southern American continent. Now, however, Spanish and Portuguese are coming more into contact through Mercosur, but even so interest in English in all the Mercosur countries may make it a handy – and neutral – link between speakers of these neighbouring and historically-related but hardly identical languages, as it often is among Germanic-speaking peoples in northern Europe.

With our reports from the largest countries in South America *ET's* coverage has been greatly extended. I look forward now to more not only from Latin America at large but also from Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and Arabic Asia.

Tom McArthur

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