

STUDIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

EDITED BY

Günter Rohdenburg and Julia Schlüter

One Language, Two Grammars?

Differences between British and American English



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One Language, Two Grammars?

It is well known that British and American English differ substantially in their pronunciation and vocabulary, but differences in their grammar have largely been underestimated. This volume focuses on British–American differences in the structure of words and sentences and supports them with computer-aided studies of large text collections. Present-day as well as earlier forms of the two varieties are included in the analyses. This makes it the first book-length treatment of British and American English grammar in contrast, with topics ranging from compound verbs to word order differences and tag questions. The authors explore some of the better-known contrasts, as well as a great variety of innovative themes that have so far received little or no consideration. Bringing together the work of a team of leading scholars in the field, this book will be of interest to those working within the fields of English historical linguistics, language variation and change, and dialectology.

Günter Rohdenburg is Professor Emeritus of English Linguistics in the Department of English and American Studies at the University of Paderborn.

Julia Schlüter is Assistant Professor in English Linguistics and Language History at the University of Bamberg.

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AND

JULIA SCHLÜTER



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List of contributors

KARIN AIJMER, University of Gothenburg
D. J. ALLERTON, University of Basle
EVA BERLAGE, University of Paderborn
DOUGLAS BIBER, Northern Arizona University
WILLIAM J. CRAWFORD, Northern Arizona University
DAVID DENISON, University of Manchester
JOHAN ELSNESS, University of Oslo
PETER ERDMANN, Technical University of Berlin
JACK GRIEVE, Northern Arizona University
MARIANNE HUNDT, University of Zurich
GINA IBERRI-SHEA, Northern Arizona University
GÖRAN KJELLMER, University of Gothenburg
MAGNUS LEVIN, Växjö University
BRITTA MONDORF, University of Mainz
GÜNTER ROHDENBURG, University of Paderborn
JULIA SCHLÜTER, University of Bamberg
GUNNEL TOTTIE, University of Zurich
UWE VOSBERG, University of Kiel

Introduction

GÜNTER ROHDENBURG AND JULIA SCHLÜTER

Differences between British and American English: One language, two grammars?

In 1789, not long after the American Declaration of Independence, Noah Webster still had reason to believe that British and American English (BrE and AmE) would in the long run drift apart, just like other Germanic dialects that have evolved into the modern languages Dutch, Danish, Swedish, German, etc.: ‘several circumstances render a future separation of the American tongue from the English, necessary and unavoidable’ (Webster 1789: 22). More than 200 years later, these expectations have not been confirmed, and there are at present no signs that this will happen even in the distant future. In their discussion of the question ‘Two languages or one?’, Marckwardt and Quirk (1964: 9–13) thus conclude that what we refer to as BrE and AmE should still be considered as one and the same language.

However, at many levels of description, British–American contrasts are widely recognized. Thus, in the phonological domain, the British Received Pronunciation and General American differ markedly. Lexical oppositions are notorious and provide the material for numerous cross-varietal vocabulary lists and dictionaries. At the pragmatic level, British and American habits are (at least impressionistically) known to vary to a considerable extent. In stark contrast, with regard to the title question of the present volume, most linguists would probably be inclined to reply that British and American of course share the same grammar (for a recent statement to this effect, see Mair 2007a: 98). After all, many would subscribe to the truism according to which ‘accent divides, and syntax unites’ (for a discussion, see again Mair 2007a). This is the point of departure for the present book.

Setting the scene: Why another book?

This volume rests on the recognition, expressed most clearly in [Chapter 18](#) by Gunnel Tottie, that BrE and AmE grammar differ in many more ways than have so far been discovered and that much work remains to be done in the domain of an empirically founded contrastive study of the two major

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national varieties. While phonological, orthographic and lexical differences as well as issues in second language teaching have received considerable attention in the literature, contrasts in the grammar of BrE and AmE have so far been largely ignored.¹ To some extent, this oversight is doubtless due to the widespread view that there is nothing to say about grammatical differences simply because they are negligible, if they exist at all (e.g. Marckwardt and Quirk 1964: 14–17, Huddleston and Pullum 2005: 2). Another likely reason behind the inadequate coverage of grammatical differences is the fact that until recently the empirical basis for contrastive studies was simply insufficient. Yet, there is reason to believe that as the level of observational delicacy increases, we are bound to find a growing number of contrasts between the two standard varieties.

The methodological obstacles that have until recently hampered such an enterprise have been eliminated thanks to the availability of large computerized corpora. There is, of course, the quartet consisting of LOB, Brown, FLOB and Frown, which contain one million words each of BrE and AmE from the early 1960s and 1990s, respectively. These have frequently been marshalled for earlier studies of British–American contrasts and are also used in the present volume. A large-scale corpus construction project involving varieties of English from all around the world is the International Corpus of English (ICE), whose individual components comprise one million words of running text. There is also the ARCHER project, which provides parallel coverage of BrE and AmE from the mid eighteenth century onwards. But beyond these relatively small corpora, we now have access to larger databases of contemporary as well as earlier forms of English, of which only very few can be mentioned here. For one thing, the yearly editions of major national and regional newspapers now regularly available on CD-ROM provide a database that by far exceeds the size of modern megacorpora. For another, the collections of historical prose compiled by Chadwyck-Healey/ProQuest (ECF, NCF, EPD, EAF, AD), comprising upwards of 10 million words each, afford the possibility of analysing even low-frequency phenomena from a diachronic perspective. Recent editions of many standard dictionaries also come with searchable CD-ROMs that can be put to use for studies on word-formation and the lexicon (e.g. COLLINS 5, COD 10, NODE 2000, AHD 4, MW 11, NHD, EWED 2001).²

This is not to say that the present situation is satisfactory in all respects: matching corpora like LOB, Brown, FLOB and Frown afford interesting comparisons, but are limited to one million words per corpus. The same is true of ICE-GB and ICE-US, the latter of which is still under construction. The completion of the *American National Corpus* (ANC), which is projected

¹ For another statement deploring this state of affairs, see Algeo (2006: 2).

² For full bibliographical details of the databases and dictionaries mentioned here, see the reference section at the end of the book.

as a counterpart to the *British National Corpus* (BNC), will be an important addition to the array of corpora available for linguistic study. Collections of newspapers and fictional writings obviously represent only two genres of written English out of many. Moreover, it has been shown by Mair (2007a) that the written standards of BrE and AmE manifest a strong pull towards convergence; in contrast, spoken data tend to exhibit a maximum of divergences. Larger spoken corpora would therefore allow us to discern even more areas where the two varieties diverge. A further innovative source of data which is practically unlimited in size is, of course, the internet. However, the use of the world wide web entails many imponderable risks that researchers have to control for.³

Whatever the reasons, to date there exists no booklength treatment of grammatical differences between BrE and AmE (with the exception of John Algeo's recent book in the same series; see below). The most comprehensive comparisons of British and American grammar available so far are represented by individual book chapters or articles in scholarly journals, rarely exceeding thirty pages in length, which list observations of likely divergences (see Strevens 1972: 44–53, Algeo 1988a, Bauer 2002: 46–59, Tottie 2002a: 146–78, 2002c, Trudgill and Hannah 2002: 55–79). The chapter on grammatical structure in volume VI of the *Cambridge History of the English Language: English in North America* (Butters 2001: 325–39), covering a disappointing 15 pages, is illustrative of the stagnant state of research in this area.⁴ The greater part of these surveys, though highly suggestive, have never been subjected to empirical scrutiny and the degree to which they differentiate between the varieties has never been quantified. However, it is self-evident that British–American divergences will typically be of a gradual rather than absolute nature (see also Algeo 2006: 2).

The few empirical analyses there are tend to be highly restricted in their selection of objects for study, often limiting themselves to high-frequency phenomena, and are generally based on relatively small corpora (which may be part of the reason for their restrictedness). The very useful pioneering survey by Johansson (1980) deserves special mention here. Collective volumes such as those edited by Modiano (2002) and Lindquist, Klintborg, Levin and Estling (1998) only devote a small share of their contributions to quantitative contrastive studies of standard BrE and AmE. Not directly relevant to the topic of the present book are the volume edited by Schneider (1996), the contribution to the *Handbook of Varieties of English* by Murray and Simon (2004) and the authored book by Walt Wolfram and Natalie Schilling-Estes (2005), since all of them pervasively focus on various kinds of historical and present-day non-standard varieties of AmE.

³ For some pioneering work in this area, see the volume edited by Hundt, Biewer and Nesselhauf (2007).

⁴ For a pertinent review, see Tottie (2004a).

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The recent monograph by John Algeo (2006) has done a lot to improve on the situation just outlined. It provides a compendium of lexical, phraseological and grammatical contrasts between the two varieties studied, which is complementary to the present volume in many respects. Arranged in alphabetical order, his book can serve as a reference work providing a plethora of basic, partly quantified insights into distributional differences, which forms an excellent point of departure for more detailed analyses taking account of relevant grammatical subcategorizations.

There is thus still a lack of in-depth, empirically based studies of standard BrE and AmE grammar in contrast. What is equally at a premium are attempts to account for variety-specific tendencies that are based on system-inherent orientations going beyond speculative extralinguistic accounts such as those proposed in Kövecses (2000). The present book seeks to close this lacuna by studying examples from the whole spectrum of grammatical choices, thereby unearthing British–American contrasts in all domains of English grammar. In contrast to Algeo’s monograph, it focuses on the relationships between immediately competing grammatical alternatives. It contains systematic studies of contextual restrictions bearing on the variants under consideration and traces their historical evolutions. The topics covered comprise some of the better known contrasts, which are set on a wider empirical basis than has been possible until recently, as well as a variety of innovative themes that have so far received little or no attention.

Going beyond an adequate description of the differences, this volume also explores potential explanations. For this purpose, the historical dimension of the contrasts, completely neglected so far, is assigned the important place that it deserves in most of the contributions to this volume. Many also refer to common stereotypes about the character of BrE or AmE and critically assess the explanatory force of popular ascriptions such as the ‘colonial lag’, the leading role of AmE in the context of world English, the ‘typically British’ predilection for formal and conservative structures and the ‘typically American’ pull towards simplicity, directness and informality.

Overarching insights: What to expect?

Above and beyond the detailed findings contained in each of the following chapters, the data-driven approach just described affords some novel insights that are all the more apparent when the present book is viewed as a whole. A few suggestive results are anticipated here to give an idea of what to expect from the following chapters. The first three concern the diachronic dimension and link up the relative speed of evolution of the two varieties with external circumstances.

- The longstanding popular concept of a ‘colonial lag’ characterizing the state of the so-called extraterritorial Englishes is replaced with a much

more differentiated typology introduced in the stage-setting [Chapter 1](#). The comparison of the historical evolutions undergone by the two national varieties yields a complex scenario of diachronic patterns. The subject reverberates through many of the other chapters that jointly reveal the ‘colonial lag’ concept to be a myth not adequate to account for the full range of facts. When seen from a diachronic perspective, quite a few differences that have traditionally been adduced in support of this view turn out to be post-colonial revivals rather than colonial conservatisms (e.g. [Chapters 1, 5, 6, 13, 14, 15](#) and [19](#)).

- Many of the chapters have a bearing on the popular view, examined in [Algeo \(2001\)](#), according to which the relationship between the two major national varieties has undergone a reversal of the direction of influence in that AmE has for some time been a derivative variety, imitative of the more prestigious variety spoken in the homeland, before it emancipated itself, developed its own character and, more recently, became the centre of gravity of linguistic change in English world wide. While the phenomena investigated in [Chapters 2](#) and [12](#) support this common impression, [Chapters 5, 7](#) and [19](#) provide surprising examples of ongoing changes with BrE in the lead and AmE following suit.
- As mentioned above, at different times, linguists have held contrary opinions as to whether BrE and AmE would drift apart or not. While it is unlikely – thanks to modern mass communication and travel – that the intercomprehensibility of the two will ultimately be at risk, we may ask to what extent we can observe divergences and convergences between the two national standards. This amounts to testing the validity of the truism according to which ‘accent divides, and syntax unites’ (see again [Mair 2007a: 97](#)). [Chapter 19](#), in particular, will draft a more differentiated picture of cases in which grammatical innovations in one variety stand a good chance of being adopted into the other variety (convergence) and cases where one of the varieties undergoes change without affecting the other (divergence).

Four generalizations about British–American differences in the domain of grammar remain confined to system-internal, intrinsic tendencies.

- A promising generalization concerns the greater tolerance and inclination of AmE towards structures characteristic of spoken colloquial usage, recently described by [Mair \(1998: 153–4\)](#). [Chapters 2, 4, 5, 8](#) and [19](#) provide further evidence in support of this trend. Where standard AmE is promoting a change, quite a few regional differences can be made out: comparative analyses of newspaper data reveal that California functions as a trendsetter, while the variety spoken on the East Coast exhibits a more conservative character (see [Chapter 19](#)).
- Another hypothesis that is supported by many of the chapters in this volume holds that AmE grammar exhibits a comparatively stronger pull

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in the direction of regular grammatical patterns. Novel findings indicate that this is true not only of morphological paradigms (see [Chapters 1, 3, 5](#) and [19](#)), but also of syntactic structures (see [Chapters 4, 5, 7](#) and [10](#)).

- From the insights afforded in particular by [Chapters 4, 6, 10](#) and [19](#), we can derive the generalization that AmE in some respects tends to be more explicit than BrE, which is less prone to mark certain grammatical functions. This is especially true of structures that involve a considerable degree of processing complexity: here, AmE tends to add clarifying material or to choose easier-to-process constructions, while BrE leaves a greater processing load for the reader/hearer. In a few cases, this translates into AmE being more analytic than BrE.
- An innovative insight to the effect that AmE shows a more marked tendency to dispense with function words that are semantically redundant and grammatically omissible is expressed in [Chapters 8](#) and [10](#). This trend towards grammatical economy ties together an array of otherwise unrelated phenomena in the complementation system and awaits further study.

Despite the attempt to find unifying principles behind the differences between BrE and AmE grammar, the strong focus on empirical detail ensures that the studies in this volume avoid sweeping generalizations. As a result, the overall trends mentioned above are carefully delimited and exceptions are paid due attention. Thus, BrE as well as AmE may in certain cases revert to irregular morphological forms (see [Chapters 1, 3](#) and [5](#)) or to grammatically marked structures typical of formal styles such as postpositions (see [Chapter 6](#)) and the subjunctive mode (see [Chapters 13, 14, 15](#) and [19](#)).

In addition to documenting synchronic and diachronic contrasts between the two varieties, an important number of contributions also demonstrate that the grammars of BrE and AmE are subject to the same functionally motivated tendencies. Among them are phonological preferences (see [Chapter 5](#)), processing preferences such as manifestations of constructional complexity (see [Chapters 4, 6, 8, 10, 11](#) and [19](#)), the avoidance of repetitions (see [Chapters 8, 11](#) and [19](#)) and extraction hierarchies ([Chapter 11](#)). By virtue of this multifactorial approach to grammatical variation, it is possible to factor out differences that are dependent on system-internal (e.g. structural and stylistic) effects and thus to isolate statistical differences that are genuinely due to intervarietal contrasts between BrE and AmE. It is only when variability gives way to stable states in one variety or the other that system-internal tendencies are neutralized.

As a rule, but not always, the differences between the two varieties are of a gradual kind. The quantitative analysis of corpora allows us to uncover a number of hitherto unnoticed differences in the functional load carried by identical structures. Relevant findings are described in [Chapters 4, 8, 9, 15, 18](#) and [19](#), indicating, for instance, that AmE uses fewer comparatives and (obligatorily) reflexive verbs, selects different strategies for the modification

of noun phrases, rarely expresses the requirement of anonymity as a *condition*, has strikingly few uses of *try* with a subordinate verb, and uses tag questions to a more limited extent than BrE. Such results are unexpected as well as challenging in that they raise more wide-ranging questions as to whether pragmatic needs in both varieties are indeed identical.

Structure and contents: Where to find what?

The structure of this volume presents a progression from lexical and grammatical morphology to word order and syntactic relations, with due attention paid to the grammar–phonology and grammar–pragmatics interfaces. The individual case studies provided in the central part (Chapters 2 to 17) are rounded off by two programmatic overview chapters (Chapter 1 and Chapter 18) that open the discussion and wrap it up. The final contribution (Chapter 19) constitutes an outlook that points to directions for future research.

The book sets out from the stage-setting Chapter 1 by Marianne Hundt. The author demonstrates that long-term diachronic changes in BrE and AmE cannot be reduced to the fairly simple dichotomy of ‘colonial lag’ vs. ‘colonial innovation’. Very often, what looks like a conservative feature in present-day AmE is actually an instance of post-colonial revival. Hundt draws up an alternative typology of differential change in BrE and AmE which distinguishes as many as six different scenarios and suggests that one of them, namely regressive divergence, may be the most frequent type of development.

Chapter 2 by Peter Erdmann deals with contrasts in lexical morphology and concentrates on the use of compound verbs such as *to baby-sit*, *to highlight* and *to pinpoint*. The most striking difference between the varieties lies in the greater productivity of these verbs in AmE. Further contrasts can be found in the orthography, stress pattern and semantics of compound verbs: BrE prefers hyphenated forms, while AmE favours solid spellings. A number of compound verbs in AmE have the main stress on their first element while BrE keeps it on the second or has variable stress. Finally, the lexical meanings of individual compound verbs are shown to differ along a scale of semantic distinctions.

Grammatical morphology is at issue in Chapter 3 by Magnus Levin. The author explores the variation between regular and irregular preterite and past participle forms of the type *burned/burnt*, *dreamed/dreamt* and *learned/learnt*. While AmE with many verbs strongly prefers regular *-ed* forms, usage in BrE is highly variable, and affected by several constraints (e.g. punctual as opposed to durative aspect, the preterite as opposed to the perfect and speech as opposed to writing). Since the regularization of these forms has progressed considerably further in AmE than in BrE, Levin discusses at some length the question of which functional factors motivate the preservation of the competing *-t* and *-ed* forms in BrE.

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On the borderline between grammatical morphology and syntax, [Chapter 4](#) by Britta Mondorf investigates the choice of synthetic and analytic comparatives with a set of forty-nine adjectives. A twofold contrast emerges. Firstly, AmE can be shown to employ a larger overall proportion of analytic comparative forms than BrE. Secondly, AmE uses a lower number of comparatives (synthetic plus analytic). Considering that the adjectives included in the study tend to occur in contexts involving processing difficulties, Mondorf explains the use of (more explicit) analytic forms as a compensatory strategy by which an increased processing load can be mitigated. Arguably, AmE is more sensitive to complexity effects than BrE, a property which it shares with informal styles.

[Chapter 5](#) by Julia Schlüter focuses on the interface between phonology and grammar. It explores the ways in which a phonological preference, the Principle of Rhythmic Alternation, influences grammatical choices in BrE and AmE. The phenomena considered are the variation between two pairs of weak past participles (*lighted* vs. *lit*, *knitted* vs. *knit*) and the transition of the degree modifier *quite* from post- to pre-determiner position. Historical and present-day data show that the principle determines the distribution of the variants in both varieties. The intervarietal differences are due to the fact that BrE and AmE occupy different positions on the trajectories of diachronic change, which are not necessarily conditioned by either ‘colonial lag’, regularization or colloquialization.

As the first of two chapters dealing with word order, [Chapter 6](#) by Eva Berlage explores the influence of functional constraints on the distribution and historical evolution of pre- and postpositional *notwithstanding* in BrE and AmE. While prepositional *notwithstanding* generally constitutes the majority option in present-day BrE, AmE clearly prefers the postpositional variant. The study suggests that the AmE preference for postpositional *notwithstanding* should be interpreted as an instance of post-colonial (extraterritorial) revival. Furthermore, Berlage demonstrates that the distribution of postpositional *notwithstanding* is largely accounted for by the Complexity Principle, whose effects are neutralized with increasingly complex nominal expressions, which tend to require the more explicit prepositional option.

Another special case of word-order contrasts is discussed by David Denison in [Chapter 7](#). Focusing on the case of the verb *substitute*, he shows that usage has always involved several possible subcategorizations: besides the standard pattern (*substitute* NEW for OLD), a *replace*-like usage (*substitute* OLD with NEW) arose in the twentieth century. Recent British usage seems to favour a hitherto-unnoticed variant (*substitute* OLD for NEW). Accounting for this argument reversal, Denison argues that among Exchange verbs *substitute* is unique in the ordering of its arguments. It is therefore prone to confusion and analogical change, especially since iconicity would suggest the sequence old–new rather than new–old.

In [Chapter 8](#), Günter Rohdenburg deals with a subtype of verb complements, namely reflexives. He demonstrates that the longstanding tendency for reflexive verb uses (e.g. *to wash o.s.*) to be replaced by non-reflexive uses (e.g. *to wash*) continues unabated in both national varieties. Intervarietal contrasts arise from the fact that in AmE this trend is accelerated by virtue of two tendencies: for one, verbs with variable reflexive marking (e.g. *to commit o.s.*) to *s.th.*) tend to give up the reflexive pronoun more rapidly; for another, verbs that have obligatory reflexive marking (e.g. *to busy o.s.*) are used less often. The analyses identify a number of additional contextual constraints determining the choice between the two competing options.

The study by Douglas Biber, Jack Grieve and Gina Ibbi-Shea ([Chapter 9](#)) investigates diachronic trends in the structure of noun phrases in BrE and AmE by quantifying differences in the functional load of pre- and postmodification structures. Generally, noun phrases in both varieties have become more densely informational and syntactically complex. AmE turns out to be in the lead of several recent changes (the reduction of premodifying attributive adjectives, the expansion of premodifying nouns, the decrease of postmodifying *of*-phrases, the increase of other prepositional phrases and *that*-relative clauses). The authors argue that an alternative, equally innovative strategy of condensing information into compact syntactic forms is the use of complex predicative expressions, which is particularly typical of BrE.

[Chapter 10](#) by Günter Rohdenburg describes a series of British–American contrasts in the area of nominal (and prepositional) complementation. It is found that with most types of constructions, AmE favours the less explicit or simpler variant over its more complex alternative using a variety of prepositions. Thus, where the increase of prepositionless constructions is concerned, AmE is typically further advanced than BrE, promoting more vigorously, for instance, the use of direct objects after verbs and directly linked complements after the adjective *due*. By contrast, with processes reversing this direction of change, AmE is more likely to preserve the simpler and less explicit alternative much better than BrE. Intriguingly, there is one notable exception to the general formula, which involves the marking of a negative orientation by means of *from* in complex argument structures. In addition, it is shown that the distribution of the options involved tends to be subject to the same range of contextual constraints in both national varieties.

Turning to the domain of sentential complements, [Chapter 11](#) by Uwe Vosberg focuses on a small number of verbs in transitional stages of linguistic change (mainly) within the past two centuries. Vosberg explores differences between BrE and AmE in the distribution of non-finite complements (*to*-infinitives and *-ing* forms). It turns out that very often BrE and AmE are not affected by these tendencies to the same extent, but that, compared to BrE, the development in AmE is accelerated in some areas and delayed in

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others. In addition, Vosberg investigates three extra-semantic factors determining the choice of complement options: the *horror aequi* Principle, the Complexity Principle and extraction hierarchies.

Chapter 12 by Johan Elsness revisits a well-known British–American divergence in the use of the tenses, viz. the rivalry between the present perfect and the preterite. Reversing the longstanding process by which the present perfect continuously extended its range of application until well into the Modern English period, there is strong evidence that the present perfect has now started to decline and that the preterite is gaining ground once more. Elsness shows that the changeover has gone further in AmE than in BrE and explores possible explanations. What is frequently quoted as an example of ‘colonial lag’ thus turns out to be a revival with AmE in the lead.

The next three chapters all focus on the use of the subjunctive in English, its motivations and the contexts in which it occurs. While the subjunctive had been on the decline since Old English times, corpus-based studies have now proved that the striking appearance of mandative subjunctives in present-day AmE is a revival rather than a ‘colonial lag’. The subjunctive presumably attracts so much attention from linguists because the re-emergence of such a formal and old-fashioned feature seems unexpected in a variety that is usually characterized as receptive of innovations and colloquialisms. Moreover, the fact that *not*-negation in connection with subjunctives is regularly realized without *do*-support is a curio in its own right.

In his Chapter 13, Göran Kjellmer thus addresses the questions of, firstly, why the evolution of the subjunctive was reversed at a particular time, and secondly, what gave rise to the unexpected word order specific to negated subjunctives. The account he proposes involves an interplay of language-internal factors (remnants of the subjunctive, lexical and structural ambiguities, omissible auxiliaries), variety-specific factors (AmE avoidance of *should*) and sociolinguistic factors (contact with speakers of other European languages in the States).

William Crawford’s Chapter 14 provides a comprehensive account of the current state of the mandative subjunctive by identifying the range of nouns, verbs and adjectives that ‘trigger’ its potential use. A distinction is made between ‘strong’ triggers, i.e. those lexical items that are frequently associated with a modally marked verb form, and ‘weak’ triggers, i.e. those where the mandative sense is often absent or only implied. The study elucidates British–American contrasts in the trigger strength of individual lexemes and word classes. A central finding is that the stronger the trigger, the more likely it is that BrE and AmE will pattern similarly regarding the choice of mode, and the weaker the trigger, the less likely BrE and AmE will pattern alike.

Chapter 15 by Julia Schlüter fills a blank in previous research on the subjunctive by investigating the selection of the modes in conditional clauses introduced by *on (the) condition*. Establishing a parallel with the mandative

subjunctive, the study shows that it is once more AmE that resurrects the subjunctive, which later spills over to BrE. However, it is argued that the intervarectal contrast has a considerably greater time-depth, originating in the loss of the explicit irrealis marking through modal auxiliaries in BrE in the mid-nineteenth century. This diachronic view is complemented by four synchronic analyses that point to further British–American differences in usage.

At the crossroads between syntax and pragmatics, **Chapter 16** by D.J. Allerton explores British–American contrasts in the structure, functions and frequencies of different types of tag questions. Divergences lie in the fact that BrE has extended the range of traditional functions with ironic and aggressive uses. The national varieties also differ in the precise form of concordant mini-clauses, particularly in respect of the verb *have*. The contrast between sequential patterns with reversed polarity vs. constant polarity is described. Attention is also drawn to a reduced version of the constant polarity pattern, with the consequent emergence in BrE of a tag question appended to a question base.

Chapter 17 by Karin Aijmer picks out the adverb *sure*, which is strikingly more frequent in AmE than in BrE, and investigates its discursual and pragmatic functions. *Sure* in AmE is above all a response reacting to a prior turn. In particular, it serves as a routinized response to speech acts such as requests, offers, thanks and apologies. It also appears in collocations (here referred to as bundles), which are described from different points of view, including string frequency and structure (constituency). In addition to this mainly synchronic approach, the American developments of *sure* are also viewed from a diachronic grammaticalization perspective.

Chapter 18 by Gunnell Tottie is a programmatic statement that forms an appropriate conclusion to the foregoing chapters. On the basis of three further case studies, the author argues that there are more and greater differences between British and American grammar than previously anticipated and that the systematic use of computerized corpora will lead to sometimes unexpected discoveries. The conclusions are based on fine-grained analyses using large parallel British and American corpora, the first dealing with lexico-grammar and verb complementation, especially the choice between *try and* and *try to*, the second with relativizers after *same* and the third with tag questions. In each case, the results turn out to become the more intriguing, the more the analysis is refined. One of the implications is that the communicative and pragmatic needs of speakers of the two varieties might not be identical: if a particular linguistic option is not chosen, this need not be because speakers prefer a different expression, but it may also be the case that communicative intentions differ in the two varieties.

In line with Tottie's conclusions, the final chapter, **Chapter 19** by the editors, forms an outlook that presents well over forty pilot studies of a wide range of grammatical phenomena that exhibit a divergent usage in BrE and

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AmE. Some of them have been neglected by previous research simply on account of their relatively low frequency, which has until recently made them ineligible for quantitative study. Some others are genuine new finds that are representative of the multitude of contrasts that still await discovery. While these observations are buttressed by solid statistical material presented in numerous charts, a more detailed and systematic study is still pending. Yet, the large number of contrasts assembled in this chapter provides another opportunity to test the validity of ascriptions such as the ‘colonial lag’ hypothesis, the recent leadership of AmE in the context of world English, the assumed formality of BrE and the colloquialization and regularization tendencies attributed to AmE.

Acknowledgements

Last, but not least, we would like to thank many people without whom the present volume would not have seen the light of day. First of all, we thank our contributors for their patience while each of the editors moved from one house to another and from one busy phase in their lives to the next (from active university service to active retirement or from childlessness to parenthood, respectively). We also thank them for their readiness to revisit their chapters at intervals so as to fit them into the framework set up for the volume. Many thanks are due to the editor at Cambridge University Press, Helen Barton, and the series editor, Merja Kytö, for their invaluable cooperation and flexibility. Working with them has always been a delight for us. The final chapter, in particular, has profited immensely from the work contributed by several under- and postgraduate students at the University of Paderborn. We are grateful to Eva Berlage, Susanna Lyne, André Schaefer, Christine Kick and Imke Zander, who agreed to let us use some of their results on British–American contrasts. We also owe a large debt of gratitude to Andreas Mankel, who took charge of putting the formatting of the chapters into shape, as well as Stefanie Förtsch and Jonas Lau, who assisted greatly in correcting the proofs and preparing the index, respectively.

Finally, many thanks are due to the Thyssen Foundation for covering the cost of a symposium held in Paderborn in 2004, which originated not only the idea for this volume but also ten of its nineteen chapters.

I *Colonial lag, colonial innovation or simply language change?*¹

MARIANNE HUNDT

I Introduction

When it comes to the relation of American to British English, one of the most popular notions is that of ‘colonial lag’. As early as 1869, Ellis (1869–89: 19) remarked that American English (AmE) was more conservative than British English (BrE) in some pronunciation features:

there is a kind of arrest of development, the language of the emigrants remains for a long time at the stage in which it was at when emigration took place, and alters more slowly than the mother tongue, and in a different direction. Practically the speech of the American English is archaic with respect to that of the British English.²

Others, like Bryant (1907: 281), for instance, were keen to point out that AmE was both conservative and innovative in comparison to BrE, with innovative features most obviously found in the lexicon. The concepts of colonial conservatism and innovation have been around for a long time, but the term ‘colonial lag’ was coined by Marckwardt (1958) who used it in a broader sense than the earlier notion of ‘arrest of development’. Marckwardt applied it not only to language but more generally to a whole nation and their culture:

These post-colonial survivals of earlier phases of mother-country culture, taken in conjunction with the retention of earlier linguistic features, have made what I should like to call a colonial lag. I mean to suggest by this term nothing more than that in a transplanted civilization, as ours undeniably is, certain features which it originally possessed remain static over a period of time. Transplanting usually results in time lag before the organism, be it a geranium or a brook trout, becomes adapted to its new

¹ For help with the retrieval of data, I am grateful to Carolin Biewer and Dorothea Halbe. The participants of the Paderborn symposium on grammatical differences between American and British English, as well as the editors of this volume, provided valuable comments on earlier versions of the chapter.

² Dillard (1992: 32f.) supposes that Webster (1789: 384–5) – without actually using the term – is the first to suggest the phenomenon of ‘colonial lag’, especially in New England.

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environment. There is no reason why the same principle should not apply to a people, their language, and their culture. (1958: 80)³

Like Bryant, Marckwardt also includes the possibility of innovative tendencies. A close look at the original definition of the term ‘colonial lag’ shows that he applied it to post-colonial survivals of conservative features. In subsequent linguistic treatments of the topic, the term was used not only to refer to apparent retentions of ‘mother-country’ usage in present-day AmE (e.g. in Görlach’s 1987 critical assessment of the concept),⁴ but also in the description of early or colonial AmE, notably in Kytö’s (1991, 1993a, 1993b) work.

In what follows, I will not focus on the problems inherent in the term ‘colonial lag’ itself, nor on the various uses and abuses of the concept, but on the question of whether it makes sense to apply it to apparently conservative features of present-day AmE.⁵ My critique will be based on the fact that the dichotomy of ‘colonial lag’ and ‘colonial innovation’ – especially when it is applied to features of post-colonial English or even modern language use in America – implies a far too simplistic view of the much more complex patterns and processes of language change. In other words, I will demonstrate that it is not enough to show the layering of both aspects, conservative and innovative tendencies, in contemporary AmE to evaluate the hypothetical archaicness of American English (see Montgomery 2001: 107). The synchronic snapshots of AmE are sometimes misleading as a seemingly conservative feature may actually be a case of ‘colonial revival’. Close reading of Görlach (1987: 55) also hints at more complicated diachronic patterns:

Although syntactic lags are, then, possible under certain circumstances of isolation or different educational policies as regards prescriptive ‘correctness’, there has been less of this in the overseas history of English than in

³ For an early critical comment on the general conservatism of AmE, see Baugh (1959: 418): ‘Yet it is open to doubt whether the English language in America can really be considered more conservative than the English of England. . . . We may well ask ourselves . . . whether the archaic features which we have noted in the language of America are evidence of a conservative tendency or are survivals which can be otherwise accounted for . . .’ He also raises the question of the basis of comparison, i.e. whether it is legitimate to compare standard AmE with standard BrE only: ‘In this respect [i.e. archaic lexicon] the rural speech of England is just as conservative as that of America’ (1959: 419). See also Marckwardt and Quirk (1965). For an alternative explanation (based on the network approach) as to why Early American English was likely to be more conservative than EMod BrE, see Kytö (2004: 130–2).

⁴ For a similar dismissal of ‘colonial lag’ as a reality in AmE, see Dillard (1992: 42): ‘The appealing concept of colonial lag, with all its genealogical promise, does not seem to meet the test of chronology.’

⁵ Problems inherent in the term are, for instance, that ‘lag’ implies that, sooner or later, the ‘colonial’ variety will catch up with the parent variety, as Bauer (2002) points out. Mazzon (2000: 75) comments on the role that the popular ‘colonial lag’ argument has had in the perpetuation of linguistic colonialism. The uncritical use of the term by lay people and the social functions of the cultural myth that varieties of AmE retain Shakespearean or Elizabethan features have been dissected by Montgomery (1998). Lehnert (1976) is an example of a rather simplistic but systematic application of the notion to modern AmE; McCrum *et al.* (2002) also seem to perpetuate the myth of the Shakespearean quality of AmE rather uncritically.

other fields, and even less is likely to evolve in a world characterized by increasing communication.

Görlach's comment on syntactic lag implies that conservative usage can 'evolve' in a colonial or rather post-colonial variety. In other words, the term 'lag' is used in a rather wide sense to include patterns of 'regressive' divergence. Similarly, Lass's (1990: 268) argument for a 'squishy' scale ranging from archaic to innovative language use suggests a more complex reality in the evolution of what he calls extraterritorial Englishes (ETEs):

Thus it is possible for ETEs (especially the older ones) to show both archaic and advanced features, often stemming from quite different layers of the Mainland evolutionary sequence; ETEs do not result from simple differential change in a monolithic input.

What we need is more diachronic depth in corpus-based studies on the development of the two varieties, British and American English, to find out when AmE became the centre of gravity for current developments – be they straightforward retentions of conservative patterns, revivals of conservative features or genuinely innovative developments.

In section 2 of my chapter, I will briefly review existing corpus-based studies on differential change in AmE and BrE to see what kind of diachronic patterns we may expect in the relation of the two varieties. I will then move on to present some new evidence from my own research (section 3). Most of this is still explorative in character, and this also holds for the possible typology of patterns that describes the relation of AmE to BrE which I will sketch in section 4 of this chapter. In my conclusion, I will propose a new metaphor for the description of diachronic developments in the two major varieties of English.

2 Previous studies

One of the most systematic studies of early AmE is Kytö's work on modals (Kytö 1991) or the replacement of the older third-person present singular verb inflection *-th* by modern *-s* (Kytö 1993b). She applies the term 'lag' in the comparison of early modern British and American English. Modal verbs provide an example of colonial lag (Kytö 1991: 353), whereas verb inflection is an example of colonial innovation (Kytö 1993b: 113). Both studies also show, however, that more detailed analyses often reveal more complex historical patterns: the use of third-person *will* is a parallel development in both AmE and BrE (see Kytö 1991: 351), whereas AmE is more conservative than BrE in retaining *-th* forms in the specific context of verbs ending in /s/ and /z/ (see Kytö 1993b: 132).

These kinds of studies provide us with valuable information on the starting point for further developments in the late modern (LModE) or post-colonial period, the topic that I am interested in. Corpus evidence on

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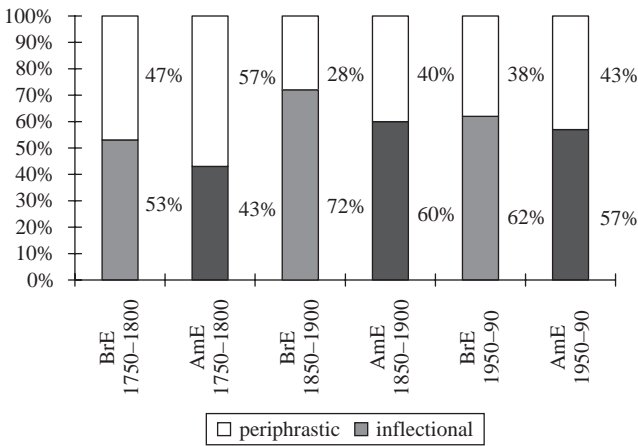


Figure 1.1 Comparative forms in ARCHER-1 (based on Kytö and Romaine 2000: 177)

the long-term developments in the two varieties has become available in the form of purely literary databases like *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (ECF) and *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (NCF) for BrE or *Early American Fiction* (EAF) for the transatlantic variety.⁶ A more obvious source to turn to is the ARCHER corpus, *A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers*. It provides diachronic evidence on BrE and AmE in the modern period across a variety of different genres. Two versions of the ARCHER corpus will be referred to in this chapter, the original ARCHER-1 corpus and a more recent ARCHER-2 corpus. To the registers sampled in ARCHER-1 (newspapers, journals, fictional writing, drama, medical, scientific, religious writing, legal texts and private letters) a new category (advertisements) has been added in ARCHER-2.⁷

So far, ARCHER has not been used systematically for the comparative analysis of historical developments in British and American English. In the existing studies that have used ARCHER, the linguistic developments as such have been foregrounded and information on diverging, converging or parallel developments in national varieties has been treated more or less as a by-product. An exception is Kytö and Romaine's (2000) study of adjective comparison, which focuses on regional differences. They find that BrE was more advanced in the change towards the inflectional type of comparison (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2).

⁶ These collections of fictional texts are commercially available; they are all published by Chadwyck-Healey.

⁷ For details on the size of individual components, see Tables 1.15-1.18 in the appendix. On the original corpus design, see Biber, Finegan and Atkinson (1994).

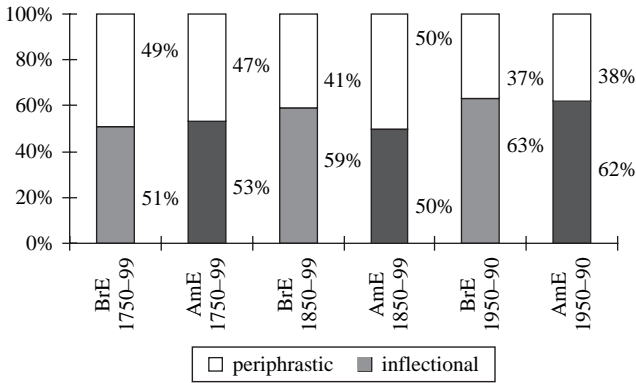


Figure 1.2 Superlative forms in ARCHER-1 (based on Kytö and Romaine 2000: 177)

The problem is how to interpret these results historically. Kytö and Romaine (2000: 190) claim that ‘[t]his may be yet another instance of a phenomenon referred to as “colonial lag”’, but the modal verb in this assessment suggests that it is not a straightforward case. After all, the variant that is being pushed in BrE is a conservative pattern, a process which Kytö and Romaine (2000) refer to as ‘the reassertion of the inflectional type as the primary one’, that is, a development which goes against the common trend towards greater use of periphrastic forms. We may rightly refer to this as an instance of colonial lag, however, if we take Early Modern English (EModE) as our reference point: evidence from Kytö’s corpus of Early American English and the EModE part of the Helsinki corpus shows that the point of departure in this development was the same for both BrE and AmE (see Kytö and Romaine 2000: 190). In other words, AmE is ‘lagging’ behind BrE in a regressive development – not what we would call a prototypical instance of ‘lag’ (cf. Chapter 4 by Mondorf).

A more canonical example of colonial lag is evidenced in the spread of the passive to progressive contexts and the retention of the passival, as Hundt (2004a) has shown: this appears to be a genuine case of colonial lag because the feature that is more frequently used in BrE is truly innovative and not a revival of an older pattern; and, furthermore, BrE usage is still ahead of AmE today (see Figure 1.3).

The reverse phenomenon, a case of colonial innovation, emerged from a long-term study of *be/have*-variation as auxiliaries in the present and past perfect of intransitive verbs: Kytö (1997) finds that AmE was more advanced in the change towards the use of *have*, particularly at a stage when the change gained momentum in the late 1700s (see Figure 1.4).

The question is, again, whether we would want to apply the term ‘colonial’ innovation to this development: we are not dealing with a change that

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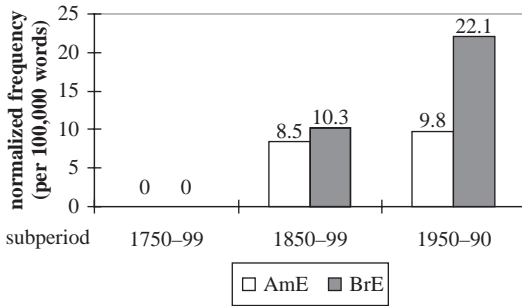


Figure 1.3 Progressive passives in BrE and AmE (ARCHER-I – based on Hundt 2004a)

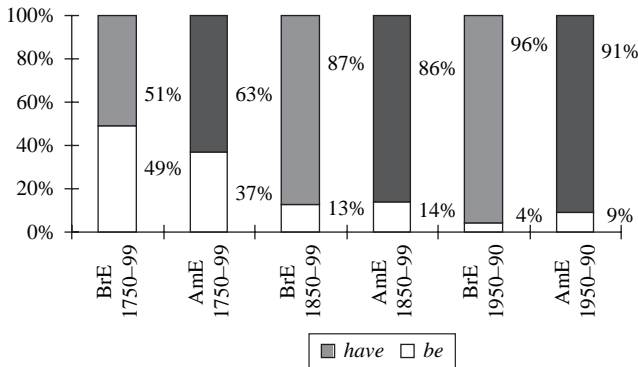


Figure 1.4 *Have* vs. *be* as perfect auxiliaries with intransitives in BrE and AmE (ARCHER-I – based on Kytö 1997: 38)

was initiated by AmE but simply one where early AmE happened to be more advanced than BrE.

A more complicated pattern of regional developments can be found in Krug's (2000) study of emerging English modals, i.e. the use of *have (got) to*, *want to* and *be going to* in BrE and AmE: he shows that AmE starts out as the more conservative variety in the eighteenth century; in the nineteenth century, the development in the two national varieties was more or less parallel,⁸ and in the twentieth century, AmE turns out to be the more advanced variety in the use of emerging modals. A similar combination of lag and overtake occurs in the development of the *get*-passive (Hundt 2001): *get*-passives are less frequently used in AmE than BrE to begin with, but in the nineteenth century, AmE is more advanced in the use of the construction than BrE. This development is interesting because nineteenth-century AmE

⁸ Slight differences occurred in text type-specific usage, for instance in the more rapid increase of *want to* in AmE drama texts (Krug 2000: 133).

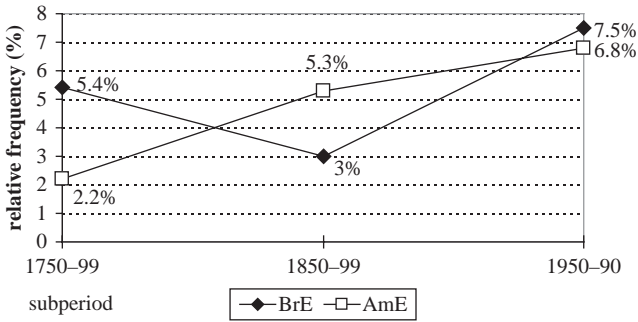


Figure 1.5 The *get*-passive in BrE and AmE in ARCHER-1 (based on Hundt 2001: 72)⁹

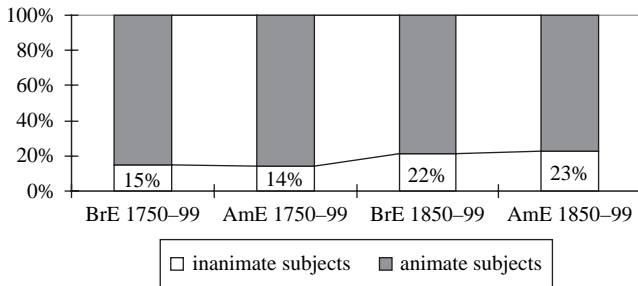


Figure 1.6 Relative frequency of progressives with animate and inanimate subjects in ARCHER-1 – BrE and AmE compared (based on Hundt 2004b)

actually only reaches the level of usage found in eighteenth-century BrE, but the use of the *get*-passive in nineteenth-century BrE decreases again, probably because of prescriptive influence. In the twentieth century, BrE catches up again with AmE (see Figure 1.5).

Yet other developments, like the spread of the progressive to inanimate or non-agentive subjects in LModE, occur in both national varieties as a parallel change (see Figure 1.6).

⁹ The figure gives the relative frequency of passive constructions against other uses of *get* in the corpus (for absolute figures, see Table 1.19 in the appendix). This option was chosen because the main concern of the chapter was the grammaticalization of the *get*-passive, which made other constructions with *get* a useful way of defining the variable. Alternatively, the development of the *get*-passive could be studied against other kinds of passives (e.g. with *be* and *have*). Indirect evidence of an overall decline in passive constructions comes from Biber and Finegan (1997: 259, 268f.): features typical of an impersonal style (with the exception of conjuncts these are all passive constructions) show a clear decrease in ARCHER.

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The proportion of inanimate subjects in both varieties rises to about 22 per cent by the middle of the nineteenth century. In other words, the loss of the original semantic constraint in the use of the progressive is a case neither of colonial lag nor of colonial innovation.

3 New evidence

The focus in the following case studies will be mainly on apparent conservatism in modern AmE: (a) irregular verb morphology, (b) concord with collective nouns and (c) the mandative subjunctive. The data come mainly from ARCHER-2 and databases of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British and American fiction. Occasionally, additional evidence will be provided from the *Zürich English Newspaper* corpus (ZEN) and from standard one-million-word corpora such as Brown or Frown. In ARCHER, the size of the subcorpora for the two varieties and different periods is not the same, but I will present overall frequencies rather than normalized frequencies because the absolute frequencies in my case studies are too low to calculate normalized frequencies. The variables will be defined in a way that allows for the use of absolute rather than normalized frequencies.

3.1 Irregular verb morphology

Irregular verb morphology in modern AmE is of interest because it seems to illustrate both innovative and conservative tendencies: On the one hand, twentieth-century AmE appears to be more advanced in the regularization of irregular past tense forms like *burned*, *leaned* or *spelled* (see [Chapter 3](#) by Levin; see also [Chapter 5](#) by Schlüter). At the same time, it retains older forms of the participles *gotten* and *proven* (cf. Hundt 1998a). The question is whether, diachronically, these are also clear-cut instances of innovation and lag. Let us first turn to alleged cases of colonial lag.

3.1.1 Gotten

The use of the irregular past participle *gotten* is a morphological Americanism in PDE (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 113, or Hundt 1998a: 36). Kytö (2004: 140) points out that the few instances of *gotten* in the spontaneous spoken conversations of the British National Corpus are used by speakers from the North of England. Text books frequently claim that there is a semantic difference between *got* and *gotten* in AmE, the latter having the dynamic sense of ‘to acquire/obtain’ (Strevens 1972: 47, or Tottie 2002a: 152). Corpus-based research has shown that *gotten* is an occasional variant of *got* in AmE (Peters 1994: 153, Hundt 1998a: 36f.), but it is still not used as a variant of stative *got* in the sense of ‘have, possess’ (cf. Trudgill and Hannah 2002: 57). The following comparison focuses merely on the form of the participle, not on semantic differences. Furthermore, the data from the *Early American*

Table 1.1 Got vs. gotten (*participles*) in ARCHER-2

	1600–49	1650–99	1700–49	1750–99	1800–49	1850–99	1900–49	1950–90
AmE	–	–	–	14:0	17:0	41:3	162:4	77:4
BrE	3:0	15:1	34:4	21:0	38:2	38:0	91:0	93:0

Fiction (EAF) database do not distinguish between the past tense use and the participle function of *got*, and thus only indicate trends that would certainly merit further in-depth analyses.

So far, comparative diachronic evidence on the use of *got* and *gotten* in British and American English is missing. Evidence from ARCHER (see Table 1.1) indicates that the use of *gotten* in AmE is not a straightforward case of colonial lag.¹⁰ Initially, the apparently ‘conservative’ form was also occasionally used in BrE. That it fell out of use in BrE in the course of the LModE period is also attested by data from the ZEN corpus where the latest occurrences date from the end of the eighteenth century. Somewhat surprisingly, *gotten* is only attested from the middle of the nineteenth century as a low-frequency variant in the American sub corpus of ARCHER. A look at individual examples shows that other dynamic uses than that of ‘obtain/acquire’ were already available in the eighteenth century (see also Strevens 1972: 47):

- (1) But have we gotten rid entirely of the premise on which it rested? (ARCHER, 1897vand.h7)¹¹
- (2) This evil must be stopped at all hazards and this monstrous brood of witches gotten out of the land. (ARCHER, 1893wil.k.d7)

The fact that *gotten* occurs so infrequently in the American sub-corpora of ARCHER is particularly interesting as the sampling frame for the corpus ensures that both written and speech-based genres are included. Larger amounts of data from corpora of fictional writing show that *gotten* is only rarely used in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century written AmE (see Table 1.2).¹²

Evidence from Kytö’s Corpus of Early American English (Kytö 2004: 140) provides earlier examples of *gotten* in the transatlantic variety, but *got* is far more frequent at forty-three against five occurrences (with suffixed forms of the participle found in speech-related text types or imagined

¹⁰ Adjectival uses of the participles (e.g. *ill-gotten*) were excluded from the count.

¹¹ A similar example from the same text reads: ‘We have gotten rid of the logical conclusion.’ (ARCHER, 1897vand.h7)

¹² Note that the figures for *got* in this table include both participle and non-participle forms. They were not distinguished because the main aim of the search was to demonstrate the (in)frequency of *gotten*. A look at the 104 instances of *got* in the eighteenth-century part of EAF, however, revealed that the majority of instances (99) were participles. Similarly, a set of 100 occurrences from the nineteenth-century part of the corpus yielded 95 instances of the participle *got*.

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Table 1.2 Got vs. gotten in Early American Fiction (EAF)

	<i>got</i>	<i>gotten</i>
Eighteenth century (1789–1799/1800)	104 (94%)	7 6%
Nineteenth century (1800/1801–1850)	11665 (98%)	182 2%

Table 1.3 Got vs. gotten (*participles*) in twentieth-century AmE

	<i>got</i>	<i>gotten</i>
Brown (1961)	134 (89%)	16 (11%)
Frown (1992)	145 (83%)	29 (17%)

speech). The assumption that the use of *gotten* in AmE is more likely a case of post-colonial revival than colonial lag is further supported by evidence from two parallel corpora of twentieth-century AmE (see Table 1.3): the frequency of *gotten* has almost doubled in the thirty years between Brown and Frown, whereas the number of regular participles has remained fairly stable.

Discounting the semantic restriction attaching to *gotten*, it may thus be described as a low-frequency, colloquial variant that has been gaining ground again rather lately in written AmE. It will be interesting to see whether this trend will be taken up, eventually, by other varieties of English worldwide or whether it will remain a morphological Americanism.

3.1.2 Proven

Historically, *prove* is a different kind of verb. Unlike *gotten*, the *en*-participle *proven* is an innovative form, introduced into English English from Scots in the sixteenth century.¹³ However, the distribution of the participles in PDE is very similar to the case we have just looked at. Again, the use of the suffixed past participle is more typical of AmE (cf. Quirk *et al.* 1985: 107, or Hundt 1998a: 33). As in the case of *gotten*, the suffix-containing *en*-participle has been gaining ground in AmE; but, unlike *gotten*, *proven* is not a low-frequency and stylistically marked option. Preliminary evidence from Gloderer (1993: 69) – a comparison of Brown with data from the *Miami Herald* for 1992 – even suggests that a shift of preference from *proved* to *proven* may have taken place in AmE in the second half of the twentieth century. Comparative data from the Frown corpus show that we are more likely to be dealing with a case of stable variation in AmE (see Table 1.4).

¹³ The earliest attestation in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) of a verbal use of *provin* is from 1536, that of the adjectival function from 1653.

Table 1.4 Proved (*participle*) and proven in twentieth-century English

	<i>proved</i>	<i>proven</i>
Brown (1961)	23	12
Frown (1992)	19	10
LOB (1961)	47	4
FLOB (1991)	51	8

Table 1.5 Proved vs. proven (*participles*) in ARCHER-2

	1600–49	1650–99	1700–49	1750–99	1800–49	1850–99	1900–49	1950–90
AmE	–	–	–	11:0	4:0	8:3	4:2	4:3
BrE	1:0	5:0	5:0	6:0	25:1	11:0	13:0	3:1

Another difference between *gotten* and *proven* is that the irregular participle of *prove* is not a morphological Americanism; it has also been gaining ground in BrE, as the data from LOB and FLOB show (see Table 1.4).¹⁴

We are thus dealing with a case in which AmE could be seen as reintroducing a putative conservatism into BrE. What about long-term differential change, though? Could it be the case that the use of *proven* in AmE is a genuine case of colonial lag with merely an increased use in the twentieth century? Corpus evidence indicates that, as in the case of *gotten*, the increase of *proven* in American and British English is a rather recent development (Table 1.5).¹⁵

Even though ARCHER does not provide ample evidence on the use of *proved* and *proven*, the figures allow us to detect a diachronic trend: with the exception of a single occurrence in a passage of fictional dialogue from a nineteenth-century novel, *proven* is only attested with one further example in the twentieth-century subcorpus of BrE in ARCHER. Evidence from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British fiction corpora (i.e. the ECF and NCF databases) supports this: in the eighteenth-century works, *proven* is not attested at all; in the nineteenth-century works, *proven* occurs occasionally (fifteen instances of the irregular participle against a total of 2470 instances of regular *proved* – both simple past and participle forms included). Similarly, the ZEN corpus only contains a single occurrence of *proven* (from the first half of the eighteenth century) but 338 instances of regular *proved*.

In the American subcorpora of ARCHER, *proven* is attested as a low-frequency alternative from the second half of the nineteenth century. Data from *Early American Fiction* support this trend: *proven* is attested in these

¹⁴ Like a lot of other ongoing changes in contemporary English, this is even more pronounced in the language of newspapers (see Hundt 1998a: 34).

¹⁵ Adjectival uses of the participles and ambiguous instances are excluded from the count.

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Table 1.6 Proved *vs.* proven *in* Early American Fiction (EAF)

	<i>proved</i>	<i>proven</i>
Eighteenth century (1789–1799/1800)	89 (100%)	0 (0%)
Nineteenth century (1800/1801–1850)	2779 (99%)	38 (1%)

written texts from the first half of the nineteenth century. The first occurrences are from the 1820s:

- (3) I need not entreat your forgiveness, for you have proven already that you have forgiven me . . . (J. McHenry, *O'Halloran*, 1824)
- (4) Still is he mortal man, as a goodly appetite hath proven (J. F. Cooper, *The Wept of Wish Ton-Wish*, 1829)
- (5) there was a saying that neither bullet nor sword could enter his body; though that was a mistake, as his death hath fully proven. (J. F. Cooper, *The Wept of Wish Ton-Wish*, 1829)

Fictional writing shows that *proven* is probably only an occasional variant in nineteenth-century written American English (see Table 1.6).¹⁶

From this cumulative evidence we have to conclude that the use of *proven* in AmE is again not a genuine case of colonial lag but an instance of post-colonial revival. The term 'revival' has to be used in a fairly wide sense here, however. According to the OED, there is only one attested sixteenth-century example. All other quotations date from the seventeenth century or later. Kytö's corpus of Early American English does not provide evidence of an earlier use of the participle in AmE either (personal communication). Standard AmE thus introduces a variant of the participle that had for some time been around in British (especially Scottish) dialectal usage.

3.1.3 Regularization of irregular past tense and past participle forms

Current AmE is clearly leading world English in the regularization of irregular past tense and past participle forms like *burned*, *leaned* or *spelled*: in the American corpora, the regular forms account for well above 90 per cent of all instances, whereas evidence from the British corpora shows that we might be dealing with a case of 'home lag' with frequencies of regular forms at 65 per cent in 1961 and 69 per cent in 1991 (cf. Hundt 1998a: 32).¹⁷ The question is whether this hypothesis is supported by diachronic data. The figures in

¹⁶ Due to the large number of hits for *proved*, adjectival uses were not excluded from the counts.

¹⁷ Varieties such as New Zealand and Australian English are even more conservative in this ongoing change than BrE. For system-internal factors of variation (e.g. the fact that the *-ed* forms tend to function as past tenses more frequently than the *-t* forms, see Chapter 3 by Levin). Due to the rather low number of overall frequencies in the ARCHER data, these internal factors were not considered.

Table 1.7 *Regularization of irregular past tense and past participle forms of the verbs burn, dwell, learn, smell, spell, dream, kneel, lean, leap, spill and spoil in ARCHER-2 (regular:irregular forms)*

	1600-49	1650-99	1700-49	1750-99	1800-49	1850-99	1900-49	1950-90
AmE	—	—	—	6:26	14:8	35:5	41:2	42:8
BrE	8:11	19:9	8:13	22:9	14:16	35:12	32:19	25:24

Table 1.8 *Regularization of irregular past tense and past participle forms of the verbs burn, dwell, learn, smell, spell, dream, kneel, lean, leap, spill and spoil in ARCHER-2 – adjectival use of participle removed (regular:irregular forms)*

	1600-49	1650-99	1700-49	1750-99	1800-49	1850-99	1900-49	1950-90
AmE	—	—	—	3:25	12:7	30:5	40:1	38:7
BrE	7:11	8:8	6:12	12:9	7:13	29:12	29:17	21:24

Table 1.7 are based on a search for verb forms of eleven verbs in ARCHER-2, namely *burn, dwell, learn, smell, spell, dream, kneel, lean, leap, spill* and *spoil*.

The results from ARCHER come as a bit of a surprise. Evidence from seventeenth- to nineteenth-century BrE seems to indicate that the regularization process was well under way in BrE before it affected AmE. This also means that AmE only seems to be heading world English in this ongoing process of language change if we take a synchronic snapshot of twentieth-century usage. The figures in Table 1.7 may be slightly misleading, though, as they include both the verbal and adjectival uses of the participles. The picture is not much different, however, if we remove adjectival uses from the counts (see Table 1.8).

Regular verb forms are fairly frequently used in BrE before they start spreading in AmE; they clearly outnumber irregular forms in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. In the second half of the twentieth century, irregular verb forms gain ground again in BrE. It may well be the case that the currently more conservative nature of BrE with respect to this variable has to be attributed to an avoidance strategy treating the regular forms as a morphological Americanism. AmE initially lagged behind BrE in this ongoing trend towards regularization of irregular verb forms; from the second half of the nineteenth century, however, it has been clearly in the vanguard of change. This is also corroborated by data from fiction databases. The data for BrE were collected from the ECF and NCF, that for AmE from the EAF databases.

Figure 1.7 shows that British authors use a larger proportion of regular verb forms in the eighteenth century than American authors do; in the nineteenth century, the relative frequency of regular verb forms decreases

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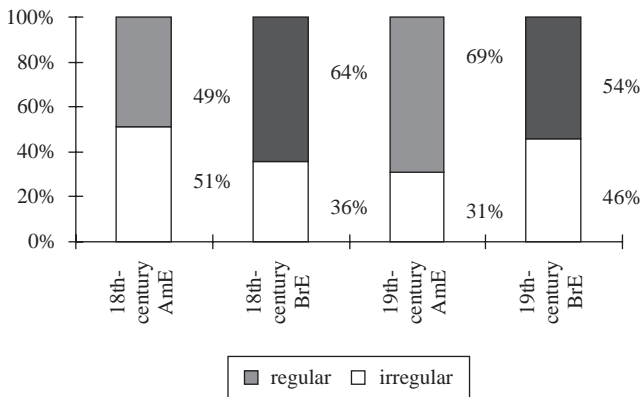


Figure 1.7 Past tense and past participle forms in fictional writing (ECF, NCF, EAF) – adjectival uses included¹⁸

in BrE fictional writing, whereas AmE fictional texts show a robust increase of regular forms.

The picture looks somewhat different if the potential adjectival uses of some verbs (*burn*, *learn*, *spoil* and *spill*) are excluded from the counts (see Figure 1.8). Overall, the proportion of regular verb forms decreases in both periods and varieties, mainly due to the highly frequent but categorical use of *learned* as an adjective. The most noticeable difference, however, concerns eighteenth-century BrE, which has a considerably lower proportion of regular verb forms once adjectival uses are excluded. In fact, the results in Figure 1.8 suggest that the verbal use of these forms was fairly stable throughout the two centuries. But BrE in the eighteenth century still has a higher proportion of regular verb forms than the cross-Atlantic variety during the same period. For AmE, however, the decrease in irregular forms is even more marked if adjectival uses are excluded, a result that ties in with previous studies.¹⁹

The story of these verbs is complicated further by the fact that a lot of the irregular forms are actually fairly recent in historical terms, namely late Middle English innovations that spread in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Interestingly, there is a fairly close correspondence between the order in which

¹⁸ Note that (for obvious reasons) the number of eighteenth-century American texts included in the EAF collection is much lower than the amount of data available from the British eighteenth-century database. Furthermore, the American texts only date from the end of the century. For raw frequencies, see Table 1.20 in the appendix. Where the total number of forms for the verbs was significantly >100, a subset of 100 instances were analysed and the results extrapolated to the original number of occurrences.

¹⁹ Hundt (1998a: 31), for instance, found that while present-day AmE uses the regular *burned* more frequently as an adjective than irregular *burnt*, the adjectival use is still a stronghold for the irregular form (65 per cent of all irregular forms were adjectival uses).

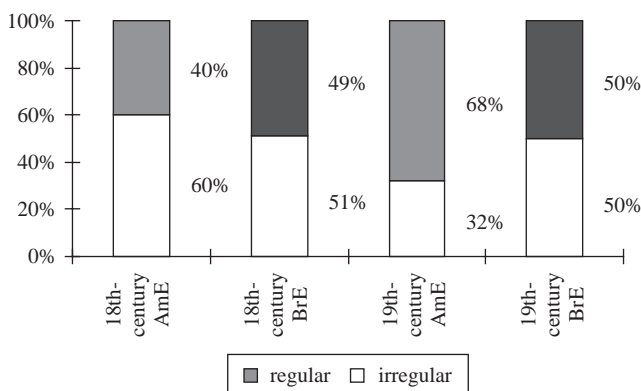


Figure 1.8 Past tense and past participle forms in fictional writing (ECF, NCF, EAF) – adjectival uses excluded²⁰

these new irregular verb forms are first attested in the OED and the proportion of irregular forms: the older the irregular form, the more frequently it will be used. The only notable exception is the verb *leap* (see Table 1.9).

According to Lass (1999: 175), ‘these [i.e. the new irregular verbs] now generally keep the old /-d/ forms in the US (*smelled, spilled, burned, dreamed*), while in BrE and the Southern Hemisphere Extraterritorial Englishes they have the newer /-t/. This suggests that the more regular nature of AmE in this area of morphology might actually be a case of colonial lag rather than innovation (cf. also Chapter 5 by Schlüter). The evidence from the fiction databases, however, shows that AmE, in the eighteenth century, has a larger proportion of irregular than regular verb forms; it also uses more irregular verb forms than BrE. This is not a case of straightforward colonial lag, then, but an instance of post-colonial re-innovation.

3.2 Concord with collective nouns

Concord with collective nouns, i.e. the choice of singular or plural verbs and pronouns, is a similarly complicated story. According to Marckwardt (1958: 77), AmE is more conservative in its use of concord patterns than BrE:

Originally the singular would have been demanded, but as early as 1000, plural verbs began to appear with collective nouns when the idea of a number of individuals took precedence over the group concept. This [i.e. the use of singular verbs, M.H.] is the way collectives were used in Shakespeare’s time, and it is the way they are still used in the United States. The consistent use of the plural with certain of these nouns

²⁰ For raw frequencies, see Table 1.21 in the appendix.

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Table 1.9 *Ranking by earliest occurrence (OED) and frequency of irregular form (evidence from BrE eighteenth-century fiction – ECF)*

<i>dwelt</i>	1375		<i>dwelt</i>	99%
<i>leapt</i>	1480		<i>burnt</i>	85%
<i>burnt</i>	1530		<i>dreamt</i>	50%
<i>dreamt</i>	1592		<i>learnt</i>	45%
<i>learnt</i>	1592		<i>leapt</i>	38%
<i>spoilt</i>	1712		<i>spoilt</i>	10%
<i>knelt</i>	1764		<i>knelt</i>	7%

apparently developed in England in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Southey is the *Oxford English Dictionary* source for plural agreement with *corporation* as well as *government*. *Ministry* appears in this construction somewhat later. American English has retained the older practice, and as yet no indications of a change have appeared.

Marckwardt commented on this case of colonial lag in the late 1950s. Since then, various studies (cf. Hundt 1998a: 86–9, and Levin 2001: 86–90) have shown how AmE is actually leading world English in an increasing use of singular concord with collective nouns in the twentieth century. The question is, however, whether Marckwardt’s comment reflects earlier conservatism of AmE.

Long-term studies of BrE show that plural verb agreement peaks in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but decreases again in the nineteenth century, as Levin (2001: 36) reports. In the twentieth century, AmE is clearly ahead of BrE in the increasing use of singular concord. What we are lacking, again, is a long-term study of AmE to verify whether AmE initially lagged behind BrE in reverting to singular concord. The figures in Table 1.10 are based on a search for *army*, *couple*, *clergy*, *committee*, *crew*, *crowd*, *family*, *government*, *population*, *public* and *team* in ARCHER-2. Both verbal and pronominal agreement patterns are included in the count.²¹

Again, the results appear to go against our expectations and the results of previous research, as both BrE and AmE seem to use singular concord more

²¹ Overall, pronouns used after collective nouns are more likely to yield plural marking than verbs, as various studies (Nixon 1979: 123ff., Hundt 1998a: 84–6, Levin 2001: 91ff.) have shown. One of the main reasons for this is that verbs are more likely to show a close proximity to their antecedent, whereas pronouns are quite likely to occur at a greater distance. Pronominal concord may even run across sentence boundaries (cf. Nixon 1979: 125, Levin 2001: 92–102). Another reason for the greater likelihood of plural pronouns with collective antecedent nouns is that pronominal concord is more likely to be of the notional than of the grammatical type, i.e. it is more likely to focus on the individual within the group (plural) than on the collectivity of the group (singular). Due to the overall low frequency of collective nouns in the sample, instances of verbal and pronominal concord were not listed separately.

Table I.10 *Concord with collective nouns in ARCHER-2 (singular:plural)*

	1600-49	1650-99	1700-49	1750-99	1800-49	1850-99	1900-49	1950-90
AmE	—	—	—	17:11	17:10	19:12	20:3	31:6
BrE	2:0	13:6	14:9	16:6	18:13	12:6	28:5	29:7

Table I.11 *Concord with army, committee and government in ARCHER-2 (singular:plural)*

	1600-49	1650-99	1700-49	1750-99	1800-49	1850-99	1900-49	1950-90
AmE	—	—	—	11:2	13:1	19:9	12:1	19:1
BrE	0:0	10:6	6:2	12:1	12:8	10:3	22:3	23:2

frequently in all subcorpora. On closer inspection, we can distinguish three different types of nouns: those that take singular concord fairly early on, a set of nouns that are slightly more conservative and a noun which has a split concord pattern even in PDE, namely *family*. Nouns that clearly prefer singular concord over plural even in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English are *army*, *committee* and *government* (see Table I.11).²²

Data from the *Early American Fiction* database do not indicate that the findings in ARCHER have to be attributed to corpus size: *government* is used more frequently with singular concord in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English,²³ similarly, *army* also prefers singular concord.²⁴ Data from collections of British fictional writing corroborate the trend: *government* is used overwhelmingly with singular concord in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century

²² Lexico-grammatical variation is also attested in corpus-based research on Present-Day English. Biber *et al.* (1999: 188) point out that '[m]ost collective nouns prefer singular concord, although a few collective nouns commonly take plural concord'. Nouns like *audience*, *board*, *committee*, *government*, *jury* and *public* belong to the singular-type, *staff* is given as a noun that prefers plural concord; examples of nouns that are truly variable according to their corpus findings are nouns like *crew* and *family* (Biber *et al.* 1999). It is for this last group of nouns that Biber *et al.* comment on regional differences between AmE and BrE. On the basis of evidence from the Collins Cobuild corpus, Depraetere (2003: 124) claims that differences between individual nouns are not semantically motivated. She concedes, however, that 'the final curtain on collectives has not been drawn' (2003).

²³ Of 66 instances from the eighteenth century, only one was an example of concord marking (singular). Out of a total of 2,762 occurrences in the nineteenth century, 100 instances of concord marking were sampled; of these, 91 showed singular concord and only 9 had plural concord.

²⁴ Of 29 instances from the eighteenth century, only one was an example of concord marking (singular). The analysis of 1,200 occurrences of a total of 3,744 instances of the noun *army* from the nineteenth-century part of the database produced 110 relevant contexts with concord; of these, 81 showed singular concord and only 29 were examples of plural concord.

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Table 1.12 *Concord with collective nouns (all except army, committee, government and family) in ARCHER-2 (singular: plural)*

	1600–49	1650–99	1700–49	1750–99	1800–49	1850–99	1900–49	1950–90
AmE	–	–	–	2:2	2:2	0:3	4:2	8:5
BrE	0:0	0:0	3:4	1:1	4:2	2:2	6:1	4:3

BrE prose texts.²⁵ But even if these nouns and *family* are excluded from the figures in Table 1.10, the data still indicate that singular concord was far from uncommon in earlier stages of BrE and AmE (see Table 1.12).

These somewhat preliminary results indicate that the change from plural to singular concord may not be a recent innovation but a revival of a latent option English has always had. We obviously need more evidence, though, from larger and stylistically stratified corpora, as well as a larger set of collective nouns. What should be clear, though, is that explanations of the type ‘singular concord has been spreading in global English from an American centre of gravity’ are too simplistic. It may even be the case that we are dealing with a parallel long-term development rather than differential change in the two national varieties of English.

3.3 *The mandative subjunctive*

The mandative subjunctive, i.e. patterns like *I insist that this book be removed from the shelf* or *They issued the recommendation that the town be evacuated*, is one of the few features Görlach (1987) mentions as a syntactic survival in AmE. Övergaard’s (1995) longitudinal study of twentieth-century British and American English shows that the use of the subjunctive in AmE is a case of post-colonial revival rather than lag (cf. Chapter 13 by Kjellmer). But, so far, we lack evidence of the development in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It may have been the case that early colonial and post-colonial AmE had retained the subjunctive to a greater extent than BrE. This is fairly unlikely, though, as a comment in Rissanen (1999: 285) suggests that the periphrastic variable with a modal verb outnumbered the subjunctive in subordinate object clauses as early as Middle English (ME). We might therefore expect that this will also hold for EModE and LModE. Corpus data from ARCHER indicate that this is indeed the case. The figures in Table 1.13 are based on a search for a set of mandative verbs and morphologically related nouns,

²⁵ In the *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* database, 38 out of 45 relevant occurrences of *government* showed singular concord and only 7 were examples of plural agreement. In the *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* database, 750 instances of the noun were analysed; of these, 121 showed concord marking, again overwhelmingly of the singular type (90 against 31).

Table 1.13 *Mandative subjunctives vs. should/shall-periphrasis in ARCHER-2*

	1750–99	1800–49	1850–99	1900–49	1950–90
AmE	0:6	1:2	2:10	2:2	12:2
BrE	0:4	1:4	0:9	3:7	2:10

 Table 1.14 *Mandative subjunctives vs. should/shall-periphrasis in Early American Fiction (eighteenth-century-born authors only)*

verb/noun	subjunctive	should/shall
<i>ASK</i>	0	6
<i>DEMAND</i>	7	26
<i>INSIST</i>	1	54
<i>PROPOSE</i>	4	128
<i>RECOMMEND</i>	4	10
<i>REQUEST</i>	1	14
<i>REQUIRE</i>	6	96
<i>SUGGEST</i>	1	14
<i>URGE</i>	0	5
<i>WISH</i>	0	60
Total	24 (5.5%)	413 (94.5%)

namely *ASK*, *DEMAND*, *INSIST*, *RECOMMEND*, *REQUEST*, *REQUIRE*, *PROPOSE*, *SUGGEST*, *URGE* and *WISH*.²⁶

Even though the overall figures in this table are rather low, the data from ARCHER clearly indicate that the subjunctive was rarely used after mandative expressions such as *ask*, *insist* or *propose* in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English on both sides of the Atlantic. Data from a larger corpus of eighteenth-century American fiction confirm that AmE was not, originally, more conservative in the use of the mandative subjunctive. The results in Table 1.14 show that the subjunctive was clearly a low-frequency variant.²⁷

On the whole, corpus evidence leaves no doubt that the mandative subjunctive is a clear-cut example of post-colonial revival rather than colonial lag.²⁸

²⁶ The following nouns were included in the search: *demand*, *recommendation*, *request*, *requirement*, *proposal*, *suggestion*, *urge* and *wish*. For an in-depth discussion of the variable, see Hundt (1998b).

²⁷ The search was limited to instances of the mandative expression followed by a *that*-clause with overt subordination, allowing for up to five words to occur between the mandative expression and the subordinating conjunction. Ambiguous forms (e.g. *He suggested that they leave immediately*) were not included in the count.

²⁸ Hundt (1998b) provides evidence that, on the global scale, AmE is likely to be the leading variety in this ongoing change.

4 Typology of diachronic patterns

Before we take stock of the different patterns of differential diachronic developments in BrE and AmE, let us look at the typology that Marckwardt and Quirk (1964) suggest: in the first possible scenario, AmE retains older features and BrE diverges from the common ancestor, EModE (i.e. the equivalent of colonial lag); in the second scenario, the reverse happens – BrE preserves older patterns and the divergent development takes place in AmE (i.e. the equivalent of colonial innovation); in the third scenario, both varieties diverge from the common ancestor – whether this third scenario would lead to parallel or divergent developments is not spelt out.²⁹ A fourth possibility, the ‘resurrection’ of old words, is mentioned as a mere afterthought (1964: 37). It is not something that they explicitly consider as a possible development in grammar.

On the basis of existing, corpus-based research and the case studies I have added, I propose the following, more complex typology of differential grammatical change:

- (a) The first type is ‘true’ colonial lag. I would like to suggest ‘extraterritorial (ETE) conservatism’ as a more neutral term that includes both colonial and post-colonial language use and avoids the negative implications of ‘lag’. ETE conservatism is attested in the development of the progressive passive and retention of the passival in AmE.
- (b) The second type is ‘true’ extraterritorial innovation; a marginal example of this would be the spread of *have* as a perfect auxiliary with intransitive verbs – it is not a prototypical instance of extraterritorial innovation, as AmE was simply more advanced in a change that was well under way when the first settlers arrived in the New World. Another example that belongs here is the replacement of the older third-person present singular verb inflection *-th* by modern *-s* (see Kytö 1993b).
- (c) Truly divergent patterns are most likely to be found on the lexicogrammatical level, which still awaits investigation. Larger databases than the current version of ARCHER are needed to investigate this area of language change. The use of irregular *gotten* may belong here, but this is not a case of either genuine conservatism or genuine innovation but of ETE resurrection (see (e)). For further examples of truly divergent patterns, see Chapter 19 by Rohdenburg and Schlüter.
- (d) Parallel developments also occur, as the spread of the progressive to inanimate subjects indicates. The revival of singular concord with collective nouns possibly also belongs here.
- (e) Many of the features that have traditionally been referred to as instances of ‘lag’ turn out to be instances of resurrection or revival, either in

²⁹ Marckwardt and Quirk (1965) assume that colonial innovation would be the more frequent scenario.

the extraterritorial variety or the original homeland. Examples are the spread of inflectional comparison for disyllabic adjectives (spearheaded by BrE),³⁰ the use of irregular *gotten* and *proven* in AmE; and the spread of the mandative subjunctive in the twentieth-century (with AmE leading world English). Future possible case studies will involve the *s*-genitive (another likely case of reviving a conservative feature), the use of short adverb forms (cf. Tottie 2002a: 168–9 and Chapter 19, topics 1–3) or the use of *sure* as a sentence adverb (cf. Tottie 2002a: 169; cf. furthermore Chapter 17 by Aijmer).

- (f) In another type of differential change, AmE starts out as more conservative but overtakes BrE as the change gains momentum. I would like to refer to these as ‘kick-down developments’. Examples might include the development of emergent modals, and what from a long-term diachronic perspective has to be called (re-)regularization of irregular verb forms. In the case of the regularization process, BrE shows regressive divergence in the second half of the twentieth century. On closer inspection, the development of the *get*-passive is not an instance of a kick-down development: AmE only ‘overtakes’ BrE in the nineteenth century because the development in BrE is regressive. As far as the question of the long-term diachronic development of concord patterns with collective nouns is concerned, we still need better data from large enough and stylistically stratified corpora to be able to decide whether this is a case of more or less parallel development in BrE and AmE, or an instance of a ‘kick-down’ development in the revival of an old variant.

Further possible candidates for study would be (a) concessive constructions of the type *as tall as he was*, which, according to Tottie (2002b), might be an instance of lag; similarly, the preference of *take* over *have* as a light verb in expanded predicates (e.g. *have a bath* vs. *take a bath*), which could be an instance of colonial conservatism (see Chapter 19; see furthermore Trudgill, Nevalainen and Wischer (2002), who present data from fiction databases for BrE only); (b) the increasing use of the *s*-genitive (see Görlach 1987) and the use of *do*-support with *have* (see Trudgill, Nevalainen and Wischer 2002), which are mentioned as likely cases of colonial innovation. Trudgill, Nevalainen and Wischer (2002: 13f.) point out that in individual changes both innovative and conservative tendencies can be linked:

The innovative behaviour of North American English, as demonstrated in the greater rapidity of its adoption of *do*-support with *have*, is paradoxically due to its conservatism in its failure to gain as much dynamism in the meanings of this verb as British and other varieties of the language.

³⁰ For further details on this topic which suggest a more complicated pattern of variation and change, see Chapter 4 by Mondorf.

5 Conclusion

I would like to return to the question of whether the terms ‘colonial lag’ and ‘colonial innovation’ are at all useful for the description of differential change in varieties of English, or whether they should be given up altogether. Bailey (2001: 472) points out one of the main problems associated with the issue, namely that

some authors have been far too quick to assume that ‘lag’ exists rather than to test the idea as a hypothesis. Consequently, critics of the metaphor have declared baldly that ‘the term and the phenomenon described by it are largely myths as far as the hard linguistic facts of English are concerned’ (Görlach 55). Such a dismissal is, however, no more justifiable in its absolute terms than is the uncritical acceptance of the hypothesis of lag. Linguistic change did take place at different rates as the two kinds of English diverged, sometimes with the colonial variety in advance of the metropolitan and sometimes the reverse.

The terms ‘colonial lag’ and ‘colonial innovation’ are useful for the synchronic description of the early stages of colonialization, when AmE is likely to have been characterized by both conservative and innovative tendencies. But I would caution against the use of the term ‘colonial lag’ in reference to seemingly conservative tendencies in contemporary AmE. In this case, the term obscures more than it reveals. There are a few cases in which AmE as the ETE is diachronically more conservative than BrE. But the studies I have presented reveal that the relation of the two varieties turns out to be more complicated. Differential language change in BrE and AmE is not merely a case of ETE conservatism or home lag. The reality is much more complex, and there are at least the six different scenarios that I have described in my typology of differential change. Overall, then, the dichotomy ‘conservative vs. innovative’ turns out to be too simplistic for a description of the relation of American and British English. I therefore suggest that we (should) give up the term ‘colonial lag’ altogether and simply refer to different patterns of language change.

The metaphor of ‘lag’ is problematic as it implies a linear model of language change. The alternative metaphor that I would like to suggest interprets differential change in two varieties as a DANCE, a metaphor that includes the possibility of ‘looping’ developments. The DANCE metaphor is not entirely new to historical linguistics, of course. The famous s-shaped curve of development has been described with analogy to the slow-quick-quick-slow rhythm of the foxtrot. Note, however, that it is also applied to a linear development. I do not only want to apply the rhythmical quality of dancing to patterns of language change but to the spatial patterns as well, where it is possible for one partner to backstep or sidestep in developments that – over a longer period of time – may be directional, but also circular or spiral. And, just as in samba-dancing, for

instance, one partner may appear to ‘lag’ behind the other if we were to take a snapshot at any particular moment of the fluid movement.

My typology of differential change in BrE and AmE is merely descriptive. But it raises some interesting questions: Will further research reveal more instances of regressive divergence, for instance? And, if so, why might this be the case? I doubt, however, that we will be able to give a single, unifying explanation for these types of change. The revival of the participle *gotten*, still a fairly low-frequency informal option, would fit in with the observed colloquialization of the written norm. But in the case of the subjunctive, we are dealing with the resurrection of a formal variant that has been spreading to more informal contexts – a curious exception to the colloquialization of written English.³¹

Finally, I need to point out that the results of my own case studies are preliminary. We need better data. For a lot of the developments, ARCHER-1 and ARCHER-2 indicate interesting trends, but the size of the subcorpora needs to be increased and the AmE subcorpora, especially, need to be extended:

Vast quantities of primary material are required to enable the collection of sufficient amounts of linguistic [. . .] data to allow us to draw statistically significant conclusions required for generalising statements regarding diachronic trends, whether reflecting linguistic innovation or conservatism (colonial lag). (Kytö 2004: 151)

Appendix

Table 1.15 *ARCHER-1*

variety	subperiod	number of words
BrE	1650–99	162,681
	1700–49	170,985
	1750–99	173,040
	1800–49	230,474
	1850–99	203,815
	1900–49	211,501
	1950–90	194,175
AmE	1750–99	164,498
	1850–99	189,003
	1950–90	194,264
Total		1,894,436

³¹ On the susceptibility of different genres and different morpho-syntactic changes to ‘colloquialization’ as a stylistic factor in ongoing language change, see Hundt and Mair (1999).

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Table I.16 *ARCHER-2*

variety	subperiod	number of words
BrE	1600–49	64,921
	1650–99	162,686
	1700–49	170,985
	1750–99	173,300
	1800–49	230,475
	1850–99	203,796
	1900–49	212,277
	1950–90	199,259
AmE	1750–99	173,873
	1800–49	126,859
	1850–99	214,736
	1900–49	188,260
	1950–90	226,295
Total		2,347,722

Table I.17 *The British component of ARCHER-2 (number of texts per register)*

	1600– 49	1650– 99	1700– 49	1750– 99	1800– 49	1850– 99	1900– 49	1950– 90	Total
newspapers	0	11	10	10	10	10	10	10	71
journals	0	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	70
fiction	10	11	11	11	11	11	11	13	89
drama	10	10	9	9	10	10	11	11	80
medical texts	0	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	70
scientific texts	0	9	10	10	10	10	10	10	69
religious texts	0	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35
private letters ¹	0	25	29	26	26	26	29	28	189
legal texts	0	0	0	0	12	0	11	0	23
advertisements	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	20	91	94	91	104	92	107	97	696

¹ The number of individual texts in this category is relatively high because a single letter does not normally provide the number of words targeted for each sample, i.e. 3000 words.

Table I.18 *The American component of ARCHER-2 (number of texts per register)*

	1600– 49	1650– 99	1700– 49	1750– 99	1800– 49	1850– 99	1900– 49	1950– 90	Total
newspapers	0	0	0	10	10	10	15	10	55
journals	0	0	0	10	0	10	0	10	30
fiction	0	0	0	11	10	11	10	10	52
drama	0	0	0	5	10	10	10	10	45
medical texts	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	10	20
scientific texts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
religious texts	0	0	0	5	0	5	0	5	15
private letters	0	0	0	27	0	28	0	31	86

Table 1.18 (cont.)

	1600– 49	1650– 99	1700– 49	1750– 99	1800– 49	1850– 99	1900– 49	1950– 90	Total
legal texts	0	0	0	12	0	10	0	12	34
advertisements ¹	0	0	0	3	1	8	10	10	32
Total	0	0	0	83	31	102	45	108	369

¹The figures do not refer to individual advertisements but the number of 3000-word samples.

 Table 1.19 *The get-passive in BrE and AmE in ARCHER-1*³²

	1750–99		1850–99		1950–90	
		%		%		%
BrE	6 (111)	5.4	6 (203)	3.0	30 (400)	7.5
AmE	2 (91)	2.2	13 (244)	5.3	30 (442)	6.8

 Table 1.20 *Past tense and past participle forms of the verbs burn, dwell, learn, smell, spell, dream, kneel, lean, leap, spill and spoil in fiction databases – adjectival uses included*³³

	irregular		regular	
18th-century AmE	157	51%	150	49%
18th-century BrE	805	36%	1,421	64%
19th-century AmE	3,738	31%	8,466	69%
19th-century BrE	5,828	46%	6,776	54%

 Table 1.21 *Past tense and past participle forms of the verbs burn, dwell, learn, smell, spell, dream, kneel, lean, leap, spill and spoil in fiction databases – adjectival uses excluded*³⁴

	irregular		regular	
18th-century AmE	151	60%	101	40%
18th-century BrE	757	51%	726	49%
19th-century AmE	3,434	32%	7,385	68%
19th-century BrE	5,554	50%	5,506	50%

³² Figures in brackets indicate the overall number of *get*-constructions in the subcorpora.

³³ For verbs which occurred with a frequency which was significantly >100, a subset of 100 instances was analysed and the results extrapolated to the original number of occurrences.

³⁴ Again, for verbs which occurred with a frequency which was significantly >100, a subset of 100 instances was analysed and the results extrapolated to the original number of occurrences. All non-verbal uses of the search strings were excluded from the counts.

2 Compound verbs

PETER ERDMANN

1 Introduction

Among the differences that exist between American and British English some concern the use of compound verbs such as *to baby-sit*, *to daydream*, *to highlight*, *to mastermind*, *to pinpoint*, *to short-change*, *to troubleshoot*, *to wiretap*. These differences are rarely mentioned in the literature and have played no prominent role in the textbooks comparing the two varieties (Bauer 2002, Gramley and Pätzold 2003, Tottie 2002a, Trudgill and Hannah 2002). In studies of English word formation, on the other hand, these compounds have been dealt with from both a synchronic and a diachronic point of view (Adams 2001, Plag 2003). There has been a lively debate about the word-formational status of these verbal units dating back at least to Marchand (1969). While compound nouns, adjectives and adverbs are generally considered to be genuine compounds, which combine two or more free forms with one another, e.g. *opinion poll* (*the latest opinion poll*), *oilrich* (*oilrich countries*), *stock-still* (*The deer stood stock-still for a moment*), Marchand took these verbs to be not genuine compounds, but secondary combinations which are derived from non-verbal compounds. He distinguished between compound and pseudo-compound verbs. In accordance with the definition of endocentric compounds, Marchand accepted only verbs preceded by a particle such as *to overrate* and *to underrate* as genuine compound verbs. They are compound verbs because the two free morphemes follow the determinant–determinatum pattern, with a verb for their determinatum, and a particle for their determinant (Marchand 1969: 96). Verbs like *to baby-sit*, *to highlight* and *to wiretap*, on the other hand, are classified as pseudo-compound verbs because their second part, i.e. *sit*, *light*, *tap*, cannot be understood as the determinatum of the compound (Marchand 1969: 101). I will come back to this question a little later. In the most recent textbooks of English word formation compound verbs are treated along the line drawn linguistically by Marchand, for example Adams (2001) and Plag (2003).

2 The term *compound verb* defined

Among the various expressions used to label these complex verb forms I opt for the term *compound verb*. I define these forms as combinations of two free

forms neither of which is (neo-)classical in origin. This definition is meant to exclude complex forms such as *to paraglide*, *to videotape*, *to phonograph*, on the one hand, and cases like *to newscast*, *to blackmail*, *to dognap*, on the other. Some of the (neo-)classical forms are used as free forms nowadays, e.g. *photo*, *video*. The combining forms *-cast* 'to broadcast', *-mail* 'to extort' and *-nap* 'to steal' in the three examples mentioned above do not occur with these meanings as free forms in Present-Day English. The three items *cast*, *mail* and *nap* occur as free forms with different meanings, i.e. *to cast* 'to mould, to throw', *to mail* 'to send by post' and *to nap* 'to have a short sleep'. As free forms they can be part of compound verbs such as *to fly-cast* 'to fish by casting artificial flies', *to airmail* 'to send mail overseas by air' and *to catnap* 'to have a short sleep during the day'. These will be included in my presentation.

One of the three combining forms mentioned above is historically related to the free form that shows up in compound verbs today, i.e. *-cast* 'to broadcast' / *cast* 'to throw'. The other two, i.e. *-mail* 'to extort' / *mail* 'to send by post' and *-nap* 'to steal' / *nap* 'to have a short sleep', are historically unrelated. The items *-cast* and *cast* developed different meanings of the Old Norse loan word *kasta* 'to throw', which replaced OE *weorpan* in the thirteenth century. In Present-Day English, the verb *to cast* meaning 'to throw' lives on in a number of compounds and fixed phrases. In its literal meaning it was replaced by *throw* which goes back to the OE strong verb *þráwan*, which is related etymologically to German *drehen*; the verb *to cast* meaning 'to mould' is used mostly in a literal sense.

The items *-mail* and *mail* go back to different roots. The combining form *-mail* found in *blackmail* developed out of an Old Norse loanword in late OE *mál(e)* with the meaning 'stipulated pay, tribute'. The compound *blackmail*, which is first recorded as a noun in the OED for 1552, referred to 'a tribute formerly exacted from farmers and small owners in the border counties of England and Scotland, and along the Highland border, by freebooting chiefs, in return for protection or immunity from plunder' (OED *blackmail* n.). In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, this meaning was extended to any payment extorted by threats or pressure, and is nowadays also used in a figurative sense. The compound verb *to blackmail* is first recorded in the OED for the year 1880. The free form *mail* goes back to ME *male* meaning '(travelling) bag; pack', recorded in the OED as an Old French loan from the early thirteenth century. From the mid-seventeenth century onward it was used in the sense of 'a bag or packet of letters or dispatches to be officially transported and delivered' by methods that have changed over the centuries.

The items *-nap* and *nap* likewise have different origins. The combining form *-nap* is the sole survivor of the verb *to nap* 'to seize; steal', which died out in common usage in the second half of the nineteenth century. The OED dates its last illustration to 1863. It is obviously a Scandinavian loan word of the late seventeenth century. The historical relationship of *-nap* to the current verb *to nab* 'to take something suddenly' is unclear. Present-Day English *nap* 'to have

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a short sleep', on the other hand, goes back to OE *hnappian/hnæppian*, which meant the same. This verb seems to have had a more dignified connotation than today, because it was formerly used in Biblical passages.

To continue, I will also exclude loans that are compounds in origin, e.g. *to genuflect* 'to kneel' from Latin *genu* 'knee' + *flectere* 'to bow', *to kowtow/kotow* 'to be excessively subservient to somebody' from Chinese *kē* 'to knock' + *tóu* 'head', *to maintain* 'to keep in good condition' from Old French *maintenir* (ultimately from Latin *manū* + *tenēre* 'to hold in one's hand') or *to ransack* 'to search a place thoroughly' from Old Norse *rann* 'house' + *sækja* 'to seek'. I will also omit English compounds that have become opaque over time, such as *to breakfast* 'to eat a meal in the morning' (< *break* + *fast* 'to interrupt the abstention from food'), *to partake* 'to join in an activity' (< *part* + *take(er)* 'person who takes a part') or *to shepherd* 'to give spiritual or other guidance' (< *sheep* + *herd* 'sheep herdsman'). And finally, I will not include complex forms which consist of shortened forms, acronyms or reduplications repeated in full or combined in slightly altered form, e.g. *to lip-sync(h)* 'to perform a song or speech by moving one's lips in synchronization with a pre-recorded sound-track' (< *lip* + *synchronize*), *to scuba-dive* 'to swim underwater using a scuba' (< *s(elf-)c(ontained) u(nderwater) b(reathing) a(pparatus)*), *to seesaw* 'to change rapidly and repeatedly from one state or position to another and back again' (< *see* (= reduplication of the second part) + *saw* 'a hand tool for cutting wood').

3 Spelling of compound verbs in AmE and BrE

The majority of compound verbs are written either as one-word or hyphenated forms, e.g. *to earmark*, *to name-drop*. Two-word forms are extremely rare, e.g. *to ski jump* (AmE), *to free climb* (BrE). The latter normally occur as spelling variants of hyphenated forms of compound verbs, e.g. *to carpet-bomb/to carpet bomb* (AmE), *to dog-paddle/to dog paddle* (BrE). Based on the evidence of monolingual dictionaries of American and British English, one can observe a slight tendency in AmE towards avoiding hyphenation, while BrE shows a preference for hyphenated forms. The numbers listed in the following tables are a result of checking three well-known dictionaries each for AmE and BrE. These are *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (4th edition; henceforth abbreviated as AHD 4), *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th edition; MW 11) and *Encarta World English Dictionary* (2001 edition; EWED 2001) for AmE, and *Collins English Dictionary* (5th edition; COLLINS 5), *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (10th edition; COD 10) and *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (2000; NODE 2000) for BrE.

This difference in hyphenation between the two varieties is illustrated by the following compounds: *to backpedal* (AmE)/*to back-pedal* (BrE), *to handpick* (AmE)/*to hand-pick* (BrE), *to shadowbox* (AmE)/*to shadow-box* (BrE),

Table 2.1 *One-word, hyphenated and two-word forms of compound verbs in three dictionaries of AmE*

	AHD 4		MW 11		EWED 2001	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
A-B	278	40.5	283	41.6	252	42.5
AB	397	57.8	372	54.6	332	56.0
A B	12	1.7	26	3.8	9	1.5
Total	687	100	681	100	593	100

Table 2.2 *One-word, hyphenated and two-word forms of compound verbs in three dictionaries of BrE*

	COLLINS 5		COD 10		NODE 2000	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
A-B	211	43.2	293	50.5	338	52.8
AB	269	55.1	284	49.0	297	46.4
A B	8	1.7	3	0.5	5	0.8
Total	488	100	580	100	640	100

to *shortchange* (AmE)/to *short-change* (BrE), to *sugarcoat* (AmE)/to *sugar-coat* (BrE). There are few variants of hyphenation to be found which occur both in AmE and BrE, or in one of the varieties to the exclusion of the other, e.g. to *babysit*/to *baby-sit* (AmE, BrE), to *poor-mouth*/to *poormouth* (AmE), to *keypunch*/to *keypunch* (BrE). In some cases, the spelling of fairly recent compound verbs seems not to have been settled by usage. This is true, for example, of to *spell-check*/to *spellcheck*/to *spell check* in both varieties or to *break-dance*/to *breakdance*/to *break dance* in AmE and to *hot-dog*/to *hotdog*/to *hot dog* in BrE. Hyphens are also used to serve certain grammatical functions. Frequently, compound verbs are derived from compound nouns. If the latter are one-word forms or hyphenated, the verbs derived from them keep their orthographical form, e.g. to *airlift*/airlift n., to *lip-read*/lip-reading n., to *touch-type*/touch-typist n. When the compound noun is made up of two separate words, the verb derived from it is normally hyphenated, e.g. to *free-associate*/free association n., to *hero-worship*/hero worship n., to *pink-slip*/pink slip n. Certain component parts display regularities of hyphenation when they occur as first or second elements of a compound verb. Take, for example, the adjectives/adverbs *deep*, *fast*, *soft* and *wet*. As the first element of a compound verb, they are hyphenated with the second part, e.g. to *deep-six*, to *fast-talk*, to *soft-land*, to *wet-nurse*. The same is true of *dry*, *freeze*, *search* and *talk*. When they occur as the second element of a compound verb, they are

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normally set off from the first part by a hyphen, e.g. *to blow-dry*, *to deep-freeze*, *to strip-search*, *to double-talk*.

4 Pronunciation of compound verbs in AmE and BrE

Compound verbs consist of at least two syllables. This means that they have to be marked for stress, i.e. for both primary and secondary stress. The stress pattern of the compound verb is normally the same as that of the complex form from which it has been derived, e.g. *to bankroll* ['bæŋkrəʊl] ← *bankroll* n. ['bæŋkrəʊl], *to spellbind* ['spelbaɪnd] ← *spellbound* adj. ['spelbaʊnd]. There are some compound verbs, however, whose stress patterns differ in AmE and BrE. Verbs such as *to backdate* or *to spread-eagle* are differently stressed in the two varieties. While BrE puts the main stress on the second syllable, AmE places it on the first, e.g. [bæk'deɪt] vs. ['bækdɛɪt]. In other cases, such as *to stage-manage* or *to strip-search*, BrE has two stress patterns, AmE only one. While in BrE primary stress occurs on the second or alternatively on the first syllable in these verbs, AmE stresses the first syllable only, e.g. *to stage-manage* [steɪdʒ'mæɪnɪdʒ] / ['steɪdʒmæɪnɪdʒ] vs. ['steɪdʒmæɪnɪdʒ]. With verbs like *to air-condition* or *to hobnob*, BrE again allows two stress patterns. This time primary stress is put on the first syllable, which is more common in use, with an alternative stressing of the third or second syllable, respectively. In AmE primary stress only occurs on the first syllable in such cases, e.g. ['hɒbnɒb] / [hɒb'nɒb] vs. ['hɑ:bna:b]. To summarize, if there is a difference in primary stress between the two varieties, AmE tends to put it on the first syllable whereas BrE moves it to the second or has two prosodic patterns. A similar tendency has been observed by Berg (1999: 132) for stress variation in compound words in general. These cases have to be kept apart from compound verbs in which stress shift occurs. Take the verb *to dry-clean*, which has its primary stress on the second syllable in both AmE and BrE. When its past participle is used as an adjective, e.g. *dry-cleaned clothes*, the stress on its second element is weakened (on stress-shifting, see [Chapter 5](#) by Schlüter).

5 Inflection of compound verbs

In compound verbs, the second element is marked for verb inflections, e.g. *The army airlifted clean water and food to the area struck by the earthquake*. Generally, the second element follows the inflection this element displays when used as a verb on its own. If it is a regular verb, it gets inflected as a regular verb when it occurs as the second element of a compound verb; if it is an irregular verb, it follows its irregular inflection pattern.

- (i) The military *test-fired* a new ballistic missile over a Japanese island ...
(*Business Week* 14 September 1998: 48)

- (2) They [women] made their family's beds and *breast-fed* their own babies. (Schor, *The Overworked American*: 94)

Verbs such as *burn* and *dream* have both regular and irregular past tense and past participle forms when used as simple verbs (see [Chapter 3](#) by Levin). As second elements of compound verbs, they show a stronger preference for the regular suffix *-ed* to form the past tense and past participle.

- (3) Hadley was a tall, shambling man with thinning red hair. He *sunburned* easily and he talked loud . . . (King, *Seasons*: 31)
- (4) The Chief put his feet upon the desk, and *daydreamed*, eyes half-shut. (Vidal, *Empire*: 56)

The verb *light* also has both regular and irregular past tense and past participle forms when used as a simple verb, with *lit* being more frequent than *lighted* (on both forms in a wider historical perspective, see [Chapter 5](#) by Schlüter).

- (5) With barely 80,000 people, Ballarat, the gold-rush town where lucky prospectors played skittles with bottles of French champagne and *lit* cigars with five-pound notes, is among the most populous of the inland cities. (*The Economist* 4 April 1992: 5)
- (6) With its materials, subjects and techniques, it [=Cubism] *lighted* up the commonness of the modern world. (*Time* 2 October 1989: 93)

As the second element of compound verbs, it displays the regular suffix *-ed* to form the past tense and past participle when the compound verb is used metaphorically. There are five compound verbs in my corpus which end in *light*, i.e. *to backlight*, *to greenlight*, *to highlight*, *to moonlight* and *to spotlight*.¹ Three of them, i.e. *to greenlight* 'to give permission to go ahead with a project', *to highlight* 'to single out, emphasize' and *to moonlight* 'to work at another job, often at night, in addition to one's full-time job', have only regular forms. The OED has an illustration for a past participle *highlit* for BrE.

- (7) He [Mohammed VI of Morocco] *green-lighted* the return of exiles, like the family of Mehdi Ben Barka, a friend turned opponent of his father's allegedly murdered by agents in Paris. (*Time* 26 July 2000: 29)
- (8) Paramount Pictures chief Sherry Lansing has *greenlighted* a string of hits directed by women, from 'Wayne's World' to 'The Brady Bunch'. (*Los Angeles Times* 25 September 1997: A18)
- (9) The US government's battle with Microsoft and AOL's purchase of Netscape in 1998 only *highlighted* the commercial ramifications of the world's population increasingly going on-line. (Baron, *Alphabet*: 227)

¹ For details on the corpus used, see the description in [section 7](#).

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- (10) Recent dual-use cases have *highlighted* the loopholes in Germany's previous export controls, thought to be the most stringent in the world. (*Guardian* 24 January 1992: 69)
- (11) 1957 *The Economist* 19 Oct. 192/1 The genuineness with which each holds the belief was *highlit* during last week's ... interview. (OED 2)
- (12) Even while working for Peter Jones, Halpin *moonlighted* as a courier for the Workers' Travel Association, a socialist travel company providing holidays in the South of France for 15 pounds a fortnight. (*Guardian* 2 January 1992: 157)
- (13) Mikhalkov has *moonlighted* in politics before. (*Time* 8 March 1999: 25)

When used literally, the verb *to moonlight* 'to illuminate an object by the pale light of the moon' occurs with irregular forms as well, especially when used adjectivally in their past participle form.

- (14) Just as I was getting into bed, I looked out for the last time on the *moonlighted* lawn and there was my enemy the rabbit, who all this week has eaten up my lettuces and cabbages, so I knelt at the open window and shot him. (*Guardian* 22 January 1992: 39)
- (15) He jerked up the shade and smiled out at the *moonlit* fields. (*People* 66: 22)

Let me return to the remaining two, i.e. *to backlight* and *to spotlight*. The verb *backlight* is used in a literal sense, i.e. 'to light (a subject) up from behind'. Morphologically, it shows both regular and irregular inflections.

- (16) The great doors swing open to reveal the caped figure of King Henry V, sexily *backlighted*. (*Time* 13 November 1989: 119)
- (17) 'Which one of you wants to die first?' said Junior Jones. Heat and a saxophone throbbed from his room; he was *backlit* by a candle burning on his desk, which was draped – like the coffin of a President – with the American flag. (Irving, *Hampshire*: 97)

The verb *spotlight* can be used semantically in two ways, i.e. 1. 'to shine a powerful light directly on someone or something', and 2. 'to focus attention on someone or something'. This meaning difference is mirrored in the inflection of the compound verb. When used in its literal sense, the verb *spotlight* has regular and irregular forms; when used metaphorically, it inflects regularly only.

- (18) Secretary Cheney was a little less upbeat about the media reception some of the initial forces received. He expressed anger, in his words, at the battery of television lights that *spotlighted* the arrival of Marines and Navy Seals who were trying to work under the cover of darkness. (*CNNMorni* 9 December 1992: 2779)

- (19) To reflect the ‘sizzling hot’ offerings in the midsummer Sydney Festival, 13 landmark buildings . . . are being *spotlit* a rich, blast-furnace red. (*Time* 18 January 1989: 4)
- (20) That barbaric incident only *spotlighted* Brazil’s long history of police brutality. (*Time* 20 February 1989: 49)
- (21) The question of where NHS responsibility ends has been *spotlighted* by a ruling by the Health Service ombudsman, William Reid, on the case of a head-injured woman discharged to a private nursing home after 18 months in a Cambridge hospital. (*Guardian* 30 January 1992: 43)

The tendencies observed so far can be seen in the inflection of the compound verb *backslide*, which is used solely in a transferred meaning, i.e. ‘to relapse into bad ways after having attempted to change your behaviour’. When used as a simple verb, *to slide* has irregular past tense and past participle forms. As second element of the above-mentioned compound verb, it has developed regular forms in some varieties of AmE.

- (22) Each man was responsible for the marks of others as well as his own. If one *backslid* and lost marks, all would. (Hughes, *Fatal Shore*: 501)
- (23) ‘There are a lot of Republicans down there who are anti-abortion, who think now he [= George W. Bush] has sort of *backslided* on it, and they don’t like it.’ (*PBSWashi* 14 August 1992: 3258)

Finally, let us look at compound verbs having *dive* as their second element, e.g. *to nose-dive/nosedive*, *to skin-dive*, *to skydive/sky-dive*, *to stage-dive*. It is well known that the simple verb *dive* has developed an irregular past tense form in AmE, i.e. *dove*. In my corpus, this form is not attested as a past inflection of the compound verbs just mentioned. This peculiarity can be linked to the observation made above that simple verbs which become part of a compound alter their inflection when they are used metaphorically. The compound verbs with *dive* as second element share this semantic development. *The American Heritage Dictionary* lists two past tense forms for *to nosedive*, i.e. *nosedived* and *nosedove*, whereas other reference books such as *Webster’s New World College Dictionary* have only one entry, i.e. *nosedived*. The regularization of irregular simple verbs as heads of compound verbs has been an issue in the debate about analogical change in English and other languages (see Kiparsky 1982, Pinker 1994: 138ff.).

- (24) When the former Soviet Union collapsed a decade ago, Finland’s consumer economy *nose-dived* along with it. (*Business Week* 10 August 1998: 1)
- (25) ‘. . . I also *sky-dived*. Nobody had to talk me into jumping out of a plane, either.’ (*CNNLarry* 6 January 1992: 964–5)

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As a final point, let me mention the inflection of compound verbs which do not have a second element that can be related to a verb in Present-Day English. These are compounds such as *to back-burner*, *to leapfrog*, *to railroad* or *to scapegoat*, which have regular past and past participle forms.

- (26) [Bob Dole] trashed his promise to repeal the Clinton ban on selected guns; and *back-burnered* his pro-life stand on abortion, all in the name of political expediency. (*Business Week* 19 August 1996: 9)
- (27) But Mr North ... had been *scapegoated* several degrees too far. (*Economist* 15 April 1989: 75)

In section 2, I mentioned that compound verbs with *cast* meaning 'to mould, to throw' as their second element will be included in the discussion. In these senses, the verb is inflected irregularly, e.g. *The actor was typecast for the role of a fiery patriot*. As a combining form, the second element *-cast* may take regular inflection in AmE.

6 Distribution of compound verbs in AmE and BrE

It has been said that compound verbs are more frequent in AmE than in BrE. How do we know? One way would be to check and compare the tokens and types to be found in two corpora of British and American English which are similar in design. The available small corpora of both varieties are insufficient because one has to work through vast amounts of data to come up with enough examples to verify a statement like this. For BrE we have the *British National Corpus*, but pending the completion of the *American National Corpus* nothing of its size is available for AmE. Another possibility would be to look at entries in monolingual dictionaries of both varieties which are comparable in scope and character. This is the procedure I have adopted for describing the distribution of compound verbs in AmE and BrE. I have used the CD-ROM versions of the latest editions of *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (4th edition) and *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th edition) for AmE, and *Collins English Dictionary* (5th edition) and the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (10th edition) for BrE. The number of compound verbs found in each of these four dictionaries is given in the table below.

The difference in the number of compound verbs listed in the two dictionaries for AmE on the one hand and for BrE on the other is striking. The COD and COLLINS contain roughly between 15 and 30 per cent fewer entries than Webster's COLLEGIATE and the AHD. I take this difference as an indication of the diverging frequency of compound verbs found in the two varieties of English. Let us look at the differences between the two dictionaries of each variety in more detail. I will start with AmE. While the two dictionaries consulted contain almost the same number of compound

Table 2.3 *Number of compound verbs in two dictionaries of AmE and BrE*

AHD 4	MW 11	COLLINS 5	COD 10
687	681	488	580

verbs, the types listed are different to some extent. About 20 per cent of the items in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate* are missing in the *American Heritage Dictionary*, whereas almost 18 per cent of those entered in the *American Heritage Dictionary* do not occur in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate*. This means that roughly one fifth of the compound verbs in the two dictionaries diverge. Here are some examples of compound verbs which are present in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* but are absent in the *American Heritage Dictionary* and vice versa:

Missing in AHD 4: *to back-burner, to bookmark, to caretake, to cherry-pick, to daisy-chain, to fast-break, to frog-march, to island-hop, to newspaper, to peer-review, to reverse engineer, to signpost, to test-market, to wrong-foot*

Missing in MW 11: *to air-kiss, to boxhaul, to drip-feed, to fly-cast, to job-hunt, to landmark, to machine-wash, to means-test, to pinfold, to shunpike, to spray-paint, to team-teach*

There are a number of reasons to be observed for the different treatment of compound verbs in the two dictionaries of AmE. They deviate from one another, for example, in the number of entries listed that are instantiations of productive schemata such as *double-*, *half-* and *self-*. We will take *self-* as our illustration. Overall, fifteen compound verbs are listed in the two dictionaries which follow this pattern. Five of them are shared by both dictionaries, e.g. *to self-insure*. Of the remaining ten types, the *American Heritage Dictionary* lists three not found in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate*, e.g. *to self-express*, while *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate* has entries for seven additional items missing in the *American Heritage Dictionary*, e.g. *to self-publish*. The two dictionaries furthermore differ in the number and kinds of compound verbs they list that some people consider dated or too specialized for a general-purpose dictionary. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate* lists several compound verbs that are no longer in common use and are marked stylistically, like *to causeway, to clapperclaw, to featheredge, to lockstitch, to starboard* and *to wheelbarrow*. The same can be observed with regard to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, which has entries for *to boxhaul, to death qualify, to godmother, to needlepoint, to spot-weld* and *to write-protect*. And finally, the two dictionaries seem to follow diverging editorial policies with regard to the speed with which they accept new words or new meanings of existing words in their editions. It is surprising that the *American Heritage Dictionary* has no entries

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for items such as *to bookmark*, *to cherry-pick*, *to daisy-chain*, *to frog-march*, *to island-hop*, *to peer-review*, *to reverse engineer* or *to test-market*. The same can be said of the lack of entries for compound verbs like *to air-kiss*, *to color-code*, *to finger-paint*, *to fly-cast*, *to machine-wash*, *to means-test*, *to spray-paint*, *to team-teach* or *to wolf whistle* in Merriam-Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary*.

A look at Table 2.3 reveals a big difference in the acceptance of compound verbs in the two dictionaries of BrE. *Collins English Dictionary* contains almost one fifth fewer entries than the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. Almost half of the items (= 47.3 per cent) listed in the latter are not found in *Collins English Dictionary*, while roughly one quarter of compound verbs (= 24.3 per cent) that occur in *Collins English Dictionary* are missing in the former. This is a noticeable contrast to the figures given above for the two dictionaries of AmE. Below is a selection of items missing in *Collins* or the *COD*, respectively.

Missing in Collins: *to arm-wrestle*, *to blindside*, *to brainstorm*, *to carpool*, *to cold-call*, *to deadpan*, *to eyeball*, *to firebomb*, *to house-hunt*, *to means-test*, *to name-drop*, *to plea-bargain*, *to role-play*, *to shoplift*, *to spellcheck*, *to tear-gas*, *to vacuum-clean*, *to wheel-clamp*, *to wool-gather*, *to zero-rate*

Missing in COD: *to air-condition*, *to belly-dance*, *to bookmark*, *to double-time*, *to dry-nurse*, *to gumshoe*, *to high-five*, *to pinprick*, *to strong-arm*, *to whistle-stop*

Semantic differences between compound verbs in AmE and BrE can be described by comparing them with their referents and/or meanings in terms of sameness and difference. I will set up a number of different groups.

To begin with, both varieties share many compound verbs, and American and British speakers experience no difficulty in using and understanding them. This is, for example, true of cases like *to brainwash*, *to earmark*, *to hamstring*, *to highlight*, *to jump-start*, *to leapfrog*, *to mastermind*, *to pinpoint*, *to rubber-stamp*, *to showcase*, *to skyrocket*, *to streamline*, *to tiptoe*, *to whitewash*, *to wisecrack*.

A second group comprises compound verbs which are present in one variety only. Here is a sample of items that occur solely or especially in one of the varieties.

AmE: *to apple-polish*, *to backlog*, *to back-order*, *to belly-land*, *to bottom-line*, *to brown-bag*, *to cannonball*, *to cheerlead*, *to cold-cock*, *to cold-turkey*, *to crawfish*, *to database*, *to dateline*, *to date-rape*, *to dead-end*, *to deep-kiss*, *to dry-farm*, *to eighty-six*, *to facelift*, *to fair-trade*, *to field-strip*, *to firewall*, *to flat-hat*, *to free-associate*, *to frontload*, *to goldbrick*, *to jawbone*, *to jury-rig*, *to landfill*, *to lowball*, *to one-up*, *to pink-slip*, *to pocket-veto*, *to postdate*, *to rabbit-punch*, *to rawhide*, *to red-dog*, *to shot-gun*, *to sky-write*, *to slipcover*, *to soapbox*, *to sparkplug*, *to*

spearfish, to surfboard, to switch-hit, to table-hop, to thumb-tack, to time-share, to tomcat, to water-soak, to woodshed

BrE: *to backcomb, to backload, to blackleg, to charge-cap, to chinwag, to clock-watch, to doorstep, to double-bank, to double-glaze, to fine-draw, to handbag, to head-butt, to letterbox, to necklace, to nursemaid, to potty-train, to queue-jump, to rate-cap, to ring-fence, to smart-mouth, to spin-dry, to spring-clean, to strike-break, to timetable, to toilet-train, to vacuum-clean, to wheel-clamp, to youth-hostel*

The differences arise for a number of reasons. Some compound verbs refer to something known in one of the two cultures but not in the other or to something known but paraphrased differently. This may have to do with diverging economic, financial, legal or social regulations and customs. In AmE, for example, the verb *to brown-bag (it)* ‘to take one’s lunch to work or school; to carry liquor in a public place or restaurant concealed in a brown paper bag; to drink liquor so concealed’ refers to the practice of carrying one’s lunch to work or school usually in a brown paper bag or of carrying one’s own liquor in areas where the sale or consumption of liquor is prohibited. This practice is widespread in the United States.

(28) That man is a millionaire, but he still *brownbags* his lunch every day. (NHD *brownbag* v.)

Or take the verb *to grandfather* ‘to exempt (one involved in an activity or business) from new regulations’ (AHD 4), which is a verb derived from the elliptical phrase *grandfather clause*. The term refers to a provision in a statute that exempts those already involved in a regulated activity or business from new regulations. Historically, the phrase describes one of several legal acts after the Civil War to deny Blacks full civil rights, e.g. the right to vote.

(29) The EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] permits American farmers to use some 320 pesticides on food. However, the scientific information on many of them is thin. In 1970 pesticide regulation was removed from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and turned over to the fledgling EPA. Most of the chemicals then in use were *grandfathered* into approval without extensive tests to document their safety; 66 of the 320 pesticides have since been classified as carcinogens by the Government. (*Time* 27 March 1989: 29)

The language of sports has contributed several compound verbs. We will take baseball as our example. The noun *lowball* denotes ‘a ball pitched so as to pass over the plate below the level of the batter’s knees’ (OED 2). It developed the transferred meaning ‘quotation of a deceptively or unrealistically low price or estimate’ from which the verb *to lowball* ‘to give someone a

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markedly or unfairly low offer' was derived. The verb refers to the practice of companies of understating a price, estimate, etc. to gain a contract on favourable terms. The practice is also common in Britain, but is phrased differently, e.g. to give a low price or offer.

(30) Some competitors suggest that Siemens is *lowballing* its bids, but Siemens managers deny it. (*Business Week* 1 May 1995: 49)

Another example is the verb *to pinch-hit* 'to bat in place of a player scheduled to bat, especially when a hit is badly needed' (AHD 4). The word *pinch* refers to a critical moment in the game, i.e. to bat 'in a pinch'. Baseball is a very popular sport in the United States, but many speakers of BrE are unfamiliar with its national pastime, and do not know the meaning of this term and its figurative extension meaning 'to substitute for another in a time of need' (AHD 4).

(31) Cardinal first baseman *pinch-hits* in first game of doubleheader against Pirates . . . (*Los Angeles Times* 19 September 1998: C1: 3)

(32) She *pinch-hit* for me while I was on vacation. (NHD *pinch-hit* v.)

And finally, the verb *to redshirt* in the sense 'to keep an athlete/player out of university competition for a year so that he or she will be eligible for athletics an extra year later'. This verb is derived from the exocentric compound noun *red shirt*, which denotes such a player. The noun comes from the traditional red shirts worn by such players in practice scrimmages against the regulars.

(33) His college football coach Bruce Snyder told Tillman that he might have to *redshirt* him -hold him back- for his first year. (*Time* 3 May 2004: 30)

(34) Resisting the temptation to turn their child into an early overachiever, a surprising number of parents are consciously delaying their youngster's entrance to kindergarten even when age eligible. This is known, quaintly, as *redshirting*, after the common university practice of keeping athletes out of games to allow them an extra year of playing eligibility. To some teachers, *redshirting* children is necessary because all too many kindergartens are more concerned with academics than with the emotional and physical development of youngsters. To others, the practice is not much better than coddling. (*Time* 13 November 1989: 102)

To illustrate this group for BrE, let us look at the verb *to rate-cap* 'to impose upper limits on the amount of money which a local authority can spend and also levy through rates'. The verb is back-formed from the nominal compound *rate-capping*, a practice the Conservative government in the early 1980s applied to councils which they thought were spending too much on local services. When other forms of local taxation were introduced

in Britain later in the 1980s, the second element *-cap* became productive and led to compound verbs such as *to charge-cap*.

- (35) 1985 *Economist* 26 January 23/2 Will the government hit the target this time? At least it has the power to *rate-cap*. (OED 2)

Take the verb *to doorstep* as another example. In the early 1980s, the compound originated as journalists' slang meaning 'to call on someone or wait uninvited outside the home of someone, in order to obtain an interview or a photograph'. The practice is also common in the United States, but has to be phrased differently, e.g. by something like 'to lie in wait'.

- (36) 1990 *Observer* 17 June 19/7 Immediately after the revolution, it was they who were afraid, running from our cameras . . . It would be madness to *doorstep* the Securitate today. (OED 2)

As a third example, we will use the verb *to wheel-clamp* 'to immobilize an unlawfully parked car with a wheel clamp'. The verb describes a method used by inner-city police in Britain from the early 1980s on. The verb is derived from the compound noun *wheel clamp* which denotes the device that is fastened to the wheel of an illegally parked car. In the United States, it is said to be known as *Denver boot* or *Denver shoe* (many Americans are not familiar with this term), because Denver, Colorado, was one of the first cities to use it in the late 1960s. In AmE no verb was derived from the compound noun. In BrE, the shortened form *to clamp* is widely used nowadays.

- (37) 1983 *Daily Tel.* 14 July 19/1 Cars belonging to diplomats will no longer be *wheel-clamped*. (OED 2)

A third group covers cases where (partly) different compound verbs are used in the two varieties to express the same meaning. Take the action of combing one's hair against the way it grows in order to make it look thicker and shape it into a style. This is lexicalized as *to backcomb* in BrE, and as *to tease* in AmE.

- (38) 1955 'C. Brown' *Lost Girls* xii. 130 She had *back-combed* her hair so that it stood out. (OED 2)

One well-known example is the opposition of *to about-face* 'to undergo a complete change of opinion or policy', which is used chiefly in AmE vs. *to about-turn* common in BrE only. In both varieties the use of the fixed phrase *to do an about-face* is widespread.

- (39) 1924 *Scribner's Mag.* July 36/1 Morrow got very white – *about-faced*, and marched out of the room. (OED 2)
- (40) 1960 *Guardian* 7 July 7/6 The whole party *about-turned* on the steps. (OED 2)

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Another case is the verb *to housebreak* used in AmE in the sense ‘to train a pet animal to defecate or urinate outdoors or in a special place’. This meaning is expressed in BrE by the verb *to house-train*.

- (41) 1945 J. Steinbeck *Cannery Row* xx. 82 He didn’t even *house-break* her [*sc.* a puppy]. (OED 2)
- (42) The pet is bought when it is small and cute. It gives much amusement to its owners. Then it grows in size and in appetite. It reveals itself incapable of being *house-trained*. (Martel, *Pi*: 129)

There is the further case that the two varieties share a compound verb, but do not agree in all of its meanings. Firstly, we will look at some cases where AmE has an additional meaning not known or used in BrE. There is the verb *to dead-head*, which has the sense ‘to remove the dead or dying flowers from a plant’, common in both varieties. In AmE, this verb is used in the additional sense of ‘to drive a vehicle (esp. on a return trip) carrying no passengers or freight’.

- (43) 1956 E. H. M. and P. A. Cox *Mod. Rhododendrons* 17 In a large collection . . . it is impossible to *dead head* every plant. (OED 2)
- (44) The airlines, they believe, will offer low fares to fill jumbo jets otherwise *deadheading* after bringing an expected 150,000 visitors to Australia. (*Business Week* 7 June 1999: 4EU2)

The verb *to railroad* is another example. When it is used transitively, AmE and BrE share the meaning ‘to rush or coerce someone into doing something; to push a measure through quickly by applying pressure’. In AmE, the verb has additional meanings such as ‘to work on the railroad’ when used intransitively.

- (45) A few days later, according to Ms. Lewinsky, the President called her. She had been upset because no one at the White House had prepared her for the Ambassador’s recent call and because she did not want the White House to *railroad* her into taking the U.N. job. (*Starr Report*: 146)
- (46) Every year children from ethnic minorities are *railroaded* into bilingual classes even if they speak English at home. (*Economist* 30 August 1997: 35)
- (47) My father *railroaded* for 40 years. (NHD *railroad* v.)

Take the verb *to second-guess*, which in both AmE and BrE has the sense ‘to predict or anticipate’. Mainly in AmE, it can mean in addition ‘to criticize someone or something after an outcome is known’.

- (48) Now, it’s harder than ever for executives in Japan to *second-guess* their American colleagues. (*Business Week* 15 April 2002: 29)

- (49) On a normal day, she reckoned, she could beat him; but today her concentration was shot, and she could not *second-guess* his game. (Follet, *Third Twin*: 17f.)
- (50) Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge said in a telephone interview Thursday that even though federal authorities had not publicly released the information, he would not *second-guess* Davis' decision to do so. (*New York Times* 1 November 2001: page lost)

As a last example we will use the verb *to warehouse* which is common in both AmE and BrE in the senses 'to store goods in a warehouse; to place imported goods in a bonded warehouse pending the payment of import duty'. AmE has the additional meaning 'to confine or house people in a large, impersonal institution'.

- (51) Thanks to breakthroughs in high-density storage, there will be loads of room to *warehouse* those videos. (*Business Week* 10 March 2003: 56)
- (52) 1886 Scholl *Phraseol. Dict.* II. 832 Any cotton you may consign to us will be *warehoused* pending your further instructions. (OED 2)
- (53) Dr. Isaac Sultan could have received up to 21 months in prison under a plea agreement with prosecutors, but Los Angeles federal Judge Dickran Tevrizian said '*warehousing*' him in prison for that length of time would serve no useful purpose. (*Los Angeles Times* 29 September 1998: A18: 4)

7 On the history of compound verbs

As mentioned in [section 1](#), there has been a debate about the origin of compound verbs dating back at least to Marchand (1969). Verbs like *to baby-sit*, *to highlight* and *to wiretap* are classified as pseudo-compound verbs because their second part, i.e. *sit*, *light*, *tap*, cannot be understood as the determinatum of the compound (Marchand 1969: 101). According to Marchand, these verbs are all derived from nominal or adjectival compounds, either by conversion or backformation. Here is his characterization (Marchand 1969: 101):

Two main groups of verbal pseudo-compounds occur:

A: the verb is derived from a nominal compound (which is almost always a substantive). 1. the type *spotlight* (sb/sb); the type *blacklist* (adj/sb), also occurring as a syntactic group of the type *cold shoulder* . . .

B: the verb is derived from a synthetic compound, either 1) an agent noun, as in the type *stage-manage* from *stage-manager*, or 2) an action noun as in the type *playact* from *playacting*, or 3) a participial adjective, as in the type *spoonfeed* from *spoonfed*, *new-create* from *new-created*.

Marchand's thesis does not stand up to the historical facts, as recorded in the second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). I have used the second edition on compact disc (Version 3.0). This version, which came out in 2002, incorporates the three volumes of the additions series to the OED which were published in 1993 and 1997. A number of compound verbs have entered the English language recently, and are not yet recorded in the OED. Here are some examples of verbs which are not yet listed in the OED: *to air-kiss* 'to greet someone by pursing the lips as if kissing', *to bench-press* 'to raise a weight in a bodybuilding and weightlifting exercise in which a lifter lies on a bench with the feet on the floor and raises a weight with both arms from chest level to arm's length', *to carbon-date* 'to calculate the approximate age of an old object by measuring the amount of carbon 14 it contains', *to day-trade* 'to buy and sell bonds, shares etc. on the Internet within a single day using a computer', *to finger-comb* 'to comb hair by repeatedly running one's fingers through it'. In other instances, a verb has not yet been recorded in the OED which was derived from a complex form which is listed: *to air-strike* 'to attack (something) on the ground by military aircraft' (entry: *air strike* n.), *to blowtorch* 'to direct a very hot flame onto part of a surface, for example to remove paint' (entry: *blowtorch* n.), *to chain-react* 'to undergo a series of events, each of which causes the next' (entry: *chain-reaction* n.), *to dirt-bike* 'to ride a small motorcycle made for use off roads' (entry: *dirt bike* n.), *to end-run* 'to get around an obstacle or difficulty, often by deceit or trickery' (entry: *end run* n.), *to fast-track* 'to take the quickest and most direct route to achieving a goal' (entry: *fast track* n./*fast tracker* n.).

Many verbs are, indeed, derived from non-verbal compounds either by conversion or by back-derivation, as Marchand suggested. Here are some examples: *to airlift* (1949) ← *air-lift* n. (1945), *to shortlist* (1955) ← *short-list* n. (1927), *to teargas* (1927) ← *tear gas* n. (1917), *to chain-smoke* (1934) ← *chain-smoker* n. (1890), *to crash-land* (1941) ← *crash landing* n. (1928), *to custom-build* (1960) ← *custom-built* p.p. (1925). In individual cases, it can be difficult to decide which subtype a compound verb is derived from. This happens when the citational evidence of the OED gives the same year for examples of complex forms from which the compound verb may have been derived. Take the following example: *to water-ski* (1953) ← *water-ski* n./*water-skier* n./*waterskiing* n. (1931). In other cases, verbal and non-verbal compounds are documented for the same year in the OED, e.g. *to pair-feed* (1972), *pair-fed* p.p. (1972); *to freebase* (1980), *freebase* n. (1980)/*freebasing* n. (1980).

In addition, the OED has a number of entries where the compound verb is historically attested before formally and semantically related complex forms, e.g. *to bellyache* 'to complain whiningly or peevishly' (1888) [MWII dates the verb to 1881], *bellyache* n. (1930), *bellyacher* n. (1930) [*bellyache* n. 'pain in the abdomen and esp. in the stomach' (1552)]; *to cowhide* (1794), *cowhide* n. (1818); *to flag-signal* (1888), *flag-signaller* n. (1930); *to gift-wrap* (1936), *gift-wrapping* n. (1949); *to mine-hunt* (1915), *mine-hunter* (1964), *mine-hunting* (1964); *to*

pistol-whip (1942), *pistol-whipping* n. (1958); *to window-shop* (1922), *window-shopper* n. (1934). Compound verbs for which the OED does not record related non-verbal complex forms also occur, e.g. *to date-cancel* (1929–30), *to eye-serve* (1800), *to head-carry* (1957), *to pool-drive* (1974), *to toe-end* (1968).

These historical facts are hard to reconcile with Marchand's thesis. His thesis becomes even more implausible when one looks at the active role analogy plays in the formation of compound verbs. Some verbs can be interpreted as instances of word-formational patterns. Such schemata consist of a pattern-forming first or second element that has developed historically as a template for compound verbs. The productivity of these schemata changes over time. We will start with productive schemata which have a pattern-forming *first* element. Take the following verbs.

- (54) *to custom-assemble* 'to put together a product according to a customer's specifications', *to custom-build* 'to design and build something to individual order', *to custom-design* 'to design something to meet the requirements of a particular customer', *to custom-make* 'to make something to individual order', *to custom-order* 'to order something according to a customer's specifications', *to custom-publish* 'to publish something according to a customer's specifications', *to custom-select* 'to choose something to one's wants or needs', *to custom-tailor* 'to alter, plan, or build something according to individual specifications'.
- (55) Over a 16-year period it has been able to tune its ordering and manufacturing processes – and update them for the Web. That's how it was able to *custom assemble* more than 25,000 different computer configurations for buyers last year. (*Business Week* 2 February 2000: 61)
- (56) By the early 21st century, they say parents will be able to *custom-order* the sex of their baby as easily as pulling up to a drive-thru window and choosing the Quarter Pounder and the Filet-O-Fish. (*Los Angeles Times* 20 September 1998: A3)

The only example of this group listed in the OED 2 so far is the verb *to custom-build* (1960), which is a back formation of the past participle *custom-built* (1925). The other examples are obviously instantiations of the word-formational pattern $[[\textit{custom}]_N [-]_V]_V$ 'to produce something according to individual order', which was abstracted and generalized from early instances such as *custom-built* and which speakers of English have come to accept as a useful schema. Another example of a highly productive schema with a pattern-forming first element can be illustrated by verbs such as *to hand-feed* 'to give food to somebody by hand', *to hand-paint* 'to paint something by hand', *to hand-wrap* 'to cover something completely in paper or other material by hand'. The schema on which the various verbs are based can be spelt out as $[[\textit{hand}]_N [-]_V]_V$ 'to do something with one's own hand(s)'. In this pattern the first element *hand* is understood as an

Table 2.4 *Compound verbs with hand as pattern-forming first element as documented in the OED 2*

hand-feed	v.	1805	hand-fed	adj.	1846
hand-fill	v.	1880	hand-filling	n.	1946
hand-finish	v.	1974	hand-finished	adj.	1975
hand-hoe	v.	1733	hand-hoer	n.	1744–50
hand-hold	v.	1963	hand-held	adj.	1923
hand-jive	v.	1958	hand-jive	n.	1958
hand-kill	v.	c. 1575	—	—	—
hand-pick	v.	1831	hand-picking	n.	1879
hand-pollinate	v.	1918	hand-pollination	n.	1954
hand-punch	v.	1967	hand-punch	n.	1962
hand-rear	v.	1893	hand-reared	adj.	1894
hand-rub	v.	1859	hand-rubbing	n.	1846
hand-sew	v.	1919	hand-sewn	adj.	1887
hand-tuft	v.	1906	hand-tufted	adj.	1922
hand-wave	v.	1641	hand-waving	n.	1791
hand-weed	v.	1664	hand-weeding	n.	1664

instrument with which something is done. This pattern has been available for more than two centuries and is still used today. To demonstrate this, I have put together an alphabetical list of compound verbs and their chronological derivations as they are documented in the OED 2.

The earliest verb of this pattern is the non-derived *to hand-kill* (c. 1575), followed by the equally non-derived *to hand-wave* (1641) and the indeterminate *to hand-weed* (1664), which is listed in the OED 2 for the same year as the action noun *hand-weeding*. The compound verbs listed for the twentieth century are surely incomplete. The following cases documented in my data are not yet to be found in the OED 2. The compound verbs have mainly been culled from a collection of texts of AmE that consists of a basic corpus of 46 million words. This corpus comprises three subcorpora: 18.5 million words of transcripts of broadcasts of the four radio and television channels *ABC*, *CNN*, *National Public Radio* and *PBS* for the year 1992; 17.5 million words of literary and scientific texts as well as daily newspapers and weekly/monthly magazines published in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s; and 10 million words from issues of magazines such as *Time* and *Business Week* that came out in the 1990s and 2000s. There is a back-up corpus of newspaper texts running to 200 million words which have been taken from the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. In addition, I have consulted the CD-ROM versions of recent editions of the major monolingual dictionaries of BrE and AmE, and have looked at dictionaries of new words that have been published for both national varieties over the past 30 years.

- (57) *to hand-assemble* ‘to collect something with one’s own hands’, *to hand-carry* ‘to carry something with one’s own hand’, *to hand-crank* ‘to operate a device by turning a crank by hand’, *to hand-decorate* ‘to

embellish something by hand', *to hand-deliver* 'to carry and pass over something in person', *to hand-fashion* 'to give a particular shape or form to something by hand', *to hand-knit* 'to knit something by hand', *to hand-paint* 'to paint something by hand', *to hand-polish* 'to polish something by hand', *to hand-turn* 'to turn something by hand', *to hand-weave* 'to form something by interlacing threads, yarns, strands, or strips of some material by hand', *to hand-wrap* 'to cover something completely in paper or other material by hand'.

- (58) Elliott's system, according to the GAO report, started with Salina's wife, who *hand carried* cashier's checks from at least five Mexican banks to Citibank Mexico City ... (*Time* 14 December 1998: 41)
- (59) Henry Krug ... still employs 'riddlers' ... *to hand-turn* bottles of champagne. (*Time* 20 August 2001: 73)

Let us now have a look at productive schemata which have a pattern-forming *second* element. Take the following verbs.

- (60) *to bar-hop* 'to visit and drink at a number of different bars during an evening', *to bed-hop* 'to engage in successive casual sexual affairs', *to channel-hop* (BrE=AmE *to channel-surf*) 'to switch frequently from one television channel to another, using a remote control device to find something of interest', *to island-hop* 'to travel from island to island within the same chain, especially as part of a vacation', *to job-hop* 'to change jobs frequently', *to table-hop* 'to move from table to table (as in a restaurant) in order to chat with friends'.
- (61) Because of their high expectations, many young people are willing to *job-hop* to get ahead. (*Business Week* 23 September 1996: 30)
- (62) 1958 *Time* 6 October 16/1 He *table-hopped* to shake hands. (OED 2)

These verbs are instantiations of one of the patterns which have the verb *hop* as their second element. The schema underlying these verbs is the following: $[[_]_N [hop]_V]_V$ 'to move quickly from one N to another'. The pattern was established with the verb *to island-hop* (1955), a back formation of the action noun *island hopping* (1944), which designated the military tactic used by the US army in the Pacific during the war of 1941-5 to recapture Japanese-occupied islands one after another. Listed below are the above-mentioned verbs as they are documented in the OED 2.

As a second example we will take compound verbs like the following.

- (63) *to double-talk* 'to use language that is intended to deceive people', *to fast-talk* (chiefly AmE) 'to persuade somebody to do something with false but appealing arguments', *to small-talk* 'to have polite conversation about ordinary or unimportant subjects', *to smart-talk* 'to talk in a clever way', *to smooth-talk* 'to use charming or flattering language to

Table 2.5 *Compound verbs with hop as pattern-forming second element as documented in the OED 2*

barhop	v.	—	—	—	—
bed-hop	v.	1979	bed-hopping	adj.	1943
channel-hop	v.	—	—	—	—
island-hop	v.	1955	island-hopping	n.	1944
job-hop	v.	1970	job-hopping	n.	1953
table-hop	v.	1958	table-hopping	n.	1967

Table 2.6 *Compound verbs with talk as pattern-forming second element as documented in the OED 2*

double-talk	v.	1961	double-talk	n.	1938
fast-talk	v.	1946	fast-talking	adj.	1961
small-talk	v.	1848	small talk	n.	1751
smart-talk	v.	—	—	—	—
smooth-talk	v.	1950	—	—	—
soft-talk	v.	1968	—	—	—
sweet-talk	v.	1936	sweet talk	n.	1945

someone, especially to persuade them to do something’, *to soft-talk* ‘to persuade somebody to do something rather than using pressure or aggressive methods’, *to sweet-talk* ‘to use flattering or pleasing words to persuade somebody to do something’.

- (64) He sounded as if Sherman had been stalling, arguing, evading, *double-talking* him, and otherwise trying to drive him crazy. (Wolfe, *Bonfire*: 419)
- (65) Clinton tried to *soft-talk* Moscow into cutting back [on Russian spies in the US] but failed ... (*Time* 2 April 2001: 61)

I take these verbs to be instantiations of a schema such as $[[_]_{ADJ} [talk]_V]_V$ ‘to say nice or insincere things to somebody in order to engage in polite conversation or to persuade them to do something’. According to the OED 2, the first verb from which the schema was abstracted and then generalized was *to small-talk* (1848), which is a zero-derivation of the nominal compound *small talk* (1751). All of the above-mentioned cases except the verb *to smart-talk* are documented in the OED 2.

8 Conclusion

Compound verbs occur in all varieties of English. Some are typical of individual national varieties, such as Australian and New Zealand English, e.g. *to king-hit* ‘to punch somebody hard and without warning, often unfairly’; South African English, e.g. *to necklace* ‘to kill somebody by putting

a tyre doused or filled with petrol around their neck and setting it alight'; Scottish English, e.g. *to first-foot* 'to be the first person to cross somebody's threshold in the New Year, in accordance with a Scottish custom'; or Irish English *to copper-fasten* 'to make (an undertaking or agreement) firm or binding'. The same can be said of the two varieties compared in this chapter, e.g. AmE *to gumshoe* '1. to work as a detective, 2. to move about stealthily; sneak' and BrE *to blackleg* 'to continue working when one's fellow workers are on strike'. Based on a comparison of two dictionaries for each of the two varieties, it can be said that compound verbs are more frequent in AmE than in BrE. This is true of the total number of these verbs listed in the dictionaries and of the diversity of word-formational patterns attested in them. As far as their orthography is concerned, compound verbs in BrE are hyphenated more frequently than in AmE, which favours one-word forms. Morphologically, the differences are small. Both varieties follow more or less the same pattern in deriving past and past participle forms when their second element is an (ir)regular verb. With regard to prosody, a number of compound verbs in AmE have the main stress on their first element, while BrE keeps it on the second or shows two patterns. Lexically, the meanings of individual compound verbs can differ along a scale of semantic distinctions, which I have tried to illustrate in my chapter.

3

The formation of the preterite and the past participle¹

MAGNUS LEVIN

1 Introduction

The variation in preterite and past participle forms of verbs such as *burn*, *dream*, *leap* and *spell* is one of the most cited morphological differences between American English (AmE) and British English (BrE).² It is mentioned as a regional feature in standard grammars such as Jespersen (1942: 32, 38), Quirk *et al.* (1985: 105–7) and Biber *et al.* (1999: 396–8), and handbooks such as Kövecses (2000: 190), Tottie (2002a: 150–1) and Trudgill and Hannah (2002: 56). Tottie (2002a: 150–1) summarizes the regional differences by stating that, although there is variation in both varieties, *-ed* is ‘[m]ore American’ and *-t* ‘[m]ore British’. Representative instances are seen in (1) to (4):

- (1) David Ginola once *dreamed* of displaying his skills in a major European city beginning with B. (*The Independent* 2000)
- (2) Whoever *dreamt* up the idea of five-day Test cricket clearly had too much time on their hands. (*The Independent* 2000)
- (3) AT&T’s stock price *leaped* \$6.125, or 11 percent, on Mr. Allen’s news. (*New York Times* 1995)
- (4) And sugar *leapt* 41 percent. (*New York Times* 1995)

In the following the term *regular* will be used for verb forms ending in *-ed* and *irregular* for verbs ending in *-t*, in spite of the irregular verbs having several characteristics in common with regulars. Pinker and Prince (1994: 322–3) list the following ‘regular’ features of irregulars:

- (i) *Similarity between the morphological base and the (irregular) marked form*; most of the stem is preserved in the inflected form. Suppletion like *go/went* is rare.

¹ I thank Hans Lindquist for commenting on a previous version of this chapter.

² Usage in other varieties constitutes a fruitful area for further research. Peters (1994) found suggestive evidence of there being more irregulars in Australian English than in BrE, while New Zealand English and BrE are ‘very similar’ in their use of these variant forms, according to Hundt (1998a: 31).

- (ii) *Similarity within the set of base forms undergoing a subregular process* (e.g. *keep, creep, deal, feel, kneel, mean, dream*).
- (iii) *Semiproductivity*; irregularity can to some degree be extended to new forms by analogy.

The irregular preterite and past participle forms of the verbs investigated have a high degree of similarity with the base form, and some of the members have fairly recently been attracted to the irregular paradigm (cf. [Chapter 1](#) by Hundt). These variable verbs also share a series of family resemblances rather than having a discrete set of phonological properties, as pointed out by Bybee and Slobin (1982: 282) and Pinker and Prince (1994: 323) (for family resemblances in general, see Wittgenstein (1953) and Lakoff (1987)). The fact that there is a whole group of similar verbs is a crucial factor in the diachronic development of these verbs, as will be argued below.

We will in the following consider the variation with these verbs and a range of potential factors affecting the choice between the variants: region (AmE vs. BrE), medium (speech vs. writing), ongoing changes (e.g. convergent or divergent developments in the varieties), differences between individual verbs and differences between preterite and past participle forms. The influence of frequency and fixedness will also be addressed. Furthermore, the aspectual distinction associated with the two endings will be considered.

[Section 2](#) discusses the material and method used and [section 3](#) provides the theoretical background. The results will be presented in [section 4](#).

2 Material and method

This study concerns the eleven verbs *burn, dream, dwell, kneel, lean, leap, learn, smell, spell, spill* and *spoil*³ in written and spoken AmE and BrE. The material was mainly retrieved from two newspapers on CD-ROM, the *New York Times* 1995 (NYT) for AmE and *The Independent* 2000 (*Ind*) for BrE, and two spoken corpora, the Longman Spoken American Corpus (LSAC) and the spoken part of the British National Corpus (BNC) (Aston and Burnard 1998). Newspaper corpora provide ‘one of the best reflections of American English vs. British English dialect differences in writing’, according to Biber *et al.* (1999: 16). They are also particularly useful when studying language change, since they represent a ‘fast’ (Mair 1998) or ‘agile’ (Hundt and Mair 1999) genre which quickly adopts changes. Nevertheless, using only one paper for each variety might be problematic because the results may

³ *Creep* and *weep* were two other potential candidates but they did not produce any variation in the present material. Some other variable verbs have been discussed in studies of regional variation, e.g. *proved/proven, got/gotten* ([Chapter 1](#) by Hundt), *lit/lighted* ([Chapter 5](#) by Schlüter), *dived/dove* and *sneaked/snuck*. These can serve as a basis for further investigation.

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Table 3.1 Percentage use of irregular vs. regular forms. Comparison with the results in Biber et al. (1999: 397)

	AmE news (Biber et al.)/NYT		BrE news (Biber et al.)/ <i>Ind</i>	
	preterite	past participle	preterite	past participle
<i>burn</i>	R/R	R/R	r/r	r/ir
<i>dream</i>	R/R	R/R	r/r	-/ir
<i>lean</i>	R/R	-/R	-/r	-/ir
<i>leap</i>	r/r	R/r	IR/IR	IR/IR
<i>learn</i>	R/R	R/R	r/r	r/ir
<i>smell</i>	R/R	-/R	ir/ir	-/ir
<i>spell</i>	R/R	R/R	ir/ir	-/ir
<i>spoil</i>	R/R	R/R	R/r	ir/ir

R = regular form used over 85% of the time

r = regular form used over 50% of the time

ir = irregular form used over 50% of the time

IR = irregular form used over 85% of the time

- = Combined total of both regular and irregular forms is less than three per million

to some extent be influenced by the individual house styles of the editors.⁴ Therefore comparisons will be made throughout the investigation with the *Los Angeles Times* (LAT 1995) and *The Times* (*Times* 2000) on CD-ROM. Overall, the results from these newspapers are found to be similar to those of NYT and *Ind*. *The Times*, however, contains a higher percentage of irregulars than *Ind*, but as seen in the comparison with Biber et al.'s (1999: 397) findings in Table 3.1 above, *Ind* seems to be more representative of usage in BrE newspapers.

The use of transcribed spoken material causes some problems. At least since Jespersen (1942: 32) it has been reported that there is no clear correlation between spelling and pronunciation. Jespersen notes that people who write, for example, *learned* and *spelled* tend to pronounce these as *t*-forms. *The Longman Pronunciation Dictionary* (Wells 1990) lists some such discrepancies. For instance, *-t* is recorded as being pronounced /t/ and *-ed* as either /t/ or /d/ for *dwell* and *lean* in both BrE and AmE, while this applies only to BrE for *dream* and *learn*. Consistency between spelling and pronunciation seems to be the rule for *burn*, *kneel*, *smell*, *spell*, *spill* and *spoil*.

Peters (1994: 156) argues that the difference between the two morphological variants is felt to be 'nonsignificant' by native speakers partly because she finds cases of variation between *-ed* and *-t* within a few lines. It is noteworthy that some variation can be found in individual texts in three of the four main corpora used (*Ind*, LSAC, BNC), as can be seen in (5) to (8) below, where the

⁴ However, the only recommendation in the *New York Times* style guide (Siegal and Connolly 1999) is for *spilled* instead of *spilt*. Since most verbs prefer *-ed* in AmE, it is difficult to determine if this has had any effect at all.

different variants occur in the same narrow contexts without being corrections or modifications.

- (5) <2969> [The whole ticket.] So, she bought tickets for we all, you know, got tickets for uh and then I *burnt* the bag. That's <unclear>.
 <?> You *burned* it?
 <2969> <laughing> Yeah. </laughing> I just *leaned* it against the <laughing> hot pan. </laughing> (LSAC)
- (6) Well it so happened that two of the aircrewmembers were *burnt* enough, not real serious, but real serious, but *burned* enough that they had to use the ground spare from another squadron, they couldn't go on the mission. (BNC)
- (7) Two thirds *dreamed* about Tetris in the hour after they fell asleep. Most surprisingly, they all *dreamed* the same dream – falling Tetris pieces sometimes rotating or fitting together. . . . Yet, David Roddenberry, Stickgold's colleague, discovered that three of the five still *dreamt* of playing Tetris. (*Ind*)
- (8) I had *learned* more while I was in care than I could ever have *learnt* outside. (*Ind*)

It seems reasonable to conclude that the material contains a great deal of authentic, text-internal variation. Previous studies of variation will be discussed in section 3.

3 Background

As mentioned previously, a large number of studies suggest that there is a preference for *-ed* forms in AmE, while both forms generally appear to co-exist in BrE (Quirk 1970, Johansson 1979, Peters 1994 (using the Brown and LOB corpora like Johansson and Hofland 1989), Biber *et al.* 1999: 396f., Kövecses 2000: 189f., and Chapter 1 by Hundt). Interestingly, Kövecses (2000: 189f.) indicates that there is generally a stronger tendency towards regularity in AmE than in other varieties. Specifically, Johansson (1979: 206) suggests that *t*-forms are 'almost completely lacking' in AmE while in BrE they are 'the preferred choice, though *-ed* forms are also frequent'.

Several studies have indicated that AmE is ahead of BrE in many recent grammatical changes (Mair 1998, Hundt 1997, 1998b, Levin 2001; see, however, Chapter 1 by Hundt for a more complex account). Hundt (1998b) finds that AmE is leading the way in the revival of the mandative subjunctive (cf. also Chapter 13 by Kjellmer). Similarly, Levin (2001) reports an increase in singular agreement with collective nouns over the centuries in BrE, so that in this respect BrE is approaching AmE usage. However, it is noteworthy that this change towards the singular started before AmE could affect BrE. It

seems that there can be parallel developments without the varieties affecting each other.

The influence of frequency on linguistic structure and language change has been discussed to a great extent in recent years (Bybee and Hopper 2001, Bybee 2003, Krug 2003). Because frequent structures become more entrenched than infrequent ones (Bybee 1985: 117, Langacker 1987: 59, Bybee and Hopper 2001: 8), it has been argued that frequency greatly influences change. Hooper (1976) and Krug (2003) both suggest that sound change first affects high frequency items, while analogical change tends to affect low frequency items first. Interestingly, Hooper (1976) exemplifies analogical levelling with the fairly infrequent verbs *creep*, *leap* and *mEEP*, which take regular *-ed* forms 'at least marginally', and the high-frequency verbs *keep*, *leave* and *sleep*, where *-ed* forms are 'clearly out of the question'. Most frequent verbs in a language do indeed tend to be irregular (see, e.g., Francis and Kučera 1982).

Frequency is also connected to markedness. Zwicky (1978: 136) maintains that '*dreamt* is stylistically marked with respect to the neutral form *dreamed*, since *dreamt* is associated with formal and poetic speech'. Since Zwicky notes that 'in historical change marked forms tend to be eliminated in favour of unmarked forms' (1978: 142), we may also assume that he has good grounds for assuming that *t*-forms are in the process of being lost (see also Greenberg 1966, Battistella 1990 and Dressler 2003 for further discussion on markedness and change). However, there are problems with the postulation that irregular forms are inherently marked, as Pinker and Prince point out (1994: 346). One difficulty is plural endings in German, where the most frequent ending is *-(e)n*, although lexically and phonologically the least restricted form is *-s*.

The fact that the class of irregular verbs is semi-productive and is occasionally extended by analogy should also be emphasized. Analogy (see, e.g., Hock 2003) and frequency are interconnected factors affecting morphological change. Particularly frequent patterns are thought to be of crucial importance in analogical change. Frequently used patterns exert pressure on less frequent ones and thereby 'ragged and irregular paradigms [are] being pulled into shape by analogy and generalization' (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 163). Hopper and Traugott (2003: 155) suggest that 'the analogical spread of one allomorph at the expense of others is aided by the sheer textual frequency of the successful allomorph' (see also Tottie 1991a: 440, Bybee 2003: 621 and Dressler 2003: 464), and both Kroch (1994: 186) and Krug (2003: 8–9) discuss examples supporting the idea that low-frequency verbs are the first to regularize. Thus Pinker and Prince (1994: 327) can conclude that there is 'abundant evidence' for the frequency-sensitive nature of irregular morphology, since forms with lower frequency are more often overregularized by children and used incorrectly by adults (Bybee and Slobin 1982), and are therefore more likely to disappear from the language (Bybee 1985).

The specialization of one morphological variant to express one aspect may, just as the analogical spread of irregularity, act to preserve variation.

Section 4 begins with a discussion of the aspectual distinction because this may affect the overall distribution of verb forms in the corpora.

4 Results and analysis

4.1 Aspect

In this section we will consider to what extent *-ed* is connected with durative aspect and *-t* with punctual aspect in written BrE.⁵ This has been discussed by, among others, Quirk (1970) and Crystal (2003: 204), who argue that *-ed* is more frequent in preterite verb forms when there is an implication of duration and that *-t* forms tend to be associated with punctual events. Quirk's (1970) elicitation experiment showed preferences for this both in BrE and (less strongly so) in AmE. Thus, if an action is durative (or 'imperfective', 'continuous', 'habitual', 'permanent'), as in (9) to (11), the *-ed* ending is more likely than when the activity can be interpreted as 'punctual' (or 'aorist', 'accidental', 'point-action'), as in (12) to (14).⁶

- (9) It *burned* for three days. (BNC)
- (10) Ted, armed with a wok, crouched in the corner, and howled at Ned, who *leaped* up and down and howled back while banging a saucepan. This went on for about 15 minutes, quieter than the thunderstorm, but less musical. (*Ind*)
- (11) 'I *learned* to act by trial and error over a long period of time', she confessed. (*Ind*)
- (12) It was brilliant, except I *burnt* someone's leg with a firework. (*Ind*)
- (13) Duncan and Rob *leapt* ashore to operate the gates. (*Ind*)
- (14) The foreign press *learnt* about it in a peculiar way. (*Ind*)

It is likely that this 'one form, one meaning' specialization is conserving the patterns of morphological variation and perhaps even extending the variation. This seems to be a possible scenario, since Kroch (1994) argues that the reason for maintaining morphological doublets is that they can differentiate two separate meanings with two separate forms, and Langacker (1987: 18) proposes that 'most (if not all) grammatical morphemes are meaningful'.

Bolinger (1968: 110) and Rohdenburg (2003b: 277) argue that iconicity may account for the different distributions of *-ed* and *-t* forms. *Burned* and *leaped*, for example, are phonetically longer than their irregular counterparts *burnt* and *leapt*, and the longer forms would therefore tend to be associated with

⁵ I thank Sheila Feldmanis and Lori Linstruth for help in the classification.

⁶ Quirk (1970) used the term 'effective' in the latter case. See, e.g., Frawley 1992: 306f. for further discussions of aspect.

durative events. It can thus be argued that there is a synchronic explanation for the continued co-existence of the two forms.

The investigation into aspectual differences was limited to preterite verb forms in *The Independent*. Although Quirk (1970) found noticeable differences between the variants in the forced-choice experiment for the AmE informants, no such patterns could be discerned in the American corpus material, where there was a very low degree of variability.⁷

According to Crystal (2003: 204), the aspectual distinction is only a tendency, and it is hard to draw a semantic distinction in many cases. Peters (1994) found no support for an aspectual distinction in her investigation of the limited material provided by LOB for BrE and ACE for Australian English, stating that ‘at best it is a tendency, and one which is regionally and lexically conditioned’ (1994: 152). It may be the case that the distinction cannot be detected in all verbs, since, for instance, Quirk (1970: 306) discovered no aspectual difference with *smell*. The corpus examples were certainly difficult to classify sometimes, but some parameters were found to be helpful in categorization. For instance, typical instances of punctual *burn* were transitives with a focus on the completion of the activity (often with the specification of the end point, such as *down* or *to the ground*). Durative *burn* typically occurred with adverbials specifying the length of time (*for 11 years, still*), or in subordinate clauses introduced by *as, when* or *while*. *Leap* was deemed to be punctual unless there was some indication of repetition or extension in time (*about, around, for an hour*). In contrast, *learn* proved to be mainly punctual with the meaning ‘to find out something by hearing it’ (as in (14) above), and typically durative with skills that take a long time to acquire (*languages, engineering skills*) or where adverbials emphasized the duration (*over the years, gradually*).

The results are presented in Figure 3.1 below (see further Table 3.2 in the appendix). In the *Ind* material there was a significant ($p \leq 0.05$) correlation between preterite *-t* forms and punctual aspect for *burn, leap* and *learn*. There was only a non-significant trend for *lean*, and, unexpectedly, a significant preference for *-ed* with punctual actions with *spill*, which nevertheless seems to be connected to some specific phrases.⁸

⁷ For example, the most variable verb in LSAC, *burn*, produced 32 punctual and 4 durative (11 per cent) verbs with *burned*, and 11 punctual and 2 durative (15 per cent) with *burnt*. In *NYT* the most variable verb, *leap*, had only a marginally stronger tendency towards *leapt*, being associated with punctual aspect (43 punctual (88 per cent); 6 durative) than *leaped* (172 punctual (82 per cent); 37 durative).

⁸ Nearly half of all instances of punctual *spilled* (as opposed to one single *spilt*) occurred in the phrase *to spill the ball/shot/free kick* (‘[t]o drop (the ball)’), exemplified in (18) below. It is interesting that such a recent idiom (first attested in 1975 in the OED) strongly prefers the *-ed* ending. The *Times* material and the .uk domain on the internet indicate that there is a widespread preference for *-ed* with this phrase in BrE.

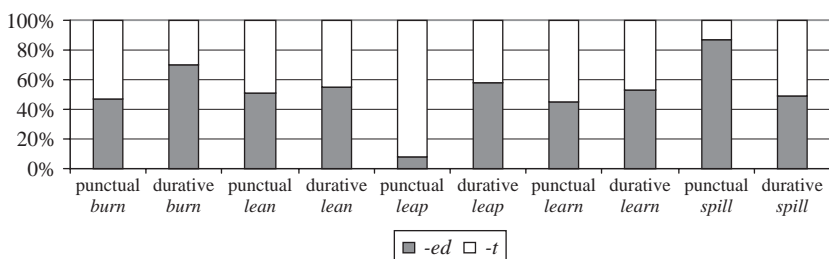


Figure 3.1 The correlation between aspect and verb inflections in the preterite in *Ind* 2000

A factor related to the aspectual patterns which was found to be influential in written BrE in the case of *burn* was (in)transitivity. *Burned* was significantly ($p \leq 0.05$)⁹ more common as an intransitive than as a transitive verb, in comparison with *burnt* (as illustrated in (9) and (12)). Intransitivity indicates that the event is semantically unbounded, and this brings about a greater proportion of *burned* because of the iconic connection between the longer *-ed* form and longer events. Further research is required to investigate the interaction between aspect and transitivity and their influence on verb morphology.

The fact that an aspectual difference is maintained in the morphemes in BrE means that there is a functional motivation for retaining the variation between *-ed* and *-t* forms. Since the two variants have specialized meanings, they can both survive. This is seen very clearly with *leap*. The action described by this verb is normally punctual, and it also produces one of the greatest proportions of *-t* forms in BrE. Evidently aspect has an impact on the overall distribution of *-ed* and *-t* with individual verbs. This finding also has implications for the discussion of frequency below in subsection 4.5.

In contrast to BrE, AmE has largely lost the possibility of overtly maintaining an aspectual difference with these verbs. As will be demonstrated below, the *-ed* form is generalized in AmE as the only alternative for most

Together with some minor categories, such as idioms (e.g. *Her butler spilled the beans last week*), *spill the ball* accounts for the significant preference for *-ed* with punctual actions. This somewhat surprising preference for *-ed* in a typically punctual phrase highlights the need for further investigation of the morphology in individual phrases.

It is noteworthy that other contexts, such as emotions and other abstract subjects spilling over (or into something) (*corruption scandals (...) immediately spilled over into France; the tension spilt over into his family life*) and the typically punctual spilling of liquids (*a customer spilled a cup of tea on her lap*), did not indicate any noteworthy preferences for either verb form. Further studies are therefore needed to determine to what extent there is covariation between aspect and morphology with *spill* and *lean*.

⁹ *Burnt* transitive 68, intransitive 44 (39 per cent); *burned* transitive 57, intransitive 78 (58 per cent). There was, however, no significant difference with *smell* or *spill*, two other verbs often occurring as either transitives or intransitives.

verbs (even though the aspectual distinction was retained ‘passively’ by speakers some decades ago, judging from Quirk’s (1970) forced-selection experiment). In BrE the aspectual distinction may be a crucial conserving factor counteracting analogical levelling.

Variation in preterite formation in verbs is a parallel to the variation of agreement with collective nouns. BrE maintains some variation in agreement because there is a semantic difference between the alternatives, whereas AmE has almost exclusively adopted singular verb agreement (Levin 2001). Such variation, where one regional variety maintains two possibilities while another makes do with only one, is accounted for by Langacker (1988: 38):

But what if speakers have no option, so that one pattern or the other must be employed (strictly according to dialect), even though either construal is conceptually quite natural? This merely reflects the conventionality of the imagery embodied by the symbolic resources of a language: out of all the ways of construing a given type of situation, certain possibilities become conventionally established (i.e. represented in the grammar by symbolic units) to the exclusion of others. Like languages, dialects often diverge in this regard.

Quirk (1970: 310) connects the aspectual patterns to change and to the variation between the preterite and the past participle. He argues that the aspectual distinction between *-t* and *-ed* is extrapolated from the past participle, where *-t* had become more firmly established than in the preterite. Where the uses of the preterite come closest to the ‘perfectivity’ of the past participle, speakers of English consider *-t* forms to be more natural even though speakers hardly use irregulars at all. As will be seen below, irregular *-t* forms are indeed more common in the past participle than in the preterite for most verbs in the BrE material. Aspect is thus not only influential in the preservation of variability between *-ed* and *-t* forms in general, but also an important factor in the variation between the preterite and the past participle.

4.2 AmE vs. BrE

Having determined that aspect is a crucial factor influencing the distribution of the competing forms, we will now turn to the differences between the varieties. Linguists writing on the topic do not quite agree about the extent to which irregular forms are used in the varieties, however. For instance, Bybee and Slobin (1982: 275) postulate ‘the imminent loss’ of *-t* forms in AmE (a claim supported by Hundt 1998a: 32), while Trudgill and Hannah (2002: 56) even go as far as suggesting that the verbs ‘have become regularized’ in AmE. For BrE, Trudgill and Hannah (2002: 56) write that the verbs remain irregular (for a similar view, see Kövecses 2000: 190). The analogical levelling of the verbs is more or less taken for granted by Biber *et al.* (1999: 396),

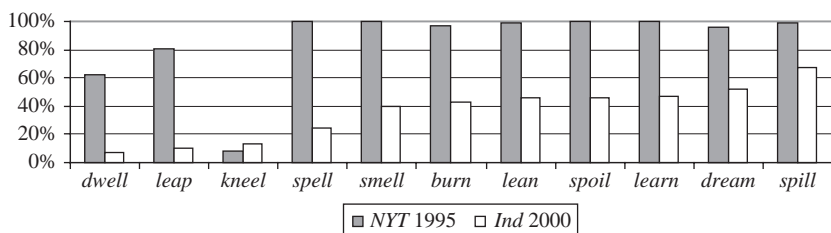


Figure 3.2 The use of *-ed* in *NYT* 1995 and *Ind* 2000 (preterite and past participle forms combined)

who propose that '[t]he expected historical trend is towards a greater use of the regular *-ed* pattern, and thus it is not surprising to find AmE more advanced in this respect than BrE'. One complicating factor, which is not mentioned by these sources, is that some irregular forms were created relatively recently. For instance, according to the OED, *spoil* dates from the seventeenth century, while *knelt* 'appears to be late (nineteenth century)'.

A more adequate description of the state of affairs is therefore given by Lass (1999: 175), who writes that AmE is keeping the old regular verb forms while BrE has the newer *-t* forms. Taylor's (1994) study of the regular-irregular variation of some verbs in the history of English emphasizes that changes are not necessarily towards more regularity. She finds that many verbs which had been variable had been so for four centuries or more. Judging from the citations in the OED, the average lifespan of doublets was about 300 years. Taylor suggests that doublets appear to have come into existence through language contact and dialect mixture.

The overall results for the verbs in AmE and BrE are presented in Figures 3.2 and 3.3.¹⁰ The numbers are provided in Tables 3.3 and 3.4 in the appendix (see Table 3.5 for *Times* 2000).¹¹

First of all, the results confirm that irregular *-t* forms are generally more frequent in BrE than in AmE. In AmE *-t* forms are very rare (with only a few exceptional verbs). In the newspaper texts, *-t* forms are significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) more common in *Ind* than in *NYT* for both the preterite and the past participle for all verbs except the two rarest ones, *dwell*, where the difference was significant only in the preterite, and *kneel*.¹² In the spoken material from LSAC and the BNC there was the same significant tendency ($p \leq 0.05$) for *burn*, *dream* (preterite only), *learn*, *smell* (preterite only), *spell*,

¹⁰ Clearly adjectival uses, as in *a burnt-out actress*, *a learned man*, *we are very spoiled*, were not included.

¹¹ In Figure 3.3 verbs with fewer than ten tokens in any cell have been excluded (except for *leap* from LSAC in Figure 3.3, which has been included for the comparison).

¹² The same results as regards significance were obtained in the comparison between the *NYT* and *The Times*.

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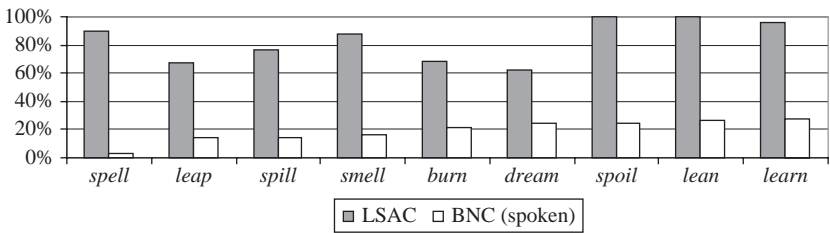


Figure 3.3 The use of *-ed* in LSAC and the spoken part of the BNC (preterite and past participle forms combined)

spill and *spoil* (past participle only). The difference between the varieties is thus firmly established both in newspaper language and in speech, a result that is very similar to those of, for instance, Johansson (1979: 206) and Biber *et al.* (1999: 397). Since AmE is leading the way in many recent grammatical changes, it might be expected that there will be more *-ed* forms also in BrE in the future when the irregular forms are levelled. However, such a simplistic view may not be appropriate in the present case, where there are also preserving forces, as seen in section 4.1.

4.3 Speech vs. writing

It is a reasonable assumption that *-ed* forms are more frequent in speech than in writing because the expected historical trend is towards more regularity. Some researchers have also noted a connection between *-t* forms and formal, presumably more conservative, styles, while others have noted the opposite. To begin with, the former hypothesis is endorsed by Zwicky (1978: 136) and Trudgill and Hannah (2002: 56), who suggest that *-t* forms are more common in formal and poetic language. The seemingly conflicting idea that irregular forms are more common in speech than in writing appears to have more support (Jespersen 1942: 32, Bryant 1962, Quirk *et al.* 1985: 106, Biber *et al.* 1999: 396). The newspapers and spoken corpora provide support for this latter view, as demonstrated in Figures 3.2 and 3.3 above. Irregulars were indeed often more frequent in speech than in writing in both the AmE and BrE material. In AmE, there were significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) more irregulars in speech than in writing for *burn*, *spell* (past participle only) and *spill* (preterite only). In BrE, as represented by *Ind* and the spoken component of the BNC, there were significantly more irregulars for *burn*, *dream* (preterite only), *learn*, *smell* (preterite only), *spill* and *spoil* (past participle only).¹³

¹³ *The Times* contained more irregulars than *Ind* and therefore there were fewer significant differences between *The Times* and the BNC. Nevertheless, *-t* forms were significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) more common in speech with the past participles of *dream*, *spell* and *spill*. Interestingly, *-t* forms were significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) more common in *The Times* than in the BNC with both the preterite and the past participle of *learn* and with the past participle of *burn*.

How can we account for the finding that *-t* forms are more frequent in speech than in writing, while at the same time they are claimed by some linguists to be more frequent in formal language? One part of the explanation may be that transcribers often render /t/ pronunciations as *-t* spellings in those cases where it is possible to transcribe them as *-ed* (see Wells 1990).¹⁴ A parallel can be found in the distributional patterns of agreement with collective nouns found by Hundt (1998a) and Levin (2001). Plural verb agreement was found to be fairly common in BrE speech, while remaining the preferred choice in some genres of highly conservative writing. Although there appears to be a general decrease in plural verb agreement in BrE across the centuries, speech contains more of the 'conservative' plural verbs than newspaper text does. Levin (2001: 37) therefore argues that plural verbs are stylistically ambiguous with singular collective nouns. It may be the case that *t*-forms are similar in this respect; they are both typical of formal writing and of spontaneous speech, while being highly variable in newspapers in BrE.

4.4 Preterite and past participle forms

An important variational feature is the distribution between the preterite and the past participle form. It has often been suggested that *-t* forms are more frequent in the past participle than in the preterite (e.g. Quirk *et al.* 1985: 106).¹⁵ Quirk's (1970) elicitation experiment indicated a greater preference for irregular forms in the past participle than the preterite for many verbs in both BrE and AmE.

The results from the present study are given in Figures 3.4 to 3.7 below.¹⁶ Adjectival uses are not included in these figures but are instead discussed in section 4.6. There was no indication of differences in AmE (which displays little variation) or in BrE speech, where the relatively few tokens produced roughly equal proportions in the preterite and the past participle. However, as illustrated in Figure 3.5, there were noteworthy differences for many verbs in *Ind*. There were significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) more *-t* forms in the past participle

¹⁴ It might be hypothesized that voiced or voiceless phonemes following the verb influence the choice of inflection (or its transcription) here. However, a spot-check of such a potential effect revealed no correlations.

¹⁵ It is also worth noting that preterite verb forms were significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) more frequent in NYT than in *Ind*, and in LSAC than in the BNC. However, Biber *et al.* (1999: 463) write that 'it has frequently been noted that AmE uses the preterite in contexts where BrE favors the perfect, for example with *yet* or *already* (...) Nevertheless, this difference does not seriously affect the frequencies in conversation. It remains a mystery why the marked difference of frequency shows up mainly in news. It might be relevant that American newspapers are renowned for a space-saving drive towards stylistic economy, and that the simple past usually requires one less word than the perfect.'

¹⁶ In Figures 3.6 and 3.7, verbs with fewer than ten tokens in any cell have been excluded (for the complete figures see Tables 3.3 and 3.4 in the appendix). In Figures 3.4 and 3.5 the past participle of *kneel* in both newspapers and *dwelt* in *Ind* also produced fewer than ten tokens but have still been included for completeness.

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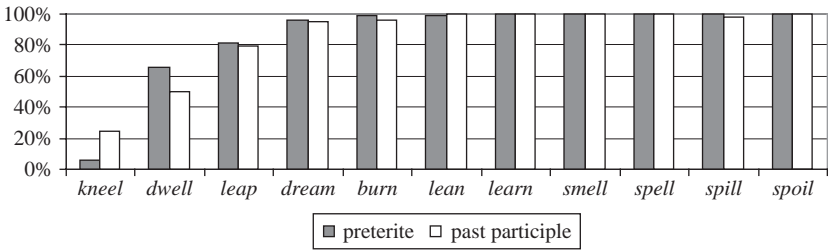


Figure 3.4 The use of *-ed* in *NYT* 1995

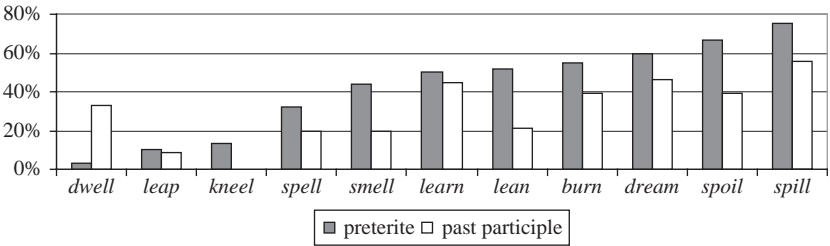


Figure 3.5 The use of *-ed* in *Ind* 2000

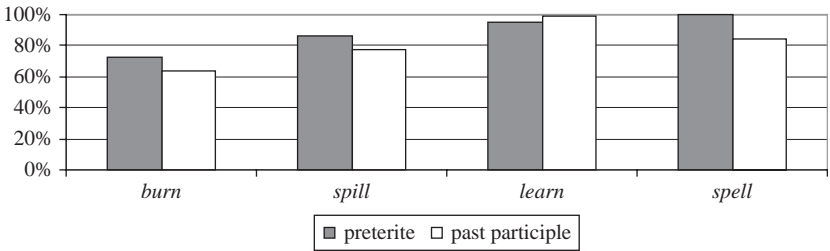


Figure 3.6 The use of *-ed* in *LSAC*

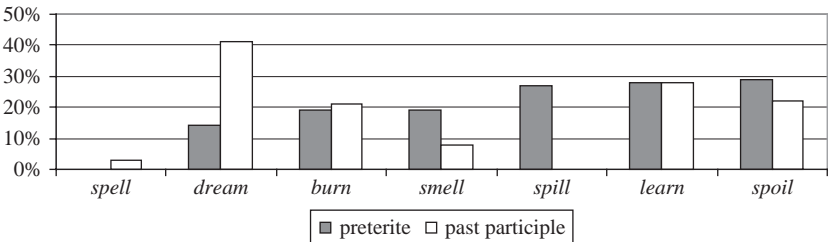


Figure 3.7 The use of *-ed* in *BNC* (spoken)

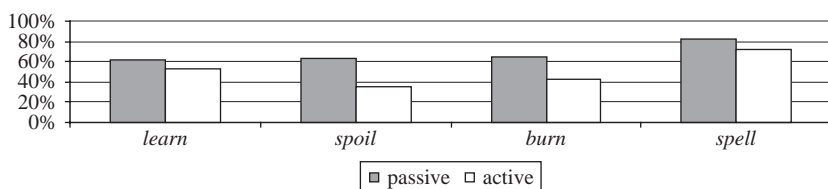


Figure 3.8 The use of irregular past participle forms in passives and actives in *Ind* 2000

than in the preterite for *burn*, *dream*, *lean*, *learn*, *spell*, *spill* and *spoil*.¹⁷ The variation between the preterite and the past participle therefore seems well established at least in BrE newspaper language.

It can be hypothesized that passives influence variation in the past participle. I therefore decided to investigate if this was the case in my material. It turned out that irregular forms were more frequent in passives, as in (15), than in past participle actives, as in (16).

(15) They wanted the lessons to be *learnt* and digested. (*Ind*)

(16) Everything I've *learned* in this game, I've basically *learned* from somebody else. (*Ind*)

The results from *Ind* are given in Figure 3.8 (and Table 3.6 in the appendix). Irregulars were significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) more frequent in passives than in actives for the three verbs *burn*, *learn* and *spoil*, but not for *spell*. We can therefore conclude that, at least in written BrE, past participle forms are more irregular than preterite forms, and that passives are a significant feature supporting *-t* forms in the past participle.

4.5 Individual verbs and frequency effects

We first turn to the issue of differences between individual verbs. Variable verbs exemplify the way in which lexical diffusion acts in morphosyntactic change, i.e. how some words are affected by a change before others. According to Tottie (1991a: 439), lexical diffusion has been considered much less in syntax and morphology than in phonology, although the concept as such appears to be taken for granted by many authors.¹⁸ Frequency is considered to be one of the key issues in lexical diffusion.

Numerous sources provide claims about usage of the verb forms in question. Quirk *et al.*'s (1985: 106–7) account of the usage patterns of the various

¹⁷ In *The Times* the differences were significant for *burn*, *dream*, *learn* and *spoil*.

¹⁸ Studies dealing with lexical diffusion in syntax include Tottie (1991a) on negation, Ogura (1993) regarding periphrastic *do*, Ogura and Wang (1996) on the development of third-person *-s* and Curzan (2003), who investigated the loss of grammatical gender.

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verbs indicates an awareness of differences both between the variants and between AmE and BrE. *-Ed* and *-t* forms are given without regional label for *burn*, *dwell*, *learn*, *smell*, *spell*, *spill* and *spoil* (*dwelled* is claimed to be a less common form). For *dream*, *kneel*, *lean* and *leap* the *-ed* forms are given as <esp AmE> while the *-t* forms are <esp BrE>, except for *knelt* and *leapt* which receive no label. Some of the forms are also classified as infrequent by Jespersen (1942: 32, 38), who claims that *kneeled* and *smelled* are used only rarely, while *dwelled* is not even mentioned. The OED maintains that *smelt* is now more frequent than *smelled* in BrE. Bryant (1962) mentions several specific points about AmE usage for individual verbs. For instance, *spell*, *spill* and *spoil* are mainly regular, whereas '[k]nelt is dominant among all types of speakers, but *kneeled* as an alternate is neither local nor nonstandard' (1962: 125). In contrast, Tottie (2002a: 150–1) and Trudgill and Hannah (2002: 56) give *dwelled* and *kneeled* as more typical of AmE than of BrE. There thus seems to be a degree of uncertainty as regards the status of some verbs. The most comprehensive and up-to-date summary of usage data is provided by Biber *et al.*'s (1999) corpus findings. Their results from newspapers are compared with those of the present study in Table 3.1. Cells producing differences between Biber *et al.*'s results and those from *Ind* are marked in bold.

Biber *et al.*'s findings are very similar to the ones in the present study, as is illustrated in Table 3.1. To a very large extent AmE newspapers use regular forms for these verbs. (In spoken AmE, irregulars were, as indicated previously, more common than in writing, but still regulars predominated here as well.) My results from the *NYT* are almost identical with those found in Biber *et al.*'s AmE news category, with only a minor difference for the past participle of *leap*.¹⁹ BrE produces, in contrast to AmE, a considerable amount of variation between groups of verbs, but the variations found within Biber *et al.*'s written BrE material and *Ind* are very similar. Seven of the cells showed identical results, while *Ind* produced more irregulars for the preterite of *spoil* and for the participle of *burn* and *learn*.²⁰ Biber *et al.*'s more widely sampled corpora thus provide considerable support for the differences between individual verbs in BrE.

¹⁹ The results from LAT 1995 are very similar to those from *NYT* and Biber *et al.*, since all verbs in Table 3.1 (and *spill*) were at least 85 per cent regular in LAT. There was little or no variation at all in the latter newspaper: *spell*, *spill* and *spoil* were exclusively regular, while there was only one irregular form each for *lean*, *learn* and *smell*. *Burn* (1570 *burned*; 6 *burnt* (<1% -t)), *dream* (523 *dreamed*; 9 *dreamt* (2% -t)) and *leap* (423 *leaped*; 9 *leapt* (2% -t)) overall produced even lower proportions of irregulars than in *NYT*, and most of these irregulars occurred in quoted material. There is therefore plenty of evidence that irregular forms with these verbs are very rare in AmE newspapers. As in *NYT*, *dwell* and *kneel* were the exceptions to the regular patterns in AmE (see below).

²⁰ *The Times*, which contained considerably larger proportions of irregulars than *Ind*, was less similar to Biber *et al.*'s findings. Only the preterite for *leap*, *smell* and *spell*, and the past participle for *leap*, produced similar results. In all other instances, *The Times* produced more irregulars than Biber *et al.* This may be an indication that usage in *Ind* is a more typical representative of BrE newspapers than *The Times* in this respect.

We will first consider the AmE material briefly. As seen above in Figure 3.4, there were only two exceptions, *dwell* and *kneel*, to the strong trend towards regularity in written AmE. These two verbs, which were by far the least frequent in the sample, behaved very differently from the others. *Dwell* seems to be highly variable both in the preterite and the past participle, while *kneel* is clearly irregular at least in the preterite.²¹ Contrary to what was suggested in some of the sources cited above, *dwelled* and *kneeled* cannot be said to be specifically AmE forms, since they are rare also in that variety.

In the written BrE material from *Ind* there were considerable differences between individual items in the class (Figure 3.5 above), as is often seen in cases of lexical diffusion. Disregarding the low-frequency *dwell* and *kneel*, *leap* produced the highest percentage of irregulars and *spill* the lowest. These are exemplified in (17) and (18) below.

(17) Environmental groups *leapt* on the announcement. (*Ind*)

(18) He *spilled* a Di Canio free kick straight to the feet of Javier Margas, but the Chilean was too startled to profit. (*Ind*)

Although irregular forms are much more common in *Ind* than in NYT, there were noticeable correlations between the varieties in that *dwell* and *kneel* are the most irregular in both varieties (together with *leap* in *Ind*). The preference for irregulars is, as mentioned above, even greater in speech than in writing. In writing the differences between the verbs are even more pronounced in the preterite than in the past participle, with some verbs clearly preferring *-ed*, some preferring *-t* and some being highly variable.

As seen above, some linguists have assumed that the verbs are regularizing in BrE. However, the high proportion of irregular forms in BrE in the present material does not support this claim. The variation can instead be argued to be deeply entrenched in the BrE verb system, and since this variation correlates with meaningful variation, the *-ed/-t* difference is unlikely to disappear. As noted above, low-frequency irregulars are usually assumed to be the first to be levelled (e.g. Hooper 1976, Krug 2003, Hopper and Traugott 2003: 128), but there is some evidence that the correlation between frequency and morphology is less straightforward than has previously been suspected. For instance, Ogura and Wang's (1996: 122) study of the spread of third-person *-s* in Early Modern English shows that the most frequent verbs, *have*, *do* and *say*, were the first to start changing. But when the infrequent verbs began to be affected by this change, they changed faster than high-frequency verbs.

²¹ A comparison with LAT 1995 indicates that *dwell* and *kneel* indeed are exceptions in AmE. Both verbs were even more irregular in LAT than in NYT (*dwell*: preterite 4 *dwelled*, 20 *dwelt* (83 per cent); past participle 2 *dwelled*, 3 *dwelt*; *kneel*: preterite 4 *kneeled*, 83 *knelt* (95 per cent); past participle 0 *kneeled*, 3 *knelt*).

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There are two types of frequency effects that need to be taken into account, namely token frequency and type frequency.²² As regards type frequency in the present case, it should be noted that marginally variable verbs such as *creep* and *weep* and non-variable verbs such as *keep*, *leave* and *sleep* probably also have an effect on the variable verbs by supporting the irregular paradigm. Thus there may be not only analogical pressure from all the thousands of regular verb types for the irregulars to conform with, but also opposing pressure from the fairly small group of similar irregular verbs towards irregularization.²³

Nübling (2000) investigates irregularization processes in Germanic languages. She suggests that uniformity and transparency are functionally motivated for low-frequency verbs, while short, simple and highly differentiated irregular forms can be seen as motivated for high-frequency items. Irregularization is claimed to be affected by frequency (2000: 256), but Nübling emphasizes that no exact correlations between frequency and degree of irregularity can be found. Nevertheless, decreasing token frequency tends to correlate with regularization, and increasing token frequency often causes irregularization. Nübling also argues that the number of competing verb classes and their degree of productivity need to be taken into account in linguistic change.

Figures 3.9 to 3.12 indicate to what extent the eleven verbs have been regularized (or irregularized). The number of tokens for each verb²⁴ in the corpora is compared to the proportion of irregular preterite and past participle forms.²⁵ Figures 3.9 and 3.11 do not indicate any correlations with the token frequency of the individual verbs in written and spoken AmE. Judging from these corpora, there has been a very clear drift towards regularization in AmE, with only the two verbs with the *lowest* token frequencies, *dwelt* and *kneel*, lagging behind.²⁶ There is thus no support for the influence of frequency in the analogical change in NYT.²⁷ Possibly these two verbs have shown even stronger preferences for irregular forms in AmE in earlier periods and will regularize very rapidly once they have started changing. As noted above, this has been suggested as a possible marching order in change

²² Token (or text) frequency refers to the number of occurrences of an item, while type frequency refers to the dictionary frequency of a particular pattern.

²³ For a discussion of the complex history of the verbs in the present study in AmE and BrE, see Hundt (Chapter 1).

²⁴ Only verbs with ten or more tokens were included.

²⁵ The individual frequencies of the verbs in the entire BNC, the CobuildDirect corpus and www.google.com are roughly similar to the ones found in the newspapers, so the fact that only newspaper text (and relatively small spoken corpora) are used here has not decisively influenced the results.

²⁶ One possibly influential factor is that *kneel* and *dwelt* may be rather formal words that are used more often in 'conservative' style. However, the present material produced no real support for this hypothesis.

²⁷ The same applies to LAT, where the two least frequent verbs, *dwelt* and *kneel*, were the most irregular.

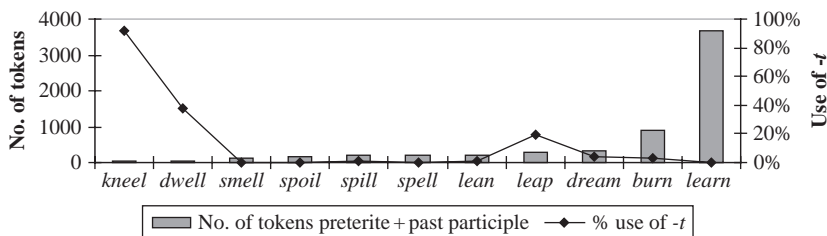


Figure 3.9 The correlation between the number of tokens and irregular inflection in *NYT*

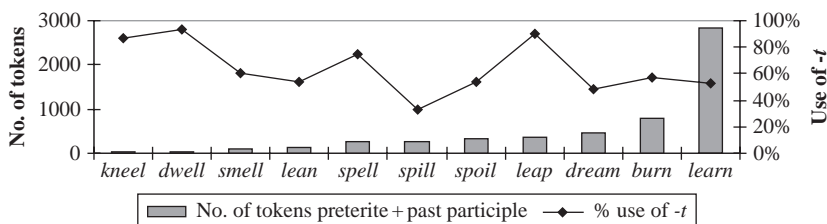


Figure 3.10 The correlation between the number of tokens and irregular inflection in *Ind*

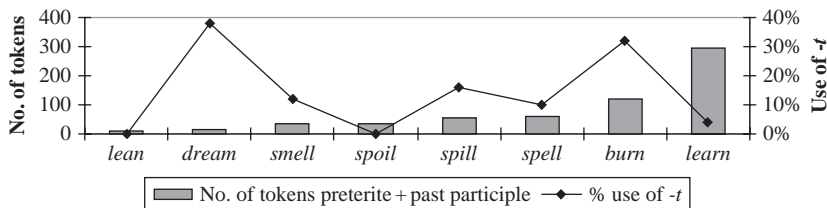


Figure 3.11 The correlation between the number of tokens and irregular inflection in *LSAC*

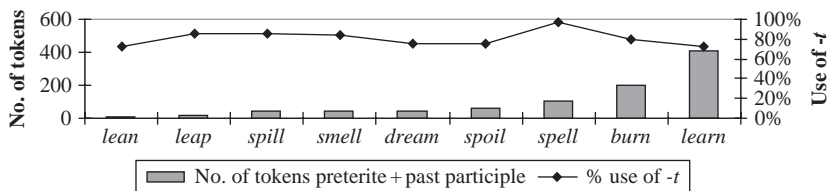


Figure 3.12 The correlation between the number of tokens and irregular inflection in *BNC (spoken)*

by Ogura (1993: 68) and Ogura and Wang (1996: 122), who propose that the later a morphological change starts for one lexical item, the greater the rate of change becomes for that item. However, this still does not explain the patterns found in LSAC, which do not correlate at all with frequency. Therefore, although AmE seems to be following the most likely path of analogical levelling, the results do not provide any evidence for the influence of frequency.

Similarly, the BrE material does not indicate any direct influence from frequency. It is therefore noteworthy that some sources, such as Hundt (Chapter 1), suggest that these verbs are not regularizing at all in BrE. Similarly, the OED classifies *burnt* as the 'prevailing form', and *burned* as 'slightly archaic, and somewhat more formal', and *Fowler's Modern English Usage* (1965: 614) records 'a movement towards -t', and that *burned* 'tends to disappear' (1965: 68). Thus it seems quite likely that there is no regularization in progress in BrE. This would account for the lack of correlation between frequency and regularization, as seen in Figures 3.10 and 3.12. Figure 3.12 shows that although there are very large differences in token frequency between the verbs in the BNC, there are only small differences in the proportion of irregular forms. Figure 3.10 does not show any correlation either in *Ind* between low frequency and a high degree of regularization. The least frequent verbs, *dwell* and *kneel*, are highly irregular in *Ind* and *The Times* (as they are in NYT and LAT). This can be compared with Hundt's suggestion (Chapter 1) that the earlier a verb was irregularized, the more irregular it is in BrE. This holds true for *dwell*, which was first attested as irregular in 1375, but not for *kneel*, which was the last to irregularize. In *Ind* (and *The Times*), *spill*, which is the most regular of all verbs, is of intermediate frequency. *Learn* and *burn*, which are the most frequent, are not particularly irregular in *Ind*, on a par with low-frequency *lean*. Similar discrepancies between frequency and the degree of regularity were found by Biber *et al.* (1999: 398). It can therefore be argued that frequency dependence only directly affects an extended group of verbs on a much more general level, in that the high-frequency forms *kept* and *left*, which are more common than any of the verbs in the present study, show no sign of regularizing. However, there is no linear connection between frequency and irregularity here either, since the irregular form *slept* is less frequent in BrE than variable *learned/ learnt*.

As indicated above, there appear to be two main reasons for the lack of analogical levelling in BrE, and therefore probably also for the lack of frequency dependence. Firstly, the verbs have high token frequencies and type frequencies. As has been pointed out by several linguists, high token frequencies and type frequencies are required for the preservation of an inflectional pattern, or even for an extension of it (Bybee 1985, Nübling 2000). It seems that the irregular forms of at least some of the verbs under study are used frequently enough to be sufficiently reinforced in the lexicon. In addition, there is a large enough number of similar variable (e.g. *creep* and

sweep) and non-variable verbs (e.g. *keep*, *leave* and *sleep*) strengthening each other's inflectional paradigm. An indication of the robustness of this paradigm is that it has been extended during the last few hundred years (e.g. *spoilt* appearing in the seventeenth century and *knelt* in the nineteenth century). This fact can explain why this inflectional paradigm is thriving in BrE, but it does not, however, explain exactly why the distributional patterns are so unrelated to frequency with the variable verbs.

The second possible reason why there are inconsistencies in the correlations between frequency and regularity is that there is a specialization of verb meaning. If both the regular and irregular forms are stored in the lexicon, they are free to acquire a greater degree of independence and the forms can consequently come to be specialized with different meanings (Bybee 1985, Nübling 2000). This iconically-motivated specialization among preterites – the longer form is used for the longer event (as has been demonstrated in section 4.1) – can thus account for some of the more prominent exceptions to frequency and irregularity in Figure 3.10. *Leap* is mainly punctual and therefore correlates to a very large extent with *-t* endings for the preterite in BrE. *Burn* and *learn*, which also produced significant correlations with aspect, are much more likely to denote durative action than *leap*, and, as expected, regular *-ed* forms are more common with these than with *leap*. Another minor form of specialization is also relevant in the preservation (or extension) of this paradigm. As seen above, irregular forms are more frequent in passives than in actives. Whether or not irregular forms are increasing, decreasing or remaining stable in BrE, the use of passives is a factor supporting irregularity.

The diachronic conclusions to be drawn from this study can be summarized in the following way: Frequency is not a major influence on the distribution of the regular and irregular forms of these verbs. In BrE other factors are strong enough to maintain the variation. In AmE, analogical levelling has progressed very far, but there is no solid evidence that frequency is crucial. Therefore it cannot simply be argued that AmE is 'ahead' of BrE and leading the way towards regularization, as was at first hypothesized.²⁸ A diachronic explanation – alluded to above – is provided by Hundt (Chapter 1), who observes that there is a tendency for irregular forms to be more frequent in Present-Day English the earlier the first attestation of an irregular form is, although, as indicated above, this explanation can only account for a part of the patterns under study. This study has nevertheless established that there are considerable differences between the varieties for most verbs, but that *dwelt* and *kneel* tend to be the most irregular (or least regular) ones in both BrE and AmE.

²⁸ For a clear case where greater regularity in AmE is due to a process of irregularization in BrE rather than to an increase in regular forms in AmE, see Schlüter (Chapter 5).

4.6 Fixedness and adjectival uses

One final factor that needs to be taken into account when considering the variation with these verbs is their use as participial adjectives in phrases which may or may not be stored as collocations. Tottie (1991a: 458–9) argues that ‘it is highly probable that collocations are learned, stored and transmitted as unitary elements, something which would explain their comparative stability over long periods of time’. Thus it seems likely that, at least in AmE, where most irregulars have been levelled, the ‘conservative’ *-t* form is more frequent with adjectives in (semi-)fixed expressions. A general preference for *-t* forms in adjectival uses has also been noted by, for example, Quirk *et al.* (1985: 106–7), Hundt (1998a: 31), Crystal (2003: 204).

Collocations chiefly involve adjectival uses.²⁹ Some of these phrases allow variation, while some phrases allow little or no variation, such as *burnt sienna*, *burnt almonds*, *burnt offering*, *burnt toast* and T. S. Eliot’s poem *Burnt Norton* (Crystal 2003: 204). The phrases which were deemed to be entirely fixed are counted separately from those where the adjectives allow variation. It is noteworthy that all the fixed phrases in the present material involve *-t* forms and not *-ed* forms. Cases where *-ed* forms exclude *-t* forms are at best very rare. In all, 24 *-t* phrases from *NYT*, 24 from *Ind*, 40 from *Times* and 10 from the BNC were deemed to be entirely fixed (*burnt offerings* (3 *NYT*; 3 *Ind*; 4 *Times*; 2 BNC); *burnt toast* (2 *NYT*; 6 *Ind*; 4 *Times*; 8 BNC); colours (e.g. *burnt orange*, *burnt sienna*, *burnt umber*) (19 *NYT*; 15 *Ind*; 32 *Times*)).

Adjectives also occurred in some variable idioms. These adjectives, as in *No use crying over spilt milk*, are more likely to be irregular than verbs are (as suggested by Bryant 1962: 126 for AmE). In the present material there were 14 instances (*NYT* 3; *Ind* 5; BNC 1; *Times* 5) of *spilt milk*, and 7 instances (*NYT* 2; *Ind* 1; LAT 4) of *spilled milk*.

²⁹ Three collocations consisting of verbs were frequent in the material, *learned/learnt a/the/his/their lesson*, *spoiled/spoilt for choice* and *spilled/spilt the ball* (for a discussion of the latter phrase, see section 4.1). *Learned/learnt a/the/his/their lesson* and *spoiled/spoilt for choice* produced only slightly more irregular verbs than overall in the corpora. In *Ind*, *learnt* was used in 58 per cent of the cases (253 *learnt*; 187 *learned*) of *learned/learnt a/the/his/their lesson*, as compared to 52 per cent *t*-forms for the remaining instances of *learn* (1156 *learned*; 1252 *learnt*). This slightly greater preference for *-t* forms with this collocation is probably connected with the fact that passives are more frequent with *learn a/the lesson* than otherwise with *learn* (as illustrated in Figure 3.8, passives favour *-t* forms). The idiom *spoiled/spoilt for choice* was frequent both in *Ind* (20 *spoiled* and 46 *spoilt* (70 per cent irregular)) and *Times* (2 *spoiled* and 58 *spoilt* (97 per cent irregular)), which should be compared with the proportions of *-ed* and *-t* endings in the past participle (76 *spoiled* and 102 *spoilt* (57 per cent irregular) in *Ind*; 28 *spoiled* and 148 *spoilt* (84 per cent irregular) in *Times*). Interestingly, this phrase did not appear in *NYT* or LAT, which suggests that it is a Britishism.

T-forms are also common as adjectives in more freely produced phrases³⁰ (see Table 3.7), as in (19) and (20) below.

- (19) The bad start stuck in his mind the way *burned* rice sticks in a pan – probably because Brown has caught the most heat of any player. (*NYT*)
- (20) I loved the hot, heady reek of *burnt* rubber, gasoline and smoldering steel. (*NYT*)

Generally irregular *-t* forms appear to be at least as frequent among pre-modifying adjectives as among verbs. Nevertheless, only *burn* produced significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) more *-t* forms as participial adjectives than as past participles in NYT and *Ind* (but not in *Times*). In NYT there were 4 per cent of irregulars with *burn* for the verbal uses and 17 per cent for adjectival/attributive uses, and in *Ind* there were 61 per cent and 82 per cent, respectively. Hundt (1998a: 31) found proportions very similar to these for adjectival *burnt*, in AmE 22 per cent (*Miami Herald*), and in BrE 75 per cent (*Guardian*). There is thus a great deal of support for the idea that there is a propensity to use irregular *-t* forms more often in adjectival function. This is in all likelihood affected by the storage of these collocations and idioms as units.

5 Conclusion

This study has explored one important morphological difference between AmE and BrE. Large corpora have enabled us to come a long way towards establishing the patterns of usage and the factors affecting variation. As regards grammatical differences between AmE and BrE, there is variation in both varieties, but much less so in AmE. Marianne Hundt (Chapter 1) describes the re-establishment of regulars in AmE as an instance of post-colonial re-innovation (or revival). The conclusion regarding BrE, where irregulars are deeply entrenched, is that the variation will remain for the foreseeable future. The variation has been maintained by language-internal factors counteracting analogical levelling. There is, to begin with, a whole paradigm of similar verbs of different token frequencies which acts to preserve this inflectional pattern (and historically perhaps to extend it). Furthermore, there is a latent meaning component in the two morphological variants which motivates the maintenance of the variation. Even though token frequency has been argued convincingly to be a crucial influence on linguistic structure, the frequency of an individual verb was not found to be a determining factor in the present case. This was clearly demonstrated with the two least frequent verbs, *dwell* and *kneel* , which were highly irregular in both the AmE and BrE written material. The description of

³⁰ The frequent adjective *learned* /'le:(r)nɪd/ (62 times in NYT, 108 in *Ind*, 120 in *Times* and 45 in the BNC) was not considered since the pronunciation is separate from verbal *learned* (/le:(r)nɪd/).

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the correlation between frequency and variable verb morphology therefore needs further refinement. Similarly, the influence of the durative/punctual aspect and transitive/intransitive use on this morphological variation requires further investigation.

This detailed study of large corpora has discovered new patterns of variation and change in AmE and BrE, and also contributed to linguistic theory by illustrating how different factors interact to determine morphological variation. The variation between regular and irregular forms in BrE is maintained because the different forms have different functions, the shorter irregular form being more common with punctual action, in the past participle, in the passive and in adjectival uses. Yet further investigations into the interconnections between frequency, analogical levelling and specialization of meaning³¹ are required on both sides of the Atlantic. Sapir's (1921: 38) assertion that '[a]ll grammars leak' is as valid as always.

Appendix

Table 3.2 *The correlation between aspect and verb inflections in Ind 2000*

	punctual		durative	
	-ed	-t	-ed	-t
<i>burn</i>	76 (47%)	87 (53%)	58 (70%)	25 (30%)
<i>lean</i>	39 (51%)	37 (49%)	17 (55%)	14 (45%)
<i>leap</i>	21 (8%)	248 (92%)	8 (58%)	11 (42%)
<i>learn</i>	277 (45%)	334 (55%)	372 (53%)	328 (47%)
<i>spill</i>	85 (87%)	13 (13%)	21 (49%)	22 (51%)

³¹ Specialization can also be investigated further with some verbs that occur with fairly distinct meanings. For instance, *spell* can mean 'to form by writing' (*spell one's name*), 'indicate something bad' (*spell disaster*) or 'to explain in detail' (*spell it out clearly*). Similarly, *spoil* can refer to the effects either of ruin or decay on an object or of an overindulgent upbringing on a person. We also saw some indications in section 4.1 that *spill* has different morphological preferences in different phrases. Such potential specializations can further support the two inflectional patterns in BrE.

Table 3.3 *The use of regular and irregular verb forms in NYT 1995 and Ind 2000*

	NYT 1995				Ind 2000			
	preterite		past participle		preterite		past participle	
	-ed	-t	-ed	-t	-ed	-t	-ed	-t
<i>burn</i>	350 (99%)	2 (1%)	510 (96%)	22 (4%)	134 (54%)	112 (46%)	211 (39%)	333 (61%)
<i>dream</i>	200 (96%)	9 (4%)	102 (95%)	5 (5%)	126 (60%)	84 (40%)	110 (46%)	129 (54%)
<i>dwell</i>	23 (66%)	12 (34%)	5 (50%)	5 (50%)	1 (3%)	35 (97%)	2 (33%)	4 (67%)
<i>kneel</i>	2 (6%)	33 (94%)	1 (25%)	3 (75%)	4 (13%)	26 (87%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)
<i>lean</i>	184 (99%)	2 (1%)	11 (100%)	0 (0%)	56 (52%)	51 (48%)	6 (21%)	22 (79%)
<i>leap</i>	209 (81%)	49 (19%)	22 (79%)	6 (21%)	29 (10%)	259 (90%)	6 (9%)	61 (91%)
<i>learn</i> ¹	>100 (100%)	0 (0%)	>100 (100%)	1 (0%)	649 (50%)	662 (50%)	694 (45%)	843 (55%)
<i>smell</i>	115 (100%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)	0 (0%)	33 (44%)	42 (56%)	3 (20%)	12 (80%)
<i>spell</i>	60 (100%)	0 (0%)	134 (100%)	0 (0%)	35 (32%)	73 (68%)	29 (20%)	116 (80%)
<i>spill</i>	123 (100%)	0 (0%)	63 (98%)	1 (2%)	106 (75%)	35 (25%)	64 (56%)	50 (44%)
<i>spoil</i>	53 (100%)	0 (0%)	124 (100%)	0 (0%)	48 (67%)	24 (33%)	96 (39%)	148 (61%)

¹In NYT there were 3,669 instances of verbal *learned* and only a single *learnt* in a quotation ('I've *learnt* a lot, *grown up a lot, since the injury, she said at the time*), and therefore these were not classified more thoroughly.

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Table 3.4 *The use of regular and irregular verb forms in LSAC and BNC (spoken)*

	LSAC				BNC			
	preterite		past participle		preterite		past participle	
	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-t</i>	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-t</i>	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-t</i>	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-t</i>
<i>burn</i>	36 (73%)	13 (27%)	44 (64%)	25 (36%)	12 (19%)	51 (81%)	29 (21%)	107 (79%)
<i>dream</i>	7 (78%)	2 (22%)	1 (25%)	3 (75%)	4 (14%)	25 (86%)	7 (41%)	10 (59%)
<i>dwelt</i>	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (100%)
<i>kneel</i>	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	1 (17%)	5 (83%)	0 (-)	0 (-)
<i>lean</i>	8 (100%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	3 (30%)	7 (70%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)
<i>leap</i>	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	2 (17%)	10 (83%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)
<i>learn</i>	198 (95%)	11 (5%)	86 (99%)	1 (1%)	57 (28%)	144 (72%)	58 (28%)	146 (72%)
<i>smell</i>	29 (91%)	3 (9%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	6 (19%)	25 (81%)	1 (8%)	12 (92%)
<i>spell</i>	24 (100%)	0 (0%)	31 (84%)	6 (16%)	0 (0%)	13 (100%)	3 (3%)	90 (97%)
<i>spill</i>	36 (86%)	6 (14%)	10 (77%)	3 (23%)	6 (27%)	16 (73%)	0 (0%)	20 (100%)
<i>spoil</i>	5 (100%)	0 (0%)	30 (100%)	0 (0%)	5 (29%)	12 (71%)	9 (22%)	31 (78%)

Table 3.5 *The use of regular and irregular verb forms in The Times 2000*

	preterite		past participle	
	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-t</i>	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-t</i>
	<i>burn</i>	57 (22%)	204 (78%)	64 (11%)
<i>dream</i>	64 (24%)	204 (76%)	43 (15%)	238 (85%)
<i>dwelt</i>	3 (10%)	27 (90%)	1 (8%)	11 (92%)
<i>kneel</i>	3 (11%)	24 (89%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)
<i>lean</i>	30 (27%)	80 (73%)	6 (33%)	12 (67%)
<i>leap</i>	6 (1%)	446 (99%)	2 (3%)	70 (97%)
<i>learn</i>	236 (14%)	1417 (86%)	189 (11%)	1572 (89%)
<i>smell</i>	20 (17%)	100 (83%)	3 (14%)	18 (86%)
<i>spell</i>	7 (7%)	87 (93%)	17 (11%)	132 (89%)
<i>spill</i>	56 (42%)	78 (58%)	24 (29%)	60 (71%)
<i>spoil</i>	26 (31%)	58 (69%)	30 (13%)	206 (87%)

Table 3.6 *The use of regular and irregular verb forms in actives and passives in Ind 2000*

	active		passive	
	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-t</i>	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-t</i>
	<i>burn</i>	34 (58%)	25 (42%)	177 (36%)
<i>learn</i>	585 (47%)	664 (53%)	109 (38%)	176 (62%)
<i>spell</i>	7 (28%)	18 (72%)	22 (18%)	98 (82%)
<i>spoil</i>	11 (65%)	6 (35%)	85 (37%)	142 (63%)

Table 3.7 *Participial adjectives in NYT 1995, Ind 2000 and The Times 2000*

	<i>NYT 1995</i>		<i>Ind 2000</i>		<i>Times 2000</i>	
	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-t</i>	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-t</i>	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-t</i>
<i>burn</i>	147 (83%)	31 (17%)	40 (18%)	185 (82%)	16 (9%)	171 (91%)
<i>spill</i>	23 (82%)	5 (18%)	20 (59%)	14 (41%)	6 (17%)	29 (83%)
<i>spoil</i>	46 (98%)	1 (2%)	34 (32%)	73 (68%)	16 (10%)	147 (90%)

4 Synthetic and analytic comparatives¹

BRITTA MONDORF

1 Introduction

The system of comparative formation exhibits two striking morphosyntactic differences between the British and American national standards. The first difference takes the form of an AmE – as opposed to BrE – lead in the use of analytic (*more full*) rather than synthetic (*fuller*) comparative forms. The second difference concerns the number of comparative forms of both the synthetic and the analytic kind: AmE newspaper data contain markedly fewer comparative forms than corresponding British material.

While both differences are remarkable in their own right, the question arises of what motivates the differing patterns of comparative formation in the two national standards. A tentative explanation will be pursued in terms of a postulated relation between cognitive complexity and style. We know that the use of analytic comparative forms increases in syntactically complex environments, a tendency subsumed under the notion of *more*-support (see Mondorf (to appear a)). This tendency is even more pronounced in AmE than in BrE and in informal than in formal styles. Thus, the British–American difference mirrors the formal–informal contrast: AmE and informal styles are generally more sensitive to complexity effects than BrE and formal styles.

The research introduced in the present chapter is predominantly based on newspaper data, the only exception being the British National Corpus (BNC).² Table 4.1³ provides a list of the corpora together with information on their approximate size.

In addition to documenting British–American differences by means of corpus data, the present chapter also relates these contrasts to three

¹ This study was carried out within the DFG-funded research project *Determinants of Grammatical Variation in English*, which is supported by the German Research Foundation (Grant Ro 2271/1–3). I am indebted to the editors Günter Rohdenburg and Julia Schlüter for valuable and stimulating comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

² For the analysis of frequent adjectives in section 5.2, the FLOB and Frown corpora have additionally been used.

³ Though the BNC also contains some spoken texts, the effect of the medium is considered negligible, since the proportion of spoken to written data amounts to approximately 10:90 million words, i.e. merely 10 per cent is spoken English.

Table 4.1 *British and American English databases*

BrE corpus	Million Words	AmE corpus	Million Words
British National Corpus (BNC)	100	<i>Washington Times</i> 1990–2	89
<i>Guardian</i> 1990–4 (incl. <i>The Observer</i> 1994)	141	<i>Los Angeles Times</i> 1992–5	320
<i>Daily Mail</i> and <i>Mail on Sunday</i> 1993–4	38	<i>Detroit Free Press</i> 1992–5	103
<i>Daily Telegraph</i> and <i>Sunday Telegraph</i> 1991–4	128		
<i>The Times</i> and <i>The Sunday Times</i> 1990–4	192		
Total	599	Total	512

pertinent generalizations designed to offer explanatory potential for a range of British–American differences, i.e. *colonial lag*, *regularization* and *colloquialization*.

This chapter is organized as follows: The theoretical approach considered most appropriate in terms of the explanatory potential is introduced in section 2, which relates the choice of comparative form to processing requirements. The following sections provide novel evidence for two differences in the British and American systems of comparison. Establishing the American preference for analytic comparative formation (to be outlined in section 3) additionally requires weeding out several potentially interfering factors, such as length, final segment, position and frequency. Section 4 then provides an in-depth description of the second major difference, i.e. the finding that AmE uses fewer comparative forms overall than BrE. Finally, the discussion in section 5 tackles the question of how the British–American differences can be explained.

2 A processing approach to comparative alternation

Previous research indicates that there is a whole network of factors from highly divergent levels of linguistic analysis that have a bearing on the choice between the two competing forms of comparison in English. Mondorf (2003, to appear a) provides empirical support for the influence of seventeen phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic complexity effects on comparative alternation. Effects of gradability and emphasis are also ascertained by psycholinguistic research presented in Graziano-King and Smith Cairns (2005: 348) and corpus-based analyses in González-Díaz (2004: 106), respectively. Crucially, the vast majority of factors constraining the choice between the synthetic and analytic comparative forms lend themselves to a joint explanation in terms of processing efficiency in the spirit of Hawkins (1994, 2003) and Rohdenburg (1996a, 2003).

According to Hawkins (2003: 200), language users can be considered to weigh the pros and cons between

less form processing . . . but more dependent processing on the one hand, and more form processing (explicit marking) with less dependent processing on the other. One can speculate that the working memory demands of dependent processing across large domains exceed the processing cost of additional form (and meaning) processing through explicit marking.

Hawkins' (1994, 2003) approach implies that, when processing demands are low, it is more economical to use less explicit constructions, which – though exerting higher demands on processing energy – can easily be afforded in such environments. Hawkins' theory is well in line with Rohdenburg's (1996a: 151) Complexity Principle:

In the case of more or less explicit grammatical options, the more explicit one (s) will tend to be favored in cognitively more complex environments.

As regards comparative alternation, language users can be shown to prefer analytic marking in environments that are for some reason more difficult, more complex, less entrenched, less frequent, less accessible or in any other way cognitively more complex. They can be considered to aim at a trade-off between the more explicit analytic comparative variant (*more*) and its less explicit synthetic competitor (*-er*). The mechanism by which the analytic variant apparently serves to mitigate complexity effects has been subsumed under the notion of *more*-support (see Mondorf (to appear a)).

In cognitively more demanding environments which require an increased processing load, language users tend to make up for the additional effort by resorting to the analytic rather than the synthetic comparative.⁴

Cognitively demanding environments can, for instance, take the form of an adjectival head taking a complement (syntactic complexity), e.g. *proud of him*, *full of doubt*, or an adjective that expresses abstract rather than concrete meanings (semantic complexity), e.g. *fresh taste* vs. *fresh fruit*.⁵

⁴ The term *more*-support has alternatively been used by Graziano-King (1999) and Graziano-King/Smith Cairns (2005) to refer to the analytic variant as the default choice from which the synthetic form is derived by means of a rule adding *-er*. The approach to variation pursued in the present article abstains from postulating one variant as the default option from which the other has to be derived by means of a lexical rule. Instead, the notion of *more*-support is designed to highlight distributional similarities in a range of phenomena that draw on the synthetic-analytic distinction. It has, for instance, been shown that the analytic *of*-genitive is frequently recruited in the presence of syntactically complex possessors in environments which otherwise favour the synthetic *s*-genitive (see Rosenbach 2003). Likewise, certain tendencies described for *do*-support in Early Modern English can be attributed to complexity issues (see Stein 1990).

⁵ For independent evidence showing that abstract entities are more difficult to process and hence cognitively more complex than concrete ones, see Mondorf (2007).

More-support is assumed to offer at least three advantages that are likely to be relevant to concerns of language processing.⁶

- I. It renders phrase structure easily identifiable by unambiguously signalling at the beginning of the degree phrase that there is a following comparative.
- II. The *more*-variant disentangles a complex lexeme consisting of a base plus inflectional suffix by assigning each function a separate form.
- III. Simply by using the degree marker *more* as a signal, a language user can alert the addressee to the fact that a cognitively complex Adjective Phrase follows, so that some extra processing capacity can be allotted to that phrase.

These assumptions are well in line with functional processing theories stating that early recognition of phrase structure facilitates language processing (see Hawkins 1994, 2003) because it demands less processing from working memory than late recognition. According to Hawkins' *Principle of Mother Node Construction* (1994: 60), a word that can uniquely determine or classify a phrase in the left to right parsing of a sentence will immediately be used to construct a representation of that phrase. If we extend this principle to comparative alternation, early occurrence of *more* is a relatively though not completely safe signal that a degree phrase follows.

3 American English uses more analytic comparative forms than British English

3.1 Previous research

Highly revealing insights into the issue of comparative alternation are offered in Kytö (1996) and Kytö and Romaine (1997), whose pioneering articles on the diachronic development of comparative alternation have been followed up by a range of subsequent empirical studies. Kytö and Romaine (2000) are – to my knowledge – the first to discern a proclivity towards analytic comparatives in AmE as opposed to BrE, which ‘may be yet another instance of a phenomenon referred to as “colonial lag”’ (Kytö and Romaine 2000: 190), i.e. of the tendency in former British colonies to retain older forms of English. In apparent contrast to the often-stated trend in the English language to replace synthetic by analytic grammatical forms, Kytö and Romaine discern an increase in synthetic forms since Late Middle English:

the older inflectional type has been reasserting itself since the Early Modern period . . . Contrary to what one might predict from the general trend in English towards a more analytical syntax, corpus-based studies have since revealed that the majority of both comparative and superlative

⁶ For a more thorough treatment of the theoretical issues involved, see Mondorf (to appear a).

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adjectives in present-day English are inflectional. (Kytö and Romaine 2000: 172f.)

While the American preference for the *more*-variant is confirmed in the present study (sections 3.2 and 3.3 below), an explanation in terms of ‘colonial lag’ does not appear to stand up to scrutiny: Mondorf (to appear a) reveals that the observed ‘reversal’ of the synthetic to analytic trend is an artefact resulting from an increase in the use of synthetic forms with highly frequent monosyllabic and disyllabic adjectives in <-y>, a possibility readily acknowledged by Kytö and Romaine:

The rise in the use of the inflectional forms can be partly accounted for by the relatively great proportion of adjectives ending in -y/-ly in this category; this ending more readily takes the inflectional ending. In fact, though breakdown makes detailed counts less useful, we might point out that certain endings tend to promote the use of one variant form to a greater extent than that of the other. (Kytö and Romaine 2000: 181)

Analyses in Mondorf (2007) reveal that only monosyllabic adjectives and those ending in <-y> adhere to the pattern which predicts an incremental use of the synthetic variant at the expense of the analytic form. For fourteen out of sixteen adjective groups investigated the trend is from synthetic to analytic. Many of those groups which permitted variation in past centuries are now knock-out contexts for the synthetic comparative (Mondorf to appear a).

Before we proceed towards an alternative explanation of the observed British–American differences, we need to rule out the influence of other potentially intervening factors, such as position, length and frequency, since each of these can independently affect the choice between competing comparative variants and hence distort the results.⁷

3.2 *Eliminating positional effects*

Awareness that position (i.e. attributive, predicative or postnominal use) has a bearing on the choice of comparative variants dates at least as far back as the beginning of the twentieth century (cf. Rohr 1929: 26–7, Jespersen 1949: 348, Schibsbye 1970: 135–6, Quirk *et al.* 1972: 293). Empirical validations of this claim are found in Braun (1982: 89), Leech and Culpeper (1997: 366), Lindquist (2000: 125) and Mondorf (2003: 287, to appear a). All studies concur in finding that adjectives in predicative and postnominal position form their comparative far more often analytically than those in attributive position. By contrast, attributive uses trigger an increased use of the synthetic form in *-er*.

⁷ For an account of the influence of these factors on comparative alternation see Mondorf (2003, to appear a).

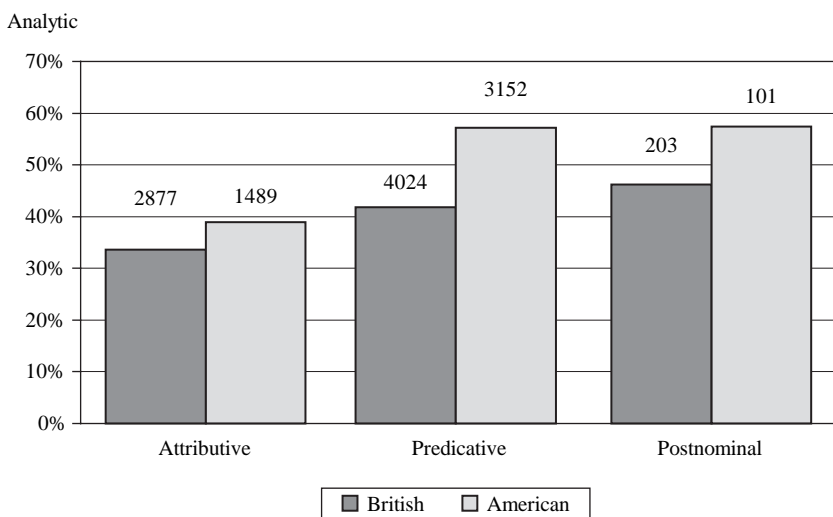


Figure 4.1 Analytic comparatives of fifty-four mono- and disyllabic adjectives according to position in the British corpus (without the BNC) and the American corpus ($N_{\text{Analytic}} = 11846$)

Hence we need to eliminate the possibility that the American proclivity towards the *more*-variant is merely a consequence of divergent positional preferences in the two national standards. If, for instance, AmE used a higher proportion of non-attributive adjectives, this would result in concomitantly higher figures for the *more*-variant. The histogram in Figure 4.1 provides the percentages for the analytic comparative in both national varieties differentiated by position. The adjectives investigated are the following:⁸ 21 monosyllables (*apt, bare, dire, dour, fit, fond, free, full, just, keen, proud, pure, rare, right, sheer, sound, sore, sour, spare, sure*); thirteen disyllables in <-y> (*crazy, empty, guilty, handy, hungry, lucky, ready, risky, sexy, silly, trendy, tricky, worthy*); seven disyllables in <-l/le> (*able, brittle, feeble, humble, nimble, noble, stable*); and thirteen disyllables in <-r/re> (*bitter, clever, eager, mature, obscure, proper, secure, sincere, slender, sober/-re, sombre/-er, tender, unfair*).

As the addition of the *-er* and *more*-comparatives is always 100%, the missing segment of each column provides the percentage for the synthetic *-er*

⁸ The selection of the 54 adjectives follows requirements for several individual studies presented in Mondorf (to appear a). For instance, *apt* has been used to demonstrate identity effects concerning consonant clusters, *fit, fond*, etc. have been chosen to ascertain the impact of argument complexity and *bare, dire*, etc. for testing the effects of morphophonologically identical segments (cf. Mondorf to appear a). This selection qualifies for use in the present investigation since each adjective can occur with both comparative variants in all three syntactic positions.

variant.⁹ We find that in all three positions AmE has the lead in using the *more*-variant. The American preference for analytic comparative formation strategies can thus by no means be attributed to positional differences.

Having confirmed the existence of British–American differences in the system of adjective comparison irrespective of positional influences, we are now in a position to investigate whether different formally-defined groups of adjectives also display the AmE preference for analytic comparative forms.

3.3 Formal differentiation of the adjectives investigated

The literature is replete with comments on the correlation between final segment and comparative form (cf. Markus 1988, Kytö and Romaine 1997: 336 for a diachronic approach). It is well known that certain suffixes tend to defy the addition of the *-er* inflection, e.g. *-al*, while other suffixes are reported to trigger *-er* to a considerable extent, e.g. *-y*, *-ly* (cf. Leech and Culpeper 1997: 358). Previous research on adjective comparison in BrE and AmE has, for instance, revealed that AmE is more sensitive to phonological identity effects with adjectives ending in <-r, re> than BrE (Mondorf to appear a). In AmE, which scores higher on rhoticity, the stronger trend to pronounce a final /-r/ appears to produce higher ratios of the *more*-variant.¹⁰

In order to exclude at least the intervening effects of position, length and final segment, these factors will be kept constant in the following analyses. This allows us to test whether the American preference for the analytic variant is a general tendency holding for fairly heterogeneous adjectives. Table 4.2 presents the synthetic and analytic comparatives for four formally defined groups of adjectives in BrE and AmE.

The adjectives investigated are again the ones listed below Figure 4.1 in section 3.2. An AmE preference for analytic comparatives emerges for three out of four adjective groups. Strikingly, one group, namely disyllables in <-y>, does not conform to the general pattern which has AmE favouring analytic forms of comparison to a greater extent than BrE. As regards the total of all adjectives investigated, the American preference for the *more*-variant is clearly borne out by the data. Note that for reasons pertaining to the selection process, many adjectives are biased towards having the *more*-variant as an option. They have intentionally been chosen for their ability to exhibit comparative alternation. Thus, all adjectives in the disyllabic group in <-y> can take infinitival or prepositional complements and are therefore more prone to occur with the *more*-variant than adjectives not used

⁹ Extremely rare occurrences of double comparatives such as *more fuller* are occasionally found, especially in historical data, and have been discarded from the analysis.

¹⁰ Though other adjectives not ending in <-r, re> (e.g. *humble*, *nimble*, *noble*, *pleasant*, *polite*) also increased their use of the *more*-variant in American as opposed to British English, this increase was considerably more pronounced for adjectives ending in <-r, re>, i.e. those that had a potential to produce phonological identity effects (cf. Mondorf to appear a).

Table 4.2 *Synthetic vs. analytic comparative forms of four formal types of adjectives in non-attributive position in the British corpus and the American corpus*

		<i>-er</i>	<i>more</i>	% <i>more</i>
Monosyllabic	BrE	2923	1152	28%
	AmE	1139	1008	47%
Disyllabic in <-y>	BrE	1793	946	35%
	AmE	1159	431	27%
Disyllabic in <-l, le>	BrE	160	889	85%
	AmE	53	532	91%
Disyllabic in <-r, re>	BrE	513	1974	79%
	AmE	26	1415	98%
Total	BrE	5389	4961	48%
	AmE	2377	3386	59%

in contexts of argument complexity (Mondorf 2003: 268–72). What the adjectives investigated here have in common is that all of them tend to be used in cognitively complex environments, a factor that will turn out to be crucial for the interpretation of the British–American differences in section 5.2. Similarly, many adjectives in the monosyllabic group end in <-r, re>, a factor that has been shown to trigger *more*-support in AmE (Mondorf to appear a). However, as other adjectives show matching patterns, phonological identity avoidance does not account exclusively for the increased use of the *more*-variant in the AmE data.

Having established the AmE lead in the use of analytic comparatives for three out of four formally defined adjective groups, ascertaining the impact of two other potentially influential determinants is in order: the frequency of the positive form and the frequency of both comparative forms, i.e. attested gradability.

3.4 *Frequency of the positive form*

Theoretically the American preference for the *more*-variant might result from an overall weaker entrenchment of certain adjectives in AmE as opposed to BrE. The more frequent (or better entrenched) an adjective, the more likely it is to select the *-er* variant (cf. Braun 1982: 101 and Mondorf 2003: 260–2). Could it therefore be the case that those adjectives that exhibit the American preference for the *more*-variant are simply less frequent in AmE than in BrE, and that they hence require *more*-support to a greater extent?

In order to examine this possibility the percentages of analytic comparatives for each adjective have been related to its number of occurrences in the positive form. If frequency were responsible for the American preference for the analytic comparative form, we would expect those adjectives for which

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Table 4.3 *Analytic comparatives of monosyllabic adjectives in relation to the positive form in the British corpus and the American corpus*

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
ADJ	BrE Analytic	AmE Analytic	% BrE Analytic	% AmE Analytic	BrE Positive Form pmw	AmE Positive Form pmw
<i>apt</i>	245	424	<u>92%</u>	<u>100%</u>	<u>5.80</u>	<u>3.58</u>
<i>bare</i>	4	7	<u>11%</u>	<u>33%</u>	<u>18.65</u>	<u>12.27</u>
<i>dire</i>	58	54	<u>84%</u>	<u>96%</u>	<u>8.64</u>	<u>5.09</u>
<i>dour</i>	25	8	<u>71%</u>	<u>89%</u>	<u>3.21</u>	<u>1.06</u>
<i>fond</i>	23	21	<u>13%</u>	<u>25%</u>	<u>9.49</u>	<u>5.96</u>
<i>full</i>	41	33	<u>2%</u>	<u>5%</u>	<u>357.18</u>	<u>219.61</u>
<i>keen</i>	145	15	<u>13%</u>	<u>14%</u>	<u>56.14</u>	<u>5.40</u>
<i>proud</i>	71	113	<u>34%</u>	<u>42%</u>	<u>35.07</u>	<u>34.22</u>
<i>pure</i>	19	25	<u>5%</u>	<u>15%</u>	<u>26.12</u>	<u>17.30</u>
<i>rare</i>	71	59	<u>6%</u>	<u>15%</u>	<u>55.38</u>	<u>42.24</u>
<i>sheer</i>	1	3	50%	50%	23.93	10.97
<i>sore</i>	5	9	29%	47%	7.15	14.07
<i>sour</i>	19	16	37%	94%	9.32	11.59
<i>sure</i>	108	70	24%	39%	148.11	177.39
<i>true</i>	340	160	33%	31%	147.26	104.33
Total	1175	1017	<u>34%</u>	<u>46%</u>	<u>911.46</u>	<u>665.09</u>

AmE takes a larger ratio of *more*-support to be simply less frequent in the positive form in AmE and vice versa. The results for the monosyllabic adjectives investigated are summarized in Table 4.3.¹¹

Columns II and III provide the tokens for the *more*-variant in each national variety. The crucial parameters for the comparison between both national varieties are provided in columns IV to VII. Columns IV and V indicate the percentages of analytic comparatives as opposed to synthetic forms, while VI and VII provide the relative frequency of the positive measured as the ratio of occurrences in the positive form per million words (pmw).

¹¹ In order to assess the occurrences in the positive form, a technically economical procedure has been chosen, by simply counting all occurrences of each adjective, e.g. *apt*, and deducting the instances of *more apt* that had previously been found in the analysis in terms of comparative alternation as well as the instances of superlatives (e.g. *most apt*). Since the analysis of comparatives excludes instances of correlative comparatives (e.g. *the more apt the candidate, the better the results*) as well as nominal uses (e.g. *the more apt of the two*), the positive category contains the occasional analytic comparative as well. In addition it includes instances of *less* + adjective and *least* + adjective. But as these constructions are rare in comparison to the overall figures, this methodological inconsistency in the positive category can be considered negligible. The adjective *free* has been discarded from this analysis, because owing to the newspaper's name it is vastly overrepresented in the *Detroit Free Press* data. Similarly, the adjectives *fit*, *just*, *right*, *sound* and *spare* have been eliminated from the tally since ascertaining their occurrence in the positive is complicated by the fact that they frequently function as nouns, interjections, verbs, etc.

If the American preference for the *more*-variant resulted from an altogether lower frequency of the adjective in the positive form, we should expect a high percentage for the *more*-variant to be accompanied by a low relative frequency of the adjective in the positive and vice versa. The adjectives for which this hypothesis is borne out are underlined. Table 4.3 reveals that the American preference for the *more*-variant is to some extent matched by lower relative frequencies of the positive form. For ten out of fifteen adjectives investigated, a high ratio of the *more*-variant correlates with a low frequency of the adjective in the positive form and vice versa. In particular, if we consider the last row, which provides the total for all adjectives investigated, it becomes obvious that different degrees of entrenchment contribute to the observed American preference for the *more*-variant.

3.5 Frequency of both comparative forms (attested gradability)

While the preceding section has investigated the potential influence of frequency gauged as occurrence of the positive form, another frequency parameter that might affect the use of *more*-support also merits our attention. Graziano-King and Smith Cairns (2005: 348) have shown that weakly gradable adjectives exhibit a greater proclivity towards the analytic comparative than strongly gradable ones. If comparative formation were altogether less customary in American than in British English, this might independently trigger a higher use of *more*-support in the former variety. By resorting to *more*-support, Americans could compensate for a lower degree of entrenchment of the construction in their national standard. We thus need to find out if the adjectives are equally often used to form comparatives, i.e. if they are equally gradable. The present chapter assumes that the notion of gradability is not a matter of all or nothing, but that there is a cline ranging from highly via weakly to non-gradable adjectives. The more easily gradable an adjective, the higher is its chance to select the *-er*-variant. Since the term gradability is reserved for the potential of an adjective to be graded, I will refer to the measure of gradability employed here as *attested gradability*. Attested gradability is measured as the relative frequency of both comparative forms, synthetic plus analytic ones, per million words. The relation between *more*-support and attested gradability is presented in Table 4.4.¹²

Columns IV and V contrast the use of the *more*-variant, displaying the American preference for thirteen out of sixteen monosyllables analysed. The levels of attested gradability are provided in columns VI and VII, gauged in

¹² For the reasons discussed in footnote 11 the set of adjectives investigated is the same as the one analysed in Table 4.3.

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Table 4.4 *Analytic comparatives of monosyllabic adjectives in relation to attested gradability in the British corpus and the American corpus*

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
ADJ	BrE Analytic	AmE Analytic	% BrE Analytic	% AmE Analytic	Attested Gradability Br Comparatives pmw	Attested Gradability Am Comparatives pmw
<i>apt</i>	245	424	92%	100%	0.44	0.83
<i>bare</i>	4	7	<u>11%</u>	<u>33%</u>	<u>0.06</u>	<u>0.04</u>
<i>dire</i>	58	54	<u>84%</u>	<u>96%</u>	<u>0.12</u>	<u>0.11</u>
<i>dour</i>	25	8	<u>71%</u>	<u>89%</u>	<u>0.06</u>	<u>0.02</u>
<i>fond</i>	23	21	<u>13%</u>	<u>25%</u>	<u>0.30</u>	<u>0.17</u>
<i>free</i>	180	98	13%	12%	2.27	1.61
<i>full</i>	41	33	<u>2%</u>	<u>5%</u>	<u>3.23</u>	<u>1.25</u>
<i>keen</i>	145	15	<u>13%</u>	<u>14%</u>	<u>1.88</u>	<u>0.21</u>
<i>proud</i>	71	113	34%	42%	0.35	0.53
<i>pure</i>	19	25	<u>5%</u>	<u>15%</u>	<u>0.60</u>	<u>0.33</u>
<i>rare</i>	71	59	<u>6%</u>	<u>15%</u>	<u>1.90</u>	<u>0.77</u>
<i>sheer</i>	1	3	50%	50%	0.00	0.01
<i>sore</i>	5	9	29%	47%	0.03	0.04
<i>sour</i>	19	16	<u>37%</u>	<u>94%</u>	<u>0.09</u>	<u>0.03</u>
<i>sure</i>	108	70	<u>24%</u>	<u>39%</u>	<u>0.75</u>	<u>0.35</u>
<i>true</i>	340	160	33%	31%	1.73	0.99
Total	1355	1155	<u>32%</u>	<u>44%</u>	<u>13.79</u>	<u>7.27</u>

terms of the number of comparative forms (both synthetic plus analytic) per million words for each national standard.

If different degrees of gradability were to be credited with the different percentages for the *more*-variant, we would expect that a higher ratio for analytic comparatives would be matched by lower scores on the attested gradability measure. The adjectives for which this hypothesis is borne out are underlined. A look at the last row, totting up the figures for all sixteen adjectives, shows that a low relative frequency for both comparatives in AmE (AmE 7.27 vs. BrE 13.79 per million words) correlates with a higher use of the *more*-variant (AmE 44 per cent vs. BrE 32 per cent). As regards the profiles for the individual adjectives investigated, however, this relation is reflected in only ten of the sixteen adjectives (indicated by the underlined figures).¹³ This shows that the American proclivity towards analytic comparatives is not exclusively explicable in terms of the lower attested gradability in AmE. However, the totals provided in the last row provide some indication that *more*-usage is to some extent related to frequency of comparative formation.

¹³ Note that three of the six exceptions can neither confirm nor disconfirm the hypothesis, because they do not display the AmE preference for analytic comparative forms in the first place (i.e. *free*, *sheer*, *true*). The only true exceptions are therefore *apt*, *proud* and *sore*.

Another aspect observable in the bottom line of Table 4.4 deserves our attention: the remarkably lower number of comparatives (both synthetic plus analytic) in AmE as opposed to BrE. So far, the evidence has merely been based on the selection of sixteen monosyllabic adjectives. The following sections are therefore dedicated to the systematic verification of this second major difference reported in the present chapter.

4 American English uses fewer comparatives than British English

4.1 Formal differentiation of the adjectives investigated

As a first step we need to establish if the surprising difference concerning overall use of comparative forms in BrE and AmE can be systematically extended to other formally defined groups of adjectives, sorted by length and final segment. The results for four formally defined groups of adjectives according to national variety are listed in Table 4.5. The fifty-four adjectives analysed are again the ones listed below Figure 4.1 (section 3.2).

Columns II and III provide the occurrences of synthetic plus analytic comparatives in BrE and AmE, while columns IV and V give the respective ratios per million words.

The table clearly indicates that the British lead in using comparative forms is not restricted to monosyllabic adjectives. It is a stable tendency observed throughout all four adjective groups. The collapsed figures in the last row demonstrate that the British ratio of comparatives is almost twice as high as the American. We have thus uncovered a systematic difference in the system of comparison between the British and American national standards. These findings – to my knowledge observed here for the first time – clearly call for an explanation. Why should the American national standard be less prone to use comparatives? The following section therefore addresses the question of whether AmE uses alternative strategies of expressing comparison.

Table 4.5 *Frequency of comparatives (synthetic + analytic) of four formal types of adjectives in the British corpus and the American corpus*

I	II	III	IV	V
	BrE	AmE	BrE Comparatives pmw	AmE Comparatives pmw
Monosyllabic	10594	4742	17.68	9.26
Disyllabic in <-y>	4240	2244	7.08	4.38
Disyllabic in <-l, le>	2657	1177	4.44	2.30
Disyllabic in <-r, re>	4659	2417	7.78	4.72
Total	22150	10580	36.97	20.66

4.2 Does the American system have other means of expressing comparison?

The most obvious alternative for expressing degree is the use of intensifiers. Theoretically, the meaning of comparison could easily be expressed without using comparative forms at all. Consider the following examples, in which degree is coded by means of intensifiers.

- (1) Now *relatively* free from domestic lobbying pressures, President Bush has turned his lame-duck status to advantage (. . .) [Frown]
- (2) The situation is *particularly* dire for the 'extra' children of women on welfare, who are punished just for being born. [Frown]

In order to gain some provisional insights into the question of whether AmE possibly replaces comparative formation by resorting to alternative strategies, the occurrence of the following twelve intensifiers with twenty-two monosyllabic adjectives has been contrasted for two matching one-million word corpora of BrE (FLOB) and AmE (Frown).¹⁴ Out of ninety-six occurrences of *very*, *immensely*, *extremely*, *beautifully*, *distinctly*, *exceedingly*, *fiercely*, *increasingly*, *pretty*, *quite*, *rather*, *so*, fifty-four intensifiers occurred in BrE as opposed to forty-two in AmE. A spot-check in two relatively small corpora thus provides no indication that AmE speakers compensate for their lower degree of comparative formation by using an increased number of the intensifiers investigated in the present study.

There are still other strategies the American system might use for coding different degrees, e.g. instead of saying that *Mary is prouder than Peter* we might state that *Peter is less proud than Mary*, or alternatively that *Peter is not as proud as Mary*, etc. The issues raised by the British preference for comparative formation thus pose intriguing questions, which have to be reserved for future research.

Another important aspect that ought to be taken into account when dealing with quantitative differences in comparative formation in the British and American national standards is that we need to assess whether the higher numbers of comparatives found in BrE are a by-product of a greater frequency overall of these adjectives in British than in American usage.

4.3 Are the individual adjectives simply more frequent in BrE than in AmE?

Another obvious question to pose is whether the British lead in forming comparatives is merely the result of lexical differences that have emerged between the two national standards, just as for the *lift/elevator*, *trunk/boot* set? The results of an investigation dealing with this question are summarized in Table 4.6.¹⁵

¹⁴ Cf. the references section for bibliographic details on these corpora.

¹⁵ Concerning the set of adjectives used, see footnote 11.

Table 4.6 *Comparatives of monosyllabic adjectives in relation to the frequency of the positive in the British corpus and the American corpus*

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
ADJ	BrE _{S+A}	AmE _{S+A}	BrE Comparatives pmw	AmE Comparatives pmw	Br Positive pmw	Am Positive pmw
<i>apt</i>	266	424	0.44	0.83	5.80	3.58
<i>bare</i>	35	21	<u>0.06</u>	<u>0.04</u>	<u>18.65</u>	<u>12.27</u>
<i>dire</i>	69	56	<u>0.12</u>	<u>0.11</u>	<u>8.64</u>	<u>5.09</u>
<i>dour</i>	35	9	<u>0.06</u>	<u>0.02</u>	<u>3.21</u>	<u>1.06</u>
<i>fond</i>	178	85	<u>0.30</u>	<u>0.17</u>	<u>9.49</u>	<u>5.96</u>
<i>full</i>	1933	640	<u>3.23</u>	<u>1.25</u>	<u>357.18</u>	<u>219.61</u>
<i>keen</i>	1126	109	<u>1.88</u>	<u>0.21</u>	<u>56.14</u>	<u>5.40</u>
<i>proud</i>	208	270	0.35	0.53	35.07	34.22
<i>pure</i>	357	167	<u>0.60</u>	<u>0.33</u>	<u>26.12</u>	<u>17.30</u>
<i>rare</i>	1141	392	<u>1.90</u>	<u>0.77</u>	<u>55.38</u>	<u>42.24</u>
<i>sheer</i>	2	6	0.00	0.01	23.93	10.97
<i>sore</i>	17	19	0.03	0.04	7.15	14.07
<i>sour</i>	51	17	0.09	0.03	9.32	11.59
<i>sure</i>	449	178	0.75	0.35	148.11	177.39
<i>true</i>	1037	509	<u>1.73</u>	<u>0.99</u>	<u>147.26</u>	<u>104.33</u>
Total	8263	3726	<u>11.52</u>	<u>5.67</u>	<u>911.46</u>	<u>665.09</u>

Columns II and III represent the synthetic plus analytic comparatives in each national variety. The ratios for comparative usage (both synthetic plus analytic) per million words are given in columns IV and V.¹⁶ The relevant parameters for contrasting these measures are provided in columns VI and VII, which indicate the relative frequencies of the positive form per million words.

If the British lead in comparative formation resulted from a higher degree of entrenchment of these adjectives in BrE than in AmE, we should expect that, whenever comparative usage is high, the positive ratio should be high and vice versa. Again, the results for adjectives that would confirm the hypothesis are underlined. The fact that nine out of fifteen adjectives corroborate the hypothesis, in conjunction with the striking difference in the collapsed figures, suggests that this expectation is largely borne out. In sum, the lower ratio of comparatives in AmE is to some extent accompanied by a lower frequency of the adjectives investigated in the positive form.

5 Towards an explanation of the British and American differences in terms of style and cognitive complexity

While the present volume introduces an impressive and long overdue collection of phenomena showing that the true extent of grammatical

¹⁶ These figures have already been introduced in Table 4.4 above, and are repeated here for convenience. Similarly, the figures in columns VI and VII replicate those from Table 4.3 above.

variation between the ‘two grammars’ of English has been underestimated in the past, we are still all too often at a loss for an explanation of these differences. Many divergent developments between BrE and AmE lend themselves to an explanation in terms of diachronic change and the present study does not exclude from the outset the possibility that comparative alternation is one of them. However, since we do not merely have a general trend from synthetic to analytic as is suggested in Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1584n.), nor a trend from analytic to synthetic as discussed in Kytö and Romaine (2000: 190) – and refuted in section 3.1, the underlying forces constraining British and American comparative formation are more difficult to explain.

The explanation tentatively ventured here to account for the American preference for analytic comparative formation can be derived from an observation pertaining to stylistic differences in the use of cognitively complex constructions. There are two points we need to bear in mind in pursuing this argument.

Firstly, most of the adjectives investigated in the present study are somewhat biased towards the analytic comparative variant, even if they are monosyllabic. They share the characteristics either of calling for *more*-support in order to mitigate phonological complexity produced by their endings in <-r, re> or of being susceptible to syntactic complexity since they are prone to take complements, e.g. *apt, fit, fond, free, full, just, keen, proud, right, sound, sure* and *true*. Both phonological and syntactic complexity are likely to trigger a higher processing load, which – in accordance with the principles laid down in section 2 and the findings published in Mondorf (2003: 268–9 and to appear a) – should tend to be compensated for by the use of *more*-support.

Secondly, support for a style-based explanation is derived from a study by Berlage (2007), which shows that informal styles are more sensitive to complexity effects than formal ones. In complex environments, informal styles compensate more strongly than formal styles for complexity by resorting to more explicit variants.

As regards comparative alternation, we can thus predict that *more*-support, i.e. explicit marking, is particularly favoured when cognitive complexity arises in informal registers. For the phonologically or syntactically complex environments occurring with the monosyllabic adjectives in the present study, the following distribution can be predicted: The stylistically lower-ranking tabloids such as the *Daily Mail* will more strongly resort to the *more*-variant than more formal broadsheets.¹⁷

¹⁷ The distinction ‘tabloid’ vs. ‘broadsheet’ strictly speaking no longer applies to British newspapers, since former broadsheets such as *The Times* now also come in smaller formats (labelled ‘compact’). As the traditional notions are, however, well-established in the literature, ‘tabloid’ will be used here to refer to other than upmarket papers that have traditionally been associated with the smaller format, while ‘broadsheet’ covers upmarket newspapers.

This hypothesis only apparently stands in contrast to claims formulated in the literature: Rohr (1929: 22) and Jespersen (1949: 356) both canonically associate informal registers with the synthetic rather than the analytic comparative variant. What is more, if we broaden the concept of *more*-support to encompass analytic support in general, genitive variation provides another instance of a preference for synthetic rather than analytic variants in informal discourse (cf. Altenberg 1982). These aspects are well in line with the claim that the *more*-variant is generally dispreferred in informal styles. However, it is worth stressing again that Berlage's (2007) results show a reversal of this preference in cognitively complex environments. If the need for *more*-support in complex environments is particularly felt in informal rather than formal registers, then we should expect tabloids such as the *Daily Mail* to use more analytic comparatives for the relatively complex adjectives investigated here than the stylistically more formal broadsheets, a hypothesis that will be empirically tested in the following section.

5.1 Comparative alternation according to style

The present analysis compares the choice of comparative form for the twenty-one monosyllabic adjectives investigated in the present study according to the levels of formality assigned to different newspapers (cf. Jucker 1992). Figure 4.2 provides the analytic comparatives for four British newspaper corpora.

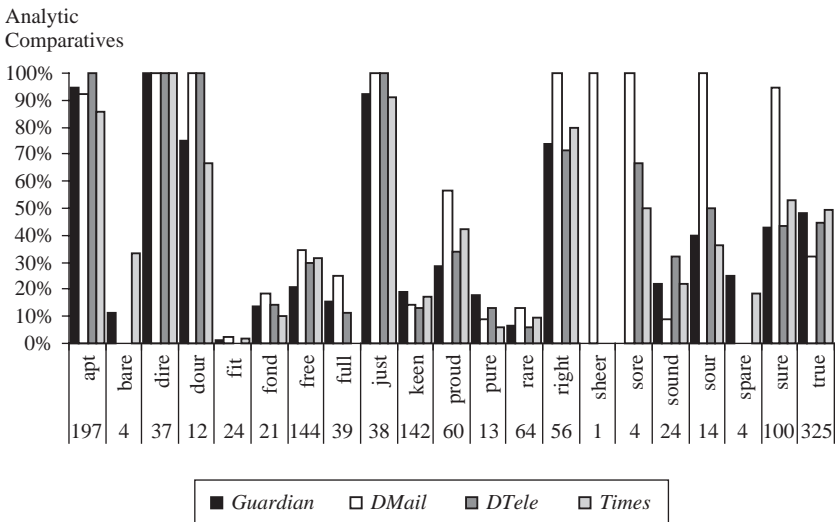


Figure 4.2 Analytic comparatives of non-attributive monosyllabic adjectives in the British corpus (without BNC) ($N_{\text{Analytic}} = 1124$)

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Analytic
Comparatives

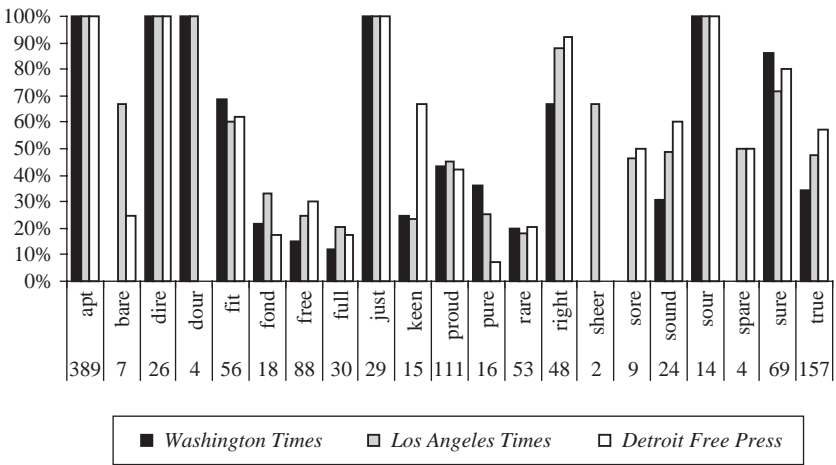


Figure 4.3 Analytic comparatives of non-attributive monosyllabic adjectives in the American corpus ($N_{\text{Analytic}} = 1168$)

The least formal midmarket British newspaper (*Daily Mail*) surpasses the remaining upmarket newspapers in terms of *more* usage for eleven out of twenty-one adjectives (*fit*, *fond*, *free*, *full*, *proud*, *rare*, *right*, *sheer*, *sore*, *sour*, *sure*). Compared to this, the *Guardian* scores highest on the *more*-variant for merely three adjectives and finally the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* both have the lead for only two adjectives. Thus, the stylistically least formal *Daily Mail* makes more abundant use of the *more*-variant than the more formal broadsheets. These findings are indicative of the interplay of style, complexity and explicitness outlined above. The less formal in terms of style, the higher the ratio of the explicit *more*-variant, but this generalization is only claimed to apply to adjectives that tend to occur in complex environments.

A similar differentiation can be applied to the AmE newspaper data presented in Figure 4.3. The *Detroit Free Press* hosts the highest percentages for the *more*-variant for seven adjectives, followed by the *Los Angeles Times*, which has the lead for five adjectives, and *The Washington Times*, which displays most analytic comparative forms for only three adjectives.

The ranking in terms of *more*-usage is well in line with the newspapers' ranking in terms of style, as supported by a wealth of evidence based on unpublished research within the project *Determinants of Grammatical Variation in English* at Paderborn University. The *Detroit Free Press* can be described as stylistically clearly less formal than the *Los Angeles Times*, which in turn is slightly less formal than *The Washington Times*.

Table 4.7 *Comparative forms of twenty-one monosyllabic adjectives in the British corpus (excluding the BNC) and the American corpus*

Corpus	Synthetic	Analytic	% Analytic	Comp. pmw
<i>Daily Mail</i> and <i>Sunday Mail</i> 1993–4	535	114	17.6%	16.95
<i>Guardian</i> 1990–4 incl. <i>Observer</i> 1994	2083	416	16.6%	17.77
<i>The Times</i> and <i>The Sunday Times</i> 1990–4	2970	516	14.8%	18.14
<i>Daily Telegraph</i> and <i>Sunday Telegraph</i> 1991–4	1883	313	14.3%	17.17
British Total	7471	1359	15.4%	17.70
<i>Detroit Free Press</i> 1992–5	543	316	36.8%	8.34
<i>Los Angeles Times</i> 1992–5	1674	818	32.8%	7.79
<i>The Washington Times</i> 1990–2	581	225	27.9%	9.04
American Total	2798	1359	32.7%	8.12
Total	10269	2718	20.9%	12.84

5.2 *The relation between style and complexity*

The collapsed figures for all twenty-one adjectives according to style and national variety are listed in Table 4.7.

The American preference for analytic comparative formation is observable for each individual corpus. All American papers display a higher share of the *more*-variant than their British counterparts. In the British papers, the percentages for the analytic comparative range from 14.3 per cent to 17.6 per cent, while the American ones vary between 27.9 per cent and 36.8 per cent. Totting up the figures for each national variety, we find that the percentage for the *more*-variant in AmE (32.7 per cent) exceeds that for the BrE data (15.4 per cent) by far.

But we can also detect stylistic differences. Those papers that rank lowest in style for each national variety have the highest scores for the *more*-variant (*Daily Mail* 17.6 per cent; *Detroit Free Press* 36.8 per cent). This is indicative of a relation between style and *more*-support.

The ratios of both comparative forms per million words displayed in the last column reflect the overall tendency for AmE to use fewer comparatives altogether. This second major British–American difference reported in the present chapter is confirmed for each of the individual corpora investigated. The ratio for comparative forms per million words lies between 16.95 and 18.14 in the British corpora and between 7.79 and 9.04 in the American data. The ratio for the BrE total (17.70) is more than twice as high as that for the AmE data (8.12). Furthermore, a low ratio of the aggregate of both comparative forms is to some extent matched by a high percentage of analytic comparatives.

If we now contrast the frequency of comparatives for adjectives that tend to occur in cognitively complex environments with those that favour simple

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Table 4.8 *Comparative forms of thirty-six frequent monosyllabic adjectives in six selected British and American English corpora*

Corpus	Synthetic	Analytic	% Analytic	Comp. pmw
1 million word extract from <i>The Times</i> and <i>The Sunday Times</i> 1999	991	1	0.101%	992
1 million word extract from <i>Guardian</i> incl. <i>Observer</i> 1999	1097	1	0.091%	1098
FLOB	1248	1	0.080%	1249
British Total	3336	3	0.090%	1113
1 million word extract from the <i>Los Angeles</i> <i>Times</i> 1999	876	4	0.455%	880
1 million word extract from the <i>Washington</i> <i>Times</i> 1990	893	0	0.000%	893
Frown	1167	0	0.000%	1167
American Total	2936	4	0.136%	980
Total	6272	7	0.111%	2093

environments, an interesting pattern emerges. The assumption underlying the present argumentation is that the extremely frequent adjectives to be investigated (*big, clean, high, large, tall*, etc.) do not tend to occur in cognitively complex environments to the same extent as less frequent adjectives that trigger syntactic complexity effects (e.g. *proud, apt*, etc. by often taking prepositional or infinitival complements) or phonological complexity effects (e.g. by ending in <-r, re>). We can thus compare the frequency of both comparative forms for adjectives that tend to require *more*-support with those that almost exclusively use the *-er* variant and presumably are relatively easy to process. The results for the latter group are provided in Table 4.8.¹⁸ The adjectives investigated are *big, cheap, clean, clear, close, cold, dark, dry, fast, fine, hard, high, hot, kind, large, light, long, low, near, old, poor, quick, rich, short, slow, small, soft, strong, tall, thick, thin, warm, weak, wet, wide, young*.

The figures for the percentage of analytic comparatives reveal that the *more*-variant is not really an option with these extremely frequent adjectives, a finding that is well in line with the notion of *more*-support.

As regards the British–American use of both comparative forms, i.e. attested gradability, the last column reveals that even for frequent adjectives that are unlikely to trigger complexity effects, AmE uses an overall lower number of comparatives of the synthetic plus analytic kind than BrE. The difference between both national standards is, however, far less pronounced than that for adjectives that tend to trigger complexity effects. For those

¹⁸ As the adjectives investigated in this table are extremely frequent, six comparatively small databases (three BrE and three AmE) suffice for the analysis in terms of attested gradability. Each of these corpora contains roughly one million words. The extracts from the newspaper corpora have been compiled by choosing the first one million words from the respective year of the newspaper database.

adjectives that are more closely associated with cognitively complex environments, the ratios per million words amount to 17.70 for BrE as opposed to 8.12 for AmE (see Table 4.7). For these adjectives the AmE data contains roughly half the number of comparatives as the BrE data. However, for adjectives canonically associated with simple environments, AmE catches up as regards its use of comparatives and the BrE lead decreases considerably (1113 in BrE vs. 980 in AmE). This is indicative of a tendency for AmE to avoid comparative formation when the adjectives are prone to occur in complex environments but to make leeway regarding its share of comparatives when cognitive complexity is low. As a first and at this stage still tentative hypothesis, we might interpret these findings as being indicative of an AmE tendency to react to complexity effects by avoiding comparative formation in complex environments.

6 Discussion and conclusion

The present chapter provides empirical support for two major differences concerning comparative formation in BrE and AmE.

The first difference is a qualitative contrast concerning the choice between the synthetic and analytic comparative forms. American newspapers contain a higher share of analytic comparatives than British ones. These effects have been observed across different groups of adjectives (monosyllabic, disyllabic in <-l/le>, disyllabic in <-r/re>, but not disyllabic in <-y>). They are additionally attested for monosyllabic adjectives in each of the seven individual British and American newspaper corpora.

Two hypotheses potentially explaining such differences have been investigated. The hypothesis that the American lead in the use of the *more*-variant can be attributed to positional differences has been ruled out. Instead it was found that the AmE proclivity towards using analytic comparatives is to some extent accompanied firstly by a lower frequency of the positive form of these adjectives in AmE than in BrE and secondly by a lower degree of attested gradability of these adjectives in AmE.

The second major difference between British and American comparative formation that has so far not been mentioned in the literature concerns a quantitative contrast pertaining to the frequency of both comparative forms (synthetic plus analytic). BrE generally uses more comparative forms of both kinds than AmE. This greater British investment in both kinds of comparatives holds for all four formally defined groups of adjectives (monosyllables and disyllables in <-y>, <-l, le> and <-r, re>). It neither appears to result from a mere substitution of comparatives by certain intensifiers that are also able to express degree in AmE, nor can it exclusively be attributed to lower frequencies of the respective adjectives in the positive, though there is a positive correlation between frequency of the positive form and frequency of both comparatives.

An interesting relation has been observed between the frequency of both comparative forms and the ratio for the *more*-variant. A higher percentage for the *more*-variant in AmE than in BrE is accompanied by concomitantly lower figures for both synthetic plus analytic forms of comparison. These are first indications that the use of the analytic variant is negatively correlated with attested gradability. The more frequently an adjective is used to form comparisons, the lower its likelihood to take the *more*-variant. This distribution is well in line with a frequency or entrenchment explanation for *more*-support (as suggested in Mondorf to appear a).

The interpretation of the American lead as an instance of *colonial lag* (see Marckwardt 1980: 69–90 and Görlach 1987; see also Chapter 1 by Hundt and Chapter 5 by Schlüter) has been rejected (see section 3.1). The results of historical analyses of comparative alternation (see section 3.1 and Mondorf to appear a) do not warrant an explanation of British–American differences in terms of colonial lag. It has been argued that the historical development of comparative alternation is not moving from synthetic to analytic but rather takes the form of a division of labour for competing variants with highly individual profiles for different formally-defined groups of adjectives. Thus, the American preference for the *more*-variant in syntactically and phonologically complex environments might as well be referred to as an instance of colonial lead (see Chapter 12 by Elsness). After all, the comparative structures produced on the basis of the adjectives investigated in the present study are often phonologically (identity effects in the synthetic form) and syntactically (argument complexity) difficult to process. The resultant complexity might consequently be compensated for by the use of *more*-support.

A second explanation for British–American contrasts in terms of *regularization* draws on the observation that AmE develops more regular forms where BrE maintains older irregular grammatical variants (cf. Biber *et al.* 1999: 396–7 and Rohdenburg 2003: 223–4; see further Chapter 5 by Schlüter). A stronger tendency towards regularization in AmE than in BrE might be derived from the observation that in AmE the emergent division of labour between both comparative variants described in Mondorf (to appear a) seems more advanced. Each of the two competing variants is in the process of acquiring its own – functionally motivated – domain which appears to be defined in terms of general functional processing principles. The less explicit synthetic variant prevails in cognitively less demanding environments, characterized, for instance, by short, high frequency adjectives that do not take complements, while the analytic variant comes to be preferred in syntactically complex environments, such as adjectives followed by infinitival or prepositional complements. As a consequence, each variant specializes in certain contexts of use, which reduces the degree of variability within a given domain. In so far as this tendency of option cutting is more advanced in AmE, this development lends itself to an analysis in terms of an increased degree of regularization.

Finally, the *colloquialization* approach assumes that different societal structures promote the use of forms generally associated with more colloquial and informal registers in AmE rather than in BrE (cf. Biber 1987: 108ff., Mair 1998: 153f., Tottie 2002a: 176 and Chapter 5 by Schlüter). This claim can also be related to Biber's (1987: 116–17) observation that 'writing prescriptions appear to play a greater role in the British genres than in the corresponding American genres'. As regards comparative alternation, the British–American differences analysed in the present study correlate with differences in terms of formal vs. informal style (cf. the discussion in section 5.2). The *colloquialization* approach holds some appeal for the analysis of the AmE preference for analytic forms of comparison, since it can be credited with relating style and national variety to each other. However, when it comes to an explanation of the observed differences, colloquialization misses out on the most crucial aspect involved, i.e. the use of analytic variants as a compensatory device in cognitively complex environments.

There is some indication that informal tabloids compensate more strongly for the syntactic and phonological complexity effects triggered by the monosyllabic adjectives investigated here than more formal broadsheets. The present analyses suggest that this is a characteristic that AmE shares with less formal styles. If the American newspapers can generally be described as stylistically less formal, and if, moreover, less formal styles are more sensitive to complexity effects, then less formal styles are more prone to resort to *more*-support in complex environments.

As regards the observed AmE tendency to use overall fewer comparatives of both the synthetic plus the analytic kind than BrE, this distribution is indicative of an avoidance strategy which generally affects comparative formation in complex environments but to a far lesser extent in simple environments.

For both major differences between the British and the American national standards we thus arrive at an interpretation in terms of processing and style. It appears to be the case that AmE displays a higher proclivity than BrE towards either compensating for or avoiding cognitively complex structures, a property it shares with informal styles.

5 Phonology and grammar¹

JULIA SCHLÜTER

1 Introduction

Based on the assumption that functional constraints underdetermine the precise shape a grammar can take, this contribution explores the influence of a rhythmic universal on grammatical variation in BrE and AmE. Although the historical division between the two national varieties under consideration has occurred only recently (by the standards of linguistic evolution), corpus analyses reveal significant dissimilarities in the ways the phonological universal is implemented. This provides a small-scale example of the interaction between system-internal, grammatical choices and system-external, functional conditions of language use.

At the centre of the discussion is the so-called Principle of Rhythmic Alternation, i.e. the tendency to separate stressed syllables by intervening unstressed ones. In previous work (cf. Schlüter 2002, 2003, 2005), its influence on the shaping of English grammar has been demonstrated. In the present contribution, the emphasis will be placed on dissimilarities in its implementation in the two major national varieties of English. For this purpose, two domains of grammatical variation will be focused on that have so far received little attention in the context of British–American differences and have therefore never been subjected to a thorough analysis. This concerns the choice between mono- and disyllabic past participles of the verbs *light* and *knit* and the positional alternation of the degree modifier *quite* in combination with the indefinite article. The present study provides quantitative analyses of these phenomena, drawing on an extensive corpus collection that allows us to pursue their history as far back as Middle and Early Modern English and to gain detailed insights into the current state of affairs in Present-Day English.

¹ The present investigation is part of a larger project at the University of Paderborn under the direction of Günter Rohdenburg and is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG; grant number RO 2271/1–3). Thanks are due to those who commented on the chapter when it was presented at the symposium ‘Grammatical differences between British and American English’.

The discussion will proceed as follows. The remaining sections of the introduction will first of all present the phonological principle under discussion. Subsequently, the grammatical differences between BrE and AmE will be contextualized with reference to three frequently quoted generalizations about the evolutionary trends observable in the two varieties. The empirical part (section 2) contains corpus-based quantitative analyses of the morphological and syntactic variation phenomena mentioned above. The conclusion (section 3) will evaluate the findings with reference to a theory of grammar integrating universal constraints on language as well as variety-specific strategies for the implementation of these constraints.

1.1 *The Principle of Rhythmic Alternation*

Since the phonology of a language is inherently dependent on the articulatory and perceptual constraints imposed by anatomy and physiology, it is shaped by preferences that are contingent upon these universal conditions. Language is constantly torn between the opposing claims of articulatory inertia and auditory discriminability. As a compromise in this conflict, patterns alternating between marked and unmarked elements have emerged on different structural levels.

In the concatenation of syllables, English prefers an alternation between stressed and unstressed units (see Jespersen 1909: 156, 1972: 97, Fijn van Draat 1910: 9, Behaghel 1924: vi-vii, Bolinger 1965b: 139, Hayes 1984: 59, Selkirk 1984: 37, Kager 1989: 2, Nespor and Vogel 1989: 69, 87). As a consequence of this principle, known as the Principle of Rhythmic Alternation, sequences of stressed syllables (stress clashes) as well as sequences of unstressed syllables (stress lapses) are avoided, with the former being more strongly objected to than the latter (see Nespor and Vogel 1989: 87, Kager 1995: 372).

The Principle of Rhythmic Alternation has frequently been formulated as a linguistic universal, valid in most, if not all, natural languages:

Whether the tendency for strong and weak syllables to alternate with one another is ultimately physiologically or psychologically conditioned, there is reason to believe that rhythmic alternation is a universal principle governing the rhythms of natural language. (Couper-Kuhlen 1986: 60)

Irrespective of certain differences in the rhythmic organization of languages (stress-timed or syllable-timed rhythms; see Pike 1945: 34-6, Abercrombie 1967: 97, Grabe and Low 2002: 515-16), rhythmic alternation has often been explained with reference to overarching principles of human motor and perceptual activity. Corresponding to the tension-relaxation dichotomy typical of muscular action and the activation-recovery cycle of neuronal processes, the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables is observable in language production and non-linguistic behaviour alike. In

perception, it enhances the discriminability of sequences of syllables by maximizing their contrasts (for a more detailed discussion, see Schlüter 2005: 22–4, 32–5). Thus, there is strong evidence that the Principle of Rhythmic Alternation is a functionally motivated universal whose effects should be observable not only in English, but in any natural language.

While the definition of this rhythmic preference has been couched in purely phonological terms, it will be shown to exert a strong influence on grammatical variation in both BrE and AmE. The contrastive corpus studies will demonstrate that although functional universals determine the shape of a grammar, they *underdetermine* it, so that grammars are free to make their own choices. The divergence between the two national varieties under consideration is a miniature example of such grammatical differences.

1.2 Generalizations about British–American contrasts

In the comparative study of BrE and AmE, three major descriptive generalizations have been proposed that are intended to subsume many of the grammatical contrasts distinguishing the two varieties. These statements have been taken to be not only descriptive, but also explanatory, being allegedly grounded in certain sociocultural conditions that distinguish Britain and America. As a spin-off of the analyses presented in section 2, the adequacy of these generalizations will be assessed and qualified. It will also be shown that in some cases they give rise to conflicting predictions, so that their prognostic value has to be qualified considerably.

First of all, the discussion of the grammatical contrasts between the national varieties has some implications for the much-debated issue of the relative speed of changes in the two varieties. Without going into details at this point, the most time-honoured generalization is that of the ‘colonial lag’, holding that AmE evolved at a reduced rate in relation to BrE (cf. Marckwardt 1958: 80, Kövecses 2000: 25). This tendency has been accounted for by the spatial separation from the British homeland. The generalization unifies not only certain phonological traits that differentiate AmE from BrE, but also numerous morphological and syntactic features. As a consequence, AmE is taken to exemplify an older state of the language in a number of respects. A more detailed discussion of this issue as well as further references are provided in Görlach (1987) and in Chapter 1 of this volume.

It has, however, become increasingly clear that the notion of a ‘colonial lag’ is far too simplistic to encompass the totality of British–American contrasts. In some cases, AmE appears to have taken the lead not only in lexical innovations, but also in grammatical changes (see in particular Chapters 1, 10, 12, 13, 15, 19; see furthermore Görlach 1987: 54). These facts require a more fine-grained categorization of the relative evolutionary tempo of linguistic structures in the two varieties. I concur with Hundt (Chapter 1) in that more diachronic depth is needed to come to an informed decision about

conservative or progressive traits in British and American grammar. Therefore, all of the following studies will be pinned against a background of extensive diachronic data.

Two further generalizations concern the directedness of linguistic change in BrE and AmE. Both have been related to national stereotypes that characterize Americans as particularly prone to simplification and informality. Rather than indulging in such preconceptions, the following studies will demonstrate the complexity of the question as to where BrE and AmE are drifting.

For one, it has occasionally been maintained that AmE shows a greater tendency towards *regularization* in its grammar than BrE (cf. Biber *et al.* 1999: 396–7, Kövecses 2000: 189, Chapter 3 by Levin, Chapter 4 by Mondorf; Chapter 19 by Rohdenburg and Schlüter, cf. furthermore Rohdenburg 2003a: 212, 223–4). If this generalization adequately describes the directedness of change, it can be expected to interfere with the former, concerning the speed of such changes. In the case of an evolution tending towards the regularization of grammatical patterns, AmE would be predicted to be more progressive than BrE, quite out of keeping with the ‘colonial lag’ hypothesis. Conversely, should there be a case of an increasing irregularization, one would expect that AmE will be more resistant to this change than BrE.

For another, AmE has been described as exhibiting a more pronounced trend towards *colloquialization* than BrE (cf. Mencken 1936: 94–6, Biber 1987: 108–13, Mair 1998: 153–4, Kövecses 2000: 235–46, Tottie 2002a: 176; cf. also Chapter 1 by Hundt, Chapter 19 by Rohdenburg and Schlüter). This suggests that AmE readily accommodates features characteristic of informal conversation across the board, that is, even in written registers. Again, this generalization about the direction of change can be expected to interact with the first one about the rapidity of change. In changes promoting the use of colloquial features in standard registers, AmE would be predicted to be further advanced than BrE. The results presented below will, however, afford an occasion to demonstrate that oversimplified assignments of linguistic features to colloquial or non-colloquial usage will yield inadequate conclusions about the supposed colloquialization typical of AmE.

2 Empirical studies

The empirical work described in this section is based on analyses of an extensive corpus collection. The diachronic dimension is represented by a series of collections of fictional prose writings from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. The Early Modern English period is covered by the *Early English Prose Fiction* database (EPPF; 1518–1700; 9.9 million words), followed by the *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* database (ECF; 1705–80; 10.3 million words) and the *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* database (NCF; 1782–1903; 39.5 million words). The imaginative prose section of the *British National Corpus* (BNC

wridomr; 1960–93; 20 million words) complements the series with comparable Present-Day English data.

While these sources all represent BrE, the actual focus of the discussion is on a set of corpora that have been specially compiled by the research group ‘Determinants of Grammatical Variation in English’, based at the University of Paderborn. These (mainly fictional) prose collections will be referred to as the *Mid-Nineteenth Century* corpus (MNC; authors born 1803–29; 18.3 million words), the *Late Nineteenth Century* corpus (LNC; authors born 1830–69; 50.7 million words) and the *Early Twentieth Century* corpus (ETC; authors born 1870–94; 17.2 million words).² All three collections have a British and an American component of roughly equal size. For the in-depth analyses of Present-Day English, an electronic newspaper database has been marshalled, comprising 13 years of British papers (totalling 477 million words) and 9 years of American papers (456 million words). Moreover, section 2.2 contains a comparison between the spoken data provided by the BNC (10 million words) and by the second release of the *American National Corpus* (ANC; 3.8 million words).

2.1 Past participle variants

In the domain of weak past participles, there has for centuries been a considerable amount of variation. The competition between regular and irregular forms in the group *burn, dream, dwell, kneel, lean, leap, learn, smell, spell, spill* and *spoil* is a familiar instance of British–American contrasts (cf. Algeo 2006: 12–18, and Chapters 1 and 3 and references therein). A less frequently noted dissimilarity concerns participial variants of the verbs *light* and *knit*. Originally formed with the regular *-ed(e)* suffix, their stem-final alveolar plosives became fused with the suffix, thus giving rise to a monosyllabic form. Simultaneously, the verbs maintained regularly formed participial forms (*lighted, knitted*) that have been in competition with the fused forms (*lit, knit*) to the present day.

2.1.1 Lit versus lighted

With regard to the participial variants of *light* (in the sense ‘ignite’ or ‘illuminate’), it will be instructive to gain a diachronic overview of their distribution. Figure 5.1 outlines the relative proportions of the regular, disyllabic form *lighted* in a pilot study carried out on four BrE prose corpora from Early Modern English to the late twentieth century.

² Note that, while all the other prose corpora are subdivided according to the publication dates of the works included, these three collections adhere to a division according to birth dates. The underlying assumption is that the generation to which authors belong is more decisive for their language use than the years of publication of their works, which may vary widely with the active years of a writer.

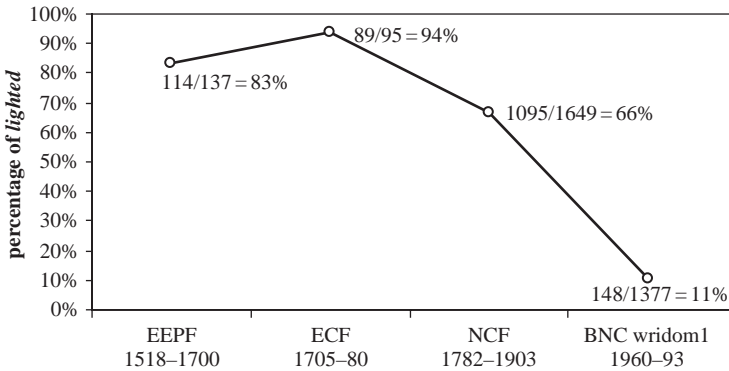


Figure 5.1 The distribution of the participial variants *lit* and *lighted* in a series of British prose corpora (EEPF, ECF, NCF, BNC imaginative prose section)

This survey clearly shows, in line with Peters (2004: 322), but contra Bauer (1997: 553), that the trend has since the eighteenth century been towards a replacement of *lighted* by *lit*. While it is obvious from the earliest corpus section as well as from its undiphthongized vowel that *lit* is not a new formation,³ it had largely disappeared by the eighteenth century and is now once again taking over from the regular form. The recent history of *lit* and *lighted* can thus be described as a clear case of *irregularization*.⁴ Incidentally, this disproves Biber *et al.*'s (1999: 396) undifferentiated statement (which expressly includes the variants *lit* and *lighted*) according to which the historical trend in the choice between regular and irregular verb forms is invariably towards greater regularity.

Having established the historical background, we may now ask how the rhythmic difference between monosyllabic *lit* and disyllabic *lighted* fits into the picture. A comparison of examples (1a) and (1b) suggests that the separation of two stressed syllables (indicated by acute accents) by an intervening unstressed one (afforded by the use of disyllabic *lighted*) satisfies the Principle of Rhythmic Alternation. In contrast, the use of monosyllabic *lit* before nouns (which are typically initially stressed) creates a stress clash, which is avoided by virtue of the same principle.

- (1) a. She was holding a *lighted cándle* in her hand, for though it was getting light in the open, the passages were still dark. (Bram Stoker: *The Lady of the Shroud*, 1907; LNC B)

³ This conclusion is buttressed by the Middle English data from the *Helsinki Corpus*. This corpus yields only two participial occurrences for the verb *light*, both monosyllabic, which contradicts Peters' (2004: 322) contention to the effect that *lit* came up only in the sixteenth century.

⁴ For a more detailed breakdown of the data, see Schlüter (2005: 105–10).

- b. ...; he crossed the Embankment and stood for a time watching the dark river and turning ever and again to the *lit* *búildings* and bridges. (H. G. Wells, *The World Set Free*, 1913; LNC B)

However, not all attributive uses are equally precarious. As soon as the participle is expanded by additional attributive material, be it through prefixation as in (2a), composition as in (2b) or adverbial premodification as in (2c), the primary stress on the participle shifts to the left. As a result, the participle itself is left only with zero or secondary stress (indicated by a grave accent) and the monosyllabic variant *lit* becomes acceptable in complex attributive structures. What is more, the use of *lit* can be argued to avoid a stress lapse by reducing a sequence of unstressed syllables.

- (2) a. We made a bolt for the *únlit* *síde cavern* forthwith. (H. G. Wells, *The First Men in the Moon*, 1901; LNC B)
 b. She turned a *firelit* *fáce* to her husband. (H. G. Wells, *Ann Veronica*, 1909; LNC B)
 c. He went into those little gardens beneath the over-hanging, *brightly-lit* *másses* of the Savoy Hotel and the Hotel Cecil. (H. G. Wells, *The World Set Free*, 1913; LNC B)

A third category of syntactic contexts subsumes all non-attributive functions of the participial variants, including postnominal, predicative and verbal uses. In these cases, illustrated in examples (3a–b), stress clashes are rarely an issue since the participles are typically followed by an unstressed function word or occur at the end of a prosodic unit.

- (3) a. Old Sapt, who seemed as fresh as a daisy, had *lit* *his* pipe and was puffing hard at it. (Anthony Hope, *The Prisoner of Zenda*, 1894; LNC B)
 b. Had a policeman intervened because their lamps were not *lit*, Hoopdriver had cut him down and ridden on, after the fashion of a hero born. (H. G. Wells, *The Wheels of Chance*, 1896; LNC B)

On the basis of the Principle of Rhythmic Alternation, two predictions can now be made (see Fijn van Draat 1912: 38, Bolinger 1965b: 147). In the process of irregularization observed in Figure 5.1, *lighted* should disappear first where its additional syllable runs the risk of creating a stress lapse, i.e. in complex attributive structures. At the same time, it should be most tenacious where its unstressed syllable can serve as a stress clash buffer, i.e. in single unmodified attributive uses. These predictions will be put to the test in an analysis of all occurrences of the two variants in the British and American sections of the MNC, LNC and ETC corpora. This analysis focuses on the stretch from the mid nineteenth century to the early twentieth century and is thus much more limited in chronological extent than the pilot study. Figure 5.2 depicts the results of this study.

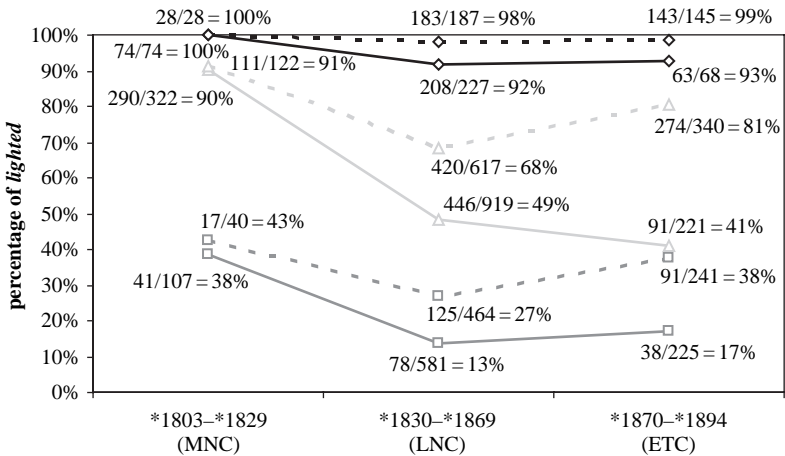


Figure 5.2 The distribution of the participial variants *lit* and *lighted* according to syntactic function in a series of British and American prose corpora (MNC, LNC, ETC)

These data largely confirm the downward trend foreshadowed in Figure 5.1. Concentrating on the BrE data (represented by the solid lines) first, we obtain a much more differentiated picture which indicates that the survey in Figure 5.1 can only furnish a crude approximation to what is actually going on. The decline of *lighted* fails to manifest itself in single unmodified attributive uses in the time span considered. In contrast, complex attributive uses turn out to spearhead the replacement process. Both effects can be accounted for in terms of the avoidance of stress clashes and lapses, and thus confirm the above predictions.⁵

The development in AmE, illustrated by the dashed lines, generally shows the same rhythmically motivated contrasts, as was to be expected on the basis of the universal preference for rhythmic alternation.⁶ Compared to BrE, the

⁵ In the British data, the contrast between single unmodified attributives and non-attributives is significant in the MNC ($\chi^2 = 8$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.0047$ (**)), the LNC ($\chi^2 = 138.01$, $df = 1$, $p = 7.24 \cdot 10^{-32}$ (***) and the ETC ($\chi^2 = 55.34$, $df = 1$, $p = 1.01 \cdot 10^{-13}$ (***)). The contrast between non-attributives and complex attributives is significant in the MNC ($\chi^2 = 122.00$, $df = 1$, $p = 2.31 \cdot 10^{-28}$ (***)), the LNC ($\chi^2 = 193.00$, $df = 1$, $p = 7.03 \cdot 10^{-44}$ (***) and the ETC ($\chi^2 = 31.99$, $df = 1$, $p = 1.54 \cdot 10^{-8}$ (***)).

⁶ In the American data, the contrast between single unmodified attributives and non-attributives is significant in the LNC ($\chi^2 = 67.92$, $df = 1$, $p = 1.70 \cdot 10^{-16}$ (***) and the ETC ($\chi^2 = 27.42$, $df = 1$, $p = 1.64 \cdot 10^{-7}$ (***)). The contrast between non-attributives

decline of *lighted* is much less pronounced in AmE for all three syntactic uses.⁷ In fact, in the early twentieth century, AmE even appears to reverse the trend to some degree. As a first result, it is thus evident that the Principle of Rhythmic Alternation correctly predicts the contexts in which *lighted* is given up most readily as well as the contexts that prove to be the most conservative. Thus, the diachronic evolution in both national varieties can be viewed in terms of an adaptation to universal rhythmic preferences. The degree to which the rhythmically motivated distribution is implemented, however, differs markedly, depending on how far the (re-)establishment of *lit* has penetrated.

In Present-Day English, the contrasts observed for earlier periods can be expected to be perpetuated. It has been noted that *lit* is overall more frequent in BrE than in AmE. The rough counts available in the literature (cf. Peters 2004: 322, Algeo 2006: 16) can be sharpened considerably if the different rhythmic contexts distinguished above are kept apart. Figure 5.3 affords a snapshot of the situation in Present-Day English based on an analysis of four years of British and three years of American newspapers, respectively. This illustrates the current *status quo* of the diachronic evolution, though certainly not its endpoint.

These synchronic data exhibit the same basic contrasts as any of the snapshots that can be taken of the historical stages portrayed in Figure 5.2: single unmodified attributive uses are the most conservative, and complex attributive uses the most progressive contexts, with non-attributive uses intermediate.⁸ It is, however, obvious that in BrE the replacement of *lighted* by *lit* is approaching completion in both contexts that can dispense with a stress clash buffer (as a result of which the difference has shrunk to 4 per cent). Even the rhythmically critical simple attributive uses retain the disyllabic variant in no more than 54 per cent of cases, which suggests that *lighted* is under great pressure from its monosyllabic competitor. At the same time, the change has clearly caught on in AmE, so that the apparent reversal seen in the early twentieth-century data in Figure 5.2 can be assumed to be a corpus artefact. As a matter of fact, AmE has at the end of the twentieth century approximately reached the levels characteristic of early twentieth-century

and complex attributives is significant in the MNC ($\chi^2 = 42.70$, $df = 1$, $p = 6.38 \cdot 10^{-11}$ (***)), the LNC ($\chi^2 = 179.23$, $df = 1$, $p = 7.12 \cdot 10^{-41}$ (***)) and the ETC ($\chi^2 = 110.76$, $df = 1$, $p = 6.66 \cdot 10^{-26}$ (***)).

⁷ The British–American differences become significant from the LNC data onwards: LNC: single unmodified attributives: $\chi^2 = 7.59$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.0059$ (***); complex attributives: $\chi^2 = 57.31$, $df = 1$, $p = 3.71 \cdot 10^{-14}$ (***); non-attributives: $\chi^2 = 30.10$, $df = 1$, $p = 4.10 \cdot 10^{-8}$ (***). ETC: single unmodified attributives: $\chi^2 = 5.20$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.023$ (*); complex attributives: $\chi^2 = 91.52$, $df = 1$, $p = 1.10 \cdot 10^{-21}$ (***); non-attributives: $\chi^2 = 25.32$, $df = 1$, $p = 4.86 \cdot 10^{-7}$ (***).

⁸ The differences are all statistically very highly significant: BrE: single unmodified attributives vs. non-attributives: $\chi^2 = 371.87$, $df = 1$, $p = 7.33 \cdot 10^{-83}$ (***); complex attributives vs. non-attributives: $\chi^2 = 35.87$, $df = 1$, $p = 2.11 \cdot 10^{-9}$ (***). AmE: single unmodified attributives vs. non-attributives: $\chi^2 = 159.10$, $df = 1$, $p = 1.77 \cdot 10^{-36}$ (***); complex attributives vs. non-attributives: $\chi^2 = 24.20$, $df = 1$, $p = 8.69 \cdot 10^{-7}$ (***).

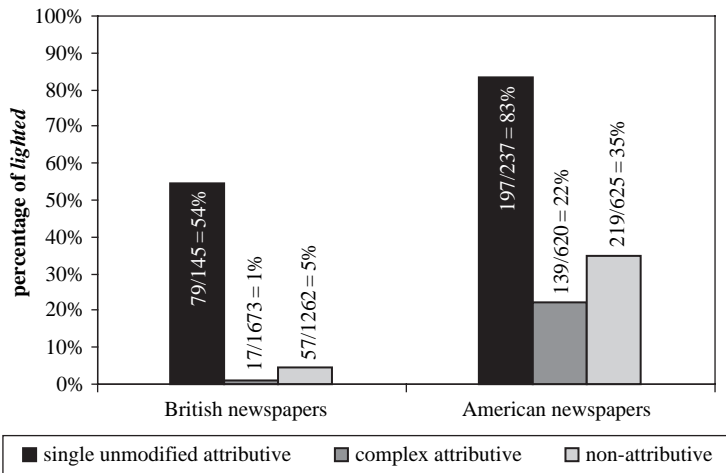


Figure 5.3 The distribution of the participial variants *lit* and *lighted* according to syntactic function in a British and American newspaper corpus (too, goo, doo, moo; W92, D95, L95)

BrE. Taking into consideration that Figure 5.3 draws on a newspaper corpus, while Figure 5.2 represents fictional prose, and bearing in mind that journalistic style tends to take up innovations particularly keenly (see Mair 1998: 148–55), less progressive registers of AmE might actually be lagging behind by another decade.

This comparison between the two varieties can be brought to bear on the ‘colonial lag’ hypothesis. As soon as BrE and AmE drift apart in the diachronic shift shown in Figure 5.2, AmE turns out to be the more conservative variety, in which the outgoing variant *lighted* holds its ground relatively well. The generalization about the lower speed of change in AmE is therefore confirmed for the case of *lit/lighted*.

Since we are dealing with an irregularization of grammatical forms, the retardation of the trend in AmE results in a greater regularity in comparison to BrE. Thus, the characterization of AmE as more prone to regularization can be corroborated. What is unexpected, however, is the fact that this contrast seems to be produced by BrE moving towards greater irregularity rather than by AmE moving towards greater regularity.⁹ This example aptly illustrates the contradiction inherent in the two generalizations: a variety characterized by inertness cannot logically at the same time be more prone to processes promoting grammatical regularization than a supposedly more

⁹ A similar conflict between the hypotheses about the ‘colonial lag’ and the regularization tendency arises in the case of the preterite and past participle variants investigated by Levin (Chapter 3).

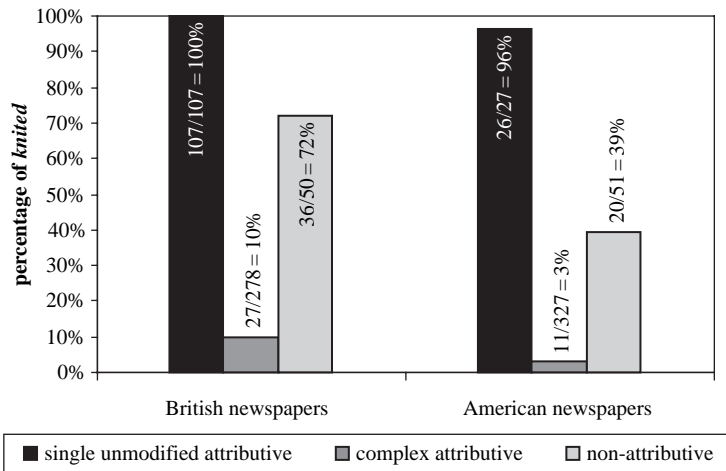


Figure 5.4 The distribution of the participial variants *knit* and *knitted* according to syntactic function in a British and American newspaper corpus (t93–94; D95, L95)

flexible variety. The following studies will bring to light further incompatibilities between these two descriptive generalizations.

2.1.2 *Knit versus knitted*

The findings for *lit/lighted* in Figure 5.3 can be insightfully compared to those for *knit/knitted* in Figure 5.4. The criteria employed to categorize the occurrences of the two variants correspond to those introduced in examples (1) to (3) above. Among the complex attributive uses, prefixed forms of *knit* or *knitted* are virtually non-existent, but the number of compounds and adverbially premodified forms is extremely high (e.g. *close-knit*, *hand-knit*, *tightly knit*, *loosely knit*, etc.).

In this figure, the same rhythmically motivated contrasts as in Figure 5.3 can be discerned. The discrepancies between single unmodified attributive uses, where a stress clash is forestalled through the use of *knitted*, and complex attributive uses, where a stress lapse is averted through the selection of *knit*, are extremely marked: in both varieties, they amount to 90 per cent or more.¹⁰ Thus, the Principle of Rhythmic Alternation is satisfied in the vast majority of corpus examples.

¹⁰ This difference is of course statistically very highly significant, as are the differences between these syntactic uses and non-attributive uses. BrE: single unmodified attributives vs. complex attributives: $\chi^2 = 277.57$, $df = 1$, $p = 2.54 \cdot 10^{-62}$ (***) ; single unmodified attributives vs. non-attributives: $\chi^2 = 32.89$, $df = 1$, $p = 9.74 \cdot 10^{-9}$ (***) ; complex attributives vs. non-attributives: $\chi^2 = 105.95$, $df = 1$, $p = 7.56 \cdot 10^{-23}$ (***) . AmE: single

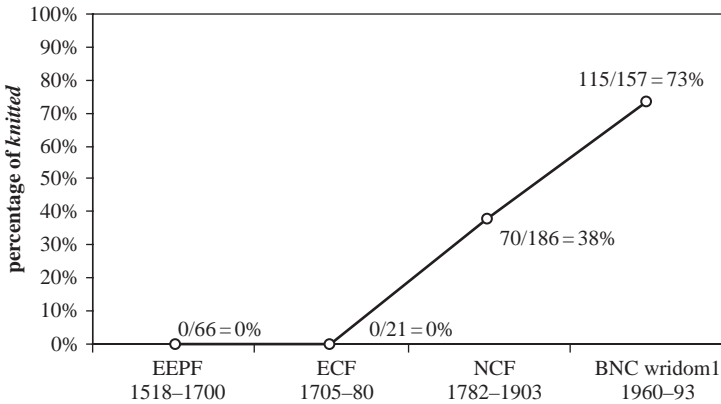


Figure 5.5 The distribution of the participial variants *knit* and *knitted* in a series of British prose corpora (EEPF, ECF, NCF, BNC imaginative prose section)

The juxtaposition of the data from the two national varieties shows, above all, that AmE possesses a lower ratio of the disyllabic variant overall and for each syntactic category.¹¹ This result comes as a surprise if we take into account the generalization according to which this variety is predisposed to greater grammatical regularity than BrE. It also contradicts the intuitions expressed by Peters (2004: 307), which suggest a stronger inclination towards *knitted* in AmE. One approach to an explanation can be found in the diachronic dimension of the phenomenon. Due to the infrequency of *knit/knitted*, an analysis of the MNC, LNC and ETC corpora fails to produce the necessary insights. We therefore have to content ourselves with the rough sketch of the BrE situation from the sixteenth to twentieth centuries provided in Figure 5.5.¹²

These data indicate that the form *knitted* has only been coming in since the eighteenth century.¹³ Thus, in contrast to *lighted*, the regularized variant is on the rise. Seen against this background, AmE is once again found to be lagging behind BrE. This result is in keeping with the ‘colonial lag’ hypothesis. However, in this case, the less rapid change in relation to BrE results in AmE having proportionately more irregular forms. This contrasts sharply

unmodified attributives vs. complex attributives: $\chi^2 = 230.14$, $df = 1$, $p = 5.56 \cdot 10^{-52}$ (***);
 single unmodified attributives vs. non-attributives: $\chi^2 = 23.77$, $df = 1$, $p = 1.08 \cdot 10^{-6}$ (***);
 complex attributives vs. non-attributives: $\chi^2 = 75.33$, $df = 1$, $p = 3.99 \cdot 10^{-18}$ (***)

¹¹ The differences are significant for those syntactic uses where the variability is large enough, namely complex attributives ($\chi^2 = 10.29$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.0013$ (**)) and non-attributives ($\chi^2 = 10.98$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.00092$ (***)).

¹² A detailed analysis of these data is to be found in Schlüter (2005: 101–5).

¹³ Note that the Middle English section of the *Helsinki Corpus* already yields three occurrences of *knitted*, as opposed to seven occurrences of *knit*. It is thus unclear whether regular *knitted* in the eighteenth century is a direct continuation of the regular weak participle or whether it originated as a secondary re-suffixation of a formerly contracted variant *knit*.

with the findings for *lit/lighted* and runs counter to the generalization ascribing a greater regularity to AmE.

In conclusion to this study of two pairs of participial variants, we have seen robust evidence in favour of the efficacy of the Principle of Rhythmic Alternation: the avoidance of stress clashes and lapses has been shown to accelerate the speed of linguistic change in favourable contexts and to slow it down in unfavourable ones. Its effects have been validated in both national varieties and in part also at different diachronic stages of their evolution, a finding that supports the claim that we are dealing with a linguistic universal.

Two of the three descriptive generalizations introduced in section 1.2 have been tested against these data. The evidence for the ‘colonial lag’ hypothesis has so far been consistent: in both cases, BrE seems to have taken the lead in the establishment of the incoming variants. Intriguingly, this results in BrE being less regular than AmE in the case of *lit/lighted*, but more regular in the case of *knit/knitted*. The generalization concerning the greater striving of AmE for regular grammatical forms has therefore been challenged by an obvious counterexample.

2.2 *The pre- and post-determiner positions of quite*

We now turn to a case of syntactic variation that has so far never figured among the most popular British–American contrasts. This concerns deviations from the canonical word order (determiner (+ adverb) + attribute + noun) in noun phrases. Non-canonical structures such as *quite a long report*, *rather unusual a person*, *half an hour*, *so pretty a girl*, *that good a teacher*, *too remote a place*, *how good a lawyer* and *a good enough reason* have, on rare occasions, been brought in connection with the avoidance of stress clashes (cf. Bolinger 1965: 151–3, 1972: 139–45).¹⁴ It is the first of these structures that will be focused on in the following study.¹⁵ For illustration, consider the examples in (4) and (5), in which the degree modifier *quite* co-occurs with an attributive adjective.

- (4) a. *A quite new* phase of humanity, bringing with it new vices and new dangers. (Charles Kingsley, *Sanitary and Social Lectures and Essays*, 1872; MNC B)
- b. When he appeared, she was so gentle to him that it woke *quite a new* sensation in him. (George Macdonald, *Robert Falconer*, 1868; MNC B)
- (5) a. He had heard a deal about Chicago, and showed *a quite remarkable* interest in it, for a god. (Mark Twain, *Following the Equator*, 1897; LNC A)

¹⁴ For three accounts that overlook this aspect, see Christophersen (1974), Seppänen (1978: 523–37) and Allerton (1987: 15–16).

¹⁵ For an account that considers British–American semantic differences inherent in the modifier *quite*, but ignores the positional variation, see Algeo (2006: 156).

- b. ... thus narrated, and thus heard, the legend seemed *quite a remarkable* affair. (Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*, 1852; MNC A)

In examples (4a) and (5a), *quite* appears in post-determiner position, which is the canonical place for adverbial modifiers of attributive adjectives. Examples (4b) and (5b) illustrate the non-canonical pre-determiner use.

The secondary literature has tackled this phenomenon mainly in terms of semantics. Thus, Bolinger (1972: 105) and Allerton (1987: 25) firstly attribute a greater sense of emphasis or surprise to the pre-determiner use of *quite*. Secondly, a long tradition in linguistics has foregrounded scope differences between the narrower reference of post-determiner *quite* and the wider reference of pre-determiner *quite*, which rather resembles a sentence modifier (cf. Stoffel 1901: 43, Borst 1902: 103, Bolinger 1972: 101, 137). Thirdly, the degree adverb *quite* itself can have different meanings: a maximizer meaning 'absolutely, totally' and a moderator meaning 'rather, somewhat' (cf. Allerton 1987: 25–6, 2001: 186, Ungerer 1988: 292, Paradis 1997: 17–18), with the maximizer meaning being more common in AmE and the moderator meaning being more common in BrE (cf. Peters 2004: 453, Algeo 2006: 156). What is more, Allerton claims that this difference correlates with the position of *quite*: the maximizer meaning tends to be expressed in post-determiner position and the moderator meaning in pre-determiner position. Thus, we might expect a higher proportion of post-determiner positions in AmE and a higher proportion of pre-determiner positions in BrE. Fourthly, to complicate matters even further, the two meanings do not combine with all types of adjectives: adjectives with a gradable meaning trigger the moderator interpretation, while those with an extreme meaning activate the maximizer meaning, and those that lend themselves to both interpretations can evoke both senses of *quite* (cf. Allerton 1987: 25–6, Paradis 1997: 79–87, Peters 2004: 453).

In a large set of corpus examples such as those in (4) and (5), it is hard to tease apart emphatic and unemphatic, sentence modifier and noun phrase modifier, or maximizer and moderator meanings. This task has been undertaken, with great difficulty, by Paradis (1997: 87). Moreover, in many adjectives, for instance *new* and *remarkable* in (4) and (5), gradable and extreme meanings overlap (for a more detailed discussion, see Schlüter 2005: 112–17). Therefore, the present analysis ignores potential semantic distinctions, assuming that they are too weak to decide the case in at least a marginal set of instances.¹⁶ Following Bolinger (1972: 137), the idea will be pursued that the Principle of Rhythmic Alternation may tip the scales where semantic factors are inconclusive, and moreover that it might occasionally override weak semantic orientations. In fact, in cases like example (4a),

¹⁶ However, the following counts exclude examples involving adjectives that designate a class of persons, things or concepts (e.g. *quite an itinerant Cobler*, *not quite a fourth part*, *quite a public calamity*). In examples like these, *quite* refers to the entire noun phrase rather than to the adjective alone and cannot occur in post-determiner position.

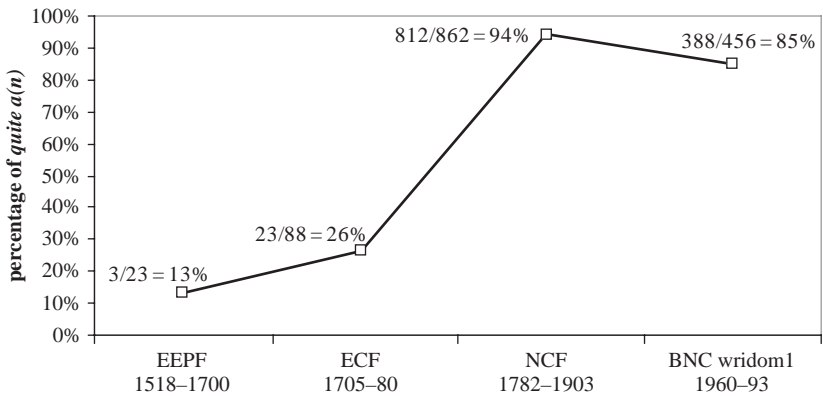


Figure 5.6 The distribution of *a quite* and *quite a(n)* before attributive adjectives in a series of British prose corpora (EEPF, ECF, NCF, BNC imaginative prose section)

where post-determiner *quite* combines with an initially stressed attribute, a collision of two stressed syllables occurs. This can be averted by the intercalation of the determiner, as in example (4b). With non-initially stressed adjectives, as in the examples under (5), stress clash avoidance is irrelevant.

Historically, the two meanings of *quite* and its two positions relative to the determiner are not equally ancient: the maximizer sense was the original one, adopted from French, whereas the moderator sense arose only later and gained ground at the expense of the maximizer meaning (cf. the OED 2 1994: s. v. *quite*, Ungerer 1988: 292). Likewise, the canonical post-determiner placement of the degree modifier existed well ahead of the pre-determiner placement, which, by hypothesis, evolved from the use of *quite* as a sentence adverbial (cf. Bolinger 1972: 101, 145, Allerton 1987: 25–6). While these semantic and syntactic changes are logically independent of each other, they are likely to be correlated (cf. Allerton 1987: 26). In a large diachronic prose corpus of BrE, a count of the relative frequencies of *a quite* and *quite a(n)* preceding attributive adjectives yields the following overall picture.

The general trend in these data is towards an increasingly frequent use of *quite* in pre-determiner position, with a minor U-turn between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Schlüter (2005: 119–22), it has been shown that the spread of the pre-determiner use was spearheaded by the more speech-related registers not included in the data of Figure 5.6: Eighteenth-century dramatic prose in particular proved extremely accommodating to pre-determiner *quite*. If the accounts proposed in the secondary literature are right, this changeover concurs with the emergence and spread of the moderator meaning. Be that as it may, for the present purposes it will be more important to determine, first, whether BrE and AmE differ in the relevant respects, and second, whether the expected rhythmic effect can be

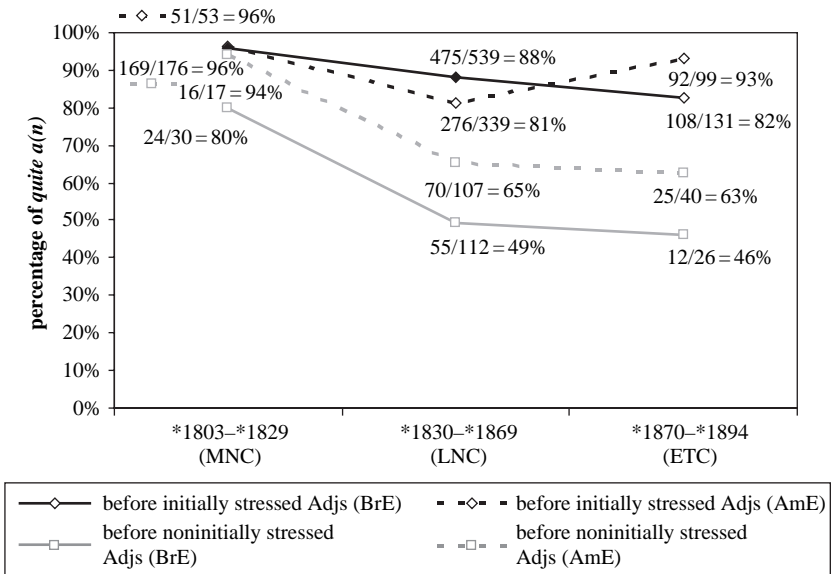


Figure 5.7 The distribution of *a quite* and *quite a(n)* before attributive adjectives in a series of British and American prose corpora (MNC, LNC, ETC)

ascertained. I therefore concentrate on two sets of corpora which provide comparable datasets, one diachronic and one exemplifying different registers of present-day usage. Figure 5.7 contrasts the situation before initially and non-initially stressed adjectives in BrE and AmE from the mid nineteenth century to the early twentieth century.

The stretch of time considered in this figure coincides with the slight reversal in the establishment of the pre-determiner variant of *quite*, which is visible in both national varieties. The time course of the change is highly intricate. In the mid nineteenth century, AmE starts out with an almost invariable placement of *quite* in pre-determiner position (96 per cent averaged across both types of adjectives shown in Figure 5.7), closely resembling BrE (94 per cent). Later in the same century, the share drops to 81 per cent in BrE and 78 per cent in AmE. Thus far, the trend in both varieties is fairly parallel and none of the contrasts reaches statistically reliable levels. In the early twentieth century, BrE ends up with a somewhat lower share of pre-determiner *quite* than AmE (76 per cent as opposed to 84 per cent for the total).¹⁷ So far, not much can be made of the general cross-varietal differences, which appear to be relatively minor.

¹⁷ This contrast fails to reach statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 2.77$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.096$ (n.s.)), but if combinations with initially stressed attributive adjectives are considered in isolation, the difference becomes significant: $\chi^2 = 5.47$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.019$ (*).

Much more stable contrasts emerge between the two groups of attributive adjectives premodified by *quite*. In both varieties, initially stressed adjectives hardly give up the rhythmically convenient pre-determiner position of *quite* once it has become quasi ubiquitous in the mid nineteenth century. This positional variant never falls below the 80 per cent mark and does not seem to be in danger of being given up again. In contrast, to the extent that the traditional post-determiner use becomes available again in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, non-initially stressed adjectives return to the canonical order 'determiner + adverb + attribute + noun'. They are clearly in the lead of the development and differ significantly from the more conservative majority of initially stressed adjectives as soon as the data become statistically sufficient.¹⁸ Thus, a word order contrast can be discerned that is largely accounted for by the rhythmic difference between initial and non-initial stress in attributive adjectives. In view of these robust results, the semantic motivations that have been adduced in the secondary literature appear to be backgrounded and partly offset by a powerful phonological determinant that has hitherto been neglected. This is all the more true if the claim that the maximizer meaning has become rare in Present-Day English is correct (cf. OED 2 1994: s. v. *quite*, Allerton 2001: 188). In that case, the variation between the competing word orders can with a considerable degree of certainty be largely attributed to the effect of rhythmic preferences.

While this result is hardly in need of further corroboration, the differential development of the variation in BrE and AmE can be elucidated by a look at some Present-Day English data. Besides samples of newspaper language from both sides of the Atlantic, Figure 5.8 includes spoken data from the BNC and the (as yet relatively restricted) second release of the ANC.

A first important conclusion that suggests itself is that the rhythmically motivated difference remains in place in BrE as well as AmE and in spoken and written usage (with the possible exception of the spoken AmE corpus, in which non-initially stressed adjectives are simply too infrequent).¹⁹ A correlation between the relative availability of the two positional variants and the extent of the rhythmically conditioned variability manifests itself: the better established the canonical post-determiner position of *quite* as an alternative to the pre-determiner position in a particular variety and register, the greater the rhythmic flexibility of the construction. Within the limits afforded by a

¹⁸ In the British LNC, $\chi^2 = 93.30$, $df = 1$, $p = 4.50 \cdot 10^{-22}$ (***) ; in the American LNC, $\chi^2 = 11.96$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.00054$ (***) ; in the British ETC, $\chi^2 = 15.86$, $df = 1$, $p = 6.82 \cdot 10^{-5}$ (***) ; in the American ETC, $\chi^2 = 19.80$, $df = 1$, $p = 8.59 \cdot 10^{-6}$ (***) .

¹⁹ The data for spoken BrE narrowly fail the statistical test since the difference of 4 per cent is too marginal: $\chi^2 = 3.47$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.062$ (n.s.). However, the contrasts in the newspaper corpora are both very highly significant: BrE: $\chi^2 = 291.25$, $df = 1$, $p = 2.66 \cdot 10^{-65}$ (***) ; AmE: $\chi^2 = 36.48$, $df = 1$, $p = 1.55 \cdot 10^{-9}$ (***) .

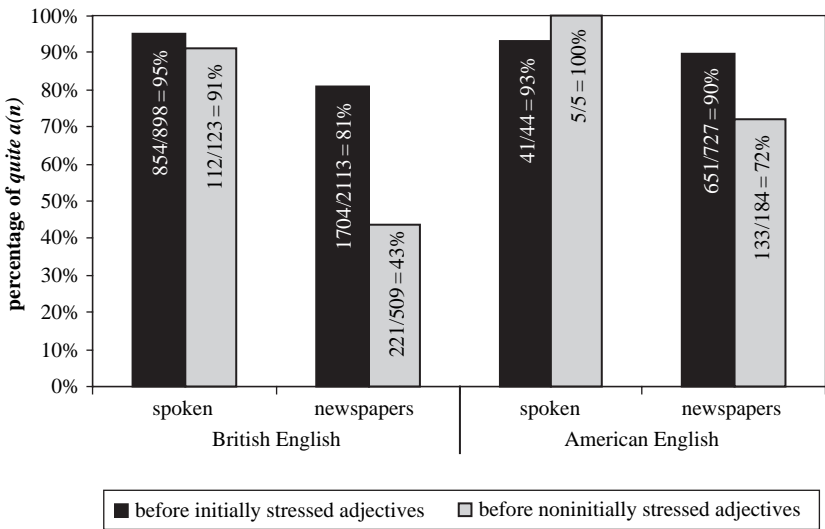


Figure 5.8 The distribution of *a quite* and *quite a(n)* before attributive adjectives according to mode in present-day BrE and AmE (BNC spoken sections; g94–97, m93–95; ANC 2nd release spoken sections; D92–95, L92–95)

particular synchronic state of a grammar, the Principle of Rhythmic Alternation thus reasserts its role as a linguistic universal in both varieties and registers under study.

In comparison, there is no evidence for a difference in semantic orientation of the kind suggested by Algeo (2006: 156): if AmE really tended more towards the maximizer meaning of *quite*, this should become manifest in a higher proportion of post-determiner placements. Obviously, the contrary is the case. As in the early twentieth-century data in Figure 5.7, *a quite* is generally more frequent in BrE than in AmE. While the sparse spoken data do not warrant any statistical comparison, the difference is very highly significant in the newspaper data.²⁰ Pending a closer semantic analysis of the corpus data, the alleged semantic difference thus does not seem to account for the observed intervarietal difference in word order.

Another interesting finding that emerges from Figure 5.8 is the fact that the non-canonical pre-determiner use of *quite* is appreciably better entrenched in the spoken registers of both national varieties.²¹ This suggests that this feature is characteristic of informal, conversational language use. Incidentally, this result parallels the difference between prototypical written

²⁰ $\chi^2 = 60.42$, $df = 1$, $p = 7.66 \cdot 10^{-15}$ (***).

²¹ BrE: $\chi^2 = 201.54$, $df = 1$, $p = 9.65 \cdot 10^{-46}$ (***); AmE: $\chi^2 = 2.43$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.12$ (n.s.).

registers and speech-related registers described for the eighteenth century in Schlüter (2005: 119–20). Intriguingly, both before and after the nineteenth century (in which pre-determiner *quite* peaked), written styles have exhibited a remarkable attachment to the canonical post-determiner use of *quite*. This state of affairs provides a possible clue to the question, looming in the background of the present discussion, of what factors led to the apparent U-turn observed in Figure 5.6. It looks as if nineteenth-century prose had adopted the syntax typical of spoken usage, only to revert to a more conservative usage around the turn of the twentieth century. This interpretation ties in with Biber and Finegan's (1989: 498–512) findings concerning the evolution of literary styles in seventeenth- to nineteenth-century fiction: the authors demonstrate that, while texts up to the eighteenth century tended to be literate in style, the nineteenth century saw a transition towards more oral styles in literary prose. To substantiate this hunch, an extension of the study of *quite* to text types that have remained extremely formal in character would be in order, but this is clearly beyond the scope of the present chapter. Eventually, the peak and subsequent reversal may turn out to be a side-effect of the colloquialization of nineteenth-century fictional prose.

This brings me to an evaluation of my British–American data with regard to the three generalizations set out in the introduction. In the first place, the ‘colonial lag’ hypothesis seems to have been confirmed: The apparent re-establishment of the post-determiner order occurs more rapidly in BrE than in AmE. However, this reversal takes off only in the nineteenth century and should therefore better be described as a ‘postcolonial lag’, which has no bearing on the hypothesis under scrutiny. In addition, some doubts have been raised as to the authenticity of this U-turn, which might merely be due to stylistic shifts in one of the genres under consideration. In the absence of conclusive evidence, the generalization cannot be buttressed. Quite to the contrary, assuming that the nineteenth-century peak in (British) fictional prose is an artefact, AmE even seems more advanced in the transition of *quite* from post- to pre-determiner position.

With regard to the alleged greater regularity of AmE, it is debatable whether this measure is applicable to the variable placement of *quite*. Assuming that it is, the canonical word order ‘determiner + adverb + attribute + noun’ could tentatively be considered to be more regular than the highly marked variant ‘adverb + determiner + attribute + noun’. And since BrE boasts the higher proportion of canonical structures, it should accordingly be considered the more regular variety of the two. In this respect, the findings fail to fulfil our expectations. On the other hand, the American data, both written and spoken, are less subject to word-order variability dependent on extragrammatical factors such as rhythm (and semantics). The syntax of AmE has thus been cutting a grammatical option, as a result of which the order of attributive structures involving *quite* has become fixed to a greater extent. This syntactic consistency may represent a

kind of regularity on a different level, which is not present to the same degree in BrE.

Finally, the most interesting issue (already alluded to in the above discussion) is the generalization according to which AmE is more prone to colloquialization than BrE. Since the anteposition of *quite* seems to have been circulated by spoken (or speech-related) registers in the eighteenth century, the variety with a higher percentage of pre-determiner *quite* can be considered more colloquial (cf. also Allerton 2001: 188). In line with this, in the synchronic data of Figure 5.8, for both varieties, the spoken corpora are of course more colloquial than the journalistic corpora. Interestingly, there is a highly significant contrast between the broadsheet the *Guardian* and the tabloid the *Mail*, with totals of 70 and 81 per cent of *quite a(n)*, respectively.²² Crucially, if the respective data are compared across the two national varieties, the generalization about the relative colloquialization of AmE is clearly confirmed: it proves to exhibit stronger colloquial traits than BrE in spoken usage as well as in newspaper language. More precisely, measured in terms of the placement of *quite*, American journalistic styles are situated between the British tabloid the *Mail* and spoken BrE, and spoken AmE is even more informal. The positional alternation of *quite* and the indefinite article thus seem to represent a novel piece of evidence in favour of the colloquialization hypothesis.

3 Conclusion

The conclusions that emanate from the empirical findings described in the preceding sections fall into two sets: one concerning the effects of a functional phonological universal on grammatical variation, and another one concerning the general characterization of British and American grammar in contrast. Each set will be discussed in turn.

As far as the phonological universal is concerned, evidence in its favour has been unequivocal: in both varieties, the preference for alternating stressed and unstressed syllables has been demonstrated to exert a constant influence on grammatical variation and change. Synchronically, the variation between *lit* and *lighted*, *knit* and *knitted* and the pre- and post-determiner positions of *quite* are clearly subject to the avoidance of stress clashes and lapses. The scope of variation is limited by the availability of the grammatical variants as well as by other, conflicting factors (e.g. semantic distinctions).

On the diachronic level, it has been shown that, since Early Modern English times, the overall share of *lighted* has decreased, the share of *knitted* has increased and the pre-determiner placement of *quite* has gained ground, at the expense of their respective competitors. These historical

²² The results of the chi-squared test are: $\chi^2 = 33.39$, $df = 1$, $p = 7.56 \cdot 10^{-9}$ (***).

developments have originated in factors that remain to be investigated. What the above analyses have revealed, however, is that the Principle of Rhythmic Alternation has affected the relative speed of these replacement processes: innovative forms have been established faster in contexts where they promote rhythmic alternation, while they have been established more slowly in contexts where they lead to objectionable rhythmic constellations. Conversely, obsolescent forms have been given up more reluctantly in contexts where they help preserve an alternating rhythm, and have been given up more readily where they violate this universal principle.

Against this background, it is impossible to argue that either BrE or AmE is more sensitive to rhythmic alternation. BrE happens to have a larger share of *lit* and *knitted* and a lower share of pre-determiner *quite*. In these respects, the two national varieties occupy different positions on the respective trajectories of change. However, the rhythmically motivated contrasts in the distribution of these variants remain stable, at least as long as both variants are available. Nothing else would have been expected in view of the fact that rhythmic alternation is commonly considered to be a linguistic universal. Incidentally, this conclusion has implications for many formal theories of grammar which disregard functionally motivated factors as determinants of grammatical choices. In particular, phonological influences like those described in this chapter are normally ignored since phonological structure is assumed to be posterior to and entirely dependent on grammatical structure (cf. in particular Schlüter 2003).

Turning to the conclusions that the preceding studies permit with regard to the three descriptive generalizations, the findings yield a much more heterogeneous picture. To recapitulate, the larger share of *lighted* in AmE compared to BrE can be described as a ‘colonial lag’ effect and as a conservation of greater morphological regularity. In contrast, the larger share of *knit* in AmE, while constituting another case of ‘lag’, leads to greater irregularity in connection with this verb. The concept of colloquialization does not seem to be applicable to the participial variants.

The positional variation involving the degree modifier *quite* at first glance appears to be an instance of ‘colonial lag’ if the short-term development since the nineteenth century is considered. If the angle is widened to include Early and Late Modern English, however, the widespread use of pre-determiner *quite* in AmE rather appears to constitute a case of ‘(post-)colonial lead’. Similarly, the inversion of determiner and degree adverb is inadequately described by the term ‘regularization’. While the inversion itself represents a deviation from canonical, regular word order, the almost complete elimination of the uninverted structure leads to a new kind of regularity. At any rate, the case of *quite* represents a showcase example of the alleged colloquialization of AmE in both spoken and written usage.

In sum, all three descriptive generalizations have more evidence in their favour than against them, but their predictive adequacy has been challenged.

Table 5.1 *Summary of the evidence with regard to the three generalizations about British–American differences*

	‘Colonial lag’	Regularization	Colloquialization
Participial variants of <i>light</i>	+	+	
Participial variants of <i>knit</i>	+	–	
Positional variants involving <i>quite</i>	+/-	-/+	+

Therefore, the conclusion from this chapter has to be that it is indispensable to analyse each alleged case of ‘colonial lag’, regularization or colloquialization in considerable detail. In many of the studies described in this chapter, this aim has been achieved. There are, however, at least two instances where further research is necessary to arrive at a well-founded evaluation of the British–American contrasts. What is more, it may turn out that adding diachronic depth to the description of such intervarietal differences will call for a reassessment of frequently quoted standard examples of ‘colonial lag’, regularization and colloquialization. The character of a grammar is insufficiently described in terms of such stereotypes. Rather, the choices the grammar of a variety makes are in principle arbitrary and unpredictable. What is predictable, however, is that, wherever there is variability, it is bound to be subject to functional universals such as the phonological preference foregrounded in this chapter.

6 Prepositions and postpositions¹

EVA BERLAGE

1 Introduction

The present chapter covers a hitherto neglected area of word-order variation involving the syntactic rivalry between post- and prepositions in English.² By comparing the distribution in BrE and AmE, it contributes to the underlying purpose of the book, which is to discern discrepancies and similarities in the grammars of both varieties. Since word-order differences between BrE and AmE are rarely mentioned in the literature, a brief survey will suffice.

A case in point is the positioning of adverbs that are associated with complex predicates (auxiliary + main verb). Empirical research done by Jacobson (1975: 155–225) on ten years of selected American newspapers in the late 1960s reveals that AmE allows for more than 20 per cent of preposed adverbial usage, as in (1). BrE, by contrast, uses the adverb in mid-position, as illustrated in (2) in 96 per cent of all cases (see Britt Sandberg's newspaper data from 1969 in Jacobson 1981: 89–93).

- (1) The search *already has cost* Shell \$9 million in the offshore area. (Jacobson 1975: 166)
- (2) The boycott *has already cost* the state as much as \$20 million ... (Guardian 92)

Further research on word-order variation includes split negative infinitives as in (3), which again occur far more often in AmE than in BrE, where the standard contiguous placement, as in (4), is still the clearly preferred variant (see Chapter 19 by Rohdenburg and Schlüter; for the use of the split infinitive in AmE, see also Fitzmaurice 2000, Kato 2001).

- (3) She tends *to not listen* to what you're saying. (Kato 2001: 312)

¹ This chapter is dedicated to the memory of my dear grandmother Änne Berlage, who always believed in me.

² The present study is based on work done within the Paderborn Research Project *Determinants of Grammatical Variation in English*, directed by Günter Rohdenburg and supported by the German Research Foundation (Grant Ro 2271/1–3).

(4) ... he told party members *not to listen* to national radio. (*Guardian* 92)

More studies on word-order variation can be found in [Chapters 5](#) and [7](#) by Schlüter and Denison, respectively.

2 Post- and prepositional placement in present-day BrE and AmE

In addition to ordinary prepositions which precede their complement, English boasts a small number of formally related items like *including/included* which either precede or follow the complement they refer to. Due to the variable placement of these expressions, it is questionable whether they can still be called genuine prepositions or whether we should describe them as 'exceptional PP constructions' (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 632) or 'adpositions'. Other prototypical members of this group include the complementary word pairs *excepting/excepted*, *aside from/aside* and *apart from/apart*. While the *ing*-forms *including* and *excepting* and the prepositional variants *aside from/apart from* invariably occur before their complements, the original past participles *included* and *excepted* and the non-prepositional *aside* and *apart* are used postpositively, as illustrated in examples (5)–(6).

(5) *Including/Excepting/Aside from/Apart from* these difficulties, life is wonderful.

(6) These matters *included/excepted/aside/apart*, life is wonderful.

To start with, a first analysis presented in [Figure 6.1](#) investigates if and how BrE and AmE differ with respect to the placement of the adpositions under consideration. In each case, the columns represent the percentage of the postpositional variants *not included*,³ *excepted*, *apart* and *aside* in both varieties, with the prepositional counterparts accounting for the complementary ratios making up 100 per cent. The absolute figures on top of each column give the total occurrences of the postpositional variant and the sum of the postpositional and prepositional uses, respectively. While the BrE data are taken from the *Guardian* (g), AmE is represented by the *Los Angeles Times* (L). The size of the database varies with the respective construction and is indicated below the diagram.

The evidence in [Figure 6.1](#) reveals that each of the constructions has a higher share of the postpositional variant in BrE than in AmE. What differs is, however, the strength of the contrast, which is significant in the cases of *not included* and *apart* ($p < 0.05$), very highly significant with respect to *excepted* ($p < 0.001$) and not significant at all with *aside*.⁴ Though absolute frequencies do not seem to influence the relative frequencies of occurrence in each variety, we may simply note that (postpositional) *excepted* and *apart*

³ The analysis is restricted to the negated forms *not including* and *not included* so as to limit the bulk of examples.

⁴ All the figures denoting statistical significance rely on the chi-square test.

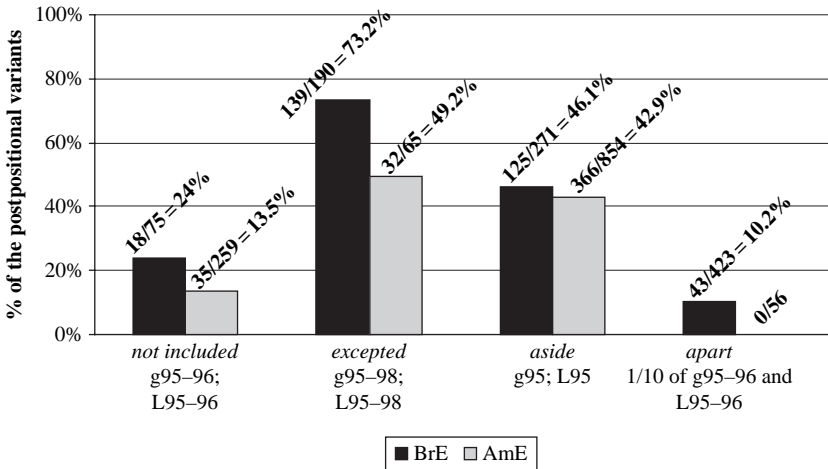


Figure 6.1 Postpositional *not included*, *excepted*, *aside* and *apart* in a set of present-day British and American newspapers⁵

are used clearly more frequently in BrE (at 0.89 per million words (pmw) vs. 0.12 pmw, and at 5.75 pmw vs. 0 pmw, respectively). As for the other items, *not included* is evenly distributed among the varieties (0.24 pmw and 0.26 pmw) and *aside* clearly preferred in AmE (3.40 pmw vs. 5.19 pmw).

The remainder of this chapter will focus on *notwithstanding*, which is found to differ from the preceding elements in two important ways. As will be shown in the course of this chapter, the postpositional variant is much more frequent in AmE than in BrE, which results in a pronounced contrast between the varieties. Secondly, *notwithstanding* has one and the same morphological form for both post- and prepositional placement, as is illustrated in (7) and (8).

- (7) *Tax liability notwithstanding*, the Queen's money is likely to remain a closely guarded secret. (*The Times* 92)
- (8) *Notwithstanding fearsome ridicule*, his name was cleared. (*Guardian* 95)

It resembles the adpositions *including/included* and *excepting/excepted* in that it has a verbal origin (see Kortmann and König 1992: 672–3). Morphologically, it consists of two parts, i.e. the present participle of the verb *withstand* and the negative particle *nought/not*, and is modelled after the French expression *non obstant*, which itself goes back to post-classical Latin *non obstante* (OED s.v. *notwithstanding*, Rissanen 2002: 194). In its function as a preposition it was first used by Wyclif in 1380.

⁵ Full references of the electronic corpora involved are found in the bibliography. Notice that the abbreviations indicating American and British newspapers use capital and lower-case letters, respectively.

- (9) And *notwipstondynge bis*, Crists Chirche schulde live . . . (John Wyclif, *Selected Works III*, 1380, quoted from the OED)

When *notwithstanding* came up in Middle English times, it was basically confined to law contexts and officialese, as in (10). The fact that the high degree of formality has not been entirely lost today is obvious from Quirk *et al.*'s characterization of *notwithstanding* as 'formal and rather legalistic in style' (1985: 706) and from Hoffmann's text-type specific analysis of the BNC, which shows that *notwithstanding* is much more frequent in formal contexts than the concessive prepositions *in spite of* and *despite*, which are more frequent elsewhere (Hoffmann 2005: 113–14).

- (10) *Notwithstondyng eny acte ordenance graunt or proviso in this present parliament made.* (*Act I, Henry VII*, 1485, OED)

Not surprisingly, the earliest usage of *notwithstanding* was motivated by the growing importance of legal documents that called for accurate expressions (e.g. Rissanen 2002: 196–7). It was further encouraged by the fact that the Romance phrase *non obstant(e)* had previously been employed in legal texts.

According to Rissanen (2002: 196), it was already in the early stages of its existence that *notwithstanding* underwent a process of grammaticalization during which it shifted from a lexical verb to the status of a preposition. This process became apparent in a change of word order: when *notwithstanding* lost its verbal qualities, which manifested themselves in the placement after the NP as in absolute constructions like *all things considered* (cf. Olofsson 1990: 23, Kortmann and König 1992: 674–5, Chen 2000: 102, Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 631), the adposition began to transfer from a postpositional to a prepositional position, as in (11), which accorded with its new syntactic function.

- (11) *Notwithstanding his poor form*, Dean Jones brought hope of entertainment . . . (*The Times* 92)

This chapter aims to complement the picture of word-order variation in BrE and AmE through a study of the adposition *notwithstanding*. The structure of the chapter is as follows: section 3 concentrates on word-order differences between BrE and AmE from both a synchronic and a diachronic angle, while section 4 focuses on universal patterns of distribution in present-day usage, thus highlighting the correspondences between the varieties. In this connection, the study poses the question of how the distribution of the two variants is motivated and suggests that cognitive complexity plays a major part.

3 British–American differences in the use of *notwithstanding*

The following section explores word-order differences between the BrE and AmE usage of *notwithstanding*. In order to account for the situation in Present-Day English, synchronic analyses will be complemented by diachronic research.

3.1 Notwithstanding in present-day BrE and AmE usage

Due to its morphological complexity, phonological prominence and concessive semantics (cf. Rissanen 2002: 193–7), the use of *notwithstanding* is highly restricted in Present-Day English. On the basis of two years each of British and American newspaper corpora a frequency rate has been calculated which amounts to 5.87 instances pmw in BrE and an average of 4.56 pmw in AmE. The ratios suggest that the overall occurrence of the adposition is very similar in both varieties.

Figure 6.2, like all of the ensuing synchronic analyses presented in this chapter, is based on the two British newspaper corpora *The Times* 1992 (t92) and the *Guardian* 1995 (g95); present-day AmE on the other hand is represented by *The Washington Times* 1992 (W92) and the *Los Angeles Times* 1995 (L95). The diagram surveys the distribution of post- and prepositional *notwithstanding* in present-day BrE and AmE.

The results show a clear-cut difference between the relative ratios of postpositional *notwithstanding* in BrE and AmE. While it clearly represents the minority option in present-day BrE with only 34.8 per cent of all uses, the ratio rises to double that figure (70.4 per cent) in AmE, resulting in a very highly significant contrast between the varieties ($p < 0.001$). In contrast to the distribution of the adpositions discussed above, it is therefore not BrE but AmE which favours postpositional placement. As the near-identical frequency rates indicate, the gap between the varieties has nothing to do with differences in the overall usage of the adposition (as might be expected on the basis of Chapter 18 by Tottie) but is motivated by factors still to be discussed.

Distributional differences as prominent as these cannot be explained by means of synchronic analyses alone. Section 3.2 therefore adds a diachronic perspective. The question is whether the use of postpositional *notwithstanding* as a majority option in present-day AmE can be characterized as an instance of colonial lag (cf. Marckwardt 1958: 80, Görlach 1987, Kövecses 2000: 25). In other words, the ensuing analyses serve to find out whether the

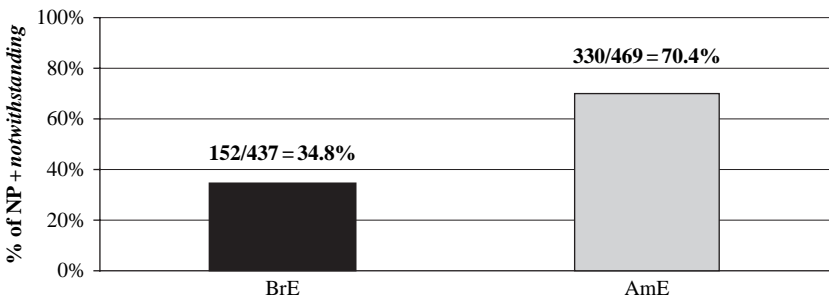


Figure 6.2 Postpositional *notwithstanding* in a set of present-day British and American newspapers

tendency for AmE to place *notwithstanding* after the NP may suggest that it is lagging behind a development which is spearheaded by BrE. They will also discuss to what extent Rissanen's hypothesis concerning the early grammaticalization of *notwithstanding* is valid.

3.2 *The historical development of postpositional notwithstanding*

Figures 6.3–6.5 provide a survey of the development of postpositional *notwithstanding* in earlier centuries.⁶ The data for a first diachronic overview in Figure 6.3 span the late fourteenth to eighteenth centuries and are drawn from the electronic *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). The analysis is based on all adpositional occurrences of *notwithstanding* and in the main represents BrE. The black columns illustrate the ratios of postpositional *notwithstanding*; the missing segments of the columns, adding up to 100 per cent, again represent the prepositional counterpart.

Figure 6.3 clearly illustrates that postpositional *notwithstanding* is still used in 26.5 per cent of all cases in the earliest period from 1380 to 1599 but is then lost almost entirely in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Its striking increase to 34.8 per cent in present-day BrE and to even 70.4 per cent in AmE (as shown in Figure 6.2) indicates that the development of postpositional *notwithstanding* is no linear downwards movement. In order to arrive at a clearer understanding of the situation, we still need to look at the development during the nineteenth century.

Figure 6.4 is based on fictional texts from the mid and late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries (MNC, LNC, ETC).⁷ In contrast to Figure 6.3, it is possible to differentiate between BrE and AmE usage in the respective time spans.

The data reveal that the nineteenth century sees a continuation of the overall low proportions of the postpositional variant observed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Yet there is a slow increase of 6–8 per cent from the mid nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. While postpositional *notwithstanding* hardly exists in BrE in the mid nineteenth century, it reaches a ratio of 8.2 per cent in the early twentieth century. In AmE, the ratio rises from 5.6 per cent to 11.6 per cent, respectively. With a maximal difference of 5.2 per cent, the contrast that exists between BrE and AmE today is not yet anticipated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, during which the varieties behaved very much alike.⁸

Despite some isolated examples in the early twentieth century, the major increase of postpositional *notwithstanding* seems to have started much later,

⁶ A more refined description is given in Berlage (2007).

⁷ The historical corpora of the mid and late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries have been compiled for research by members of the Paderborn Research Project *Determinants of Grammatical Variation in English*.

⁸ None of the differences between BrE and AmE is significant according to the chi-square test.

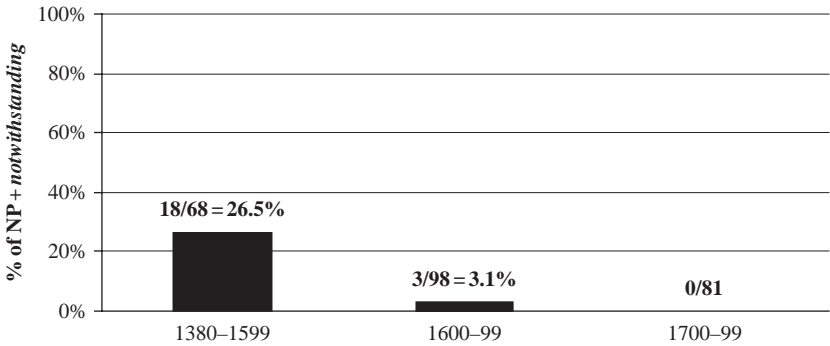


Figure 6.3 Postpositional *notwithstanding* from the late fourteenth to eighteenth centuries (OED)

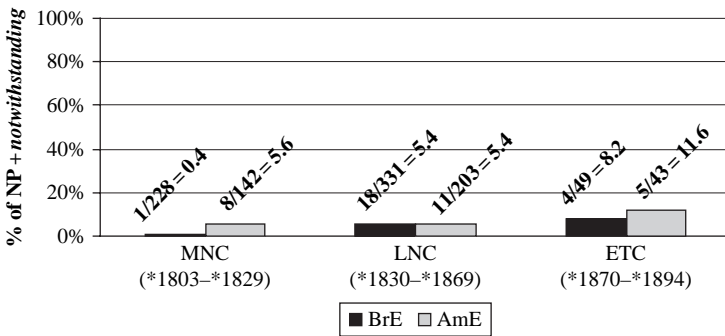


Figure 6.4 Postpositional *notwithstanding* during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (MNC, LNC, ETC)⁹

presumably after the Second World War. More precise evidence with respect to AmE comes from a set of historical newspapers that cover the time from 1895 to 1955.¹⁰ Due to the time-consuming search procedures, the analysis includes only NPs of up to ten words, omitting any type of clausal post-modification. Additionally, it is confined to a total of 134 examples. For this reason it is the rates of increase rather than the specific percentages that should be compared.

Figure 6.5 shows that the postpositional variant rises by 58.5 per cent from 1895 to 1955. It is particularly in the 1950s that postpositional *notwithstanding* becomes firmly entrenched in AmE. From 1951 to 1955, that is, in

⁹ In contrast to the other analyses described in this chapter, the dates in brackets below the diagram refer to the dates of birth of the authors concerned rather than to publication dates.

¹⁰ The data were retrieved courtesy of ProQuest online, which provided access to these corpora for a trial period of 30 days.

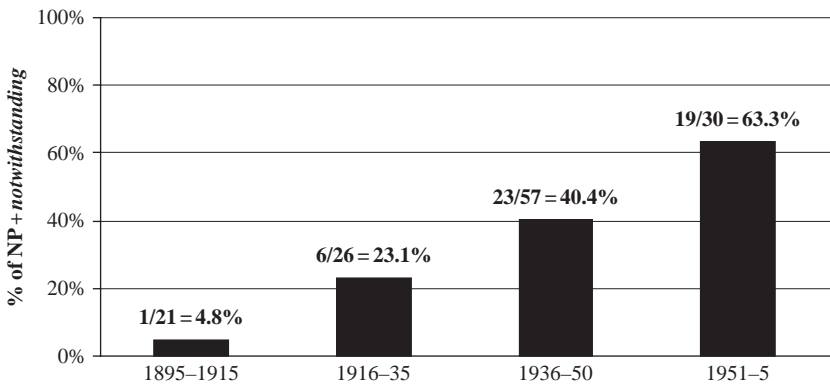


Figure 6.5 Postpositional *notwithstanding* associated with NPs of up to ten words excluding NPs with dependent clauses in a set of American historical newspapers from 1895 to 1955 (*New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal*)

only five years, its use soars by 22.9 per cent compared to the preceding fifteen years.

Diachronic analyses have confirmed Rissanen's hypothesis concerning the early grammaticalization of *notwithstanding*: postpositional *notwithstanding* still existed as a minority option during the period of its earliest occurrences until the sixteenth century, but literally vanished in the course of the following centuries. Comparing BrE and AmE, we have seen that it is in fact AmE that takes up the older form again in the twentieth century and presumably contributes to its reintroduction into BrE. In sum, empirical research has demonstrated that the development of adpositional *notwithstanding* cannot be characterized in straightforward terms as a colonial lag phenomenon but is better described in terms of a 'U-turn'. With regard to Hundt's classification (Chapter 1), I would suggest interpreting postpositional *notwithstanding* as an example of post-colonial revival, in which the older form is 'resurrected'.

4 British-American correspondences in the use of *notwithstanding*: The Complexity Principle

Up to this point, the main emphasis of the chapter has been on the description of distributional differences between BrE and AmE in diachronic terms. Section 4 will now focus on similarities between the varieties and at the same time aim at providing an explanation for the distribution of post- and prepositional *notwithstanding* in Present-Day English. This will be along the lines of universal complexity factors.

4.1 Theoretical assumptions

The present chapter supports a functionalist approach to language in the sense that it rejects the idea of a random distribution of grammatical variants and assumes instead that the choice of competing variants is motivated in such a way as to be advantageous and convenient for the speaker and/or hearer. In the present case the argument draws on presumably universal complexity factors that can account for similarities in BrE and AmE. Throughout this chapter they will be subsumed under the so-called Complexity Principle.

The Complexity Principle as formulated by Rohdenburg states that in the case of more or less explicit grammatical variants the more explicit ones tend to be preferred in cognitively more complex environments (Rohdenburg 1996a: 151, 1998, 2002, 2003a). In other words, there is a correlation between an increasing degree of cognitive complexity on the one hand and grammatical explicitness on the other. Accordingly, I assume that, different though BrE and AmE may be regarding their placement of *notwithstanding*, both varieties show a strong correlation between the prepositional use of the form *notwithstanding* + NP and cognitively complex environments. Three reasons can be adduced for the premise that the prepositional word order is more explicit than the postpositional variant.

- As far as processing complexity is concerned, preposed *notwithstanding* functions as a structural signal that helps to speed up the comprehension of an expression that is very long or structurally complex (see Hawkins 1990, 1992, 2000, Arnold *et al.* 2000, Wasow and Arnold 2003). According to Hawkins, parsing is facilitated if short elements precede long ones because the domain in which constituents have to be recognized is considerably reduced. While nine words are necessary to analyse the phrase structure in (12), the processing domain can be reduced to four words where the word order is changed to (13).
- (12) But *the ovation from a very receptive opening-night crowd notwithstanding* ... (L95)
- (13) But *notwithstanding the ovation from a very receptive opening night crowd* ...
- From a semantic point of view, too, prepositional placement is more explicit than its postpositional alternative. Since *notwithstanding* implies a concessive meaning in the sense that something happens in spite of something else (cf. Rissanen 2002: 192–3), it is in all probability more difficult to process than other semantic concepts such as causality or purpose. Support comes from Kortmann (1997: 167–75), who establishes a hierarchy of conjunctions according to their degree of complexity. He states that concessive relations represent the most complex type of modal concepts due to their high degree of conceptual discreteness (in the sense

of distinct semantic concepts). What he says about concessive conjunctions might likewise apply to prepositional markers of concession:¹¹ if *notwithstanding* occurs at the end of a phrase, as in (14a), the listener (or reader) has to process everything up to the postposition before s/he realizes that the action described by the matrix sentence suggests something unexpected. If the structural signal precedes the expression, however, as in (14b), accessibility is increased.

- (14) a. (?) I hold this view *the Commission's attempt to promote further economic and political unity notwithstanding*.
 b. I hold this view *notwithstanding the Commission's attempt to promote further economic and political unity*. (g95)

- The increased explicitness of prepositional *notwithstanding* can also be explained in terms of an iconic motivation, more precisely by the so-called Distance Principle (Haiman 1983: 782). If *notwithstanding* precedes the nominal expression it is related to, structural signal (*notwithstanding*) and phrasal head form a coherent syntactic unit which corresponds to the close semantic relation between adposition and noun. If it follows, however, *notwithstanding* and the phrasal head of the NP may be separated by a longer syntactic distance simply because postmodifications are in general longer (and hence more complex) than premodifications. In (15), for example, the prepositional postmodification *to her maturity and resolve* disturbs the close semantic unity between *testimonials* and *notwithstanding*. While the relation between adposition and phrasal head remains easily recoverable in (15), (16) would certainly be far less accessible with postpositional *notwithstanding*.

- (15) But *all the testimonials to her maturity and resolve notwithstanding*, she oddly conveys vulnerability. (L95)
- (16) ... *notwithstanding the absurdity of the cultural clashes to which this could give rise* ... (t92)

Convincing as each of these explanations may sound on their own, they are much more forceful when we see them as interrelated: processing complexity, concessive semantics and iconic motivations combine to make prepositional *notwithstanding* the more explicit syntactic variant.

On the basis of these theoretical assumptions, the ensuing sections in turn adopt three methods of measuring different degrees of cognitive complexity and their influence on the placement of *notwithstanding*. For practical reasons, the notion of complexity is restricted to the NPs dependent on *notwithstanding*. Thus, sections 4.2 and 4.4 both concentrate on the structure

¹¹ Note that Huddleston and Pullum (2002) have entirely given up the distinction between prepositions and conjunctions and refer to the whole group as prepositions.

of the dependent NPs. While 4.2 only distinguishes between simple and complex NPs, 4.4 employs more subtle classifications. Section 4.3 uses word counts to gauge the complexity involved.

4.2 Simple vs. complex NPs

All of the following analyses examine the extent to which word-order variation in the case of *notwithstanding* can be explained using the framework of the Complexity Principle. Firstly, we will look at the effect that so-called simple and complex NPs have on the placement of the adposition in both varieties.

Let us begin with a preliminary classification of all nominal complements along the following lines: if an NP does not contain any type of postmodification or coordination, as in example (17), it is called structurally simple; if, on the other hand, it is postmodified and/or coordinated, as in (18), or involves an independent clause, it is considered structurally complex.¹² Premodification is optional for both types.

- (17) He is 27 and, *good opponents notwithstanding*, his hardest fights have been with lawyers. (g95)
- (18) *Notwithstanding the occasional stretch and yawn at the 6 a.m. roll call*, officers said they welcomed the four days off. (L95)

In order to compare simple and complex NPs in BrE and AmE, the overall length of the structures under consideration has to be reasonably similar in both datasets. Evidence that this requirement is met is provided in Figure 6.6.

As Figure 6.6 illustrates, the variance between BrE and AmE with regard to the average numbers of words associated with the nominal complements of post- and prepositional *notwithstanding* is not so large as to make the two varieties incomparable in terms of complexity. The different ratios of pre- and postposed *notwithstanding* in BrE and AmE are therefore variety-specific.

On the basis of these results we can proceed to compare the influence that the binary distinction between simple and complex NPs has on the distribution of the variants. In contrast to the diachronic analyses, which delineated the evolution of postpositional *notwithstanding*, the synchronic analyses illustrate the relative frequencies of prepositional *notwithstanding*. As in the previous diagrams, the competing variant accounts for all remaining cases.

¹² The category of complex NPs contains six coordinations which are part of a premodification, as is illustrated in (i) *technical and political difficulties*. Since coordinations such as these may be interpreted as shortened versions of cases in which the NP is repeated as in (ii) *technical difficulties and political difficulties*, they have been included in the category of complex NPs. For a more specific description of different NP-structures, see section 4.4 and Berlage (2007).

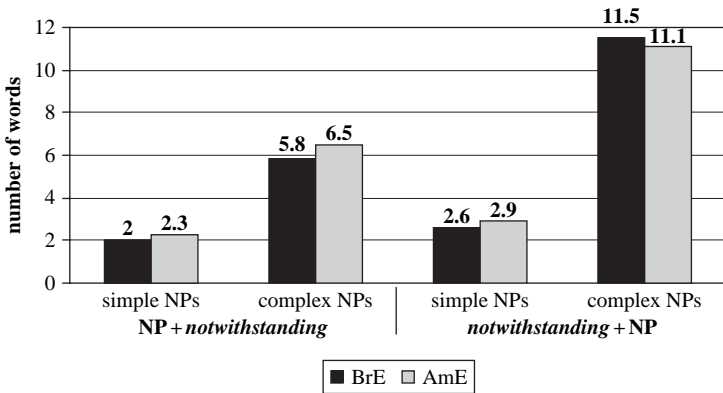


Figure 6.6 The average number of words associated with simple and complex NPs that occur before or after *notwithstanding* in a set of present-day British and American newspapers

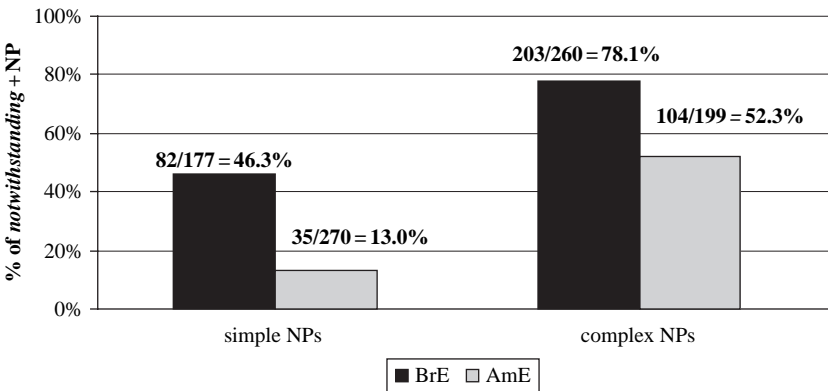


Figure 6.7 Prepositional *notwithstanding* associated with simple vs. complex NPs in a set of present-day British and American newspapers

Before interpreting the results displayed in Figure 6.7, let us briefly review the overall distribution of prepositional *notwithstanding* as presented in Figure 6.2. There we saw that the preposed variant accounts for 65.2 per cent of all uses in BrE but for only 29.6 per cent in AmE. Figure 6.7 now demonstrates that both varieties prefer the more explicit variant where the dependent NP is complex. Thus, BrE uses it in 46.3 per cent of all cases with simple NPs; where complex NPs are concerned, however, the ratio rises to 78.1 per cent. A similar tendency, albeit on a lower level of relative frequencies, can be observed in AmE. Here *notwithstanding* precedes simple NPs in

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only 13.0 per cent, but complex NPs in more than half, of all uses. As a result, the differences in placement associated with simple and complex NPs are very highly significant in BrE and AmE ($p < 0.001$).

4.3 Cognitive complexity in terms of word counts

The classification of the relevant NPs into simple and complex ones in Figure 6.7 has provided some basic insights concerning the correlation between cognitive complexity and grammatical explicitness. An even more accurate means of gauging the degree of complexity involved would consist in drawing finer distinctions within the groups of simple and complex NPs. This necessity is suggested by examples (19) and (20), both of which are classified as complex NPs and yet differ with respect to word-order preferences.

- (19) *Pots and kettles notwithstanding*, the real irony was that Southampton's physical excesses were mild by their standards. (t92)
- (20) The royal palace is still a forbiddingly dark, loveless place, *notwithstanding the incense and monkish chant that drift across its enormous acres*. (t92)

In examples (19) and (20), the classification as complex NPs is not sufficient to make correct predictions as to which variant should be preferred. This is simply because more subtle contrasts between different types of complex (or simple) NPs are neglected. One way to account for such differences consists in analysing the length of the respective NP. The fact that (20) contains eight words more than (19) makes it more complex and therefore more likely to take prepositional placement. As regards processing complexity, this is perfectly plausible since longer NPs are more difficult to process than shorter ones (see above). Word counts are therefore employed as a first instrument to account for different degrees of cognitive complexity within the boundaries of simple and complex NPs.

Figure 6.8 classifies all simple NPs into three groups which differ with respect to the numbers of words they contain (NPs of one to two words, three to four words and five to eight words).

The data presented in Figure 6.8 support the correlation delineated by the Complexity Principle: in general, longer NPs are more likely to trigger the more explicit prepositional placement of *notwithstanding* than shorter phrases.¹³ Although both varieties obey the same trend, they again differ in their affinities with prepositional placement.¹⁴ While BrE already uses 36.0 per cent of all one-to-two-word NPs with the prepositional variant, AmE

¹³ According to the chi-square test, the difference between NPs of one to two and three to four words is very highly significant in BrE ($p < 0.001$) and significant in AmE ($p < 0.05$).

¹⁴ The British–American differences in the categories of NPs containing one to two and three to four words are very highly significant ($p < 0.001$).

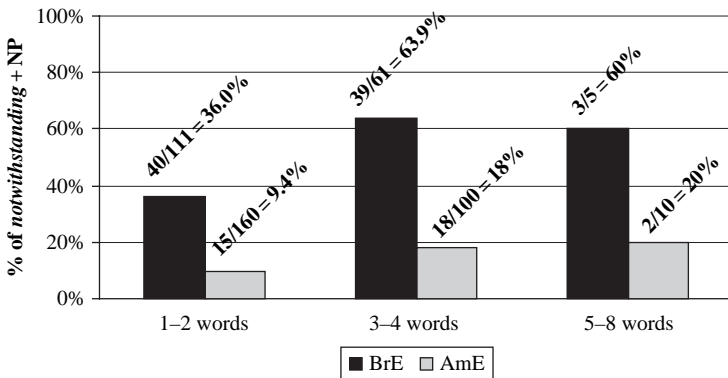


Figure 6.8 Prepositional *notwithstanding* in relation to word counts with simple NPs in a set of present-day British and American newspapers

does not reach more than 20 per cent with the most complex class of five to eight words.

Figure 6.9 shows the respective ratios with NPs classified as complex in section 4.2. Again, we find the Complexity Principle confirmed: the longer the expression, the more frequent the prepositional variant. Here too BrE and AmE differ with respect to the relative proportions of pre- and postpositional placement. The diagram thus illustrates that a less pronounced inclination towards the prepositional use of *notwithstanding* in AmE requires longer and hence more complex structures to trigger the more explicit variant than in BrE.¹⁵ While prepositional *notwithstanding* in BrE thus increases its range of application from 32.3 per cent with NPs of two to four words to 73.8 per cent with NPs that consist of five to eight words, a comparable rise of more than 40 per cent in AmE only occurs between NPs of five to eight and nine to sixteen words.¹⁶ Consequently, the two varieties differ as to the point at which prepositional *notwithstanding* turns from the minority into the majority option.

By contrast, distributional differences between the two varieties are diminished where the NPs are very long. Thus, BrE and AmE differ by up to 37.8 per cent with NPs of five to eight words; where the NPs contain between seventeen and thirty-one words, however, word-order differences

¹⁵ The chi-square test yields a highly significant difference for NPs containing five to eight words and a significant contrast for NPs of nine to sixteen words ($p < 0.05$).

¹⁶ In BrE, the increase from NPs of two to four to NPs of five to eight words is very highly significant ($p < 0.001$); that between NPs of five to eight and nine to sixteen words is highly significant ($p < 0.01$). In AmE, significance is achieved for the contrast between NPs of five to eight and nine to sixteen words ($p < 0.001$).

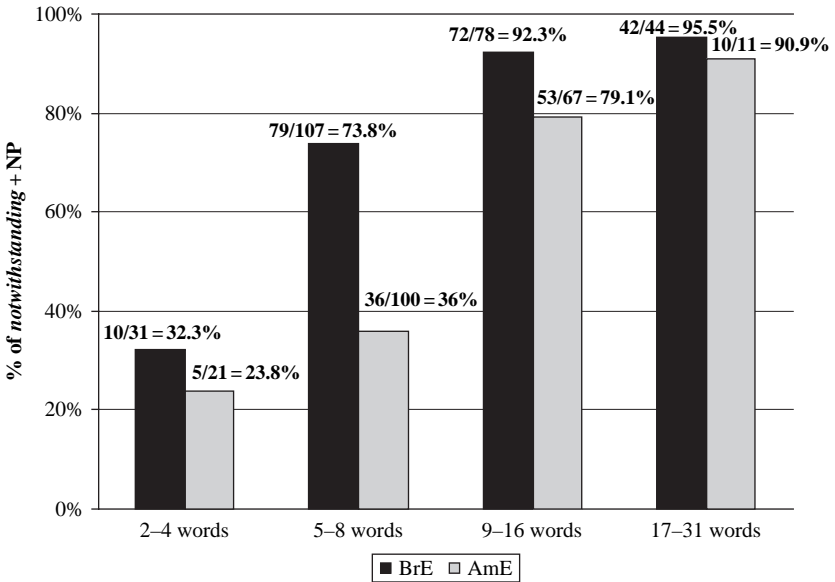


Figure 6.9 Prepositional *notwithstanding* in relation to word counts with complex NPs in a set of present-day British and American newspapers

are almost neutralized. Here, *notwithstanding* precedes the NP in 90.9 per cent of all cases in AmE and in 95.5 per cent in BrE.

4.4 Cognitive complexity in terms of structure

It is certainly uncontroversial that word counts are a good instrument for predicting word-order variation. Even so, we have to reckon with the possibility that length on its own cannot fully account for the different degrees of cognitive complexity involved. It is for this reason that the ensuing discussion will focus on structural differences as a second parameter of word-order variation involving *notwithstanding*. The examples cited as support for a categorization along the lines of word counts will now encourage an argument in terms of finer-grained structural distinctions. For convenience, the respective sentences are reproduced below.

- (19) *Pots and kettles notwithstanding*, the real irony was that Southampton's physical excesses were mild by their standards. (t92)
- (20) The royal palace is still a forbiddingly dark, loveless place, *notwithstanding the incense and monkish chant that drift across its enormous acres*. (t92)

Comparing these sentences once again, we see that the NP governed by *notwithstanding* in (20) not only contains more words than that in (19) but is also more complex as far as its structure is concerned. While (19) consists of two coordinated NPs, (20) comprises a finite clause.

What has been illustrated by means of these examples, i.e. that NPs which contain a clause seem to be more complex than coordinated NPs and therefore require a higher degree of explicitness, will be confirmed on the basis of a large-scale analysis. Sentences (21)–(24) introduce a range of different types of complex NPs underlying the structural analysis illustrated in Figure 6.10. The analysis thus distinguishes between coordinated NPs as in (21), NPs involving PPs as in (22), NPs containing non-finite clauses as in (23) and NPs involving finite clauses as in (24). If more than one structural category occurs at a time, as in (25), the examples are classified according to the most complex structural type they contain (compare Rickford *et al.* 1995: 110). In the present case, this is the finite clause.

- (21) It unlocks a fascinating, secret world which, *Terror and incompetence notwithstanding*, enabled the Soviet Union to produce enough steel to resist Hitler's assault. (g95)
- (22) When Wales lost to South Africa last November, *notwithstanding a magnificent performance by their forwards*, there was . . . (g95)
- (23) His wait, *notwithstanding Caribbean reluctance to ring the changes*, seemed unduly prolonged. (g95)
- (24) . . . and in almost like manner he despised William Pitt, *notwithstanding the similar views they both held on social and political reform*. (t92)
- (25) *Notwithstanding the claims by some lawyers in the South-East that they cannot afford to take on the work*, the 200,000 divorces in Britain last year cost Pounds 140 million in legal aid. (t92)

Figure 6.10 shows that simple NPs and coordinated NPs, as in (19) and (21), still prefer postpositional *notwithstanding* in BrE and AmE, whereas NPs involving prepositional phrases such as (22) in BrE clearly call for the preposed variant. With all NPs that contain clauses, as in (23) to (25), both varieties choose the more explicit word order in at least 82.4 per cent of all cases. NPs comprising non-finite complements, which for a variety of reasons (see Rohdenburg 2002, 2003a) are less complex than NPs involving finite structures, still display British–American differences. By contrast, word-order differences are almost neutralized with NPs containing finite clauses.¹⁷ In BrE, all kinds of NPs involving finite complements represent a

¹⁷ The category of NPs involving finite clauses comprises eight cases in which the NP either contains an independent clause or represents one itself as in the case of a free *wh*-clause.

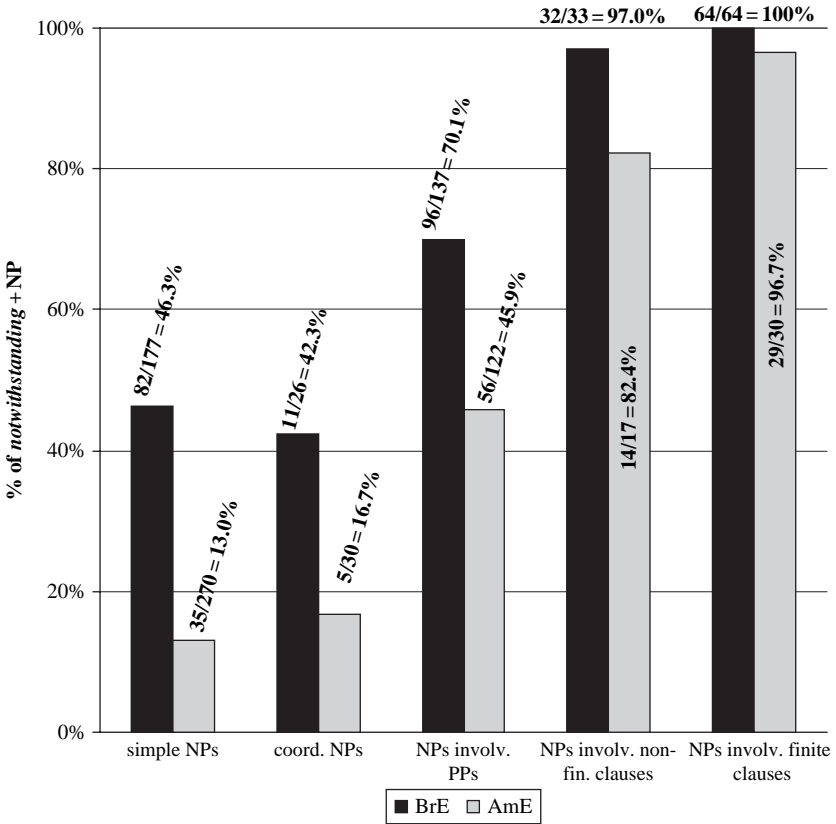


Figure 6.10 Prepositional *notwithstanding* associated with NPs of different structural types in a set of present-day British and American newspapers

‘knock-out’ context (i.e. 100 per cent of preposed *notwithstanding*) and even AmE uses postposition in only one out of 30 examples. This explains why British–American differences are down to as low as 3.3 per cent.¹⁸ The analysis in Figure 6.10 complements the study of the length of complex NPs in Figure 6.9, since it shows that neutralization effects do not only occur with very long, but likewise with structurally complex, NPs.

For the time being, the question of which parameter, length or structure, makes the more reliable predictions with respect to word-order variation has

¹⁸ As regards the rates of increase in BrE and AmE, highly significant differences ($p < 0.01$) can be attested for the comparisons between coordinated NPs and NPs involving PPs, and for the contrast between NPs involving PPs and NPs containing non-finite clauses. With respect to the differences between BrE and AmE, all but NPs containing clauses yield significant or very highly significant results.

to be postponed.¹⁹ What the analyses have confirmed, however, is this: where two expressions governed by *notwithstanding* differ maximally in terms of structure and length, i.e. one is short and simple as in (26), whereas the other is long and complex as in (27), they also exhibit maximally contrary tendencies in terms of word order.

(26) *All this notwithstanding*, I've lost another two pounds. (L95)

(27) *Notwithstanding repeated pronouncements over the last several years that the Vietnam War is behind us*, the issue ... (L95)

While sentences such as (26) show a maximal preference for postpositional *notwithstanding*, those of type (27) have a strong affinity with the prepositional alternative. Consequently, the combination of short and simple NPs reinforces existing differences between the varieties, while NPs of the category long and complex neutralize word-order differences and thereby promote the similarities between BrE and AmE.

5 Conclusion

This chapter explores word-order variation in the case of adpositional *notwithstanding* from two different angles. It begins by investigating British–American differences and then looks at the similarities between the two varieties. This binary perspective involves two different methods, a diachronic and a synchronic approach. The first approach depicts the evolution of the adposition *notwithstanding* from its first attestation in 1380 up to the present day, where the postpositional variant is more than twice as frequent in present-day AmE as in BrE. With reference to Hundt's terminology it is suggested that postpositional *notwithstanding* should be described as an example of post-colonial revival starting in AmE around the 1950s.

The second, synchronic approach illustrates that word-order differences between BrE and AmE are not categorical but rather a question of relative frequencies. The analyses indicate that both varieties are subject to complexity factors which have been accounted for by means of the parameters length and structure, applied to the NPs dependent on *notwithstanding*. Even if cognitive complexity cannot be considered the only determinant of grammatical variation, it offers an explanation for why differences between BrE and AmE in terms of explicitness are neutralized in complex environments. As far as word counts are concerned, the data suggest a strong correlation between an increasing length of the NP and prepositional placement, both in BrE and AmE. With respect to structure, the analyses demonstrate that word-order differences between the two varieties are most pronounced with

¹⁹ For an in-depth discussion of the rivalry between the parameters word counts and structure, see Berlage (2007).

simple NPs, coordinated NPs and NPs with prepositional postmodification; they diminish and even disappear, however, with the longest and structurally most complex NPs involving clauses.

Besides explaining the present distribution in BrE and AmE, the Complexity Principle may help to make evolutionary predictions: if, as is suggested by the analyses presented in this chapter, postpositional *notwithstanding* continues to increase its range of application in both BrE and AmE, NPs containing finite clauses will certainly be the last resort of the prepositional use of *notwithstanding*.

7 Argument structure

DAVID DENISON

1 Introduction¹

This chapter deals with argument structure, the relationship between the underlying semantics of the noun phrases associated with a verb and the form of their syntactic expression. It explores the group of verbs known as the Exchange verbs, and one verb in particular, *substitute*, whose recent history is particularly intricate. Teasing out the details of what is happening to *substitute* will reveal significant differences between British and American usage, a surprising reason for the differences, and useful insight into the relationship between register and syntax.

A problematic reversal in the use of the verb *substitute* appears in the conclusion to a British newspaper leader about American forces in Iraq:

- (1) A striking scene in *The Battle of Algiers* is a response by the French commander to allegations of brutality by his forces: “We are soldiers and our only duty is to win . . . I would now like to ask you a question: should France remain in Algeria? If you answer yes, then you must accept the consequences.” Substitute “France” for the US, and “Algeria” for Iraq, and the question remains the same. (2004 ‘Losing Falluja’, *Guardian*, p.25/2 (15 April))

The sense intended in (1) is clearly something like the following: ‘The quotation from a famous film of 1965 mentioned France and Algeria. If instead of those two countries we refer to the US and Iraq, the quotation will be equally apt in 2004.’ But for many speakers, the wording is odd. The

¹ Versions of this chapter have been presented at the Universities of Liverpool, Paris III, Paderborn, Edinburgh and Vienna (13th ICEHL). I am grateful to those audiences for helpful suggestions, and in particular to David Allerton, Dominique Boulonnais, Teresa Fanego, Marianne Hundt, Christian Mair, Geoff Thompson and Roger Wright, and of course to the present editors. Gunnell Tottie independently and simultaneously worked on *substitute* (see sections 2.4 and 8.1 below), and Elizabeth Traugott and Arnold Zwicky have also corresponded with me about it. In addition, Ralph Brands, Ian Mayes, Phil Schwartz, Robert Stockwell and Edmund Weiner responded to queries, and Keith Suderman sent me some preliminary ANC data. I must also acknowledge conference travel support from the British Academy for the Vienna talk, and generous subventions from Professors Claude Delmas and Günter Rohdenburg for visits to Paris and Paderborn, respectively.

apparent meaning of (1) reverses the direction of substitution ('replace the US with France', etc.) and hence is nonsensical. For me it should read:

(1)' Substitute the US for France, and Iraq for Algeria.

However, many standard speakers notice nothing amiss until it is pointed out, and no one mistakes the meaning.

The cited *Guardian* usage is not isolated and cannot just be dismissed as an error. I have been observing this reversal sporadically in print and on the BBC and frequently in students' writing for several years, and it raises the question of potential dysfunction, if different speakers in the same community can use the same verb in converse ways. I will explore this question and ask how the reversal in *substitute* could have arisen, whether it is a common type of verbal development and why it is so much more characteristic of British than American English. This little by-water – or rather eddy – in the river of English language history can be shown to have significance beyond itself, and I will try to derive some insights from it into the history of English and linguistic theory generally.

The chapter is organized as follows. I give a few more examples of reversed usage in 1.1, then discuss verb subcategorization in general terms in section 1.2. The account of *substitute* v. in the OED is examined in section 2, as are the comments of prescriptivists, and two sketches are offered of the historical development. In section 3 I look at the data in the BNC and discuss frequencies. In section 4 I consider the question of register and suggest that soccer is of crucial significance. This leads to the timing of the change (section 5.1) and a comparison with American usage (section 5.2). Section 6 brings in ambiguity, iconicity and focus. Now a more sophisticated account of the origins of the reversal can be offered in section 7. Finally, section 8 compares the British and American situations, considers analogous developments and draws some general conclusions.

1.1 More examples of 'reversed' use

Firstly, I give a handful of examples in the active ((2)–(4)) and passive ((5)–(6)), respectively, to demonstrate that the reversed subcategorization has some currency:

- (2) Well, we can substitute rain for wind today: it's going to be a very windy day. (2004 Helen Young, BBC Radio 4 (21 October, 6.06 am)[the previous day had been very wet])
- (3) Prizes are subject to availability. [The promoter] reserves the right to substitute any prize for one of an equal value. (2001 scratchcard, 'Thus plc')
- (4) Next door, another room has bee[n] converted to house more of the latest technology, this time substituting a manual system of producing hand samples for a mechanical one in the shape of a 'rapid pegging machine'. (BNC HRY 456)

Table 7.1 *Informal survey*

VP pattern	label	N
<i>substitute forgery for original</i>	V new _{dO} for old = standard	1
<i>substitute original with forgery</i>	V old _{dO} with new = used like <i>replace</i>	2
<i>substitute original for forgery</i>	V old _{dO} for new = reversed	13
irrelevant (used the noun)	–	1
Total		17

- (5) Mount the board on small spacers, say 0.25" above the case. At a pinch the spacers can be substituted for four appropriately sized nuts. (BNC C91 228)
- (6) In games, the same thing applies when the word Extreme creeps into the title, which in most cases could be substituted for the more accurate word dull. (2001 Nick Gillett, *The Guide* (*The Guardian*) p. 26/1 (8–14 September))

I made an informal survey of students to test their usage. Seventeen first-year undergraduates in Manchester (date of birth typically around 1984–5) were invited to construct a sentence involving the verb *substitute* for the imagined situation in which the vendor of a Picasso had actually sold a forgery instead of the original; the purpose of the task was not revealed in advance. The results are given in Table 7.1, abstracting the relevant parts of the verb phrase.

I will refer throughout to the two VP arguments by the shorthand ‘old’ and ‘new’ in a way that is, I hope, transparent. The abbreviations ‘dO’ (above) and ‘iO’ (next section) stand for *direct* and *indirect object*, respectively. All three patterns mentioned in Table 7.1 will be discussed below. My brief survey suffices to show that the reversed pattern of (1)–(6) is robustly available in present-day Britain.²

1.2 *Verb subcategorization*

The differing patterns of usage belong under the heading of *subcategorization*. The lexicon must include information on the kind of complementation a verb can occur with. Thus *give* might be listed as occurring in the following frames:

² I also tried to survey a smaller number of postgraduate students who are well used to considering variation in Present-Day English. The interesting point to come out of that discussion was that several pronounced themselves unsure both of the ‘correct’ and of their own usage of *substitute*.

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- (7) a. give NP_{iO} NP_{dO} (*She gave her friend no choice*)
b. give NP_{dO} to NP (*She gave no choice to her friend*)
c. give NP_{dO} (*She gave a lecture*)
d. give to NP (*She gave to charity*)

and no doubt others. Often a number of verbs show a similar range of patterns. How do we know which verbs belong together? Here I turn to a most useful descriptive reference work by Levin (1993), which, having listed the main complementation patterns for verbs in (standard American) English, attempts to group similar verbs together. I will cite some of her observations.

Some transitive verbs allow alternatives. There is the very well known alternation with *give*-type verbs, as shown in the contrast between (7a) and (7b). Compare too the so-called *spray/load* alternation:

- (8) a. splash NP_{dO=theme} on NP_{loc} (*She splashed paint on the wall*)
b. splash NP_{dO=affO/loc} with NP_{inst} (*She splashed the wall with paint*)

Levin lists many such alternations, e.g.

- (9) a. carve a toy out of a piece of wood
b. carve a piece of wood into a toy
- (10) a. present a prize to the winner
b. present the winner with a prize

In general, such alternations use different prepositions (or sometimes no preposition for one alternant) and usually have slightly different meanings, perhaps involving a contrast between part and whole. (Thus, roughly speaking, the actions of (8b) and (9b) affect the whole of the wall or the piece of wood, respectively, whereas (8a) and (9a) do not.) It is hard to imagine confusion arising between the alternative patterns. However, the alternations in *substitute* seem to be of a different nature: the same preposition for two of them, and no discernible difference of meaning. We will return to the question of whether *substitute* is a special case in sections 3 and 8.2 below.

2 The history of *substitute* v.

2.1 The evidence of the OED

According to the OED, the earlier history of relevant uses of *substitute* can be summed up as follows. The first, now obsolete, meaning from 1532 was '[t]o appoint (a person) to an office as a deputy or delegate', as in Latin – hence **new** as direct object, since the focus is on the appointee. A generalized

meaning '[t]o put (one) in place of another' is listed from 1674 to PDE (s.v., 2.d), again with **new** as direct object. This is the (now standard) pattern *V new for old*.

However, a variant with **old** as direct object is listed (s.v., 4.a) from 1675 (passive) and 1778 (active); I give a pair of PDE examples. In this variant, **new** appears as subject of the active, and in the passive optionally in a *by*-phrase:

- (11) 70% of present fuel consumption in cars could be substituted by use of battery vehicles. (BNC AT8 1126)
- (12) They found that by introducing a normal gene to substitute the defective one, the mice recovered from the illness. (BNC K1H 3562)

Perhaps it is not surprising to find *V old_{do}* first in the passive, and from virtually the same date as the standard usage, since a prepositional passive of the standard construction can be rather awkward:

- (13) Baron Hans Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza shall be the Chairman of the Foundation's Council or Governing Body. He shall be substituted for and succeeded by his wife, the Baroness Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza. (BNC EBW 474)

However, according to the dictionary, the pattern in (11)–(12) is 'now regarded as incorrect'. Also condemned is a variant in which **new** appears in a *with*-phrase in both active and passive, the pattern *V old with new*, 'used incorrectly for *replace*':

- (14) Hoechst UK Ltd reserve the right to substitute prizes with similar goods of equal or superior value subject to availability. (BNC HT5 37)

The adverb 'incorrectly' may be a matter of opinion, but that the usage is based on *replace* seems uncontroversial, since *replace* has precisely that subcategorization (as well as *V old by new*, just like *substitute* in (11)). The OED dates *substitute old with new* from 1974 (s.v., 4.b, but see section 2.4 below).

By contrast, the reversed pattern *V old for new* is not mentioned in the OED at all, and the Deputy Chief Editor, Edmund Weiner, was unable to spot any examples in OED's database of incoming citations (p.c., 7 June 2004). On these and other grounds I take it that reversed *substitute* is a reasonably new phenomenon.³

³ Several colleagues have wondered whether the song 'Substitute' by The Who (released 1966) might contain some early examples of the reversal. I wrote to ask Pete Townshend, its writer, whether the line

- (i) Substitute you for my Mum

meant 'replace you with my Mum' or 'replace my Mum with you'. The answer sent on his behalf (1 December 2004) reads: 'Pete says it is the latter (viz: "YOU" are the substitute). In other words the song exhibits standard usage, not reversed.

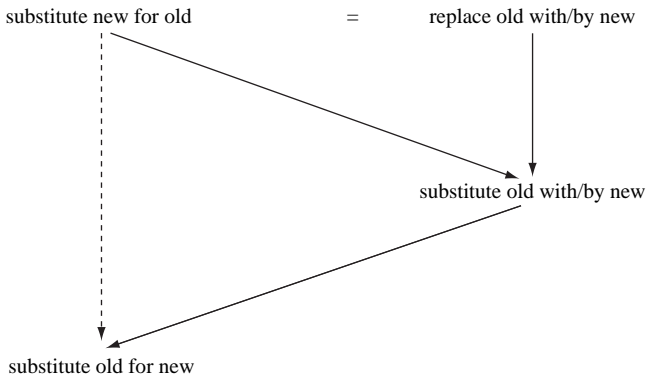


Figure 7.1 Development of reversed *substitute*

2.2 A first sketch of the history

In the light of OED's data, the obvious path of development is as diagrammed in Figure 7.1. That is, the standard form for *substitute*, at the top left, is almost synonymous with the only pattern for *replace*, which for its part is far more common. Under its influence, *substitute* develops an analogical subcategorization pattern. Finally, the reversed pattern, at the foot of the diagram, develops as a blend between the argument order of the analogical pattern and the choice of preposition in the original, standard form.

Now, although there must be a lot of truth in this sketch, it is *post hoc*, takes little account of frequency, and fails to explain why the reversed pattern only seems to have developed very recently. The suggested development would have been equally plausible at any time in the last two hundred years or more, yet it is doubtful that the reversed pattern is more than a couple of decades old at most. Frequency and salience must therefore be addressed (sections 3, 5.1 and 7 below).

2.3 An alternative picture: French *substituer*

In an unpublished paper on diachronic changes in valency patterns, Richard WALTERIT (2001) considers data from several languages, including (2001: §3) a development in French *substituer* 'substitute' which is astonishingly reminiscent of the first stage noted in section 2.2 above. Apparently, the pattern *substituer* **new** à **old** ((15a), since the thirteenth century) has now been joined in French by *substituer* **old** *par* **new** ((15b), twentieth century):

- (15) a. Ils ont substitué un mot à un autre.
 'They have put one word in another one's place.'
 b. Ils ont substitué un mot par un autre.
 'They have exchanged one word for another one.'

Waltereit hypothesizes several intermediate stages between (15a) and (15b) in French:⁴

- optional omission of the **new** argument;
- reanalysis of the direct object as **new** because **old** and **new** are of the same type, with a concomitant change of perspective from ‘replacement’ to ‘exchange’;
- reintroduction of the eliminated argument ‘in a semantically transparent (and optional) prepositional phrase’.

This scenario could apply to the historical English data as well. I suggest that Waltereit’s view enriches the sketch in [section 2.2](#) without invalidating it.

2.4 *The evidence of the prescriptive tradition*

For this aspect I am indebted to Gunnel Tottie, who has focused on the role of prescriptive grammar and second language teaching in the choice between the standard usage of *substitute* and its *replace*-like usage (Tottie 2004b, 2005). She finds a condemnation of the *replace*-like pattern in the first edition of Fowler (1926: 578), which clearly suggests that the OED’s first attestation of 1974 (see [section 2.1](#)) considerably postdates the actual appearance of the usage. Indeed, according to David Allerton, there was explicit instruction in the correct use of *substitute* in British schools of the 1950s, while a *replace*-like usage is criticized as ‘incorrect’ in Wood (1962: 222) (Günter Rohdenburg, p.c., 10 April 2007). Tottie finds American style handbooks which contrast the behaviour of *substitute* and *replace*, such as Copperud (1980: 367) and Crews, Schor and Hennessy (1989: 564). As far as I am currently aware, prescriptivists have concerned themselves with the spread of the *replace*-like construction and have not yet noticed the reversed usage. Prescriptive attention to the *substitute old with new* pattern is strong indirect evidence of the early tendency to analogize the complementation of *substitute*, just as neglect by prescriptivists of *substitute old for new* confirms the relative newness of that reversed pattern.

3 Pattern frequencies in the BNC

A detailed frequency count is necessary to contextualize and also to justify the suggestions of analogical change made in [section 2](#).

In morphosyntax, anomalous but very frequent items can be resistant to change; see Krug (2003), Phillips (2001). Conversely, simply because they fail to occur, highly *infrequent* items are also unlikely to undergo rapid colloquial change – and I will be suggesting a colloquial origin for the

⁴ For ease of comparison I have used **old** and **new** rather than Waltereit’s terms **goal** and **source**, respectively.

reversed usage. The changes in *substitute* will be easiest to explain, therefore, if the verb is neither too frequent nor too infrequent. A starting point is to compare it with its synonyms. In her §13.6, 'Verbs of Exchange', Levin (1993: 143–4) lists *barter*, *change*, *exchange*, *substitute*, *swap*, *trade*. Frequency data for these verbs in the British National Corpus (using the BNC's own lemmatization) are as follows: *change* ×26,629, *trade* ×2,692, *exchange* ×1,915, *substitute* ×1,316, *swap* ×880, *swap* ×118, *barter* ×114. So *substitute* appears to be pleasingly middling in its relative frequency.

However, what I have done here is rather simplistic. Many examples represented in the counts above are not 'Exchange' uses; for example, *change* in the BNC is frequently intransitive or monotransitive. Furthermore, the whole Exchange grouping is not really satisfactory. Levin writes (1993: 144): 'These *for* phrases are used to express the object that the agent receives as part of the exchange.' In other words, (all) Exchange verbs put the **new** argument in a *for*-phrase. In standard English, however, *substitute* is different and traditionally puts **old** in its *for*-phrase. And Levin does not discuss the important verb *replace* (×10,921) at all, presumably because its subcategorization does not allow it to be grouped with any other semantically similar verb.

I put all the BNC's 2,739 examples of *substitute*(*s/d*) as noun, verb or adjective into a database, incidentally correcting those which were mis-tagged (5.8 per cent of the total), and then classified the verbal instances, 1,247 in all. One important variable, wherever a direct object is overt or can be inferred, is the referent of that object: **old** or **new**? Table 7.2 gives the distribution of complementation patterns in the 1,065 out of 1,247 examples which have a direct object (if active) or a potential one (if passive).

Actually, at least 29 of the 1,065 are indeterminate, once we recognize the currency of the reversed usage beside the standard one:

- (16) But if we have men who are not straight themselves, then you substitute one crooked man for another, regardless of colour. (BNC G XK 950)

Examples like (16) neutralize the distinction between standard and reversed order, and I will discount the indeterminate examples when calculating proportions, leaving 1,036 examples to be discussed in relation to the referent of the direct object.

The figures in Table 7.2 allow us to be a little more precise about the analogical support for the reversed usage in the BNC. We can say that a subcategorization frame with **old** as direct object, which would be supported by normal usage both with other Exchange verbs and with *replace*, occurs in 192 out of 1,036 (= 18.5 per cent) unambiguous instances of *substitute* v., which is a substantial minority. In addition to the figures on the reference of the direct object, we can also say that a subcategorization frame including the preposition *for* occurs in 622 out of 1,247 (= 49.9 per cent) occurrences of *substitute* v., while the same proportion of one half is shown by *substitute* n. + *for*: 680 out of 1,378 (= 49.3 per cent on the BNC's figures). The

Table 7.2 *Direct object of substitute in the BNC*

pattern	voice	number of examples
V new _{do} for old = standard	active	322 (+7 probable)
	passive	113 (+1 probable)
(subtotals include probables)	subtotal	443
V new _{do} rather than old / V new _{do} in place of old / V new _{do} instead (of old)	active	27
	passive	6
	subtotal	33
V new _{do} – other subcategories	subtotal	368
<i>V new_{do} – overall</i>		<i>844</i>
V old _{do} (\pm by new) = ‘now regarded as incorrect’	active	25 (+1 probable)
	middle	1
	passive	125
	subtotal	152
V old _{do} with new = used like <i>replace</i>	active	22
	passive	5 (+1 probable)
	subtotal	28
V old _{do} for new = reversed	active	7
	passive	5
	subtotal	12
<i>V old_{do} – overall</i>		<i>192</i>
<i>indeterminate</i>		<i>29</i>
<i>Total with real or inferred direct object</i>		<i>1065</i>

analogical support for the reversed usage is therefore quite substantial. Nevertheless the date of its appearance remains unexplained. This problem will be taken up in section 5.

4 Importance of register

4.1 Register of substitute in the BNC

Very many examples in the BNC come from scholarly and legal texts, some of them highly abstruse. There is also a special use in maths, economics and chemistry for formulas and equations, amounting to 186 out of 1,247 examples (= 14.9 per cent), often subcategorized with *in(to)*:

- (17) Substituting the above equation into eqn (3.1) we get [formula] (BNC FEF 638)

Incidentally, this usage does not involve straight replacement of **old** by **new** so much as variation of **old** by inclusion of **new**: it is actually semantically a little different. Some of the legal usages are similar. All in all, the various

Table 7.3 *Reference of direct object in the BNC according to domain*

	sport	non-sport	total
direct object = new	1 (1.4%)	843 (87.3%)	844
direct object = old	69 (98.6%)	123 (12.7%)	192
Total	70	966	1036

scholarly uses make up a good share of the total sample in the BNC, and in everyday speech the verb *substitute* does not seem particularly frequent.

4.2 Sport

One non-academic context does show up rather often. What is probably the most common everyday context is sport: 77 out of 1,247 examples in the BNC, most often football (soccer). In order to compare sports usage with other uses of *substitute*, we must omit four middle voice examples, e.g.

- (18) In their teens Angel and Pedro had hung around the polo grounds, waiting for players to fall off, so they could substitute for them (BNC CA0 2119)

plus two oddities (a report on a rigged arm-wrestling match between American business executives, and an unidiomatic email from a Norwegian) and one example whose direct object is indeterminate between **old** and **new**, leaving 70 relevant examples with a (potential) direct object of unambiguous reference. The comparison is given in Table 7.3.

Even the one sports-related example with **new** as direct object is exceptional and not at all colloquial, coming from the formal rules of a boxing competition. How substitution works linguistically in soccer is nicely illustrated in (19):

- (19) By the way, Jamie started 5 matches last season (was substituted in 3 of them) and came on once as a substitute (all in the league), but no goals. (BNC J1C 990)

The player *substituted* is always the **old** NP object (i.e. already on the pitch), never the **new** (on the bench). Sporting usage is entirely one-sided. Whatever the reason,⁵ this is a fact to be reckoned with.

⁵ Günter Rohdenburg found a strong parallel in football usage in German, which has both *Auswechslung* (removal of a current player) and the logically corresponding *Einwechslung* (insertion of a substitute): *Auswechslung* is much more frequent in internet data than *Einwechslung*, and even more so in the inflected plural. He speculates that this matches the perspective of spectators (and camera), for whom players already on the pitch are perceptually more salient than those on the bench. Compare also Waltereit's account of reanalysis in French (section 2.3 above).

5 Explanation for date and place?

5.1 Date

Now we can explain the recency of the change. It happens only after the verb *substitute* enters widespread colloquial use, and this in turn is triggered by its use in soccer (and other sports), which only becomes a matter worth discussing when substitution becomes a normal part of virtually every match, a matter of tactics rather than the occasional replacement of an injured player, and probably at least as frequent as the scoring of goals. Tactical (technical) substitution is a recent rule change in soccer, introduced in the 1966/7 season.⁶ Of course, it is entirely relevant that live radio and television coverage of football can foster the spread of the linguistic usage and encourage discussion of managers' decisions. My first examples of reversed usage come from the BNC, which dates the relevant material 1985–93. This gives quite a good fit with the rule change in soccer.

5.2 American usage

If the link with soccer is valid, a prediction follows: the reversed type would not be used – or much less used – in America. American sports certainly make use of substitution as a concept: *pinch-hitters* in baseball, replacement of the whole *offense* by the *defense* and vice versa in football, and tactical substitution of individuals in many sports. However, the verb *substitute* is rarely used in US sporting language (though see now footnote 7) – rather some other verbal synonym or the noun *sub(stitute)*. In one year of the *New York Times* sports section, I found only fifty-seven hits altogether for *substitut**, of which only five were verbs. (Compare any English newspaper, which would probably have that many in a day or two.) In those five *New York Times* examples, if **new** was expressed, it was always the direct object or middle subject, and **old** was always in a *for*-phrase:

- (20) And in each game, Barber has gotten stronger as the game went along. Look for the Giants to substitute for him more to keep him fresh. (2003 *New York Times* (5 October))

In other words, what I have been calling the standard usage is employed, not the reversal.

Stephen Nagle drew my attention to the clipping *sub*, but in the *New York Times* data this is neither particularly frequent nor significantly different in use. Thus we have such examples as:

⁶ I am grateful to Mr David Barber of the Football Association for information on this aspect of soccer history (p.c., 26 May 2004).

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Table 7.4 *Direct object of substitute in the ANC*

pattern	voice	number of examples
V new _{dO} <i>for</i> old = standard	active passive subtotal	58 (+ 1 elliptical) 5 64
V new _{dO} <i>instead</i> (of old)	active	2
V new _{dO} – other subcategories		17
<i>V new_{dO} – overall</i>		83
V old _{dO} <i>by</i> new = ‘now regarded as incorrect’	passive	1
V old _{dO} <i>with</i> new = used like <i>replace</i>	active	1
V old _{dO} <i>out of</i> X ¹	passive	1
V old _{dO} <i>for</i> new = reversed		0
<i>V old_{dO} – overall</i>		3
<i>indeterminate</i>		5
<i>Total with real or inferred direct object</i>		91

¹The example is probably from the rules of indoor Arena Football, a recent variant of American football:

- (i) Non-specialists only can be substituted out of the lineup once per quarter, meaning two-way players can expect to be on the field upward of 45 to 50 minutes of a 60-minute game. (ANC, *New York Times*)

This means that certain kinds of player currently ‘in the lineup’ (i.e., playing) can be replaced. I am grateful for a number of responses to a query about it on LINGUIST List 15.3523. Even if *substitute old* is entering the language of American sport, it remains less common there than the standard usage of *substitute new*, and the two are often kept apart by the addition of *out* or *in*, respectively, as in (i) or (22).

- (21) Brown, 29, a free agent, led the Cardinals to three victories in five starts while subbing for an injured Jake Plummer last season. (2000 *New York Times* (24 February))
- (22) . . . their first road game against a Vanderbilt team that started three sophomores and subbed in three freshmen. (2002 *New York Times* (2 December))

In (21), *sub* follows a middle voice pattern that is common for the full verb *substitute* and has **old** in a *for*-phrase, while in (22) the phrasal verb *sub in* (normal in AmE, cf. footnote 7, but not, I think, in BrE) is used with **new** as direct object – thus in both cases parallel to the standard pattern.

Since I have made use of the BNC to represent general current BrE, I turn now to the American National Corpus for general AmE. The ANC First Release is about 10 million words in size, one tenth of the size of the BNC. Ninety-one out of 125 examples of *substitute v.* in the ANC (including some apparent duplicates) have a (potential) direct object. I give the distribution in Table 7.4 and then compare with the BNC in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5 Comparison of unambiguous examples in the BNC and ANC

	BNC	ANC
direct object = new	844 (81.5%)	83 (96.5%)
direct object = old	192 (18.5%)	3 (3.5%)
Total	1036	86

The use of **old** as direct object is much less well represented in the ANC at 3.5 per cent than in the BNC (18.5 per cent), and the reversed usage does not occur at all. The prediction appears to be borne out.

6 Ambiguity, iconicity, focus

We have seen that the standard use of *substitute* is not supported by analogy with any other verb. Furthermore, *substitute* is quite often used for genuine interchange, where **old** and **new** are symmetrical and the standard and reversed usages would be indistinguishable. If **old** and **new** are not symmetrical, context usually makes clear which is which. That is why the very public (1) apparently provoked no comment, no entry in the *Guardian's* Corrections and Clarifications column.

Up to the late twentieth century, the traditional subcategorization was not deeply entrenched in everyday speech, given the relative infrequency of colloquial use outside sporting contexts and the need felt by prescriptivists to alert insecure writers to the danger of mistakes. If the verb was coming to be used in new contexts and hence by new users, another factor might have kicked in: I suggest iconicity. Conceptually, the **old** referent must come chronologically before the **new** one. Therefore principles of iconicity would support the ordering of arguments linguistically the same way round.

Elizabeth Traugott suggests another angle: ‘this reversal **MUST** have something to do with focus coming last in the ordinary English sentence, and focus being associated with “new”’ (p.c., 6 September 2004). But that is **new** taken in the sense of rheme, and it is not necessarily the case that what is new as far as the exchange is concerned (the replacement) is always either discourse-new or carries greater focus than what is old in the exchange (that which is replaced, the ‘replacee’; cf. also footnote 5). However, when **new** – in the sense in which I have been using the term – coincides with discourse-newness, as it often may, then the focus structure of English discourse would also tend to support the reversal.

7 The history of *substitute* revisited

We are now in a position to give a fuller and better motivated account of the development of the reversed usage. Comparing just the standard and reversed usages, we can list in Table 7.6 a number of factors which might have been

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Table 7.6 *Factors in choice of argument order*

favouring standard	neutral	favouring reversed
entrenchment in scholarly registers, education, prescription	extension to new users, new registers	
new as direct object is the most frequent pattern overall	strong association of verb and noun with preposition <i>for</i> old and new are referents of same type context usually makes clear which referent is old and which new , or else the distinction is immaterial	old as direct object has a long history and is not rare overall
		old as direct object is categorical in sporting usage, the commonest pragmatic context in colloquial usage
		old as direct object is categorical for the most common synonym, <i>replace</i>
		V old for new is normal for all other Exchange verbs
		old before new is iconic
		new in final position often matches the needs of focus

relevant once the verb *substitute* moved out of its previously rather specialized or scholarly registers into more widespread colloquial use. This I attribute largely to its adoption for the language of football from the 1960s onwards.

Most of the factors cited are to do with argument order and the selection of a particular argument as direct object. It is noticeable that there is some uncertainty about prepositional choice, and when *substitute* is used with **old** as direct object, the **new** argument can be found in a prepositional phrase headed by any of the following:

- *for* (reversed)
- *with* (like *replace*)
- *by* (another possibility for *replace*, or just the normal preposition of the passive).

8 Conclusions

8.1 *Time and place: British vs. American English*

I close with some questions. Why did the reversed usage of *substitute* arise recently and not earlier? Here the answer appears to be soccer: a change in

rules on substitution, the availability of widespread broadcast commentary, a shift of register in the use of the verb. However, it is also conceivable that an earlier change has been masked by stricter editorial standards and a lack of spoken or colloquial data from older periods.

What about US English? We would not expect the reversal to be wholly absent in America, given the range of factors conducive to its appearance. Indeed, Gunnell Tottie has found an American example (p.c., 16 June 2004):

(23) THE FAIRMONT DAY SPA PACKAGE

Two 50-minute spa treatments of choice (not to exceed \$119 per treatment)
Can be substituted for one 100-minute Kur (2004 Publicity from Fairmont Hotels)

Subsequently she found five in CNN transcripts (Tottie 2005). The reversal has also been a recent topic of discussion on the American Dialect Society List (Arnold Zwicky, p.c., 2004–7; see <http://www.americandialect.org/>).

If it remains true that the reversal is less frequent and generally later to arrive in the USA, however, is that really because of differences in the language of sport, or is it merely a matter of editorial primness? Over the last two or three decades, after all, standards for edited material published in America (from newspapers to academic articles to children's books) have been notoriously stricter (or fussier!) than in Britain.⁷ On the other hand, if it should turn out that the reversed usage is not uncommon in America, could we ascribe this to Hispanic influence? In Spanish, the order of arguments with the cognate verb is *sustituir* *old* *por* *new*. At present I stand by my suggestion that soccer has been the trigger for a noticeable difference between British and American English, but (as always) we must be prepared to reconsider if new evidence turns up.

8.2 The argument structure of verbs

Do any other three-place verbs show similar alternations to those of *substitute*? As we saw in section 1.2, it is difficult to find anything closely similar. There are, of course, some well-known three-place verbs which have non-standard subcategorizations, such as

(24) learn somebody something 'teach'

but standard usage of *learn* is two-place. Then consider

- (25) a. lend somebody something
b. lend something to somebody
c. lend something from somebody 'borrow'

⁷ It is instructive that Tottie (2005) found a more permissive attitude to the *replace*-like use of *substitute* among British style manuals. She also points out that British students, unlike American students, do not generally bother with style manuals.

The non-standard usage here is (25c), but it has a different preposition from the standard (25b) and is anyway more typically found in two-place form:

(26) Can I lend your X?

Much closer parallels in argument structure and form-function mappings are shown by some two-place verbs:

- (27) a. That colour really suits you.
b. You really suit that colour.

Pairs like (27) provide an interesting present-day analogue to *substitute*. They also resemble the much-discussed historical changes in *like* and (other) impersonal verbs, so the recent and ongoing changes we have been examining in *substitute* might provide a test-bed for models of spread of innovation through a community, and for studying the question of (mis)communication between speakers with different usages.

Probably uniquely among the large set of verbs classified by Levin (1993), the Exchange group has two non-subject arguments which are usually symmetrical, and certainly semantically similar. So do other Exchange verbs suffer similar fates? I have only a couple of intriguing examples to offer:

- (28) FM states that version 7 is compatible only with TrueType fonts so if you're using MacOS X you'd better replace those Type 1 fonts_{old} for their TrueType counterparts_{new}. (2004 Ibrahim Bittar, FMPExperts list (7 April))
- (29) The year-off generation waited breathlessly for a follow-up to Garland's bestselling debut *The Beach* (1996), and were partially satisfied with *The Tesseract* (1998), which switched Manila_{new} for Thailand_{old}. (2004 Alfred Hickling, *Guardian Review* p.26/2 (10 July))

In (28), *replace* is used with the preposition *for* (but possibly by a non-native speaker); in (29), *switch* is used – like standard *substitute* – with **new** before **old**, rather than the more natural **old** before **new**. Both have actually moved, though in different respects, towards the standard usage of *substitute*! An early use of *replace* in a *substitute*-like pattern is hinted at by Barber (1985: 44) – reference due to Günter Rohdenburg (p.c., 10 April 2007) – while the American Dialect Society List offers some other oddities within the Exchange group. Reviewing the factors tabulated in Table 7.6, we can say that while some hold for all Exchange verbs and can therefore explain anomalies like (28)–(29), others are peculiar to *substitute*.

Manning (2003) has written illuminatingly on what he sees as the false demarcation between grammatical and ungrammatical complementation patterns, and on the need to allow for relative frequency, down to low but non-zero frequencies. He argues that most complementation patterns found

among a group of similar verbs are in fact found with each one of those verbs in a large enough corpus, albeit sometimes with a frequency low enough to get them judged by linguists as impossible, and that such allegedly 'impossible' examples often look quite natural in context. His observations about real corpus data are clearly relevant to the present case: as far as verbal complementation is concerned, what can happen will happen.

To close this chapter I offer several observations. Firstly, abrupt change of register, like creolization, can facilitate the rise of unmarked or 'natural' syntax and therefore may provide more opportunities within language history to see the effects of iconicity and other such principles. In the recent history of *substitute* we see BrE moving faster than AmE for essentially social reasons: differences in the language of sport and perhaps in the reverence accorded to prescriptive ideas. I also take this micro-history of one verb to offer support for two more general claims, namely that speakers make far greater use of context than formal grammars allow, and that speakers associate collocations and construction fragments with meanings without necessarily making a precise form–meaning mapping, word by word.

8 Reflexive structures¹

GÜNTER ROHDENBURG

1 Introduction

While the earlier history of reflexive marking has been researched in depth up to and including Early Modern English (see, in particular, Peitsara 1997), comparatively little is known about the last three centuries. Even so, the evidence supplied by Jespersen (1927: 325–31), Visser (1963: 420–39), Peitsara (1997: 348–9) and others allows us to assume the following scenario:

- Having completely ousted its simpler rival, the use of personal pronouns (e.g. *I washed me*), by the end of the Early Modern English period, the prevailing construction using the reflexive pronoun (e.g. *I washed myself*) has been steadily contracting its range of application both in terms of verb types and its frequency of use.
- There are a number of rivalling structures that are held responsible for the general decrease of overtly reflexive uses in Modern English.² The most direct and best researched (though not necessarily the most important) competitor is provided by the so-called zero variant (e.g. *I washed*), which has established itself at the expense of the reflexive pronoun with a subset of ‘essentially reflexive’ (or self-directed/introverted) verbs. This certainly is in line with the typological evidence as presented by, e.g., Haiman (1983), Faltz (1985), König and Siemund (2000), König (2003) and Smith (2004).

In this chapter, we will demonstrate that the reduction of overtly reflexive uses is continuing unabated and that it is AmE that has been implementing these changes faster and more extensively than BrE. In particular, a range of novel data will be adduced in support of two possibly interlinked assumptions:

¹ This study was carried out within the Paderborn research project *Determinants of Grammatical Variation in English*, which is supported by the German Research Foundation (Grant Ro 2271/1–3).

² A hitherto neglected rival is provided by the *way*-construction (e.g. *She worked her way to the top*), which has – in certain resultative functions – largely replaced the reflexive construction over the last four centuries (Mondorf to appear b).

- AmE is continuing to lead the way in the establishment of the zero variant.
- As far as so-called obligatorily reflexive structures are concerned (those cases where the reflexive pronoun cannot be replaced by zero), AmE tends to use them more sparingly than BrE.

In addition, the analysis will identify a number of contextual constraints determining the choice between the two competing options.³

2 The omission of the reflexive pronoun

2.1 *Early and long-term contrasts between BrE and AmE*

Jespersen (1927: 331) appears to be the first and only author to point out – however briefly – that BrE and AmE may differ regularly in their usage of reflexive structures.⁴ Comparing the six verbs listed in (1), he suggests that in his day (i.e. the first few decades of the twentieth century) the ongoing replacement of the reflexive use by the zero variant was – with the exception of the verb *trouble* – further advanced in AmE than in BrE.

(1) *empty (into), trouble, qualify (for), oversleep, overeat, overwork*

For instance, the clearest case, that concerning *oversleep*, is described as follows: ‘*I overslept myself* is usual in England by the side of *I overslept*, which is the only expression used in US.’ To the extent that these contrasts existed at the time, they have largely levelled out by now. The excess-verbs (*oversleep, overeat, overwork*) seem to have entirely given up the reflexive use, and in the case of *qualify (for)* and *trouble* the newspaper collections of BrE and AmE available at Paderborn do not reveal any substantial differences. The only contrast surviving today is found with *empty*, as in example (2) (cf. Table 8.1).

(2) The Thames empties (itself) into the North Sea.

Jespersen’s observations have, however, been supported in our nineteenth- and early twentieth-century corpora for *empty* and two of the excess-verbs. We will consider them in turn.

As for *empty*, the evidence in Table 8.2 identifies a clear contrast between the two national varieties for the authors born in the nineteenth century: in AmE the share of reflexive uses is less than half of that preserved in BrE. Furthermore, and possibly unlike BrE, the massive expansion of the zero variant had already occurred with the American authors born in the eighteenth century.

³ In many instances, the contrast between the reflexive and zero variants may at least in part reflect a greater or lesser degree of transitivity in the sense of Hopper and Thompson (1980: 266, 276–8; cf. also Haiman 1983: 796–7, Smith 2004: 576–82). In other words, it relates to ‘the effectiveness with which an action takes place’ (Hopper and Thompson 1980: 251). In the following, any potential semantic contrasts of this kind will be disregarded. At any rate, this survey will be limited to such cases where the influence of transitivity is minimal or can be safely ignored.

⁴ In addition, Algeo (2006: 217) notes (correctly) in his rubric dealing with noun phrase complements used as direct objects that the verb *shit* ‘is more often reflexive in British than in American’.

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Table 8.1 *Reflexive and non-reflexive (active) uses of the verb empty immediately preceding the preposition into in selected British and American newspapers*⁵

		I reflexive	II non-reflexive	III total	IV % reflexive
BrE	t90-01, g90-00, d91-00, i93-94, i02-04, m93-00	11	101	112	9.8%
AmE	L92-99, D92-95, W90-92, N01	–	409	409	0%

Table 8.2 *Reflexive and non-reflexive (active) uses of the verb empty immediately preceding the preposition into in a selection of historical British and American corpora*^a

		I reflexive	II non-reflexive	III total	IV % reflexive
BrE	1 EEPF (1518-1700)	1	–	1	
	2 ECF (1705-1780)	4	–	4	100%
	3 authors born in the nineteenth century (EPD, NCF2, MNC/B, LNC/B, ETC/B)	6	11	17	35.3%
AmE	1 EAF1 (*1744-1799)	1	6	7	14.3%
	2 authors born in the nineteenth century (EAF2, MNC/A, LNC/A, ETC/A)	16	97	113	14.2%

^a In this table (and also in Tables 8.3, 8.4, 8.6) asterisks are used to indicate the years of birth of the authors concerned.

Turning now to *oversleep* in Table 8.3, we detect an even clearer contrast with the authors born in the nineteenth century. While BrE does not show any signs of suppressing the reflexive pronoun until the beginning of the twentieth century, AmE had already established the zero variant as a perfectly regular option by the second half of the nineteenth century. Again we find that – unlike BrE – the trend towards dropping the reflexive pronoun is already visible with the American authors born in the eighteenth century. Table 8.4, summarizing the meagre evidence we have for *overeat*, appears to present a largely similar picture. There is hardly any doubt, then, that the changes leading to the complete suppression of the reflexive pronoun with these verbs were initiated much earlier in AmE than in BrE.⁶

⁵ Full references of the electronic corpora involved are found in the bibliography. Notice that the abbreviations indicating American and British newspapers use capital and lower-case letters, respectively.

⁶ Furthermore, there is a great variety of verbs like *adjust* and *adapt* where the earlier use of the reflexive alternative has been reduced to such an extent as to obliterate any contrasts that might have existed between the two national varieties.

Table 8.3 *Reflexive and non-reflexive (active) uses of the verb oversleep in British and American historical corpora*

		I reflexive	II non- reflexive	III total	IV % reflexive
BrE	1 EEPF (1518–1700)	2	–	2	
	2 ECF (1705–1780)	8	–	8	100%
	3 NCF ₁ (*1728–*1799)	3	–	3	
	4 *1800–*1869 (NCF ₂ , MNC/B, LNC/B)	35	–	35	100%
	5 ETC/B (*1870–*1894)	2	1	3	
AmE	1 EAF ₁ (*1744–*1799)	11	2	13	84.6%
	2 *1800–*1869 (EAF ₂ , MNC/A, LNC/A)	20	15	35	57.1%
	3 ETC/A (*1870–*1894)	2	6	8	25%

 Table 8.4 *Reflexive and non-reflexive (active) uses of the verb overeat in British and American corpora of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries*

		I reflexive	II non- reflexive	III total	IV % reflexive
BrE	1 NCF ₂ (*1810–*1820)	12	–	12	100%
	2 MNC/B (*1811–*1814)	4	–	4	100%
	3 LNC/B + ETC/B (*1855–*1881)	9	–	9	100%
AmE	1 EAF (*1776–*1819)	2	–	2	
	2 MNC/A (*1803–*1828)	–	–	–	
	3 LNC/A + ETC/A (*1837–*1876)	3	3	6	50%

Present-day contrasts like that of *empty*, which go back to the nineteenth century, have been observed for many other verbs, including *curl (o.s.) up*, *spruce (o.s.) up*, *brace (o.s.) up* and *keep* in two specific constructions, *keep (o.s.) from* + verbal *-ing* and *keep (o.s.) to o.s.* This chapter is confined to the two constructions associated with *keep*.

The first type was brought to my attention by Peters (2004: 305), who points out that (non-reflexive) examples like (3) are much more common in AmE than in BrE.

(3) He couldn't keep from speaking out.

Though perfectly accurate, this observation only tells half the story. As is suggested by the data in Table 8.5, we are presumably dealing here with an earlier (predominantly) reflexive use which has been largely replaced by the corresponding zero variant. While the replacement process must have been under way in Britain in the Early Modern English period, it was speeded up dramatically by AmE throughout the nineteenth century. As a result, the reflexive variant in BrE is now found to be – relatively speaking – three or four times as common as in AmE. The present-day contrast had been established by the beginning of the twentieth century.

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Table 8.5 *Reflexive and non-reflexive (active) uses of the verb keep immediately preceding from + verbal -ing form in historical and present-day British and American databases*

			I reflexive	II non- reflexive	III total	IV % reflexive
BrE	1	EFPF	13	4	17	76.5%
	2	ECF	25	5	30	83.3%
	3	NCF, MNC/B, LNC/B	76	69	145	52.4%
	4	ETC/B	6	13	19	31.6%
	5	t90-04, g90-04, d91-00, m93-00, i93-94, i02-04	76	170	240	31.7%
AmE	1	EAF ₁	5	7	12	41.7%
	2	EAF ₂ , MNC/A, LNC/A	49	224	273	17.9%
	3	ETC/A	6	61	67	9.0%
	4	L92-99, D92-95, W90-92, N01	83	1037	1120	7.4%

Table 8.6 *Reflexive and non-reflexive (active) uses of the type keep (o.s.) to o.s. in British and American historical corpora^a*

			I reflexive	II non- reflexive	III total	IV % reflexive
BrE	1	ECF + NCF ₁ (*1660- [*] 1799)	6 (1/5)	–	6 (1/5)	100%
	2	authors born in the nineteenth century (MNC/B, NCF ₂ , LNC/B, ETC/B)	39 (2/37)	25 (10/15)	64 (12/52)	60.1% (16.7%/71.2%)
AmE	1	EAF ₁ (*1744- [*] 1799)	–	–	–	–
	2	authors born in the nineteenth century (EAF ₂ , MNC/A, LNC/A, ETC/A)	3 (0/3)	51 (15/36)	54 (15/39)	5.6% (0%/7.7%)

^a The analysis includes examples involving elements between *keep* (+ reflexive) and *to* + reflexive which may be up to three words long. The bracketed figures distinguish between such examples with intervening elements and all remaining straightforward cases.

As is seen in Table 8.6, the second type is found in BrE several generations before it occurs in AmE. While BrE does not shed the reflexive until the first few decades of the nineteenth century, AmE introduces the simple variant right away. With the exception of three measly counterexamples, which crop up very much later, AmE has confined itself to the zero variant for almost 200 years (see Table 8.7). Instead of following suit, BrE has preserved the reflexive variant as the prototypical representative of the construction and, surprisingly enough, even increased its share in journalistic prose.

The evidence in Tables 8.6 and 8.7 also draws attention to an important contextual constraint influencing the choice between the two alternatives (at least) in BrE. The bracketed figures distinguish between examples like

Table 8.7 *Reflexive and non-reflexive (active) uses of the type keep (o.s.) to o.s. in selected British and American newspapers^a*

		I reflexive	II non-reflexive	III total	IV % reflexive
BrE	g90–00, d91–00, m93–00	515 (28/487)	156 (28/128)	671 (56/615)	76.8% (50%/79.2%)
AmE	D92–95, W90–92, No1	–	147 (3/144)	147 (3/144)	0%

^a The analysis includes examples involving elements between *keep* (+ reflexive) and *to* + reflexive which may be up to three words long. The bracketed figures distinguish between such examples with intervening elements and all remaining straightforward cases.

(4a–b) with and without any elements intervening between *keep* (+ reflexive) and *to* + reflexive.

- (4) a. She used to keep (herself) in general to herself.
 b. She used to keep (herself) to herself.

It seems reasonable to assume that (4a–b) including the reflexive represent more explicit grammatical structures than their counterparts without it. This suggests that in common with literally dozens of grammatical variation phenomena the choice between the two variants should be sensitive to the so-called Complexity Principle (cf., e.g., Chapters 4, 6, 10 and 11 by Mondorf, Berlage, Rohdenburg and Vosberg, respectively; Rohdenburg 1996a, 2003a, 2006a/b, 2007a/b). The principle states that in the case of more or less explicit constructional options, the more explicit one(s) will tend to be preferred in cognitively more complex environments. In general, the presence of insertions (as in (4a)) can thus be expected to favour the more explicit grammatical option, which in (4) would be represented by the reflexive variant. However, the evidence in Tables 8.6 and 8.7 leaves no doubt that the discontinuous structure (as in (4a)) has always favoured the (presumably less explicit) non-reflexive variant and possibly contributed to its introduction. We shall see below that far from promoting the use of the reflexive, other manifestations of grammatical complexity tend to restrict it as well. This should allow us to circumscribe more narrowly the Complexity Principle's range of application.

2.2 *More recent cases of divergence*

The vast majority of contrasts between BrE and AmE, however, that I have been able to identify so far (something like 50 verbs) appear to be of much more recent date. Virtually all of them belong to the class of essentially or predominantly self-directed verbs, and with one exception (*acclimate* + *acclimatize* in AmE vs. *acclimatise* in BrE) they attest to the special affinity

Table 8.8 *Reflexive and non-reflexive (active) uses of he committed (himself) 'he bound himself' associated with following complements introduced by the preposition/ infinitive marker to in selected British and American newspapers*

		I himself	II Ø	III total	IV % himself
BrE	t90-02, g90-00, d91-00, i93-94, m93-00	127	10	137	92.7%
AmE	L92-99, D92-95, W90-92, N01	29	80	109	26.6%

Table 8.9 *Reflexive and non-reflexive (active) uses of he committed (himself) 'he bound himself' associated with following complements introduced by the preposition/ infinitive marker to in selected years of the Los Angeles Times*

		I himself	II Ø	III total	IV % himself
1	L92-95	9	29	38	23.7%
2	L96-99	4	31	35	11.4%

of AmE for the zero variant.⁷ This chapter is confined to the analysis of two sets of relevant case studies. We will start by presenting the verbs *commit* and *brace*, which are used simply to exemplify the kind of striking contrast that may have evolved between the two varieties in the twentieth century. The second set of predicates (*disport*, *get in(to) trouble*, *pledge*, *organize*) has been chosen to illustrate four further constraints on the use or suppression of the reflexive pronoun.

Drawing on pertinent changes in recent dictionary entries as well as informal surveys, Shapiro (1999) notes that over the last few decades the verb *commit* 'pledge/bind oneself' has largely given up its earlier obligatorily reflexive use in AmE. These observations are confirmed by the large-scale analyses displayed in Table 8.8. At the same time, the evidence in this table shows that this change has barely affected BrE. Moreover, the comparison undertaken in Table 8.9 between four earlier and four later years of the *Los Angeles Times* suggests that the erosion of the reflexive pronoun is continuing at a striking rate in AmE.

In the case of *brace (o.s.)* (and discounting the particle verb *brace (o.s.) up*), neither BrE nor AmE made regular use of the zero variant in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries either (see Table 8.10). In the meantime, however, the reflexive use has been eroded dramatically and unilaterally in AmE (see Table 8.11).

⁷ I suspect that in at least a number of instances there may have been concomitant cultural changes turning a basically other-directed verb into a predominantly self-directed one.

Table 8.10 *Reflexive and non-reflexive (active) uses of the verb brace (o.s.) immediately preceding phrases introduced by to (preposition or infinitive marker), for or against in historical British and American corpora^a*

			I reflexive	II non-reflexive	III total	IV % reflexive
BrE	1	authors born between 1800 and 1869 (MNC/B, NCF2, LNC/B)	59	1	60	98.3%
	2	ETC/B (*1870-*1894)	19	–	19	100%
AmE	1	authors born between 1800 and 1869 (MNC/A, EAF2, LNC/A)	46	2	48	95.8%
	2	ETC/A (*1870-*1894)	44	–	44	100%

^a The analysis excludes any examples representing nautical jargon.

Table 8.11 *Reflexive and non-reflexive (active) uses of the verb brace (o.s.) immediately preceding to (preposition or infinitive marker), for or against in selected British and American newspapers*

		I reflexive	II non-reflexive	III total	IV % reflexive
BrE	t92, g92, d92, i93, m93	534	35	569	93.8%
AmE	L92, D92, W92, N01	151	599	750	20.1%

In this connection, it is instructive to observe that Smith (2004: 586), presumably a British linguist, still classes an example like (5) as completely unacceptable.

(5) The driver braced for impact.

Generally speaking, the trend towards the suppression of the reflexive pronoun has affected high-frequency and well entrenched verbs much earlier and to a greater extent than low-frequency ones. For instance, compare the high-frequency verb *prepare*, which for a long time has rarely been accompanied by reflexive pronouns, with its far less common near-synonym *brace*, analysed in Table 8.11. Compare also such common verbs as *undress* and *hide*, which have usually dispensed with the reflexive for at least two centuries, with their infrequently occurring synonyms *disrobe* and *ensconce*.⁸ While *disrobe* stopped using the reflexive pronoun much later than *undress*, the overtly reflexive structure is still obligatory with *ensconce*. In view of these general tendencies it comes as a surprise to find that with the verb *disport*, which is used five times as frequently in British as in American

⁸ According to Smith (2004: 583), the obligatory use of the reflexive pronoun – in reflexive contexts – with the low-frequency verb *conceal* is explained by its status as a predominantly other-directed predicate.

Table 8.12 *Reflexive and non-reflexive (active) uses of the verb disport in selected British and American newspapers*^a

	I reflexive	II non-reflexive	III total	IV % reflexive
BrE t90-01, g90-00, d91-00, m93-00 (1,492 million words)	310 (13/297)	39 (9/30)	349 (22/327)	88.8% (59.1%/90.8%)
AmE L92-99, D92-95, W90-92, N01 (845 million words)	29 (3/26)	9 (3/6)	38 (6/32)	76.3% (50%/81.3%)

^a The figures in brackets distinguish between the presence of concrete and mostly human *with*-phrases and all remaining cases.

newspapers, BrE has preserved a markedly larger share of the reflexive variant than AmE (cf. Table 8.12).

Beyond the frequency contrast, BrE and AmE appear to be equally sensitive to the presence or absence of *with*-phrases, as in (6).

- (6) ... who alleges that the Great Helmsman ... disported with numerous young women. (L98)

As is shown by the bracketed figures in Table 8.12, the use of such prepositional complements provides a context favouring the omission of the reflexive pronoun. In this respect, it certainly contrasts with the mere presence of locative or temporal adjuncts or the total absence of any post-verbal material. Asymmetries like these seem to be a regular feature of many other verbs. For instance, take the case of *indulge*. While you still often *indulge yourself* just like that, you almost always *indulge in something*. In other words, there are many cases where increased argument complexity is likely to discourage the use of reflexive pronouns.

A related kind of asymmetry has been observed with the type *get (o.s.) in(to) (...) trouble*, which involves two grammatical choices yielding a total of four permutations as set out in (7a-d).

- (7) a. They got themselves into (great) trouble.
 b. They got themselves in (great) trouble.
 c. They got into (great) trouble.
 d. They got in (great) trouble.

From the stylistic point of view, the more highly marked and more complex options (the presence of the reflexive pronoun and the use of *into*) constitute more highly valued choices than the zero variant and the use of *in*. Assuming that general stylistic tendencies favour combinations of features from roughly the same stylistic level we would predict that (7a) and (7d) should be preferred over (7b) and (7c). Notice that the Complexity Principle would make the same prediction: The more explicit reflexive structure should be preferred in the presence of the more complex preposition *into* rather than with *in*.

Table 8.13 *Reflexive and non-reflexive (active) uses of the type get (o.s.) in(to) (...) trouble in selected British and American newspapers^{a/b}*

	I reflexive	II non-reflexive	III total	IV % reflexive
BrE 100–01, d91–00, m93–00	133 (110/23)	1896 (1712/184)	2029 (1822/207)	6.6% (6.0%/11.1%)
AmE L92, D92–95, W90–92	83 (27/56)	1566 (852/714)	1649 (879/770)	5.0% (3.1%/7.3%)

^a The analysis is based on all relevant examples of *trouble* retrieved within a window of five words to the right.

^b The figures in brackets distinguish between the use of the prepositions *into* and *in*.

 Table 8.14 *Reflexive and non-reflexive (active) uses of the verb forms pledging/to pledge immediately preceding the preposition/infinitive marker to in selected British and American newspapers^{a/b}*

	I reflexive	II non-reflexive	III total	IV % reflexive
BrE t90–01, g90–00, d91–00, m93–00	161 (97/64)	1281 (2/1279)	1442 (99/1343)	11.2% (98.0%/4.8%)
AmE L92–95, D92–95, W90–92	16 (8/8)	663 (1/662)	679 (9/670)	2.4% (88.9%/1.2%)

^a The analysis excludes any examples in which the *to*-phrase representing a personal referent is the first of two arguments.

^b The figures in brackets distinguish between nominal complements and non-finite (mostly infinitival) ones.

Consider now the results of the corpus analysis summarized in Table 8.13.⁹ While the overall share of the reflexive does not show a clear advantage of BrE over AmE, the two contexts distinguished in the bracketed information and illustrated by examples like (7a/c) and (7b/d) do display moderately robust contrasts in the expected direction. Intriguingly enough, however, the results are incompatible with either the general stylistic preference laws referred to above or the Complexity Principle. In both BrE and AmE, the choice of the reflexive happens to be clearly favoured by the use of *in* over *into*. So rather than attracting the reflexive pronoun the increased grammatical complexity associated with *into* is seen to repel it.

The analysis devoted to the verb *pledge* is summarized in Table 8.14. The totals for BrE and AmE seem to indicate a distinct contrast between the two regional varieties. On closer analysis, however, we find that the contexts

⁹ Other variation phenomena involving the choice between *in* and *into* are presented in Chapter 19 by Rohdenburg/Schlüter. In all of the cases contrasting the two national varieties which have been analysed so far it is AmE that shows a greater preference for *in* than BrE.

Table 8.15 *Reflexive and non-reflexive (active) uses of the verb forms organize (organise)/organizes (organises)/organizing (organising) immediately preceding infinitival purpose clauses in selected British and American newspapers^a*

		I reflexive	II non-reflexive	III total	IV % reflexive
BrE	t90-04, g90-04, d91-00, 193-94, 102-04, m93-00	104 (28/76)	119 (18/101)	223 (46/177)	46.6% (60.9%/42.9%)
AmE	L92-99, D92-95, W90-92, NoI	31 (13/18)	222 (23/199)	253 (36/217)	12.3% (36.1%/8.3%)

^a The figures in brackets distinguish between *to organize (organise)* and all remaining uses.

distinguished in (8a-b) (and represented in the bracketed figures of Table 8.14) display extremely divergent tendencies.

- (8) a. He pledged himself to the support of his club.
b. He pledged (himself) to support/to supporting his club.

In (8a-b) a distinction is drawn between nominal complements and non-finite ones. The latter category is represented overwhelmingly (in something like 80 per cent of all cases) by infinitival complements. We can see now that the overall contrast between BrE and AmE is exclusively accounted for by the modest divergence found with non-finite complements. While the reflexive variant is only weakly, though differentially, available with infinitival (and gerundial) complements, it almost invariably occurs with nominal complements. Informal observations indicate that this kind of contrast between nominal complements and infinitival ones may be found with several other verbs. Yet it is not clear at present how this asymmetry should be interpreted.

This brings us to the analysis of the verb *organize* in Table 8.15. The evidence reveals a striking contrast between BrE and AmE in the expected direction for both kinds of context distinguished in the bracketed information and illustrated in (9a-b).

- (9) a. They intended to organize (themselves) to defend their rights.
b. They may organize/were organizing (themselves) to defend their rights.

Notice that in the data analysed the verb *organize* (*o.s.*) immediately precedes an infinitive. It is examples like (9a) containing the marked infinitive of *organize* that are much more likely to preserve the reflexive pronoun than all other uses of the verb, as, for instance, in (9b). No doubt the intervening pronoun is used at least to some extent to avoid the immediate succession of two marked infinitives.

This tendency ties in with a number of related avoidance strategies subsumed under the *horror aequi* Principle (cf., e.g., Rohdenburg 2003a: 236-42, Schlüter 2005: 293-4, 320, Vosberg 2006, Rohdenburg 2006a: 155-8). The

Table 8.16 *Reflexive and non-reflexive (active) uses of the verb forms organise/organises/organising (including any spelling variants) immediately preceding infinitival purpose clauses in selected years of The Times and The Sunday Times and The Guardian (including The Observer for 1994–2004)*^a

		I reflexive	II non-reflexive	III total	IV % reflexive
1	t90–01, g90–00	58 (18/40)	59 (5/54)	117 (23/94)	49.6% (78.3%/42.5%)
2	t02–04, g01–04	14 (4/10)	29 (3/26)	43 (7/36)	32.6% (57.1%/27.8%)

^a The figures in brackets distinguish between *to organise* and all remaining verb forms.

principle involves the universal tendency to avoid the repetition of identical and immediately adjacent grammatical elements or structures. Some of the alternatives chosen in order to avoid an undesirable sequence of *to*-infinitives include the following:

- the omission of *to* in the infinitive dependent on *to help* (+object) (e.g., Lind 1983a, Kjellmer 1985, Mair 2002: 125, Rohdenburg 2006a: 157–8, Berlage 2007)
- the replacement of the following infinitive by (a reduced form of) *and* as in *to try and see* (e.g. Chapter 18 by Tottie, Lind 1983b, Rohdenburg 2003a: 236–42, Vosberg 2006: 224–32, Hommerberg and Tottie forthcoming)
- the replacement of the following infinitive by a gerund with or without a preposition (e.g. Chapter 11 by Vosberg, Vosberg 2003a: 315–22, Vosberg 2006, Rohdenburg 2007a/b)
- the failure to insert a so-called interpretative verb in cases like *to check (to see) whether this is true* (Rohdenburg 2003a: 242).

However, there is an important difference between these cases and the situation in (9a). While with the familiar avoidance strategies the second marked infinitive constitutes a *bona fide* complement of the first verb in the marked infinitive, we are dealing in (9a) with what is best analysed as a purpose clause. We have to conclude, then, that the effects of *horror aequi* may at least in some cases extend to non-arguments.

Incidentally, a comparison of the data from earlier and later years shows that at least in BrE the reflexive structure is at present receding at a dramatic rate (see Table 8.16). However, as is obvious from the figures given in brackets, the ongoing change has not diminished the contrast between *horror aequi*-sensitive *to organise* and all remaining uses of the verb.

3 Frequency contrasts involving reflexive verbs

Having explored British–American contrasts in the expanding area of optional reflexive use, we now turn to those reflexive structures where the zero option is at present still generally excluded even in AmE. In Chapter 4, Mondorf shows that

there are two strategies pursued by AmE vis-à-vis the cognitively complex comparative, in particular with complex adjectives or in complex syntactic environments: the use of *more*-support and the complete avoidance of the comparative structure. We have already seen that the reflexive pronoun may be omitted more easily in various complex environments, the use of insertions, the use of prepositional complements introduced by *with*, and the use of *into* rather than *in* with *get (o.s.) in(to) trouble*. This suggests that reflexives are generally treated as cognitively complex structures as well. In view of these observations, we could expect that in addition to promoting the zero variant more forcefully, AmE might also show a greater tendency to simply use reflexive verbs less often.

For the purposes of this enquiry a set of 123 verbs has been compiled (see the [appendix](#)) which meet the following requirements:

- They are still (generally) incompatible with a (semantically (near-) equivalent) zero variant.
- In the specific interpretations under scrutiny, they occur exclusively, predominantly or to a very large extent with reflexive pronouns.

As is pointed out by many grammarians, such verbs are generally uncommon, and usually formal (Christoffersen and Sandved 1969: 122), which means that they are ‘more common in the written registers than in conversation’ (Biber *et al.* 1999: 345).

The initial hypothesis has been put to the test in two kinds of databases:

- a newspaper collection of BrE and AmE (totalling 1492 million words and 844 million words, respectively) and
- four matching corpora representative of written BrE and AmE from the 1960s and the 1990s (totalling 1 million words each).

Concerning the larger newspaper database, we will have to confine ourselves in this chapter to giving only the broad outlines of the contrasts observed between the two national varieties. With roughly three quarters of all verbs, BrE boasts a very much greater frequency of use than AmE, while the reverse situation is only found in something like 5 per cent of all cases. The remaining verbs do not display any substantial differences.

The analysis conducted on the four one-million-word corpora, LOB, FLOB, Brown and Frown, has been summarized in [Table 8.17](#). Of the 123 verbs scrutinized, only 105 are attested in at least one of the four matching corpora, yielding a combined total of 601 instances (see column I).¹⁰ As well as giving overall totals for the four corpora, [Table 8.17](#) provides more specific

¹⁰ Given that formal complexity correlates inversely with frequency of occurrence (Zipf 1935), the generally less entrenched status of these 105 reflexive verbs may be gauged by comparing them in terms of phonological complexity with a more representative set of verbs, the 1000 most frequent verbs found in the Brown corpus (cf. Schlüter 2005: 329–30). While the least complex category, that of monosyllabic verbs, accounts for 43.2 per cent of the 1000 types in Brown, it only represents 27.6 per cent (or 29) of the types in our set of 105 reflexive verbs.

Table 8.17 *Selected reflexive verbs in four matching one-million-word corpora of written British and American English^a*

	I all examples	II 1–3 tokens class 1	III 4–9 tokens class 2	IV 10 ⁺ tokens class 3	
BrE	1 LOB (1961)	180 (67; 0.37)	22 (15; 0.68)	69 (35; 0.51)	89 (17; 0.19)
	2 FLOB (1991)	155 (59; 0.38)	14 (13; 0.93)	49 (28; 0.57)	92 (18; 0.20)
AmE	3 Brown (1961)	142 (66; 0.46)	24 (20; 0.83)	52 (29; 0.56)	66 (17; 0.26)
	4 Frown (1992)	124 (70; 0.56)	27 (24; 0.89)	43 (28; 0.65)	54 (18; 0.33)
Total	601 (105; 0.17)	87 (49; 0.56)	213 (38; 0.18)	301 (18; 0.06)	

^a The bracketed figures in columns I–IV specify the number of verb types found and the respective type-token ratios.

information in columns II–IV on the verbs assigned to three frequency classes. For instance, class 1 (in column II) covers those verbs that, in the database consisting of all the four corpora under comparison, occur at least once and at most three times, and class 3 (in column IV) deals with the verbs that occur at least ten times in the four corpora taken together. Comparing the overall totals in column I, we can see at a glance that reflexive verbs are indeed becoming generally less frequent in both national varieties, with AmE clearly leading the trend. Brown represents only 78.9 per cent of the tokens found in LOB, although these are distributed across a slightly larger number of verb types. Frown only has 80 per cent of the total attested in FLOB, even though it uses a strikingly larger number of verb types (an increase of 15.7 per cent).

In BrE the overall decrease of almost 14 per cent from LOB to FLOB is exclusively accounted for by the verbs in classes 1 and 2 (one to three tokens and four to nine tokens). There is even a small increase of examples in the high-frequency class 3 (ten or more than ten tokens). In terms of verb types, there is a decrease of almost 12 per cent, which is particularly pronounced in class 2 (four to nine tokens).

In AmE the decrease of 12.7 per cent from Brown to Frown is to be attributed to equal degrees to the verbs in classes 2 and 3 (four to nine and ten or more than ten tokens). There is a small increase in the number of verb types from Brown to Frown.

Comparing the totals for the types and tokens as well as the type-token ratios in BrE and AmE we find that reflexive uses are distributed across a relatively larger number of types in AmE. The tendency is even more pronounced in Frown than in Brown. In fact, both Brown and Frown are more strongly represented in the least frequent category than LOB and, in particular, FLOB. By contrast, classes 2 and 3 (four to nine and ten or more than ten tokens) display larger shares of tokens in LOB and FLOB than in Brown and Frown, respectively. In the 1960s (LOB vs. Brown), the margins in classes 2 and 3 were evenly balanced. By the 1990s, the gap had narrowed substantially

in class 2 (four to nine tokens). It had, however, widened to a striking extent in the high-frequency class (ten or more than ten tokens). It is here that we observe the biggest contrast between contemporary BrE and AmE, with Frown only representing 58.7 per cent of the corresponding total in FLOB.

4 Conclusion

In the area of reflexive verbs, AmE differs from BrE in at least two respects:

- With the class of verbs used inherently, predominantly or very frequently with reflexive pronouns, the centuries-old trend towards the zero variant has affected AmE much faster and more extensively than BrE. Quite a few of these contrasts can be traced at least as far back as the nineteenth century while the majority appear to have evolved in more recent times.
- There is a parallel trend towards using reflexive verbs less often, which has affected both national varieties to different degrees. In the case of verbs whose reflexive pronoun cannot be replaced by zero (without dramatic semantic changes), AmE has at least for something like 50 years led BrE in the decline of reflexive uses. This fact may be attributed to the stronger tendency of AmE (which is also seen in the area of comparatives, cf. [Chapter 4](#) by Mondorf) to avoid comparatively complex and formal structures.

However, BrE and AmE do share the same kinds of contextual constraints. With optionally reflexive verbs, the reflexive pronoun increases its share in *horror aequi* contexts in order to avoid the immediate adjacency of two marked infinitives. By contrast, and contrary to what the preliminary formulation of the Complexity Principle would lead us to expect, various kinds of grammatical (and cognitive) complexity have been shown to repel the reflexive variant rather than promoting it.¹¹ There is no doubt, then, that the rivalry between the reflexive use and the zero variant fails to be accounted for in terms of the Complexity Principle. The task of disentangling the numerous variation phenomena explained by the principle and those few not covered by it will have to be reserved for future investigations. In addition, there are many contextual constraints whose interpretation still eludes us. They include the contrast between prepositional and infinitival complements, which correlates with higher or lower proportions of reflexive structures.

¹¹ In Rohdenburg (in preparation) it is found that particle verbs of the self-directed kind are generally much more likely to drop the reflexive pronoun than corresponding uses without the particle (cf. *calm (o.s.) down* and *calm o.s.*). This fact might be due to two synergetic tendencies:

- the observed affinity of reflexive uses for syntactically simple environments and
- the disinclination to combine a comparatively formal feature (the use of the reflexive) with a relatively informal one (the use of a particle verb).

Appendix: Reflexive verbs analysed in the two databases^a

absent, absorb, accustom, acquaint, acquit, address (to), amuse, apply, assert, avail, barricade, *bestir, betake, better, bill, bring (*to*-infinitive), burden, bury, busy, calm, cast, comfort, commend, comport, compose, *compromise, conceal, *concern, conduct, confine, console, contain, content, control, dedicate, delude, demean, devote, *disgrace, disguise, distance, distinguish, divest, drag, ease, embed, *employ, endear, enjoy, entrench, *excel, exert, expose, express, extend, extricate, flatter, fling, force (on/upon), forget, fortify, *fulfil(l), gather, *glorify, *handle, *harden, haul, heave, help (to), *hoist, humble, hurl, hurt, impose (on/upon), ingratiate, insulate, introduce, lay (open/bare), lend (to), lever, lose, maintain, measure, model, *mortify, *nerve, occupy, orient/orientate, *perjure, pit, position, possess, pride, prop, prostrate, pull (together), reconcile (to), redeem, *reform, repeat, resign, restrict, *revenge, rid, rouse, sacrifice, satisfy, seat, settle, spend, steady, steel, stuff, suggest, suit, sun, surround, sustain, throw, *unburden, *value, vent, wrench.

^a The asterisked reflexive verbs are not attested in any of the four one-million-word corpora LOB, FLOB, Brown and Frown.

9 Noun phrase modification

DOUGLAS BIBER, JACK GRIEVE AND GINA
IBERRI-SHEA

1 Introduction

Written registers in English have undergone extensive stylistic change over the past four centuries, in response to changes in the purposes of communication, the demographics of the reading public and attitudinal preferences of authors. For example, Biber and Finegan (1989, 1997) document the way in which written prose registers in the seventeenth century were already quite different from conversational registers, and how those registers evolved to become even more distinct from speech over the course of the eighteenth century.

Informational expository registers like medical prose and science prose have continued to develop more ‘literate’ styles over the last two centuries, including increasing use of passive verbs, relative clause constructions and elaborated noun phrases generally (see Atkinson 1992, 2001, Biber 1995: 280–313, Biber and Finegan 1997). These linguistic developments correspond to the development of a more specialized readership, more specialized purposes, and a fuller exploitation of the production possibilities of the written mode. That is, in marked contrast to the general societal trends towards a wider lay readership and the corresponding need for popular written registers, readers of medical research prose and science prose have become increasingly more specialized in their backgrounds and training, and correspondingly these registers have become more specialized in linguistic form. Surprisingly, even some more ‘popular’ registers, such as newspaper reportage, have followed a similar historical path (see Biber 2003).

One linguistic domain that reflects these historical developments is the choice among structural devices used to modify noun phrases. In English, noun phrase modifiers can occur before the head noun – ‘pre-modifiers’ – or after the head noun – ‘post-modifiers’. Pre-modifiers in English are phrasal (rather than clausal); there are three major structural types of pre-modifier: attributive adjectives, participial adjectives and nouns:

Pre-modifiers:

Attributive adjective: *a special project*
 an internal memo

- Participial adjective: *hidden variables*
detecting devices
- Noun as pre-modifier: *the bus strike*
the police report

In contrast, post-modifiers can be clausal (finite relative clauses, non-finite participial clauses, *to*-clauses) or phrasal (prepositional phrases and appositive noun phrases):

Clausal post-modifiers:

- Relative clause: *the penny-pinching circumstances that surrounded this international event*
the unity of representation which we expect
- ing*-clause: *the imperious man standing under the lamppost*
- ed*-clause: *a stationary element held in position by the outer casting*
- to*-clause: *the person to see*

Phrasal post-modifiers:

- Appositive noun phrase: *the Environment Secretary, Mr Chris Patten*
- Prepositional phrase: *compensation for emotional damage*
this list of requirements

In many cases, these devices can be considered as alternative forms of expression with roughly equivalent meanings; for example:

- continuous-time feedback systems*
 versus
systems which provide feedback continuously
- systems with chaotic behavior*
 versus
systems exhibiting chaotic behaviour

Noun modifiers are generally much more common in informational written registers (like academic prose or newspaper reportage) than in other registers (see de Haan 1989, Halliday 1988, Varantola 1984). Overall, pre-modifiers and post-modifiers are about equally common (see Biber *et al.* 1999: 578, Figure 8.4). However, there are strong preferences for the specific structural variants. Among pre-modifiers, participial adjectives are comparatively rare, while simple attributive adjectives are very frequent. Nouns as pre-modifiers are also very common, especially in newspaper language (Biber *et al.* 1999: 589, Figure 8.7). Among the post-modifiers, prepositional phrases are by far the most common variant (occurring about four times more frequently than all other types combined; see Biber *et al.* 1999: 606, Figure 8.12). Finite relative clauses account for about half of the remaining post-modifiers, while *ed*-clauses and appositive noun phrases are also moderately common (see Biber *et al.* 1999: 606, Figure 8.13).

However, these synchronic patterns of use have not been constant over the past. Rather, since the eighteenth century, written prose in English has evolved, developing an increasing reliance on ‘compressed’, phrasal types of noun modification. Biber and Clark (2002) document this historical trend, ranking nominal modifiers along a cline of ‘compression’ as follows:

COMPRESSED – pre-modifiers	<	phrasal	<	non-finite	<	relative	–	EXPANDED
(PHRASAL)				post-		clauses		clauses (CLAUSAL)
EXPRESSION				modifiers				EXPRESSION

Over the past three centuries, nominal modifiers have been used with increasing frequencies, with the largest expansion in use occurring at the ‘compressed’ end of this continuum (pre-modifiers and phrasal post-modifiers). Biber and Clark (2002) show how this trend progressed gradually over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but then increased dramatically in the twentieth century (especially the past fifty years) (see also Biber 2003).

These linguistic developments seem to be a reflection of two major factors: the informational purposes of expository and descriptive registers, coupled with the influence of economy. That is, the ‘informational explosion’ has resulted in pressure to communicate information as efficiently and economically as possible, resulting in compressed styles that depend heavily on tightly integrated noun phrase constructions.

Against this background, it is interesting to compare the patterns of use in AmE and BrE: did these historical developments occur at the same rate and to the same extents in both national varieties? The present chapter focuses on one register – newspaper reportage – and compares the preferred patterns of noun phrase modification across the two varieties. The analyses show that AmE and BrE underwent similar shifts in the preferred patterns of noun phrase modification over the past three centuries. However, AmE has generally been in the lead in the increasing reliance on compressed styles of noun phrase modification.

2 Overview of the corpus analyses

The patterns of variation described in the present study focus exclusively on newspaper reportage, based on an analysis of two major corpora. For the analyses of earlier historical periods, we used the ARCHER Corpus (see Biber and Finegan 1997). ARCHER was designed to represent a range of written and speech-based registers in English over the past four centuries, but to a lesser extent the corpus also represents differences between AmE and BrE. The corpus is structured in terms of fifty-year periods, and the second period in each century includes parallel samples of AmE and BrE texts. The diachronic analysis here is based on the newspaper texts from these periods.

This subcorpus is quite small by present-day standards, and it is therefore not suitable for the analysis of rare grammatical features or lexical patterns. However, these samples adequately represent the distribution of

Table 9.1 *Diachronic newspaper corpus*

	no. of texts	
	AmE	BrE
1750–99	10	10
1850–99	10	10
1950–90	10	10

Total: 60 texts; *c.* 120,000 words

Table 9.2 *Present-day newspaper corpus*

Newspaper	no. of words
AmE:	
<i>The Atlanta Journal-Constitution</i>	65,888
<i>The Arizona Republic</i> (Phoenix)	64,933
<i>Houston Chronicle</i>	96,980
<i>Los Angeles Daily News</i>	66,529
<i>The New York Times</i>	92,745
<i>The Philadelphia Inquirer</i>	67,759
<i>St Louis Post-Dispatch</i>	79,243
<i>San Francisco Chronicle</i>	78,142
<i>The Seattle Times</i>	69,447
<i>The Washington Post</i>	82,033
Subtotal:	763,699
BrE:	
<i>Daily Mail</i> (London)	80,707
<i>Daily Telegraph</i> (London)	81,455
<i>Guardian</i> (London)	91,581
<i>The Observer</i>	105,638
<i>The Times</i> (London)	81,254
Subtotal:	440,635

more common grammatical features, and ARCHER has been used for many previous studies of historical register variation.

For the present-day comparison of AmE and BrE newspaper reportage, we constructed a larger corpus of newspaper texts published in 2006. We selected only news articles (rather than editorials), and included mostly ‘metro’ news. All newspapers sampled for the 2006 corpus are formal newspapers with strong reputations, published in major cities (e.g. New York, Washington, London). The AmE sample, totalling *c.* 750,000 words, was collected from ten major newspapers, while the BrE sample, totalling *c.* 450,000 words, was collected from five major newspapers. (All 2006 newspaper articles were downloaded from *World News Access*.)

The linguistic analyses were based on ‘tagged’ texts. The ‘tagger’ used for the analyses was written in Delphi-Pascal; it has both probabilistic and

rule-based components, uses multiple large-scale dictionaries and runs under Windows. This tagger has been developed with three primary considerations: achieving high accuracy levels; robustness across texts from different registers (with different processing options for ‘oral’ and ‘literate’ texts); and identification of a large set of linguistic characteristics (e.g. distinguishing simple past tense, perfect aspect, passive voice and postnominal modifier functions for past participle forms; identifying the gap position for *wh*-relative clauses; identifying several different kinds of complement clause and the existence of *that*-complementizer deletion). The tagger has been used for numerous previous studies of linguistic variation, including ‘multi-dimensional’ studies (e.g. Biber 1995) and the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber *et al.* 1999).

For the most part, we used automatic techniques to identify and count the linguistic features described below. The major exception, though, is for the use of prepositional phrases as noun modifiers, because there are no automatic methods that reliably and accurately distinguish between prepositional phrases functioning as adverbials and those functioning as noun modifiers. Thus, for this feature, we carried out hand-analyses on a sample of prepositional phrases immediately following a noun (i.e. in the context where the prepositional phrase could be functioning as a nominal post-modifier). Approximately 2,000 prepositional phrases were coded by hand, 1,000 sampled from each variety. Prepositional phrases were chosen using random selection techniques, so that the sample included the full range of prepositions (excluding *of*, i.e. *about, after, as, at, before, between, by, for, from, in, into, on, over, to, with*; *of*-phrases were treated separately, because they can be automatically identified with a high degree of accuracy: an *of*-phrase following a noun is almost always a post-nominal modifier). Different prepositions were more or less common overall, and more or less likely to occur as a post-nominal modifier. For example, the preposition *in* is frequent (*c.* 400–500 per million words) and often occurs as a post-nominal modifier (*c.* 65 per cent of the time). *Between* is much less frequent overall (occurring only *c.* twenty to thirty times per million words), but it usually occurs as a post-nominal modifier (*c.* 85 per cent of the time). *By* is also not particularly frequent (*c.* forty to fifty times per million words), but it rarely occurs as a post-nominal modifier (only about 10 per cent of the time). Overall, prepositional phrases occurred as post-nominal modifiers *c.* 54 per cent of the time, accounting for both the overall frequency of the individual preposition and the likelihood that the individual preposition will be used in a post-nominal function. Although this rate can serve as only an approximate estimation, we used it to adjust the automatic frequencies of Noun + Preposition phrase sequences across the various subcorpora.

3 Variation in the choice of noun-modifiers

Figure 9.1 plots the historical change in the use of attributive adjectives and nouns as pre-modifiers in newspaper reportage, showing that AmE and BrE

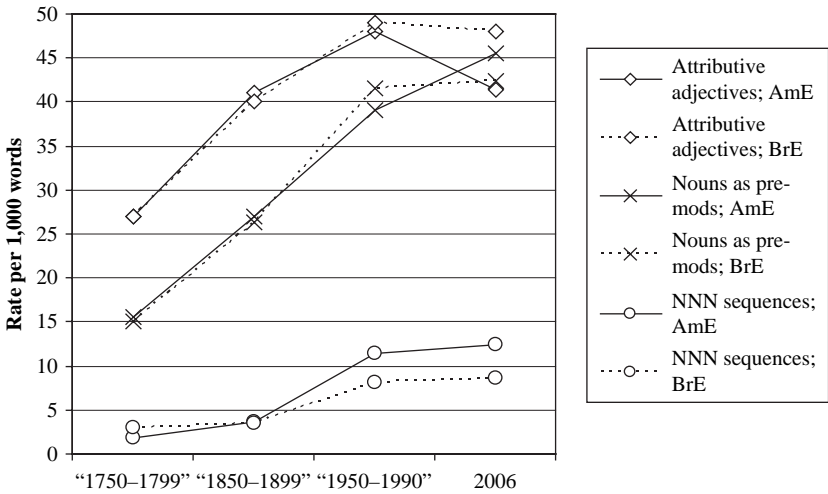


Figure 9.1 Pre-modifiers across historical periods: AmE vs. BrE

are generally similar in their increasing use of these features. Attributive adjectives are generally more frequent than pre-modifying nouns until the most recent period, but both features have increased dramatically in use over the past three centuries.

The historical patterns of use are strikingly similar in AmE and BrE until the most recent periods. However, the two varieties have departed to some extent over the past 50 years: Attributive adjectives have become somewhat less common in AmE, while BrE has maintained the extremely frequent use of this feature (mean difference = 6.54; $t = 5.36$; $p < 0.001$). In contrast, AmE has continued to increase its use of pre-modifying nouns, while the reliance on that feature has leveled out in BrE (mean difference = 3.16; $t = 1.88$; n.s.). As a result, even non-technical news stories in AmE have frequent pre-modifying nouns; for example:

Text Sample 1: *The Washington Post (AmE)*

What's up with the cop in Silver Spring who's ratting out colleagues? That was the question raised by a police officer who started a thread on the online message board of the Montgomery County police union on July 15, 2004.

[...]

The message board was designed as a forum where officers could trade tips, complaints and light banter. But several officers say it has become an outlet for personal attacks – often laced with racist language, sexual harassment and disparaging remarks about police supervisors, county leaders, immigrants and residents.

Copies of the messages from the password-protected Web site provided to The Post provide a rare glimpse of some officers talking among themselves.

The authenticity of the messages, posted from 2004 to this year, was verified by officers with access to the site.

The officer attacked in July 2004 was Cpl. Sonia Pruitt, identified on the site not only by her name but also her professional particulars: badge No. 1134, *Silver Spring station, central business district*. She said the attack stemmed from a misunderstanding of an innocuous episode involving an officer she believed did not follow proper procedure during an arrest.

The threat about her husband would have been jarring in any context, Pruitt said. But coming from one of her colleagues – only *Montgomery County police officers* have access to the forum – it was downright bloodcurdling.

'Who's to say a guy with a gun wouldn't hurt my husband on a *traffic stop*?' she asked.

Officers concerned about what they describe as a spate of increasingly odious exchanges say *union leaders* and *police supervisors* have largely ignored their complaints. The *union president* said the site is deliberately uncensored, but he said he discourages its use as an outlet for personal attacks, harassment and racist language.

Noun-noun sequences are especially common, but Figure 9.1 also shows that AmE more commonly uses longer sequences of pre-modifying nouns than in BrE (mean difference = 3.88; $t = 3.89$; $p < 0.001$); for example:

co-occupant consent rule
hurricane protection system
school security guard
aviation security official
convenience store owner
Family Research Council
company payroll costs
law enforcement communities

Figure 9.2 plots the historical patterns for post-modifiers, again showing that AmE and BrE have changed in generally similar ways. The most noticeable change has been the marked decrease in *of*-phrases. In earlier historical periods of English, *of*-phrases were much more common than other prepositional phrases as noun post-modifiers. For example, Raumolin-Brunberg (1991: 308, Table 9.C) describes how *of*-phrases comprised *c.* 70 per cent of all post-modifying prepositional phrases in the sixteenth-century prose of Sir Thomas More. Figure 9.2 shows that *of*-phrases continued to be extremely common in eighteenth-century newspaper prose, in both AmE and BrE, and this frequency of use was maintained in the nineteenth century. Thus, it is common to find noun phrases like the following in eighteenth-century newspapers (taken from ARCHER):

the Custody of the Seals of the Dutchy and County Palatine of Lancaster
the Manner of raising the extraordinary Contribution of a Million of Ducats

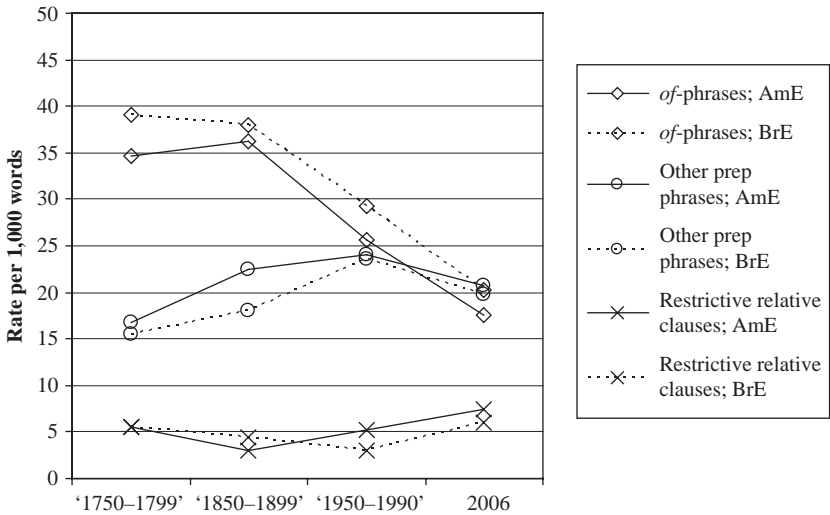


Figure 9.2 Post-modifiers across historical periods: AmE vs. BrE

However, *of*-phrases have dramatically decreased in use during the past century in both varieties. AmE has taken the lead in this regard, using consistently fewer *of*-phrases than BrE (mean difference for 2006 sub-corpora = 2.59; $t = 4.95$; $p < 0.001$).

Over the same period, there was a strong increase in the use of other prepositional phrases as post-modifiers. This increase results in noun phrases such as the following:

the Institute on Religion and Public Life in New York
the first difficulties in her relationship with the new President
a motion for a new trial by Philadelphia Newspapers, Inc.

AmE also led this innovation, shifting in the nineteenth century to an increased use of other prepositional phrases as post-modifiers. However, by the late twentieth century AmE and BrE news reportage were similar in their frequent reliance on other prepositional phrases as noun post-modifiers (mean difference = 2.0; $t = 2.39$; $p < 0.05$).

Interestingly, this trend seems to have levelled off, and perhaps even begun to reverse course, so that the 2006 sample shows a slight decrease in the use of other prepositional phrases as post-modifiers. As a result, *of*-phrases and other prepositional phrases have nearly the same frequency of use in present-day newspaper reportage. One explanation for this recent development might be the increasing emphasis on reader-friendliness, as newspapers compete with the world wide web and other news sources to retain their readerships. But this decrease could also relate to the general increasing

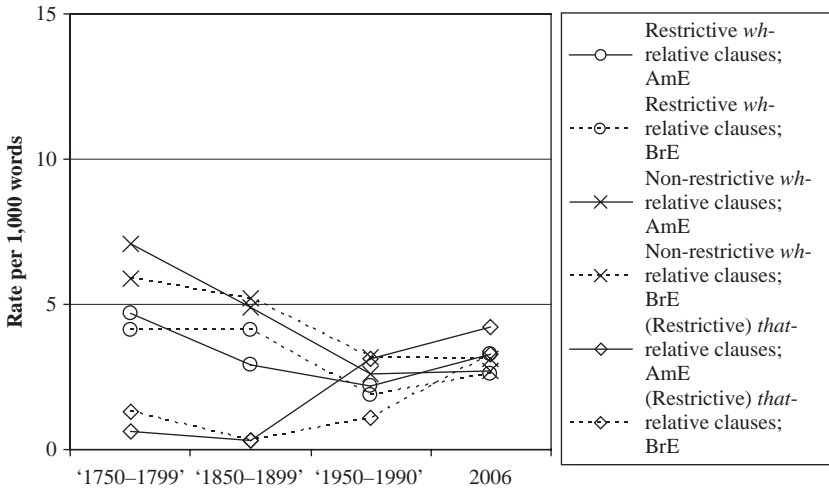


Figure 9.3 Relative clause types across historical periods: AmE vs. BrE

reliance on nominal pre-modifiers, reflecting an overall shift in preference from post-modifiers to pre-modifiers.

Restrictive relative clauses – the major clausal type of noun post-modifier – have remained relatively constant in use across the last three centuries. Surprisingly, the frequency of restrictive relative clauses has increased in the most recent period, representing a counter-trend to the overall greater reliance on non-clausal types of modification. Here again we see AmE taking the lead in this development.

Figure 9.3 breaks out the historical patterns for the different types of finite relative clauses, distinguishing among (restrictive) *that*-relative clauses, restrictive *wh*-relative clauses and non-restrictive *wh*-relative clauses. As Figure 9.3 shows, the recent overall increase in the use of relative clauses is due almost entirely to an increase in *that*-relative clauses, especially in AmE (mean difference = 0.93; $t = 4.25$; $p < 0.001$). In contrast, *wh*-relative clauses have decreased in use over the past three centuries, in both varieties. Interestingly, *that*-relative clauses are coming to be used with both animate and inanimate head nouns. The following examples are all taken from the same news story as Text Sample 1 above:

online forums [that have changed the way police gripe]
A January thread [that started with a message about a sign at a district station]
employees [that would write some of the things [that are written in this forum]]
a good painter [that would be cheap]
an anti-illegal immigration group [that recently started scouting day laborer sites in the county]

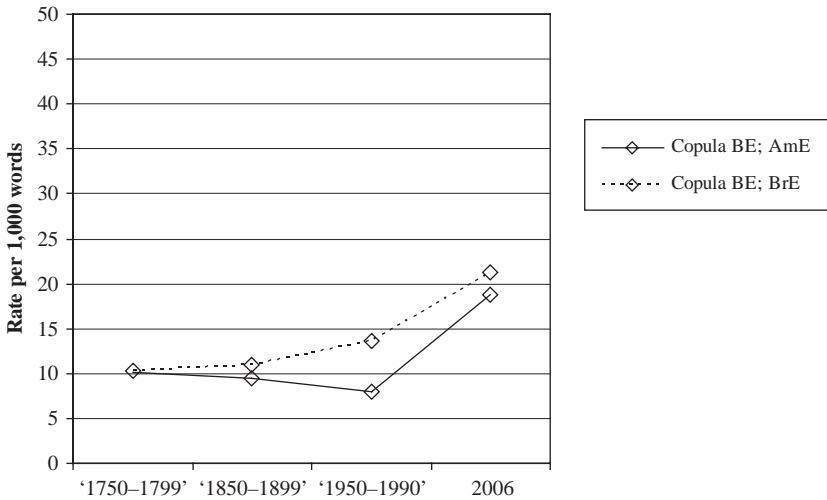


Figure 9.4 Copula BE across historical periods: AmE vs. BrE

a group [that assists immigrants in the county]

a site [that hosts more than 150 message boards for law enforcement communities]

online message boards [that got out of hand]

The only other structural device that occurs frequently as a noun modifier in newspaper reportage is appositive noun phrases, such as:

Sir Terry Leahy, Tesco's chief executive

Bryan Whitman, a Pentagon spokesman

Fortress Investment Group LLC, a New York-based asset management firm

Appositive noun phrases are about as common as prepositional phrases as noun modifiers in the present-day subcorpora (*c.* fifteen occurrences per 1,000 words), occurring with equal frequency in both AmE and BrE.

Finally, we investigated the use of alternative forms of expression used to describe a noun, focusing on the copula *BE*. In this clausal structure, the subject predicative (following the copula *BE*) functions to provide descriptive information about the noun in subject position; for example:

the law is unclear

the Wright Amendment was a fair compromise

As Figure 9.4 shows, these structures have also increased strongly in recent historical periods, but in this case BrE has been in the lead (mean difference for 2006 subcorpora = 2.41; $t = 2.74$; $p < 0.01$).

There are several functions of copula *BE*, including extraposed constructions (*it is unlikely that . . .*), and existential *there* constructions (*There is also concern about*). However, one major pattern that has contributed to the increased use of copula *BE* is in predicative constructions that contain a syntactically complex subject predicative. For example:

Britain is [*the only Western democracy where clerics sit in the legislature by right*]

Genus is [*the level of classification above species*]

Cooper is [*the father of Yvette Cooper, the Housing Minister*]

The BBC is [*liable for a fine of up to €20,000*]

He is [*due to appear at Sevenoaks Magistrates' Court on Wednesday*]

All human life is [*sacred and Godgiven with a value that is inherent, not conditional*]

In many cases, both the subject and the subject predicative are syntactically complex:

[*Operation Ore, started in 2002,*] is [*Britain's biggest inquiry into the internet abuse of children*]

[*The next big issue on which they are likely to agree*] is [*the building of nuclear power stations*]

[*The hearing of the test cases against the Home Office*] is [*due to start on November 13*]

[*A monkey with a mohican hairstyle discovered in Tanzania last year*] is [*not only a new species but also in an evolutionary league of its own*]

These are clausal rather than nominal constructions; however, they incorporate complex noun phrases and adjective phrases as the subject and subject predicative constituents. Thus, the recent increase in the use of copula *BE* can be seen as yet another manifestation of the shift towards more densely informational styles. These structures are minimally clausal, with only the semantically empty linking verb *BE* connecting two structures that are syntactically and informationally complex. These clauses can therefore be regarded in part as an alternative strategy to complex noun phrase structures – a strategy which is utilized to a greater extent in BrE than AmE.¹

4 Conclusion

Newspaper reportage in AmE and BrE has been subjected to the same functional forces over the past three centuries. On the one hand, authors

¹ In future research, it would be interesting to track the use of a wider range of verbs, to investigate whether there has been a general shift away from the use of verbs with specific semantic content towards an increased use of semantically 'light' linking verbs (e.g. *be, have, become, seem, include, involve*).

and editors have become increasingly aware of the production possibilities of the written mode, offering almost unlimited opportunities for crafting and revising the final text. The availability of typewriters, and more recently word processors, have been technological developments that facilitate authors' abilities to manipulate the language of written texts. At the same time, we have witnessed an 'informational explosion', resulting in pressure to communicate information as efficiently and economically as possible. Taken together, these two factors help to explain the rapid increase in the use of syntactically complex and 'compressed' noun modification devices over the past 100 years.

In general, AmE has been somewhat more innovative in using these devices earlier and to a greater extent than BrE. However, newspaper reportage in both varieties has generally followed the same historical course, and present day newspapers in the two varieties are strikingly similar in their reliance on these patterns of nominal modification. Thus, while we see the influence of diatopic variation here, the stronger influences are functional, associated with the technology of literacy and the communicative demands of the 'informational age'.

IO Nominal complements¹

GÜNTER ROHDENBURG

1 Introduction

This chapter surveys a series of British–American contrasts in the area of nominal (and prepositional forms of) complementation against the background of (potentially) long-term and general tendencies. The major perspective adopted resembles that pursued in McWhorter (2002), who in turn was inspired by Hawkins (1986). Considering a set of grammatical features characteristic of Common Germanic, McWhorter demonstrates that in the course of its history English has become strikingly less formally marked than any of its Germanic sister languages. It will be argued here that with few though important exceptions in a circumscribed area, a similar contrast has evolved between BrE and AmE. Accordingly, we shall concentrate on grammatical variation phenomena where the relevant alternatives lend themselves to being classed as more or less explicit. It will be shown that with most types of constructions it is AmE that favours the formally less explicit or simpler option over its more complex variant. In this respect, the present study complements the survey of reflexives in [Chapter 8](#).

In addition, there are two further goals pursued in this chapter. We shall attempt – at least in some cases – to shed some light on the earlier history of the relevant contrasts and to identify some major contextual constraints on the constructions analysed. Concerning a number of general trends, we shall see that while AmE is lagging behind BrE in some areas, it is clearly more advanced in many others and that the distribution of the options involved in both national varieties is usually subject to the same range of constraints.

2 Directly linked nominal complements governed by adjectives

The loss of morphologically marked nominal complements has resulted in contrasting developments for verbs and adjectives. While the class of objects dependent on verbs has undergone a considerable expansion and

¹ This study was carried out within the Paderborn research project *Determinants of Grammatical Variation in English*, which is supported by the German Research Foundation (Grant Ro 2271/1–3).

diversification, any remaining unmarked and directly linked nominal complements dependent on adjectives have generally been replaced by more explicit prepositional ones.² The trend has even affected items like (*un*)*deserving* and (*un*)*becoming*, which are derived from (transitive) verbs selecting direct objects. As for so-called central adjectives that relatively freely occur both predicatively and attributively, there are at present perhaps only two exceptions to the general rule postulating prepositional rather than zero-linked complements, *unbecoming* and *due* ‘owed as a debt or as a right’.³ Since these involve diametrically opposed developments, they will be discussed in separate subsections.

2.1 Unbecoming

Like its non-negated counterpart, *unbecoming* must at some stage have begun to replace the original directly linked complements by prepositional ones. Unlike *becoming*, however, the change never reached completion. While predicative and postnominal uses of *unbecoming* have become very formal and highly stereotyped they are still compatible with zero-linked complements. The rivalry between the old and the new construction is illustrated in examples (1) and (2).

- (1) His behaviour is unbecoming (of/to) an officer.
 (2) He was accused of conduct unbecoming (of/to) an officer.

Comparing BrE and AmE in this respect, we find that they differ strikingly in the extent to which they have preserved the older directly linked complement. Consider the analysis summarized in Table 10.1. BrE and AmE are in full agreement as to which factors help to preserve the older and more economical construction. Predicative structures like that in (1) favour the novel prepositional complement, whereas postnominal uses retain the zero-linked object much better. This is true, in particular, of stereotypical uses involving the unadorned phrase *conduct unbecoming*, as in (2). Yet in all of these contexts, AmE displays a strikingly higher retention rate than BrE.

2.2 Due ‘owed as a debt or as a right’

As indicated above, *unbecoming* has failed to complete the predicted grammatical change. By contrast, the evolution of *due* in the sense of ‘owed as a debt or as a right’ reverses the direction of change that leads from zero-linked to prepositional complements. Kirchner (1940) may have been the first grammarian to point out that in AmE examples like (3a) are usually replaced by the shorter version in (3b).

² For a brief treatment of two factors influencing the evolution of (*un*)*worthy* in Early and Late Modern English, see Rohdenburg (2007b: 220–1, 226–7).

³ The special case of *near* (*to*) (e.g. Maling 1983 and Rohdenburg 1995a: 101–3) is dealt with in Chapter 19 (topic 16).

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Table 10.1 *Prepositional and directly linked nominal complements associated with unbecoming in selected British and American newspapers (190–94, 190–94, 191–94, 193–95; L92–95, D92–95)^a*

		I prepositions				II Ø	III total	IV % prepositions
		a) <i>to</i>	b) <i>of</i>	c) others ^b	d) total			
BrE	1 all examples	28	27	2	57	88	145	39.3%
	2 predicative uses	8	10	1	19	4	23	82.6%
	3 postnominal uses	20	17	1	38	84	122	31.1%
		(11/9)	(3/14)	(1/0)	(15/23)	(66/18)	(81/41)	(18.5%/56.1%)
AmE	1 all examples	8	11	5	24	110	134	17.9%
	2 predicative uses	3	7	4	14	7	21	66.7%
	3 postnominal uses	5	4	1	10	103	113	8.9%
		(3/2)	(1/3)	(0/1)	(4/6)	(78/25)	(82/31)	(4.9%/19.4%)

^a The bracketed figures distinguish between two kinds of postnominal uses, the unadorned stereotypical phrase *conduct unbecoming* and all remaining cases.

^b This category includes the prepositions *from* (BrE), *for* (BrE/AmE) and *toward* (AmE), and it excludes a – very small – number of *in*-phrases whose complement status may be in doubt as well as a few sentential complements of the form *for/of*NP + *to*-infinitive.

- (3) a. The money (that is) due to him . . .
 b. The money (that is) due him . . .

According to Kirchner, the simpler variant is modelled on *owing* and/or the so-called primary passive of *owe* as in (4a–b), which allows the complement expression to optionally delete the preposition *to*.

- (4) a. The money (that is) owed to him . . .
 b. The money (that is) owed him . . .

This argument is strengthened by two observations. Firstly, as we shall see in section 4.3.2, constructions like (4b) without the preposition have generally been more popular in AmE than in BrE. Secondly, as is also pointed out by Kirchner (1940), there is a further parallel, possibly American in origin, between the adjective *due* and the participle *owed* in so-called secondary passives. Compare:

- (5) a. She is owed an increase in salary.
 b. She is due an increase in salary.

The data in Table 10.2 show that the change leading from type (3a) to (3b) constitutes indeed an American innovation, which is clearly established by the first few decades of the nineteenth century. The analysis is here confined to two

⁴ Full references of the electronic corpora involved are found in the bibliography. Notice that the abbreviations indicating American and British newspapers use capital and lower-case letters, respectively.

Table 10.2 *The use of prepositional and directly linked complements dependent on (be) due 'owed as a debt or as a right' immediately preceding the personal pronouns me, you, him, her, us, them, or the possessive pronouns my, your, his, her, our, their, in selected eighteenth- and nineteenth-century corpora^a*

	I to (or unto)	II Ø	III total	IV % to (or unto)
BrE 1 ECF (*1660–*1752)				
a) personal pronouns	64 (34/30)	–	64 (34/30)	100%
2 NCF2 (*1800–*1829)				
a) personal pronouns	96 (70/26)	–	96 (70/26)	100%
AmE 1 EAF1 (*1744–*1799)				
a) personal pronouns	42 (29/13)	6 (2/4)	48 (31/17)	87.5% (93.5%/76.5%)
b) possessive pronouns	87 (56/31)	3 (0/3)	90 (56/34)	96.7% (100%/91.2%)
2 EAF2 (*1800–*1827)				
a) personal pronouns	27 (19/8)	20 (4/16)	47 (23/24)	57.4% (82.6%/33.3%)
b) possessive pronouns	~59 (34/25)	2 (1/1)	61 (35/26)	96.7% (97.1%/96.2%)

^a The bracketed figures distinguish between predicative and postnominal uses.

kinds of fillers for the complement slot, personal pronouns and (more complex) NPs introduced by possessive pronouns. It is seen that the simpler (and less explicit) prepositionless variant is much further advanced with the more easily processed personal pronouns than with the more complex NPs containing possessive pronouns. These results provide further evidence supporting the Complexity Principle, which states that in the case of more or less explicit grammatical options the more explicit one(s) will tend to be preferred in cognitively more complex environments (cf. Chapters 4, 6 and 11 by Mondorf, Berlage and Vosberg, respectively).

In addition, a distinction is drawn in the bracketed information of Table 10.2 between predicative and postnominal uses of *due*. The results parallel the findings shown in Table 10.1. Here too it is the formally more complex predicative structure that favours the more explicit grammatical option. Conceivably, this kind of contrast, which crops up again in section 4.3.2, may also be accounted for in terms of the Complexity Principle.

Finally, consider the present-day situation shown in Table 10.3, which for reasons of accessibility deals only with complements realized by personal pronouns. We can see that AmE has continued the trend already visible in Table 10.2. By contrast, BrE has barely been affected by the change, which does not appear to be making any progress at present. As before, there is a clear contrast in AmE between the (fuller) predicative structure and the (reduced) postnominal one.

3 The use of direct objects after verbs

One of the long-term consequences of the collapse of the English case system has been the expansion of the sentence pattern S-V-O. As a result, both the subject and direct object categories have become much more extensive and abstract.

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Table 10.3 *The use of prepositional and directly linked complements dependent on (be) due 'owed as a debt or as a right' immediately preceding the personal pronouns me, you, him, her, us, them, in selected British and American newspapers (192–93, 92–93, 92–93, 93–94, 93–95; 103–04, 903–05, 902, 904, 103–05; L92–99, D92–95, W90–92, N01)^a*

	I <i>to</i>	II \emptyset	III total	IV % <i>to</i>	
BrE	1 earlier years (1992–5)	131 (41/90)	6 (3/3)	137 (44/93)	95.6% (93.2%/96.8%)
	2 later years (2002–5)	160 (60/100)	10 (3/7)	170 (63/107)	94.1% (95.2%/93.5%)
AmE	1992–2001	31 (17/14)	177 (54/123)	208 (71/137)	14.9% (23.9%/10.2%)

^a The bracketed figures distinguish between predicative and postnominal uses.

Concerning the subject slot, pertinent evidence contrasting English with German is assembled in Rohdenburg (1974), Hawkins (1986) and Legenhausen and Rohdenburg (1995). As for direct objects, the observations provided by Jespersen (1927: 252–73), Kirchner (1955, 1957, 1959), Rohdenburg (1974: 79–83, 357–411), Hawkins (1986) and Legenhausen and Rohdenburg (1995) attest to a centuries-old and still ongoing tendency to expand the category at the expense of prepositional phrases, in particular. As to whether the trend towards direct transitivity is more pronounced in BrE or AmE, there are divergent views, which may be due to conflicting kinds of evidence. Algeo (2006: 217–20) appears to assume that BrE is further advanced in this respect. By contrast, this chapter attempts to provide some quantified evidence in support of the opposite view, which is also held by Horwill (1936: 195) and Kirchner (1955, 1957: 37–8, 1959). For reasons of space, the following exemplification had to be restricted to two – semantically defined – classes of verbs.⁵

3.1 *Antagonistic verbs*

The term *antagonistic* is applied here to verbs that denote an activity directed against a person or thing and which are at least potentially associated with prepositional objects using the preposition *against*. This section focuses on the verbs and contexts illustrated in examples (6)–(12).

- (6) He fought (against) the occupying troops in 1808.
- (7) They battled (against) the fire for two days.
- (8) They protested (against) the invasion of Harikutu.
- (9) She appealed (against) the decision.

⁵ Other verbs that corpus analyses have shown to involve similar contrasts between the two varieties include *cater* (*for/at*), *hunt* (*in/on* etc.), *impact* (*(up)on*), *shop* (*at/in*), *trail* (*behind/against*), *trample* (*(up)on/over*) and *work* (*at/in/on*) a job, etc.

- (10) I just race (against) the clock.
 (11) He would prefer to play (against) a team from down south.
 (12) The document does not offend (against) any international conventions.

In order to retrieve a sufficient amount of relevant data with a minimum of fuss, the environments in which these verbs occur have been restricted in a number of ways. With the exception of *play* and *race*, which have been capitalized in Table 10.4, the analyses are restricted to the verb forms indicated there. In the case of *fight*, *battle*, *protest* and *appeal*, the NPs selected are all introduced by the definite article, and the prepositional/direct objects immediately follow the verb concerned. The analysis of the verbs *play* and *race* has been confined to NPs containing the head nouns *team* and *clock* within a window of four or five words to the right, respectively. With *offend* it has been necessary to distinguish clearly between the relevant sense of 'contravene' and the irrelevant sense of 'hurt'. In order to guarantee the use of the right sense, the search has been limited to object noun phrases containing as heads or modifiers the following nouns (and any derived adjectives):

Table 10.4 *Prepositional and direct objects associated with selected antagonistic verbs in British and American newspapers^a*

	I <i>against</i>	II <i>with</i>	III <i>at/ about/over</i>	IV Ø	V total	VI % prepositions
1 <i>fought</i>						
BrE: t92, g92, d92, m93	34	3	—	147	184	20.1%
AmE: L92, D92, W92, NoI	35	28	—	436	499	12.6%
2 <i>battled/battling</i>						
BrE: t92–93	20	21	—	18	59	69.5%
AmE: L92, D92–95, W92–95, NoI	12	31	—	718	761	5.7%
3 <i>protested/protesting</i>						
BrE: t92	39	—	72	7	118	94.1%
AmE: W92	9	—	5	179	193	7.3%
4 <i>appealed</i>						
BrE: t92	76	—	—	—	76	100%
AmE: W92	4	—	—	261	265	1.5%
5 <i>RACE</i>						
BrE: t90–04, g90–04, d91–00, i93–94, io2–04, m93–00	166	—	—	33	199	83.4%
AmE: L92–99, D92–95, W90–92, NoI	83	—	—	68	151	55.0%
6 <i>PLAY</i>						
BrE: t90–94	28	—	—	60	88	31.8%
AmE: W90–92	21	—	—	124	145	14.5%
7 <i>OFFEND</i>						
BrE: g90–00, d91–00, m93–00	130	—	—	162	292	44.5%
AmE: L92–95, D92–95, W90–92, NoI	4	—	—	58	62	6.5%

^a Capitals are used here to refer to all forms of a given verbal lexeme.

- (13) a. law, act, code, rule, convention, constitution, doctrine, principle
 b. right, tenet, article, amendment, canon, legislation, standard
 c. tradition, logic, mores, manner, justice, clause

In addition, all of the analyses in this and the following section disregard any examples featuring adverbial or other material between the verb and the direct or prepositional object. The reason for this exclusion is very simple: the occurrence of such extraneous elements almost invariably prompts the choice of the prepositional variant in accordance with the Complexity Principle. Notice that two of the verbs (*fight* and *battle*) may occur with the preposition *with* in the relevant interpretation, and *protest* is additionally associated, in particular in BrE, with the prepositions *at*, *about* and *over*.

The evidence presented in Table 10.4 shows first of all that the prepositional objects have been replaced by direct objects to varying degrees. But in every single case AmE is clearly further advanced than BrE.⁶ Two verbs, *appeal* and *protest*, stand out from the rest: while BrE still uses the prepositional variant almost exclusively, AmE virtually always selects the direct object. As yet, very few details are known about the evolution of the contrasting options over the last few centuries. With at least some verbs it is clear, however, that the direct object has only become the American majority variant in the course of the twentieth century. For instance, in the American component of the ETC (the *Early Twentieth Century Corpus*), the direct object is found only once with (antagonistic) *protest* (in a total of twenty instances) and not at all with *battle* (N = 52).

3.2 Verbs of leaving

The verbs of leaving treated in this section are all associated with the optional preposition *from*. Compare:

- (14) They immediately fled (from) the border area.
 (15) It was then that they departed (from) the scene.
 (16) He may resign (from) the post of headmaster.
 (17) He had escaped (from) the prison (camp).

The analyses shown in Table 10.5 have been restricted in similar ways to those involving the antagonistic verbs in Table 10.4:

- With *flee* and *depart*, the NPs concerned are introduced by the definite article, and the prepositional/direct objects immediately follow the verb in question.

⁶ Concerning the iconically motivated Distance Principle (e.g. Haiman 1983, Givón 1991), I interpret this state of affairs to mean that in AmE the scope for the principle to apply has been reduced correspondingly.

Table 10.5 *Prepositional and direct objects associated with selected verbs of leaving in British and American newspapers^a*

	I <i>from</i>	II \emptyset	III total	IV % <i>from</i>
1 <i>fled</i>				
BrE: t90–92	57	216	273	20.9%
AmE: W90–92	29	367	396	7.3%
2 <i>departed</i>				
BrE: t90–93	74	44	118	62.7%
AmE: L92–95, D92–95	85	126	211	40.3%
3 <i>RESIGN</i>				
BrE: t92–93, g92–93, i93–i94, m93–95	247	268	515	48.0%
AmE: L92, D92–95, W90–92, TAL89–94	164	415	579	28.3%
4 <i>ESCAPE</i>				
BrE: t95, d95, i94, m95	170	4	174	97.7%
AmE: L94–96, D92–95, W90–92	304	41	345	88.1%

^a Capitals are used here to refer to all forms of a given verbal lexeme.

- In the case of *resign*, the analysis has been confined to NPs containing the nouns *post*, *position* and *job* as heads.
- The analysis of the verb *escape* is exclusively concerned with the meaning ‘get away or break free from’, which in contrast to others is systematically compatible with the choice of prepositional and direct objects. To isolate the relevant sense spectrum, the investigation has been confined to locational uses of the nouns *prison* and *jail* (occurring within a window of six words to the right), which function either as heads (e.g. [*county*] *jail*) or as premodifying elements of concrete complex NPs or compounds (e.g. *prison van/bus/camp*, but not *prison term/sentence*).
- As in section 3.1, any examples containing adverbials or other material between verb and object have been disregarded.

The findings in Table 10.5 parallel those in Table 10.4. The four verbs display distinct distributional profiles. Yet in every single case the trend towards the use of direct objects has progressed further in AmE than in BrE. Given that almost fifty years ago Kirchner (1959: 380) observed the reverse contrast between BrE and AmE for the verb *resign*, the marked difference seen in Table 10.5 is particularly intriguing. Thus we may be dealing here with another example of the lag and overtake scenario described by Hundt in Chapter 1.

4 Double objects and their passive equivalents

There is no doubt that the enlargement of the semantic spectrum of direct objects discussed in 3.1–3.2 is generally confined to simple rather than complex object constructions. In the area of double object constructions, the history of English is characterized by a series of changes leading to more explicit prepositional structures (e.g. Visser 1963: 606ff., Rohdenburg

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1995a: 108–13). As a result, many semantic types have been virtually eliminated in double object constructions, leaving behind in BrE one or two isolated relics. The only – marginally productive – type left today is provided by verbs of transfer, like *give*, *offer*, *fax* and *email*. Even so, a number of peripheral verbs of transfer have been marginalized or phased out altogether in double object constructions, with AmE generally lagging behind BrE. In this area, it is customary to distinguish between two kinds of passive as illustrated in (18a–b).

- (18) a. The money was given (to) her. (primary passive)
b. She was given the money. (secondary passive)

While the secondary passive appears to have expanded its range of application over the last few centuries (Kirchner 1936, 1937, 1951, Visser 1973: 2142–52), the primary passive, in particular the non-prepositional variant, has become decidedly less frequent and acceptable (e.g. Anderson 1971: 133, Dekeyser *et al.* 2004: 293).

4.1 Verbs of separation

With verbs of separation like *banish*, *discard*, *eject*, *exile* and *expulse*, double object constructions like (19a) have generally been replaced by more explicit constructions like (19b) in which the (second) NP referring to a concrete or abstract domain is explicitly introduced by the preposition *from* or the semantically related *out of* (Visser 1963: 633–5, 1973: 2141–2).

- (19) a. They banished him the court.
b. They banished him from the court.

Previous research has uncovered a number of important factors influencing the choice of the old and outgoing variant (Rohdenburg 1995a: 108–13):

- the conservative role of frequent collocations;
- the contrast between cognitively simpler and more complex (and less accommodating) full NPs;
- the choice between the active and the passive.

In particular, it was found that the type was retained much better and longer in the passive than in the active. It does not come as a surprise, therefore, to find that at least one verb of separation, namely *dismiss*, is still used in the passive version of (19a) with certain stereotyped phrases, as in (20).

- (20) He was dismissed the (police) service/her Majesty's service.

As in (20), the corpus analysis presented in Table 10.6 has been restricted to domain expressions using the head noun *service* and which immediately follow the passive participle. The evidence reveals a striking contrast between the two national varieties, which is occasionally mentioned in the literature (e.g. Trudgill/Hannah 2002: 78). While AmE has completely eliminated the old

Table 10.6 *The realization of the domain expression in passive equivalents of the double object construction with dismiss in selected British and American newspapers*

		I from NP	II Ø NP	III total	IV % from NP
BrE	t90–01, g90–00, d91–00, i93–i94, m93–94	124	76	200	62%
AmE	L92–99, D92–95, W90–92, No1	28	–	28	100%

variant, it is retained to some extent in BrE, with the politically more conservative *Daily Telegraph* displaying the lowest proportion of the new variant (i.e. 40.3 per cent). With other head nouns than *service*, the prepositionless variant of type (20) occurs very seldom even in BrE. For instance, NPs containing the nouns *army*, *navy* or *airforce* trigger the older variant only in 2.5 per cent of the total in the same set of British newspapers which is used in Table 10.6.

4.2 Excuse ‘allow sb. not to fulfil some duty, obligation’

A similar situation is found today with a semantically related verb of dispensation, namely *excuse* in the sense of ‘allow sb. not to fulfil some duty, obligation’. The type is illustrated in examples (21a–b).

- (21) a. The court excused her (from) jury service.
 b. She was excused (from) jury service.

Comparing BrE and AmE in Table 10.7, we note that the prepositionless construction only survives in BrE, with the passive clearly lagging behind the active.⁷ In AmE, the preposition *from*, which makes explicit the negative feature contained in the verb, has become obligatory across the board (cf. the brief statements found in Kirchner 1936: 15, Trudgill and Hannah 2002: 78, Algeo 2006: 219). There is an intriguing contrast in BrE between the active verb forms *excused* and *excusing*, which as yet remains unaccounted for.

4.3 Verbs of transfer

4.3.1 Active uses of peripheral verbs

The contraction of the range of double object constructions has even affected the only marginally productive semantic type, the verbs of transfer. It can be shown that while certain uses have been marginalized – at least in BrE – there are also a few additions to the category. In this section, we will focus on the verbs in (22a–c), which for various reasons may be regarded as being peripheral to the class (e.g. Kühne 1992: 204ff.).

⁷ On the face of it, the asymmetry between the active and the passive revealed in this and the preceding sections looks like a counter-example to the Complexity Principle. For an account of this contrast in terms of the principle, see, however, Rohdenburg (1995a: 112–13).

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Table 10.7 *Double object constructions involving excuse 'allow sb. not to fulfil some duty, obligation' in selected British and American newspapers^a*

		I from NP	II Ø NP	III total	IV % from NP
BrE	1 active uses of <i>excused/ excusing</i> (t90–01, g90–00, d91–00, m93–00)	69 (25/44)	17 (12/5)	86 (37/49)	80.2% (67.6%/89.8%)
	2 passive uses (t90–91, g91, d91, m93–95)	27	83	110	24.5%
AmE	1 active uses of <i>excused/ excusing</i> (L92–95, D92–95, W90–92)	53	–	53	100%
	2 passive uses (L92, D92–95, W90–92)	136	–	136	100%

^a The bracketed figures distinguish between the verb forms *excused* and *excusing*.

- (22) a. *furnish, present, provide, supply*
 b. *feed, issue*
 c. *assure* (used reflexively)

The most obvious manifestation of their marginal status can be seen in the fact that alongside a double object construction (of perhaps questionable acceptability in some varieties) there is an immediately corresponding prepositional construction using the preposition *with* for the verbs in (22a–b) or *of* for *assure*.⁸ Compare:

- (23) a. The future presents us a mixed picture. (L94)
 b. The future presents us with a mixed picture.
- (24) a. He assured himself a footnote in history.
 b. He assured himself of a footnote in history.

With the verbs in (22a) the double object construction was already available in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By contrast, *feed* and *issue* did not become established in this use until the middle or end of the nineteenth century.⁹ Generalizing across the verbs in (22a–b), we can say that the double object has either been preserved (cases (22a)) or newly established (cases (22b)) much better in AmE than in BrE, which makes greater use of corresponding *with*-constructions. In this chapter, the two diametrically opposed developments will be illustrated by the verbs *present* and *issue*.

As is well known (e.g. Goldberg 1992: 55, Collins 1995), the double object construction is particularly at home with personal pronouns in the recipient slot. This is why all of the explorations displayed in the following tables are

⁸ Double object constructions involving *furnish, present* and *supply* are described as unacceptable by the (American) linguist Goldberg (1992: 41, 1995: 128).

⁹ Concerning *feed*, see the early contribution by Kirchner (1935).

Table 10.8 *Double objects and sequences of the type object + with-phrase associated with the verb present in historical British and American corpora^a*

			I NP ₁ with NP ₂	II NP ₁ Ø NP ₂	III total	IV % NP ₁ with NP ₂
BrE	1	authors born between 1750 and 1799 (NCF ₁)	59	44	103	57.3%
	2	authors born between 1800 and 1829 (NCF ₂)	85	10	95	89.5%
	3	authors born between 1830 and 1869 (LNC/B)	85	2	87	97.7%
	1-3	total	229 (223/6)	56 (50/6)	285 (273/12)	80.4% (81.7%/50%)
AmE	1	authors born between 1750 and 1799 (EAF ₁)	56	33	89	62.9%
	2	authors born between 1800 and 1829 (EAF ₂)	87	29	116	75%
	3	authors born between 1830 and 1869 (LNC/A)	63	17	80	78.8%
	1-3	total	206 (202/4)	79 (69/10)	285 (271/14)	72.3% (74.5%/28.6%)

^a The bracketed figures distinguish between canonical orderings and those cases in which the direct or the prepositional object (= NP₂) has been extracted by relativization or some other means.

confined to examples of this kind. For purely practical reasons any instances involving the pronoun *it* have been disregarded.

We start by considering part of the evolution of the verb *present* in Table 10.8. The data have been arranged in three chronological steps according to the years of birth of the authors involved. It is seen immediately that, while the two varieties evolve more or less in parallel during the first period (ending with the birth year 1799), they begin to diverge during the second (covering the birth years 1800–29), and BrE virtually phases out the double object within little more than a generation. AmE, by contrast, though following the trend set by BrE, develops at a much slower rate.

Turning now to the present-day situation in Table 10.9, we find that AmE has continued to replace double objects by *with*-phrases, thus diminishing the gap between the two varieties. Surprisingly, and possibly owing to increased interference from AmE, even BrE appears not to have quite completed the change it started almost 200 years ago.

So far, the general picture sketched in the preceding description has ignored an important grammatical asymmetry, that between canonical examples like those in (23a–b) and those in (25a–c), where the second object or prepositional phrase (NP₂ in Tables 10.8–10.11) has been extracted by relativization or some other means.

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Table 10.9 *Double objects and sequences of the type object + with-phrase associated with the verb present in selected British and American newspapers (190–92, m93–95; L92, D92–95, W90–92, No1)*^a

	I NP ₁ with NP ₂	II NP ₁ Ø NP ₂	III total	IV % NP ₁ with NP ₂
BrE	545 (540/5)	7 (5/2)	552 (545/7)	98.7% (99.1%/71.4%)
AmE	532 (527/5)	44 (32/12)	576 (559/17)	92.4% (94.3%/29.4%)

^a The bracketed figures distinguish between canonical orderings and those cases in which the direct or the prepositional object (= NP₂) has been extracted by relativization or some other means.

Table 10.10 *Double objects and sequences of the type object + with-phrase associated with the verb issue in selected British and American newspapers (190–94, 101–03, 990–994, 901–03, 193–94, 102–03, 991–00, m93–00; L92–95, D92–95, W90–92)*

	I NP ₁ with NP ₂	II NP ₁ Ø NP ₂	III total	IV % NP ₁ with NP ₂
BrE	395	72	467	84.6%
AmE	2	154	156	1.3%

- (25) a. This is the picture the future presents us.
 b. This is the picture the future presents us with.
 c. This is the picture with which the future presents us.

The bracketed information supplied in Table 10.9 shows that in AmE the double object construction still represents the majority variant in non-canonical uses like those in (25). Similar observations have been made for all of the other verbs listed in (22a). The historical data totted up for the three periods analysed in Table 10.8 point in the same direction. These observations strongly suggest that non-canonical uses like those in (25) have always favoured the double object construction over its immediate prepositional alternative. It is tempting to compare this asymmetry with the voice contrast encountered above with *dismiss* and *excuse*. In all of these cases, acceptability is enhanced by the superficial separation of the object NPs in a double object construction.

In the available historical corpora, the verb *issue* does not yet occur in the *with*-construction of type (23b) and there are only two examples of the double object construction (for the years 1908 and 1909). Significantly, both instances stem from American authors. For example:

- (26) ... and I don't believe any life-insurance company in the world would have issued me a policy on the strength of 'em. (LNC/A, 1909)

In the meantime, the verb has become thoroughly established in the double object construction in AmE, which uses the *with*-construction only sporadically (see Table 10.10). The situation is reversed in BrE, which is, however, beginning to adopt the double object variant as well.

Table 10.11 *Double objects and sequences of the type object + of-phrase associated with the reflexively used verb assure in selected British and American newspapers (190–92, 190–92, 190–92, 193–94; 102–04, 102–05, 102, 104, 102–05; L92, L94, L97–99, D92–95, W90–92, Not)*

		I NP ₁ of NP ₂	II NP ₁ Ø NP ₂	III total	IV % NP ₁ of NP ₂
BrE	1 earlier years (1990–4)	100	9	109	91.7%
	2 later years (2002–5)	62	13	75	82.7%
AmE	1992–2001	141	96	237	59.5%

This brings us to the reflexively used verb *assure* in the sense of ‘make sure that one obtains sth.’, which appears to be another recent addition to the class of verbs using double object constructions. At any rate, examples of type (24a) do not yet occur in the available historical corpora. As can be gathered from the data in Table 10.11, the longstanding prepositional variant has been largely replaced by the double object construction in AmE. BrE has already begun to adopt the novel type as well, and the comparison of the earlier and later years in the newspaper corpus suggests that the replacement process is making rapid progress at present.

4.3.2 Primary passives

As is shown in (18a), repeated here for convenience, primary passives may occur with or without an appropriate preposition in the recipient slot.

(18) a. The money was given (to) her.

Surprisingly, the literature (e.g. Visser 1973: 2152–7) is silent on the evolution of the two rivals in Modern English or any earlier periods. A number of explorations of my own leave no doubt, however, that compared with earlier centuries the prepositionless variant has receded dramatically at the expense of the more explicit alternative. For instance, consider the survey in Table 10.12, which for practical reasons has been restricted as follows:

- the passive subjects are non-human;
- the NPs/PPs in the recipient slot, which immediately follow the passive participle, are realized as personal pronouns (excluding *it*).

Moreover, it can be shown that the development has in general been much faster and more thorough-going in BrE than in AmE.¹⁰ While the use of personal pronouns after *was/were sent* does not reveal any appreciable contrasts between the two varieties in this respect, many other verbs do represent more or less divergent stages of development. In the following, two

¹⁰ There are conflicting views as to whether BrE or AmE is more accommodating of the prepositionless variant. While Trudgill and Hannah (2002: 65) incline to the former position, the latter is favoured by Zandvoort (1963: 56, 204).

Table 10.12 *The realization of the recipient in primary passives associated with was/were sent in historical and present-day corpora of BrE and AmE*

		I <i>to</i> NP (<i>unto</i>)	II Ø NP	III total	IV % <i>to</i> NP (<i>unto</i>)
BrE	1 EEPF/ECF (1518–1782)	10	30	40	25%
	2 authors born between 1800 and 1896 (NCF ₂ , MNC/B, LNC/B, ETC/B)	27	15	42	64.3%
	3 g05, i04–05, d02, d04	53	2	55	96.4%
AmE	2 authors born between 1800 and 1896 (EAF ₂ , MNC/A, LNC/A, ETC/A)	30	14	44	68.2%
	3 L96–99, D92–95, W90–92	48	1	49	98.0%

Table 10.13 *The realization of the recipient in primary passives associated with is/are/was/were owed in British and American newspapers (t90, t95, t00, t04, g90, g95, g00, g05, d91, d95, d00, d04, i93, i94, i02, i05; L96–99, D92–95, W90–92, N01)^a*

	I <i>to</i> NP	II Ø NP	III total	IV % <i>to</i> NP
BrE	2 (1/1/0)	227 (38/65/124)	229 (39/66/124)	99.1% (97.4%/98.5%/100%)
AmE	141 (15/39/87)	41 (24/13/4)	182 (39/52/91)	77.5% (38.5%/75%/95.6%)

^a The bracketed figures distinguish between personal pronouns, NPs introduced by the definite article and all remaining NPs.

(radically different) cases of this kind will be presented, which involve the verbs *owe* and *accord*. Since the insertion of adverbial or other material between the passive participle and the recipients almost invariably triggers the use of the preposition *to*, such cases have again been excluded from consideration.

In the case of *owe*, the recipients have been roughly classified as in (27) into three categories representing increasingly raised degrees of processing complexity, namely personal pronouns, NPs introduced by the definite article and all remaining NPs.

(27) The money was owed (to) him/the elder sister/nobody in his family.

The investigations summarized in Tables 10.13 and 10.14 allow several more or less firm conclusions to be drawn:

- As far as the two easier kinds of recipient NPs (and their competing prepositional variants) are concerned, there is at present a clear-cut contrast between the two varieties, with AmE clinging to the zero variant much more tenaciously than BrE.
- Although – due to lack of data – we cannot be absolutely sure, this contrast may have been around for at least a century.

Table 10.14 *The realization of the recipient in primary passives associated with the verb owe in British and American authors born in the nineteenth century^a*

		I to NP	II Ø NP	III total	IV % to NP
BrE	NCF ₂ , MNC/B, LNC/B, EPD, ETC/B	7 (3/1/3)	1 (1/0/0)	8 (4/1/3)	87.5% (75%/0%/0%)
AmE	EAF ₂ , MNC/A, LNC/A, ETC/A	3 (1/1/1)	4 (4/0/0)	7 (5/1/1)	42.9% (20%/100%/100%)

^a The bracketed figures distinguish between personal pronouns, NPs introduced by the definite article and all remaining NPs.

Table 10.15 *The realization of the recipient in primary passives of the verb accord associated with two classes of full NPs in the recipient slot in selected British and American newspapers (1901–02, 194, 104, 196–99)^a*

		I to NP	II Ø NP	III total	IV % to NP
BrE	1 all examples	130 (45/85)	46 (17/29)	176 (62/114)	73.9% (72.6%/74.6%)
	2 predicative uses	26 (11/15)	9 (4/5)	35 (15/20)	74.3% (73.3%/75%)
	3 postnominal uses	104 (34/70)	37 (13/24)	141 (47/94)	73.8% (72.3%/74.5%)
AmE	1 all examples	43 (6/37)	110 (33/77)	153 (39/114)	28.1% (15.4%/32.5%)
	2 predicative uses	12 (4/8)	13 (7/6)	25 (11/14)	48% (36.4%/57.1%)
	3 postnominal uses	31 (2/29)	97 (26/71)	128 (28/100)	24.2% (7.1%/29%)

^a The bracketed figures distinguish between NPs introduced by the definite article or a possessive pronoun and all remaining NPs.

- The differences between the three classes of NP distinguished in Table 10.13 (for AmE) and perhaps also in Table 10.14 are well in line with the predictions of the Complexity Principle: the individual shares of the more explicit prepositional variant are directly proportional to the assumed degrees of processing complexity.

The analyses carried out on the verb *accord* also distinguish between three classes of recipients representing ascending degrees of processing complexity, as in (28).

- (28) These were the benefits (that were) accorded (to) them/the(ir) fans/
some people who had registered in time.

In order to provide a sufficient number of examples for pronominal fillers, the category had to be analysed separately from full NPs (see Tables 10.15 and 10.16). In addition, both surveys reintroduce the distinction between predicative and postnominal uses, which was discussed in 2.1–2.2. The evidence in the two tables shows first of all that AmE has preserved a strikingly greater proportion of the zero variant with all types of recipients. Moreover, we can generally observe the expected grammatical asymmetries: pronominal

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Table 10.16 *The realization of the recipient in primary passives of the verb accord associated with personal pronouns (excluding it) in the recipient slot in selected British and American newspapers (101–04, 101–05, 102–05, 102, 104; L92–99, D92–95, W90–92, Nor)*^a

	I to NP	II Ø NP	III total	IV % to NP
BrE	26 (11/15)	34 (8/26)	60 (19/41)	43.3% (57.9%/36.6%)
AmE	6 (3/3)	24 (3/21)	30 (6/24)	20% (50%/12.5%)

^a The bracketed figures distinguish between predicative and postnominal uses.

Table 10.17 *The realization of the recipient in primary passives of the verb accord in historical British and American corpora*^a

		I to NP	II Ø NP	III total	IV % to NP
BrE	authors born between 1860 and 1879 (LNC/B, ETC/B)	18 (4/14)	8 (7/1)	26 (11/15)	69.2% (36.4%/93.3%)
AmE	authors born between 1860 and 1879 (LNC/A, ETC/A)	3 (0/3)	28 (14/14)	31 (14/17)	9.7% (0%/17.6%)

^a The bracketed figures distinguish between personal pronouns and all remaining expressions in the recipient slot.

recipients induce a lower share of the prepositional variant than NPs containing the definite article or a possessive pronoun, and these in turn feature fewer prepositional phrases than the remaining recipients, at least in AmE. In parallel with the findings in 2.1–2.2, predicative uses tend to trigger higher proportions of the more explicit prepositional variant than postnominal ones. There are only two exceptions to these general tendencies: the contrast between the two kinds of full NPs in the recipient slot and the associated one between the predicative and postnominal uses are not (no longer?) observable in BrE.

Finally, we may note that the divergence between BrE and AmE and the contrast between prenominal recipients and the rest can be traced at least as far back as the early 1900s (see Table 10.17).

5 Conclusion

In the domain of nominal complements, we have seen that both national varieties share the same set of developments. With most types of constructions, AmE favours the formally less explicit or simpler variant without a preposition over the more complex and more explicit prepositional one. Where the trend involves the addition of prepositions, these changes have usually been delayed in AmE. Accordingly, *unbecoming* + direct nominal

complement, the double object with certain peripheral verbs of transfer (*furnish, present, provide, supply*) and the prepositionless variant of the primary passive with verbs of transfer have been retained longer and better in AmE than in BrE.

By contrast, changes tending in the opposite direction are usually implemented faster in AmE. Thus, the following features have been established more extensively in AmE:

- the directly linked complement after *due*;
- the direct object after several types of prepositional verbs (including antagonistic verbs and verbs of leaving);
- double objects at the expense of prepositional constructions after some peripheral verbs of transfer (e.g. *feed, issue, assure*).

Intriguingly, there are two notable exceptions to the general formula, the unusually fast establishment in AmE of the prepositional variants (using *from*) at the expense of double object constructions (or their passive equivalents) with *dismiss* and *excuse*. With the verbs of leaving, however, the preposition *from* is more likely to be dispensed with in AmE. This suggests that the negative feature associated with *from* in argument complexes may play a very special role. This assumption is supported by the parallel findings in the area of sentential complementation. With the verbs of negative causation, the earlier trend towards marking the negative orientation by means of *from* has virtually reached completion in AmE. While BrE has followed suit in the passive, several verbs in the active (*prevent, stop, save* and a few others) can get away without this marking and have even been reversing the older trend to some extent (e.g. Mair 2002 and Vosberg 2006: 149–57).

Above and beyond these evolutionary trends, the variation phenomena described for BrE and AmE are sensitive to a number of important constraints. These include the following:

- Stereotyped phrases are likely to delay an ongoing change (2.1, 4.1).
- Double object constructions with the verbs *dismiss* and *excuse* (4.1, 4.2) and peripheral verbs of transfer like *present* (4.3.1) share similar tendencies: the separation of the two arguments by means of passivization (4.1, 4.2) or extraction (4.3.1) serves to dramatically increase their degrees of acceptability or their frequencies of use.
- Predicative uses of adjectives and (passive) past participles display a greater affinity for the more explicit prepositional variant than corresponding postnominal ones (2.1, 2.2, 4.3.2).
- An increased degree of noun phrase complexity is matched by a correspondingly raised share of the more explicit prepositional variant (2.2, 4.3.2).

The last factor (and perhaps also the two preceding ones) may be accounted for in terms of the Complexity Principle.

II Non-finite complements¹

UWE VOSBERG

1 Introduction

The rivalry between infinitival and gerundial constructions is a widely recognized phenomenon in the grammatical system of the English language, probably because the gradual implementation of a verbal *-ing* form² since late Middle English is unique among the European languages.

Large-scale analyses of historical as well as present-day electronic text corpora reveal that, in processes of linguistic change involving variable non-finite verb complementation, American English (AmE) has sometimes been lagging behind the parent variety³ while very often it is British English (BrE) that has been more conservative. The examples in (1) illustrate a case where AmE appears to be further advanced than BrE:⁴

- (1) a. *We cannot stand seeing* our own tactics displayed so obviously in another woman. (*Guardian* 1994)
b. ... teachers digging into their own pockets because they *cannot stand to see* their students go without essential learning tools. (*Los Angeles Times* 1995)

Since Old English times, a series of linguistic processes has resulted in a reorganization of the entire system of sentential complementation. In Middle English, *to*-infinitives began to replace *that*-clauses after many verbs that had previously been confined to a finite clause (see Fischer 1997a: 268). In the area of non-finite complementation, gerunds increasingly

¹ This study was carried out within the Paderborn research project *Determinants of Grammatical Variation in English*, which is supported by the German Research Foundation (Grant Ro 2271/1–3).

² Cf. Poutsma (1923: 142–4), Jespersen (1940: 192–203), Visser (1973: 1861), Dixon (1991: 233), Quirk *et al.* (1985: 1191–3), Miller (2002), Fanego (2004).

³ It has long been clear, though, that Marckwardt's (1958) idea of post-colonial survivals of conservative features (often summarized in the term 'colonial lag') is probably a myth 'as far as the hard linguistic facts are concerned' (Görlach 1987: 55).

⁴ A typology of diachronic patterns involving all kinds of possible situations is provided by Hundt (Chapter 1). However, the distinction between 'colonial lag', 'colonial lead' and (in only very few cases) 'lag and overtake' will meet our requirements for the time being.

took over the function of unmarked infinitives after certain verbs (see Fischer 1997a: 267, 1997b: 127, 2003: 454). Since late Middle English times, and probably to a much greater extent, the emerging gerund has also been competing against the marked infinitive in the complementation of many superordinate predicates (see Fanego 1996a: 77, Kjellmer 1980: 89, 92).

As a result, a long-term and general tendency (which may deserve a name like ‘Great Complement Shift’) has often led to the replacement of *to*-infinitives by *-ing* forms in complement function (see Fanego 1996a/b/c). This process has affected the majority of governing items (verbs, adjectives and verb-noun collocations) that had hitherto been complemented only by infinitives. The Great Complement Shift and occasional reversals of it have been accounted for by a general semantic specialization which many (in particular cognitive) linguists seem to have regarded as clear-cut and even categorical (for a critical assessment, see Fanego 2004).⁵

It can be shown, however, that in transitional stages of development semantic tendencies are very often accompanied and even overshadowed by a number of other factors influencing the variation of grammatical options,⁶ so that one of the two non-finite verb forms provides a clearly preferred alternative in certain syntactic or morphosyntactic environments (see Bolinger 1979, Rohdenburg 1995a/b, 1996a, Mair 1990, 1993, Rudanko 2000, 2002, Fanego 1996c, Vosberg 2003a/b, 2006, Rohdenburg 2006a, 2007b).

Covering chiefly the last two centuries, the following four case studies will shed light on the varying extent to which both national varieties have been affected by the Great Complement Shift. Additionally, this chapter will explore the influence of three major extra-semantic factors (which have been largely neglected in the linguistic debate so far) which have always been likely to either accelerate or delay the rise or fall of *-ing* forms.

2 *Have no business*

Diachronic analyses of the verb-noun collocation *have (got) no/any business* leave no doubt that, in the course of the Great Complement Shift, it was AmE (rather than BrE) that accelerated the general trend towards gerundial complementation as shown in example (2a). Surprisingly, the OED still does not accept gerundial complements.⁷ Non-finite constructions introduced by

⁵ Functional Grammar (see Wierzbicka 1988: 162f., 165, Dirven 1989: 128ff.) has often explained the variation of the two non-finite constructions in terms of the semantic (mainly temporal) orientation of the particular governing item.

⁶ In many cases semantic differences are hardly perceptible today (see Mair 2003: 329 for the verb *start* in Present-Day English). This problem was even more pronounced in former centuries, when ‘the *-ing*-construction was not yet as specialized semantically as it is today’ (Rohdenburg 1995b: 381).

⁷ ‘*Colloq.* A matter with which one has the right to meddle. Also, justifying motive or right of action or interference, ‘anything to do’ (*with*). Almost always with negative expressed or implied. Const. usually *with*, or infinitive’. (OED, s.v. *business*, sense 16c)

one of the prepositions *in* or *with*, as in (2b/c), are encountered only very occasionally in both national varieties.

- (2) a. Neither of you are seventeen, and *have no business thinking* about young gentlemen and matrimony . . . (EAF2: Joseph Holt Ingraham, *Charles Blackford*, 1845)
- b. Although the World Cup has been a great success, the Ivory Coast *has no business competing* in it and rugby *has no business in setting up* mismatches. (*Guardian* 1995)
- c. 'But it's bad –; it's bad,' Mr Tulliver added, sadly, checking this blamable exultation; 'a woman's *no business wi' being* so clever; it'll turn to trouble, I doubt.' (NCF2: George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, 1860)

Since the mid nineteenth century (represented by authors born between 1800 and 1869),⁸ AmE has always been more advanced in the replacement of the infinitival complement variant than BrE. As a result, this process has nowadays been completed in the colonial variety while this is not yet the case in BrE (cf. the evidence in Figure 11.1).⁹ Frequency of occurrence might play an important role here: AmE is not only further advanced than BrE but also exhibits a higher frequency in the overall use of non-finite complements following this verb-noun collocation.

A closer look at the examples found in the corpora reveals that under certain syntactic circumstances the *to*-infinitive tends to be preserved longer than elsewhere. A typical example of such an environment is given in (3):

- (3) Young girls must always be expected to have secrets; [that old folks *have no business to know* *t_i*]. (EAF2: Joseph Holt Ingraham, *Blanche Talbot*, 1847)

Here, the argument (*secrets*) of the dependent verb (*know*) has been extracted from its original position after the verb and placed before the clause by means of relativization. In Transformational Grammar it is assumed that this (object) movement leaves a gap (or trace, *t_i*) in the original position by fronting the filler of the gap (indexed *i*).

Hawkins (1999: 246) has shown that all kinds of filler-gap dependencies are hard to process. In particular, he has demonstrated that (longer) finite clauses are more difficult to extract out of than (shorter) non-finite ones (see Hawkins 1999: 263f.). In the area of non-finite complementation, analyses carried out within the Paderborn research project (see Vosberg 2003a/b, Rohdenburg 2005, 2006a, 2007b) have shown over and over again that

⁸ The various historical periods are covered by the following corpora: Early Modern English: EEPF (publication dates 1518–1700); Early eighteenth century: ECF₁ (authors born *1660–*1699); Late eighteenth c.: ECF₂ (*1700–*1752); Early nineteenth c.: NCF₁ and EAF₁ (*1728–*1799); Mid/Late nineteenth c.: NCF₂, EAF₂, MNC, LNC (*1800–*1869); Early twentieth c.: ETC (*1870–*1896); Late twentieth c.: BNC (publication dates 1960–93).

⁹ There are no instances of non-finite complements following this collocation in the EEPF corpus and only eleven examples in the ECF corpus, all of them involving infinitives.

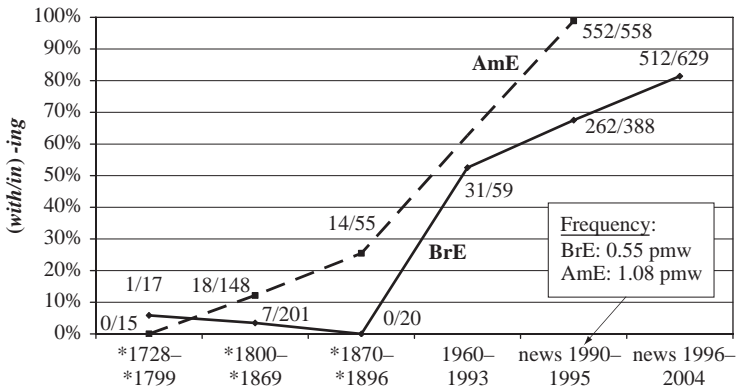


Figure 11.1 The development of non-finite complements dependent on the verb-noun collocation *have (got) no business* in various historical and present-day corpora (NCF, EAF, MNC, LNC, ETC, BNC; t90-04, g90-04, d91-00, m93-00, i93-94, i02-04; W90-92, L92-95, D92-95)^{10,11,12}

extraction contexts tend to prefer infinitival complements to gerundial ones (cf. the examples in (2a) and (3), both by the same author). These observations are expressed in terms of the extraction principle:

Extraction Principle: In the case of infinitival or gerundial complement options, the infinitive will tend to be favoured in environments where a complement of the subordinate clause is extracted (by topicalization, relativization, comparativization, or interrogation etc.) from its original position and crosses clause boundaries. (Vosberg 2003a: 308, 2003b: 202)

Accordingly, Figure 11.2 (devoted to BrE) shows that the decline of the *to*-infinitive has always been delayed in these contexts. The same tendency can be found in AmE (see Figure 11.3), although at first sight the colonial variety does not seem to be as sensitive to this phenomenon as the parent variety. However, the gerund is so firmly entrenched in present-day AmE that even extraction contexts are unable to shelter the *to*-infinitive nowadays.

3 Decline

The verb *decline* (in the sense of 'refuse') complemented by non-finite constructions like the ones in (4a/b) is one of those verbs that reverse the

¹⁰ The dates preceded by an asterisk refer to the relevant years of birth.

¹¹ N.s. for *1728-1799, $p < 1\%$ ** for *1800-1869, $p < 5\%$ * for *1870-1896, $p < 0.1\%$ *** for present-day newspapers 1990-5.

¹² Full references of the electronic corpora involved are found in the bibliography. Notice that the abbreviations indicating American and British newspapers use capital and lower-case letters, respectively.

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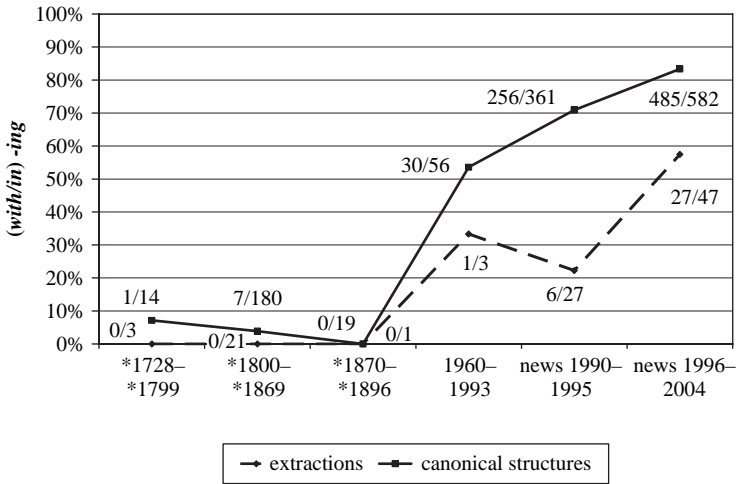


Figure 11.2 The development of non-finite complements dependent on the verb-noun collocation *have (got) no business* in various British historical and present-day corpora¹³

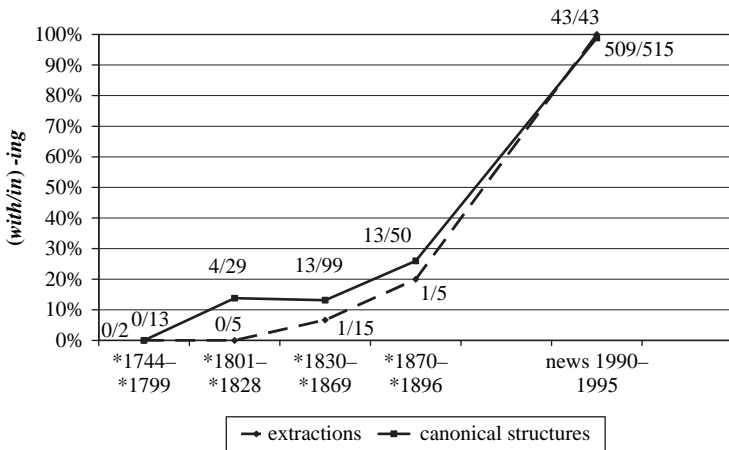


Figure 11.3 The development of non-finite complements dependent on the verb-noun collocation *have (got) no business* in various American historical and present-day corpora¹⁴

¹³ $p < 0.1\%$ *** for both periods (1990-5 and 1996-2004) in present-day British newspapers; all other periods n.s.

¹⁴ All periods n.s.

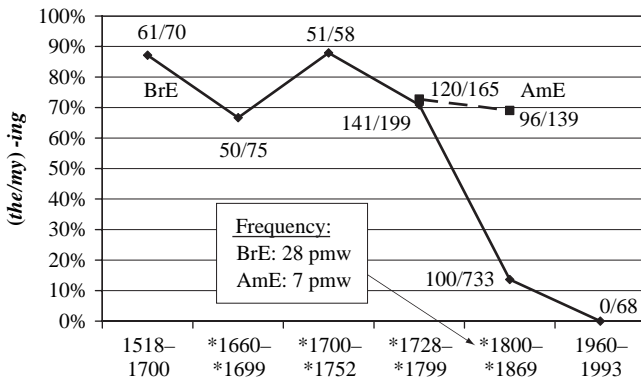


Figure 11.4 The development of non-finite complements of the verb *decline* in various historical and present-day corpora (EEPF, ECF₁₊₂, NCF₁₊₂, EAF₁₊₂, BNC/wridom)¹⁵

general tendency described by the term ‘Great Complement Shift’ earlier on. Although the verbal *-ing* complement seems to have been firmly established by around the Early Modern English period, it was obviously felt to be semantically inadequate (cf. footnote 5) and began to disappear in the nineteenth century so that today it is not used anymore in BrE (cf. Figure 11.4). No similarly dramatic decline by the end of the nineteenth century can be observed in AmE, which was thus lagging behind BrE at that time. Again, a very much lower frequency in the use of non-finite complements of this verb seems to be responsible for the (colonial) lag.

- (4) a. ... while Cornbury, equalling the Frenchman in politeness, courteously *declined accepting* his weapon, and at once admitted the officers to their parole. (EAF₂: Peter H. Myers, *The King of the Hurons*, 1850)
- b. ... but my heart smote me for my selfishness, when I witnessed their effect on Mr. Dick, who was so low-spirited at the prospect of our separation, and played so ill in consequence, that my aunt ... shut up the board, and *declined to play* with him any more. (NCF₂: Charles Dickens, *The Personal History of David Copperfield*, 1850)

While the overall development is close to completion in BrE nowadays, the *-ing* form seems to be protected in certain morphosyntactic environments (in section 4 referred to as *horror aequi*) where the governing verb appears in the form of a marked infinitive itself: in a present-day American newspaper corpus (cf. Vosberg 2006), gerundial constructions are still used

¹⁵ $p < 0.1\%$ *** only for *1800–*1869.

Table 11.1 *The distribution of non-finite complements of the verb decline in various historical British corpora*

<i>decline</i> : EEPF, ECF, NCF	<i>to</i>	(<i>the</i>) - <i>ing</i>	total
1 continuous constructions	691	397 (36.5%)	1,088
2 insertions	41	6 (12.8%)	47
2a insertions: one or two words	23	6 (20.7%)	29
2b insertions: more than two words	18	0 (0.0%)	18
2c insertions: adverb, verbless adverbial phrase, vocative, intensifier	30	6 (16.7%)	36
2d insertions: complex adverbial phrase, reduced adverbial clause, reporting clause	11	0 (0.0%)	11

in about 18 per cent (= 7/39) of all non-finite complements after the string *to decline*, as in (5), whereas the corresponding proportion in the British newspapers¹⁶ is already down to 3 per cent (= 5/195) even in this context.

- (5) But Ojai wants the supervisors *to decline placing* the initiative on the ballot . . . (*Los Angeles Times* 1994)

The development and variation of non-finite complements after *decline* seems to be sensitive to the following principle:

Complexity Principle: In the case of more or less explicit grammatical options, the more explicit one(s) will tend to be favoured in cognitively more complex environments. (Rohdenburg 1996a: 151)

Cognitive complexity can appear in different shapes. One manifestation is represented by material intervening between the matrix expression and its complement. Having a closer look at the historical (British) corpora, we find that insertions – like the ones in (6) – provide a syntactic context in which the decline of the *-ing* form (or the re-establishment of the infinitive) is obviously accelerated (cf. Table 11.1,¹⁷ lines 1 and 2).

- (6) a. I did not therefore always *decline*, by pretended loans to assist other men to employ labourers as well as myself, *to act* upon their own designs, and prosecute their own fortune. (NCF1: William Godwin, *St Leon*, 1799)
 b. Arthur went in for the sake of patting Meg, *declining* as far as possible *to see* anything in the stables . . . (NCF2: George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 1859)
 c. Charlotte's mother sent a grim consent to the child's marriage, but *declined* herself *to attend* it. (NCF2: William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Adventures of Philip*, 1862)

¹⁶ For AmE: W90–92, L92–95, D92–95; for BrE: d91–00, g90–00, t90–01, m93–00.

¹⁷ $p < 0.1\%$ *** for 1/2, n.s. for 2a/b, n.s. for 2c/d.

Table 11.2 *The distribution of non-finite complements of the verb decline in the EAF corpus*

<i>decline: EAF</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>(the) -ing</i>	<i>total</i>
1 continuous constructions	83	214 (72.1%)	297
2 insertions	5	2 (28.6%)	7

The effect of structural discontinuities is, of course, also noticeable in AmE (cf. Table 11.2¹⁸ for the situation in the nineteenth century).

It can be assumed that the infinitival option is more explicit than the gerundial one, because its sentential (or verbal) status is more evident: the *-ing* form very often represents a nominal category, as can be seen from the still existing instances of (mixed) nomino-verbal gerundial complement types such as in *I remember* [DET *his*] *reading* [DO *a book*], in which the *-ing* form is preceded by a determiner though followed by a direct object. This conclusion would then be in line with the view expressed by the Complexity Principle: the more explicit infinitive tends to be favoured in the more complex environments provided by discontinuous constructions.

The degree of cognitive complexity produced by insertions can be measured both gradually (in terms of length) and categorically (by means of different types of insertions): contexts involving longer insertions (of more than two words) avoid gerundial complements altogether here (cf. Table 11.1, lines 2a and 2b). Moreover, it seems clear (cf. Table 11.1, lines 2c/d) that adverbial phrases containing sentential constituents, as in example (6a), are cognitively much more complex than (reduced) sentences lacking a VP, as in (6b), or intensifiers, as in (6c) (cf. Rohdenburg 2000: 27f. and also Chapter 6 by Berlage).

4 *Lay claim*

Another verb-noun collocation that is about to establish a gerundial complement at the expense of the infinitive is *lay claim*. It was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that a form of sentential complement was used after this collocation. At first, the infinitive appears to have been the regular option (cf. Figure 11.5 for the nineteenth century). Nowadays, by contrast, the majority of all non-finite complements is represented by gerunds featuring the preposition *to*, as in (7).

- (7) It has afforded the Author great amusement and satisfaction ... to learn from country friends ... that more than one Yorkshire schoolmaster

¹⁸ n.s.

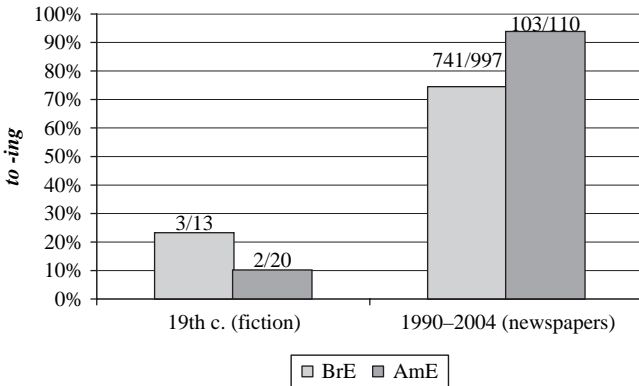


Figure 11.5 The development of non-finite complements dependent on the verb-noun collocation *lay claim* in various historical and present-day corpora (NCF, EAF, MNC, LNC, ETC; t90–04, g90–04, d91–00, m93–00, i93–94, i02–04; W90–92, L92–99, D92–95, N01)¹⁹

lays claim to being the original of Mr. Squeers. (NCF2: Charles Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*, 1839)

In Present-Day English, there is a highly significant difference between BrE and the transatlantic variety in the distribution of these two non-finite rivals, with the colonial variety showing a higher percentage of gerunds (cf. Figure 11.5). In the general trend towards gerundial complementation, AmE is now further advanced than BrE, while in the (fictional) texts of the nineteenth century it still seems to lag behind the parent variety. Thus, the development of *-ing* complements is a case of colonial lag and overtake.²⁰

Contrary to the observations made in sections 2 and 3, the variety exhibiting a higher frequency (in the use of the governing expression) is not the one that is more advanced in the case of *lay claim*. In the present-day newspapers examined, *lay claim* complemented by a non-finite construction is used much more frequently in BrE (0.5 instances per million words compared to 0.1 instances pmw in AmE), although it is obviously lagging behind the transatlantic system.

¹⁹ Br–Am contrasts: n.s. for nineteenth century fiction, $p < 0.1\%***$ for present-day newspapers; diachronic contrasts: n.s.

²⁰ With regard to Figure 11.5 (and later on also Figure 11.8), it should be noted that, at present, the historical data can only be covered by fictional texts, while the Present-Day English material is represented by (non-fictional) newspaper corpora. It goes without saying, though, that different text types may account for the different behaviour in the distribution of the options concerned.

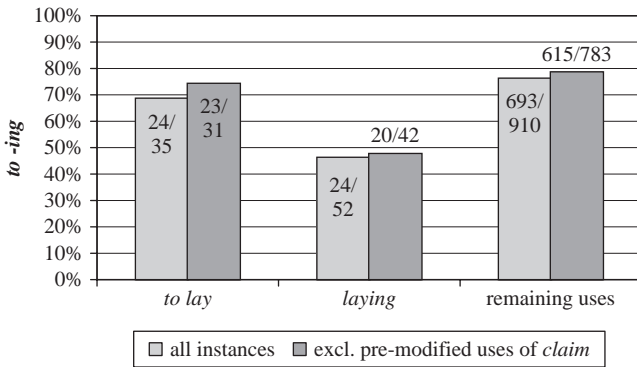


Figure 11.6 The distribution of non-finite complements dependent on the verb-noun collocation *lay claim(s)* in various British present-day newspapers for 1990–2004²¹

A detailed analysis of the examples found in the corpus involving the greatest number of instances (the present-day British newspapers illustrated in Figure 11.5) reveals that it is useful to distinguish at least two morphosyntactic categories of the verb *lay*: a) *laying*, b) *to lay* (compared to the remaining uses \emptyset *lay*, *lays*, *laid*).

Firstly, the overall entrenchment value of about 75 per cent for gerundial complements is not reached if the verb *lay* appears in the shape of an *-ing* form itself, as in example (8a). In cases like these (cf. the column representing all instances of the category *laying* in Figure 11.6), a complement involving another *-ing* form is obviously felt to be less acceptable than in other morphosyntactic environments (cf. also Ross 1972). Instead, an infinitival complement tends to be used to avoid a clash of two *-ing* forms.

- (8) a. The public hearing has been set to start on Nov 24 and is certain to assume the drama of another show trial of the woman who, while no longer *laying claim to be* ‘mother of the nation’, has unabashed ambition for high political office. (*Daily Telegraph* 1997)
- b. . . . *they found it difficult to lay claim to be British.* (*Guardian* 1995)

This effect can be accounted for by the *horror aequi* Principle:

The horror aequi Principle involves the widespread (and presumably universal) tendency to avoid the use of formally (near-) identical and (near-) adjacent (non-coordinate) grammatical elements or structures. (Rohdenburg 2003a: 236)

²¹ $p < 0.1\%***$ for both contrasts between *to lay/laying/remaining uses*.

Bolinger (1979: 44) remarks that ‘The closer the echo, the worse it sounds. Two *-ings* with a preposition are better than two without.’²² Accordingly, compared to verbs immediately followed by non-finite complements (as in *starting doing* or *to start to do*), the *horror aequi* effect is weakened in the case of a gerundial construction complementing verb-noun collocations (as in *laying claim to doing*), because here the two *-ing* forms are not directly adjacent with the noun *claim* and the preposition *to* providing a buffer.

It is clear that once the gerundial complement is almost fully established, there is virtually no possibility of avoiding it by means of the infinitive any more. In *horror aequi* contexts such as in *laying claim to (playing) an important role*, we often find that (non-finite) complementation escapes into the domain of non-sentential structures. In cases like these, a non-finite complement form (and therefore a sequence of two *-ing* forms) can be dispensed with altogether and replaced by a (non-sentential) NP object (see Vosberg 2003a, 2006, for the verb *avoid*).

The second potential *horror aequi* context is represented by the morpho-syntactic category *to lay*, as in example (8b). In cases where the matrix expression takes a marked infinitive itself, the *horror aequi* Principle predicts that another *to*-infinitive complementing the collocation would tend to be largely avoided. In other words, we would expect the proportion of gerundial complements (cf. the column representing all instances of the category *to lay* in Figure 11.6) to be much higher than for the remaining uses of *lay*. However, this does not turn out to be the case. Thus, a string of two infinitives is obviously not judged to be as unusual and awkward as two successive *-ing* forms. One major reason why structures like (8b) are fully acceptable is the fact that the old and well-known infinitive is still much more entrenched in the English complementation system than the gerund.

In addition to the *horror aequi* Principle, there seems to be yet another extra-semantic factor determining the choice of non-finite complement forms. The noun *claim* is occasionally qualified by grammatical or lexical elements such as determiners or adjectives like the ones in (9a/b).

- (9) a. His grandfather, a stucco decorator, could *lay* some *claim to be* an artist ... (*Daily Telegraph* 1995)
 b. A gold medallist at Los Angeles, Seoul, Barcelona and Atlanta, Redgrave can already *lay* justifiable *claim to be* regarded as Britain’s greatest Olympian ... (*Daily Telegraph* 2000)

It follows from Figure 11.7 (see the columns representing all instances) that these premodified uses of *claim* tend to prefer infinitival complements rather

²² It should be noted at this stage that surface (phonetic) identity alone does not seem to be a trigger of *horror aequi*. It is considered objectionable only when it coincides with a maximum of grammatical similarity (see also Hoekstra and Wolf 2004). Thus, Bolinger’s (1979: 44) exclusively euphonic motivation mentioned above should be viewed with caution.

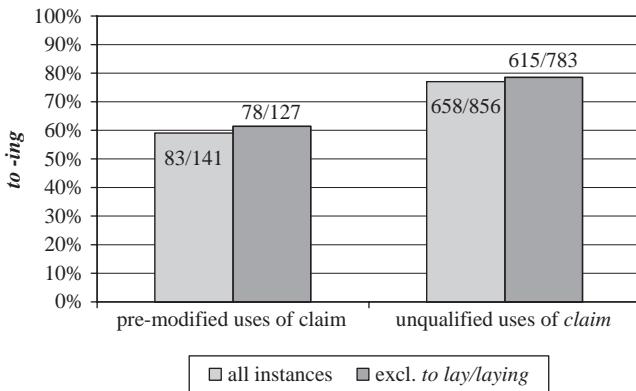


Figure 11.7 The distribution of non-finite complements dependent on the verb-noun collocation *lay claim(s)* in various British present-day newspapers²³

than *-ing* forms. According to the Complexity Principle, this does not come as a surprise, because qualification clearly increases the (cognitive) complexity of the expression so that the (presumably) more explicit complement option – the infinitive – is preferred in these cases.

So far, two extra-semantic factors have been shown to exert considerable influence on the choice of competing complement types: *horror aequi* and cognitive complexity. One of the most intriguing issues in multifactorial analyses is the question of how and to what extent different factors influence (weaken or reinforce) one another. As for the area under investigation, there does not seem to be any interference between the two factors here: exclusion of the competing factor (see the right columns in Figures 11.6 and 11.7) always shows (more or less) the same contrast as suggested by the figures representing all examples.

5 *Can't stand*

A distributional difference between the two national varieties is also quite evident in the case of infinitival and gerundial complements of the verb *stand* used in the sense of 'bear'²⁴ and preceded by the auxiliaries *can* or *could*. All cases considered involve an overt marker of negativity such as the particle *not*

²³ $p < 0.1\%***$ for both contrasts between premodified and unqualified uses.

²⁴ This excludes cases such as the following:

- (i) But pardon me I beseech you, good master Freeman, the day weares, and I haue farre to go, therefore I cannot stand to tell out the rest: but at our next meeting in troth you shall knowe all; therefore let vs paye our shotte and be walking. (EFPF: Edward Sharpham, *The Discouerie of the Knights of the Poste*, 1597)

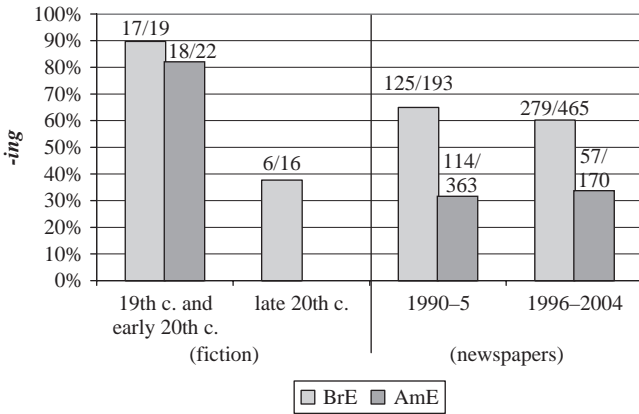


Figure 11.8 The development of non-finite complements dependent on the verb *cannot/could not stand* in various historical and present-day corpora (NCF, EAF, MNC, LNC, ETC, BNC/wridomi; t90-04, g90-04, d91-00, m93-00, i93-94, io2-04; W90-92, L92-99, D92-95, Nor)²⁵

(including the corresponding contracted forms) or certain non-assertive adverbial expressions like *no longer* or *hardly*.²⁶

(10) Pon my honour, I *can't stand seeing* a whole family going to destruction!
(NCFr: Susan Ferrier, *Marriage*, 1818)

As can be seen from Figure 11.8, the construction was very rare in the texts covering the last two centuries, and the gerundial complement option has been losing ground to the infinitival variant in both BrE and AmE.²⁷

The collection of present-day newspapers shows that in AmE the decline of *-ing* complements is much further advanced than in the parent variety (see also the evidence provided by Tottie 2002c). Additionally, AmE makes use of this construction (involving non-finite complements) much more frequently than BrE: 0.27 instances pmw in the British newspapers for 1990-5 and 0.7 instances pmw in the transatlantic newspapers for the same period. Again, there is a highly suggestive correlation between the overall frequency and developmental stages. It should be mentioned, though, that the frequency

²⁵ An American corpus comprising late twentieth-century texts, and thus being equivalent to the *British National Corpus* (BNC), is still under construction.

²⁶ Br-Am contrast: $p < 0.1\%^{***}$ for both 1990-5 and 1996-2004; diachronic contrast: $p = 0.13\% < 1\%^{**}$ for the fictional British corpora; all others n.s.

²⁷ The analysis excludes, however, interrogatives such as

- (i) How can you stand to watch this? (*Los Angeles Times* 1997)

It is found that these uses of *stand* are predominantly followed by infinitival complements.

Table 11.3 *The distribution of non-finite complements dependent on the verb cannot/could not stand (incl. contractions and non-affirmative adverbs) in various British newspapers for 1996–2004*

BrE newspapers for 1996–2004	<i>to</i>	<i>-ing</i>	total
1a <i>can</i> + negative form	112	173 (60.7%)	285
1b <i>could</i> + negative form	74	106 (58.9%)	180
2a non-contracted form of <i>can/could</i>	65	53 (44.9%)	118
2b contracted form of <i>can/could</i>	121	226 (65.1%)	347
3a <i>can/could</i> + <i>seldom/barely/hardly/no longer</i> + <i>stand cannot/can't/could not/couldn't</i> + <i>really/even/longer</i> + <i>stand</i>	19	4 (17.4%)	23
3b remaining (straightforward) cases	167	275 (62.2%)	442
4 Total	186	279 (60.0%)	465

of this construction has been decreasing in AmE, while in BrE it has remained nearly constant: 0.33 instances pmw in the British newspapers for 1996–2004 and 0.5 instances pmw in the corresponding American newspapers.

The question as to which of the two auxiliaries is actually used (either *can* or *could*) does not seem to be very influential in the choice of the two non-finite complement forms (cf. Table 11.3,²⁸ lines 1a/b).

However, the increasing tendency to use the (informal) contracted forms of the construction *can/could* + *not* involving the verb *stand* obviously helps to delay the decline of gerundial complements (cf. Table 11.3, lines 2a/b). These findings are in accordance with the informal character of the *-ing* form as compared to the infinitival option (cf. Fanego 1996a: 75–6 for the situation in Early Modern English, and Miller 1993: 130 for non-standard varieties).²⁹

The previous section has shown that some kind of qualification of the predicate expression (*lay some/justifiable claim*) can preserve the acceptability of infinitival complementation a bit longer than usual. Similar observations can be made for the variable complementation of the verb (*can't*) *stand*. Table 11.3 (lines 3a/b) shows that any adverbial material modifying the matrix expression and intervening between the modal auxiliary (*can* or *could*) and the main verb (*stand*) tends to increase the use of the infinitival complement of this construction: compare the examples in (11a/b).

- (11) a. ... because she has been so traumatised by harassment from Baiul that she *can* no longer *stand to hear* the name Oksana. (*Guardian* 1997)

²⁸ n.s. for lines 1a/b, $p = 0.01\% < 0.1\%**$ for 2a/b, $p < 0.1\%***$ 3a/b.

²⁹ It is, however, doubtful whether the Complexity Principle would be able to account for the preference of *to*-infinitives as complements of *stand* following non-contracted forms of *can/could*+*not*, because it is far from clear whether the contraction is indicative of a cognitively less demanding structure.

- b. But I knew it wouldn't happen because we *couldn't* even *stand to be* in the same room together. (*The Times* 2000)

The intervening material found here serves distinct syntactic and semantic functions: non-assertive adverbials (such as *no longer* or *hardly*) replace the negative particle *not* in order to create a negative context, while other kinds of adverbs (like *even*) preserve the negator. Ignoring this functional difference, however, we might suggest that the Complexity Principle accounts for the results shown in Table 11.3 (lines 3a/b). The cognitively more complex environments provided by these adverbial modifications tend to accelerate the replacement of gerunds by *to*-infinitives as complements of the verb (*can't*) *stand*.³⁰

6 Conclusion

Focusing on a small number of verbs and verb-noun collocations in transitional stages of linguistic change mainly within the last two centuries, the present study has shown that both BrE and AmE follow the same trends in the development of non-finite complement variants, though at clearly different speeds. The process referred to as the 'Great Complement Shift' (gradual replacement of infinitives by gerunds, cf. *have no business* and *lay claim* in Table 11.4, column I) and sporadic reversals (cf. *decline* and *can't stand* in Table 11.4, column I) have not affected the two national varieties to the same extent. Compared to BrE, the transatlantic variety leads the development in some areas (cf. *have no business*, *can't stand*, in Table 11.4, column II) and lags behind it in others (cf. *decline* in Table 11.4, column II), while occasionally (cf. *lay claim* in Table 11.4, column II) it represents a case of lag and overtake. The contrasts established might be summarized in two different ways.

Table 11.4 Summary of the findings

Governing expression	I General trend in non-finite complementation	II Variety leading the trend	III Variety showing a higher frequency
<i>have no business</i>	<i>to</i> → <i>-ing</i>	AmE	AmE
<i>decline</i>	<i>-ing</i> → <i>to</i>	BrE	BrE
<i>lay claim</i>	<i>to</i> → <i>-ing</i>	AmE (lag and overtake)	BrE
(<i>can't</i>) <i>stand</i>	<i>-ing</i> → <i>to</i>	AmE	AmE

³⁰ The analyses of the American corpora corresponding to the ones presented in Table 11.3 do not yield any significant results, yet the tendencies are the same as for the British corpora.

Firstly, the case studies presented here suggest that, with the exception of the verb (*can't stand*), AmE is further advanced than BrE in those areas of non-finite complementation (compare columns I and II in Table 11.4 for *have no business* and *lay claim*) where the infinitive is about to be replaced by the gerund (cf., however, Allerton 1988: 11, 22–3),³¹ and lags behind it where the gerund is on the decline (compare columns I and II in Table 11.4 for the verb *decline*). It is claimed elsewhere that, unlike BrE, the transatlantic variety is often found to favour the less formal and less explicit (cf. Chapters 4 and 10, respectively) grammatical option. These conclusions are supported by three of the four major findings discussed in this chapter: *have no business*, *decline* and *lay claim* (but not *can't stand*) are among those governing expressions that still show (or once showed) a stronger inclination towards the less formal (cf. section 5) and less explicit (cf. section 3) *-ing* complement in AmE rather than in BrE.

Secondly, it has been argued that the variety exhibiting a higher frequency in the use of a particular governing expression is also the one that is further advanced in the general development (compare columns II and III in Table 11.4). This hypothesis does not seem to be confirmed in the case of the collocation *lay claim*, which involves the somewhat muddled situation of lag and overtake.

In addition to surveying the existing national contrasts, our analysis has identified three extra-semantic (and potentially universal) factors likely to delay or accelerate the rise or fall of the two non-finite complement options: a) extractions, b) *horror aequi* contexts and c) insertions/modifications.

³¹ According to Allerton (1988: 11, 22–3), both formal/written styles as well as American English in general are nowadays affected by a frequent and 'unnatural' over-use of the infinitive so that the distinction between infinitive and gerund made in informal/conversational British usage is lost in certain cases.

12 The present perfect and the preterite

JOHAN ELSNESS

1 Introduction

Like a large number of other languages, English has two competing verbal constructions commonly used to refer to past time: the periphrastic present perfect and the synthetic preterite, as in, respectively,

(1) I *have seen* him recently

and

(2) I *saw* him recently.

The distribution of the two constructions varies a great deal between languages, and also within individual languages. For example, German and French can easily have constructions like

(3) Ich *habe ihn gestern gesehen*

and

(4) Je l'*ai vu* hier.

However, the corresponding construction would not seem acceptable in English:

(5) *I *have seen* him yesterday.

The problem is that, unlike German and French, English puts very severe restrictions on the combination of the present perfect with specifications of a clearly defined temporal location wholly in the past. Instead, English generally prefers the preterite in such cases.

Moreover, the distinction between the two verb forms is drawn differently in American as compared with British English. While the basic rules are the same, a sentence like our example (1) above would often be preferred by speakers of BrE, while many speakers of AmE would be more likely to opt for (2). The point here is that, although the reference is clearly to past time, this time is not very precisely defined, which leaves considerable scope for individual judgement. In such cases there appears to be a distinct tendency

for AmE to select the preterite, BrE the present perfect, so that on the whole the latter verb form is more frequent in BrE than in AmE. In most kinds of text, however, the present perfect will be outnumbered by the preterite in both varieties, and by a wide margin.

What has happened in both English and other languages is that the present perfect has increased in frequency over the centuries, at the expense of the preterite. This is in line with a more general tendency for synthetic forms to be replaced by periphrastic constructions (see, e.g., Zieglschmid 1930a/b). English seems to differ from many other languages, however, in that the present perfect may now be in decline.

2 The history of the present perfect and the preterite in English

In Old English the preterite was the predominant verb form in references to past time. Even in OE, however, some constructions may be recognized as early instances of the present perfect, with HAVE (HABBAN) followed by a past participle. To begin with, this construction occurred only with transitive verbs, but it gradually spread to other patterns. Besides, there was a similar construction with BE (WESAN), common with (intransitive) mutative verbs.

In the early stages it is not always easy to draw the line between perfect constructions and constructions where HAVE is the main verb and the past participle has a clear adjectival function. In a major investigation of the present perfect in English (reported in Elsness 1997) my policy was to recognize as perfects all such HAVE constructions provided the reference was clearly to past time associated with the past-participial verb, irrespective of whether the participle was inflected for concord with the putative object, and also irrespective of whether the participle was pre- or postposed relative to this object.¹ For that investigation I collected a corpus consisting of texts dating all the way from Old English up to Present-Day English, in most cases concentrated in 50-year periods spread over 200-year intervals. In the case of the period 1750–1800 and the present day, both American and British English were represented.²

Two of the constructions recognized as occurrences of the present perfect in the Old English section of my corpus are:

(6) and we *habbað* Godes hus inne and ute clæne *berypte*.

(From 'Wulfstan's Address to the English')

'and we *have* completely *despoiled* God's houses inside and out'.

¹ This pragmatic view of what constitutes a perfect construction is in line with that adopted in Denison (1993: 340–1).

² For details of the composition of this corpus, see Elsness (1997).

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Table 12.1 *The present perfect (with auxiliary HAVE) and the preterite as percentages of all past-referring verb forms in the history of English. Passive as well as active verb forms included (but not progressive forms). From the corpus used in Elsness (1997)*

	Old English	Early Middle English	1350–1400	1550–1600	1750–1800 BrE	1750–1800 AmE	Present-day BrE	Present-day AmE
	n = 989	n = 916	n = 906	n = 859	n = 880	n = 854	n = 1883	n = 1588
Present perfect	0.7	5.0	8.6	15.8	16.4	21.7	19.7	9.8
Preterite	83.3	79.1	66.6	62.6	62.0	57.7	61.9	76.2

- (7) For ðæm we *habbað* nu ægðer *forlæten* ge ðone welan ge ðone wisdom.
(From ‘On the State of Learning in England’)

‘Therefore we *have* now *lost* both the wealth and the wisdom.’

What happens in Old and Middle English is that the various perfect forms gradually become more frequent, at the expense of the preterite, taking over more and more of the semantic functions of that verb form.

The growth and spread of the present perfect does not continue in the same way in the Modern English period, however.³ In the AmE section of my corpus there is a marked drop in the proportion of present-perfect forms from 1750–1800 to the present day. In the BrE material the development within the Modern English period is more uncertain: the increase in the frequency of the present perfect levels off from 1550–1600 to 1750–1800 but may then seem to get a second wind in the last 200-year span. The figures for the present perfect (with auxiliary HAVE) and the preterite are set out in Table 12.1. Both active and passive forms are included in these figures but no progressives.⁴ The development of the present perfect is further illustrated in Figure 12.1.

Comparison of corpora from different periods is wrought with problems and complications. To put together corpora with similar textual compositions

³ A similar fate seems to have befallen the preterite perfect, or pluperfect, but here we shall concentrate on the present perfect.

⁴ The most numerous of the past-referring verb forms not included here are various combinations with modal auxiliaries. In addition a fair number of present-perfect constructions with auxiliary BE were recorded up until 1750–1800 (but outnumbered by the present perfect with HAVE from early Middle English onwards). Pluperfect constructions with both auxiliaries are also fairly common, as are progressive constructions in the most recent sections. In the early stages the perfect of mutative verbs commonly took auxiliary BE but the connection between type of verb and choice of auxiliary started to break down as early as at the beginning of the Middle English period. For a comparison of American and British English the BE perfect is in any case less relevant, as the predominance of the HAVE alternative was well nigh complete from the beginning of the Modern English period. For full details, see Elsness (1997: 267–9, 271–2, 322–7).

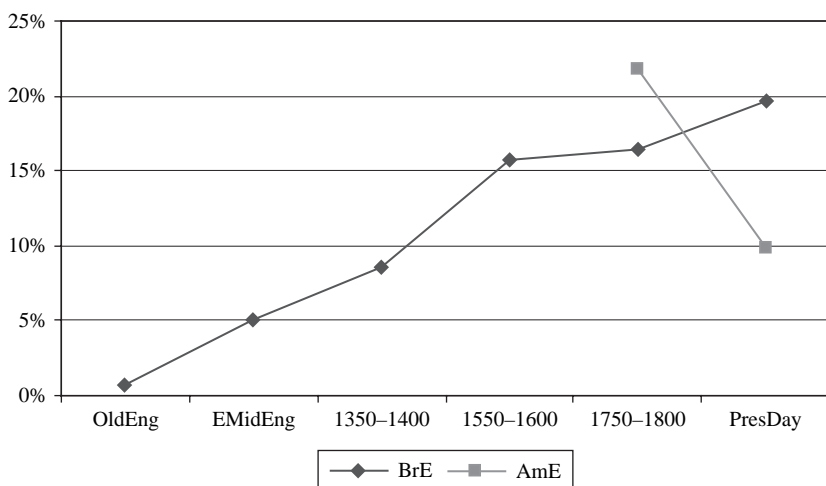


Figure 12.1 The present perfect (with HAVE, active/passive) as percentage of all past-referring verb forms (cf. Table 12.1)

can be difficult enough even without the kind of diachronic gaps we are faced with here (for the comparison of different varieties of Present-Day English, for instance); comparing corpora spread over several centuries means that there will be unavoidable differences in the makeup of text categories, for example. Even so, if clear differences emerge, they may provide useful insight into the way a language has developed.

In the composition of my own corpus the number of texts included in each section was in most cases sufficient to neutralize, or at least greatly reduce, the impact of any very idiosyncratic texts. A possible exception is the category of science texts from Present-Day English, where a much smaller number of texts than usual were included from each variety. A very striking difference in the present perfect/preterite distribution was recorded between these texts: the present perfect was a lot more frequent than the preterite in the BrE texts but almost absent from the AmE ones. In this particular text category that difference went far beyond any general AmE/BrE difference in the use of this verb form.

Figure 12.2 illustrates the development of the present perfect when the science category is disregarded in Present-Day English. It can now be seen that this verb form displays a marked decline in BrE as well as AmE from 1750-1800 up to the present day – in the present-day section the proportion of present-perfect forms drops from 19.7 per cent (cf. Table 12.1) to 12.2 per cent ($n = 1581$) in BrE, while it rises slightly, from 9.8 per cent (cf. Table 12.1) to 10.5 per cent ($n = 1297$), in AmE.

This indeed shows the linguist at the mercy of his corpus. In an attempt to find more reliable evidence for the development of the present perfect over

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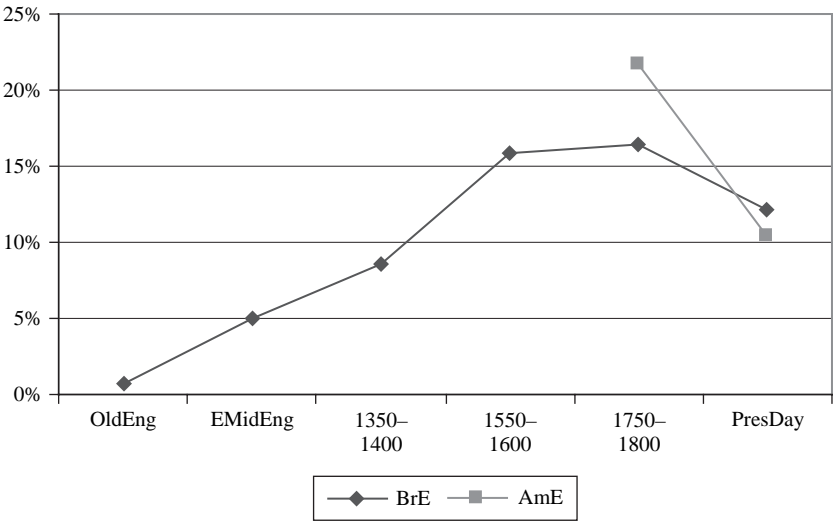


Figure 12.2 The present perfect (with HAVE, active/passive) as percentage of all past-referring verb forms *when science category is disregarded* in Present-Day English

the past two centuries we shall look at some text categories separately. In my corpus the following text categories can be identified both in the present-day section and at least in the section from 1750–1800, and with one exception even further back: (i) news columns of newspapers, (ii) social letters, (iii) narrative passages of fiction, (iv) direct speech of fiction and (v) drama.⁵ Table 12.2 sets out the proportions of present-perfect and preterite verb forms, again expressed as percentages of all past-referring verb forms. The bottom two lines of each section give the chi-square value and the statistical significance, or otherwise, of the change from the preceding period.⁶

We shall focus on developments within BrE, since the decline of the present perfect in AmE does not seem to be in doubt. Figure 12.3 illustrates the results for BrE.

It will be seen that in four of the five text categories there is a decrease in the frequency of the present perfect in that variety from 1750–1800 to the

⁵ This is not to deny that the comparison of text categories across centuries is problematic, and that the use of language, even within similar texts, may change quite drastically over time. Even so, looking at developments within what is here recognized as similar text categories separately reduces some of the problems of diachronic corpus comparison.

⁶ The statistical evidence was calculated by applying the chi-square test to the underlying raw figures for the present perfect and the preterite in each section compared with the preceding section in the same variety (AmE/BrE) (degrees of freedom=1 throughout). In the case of AmE from 1750–1800 the comparison is with the overall (BrE) figures from 1550–1600.

Table 12.2 *The present perfect (with HAVE) and the preterite as percentages of all past-referring verb forms in some text categories in the history of English. Passive as well as active verb forms included (but not progressive forms). Statistical significance of change since preceding period according to chi-square test ('n.s.' = not significant)*

(a) *Press/news*

	1750–1800 BrE		1750–1800 AmE		PresDay BrE		PresDay AmE	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Present perfect	12	11.9	19	18.3	56	19.5	40	12.4
Preterite	71	70.3	55	52.9	166	57.8	221	68.6
All	101	100.0	104	100.0	287	100.0	322	100.0
χ^2	–		–		3.4453		3.5729	
Stat. sign.	–		–		n.s.		n.s.	

(b) *Letters/social*

	1550–1600		1750–1800 BrE		1750–1800 AmE		PresDay BrE	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Present perfect	10	11.1	32	17.1	49	27.7	101	16.8
Preterite	58	64.4	110	58.8	99	55.9	395	65.6
All	90	100.0	187	100.0	177	100.0	602	100.0
χ^2	–		1.3062		7.0473		1.2192	
Stat. sign.	–		n.s.		1%		n.s.	

(c) *Fiction (novels)/narrative*

	1350–1400		1550–1600		1750–1800 BrE		1750–1800 AmE		PresDay BrE		PresDay AmE	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Pres. p.	7	3.6	5	2.5	8	4.6	1	0.6	0	0.0	1	0.6
Preterite	148	75.1	142	70.6	124	71.3	120	71.0	198	75.6	126	78.8
All	197	100.0	201	100.0	174	100.0	169	100.0	262	100.0	160	100.0
χ^2	–		0.0404		0.5894		1.0062		9.8695		0.4567	
Stat. sign.	–		n.s.		n.s.		n.s.		1%		n.s.	

(d) *Fiction (novels)/direct speech*

	1550–1600		1750–1800 BrE		1750–1800 AmE		PresDay BrE		PresDay AmE	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Present perfect	16	22.9	3	25.0	7	25.0	34	24.5	4	10.0
Preterite	29	41.4	6	50.0	21	75.0	80	57.6	32	80.0
All	70	100.0	12	100.0	28	100.0	139	100.0	40	100.0
χ^2	–		0.0650		0.4691		0.0245		1.2703	
Stat. sign.	–		n.s.		n.s.		n.s.		n.s.	

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Table 12.2 (cont.)

(c) Drama

	1550–1600		1750–1800 BrE		1750–1800 AmE		PresDay BrE		PresDay AmE	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Present perfect	55	25.1	47	29.6	22	14.1	31	15.4	29	7.2
Preterite	127	58.0	83	52.2	104	66.7	132	65.7	312	77.4
All	219	100.0	159	100.0	156	100.0	201	100.0	403	100.0
χ^2	–		0.9588		5.8022		10.0112		6.6931	
Stat. sign.	–		n.s.		5%		1%		1%	

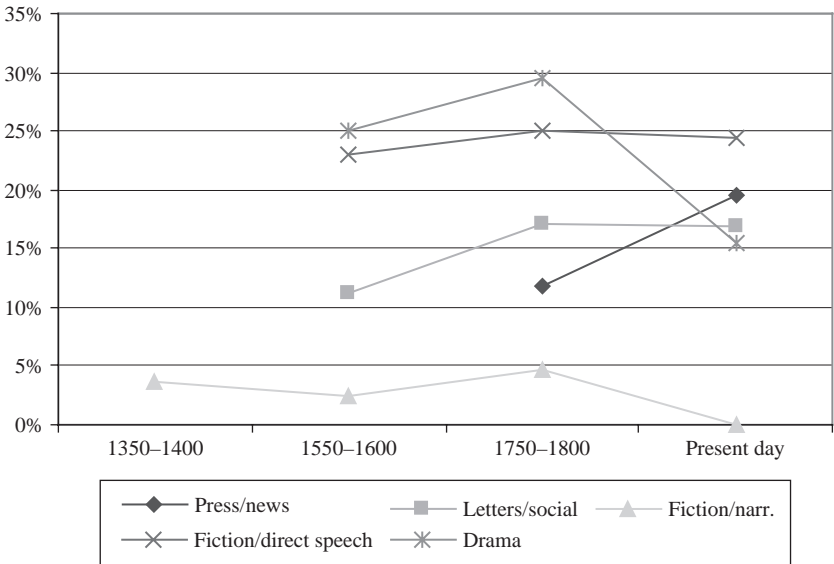


Figure 12.3 The present perfect as percentage of all past-referring verb forms in some text categories in the history of British English (cf. Table 12.2)

present day. In two of those cases, the narrative passages of fiction and drama, the change is statistically significant at the 1 per cent level.

The one text category which displays an increase in the frequency of the present perfect in BrE from 1750–1800 to the present day is the news columns of newspapers. As can be seen from Table 12.2 (a), this increase is not statistically significant. If the recorded figures nevertheless do reflect a real increase in the use of the present perfect in texts of this kind, the change is not difficult to account for: with modern telecommunications news reporting has changed drastically since the eighteenth century; in that century news reports usually centred on events which were quite

distant in time, while today even news reported in print tends to be located in the much more recent past. That this should make for a difference in the distribution between the present perfect and the preterite verb forms in the observed direction was only to be expected, since throughout the period covered here the present perfect has been particularly frequent in references to the recent past, the preterite generally being preferred to refer to clearly defined points and periods in what will often be a more distant past time.

We have seen that the steady increase in the frequency of the present perfect which was observable in Old and Middle English – a development which English shared with a number of other languages – has been arrested within the Modern English period. There is also strong evidence to support the assumption that over the past couple of centuries the growth of the English present perfect has not only been arrested but reversed, i.e. that the frequency of the present perfect has started to decrease. The evidence for this latter conclusion must be said to be conclusive for AmE and is now also pretty convincing for BrE. At the same time it seems clear that in Present-Day English the present perfect is still more frequent in BrE than it is in AmE.

If the present perfect may now be in decline, it makes sense to look for cases in earlier English where this verb form was used but where it would be unlikely to occur in Present-Day English. However, since the functional distinction between the present perfect and the preterite is far from being clear-cut in all cases, it seems likely that at least some of the change can be accounted for by cases where either verb form can still be used but where the present perfect would be more likely to be preferred in earlier Modern English than it would today.

Visser (1973: 2197) records several examples of the present perfect combining with past-time specification in earlier Modern English, in a way that would seem unlikely to occur in the present-day language:

- (8) *I have delivered it an hour since.* (Shakespeare, *All's Well that Ends Well*, 1601)
- (9) ... which I *have forgot* to set down in my Journal *yesterday.* (*Pepys' Diary*, 1669)
- (10) The Englishman ... *has murdered* young Halbert ... *yesterday morning.* (Scott, *Monastery*, 1820)
- (11) *I have been* to Richmond *last Sunday.* (Galsworthy, *In Chancery*, 1920)

The following examples were recorded in the BrE section of my own corpus from 1750–1800:

- (12) Nor is this topic confined merely to modern religions. *The ancients have also employed it.* (Hume, *The Natural History of Religion*)

- (13) Lady Sneer. . . . I *have found* him out a long time since. I know him to be artful, selfish, and malicious – in short, a sentimental knave. (Sheridan, *The School for Scandal*)
- (14) Lady Sneer. . . . but do your brother's distresses increase?
Joseph S. Every hour. I am told he *has had* another execution in the house *yesterday*. In short, his dissipation and extravagance exceed anything I have ever heard of. (Sheridan, *The School for Scandal*)

And the following well-known passage occurs in my own corpus from 1550–1600, with the choice between the present perfect and the preterite apparently determined more by metrical than by temporal considerations:

- (15) Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft
Have you *climbed* up to walls and battlements,
To towers and windows, yea, to chimney-tops,
Your infants in your arms, and there *have sat*
The live-long day, with patient expectation,
To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome.
And when you saw his chariot but appear,
Have you not *made* an universal shout,
That Tiber trembled underneath her banks
To hear the replication of your sounds
Made in her concave shores? (Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*)

The above collection of examples demonstrates that in earlier (British) Modern English the present perfect was used more freely in combination with specifications of past time than what is common in the English language of today. This further corroborates the conclusion that the present perfect is now decreasing in frequency in BrE as well as AmE.

3 Elicitation test

As regards today's relationship between AmE and BrE, we have seen that my corpus showed the present perfect to be more frequent in the latter variety. This is in line with several earlier claims to the same effect.⁷ Further evidence is provided by an elicitation test I carried out with American and British students acting as informants.⁸ In that test participants were asked to

⁷ For an early demonstration of this difference between present-day AmE and BrE, see Vanneck (1958).

⁸ The elicitation test was carried out at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, USA, and at Cambridge University, England, in 1986 and 1987, respectively. The number of participants in the test was eighty for AmE and ninety-three for BrE. They were each given a questionnaire with a total of thirty-four pairs of constructions. In the actual test the order of the various sentence pairs was varied, as was the order of the perfect/preterite alternatives within each pair. For further details, see Elsness (1990 and 1997).

indicate their view of each sentence they were presented with on a scale from 1 (totally unacceptable) to 5 (perfectly OK).

Some of the constructions used in the test are reproduced below, with average scores given separately for AmE and BrE. The AmE/BrE differences were tested for statistical significance by means of Student-Fisher's t-test. In each case the significance level is indicated in the right-hand column.

		AmE	BrE	p ≤
Ia	I <i>have seen</i> John <i>yesterday</i> .	1.4	1.4	n.s.
b	I <i>saw</i> John <i>yesterday</i> .	5.0	5.0	n.s.

The first construction pair reproduced here demonstrates that in cases of clearly defined past-time reference the preterite, and not the present perfect, is the verb form used in English.

		AmE	BrE	p ≤
IIa	That problem <i>has been solved</i> long ago.	2.3	3.1	0.1%
b	That problem <i>was solved</i> long ago.	4.8	4.9	n.s.
IIIa	Yes, John is here. I <i>have just seen</i> him.	3.4	4.8	0.1%
b	Yes, John is here. I <i>just saw</i> him.	4.7	3.4	0.1%

II and III show that once the past time referred to is more vaguely defined, the picture becomes more varied. The preference for the preterite is no longer so clear – indeed, in the case of construction pair III BrE recorded the higher score for the present-perfect alternative – and the difference between AmE and BrE is also marked, three of the four sentences displaying an AmE/BrE difference that is statistically significant at the 0.1 % level.⁹

		AmE	BrE	p ≤
IVa	I'm going to lunch now. <i>Have you had</i> yours?	4.0	4.7	0.1%
b	I'm going to lunch now. <i>Did you have</i> yours?	3.6	2.3	0.1%

This pair of constructions may be seen as a test of the influence of the current relevance of the past situation on the choice of verb form. In any case the preference for the present perfect is much more marked in BrE than in AmE.

		AmE	BrE	p ≤
Va	<i>Have you finished</i> the book <i>already</i> ?	4.6	4.9	0.1%
b	<i>Did you finish</i> the book <i>already</i> ?	4.1	1.5	0.1%
VIa	<i>Have you told</i> them the news <i>yet</i> ?	4.8	4.9	1%
b	<i>Did you tell</i> them the news <i>yet</i> ?	4.3	1.9	0.1%

⁹ In these as in other cases factors other than the mere temporal reference may have influenced the scores, for instance whether the main verb is regular or irregular – the formal difference between the two verb forms being more marked in the latter case – and also the fact that only uncontracted forms of the auxiliary were used in the test, a fact which may have lowered the scores for the present-perfect alternatives, perhaps especially in AmE. For further discussion, see Elness (1990 and 1997).

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V and VI confirm that constructions with the rather special adverbs *already* and *yet* are judged very differently by speakers of AmE and BrE. Here the present perfect is definitely the norm in BrE, while AmE is almost as ready to accept the preterite.

	AmE	BrE	p ≤
VIIa Do you know who <i>has written</i> this book?	2.5	3.1	1%
b Do you know who <i>wrote</i> this book?	4.9	4.8	n.s.
VIIIa This cake is delicious. <i>Have you made</i> it yourself?	1.6	2.6	0.1%
b This cake is delicious. <i>Did you make</i> it yourself?	4.9	4.9	n.s.
IXa That's a nice picture. Who <i>has painted</i> it?	1.9	2.4	1%
b That's a nice picture. Who <i> painted</i> it?	5.0	5.0	n.s.

The last three construction pairs reproduced from the elicitation test focus on what may be termed unique past-time reference. In each case context makes it clear that the action denoted by the main verb must have occurred once – but only once – in the past: since the book/cake/picture exists at the moment of utterance, it must have been written/made/painted at some time in the past, and these past actions will only have been performed once (in this respect painting a picture is different from painting a house, for example). It will be seen that in these cases English shows a very clear preference for the preterite, whereas many other languages would use the present perfect, so that this is a verbal usage that needs to be noted by many foreign learners of English. The preference for the preterite in these cases can be seen to be even stronger in AmE than in BrE, in the sense that the present-perfect alternatives achieved somewhat higher scores in BrE, although even in that variety the preference for the preterite is clear enough.

Quite a few of the constructions we have considered display a statistically significant difference between AmE and BrE, and invariably it is AmE that has the higher score for the preterite alternative, BrE for the present perfect.¹⁰ Table 12.3 sums up the results for all the constructions included in the test for which a statistically significant AmE/BrE difference was recorded, i.e. for a total of thirty-one of the sixty-eight constructions which made up the test.

Table 12.3 *Distribution of all present perfect/preterite constructions from elicitation test with a statistically significant difference between American and British English*

Higher score:	American English	British English	Sums
Present perfect	0	18	18
Preterite	12	1	13
Sums	12	19	31

¹⁰ The one apparent exception was clearly lexically motivated.

The fact that most of the constructions displaying a statistically significant difference in acceptability were ones preferred in BrE can perhaps be seen as evidence that in the present situation typically American forms are more universally acceptable, at least across the Atlantic, than typically British forms.

4 A closer look at developments within the second half of the twentieth century

At the time when the investigation reported in Elsness (1997) was carried out, I did not have access to the Freiburg updates of Brown and LOB made up of texts from the early 1990s, commonly referred to as Frown and FLOB, respectively. The existence of these new corpora, closely parallel to Brown and LOB in their textual composition, offers a unique opportunity to study the development of both AmE and BrE within the second half of the twentieth century, or, to be more precise, from 1961 to 1991/1992.

For the investigation to be reported below I had to base myself on the untagged versions of Frown and FLOB. I shall concentrate on the present perfect and address the question of whether any further development can be detected in the use of that verb form, in AmE and/or BrE, within the thirty-year period spanned by Brown/LOB and Frown/FLOB.

One very rough indication of the frequency of the present perfect can be assumed to be the frequency of present tense forms of the verb HAVE. This verb has a number of different syntactic functions, both as a main verb and as an auxiliary, but it seems that in most kinds of text the function of perfect auxiliary will account for between one-half and two-thirds of its occurrences and be by far its most common single function (see Elsness 1997: 84 and 2000/2001: 16, 36). The task of identifying present-perfect forms is compounded by the fact that the particular form *have* doubles as the infinitive form of HAVE.¹¹ Also, it is obviously important to include contracted forms, since these can be expected to make up a substantial proportion of overall occurrences, especially since the use of contractions in print can be assumed to have increased from 1961 to 1991/1992, so that they will be important in any attempt to account for developments during this period.¹²

Table 12.4 lists the frequencies recorded of the various potential present-tense realizations of HAVE, irrespective of syntactic function. The first summation column adds up the figures from all the preceding columns. Here there can be seen to be a marked increase in both AmE and BrE from 1961 to 1991/1992, of more than 10 per cent in both cases but more in AmE

¹¹ I am confining myself to indicative verb forms here. In addition, of course, *have* occurs across the present tense paradigm in the subjunctive. A more frequent use can be assumed to be that of the imperative.

¹² This is especially relevant since the four parallel corpora comprise only printed, published texts.

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Table 12.4 *Potential present tense forms of HAVE in the four parallel corpora*

	<i>have</i>	<i>haven't</i>	<i>'ve</i>	<i>has</i>	<i>hasn't</i>	<i>'s</i>	SUM all left	SUM <i>have</i> <i>+haven't</i> <i>+ 've +has</i> <i>+hasn't</i>	SUM <i>haven't</i> <i>+ 've +has</i> <i>+hasn't</i>	SUM <i>haven't</i> <i>+has</i> <i>+hasn't</i>	SUM <i>has</i> <i>+hasn't</i>
Brown	3942	38	245	2439	20	5893	12577	6684	2742	2497	2459
Frown	3740	56	437	2298	27	8920	15478	6558	2818	2381	2325
LOB	4597	57	335	2802	19	5723	13533	7810	3213	2878	2821
FLOB	4444	73	406	2703	24	7438	15088	7650	3206	2800	2727

than in BrE. A major problem with these figures is that they include the *'s*, which may represent both *has* and *is*, and even be the genitive ending. Indeed, a quick glance at some of its occurrences in the four corpora confirmed that in many, perhaps most, texts the last two functions can be assumed to be more frequent than the first. This fact makes the recorded figures highly unreliable as indications of the frequency of the potential present-perfect auxiliary, let alone the frequency of the present perfect itself.

In the second summation column in Table 12.4 the figures for *'s* are excluded. Now it can be seen that there is a marked decrease in frequency from 1961 to 1991/1992 in both AmE and BrE. One problem with the figures set out in this column is that they still include *have*, which commonly functions as the infinitive rather than the present tense.¹³

In the next summation column even the figures for *have* have been excluded, and our original number of occurrences is substantially reduced. The remaining figures show a slight increase in AmE within the period now being focused upon, as against a negligible decrease in BrE. There is still the problem that one of the forms included – *'ve* – may function as the infinitive rather than the present tense. The four corpora contain quite a few instances of this after modal auxiliaries, in combinations like *could've*, *should've*, *would've*. This comes on top of the general problem with the possible variation in the proportion of contracted forms.

In the next to last column, therefore, even *'ve* has been left out. The remaining three forms have the advantage that they can only function as the present tense. In both varieties there can now be seen to be a marked decrease within the period studied.

In the final column only the third-person singular forms *has* and *hasn't* are left. Hence the problem of a possible variation in the proportion of contracted forms between 1961 and 1991/1992 is neutralized, since occurrences of

¹³ A quick look at some of the occurrences recorded in the four corpora showed that a substantial proportion of these represented the infinitive after a modal auxiliary. Most of these can be expected to be part of perfect constructions (as in *should have done*, *might have been*) but not of course the *present perfect*.

the uncontracted negative form *has not* are included among the figures for *has*. In any case the figures for *has* predominate even more here, and there is a marked decrease in the number of occurrences during this period, of 5.4 per cent in AmE and 3.3 per cent in BrE.¹⁴

Although the evidence considered so far is by no means conclusive as regards the development of the present perfect, the figures set out in Table 12.4 do suggest that there was a decrease in the frequency of present tense forms of HAVE from 1961 to 1991/1992. As there seems to be no particular reason to believe that there was any significant change in the frequency of HAVE used in other functions than that of the perfect auxiliary, this may be taken as tentative support for the assumption that the decrease in the frequency of the present perfect that was recorded earlier in the Modern English period continued in the latter half of the twentieth century and was even noticeable within such a short time span as the 30 years from 1961 to 1991/1992.

We need to look for further, and firmer, evidence. Table 12.5 gives the results of an examination of the present perfect of twenty high-frequency verbs in the four parallel corpora.¹⁵ To simplify the electronic search, only constructions where these verbs take personal pronouns as subjects were included. Both contracted and full auxiliaries were included in the search. A maximum of two optional words were allowed between the auxiliary and the main verb. Since the total number of personal pronouns varies somewhat among the four corpora, occurrences of the present perfect per 1,000 personal pronouns were calculated, the results appearing in the right-hand column of Table 12.5. These results are illustrated in Figure 12.4.

It will be seen that when we look directly at occurrences of the present perfect in the four parallel corpora, the impression of a continuing decline in the use of this verb form from 1961 to 1991/1992 is confirmed.¹⁶ The decline

¹⁴ The change is not statistically significant in either AmE or BrE so long as each variety is considered separately: $\chi^2=3.7064$ and $\chi^2=1.5633$, respectively. However, if the figures for the two varieties are put together, the difference in the number of *has/hasn't* forms between 1961 and 1991/1992 is statistically significant at the 5 per cent level: $\chi^2=5.0002$.

¹⁵ The twenty verbs were selected from frequency lists of the four corpora. BE, HAVE and DO were avoided, because of the auxiliary functions that these verbs may have. GET was also excluded, because of the complications following from the idiomatic use of *have got*, more common in BrE than in AmE.

¹⁶ Evidence has been presented which suggests that a development in the opposite direction may be under way in certain types of colloquial English. Engel and Ritz (2000) report that in their corpus of Australian English, largely made up of radio news and chat shows, the present perfect is used quite extensively in references to clearly defined past time, either specified by temporal adverbials or being part of narrative passages. The following example illustrates the former: 'Police confirm that at 16.30 hours yesterday the body of Ivan Jepp *has been located*' (Engel and Ritz 2000: 130). A brief reference to the present perfect in the editor's introduction to Trudgill (1978: 13) suggests that this phenomenon may not be confined to Australian English. Trudgill claims that constructions like 'He's *played* for us last year,' are used by 'increasing numbers of speakers'. Focusing on spoken and non-standard varieties of BrE, Miller (2004a/b) likewise reports cases where the present perfect is used in combination with a clear adverbial specification of past time, e.g. 'Some of us *have been* to

Table 12.5 *The present perfect of twenty high-frequency lexical verbs with personal pronoun subjects (I, you, he, she, it, we, they) in the four parallel corpora: SAY, MAKE, GO, TAKE, SEE, KNOW, COME, GIVE, USE, THINK, LOOK, FIND, BECOME, WANT, TELL, LEAVE, SHOW, FEEL, WORK, ASK*

	Pres. perf. of 20 verbs	Personal pronouns	Pres. perf. per 1,000 p. pron.
Brown	208	37984	5.48
Frown	199	39392	5.05
LOB	359	42158	8.52
FLOB	253	39925	6.34

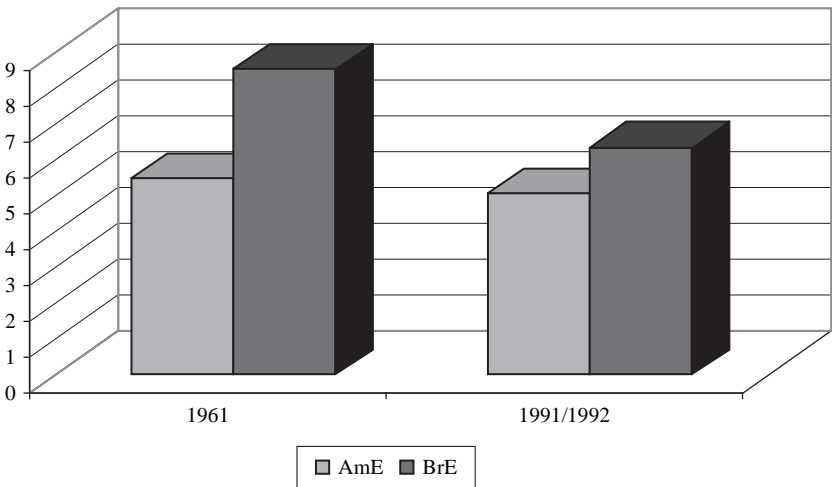


Figure 12.4 The present perfect of twenty high-frequency verbs in the Brown, LOB, Frown and FLOB corpora. Occurrences per 1000 personal pronouns (cf. Table 12.5)

is more marked in BrE than in AmE. Indeed, the figures for AmE are not statistically significant and thus may be due to chance. The figures for BrE, on the other hand, show a very reassuring statistical significance at the 0.1 per cent level.¹⁷

At the same time the present perfect continues to be more frequent in BrE than in AmE even in Present-Day English, although the gap between the two varieties appears to be closing: even the figures from the early 1990s

New York years ago to see how they do it' (Simon Hughes, Liberal Democrat MP, in BBC News at Ten interview, January 2002) (Miller 2004a: 234, 2004b: 323). Since the four parallel corpora that our figures are based on only contain printed, published texts, they would be less likely to capture constructions which may occur mainly in more colloquial registers and non-standard dialects.

¹⁷ Statistical significance of change: Brown/Frown: n.s. ($\chi^2 = 0.5864$); LOB/FLOB: $p \leq 0.001$ ($\chi^2 = 12.8601$).

show a difference between AmE and BrE, statistically significant at the 5 per cent level.¹⁸ One interpretation of the figures recorded here compared with the findings presented previously is that the decline in the use of the present perfect is now slowing down in AmE and that BrE is approaching the level of AmE.¹⁹

5 Concluding remarks

The continuing decline of the present perfect means that the development in English runs counter to that observable in many other languages, including French and German, where the spread of the present perfect, at the expense of the preterite, seems to be continuing unabated. As was suggested in Elsness (1997), the main reason for this may be that the formal difference between the present perfect and the preterite in English has been reduced to such an extent that the distinction is difficult to uphold, seeing that the functional-semantic difference between them is also small: in speech the auxiliary of the present perfect is often reduced to just an /s/ or a /z/ or a barely audible /v/, and the contracted forms of the auxiliary are increasingly common even in the written language; and the expression of the past-participial main verb is identical with that of the competing preterite in the case of all regular and quite a few irregular verbs, in both speech and writing.²⁰ Even with most of the verbs which retain distinct preterite and past-participial forms, the formal difference between the two forms is slight compared with that obtaining in German, French and many other languages.

In the decline of the English present perfect it is AmE that seems to have been leading the way. This is in line with a more general tendency for

¹⁸ Statistical significance of AmE/BrE differences: Brown/LOB: $p \leq 0.001$ ($\chi^2 = 25.8483$); Frown/FLOB: $p \leq 0.05$ ($\chi^2 = 5.5546$).

¹⁹ Comparison of a preliminary version of the tagged Frown and FLOB corpora with the tagged Brown and LOB suggests that verbs may generally be slightly less frequent in the corpora from 1991/1992 than in those from 1961, nouns slightly more frequent. At least in the case of verbs, this seems to be due mainly, perhaps wholly, to the fictional text categories of the four corpora, where the proportion of direct speech is important for this as for many other distributions. The exact significance of this difference between the corpora from 1961 and those from 1991/1992 is difficult to assess at the present moment, although it is clear that any variation in clause/sentence length and in the proportion of sentence fragments, as well as that of direct speech, will easily influence the frequencies of verbs and nouns. The recorded differences seem so slight that the possibility cannot be ruled out that they are due to subtle differences in the composition of the four corpora rather than to a general change in the English language as used in 1961 versus 1991/1992. In any case these more general differences seem small by comparison with the differences reported above in the frequency of the present perfect. I am grateful to Christian Mair and Lars Hinrichs for making the preliminary version of the tagged Frown and FLOB available to me.

²⁰ See further Defromont (1973). It may be noteworthy that of the twenty verbs subjected to special examination above (see Table 12.5), chosen because of their high frequencies of occurrence, as many as twelve have identical preterite/past-participial forms. This count does not include SHOW, which displays variation between *shown* and *showed* in the past participle.

linguistic change to have advanced further in AmE than in BrE, at least as far as the verb phrase is concerned: the continuing expansion of the progressive is one example; the use of identical forms for both the preterite and the past participle is another.²¹

This latter point is of particular relevance in our context. Even within what can safely be termed Standard English there is an often noted tendency for regular verb forms to be more frequent in AmE, irregular ones in BrE, in cases where both are available (BURN, DREAM, LEAP, SMELL, SPELL, SPOIL are some of these).²² Generally, however, the same form is used for both the preterite and the past participle. In addition there is a tendency, most notable in colloquial usage, for once irregular verbs to become regularized, and this tendency seems to be stronger in AmE (and at least in some cases, also in Australian English) than in BrE. Collins and Peters (2004: 595–7) mention verbs such as MOW, SOW, STRIDE, STRIVE and THRIVE. They further note a group of verbs which remain irregular but where the number of forms seems to be in the process of being reduced from three to two, i.e. the same form is increasingly used for both the preterite and the past participle. These are verbs with an *-i-* stem which used to have *-a-* in the preterite and *-u-* in the past participle: SHRINK, SING, SINK, SPRING, STINK. With these there seems to be a tendency which is much stronger in colloquial AmE (and Australian English) than in BrE to use the *-u-* form even for the preterite: ‘My old woolly jumper shrunk in the wash,’ ‘Their dog sunk his teeth into the visitor’s leg.’²³

In short, the tendency towards using the same form for both the preterite and the past participle seems to have advanced further in AmE than in BrE. There also appears to be an AmE/BrE difference in the first element of the perfect form: the use of contracted forms in print appears to have spread faster in that variety than in BrE.²⁴ Between them these two developments mean that the reduction of the formal difference between the present perfect

²¹ For support for the claim that the progressive is more frequent in AmE, see for instance Biber *et al.* (1999: 462–3). Biber *et al.* record the greatest AmE/BrE difference in the use of the progressive in the conversational section of their corpus, which may be why the AmE/BrE difference is not so striking in the newspaper texts examined by Mair and Hundt (1995). The greater frequency of the progressive in AmE is confirmed by Elsness (1997: 268), where 2.5 per cent of all past-referring verb forms are made up of the preterite progressive in the section of contemporary written AmE, as against only 1.8 per cent in the corresponding BrE section.

²² See Biber *et al.* (1999: 397), Hundt (1997: 136) and Johansson (1979: 205–6).

²³ Collins and Peters (2004) record a clear tendency for this usage to be more common among the younger generation in their Australian material. Biber *et al.* (1999: 398) note a tendency to ‘confuse’ (both ways) the distinction between *swam* and *swum* but do not link this to any difference between AmE and BrE (or any other geographical variety).

²⁴ See for instance Hundt (1997: 141–2), where the use of contracted forms in written AmE and BrE is investigated. See also Peters (2001: 168–75).

and the preterite has proceeded faster in AmE, which helps to explain why the decline of the present perfect has also been faster in that variety.²⁵

The state of the present perfect in Irish English is also of interest. Possibly influenced by the fact that Irish itself lacks any clearly defined perfect construction, Irish English tends to use constructions which deviate from Standard English in expressing some of the temporal meanings which in the latter variety would be associated with the present perfect (see, e.g., Harris 1991: 201–5 and Siemund 2004). This may have contributed further to the weakening of the position of the present perfect, especially in AmE.

The conclusion drawn by Biber (1987) may further help to shed light on the development of the present perfect in AmE vs. BrE in Late Modern English. On the basis of an extensive investigation into the behaviour of a large number of grammatical features in American and British texts, Biber concludes that:

... writing prescriptions appear to play a greater role in the British genres than in the corresponding American genres.

... the differences ... seem to relate to a single underlying functional priority: the greater influence of grammatical and stylistic prescriptions in British writing. Whether these differences reflect different writing styles across the dialects [i.e. AmE vs. BrE], or different editorial practices, or both, they characterize systematic differences between British and American written texts. (Biber 1987: 116–17)

This difference may have helped to preserve the position of the present perfect better in BrE than in AmE. It seems to be a pretty common attitude, not least in the teaching profession, that in some cases the present perfect is more 'correct' than the preterite, for instance in combinations with a temporal adverbial like *just*. Such attitudes may have been more widespread, and more influential, in Britain than in the United States.

Finally, the development of the present perfect that has been confirmed for late Modern English is part of a much larger picture as far as the relationship between AmE and BrE is concerned. There can be little doubt that today the main linguistic pressure between these two major varieties of English is in the direction from AmE to BrE, as amply confirmed for instance by Johansson (1979). The fairly rapid decline in the use of the present perfect which appears to have occurred in AmE may thus have contributed to speeding up the same process in BrE.

²⁵ It is noteworthy that several of the American informants taking part in the elicitation test reported orally that in some cases they would have preferred a form 'between' the present perfect and the preterite. This may be seen as a highly significant indication that at least AmE has already reached a stage where the present perfect and the preterite are not always perceived as clearly distinct verb forms. (In the test all constructions were given without contracted forms, so as not to prejudge the distinction between full and reduced forms. This may have made some of the perfect alternatives less attractive than they would have been with the contracted auxiliary, perhaps especially to the American informants.)

13 The revived subjunctive

GÖRAN KJELLMER

1 Introduction

The reintroduction of subjunctive forms in Modern English is a fascinating story of the reshaping of an important section of the language. Verb forms like *be shared* in

(1) It was decided that this proposal *be shared*

were extremely rare up to less than a century ago, not to mention negated forms like *not use* in

(2) Most dermatologists suggested that you *not use* these soaps,

but today they are frequently met with in AmE and beginning to appear in BrE. Not surprisingly, the recent restructuring of the verb system has attracted the attention of linguists and resulted in a number of articles and at least one full-length study, Gerd Övergaard's *The Mandative Subjunctive in American and British English in the 20th Century* (1995). In the following, certain aspects of the process will be discussed. After a general background, dealing with the definition of terms and the history of the subjunctive in English, the discussion will fall into three parts: why the subjunctive returned in AmE, why it returned in BrE and why *not* occurs before the verb in negated subjunctive constructions.

To illustrate my points I shall be making frequent use of the 57-million-word CobuildDirect Corpus, a corpus containing British (chiefly), American and Australian contemporary material from a variety of mainly written sources. (For a description of the corpus, see Sinclair (1987) and, for example, the Website <http://www.titania.cobuild.collins.co.uk>)

2 Background

2.1 Definition

The term subjunctive, as used about the modern phenomenon, refers to the base form of the verb (except *were*), which lacks tense and agreement features and does not take DO support. The mandative subjunctive can occur in

subclauses dependent on mandative verbs and nouns and emotive adjectives (expressions of wishing, desiring, commanding, insisting, praying, asking, suggesting, forbidding and the like; Visser 1969: 1655–6).

2.2 History

Subjunctive forms, ‘modally marked forms’, were used extensively in Old English (Behre 1934: 71ff.). Although they were frequent in mandative contexts, they were not the only alternative: indicatives and *scolde* + infinitives were among the rival constructions (Behre 1934: 87ff.). Partly because of the decay of the morphological system in late Old English and Middle English, where for example *-on* and *-en* endings would be fused and where final unstressed *-e* would disappear, thus rendering subjunctive forms less distinctive, they became less and less often used. They were supplanted by modal auxiliaries + infinitives, particularly *should*-constructions, in different syntactic environments, but remained as an archaic/literary/regional option (see Mustanoja 1960: 461). After about 1600 subjunctive instances became increasingly rare in the extant literature (Visser 1966: 843–7). At the beginning of the twentieth century the periphrastic variant, chiefly *should* + infinitive, was the predominant construction in ‘mandative’ contexts in both American and British English (‘I suggested that he should go’). Then nothing less than a revolution took place.

Övergaard (1995) is a corpus-based study, where the corpora, unlike the CobuildDirect Corpus referred to above, contain British and American texts fairly evenly spaced throughout the twentieth century (1900, 1920, 1940, 1960, 1990). The author is thus able to establish trends and make comparisons between the two varieties. With regard to the periphrastic construction in British and American English mandative constructions, normally *should* + infinitive, she shows (p. 61) that it went down dramatically in the twentieth century, from 67 per cent to less than 1 per cent in AmE, and, somewhat later, from 94 per cent to 36 per cent in BrE corpora. What has happened, then, is that there has been a reversal of tendencies so that the morphological subjunctive has re-established itself as a more and more important alternative to the periphrastic variant. This tendency is clearly visible from circa 1920 onwards. From that time the morphological subjunctive has become a characteristic of AmE, although it can be seen to spread in BrE too (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 157).

The negated subjunctive, as in

- (3) They demanded that he not stay

is both more recent and more infrequent in the language. The first instance in Övergaard’s material appears in her 1940 corpus, where it is the only one (p. 73).¹ There are ten American negated subjunctives altogether in her material, to be compared with the 357 instances of affirmative American

¹ The earliest instance given by Visser (1966: 847–8) is dated 1936.

Table 13.1 *Normalized frequencies of negated subjunctives in AmE, BrE and AusE (Database: CobuildDirect Corpus) (pmw = per million words)*

AmE n	Subcorpus size	n pmw	BrE n	Subcorpus size	n pmw	Aus n	Subcorpus size	n pmw
25	9 980 368	2.5	2	42 099 593	0.05	7	5 337 528	1.3

subjunctives. The British corpora contain only two negated subjunctives and ninety-nine affirmative ones. The negated formula (*not* + subjunctive) has been slow in establishing itself in Britain. Övergaard (p. 70) quotes the English grammarian A. M. Clark (1947: 229) as saying that the ‘ordinary’ negative subjunctive forms were ‘*I (he, she, it, we, you, they) do not /don’t take*’ in the active voice and ‘*I (he, she, it, we, you, they) be not taken*’ in the passive voice. Somewhat later than Clark, Kirchner (1954: 124) writes:

It seems that American literary historians are as yet fighting shy of this construction [‘a demand that English not be used’]. Kenneth B. Murdock e.g. avoids it in his contribution to the *Literary History of the U.S.* (1948), writing: very little of his verse was published in his day, but he left enough in ms. to fill a large volume, with the request that it *be not printed* (pp. 55–66).

It is obvious that the *not* + subjunctive structure is much better established in American than in British English even today. A search in the 57-million-word CobuildDirect Corpus produced the results provided in Table 13.1. The negated subjunctive is thus (2.5/0.05=) 50 times as frequent in the American as in the British part of the corpus. It is worth noting that Australian usage is much closer to American than to British English.

3 Discussion

3.1 *Why return of the subjunctive in AmE?*

When discussing why the subjunctive reappeared in AmE, we will try to distinguish between factors that made it possible for it to appear and factors that were the direct agents of its reappearance, although the distinction between the two types is not always clear-cut.

3.1.1 *Setting the stage for the subjunctive*

Under the first head, features in the language that may have paved the way for the general return of the subjunctive in AmE, there are a handful of factors.

3.1.1.1 *Traces of the subjunctive*

The old subjunctive had never disappeared completely. It remained in traditional sayings and proverbs, fossilized expressions and in the Bible (King James’s Version), for example:

- (4) And if a soul *sin*, and *hear* the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he *do* not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity. (Leviticus 5)

Speakers can therefore be assumed to have had a certain familiarity with subjunctive forms even if they did not use them themselves.

3.1.1.2 Lexical ambiguity

Some verbs are ambiguous between non-mandative and mandative. For instance, non-mandative *insist* means ‘to say firmly and often that something is true’, and mandative *insist* ‘to demand that something should happen’ (LDOCE). In the following sentence *adhere to* could hence mean either ‘already adhere to’ or ‘should adhere to’.

- (5) There are a few fashion rules that every self respecting hip babe will insist their parents adhere to this summer.

CobuildDirect Corpus: Australian newspapers. Text: N5000950817.

Another such verb is *suggest*: nonmandative ‘to state something in an indirect way; = imply’; mandative ‘to tell someone your ideas about what they should do, where they should go etc.’ (LDOCE). The following sentence is ambiguous in theory, in that *African voters expect* might mean either ‘African voters actually expect’ or ‘African voters should expect’:

- (6) Far from expecting miracles from the new Government, these studies suggest African voters expect things to get better only very gradually.

CobuildDirect Corpus: UK Times newspaper. Text: N2000960222.

Such ambiguous verbs could smooth the way for the acceptance of one-word mandative subjunctive forms.

3.1.1.3 Structural ambiguity: present indicative vs. infinitive

If there is ambiguity inherent in certain verbs, as we have just seen, there is also structural ambiguity in English between finite present tense forms and infinitives. In a sentence like

- (7) We can see you jump for joy

there is a dual constructional possibility: finite clause (=‘that you jump’) or subject/object + infinitive (=‘you jumping’). Intended infinitives could thus be understood as finite present tense forms, so the stage was set for infinitive-like finite subjunctive forms² to appear. The structural difference between sentences such as

² Like, for example, Crystal (1995: 212), but unlike Need and Schiller (1990), I choose to regard the subjunctive base forms as finite.

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(8) a. His boss had John paint the house (infinitive *paint*)

b. His boss insisted John paint the house (subjunctive *paint*)

may not have been apparent to everybody. It could be mentioned that Denison (1993: 181f.) has observed a similar phenomenon in Middle English, where a subjunctive could be mistaken for a bare infinitive, or vice versa:

(9) And preie God save the king (Chaucer, *Astrolabe* Prol. 56)

That similar mistakes are in fact made can be shown by means of the well-known phrase referring to tea: ‘the cups that cheer but not inebriate’. This is a quotation from William Cowper’s (1731–1800) poem *The Task*. Cowper, in turn, lifted it from Bishop Berkeley, who had praised tar water for being ‘so mild and benign . . . as to warm without heating, to cheer but not inebriate’ (Kjellmer 1979). The infinitives in Berkeley are thus used by Cowper as present plural indicatives, resulting in a puzzling negative construction.

3.1.1.4 Structural ambiguity: present indicative vs. present subjunctive

In mandative contexts the indicative is often used, particularly but not exclusively, in BrE:

(10) It is recommended that this document is obtained and followed exactly.
CobuildDirect Corpus: UK ephemera (leaflets, adverts, etc). Text: E0000002009.

(11) But if he wants to be taken seriously I suggest he loses those seaside post card cracks.
CobuildDirect Corpus: UK Today newspaper. Text: N6000951014.

(12) It may not even have been practical to insist that Iraq stays in one piece.
CobuildDirect Corpus: US National Public Radio broadcasts. Text: S2000910326.

When subjunctive and indicative forms are identical it is therefore difficult or impossible to decide which type they belong to:

(13) We suggest you read it carefully.
CobuildDirect Corpus: UK ephemera. Text: E0000001266.

Övergaard (1995: 67) discusses this phenomenon and thinks, too, that ‘the fact that most of the indicative and the subjunctive present tense forms are identical makes for opacity, which may ultimately lead to levelling in the same way as in the OE and ME periods’. In distinguishing formally identical subjunctive from indicative verb forms, she states: ‘If no indicatives appear in parallel instances, it is taken for granted that a finite bare V form is a non-inflected subjunctive, not an indicative verb form’ (1995: 93). The few ambiguous forms in her material are listed separately (pp. 68–9).

So the previous existence of subjunctive forms in highly restricted types of writing along with the occurrence of nonsubjunctive but subjunctivelike forms (present indicative, infinitive) in potentially modal contexts set the stage for the full-scale return of the subjunctive.

3.1.2 *Potentially decisive factors*

Øvergaard (1995: 42ff.) sees the reversal of trends in AmE primarily as a result of the workings of extralinguistic social and regional factors. At the turn of the century, the culturally and socially important New England version of English was under the influence of BrE with its predominant periphrastic *should* construction. But when the large cities in the Mid West with their mixed population came to have greater importance and prestige in the political and cultural world of the early 1900s, the surviving morphological subjunctive along with the influence of the subjunctive in the languages of the vast numbers of European settlers made for increased use of the subjunctive in their English.

In addition to such sociolinguistic causes, another factor of a more linguistic kind could have promoted the return of the morphological subjunctive in AmE. The periphrastic variant of the subjunctive was chiefly a construction with *should* + infinitive, although other modals also occurred. In both British and American English there are a number of occasions where a *should* + infinitive phrase can alternate with a finite main verb in the indicative without any serious semantic consequences. A few examples are: 'if you (should) see him, will you tell him?' and 'I (should) think I can do it.' That a finite base form of the verb can take the place of a periphrastic *should*-construction is therefore a familiar phenomenon. Furthermore, one of the well-known distinguishing features of British and American English is precisely the difference in their use of *should*. *Should* is much more frequent in British than in American English, e.g. in conditional clauses ('I *should be* glad if you would . . .') and in 'putative' (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 14.25) uses ('I'm surprised he *should feel* lonely'). The severe semantic and structural restriction on the use of American *should* is a favourite topic of American writers such as Mencken (1936),³ Evans and Evans (1957)⁴ and Copperud (1970).⁵ While the indicative was not much of an option in AmE (Øvergaard 1995: 62; but cf. 3.1.1.4), the decline of *should* in that variety created a gap which in mandative contexts would conveniently be filled by the morphological subjunctive.

³ 'As for *should*, it is displaced by *ought to* . . . In the main, *should* is avoided, sometimes at considerable pains. Often its place is taken by the more positive *don't*. Thus 'I *don't* mind' is used instead of 'I *shouldn't* mind'.' (445)

⁴ 'Americans *should*, however, remember that an Englishman is likely to say *I should* or *we should* where an American would use *would*. For example, an Englishman sees nothing outrageous in the sentence, *the doctor thought I should die*.' (448)

⁵ '*Should* is generally used in the U.S. only in the sense of *ought to*.' (243)

3.2 *Why return of the subjunctive in BrE?*

In BrE the situation with regard to the mandative subjunctive has been radically different from AmE. Periphrasis has been the normal policy in mandative contexts well into the twentieth century, and unlike the situation in AmE the present indicative has often been used in the subclause:

- (14) Now it is suggested that the man responsible for it . . . is to be sacked because of it.

CobuildDirect Corpus: UK Today newspaper. Text: N6000920907).

This is now changing. As we saw above, BrE is now following in the footsteps of AmE, only some decades later: periphrasis is down and non-inflected subjunctives are up. Övergaard (1995: 54) sees the development in BrE as a result of American influence, which seems very plausible in view of the strong American impact on BrE in the twentieth century in various fields.

3.3 *Why unexpected word order in negated subjunctive?*3.3.1 *Puzzling word order*

The negated morphological subjunctive of the type ‘that he not go’ is mystifying in that *not* unexpectedly occurs *before* the finite verb. Earlier in the history of English its regular place was after the finite verb. This is true both of the period before and of the period after the establishment of the DO support.⁶

Not thus normally followed the subjunctive, as in

- (15) 2 And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, *that he come not* at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; *that he die not*: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat. (Leviticus 16)
- (16) 12 And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, *that he see not* the ground with his eyes. (Ezekiel 12)

In archaic, solemn or proverbial style this type of construction without DO support still occurs:

- (17) The Speaker advised the House that such a motion was not in order whereupon the Member subsequently moved ‘That the Member speaking *be not* further heard’, which was agreed to on division.
(*N[ew] S[outh] W[ales] Legislative Assembly Practice and Procedure Book.*)

⁶ Cf. Ellegård (1953: 193) writing on the Early New English period: ‘Now *not* was eminently an adverb that by tradition could not take the place before the full finite verb.’

And as late as 1999 an English novelist repeats the pattern:

- (18) And it is therefore imperative that the body *be not* buried. (Pears 1999: 510)⁷

Against this background the word order of the modern negated subjunctive is remarkable. Visser (1966: 847–8) speculates that the position of *not* ‘may be due to the tendency . . . to give a word prominence by putting it in an unusual place’. Haegeman (1986) and Övergaard (1995: 72–3) both suggest that the pattern valid for other adverbials was applied to *not* (‘He insisted/demanded that we *never use* it again’; ‘a recommendation/stipulation that he *always notify* us in advance’).

Nevertheless, the placement of *not* is astonishing. It is an extremely frequent word (it comes as No. 30 in the Cobuild frequency list, before *or*, *an* and *go*), and its place in the verb phrase, after the finite verb, has been well established for centuries. It is difficult to imagine that speakers would put it on a par with frequency adverbs and change the time-honoured order if there were no other influencing factors. I will suggest three such factors.

3.3.2 Omitted auxiliary

Visser (1966: 843–7) quotes a number of writers who regard the (affirmative) one-word subjunctive as an innovation and as an abbreviated form of *should* + infinitive. Thus Myers (1952: 169) says the construction can be explained as short for *should* + infinitive, Carey (1953: 17) speaks of omission of *should* after verbs of wishing, suggesting and the like, and most of Jespersen’s friends say that ‘it is rare and rather unnatural in these cases to leave out *should*’ (1931: 162) (all quoted after Visser). In fact, nonoccurrence of a finite auxiliary is not all that unusual in Present-Day English. There are a number of examples like the following in CobuildDirect (see further Kjellmer 2003):

- (19) Unions have every right to negotiate on behalf of members but they should not be interfering in workplaces *which chosen* to be non-unionised.
CobuildDirect Corpus: Australian newspapers. Text: N5000950106.

- (20) . . . we’ll undercut them give ‘em a better deal here we’ll be the banking capital of the world and all that money’ll come pouring back from the film stars rock stars er radio presenters *that hidden* their money there all this kind of stuff.

CobuildDirect Corpus: UK transcribed informal speech. Text: S0000000753.

⁷ In the CobuildDirect Corpus, there is an example where the author translates a Hebrew ‘adjuration addressed to the daughters of Jerusalem not to stir or awaken love’ as ‘that you stir not up nor awaken love’ (CobuildDirect Corpus: UK books; fiction & non-fiction. Text: B000000917).

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- (21) Ain't he always in trouble? You forget *I known* him longer than you.
CobuildDirect Corpus: US books; fiction & non-fiction. Text: B9000001192.

See also cases like

- (22) . . . the Tories must rely on slick delivery of the few policies on which they *can agree*.
CobuildDirect Corpus: UK *Times* newspaper. Text: N2000951212.

where *can* could be omitted, and

- (23) . . . if you manage to tilt it [the population] in a way that *you reach* more of them, there are more votes there.
CobuildDirect Corpus: US National Public Radio broadcasts. Text: S2000910608.

where *can* (or another modal) could be inserted. There are clearly cases where the standing of the English auxiliary is less than rock solid.

If many, or most, people thus take, for example, . . . *that he leave* to be a form of . . . *that he (should) leave*, they will also take . . . *that he not leave* to be a form of . . . *that he (should) not leave*, where consequently *not* is seen as regularly occurring after the deleted *should*. On the assumption that a modal had been deleted, speakers new to the expression would naturally insert a *not* before the remaining verb form.

A related case is that of coordinated infinitives, the second of which is negated and, as expected, immediately preceded by the negation, as in (24):

- (24) I think *I'll go straight down and not vote* for any incumbent.
CobuildDirect Corpus: US National Public Radio broadcasts. Text: S2000920406.

where *and not vote* = 'and I'll not vote', i.e. where an auxiliary can be understood before *not*. The *and + not* (+ infinitive) structure functions as a cohesive device, linking the two infinitives and sometimes operating across considerable stretches of text:

- (25) And how do you *do it* in a way that is historically responsible; that is, that conveys the specificity of what went on *and not get lost* in sort of general shibboleths about the evils of prejudice . . . ?
CobuildDirect Corpus: US National Public Radio broadcasts. Text: S2000930421.

However, the second infinitive is then in danger of becoming detached from the coordinated structure and of losing its infinitival character; rather than being an infinitive whose finite auxiliary can be supplied from a coordinated structure, it apparently now and then comes to be seen as a finite verb with a preposed negation:

- (26) Her husband and children went with her. No mean feat. ‘If you tell them why, they understand,’ she said. ‘If you say we aren’t going to have ice cream around because it’s fattening and empty calories – how about Popsicles instead? If you get them involved *and not impose on them*, they’ll go along.’ (*Detroit Free Press* 1993)⁸
- (27) And then I went through a phase where I was just sort of like passive *and not say anything* at all and just let it wash over me.
 CobuildDirect Corpus: UK transcribed informal speech. Text: S9000000524.
- (28) You look at the overall response *and not worry* too much about whether it’s the ocean or the atmosphere which is carrying the heat.
 CobuildDirect Corpus: UK transcribed informal speech. Text: S9000001058.
- (29) But researchers would have to be sure that the genes only entered the right lung cells, *and not travel* to other cells in the body.
 CobuildDirect Corpus: US National Public Radio broadcasts. Text: S2000900921.

3.3.3 Structural ambiguity

Secondly, in subject/object + infinitive sentences like the following, *not* regularly precedes the infinitive:

- (30) They’re going to have . . . about 135,000 people come out to see the Giants *not win anything*.
 CobuildDirect Corpus: US National Public Radio broadcasts. Text: S2000911005.
- (31) I’d rather see more people *not accept* keeping people alive just to keep them alive.
 CobuildDirect Corpus: US National Public Radio broadcasts. Text: S2000921123.

We saw above (3.1.1.3) that the formal identity of infinitives and finite forms could cause confusion. If sentences of the above kind are acceptable (and they do occur in the Corpus!), they may also be acceptable with a mandative verb in the matrix clause:

- (32) They’re going to have . . . about 135,000 people come out to make sure the Giants *not win anything*.
- (33) I will insist more people *not accept* keeping people alive just to keep them alive.

In that case, the subjunctive will naturally be preceded by *not*.

⁸ I owe this example to Professor Günter Rohdenburg.

3.3.4 *German influence*

Thirdly, it was suggested above that the return of the subjunctive in AmE could at least partly be due to European immigrants transferring their native speech habits, which featured the use of subjunctive forms, to their variety of English. In a similar way it seems likely that the large number of German settlers in America⁹ could have applied the word order in their negated subordinate clauses, as in

(34) Sie verlangt, dass er nicht komme

to corresponding English clauses such as

(35) She demands that he not come.

Such factors, in conjunction with the adverbial-influence one, could have been strong enough to plant *not* firmly in its now normal place before the finite subjunctive verb in mandative constructions. This position would have marked them as new and different from the old biblical-sounding ones (*that he come not*).

4 Conclusion

As in several other Germanic languages, the subjunctive declined in English in the modern period, but unlike the situation in its sister languages the trend was reversed in twentieth-century English. The subjunctive is now a characteristic of especially AmE. The reasons for its come-back in AmE are, first, that the ground was well prepared for the change through popular acquaintance with biblical subjunctives and through the use of potentially subjunctive forms. Then the rise in prestige of such varieties of English that were spoken by immigrants familiar with subjunctives in their mother tongues may have tipped the balance. That the same tendency towards increasing use of the subjunctive is also observable in BrE is only natural in view of the considerable impact of AmE on modern BrE. The unexpected order of the elements of the negated subjunctive (*not* + finite verb), finally, may be explained by a combination of circumstances: the construction *that he not go* was often seen as a defective form of *that he (should) not go*, there were similar indicative forms available and German influence may have made itself felt. Considering the limited period during which it took place, this refashioning of the English verbal system is nothing less than remarkable.

⁹ 'In descending order for numbers of speakers, the main languages of the US are: English, Spanish, Italian, *German*, French, Polish, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese' (McArthur 1992: 48; my emphasis).

14 The mandative subjunctive

WILLIAM J. CRAWFORD

1 Introduction

It has been repeatedly illustrated that the mandative subjunctive (e.g. *He demanded that I be there on time*) has seen a re-emergence in different varieties of English (Turner 1980 for British English, Övergaard 1995 for British and American English, Peters 1998 for Australian English). Some studies have shown the subjunctive to be alive and well and living (primarily) in American English (Övergaard 1995, Albakry and Crawford 2004) or that American English is leading in its revitalization and that British English is 'lagging behind' (Hundt 1998b: 171). These studies have reached the general consensus that American English prefers the subjunctive form (e.g. *They suggested that he be reprimanded*) while British English favours the modal construction (*They suggested that he should be reprimanded*). The present chapter is also concerned with describing subjunctive contrasts in British and American English through a close examination of a finite set of words (i.e. subjunctive triggers) which co-occur with the subjunctive. The focus of this chapter is not wholly concerned with whether American English has more subjunctives than British English or whether British English uses more modal forms than American English; instead, this chapter illustrates the distributional differences of complement clause types in both American and British English in a fairly large corpus of news writing.

This chapter adds to the growing body of research on the subjunctive by using a synchronic, corpus-based approach to identify the range of nouns, verbs and adjectives that may 'trigger' its use (e.g. *suggestion, insist, important*) and then demonstrating the co-occurrence of each trigger with different types of complement clauses that will be subsumed under the cover term 'mandates'. Three questions guide this research. Firstly, in a set of lexical items which co-occur with the subjunctive, how frequent are the competing complement types? Secondly, are there contrasts in how particular word classes or lexical items express mandates? Thirdly, in this set of lexical items, are there frequency contrasts in how AmE and BrE express mandates? Such an approach not only verifies previous work on the vibrancy of the subjunctive and demonstrates clear differences between AmE and BrE, but also

Table 14.1 *The Longman corpus of news writing: British and American*

Corpus	British News	American News
Words	5,549,133	5,688,310

illustrates that specific word classes and lexical items within these word classes are clear indicators of British and American contrasts in the use of mandates in general as well as in the expression of different types of mandates (including, of course, the subjunctive).

The corpora used in this study are taken from the British and American news writing subcorpus used in the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (LGSWE) (Biber *et al.* 1999). As stated in the LGSWE, the corpora are comparable on many levels, including regional and political differences in selected newspapers, readership level and variety of topics. All texts were collected in the 1990s (see Biber *et al.* 1999: 31–2 for a detailed description of the news corpora). Table 14.1 provides the word counts for each corpus.

2 Preliminaries: triggers, proportional counts and types of complement clauses

In this section I outline four issues that are central to the study: the definition of a trigger; a general distinction between mandative and non-mandative complement types; the definition of a subjunctive; and a description of the complement types used in this study.

This study adopts a triggering view of the mandative subjunctive, so that any lexical item which may possibly occur with the subjunctive is a potential trigger. For example, a verb such as *order* can co-occur with a subjunctive (*He ordered that they be removed*) and is thus a trigger; on the other hand, the verb *find* cannot occur with the subjunctive (**He found that they be removed*) and is not. More recent corpus-based synchronic work on the mandative subjunctive has illustrated the frequency with which particular lexical items (triggers) are found with the subjunctive (Johansson and Norheim 1988, Övergaard 1995, Albakry and Crawford 2004). Triggers that frequently co-occur with the subjunctive are considered ‘strong’ triggers; those that are infrequently found with a subjunctive or compatible with it but not found are ‘weak’ triggers. Albakry and Crawford, for example, compiled a list of 108 potential subjunctive triggers and showed their frequency in a one-million-word corpus of American news writing. This study uses the same list of 108 triggers (cf. the list in Appendix A). It should be mentioned here that the trigger approach allows for reliable statements concerning the extent to which a finite set of lexical expressions co-occurs with the subjunctive. Such an approach does not, however, capture all uses of the subjunctive in the corpora. This issue is also discussed in Övergaard (1995: 13) and Hundt (1998b: 91).

Each trigger can be followed by a variety of complement clauses which, in this study, were grouped, in a first rough subdivision, as general mandative vs. non-mandative complement types and further subdivided into specific complement types within the mandative vs. non-mandative distinction. Under the more general classification, mandates are viewed as any clause in its finite verb form that explicitly addresses the fact that some person or entity wants a particular action to be taken or a certain event to happen. Such a functional definition of mandates includes clauses expressed in one of three ways: as complement clauses containing subjunctives; as complement clauses containing the modal *should/shall*; and as complement clauses containing the modal *must/have to*. While Övergaard (1995: 54f.) makes a distinction between the subjunctive and its periphrastic counterparts based on the fact that ‘the subjunctive can replace all periphrastic alternants, but not vice versa’ (54–5), the decision to place all three complement types into one general category stems from the semantic force of the modal *should/shall* and *must/have to* that are not found in modals such as *could* or *might*. Given the perspective on mandates adopted here, triggers can potentially vary between these three ways of expressing a mandate in a complement clause. This point is illustrated in sentence (1), where any of the three variants is a possible way of expressing a mandate.¹

- (1) Israel was also said to be determined that the agenda for a meeting with Palestinians *be/should be/must be restricted* to agreeing details of the conduct of elections in the West Bank and Gaza strip. (British News)

Triggers do not necessarily need to express mandates; they may also include a non-mandative modal verb as in (2), where the complement clause takes a modal of possibility, or in cases such as (3), which contains an indicative or ambiguous subjunctive (see discussion below).

- (2) In his letter to Dingell, Boskin belittled the suggestion that most of the additional costs of tougher air pollution *could be offset* by savings elsewhere. (American News)
- (3) Last night police virtually ruled out a suggestion that the intruders *were* poachers. (British News)

This study also had to make a decision as to how a subjunctive would be defined and identified. While some studies have used a semantic criteria (e.g. Johansson and Norheim 1988, Övergaard 1995), other studies (Peters 1998, Albakry and Crawford 2004) only counted as subjunctive forms that were distinctly marked as such. The latter approach was adopted and a subjunctive was only counted as one in cases where there is unambiguous morphological

¹ The actual sentence has the subjunctive *be*. The modal examples were included to make the point that all three are possible ways of expressing a mandate.

evidence of its subjunctive status. Examples of these subjunctive forms are shown in (4–5). In (4) the primary verb *be* is in its subjunctive form. In (5), the third-person singular subject (*he*) is followed by a verb with no third-person singular verbal morphology (*die*) and this is counted as a subjunctive.² It should however be noted here that cases where syntactic criteria such as the placement of the negator *not* (*that he not go*) or the lack of tense concord between the matrix and embedded clauses (*He insisted that they go*) indicate the presence of a subjunctive were not included.³

- (4) The European Community states represented on the UN Security Council have asked that Macedonia *be admitted* under the name ‘Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’ until the dispute with Greece is settled. (British News)
- (5) In November, the same jury recommended that he *die* in the gas chamber for the killings. (American News)

As stated above, clausal complements of potential triggers can also express a mandative meaning through the use of the modal verbs *should* (6) and *must* (7).⁴

- (6) Councillors and officials will demand that such ships *should have* a mandatory duty to contact the Orkney Harbor’s Department ... (British News)
- (7) Other ideas under consideration include a requirement that all mail *must have* rhyming addresses. (American News)

Clauses not falling into the three types described above were placed into one of two categories: complements containing non-mandative modal verbs (8) and a catch-all category called ‘other’ (9–10). This final category included cases such as (9) where the verb of the complement clause is in the indicative mood. Also counted as ‘other’ were cases like (10), where the subject *you* is not in the third person and there is no morphological evidence that the main verb (*plan*) is in the subjunctive. Examples such as (10) can also be viewed as ambiguous subjunctives, but under the morphological definition adopted here there is really no way to tell. The definition of subjunctives is inherently problematic in English because either approach has its own complications. While a semantic criteria necessitates decisions based on judgements of the speaker/writer’s intent (the researcher must do this by intuition), a

² Although the uninflected *have* is also a possible form, no examples of this were found and hence are not included.

³ The studies presented in Chapter 13 by Kjellmer and Chapter 15 by Schlüter pursue different aims and therefore do take account of these syntactic differences between subjunctives and indicatives.

⁴ *Shall* and *have to* were very rare in the corpora and were included in the *should* and *must* counts, respectively.

morphological approach is bound to under-represent the number of subjunctives.⁵

- (8) The ecological monitoring group is a useful initiative to ensure that the environmental impacts of the spill *would be assessed*. (British News)
- (9) It's all in the book – though Millman blushes at the suggestion that she *has written* a nightmarish portrait of family life. (American News)
- (10) Thorpe Park recommends that you *plan* your day out for a visit of more than six hours to get maximum enjoyment from your outing. (British News)

3 The study

3.1 Overview

Using a list of 108 potential subjunctive triggers compiled by Albakry and Crawford (2004) (found in Appendix A), *that* complement clauses (including zero-*that* complement clauses) were identified for all forms of each verb, noun and adjective using the software program *Monoconc 2.0* (Barlow 2000). Potential triggers that did not provide a single subjunctive in either corpus were not included in the study. This resulted in a subset of sixteen verbs, eleven nouns and six adjectives which had at least one example of the subjunctive. All *that* complement clauses for each resulting trigger were then put into one of five categories: subjunctive; modal verb *should/shall*; modal verb *must/have to*; modal verb other than those just mentioned; and 'other' (complement types that did not fit into the four previous categories). The thirty-three triggers and the distribution of complement types are reported in Tables 14.3, 14.4 and 14.5 of Appendix B.⁶ In the following sections, I discuss British–American contrasts in the frequency of the subjunctive; the frequency of both general mandative vs. non-mandative and specific mandate types; and trigger strength in both word classes as well as in specific lexical triggers within each word class.

Table 14.2 provides total counts of subjunctive, modal *should*, modal *must*, non-mandative modals and 'other' counts for verbs, nouns and adjectives in both British English (BrE) news writing and American English (AmE) news writing. Three general points can be made by reference to this table.

⁵ Furthermore, in studies adopting semantic criteria for counting the subjunctive (Övergaard 1995, for example), many examples of what was counted as 'other' in the present study would have been included as 'subjunctive'. Consequently the frequency counts of the subjunctive in these studies should be much higher than what is reported here.

⁶ As is especially apparent from the tables in Appendix B, there are some counts where the total number of complement clause types are very low (or even non-existent, e.g. BrE verb *provide* and AmE noun *advice*). While this is likely due to the size of the corpus, a larger corpus of news writing would likely provide similar results.

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Table 14.2 *Complement types following selected triggers in British and American news writing*

Word class	Corpus	Subjunctive	Modal <i>should/shall</i>	Modal <i>must/have to</i>	Modal other	Other	Total Number
Verb	BrE	140	135	23	258	785	1341
	AmE	423	35	17	243	577	1295
Noun	BrE	22	33	2	38	116	211
	AmE	108	2	7	23	78	218
Adjective	BrE	5	25	0	13	105	148
	AmE	16	3	5	26	70	120

Firstly, the total number of verb, noun and adjective complement clause counts are similar in BrE and AmE. Given that the two corpora used for this study were intended to be parallel (for a discussion of parallel corpora, see Mair 1997 and Hundt 1998b), this is to be expected. Consequently, comparisons of clause types between BrE and AmE are more trustworthy than if the complement clause counts were wildly different in the two varieties.

Secondly, in line with previous research (Övergaard 1995, Hundt 1998b, Peters 1998), the subjunctive counts are higher in American English in all three categories (423 vs. 140 for verbs; 108 vs. 22 for nouns; and 16 vs. 5 for adjectives) and the modal *should* counts are higher in British English in all three categories (135 vs. 35 for verbs; 33 vs. 2 for nouns; and 25 vs. 3 for adjectives). These overall counts illustrate the strong preference for the subjunctive in all three word classes in AmE and the somewhat equal distribution of subjunctive and *should* complement clauses in verbs and nouns in BrE, but a preference for *should* complement types with adjective triggers. Modals with *must* are much less frequent in both varieties.

Thirdly, there is a larger number of 'other' clause types in BrE than AmE. This category includes a number of different clause types (imperatives, indicatives and ambiguous subjunctives), and it may well be that adopting another approach to identifying subjunctives would move a number of the 'other' category into the subjunctive type. Nevertheless, a different method for determining subjunctives would also move some of the 'other' group to the subjunctive category in AmE as well, so there is still a strong preference for expressing mandates with the subjunctive in AmE.

3.2 *Mandative vs. non-mandative complements*

In order to provide a sense of when a mandate is used and when it is not used (or expressed ambiguously), the subjunctive and modal *should/must* categories were conflated into one 'mandative' category and compared to the modal other and 'other' types (resulting in a mandative vs. non-mandative grouping). Figure 14.1 provides such a view and shows that American English has

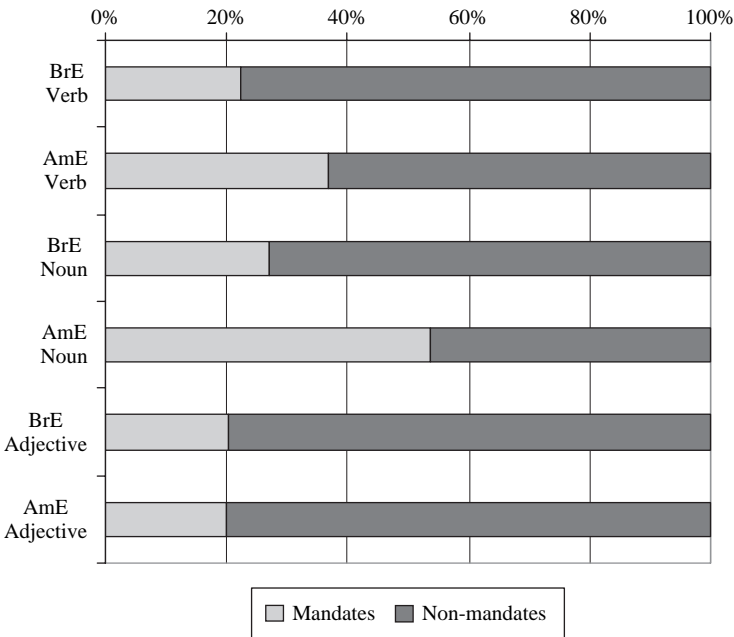


Figure 14.1 Mandates and non-mandates in British and American news writing

more mandates in both verb and noun triggers, although not with adjective triggers, which have an equal distribution. While nearly 40 per cent of complement clauses in all 16 verbal triggers result in either a subjunctive or a modal *should/must* in AmE, only just over 20 per cent are found in BrE. AmE also contains noun complements expressed as mandates over two times more frequently than BrE (55 per cent vs. 24 per cent).⁷ Therefore, AmE not only has a preference for the subjunctive (as shown in Table 14.1) but also expresses more overall mandates with the triggers that condition the subjunctive.

While conflating the triggers provides a distributional view of complement clause types in word classes, it does not address the issue of how frequently individual triggers express mandates. Figures 14.2–14.4 provide the ratio of mandates and non-mandates for each of the thirty-three triggers. Contrasts between triggers in BrE and AmE are demonstrated by reference to trigger strength. Although the strength of a trigger is a relative concept (i.e. there is no absolute defining characteristic for identifying a trigger as strong or weak), this chapter adopts a 65 per cent benchmark to distinguish strong triggers from weaker ones. In this study, a strong trigger is one that is followed by a

⁷ See also Chapter 15, where Schlüter finds a diachronically stable trend for AmE to mark modality more frequently than BrE.

complement clause containing a mandate in 65 per cent or more of all cases. Triggers resulting in mandates in the 40–64 per cent range are considered moderate triggers and those under 40 per cent are weaker triggers. Again, no absolute distinction is made here as these percentages only provide a sense of the strength of a trigger relative to the other triggers. One advantage to this perspective on trigger strength is that it provides a better picture of how each variety employs choices of complement types. Frequency counts alone can be misleading, while proportional counts can provide an indication of trigger strength that pure frequency counts will not provide. For example, a potential trigger such as the verb *insist* may have a higher frequency of subjunctives than a verb such as *urge*, but this may be due to an overall higher frequency of occurrence for *insist* than *urge* and can lead one to the false conclusion that *insist* is a stronger trigger than *urge*. In the following paragraphs, contrasts in triggers for both mandates in general as well as types of mandates will be illustrated with reference to proportional counts of triggers.

Figure 14.2 shows the proportion of mandates and non-mandates in the 16 verbs that were identified as subjunctive triggers. The overall pattern found in verbs illustrates a somewhat uniform pattern of trigger strength in BrE and AmE, with the largest trigger differences seen in the strong triggers and less variation in the moderate and weak triggers. For example, the strong AmE triggers *ask* (83 per cent vs. BrE at 63 per cent), *demand* (85 per cent vs. BrE at 68 per cent) and BrE *request* (85 per cent vs. AmE at 65 per cent) have proportional differences of 17–20 per cent, although they are strong (or nearly strong) triggers in both varieties. A similar, though somewhat weaker, difference is found for *recommend* (71 per cent BrE vs. 62 per cent AmE). The one trigger exhibiting the largest difference (*order* as 85 per cent AmE vs. 55 per cent for BrE) is strong in AmE and moderate in BrE. The other strong verbal triggers (*propose*, *require*, *urge*) are more uniform in BrE and AmE with differences around 10 per cent. Triggers that fall into the moderate (*dictate* and *wish*) and weak (*decide*, *determine*, *ensure*, *insist*, *provide*, *suggest*) categories show even less variation than the stronger triggers, the two exceptions being *determine* (31 per cent BrE vs. 4 per cent AmE) and *provide* (0 per cent BrE vs. 22 per cent AmE). The weak and moderate triggers *decide*, *dictate*, *ensure*, *insist*, *suggest* and *wish* all have a 0–13 per cent difference.

Of particular note here are the two triggers *insist* and *suggest*, which Övergaard (1995) reports as frequent triggers of the subjunctive. Although they both have high overall mandative counts (as reported in Table 14.3 in Appendix B, *insist* has thirty-five BrE and thirty-two AmE; *suggest* has fifty BrE and forty-eight AmE), the frequency information alone can be misleading. While these numbers are relatively high and may indicate that *insist* and *suggest* are strong triggers, when they are viewed in relation to the high number of overall clause counts, they are actually weak triggers (*insist* occurs as a mandative in 17 per cent of the complement clauses in both BrE and AmE; *suggest* is 13 per cent BrE and 14 per cent AmE).

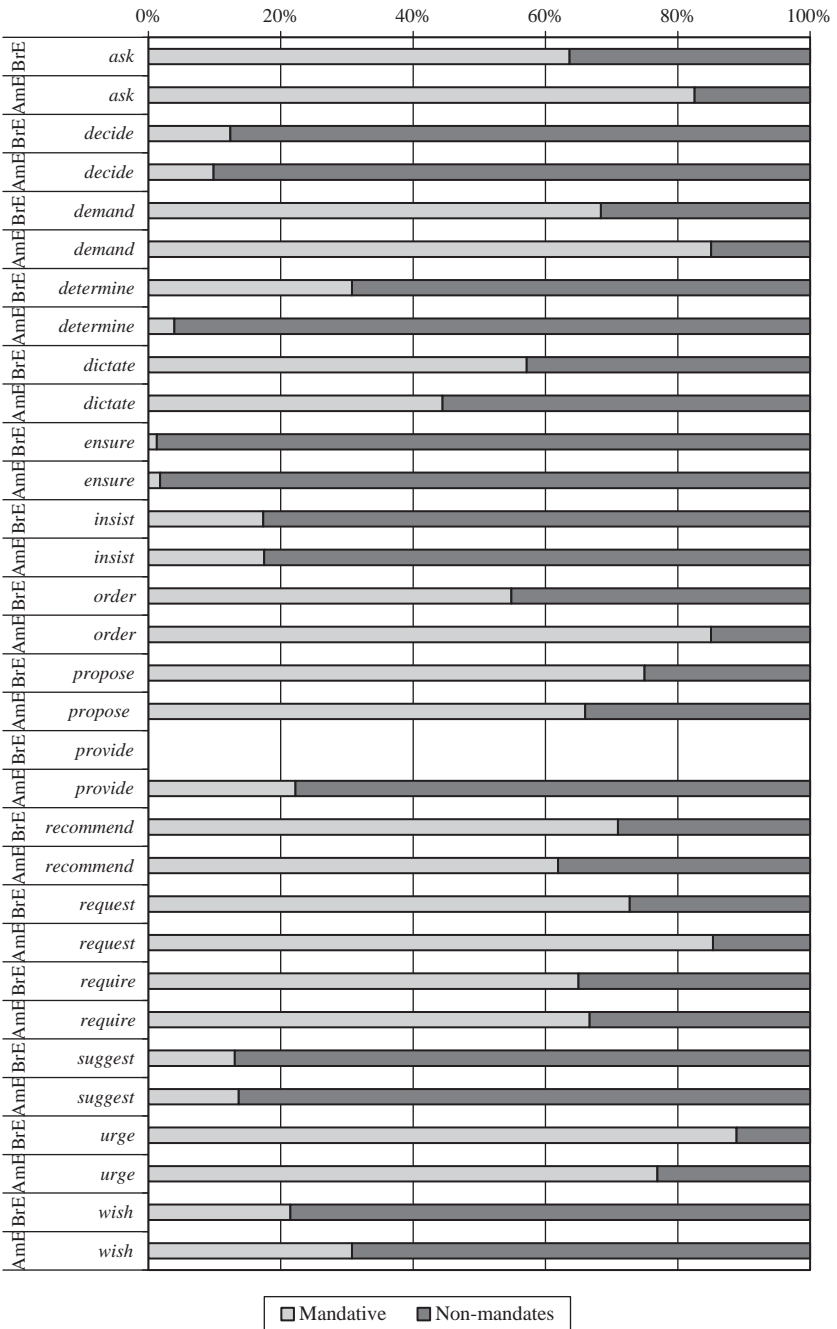


Figure 14.2 Mandates and non-mandates in verbal triggers in British and American news writing

Figure 14.3 shows the proportion of mandates in the eleven noun triggers. Unlike the verbal triggers, which are generally strong in both BrE and AmE, a number of triggers are strong in one variety but not in the other. The most notable differences are in *proposal*, *recommendation* and *requirement*. BrE

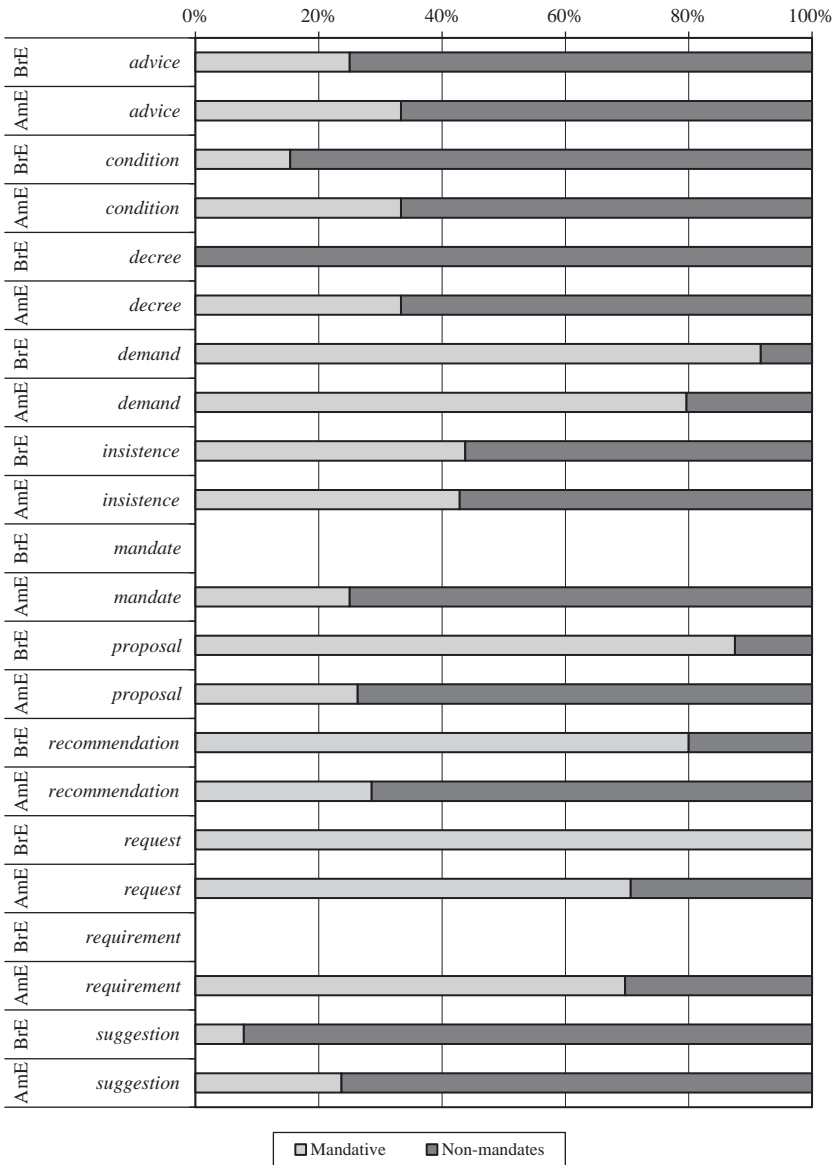


Figure 14.3 Mandates and non-mandates in noun triggers in British and American news writing

proposal and *recommendation* are strong triggers (88 per cent and 80 per cent, respectively) but these are weak in AmE (26 per cent and 29 per cent, respectively). AmE *requirement*, at 70 per cent, is also very different from its BrE counterpart, where, quite surprisingly, no *that* complement clauses were found. In addition to the strong–weak distinction in these nouns, there are five nouns that are weak in both BrE and AmE (*advice, condition, decree, mandate* and *suggestion*). In fact, Figure 14.3 demonstrates a much wider discrepancy of noun triggers in BrE and AmE than was found for verbs. Of the eleven noun triggers, eight have differences over 18 per cent (*condition, decree, mandate, proposal, recommend, request, requirement* and *suggestion*).

Figure 14.4 shows the proportion of mandates and non-mandates in the adjective triggers. The most striking overall point apparent from this figure is the absence of strong adjective triggers in either BrE or AmE. The adjective with the highest proportion of mandates, AmE *important*, is around 52 per cent. The other adjectives range from 3 per cent (AmE *concerned*) to 38 per cent (AmE *essential*). Furthermore, the proportion of mandates to non-mandates in the adjective triggers is not as variable as was seen in verbs and nouns. The most notable differences in the adjectives are *important*

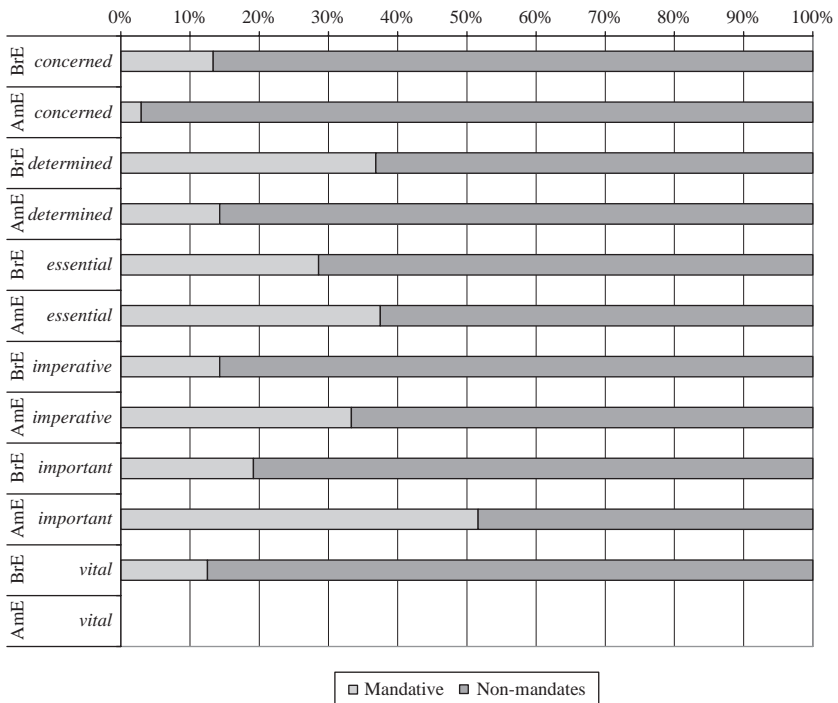


Figure 14.4 Mandates and non-mandates in adjective triggers in British and American news writing

(AmE 52 per cent vs. BrE 19 per cent), *determined* (BrE 37 per cent vs. AmE 14 per cent) and *imperative* (BrE 14 per cent vs. AmE 33 per cent). The other adjectives, *concerned* and *essential*, show less variation.

The general picture that emerges from looking at proportional counts of lexical triggers is that verbs have more strong triggers in both varieties, followed by nouns and then adjectives. The largest difference in trigger strength between BrE and AmE is found in nouns which contain a number of cases where a trigger is strong in one variety of English but not in the other. There are no verb triggers that are strong in one variety but weak in the other and there were no strong adjective triggers at all. Thus, the strongest triggers (verbs) and the weakest triggers (adjectives) have less variation in the overall expression of mandates in BrE and AmE than intermediate triggers (nouns).

3.3 Types of mandates

While section 3.2 shows the mandative/non-mandative distinction in the identified triggers, this section is concerned with portraying how different types of mandates are expressed in BrE and AmE. Figures 14.5–14.7 show the distribution of all subjunctive, *should/shall* and *must/have to* mandates for each of the triggers.

Figure 14.5 contains the distribution of mandate types in verbs. Six of the thirteen verbal triggers show a preference (60 per cent or more proportion of subjunctives) for the subjunctive in both BrE and AmE (*ask, demand, order, request, require* and *urge*). AmE has a much stronger subjunctive preference, with *insist, propose, provide, recommend* and *wish* also having subjunctives in the complements following these verbs over 60 per cent of the time. Complement clauses having *should* at 60 per cent or more are only found in both BrE and AmE for two verbs, *decide* and *suggest*, whereas BrE uses *should* at 60 per cent or more for *determine, dictate, ensure, recommend* and *wish* as well. Complements containing *must/have to* reach the 50 per cent mark only in AmE *determine*, while it occurs over 20 per cent in BrE and AmE *decide* and *insist* as well as AmE *dictate*. Overall, the complements of these verbs tend toward the subjunctive in both BrE and AmE (eight of the thirteen verbs in both varieties have subjunctives over 50 per cent of the time) with the *should* mandates making a good showing in BrE generally as well as after *decide, suggest* and *ensure* in AmE.⁸

The British trend towards adopting the subjunctive in place of *should* complement types is clearly supported by the stronger ones among the verbal triggers. There are seven BrE verbs that have subjunctive complement types at 50 per cent or higher (*ask, demand, order, propose, request, require* and *urge*). Of these seven, five are strong triggers and one is

⁸ Recall that the two verbs *decide* and *suggest* were both categorized as weak triggers.

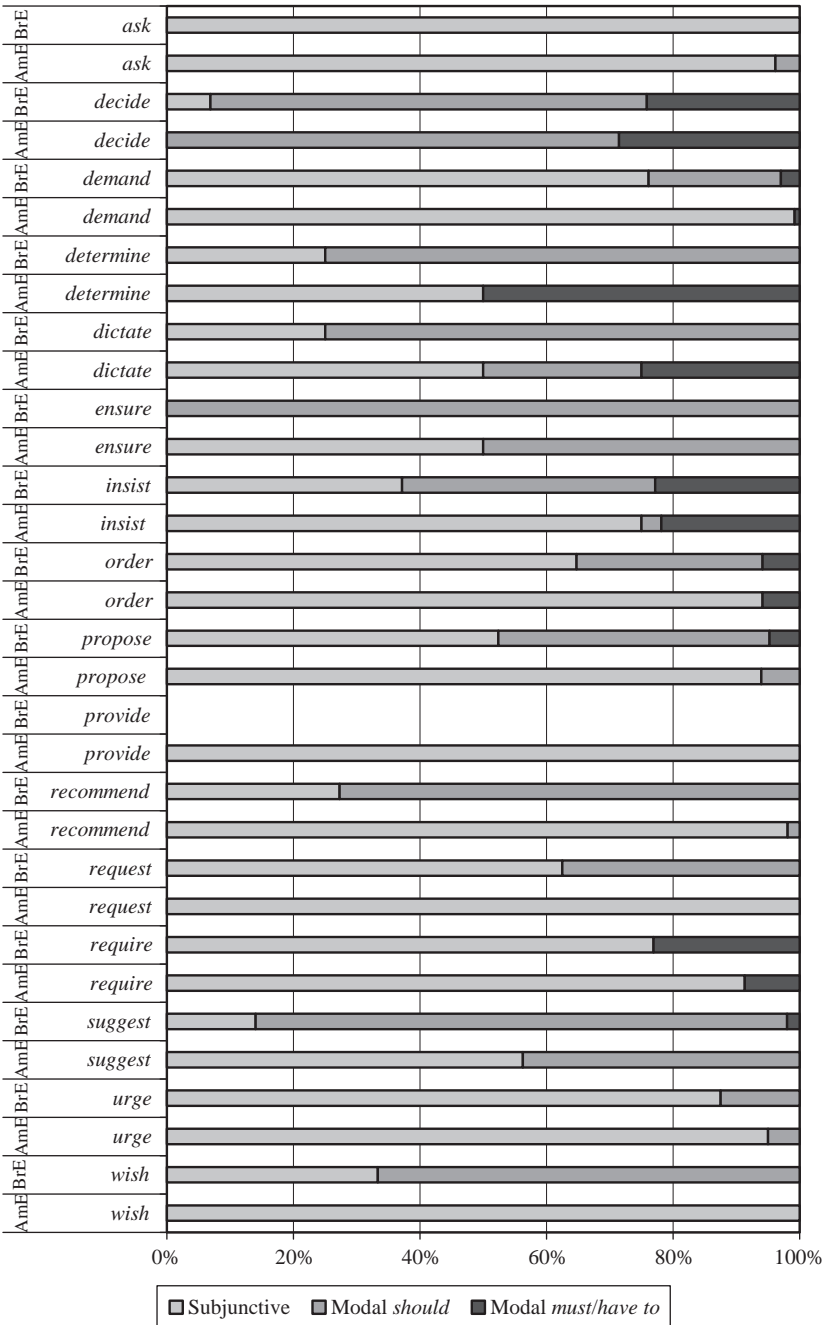


Figure 14.5 Distribution of verb trigger mandates in British and American news writing

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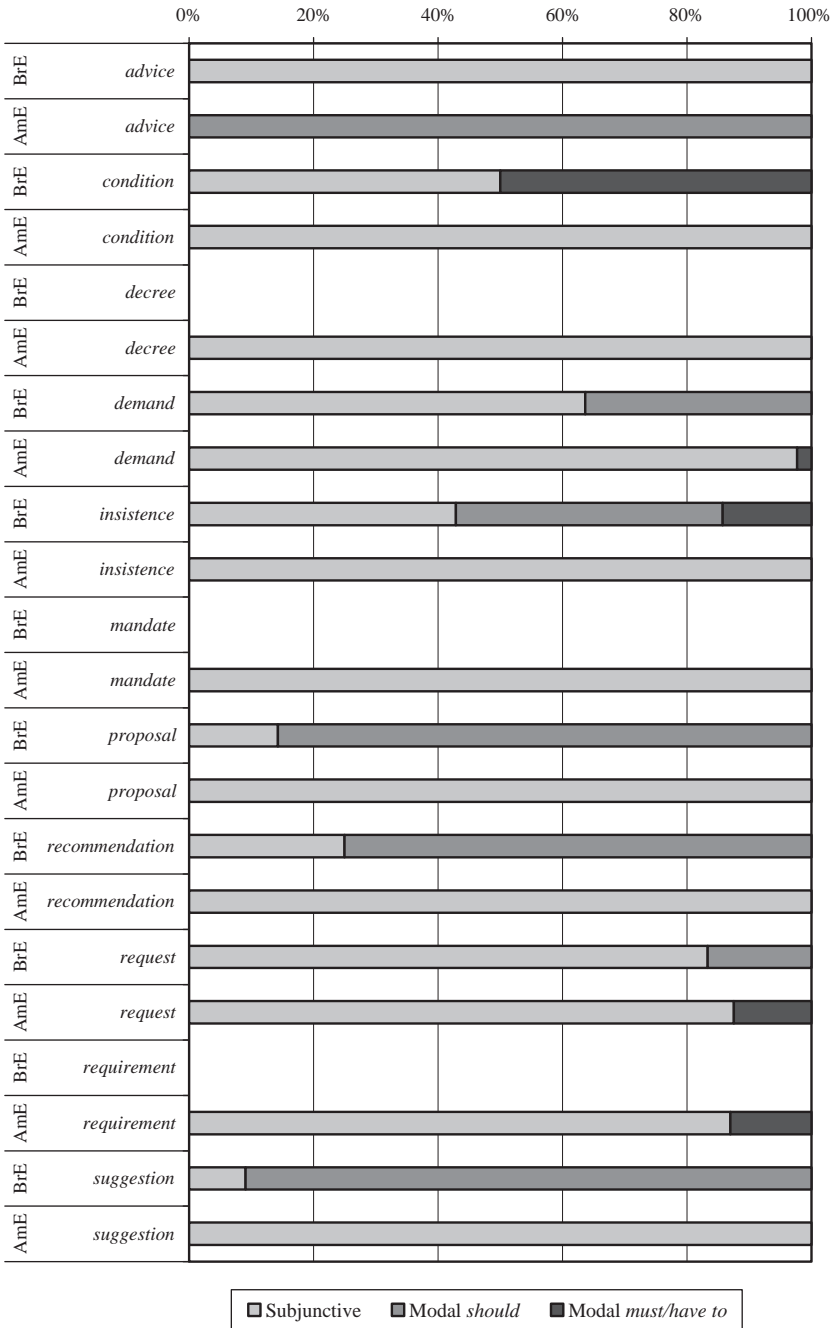


Figure 14.6 Distribution of noun trigger mandates in British and American news writing

moderately strong. In contrast, three AmE verbs use *should* 50 per cent or more of the time (*decide*, *ensure* and *suggest*) and these are all weak triggers. Hence, the trend towards the subjunctive in BrE is seen in the stronger verbal triggers, while *should* in AmE tends toward the weaker triggers.

Figure 14.6 provides the distribution of mandates in the noun triggers and demonstrates greater contrast in mandative types than what was found for verbs. For example, only two nouns, *demand* and *request*, show a strong preference for the subjunctive complement in both BrE and AmE. While ten of the eleven nouns take the subjunctive at 82 per cent or higher in AmE (seven of which take the subjunctive at 100 per cent), the vast majority of AmE noun triggers are found with the subjunctive. In comparison, *should* is well-represented in the BrE nouns *proposal* (85 per cent), *recommendation* (75 per cent) and *suggestion* (91 per cent), and also makes a decent showing in *demand* (35 per cent) and *insistence* (40 per cent). The one noun that goes against this trend is *advice*, where all BrE mandative complements were in the subjunctive and all AmE mandates were found with the modal *should* even though the number of overall occurrences is quite small. The three nouns that take the subjunctive 50 per cent or more of the time in BrE (*advice*, *demand* and *request*) included two strong mandative triggers (*demand*, *request*) and one weak one (*advice*); the one AmE trigger strongly preferring *should* (*advice*) is also weak in AmE. This suggests a trend towards BrE using stronger triggers in the subjunctive, similar to what was found for verbs.

The distribution of mandate types in adjective triggers is reported in Figure 14.7. The distinction in mandative types between BrE and AmE is even more apparent in adjectives than in nouns. Of the six identified adjective triggers, four show a 60 per cent or more preference for the subjunctive in AmE, and all six adjectives show a 60 per cent or more preference for *should* in BrE (*concerned*, *determined*, *essential*, *imperative*, *important* and *vital*). AmE *important* has the greatest variability in mandate types (with *must* mandates comprising over 30 per cent). AmE *vital* has no complements at all (compared to twenty-four mandative and non-mandative complements in BrE). There are no BrE mandates taking 50 per cent or more subjunctive complements, and two AmE triggers taking *should* complements (*essential* and *important*), both of which are moderate triggers.

The overall pattern that emerges from looking at the distribution of mandate types in verb, noun and adjective triggers is that BrE and AmE are more similar in the use of subjunctives in verbs, and less so in nouns and least in adjectives. Furthermore, mandate complements (in fact, complements in general) are more common in verbs as well. Thus, it looks as though the more frequent the complement type, the more similar these varieties are and that verbs are 'leading the way' in BrE, as verbal triggers occur with the subjunctives most frequently. Adjectives, on the other hand, show the greatest difference in mandate types in BrE and AmE.

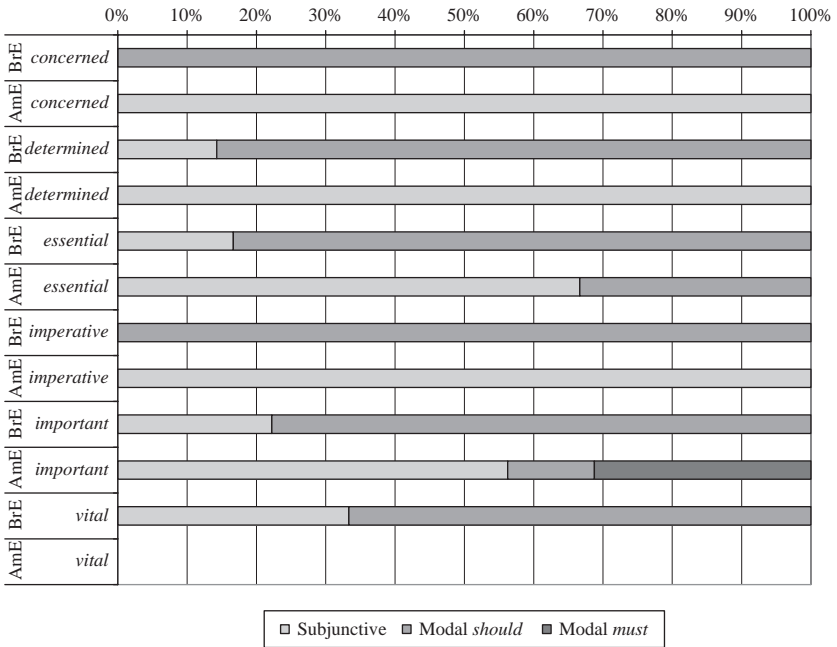


Figure 14.7 Distribution of adjective trigger mandates in British and American news writing

4 Conclusion

The lexical perspective adopted in this study has illustrated that while the total number of complement types following subjunctive triggers was comparable in BrE and AmE, mandates containing the subjunctive were more frequent in AmE. BrE had a fairly equal distribution of subjunctive and *should* mandates in verb and noun triggers but a preference for *should* mandates in adjective triggers. Furthermore, it was found that AmE expressed more overall mandates than BrE with the largest difference found in the noun triggers and then the verb triggers. Adjective triggers expressed mandates in both varieties equally.

A closer look at trigger strength showed that verbs are the strongest triggers in both varieties followed by nouns and then adjectives. A somewhat uniform pattern of trigger strength in BrE and AmE was found for verbs where triggers that were strong in one variety are also strong in the other (*ask, demand, propose, request, require, urge* and, very nearly, *recommend*). This does not hold for the nouns, where certain triggers are strong in one variety but weak in another (BrE *proposal, recommendation* and *request*, and AmE *requirement*). This category has only two nouns, *demand* and *request*, that are strong in both BrE and AmE. For the adjectives there are no strong triggers, and the triggers show less strength variation than the nouns and the verbs.

This study has also shown that the stronger the trigger, the more likely it is that BrE and AmE will pattern similarly with respect to the expression of mandate types, and the weaker the trigger, the less likely BrE and AmE will pattern alike. For example, the strong verb triggers *ask*, *demand*, *require* and *urge* have subjunctive mandates in both BrE and AmE over 60 per cent of the time. This trend extends to the noun triggers as well where the strong triggers *demand* and *request* also express subjunctive mandates in both varieties at over 60 per cent. Weaker triggers show greater contrast, as was found for the verbs *insist*, *suggest*, *wish*, and the nouns *advice* and *suggestion*. In these weak triggers, the mandates were expressed as *should* in BrE and as subjunctives in AmE, the only exception being *advice* which patterned opposite from this expected trend (where AmE used *should* and BrE used the subjunctive). The weak trigger effect extends to the adjectives which not only comprised an overall class of weaker triggers than verbs and nouns, but also contained greater differentiation in mandative types in BrE and AmE.

While the results of this study verify previous work on both the vitality of the subjunctive and the AmE preference for it, the trigger perspective adopted here also demonstrates that specific word classes and lexical items within these word classes are clear signs not only of British and American contrasts in the use of the subjunctive (e.g. as was found with the weak triggers) but of the overall general finding related to trigger strength and variation. This view can be supported by two general points:

1. The stronger the trigger, the more likely it is that there will be less contrast in BrE and AmE. For example, even though BrE has a fairly equal distribution between subjunctive and *should* mandates in the verbal triggers, the stronger the trigger, the more likely it is that the mandate will be expressed as a subjunctive, and the weaker the trigger, the more likely the mandate will be expressed using *should*.
2. Weaker triggers have greater variation than stronger triggers. Support for this is found in the noun triggers which not only expressed fewer overall mandates in BrE but also exhibited the widest differences in trigger strength. Furthermore, the least frequent category of triggers, adjectives, showed the greatest contrast in mandate types with *should* the preferred BrE mandate type and the subjunctive the preferred AmE type. Thus, the findings here suggest a direction of change where the subjunctive has made its way into BrE in the strongest triggers. We might expect this change to include weaker triggers in the future.

Finally, I would like to suggest that it would be beneficial to look at diachronic aspects of the revival of the subjunctive from this perspective in order to see how different triggers have developed over time and the extent to which these developments have affected the expression of mandates. Additionally, extending this analysis to include a wider range of registers and to further representations of Present-Day English would also be welcomed.

Appendix A

Compiled list of lexical items that 'trigger' the use of the subjunctive mood

Adjectives	Nouns	Verbs
1. advisable	1. advice	1. advise
2. anxious	2. command	2. advocate
3. appropriate	3. condition	3. arrange
4. better	4. cry	4. ask
5. concerned	5. decree	5. beg
6. convenient	6. demand	6. choose
7. desirable	7. desire	7. clamour
8. desirous	8. determination	8. command
9. determined	9. dream	9. decide
10. essential	10. edict	10. decree
11. fair	11. implication	11. demand
12. fitting	12. insistence	12. deserve
13. fundamental	13. instruction	13. desire
14. imperative	14. mandate	14. determine
15. important	15. matter of urgency	15. dictate
16. keen	16. motion	16. direct
17. natural	17. persuasion	17. insure
18. necessary	18. plan	18. ensure
19. preferable	19. principle	19. expect
20. proper	20. priority	20. insist
21. undesirable	21. proposal	21. intimidate
22. vital	22. proposition	22. lay it down
23. willing	23. provision	23. make sure
	24. recommendation	24. move
	25. remedy	25. ordain
	26. request	26. order
	27. requirement	27. persuade
	28. resolution	28. petition
	29. restriction	29. plead
	30. rule	30. prefer
	31. ruling	31. propose
	32. stipulation	32. provide
	33. suggestion	33. recommend
	34. supplication	34. refuse point-blank
	35. terms	35. request
	36. treaty	36. require
	37. understanding	37. resolve
	38. will	38. secure
		39. see to it
		40. specify
		41. stipulate
		42. suggest
		43. take care
		44. urge
		45. want
		46. will
		47. wish

Adapted from Quirk *et al.* (1985: 155–8, 1182, 1224) and Övergaard (1995: 95–121).

Appendix B

Table 14.3 *Verbal triggers of the subjunctive in British (BrE) and American (AmE) news writing*

Corpus	Lexical item	Subjunctive	Modal <i>should/shall</i>	Modal <i>must/have to</i>	Modal other	Other	Total Number
BrE	<i>ask</i>	14	0	0	1	7	22
AmE	<i>ask</i>	50	2	0	0	11	63
BrE	<i>decide</i>	2	20	7	51	154	234
AmE	<i>decide</i>	0	5	2	18	46	71
BrE	<i>demand</i>	51	14	2	4	27	98
AmE	<i>demand</i>	124	0	1	2	20	147
BrE	<i>determine</i>	1	3	0	4	5	13
AmE	<i>determine</i>	1	0	1	7	42	51
BrE	<i>dictate</i>	1	3	0	1	2	7
AmE	<i>dictate</i>	2	1	1	2	3	9
BrE	<i>ensure</i>	0	3	0	41	194	238
AmE	<i>ensure</i>	1	1	0	31	81	114
BrE	<i>insist</i>	13	14	8	31	136	202
AmE	<i>insist</i>	24	1	7	33	118	183
BrE	<i>order</i>	11	5	1	6	8	31
AmE	<i>order</i>	16	0	1	0	3	20
BrE	<i>propose</i>	11	9	1	3	4	28
AmE	<i>propose</i>	31	2	0	5	12	50
BrE	<i>provide</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
AmE	<i>provide</i>	2	0	0	2	5	9
BrE	<i>recommend</i>	6	16	0	1	8	31
AmE	<i>recommend</i>	51	1	0	1	31	84
BrE	<i>request</i>	5	3	0	0	3	11
AmE	<i>request</i>	29	0	0	1	4	34
BrE	<i>require</i>	10	0	3	3	4	20
AmE	<i>require</i>	42	0	4	0	23	69
BrE	<i>suggest</i>	7	42	1	105	228	383
AmE	<i>suggest</i>	27	21	0	136	168	352
BrE	<i>urge</i>	7	1	0	1	0	9
AmE	<i>urge</i>	19	1	0	2	4	26
BrE	<i>wish</i>	1	2	0	6	5	14
AmE	<i>wish</i>	4	0	0	3	6	13

Table 14.4 *Noun triggers of the subjunctive in British and American news writing*

Corpus	Lexical item	Subjunctive	Modal <i>should/shall</i>	Modal <i>must/have to</i>	Modal other	Other	Total Number
BrE	<i>advice</i>	1	0	0	0	3	4
AmE	<i>advice</i>	0	2	0	1	3	6
BrE	<i>condition</i>	1	0	1	2	9	13
AmE	<i>condition</i>	2	0	0	0	4	6
BrE	<i>decree</i>	0	0	0	1	6	7
AmE	<i>decree</i>	2	0	0	0	4	6
BrE	<i>demand</i>	7	4	0	0	1	12
AmE	<i>demand</i>	42	0	1	0	11	54

Table 14.4 (cont.)

Corpus	Lexical item	Subjunctive	Modal <i>should/shall</i>	Modal <i>must/have to</i>	Modal other	Other	Total Number
BrE	<i>insistence</i>	3	3	1	0	9	16
AmE	<i>insistence</i>	3	0	0	2	2	7
BrE	<i>mandate</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
AmE	<i>mandate</i>	2	0	0	2	4	8
BrE	<i>proposal</i>	1	6	0	0	1	8
AmE	<i>proposal</i>	5	0	0	8	6	19
BrE	<i>recommendation</i>	3	9	0	0	3	15
AmE	<i>recommendation</i>	2	0	0	1	4	7
BrE	<i>request</i>	5	1	0	0	0	6
AmE	<i>request</i>	21	0	3	2	8	34
BrE	<i>requirement</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
AmE	<i>requirement</i>	20	0	3	2	8	33
BrE	<i>suggestion</i>	1	10	0	35	84	130
AmE	<i>suggestion</i>	9	0	0	5	24	38

Table 14.5 Adjective triggers of the subjunctive in British and American news writing

Corpus	Lexical item	Subjunctive	Modal <i>should/shall</i>	Modal <i>must/have to</i>	Modal other	Other	Total Number
BrE	<i>concerned</i>	0	4	0	0	26	30
AmE	<i>concerned</i>	2	0	0	21	45	68
BrE	<i>determined</i>	1	6	0	10	2	19
AmE	<i>determined</i>	1	0	0	3	3	7
BrE	<i>essential</i>	1	5	0	0	15	21
AmE	<i>essential</i>	2	1	0	0	5	8
BrE	<i>imperative</i>	0	1	0	0	6	7
AmE	<i>imperative</i>	2	0	0	0	4	6
BrE	<i>important</i>	2	7	0	2	36	47
AmE	<i>important</i>	9	2	5	2	13	31
BrE	<i>vital</i>	1	2	0	1	20	24
AmE	<i>vital</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0

15 The conditional subjunctive¹

JULIA SCHLÜTER

1 Introduction

The subjunctive is one of the most striking and most frequently commented-on domains of grammatical contrasts between the two major national varieties of English. Many surveys and specific studies have remarked on the greater propensity of AmE to use the subjunctive in contexts where BrE resorts to two other options, the indicative or modal constructions (see Johansson 1979: 201, 1980: 90–1, Erdmann 1981: 120–3, Quirk *et al.* 1985: 157, Johansson and Norheim 1988, Algeo 1992: 600, 2006: 263–4, Denison 1998: 264, Peters 2004: 520). However, those that widen the perspective to include the history of the phenomenon have come to contradictory conclusions. On the one hand, Turner (1980: 272–3), Görlach (1987: 53) and Lass (1987: 282) seem to assume a continuity between older forms of English and the frequent use of the subjunctive in AmE, and accordingly label it an ‘archaic expression’, a ‘retention’ or a ‘conservatism’. In a similar vein, Algeo (1992: 604) and Peters (1998: 98, 100) suggest that the higher levels of subjunctive use in AmE require no particular explanation, being simply another effect of the ‘colonial lag’ often adduced in such cases. On the other hand, corpus-based studies sampling texts from different periods of the last century have unanimously come to the conclusion that what looks like an ‘extraterritorial conservatism’ is in fact a recent ‘revival’ (to borrow the terms introduced by Marianne Hundt in [Chapter 1](#)) of a structure that had virtually died out in the interim (see Övergaard 1995, Hundt 1998b and [Chapter 13](#) by Kjellmer). This view is also supported in the present volume by Marianne Hundt with quantitative studies now reaching as far back as the eighteenth century. Moreover, the American trend has been shown to be spilling over to Britain with a considerable delay (see Quirk *et al.* 1985: 156,

¹ I wish to thank Marianne Hundt for her careful reading and helpful comments on an earlier version of this chapter. Thanks are also due to the North-Rhine Westfalian Ministry of Science and Research, which supported this work with a post-doctoral research scholarship as part of the Lise Meitner programme, as well as the German Research Foundation (DFG; grant number RO 2271/1–3), which enabled us to acquire the corpus collection and conduct research in the Paderborn-based project *Determinants of Grammatical Variation in English* over more than five years.

Övergaard 1995: 21–31), thus making the chronology of the change an even more noteworthy object of study.

Notice, however, that the corpus studies just quoted concentrate on the so-called mandative subjunctive (see Quirk *et al.* 1985: 156, Algeo 1992: 599, Peters 2004: 520; Chapters 1, 13 and 14 in this volume). While the diatopic as well as diachronic facts are thus relatively well established for mandatives, very little is known about adverbial clauses of condition, concession and negative purpose, which represent the second environment in which subjunctives are still used with a certain degree of productivity (see Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1093). Apart from the exceptional case of *lest*, which has a considerable currency as a subjunctive-inducing conjunction in AmE (see Quirk *et al.* 1985: 158),² no noticeable differences between BrE and AmE have so far been made out (see Erdmann 1981: 118, Johansson and Norheim 1988: 32).

The case study introduced in the present chapter provides the first detailed contrastive study explicitly devoted to the present subjunctive in conditional clauses.³ Out of the set of conditional-clause introducing subordinators listed in Quirk *et al.* (1985: 1089), it picks out the complex conjunction *on condition (that)*. This case study proves to be particularly interesting due to its affinity with mandative expressions, to which I will come back in section 4.

As in its other uses in subordinate clauses, the subjunctive after *on condition* competes with two other types of verbal syntagms: the modally unmarked indicative and periphrastic constructions involving modal auxiliaries.⁴ Three illustrative examples are given in (1)–(3).

- (1) He left \$67 million to the endowment when he died in 1925 *on the condition that* the school – then Trinity College – *change* its name to honor his father, Washington Duke. (*Detroit Free Press* 1993)
- (2) In 1985 President Botha offered to release Mandela *on condition that* he *renounced* violence. (*The Times* 1990)
- (3) Israeli Premier Yitzhak Rabin said he ordered the ceasefire *on condition* the guerillas *would stop* firing Katyusha rockets at northern Israel. (*Daily Mail* 1993)

² The pilot study of verbal paradigms after *lest* provided in Chapter 19 shows a clear contrast between British and American newspapers in the propensity to use the subjunctive. In addition, it indicates that BrE has been rapidly catching up with AmE over the last few decades.

³ For the past subjunctive, realized by the unique verb form *were*, see Leech *et al.* (in press).

⁴ Modal auxiliaries are, in this function, regarded as '(periphrastic) marker[s] of subjunctiveness' by Anderson (2001: 163), so if (1) is considered as an inflectional subjunctive, (3) can in a similar vein be described as a periphrastic subjunctive. For the present study, *subjunctive* will be used to refer to inflectional subjunctives only, while periphrastic subjunctives will simply be referred to as *modal periphrasis*.

The few text-based studies of the subjunctive that have included conditional clauses treat the expression *on condition* (along with *if*, *unless*, *provided* (*that*), etc.) as one of an apparently homogeneous set of conditional conjunctions (Erdmann 1981: 115–16, Johansson and Norheim 1988: 33, Peters 1998: 96; see also Crawford in Chapter 14). While Erdmann does not offer any quantified evidence, the counts provided by Johansson and Norheim and Peters contain only a single instance of *on condition* each, and Crawford does not focus specifically on conditional clause-introducing uses of the noun *condition*. Thus, there is ample room for a contrastive study of verbal syntagms after *on condition* in BrE and AmE.

Before I enter into the discussion of the synchronic and diachronic aspects of the competing types of verbal paradigms in BrE and AmE, a few preliminary remarks on the conjunction under discussion are in place. First of all, the conjunction itself can assume different shapes, as illustrated in examples (1)–(3). Not only is the subordinator *that* variably present, but the definite article before *condition* is likewise optional. As a matter of fact, all four possible combinations occur in both national varieties, though with different frequencies.⁵ Figure 15.1 contrasts the distribution of the variants among the approximately 500 instances retrieved for each variety from a collection of electronic newspapers.⁶

The comparison reveals that the full form of the conjunction is the most frequent variant in AmE, while BrE uses the articleless variant in the majority of cases. *On the condition* is comparatively rare, and the most reduced version, *on condition*, accounts for about one fifth of the cases in both varieties.⁷ Overall, BrE thus exhibits a tendency to more reduced forms, a fact that might be linked with the slightly higher textual frequency of the conjunction: 2.99 occurrences per million words as opposed to only 2.54 in AmE (see, moreover, the analysis in section 5.1, which provides additional support for the more widespread use of the conjunction in BrE).⁸ For the purpose of the diachronic and synchronic studies presented in this chapter, all four variants will be referred to summarily as *on condition*.

⁵ The combination with *upon* instead of *on* is a marginal variant in Present-Day English, occurring no more than twice (both in *The Times*, 1990 and 1991). These examples have been added to the *on*-examples.

⁶ For details of the corpus, see section 3.

⁷ The distributional difference across the two varieties is statistically very highly significant ($\chi^2 = 187.57$, $df = 3$, $p = 2.05 \cdot 10^{-40}$).

⁸ Grammaticalization theory would predict that the establishment of an expression in a grammatical function goes along with its formal reduction (see Heine, Claudi and Hünnemeyer 1991: 214, Lehmann 1995: 126–7). Thus, while *on the condition that* is a fully articulate nominal syntagm with an explicitly subordinated clause, *on condition* is considerably closer in shape to an ordinary conjunction (cf. *because*). As for optional *that* as an indicator of the conjunctive function of the expression, its use or omission has been brought into connection with the degree of establishment of the conjunction as a whole by Beal (1988: 60–5), whose hypothesis is supported with empirical evidence by Rohdenburg (2008). The latter contribution reveals a number of additional (stylistic and processing-related) factors impinging on the variable presence of *that* in adverbial conjunctions, including *on condition*.

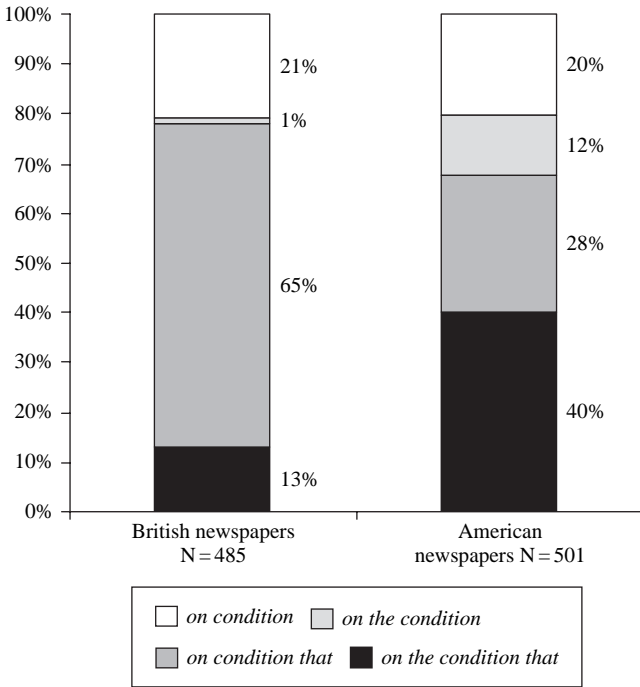


Figure 15.1 The shape of the complex conjunction *on (the) condition (that)*. Corpus: selected British and American newspapers (cf. Table 15.2)

The present chapter is arranged in the following way. Section 2 surveys previous research on the evolution and synchronic distribution of the subjunctive. In section 3, a few methodological issues are discussed. The next two sections present the corpus analyses, beginning with the diachronic dimension (section 4) and then enlarging on various factors playing a role on the synchronic dimension (section 5). Section 6 summarizes the findings and indicates some avenues for further research.

2 Previous research

It goes without saying that there is no specific study available to date that focuses on verbal syntagms in subordinate clauses introduced by the conjunction *on condition*. However, the diachronic evolution of the subjunctive, in conditional as well as mandative clauses, has been traced through many centuries. The synchronic studies have largely concentrated on the striking case of mandative subjunctives, comparing different national varieties and uncovering additional factors that co-determine the selection of the

subjunctive and its competitors. Some relevant results of these two sets of studies are highlighted in this section as a background to the issues addressed in the empirical studies in sections 4 and 5.

2.1 Diachronic studies

Seen as a whole, the history of the subjunctive is one of a continuous decline. For one thing, the phonetic erosion of verbal endings led to a situation in which only the third-person singular and the verb *be* still had distinctive forms for the indicative and subjunctive (see Strang 1970: 209, Plank 1984: 346, Rissanen 1999: 228). Second, there has for many centuries been a continuous retreat of subjunctives from most of their original contexts of use (see Harsh 1968: 40, 54, 57, 99, Strang 1970: 312). Mandative uses have developed in line with the general trend: the subjunctive had by late Middle English times been largely replaced by modal periphrases (see Moessner 2005a). Third, the subjunctive has become increasingly restricted to formal and literary styles (see Kihlbom 1938: 264, Strang 1970: 153, Turner 1980: 271, Rissanen 1999: 228, 304–19).

In contrast to this overall development, it has been noted that conditional clauses provided an extraordinary stronghold for the subjunctive (see Harsh 1968: 42, 69, 100, Kihlbom 1938: 261–4, Turner 1980: 271, Moessner 2005b: 219). The share of subjunctives in conditional clauses even rose substantially from Old English until the end of the Middle English era (see Moessner 2005b: 221). Recent corpus-based studies have shown that this development was reversed from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, bringing the percentage of subjunctives down to around 20 per cent before the turn of the twentieth century (see González-Álvarez 2003: 305; see furthermore Auer 2006: 44–5, Grund and Walker 2006: 93–4). The residual uses of the subjunctive in conditional clauses have thus held their ground better throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than the mandative subjunctive. A further difference is that in mandates the change has promoted modal periphrases, whereas in adverbial clauses the indicative has taken over.

Note, however, that the studies by Moessner (2005b), González-Álvarez (2003), Auer (2006) and Grund and Walker (2006) are all concerned with a varied set of conjunctions introducing different types of adverbial – or, in the case of González-Álvarez and Moessner, conditional – subordinate clauses. As can easily be seen from comparisons among different subordinators (for example, Grund and Walker 2006: 99), these show widely discrepant behaviours with regard to the realization of the verbal syntagms concerned. What is more, neither Auer nor Grund and Walker include instances of *on condition*, and Moessner (2005b: 217) finds merely two instances each of *on this condition* and *under condition*.

British–American contrasts in the use of the subjunctive have been pinpointed in corpora reaching back to the nineteenth century. To date, only the striking comeback of the subjunctive in mandative clauses has been investigated in any detail. The three diachronic studies provided by Övergaard (1995; see also Chapter 13 by Kjellmer), Hundt (1998b) and Hundt (Chapter 1 of this volume) unanimously show that the mandative subjunctive underwent a revival, taking its starting point in AmE. Övergaard’s data (1995: 21–39) indicate that by the turn of the twentieth century, AmE already featured the subjunctive in one third of all mandative clauses, while BrE employed it in less than 5 per cent. The intervarettal distance reached its maximum between 1940 and 1960; after that, BrE caught up substantially, while AmE used the subjunctive pervasively in more than 90 per cent of all cases (see also the earlier findings in Johansson 1979: 203, 1980: 90).⁹ The increasing influence of AmE after the Second World War has been made responsible for this change (see Haegeman 1986: 65–6, Algeo 2006: 264).

In stark contrast to mandatives, the subjunctive is judged by Denison (1998: 294) to be ‘probably obsolescent’ in the second use that continues to be productive, i.e. adverbial clauses. In view of these facts, it will be interesting to see how the subjunctive has fared in the particular case of conditional clauses.

2.2 *Synchronic studies*

The quantitative studies of the subjunctive available for Present-Day English have confirmed and quantified the greater propensity of AmE to use the form in mandative contexts (cf., e.g., Turner 1980, Algeo 1992), but those that also include conditional clauses have failed to discover any major differences in this specific context (cf. Johansson 1980: 90–1, Erdmann 1981: 120–3, Johansson and Norheim 1988: 27–30).¹⁰ Even so, research on the mandative subjunctive has unearthed a number of linguistic and extralinguistic factors that influence the realization of verbal syntagms as subjunctives, indicatives or modal periphrases. Three factors (two syntactic and one semantic) will be applied to the conditional subjunctive in sections 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 (see references there).

⁹ Note that Övergaard conflates all non-inflected finite verbs, so that what she calls ‘non-inflected subjunctives’ necessarily includes a certain number of ambiguous verb forms outside of the third-person singular. This method of counting leads to somewhat higher shares of the verb forms referred to as ‘subjunctives’. Thus, in her 1990 data, Övergaard finds 99 per cent of subjunctives in AmE and 57 per cent in BrE. The count provided in Leech *et al.* (in press) for the early 1990s only compares subjunctives and *should*-constructions, but even so arrives at only 91 per cent of subjunctives in AmE and 38 per cent in BrE. Needless to say, if indicatives had been included, the shares of the subjunctive would have turned out even lower.

¹⁰ The only exception is provided by *lest* (see Johansson and Norheim 1988: 32).

- For BrE, particularly high levels of subjunctive use have been found in subordinate clauses involving the verb *be*, or in such involving passive verb forms. (Both categories are of course largely coextensive.) In contrast, AmE exhibits no such affinity; the subjunctive is almost ubiquitous across both active and passive sentences.
- Negated subordinate clauses in the subjunctive involve a highly marked structure in which the negator *not* precedes the main verb without *do*-support. This construction seems to be avoided at least in the initial stages of the subjunctive revival, both in BrE and AmE.
- The choice between subjunctives, indicatives and modal periphrases on the one hand and the selection of an item from the range of possible modals on the other has been argued to involve a semantic element. In addition, BrE and AmE have been shown to have different preferences with regard to modals in mandative clauses.

The literature on the subjunctive in English yields insights into a number of further factors impinging on the choice of the subjunctive and the competing verbal structures. Among them are text genre (cf. Moessner 2002: 234, Grund and Walker 2006: 95–7), gender (González-Álvarez 2003: 310–11, Grund and Walker 2006: 97–8), personal style (Moessner 2002: 234) and the influence of prescriptivism in the eighteenth century (cf. Auer 2006). Since these factors are beyond the scope of the following analyses, they will not be discussed in any detail here, though an analysis along these lines promises further insights.

Compared to other contemporary national varieties, BrE and AmE form the two endpoints of a dialectal continuum. Corpus evidence from Sayder (1989) for Indian English, from Peters (1998) and Hundt (1998b) for Australian English, and from Hundt (1998a: 93–4 and 1998b) for New Zealand English suggests that these extraterritorial varieties all use the subjunctive to a higher extent and/or at an earlier stage than BrE. The studies indicate that Australian English comes closest to AmE, followed by New Zealand English, while Indian English is most similar to BrE.

3 Methodology

Before I enter into an analysis of the empirical data, a few methodological preliminaries have to be clarified. Most importantly, the selection of corpora deserves some comment. Table 15.1 gives the details of the main diachronic corpus set that has been investigated.

Compared to previous corpus studies of the subjunctive in English, the database marshalled for the present analysis is exceptionally large, which is necessary in view of the highly constrained focus on a single conditional conjunction. The central subcorpora are provided by Chadwyck-Healey's prose collections. The dates for all subperiods except the last listed in

Table 15.1 *Composition of the database: diachronic part*

Sub-period		*1460– *1670	*1660– *1752	*1728– *1799	*1800– *1829	*1830– *1869	*1870– *1894	1960–2003
BrE	standard corpora	EEPF	ECF	NCF 1	NCF 2	NCF 3		BNC
	million words	9.9	10.3	11.8	21.6	6.1		100.0
	Paderborn corpora				MNC B	LNC B	ETC B	
	million words				10.7	22.2	4.9	
	total million words	9.9	10.3	11.8	32.3	28.3	4.9	100.0
AmE	standard corpora			EAF 1	EAF 2			ANC 2
	million words			16.5	19.5			22.6
	Paderborn corpora				MNC A	LNC A	ETC A	
	million words				7.6	28.5	12.3	
	total million words	_	_	16.5	27.1	28.5	12.3	22.6

Table 15.1 refer to the authors' years of birth.¹¹ The latest subperiod is provided by the *British National Corpus* (BNC) and the second release of its American counterpart ANC (which is less representative since the corpus is still under construction). For the texts in these two latest corpora only the dates of their production or publication can be given. These are, however, not strictly parallel: the texts in the BNC date from 1960 to 1993, while those in the ANC were written between 1996 and 2003. The gaps that appear in the diachronic succession of these standard corpora are narrowed down by three prose collections specially compiled in the Paderborn research project: the *Mid-Nineteenth Century*, *Late Nineteenth Century* and *Early Twentieth Century* collections, which have a British and an American subsection each. The first two are aligned with the later sections of the NCF and EAF, and the third contains some texts published in the early decades of the twentieth century.

As can be seen from Table 15.1, coverage of the early twentieth century is unfortunately not very dense. Therefore, additional samples were drawn from a collection of historical American newspapers.¹² The papers used were the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times* for the years 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940, 1950 and 1960, respectively. Since the search software did not allow for any exhaustive searches, only 40 hits were sampled semi-automatically from each year (20 from each paper).

¹¹ Notice that in some cases, this makes the subperiods appear longer than they are in terms of publication dates: the first work contained in EEPF only dates from the year 1518; the first works in NCF and EAF only date from 1782 and 1789, respectively. Nevertheless, this subdivision was adopted on the assumption that authors born in the same subperiod show a maximal convergence in their grammatical usage.

¹² For access to these data, I thank the Young Research Library at the University of California in Los Angeles, which hosted my stay as visiting scholar in September and October 2005.

Table 15.2 *Composition of the database: synchronic part*

British newspapers	title	<i>The Times</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	<i>Daily Mail</i>	Total
	years	1990–1	1991	1991	1993–4	
	million words	74	24	25	39	162
American newspapers	title	<i>Washington Times</i>	<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	<i>Detroit Free Press</i>		Total
	years	1990–1	1992	1992–3		
	million words	56	88	53		197

For the in-depth synchronic studies presented below, a much larger corpus was needed. For this purpose, a collection of fully searchable newspapers from the early 1990s was subjected to scrutiny. The composition of the database is detailed in Table 15.2.

To constitute appropriate datasets, the corpora were searched for all versions of the complex conjunction (*up*)*on* (*the*) *condition* (*that*) (with the exception of the historical newspapers, which were searched only for the variant *on condition that*). From the data on mandative and conditional subordinate clauses accumulated in previous studies, it is obvious that different governing expressions show widely discrepant behaviours with regard to the selection of the subjunctive (cf. Haegeman 1986: 68–9, Johansson and Norheim 1988: 29, Peters 1998: 93, 96, Crawford's Chapter 14 in this volume). The restriction to one specific type of conditional conjunction guarantees a very precise variation profile not watered down by the inclusion of a set of heterogeneous subjunctive triggers.

The verbal syntagms that entered the analysis were categorized into subsets involving modal periphrases, (present) subjunctives, indicatives and forms that are ambiguous between the latter two.¹³ Subjunctives are regularly realized by the base form of the verb. Thus, they can be formally distinguished from indicatives in all persons of the verb *be*, as in example (4), and in the third-person singular present tense of all other verbs, as in example (5). Examples (6) and (7) illustrate two additional cases in which subjunctives show a syntactic behaviour that clearly identifies them as such: there is no backshifting of tenses in the subordinate clause if the superordinate clause contains a verb in the past, and the negation of subjunctives is expressed by the negator *not* immediately preceding the verb without *do*-support.¹⁴

¹³ In the case of coordinated subordinate clauses dependent on *on condition*, only the first one was included since the realization of subsequent verbal syntagms usually adhered to the choice made in the preceding slot.

¹⁴ With the verb *be*, the order *be* + *not* is also possible (see Quirk *et al.* 1985: 156, Erdmann 1981: 111–12), but the corpus data investigated include not a single example of this type.

- (4) The main board proposal has been to raise €10 million by an issue of new shares, on condition that the team *be* kept intact so as not to weaken their European campaign. (*Guardian* 1991)
- (5) A medical student from Southern California has received a Washington state scholarship on condition that she *practice* in Othello. (*Los Angeles Times* 1992)
- (6) Dennis Gibson, 65, and cleaner Pauline Lancashire, 60, *were remanded* on bail by magistrates, on condition they *live* at their home addresses in Armley, Leeds. (*Daily Mail* 1994)
- (7) When couples know they must use only donor sperm, they do so only on the condition that they *not learn* the identity of the donor and vice versa. (*Detroit Free Press* 1992)

Even when all four criteria are applied to separate subjunctives from indicatives, there remains a small residue of ambiguous cases. Ambiguities arise in the first and second persons singular and in the plural of the present tense, as in example (8), but also in the past tense of verbs with identical principal parts, as in example (9).

- (8) Visas, three months maximum, usually for less than one month, are issued on condition that friends and families *confirm* in writing that they can put the visitor up. (*Guardian* 1991)
- (9) Lucky Rob had all criminal charges dropped, but only on the condition that he *put* in two years' community service, visiting schools to lecture on the dangers of drugs . . . (BNC)

To present a comprehensive and adequate picture of the frequencies of the competing verbal syntagms in the corpora, ambiguous uses have been included as a category intermediate (or rather indeterminate) between indicatives and subjunctives. In contrast, sporadic uses of the past subjunctive, realized by the special form *were* in the first and third persons singular, have been discounted.¹⁵ These are generally supposed to have a hypothetical and unreal meaning (see Quirk *et al.* 1985: 158) and therefore hardly occur after *on condition* (possibly due to its mandative ring). Past subjunctives are so few in number in both varieties and in the historical data that it would have been impossible to deal with them satisfactorily. Moreover, Johansson and Norheim's (1988: 34) findings suggest that BrE and AmE exhibit no major

¹⁵ For an analysis of recent change in the use of the past subjunctive in conditional *if*-clauses, see Leech *et al.* (in press). An illustrative example is provided in (i):

- (i) He, therefore, consented to sojourn in 'Arch west of Broad', until the whitewashing process could be performed, on condition *he were* taken there by the 'alley way' . . . (Joseph C. Neal, *Charcoal Sketches*, 1838; EAF 1)

differences in the use of the past subjunctive, and this expectation is confirmed by the evenly spread occasional instances in the corpora used for this study (but cf. Leech *et al.*, in press).

4 The diachronic dimension

The history of the complex conjunction *on condition* deserves particular attention since it does not fit easily into the mainstream of conditional conjunctions, but is subject to important influences from the interesting class of mandative expressions. Since its first attestation in Chaucer's *De the Blanche* (c. 1369; cf. OED s.v. *condition*), the conjunction and its then numerous variants seem to have triggered modal auxiliaries in the majority of cases. Among the fourteen occurrences between 1369 and 1855 quoted in the OED entry, only the second one (also from one of Chaucer's works, the *Parliament of Fowles*, c. 1381) contains a subjunctive, while all others (except one ambiguous case from c. 1450) select a variety of modal auxiliaries. The Middle English section of the *Helsinki Corpus* includes six instances of the complex conjunction, all after 1350, three of which are combined with modal auxiliaries, two with subjunctives and one with an ambiguous verb form. The earliest occurrences of *on condition* are thus far less consistently associated with the subjunctive than the other (older) conditional conjunctions (see section 2.1).

The subsequent history of *on condition*, starting from the Early Modern English period, will be subjected to closer scrutiny in the three corpus studies described in this section. Consider first Figure 15.2, which indicates the proportions of the three competing types of verbal paradigms and the ambiguous forms in the seven diachronic stages in BrE.

The earliest subcorpus ties in with the above observation according to which *on condition* starts out as a conjunction mainly followed by modal constructions. Subjunctives, indicatives and ambiguous forms together make up only 18 per cent of the instances. In the course of the five centuries covered, modals steadily lose ground to indicatives, while the use of subjunctives continues to be a marginal option. It is only in the late twentieth century that the share of subjunctives rises to 9 per cent of the total. This increase is highly significant when contrasted with the data for the late nineteenth century (authors' birth dates *1830–*1869). Moreover, the data from the small database for the early twentieth century (birth dates *1870–*1899) suggest that the rise took off no earlier than the middle of that century.¹⁶

¹⁶ The results of the chi-square test for subjunctives, compared between the periods *1830–*1869 and 1960–2003, are: $\chi^2 = 8.11$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.004$ (**); for indicatives, compared between the same periods: $\chi^2 = 3.04$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.081$ (n.s.). A comparison with the *1870–*1899 subcorpus is inconclusive due to the low number of hits in this small database.

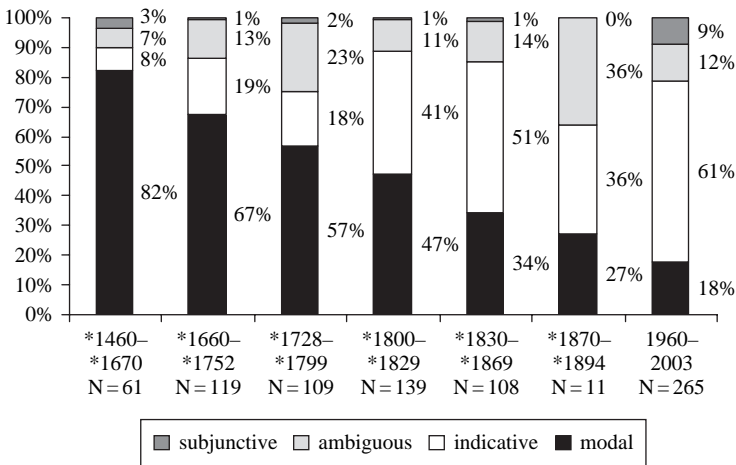


Figure 15.2 Realizations of the verbal syntagm in subordinate clauses dependent on (*up*)on (*the*)condition (*that*). Corpus: diachronic series of BrE corpora (cf. Table 15.1)

These data can be usefully compared to the findings in Hundt (1998b: 163) regarding mandative subjunctives. Counting only subjunctives and modal constructions involving *should*, Hundt arrives at an increase of the former from 12.9 per cent in 1961 to 39.6 per cent in 1991. This change appears much stronger than that observable in Figure 15.2, but if indicatives and ambiguous cases are discounted here (as is done in Hundt's study), the subjunctives likewise amount to 33.8 per cent in the latest subperiod as opposed to 66.2 per cent made up by all modals taken together. From this restricted perspective, the increase of the subjunctive in subordinate clauses after *on condition* thus seems to be on a par with its increase in mandative clauses. However, from a more comprehensive angle, it can be seen that the evolution in the case of *on condition* has largely promoted the indicative, while the subjunctive is only beginning to gain a foothold, even though it is not entirely new to this construction.

From the third diachronic subperiod (birth dates *1728–*1799) on, we have parallel American data that allow us to compare the evolution of subordinate clauses after *on condition* on the other side of the Atlantic. The results are presented in Figure 15.3. The data show that the situation in AmE differs in several respects from that in the mother country. First of all, the decline of modal auxiliaries is delayed throughout the nineteenth century.¹⁷ As a result, there is no noteworthy increase in the share of unambiguously

¹⁷ The first time the relative shares of modals in BrE and AmE differ significantly is in the mid nineteenth century: *1800–*1829: $\chi^2 = 4.45$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.035$ (*); *1830–*1869: $\chi^2 = 3.46$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.063$ (n.s.). The test is inapplicable in the latest two subcorpora due to the scarcity of data.

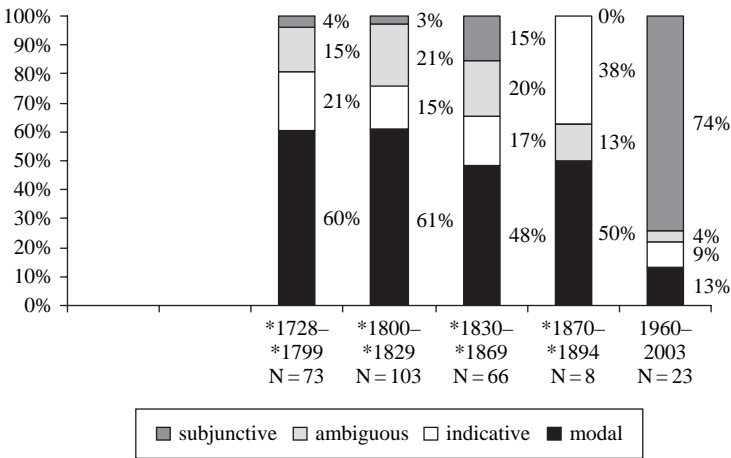


Figure 15.3 Realizations of the verbal syntagm in subordinate clauses dependent on (*up*)on (*the*) condition (*that*). Corpus: diachronic series of AmE corpora (cf. Table 15.1)

identifiable indicatives, which contrasts strongly with the situation in BrE.¹⁸ Most strikingly, the late twentieth-century data suggest that the subjunctive is now the dominant verb form in the context investigated. Unfortunately, the number of examples for the early and late twentieth century (*1870–*1899 and 1960–2003) is extremely low. We can, however, surmise that the apparently very sudden dominance of the subjunctive has its roots in the late nineteenth century, where its proportion already attains 15 per cent and is thus appreciably higher than in BrE in the same period.¹⁹

To shed more light on twentieth-century developments, 20 examples each have been sampled from the issues of the *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times* for the years 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940, 1950 and 1960. The results are given in Figure 15.4. Despite the difference in text type of the databases investigated in Figure 15.3 (mainly fictional prose) and Figure 15.4 (journalistic writing), the newspaper data provide an appropriate missing link between the fiction corpora for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Occasional fluctuations in the frequencies of the

¹⁸ The shares of the indicative differ significantly between the American and British corpora from the mid nineteenth-century corpus onwards: *1800–*1829: $\chi^2 = 19.79$, $df = 1$, $p = 8.62 \cdot 10^{-6}$ (***); *1830–*1869: $\chi^2 = 20.42$, $df = 1$, $p = 6.21 \cdot 10^{-6}$ (***); *1870–*1899: n.a.; 1960–2003: $\chi^2 = 23.35$, $df = 1$, $p = 1.35 \cdot 10^{-6}$ (***).

¹⁹ The results of the chi-square test are highly suggestive, but the test is strictly speaking not applicable since the American data are insufficient: $\chi^2 = 14.00$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.00018$ (n.a.).

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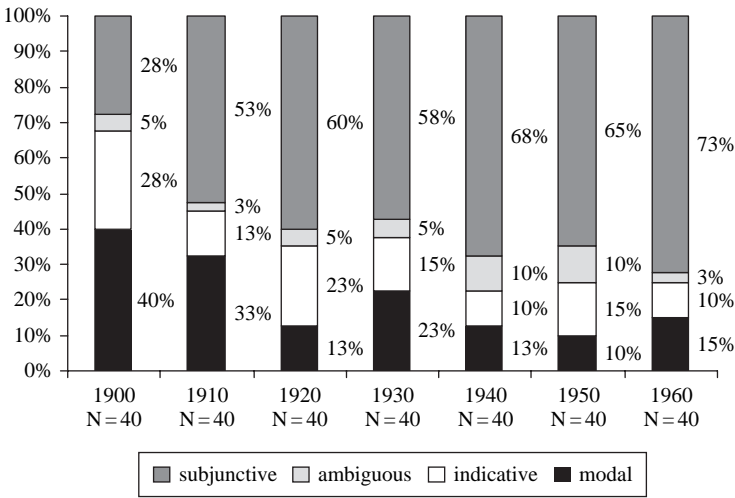


Figure 15.4 Realizations of the verbal syntagm in subordinate clauses dependent on *on condition that*. Corpus: sample of historical American newspapers (*Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times*)

verbal syntagms are due to the limited number of examples in each year. Even so, it is clearly apparent that the dominance of the subjunctive in the late twentieth century has not come about as suddenly as the last two columns in Figure 15.3 might suggest. In actual fact, the establishment of the subjunctive goes back to the late nineteenth century, and the picture presented in the column for *1830–*1869 in Figure 15.3 receives strong support. Compared to Övergaard’s data (1995: 21–39), the spread of the subjunctive is thus exactly as far advanced in conditional clauses (after *on condition*) at the turn of the twentieth century as in mandative clauses: in the year 1900, one third of the verbal syntagms are realized as subjunctives (or as potential subjunctives).

It has been suggested that the striking resurrection of an almost extinct verb form such as the subjunctive may have been nurtured by a repository in genres or registers not included in the corpora that are available to linguists (see Övergaard 1995: 66, note 87). Thus, the possibility has to be reckoned with that the subjunctive survived in the spoken language or in highly specialized registers such as legalistic prose (see Haegeman 1986: 65–6). As far as the subjunctive in clauses introduced by *on condition* is concerned, there are at least two arguments that render this hypothesis highly unlikely. First, there is no convincing evidence that the subjunctive was ever very common after *on condition* (the Middle English and Early Modern English data weigh in favour of modal constructions). Second, two extensive drama corpora have been searched for the conjunction. If we assume that the

written-to-be-spoken texts of dramatic prose succeed at least to some extent in approximating the spoken language of the day, we have to conclude that the subjunctive was hardly used in speech at all: the British collection *English Prose Drama* contains only six subjunctives after *on condition* in the works of authors born between 1537 and 1869, scattered across the whole period studied. Similarly, the American dramatists born between 1660 and 1899 covered in the *American Drama* database together yield a meagre crop of six subjunctives in the same context.

In contradistinction to mandative clauses as well as other conditional clauses, the subjunctive thus represents a true newcomer in clauses introduced by the complex conjunction *on condition*, where it quickly imposed itself in twentieth-century AmE. In BrE, the rise of the subjunctive is only in its infancy in the late twentieth century. This begs the question of what caused the surprising innovation, keeping in mind that the subjunctive is overall still a marked verb form with a highly restricted distribution. In answer to the question, I propose that a certain predisposition of AmE as well as a triggering circumstance in the same variety can account for this divergence.

First of all, what paved the way for the establishment of the subjunctive in AmE but disqualified BrE from a similar development is a longstanding divergence in the selection of the two other options, modal periphrases and indicatives. Reconsider the data provided in Figures 15.2 and 15.3. The juxtaposition shows that the share of the formerly dominant modal auxiliaries had been on the decline in BrE for several centuries, while it stayed at a more constant level in AmE. In turn, the indicative took over and became the dominant form in BrE, while it remained a marginal variant on the other side of the Atlantic. As has been convincingly argued by Anderson (2001: 163–4), both the subjunctive and modal periphrases ensure an explicit marking of the irrealis, while the indicative is indifferent to the realis/irrealis distinction. This means that forms marked for irrealis after *on condition* became ever more rare in the British homeland, while AmE preserved a grammatical marking of the irrealis. Crucially, it can be assumed that this conservatism paved the way for the establishment of the subjunctive: AmE simply substituted one marked form for another – and thereby turned a conservative trait into an innovation. Thus, it can be argued that the preservation of modals after *on condition* provided the necessary prerequisite for the rise of subjunctives.²⁰

Even so, the subjunctive would hardly have gained ground if it had not been for a concrete trigger that caused the rapid changeover starting in the late nineteenth century. As has already been suggested in section 1, adverbial clauses introduced by *on condition* have certain affinities with mandative

²⁰ It would be most interesting to see if this precondition is also met in the case of mandative subjunctives.

subordinate clauses: they customarily express an action or event that is a precondition for the action or event described in the main clause (as is usual in conditional clauses), but they also affirm the demand, recommendation, proposal, etc. that this condition should be actively implemented by the referent of the logical subject in the conditional clause. Thus, the action or event is (still) irrealis at the time the condition is set up, but it is uttered as an obligation or requirement. Consequently, the irrealis that is expressed in these clauses can more precisely be described as a mandative meaning. Consider again examples (1) and (4) to (7) above. As an alternative to subjunctives, the mandative sense may be expressed by appropriate modal auxiliaries. The modal *should*, illustrated in (10), is particularly appropriate, but others, such as *would* in example (3), do not alter the mandative ring of the subordinate clause in any substantial way. Verbs in the indicative, as in example (2), pervasively have a sense of mandativity, though this is not explicitly marked in the form of the verbal syntagm. In very few cases, possibly example (11), is there any doubt that the person(s) stipulating the condition intend(s) it to be fulfilled.²¹

- (10) The money and a salary offer came through on the condition that I *should work* for them for a year. (*Daily Mail* 1993)
- (11) There are large bonuses these days for non-drinkers. The lowest quote found by *Which?* was offered on condition that the entire family *were* teetotallers. (*The Times* 1990)²²

Övergaard (1995: 66–7) discerns the same connection between *on condition* and mandative expressions, arguing that *on condition* is (at least in Present-Day English) perceived as a mandative expression, ‘i.e. what is said in the noun clause is something for someone to bring about’. Accordingly, she includes the expression in her counts of mandative clauses.²³

For the purposes of the present study, *on condition* is probably best described as a complex conditional conjunction based on a (potentially) mandative noun. Its affinity with mandative interpretations accounts for

²¹ In this respect, the view adopted here differs from that promoted by Crawford (Chapter 14). Crawford sees a fundamental division between verbal syntagms explicitly marking the mandative meaning and those leaving it implicit.

²² Example (11) is ambiguous between an indicative verb form and a past subjunctive. The latter is, however, a highly unlikely option in view of the limited range of applications of this form in Present-Day English.

²³ While I am prepared to go along with her thus far, her speculations about the earlier history of *on condition* are refuted by the diachronic facts presented in this section. Hence, *on condition* did not originally select the indicative and acquire the mandative element of meaning only later. Moreover, the indicative would not have been the typical choice of mode for a conditional conjunction, as Övergaard seems to assume. Instead, *on condition* was typically associated with modal auxiliaries and in that respect differed significantly from other conditional conjunctions, which normally took the subjunctive.

the fact that it readily accommodates the subjunctive, and the choice of verbal syntagms consequently develops in parallel with the evolution in mandative contexts.

In contrast to AmE, both the predisposition to a modal marking of conditional clauses as irrealis and the concrete trigger in the form of semantically similar mandative subjunctives are absent from nineteenth-century BrE. This explains the lack of a parallel evolution in the homeland variety. As for the beginning adoption of the subjunctive in the late twentieth century, the same factor can be made responsible as has been adduced for similar observations in connection with mandative subordinate clauses: the growing influence of AmE, mediated by the entertainment industries, but also through increasing economic ties and personal mobility, seems to have furthered the acceptability and use of the subjunctive in BrE (see also Haegeman 1986: 66, Algeo 2006: 264).

5 The synchronic dimension

The discrepancies between BrE and AmE in the use of verbal syntagms after *on condition* do not only reside in the history of the structure, but extend to the synchronic dimension. The following four analyses indicate that the contrast is in many cases more than a merely quantitative difference that would have been expected in view of the divergent degrees of entrenchment of the subjunctive: It is very often of a qualitative nature. The corpus used for the four analyses is provided by the collection of newspapers from the 1990s described in Table 15.2 of section 3.

5.1 Semi-formulaic uses

As already mentioned in section 1, the complex conjunction *on condition* has a slightly higher textual frequency in present-day BrE than in AmE: 2.99 occurrences per million words (pmw) as opposed to only 2.54 pmw. Moreover, just over half of the 501 examples retrieved from American newspapers instantiate a semi-formulaic use that is routinely employed to stipulate anonymity as a precondition for the action or event described in the superordinate clause. Two examples are provided in (12) and (13).

- (12) One banker, speaking *on condition he not be named*, declined detailed comment on the plan, except to say, ‘They’ve got a way to go.’ (*Los Angeles Times* 1992)
- (13) ‘I want to get out of public housing,’ said Marie, 44, who spoke *on condition her real name not be used*. (*Detroit Free Press* 1993)

The examples considered as semi-formulaic in the present analysis share the following features: they begin with a form of the conjunction *on condition*,

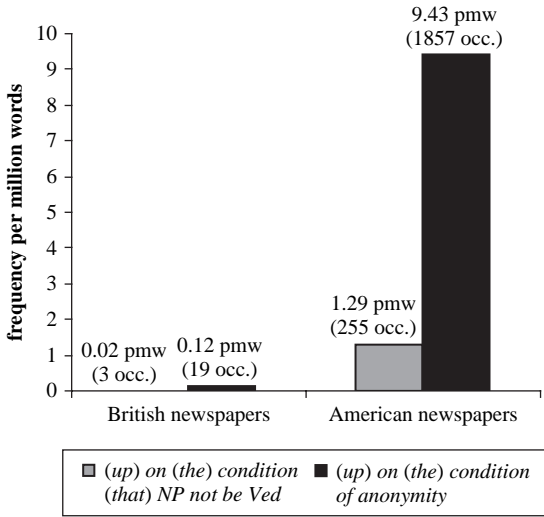


Figure 15.5 Textual frequencies of the semi-formula *(up) on (the) condition (that) NP not be Ved* and of the semantically equivalent formula *(up) on (the) condition of anonymity*. Corpus: selected British and American newspapers (cf. Table 15.2)

they contain a passive verb form in the subjunctive, they are negated with *not* and they express a requirement of anonymity. As illustrated in (12) and (13), within the schema *(up) on (the) condition (that) NP not be Ved* (as it will be labelled henceforth), a variety of subjects and verbs can be used, but the stereotyped character is clearly recognizable. While expressions of this type are current in AmE (1.29 pmw), the British newspapers only contain three measly examples (0.02 pmw). One may thus wonder what BrE does instead to express such a condition.

A likely assumption is that BrE uses a functionally equivalent expression, and a promising candidate is the handy formula *(up) on (the) condition of anonymity*. The frequency of this phrase has been checked in the contemporary newspaper data introduced in Table 15.2. Figure 15.5 displays the results and compares them to the results for the semi-formulaic expression *(up) on (the) condition (that) NP not be Ved*.

Contrary to expectation, the verbless, fully formulaic expression is also drastically more frequent in AmE than in BrE. For the latter variety, the newspaper corpus contains no more than nineteen occurrences. Thus, *(up) on (the) condition of anonymity* does not serve as a regular substitute for subordinate clauses of the type *(up) on (the) condition (that) NP not be Ved*. Both the formulaic, verbless expression and the semi-formulaic, verb-containing version can be considered as Americanisms. The question

thus still remains open as to what linguistic means BrE substitutes for the two Americanisms to express the relevant communicative purposes. However, since no very close synonym seems to be at hand, one may wonder if British speakers (and in this particular case journalists) have the same communicative needs as their American counterparts at all or whether it is for certain sociocultural reasons not very common in Britain to stipulate anonymity before passing on information (for similar speculations in other areas of grammar, see [Chapter 4](#) by Mondorf and [Chapter 18](#) by Tottie).

An extension of the study to other corpora shows that the strikingly high entrenchment of *(up)on (the) condition (that) NP not be Ved* as well as *(up)on (the) condition of anonymity* in AmE appears to be largely restricted to the journalistic genre: the second release of the ANC, containing 22.6 million words from a variety of text types as well as spoken language, yields four instances of the former (semi-formulaic) expression and thirty-eight instances of the latter (formulaic) phrase, all of which come from the *New York Times* and *Slate Magazine*. Not surprisingly, the comprehensive 100-million-word corpus BNC contains no occurrences of *(up)on (the) condition (that) NP not be Ved*, and only three instances of *(up)on (the) condition of anonymity*. Significantly, all three occur in texts on world affairs or applied science and are set in an American or Latin-American context. Hence, *(up)on (the) condition (that) NP not be Ved* and *(up)on (the) condition of anonymity* are part of American journalese but hardly extend to other text genres, and are not current across the Atlantic either.

It is all the more remarkable that when the many instances of the semi-formulaic structure in AmE are discounted, the complex conjunction *on condition* as such has an even lower textual frequency in AmE (1.25 pmw) compared to BrE (2.98 pmw) than was calculated in the introductory remarks ([section 1](#)). Thus, on the one hand, *on condition* is strongly associated with a stereotyped high-frequency type of clause in AmE journalistic styles, but is less often used elsewhere. On the other, BrE employs *on condition* more frequently overall and in a wider variety of contexts, while there are no (semi-)formulaic uses that distinguish themselves by a high recurrence and reduced variability in the corpora investigated. This recognition has implications for the following studies: all instances of *(up)on (the) condition (that) NP not be Ved* will be excluded from the counts. Since all of them by definition involve passive verb forms and are negated, their inclusion in the analyses of these factors would have led to major distortions of the resulting data.

5.2 *The special status of the verb be*

A number of studies have revealed that mandative subjunctives are (and have for many centuries been) particularly frequent in connection with the verb *be* (see Strang 1970: 209, Johansson 1979: 202, Haegeman 1986: 70, Johansson

and Norheim 1988, Hundt 1998a: 95, 1998b: 167, Peters 1998: 93, Moessner 2005a).²⁴ Two accounts have been adduced for this. One makes reference to factors such as the distinctiveness of the verb *be* in the subjunctive across all persons, which ensures a greater frequency and entrenchment and thus a greater ease of use for the form (see Turner 1980: 276, Johansson and Norheim 1988: 30). The other links the marked affinity of *be* with the subjunctive to its use in passive subordinate clauses. This line of argument discerns a correlation between the passive and the subjunctive which hinges on the fact that both tend to occur in relatively formal contexts (see Turner 1980: 276, Johansson and Norheim 1988: 30, Hundt 1998b: 167).

Several studies have found that the active–passive contrast does not play nearly as important a role in AmE, where the subjunctive occurs across the board, as it does in BrE, where passives form the most accommodating environment (cf. Turner 1980: 274–5, Hundt 1998a: 95, 1998b: 167, Algeo 1992: 607–11). But what is true for the mandative subjunctive need not necessarily hold for the subjunctive in conditional clauses. Thus, Moessner (2005b: 220) states that in Middle and Early Modern English conditional clauses lexical verbs still make up around 50 per cent of all subjunctives, with a rising trend, and González-Álvarez (2003: 309) reports far more active than passive subjunctives down to the nineteenth century. The following study examines the situation in clauses introduced by *on condition* in Present-Day English.

For this purpose, the set of British and American newspapers listed in Table 15.2 has been searched for all variants of the conjunction and the hits have been subdivided according to whether or not they involved a form of *be*. All semi-formulaic uses have been discounted, which eliminates as many as 255 out of the 350 occurrences of *be* in the American subcorpus and only 3 BrE examples. Examples (14)–(16) show uses of the verb *be* in (non-formulaic) passive contexts, in connection with a progressive and as a main verb. Instances without *be* have been amply illustrated above.

- (14) Some banks and building societies do, at the very least, offer discounted loans and mortgages on condition that their own insurance policies *are taken out*. (*The Times* 1990)
- (15) His visa will be issued on condition that he *is furthering* the Ulster peace process in talks to various organisations. (*Daily Mail* 1994)
- (16) Klapper agreed on the condition that the trip *be* platonic, her family said. (*Los Angeles Times* 1992)

Figure 15.6 portrays the results. It makes no distinction between the different functions of *be* (passive, progressive, main verb). Note that of the

²⁴ Only Övergaard (1995: 77) comes to a different conclusion: in her data, she discerns no particular statistical association between the subjunctive and the passive.

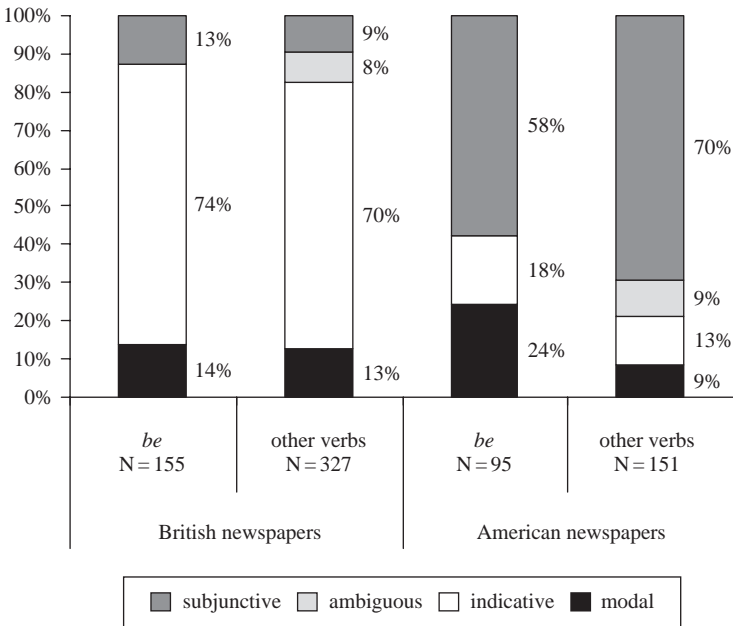


Figure 15.6 Realizations of the verbal syntagm for *be* and other verbs in subordinate clauses dependent on (*up*)on (*the*) condition (*that*), excluding semi-formulaic instances of the type (*up*)on (*the*) condition (*that*) NP not *be* Ved. Corpus: selected British and American newspapers (cf. Table 15.2)

155 instances of *be* in the British subcorpus, 117 (i.e. 75 per cent) involve passive *be*, while of the 95 occurrences in the American subcorpus as many as 87 (i.e. 92 per cent) are instances of the passive. However, passive and other *be* do not differ in any significant way in their affinity with the subjunctive in either of the varieties. Another similarity consists in the fact that 20 out of the 51 subjunctives in BrE (i.e. 39 per cent) and 55 out of the 160 subjunctives in AmE (i.e. 34 per cent) are represented by *be*. The shares are relatively low and statistically indistinct,²⁵ indicating that the subjunctive is not (even in BrE) a feature uniquely tied to the verb *be*.

A comparison between the proportions of subjunctives in BrE and AmE as indicated in Figure 15.6 reveals a striking difference: while in BrE the verb *be* actually attracts a slightly increased percentage of subjunctives compared to other verbs, AmE clearly avoids the subjunctive in connection with *be*, falling back on modal periphrases instead, if the situation obtaining

²⁵ The chi-square test yields the following results: $\chi^2 = 0.40$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.53$ (n.s.).

for other verbs is taken as a measure of comparison.²⁶ This finding runs counter to the familiar attempts at an explanation in terms of a better entrenchment of the form *be*. A different explanation is thus needed as far as AmE is concerned. An account that suggests itself again relies on the exceptionality of subjunctive *be*. Its shape distinguishes it sharply from the corresponding indicative forms, a fact that contrasts with other verbs and that appears to be unwelcome in AmE.

Underlying this British–American difference, there may be a divergence in the stylistic evaluations incurred not only by the subjunctive as such, but by the highly marked form *be* in particular. As has already been mentioned, the subjunctive has often been brought into connection with formal styles (e.g. Quirk *et al.* 1985: 157, 1093, Johansson and Norheim 1988: 30, Denison 1998: 294, Rissanen 1999: 228, Peters 2004: 520). However, what is considered formal need not be identical across varieties. Accordingly, the contrast between formal and informal registers has been found to be stronger in BrE than in AmE, where mandative subjunctives are well established across all stylistic levels (cf. Hundt 1998b: 167, 170, Sayder 1989: 63). Furthermore, while subjunctives in general are a widespread feature in AmE, the particular form *be* may nevertheless be perceived as more formal than other, less distinctive subjunctives. This appears to be the crucial effect responsible for the avoidance of subjunctive *be*, which also corresponds with the generalization that AmE manifests a stronger pull towards less formal and more colloquial structures than BrE (cf. Chapter 19 by Rohdenburg and Schlüter).

In conclusion to this analysis, the affinity between the verb *be* and the subjunctive that has been brought up in the literature has received only weak (statistically insignificant) support for BrE. Outside of semi-formulaic uses, AmE shows a contrary tendency, with relatively fewer instances of *be* in the subjunctive than of other verbs. This divergence exists independently of the active–passive distinction and can therefore be accounted for by a relatively high entrenchment of subjunctive *be* in BrE, and conversely an avoidance of this highly marked form in AmE. Needless to say that *be* in BrE still takes the subjunctive far less frequently than *be* in AmE.

5.3 *The influence of negation*

A further structural factor that previous analyses have drawn attention to is the influence of negation. When a subjunctive verbal syntagm is negated, the negator *not* typically precedes the bare verb, as in (17); there is no *do*-support

²⁶ In BrE, the difference in the relative proportion of the subjunctive between *be* and other verbs is statistically not significant: $\chi^2 = 1.30$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.25$ (n.s.). In AmE, it only narrowly fails to reach statistical significance: $\chi^2 = 3.48$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.062$ (n.s.). However, considering that the 9 per cent of ambiguous uses of other verbs in AmE are likely to be subjunctives rather than indicatives, the error probability can safely be assumed to actually fall below the $p = 0.05$ mark.

(see Quirk *et al.* 1985: 156; see in particular Chapter 13 by Göran Kjellmer). This remarkable construction was first commented on in the early years after the Second World War (see Kirchner 1954). It used to be particular to AmE, where its currency has increased over the past century (see Övergaard 1995: 70–4). In BrE, it has until recently been absolutely unknown, its function being filled by negated indicative or modal auxiliary constructions, as in (18) and (19) (see Johansson 1979: 202, Johansson and Norheim 1988: 30, Rohdenburg 2006b). The first occurrences of negated subjunctives in BrE that attracted linguists' attention date from around the year 1990 (see Övergaard 1995: 70–4, Hundt 1998b: 166; on the absence of pre-verbal *not* in the late nineteenth century, see González-Álvarez 2003: 309). Nevertheless, there is some indication that, just like the British in the early 1990s, Americans in the late 1970s avoided the negation of subjunctives, though far less strongly than the former (see Johansson 1979: 202). The general reluctance to use negated subjunctives has been ascribed to the highly marked shape of the construction (see Hundt 1998b: 166–7).

- (17) He was released on personal bond, on the condition that he *not assault* Harris, because he had no prior record, Pope says. (*Detroit Free Press* 1993)
- (18) He was freed on £1,500 bail on condition that he *does not go* within a mile of the Magpie and Stump public house in King's Road, Chelsea. (*The Times* 1990)
- (19) So when I was asked to go to head office in London, I agreed on the condition that I *would not have* to move from my home near Bristol. (*Daily Mail* 1994)

The following study seeks to determine how far the establishment of negated subjunctives in conditional clauses after *on condition* has progressed in present-day BrE and AmE. For this purpose, the newspaper data for clauses introduced by *on condition* (again excluding semi-formulaic uses) have been subdivided into instances negated by *not* and instances not negated by *not*, labelled 'non-negated' for convenience.²⁷ Figure 15.7 displays the results of the count.

Both varieties indeed show a remarkable avoidance of subjunctive forms in negated subordinate clauses. While the subjunctive in BrE reaches 12 per cent outside of negated contexts, there is not a single occurrence of a subjunctive within negated ones.²⁸ Thus, the spread of the subjunctive does not extend to negated uses yet (at least in the limited set of 56 examples and after the exclusion of the 3 semi-formulaic examples). On the other

²⁷ Note that the latter category, however, comprises examples with *no*-negation (also including *never*).

²⁸ The contrast is statistically highly significant: $\chi^2 = 7.50$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.0062$ (**).

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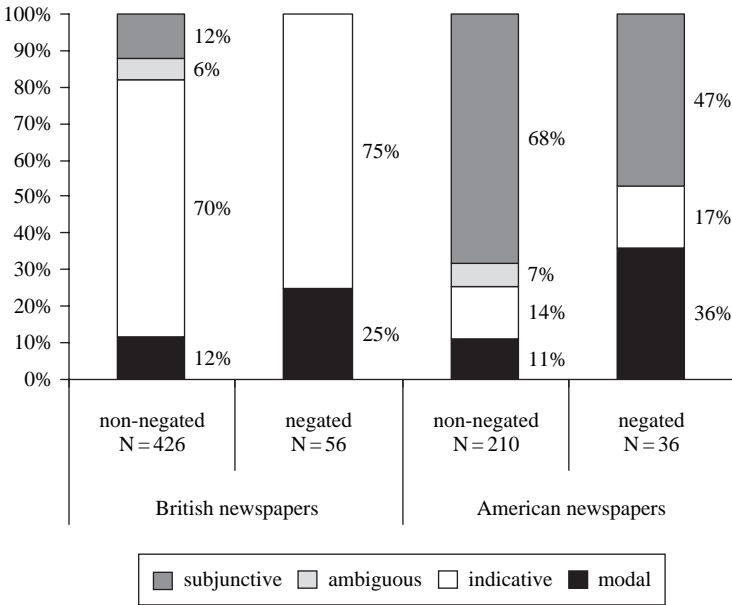


Figure 15.7 Realizations of the verbal syntagm in negated and non-negated subordinate clauses dependent on *(up)on (the) condition (that)*, excluding semi-formulaic instances of the type *(up)on (the) condition (that) NP not be Ved*. Corpus: selected British and American newspapers (cf. Table 15.2)

hand, AmE, which in non-negated contexts employs the subjunctive in over two thirds of the cases, has a strikingly low percentage of subjunctives in negated subordinate clauses, which even falls short of the 50 per cent mark.²⁹ The data in Figure 15.7 indicate that the avoidance of subjunctives is mainly to the advantage of modal periphrases, both in BrE and AmE. We may thus conclude that negation is the strongest grammatical factor that impedes the rise of the subjunctive in conditional clauses.

While this finding is not surprising in view of previous research on the topic, what is still outstanding is an explanation for the avoidance of negated subjunctive clauses. A promising approach comes from the typological insights informing Horn’s (1978: 191) so-called *embedded negation constraint* (ENC), which describes a general aversion to negation in non-finite embedded clauses. In addition, instead of a binary division between finite and non-finite clauses, Horn (1978: 191–205) discerns a continuum of finiteness, on which

²⁹ This discrepancy is also statistically significant: $\chi^2 = 5.89$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.015$ (*).

subjunctives range closer to the non-finite end than indicatives.³⁰ Independent support for this scale of finiteness comes from Rohdenburg (1995b: 378–80, 2006b) and Anderson (2001: 161), who argue that exactly the same contrast between indicatives and modal periphrases on the one hand and subjunctives on the other holds in English.³¹ Applied to the case under investigation, the negation of subjunctives thus tends to be avoided, whereas it is more acceptable in more ‘clausy’ and therefore more explicit types of subordinate clauses, namely indicatives and modal periphrases. As an underlying motivation for this imbalance, Horn offers the following explanation:

the function of negation is to deny a proposition or claim, or to substitute an inverse act for the one under consideration. The less the dependent clause looks and acts like a sentence – the less it seems to express a complete proposition, thought, claim, or act – the less negation is admitted without corresponding discomfort, if it is admitted at all. (Horn 1978: 205)

In sum, the analysis of the effect of the negation of the conditional subordinate clause on the realization of the verbal syntagm has provided strong evidence that the subjunctive tends to be avoided in clauses negated by *not* and to be replaced by modal periphrasis. In BrE, this results in the virtual absence of the subjunctive, and in AmE the share of subjunctives is reduced to less than 50 per cent. The effect becomes explicable if we follow Horn (1978) in assuming that subjunctive clauses are semantically more dependent and thus less fully-fledged sentential units than other finite clauses.

5.4 *The choice of modal auxiliary*

In addition to structural factors such as formulaicity or the occurrence of the verb *be* or the negator *not*, the choice between subjunctives, indicatives and modal periphrases presumably involves a semantic component. For

³⁰ As evidence for this model, Horn (1978: 193) quotes two examples from French. In the concocted, untypical example (i), the negation *ne ... pas* remains in the subjunctive subordinate clause (where it semantically belongs). Much more common is the extraction of the negation from the subordinate clause, as shown in (ii).

- (i) Je veux que vous ne sortiez pas. ('I want that you do not leave.')
- (ii) Je ne veux pas que vous sortiez. ('I do not want that you leave.')

³¹ Rohdenburg (1995b, 2006b) is able to show that in negated contexts modal periphrases are preferred to subjunctive clauses, indicative clauses are preferred to infinitives, and marked infinitives are preferred to unmarked infinitives and to gerunds. The position of modal periphrases on this scale relative to indicative clauses seems less than clear: Anderson (2001: 163–6) concludes that, depending on the case, modal constructions can function as either finites or non-finites. The results from Figure 15.7 suggest that they might actually be the most explicit complementation type, since they are clearly favoured in negated contexts.

mandative clauses, this view is espoused by Quirk and Rusiecki (1982: 393), who hypothesize that the degree of ‘willingness’ vs. ‘reluctance’ of the subject of the subordinate clause plays a role, though their elicitation data fail to present a consistent pattern. Semantic distinctions are easier to detect within the category of modal periphrases, since language users have a whole array of modal auxiliaries to choose from.

In mandative subordinate clauses, preferences have been shown to differ on both sides of the Atlantic, with British speakers plumping for the modal *should* and Americans being more variable in their choice (see Hundt 1998b: 170, Peters 1998: 94, Övergaard 1995: 56). The selection of a modal has been argued to be a matter of the volitional force inherent in the superordinate clause, which can vary from requirement through exhortation to tentative suggestion (see Peters 1998: 94; for a detailed discussion, see Övergaard 1995: 54–60). The following study will thus allow us to estimate which of the two national varieties can be regarded as more explicit insofar as it exploits the set of modal auxiliaries more fully. By way of examples, consider (20) to (23), which exemplify four different modal auxiliaries.

- (20) The money and a salary offer came through on the condition that I *should* work for them for a year. (*Daily Mail* 1993)
- (21) The two quelled the rumors, then decided to reunite the group on the condition that drugs *would* no longer be involved. (*The Washington Times* 1991)
- (22) General Kobets said that he had accepted the role of defence minister only on condition that he *could* supervise the execution of ‘those junta bastards’. (*The Times* 1991)
- (23) To his further amazement, she bestows on him an unimagined fortune by weaving golden cloth at night on the condition that her method *must* remain a secret. (*The Times* 1990)

The differences between these examples reside in the person(s) stipulating the condition, the person(s) on whom the condition is imposed, the animacy of the subject in the subordinate clause and the tense concord with the superordinate clause. All of these factors can be assumed to exert an influence on the choice. Arguably, the most versatile modal is *would*, since it does not presuppose a component of volition on the part of the subject and is therefore applicable to animate and inanimate subjects alike. However, a detailed semantic analysis of individual examples cannot be undertaken here for reasons of space.

Figure 15.8 focuses on the examples of modal periphrases collected from the British and American newspaper corpora (corresponding to 13 per cent of the British and 15 per cent of the American data after the exclusion of the semi-formulaic uses). Though the number of modal uses in AmE is very low,

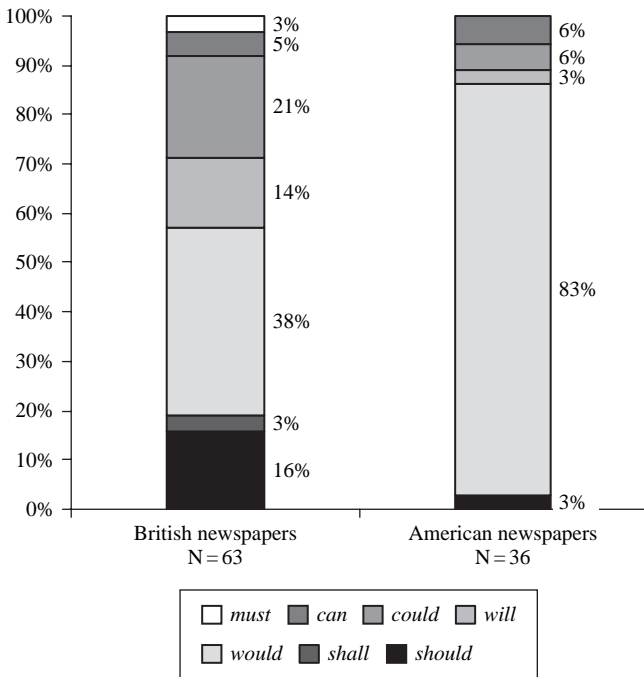


Figure 15.8 Choice of modal auxiliaries in subordinate clauses dependent on (*up*)on (*the*) condition (*that*). Corpus: selected British and American newspapers (cf. Table 15.2)

the data permit some important insights into further contrasts between the two national varieties.³²

The resulting picture leaves no doubt that BrE employs a more varied range of modal auxiliaries than AmE.³³ This fits into the larger background described by Leech (2003: 236), who shows that in AmE the use of modal auxiliaries is generally on the retreat (a trend which is less pronounced in BrE). What is more, the decrease is far more pronounced in connection with the rarer modals, while the more frequent ones – with *would* heading the list – stand their ground somewhat better (see Leech 2003: 228). In accordance with this, Figure 15.8 demonstrates that AmE resorts to the form *would*

³² The differences observed fail the statistical test due to the large number of types. When compared to the total of all other modals, the different shares of *would* are, however, very highly significant: $\chi^2 = 18.91$, $df = 1$, $p = 1.37 \cdot 10^{-5}$ (***).

³³ Note that the selection of *should* or *shall*, *would* or *will* and *could* or *can* is to some extent, but not exclusively, a matter of tense concord with the superordinate clause. An exception is seen in (i):

- (i) The West German government and the Bundesbank *favour* a single European currency only on the condition that a European central bank *would* enjoy independence in the day-to-day conduct of its monetary policy. (*The Times* 1990)

in more than four out of five cases, whereas in BrE *would* is also the most frequently used modal (another difference from mandative clauses), but occurs in less than two out of five cases. Besides, BrE shows a substantial percentage of the modals *should/shall* and *could/can*, as well as a sprinkling of *must*. This result can in part be accounted for by a more general avoidance of the modal *should* characteristic of AmE: Leech's (2003: 228) data show that *should* is strikingly less frequent in this variety than in BrE, and preliminary observations in the Paderborn research project have shown that it tends to be replaced by alternative means of expressing modality, for instance the modal *would* (or, in the present case, also the subjunctive).

Assuming that the basic communicative needs of British and American speakers are identical in this respect and that the selection of the modals is at least to some extent motivated by semantic considerations, we may conclude that BrE manifests a considerably greater explicitness than AmE as far as the differentiation between different degrees of volitionality is concerned. Judging from the literature, this situation is contrary to the one obtaining for mandative subjunctives, where it is AmE that is less fixed in its use of modals.

6 Conclusion

The study presented in this chapter has focused on the realization of verbal syntagms in conditional clauses introduced by the complex conjunction *on condition*. It has been argued that the set of subordinate clauses under discussion partakes of the two uses of the subjunctive that still have a certain degree of currency in Present-Day English: conditional clauses on the one hand and mandative clauses on the other. While conditional clauses have been shown elsewhere to have preserved a relatively high incidence of subjunctive verb forms down to the nineteenth century, the relatively young conjunction *on condition* was originally primarily associated with modal periphrases. Due to its mandative component of meaning, it has however been affected by the relatively well documented revival of the subjunctive in mandative clauses. As a result, BrE and AmE nowadays differ as much in the choice of verbal syntagms after *on condition* as in mandative contexts.

The diachronic part of the analyses presented in this chapter has shown that British–American contrasts, however, originate in a period well before the revival of mandative subjunctives: since the mid nineteenth century, BrE has exhibited a pronounced tendency to abandon the irrealis (mandative) marking of the verbal paradigm which continued to be indicated by the use of modal auxiliaries in AmE. This difference has been argued to be at the bottom of the susceptibility of AmE to the subjunctive revival, while the concrete trigger seems to have been the parallel change in mandative clauses. The first signs of the comeback have been traced to the late nineteenth century, and the change has spread so rapidly in AmE of the early twentieth century that the subjunctive has been the majority variant since about 1910. In stark contrast, BrE, which had

dashed ahead in the replacement of modal periphrases by indicatives, has until very recently remained untouched by the American trend. For the time being, the indicative in clauses after *on condition* still is a shibboleth of BrE.

But the British–American differences are not limited to distinctions in terms of earlier or later onsets of changes or higher or lower rates of change; the synchronic analyses have also revealed a number of characteristic system-internal effects. Thus, the verb *be* seems to attract the subjunctive in BrE (though only weakly), but rejects it in AmE. Its distinctive subjunctive form seems to increase its accessibility for British speakers, but makes Americans shy away from its use. A tendency that is shared by both BrE and AmE is the avoidance of the subjunctive in negated subordinate clauses. This has been accounted for by a general principle according to which clauses that are not fully finite do not easily combine with negation. In addition, BrE and AmE have been shown to differ in the range of modal auxiliaries which they employ as well as in the relative frequencies with which they select individual modals. This observation has been linked to a potentially greater explicitness on the part of BrE, which is more flexible in its choice, while AmE largely relies on the all-purpose modal *would*. Further differences between BrE and AmE that have been noted are divergent preferences in the form of the conjunction itself and the frequent use of semi-formulaic subordinate clauses of the type (*up*)*on (the) condition (that) NP not be V*ed in AmE, which is practically absent from BrE.

The proposed case study calls for further research on the conditional subjunctive after other conjunctions. It will be interesting to see whether these have to any noticeable extent undergone a resurgence of the subjunctive or if the particular development in the case of *on condition* is explained by its affinity with mandative uses. A more wide-ranging research topic would be to determine whether the preservation of modal periphrasis in subordinate clauses (found in the historical data for *on condition*) has also paved the way for the revival of the mandative subjunctive. It might be the case that in a diachronic perspective, mandative clauses already differed in BrE and AmE prior to the first signs of a revived subjunctive, in that AmE retained the explicit marking of modality in the form of modal auxiliary constructions, while BrE gave up modally marked forms in favour of plain indicative clauses. This would provide a novel avenue to explaining the surprising comeback of an already obsolescent verb form in AmE, which has no parallel in BrE. Finally, a methodological point should be mentioned. The present case study shows that a concentration on a single conditional clause introducing conjunction can afford a clearer view of diachronic and synchronic variation than a less restricted perspective that lumps together a set of different items, each of which may have its own variation profile and be subject to specific (e.g. semantic) constraints. As a conclusion to the insights gained from this exemplary study, it becomes clear that the study of British–American differences has many discoveries to make – even in such well-researched areas as the subjunctive.

16 Tag questions

D. J. ALLERTON

1 Preliminaries

Tag questions are a well-known phenomenon in British and American English, but there have been some changes in their form and use since the classic descriptions of the first half of the twentieth century.¹ The aim of this chapter is to outline the general system of tag questions in the two major varieties of English and to point to some differences between them.² Firstly, though, it will be helpful to clarify some basic issues.

BrE and AmE each embrace a wide range of varieties of English, varying according to such factors as the precise geographical region, the social group and the social situation of the language users involved, as well as the complex question of spoken as against written language. All linguists are restricted by the data available to them, and the present writer is no exception. This chapter will take BrE, more specifically English English, as its starting point, but will attempt to highlight contrasts with AmE, paying particular attention to some recent changes in BrE, which may partly reflect American influence.

Ideally the sources for studying a particular linguistic phenomenon should include both naturally occurring texts and the intuitions of native speakers. As a native speaker of English English, the present writer has been able to follow recent developments in this variety at first hand. He has been able to refer to the British National Corpus, although the spoken element of this is of course limited to 10 per cent; he has also had restricted access to the American National Corpus,³ which is only just being developed. The limited amount of spoken data available is not the only problem: tag questions are relatively rare in written texts, and their inherent variability of form makes them difficult to search for. The pioneering work of Algeo (1988b, 1990,

¹ While the term 'tag-question' (with a hyphen!) was used by Jespersen (1940: 481), the term 'confirmative question' was preferred by Krusinga (1931: 291–2) and by Palmer and Blandford (1939: 265–6).

² For discussion of more specialized aspects of tag questions and related issues, see also Cheshire (1991), Jones (1990), Krug (1998), Millar and Brown (1979), Ramisch (1991), Tagliamonte (2003), Tottie (1978), Trudgill, Nevalainen and Wischer (2002).

³ I would like to thank Britta Mondorf and Günter Rohdenburg for making these materials available to me.

2006) makes use of a wide range of individually collected examples, but they are taken from a variety of different sources. On the other hand, the data studied by Cheshire (1991) and by Stenström (1997) is more uniform but more limited. This is the inevitable quandary of the data-oriented linguist. Any findings thrown up by this chapter therefore need to be regarded as tentative and provisional, but it is hoped that some light may be shed on the nature and function of tag questions in current English.

2 The definition of tag questions (or question tags)

Essentially tag questions are questions that are also tags, in the sense that they are tagged on at the end of an utterance. They can just as well be called question tags, because they are tags in the form of questions; indeed, this might be the preferable term, since their tag nature is paramount, and, unlike standard questions, they barely seek to elicit information from the collocutor, at best asking for assent. But ‘tag question’ seems to have become the more common term.⁴

Regardless of the label we give them, we are concerned with elements that are, at least in a broad sense, questions. The term ‘question’ in this context is being understood functionally: in other words, a question is considered as a sentence (or virtual sentence) with a particular textual function (Allerton 1969: 42–4), i.e. it is a sentence that has the primary function of eliciting information of some kind from the addressee, normally in the directly following utterance. In this sense, a question does not require a particular kind of internal sentence structure, such as an interrogative one, because it is defined purely by its questioning role in the text.

Tag questions, then, are question-like sequences tagged on to the end of an utterance, and in the case of multi-sentence utterances they are most commonly attached to and apply to the last sentence of the utterance. This is most commonly a statement, but may also be an exclamation, command and even (for some speakers) a question. Statements with question tags can be exemplified by the examples of (1a–c):

- (1) a. That’s a bit of a problem, isn’t it?
 b. That’s a bit of a problem, is it?
 c. That’s a bit of a problem, right?

The tags *isn’t it?*, *is it?* and *right?* derive part of their interpretation from the preceding sequence, which alone could have occurred as a separate sentence. Depending how the term ‘sentence’ is defined (the main issue addressed in Allerton 1969), the tag itself could also be regarded as a separate sentence,

⁴ A sample Google search in December 2004 yielded 11,300 hits for *tag question* and 4,420 for *question tag*.

but it seems more reasonable to regard it as a potential sentence that has been incorporated into another sentence. This preceding (potential) sentence can be termed the 'base sentence',⁵ to which the tag is attached or into which it is incorporated.

The purpose of such tags can provisionally be described as that of inducing limited feedback from the addressee. In other words, they do not seek to elicit a substantial contribution from the addressee, but rather a simple confirmation of understanding of the message and/or of assent to its content. This means that they are largely limited to spoken dialogue; their occurrence in written texts is limited to cases in which spoken language is being simulated in some way.

In seeking to elicit feedback from the addressee, tags naturally have a close connection to the feedback they help to elicit, and it is not therefore surprising if there is also a formal similarity. The most natural positive follow-up to the tag question in (1a) and (b) would be *It is* in the case of agreement and *It isn't* in the case of disagreement. For (1c) a tag response signalling agreement could be *Right* or *Yes (it is)*, whereas one involving disagreement would be *No (it isn't)*, or (more politely) *Not really*. As opposed to tag questions, these utterances could be termed 'tag responses'; in this case, obviously, the 'tagging' is carried out by the collocutor, rather than by the speaker of the base sentence.

If tags, as suggested above, by definition have the function of eliciting feedback, we must exclude from the category two other kinds of final appendage, which are exemplified in (2) and (3) below:

- (2) That's a bit of a problem, George.
 (3) He's a bit of a problem, George (is).⁶

In both of these (one-sentence) utterances there is a final appendage, which might loosely be termed a 'tag'. But, unlike tag questions, the appendages of (2) and (3) do not have the function of eliciting feedback: indeed, adding *George (is)* in no way increases the chance of the addressee taking the floor for the next utterance, and there may even be less chance. Moreover, both of these appendages take the form of full lexical noun phrases, the second optionally supplemented with a finite auxiliary or full verb (an 'operator' in the sense of Quirk *et al.* 1985: 79–81).

The appendages of (2) and (3) differ not only from (1) but also from each other. The appendage in (2) is a vocative, i.e. a full noun phrase, most commonly a proper name, that has the function of naming the addressee of the utterance, either to make clear who the intended recipient of the message is or to show social solidarity with that recipient. The appendage in (3) is again

⁵ Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 891) use the term 'anchor'.

⁶ In the North of England and in Scotland the variant *... is George* is used.

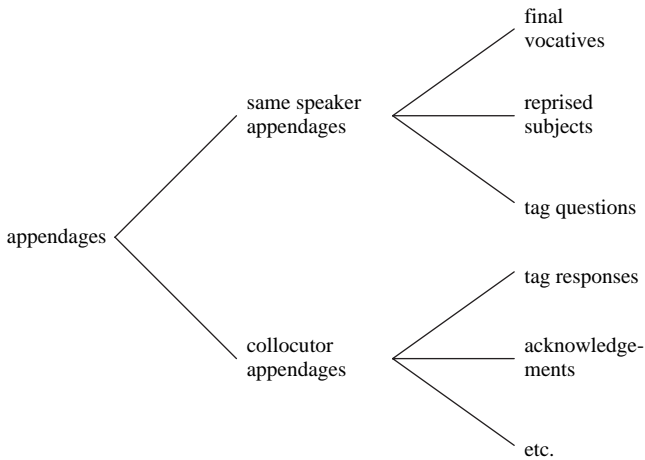


Figure 16.1 Types of appendage

a full lexical noun phrase, but this time it is in effect a ‘reprised’ subject, i.e. a postposed noun phrase that repeats the subject in a more explicit version, with the function of making more precise the earlier (usually pronominal) subject in its standard position. While it is reasonable to refer to these utterance-final structures as ‘appendages’, it seems best to reserve the term ‘tag’ for a particular kind of appendage, i.e. one that has the function of eliciting feedback from the collocutor.

The range of tag-related phenomena referred to so far can be presented as in Figure 16.1. Tag questions are thus a subvariety of ‘same speaker appendage’, whereas tag responses are a subvariety (alongside acknowledgements such as *I see*, etc.) of ‘collocutor appendages’. The two types of tag, tag questions and tag responses, share a concern with the truth value of the core sentence. As already made clear, this chapter is limited in its scope to tag questions.

3 Forms of tag across languages

Tag questions, then, are appendages to a sentence, most commonly a statement, that seek confirmation of the understanding of, and possibly also of agreement to, the content of the preceding sentence. Before exploring the full range of functions displayed by tag questions it is worth briefly considering their form or structure. This varies considerably, both between and inside languages, ranging from elements with the basic structure of clauses, through phrases and words, to mere phonological sequences. Although the variety is great and lines are difficult to draw, we can place most of them under one of the following rough headings:

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- (a) reduced concordant⁷ (affirmative) interrogative clauses (e.g. *is it?*, *are we?*, etc. according to the preceding context);
- (b) reduced negative concordant interrogative clauses (e.g. *isn't it?*, *aren't we?*, etc. according to the preceding context);
- (c) invariable (i.e. non-concordant) versions of (a) and (b) (e.g. *is it?*, *isn't it/innit?*, in context-free use);
- (d) clauses based on verbs of understanding, thinking or saying (e.g. *(do) you see/know?*, *capito?*, *don't you think?*, *wouldn't you say?*);
- (e) (clauses with) words meaning '(be) true/truth' or '(be) right' (e.g. *true?*, *(am I) right?*, French *c'est vrai?*, Spanish *(no es) verdad?*, German *nicht wahr?*);
- (f) clauses or expressions meaning '(be) in order' (e.g. *(all) right?*, *okay?*);
- (g) words for *yes* and *no*;
- (h) words for *what* (e.g. French *quoi?*, early twentieth-century British Eng. *what?*);
- (i) words for *or* (e.g. German *oder?*);
- (j) non-word phonological sequences (e.g. *eh?*);
- (k) grunts and other paralinguistic elements (with a rising intonation).

Of these, the first five have a kind of reduced clause structure. The first two, (a) and (b), are clauses with only a pronominal subject and a finite non-lexical verb;⁸ they are thus almost empty of lexical content, although they have a clear grammatical meaning. We can call these 'concordant mini-clauses'.⁹ They are concordant in three ways:

- (i) the pronominal subject of the tag question agrees with the main clause subject in person and number, one peculiarity being that *there* (in, for instance, *There's a meeting next week, isn't there?*) counts as a subject and is pronominalized as itself;
- (ii) the non-lexical verb is copied from the main clause or, in clauses without a non-lexical verb, is represented by the corresponding form of *do*, the process commonly known as *do*-support;
- (iii) the more common type of tag has so-called 'reversed polarity', i.e. affirmative main clauses are followed by negative tags, and vice versa. As we shall see below, there is also a 'constant polarity' tag for affirmative main clauses, but this has a slightly different meaning.

⁷ Apparently irregular concordant tags like *Stop it, will you?* and *You ought to stop it, shouldn't you?* can still be of a basically concordant nature. The first example illustrates *will*-tags after an imperative, and the second exemplifies the problem of the non-occurrence of the quasi-modal *ought (to)* in interrogative structures. But both can be accommodated under a general rule of tag question formation.

⁸ In other words: an auxiliary verb or main verb *be* or *have*; see discussion below.

⁹ As opposed to so-called 'small clauses', which have lexical content but little by way of grammatical elements.

Concordant mini-clauses have been thought of as the classic English tag questions, although they are losing ground in contemporary BrE. They seem to be relatively rare, however, in other languages. They are found in the Celtic languages, as the following colloquial Welsh examples¹⁰ demonstrate:

- (4) Mae Siân yn dweud celwydd, 'yw hi?
 is Siân -ing tell lie is she
 'Siân is telling lies/a lie, is she?'
 (5) Mae Siân yn dweud celwydd, on'd 'yw hi?
 is Siân -ing tell lie not is she (INTERROG.)
 'Siân is telling lies/a lie, isn't she?'

This corresponds closely to the English construction.¹¹

The third type of tag question in our list is the invariable use of one form of the first two tag types. The normal forms for this type (c) are affirmative *is it?* and negative *isn't it?*, the latter having, in popular speech, the phonologically simplified forms *intit?* [¹ɪntɪtʔ] or [¹ɪntɪ] in north-western England and *innit?* [¹ɪnɪʔ] in southern England (see Krug 1998). The more formal forms *isn't that right?* and *isn't that the case?* could also be placed here, although they could also be regarded as cases of type (e). Interestingly, invariable *isn't it?* is often heard in Welsh English, although, as we have seen, Welsh itself has concordant tags. The form *innit?* is associated with the popular speech of London and the Home Counties (see Cheshire 1991), although it may now have been overtaken by other invariable forms.

Tag questions of type (d), such as *d'you see?* or *d'you know?*,¹² are clauses of a different kind. They have no concord with the main clause. This is because they make no direct reference to the detailed content of the main clause. Instead they use a verb of understanding or knowing of which the main clause is to be taken as the understood clausal object. This means that they are more concerned with securing the comprehension of the speaker rather than his or her agreement.

The fifth type of tag, type (e), is barely found in traditional English, although it is the standard type in some languages, e.g. traditional German *nicht wahr?*, Spanish (*no es*) *verdad?* In English *true* or *right* is found as a tag response, even after a mini-clause tag question; cf.

- (6) Tag questions seem to invite a tag response (don't they?)
 True/Right.

But only *right* is regularly used as a tag, as in

- (7) He's in New York now, right? (ANC/*callhome/en_4065*)

¹⁰ I am grateful to Emrys Evans (University of Wales, Aberystwyth) for these examples.

¹¹ Since English is the only Germanic language with mini-clause tag questions, this phenomenon may be a contact phenomenon derived from the Celtic languages.

¹² Older BrE also had *don't you know?*

This is particularly common in AmE, but has dramatically increased in frequency in BrE in recent times.

Type (f) tag questions are quite similar to type (e), and involve elements like *(all) right?, okay?* or German *in Ordnung?* (which is apparently more common as a tag response). But because expressions like this have a broader meaning than just ‘true’, tags containing them tend not to be limited to the question of the truth value of the base sentence, to which the tag has been attached, as will become clear below.

The seventh formal type of tag, type (f), i.e. words for *yes* and *no*, is rare in traditional English, but it is widely used in the world’s languages. Not all languages have both possibilities, however: German, for instance, uses *ja* but not *nein*, while French uses *non* but not *oui*. The prevalence of these possibilities in various languages may be one reason why *yes* and *no* are used quite commonly in non-native English, and this in turn may be influencing native speaker English.

Types (h) and (i) can be represented by French *quoi* and German *oder* respectively. These are both grammatical words that must owe their tag question status to some sort of reduction or ellipsis. Early twentieth century British upper class English is reputed to have used *what* in combinations like *Topping weather, what?* corresponding to more standard *(It’s) Excellent weather, isn’t it?* and modern French *quoi* seems to be used in a similar way. In either case the expression can be understood as a truncation of an expression with the value ‘What do you think?’ The case of German *oder* ‘or’ is slightly different, in that the interpretation can be taken as something like ‘or do you have a different opinion?’

The final two forms of tag question in our list are different from all the others in that they do not consist of normal words but mere phonetic sequences. In that sense they can be regarded as a single category. Subtype (j) consists of quasi-words, i.e. elements that have the phonological structure of words, such as English *eh*. Subtype (k) consists of sounds not structured in terms of the phonological elements of the language (i.e. phonemes, stress patterns, etc.), such as English *huh* (= [hǔ]). There is probably no clear division not only between types (j) and (k), but also between them and the other types (which consist of words of the language): German *nicht wahr*, for instance, is reduced to *nicht*, which can be further reduced (depending on the variety) to [nit], [nət], [nt̪], [niç], [nəç] or [nə].

There is thus a wide range of grammatical and phonological elements that can serve as tag questions in the world’s languages, of which the above list can be regarded as a sample. In traditional English usage concordant mini-clauses are clearly the major type, and they will therefore be the main focus of this chapter. But it is already clear that other possibilities have been developing. Some of the more recent ones may be short-lived and go the way of archaic forms like *what?* and *don’t you know?*

4 The pragmatic function of tags

Before we consider the different forms of concordant tag in more detail, it is important to realize that they do not all have precisely the same pragmatic function. In their traditional use at least, tag questions, as noted earlier, constitute feedback requests, but, as also noted, the invited feedback can refer to the understanding of the message and/or to agreement with its content. Actually, as many as three different meanings can be distinguished, and the different English tags can signal these, although some tags are apparently ambiguous:¹³

- (α) ‘You understand this, don’t you?’ or ‘You are listening, aren’t you?’
 e.g. *you-see?, you-know?, (y’) understand?, yeah₁?, (you-)know-what-I-mean?, (d’you) get it? / (have you) got it?* (all invariable)
- (β) ‘This is correct, isn’t it’ or ‘You agree that this is true, don’t you?’
 e.g. *aren’t you?, etc.* (= classic concordant tag), *right₁?, yes?, yeah₂?, eh?, huh?*
- (γ) ‘You agree to these plans/arrangements/orders, don’t you?’
 e.g. *okay?, yeah₃?, right₂?, agreed?*

The focus of attention in this chapter is classic English tag questions, which are of type (β). But we should be aware that it is not always easy to specify the precise meaning of a given tag question, because a certain amount of fuzziness is involved. There is also some ambiguity or vagueness in the value of the different tag forms. In particular the important form *right* is used both for type (β) and for type (γ). Thus in

- (8) (i) We’re leaving at seven fifteen, aren’t we?
 (ii) We’re leaving at seven fifteen, right?
 (iii) We’re leaving at seven fifteen, okay?

the (i) version, with a concordant mini-clause, clearly has a (β)-type meaning (i.e. ‘Is this correct?’); this would typically be said by someone who has imperfect knowledge and is seeking clarification. The (iii) version, with *okay?*, on the other hand, has a (γ)-type meaning (i.e. ‘Do you agree to this?’); this would typically be said by someone who has clear knowledge and is seeking to ensure that the collocutor has the same knowledge.¹⁴ The (ii) version, with *right?*, is ambiguous between the two interpretations.

The tag *yeah* is even three-ways ambiguous: in recent London English it could be used as a replacement for *aren’t we?* (with (β)-type meaning) in (8)(i)

¹³ In the following lists *yeah* is pronounced [je], [jæ] or [jeə]; *eh* is pronounced [eɪ]; *huh* is pronounced [hʊ].

¹⁴ This meaning is of course often heard from the mouths of speakers in a socially superior position, e.g. parents, teachers, managers and military superiors. The forms used to express this meaning may be dialect- or register-specific: for instance, in the Royal Air Force of the 1950s it was common to use *check?* with this meaning, and at least one officer had the curious variant *check-ching?*

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or equally as an alternative to *okay* (with (γ)-type meaning) in (8)(iii). But it could also have been used with (α)-type meaning (i.e. 'Do you understand this?' or 'Are you listening?') in the same context. Consider these three examples extracted from the BNC:

- (9) So if you think of what Y equals X squared looks like, yeah? (GYX 305)
(cf. *understood?* = (α)-type meaning)
- (10) Oh, would be for that sort of money yeah (KDM 8605) (cf. *wouldn't it?* = (β)-type meaning)
- (11) You're gonna make the actual statistics worse okay yeah you can do that but it's the vocabulary that's not strong enough (JJS 1037) (cf. *agreed?* = (γ)-type meaning)

In fact the (α)-type meaning may be the most common meaning for *yeah* in current Estuary English. Indeed, with this meaning it is not limited to use as a final appendage, and may also appear in medial position, as in the following further BNC examples:

- (12) ... and I yeah I went two months and he give me right, they're called they're yellow like round tablets they are, like an aspirin but they're yellow right? (KCA 807)
- (13) How can that how can that bloke be yeah any more comfortable (KP4 828)

It even appears, then, that *yeah* is on the way to becoming a filler expression to rival *you-know* (*what I mean*) and regional BrE *like*.

Concentrating on the tags with a (β)-type meaning, we can recapitulate that these have the core meaning 'Is this correct?' Within this broad meaning, which, as a *yes/no*-question, is essentially bipolar, there are nevertheless different nuances. As we shall note in [section 5](#) below, the precise extent to which the tag question constitutes a genuine enquiry about truth value depends on whether it has reversed or constant polarity and whether the intonation is rising or falling, and the semantics of the tag must in any case be seen against the overall system of interrogative structures.

Provisionally, we can take a reversed polarity tag as basic and assume that a tag with rising intonation is a more genuine enquiry about the opinion of the addressee, while one with a falling intonation seems to exert more pressure on the addressee to agree. In some kinds of English, e.g. popular London English, this coercive aspect has been taken even further. Indeed, Algeo (1990: 445–8) recognizes five uses of tag questions in BrE,¹⁵ which he labels as follows:

¹⁵ Algeo (whose work on this topic was drawn to my attention by Christian Mair, University of Freiburg im Breisgau) does not make clear that many of the examples and the fifth type of tag he suggests are typical of popular London English (probably including so-called 'Estuary English') rather than of BrE as a whole.

- (i) ‘informational tags’. These tags, with a rising intonation, in Algeo’s view ‘seek information’, although as *yes/no*-questions they can only invite a decision between ‘true’ and ‘untrue’ and thus simply seek agreement. They do invite the addressee’s opinion, because the speaker, though fairly sure, is not certain and seeks confirmation from the addressee; so the base sentence is presented as the speaker’s current view with a comment invited. One of Algeo’s examples is *You don’t have to wear any glasses or anything, do you?*
- (ii) ‘confirmatory tags’. These tags, with a falling intonation, in Algeo’s view aim to evoke or at least encourage agreement, because, although the speaker is more or less certain of the truth of the statement, he/she still wants the addressee (perhaps reluctantly) to confirm this as an absolute certainty, i.e. to admit to knowing. The result is that the base sentence is presented as the speaker’s fairly confident assertion. One of Algeo’s examples is *So we don’t know whether they taste nice or not, do we?*
- (iii) ‘punctuational tags’. These tags, again with a falling intonation, in Algeo’s view do not seek agreement or confirmation but simply have the aim of seeking the addressee’s attention and emphasizing the speaker’s absolutely confident assertion. This is because the speaker is certain about the truth of his/her assertion and is also sure that the addressee is equally aware of the facts, so that no confirmation is required. One of Algeo’s examples is *You classicists, you’ve probably not done Old English, have you? (Course you haven’t.)*
- (iv) ‘peremptory tags’. These tags are said by Algeo to aim to end a topic under discussion (which is in a way the precise opposite of inviting feedback), because they follow the statement of a truth that is obvious or universally known but has not yet been recognized by the addressee. The net effect of this is that the addressee feels criticized for his/her ignorance or obtuseness. One of Algeo’s examples is *I wasn’t born yesterday, was I?*
- (v) ‘aggressive tags’. These tags, according to Algeo, assert something that is controversial or not universally known, and certainly not known to the addressee, so that the effect of inviting agreement is to provoke or irritate the addressee. The latter is apparently being expected to know something he or she could not be expected to know. One of Algeo’s examples is *[Is that your brother?] It’s my dad, innit?*

Cheshire (1991) also has a useful categorization of the functions of tag questions. She distinguishes conventional and non-conventional tag questions, differentiating two subvarieties of the latter, which correspond to Algeo’s types (iv) and (v).

Algeo’s five different types, while clearly distinguishable, are not quite so different from each other as they appear at first sight. It is possible to see ‘punctuational tags’ as a kind of rhetorical tag question, and to consider

'peremptory tags' and 'aggressive tags' as different kinds of ironic tag question. It might be better, though, to view all three types within the framework of Gricean (1975) implicatures: thus if feedback is obviously not appropriate, i.e. the speaker knows and knows that the addressee similarly knows (as in 'punctuational' tags), or the whole world knows (as in 'peremptory' tags), or only the speaker can be expected to know (as in 'aggressive' tags), then, following Gricean maxims, some other interpretation must be sought. Alternatively we could say that the basic idea is that the speaker is looking for assent to his proposition and puts different degrees of pressure on the addressee to achieve it (cf. further Hudson 1975).

A different perspective for viewing tag questions is in terms of their turn-taking function (see, for instance, Sacks 1992: 624–5). Whereas statements as such keep open the speaker's option to retain the floor, standard questions obviously offer the floor to the collocutor, at least for the duration of a suitable response to the question. With tag questions the situation lies somewhere between statements and standard questions: the collocutor is invited to give some minimal feedback, but only enough to confirm that the communication is proceeding satisfactorily.

5 Patterns of traditional concordant mini-clause tag questions

Some of the differences between BrE and AmE question tags lie in the form of the tags themselves. Classic English tag questions (of type (β) in section 3, i.e. with a concordant mini-clause) have the following form:

'anomalous finite' (+ *n't*) + 'subject pronoun' (= 'operator')

This formula makes use of Hornby's (1975: 2–3) term 'anomalous finite'. Quirk *et al.* preferred the term 'operator', although this term has been used in other senses by other linguists. The point about 'anomalous finite' is that it is a cover term for both finite auxiliaries and for finite forms of the 'main verbs' *be* and *have* (the latter only in the case of older British speakers and, according to Tottie (1978), even of American speakers in such high-frequency non-possessive collocations as *have an idea*). The structure involved is one realization of 'Code', one of the so-called 'NICE' functions (Palmer 1964: 20–1), that identifies this category of finite auxiliaries plus main verbs *be* and *have*. (The others are 'Negation', 'Interrogation' and 'Emphasis'.) Whenever the preceding base sentence contains an anomalous finite, the same one is used in the tag question. It is worth noting that the form of negative auxiliary used in the tag after the affirmative clause corresponds to that used in a negative main clause. (The same applies in reverse for the affirmative auxiliary tag after the negative clause, except that the corresponding form in the affirmative main clause is phonologically reduced.)

The examples of (14) to (16) have tags in which an auxiliary verb is simply copied from the preceding base sentence:

(14) George can play tennis, can't he? George can't play tennis, can he?

(15) Chérie's seen the play, hasn't she? Chérie hasn't seen the play, has she?

(16) Chérie's coming today, isn't she? Chérie isn't coming today, is she?

In the examples of (17) to (18) the base sentence has a finite full lexical verb (without any auxiliary), and *do*-support is required where appropriate:

(17) George plays golf, doesn't he? George doesn't play golf, does he?

(18) Chérie won the case, didn't she? Chérie didn't win the case, did she?

In these cases an auxiliary verb has had to be supplied, both in the negative main clause and in tag questions (regardless of whether they are affirmative or negative).

Turning to main verbs *be* and *have*, we find that main verb *be* is treated like an auxiliary:

(19) George is a good leader, isn't he? George isn't a good leader, is he?

With *have*, on the other hand, the situation is more complex. In traditional BrE it is still possible to treat main verb *have* like an auxiliary in formal style, so long as *have* is used in a possessive sense, as in:

(20) a. Chérie has a chance, hasn't she? Chérie hasn't a chance, has she?

In more informal use the *have got* construction is preferred:

(20) b. Chérie's got a chance, hasn't she? Chérie hasn't got a chance, has she?

When the possession involved is concrete, however, the informal construction seems to be required (see Tagliamonte 2003: 541–3), as in:

(21) a. ?Chérie has a wig, hasn't she? ??Chérie hasn't a wig, has she?

b. Chérie's got a wig, hasn't she? Chérie hasn't got a wig, has she?

Younger British speakers (i.e. those under 60!) often prefer to follow general American usage and treat *have* just like any other main verb, regardless of the kind of possession, i.e.:

(20) c. Chérie has a chance, doesn't she? Chérie doesn't have a chance, does she?

(21) c. Chérie has a wig, doesn't she? Chérie doesn't have a wig, does she?

In doing this American and younger British speakers are simply making possessive *have* follow the pattern of non-possessive (and dynamic) *have*.¹⁶

¹⁶ On *have* and *have got* cf. Trudgill, Nevalainen and Wischer (2002).

(22) c. Chérie has a nap, doesn't she? Chérie doesn't have a nap, does she?

All the examples of *have* given so far have involved present tense forms. With past tense forms there seems to be a straight choice between *have got* and the normal main verb pattern, even in cases where the pattern with main verb *have* treated like an auxiliary pattern is possible, as in (20a). Consider now the corresponding past tense forms:

(23) a. ?Chérie had a chance, hadn't she? ?Chérie hadn't a chance, had she?

b. Chérie'd got a chance, hadn't she? Chérie hadn't got a chance, had she?

c. Chérie had a chance, didn't she? Chérie didn't have a chance, did she?

With the more concrete kind of possession, the past tense results look slightly different:

(24) a. ?Chérie had a wig, hadn't she? *Chérie hadn't a wig, had she?

b. ?Chérie'd got a wig, hadn't she? Chérie hadn't got a wig, had she?

c. Chérie had a wig, didn't she? Chérie didn't have a wig, did she?

But once again the preference is for *have* as a normal main verb.

In the present form, however, the *have got* pattern is very strong in informal use, even in AmE. But here we notice a further development, the complete elision of *have*, leaving just *got*. The question then arises what sort of finite auxiliary form should be used in the tag, and the obvious choice seems to be *do*:

(25) I got a great chance, don't I?

Internet searches have failed to reveal any examples of this kind, except for one from a Turkish science fiction website:

(26) ... finally a guy who doesnt just draw naked women, I liek your stuff, but I bet your holding out on us, you've got more dont cha, DONT ...

But within the general pattern of 'Code' it is possible to find examples. For instance, for the string ... *got more than I do* I got sixty-three hits.

One of the reasons that there are relatively few examples of this 'Code' pattern in tags is probably that, in general, AmE prefers to avoid mini-clauses altogether and to use a fixed tag like *right?*

6 The sequential patterns of traditional mini-clause tags

Having looked at the internal structure of mini-clause tags, we need to consider how tag questions fit together with the preceding clause to which they have been appended. The major pattern that we have considered so far

is that of so-called ‘reversed polarity’, i.e. an affirmative clause is followed by negative tag question, and vice versa; in such cases the tag question may take either a rising or a falling intonation. The other pattern, which we can call ‘constant polarity’, can only have a rising intonation. This gives us in all three possibilities:

- (i) reversed polarity — with a falling intonation (‘confident’)
 - cf. *right?* with a level intonation
- (ii) reversed polarity — with a rising intonation (‘cautious’)
 - cf. *right?* with a rising intonation
- (iii) constant polarity — with a rising intonation (‘inferential’)
 - cf. *eh?* (with a rising intonation)

The following are examples:

- (27) a. George felt deserted, ‘didn’t he?’
 - b. George didn’t feel deserted, ‘did he?’
- (28) a. George felt deserted, ‘didn’t he?’
 - b. George didn’t feel deserted, ‘did he?’
- (29) a. George felt deserted, ‘did he?’
 - b. (?)George didn’t feel deserted, ‘didn’t he?’

A question that obviously arises is exactly what the semantic or pragmatic difference is between reversed polarity and constant polarity, and within the first type what the difference is between a rising and a falling intonation. As we saw above, Algeo describes the difference between normally used falling and rising tags as that between ‘confirmatory’ and ‘informational’ tags, but the distinction can be better described as involving a difference between ‘seeking confirmation for something presumed to be true’ and ‘seeking resolution of a doubt’. The falling tag has been described as ‘coercive’, but a better word would be ‘confident’. The rising tag is ‘cautious’. In both cases the preceding statement is an assertion that is being made by the speaker.

The constant polarity tag is somewhat different in this latter respect. The speaker is not so much making an assertion of his or her own as rather checking whether he or she has correctly understood an implicature suggested by the collocutor; we could refer to it as ‘inferential’. This may explain the unlikelihood of the negative form, except where the inferential meaning is very clear, as in (30), although the double negative sequence may still be problematic.

- (30) John isn’t coming, isn’t he? [We’ll see about that . . .]

In any case, there is a ready-made alternative to a constant polarity tag after a negative sentence, as we shall see.

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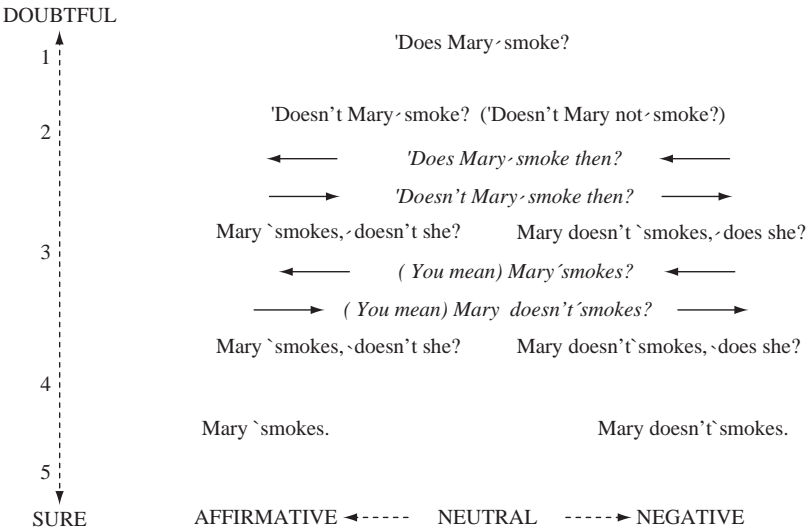


Figure 16.2 From question to statement

It is clear that such a system can only work with mini-clause tags. Only mini-clauses show a distinction between reversed and constant polarity. These tags are a feature of traditional BrE but seem to be used much less in AmE (and recent BrE), where the preference is for tags of type (f) in section 2, in particular *right?* This and similar tags almost typically take either a level or a rising intonation.

Considering the different values of tag questions according to their intonation makes it natural also to ask what the relation of tags is on the one hand to the base sentence that precedes them, and on the other to an equivalent *yes/no* question. The combination of base sentence statement plus tag question produces a kind of complex speech act. How do such complex utterance types compare with simple statements and simple *yes/no* questions? An attempt is made to display the different possibilities in two dimensions in Figure 16.2. Each utterance-type is placed on the grid according to its semantic analysis in terms of these two semantic dimensions. Since some utterances seem to involve a change of mind, these have to be represented as a movement across the chart; this is shown with an arrow, such that the starting point of the arrow indicates the previous view of the speaker, and the direction of the arrow-head points to the new opinion.

Looking at the affirmative possibilities (on the left-hand side), we see that there are five degrees from 'sure' to 'doubtful'. If this representation is valid, then adding a falling tag question has the effect of making the utterance one degree more doubtful, and adding a rising tag question makes it two degrees more doubtful. If the tag is planned in advance, this degree of doubt has been

decided before the utterance; but it may also be added during the utterance, 'on line' as it were. In such cases the speaker is changing his or her mind during the utterance. A different kind of change of mind is involved in the negative question and in the questions with *then*: in these cases the speaker seems to be responding to evidence from the situation, possibly to something a collocutor has said.

Constant polarity tags were omitted from the above schema. They are very close in meaning to questions with *then*, which imply that something in the context suggests the opposite of what the speaker previously thought. Consider the following set of further possibilities, all pronounced with a rising intonation on the tag:

- (31) George speaks Spanish, doesn't he?
- (32) George speaks Spanish, does he?
- (33) Does George speak Spanish, then?
- (34) George speaks Spanish, eh?

The meaning of (32) seems to be much closer to that of (33) than it does to that of (31). Example (34), with the invariable tag *eh?*, seems to have a similar meaning, but with an extra semantic dimension of something like 'interesting discovery!'

A curious aspect of constant polarity tag question complexes is that those that have a pronominal subject also occur in a reduced form. Thus (35), a version of (32) with a pronominal subject, can be reduced to a form without a subject, viz.:

- (35) (He) Speaks Spanish, does he (George)?

The full verb *have* is treated like any other lexical verb:

- (36) (She) Had a good time, did she (Chérie)?

When the full form of the sentence has a finite primary auxiliary (*be* or *have*), this is omitted along with the subject:

- (37) (He's . . .) Taking a rest, is/was he?
- (38) (She's . . .) Rolled her sleeves up, has/had she?
- (39) (They've) Been caught with their hand in the till, have they?

It is no surprise that the *have got* construction is treated in the same way:

- (40) (They've) Got a new car, have they?

The net effect of the elision of the subject and the finite auxiliary is to leave a truncated predicate, an element referred to by Quirk *et al.* (1972: 34–5) as the 'predication'. Essentially it is a verb phrase preceded by any non-finite

auxiliaries that happen to be used. It is slightly more surprising that full verb *be* followed by a nominal, adjectival or prepositional predicative, as in (41) to (43), is treated the same as auxiliary *be* in (37):

(41) (It was) *A* girl, was it? (said after a recent birth)

(42) (He's) *A* Frenchman, is he?

(43) (She's) In a good mood, is she?

It is worth noting that when the predicative begins with an indefinite article, as in (41) and (42), this too can be elided.

These reduced versions of constant polarity tag question complexes seem to be a characteristic of BrE and related varieties (like Australian English). As has already been noted, AmE, in any case, only makes limited use of mini-clause tags. A small survey¹⁷ of five speakers of AmE showed that they would use utterances of this type rarely if at all, and that they associate this pattern with British speakers. They also seem to associate it with sarcasm, which for British speakers is one possible use, but by no means the only one.

An even more distinctive pattern emerges for some speakers of standard BrE (including the present writer). On the basis of the reduced form of the main clause the utterance can be reconstructed but with an interrogative structure in place of the previous declarative structure, as in:

(35') Does he speak Spanish, does he?

(36') Did she have a good time, did she?

(37') Is he taking a rest, is he?

(38') Has she rolled her sleeves up, has she?

(39') Have they been caught with their hands in the till, have they?

(40') Have they got a new car, have they?

This structure seems slightly less likely with main verb *be*:

(41') ?Was it a girl, was it? (said after a recent birth)

(42') ?Is he a Frenchman, is he?

(43') ?Is she in a good mood, is she?

There was mention earlier in this chapter of tag questions after questions. These are the structures being referred to. They seem to be limited to BrE, and perhaps even to a subvariety of this. The pattern was unknown to the five speakers of AmE surveyed, who asserted that they would use it under no circumstances whatsoever. There is thus a clear-cut contrast for Americans

¹⁷ This survey was carried out by Julia Schlüter, to whom I am extremely grateful.

between the (barely acceptable) examples (35) to (43) and the downright unacceptable (35') to (43').

7 Differences between British and American English

We are now in a position to sum up the main differences we have found between tag questions in BrE and AmE. Despite the provisional nature of our findings, they clearly suggest some generalizations, which can be summarized as follows:

- (i) British and American differential interpretation for concordant mini-clauses of *have (got)* in base sentences;
- (ii) AmE dispreference for traditional tags, i.e. concordant mini-clauses, in favour of invariable tags like *right?*;
- (iii) the development of the invariable tag *isn't it?/ innit?* in Welsh English and London English, respectively, and of extended rhetorical and ironic use of tags in London English (highlighted by Algeo);
- (iv) recent southern English development and extension of the use of *yeah?*;
- (v) peculiar British use of question tags after full or reduced *yes/no* questions.

Taking the diachronic perspective, the most significant change in BrE in recent times (like so many other changes) has involved following an American model, in this case the dispreference for concordant mini-clauses referred to under point (ii). Points (iii) and (iv) also involve a move away from traditional concordant tags. Concordant tag questions obviously have a more complex grammar than invariant ones; so it seems reasonable to claim that the trend is towards grammatical simplification and may even be linked to the internationalization of English. One thing is, however, clear to all users of English: tag questions have (got) a lot to answer for, haven't they/don't they/right/yeah?

17 The pragmatics of adverbs

KARIN AIJMER

1 Introduction

The pragmatic functions of adverbs of certainty have been discussed in BrE rather than AmE. There are many similarities but also differences between the two varieties. The adverb *sure* with a distinctive pronunciation is, for instance, a characteristic feature of AmE.

Words which have the same or a similar origin but have evolved different functions tend to raise a number of important theoretical issues. To what extent do they develop in the same way and how should we explain the similarities or differences in their meanings? What is the relation between meaning and use or ‘langue’ and ‘parole’? As we pay more attention to discourse and language use we find differences between words that appear to mean the same thing because of their common origin. This is the case with the adverbs *surely* and *sure*. A common explanation put forward nowadays by linguists who are interested in ‘rethinking the linguistic relativity hypothesis’ is that the social and cultural context can account for the differences (see Gumperz and Levinson 1996). However, differences must also be seen against the backdrop of universal tendencies and similarities between languages which are systematic and typologically motivated rather than based on usage. In the present chapter I want to look for an explanation of the different developments of *sure* and *surely* at the interface between universal tendencies and social and cultural factors.

Etymologically *sure* and *surely* are closely related. *Surely* is derived from *sure* by suffixation and both *surely* and *sure* include in their overall meaning a semantic component of certainty (OED *sure*). *Sure* is an adjective, but it is also an adverb, above all in AmE. There are certain observations we can make about the adverb *sure* from the outset. Adverbial *sure* occurs alone and in lexicalized patterns; it is multifunctional and its meaning varies depending on factors such as position and collocations with other elements. It has functions which can be described in terms of its placement in discourse sequences and in conversational rituals.

The general aim of this study is to show how *sure* has gained ground in AmE and developed discursual and pragmatic functions which are different

from those of *surely* (and *certainly*). The present chapter will focus on the adverbial use of *sure*, including a variety of collocations involving *sure* in AmE. It is obvious that *sure* is interesting not only as a single linguistic element but that it is on its way to becoming part of a construction with an auxiliary (e.g. *sure do*) characterized by a certain amount of coalescence and fusion. The collocations will be described from several points of view such as 'string frequency' (Krug 2000) and structurally in terms of degrees of syntactic constituency.

The present study is mainly synchronic. However, the developments of *sure* in AmE will also be viewed from a grammaticalization perspective (see e.g. Hopper and Traugott 2003, Traugott and Dasher 2002). Thus the approach combines a synchronic and a diachronic orientation and is 'an integrative study of synchronic and diachronic variation' in the sense of Krug (2000: 28). On the one hand, I will investigate the different functions of *sure* as a case of ongoing grammaticalization in present-day AmE. On the other hand, I will look at both convergent and divergent developments of *sure* and *surely* from a diachronic perspective.

For the present study I have concentrated on both present-day AmE corpora and historical corpora. The synchronic American data for this study is derived from the Longman Corpus of Spoken American English (LCSAE) (5 million words of spoken AmE). The historical corpora I have used are introduced in section 5.

The difference between BrE and AmE has to do with the distribution of the adverbs. For the comparison in this study I have used the spoken part of the British National Corpus (10 million words of spoken BrE). I have also included the close synonym *certainly*, which occurs in both BrE and AmE.

Table 17.1 gives the frequencies of *sure*, *surely* and *certainly* in the Longman Corpus and the British National Corpus (BNC). The figures within parentheses show the frequencies normalized to 1 million words. *Sure* (adjective + adverb) is twice as frequent in the LCSAE as in the BNC. In the Longman Corpus approximately 43 per cent of the tokens are adverbs (calculated on the basis of 100 examples of *sure* randomly chosen from the corpus). The corresponding figure for the BNC is only about 12 per cent.

Surely, on the other hand, is more than four times as common in the British material. *Certainly* is also more typical of BrE, suggesting that

Table 17.1 *Frequencies of sure, surely and certainly in the spoken parts of the BNC and the LCSAE*

	<i>sure</i> (Adj + Adv)	<i>surely</i>	<i>certainly</i>
LCSAE	4989 (997)	65 (13)	334 (77)
BNC	5161 (498)	638 (62)	3090 (299)

certainly partly compensates for the relative infrequency of *sure* as an adverb in BrE. For example, *certainly* in BrE is often used as a response to a request where Americans would use *sure* as shown in my data.

The rest of this chapter is organized as follows. In order to compare the two varieties I will look at examples where AmE uses *sure* rather than another expression of certainty. In the first, synchronic part of the study the focus will be on conventionalized rituals and discourse sequences where *sure* is used in the American variety and a different expression would be more typical of BrE. The purpose of [section 2](#) is to discuss the functions that *sure* acquires in the interaction. *Sure* will be discussed both alone ([section 3](#)) and as a part of a lexical bundle or construction ([section 4](#)). In the second, diachronic part of the chapter ([section 5](#)), the different functions of *sure* and *surely* will be studied from a historical perspective.

2 Epistemic certainty in an interactive perspective

Both *surely* and the adverbial *sure* have a meaning component of epistemic certainty, i.e. they are used to express a high degree of commitment to the proposition or a judgement. Adverbs of certainty have extended meanings strengthening or weakening the force of the assertion. There has been a great deal of discussion about the conversational heuristics, such as the Gricean maxims resulting in inferred meanings in specific contexts (see [section 5](#)). On the one hand, adverbs of certainty can develop the meaning of uncertainty (a modal meaning) by inferencing since the hearer reads the speaker's uncertainty into what is said even when certainty is explicitly proclaimed. Consider for example the use of *no doubt* which must be interpreted as expressing uncertainty. Closer to the focus of this chapter there are examples where the epistemic meaning of *surely* is uncertainty rather than certainty, e.g. in interrogative structures (*Surely that is no problem?*).

Sure, on the other hand, is generally emphatic and evaluative.

- (i) <A> Oh boy <unclear>
 Delicious.
 <A> Boy *it sure looks* good.
 Nothing like home [made] (142302)¹

Emphatic affirmation straddles the boundary between epistemic modality and discourse as pointed out by Palmer:

Emphatic affirmation may be treated either as a matter of discourse or as a kind of 'strong' epistemic modality expressing complete confidence in, or knowledge of, what is being said. (Palmer 1986: 92)

¹ All the references are to the texts in the LCSAE. The speaker labels have been changed to A, B, etc.

However, in an interactive perspective we often get meanings such as counter-assertion or challenging which clearly belong to discourse and not to modality.

In their discourse and interactive meanings modal expressions have indexical meaning. They point to some entity in the immediate situation-at-hand such that when these forms are used they invoke those situational dimensions (Ochs 1996: 411). As a result of their frequent use in particular situations and functions, adverbs can become indexically linked to features of the context. ‘Somewhat like elements in a chemical compound’, new situational meanings can be linked to a meaning which is indexed by the adverb (Ochs 1996: 417). For example, epistemic adverbs can index the speaker’s commitment to the truth of a proposition (epistemic stance), but they can also index or be linked to particular social acts such as a challenge or a threat. If used by a person setting him- or herself up as an authority they receive meanings such as emphasis or challenge.

Indexicality can explain the multifunctionality of adverbs of certainty but is not sufficient to explain their rhetorical or argumentative character. In a dialogic or interactive perspective, speakers take up a position of opposition or resistance to the discourse or to assumptions or beliefs which can be read into the discourse. For example, in the following case *sure* does not mean belief or commitment, but it challenges the assumptions expressed by the hearer in the preceding context:

- (2) <A> *Sure* you’ll have problems if it dumps over the whole thing will cave in but it’s not as fragile as you think it is. Its pretty solid. See? You know, I mean, it’s it’s glass about . . . uh, (142101)

New interactive meanings can develop in the flow of interaction which later become coded meanings, i.e. they are interpreted as conventional aspects of linguistic form. This is the case in (3), where *sure* has concessive meaning (‘I admit’, ‘granted’):

- (3) <A> I bet he is real popular at the dances
 Oh God he is you know even now <unclear> that all the old guys just <unclear>
 <A> *Oh sure* but I don’t think it’s a good idea to <unclear> (174202)

3 *Sure* as a response

Discourse analysis has given us various analytical tools with which to describe the use of language. Principles such as conversational turntaking are universal, but they are applied differently in different text types and societies. Speech acts have universal definitions. However, the close analysis of authentic discourse has shown that there is much diversity in how, when and why particular speech acts are performed. *Sure* occupies the second

position in speech act sequences of a fairly conventionalized form. Elements in this position (responses) tend to differ both across languages and varieties. The present section highlights differences between AmE and BrE in the use of *sure* as a response to offers, invitations and requests (section 3.1), to thanks and apologies (section 3.2) and as a backchannel item (section 3.3).

3.1 *Sure as a response to offers, invitations and requests*

Sure may be used as a response to offers, invitations and requests. The *Macmillan English Dictionary* says about *sure* as an adverb that it is used for saying 'yes' or agreeing to something: '*Can I borrow your green jumper?*' '*Sure, no problem*'. Alternatives that could be used in this kind of context are *yes, right, OK, certainly, true, true true*. The following examples are from the Longman Corpus, illustrating AmE, but similar examples were found in the BNC, although they were not as frequent:

After offers:

- (4) <A> Do you feel like a noodle dish?
 Sure but not cold (166503)
- (5) <A> Do you want to get some coffee or something now?
 Sure okay (144202)

After an invitation:

- (6) <A> Can we go for a walk?
 Sure. Sure. (154602)

After a request:

- (7) <A> Can you go ahead and start me something and I'm going upstairs?
 Sure.
<A> Would you allow that?
 Sure.
<A> Can I do that?
 Sure, mhm, sure. Okay. (163801)

When *sure* occurs after a request, it can be exchanged for *of course*, i.e. it signals the lack of any opposition or resistance rather than agreement or certainty. Like requests, responses have a more or less conventionalized form reflecting strategies and norms in the particular society. Since a request is by its nature an imposition on the hearer's time and abilities, it cannot be taken for granted that the hearer will carry out the request as a matter of course. *Sure* as a response after a request makes little of the effort involved and is therefore a polite response to the request.

Sure performs a different strategy after an offer. Both the offer and its response have a fairly conventionalized or fixed form which is motivated by

the fact that an offer is beneficial to the hearer. *Sure* as a conventionalized polite response mirrors the rule that it is polite to accept an offer by signalling personal involvement.

3.2 *Sure as a response after thanking and apologizing*

That responses differ across languages as well as varieties is particularly true of responses to thanks and apologies, where BrE and AmE use radically different strategies. *Sure* as a response to thanking and apologizing occurs only in AmE and is therefore one of the clearest examples of a difference between the varieties. Adverbial *sure* is used in AmE as a characteristic response after thanking ('*I really appreciate all your help*'; '*Sure, any time*'), often together with other strategies (*sure no problem, sure okay, sure sure okay, oh sure sure, sure thing*). Responses to thanking may express different strategies such as minimizing the favour (*that's okay, no problem*), expressing pleasure (e.g. *great pleasure*) or expressing appreciation of the hearer (*you're welcome*).

In my corpus *sure* occurred twenty-two times after an expression of thanking (*thank you, thanks, thanks for everything, thank you very much, I appreciate it*), to be compared with *you're welcome* (which occurred twice) and no response (thirteen times). Following are two examples:

- (8) <A> Okie dokie. Thanks a lot for doing this.
 Sure.
 <A> Okay. (127401)
- (9) <A> Uh, yeah. Thanks alot.
 Sure.
 <A> Okay this is your receipt with twenty-four, twenty-four and two dollars and then <unclear>.
 Thanks alot. Thank you very much. And what is your name?
 (112101)

The meaning of *sure* is related to strategies minimizing the favour, such as *no problem, that's okay*. The strategy is motivated by what we mean by thanking, namely that it imposes a burden or a debt which can be minimized by making light of it. Adverbial *sure* and the combinations in which it occurs (*sure no problem, sure okay, sure sure okay, oh sure sure, sure thing*) in little thanking rituals are shown in the following corpus examples:

- (10) <A> Like tonight and then tomorrow I'm gonna bring them in to
 <unclear> so I'll play two of them tomorrow at work. <nv_laugh>
 Alright. Thanks a lot.
 <A> *Yeah. Sure no problem*.
 I appreciate it.
 <A> *Oh sure. Charlie boy, Charlie boy*. (151003)

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Sure and *no problem* signal that the burden of thanking is no longer a big deal and that the power balance in the conversation is restored.

Sure is also used in extended rituals such as leave-taking together with thanking reflecting the speakers' negotiation to come to an agreement before closing. In example (11), *sure* combines with farewell phrases with a preclosing function (agreeing to come to a closure of the conversation):

- (11) <A> Sounds good to me.
 Good.
<A> See you.
 Thanks for everything.
<A> *Sure.*
 And for the help. (110802)

Sure also plays a role in the ritual farewells at the end of telephone conversations and face-to-face encounters as shown in the following example where *sure* combines with *bye bye* to signal the speaker's readiness to close the conversation.

- (12) <A> Bye, *I appreciate y'all. Have a good day.*
 Bye bye, sure.
<A> Thanks Carl, I appreciate it.
<2266> You're welcome and good luck huh. (153101)

A number of discourse elements can occur at the end of the conversation including *right*, *okay*, well-wishes, farewell phrases. However, it is only *sure* that reveals that a conversation is in AmE.

Thanking and apologizing are related speech acts and *sure* is also used as a responder to apologies:

- (13) <A> I'm borrowing one
 Beg pardon
<A> I said I'm in the way
 No no
<A> *Excuse me*
 Sure (113801)

Two examples in the corpus used *sure* (one example *I sure will*). Moreover, there was one example of *that's all right*, suggesting that there is some variation in how this little ritual is performed (exonerating the offence).

3.3 *Sure as a backchannel item*

Sure occurs frequently as a conversational backchannel punctuating the speech of the current speaker by signalling understanding or agreement with what is said or encouraging the speaker to continue his or her turn (Tottie 1991b). We can assume that backchanneling is a general phenomenon,

but that there are both linguistic and cultural differences in how backchannel items are used. It has, for example, been suggested by Tottie (1991b) on the basis of a fairly small corpus of conversations in BrE and AmE that there are varietal differences both with regard to single backchannels and how they combine into ordered clusters. Tottie found *sure* only in the American material. In the Longman Corpus backchanneling was a frequent use of *sure*, as is illustrated in (14):

- (14) <A> Uh, but it's a good idea to leave hold on because that way when you carry it around or anything you can't accidentally turn it off or eject the tape or
 Sure
 <A> Anything weird like that.
 Sure.
 <A> So that's just kind of a precautionary measure and I've got that on the checklist.
 Okay. (125801)

3.4 Summary

To sum up, *sure* has developed a number of functions which can be described in terms of the discourse sequences where it occurs and the strategies that it is used to perform in these structures. Responses are generally difficult to distinguish from each other. *Of course*, *definitely*, *certainly*, *yes*, *okay*, *right*, are all used as responses in the ritual conversational games in which speakers engage. In its strategic use after requests *sure* can for example be exchanged for *of course* while in other contexts it has strategic discourse uses such as emphasis (after an offer) or minimizing a debt or offence (after thanking or apologizing). *Sure* also has a number of strategic uses which can only be explained by taking into account the global context. It is for instance used at the end of a conversation where it is important for the speakers to come to an agreement. Moreover, *sure* is frequent in the backchannel use.

We can assume (on the basis of a comparison with the BNC) that *sure* is in each of its functions more frequent as a discourse element in AmE than in BrE. In some cases, as with thanking and apologizing, *sure* clearly distinguishes between BrE and AmE.

4 *Sure* and lexical bundles

4.1 General overview

It is not sufficient to analyse *sure* as a single word. There are also larger patterns with *sure* which are interesting because of their obvious 'Americanness'. *It sure does smell good* or *Jim Hendrix was sure ugly* are examples of phrases which sound distinctly American. *Surely that's no*

problem, on the other hand, sounds more like BrE. The examples show that we need to explore the patterns in which these adverbs occur in order to get a better picture of how they are used in different varieties. Mair (2007b) has demonstrated that both *that is surely* and *that's surely* are collocational markers of 'Britishness' occurring with a higher frequency than expected compared with other regional web domains. We can also find collocations involving *surely* which are frequently used in BrE with a distinct function. Downing, for example, discusses the function of *but surely* which she describes as a 'rhetorical combination in argumentation' (Downing 2001: 276). Another pattern is *surely there is (a case, a reason, no way)*, which is defined as 'a surreptitious way of smuggling something into discourse' (Downing 2001: 274). By checking the frequency of such patterns in the BNC we can get some idea of the distinctiveness of the patterns. A quick look showed that the BNC (the spoken and the written part) contained thirty-two examples of *surely there is* corresponding to 0.32 instances per million words and that *but surely* had a frequency of 4.84 instances per million words. In the LCSAE, on the other hand, there were two examples of *surely there is* (giving a frequency of 0.4 instances per million words) and a single example of *but surely* (0.2 instances per million words). *Surely there is* therefore reveals itself to be far less characteristic of BrE than *but surely*.

Lexicalized patterns are widespread in language. As noted by many linguists, 'there is no reason why many sentences cannot be treated as partially lexicalized rather than purely syntactically generated' (Kennedy 1998: 109; see also Pawley and Syder 1983). Fixed or recurrent combinations of words have been called collocations, routines, idioms, recurrent word combinations or constructions (Altenberg and Eeg-Olofsson 1990; on constructions see Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor 1988). Recently the term 'lexical bundle' has been introduced to describe combinations of words that show a statistical tendency to recur (Biber *et al.* 1999: 990–1036). Lexical bundles are storage and processing units which can be used in different shapes: *I sure do*, *sure do* or *sure do like it* are all lexical bundles because of their repeated use in the corpus. However, lexical bundles are not grammatically and functionally homogeneous. Some bundles are constituents and best characterized in grammatical terms, e.g. as complex adverbs (*after all*) or as verb + particle combinations (Hudson 1998). Bundles can also have a characteristic discourse function. According to Biber *et al.* (1999: 1003), lexical bundles can function as 'utterance launchers' in particular if they contain a verb marking an epistemic or affective stance. Especially in conversation, we find expressions such as *you know* (*you* + verb phrase) or *I think* (*I* + verb phrase) which function as discourse markers.

Combinations such as *sure do* which do not have constituent status have not been discussed in the literature. However, Bybee and Scheibman (1999) have shown that there is grammatical, morphological and phonological evidence that repetition and usage can result in chunks or word combinations

Table 17.2 *Two-word lexical bundles in the LCSAE*

		LCSAE (5 million words)	BNC spoken parts (10 million words)
<i>sure</i> + a form of <i>be</i>	<i>sure is</i>	9	3
	<i>sure am</i>	2	0
	<i>sure be</i>	2	2
	<i>sure was</i>	1	1
<i>sure</i> + a form of <i>do</i>	<i>sure do</i>	9	1
	<i>sure did</i>	7	2
	<i>sure does</i>	1	0
<i>sure</i> + modal auxiliary	<i>sure can</i>	4	3
	<i>sure will</i>	4	0

which can be characterized in terms of degrees of constituency. For example, in their study *don't* was more frequently reduced before certain high-frequency verbs such as *know* and *think* and when there was a subject pronoun indicating that (*I*) *don't know* is a fused storage unit.²

Lexical bundles differ across text types and they can be expected to be revealing from the point of view of regional differences such as that between BrE and AmE. The combinations which I discuss below have in common that they are frequent in the Longman Corpus but hardly ever occur in the BNC material. The two-word bundles found in the LCSAE do not represent structural or grammatical units but consist of *sure* + *do* (*did*, *can*, *am*, *is*, *will*, *would*, etc.). The most frequent combinations contained a form of *be* or *do*, but some bundles involving modal auxiliaries can also be found. The auxiliary can have a present tense or past tense form. Three-word lexical bundles can be considered as extensions of two-word bundles and are of two kinds: subject + *sure* + *do* (*I sure do*) and subject-less bundles characterized as *sure* + auxiliary + verb (*sure is nice*). Table 17.2 shows the frequencies of some two-word lexical bundles in the LCSAE and the BNC (spoken parts). Although the bundles are not frequent in the LCSAE as individual items, the paradigm is productive in AmE as is shown by the frequencies of the combinations with different forms of the verbs taken together.

Bundles such as *sure is*, *sure does*, etc. are characteristic of AmE as indicated by the fact that they occur almost exclusively in the American corpus. A comparison can be made with bundles such as *is surely*, *will surely* and *must surely* (*certainly*) in BrE. Hoyer (1997: 212) claims that the adverbs placed in mid-position after the auxiliary can be regarded as modal particles. When the adverb is placed before the auxiliary, the meaning of *surely* is argumentative rather than epistemic only.

² Cf. also Krug (2000) for a demonstration that string frequency can have an effect on constituent structure.

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Unlike *surely*, *sure* has a fixed position before the auxiliary and it is stressed. This is the normal position of *sure* as seen from example (15):

- (15) Morgan *sure* is good with kids.
? Morgan is *sure* good with kids.

The bundles will be discussed according to the verb involved: a form of *be* (4.2), *do* (4.3) and modal auxiliaries (4.4).

4.2 Bundles involving a form of *be*

Sure is is a construction or ‘bundle’ characterized by the tight constituency between the adverb and the auxiliary. As discussed by Bybee and Scheibman (1999), non-conventional constituents or ‘natural chunks’ can be created in the interaction as a result of the repetition of a given string of lexical elements. Elements which frequently occur together are stored in the long-term memory and used as processing units.

Collocations or ‘lexical bundles’ can be of different lengths and be more or less flexible. Besides *sure is*, etc. we find *sure is good* (*nice*, etc.), suggesting that *sure is* can be stored and processed together with evaluating adjectives. We can represent the structure as a collocational frame such as (*it*) *sure* + *is* (ADJ) where the optional adjective slot can be filled by an adjective expressing evaluation (on collocational frames, see Renouf and Sinclair 1991).

- (16) (Speakers are having dinner)
<A> Mhm. *Sure is good* <nv_laugh> (120502)

Some additional uses of the pattern are illustrated in the following: *Sure is* + adjective can also have a subject placed as an afterthought.

- (17) <A> *sure is scary*, that kind of stuff. (167101)

In (18), *sure am* is used together with an expression of attitudinal meaning:

- (18) <A> Yeah. My gosh *sure am bored*. (141502)

Both the subject and a modal can be absent, as in the phrase *sure be*. *Sure be* can be followed for example by *glad* or *great*.

- (19) <A> That’s eight o five. *Sure be glad* to get out of here. (153101)

4.3 Bundles involving a form of *do*

Below I give two examples of two word bundles based on a form of *do*:

- (20) <A> Yes, we *sure do*. *Sure do*. (141602)
- (21) <A> We came home that night, *sure did*, now who else they had there, Uncle Robby Joe, mhm, Uncle William, what about Stephanie? (191902)

Sure do, sure did, etc. occur together with verbs belonging to a particular semantic class in three-word bundles. For the most part we find verbs such as *like, want, feel, hope*, i.e. verbs expressing an epistemic or affective stance or a sensation (such as smell, or perception), together with *sure do*. When a subject is present, we also find bundles of four words, for instance with *like*:

(22) <A> Michele, *I sure do like* your hair that way. (161602)

The pattern can be illustrated with several different verbs:

(23) <A> <unclear> I hope so because I wrote some checks that I know will be deposited tonight. *I sure do hope* they put it in tonight. (163201)

(24) One thing I have to say about Baltimore, *they sure do know* how to eat up here. (110801)

(25) What is? *It sure does smell* good. (117001)

Negation prevents fusion. In the following examples there is no evidence that we have a fixed combination between *sure* and *do*:

(26) <A> Is restructurizing even a word.

 Yeah. It's it's one of those generated words that we speak.

<A> Because *I sure don't know* how to spell it. (1525 02)

4.4 Bundles involving modal auxiliaries

As can be seen from Table 17.2, *sure* is also frequent in combinations with modal auxiliaries, where it can serve certain discourse functions. *Sure can* is used with the meaning of *of course*:

(27) <A> <unclear> ... can I leave my sweatshirt in here?

 Sure can ... <unclear> down

<A> Okay ... (122401)

In (28), the dropping of *you* is less likely. The speaker responds to a request for permission. It is, however, not self-evident that the request will be granted. *Sure can* seems to be less appropriate in such cases:

(28) <A> So how do I check on that?

 I don't know you can talk to that lady right behind you. She is the ones [*sic*] that handles the schedules. I don't know why it got changed but she can help you.

<A> Thank you.

 Uh huh. <nv_sigh>

<?> Right there ma'am. The lady on the phone.

<A> Can I get my schedule changed?

 Yeah *you sure can*. (141701)

5 Grammaticalization

Sure has primarily discourse functions in AmE. It is for instance used in routine phrases, as a feedback or backchannel signal and as a response. The examples I have looked at suggest that it has become an interactive discourse marker to be compared with *right* or *okay*. What we are witnessing, then, is a development in AmE which diverges from the changes undergone by *surely*. In the present section I want to look for an explanation of the different diachronic developments of *sure* and *surely* using grammaticalization theory.

The process of grammaticalization allows for basically lexical elements to evolve meanings which are analysed on the level of discourse. What is grammaticalized can also be a construction: ‘grammaticalization does not merely seize a word or morpheme . . . but the whole construction formed by the syntagmatic relations of the element in question’ (quoted from Traugott 1999: 625).

Both formal reduction/fusion and semantic change in the direction of interpersonal meanings are characteristic of grammaticalization (for a discussion of formal changes, see particularly Lehmann 1995). As Haiman (1985: 2) points out, we can expect grammaticalization to be accompanied by processes such as simplification and loss of core meaning (‘opacity’): ‘At any stage of any natural language, there will be areas in the grammar where originally iconically motivated structures have become grammaticalized and there will be others where they have not.’

Even a predominantly synchronic investigation such as the present one may benefit from a look at the diachronic facts. Grammaticalization plays an important part in the domain of modality not only when it comes to explaining the emergence of grammatical categories such as modal auxiliaries or modal adverbs. The development of pragmatic meanings based on adverbs of certainty has, however, not been discussed in the literature, probably because the close similarity between epistemic modality and discourse uses has not yet been fully recognized. In this chapter I will only look at the diachronic developments of *sure* in earlier forms of English. The historical data comes from the Helsinki Corpus, the Archer Corpus and the OED.³ The Archer Corpus was included since it also contains AmE data.

Sure was an adverb in earlier forms of English and semantically very similar to *surely*. Both had the same meaning ‘with certainty’, ‘without risk of failure’. Consider:

- (29) Children would . . . lay the Foundations of an healthy . . . Constitution much *surer*, if they . . . were kept wholly from Flesh. (1693 Locke Educ; OED)

³ For more information on the Helsinki Corpus and the Archer Corpus, see, e.g., Kennedy (1998: 40).

Like *surely*, *sure* had epistemic meanings such as ‘assuredly’, ‘undoubtedly’, ‘for a certainty’ (OED). It was used primarily with reference to the future and with cognitive verbs and occurred in patterns such as those illustrated below (cf. patterns with *surely* in Present-Day English, as *will surely*, *must surely*). The earliest example in the OED is from 1475. The following examples from the Helsinki Corpus (HC) illustrate *sure* in the position after the verb:

(30) Cal me the knaue hether, *he shal sure kysse* the stockes (HC, 1500–70)

(31) Say yea masster vicar & *he shal sure confes* to be your detter (HC, 1500–70)

Sure and *surely* tend to develop new meanings in adversative contexts, a development which is attested for *sure* from 1552 (OED). Following Traugott and Dasher (2002), we can subsume this change under the heading of intersubjectification and the development of argumentative functions. Intersubjectification can be said to take place when a semantic change results in the development of meanings that explicitly reveal recipient design: the designing of utterances for an intended audience (cf. Traugott and Dasher 2002: 31). Thus intersubjectification is part of the same ‘metonymically based mechanism of recruiting meanings to express and regulate beliefs, attitudes, etc. as subjectification’ (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 31).

Sure is frequent in the Archer material in combination with *but* as an adversative connective (cf. *surely*). In such instances, illustrated here from the Helsinki Corpus, *sure* has initial position and scope over the whole sentence:

(32) I think you meant to make Arabella a Titular Queen, of whose Title I will speak nothing; *but sure* you meant to make her a Stale. (HC: The trial of Sir Walter Raleigh 1730)

In other examples *sure* occurs without *but* as a discourse marker with adversative or argumentative function. The contexts in which *sure* occurs are for instance those where the speaker takes up a position towards an explicit or implicit question:

(33) . . . *sure* she will hardly escape all these dogs and men. I am to have the skin if we kill her. (HC 1640–1710)

It also occurs after *why* and *nay* with adversative function:

(34) Nay *sure* thou shal not misse so faire a marke, For thirteene shillings foure pence. (HC 1570–1640)

(35) Money! all that Money! why, *sure* Father the Gentleman comes to be chosen Parliament-man. Who is he? (HC 1640–1710)

There were only a few examples where *sure* has interactive discourse functions. The response marker function ‘agreement’ is stronger than counter-expectation in:

- (36) . . . this I have seen since I saw you. To which Sir Robert replied, *Sure*, sir, you have slept since I saw you, and this is the result of some melancholy dream, which I desire you to forget, for you are now awake. (Archer 1720defo.f2) (fiction, British)
- (37) [‘How quiet art thou, my angel,'] (said I:) [‘*sure – sure*, Heaven has stilled thy little plaints in mercy to us.’] (Archer 1797blee.f4) (fiction, British)

The reason why there are so few examples of *sure* as a response marker may be that we have texts from drama or fiction rather than authentic reproductions of spoken language in the historical databases. However, the scarcity of examples suggests that the development of discourse functions for *sure* takes place primarily in AmE and that it must be a fairly late development.

In the earliest examples in the OED from American writings it is, however, placed in final position.

- (38) Once successfully transplanted *it will live sure*. (1861 Trans. Illinois Agric. Soc. V. 460)
- (39) *They’re coming, sure*. (1876 Mark Twain, *Tom Sawyer* iv.83)

The only example of *sure* followed by a form of *be* dates back to the early 1900s.

- (40) *It sure was* a cold night (1908 ‘Yeslah’ Tenderfoot S. Cal. ii4)

Emphatic meaning is most apparent when adverbs of certainty are placed in marked position before the auxiliary. The developments of *surely* and *sure* are largely parallel and can be explained as the result of invited (metonymy-driven) inferences where an element has the meaning of a high degree of certainty (Traugott and Dasher 2002). According to Traugott and Dasher (2002: 162), inferences arise from the M(anner) heuristic: ‘marked expression warns pragmatically special situation’. If a declarative sentence is ‘marked’, the intended interpretation is constrained and it signals some doubt about the truth of that declarative. The new uses of the forms exploit the M-heuristic because they are redundant in the context and so signal a marked situation. It is in the light of this principle that we can explain both the development of meanings of uncertainty and emphasis. The adverb can be understood as taking up an argumentative position relative to viewpoints or assumptions which are explicit or implicit in the context. Accordingly, the speaker may want to either align or disalign himself with this viewpoint. However, it is characteristic of *sure* that it develops the meaning of agreement along with the meaning of counter-expectation.

The grammaticalization of structures such as *sure do*, *sure can*, etc. can be related to the process of fusion whereby a combination of words (a bundle) becomes more fixed as a result of routinization (or ritualization). Routinization is akin to economy and simplification. At the outset we have a complete constituent structure. *I sure do* has the form of a sentence, which develops into *sure do* with fusion of the two elements (nothing can be inserted between *sure* and *do*). According to Haiman (1994: 1633), the effects of change may be ‘to destroy motivation, which may be semantic, pragmatic, phonetic, or syntactic. Insofar as they do, they can be seen as aspects of one fundamental tendency, that of ritualization.’ The result of routinization is to destroy the syntactic structure (‘the syntactic motivation for the structure’). *Sure do* is not an established constituent structure since it is not a sentence or a traditional constituent. However, the combination seems to have acquired a kind of acceptability or even grammaticality because of its popularity in speech.

Summing up, the evidence from the OED and the corpora used suggests that *sure* has undergone new developments in AmE and that these belong especially to spoken language. It becomes established in different discourse functions and spreads to new contexts. Rather than expressing certainty, it occurs as a response and it has functions such as concession, emphasis, agreement.

It is clear that grammaticalization does not provide the whole story explaining the developments of *sure* and *surely*. Changes must also be observed in a historical and cultural context. An important type of influence of an extra-grammatical nature may be seen in the migration to the US and the provenance of the immigrants. As people speaking different dialects come together we can expect the linguistic input to be an influence resulting in a divergent development of AmE. Thus a possible explanation for American *sure* is dialectal influence strengthening the use of *sure* in competition with *surely*. In the OED (s.v. *sure* 3.a), *sure* is for example marked as *Irish* in the meaning ‘assuredly’, ‘undoubtedly’ and ‘for a certainty’. The following OED example is revealing in this respect since it imitates Irish English:⁴

- (41) ‘That’s a drop of good Whiskey — eh, Pat? *Pat*. ‘Faith, ye may well say that, Sorr, *Shure*, it wint down my T’roat loike a Torchlight Procession.’ (1897 *Punch* 3 April 166/1)

Adverbial *sure* is also used in present-day BrE, but less frequently, as suggested by the uses in the British National Corpus that are similar to American *sure*. It would be interesting to see if this is due to American influence or if it represents an older use of *sure* in BrE. It is also clear that there is more to be said about *certainly*. *Certainly* has developed strong epistemic meanings such as emphasis and contrast. The changes can be described as a unidirectional

⁴ Dolan (1998: 263; s.v. *sure*) defines it as ‘A common emphatic opening to sentences (cf. Standard English ‘but’).

development from ‘ordinary certainty’ to emphasis (cf. ‘without any doubt’, ‘unquestionably’). *Certainly* is therefore similar in function to *sure*, but does not seem to share many meanings with *surely*.

6 Conclusion

Finally let us return to the issue of how we can explain the different developments of *sure* and *surely*. It is clear from the historical data that AmE in particular has undergone important changes. Initially, *sure* and *surely* seem to display parallel developments in BrE. For example, both evolve the meaning ‘certainly’ at an early date and both acquire adversative and argumentative meanings. However, because the extralinguistic conditions are different, *sure* can be assumed to have developed differently on American ground. American *sure* and British *surely* display both functional similarities and functional differences. From a theoretical perspective these results are significant since they provide a richer picture of the pathways of grammaticalization from a particular lexical source.

In this chapter the aim has been to achieve a fuller understanding of change and variation by bringing in extralinguistic issues, in particular concerning the question of how semantic changes are affected by regional variation. Changes do not take place in a vacuum, but certain variants may be favoured by social groups of people or be associated with a certain text type. This study suggests that we also need to consider the effect of factors such as migration, dialect influence, isolation from mainstream developments, etc. Even etymological cognates such as *sure* and *surely* may develop in different ways in different regional varieties. However, a more detailed study of sociolinguistic issues must be left as a topic for future research.

Sure in AmE is above all a response reacting to a prior turn. In particular it serves as a routinized response to speech acts such as requests, offers, thanks and apologies. It also appears in collocations (here referred to as bundles) in the American data and can become grammaticalized as a constituent of stereotyped phrases. In conclusion, phrases such as *sure OK* can be regarded as social, cultural and regional categories just as much as linguistic ones.

18 How different are American and British English grammar? And how are they different?¹

GUNNEL TOTTIE

1 Introduction

I have chosen a somewhat provocative title for this chapter, asking the question *How different are American and British English grammar?* and the concomitant *And how are they different?* I have not done this because I wish to engage in any kind of glottometrical exercise to establish distances between the two national varieties – they are much too nebulous and hard to define in order for such a venture to be at all profitable or even possible. What I wish to do is to argue, on the basis of some recent and ongoing research, that there are more differences between American and British grammar than previously dreamt of in our philosophy, and then count the ways – or at least some of them – in which the differences manifest themselves, also stressing the need to consider the multidimensional nature of the phenomena we examine. We cannot speak simply of differences between American and British English grammar but must also consider intravarietal variation between spoken and written language and between different registers.

I shall also argue not only that we need to look at the proportions of use of the variables under study, but that we need to consider the sum totals of these variables, in order to find out about communicative and pragmatic needs of speakers of either variety. Other important issues concern the relationship between meaning and form, especially as conditioned by the pragmatics of use of different grammatical forms and constructions. Finally, I also hope to make the point that, thanks to the availability of bigger, better and more accessible computerized corpora, we are likely to find out much more about American–British differences, sometimes serendipitously, sometimes by sheer hard work and routine searches, than we ever expected to.

¹ The work on the Longman Spoken American Corpus (LSAC) was carried out in collaboration with Jack DuBois, the University of California at Santa Barbara. I am indebted to Charlotte Hommerberg for permission to use her unpublished data and to Nils-Lennart Johannesson for help with statistics. They also made valuable comments on an earlier version, as did Sebastian Hoffmann, Arne Olofsson, Morton D. Paley, Jan Svartvik and the editors of this volume; I am deeply grateful to them all. Any remaining mistakes are mine alone.

One basic fact that we need to keep in mind when discussing differences between American and British grammar is that they are rarely categorical. As a rule, they can be expressed as proportions or probabilities. We might say that, most of the time, Americans and British speakers have the same grammars, with the same inventory of forms and the same rules, but that application of the rules differs between the varieties. Capturing this variation is the goal of most of the research in this field.

2 Three case studies

Even if vocabulary and phonology will always be the areas where differences between American and British English are most important, treating grammatical differences as small or non-existent is mostly a thing of the past.² Recent textbooks such as Kövecses (2000), Trudgill and Hannah (2002) and Tottie (2002a) demonstrate that there are differences in virtually all areas of grammar, pertaining to all word-classes, and in lexico-grammar as well as in larger syntactic structures. I will refrain from summarizing well-known facts and instead use data from some very recent studies whose results have yet to be included in the canon, as well as data from ongoing work carried out by myself and collaborators. I will discuss three types of grammatical differences, the first concerning the lexico-grammar of verbs, especially the complementation of *try*, the second concerning the distribution of relative marker forms after antecedents consisting of or containing *same*, and the third a complex case of differences in frequency of use, semantics and pragmatics, exemplified by tag questions.

2.1 Lexico-grammar: verb complementation

One enormous field of research where there are still many unknown differences between British and American English is lexico-grammar, the grammar of individual words. Verb complementation is one of the areas where many differences are likely to surface as we proceed to levels of greater delicacy of description. Thus, for instance, as has been recently shown by Olofsson (2003), Americans prefer *affiliated with* and British speakers *affiliated to*, but with *connected* we have the opposite situation: Americans tend to prefer the collocation *connected to* and British speakers *connected with* (Olofsson 2004).

A more complicated case is the verb *substitute*, where prepositional use causes problems not only for foreign learners but for native speakers, as shown by Denison (Chapter 7 in this volume) and Tottie (2004b, 2005). (The difference in prepositional use is also correlated to textual and cognitive factors in intricate ways that I will ignore here.) The construction long advocated by

² Volume VI of *The Cambridge History of the English Language* is a recent exception; cf. Tottie (2004a).

prescriptivists is that seen in the schematic example in (1), where *substitute X for Y* means roughly ‘put something NEW in the place of something OLD’.

(1) John *substituted* margarine *for* butter.

Denison shows that many younger British speakers, while keeping the preposition *for*, use the construction in the opposite sense, as if it meant ‘John replaced margarine with butter,’ a process that he terms *reversal*. Furthermore, as we both discovered while working independently, *substitute* is now frequently used in the same way as *replace*, as in (2a) and (2b), using *with* or *by*, the latter preposition especially in passives.

- (2) a. John *substituted* the butter *with* margarine.
b. The butter *was substituted by* margarine.

We found this type of construction to be particularly common in British newspaper reporting about soccer, and it seems to be spreading from there to other registers in BrE while being rare in AmE newspapers and non-existent in the American National Corpus (Tottie 2004b and 2005, Denison, Chapter 7 in this volume). However, I found a small number of examples of the type shown in (2a) in transcripts of CNN newscasts and interviews from 2000–4, as in (3):

- (3) ...if instead of grabbing that can of soda ... you *substituted* it *with* water, you would lose 15 pounds over the year ... (CNN 2003.12.14)

There were only 10/260 instances of this type, or 4 per cent of the totals in the CNN material (Tottie 2005), to be compared with the 18.5 per cent reported by Denison for the British National Corpus and about 50 per cent for the British newspapers examined in Tottie (2004b). Some caveats are necessary when making this comparison: the British newspaper data were of course entirely written, and Denison’s BNC data 90 per cent written, whereas the CNN material is spoken language, although probably not entirely spontaneous. However, even given large register and channel differences, it seems safe to say that there is a substantial lexico-grammatical difference between American and British English as concerns the use of *substitute*. We are also reminded that regional variety differences must be related to both spoken and written registers.

My prime example of lexico-grammatical differences between American and British English will be the alternation between *try and* and *try to* before a following verb, as seen in (4) and (5):

- (4) I *try and* look as if I’ve got money to spend (UKSpo)
(5) I *try to* give options all the time ... (UKSpo)³

³ The examples are from Hommerberg (2003), whose labels I retain. See below.

This alternation itself is a fairly well-known case, discussed by researchers like Lind (1983b), Kjellmer (2000), Rohdenburg (2003a), Vosberg (2006: 224–34) and in standard grammars like Quirk *et al.* (1985: 978–9), Biber *et al.* (1999: 738–9) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1302). Variation is only possible with the base form *try*; after the inflected forms *tries*, *tried* and *trying* the *to*-infinitive must be used (**He tries/tried and open the door*). The first mention of American–British differences seems to be the one in Biber *et al.* (1999: 738–9): they mention differences in the choice between *try+to+ verb* and *try+and+ verb*, noting that *try+and+ verb* is ‘used more in British English than in American English’ and adding that in fiction *try+and+ verb* is ten times as frequent in BrE as in AmE (20 instances per million words – henceforth pmw – compared with 2 pmw).

But there is more to say about this case of grammatical variation, especially as regards differences between American and British usage. I will base my discussion on unpublished data from Hommerberg (2003), a neat orthogonal study based on spoken and written British and American English. There have been claims that *try and* and *try to* are not semantically and pragmatically equivalent, but as Hommerberg points out in her careful review of the literature, ‘there seem to be almost as many conceptions as there are linguists of the possible pragmatic significance of the choice between the two constructions’ (2003: 10), and, like Hommerberg, I will therefore take the approach of most major studies and regard the variants as having the same meaning (see also Hommerberg and Tottie 2007).⁴

For her study Hommerberg used mainly the CobuildDirect Corpus: 9.3 million words of spoken and 5.4 million words of written BrE (referred to as UKspok and UKbooks in the tables and references to examples) as well as 5.6 million words of written AmE (USbooks). For spoken AmE, she used the Longman Spoken American Corpus (LSAC), comprising 5 million words. She considered only instances of the base form *try*, as no variation is possible after the inflected forms *tries*, *tried* and *trying*.

Although the proportions are not exactly the same, Hommerberg’s results support Biber *et al.*’s assessments of frequency of the use of *try and* and *try to*: *try and* is much more frequent in BrE than in AmE, but in both varieties *try to* predominates in writing. Thus 71 per cent of all occurrences in spoken BrE have *try and* but only 24 per cent in spoken AmE, and only 24 per cent of all instances in written BrE contain *try and*, and 5 per cent in written AmE do. See Table 18.1.

Hommerberg breaks down her data into infinitive, imperative, present and past tense uses of *try and/try to*. The infinitive category does not

⁴ A third construction, *try + ing*-form, as in *He tried cooking*, is not semantically equivalent (cf. Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1191) and was not included in Hommerberg’s study. The incipient construction *try + verb*, discussed by Kjellmer (2000), is rare in BrE and did not appear in LSAC.

Table 18.1 *The distribution of try and + verb and try to + verb in spoken and written British and American English (from Hommerberg 2003)*

	UKspok, 9.3 million words		UKspok, 5.4 million words		LSAC, 5 million words		USbooks, 5.6 million words	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>try and</i>	1663	71%	217	24%	284	24%	44	5%
<i>try to</i>	694	29%	679	76%	893	76%	773	95%
Total	2357	100%	896	100%	1177	100%	817	100%

comprise instances of *try* following forms of *do*, which are counted among tensed forms. Imperatives comprise both positive and negative forms, as in *Try to do it* or *Don't try and do it*, but not *Try not to do it*, as there is no possibility of variation with *try and* here. Present tense forms comprise both finite uses, as in *I try to . . .*, *we try and . . .*, and negative and interrogative constructions with *do*-support, as in *I don't try to*. A small number of possible mandative subjunctives after verbs like *propose* and *suggest* and adjectives like *important* are also included here.⁵ Past tense uses comprise only forms with *do*-support, as in *He didn't try to . . .*; the type *He tried not to . . .* does not allow variation with *and* and was not included. Infinitives account for the majority of tokens in all corpora: more than 50 per cent of the totals in written AmE (422/817), and for over 60 per cent in the other corpora (1492/2357, 550/896, and 765/1177, respectively – cf. Tables 18.1 and 18.2).

Even with this fairly rough classification, we see clear differences between the categories in the use of *try to* and *try and*, as shown in Tables 18.2 and 18.3. Thus infinitives and imperatives have the highest proportions of *try and* in all four subcorpora, exceeding 80 per cent in spoken BrE but reaching only 47 per cent and 39 per cent in the present and past tenses. Written BrE has 32 per cent *try and* in infinitives and 18 per cent in imperatives, but only 6 per cent in present tense uses, and none in the past tense. AmE shows the same tendencies: 27 per cent *try and* in infinitives and 25 per cent in imperatives in speech, but only 15 per cent in the present and past tenses.

⁵ There were no instances of the subjunctive in spoken BrE. A low number of 'possible' instances, i.e. cases where *try* does not occur after a third-person singular subject, were found in spoken AmE (one instance) and written BrE (altogether four instances with second-person or plural subjects), as in (i) and (ii):

- (i) I would *propose that we try to* deal with it. (LSAC)
- (ii) It is *important that you try to* separate the person from what he is telling you. (UKbooks)

The written AmE subcorpus had three possible instances, but only two certain cases with third-person subjects, as in (iii):

- (iii) He would *suggest that he try to* write the letter with his left hand. (USbooks)

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Table 18.2 *The distribution of try occurring in the infinitive, the imperative, the present tense and the past tense in the British material. Row percentages (after Hommerberg 2003)*

	UKspok, 9.3 million words				UKbooks, 5.4 million words			
	<i>try and</i>		<i>try to</i>	Total	<i>try and</i>		<i>try to</i>	Total
	N	%	N	N	N	%	N	N
Infinitive	1209	81%	283	1492	176	32%	374	550
Imperative	105	83%	21	126	33	18%	146	179
Present tense	340	47%	376	716	8	6%	127	135
Past tense	9	39%	14	23			32	32
Total	1663	71%	694	2357	217	24%	679	896

Table 18.3 *The distribution of try occurring in the infinitive, the imperative, the present tense and the past tense in the American material. Row percentages (after Hommerberg 2003)*

	LSAC, 5 million words				USbooks, 5.6 million words			
	<i>try and</i>		<i>try to</i>	Total	<i>try and</i>		<i>try to</i>	Total
	N	%	N	N	N	%	N	N
Infinitive	210	27%	555	765	36	9%	386	422
Imperative	29	25%	86	115	8	5%	149	157
Present tense	42	15%	235	277			217	217
Past tense	3	15%	17	20			21	21
Total	284	24%	893	1177	44	5%	773	817

In written AmE the proportion of *try and* is 9 per cent in infinitives and 5 per cent in imperatives, and there were no examples at all among present and past tense forms.

Differences emerge more clearly from Tables 18.4 and 18.5, where I have recalculated the figures as frequencies per million words. We also see that the aggregate figures for *try + complement* are higher in BrE: there are 254 instances pmw in spoken BrE, compared with 236 pmw in spoken AmE, and 166 pmw in written BrE, compared with 146 pmw in written AmE. This difference is significant at $p < 0.05$ (chi-square 4.3, 1 d.f.). The verb *try + complement* is thus more frequently used in British than in American English – do British speakers and writers try harder?

In what follows, I will concentrate on the spoken material, as there is no information concerning different registers in the written material. Looking at the left-hand columns of Tables 18.4 and 18.5, we see that in infinitive constructions *try and* predominates in spoken BrE and *try to* in spoken AmE, as expected. But if we take a closer look at imperatives and present tense constructions, there are some surprises. First of all, the total number of

Table 18.4 *The frequency of try-constructions in spoken and written BrE, expressed as number of instances per million words. Based on Hommerberg (2003)*

	UKspok, 9.3 million words			UKbooks, 5.4 million words		
	<i>try and</i>	<i>try to</i>	Total	<i>try and</i>	<i>try to</i>	Total
	pmw	pmw	pmw	pmw	pmw	pmw
Infinitive	130	30	160	33	69	102
Imperative	11	2	13	6	27	33
Present tense	37	40	77	1.5	23.5	25
Past tense	1	2	3		6	6
Total	179	74	254	40.5	125.5	166

 Table 18.5 *The frequency of try-constructions in spoken and written AmE, expressed as number of instances per million words. Based on Hommerberg (2003)*

	LSAC, 5 million words			USbooks, 5.6 million words		
	<i>try and</i>	<i>try to</i>	Total	<i>try and</i>	<i>try to</i>	Total
	pmw	pmw	pmw	pmw	pmw	pmw
Infinitive	42	111	153	6	69	75
Imperative	6	17	23	1	27	28
Present tense	8	47	55		39	39
Past tense	1	3	4		4	4
Total	57	178	236	7	139	146

imperatives with *try* is much higher in spoken AmE than in spoken BrE: 23 pmw compared with 13 pmw. This difference is statistically highly significant (chi-square 70.316, $p \leq 0.001$, 1 d.f.). Although there is a possibility that the corpora under investigation are very differently structured, it also seems possible that Americans either use more imperatives than British speakers, or that they just use more imperatives with *try*. Another difference, which is not likely to be an artefact of corpus choice, can be observed in the total use of present tense constructions, where spoken BrE shows a much higher incidence than spoken AmE: 77 pmw in spoken BrE, compared with 55 pmw in spoken AmE (chi-square 19.225, $p \leq 0.001$, 1 d.f.). (Past tense uses are rare in both varieties, as might be expected – see Biber *et al.* 1999: 456.)

We have seen already in Tables 18.2 and 18.3 that in both varieties the percentage of *try and*-constructions is lower in the present tense than in infinitives and imperatives. The relevant data for spoken language are repeated for convenience in Table 18.6, and a further breakdown of the material into finite uses of the base form *try* and uses with *do*-support is displayed in Table 18.7.

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Table 18.6 *The distribution of try and and try to occurring in the infinitive, the imperative and the present tense in spoken BrE and spoken AmE: proportions of try and of the total number of instances as row percentages. Based on Hommerberg (2003)*

	UKspok, 9.3 million words				LSAC, 5 million words			
	<i>try and</i>		<i>try to</i>	Total	<i>try and</i>		<i>try to</i>	Total
	N	%	N	N	N	%	N	N
Infinitive	1209	81%	283	1492	210	27%	555	765
Imperative	105	81%	21	129	29	25%	86	115
Present tense	340	47%	376	716	42	15%	127	135

Table 18.7 *Present tense try used with or without do-periphrasis in spoken BrE and spoken AmE. Proportions of try and as row percentages of totals. Based on Hommerberg (2003)*

	Ukspok				LSAC			
	<i>try and</i>	%	<i>try to</i>	Total	<i>try and</i>	%	<i>try to</i>	Total
	N	%	N	N	N	%	N	N
Finite present	300	45%	335	635	41	16%	218	259
<i>Do</i> -question	19	65%	10	29		0%	3	3
<i>Do</i> -emphatic	11	28%	28	39		0%	2	2
<i>Do</i> -negative	10	71%	3	14	1	8%	12	13
Total	340		376	716	42		235	277

If we look at the breakdown of present tense uses of *try and* and *try to* as displayed in Table 18.7, we see that periphrastic forms with *do* are rare in both varieties. In spoken BrE, non-periphrastic forms account for 635/716 or 89 per cent of the total, which leaves 11 per cent of the total number of present tense uses; in spoken AmE, non-periphrastic forms account for 259/277, or 94 per cent, leaving only 6 per cent for the periphrastic forms. Negative sentences with *do* are the only type that is at all frequent in spoken AmE, with thirteen of the eighteen instances, or 72 per cent; in fact they are more frequent in AmE than in BrE, with a frequency of 2.6 pmw, compared with spoken BrE, where they account for 17 per cent of the total (14/81), a mere 1.5 pmw. The choice of *try and* in negative sentences with *do*-periphrasis is extremely skewed with 71 per cent in spoken BrE and only 8 per cent in spoken AmE; the difference is highly significant (chi-square 12.76, $p \leq 0.001$, 1 d.f.). (These calculations do not include negatives of the form *he tried not to*+verb.)

The greatest differences between the varieties occur in *do*-questions and *do*-emphatics. There are twenty-nine *do*-questions in spoken BrE (3 pmw)

compared with three (0.6 pmw) in spoken AmE, and the rate of *try and* is 65 per cent in BE compared with zero in AmE. In emphatic constructions differences in total use are even larger: thirty-nine instances in spoken BrE (4 pmw) compared with two in spoken AmE (0.4 pmw). In BrE the preference for *try and* has dwindled to 28 per cent, and in spoken AmE there are no occurrences at all. Numbers are getting dangerously low here – larger corpora are necessary if we want to be absolutely certain of current usage.

Hommerberg also reports on collocational differences between American and British English. With the verb *remember*, spoken BrE has an absolute preference for *try and*, with twenty-two instances of the type shown in (6). *Try to* occurs only in negative imperatives like (7), and sometimes even with restructuring, as in (8). AmE, on the other hand, had eight out of nine instances with *try to remember*.

(6) It's very difficult to *try and remember* everything I have to do. (UKspok)

(7) The map of Europe changed on a number of occasions but *don't try to remember* exactly how. (UKspok)

(8) Don't *try and try to* remember the countries. (UKspok)

After *let's*, BrE also shows a preference for *try and*, which was used in 20/22 instances, as in (9):

(9) *Let's try and* have a discussion for once. (UKspok)

I have chosen to include this detailed analysis of constructional differences with the verb *try* in order to underscore my point that even in a case like this, where the main facts about the grammar of a lexical item in BrE and AmE can be assumed to be fairly well known, it is possible to make new discoveries at more delicate levels of analysis and even to correct the big picture, or at least to show it in a different light, if we look at the data from different angles and tease them out in new ways. (Some additional fine-grained analyses can be found in Vosberg 2006: 224–34.)

One aspect of my discussion above concerns the overall use of the verb *try* and of different tenses and moods in the two varieties. Such data may be considered trivial by some, but I would argue that they are crucial both for our understanding of the problem at hand and because they permit us to ask fundamental questions on which further research can be based. For instance, assuming that their communicative needs are similar, if Americans don't use *try* + complement as much as British speakers, what do they do instead? Or are their communicative needs different? Why is it that British speakers use *try* (followed by either of the two complement types under consideration) much more in the present tense than Americans, and why do Americans use it more in imperatives? Questions like these prompt us to look at problems from the point of view of semantics and pragmatics, and may ultimately enable us to widen our research to semantic fields and to hitherto uncharted areas of pragmatics.

2.2 Paradigmatic choices: relative markers after same

Another fairly well-known difference between American and British English grammar concerns relative markers. As in so many cases, the two varieties use the same paradigm of forms but in different distributions. For instance, AmE shows a preference for *that* in general, especially in restrictive relative clauses, where BrE can also have *who* or *which*, as in *the car that I bought* and *the car which I bought* (see Tottie 1997a). Prescriptive rules and editorial practices are also sharply different in the two varieties, as has been shown, for example, by Tottie (1997b) and Olofsson (1999 and 2005); thus in restrictive relative clauses *that* has virtually ousted *which* in American edited publications.

One difference that seems not to have been previously reported in the literature has to do with the use of relative markers after *same*, especially the use of *as*, described in Lehmann and Tottie (in preparation). We had previously investigated the distribution of relative markers in spoken and written registers of BrE, based on the spoken component of the British National Corpus (BNC-S) and *The [London] Times* from 1999, and reported it in Tottie and Lehmann (2002).⁶ Our study was prompted by the fact that *as* is an acceptable relative marker in standard English when the antecedent is or contains *same*, something that has received little attention in grammars and works on relativization.⁷ The examples in (10) show that *as* occurs in paradigmatic variation with *that* and zero and that it thus functions as a relative marker:

- (10) a. John always bought the same car *as* Mary did.
 b. John always bought the same car *that* Mary did.
 c. John always bought the same car \emptyset Mary did.

We found striking differences between spoken BrE and written newspaper language: there were many more relative constructions with *same* in speech than in writing, and the proportion of *as* as a relative marker was much higher in the spoken language than in newspaper text, 16.3 instances pmw vs. 5.95 pmw, or 54 per cent vs. 34 per cent of the totals, as appears from Table 18.8. *Wh*-relatives (including *when* and *where*) were rare in both speech and writing, with only 5 per cent in speech and 11 per cent in writing; this is a much lower proportion than the average for written BrE relative clauses and somewhat lower than for spoken BrE (see Tottie 1997a).

⁶ We chose not to use the written registers of BNC because of the lack of an American equivalent, as we wanted to be able to continue our research on AmE at a later stage. Retrieval strategies are described in Tottie and Lehmann (2002).

⁷ Sigley (1997), writing on New Zealand English, is a major exception. Quirk *et al.* (1985) have nothing to say about *as* as a relative marker, and Biber *et al.* (1999: 609) mention it but not in connection with *same*. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1138) recognize the equivalence with relative clauses but regard *as*-clauses as comparative clauses.

Table 18.8 *Relativizers after same in BrE: BNC-S and The Times 1999*

	BNC-S, >10 million words			<i>The Times</i> , 36.8 million words		
	N	%	pmw	N	%	pmw
<i>as</i>	163	54%	16.3	219	34%	6
<i>that</i>	91	30%	9.1	220	34%	6
<i>zero</i>	32	11%	3.1	143	22%	3.8
<i>who</i>	8	3%	0.8	20	3%	0.5
<i>which</i>	6	2%	0.6	37	6%	1
<i>whom</i>	—	—	—	2	0%	0.1
<i>where</i>	—	—	—	11	2%	0.3
<i>when</i>	1	—	0.0	—	—	—
Total	301	100%	30	652	100%	17.7

 Table 18.9 *Relativizers after same in AmE: LSAC and the LA Times 1999*

	LSAC, 5 million words			<i>LA Times</i> , 42.5 million words		
	N	%	pmw	N	%	pmw
<i>as</i>	14	9%	2.8	111	9%	2.6
<i>that</i>	59	37%	11.8	331	27%	7.8
<i>zero</i>	81	51%	16.2	686	55%	16.1
<i>who</i>	3	2%	0.8	46	4%	1.1
<i>which</i>	—	—	0.6	31	2%	0.7
<i>whom</i>	—	—	—	2	0%	0.0
<i>where</i>	2	1%	—	35	3%	0.8
<i>when</i>	1	1%	0.0	1	0%	0.0
Total	160	100%	32	1243	100%	29

Our follow-up of the study of BrE (Lehmann and Tottie, in preparation) is based on the Longman Spoken American Corpus and the *Los Angeles Times* for 1999. To our great surprise, relativizers after *same* in AmE show a strikingly different distribution from that found in BrE, as appears from Table 18.9. Although the frequencies of the totals for speech are similar, 30 pmw in BrE and 32 pmw in AmE, they differ in writing – 17.7 pmw in *The Times* and 29 pmw in the *Los Angeles Times*.⁸ The incidence of *as* is much lower in AmE than in BrE, a mere 2.8 pmw in speech and 2.6 pmw in writing, compared with 16.3 pmw in British speech and 6 pmw in British writing. *That* is somewhat more frequent in spoken AmE (11.8 pmw) than in BrE speech (9.1 pmw) and somewhat more frequent in AmE writing (7.8 pmw) than in BrE writing (6 pmw), but the really spectacular difference can be observed between the proportions of zero relatives in BrE and AmE: over 50 per cent of all cases are

⁸ Some effects can of course be due to characteristics of style in the two newspapers; more research on a wider spectrum of registers will be necessary to settle differences here.

zero relatives in AmE, in speech as well as in writing, with frequencies of over 16 pmw in both channels, whereas in BrE the proportions are 11 per cent in speech and 22 per cent in writing, or 3.1 pmw and 3.8 pmw, respectively. All other relativizers scored very low figures.

The use of relativizers must always be related to their antecedents and their function in the relative clause. In the case of relative markers occurring after *same*, it is especially their use as adverbials or direct objects that determines the choice. Although considerations of space preclude a detailed discussion here, it is clear that a major difference between the varieties is that *as* is the relativizer of choice in BrE when it functions as direct object or adverbial in the relative clause, but this is less frequent in AmE, where zero relatives are more often used in these syntactic functions (cf. the more general tendency of AmE to prefer zero variants established in Chapters 8 and 10 by Rohdenburg in this volume). *That* has similar functions in both varieties. (11)–(13) are typical examples of British and American usage of relativizers after *same*. (See further Lehmann and Tottie, in preparation.)

- (11) But our department hasn't changed, the women are just doing *the same job as they did* sixty years ago. (BNC-S)
- (12) My dad was sixty-two when he died, he died *the same year that Paul was born*. (LSAC)
- (13) Walker Center, *the same place Ø we had our last meeting?* (LSAC)

It is clear that the differences between the varieties are substantial, something that had not previously been suspected. In this case a routine follow-up of an investigation of BrE led to an unexpected discovery, and it seems highly likely that such discoveries will be made again when corpora from both varieties are tested for the same variables.

2.3 Frequency and pragmatics: the case of tag questions

Relative marker use after *same* is a fairly infrequent phenomenon in the grammar of English, and it is perhaps not surprising that the differences between British and American English had remained unnoticed. It is much more astonishing that another difference, of much greater magnitude and concerning a very frequent grammatical phenomenon, has received relatively little attention: that between the use of tag questions in British and American English, more precisely those constructions typical of the English language that are seen in (14)–(17). The term *tag question* will be used here for the whole package, including the initial statement and the following question tag; see further below.⁹

- (14) Makes you really think, doesn't it. (LSAC)

⁹ For a detailed study and discussion of terminology, see Chapter 16 by Allerton.

- (15) Oh it's not very valuable is it? (BNC-S)
 (16) So this is the letter he sent you is it? (LSAC)
 (17) Yes, they don't come cheap don't they? (BNC-S)

Tag questions are a very conspicuous phenomenon of the spoken language, and they have been frequently discussed in the literature (e.g. Huddleston 1970, Cattell 1973, Hudson 1975, Bublitz 1979, Östman 1981, Östman 1981, McGregor 1995 and Allerton, Chapter 16 in this volume). Most attention has been given to their polarity properties and pragmatics, but not very much has been said about their different uses in British and American English. Nässlin (1984) provides a quantitative empirical study based on spoken BrE from the Corpus of English Conversation (Svartvik and Quirk 1980) as well as the Brown and Lancaster/Oslo-Bergen (LOB) Corpora, but she has little to say about differences between British and American grammar, as spoken AmE corpus material was not available at the time. She does report differences between the two varieties, showing more British than American examples in the fiction parts of the Brown and LOB corpora, but she pays little attention to them.¹⁰ Algeo (1988b, 1990) is the first modern scholar to discuss differences between the use of tag questions in American and British English, focusing especially on their pragmatics and more or less polite functions, but he does not quantify his findings. An early American observer, writing in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* in 1901, is quoted by Algeo (1988b) as saying that 'English people end almost every sentence with a question' (Ralph 1901), but that is as close to an observation of frequency as we get. Biber *et al.* (1999: 211 ff.) discuss the frequency of question tags in different registers, but have nothing to say about regional differences.

Our study of tag questions (Tottie and Hoffmann 2006) was prompted by a serendipitous find by a Zurich student, Andreas Graf, who examined the competition of *will* and *be going to* as future markers in American and British English in BNC-S and LSAC (see Tottie 2002c: 42f.). In order to create comparable datasets of his two modal verbs, Graf needed to remove all instances of question tags of the types occurring in *He will do it, won't he?/He won't do it, will he?* as there are no parallel types for *be going to*. He then found that there were many more question tags in the British material than in the American corpus. This led us to examine the use of tag questions in the spoken component of the British National Corpus (BNC-S, a total of 10.36 million words) and the Longman Spoken American Corpus (LSAC, 5 million words). We studied the type of tag question characteristic of English illustrated in (14)–(17) and shown schematically in (18a–d), where there is either reversed polarity

¹⁰ Nässlin's data on the use of tag questions in British and American English are based on fiction and discussed only in footnotes. The ratio of tag questions is calculated as a proportion of all questions, which plays down the differences very effectively.

(positive–negative or negative–positive) in the ‘anchor’ clause and the following ‘question tag’, as in (18a) and (18b), constant positive polarity, as in (18c), or constant negative polarity, as in (18d).¹¹ Following Algeo (1988b), we use the term ‘tag question’ for the combination of anchor and tag (the term ‘anchor’ comes from Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 891).

(18) ‘polarity types in tag questions’

	‘anchor’	‘tag’
a.	British speakers <i>use</i> them a lot, POS-NEG +/–	<i>don’t</i> they?
b.	Americans <i>don’t use</i> them much, NEG-POS –/+	<i>do</i> they?
c.	Brits <i>use</i> them an awful lot, POS-POS +/+	<i>do</i> they?
d.	?Americans <i>don’t use</i> them much, NEG-NEG –/–	<i>don’t</i> they?

Our retrieval was carried out by means of a tag-based search with constraints; the methods are described in Tottie and Hoffmann (2006). This produced over 7,000 hits in LSAC. They were then subjected to a manual search, yielding a total of 2,311 relevant instances. BNC-S yielded a much higher first total, almost 80,000. On the assumption that the proportion of relevant instances would be roughly the same as in LSAC, we estimated the number of relevant instances in BNC-S to be around 25,000, but in a corpus more than twice the size of the American one. Expressed as frequencies per million words, we estimated that the British speakers probably produced about 2,400 tag questions per million words, whereas the American speakers produced a mere 462 pmw. This means that tag questions were more than five times as frequent in BNC as in LSAC, a truly surprising discovery, which is illustrated in Figure 18.1. If only the demographic BNC sample (BNC-SDEM) is included for comparison, tag questions are nine times as frequent in BrE as in AmE.¹²

Because of the large initial number of hits in the BrE sample, it was not possible to check all of them manually. We therefore created a random subset of 5,000 relevant tag question constructions in BNC-S, which represents about the same proportion of the total number of words in BNC-S as the 2,311 instances found in LSAC. From these 5,000, we deducted twenty-seven instances of invariant *innit*, as in (19), so that our whole sample amounted

¹¹ The type with constant negative polarity (18d) has been marked by grammarians as doubtful – ‘not clearly attested’ according to Quirk *et al.* (1985: 813), or grammatical only in some dialects (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 891). We found five examples, as in (17). We found a low number of anchor types other than those shown here (imperative and interrogative clauses) and include them in our numbers here among positive anchors; for a detailed survey, see Tottie *et al.* (forthcoming).

¹² See Tottie and Hoffmann (2006), where many statistics are based on BNC-SDEM only.

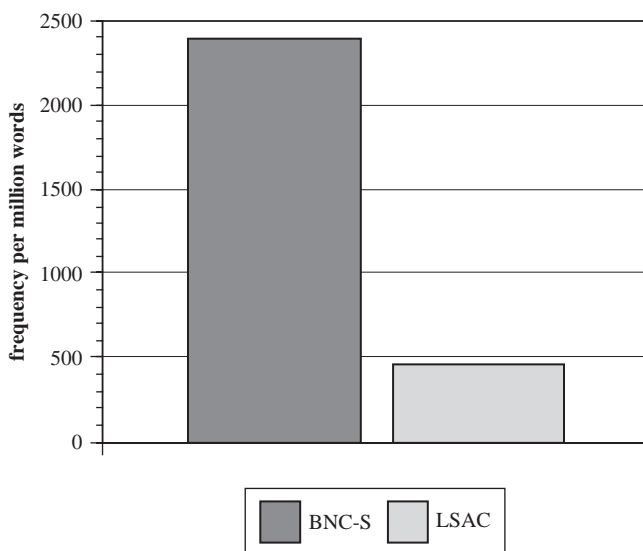


Figure 18.1 The frequency of tag questions in British and American English, calculated per million words (Tottie and Hoffmann 2006)

to 4,973 instances. (There were no instances of *inmit* in LSAC.) We did include 303 instances of British *inmit* referring back to *is* in the anchor clause, as in (20):

(19) That must be kids *inmit*? (KDA 1222)

(20) It's boring life really, *inmit* really? (KB9 1687)

These are the numbers on which our investigations are based; where subsets were used, this is indicated in each case.

We found differences between preferred forms of tag questions in British and American English. Biber *et al.* (1999: 211) note that 'tags are most often added to a positive statement', but they do not underpin their statement with precise numbers and make no reference to differences between the two varieties. Based on two samples of 1,000 instances each, we found that British and American English have fairly similar high frequencies of Positive–Negative polarity tag constructions (both close to 70 per cent), but that there are significant differences between the two varieties as regards the use of Negative–Positive and Positive–Positive constructions. Thus, as appears from Figure 18.2, Americans use more Negative–Positive constructions, and British speakers more Positive–Positive constructions. These differences are statistically significant (chi-square 41.62, $p < 0.001$, 3 d.f.).

We also examined the different auxiliaries and modals occurring in question tags and found differences between British and American usage. The

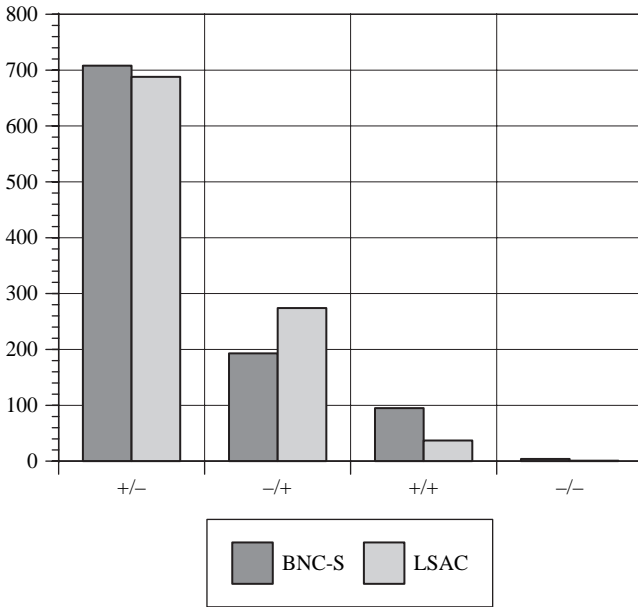


Figure 18.2 Distribution of polarity in two subsets of BNC-S and LSAC (1,000 instances each) (Tottie and Hoffmann 2006)

Table 18.10 *Auxiliary frequency in question tags in BNC-S and LSAC*

Corpus	<i>BE</i>	<i>DO</i>	<i>WILL</i>	<i>HAVE</i>	<i>CAN</i>	Other modals	Total
BNC-S	2506 50%	1221 25%	439 9%	424 9%	234 5%	149 3%	4973
LSAC	1067 46%	941 41%	140 6%	71 3%	52 2%	40 2%	2311

results are displayed in Table 18.10 and further illustrated in Figure 18.3. *Be* is the most frequently occurring operator in both varieties, accounting for 50 per cent of all instances in BrE and 46 per cent in AmE. Question tags with *do* come second in both varieties, but there is a difference of 16 percentage points between the varieties here, with 41 per cent *do* tags in AmE and only 25 per cent in BrE. With the other major operators in question tags, *will*, *have*, and *can*, BrE scored higher than AmE. All of these differences are significant at the 0.001 level, and again we can thus see large qualitative as well as quantitative differences between the two varieties.

There are also differences between BrE and AmE as regards pronominal use in tag questions, as appears from Figure 18.4. *You* accounts for a much higher proportion of examples in AmE than in BrE, and *she* for a somewhat

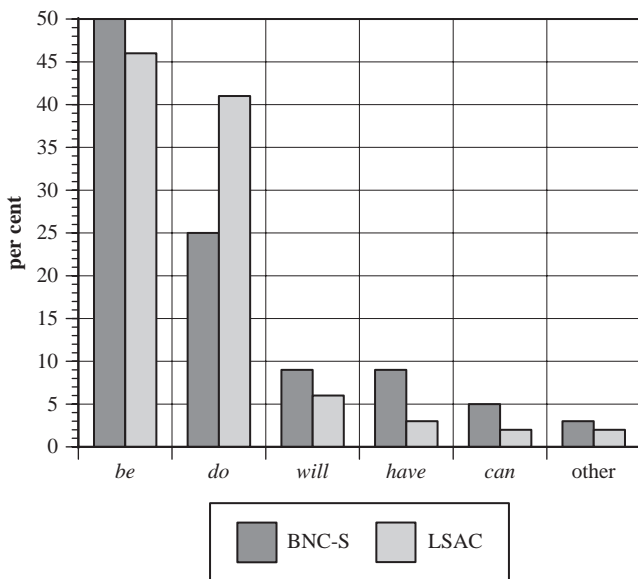


Figure 18.3 Proportions of auxiliary use in question tags in BNC-S and LSAC (see Tottie and Hoffmann 2006 for data on BNC-SDEM)

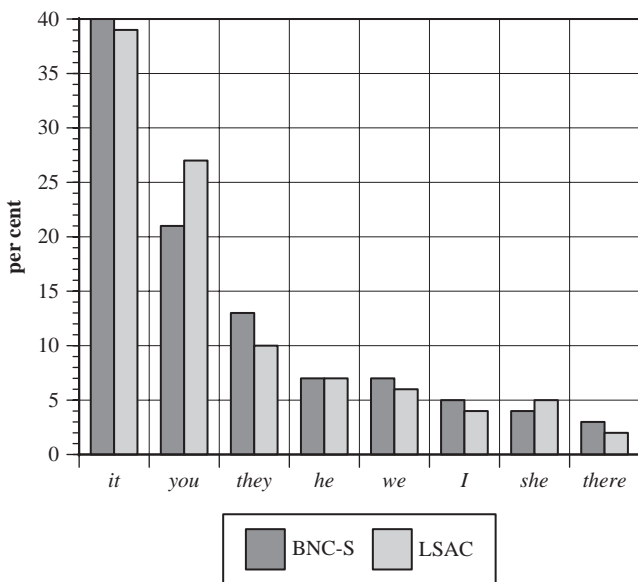


Figure 18.4 Proportions of pronouns in question tags in BNC-S and LSAC (see Tottie and Hoffmann 2006 for data on BNC-SDEM)

Table 18.11 *The fifteen most common question tags in BNC-S and LSAC (see Tottie and Hoffmann 2006 for data on BNC-SDEM)*

TAG	BNC-S N = 4973	%	LSAC N = 2311	%
<i>isn't it?</i>	1049*	21%	431	17%
<i>is it?</i>	317	6%	116	5%
<i>aren't they?</i>	175	5%	66	3%
<i>don't you?</i>	139	3%	126	5%
<i>do you?</i>	107	2%	123	5%
<i>wasn't it?</i>	123	2%	76	3%
<i>doesn't it?</i>	97	2%	102	4%
<i>aren't you?</i>	119	2%	66	3%
<i>don't they?</i>	121	2%	55	2%
<i>didn't you?</i>	77	1.5%	70	3%
<i>are you?</i>	77	1.5%	52	2%
<i>did you?</i>	52	1%	65	3%
<i>haven't you?</i>	91	2%	22	1%
<i>isn't he?</i>	63	1%	43	2%
<i>wouldn't it?</i>	58	1%	43	2%

*This figure includes 303 instances pronounced *innit*, but used as regular (not invariant) tags.

higher proportion, but notice that here and elsewhere the actual numbers of occurrence are always higher in BrE because of the higher frequency of question tags in that variety.

Looking next at the entire tags consisting of auxiliary, pronoun and optional *n't*, we found a total of 198 different combinations, most of them occurring in very low proportions. The fifteen top-scoring combinations are shown in Table 18.11. *Isn't it?* was the top-ranking tag in both varieties, with 21 per cent of all occurrences in BNC-S and 17 per cent in LSAC. *Is it?* ranked second in BNC-S with 6 per cent and reached 5 per cent in LSAC, as did *don't you?* and *do you?* Only one combination, *aren't they?*, scored 5 per cent in BNC-S. *Doesn't it?* accounted for 4 per cent in LSAC, but all other tags accounted for 3 per cent or much less in both corpora.

It is also interesting to consider the distribution of discourse functions of tags in our samples of British and American English. For this purpose we classified 500 instances each from BNC-S and LSAC into different pragmatic types, concentrating on 371 examples from the demographic subcorpus of BNC-S (BNC-SDEM). Following Algeo (1988b) and Holmes (1983, 1984, 1986, 1995) we divided the examples into informational, confirmatory, attitudinal, facilitative, preemptory and aggressive tags. Some problematic cases were classified as 'other'.¹³ As the corpora we used

¹³ Allerton (Chapter 16) has a different pragmatic classification and points out (in n. 13) that 'Algeo does not make clear that many of the examples and the fifth [aggressive] type of tag he suggests are typical of popular London English . . . rather than of British English as a whole.' Cheshire (1991) has a simple and useful classification into conventional and non-conventional tags. She includes aggressive tags among the latter and characterizes them as typical of the Reading vernacular.

Table 18.12 *The distribution of pragmatic types of tags*

Tag type	BNC-S		LSAC	
	N	%	N	%
confirmatory	136	37%	151	30%
facilitative	133	36%	248	50%
attitudinal	65	18%	58	12%
informational	16	4%	18	4%
aggressive	4	1%	0	0%
hoping/fearing	3	1%	5	1%
conspiratory	14	4%	20	<4%
Totals	371	100%	500	100%

have no indications of intonation, we had to rely exclusively on context, a particularly limiting circumstance in the case of tag questions, and our results must therefore be regarded as preliminary. The three types of tags that turned out to be the most frequent are exemplified in (21)–(23):

(21) *Confirmatory tag* (speaker is not sure of what s/he says):

2930: I'm gonna try to go walking for a little bit. I don't need a jacket, *do I?*

2929: No, it's still pleasant. (LSAC)

(22) *Facilitative tag* (speaker is sure of the truth of what s/he says):

Teacher: Right it's two *isn't it?*

Pupil: Mm. (BNC-S)

(23) *Attitudinal tag* (emphasizes what speaker says, does not expect involvement or reply):

June: I said I think we're gonna have to start still doing what we said, erm, getting the money beforehand I think. You know it's ridiculous *isn't it?* Well you don't bleeding know whether them other people turned up do you? Did your mum take it to let you know?

Geoff: no. (BNC-S)

These types, confirmatory, facilitative and attitudinal tags, together accounted for 91 per cent of the totals in BNC-S and for 92 per cent in LSAC. The distribution of the different types is shown in Table 18.12 and Figure 18.5.

We see that the greatest difference between the two varieties is that there is a much larger proportion of facilitative tags in AmE than in BrE: the

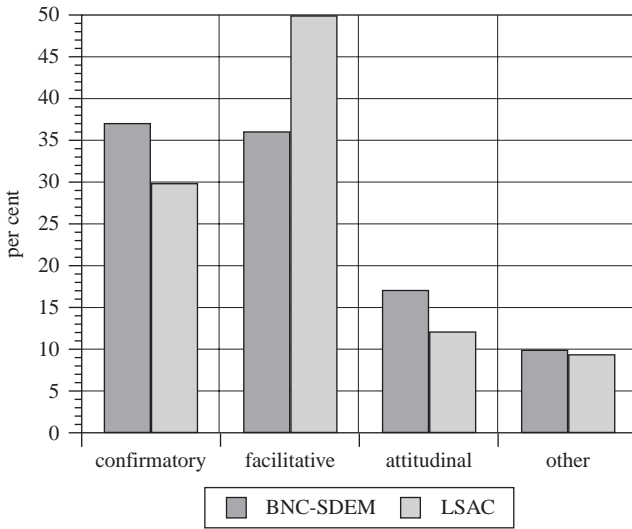


Figure 18.5 Proportions of types of pragmatic meanings of question tags in BNC-S and LSAC (Based on 500 instances from each corpus; Tottie and Hoffmann 2006)

difference is eighteen percentage points. There are also other differences between BrE and AmE as regards confirmatory and facilitative tags: seven and five percentage points, respectively. (Again, it is important to remember that these are proportions in two samples of equal size, and that in two text samples of equal length, BrE is likely to have many more examples of each type than AmE.)

The fact that facilitative question tags account for a higher proportion in AmE seems to correlate nicely with the fact that AmE also shows more speaker change after tag questions, as shown in Figure 18.6, and a greater proportion of second-person pronouns in question tags, as shown in Figure 18.4 above. We also discuss the correlation of formal properties and pragmatic functions of tag questions in Tottie and Hoffmann (2006).

The considerable differences between tag questions in British and American English described above are interesting news per se, but they also provide us with a sound quantitative basis for asking and possibly answering some important questions having to do with semantics and pragmatics. First of all, why do the British use so many more tag questions as Americans? This question cannot be answered on the basis of the facts unearthed for this study but must be considered in a much wider perspective. We can take a small first step here by examining the functions of tag questions in the two varieties, but once that has been done, it will be necessary to examine how the pragmatic functions served by tag questions

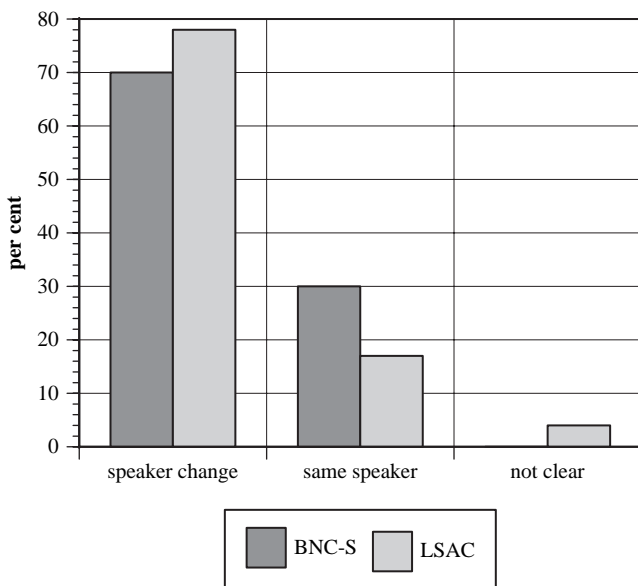


Figure 18.6 Speaker change after tag questions in BNC-S and LSAC (Roesle 2001)

in BrE are carried out in AmE: if Americans do not use tag questions as frequently as British speakers, what do they do instead? Do they use other types of tags, such as *right*? Do Americans prefer epistemic particles, like *probably*, *likely*, *presumably*, where they have similar functions?¹⁴ Does the famous American expression *I guess* play a role here? And, most importantly, assuming that we can chart and quantify the pragmatic functions of tag questions, are we even justified in assuming that those same pragmatic functions will be exploited in both varieties to the same extent, i.e. that speakers from two different cultures will feel the need to express the same meanings (in different ways) under similar conditions of interaction? Just as Americans are comfortable asking others *Where are you from?* and British speakers are not, there may be other culture-specific differences that account for quantitative grammatical differences. We may be totally wrong in positing some kind of structural equilibrium of the kind that probably exists with past and present perfect forms (cf. Chapter 12 by Elsness), regular and irregular verb forms (cf. in particular Chapters 1, 3, 6) or relative marker paradigms when we deal with grammatical forms that have more exclusively pragmatic functions.

¹⁴ Cf. the parallel questions posed by Mondorf (Chapter 4) with regard to the frequencies of adjectival comparatives in British and American English.

3 Discussion

The most common type of difference that exists between American and British grammar is that where a form, a paradigm or an entire grammatical structure is available to a majority of speakers of both varieties but where there is a difference in frequency of use. Virtually all of the chapters in the present volume are good examples of this. The forms in a paradigm occur in complementary distribution, so that one out of two or more is chosen, and in making comparisons between the varieties proportions of choices are compared. This is an entirely legitimate procedure which yields interesting results. However, there often seems to be a tacit assumption either that the sum total of the tokens is similar in the two varieties, or that totals do not matter. In this chapter, I hope to have shown, in my discussion of the *try and/try to* alternation, and especially in the presentation of data concerning the use of tag questions, that the total number of tokens is of great interest, as they prompt us to ask questions that go beyond grammatical choices. If speakers of AmE don't use the verb *try* with either *and* or *to* as frequently as BrE speakers, what do they do instead? Do they use *attempt* or *endeavor*? If Americans do not use tag questions to nearly the same extent as British speakers, what do they do? Are there alternatives? Are pragmatic needs the same in the two varieties?

One point that I have argued above and tried to underpin with data from the lexico-grammar of verbs and relativization of noun phrases containing *same* is that the more delicate our analysis, the more differences we will find. It has always been my experience that as soon as we begin to scratch the surface of grammatical phenomena, we find unexpected differences between the two varieties. It is of course possible to dismiss findings from research at very detailed levels as uninteresting – your attitude here will depend on the goals of your description. My opinion is that we can only get the big picture right if we get as many of the details right as we possibly can. We still need more, bigger and better corpora: more American corpora, bigger corpora if we wish to investigate less frequent syntactic phenomena, and better in the sense of more fully annotated if we want to include discourse phenomena like intonation, pauses and hesitation features in our research on spoken language.

However, we are already in a position to find out more than ever before, thanks to the existing large computerized corpora. The corpora are also likely to give us more than we asked for in terms of serendipitous finds, as I demonstrated with examples from relativization after *same* and tag questions above. This does not diminish the role of scholars, who must be open to unexpected findings and ready to incorporate them in description as well as theory, as is normal practice in the natural sciences.

In this chapter, I have deliberately refrained from discussing reasons for differences between American and British grammar, but even so I have probably raised more problems and asked more questions than I have

answered. However, I think I have answered the questions that I asked in the title of the chapter, *How different are American and British grammar? And how are they different?* I hope my readers will agree that the answers must be, for now, *More different than we used to think* and *In more ways than we can anticipate*. When we have more precise answers we will also be able to ask the most interesting question of all: *Why are American and British grammar different?*

19 New departures¹

GÜNTER ROHDENBURG AND JULIA SCHLÜTER

1 Outline

Rather than a conclusion summing up the findings from the present volume, this *final chapter* forms an outlook that is intended to foster a continuation of the work begun by the contributors. The authors of this chapter and editors of this volume do not pretend that the differences between BrE and AmE grammar studied in the preceding chapters can be adequately summarized in a few pages or that a few concluding remarks can do justice to the multiplicity of findings discussed (for some suggestions, see the general Introduction). The array of contrasts from the most diverse areas of grammar forbid us to even venture the attempt. Too many of the traditional generalizations about British–American contrasts have been confronted with counter-evidence, yielding a highly differentiated picture.

What becomes more than clear in view of the data gathered in this volume is that, contrary to general opinion, BrE and AmE do not differ only in their pronunciation and lexicon, but also in central domains of their grammar. Thus, the most important lesson to be drawn from the preceding studies is the one expressed by Gunnel Tottie in *Chapter 18*: ‘the more delicate our analysis, the more differences we will find’.

In line with this conclusion, the present chapter suggests numerous avenues for further research on British–American contrasts. It contains almost four dozen pilot studies, roughly grouped into five grammatical categories. Some of them are based on a set of four matching one-million-word corpora (LOB, Brown, FLOB and Frown) and would deserve a more detailed study on a larger basis. Some others draw on an extensive collection of newspapers, totalling several hundred million words. This does not mean that they present exhaustive descriptions of the phenomena. They rather focus on selected subtypes of the structures under discussion or make use of highly restrictive search strategies in order to keep the results manageable while at the same time retrieving a sufficient number of examples.

¹ This study was carried out within the Paderborn research project *Determinants of Grammatical Variation in English*, which is supported by the German Research Foundation (Grant Ro 2271/1–3).

Hence, the following studies are not designed to do full justice to the issues under discussion but to stimulate further contrastive research into the grammar(s) of British, American and other varieties of English that may be compared to the former two. At the same time, the wide range of topics covered by the studies is intended to reinforce Gunnell Tottie's conclusion to the effect that there is more to be discovered in the area of British–American contrasts than one may expect.

Wherever possible, the diachronic dimension of the case studies will be indicated and in some cases corpus data from earlier forms of English will be adduced. In many cases, the database available for historical analyses is, however, insufficient; in other cases, limitations of space prevent us from elaborating on a sometimes very complex evolution. Similarly, it is not possible within the confines of this chapter to evaluate each phenomenon discussed with regard to overarching generalizations about British–American differences.

To palliate these shortcomings at least to a minimal extent, each of the subsections in the main part of this chapter will be appended with a table providing a synopsis of the topics treated. In these tables, each contrast will be evaluated along four parameters: firstly, which of the two varieties has the lead on the diachronic level (or, in other words, which is more progressive/less conservative); secondly, which variety is more formal (or less colloquial); thirdly, which variety has implemented a more consistent grammatical system or discarded more irregularities; and fourthly, which variety employs more explicit grammatical means and is therefore less opaque in the relevant sense.

As has been mentioned several times throughout this book, these four parameters are not new in the context of British–American differences. Therefore, they come along with certain preconceived settings. There is a long tradition that has considered AmE as more conservative (the 'colonial lag' hypothesis; cf. Marckwardt 1958: 80, Kövecses 2000: 25; for a critical assessment, see Görlach 1987 and also Chapters 1, 4 and 5 by Hundt, Mondorf and Schlüter). However, in the twentieth century, the direction of influence has been reversed, so that the leading role in world English now falls to AmE (cf. Algeo 2001). Formality is usually ascribed to BrE, while AmE is considered as strongly influenced by colloquial speech (cf. Mencken 1936: 94–6, Biber 1987: 108–13, Mair 1998: 153–4, Kövecses 2000: 235–46, Tottie 2002a: 176). Similarly, AmE is known for its tendency to eliminate irregularities (cf. Kövecses 2000: 177–202, Rohdenburg 2003a: 212, 223–4, and Chapter 3 by Levin). The fourth characteristic, explicitness, is loosely associated with the 'typical' American directness in matters interpersonal (cf. Kövecses 2000: 203–17). The synopses provided at the end of each subsection will thus allow us to assess the extent to which these prototypes are actually fulfilled.

Since quantitative corpus studies typically do not yield absolute contrasts but gradual differences between the varieties, the judgements along the lines

of these four criteria can obviously only relate to tendencies. For instance, a variety using a clarifying preposition in 60 per cent of the cases will be judged more explicit than a variety dropping the preposition in 55 per cent of the total. Despite this caveat, in some cases no clear decision is possible because the phenomenon under consideration can be viewed from two perspectives. For instance, adding *for* to the adverb *longer* dissociates the item from the paradigm of other compared adverbs like *earlier*, *sooner*, *rather*, *better*, etc., but integrates it into the paradigm of adverbials formed with *for*, e.g. *for sure*, *for good*, *for now*, *for real* and *for (too/very/so etc.) long* itself. In most cases the diachronic direction of the divergence is known or can be inferred, but cases where the evolution has undergone a U-turn may be problematic. In some other cases the decision as to whether BrE or AmE should be regarded as more formal, regular or explicit can only be justified with recourse to additional considerations. In the tabular form of presentation that will be adopted, limitations of space forbid us to expand upon these details. Thus, our judgement of these cases is given in brackets. Finally, there are cases where the criteria are simply not applicable to the phenomenon under consideration, or where we are ignorant of too much of the background to pronounce a judgement. Where this is the case, the corresponding cells of the tables are left empty. For instance, as long as no direct competitors can be brought into play, it is not clear whether a more frequent use of the adverb *overly* or an increased use of prepositional particle verbs like *sneak up on* or *close in on* in AmE has any consequences for the degree of consistency or explicitness of the variety. The generalizations derived from these synopses will be added up and summarized in a comprehensive table in the concluding section. It has to be kept in mind, however, that even the forty-six distinct phenomena investigated here constitute only a more or less arbitrary sample of British–American contrasts with a limited generalizability.

2 New departures

The pilot studies outlined in this chapter are arranged into five roughly defined classes. The first deals with individual adverbs and adverbials consisting of more than one word; the second concentrates on the use or omission of prepositions and the formation of new prepositions; the third treats noun phrases and their modifiers and quantifiers; the fourth focuses on components of verb phrases, in particular predicates and predicative expressions; and the fifth encompasses various kinds of sentential structures from finite to non-finite.

2.1 *Adverbs and adverbials*

The large and variegated class of adverbs and adverbial expressions contains numerous examples of British–American contrasts. They involve the use or

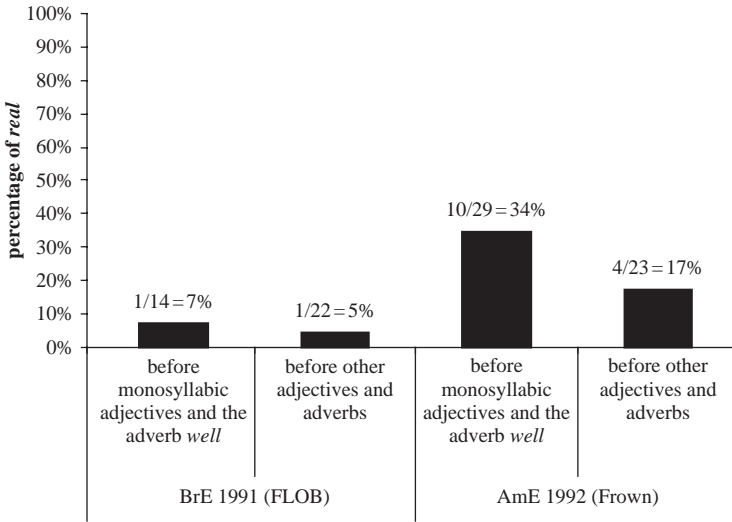


Figure 19.1 The rivalry between *really* and *real* intensifying adjectives (and the occasional adverb) in two matching British and American corpora

omission of the regular adverbial suffix *-ly*, the choice or frequency of use of individual adverbs and other aspects of adverbial usage. A further relevant example concerning different pragmatic implications of an adverb has been treated in [Chapter 17](#) by Karin Aijmer.

1. One case in point that has often been mentioned in the literature but has rarely been quantified is the use of suffixless adverbs, which is more typical of AmE than of BrE (cf. the remarks in Mittins, Salu, Edminson and Coyne 1970: 75–7, 107–8; see furthermore Tagliamonte and Ito 2002: 238 and references therein, Tottie 2002a: 168–9 and Peters 2004: 62, 591). A showcase example of the contrast is presented by the intensifier *real(ly)*, whose suffixless form is considered as a shibboleth of informal AmE. The data in [Figure 19.1](#) confirm the American predilection for the short form in a corpus representing written usage. In addition, a distinction emerges in AmE between monosyllabic and longer adjectives and adverbs: *real* more commonly modifies the shorter ones, with which it forms high-frequency collocations.

2. Besides *real(ly)*, another intensifier can be used to illustrate the AmE tendency to drop the adverbial suffix: before comparatives and semantically similar expressions (e.g. *different*), the adverbial use of *whole* is more typical of AmE than of BrE, which in turn uses *wholly* much more extensively. [Figure 19.2](#) depicts the distribution of *whole*, *wholly* and a third option, *a whole lot*, premodifying the adjective *different* (which merely serves as an example here). The distribution is also subject to grammatical restrictions, which have not been teased apart in the data of [Figure 19.2](#). Thus, *wholly* can

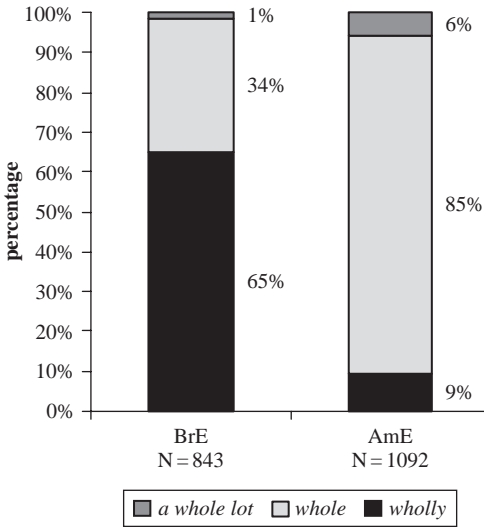


Figure 19.2 The rivalry between *wholly*, *whole* and *a whole lot* as intensifiers preceding *different* in selected British and American newspapers (database: t90-01, g90-00, d91-00, m93-00, L92-99, D92-95, W90-92, N01)²

modify attributive, postnominal or predicative adjectives, while *whole* is only an option before attributive adjectives, and *a whole lot* is limited to post-nominal and predicative uses.

3. The British–American contrast also extends to manner adverbs, for which Figure 19.3 gives four exemplary collocations. Again, AmE uses more suffixless adverbs than BrE, though the percentages vary depending on the contexts considered. In both varieties, *funnily* tends to be avoided, but while AmE overwhelmingly resorts to the suffixless variant, BrE opts for the *way*-construction in almost a third of the instances.

Historically, there has been a longstanding competition between suffixed and suffixless adverbs, with an overall trend towards more adverbial marking in the standard. (Needless to say, this is not true of non-standard usage.) Thus, the re-establishment of unmarked adverbs in the spoken and written standard can be considered as a U-turn development led by AmE.

4. Another case where an adjective without adverbial suffix is put to use as an adverb is the form *likely*. Greenbaum (1969: 110, 122, 223) observes that this is possible only when *likely* is modified (cf. example (1)).

(1) This type will (very) likely be sold out in the near future.

² Full references of the electronic corpora involved are found in the bibliography. Notice that the abbreviations indicating American and British newspapers use capital and lower-case letters, respectively.

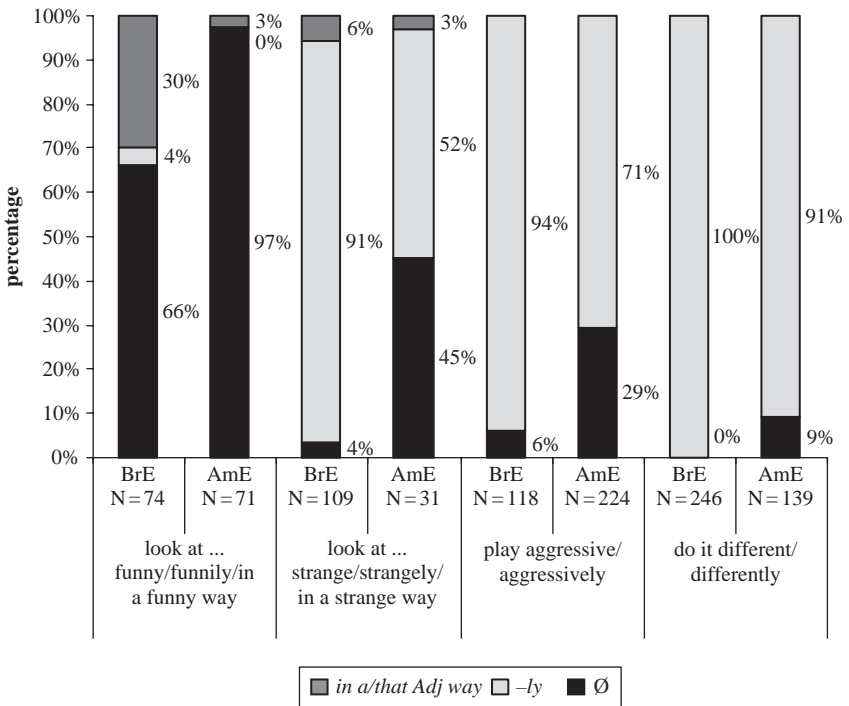


Figure 19.3 The rivalry between suffixed and suffixless manner adverbs (and the *way*-periphrasis) in selected British and American newspapers (database: *funny/funnily*: t90-03, g90-03, d91-00, i93-94, i02-04, m93-00, L92-95, D92-95, W90-92, Nor; *strange(ly)*: t90-01, g90-00, d91-00, m93-00, L92-95, D92-95, W90-92, Nor; *aggressive(ly)*: t90-01, g90-00, d91-00, m93-00, L92-99, D92-95, W90-92; *different(ly)*: t90-01, g90-00, d91-00, m93-00, L92-99, D92-95, W90-92, Nor)³

As Figure 19.4 reveals, *likely* is generally better established as an adverb in AmE: not only is it more frequent, but it also dispenses with modifying material more easily than in BrE, where most instances are accompanied by *very*, *quite*, *enough*, *just as*, (*as*) . . . *as not*, *less*, *more (than)* or *most*. It is true that unmodified *likely* occurs only rarely in initial position even in AmE: an adverb without appropriate marking presumably poses processing problems at the beginning of a sentence. However, the frequency of the adverb *likely* per million words (Brown: 19 pmw; Frown: 37 pmw) and the share of adverbial as opposed to adjectival uses of the form (Brown: 12.6 per cent; Frown: 19.7 per cent) are increasing. Incidentally, a pilot study of British and American newspapers suggests that BrE compensates for this lack through

³ The *way*-periphrasis has only been taken into account for the first two collocations.

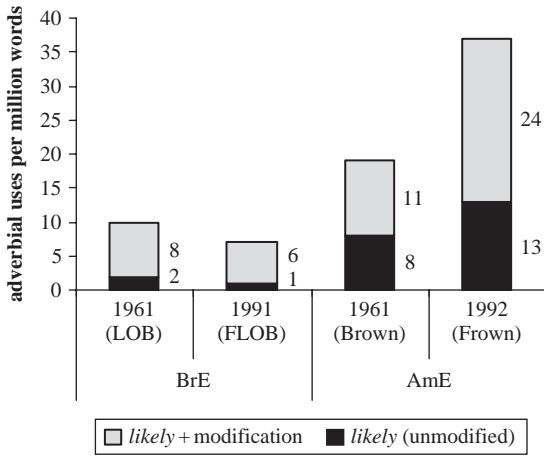


Figure 19.4 Adverbial uses of *likely* in four matching British and American English corpora

a more extensive use of the formula *it is likely that* to introduce a clause (6.82 pmw as opposed to only 1.48 pmw in AmE).

5. Our next example involves a different adverbial marker, namely the final *-s* in items ending in *-ward(s)*. It is a well-known fact that BrE is more prone to use the ending *-wards* for this group of adverbs, while AmE plumps for *-ward*, but the distinctive value of the *-s* has never been quantified so far. In effect, as Figure 19.5 demonstrates, BrE draws a fairly consistent morphological distinction between adverbs (ending in *-wards*) and adjectives (ending in *-ward*), which is absent from AmE. The contrast is illustrated in (2).

(2) The slight upward trend has been revised further upwards.

A look at the individual items shows that the distinction is however not as straightforward as one might expect: it is hardly drawn at all, even in BrE, in the case of *forward(s)*, and it applies only in part to the items *inward(s)* and *outward(s)*. Even so, BrE patently makes use of a morphological contrast that is neutralized in AmE. From a historical perspective, BrE has thus stabilized an existing functional split that AmE has abandoned by progressively giving up the adverbial marker *-s*. The contrast, by the way, carries over to the preposition *toward(s)*, which preserves the *-s* in as much as 98 per cent of the cases in BrE, but has lost it in 99 per cent of the total in AmE.

6. Apart from the use or omission of the adverbial suffix in items like *real/really* and *whole/wholly*, the domain of degree adverbs offers several other contrasts that distinguish between British and American usage. For one thing, the two varieties manifest different preferences in the choice of intensifiers. Two items that are particularly typical of AmE are *plenty* and *overly*. The items come from two different stylistic poles: *plenty* is

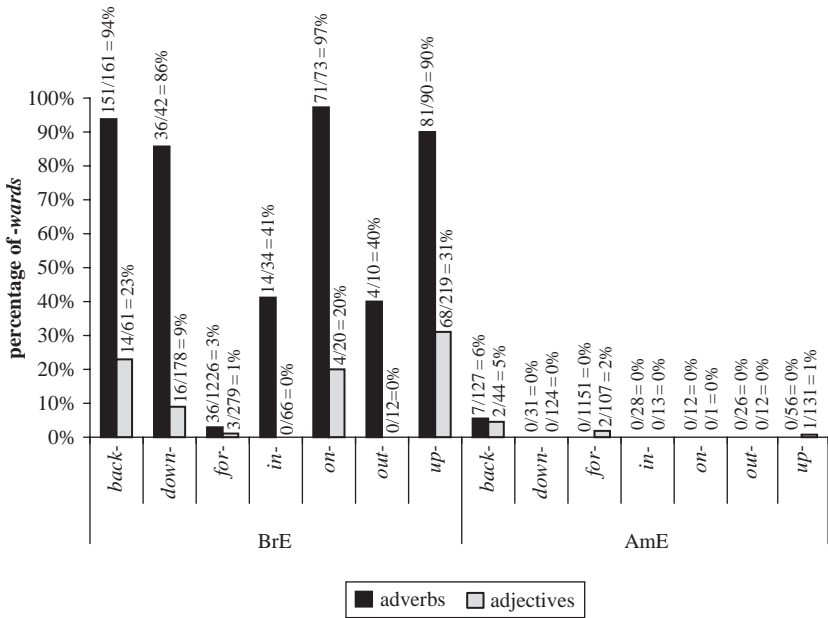


Figure 19.5 The distribution of *-ward* and *-wards* with adverbs and adjectives in selected British and American newspapers (data supplied by Imke Zander) (database: t97–99, L97–99)⁴

characteristic of informal and *overly* of formal registers. Figure 19.6 indicates their frequencies per million words.

A premodifying *plenty* is often combined with a postmodifying *enough*, as in *plenty nice enough*. In the special case of *plenty*, which is a noun in its origin, the addition of *enough*, which predominated in the nineteenth century, can be considered as a clarification of the adverbial function. In our newspaper data, BrE has a drastically higher percentage of ‘*enough*-support’ than AmE (78 per cent vs. 10 per cent), which also speaks for a better establishment of *plenty* as an intensifier in AmE.

7. Another case in point is the intensification of the comparative *fewer* as a determiner accompanying countable plural nouns or in nominal uses (with ellipsis of the nominal head). The expected intensifier would seem to be *many*, but its combination with *fewer* creates an apparent contradiction in terms that can be avoided by using *much* (which, according to grammatical norms, is appropriate only for uncountables).⁵ Figure 19.7 shows that this

⁴ In the case of *plenty*, all adjectives (predicative and attributive), but only unmarked simple adverbs (e.g. *fast*, *well*), have been considered.

⁵ Another avoidance strategy that neither incurs the semantic nor the grammatical infelicity but is excluded from the present count is the use of *far* instead of *many* or *much*.

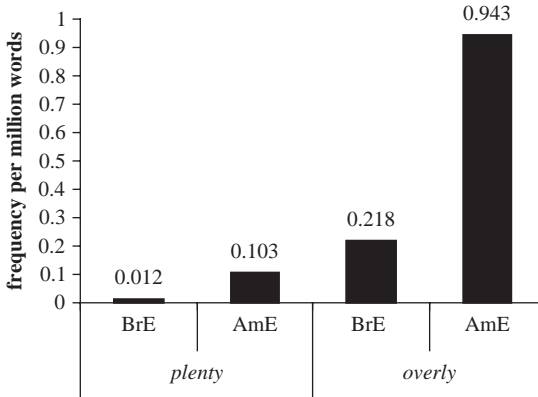


Figure 19.6 The use of *plenty* and *overly* as premodifiers of adjectives and adverbs in selected British and American newspapers (database: *plenty*: t91, t95, g92, d91, m95, D95, W91, N01 Jan-Jun; *overly*: t92, m93, D95, W92, N01)

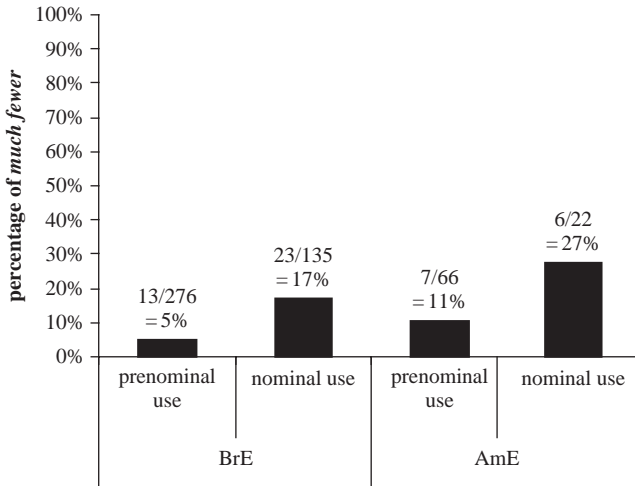


Figure 19.7 The rivalry between *many* and *much* in the type *many/much fewer (books)* in selected British and American newspapers (database: t90–00, g90–00, d91–00, m93–00, L92–95, D92–95, W90–92)

possibility is more frequently resorted to in AmE. In addition, the figure reveals that in both varieties the prenominal use (e.g. *many/much fewer books*) is characterized by a lower share of *much* than the nominal use (e.g. *many/much fewer*). A look at the historical dimension of the phenomenon shows that *much* before *fewer* is actually a longstanding usage: *much* was used exclusively

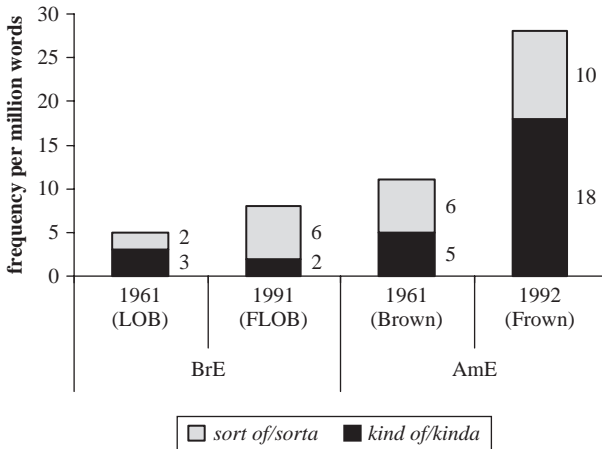


Figure 19.8 The use of *kind of/kinda* and *sort of/sorta* modifying elements other than nouns/noun phrases in four matching British and American corpora

in this context up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. It is only in the recent past that *many* has gained ground – *pace* Bolinger (1968: 127), who writes that '*many fewer* is next to impossible'.

8. Also within the category of degree adverbs, but belonging to the subcategory of downtoners, is another contrast that has frequently been noted in the literature: accordingly, AmE has a predilection for using *sort of* or *kind of* (and their reduced versions *sort o'/sorta* and *kind o'/kinda*) to modify many different types of syntactic elements (e.g. adjectives, adverbs, verbs and clauses introduced by *as if*) as well as in elliptical uses (where *sort of/kind of* stand on their own, mostly in affirmative replies).⁶ Figure 19.8 provides suggestive empirical evidence that the downtoners are indeed more frequent in AmE, and that *sort of* is more typically British, whereas *kind of* is more widespread in AmE. What is more, the increase that can be observed in both varieties is strikingly accelerated in AmE, so that the gap between AmE and BrE is widening rather than closing. A closer analysis (not reproduced here) additionally shows that the syntactic uses of *sort of/kind of* are more highly diversified in AmE.

9. Turning now to the domain of temporal adverbs, two characteristic differences can be mentioned. The first concerns the item *twice*. While *once* is firmly established and *thrice* has been generally ousted by the more regular (analytic) equivalent *three times*, *two times* may be turning into a

⁶ For two studies of the grammaticalized uses of *sort of* and *kind of* as degree modifiers (both of which do not pay attention to British–American contrasts), see Aijmer (1984) and Tabor (1994).

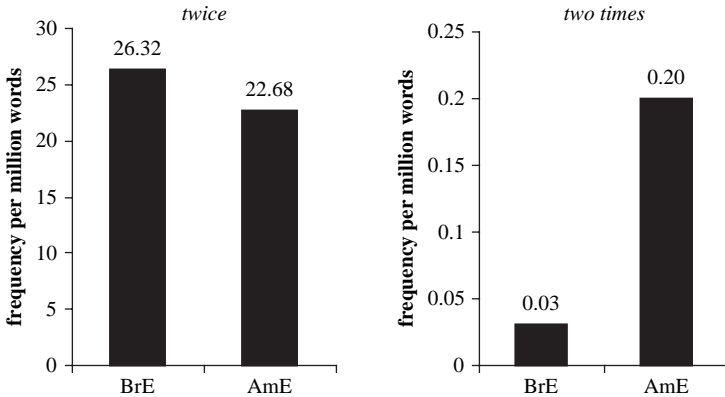


Figure 19.9 The rivalry between *twice* and *two times* in three major syntactic environments in selected British and American newspapers (database: *twice*: moo, D95; *two times*: t90-01, g90-00, d91-00, m93-00, L92-99, D92-95, W90-92, N01)

serious competitor for the still-frequent (synthetic) adverb *twice*. The data in Figure 19.9 show the rates of occurrence of the two items in certain high-frequency collocations.⁷ Though *twice* is still well entrenched here, it is used more sparingly in AmE than in BrE. The frequencies of *two times* contrast in the reverse direction. This suggests that there might be a compensatory relationship between the two adverbs, with AmE favouring the more regular option.⁸

10. The second contrast concerning adverbials of time deals with the choice between the comparative *longer* and the extended phrase *for longer*: the extended variant has for at least two centuries been associated with following *than*-phrases (e.g. *for longer than a year*). This connection seems to have been weakening over the second half of the twentieth century, with *for longer* replacing *longer* in other contexts as well. The change is starting out from BrE, where the full collocation *for longer (...) than* is still comparatively frequent, but the form *for longer* is found increasingly in new environments, including sentence-finally. As Figure 19.10a shows, isolated *for longer* is hardly known in AmE, with only 0.05 occurrences per million words.

That this extension of use is a very recent phenomenon in BrE can be seen from a comparison of the frequencies per million words in the earlier and later years of the British newspapers, which are totted up in Figure 19.10a. Thus, in the data from the early 1990s (t90, g90, d91, i93 and m93), *for longer (...)*

⁷ The environments searched include *twice/two times as much/often/large*, etc., *twice/two times the size/length/speed*, etc. and *twice/two times a day/week/year*, etc.

⁸ The case of the special temporal adverb *twice* has a (distant) parallel in the time expression *fortnight* and the derived adjective/adverb *fortnightly*. Here again, even formal AmE makes much less use of the synthetic and more opaque term: in *The Washington Times*, *fortnight (ly)* occurs merely 1.5 times pmw, while in the British *Times* it has a frequency of 28.4 pmw.

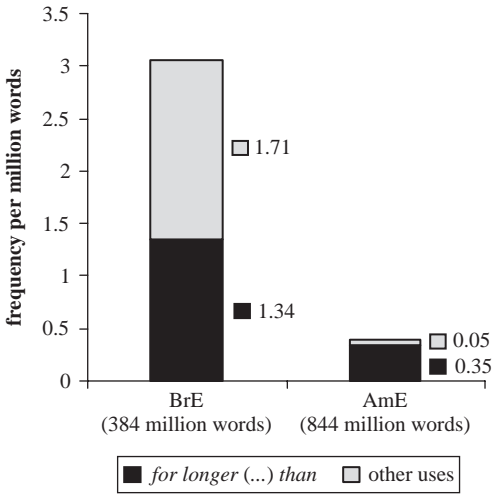


Figure 19.10a The distribution of *for longer* in selected British and American newspapers (database: t90, to4, g90, go4, d91, doo, i93, io4, m93, moo, L92–99, D92–95, W90–92, No1)

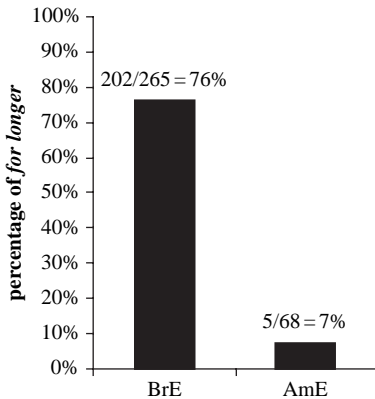


Figure 19.10b Comparative sequences of the type *fresher (for) longer* in selected British and American newspapers (database: t90–02, g90–00, d91–00, i93–94, m93–00, L92–99, D92–95, W90–92, No1)

than has a frequency of 1.17 pmw, which increases slightly to 1.45 pmw in the first years of the twenty-first century (to4, go4, doo, io4 and moo), while other uses of *for longer* increase dramatically from 0.90 pmw to 2.20 pmw in the same years. As is shown by Figure 19.10b, the British–American contrast is sharpened when another comparative precedes (*for*) *longer* (see example (3)).

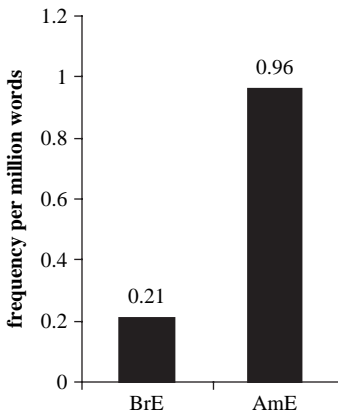


Figure 19.11 The occurrence of *nary* ‘not/never/neither’ in selected British and American newspapers (database: t90–01, g90–00, d91–00, m93–00, L92–99, D92–95, W90–92, N01)

(3) This way it tends to keep fresher (for) longer.

In this context, BrE exhibits a striking tendency to insert *for* in 76 per cent of all cases, while AmE still only employs it in 7 per cent and tolerates the immediate adjacency of two comparatives in the remaining cases. The driving forces behind the intercalation of *for* may be the *horror aequi* effect triggered by the comparative sequence as well as the need for an upbeat introducing the constituent formed by *longer*.⁹ Since *for* is hardly available in AmE, these forces operate more or less vacuously in this variety.

11. Turning now to another subclass of adverbs, viz. negators, there is one item that is more current in the American written standard than in the British. Contracted from the sequence *never a, nary* (meaning ‘not/never/neither’) is of dialectal origin, but is found more than four times as often in American newspapers as in their British counterparts (see Figure 19.11). This contrast seems to be indicative of the more colloquial style cultivated in American papers.

12. A different type of British–American contrast in the domain of negation concerns the placement of the negator in connection with infinitives. The splitting of infinitives, long incriminated by prescriptive grammarians, is generally more common in AmE (see Fitzmaurice 2000: 61, Kato 2001):¹⁰ a crude frequency count in newspaper data reveals that *to*-infinitives are almost

⁹ For a definition of the *horror aequi* Principle, see Chapter 11 by Vosberg; see furthermore Chapter 8 by Rohdenburg. The upbeat requirement is discussed in more detail in Schlüter (to appear); see also Fijn van Draat (1910: 113–14).

¹⁰ For a study of split infinitives (that makes no reference to British–American contrasts), see Close (1987).

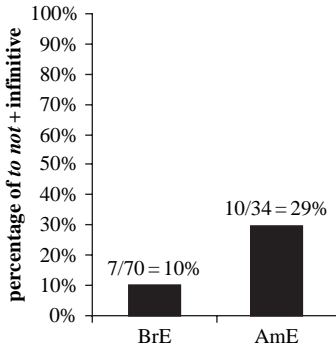


Figure 19.12a Negated infinitives governed by and immediately following the verbs *begin* and *start* in selected British and American newspapers (database: t90–01, g90–00, d91–00, m93–00, L92–99, D92–95, W90–92, Nor)

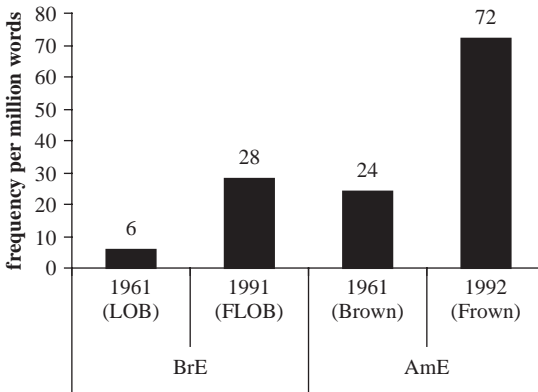


Figure 19.12b The use of infinitives split by single adverbs ending in *-ly* in four matching British and American corpora

ten times as often separated by *not* in AmE (5.26 pmw) as in BrE (0.56 pmw). More specifically, Figure 19.12a provides the results of a direct comparison of *to*-infinitives preceded by *not* (*not to + infinitive*) or split by *not* (*to not + infinitive*) in the complementation of the verbs *begin* and *start*. It turns out that 29 per cent of the infinitives in AmE are split, but only 10 per cent of the infinitives in BrE.

A similar situation obtains for other short adverbs that may intervene between *to* and the infinitive (cf. Mittins, Salu, Edminson and Coyne 1970: 69–73). Figure 19.12b compares the frequencies of infinitives split by simple (i.e. single-word) adverbs ending in *-ly*. A clear twofold division emerges: on

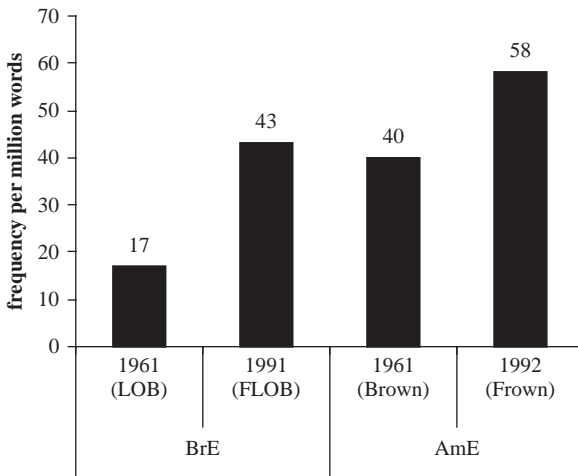


Figure 19.13 Verb-based attitudinal disjuncts like *admittedly* and *allegedly* in four matching British and American corpora

the one hand, AmE has a stronger tendency to split infinitives; on the other, in both varieties the usage gains ground between 1961 and 1991/1992. We can thus conclude that AmE is leading the way in the expansion of split infinitives, and BrE is following suit.

13. The final two contrasts to be adduced here from the domain of adverbs are from the relatively formal department of sentence adverbs (see also Swan 1991). According to Algeo (2006: 146), ‘the category as a whole is suggestive of Britishness’. At a closer look, however, this is only true of the second subtype of sentence adverbs to be discussed under item 14. The first subtype comprises adverbs derived from verbs of thinking and saying, which are based on past participles with an attached *-ly* suffix (cf. Greenbaum 1969: 95, 98, 105, Swan 1991: 418).¹¹ The items included in the following pilot study are *admittedly*, *allegedly*, *assuredly*, *avowedly*, *concededly*, *expectedly*, *professedly*, *purportedly*, *reportedly*, *reputedly* and *supposedly*. Figure 19.13 displays the token frequencies of these eleven types lumped together. The resultant scenario is similar to the one encountered in Figure 19.12b above: AmE is spearheading the introduction of this type of sentence adverb, but the innovation is rapidly being adopted into BrE. Compared to the 1961 data, the change has gained considerable momentum within the three decades covered. The fact that the American data contain a greater number of different types provides another piece of evidence for the better establishment of these adverbs in AmE.

¹¹ In Greenbaum’s classification, these so-called ‘verb-based attitudinal disjuncts’ belong to correspondence class J (1969: 105), which is defined by the equivalence between, e.g., *Allegedly they work hard* and *It is alleged that they work hard*.

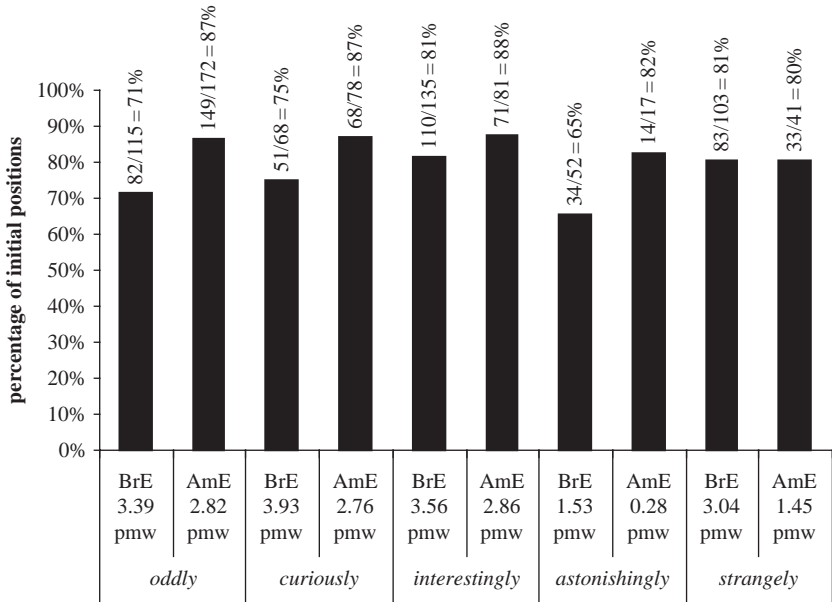


Figure 19.14a The distribution of selected sentence adverbs across different positions in British and American newspapers (The figures at the bottom of the columns give the overall frequency of the adverbs per million words.) (database: *oddly*: t91, W91–92; *curiously*: t91 Jan–Jun, W91; *interestingly*: t92, W91; *astonishingly*: t91, W91–92; *strangely*: t91, W91)

14. The second type of sentence adverb to come under scrutiny here are evaluative sentence adverbs like *oddly*, *curiously*, etc. It has been shown that the current flourishing of this class is quite unprecedented in its history (cf. Swan 1991: 418–19) and apparently more typical of BrE than of AmE (cf. Algeo 2006: 146–7). Robust evidence of three kinds can be adduced to show that evaluative sentence adverbs are generally better established in BrE – in contrast to the preceding example of adverbs based on verbs of thinking and saying. Consider first the frequency indications given below the columns in Figure 19.14a. All of the five adverbs exemplified here have more occurrences per million words in BrE than in AmE. Secondly, as the columns indicate, four out of five are more frequently found in clause-initial position in AmE than in BrE. This is certainly due to the fact that the beginning of a sentence is the prototypical and most easily recognizable position for a sentence adverb. In other words, BrE can afford to deviate from the canonical position more frequently than AmE.

A third argument for the better establishment of evaluative sentence adverbs in BrE emanates from the comparison shown in Figure 19.14b.

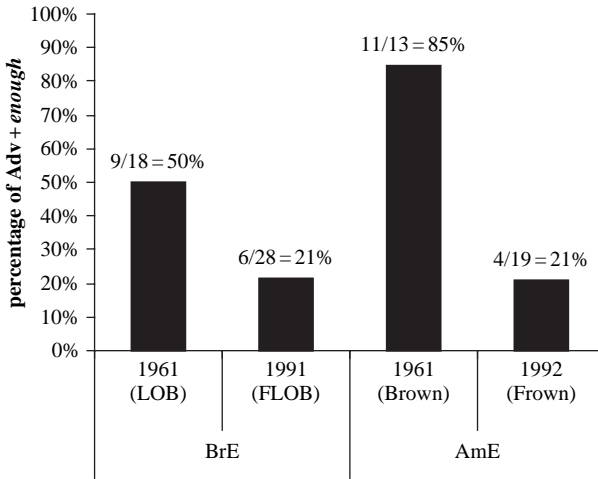


Figure 19.14b The distribution of six evaluative sentence adverbs (*amazingly*, *astoundingly*, *curiously*, *interestingly*, *oddly*, *strangely*) in four matching British and American corpora

Here, all occurrences of six sentence adverbs in four one-million-word corpora are classified according to whether or not they are postmodified by *enough*. The latter contributes little (if anything) to the semantics, but serves as a clear indicator of the syntactic and semantic function of this type of sentence adverbial, as is illustrated in example (4) (cf. Schreiber 1971).

(4) Strangely (enough), the audience received the film with enthusiasm.

In the 1961 data, the count shows a clear-cut contrast between BrE and AmE in the expected direction: AmE requires more support by *enough* to disambiguate the function of the sentence adverbials. In both varieties, the share of adverbs followed by *enough*, however, decreases over three decades so that the contrast appears to be neutralized by the early 1990s. We are thus witnessing an evolution spearheaded by BrE, with AmE catching up rapidly (see Rohdenburg 1996b: 107–9).

A special case in point is provided by the sentence adverb *funnily* (*enough*), which in this function is common in BrE (1.04 pmw), but virtually non-existent in AmE (0.02 pmw). It is remarkable that *enough* is most rarely dropped here even in BrE. A possible reason may be that sentence adverbs are generally foreign to spoken registers (but typical of journalese). *Funnilly*, however, is the only sentence adverb that is so frequent that it spills over to spoken English, but it cannot dispense with ‘*enough*-support’ (see Rohdenburg 1996b: 108).

As has been announced in the outline of this chapter, each subsection of the pilot studies will be followed up by a table surveying the phenomena

Table 19.1 *Synopsis of British–American contrasts in the domain of adverbs and adverbials*

	+ progressive/ – conservative	+ formal/ – colloquial	+ consistent/ – irregular	+ explicit/ – opaque
1. <i>real(ly)</i>	AmE	BrE	BrE	BrE
2. <i>(a) whole (lot)/wholly different</i>	AmE	BrE	BrE	BrE
3. <i>funny/-ily/strange(ly)/ aggressive(ly)/different(ly)</i>	AmE	BrE	BrE	BrE
4. <i>likely</i>	AmE	BrE	BrE	BrE
5. <i>-ward(s)</i>	AmE	BrE	BrE	BrE
6. <i>plenty</i>	AmE	BrE	(BrE)	(BrE)
<i>overly</i>	AmE	AmE		
7. <i>many/much fewer</i>	BrE	BrE	BrE	BrE
8. <i>sort of/kind of</i>	AmE	BrE	(BrE)	(BrE)
9. <i>twice/two times</i>	AmE	BrE	AmE	AmE
10. <i>(for) longer</i>	BrE	(AmE)		BrE
11. <i>nary</i>	AmE	BrE		
12. <i>to not/Adv + inf.</i>	AmE	BrE	AmE	AmE
13. <i>admittedly, allegedly, etc.</i>	AmE	AmE		
14. <i>oddly/curiously etc. (enough)</i>	BrE	BrE		AmE
sums BrE : AmE	3 : 12	12 : 3	8 : 2	9 : 3

covered and evaluating them with respect to four standard assumptions about British–American contrasts. Table 19.1 brings together the topics covered in the present section on adverbs and adverbials.

Far from being able to comment on every single decision here, we can highlight a few tendencies. With only three exceptions, it is usually AmE that is in the lead of a change (and we have seen that in many cases BrE is following suit). Significantly, the changes initiated by AmE are usually directed towards more colloquial structures. As a consequence of this, BrE in many cases remains more formal. Interestingly, two of the three changes spearheaded by BrE (numbers 7 and 14) are moves towards more formal structures, in line with a more formal overall character of BrE. Note that two of the changes promoted by AmE (number 6, *overly*, and number 13), however, lead to more formal structures as well. Contrary to preconceived notions of AmE as being generally more regular, this role falls to BrE in eight out of ten cases. This is due to the fact that, in the domain of adverbs in particular, BrE preserves more regular and explicit markings than AmE (numbers 1–5). Therefore, AmE also has a tendency towards more opacity as far as adverbial marking is concerned. In other respects, AmE lives up to its allegedly more explicit character (numbers 9, 12 and 14). We thus end up with a somewhat heterogeneous picture that contains ample counter-evidence to the hypotheses about the ‘colonial lag’ and the greater regularity and explicitness of AmE.

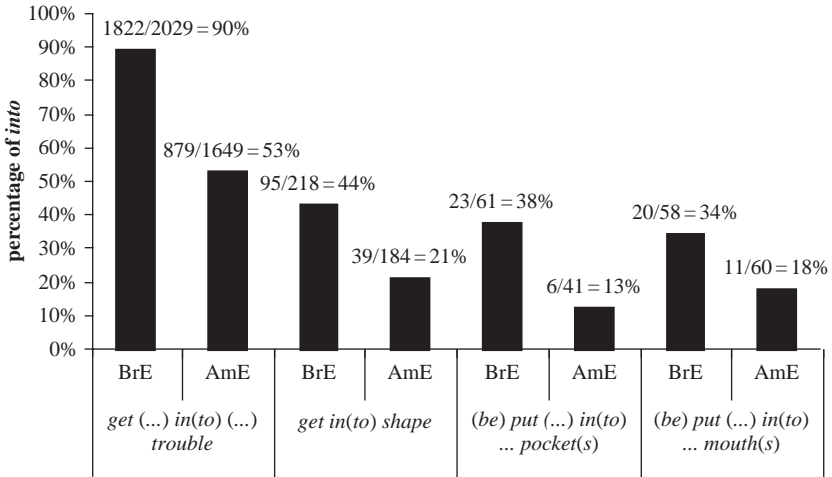


Figure 19.15 The rivalry between the prepositions *into* and *in* in four frequent collocations in selected British and American newspapers (database: *trouble*: t00–01, d91–00, m93–00, L92, D92–95, W90–92, Nor; *shape*: d91–00, m93–00, W90–92, D92–95; *pocket(s)* and *mouth(s)*: m93–94, D93–94)

This concludes our exemplification of adverbial contrasts and brings us to the next domain, viz. prepositions. The data from topic 10 (dealing with the time adverb *longer* with or without *for*) could as well be used in the following section, which draws attention to several contrasts involving the use or omission of prepositions.

2.2 Prepositions

Pre- (and post-)positions are notorious for their unpredictable divergences between languages. The following case studies will show that, even between the two national varieties considered, we find some considerable contrasts. The study elaborated in [Chapter 6](#) by Eva Berlage has already detailed a relevant example (pre- vs. postpositive *notwithstanding*) and illustrated some additional contrasts concerning the pairs *including* vs. (postpositive) *included*, *excepting* vs. (postpositive) *excepted*, *apart from* vs. (postpositive) *apart* and *aside from* vs. (postpositive) *aside*.¹²

15. Let us first consider a very general difference that cuts across many different contexts of use. [Figure 19.15](#) gives four arbitrarily selected collocations in which the prepositions *in* and *into* are in competition. In each of them it is obvious that BrE displays a higher share of *into*, which AmE substitutes with the shorter *in*. This implies that BrE tends to distinguish

¹² For further details, see Berlage (2007).

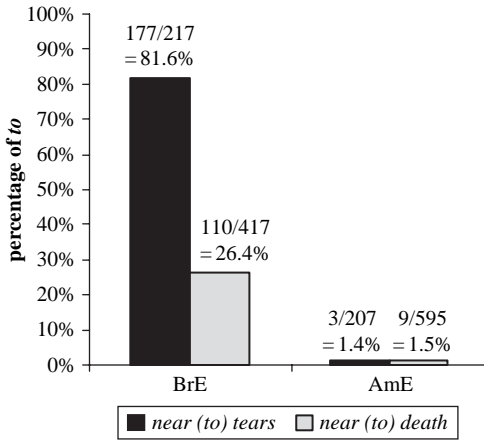


Figure 19.16 The distribution of the preposition *to* in *near (to) tears/death* in selected British and American newspapers (t90–01, g90–00, d91–00, 193–94, 102–04, m93–00, L92–99, D92–95, W90–92, Noi)¹³

more frequently (though by no means consistently) between indications of place (introduced by *in*) and indications of direction (introduced by *into*). In comparison, AmE remains less explicit.

16. A similar tendency can be observed in connection with the item *near*. As the analysis of two collocations in Figure 19.16 demonstrates, BrE preserves a considerable share of occurrences in which *near* is followed by the preposition *to*. This is the case where *near* has an abstract meaning, as in *near (to) tears* and *near (to) death*, but not where it has purely local semantics. Thus, BrE draws a distinction that is virtually absent from AmE. Note, however, that different collocations display clearly distinct profiles: while more than 80 per cent of the examples involving *tears* have *to*, just above a quarter of the examples involving *death* boast this additional preposition in BrE.

The historical dimension of this phenomenon is revealing. The British–American contrast is only visible in data from the twentieth century. Historical data for the collocation *near (to) death* show that *to* established itself increasingly, reaching around 60 per cent in both varieties around the end of the nineteenth century. In the light of these facts, the low rate of *to* in present-day AmE appears to result from a U–turn in the early twentieth century.

17. Another recent change implemented faster in AmE concerns the prepositional phrase *by the courtesy of*, which can be argued to be evolving into a novel preposition. This process is accompanied by a stepwise formal reduction: firstly, the definite article is deleted; then the initial preposition *by* is left out; most recently, the final preposition *of* may also be dropped.

¹³ Examples with adjectival uses of *near* meaning ‘imminent’ have been discounted since *near* is not interchangeable with *near to* in these uses.

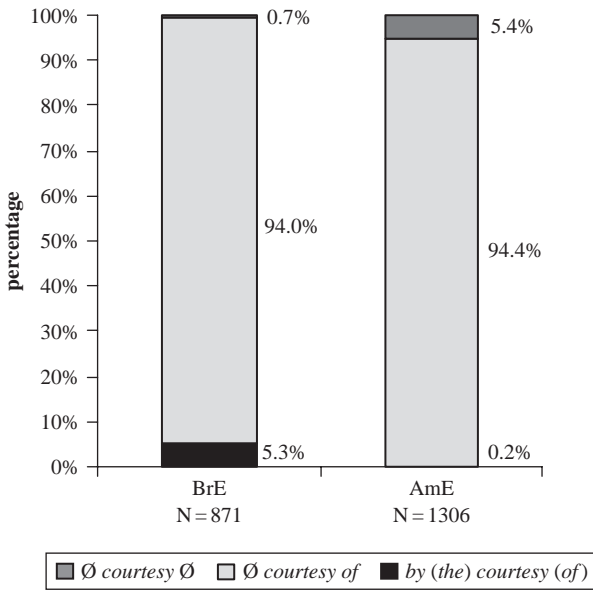


Figure 19.17 Causal/instrumental prepositional phrases involving *courtesy* in selected British and American newspapers (database: t90, g90, d92, m93, t91 Jan-Mar, t93 Jan-Mar, d92 Jan-Mar, W92, Insight 90-92, L92, L95, D92-95)¹⁴

Figure 19.17 shows that the (near-)complete form(s) are best preserved in BrE, while the advanced reduction stage *courtesy* is practically limited to AmE.

This may be interpreted as a grammaticalization process which is further advanced in AmE than in BrE. Incidentally, it is accompanied by semantic bleaching: the novel preposition is extending its range of application from causes leading to positive results to causes leading to neutral and negative ones (cf. example (5)) and from animate to inanimate nouns (cf. example (6)).

- (5) These days, my red-eye problems are usually *courtesy* of a sleepless little one and rarely due to boozy, smoky clubs.
- (6) First, Martin captured the fourth set, *courtesy* of a superbly placed backhand return.

18. Another item that is arguably evolving into a novel preposition is the adjective *absent*, which is taking on the meaning of (and possibly competing

¹⁴ The traditional alternative, *through the courtesy of*, which is never reduced, has been excluded from consideration. There are three such examples in the British newspapers and four in the American.

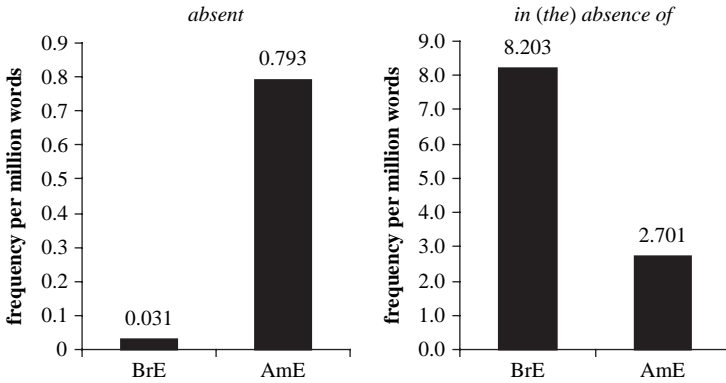


Figure 19.18 The use of the novel preposition *absent* and the prepositional phrase *in (the) absence of* in selected British and American newspapers (data for *in (the) absence of* supplied by Imke Zander) (database: *absent*: t92, g92, d92, i93, m93, L92, D92–93, W92; *in the absence of*: t90–03, g90–03, d91–00, m93–00, D92–95, L92–99, W90–92)

with) the full prepositional phrase *in the absence of* (cf. Slotkin 1985, 1994). An example is given in (7).

- (7) It is going to be tough, especially absent/in the absence of any improvement in market conditions.

However, as Figure 19.18 shows, this evolution is largely limited to AmE, where *absent* in this function has achieved a considerable frequency; BrE so far only has traces of this innovative use. The fact that BrE uses the prepositional phrase *in (the) absence of* about three times as often as AmE may be taken to suggest that there exists a compensatory relationship between the use of the two semantically and functionally equivalent expressions.

19. The next prepositional contrast has to do with the verb *depend*, whose complement is usually introduced by the prepositions *on* or *upon*. However, traditional grammar writing has it that *if*-clauses may not be preceded by a preposition (see Rohdenburg 2006c: 50–2). If *it depends (up) on* is followed by an *if*-clause, one would thus expect the preposition to be dropped. In analogy with other indirect interrogative clauses, the ban on the use of prepositions is, however, increasingly being lifted in AmE. Figure 19.19 shows that the trend has reached 50 per cent in American journalistic prose, while written BrE has only traces of it.

20. A related contrast concerns the use of various prepositional links before indirect interrogative clauses dependent on *the question*. Like *if*-clauses, *whether*-clauses historically used to occur without prepositional links. In the EEPF and ECF corpora, this is true without exception (for *whether*-clauses after *the question*). However, in the nineteenth and early

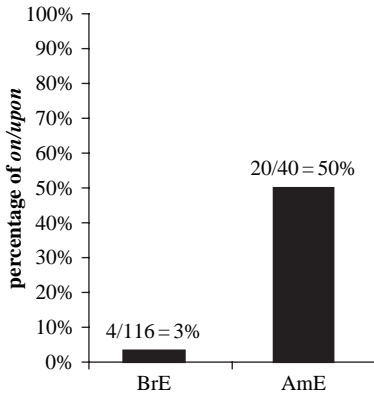


Figure 19.19 The use of prepositions (immediately) preceding interrogative *if*-clauses dependent on *it depends* in selected British and American corpora (database: BNC, t90–04, g90–04, d91–00, i93–94, i02–04, m93–00, L92–99, D92–95, W90–92, N01)

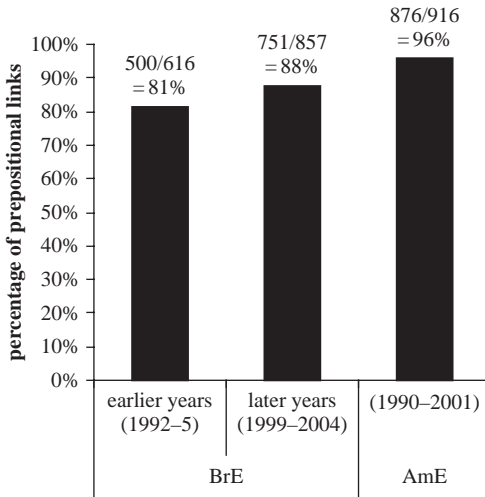


Figure 19.20 The use of prepositions introducing interrogative *whether*-clauses dependent on *the question* in selected British and American newspapers (database: t92, t04, g92, g04, i93, i04, d92, doo, m93–95, m99–00, L92, D92–95, W90–92, N01)

twentieth century collections (NCF, MNC, LNC, ETC), the two national varieties begin to split up: the BrE data have only 6.8 per cent and the AmE data boast as much as 15.3 per cent of prepositional links. Figure 19.20 illustrates the situation in Present-Day English. The prepositional links

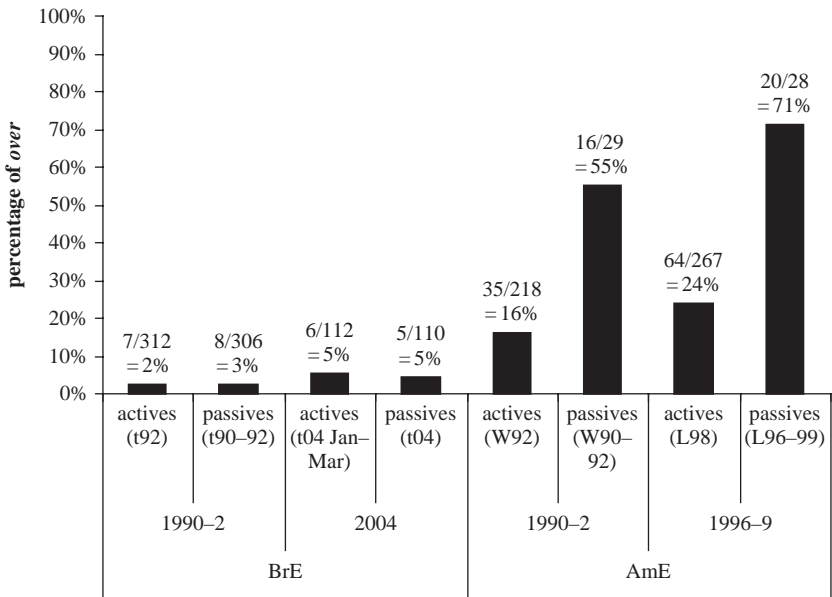


Figure 19.21a The expression of dispreferred alternatives with the verb *prefer* by means of the prepositions *over* and *to* in selected British and American newspapers (The database used for each count is given below the corresponding column.)

used are *of* (which is by far the most frequent), but also *as to*, *about*, *over* and *on*. It is obvious that in AmE, the change has almost reached completion, while BrE still allows *whether*-clauses without prepositional links. However, as is illustrated by the distinction between the earlier and later years of British newspapers included in the count, the gap is closing quickly.

21. We finally turn to an example where not the use or omission of a preposition but the choice of one or the other is at issue. Corpus data show that in EModE the dispreferred alternatives after the verb *prefer* were indicated by a whole range of prepositions, including *before*, *above* and *to*. The latter began to oust its competitors in the second half of the seventeenth century. The most recent variant, namely *over*, is first attested (though rarely) in the second half of the nineteenth century. Figure 19.21a illustrates the rivalry between *over* and *to* in a present-day newspaper database. For both varieties, the graph distinguishes between earlier and later years and again between active and passive uses. This shows, first, that *over* is considerably more common in AmE; second, that it is at present expanding in both varieties; and third, that there is a tendency (particularly in AmE) for it to be favoured in passive contexts. Since passives generally involve a higher processing load than actives, this can be interpreted as a compensatory effect exploiting the more explicit semantics of *over* (cf. the Complexity Principle

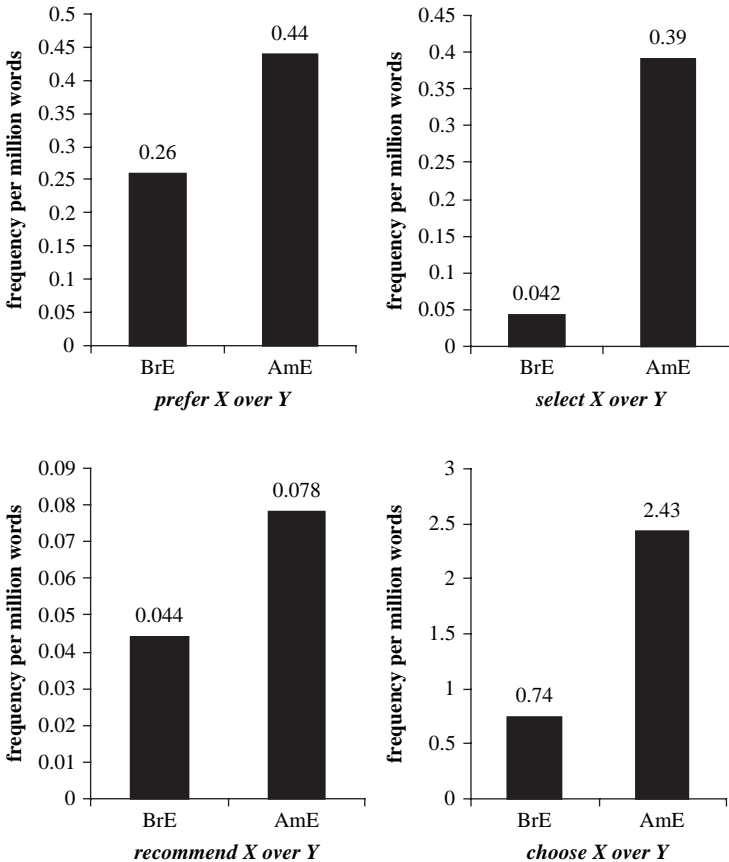


Figure 19.21b The use of the preposition *over* to indicate dispreferred alternatives with the verbs *prefer*, *select*, *recommend* and *choose* in selected British and American newspapers (database: *prefer*: t92, W92; *select* and *recommend*: t90–01, g90–00, d91–00, m93–00, L92–99, D92–95, W90–92, N01; *choose*: m93–00, D92–95)

referred to in [Chapters 4, 6, 10](#) and [11](#) by Mondorf, Berlage, Rohdenburg and Vosberg, respectively).

In addition, *over* is extending its range of application also to other verbs of selecting and recommending, which ultimately are grounded in some kind of indirect comparison, but its establishment has progressed to different extents depending on the particular verb concerned. In many cases, it has the property of supplying an additional prepositional complement to verbs normally taking only a direct object. [Figure 19.21b](#) gives the frequencies of four exemplary verbs combined with *over* per million words, namely *prefer*, *select*, *recommend* and *choose*. It is immediately obvious that AmE

Table 19.2 *Synopsis of British–American contrasts in the domain of prepositions*

	+ progressive/ – conservative	+ formal/ – colloquial	+ consistent/ – irregular	+ explicit/ – opaque
15. <i>in (to)</i>	AmE	BrE	BrE	BrE
16. <i>near (to)</i>	AmE	BrE	AmE	BrE
17. <i>(by (the)) courtesy (of)</i>	AmE	BrE	BrE	BrE
18. <i>absent/in (the) absence of</i>	AmE	BrE	BrE	BrE
19. <i>depends (on) if</i>	AmE	BrE	AmE	AmE
20. <i>the question (of/as to etc.) whether</i>	AmE	AmE	AmE	AmE
21. <i>prefer to/over</i>	AmE		(AmE)	AmE
sums BrE : AmE	0 : 7	5 : 1	3 : 4	4 : 3

has relatively more instances of each example. In return, we may assume that BrE uses other devices more frequently, e.g. the preposition *to* with *prefer*, or *rather than* and *in preference to* with the other verbs.

The above findings from the domain of prepositions can be summarized and evaluated in the tabular form shown in Table 19.2. Again, many of the assignments are to some extent debatable, but there is no space to enlarge upon the reasons in any detail. For what they are worth, they illustrate, however, some more or less pervasive poles of British–American divergences.

The most consistent tendency recognizable in this collection of contrasts is the conservative character of BrE and the innovative quality of AmE. This is visible in the abandonment of functional distinctions (items 15 and 16), in the grammaticalization of new prepositions from more complex prepositional phrases (items 17 and 18), in the filling of systematic gaps in the use of prepositions (items 19 and 20) and in the replacement of one preposition by another (item 21). Also relatively pervasive is the finding that BrE has a strong tendency to preserve formal structures. In contrast, AmE is more colloquial where this implies that less important meaning elements are economized. This American tendency is partly in conflict with the inclination to regularize grammatical structures, which can be seen in particular in items 16, 19 and 20. In sum, AmE turns out, however, to be hardly more regular than BrE. The imbalance observed in Table 19.1 above (showing BrE to be more regular with regard to adverbs and adverbials) is neutralized to a certain degree. As for the question of explicitness vs. opacity, the scores of BrE and AmE are very similar, thus indicating that the alleged explicitness of AmE is often overridden by its tendency to give up formal structures in favour of colloquial ones.

2.3 *Noun phrases*

Chapter 9 by Douglas Biber, Jack Grieve and Gina Ibarri-Shea has already shown some general divergences in the domain of noun phrase modification.

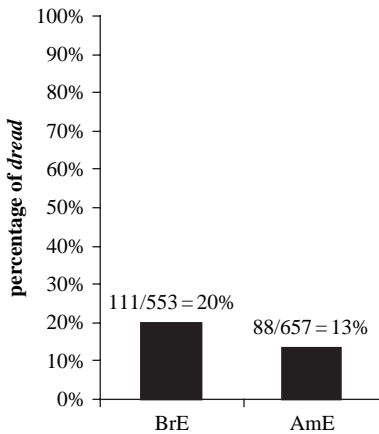


Figure 19.22 The distribution of the participial variants *dread* and *dreaded* in attributive function in British and American newspapers (database: m93–94, m99, d92, g92, t92, D92–95, LAT92–93, W90–92)¹⁵

In this section, we will introduce some further contrasts surrounding the modification of nouns and pronouns.

22. The first example concerns the prenominal, or attributive, use of another pair of participial variants and thus offers parallels with the group *burnt/burned*, *dreamt/dreamed*, *learnt/learned*, etc. (cf. Chapter 3 by Levin) on the one hand, and with the items *lit/lighted* and *knit/knitted* (cf. Chapter 5 by Schlüter) on the other. Historically, the verb *to dread* has two participles, the regular *dreaded* and the recessive, contracted *dread*. Unlike the other short participial variants, *dread* is only preserved in attributive function, but like in the other cases, BrE has relatively more instances of the conservative, short form than AmE, as is indicated by Figure 19.22.

23. A more complex type of premodifying structure involves the ordinal expressions *next/past/last/first* preceding nouns of various classes, e.g. those designating time units like *years/months/weeks/days/hours/minutes/seconds*. Formerly, these items could be combined directly, but over the last two centuries intervening quantifiers have become almost obligatory in many cases. Both national varieties share this trend, but there is a striking difference in the items that can intervene between adjective and noun. Figure 19.23 shows the distribution of the quantifiers in relation to the items *next/past/last/first*, each of which has its own profile. While *few* used to be and still is the most frequent element in this position in both varieties, BrE has largely caught up in the use of *couple of*, which came up in AmE in the nineteenth century. The main contrast today concerns the quantifier *several*, which also

¹⁵ The search concentrated on instances of *dread(ed)* immediately following the determiners *a/the/this/that/these/those*.

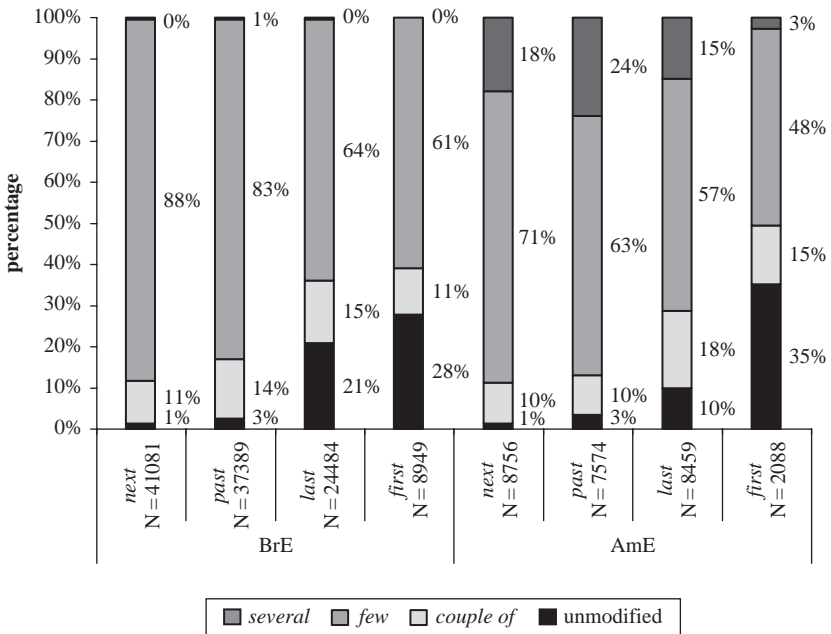


Figure 19.23 The distribution of the phrases *the next/past/last/first O/ few/several/couple of years/months/weeks/days/hours/minutes/seconds* in British and American newspapers (data supplied by André Schaefer) (database: t92-03, g92-03, d91-00, m93-00, D92-95, L92-95, W90-92)¹⁶

emerged in the nineteenth century, but has practically remained confined to AmE. What is more, there is evidence from corpus data that *several* has an even higher share in spoken registers. That this effect is part of a more pervasive divergence is suggested by the fact that in AmE *several* is generally more frequent than in BrE (unlike, for instance, *few*).

Note that the introduction of the quantifiers has brought about a precision of the entire time expressions concerned, and that by adding *several* to the set of quantifiers available AmE has extended its choices and increased its explicitness in this area.

24. A third example of British–American contrasts in the domain of noun phrases concerns the pre-determiners *both* and *all*. Historical data show that these items have increasingly adopted an additional preposition *of* when preceding a determiner or pronoun. Concentrating on *both* before *these* and *those*, Figure 19.24a provides the percentage of intervening *of* in a collection of (mostly) narrative texts by authors born in the nineteenth century. It turns out that AmE is further advanced in the establishment of the preposition than BrE. Furthermore, there is a clear distinction between examples where *both (of)*

¹⁶ The category *couple of* also comprises a few instances of *coupla* and *couple* (without *of*).

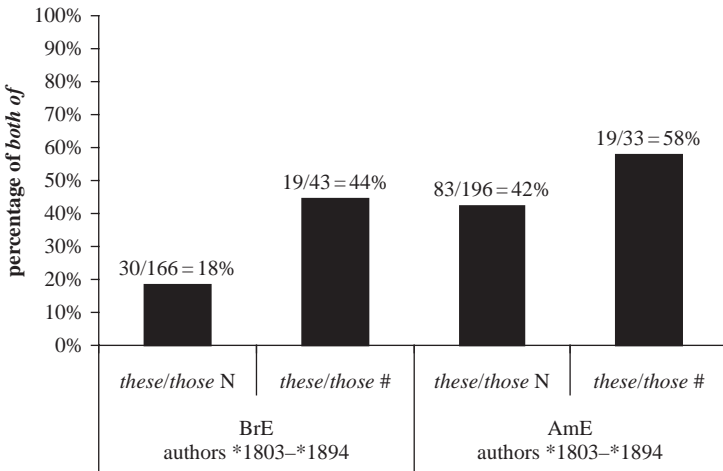


Figure 19.24a The rivalry between *both these/those* and *both of these/those* in (predominantly) narrative historical corpora of British and American English (database: MNC, LNC, ETC)

precedes the determiners *these* or *those* plus a noun and such where *these* or *those* stand on their own as pronouns: in the former case, we find a lower share of *of* than in the latter. A potential reason for the differential speed at which *of* is introduced may be the avoidance of adjacent stressed syllables (cf. Chapter 5 by Schlüter and Schlüter 2005: 39): determiner *these/those* carry less stress than pronominal *these/those*, so that a buffer syllable is more needed in the latter case.

As Figure 19.24b indicates, the trend is considerably further advanced in the spoken language of the late twentieth century. However, the contrasts between the varieties and between contexts featuring *these/those* in determiner and pronominal uses remain in place. The insertion of *of* has nowadays become almost categorical in spoken AmE when no noun follows.

In contrast to combinations with *both*, noun phrases quantified by *all* still have a lower share of intervening *of*, though the distribution across nominal and pronominal uses of *these* and the contrasts between BrE and AmE are parallel. The data in Figure 19.24c depict the situation in (relatively formal) newspapers dating from 1992.¹⁷ We have additional evidence that within the following decade, the percentage of *of* in BrE rose by several percentage points, thus following the American trend with a certain delay. For earlier mentions of this contrast, see Strevens (1972: 51–2) and Algeo (2006: 64); for further analyses against a larger background, see Estling (2000) and Estling-Vannestål (2004).¹⁸

¹⁷ For comparison, after *both*, the percentages of *of* before *these/those N* run to 22 per cent in t92 and 64 per cent in W92.

¹⁸ Estling-Vannestål (2004: 154–7), for example, shows a clear *horror aequi* effect triggered by an additional preceding or following *of*: the percentage of *all of* and *both of* is greatly reduced in favour of simple *all* and *both*.

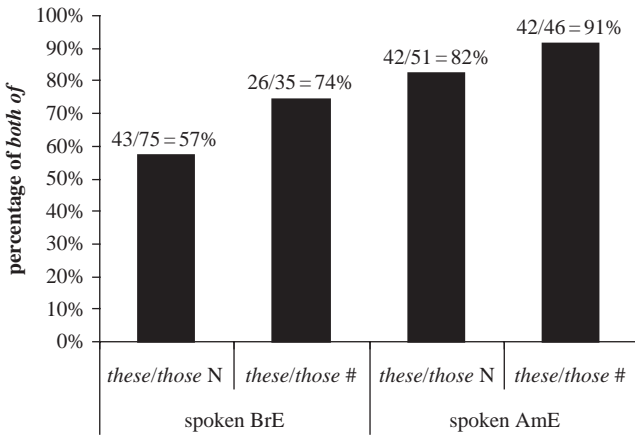


Figure 19.24b The rivalry between *both these/those* and *both of these/those* in spoken corpora of British and American English (database: BNC spokdem + spokcont, CSPAE, ANC Switchboard)

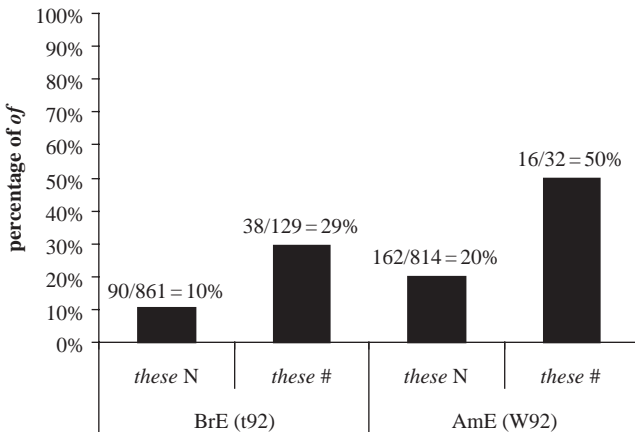


Figure 19.24c The rivalry between *all these/those* and *all of these/those* in selected British and American newspapers (database: t92, W92)

25. A very recent example of British–American differences concerns the structure of noun phrases involving the items *as*, *so*, *how*, *this*, *that* and *too* in pre-determiner function. Previous references to the structure are found in Trudgill and Hannah (2002: 78) and Fitzmaurice (2000: 56–9). BrE consistently sticks to the (non-canonical) structure *as* etc. + adjective + *a* + noun. AmE, in contrast, has begun to introduce an additional *of* between the adjective

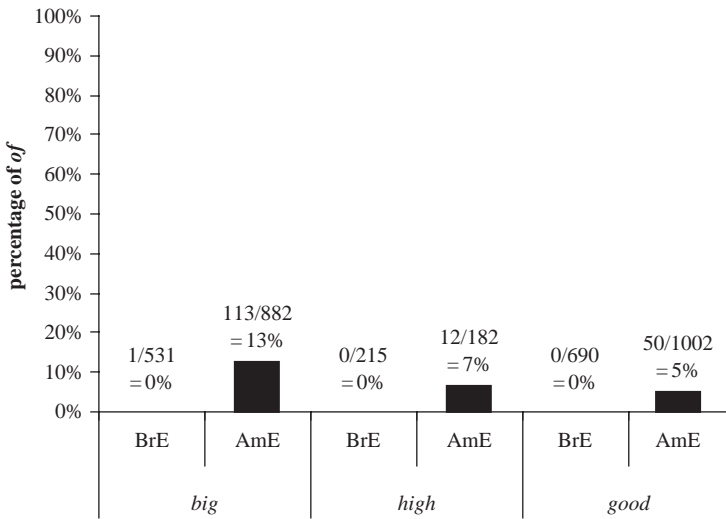


Figure 19.25 The variable use of the preposition *of* after sequences of the predeterminers *as/so/how/this/that/too*, the adjectives *big/high/good* and following nouns in selected British and American newspapers (data supplied by André Schaefer) (database: too, goo, doo, moo, BNC, W90–92, D92–95, L93)

and the indefinite article, as is illustrated in example (8) (for a study of the structure exclusively focusing on AmE, see Fitzmaurice 2000: 56–9).

(8) How big (of) a problem do you think this would be?

As Figure 19.25 indicates, this trend is an American idiosyncrasy which leaves BrE practically unaffected. Two further observations can only be touched on in this context. Firstly, the frequency of inserted *of* in AmE is highly variable: individual adjectives (*big, high, good*) as well as individual pre-determiners (*as/so/how/this/that/too*) have different profiles. It seems that the frequency of inserted *of* depends to some extent on the frequency of the whole collocation. Thus, *how big of a deal*, for instance, is extremely frequent. Secondly, though the figures for the different American newspapers have been totted up here, there are clear differences between them: the *Los Angeles Times* has the highest percentage, the *Detroit Free Press* is intermediate and *The Washington Times* is most conservative. This suggests that the West Coast represents the centre of gravity of the new trend.

26. A different issue in the domain of noun phrases is presented by the recessive use of the item *sufficient* as head of a noun phrase followed by a prepositional phrase consisting of the preposition *of* and plural nouns or singular mass nouns. An example is provided in (9).

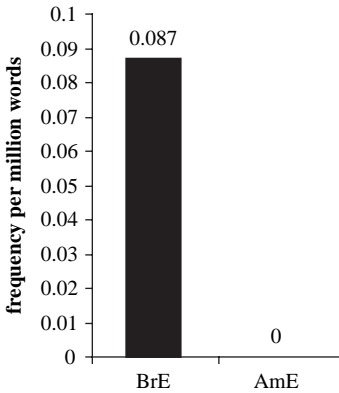


Figure 19.26 The use of *sufficient* in constructions like *sufficient of his energies/talent* in British and American newspapers (database: t90–01, g90–00, d91–00, m93–00, L92–99, D92–95, W90–92, No1)

- (9) Some junior officers voiced their resentment about not getting sufficient of the council's financial means.

Figure 19.26 displays the relative frequencies in a large newspaper corpus. While the British corpus provides 130 instances of this type, there is not a single one in as many as sixteen years of American newspapers, suggesting that in AmE this construction, though still attested in the early 1900s, may have been phased out by now.

27. This brings us to our final item in the extended area of noun phrases. Informal AmE has developed a special use of the quantifier *all* following the interrogative pronouns *who* and *what* when they refer to an unknown but elevated number of entities (cf. Murray and Simon 2004: 232). Consider, for instance, example (10).

- (10) Who (all) was there? I don't know what (all) has gone wrong.

The pilot study illustrated in Figure 19.27 indicates that the structure (in this case, *who all*) has a considerable currency in spoken AmE, but is virtually unknown in BrE, even in a spoken corpus (with just one example in over 10 million words). Furthermore, the figure shows that written AmE also occasionally uses the quantifier (in this case, *who all* plus *what all*): a newspaper corpus of over 844 million words contains (only) 22 instances in total. In contrast, BrE newspapers contain only a single instance of *who all* and none of *what all* in a sample of over 1,492 million words.¹⁹ Further evidence suggesting that interrogative pronouns postmodified by *all* are better

¹⁹ Significantly, the example is found in a quotation of a Brazilian footballer.

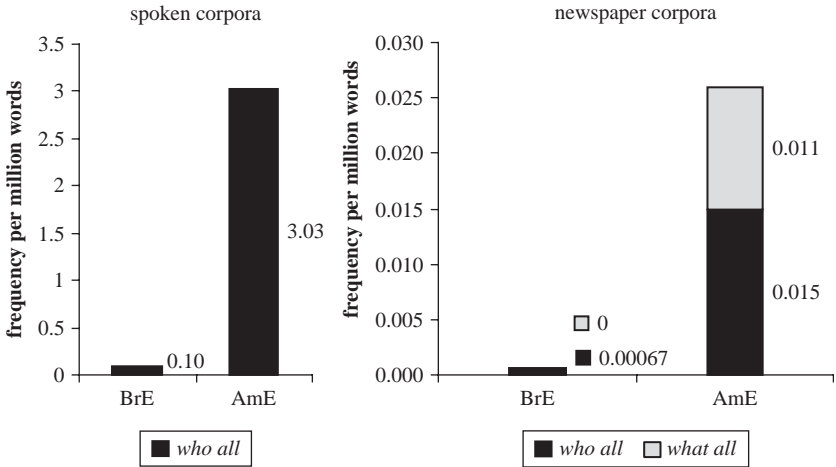


Figure 19.27 The use of *all* postmodifying interrogative *who* and *what* in selected British and American corpora (database: spoken corpora: BNC spokcont + spokdem, CSPAE; newspaper corpora: t90–01, g90–00, d91–00, M93–00, L92–99, DFP92–95, W90–92, No1)

entrenched in AmE is provided by the fact that this variety uses the construction not only in direct but also in indirect interrogative clauses, as in the second example in (10).

In conclusion to this section, it is interesting to note that many of the novel contrasts identified in the area of noun phrases revolve around the quantification of noun phrases. This includes the insertion of quantifiers after *next/past/last/first*, the introduction of *of* after *both/all* and after *as/so/how/this/that/too* + adjective, the type *sufficient of the money/of his energies* and the addition of *all* after the interrogatives *who/what*.

Table 19.3 summarizes our judgements of the six phenomena addressed in this subsection with regard to the four parameters expressing generalizations about British–American divergences. In view of these evaluations, noun phrases seem to be the area in which contrasts between the varieties are the most consistent and BrE and AmE confirm the general ideas that have been formed about their characteristics. Thus, in all six examples, it is AmE that is in the lead of an innovation (items 23–25 and 27) or that more readily gives up an old-fashioned usage (items 22 and 26). In contrast, in all cases where the epithets ‘formal’ or ‘colloquial’ can be applied, it is BrE that earns the former and AmE that is described by the latter. This implies that the changes initiated by AmE typically promote informal structures into the standard or eliminate formal features from usage. The category ‘consistency vs. irregularity’ cannot be applied to most of the items in the domain of noun phrases; only item 22 is well in line with the general trend

Table 19.3 *Synopsis of British–American contrasts in the domain of noun phrases*

	+ progressive/ – conservative	+ formal/ – colloquial	+ consistent/ – irregular	+ explicit/ – opaque
22. <i>dread(ed)</i>	AmE	BrE	AmE	AmE
23. <i>the next</i> etc. <i>Ø/few/ several/couple of N</i>	AmE			AmE
24. <i>both/all (of) these</i>	AmE	BrE		AmE
25. <i>as/so/how/this/that/ too Adj (of) a N</i>	AmE	(BrE)		
26. <i>sufficient of</i>	AmE	BrE		
27. <i>who all/what all</i>	AmE	BrE		AmE
sums BrE : AmE	0 : 6	5 : 0	0 : 1	0 : 4

for AmE to favour regular past participle variants (cf. also Chapters 3 and 5 by Levin and Schlüter). As for the parameter of explicitness vs. opacity, four out of the six divergences in which AmE is in the lead can be considered to promote more explicit structures. Noun phrases are thus an area where the preconception according to which AmE tends to be more explicit than BrE receives the most consistent support.

2.4 *Predicates and predicatives*

Predicates and predicative structures are another area of grammar where the two major national varieties of English diverge. Not surprisingly, most contrasts concern complex predicative structures rather than simple one-word verbs.

28. The first predicate to be investigated here is, however, as short as it can be: a well-known shibboleth of non-standard English, *ain't* occurs in BrE as well as AmE. Yet, there is an important contrast that arises from the distinction between instances representing the verb *to be* and those representing the verb *to have*. Figure 19.28 shows that *ain't* is generally more frequent in written AmE and that its frequency increases from 1961 to 1991/1992 in both varieties.²⁰ Beyond the quantitative difference, it also shows that *ain't* occurs quite commonly in the sense of 'have' in AmE (though still less frequently than in the sense of 'be') but rarely has this function in BrE. It is thus in two respects that AmE makes more extensive use of the non-standard feature than BrE even within the context of the written standard.

29. The verbs *to be* and *to have* are also involved in the next contrast to be sketched here. The traditional collocation *X has/have to do with Y* is

²⁰ Typologically motivated arguments accounting for the increasing popularity of *ain't* and *don't* replacing *doesn't* in spoken English are provided in Anderwald (2003).

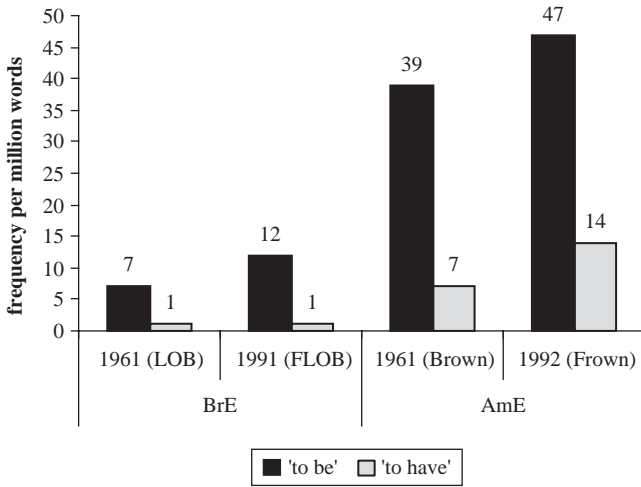


Figure 19.28 The use of *ain't/aint* representing negated forms of *be* and *have* in four matching British and American corpora

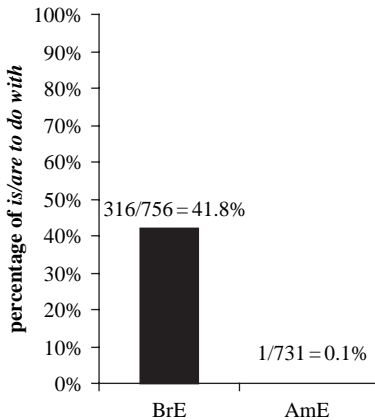


Figure 19.29 The rivalry between the types *X has/have to do with Y* and *X is/are to do with Y* in selected British and American newspapers (database: t90, too, g90, goo, d91, doo, m93, moo, L92, D93, W92)

increasingly under competition from the equivalent *X is/are to do with Y*, at least in BrE (cf. also Algeo 2006: 249). Figure 19.29 shows that while British newspapers use the new variant in over 40 per cent of all cases, it is virtually non-existent in American newspapers, the only exception evidently stemming from a British journalist writing for *The Economist*. A look at historical corpora shows that the earliest occurrences of the new type can be traced in

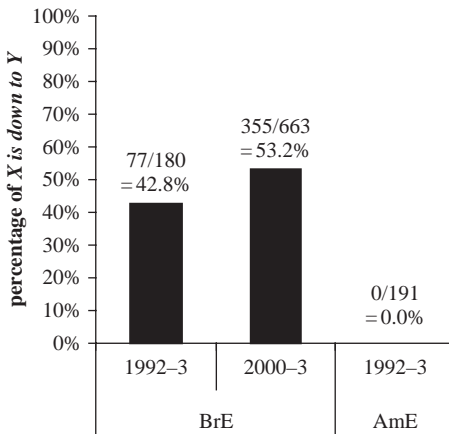


Figure 19.30 The rivalry between *X comes down to Y* and *X is down to Y* in selected British and American newspapers (database: t92, t03, m93, m00, W92, D93)

the British sections of the LNC and ETC collections (texts dated 1904, 1908 and 1915); the American counterparts of these corpora contain no instances. This time it is thus BrE that is implementing a change unilaterally.

30. A very similar contrast where *to be* is replacing another verb is portrayed in Figure 19.30. The collocation *X comes down to Y* is increasingly being ousted – once more in BrE – by the expression *X is down to Y* (cf. also the entry for *down* in the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* 1995: 416 and the remarks in Algeo 2006: 166, 258).²¹ Figure 19.30 shows that the latter is not found in American newspapers, but that within a decade its proportion has risen by about 10 per cent in BrE. Again, BrE is implementing a home-grown change which is not (yet) spilling over to AmE.

31. Yet another example of a change in multi-word predicates with BrE in the lead is the competition between *take* and *have* in complex verbal structures of the type *take/have a look*. In Figure 19.31 the ETC corpus is used to illustrate the situation at the beginning of the twentieth century. The older structure is the one involving *take*, which still predominates in AmE. BrE, in line with its general use of *have* in dynamic senses (e.g. *have a drink*), exhibits a strong tendency to replace *take* with *have* (cf. Trudgill, Nevalainen and Wischer 2002, Algeo 1995; cf. also Algeo 2006: 270, 272–4). In the present-day, AmE still ‘lags behind’ the changeover from a British perspective.

²¹ Barber (1985: 40) sees the novel expression *X is down to Y* as a curious variant of *X is up to Y* (possibly implying a conflation between the latter and the expression *put X down to Y*).

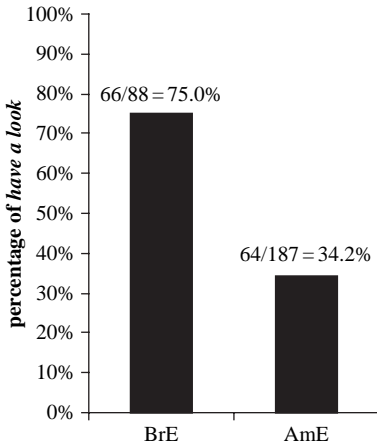


Figure 19.31 The rivalry between the verbs *have* and *take* in complex verbal structures involving the sequence *a look* (database: ETC)

32. This brings us to a set of predicate expressions of a completely different type. The so-called *way*-construction, illustrated in example (11), is a means of adding the semantic feature of ‘path’ to a verb which lacks it in its ordinary semantics. It can be formed with all kinds of activity verbs and is used in both national varieties (cf. Mondorf to appear b).

(11) From the position of a simple employee, he worked his way to the top.

Figure 19.32 compares the number of tokens per million words in two newspaper corpora. The data indicate that the construction is more frequent in BrE. Other productivity measures suggest the same conclusion. Thus, the type/token ratio in BrE runs to 0.1771, while AmE only reaches a ratio of 0.1151, and the ratio of hapaxes (formations occurring only once in the dataset) per tokens is 0.1024 in BrE, but only 0.0676 in AmE.²² Once again, BrE boasts more of these novel constructions and is thus able to encode a supplementary semantic element more productively than AmE.

33. Forming novel combinations of verbs with particles is another way of creating new predicates. The frequent use of particle verbs has been claimed to be characteristic of informal registers as opposed to formal registers as well as of AmE as opposed to BrE.²³ A special case of particle verbs that is illustrative of the British–American contrast is provided by prepositional

²² For these measures to be valid, the corpus size has to be (near-)identical on both sides: the British corpus has 79 million words and the American 78 million, so the condition is fulfilled.

²³ For statements about the informality of particle verbs (or phrasal verbs), see Bolinger (1971: 172), Leech and Svartvik (1975: 264), Pelli (1976: 103), Biber *et al.* (1999: 408–9, 424 [on

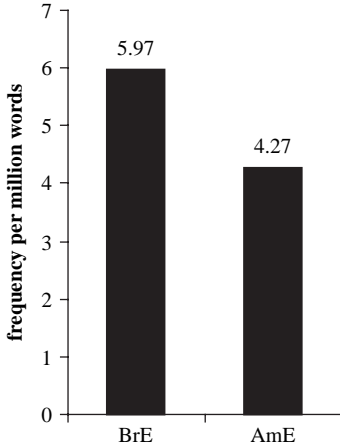


Figure 19.32 The use of the *may*-construction with different verbs in selected British and American newspapers (data supplied by Britta Mondorf) (database: t94, g94, L94)

particle verbs. The examples *sneak up on* and *close in on* feature two characteristic patterns which are employed to form numerous types. To measure the productivity of these formations, the number of different types and the total number of tokens for prepositional particle verbs involving the sequences *up on* and *in on* have been determined in four one-million-word corpora. Figure 19.33 demonstrates that this time it is AmE that has a more substantial number of tokens as well as types. It is questionable whether the apparent diachronic trends visible in the relatively small dataset can be taken at face value: in that case, BrE would be attracted towards the model of AmE (which is a likely state of affairs), but AmE would be reverting towards a less productive use of particle verbs. More data would be needed to support or reject such an implausible conclusion.

34. The next type of predicate to be considered is formed with past participles derived from verbs of motion and body posture. Though these participles have a passive form, they have active semantics similar to the present participle (and have therefore been referred to as ‘pseudo-passive constructions’; cf. Klemola 1999, 2002). Thus, at least some of them are in competition with the present participles of the same verbs. The class includes the items *sat*, *stood*, *laid*, *headed*, *sprawled*, *crouched*, *huddled*,

phrasal verbs and phrasal-prepositional verbs, respectively]) and Schneider (2002: 83). For (unquantified) references to the British–American contrast, see already Robertson (1939: 253), Foster (1955: 343), Pelli (1976: 43) and Tottie (2002a: 161).

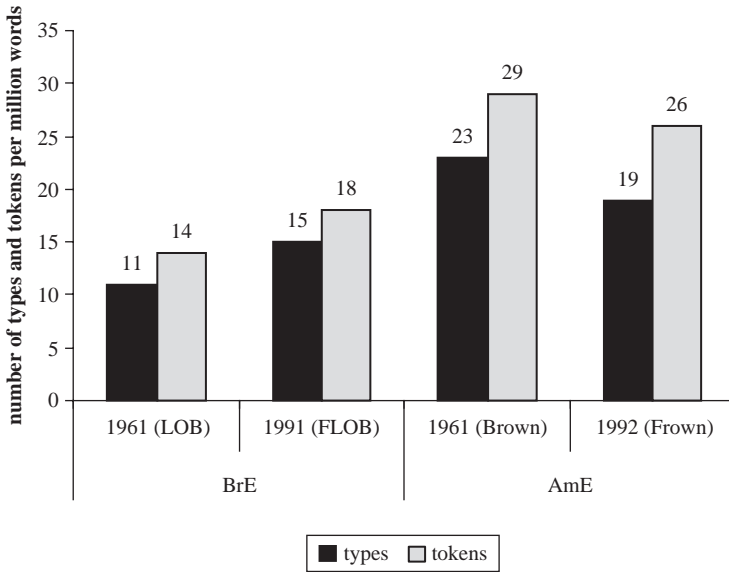


Figure 19.33 Prepositional particle verbs involving the combinations *up on* or *in on* in four matching British and American corpora²⁴

hunched, lolled, perched, squatted, steered and *stooped*.²⁵ For present purposes, two types of pseudo-passives are worth looking at, which are distinguished by their geographical distribution.

The main representatives of the first group, illustrated in example (12), are the constructions *be sat* and *be stood* (which are in competition with their synonyms *be sitting* and *be standing*; cf. Wood 1962: 206, 220). They originate in non-standard varieties of Northern and Midland BrE (cf. Klemola 1999, 2002), but are now spreading southwards and into the British standard.

(12) I was sat/sitting in the front passenger seat.

Figure 19.34a illustrates the rapid pace of the expansion by contrasting the incidence of *be sat/be stood* in British newspapers from the early 1990s and from 2004/2005. In stark contrast, AmE shows no signs whatsoever of taking over the British innovation (cf. also Algeo 2006: 34).

The second group of pseudo-passives is an American innovation. Examples are provided by the pairs *be headed/heading* and *be sprawled/sprawling*, which will be considered in turn. The first pair is illustrated in example (13). Figure 19.34b shows a clear-cut contrast in the choice between

²⁴ The combination *be in on* has been excluded from the count.

²⁵ Wood (1962: 133, 206, 220) mentions (and criticizes) only the items *sat, stood, laid*.

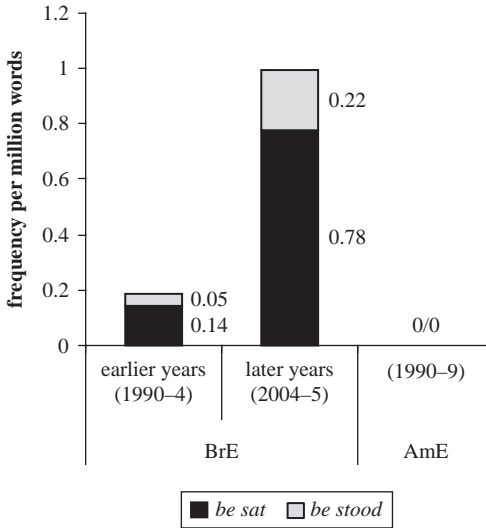


Figure 19.34a The use of the pseudo-passive constructions *be sat* and *be stood* in selected British and American newspapers (database: t90-91, to4, g90, g92, g05, d91-92, do4, i93-94, io5, L99, D92-95, W90-92)²⁶

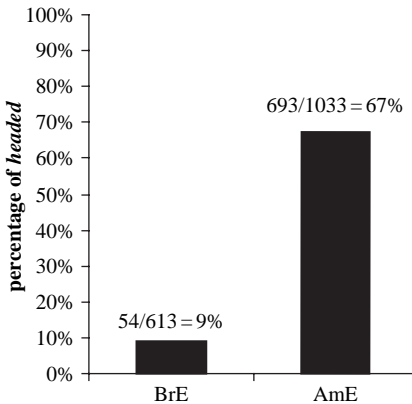


Figure 19.34b The rivalry between *X is heading* and *X is headed + directional phrase* in selected British and American newspapers (database: t90, g90, d91, m93, L92, D92, W92)²⁷

²⁶ The analysis is restricted to cases where *is/are/was/were/be/being/been* immediately precede *sat* or *stood*.

²⁷ Only cases where *is/are/was/were* immediately precede *heading/headed* have been taken into account.

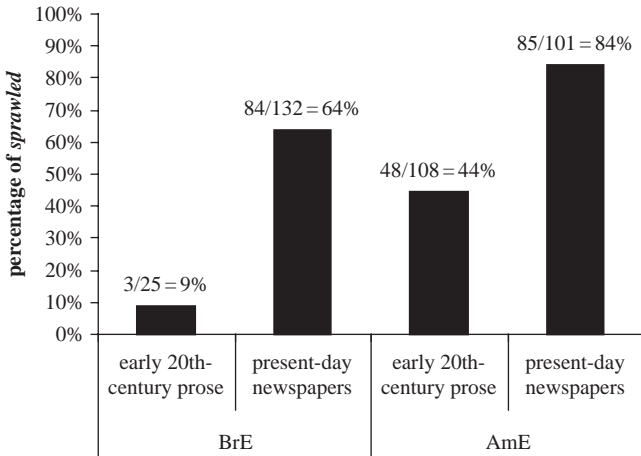


Figure 19.34c The rivalry between non-attributive and intransitive uses of *sprawling* and *sprawled* (database: ETC, t90-01, g90-00, d91-00, m93-00, L92-99, D92-95, W90-92, No1)²⁸

be headed and *be heading*: while the pseudo-passive is very rare in BrE, it accounts for two thirds of the American instances.

(13) The housing market was headed/heading for a crash.

Historical data (not detailed here) show that this function was originally realized by the present participle *heading*. It is only in the nineteenth century that the two national varieties began to diverge. Since the late nineteenth century, the innovative *headed*-variant has been dominant in AmE, but has only marginally been adopted into BrE.

The case of *be sprawled* and *be sprawling* is similar. The data in Figure 19.34c indicate that AmE is again in the lead as regards the replacement of *sprawling* by the pseudo-passive *sprawled*, which was relatively advanced even in the early twentieth century. By the turn of the twenty-first century, BrE has, however, caught up substantially. A closer look at the occurrences in the newspaper corpora reveals additional details. While the incoming form *sprawled* has continued the original meaning of *sprawling* as a verb of posture or remained close to it, the use of the traditional variant *sprawling* has been extending in various directions, especially in AmE: only one of the sixteen American examples of *sprawling*, but eleven of the forty-eight British examples, preserve the original sense referring to human bodies. This indicates that the functional diversification between *sprawling* and *sprawled* has progressed further in AmE than in BrE.

²⁸ In the newspaper corpus, the analysis has been confined to examples of *sprawling* and *sprawled* immediately preceded by (and in construction with) *is/was*.

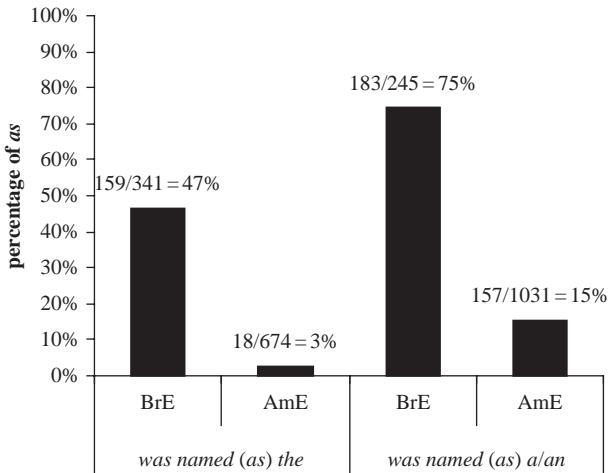


Figure 19.35 The variable use of *as* with nominal predicatives containing the definite and indefinite articles immediately following the sequence *was named* in selected American and British newspapers (database: definite predicatives: m93–00, d91–00, L92, L99; indefinite predicatives: t90–01, g90–00, d91–00, m93–00, L92–99, D92–95, W90–92, N01)

35. This brings us to two examples of predicative expressions involving optional predicative markers. One such marker is the item *as*, which is in use after a wide variety of verbs taking object predicatives. The following count takes the passive structure *be named* as an example. Figure 19.35 illustrates the percentage of complements introduced by *as* compared to the zero variant without predicative marker. The distinction between the two search strings *was named (as) the* and *was named (as) a(n)* has been maintained since there is a clear contrast between definite and indefinite predicatives. It turns out that *as* is strikingly more frequent in BrE and that AmE is more economic in this respect. Besides this main difference, we see that both varieties select *as* more often in connection with indefinite than with definite noun phrases. This is presumably due to the increased complexity associated with nominal entities that have not been mentioned in the preceding context (cf. the Complexity Principle, also dealt with in Chapters 4, 6, 8 and 11).

36. The second example of predicative expressions involves the predicative marker *being*, which occurs in cases like (14) (see Rohdenburg and Schlüter 2000: 452–6, 467).

(14) The issue is far from (being) resolved.

To uncover the latent contrasts between BrE and AmE, instances of the negator *far from* in combination with selected hard-to-process predicatives have been searched in an extensive newspaper database. These contextual

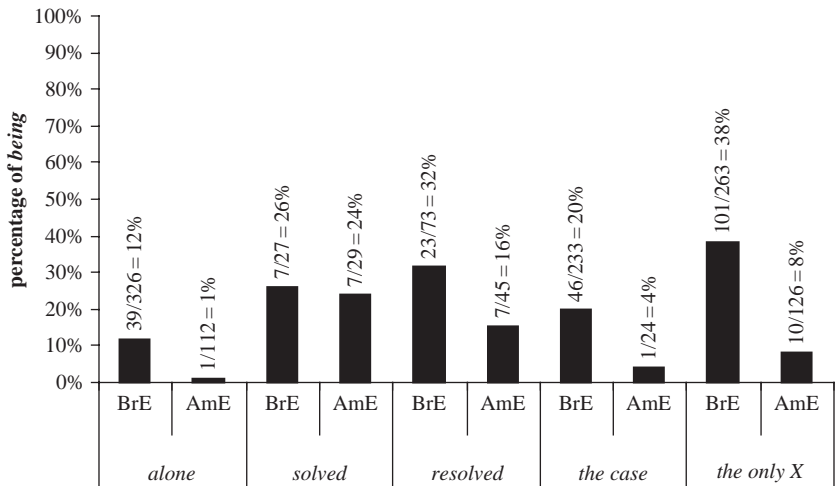


Figure 19.36 The use of *being* to introduce different predicative expressions associated with the negator *far from* in selected British and American newspapers (database: t90–01, g90–00, d91–00, m93–00, L92–99, D92–95, W90–92, No1)²⁹

restrictions were necessary to obtain sufficient instances of *being*, which are only sporadically found with simple predicative expressions. The results of this study are presented in Figure 19.36. Depending on the particular search expression, the crop of examples with *being* is more or less ample, but in four out of the five cases analysed BrE produces a substantially higher share of *being* than AmE. In other words, BrE prefers to make the predicative relation more explicit while AmE tends to dispense with the semantically (nearly) empty marker.

At the end of our section on predicates and predicative structures, we again have occasion to assess the degree to which the contrasts studied are in line with the generalizations about typical characteristics of BrE and AmE.

Interestingly, the contrasts observed in this section provide no clear evidence in favour of the frequently observed innovative character of AmE. In five out of ten cases, it is BrE that is developing new predicates, either by replacing one semantically light verb by another (items 29, 30, 31), by expressing new meaning components through the *way*-construction (item 32) or by taking over pseudo-passives from the non-standard (item 34). In those cases in which AmE takes the lead in introducing colloquial structures or dropping semantically superfluous material, BrE remains more

²⁹ The analysis is confined to those cases where *far from* is associated with the verb *be* or some other copular verb (e.g. *look*, *seem*, *appear*).

Table 19.4 *Synopsis of British–American contrasts in the domain of predicates and predicatives*

	+ progressive/ – conservative	+ formal/ – colloquial	+ consistent/ – irregular	+ explicit/ – opaque
28. <i>ain't</i>	AmE	BrE	(AmE)	BrE
29. <i>to have/be to do with</i>	BrE	(AmE)	AmE	AmE
30. <i>X comes/is down to Y</i>	BrE	AmE		AmE
31. <i>take/have a look etc.</i>	BrE			
32. <i>V one's way</i>	BrE			BrE
33. <i>sneak up on/close in on etc.</i>	AmE	BrE		
34. <i>headed/heading, sprawled/sprawling</i>	AmE		BrE	AmE
<i>sat/sitting, stood/standing</i>	BrE	AmE	AmE	AmE
35. <i>be named (as) + predicative</i>				BrE
36. <i>be far from (being) + predicative</i>	AmE	BrE	(AmE)	BrE
sums BrE : AmE	5 : 4	3 : 3	1 : 4	4 : 4

formal and/or more explicit (items 28, 33, 36). Generally, there is, however, no clear preponderance of formal vs. colloquial or explicit vs. opaque structures on either side. The criterion of consistency vs. irregularity is not applicable to half of the phenomena studied, but where it does apply, AmE usually appears to be more regular (except where a pseudo-passive serves to express an active state of affairs, as in item 34). The analyses surveyed in Table 19.4 thus do not yield any uniform trends with regard to the four criteria evaluated.

2.5 Sentential structures

The final cluster of British–American contrasts to be discussed here goes beyond the level of individual constituents and concerns the domain of clauses and the relationships between them. Several phenomena relate to adverbial subordinate clauses, but we will also consider relative clauses, interrogative clauses, cleft structures and non-finite clauses.

37. Our first example concerns a set of four relatively formal subordinating conjunctions. Two of them, *given (that)* and *on the basis (that)*, are newcomers to the field of conjunctions. Figure 19.37a shows that in both cases it is BrE that has relatively more occurrences and thus is more innovative than AmE. The other two, *being (that/as (how))* and *for fear (that)*, are traditional conjunctions that had their heyday in the Early Modern English period. As it happens, these two prove to be better preserved in AmE. In the case of *being*, this can straightforwardly be seen from

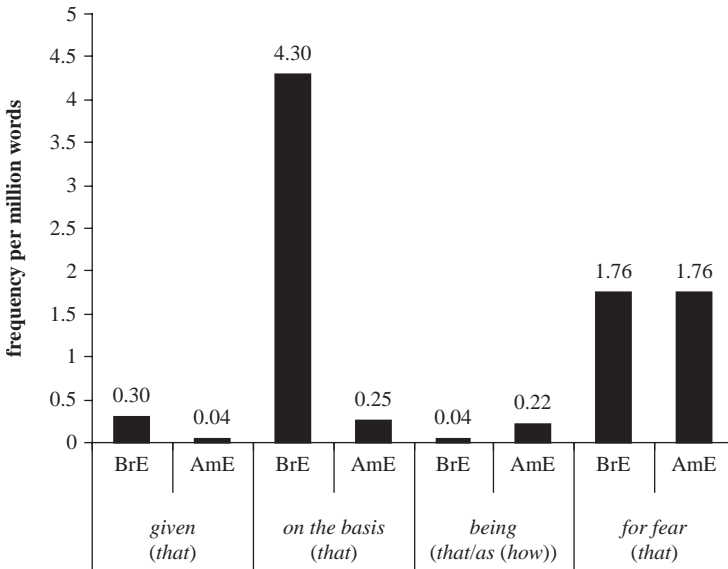


Figure 19.37a The use of the adverbial conjunctions *being (that/as (how))*, *given (that)*, *on the basis (that)* and *for fear (that)* in selected British and American newspapers (database: *being* and *given*: t90–01, g90–00, d91–00, m93–00, L92–99, D92–95, W90–92, Noi; *on the basis*: t90–97, g90–97, d91–94, L92, L99, D92–95, W90–92, Noi; *for fear*: t90–94, g90–94, m93–94, W90–92, D92–95)

the higher frequency per million words. *Being* is typically accompanied by *that* in AmE and by the regionally/dialectally flavoured *as (how)* in BrE.³⁰ Both serve as subordination signals identifying the preceding item as a conjunction. In the case of *for fear*, the better establishment in AmE is not mirrored by a frequency difference in the corpus data.

Robust evidence for the better entrenchment of *for fear* in AmE can, however, be derived from the fact that the conjunction is less often followed by the subordinator *that* than in BrE. It has been demonstrated that a conjunction that is poorly established (e.g. recessive or newly introduced) in this function tends to be followed by the explicit subordination signal *that* more often than a well-established and highly-frequent conjunction (cf. Rohdenburg 2008). In line with this generalization, historical data show that the use of *that* after *for fear* has been increasing over the last one or two centuries due to the fact that *for fear* as such has been falling into disuse. Thus, if *for fear* is accompanied by *that* in only 32 per cent of the cases in AmE, but in 62 per cent of the cases in BrE, this is indicative of a better

³⁰ The use of *being as* is criticized by Wood (1962: 33) as a ‘solecism’ and ‘vulgarism’.

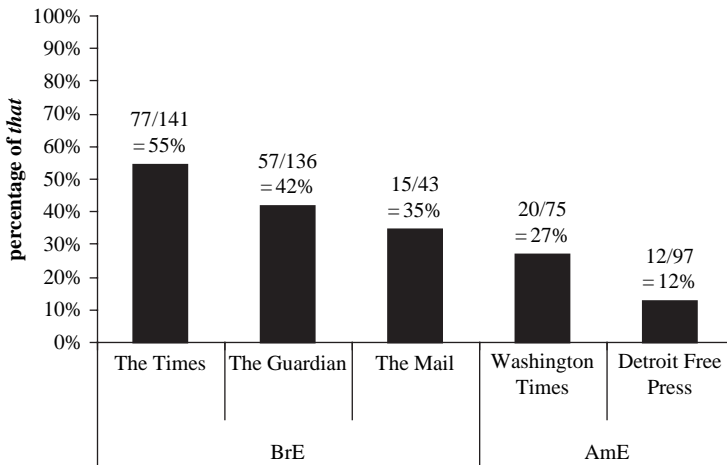


Figure 19.37b The use or omission of the subordination signal *that* with the conjunction *for fear* in selected British and American newspapers (database: t90–94, g90–94, m93–94, W90–92, D92–95)³¹

overall entrenchment (which need not manifest itself in a lower incidence in newspaper language). More detailed data on the use or omission of *that* are presented in Figure 19.37b. To exclude the influence of complexity factors such as complex noun phrase subjects or adverbial insertions, the data are restricted to examples where *for fear (that)* is immediately followed by personal pronouns. The graph distinguishes between three British and two American newspapers. In addition to showing the expected intervarietal contrast, the row of columns from left to right translates into a stylistic cline, with the formal papers to the left and the informal ones to the right. Note that the least formal British paper comes very close to the most formal American one. Thus, the variable use of *that* is also contingent on the degree of formality aimed at.

In conclusion to the above study of adverbial conjunctions, AmE turns out to be more conservative than BrE in that it uses more of the old and fewer of the new conjunctions. Two criteria support this conclusion: the raw frequencies of the items and the extent to which they combine with the subordinator *that*.³²

³¹ The analysis is restricted to cases where *for fear (that)* is immediately followed by a personal pronoun subject.

³² This generalization has to be taken with a pinch of salt, since the four case studies do not form a representative overview of the entire field of conjunctions. Exceptions that are known to the authors are the conjunctions *now (that)* (cf. Rohdenburg 2008) and *in the event (that)*. The whole field of emergent and disappearing adverbial conjunctions still awaits further research.

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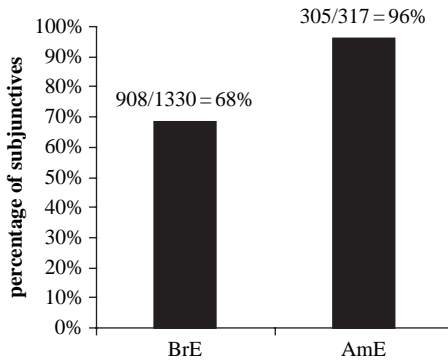


Figure 19.38 The use of subjunctives in adverbial clauses introduced by *lest* in selected British and American newspapers (database: 190–92, 201–04, 990–00, 193–94, 102–04, d90–00, m93–00, L92–95, D92–95, W90–92)³³

38. The next study takes the old and now formal conjunction *lest* as a point of departure to investigate the choice of mode in dependent adverbial clauses. As has been noted, e.g. by Robertson (1939: 250), Jespersen (1931: 162) and Quirk *et al.* (1985: 158), *lest* frequently triggers the subjunctive, at least in AmE. Figure 19.38 provides quantitative evidence of the use of the subjunctive and competing verb forms (primarily modal periphrases and indicatives). The results confirm that the subjunctive is virtually obligatory in this context in AmE, and that BrE has already caught up to a considerable extent. This is also argued by the clear difference between the earlier (1990–2) and later (2001–4) years of *The Times*, which have 58 per cent and 77 per cent of subjunctives, respectively. In line with the arguments used in Chapter 13 by Kjellmer and Chapter 15 by Schlüter, this usage has to be considered as a revival rather than a conservatism in AmE.

39. This brings us to an example of what can be considered as a novel concessive conjunction. The structure *no matter* + interrogative clause, exemplified in (15), is discussed at considerable length in Culicover (1999: 105–22). But maybe due to his American focus, the author commits an interesting oversight: in BrE, *no matter* is frequently followed by another type of clause introduced by *that*, as is illustrated in (16).

(15) No matter who gave the order, it should never have been executed.

(16) No matter that the idea was not his, he should still have adopted it.

Figure 19.39 shows that *no matter that* is about twice as frequent in BrE as in AmE. The sequences *no matter if* and *no matter whether* are merely used as representatives of interrogative clauses (which of course include many more

³³ The analysis is confined to singular subject expressions (immediately following *lest*) which are represented or introduced by *he/she/it/one/a/an/this/that*.

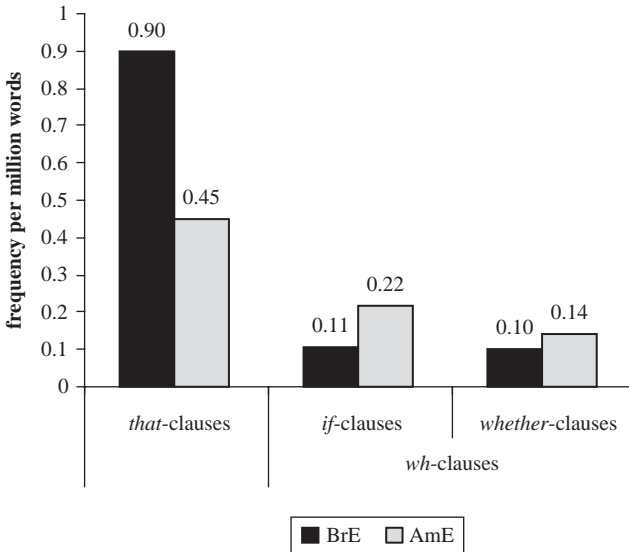


Figure 19.39 The use of *that*-, *if*- and *whether*-clauses associated with and following *no matter* in selected British and American newspapers (database: *that*: t90–92, m93–00, D92–95, W90–92, N01; *whether/if*: t90–01, g90–00, d91–00, m93–00, L92–99, D92–95, W90–92, N01)

types). The comparison shows that interrogative clauses are evidently more common in AmE (and, by the way, that BrE and AmE have different predilections for the synonymous *if* and *whether*). It is interesting to note, furthermore, that in BrE *that* is beginning to be omitted in the simplest of all contexts, viz. before personal pronouns. In conclusion, *no matter (that)* has achieved a high degree of grammaticalization in BrE, but less so in AmE.

40. The next topic concerns a type of adverbial clause that has been grammaticalizing into a topic-introducing phrase without a finite verb. Example (16) illustrates the omissibility of the verbal coda in an example of this type.

- (17) As far as improving myself (goes/is concerned), I haven't read any books lately.

The data in Figure 19.40, gleaned from Berlage (2007), indicate that the verbless variant is prominent in AmE, while BrE still shies away from this usage. It is also obvious that in both varieties it is the spoken language that leads the change, which suggests that the origin of the reduced structure is in colloquial speech. Correspondingly, the textual frequency of the topic-introducing phrase with or without the verbal coda is considerably higher in AmE than in BrE, particularly in the spoken registers: spoken BrE uses it 35.3 times per million words, and written BrE 8.3 times pmw, whereas spoken AmE has it 85.2 times pmw, and written AmE 10.2 times pmw.

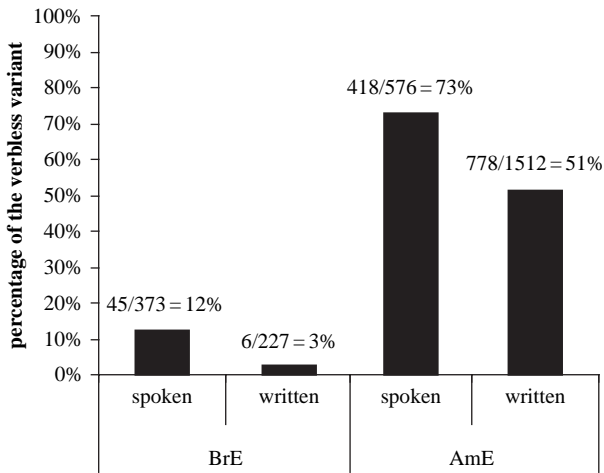


Figure 19.40 The omission of the verbal coda in topic-restricting *as far as*-constructions in written and spoken British and American corpora (data supplied by Eva Berlage) (database: g92, D92, L92, W92; spoken parts of the ANC and the BNC)

Interestingly, it has been shown that the probability with which the verbal coda is dropped increases with the length and complexity of the intervening topic expression (for further details, see Rickford *et al.* 1995, Berlage 2007).

41. In the following example of a British–American contrast, it is BrE that may deploy additional syntactic possibilities. In a comparison with *than*, the expression providing the standard of comparison can be relativized with an object-case relative pronoun. This gives rise to (typically negated) constructions like the one illustrated in (18).

- (18) Dr. Winter, *than whom* they do not come more ambitious, has given up on the issue.

Semantically, these constructions are in most cases roughly equivalent to a superlative (‘who is the most ambitious kind of person you can imagine’). Out of all syntactic positions, the position in a comparative *than*-phrase is the least accessible for extraction, i.e. only very few languages (or varieties) are able to relativize the expression following *than* (see Keenan and Comrie 1977). As Figure 19.41 demonstrates, this possibility of relativization is virtually unknown in American newspapers: there are no more than three occurrences in a corpus of over 840 million words. The use of *than whom* or *than which* came up in EModE, though it remained restricted to formal and poetic language (cf. Görlach 1999: 14–93). On the basis of various analyses exploring the available historical databases, we can assume that – despite a certain amount of fluctuation – the last four centuries have witnessed

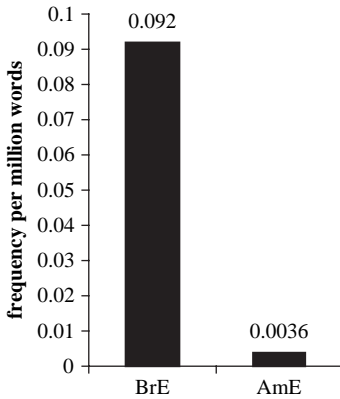


Figure 19.41 The relativization of the standard of comparison by means of *than which/whom* in selected British and American newspapers (database: t90–01, g90–00, d91–00, m93–00, L92–99, D92–95, W90–92, No1)

a general decline of the construction. This leaves no doubt that BrE is again the more conservative of the two varieties.

42. This situation is reversed in the case of the expression *how come*, which is arguably evolving into a complex interrogative in AmE (see the remark in Tottie 2002a: 164). Being an independent clause in its origin, it congealed into an interrogative introducing direct questions. The small dataset given in Figure 19.42a suggests that the use of *how come* as a complex interrogative originates in AmE. It also depicts the familiar scenario in which the change progresses quickly within the span of thirty years and begins to spill over to BrE in the 1990s corpus. Statistically more satisfactory evidence comes from the fact that in a corpus comprising forty-one years of British and sixteen years of American newspapers dating from 1990 to 2001, the relative frequency of *how come* is higher in AmE, with 2.12 pmw, than in BrE, with 1.80 pmw.

British and American usage also differ in two more respects. For one, *how come* is beginning to extend its range of application in AmE, e.g. to reversed pseudo-cleft sentences, as in example (19), and dependent interrogative clauses, as in example (20) (cf. again Tottie 2002a: 164).

(19) That's how come I lost control of myself.

(20) Nobody wanted to know how come she knew this would happen.

For another, AmE hardly ever makes use of the subordinator *that* following *how come*, which is reminiscent of the former subordinate status of the interrogative clause. As Figure 19.42b shows, *that* is mainly used in hard-to-process contexts where *how come* and the subject of the subordinate clause

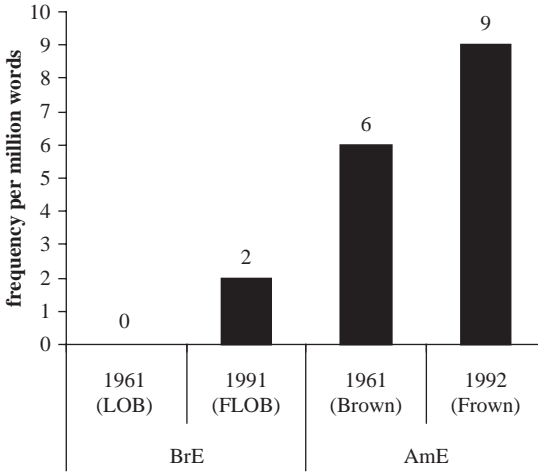


Figure 19.42a The use of the complex interrogative *how come* in four matching British and American corpora

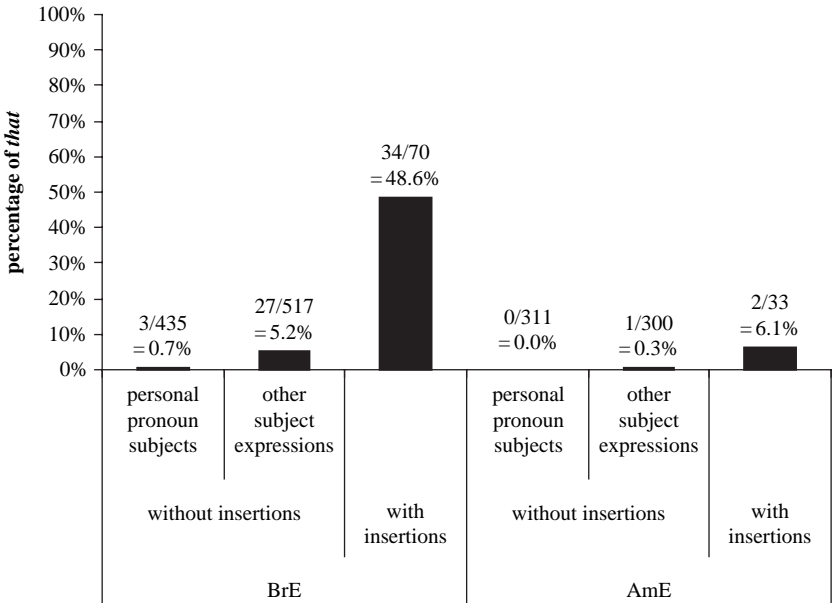


Figure 19.42b The use of the interrogative *how come* in selected British and American newspapers (data supplied by Christine Kick) (database: t90-95, g90-95, i93-94, d91-95, m93-94, m96-97, L92-99, W90-92)

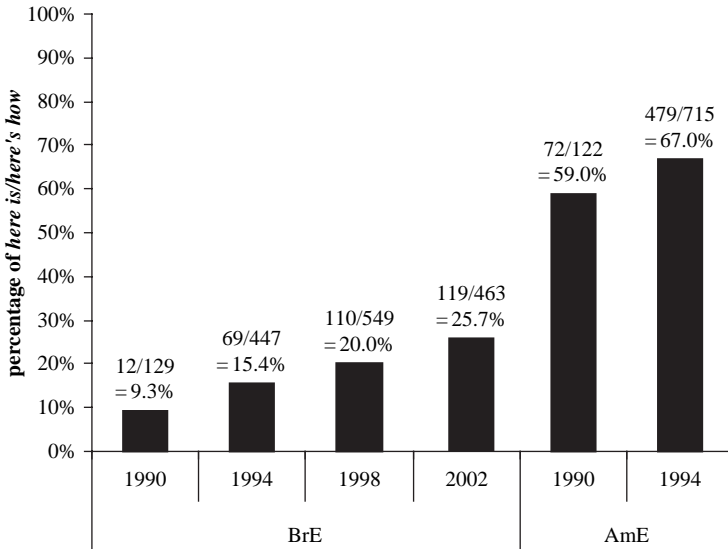


Figure 19.43 The rivalry between the reversed pseudo-cleft construction *this is how* + S and the upcoming type *here is how/here's how* + S in selected British and American newspapers (data supplied by André Schaefer) (database: t90, t94, t98, t02, g90, g94, g98, g02, d94, d98, m94, m98, W90, L94, D94)

are separated by intervening elements. In comparison, BrE shows a considerably enhanced sensitivity to this complexity factor and even reacts to the type of subject expression: more complex subjects trigger the use of *that* slightly more often than pronoun subjects, where *that* is only found exceptionally. In sum, the higher frequency, the greater syntactic flexibility and the omission of *that* all indicate unambiguously that the grammaticalization process of *how come* is further advanced in AmE.

43. AmE is also in the lead in the establishment of the incoming structure *here is/here's* plus a following *wh*-clause. Among the set of interrogative items, *how* is the one that occurs by far the most frequently with the innovative *here is/here's*. In Figure 19.43, the sequence *here is/here's how* is compared with the synonymous *this is how*. Note, however, that the two are not strictly interchangeable since *this is how* can be cataphoric as well as anaphoric, whereas *here is how/here's how* is restricted to cataphoric uses and mostly occurs in instructions with a present tense verb or modal (see example (21)).

(21) This is/Here is how you (should) go about it.

Keeping this in mind, the data in Figure 19.43 unambiguously show that the variant employing *here is* is much better established in AmE and that it is continuing to encroach upon the territory of the variant involving *this*. The

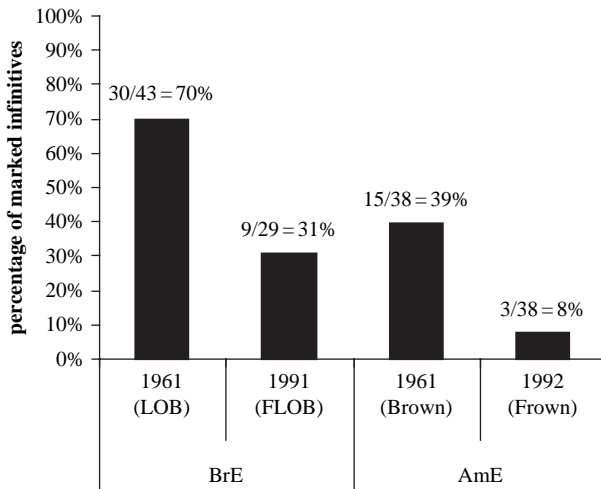


Figure 19.44 Marked and unmarked infinitives with pseudo-cleft constructions involving *what*, *all*, *thing(s)* or *the least/most/best/worst* + pro-verb *do* in four matching British and American corpora³⁴

change is also spilling over to BrE, which shows a steady rise in the percentage of *here is/here's how*, but is far from catching up with AmE.

44. This brings us to three examples of contrasting usage in the domain of non-finite clauses. The first are pseudo-cleft structures of various types illustrated in example (22), which have an infinitival clause in the identifier slot.

- (22) What/All/The only thing/The least/most/best/worst he can/could do is/was (to) sell it.

The British–American difference in this case resides in the use or omission of the infinitive marker *to*. As Figure 19.44 reveals, in both varieties there is a distinct trend towards unmarked infinitives, which is accelerated in AmE. Thus, AmE is once again in the lead of a new drift towards economy while BrE remains more conservative and more explicit. Above and beyond these contrasts, the percentage of use of marked infinitives is dependent on several complexity factors. A detailed account of these is beyond the scope of the present survey, but see for instance Rohdenburg (2000: 31–2) and Rohdenburg (2006b: 61).³⁵

³⁴ For convenience, the search has been confined to the verb forms *is* and *was* connecting the identifier clause and the identified clause.

³⁵ See furthermore Berlage (2007) and Rohdenburg (2006b: 60), which deal with the effects of processing complexity on variable infinitival marking in other contexts.

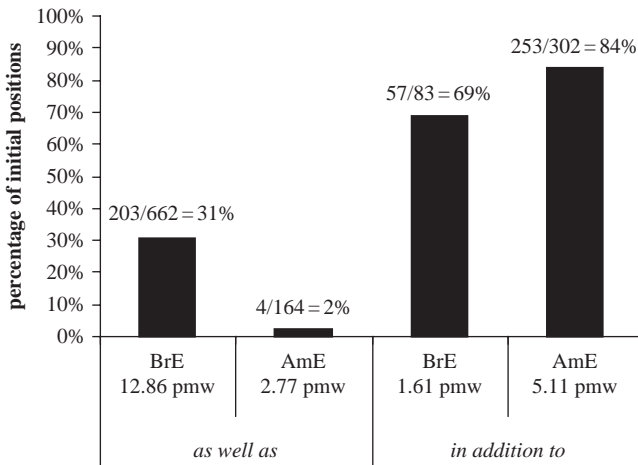


Figure 19.45a Subjectless gerunds associated with *as well as* and *in addition to* in selected British and American newspapers (database: t92, m93, W92, D93)³⁶

45. The second contrast concerning non-finite clauses has to do with a particular use of gerundial *-ing*-forms with an implicit subject. The structure is illustrated in example (23).

- (23) As well as/In addition to sending and receiving text messages, it can hook up to the internet.

While the type is current in BrE as well as AmE, there are important differences in the frequencies of individual introductory elements as well as of the construction as a whole. Consider first the frequency data given at the bottom of the columns in Figure 19.45a. There is, arguably, a compensatory relationship between subjectless gerunds introduced by the prepositional expressions *as well as* and *in addition to*, to the effect that BrE plumps for the former, while AmE uses more of the latter. This frequency contrast is matched by a divergence in the syntactic positions that can be occupied by the gerund phrase: allowing for the fact that *in addition to* is more strongly attracted to sentence-initial position than *as well as*, we note that the use of this position correlates to some extent with the degrees of entrenchment of the rivalling options. The share of initial positions is represented by the height of the columns in Figure 19.45a. It is evident that *as well as* occurs

³⁶ To avoid ambiguities between subjectless gerunds and nominalized verbs, the analysis is confined to transitive verbs involving (mobile) direct objects. Any examples of *as well as* or *in addition to* + *V-ing* immediately following relative pronouns in subject function have been treated as non-initial.

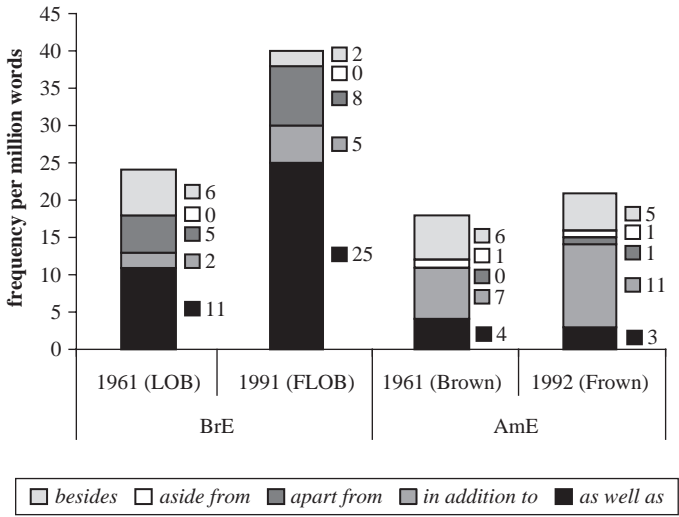


Figure 19.45b Subjectless gerunds associated with *apart from*/*as well as*/*besides*/*aside from*/*in addition to* in four matching corpora

extremely rarely in these prominent positions in AmE compared to BrE, while *in addition to* is not placed there quite as often in BrE as in AmE.

There is a whole set of preposition-like expressions with similar semantics that can be used in the type of construction under consideration here. Further members are *apart from*, *aside from* and *besides*.³⁷ Figure 19.45b provides an overview of the set and compares their frequencies in BrE and AmE of the early 1960s and 1990s. The results suggest that the use of subjectless gerunds in this function is on the increase across both varieties and that BrE is generally further advanced in this respect.

46. The third contrast in the domain of non-finite clauses and the final one to be discussed in this chapter concerns the form of nominal and pronominal subjects associated with verbal gerunds. The choice of items using the genitive/possessive vs. the objective case pronouns is illustrated in example (24).

(24) There is no problem with you(r)/the children('s) (not) being Catholic.

The genitival/possessive version is the more traditional one and it has been noted that it is more characteristic of AmE (cf. Hudson 2003: 581; see furthermore the discussion in Mittins, Salu, Edminson and Coyne 1970: 64–7). Empirical evidence comes from the case study presented in Figure 19.46, which is restricted to pronominal subjects. The count focuses

³⁷ Concerning *aside from* and *apart from*, consider also Chapter 6 by Berlage.

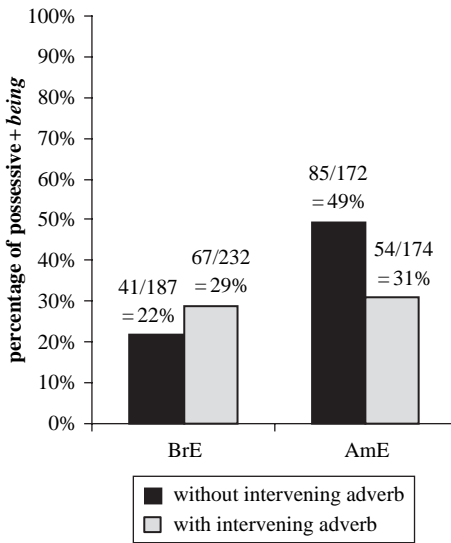


Figure 19.46 The rivalry between possessive and objective case pronouns as logical subjects of the gerund *being* (data supplied by Susanna Lyne) (database: too, to2, to4, goo, go2, go4, doo, do2, do4, io2–o4, L92–99, D92–95, W90–92; from all newspapers one randomly chosen hit out of twenty has been included; from the British newspapers only the months Jan–Mar and Aug–Oct have been analysed)

on the extremely frequent gerund *being* preceded by possessive and objective case pronouns. If the pronoun immediately precedes the gerund, AmE still uses possessive pronouns in every second example, while BrE does the same in approximately one in five instances. In AmE, the gerund thus preserves a more nominal character. However, an adverb inserted between the pronoun and gerund (in the count, only the items *not*, *ever* and *actually* have been considered) almost neutralizes the British–American difference by bringing the ratio of possessives in AmE down to about 1 in 3.³⁸ Aside from intervarectal contrasts, the percentage of possessive and objective case pronouns also depends on further system-internal factors (see Heyvaert, Rogers and Vermeylen 2005, Lyne 2006).

This brings us to our fifth and last synopsis of the phenomena treated under the heading ‘sentential structures’. Table 19.5 again presents a very heterogeneous picture. Three of the innovations treated in this section have been promoted by BrE at different times (items 37 *given/on the basis (that)*, 39, 45); in two more cases BrE seems more advanced because it has given up

³⁸ The difference between instances with and without intervening adverbs observable in BrE is not statistically significant and therefore negligible.

Table 19.5 *Synopsis of British–American contrasts in the domain of sentential structures*

	+ progressive/ – conservative	+ formal/ – colloquial	+ consistent/ – irregular	+ explicit/ – opaque
37. <i>given/on the basis (that)</i>	BrE	BrE		AmE
<i>being/for fear (that)</i>	BrE	AmE		BrE
38. <i>lest + subj.</i>	AmE	(AmE)		BrE
39. <i>no matter (that)</i>	BrE	(AmE)		AmE
40. <i>as far as X (is concerned/goes)</i>	AmE	BrE	BrE	BrE
41. <i>than which/whom</i>	AmE	BrE		
42. <i>how come</i>	AmE	BrE	BrE	AmE
43. <i>this/here is how</i>	AmE	(BrE)		AmE
44. <i>all etc. he can do is/was (to) + inf.</i>	AmE	BrE	BrE	BrE
45. <i>as well as/in addition to V-ing</i>	BrE	BrE		
46. <i>him/his being</i>	BrE	AmE		
sums BrE : AmE	5 : 6	7 : 4	3 : 0	4 : 4

older structures that AmE preserves (items 37 *being/for fear (that)*, 46). The other six present examples where AmE has initiated or accelerated a change and therefore has to be judged more progressive. It might be expected that the changes should endow the variety that is spearheading them with a more colloquial character, be it BrE or AmE (items 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44), but there are also some notable examples of changes that are conducive to more formality (items 37 *given/on the basis (that)*, 38, 45). In the cumulated figures (given in the bottom line), BrE reveals itself to have a more pronounced affinity with formal structures. Three of these formal structures (items 40, 42, 44) are obviously also more consistent, while AmE violates grammatical norms by dropping the verbal coda in 40, the operator and subject in 42 and the infinitive marker in 44. The other phenomena do not lend themselves to an interpretation in terms of consistency vs. irregularity. Concerning the criterion of explicitness vs. opacity, BrE and AmE score four times each. Generally, the variety that drops some function word can be argued to be less explicit. Some of the other judgements would deserve further comment, but limitations of space forbid us to enlarge on them.

3 Conclusion

Going beyond the topics discussed in detail in the foregoing chapters, the present chapter has formed an outlook sketching some areas where additional contrasts between the grammars of BrE and AmE can be unearthed. Some of these have so far simply not been noticed; others have been neglected, partly on account of their relatively low frequencies, which have

Table 19.6 *Synopsis of British–American contrasts across all domains surveyed in the present chapter (based on Tables 19.1 to 19.5)*

	+ progressive/ – conservative	+ formal/ – colloquial	+ consistent/ – irregular	+ explicit/ – opaque
1.–46. total sums				
BrE: AmE	13 : 35	32 : 11	15 : 11	21 : 18

until recently made them ineligible for quantitative study. While the observations included in this chapter have all been buttressed by more or less ample corpus data, they still await more detailed and systematic study. Even so, the considerable number of no less than 46 phenomena treated here afford an occasion to adopt a bird's eye view of frequently discussed topics such as the relative speeds of evolution in BrE and AmE and the directedness of intervarietal divergences. Table 19.6 tots up the evaluations given in Tables 19.1 to 19.5 of section 2. For what they are worth, they provide a quantitative measure of the relative degrees of progressiveness, formality, consistency and explicitness of the two varieties.

A juxtaposition at this level of abstraction must of course not be over-interpreted. Despite this caveat, the comparison shows that two of the four criteria produce more consistent results than the others. Very often (in thirty-five out of the forty-eight cases evaluated), AmE proves to be more progressive than BrE. Just as often (in thirty-two out of forty-three cases), BrE preserves or promotes more formal grammatical structures, while AmE exhibits a greater affinity with colloquial features. There are, however, exceptions as, for instance, in the formation of new predicates, where BrE happens to be more innovative. Generally, the hypothesis of the 'colonial lag' thus has to be refuted in favour of a tendency for AmE to assume the leading role in more recent and ongoing changes. BrE (as well as other varieties in the English-speaking world) can be shown to take over many of the innovations from AmE. In contrast, the predictive value of putative ascriptions such as the greater regularity or explicitness of AmE (and, conversely, the greater irregularity and opacity of BrE) is very limited. Within the datasets considered, it is actually BrE that has a narrow lead in these respects. Rather than indulging in preconceived generalizations, linguistic research should thus focus on individual phenomena or groups of phenomena where one variety is more regular (e.g. BrE in the preservation of grammatically complete sentential structures and AmE in the formation of past participles) or more explicit (e.g. BrE in the marking of adverbs and AmE in the quantification of noun phrases).

Coming back to the issues of progressiveness/leadership in grammatical change and affinity with colloquial means of expression, our survey suggests some novel insights into interconnections between these parameters. As has

been mentioned in section 1 of this chapter, most of the contrasts between BrE and AmE are obviously of a gradual nature only. Where one variety is moving ahead, the other frequently changes in the same direction, only with some delay or at a slower pace. In contrast, some of the differences are more absolute in that a change occurring in one variety remains endemic in that variety. For BrE, this is true of the phenomena studied under items 10 (*for longer* following other comparatives), 16 (*near to* used with abstract nouns), 29 (*to be to do with*), 30 (*X is down to Y*), 34 (*be sat/stood*) and 45 (*as well as V-ing* in initial position). Changes exclusive to AmE are provided by items 19 (*depends on if*), 23 (*the next* etc. *several N*), 25 (*how big* etc. *of a N*), 27 (*what/who all*) and 40 (*as far as* without verbal coda). Some further examples can be found in the foregoing chapters of this book, e.g. the functionally motivated split between *spilt* and *spilled* (see Chapter 3 by Levin) and the *replace*-like usage of *substitute* (see Chapter 7 by David Denison) for BrE and the unexceptional use of *from* after the verbs *dismiss* and *excuse* for AmE (see Chapter 10 by Rohdenburg).

It can be observed that changes are likely to remain unilateral where they originate in informal or non-standard usage and are taken over into the national standard. The non-standard origin obviously lowers the chances of the novel structure being adopted on the other side of the Atlantic. This is especially true of BrE innovations (e.g. *X is down to Y*, *be to do with*, *be sat/stood*), while many of the numerous new forms of expression emerging out of the AmE non-standard do find fertile ground in BrE as well. However, the structures *as/so/how/this/that/too Adj (of) a N*, *it depends on if* and *what/who all* are still unknown in BrE. This suggests that there is a certain imbalance between the two major national varieties in that AmE is not only more rich in innovations, but also less prone to take over changes initiated by BrE. On the other hand, BrE (doubtless like many other varieties of English around the world) is very receptive of innovations emerging in America, which is a major source of new developments for the homeland variety, but it also has its own resources, particularly the non-standard.

Notice that the majority of the pilot studies drafted in the present chapter are based on written data (mainly journalistic prose). Even in the written standard, we have thus been able to single out areas of divergence between BrE and AmE. From what has just been said, it is more than likely that divergences in spoken, especially informal usage will be much more pronounced. We therefore do not agree unconditionally with Mair's (2007a: 98) conclusion according to which 'we have one common underlying system of options, "English", for which speakers in different communities or contexts have different statistical preferences'. It is of course true that language users on both sides of the Atlantic have different preferences, but some of the contrasts go beyond mere statistical divergences. Furthermore, it can be assumed that frequencies play an important part in the acquisition and use of a (mental) grammar, because an increasing number of statistical differences

at some point lead to a loss of intercomprehensibility. We rather subscribe to Tottie's view (Chapter 18), according to which 'the more delicate our analysis, the more differences we will find', and many small differences in fact add up to recognizably different standards.

Coming back to the title question of the present volume, are we thus justified in speaking of two different grammars for the language we call English? As long as linguists are still debating the question of what should count as variations of the 'same' grammatical system or as two 'different' grammatical systems, the decision can only be taken by each reader according to his or her personal convictions. Two things seem clear, however. For one, disconfirming the anticipations expressed by Noah Webster around the year 1800 (quoted in Marckwardt and Quirk 1964: 9), BrE and AmE are not about to diverge from each other to the extent that other modern Germanic languages like German, Dutch, Danish and Swedish have. That the split does not occur is ensured by the strong exchange between the two nations that is owed to the media, the many opportunities for travel and the general globalization of economic and cultural life. This insight is certainly not new. For another thing, however, these external conditions fail to put a stop to novel developments that remain restricted to one variety or the other. Both AmE and (maybe to a somewhat lesser extent) BrE testify to an internal dynamism that continues to drive them apart. This does not mean that an innovation may not at some point be taken over by the other variety and thereby turn into a mere statistical preference and become equally established in both varieties in the end.

In sum, the present book has shown that, contrary to general opinion, the widely accepted truism according to which 'accent divides, and syntax unites' (for a discussion, see Mair 2007a) is too simplistic. There is decidedly more to British–American contrasts than only differences in pronunciation (and the lexicon): the morphosyntax has turned out to provide fertile ground for further research, and the present chapter has pointed to some promising directions. What is more, it may be that BrE and AmE represent two extremes of a grammatical continuum, with BrE at the conservative pole and AmE at the progressive pole. Corpus-based studies including Indian, Australian and New Zealand English have shown that these national varieties are located between the two extremes in relevant respects (see, e.g., Sayder 1989, Hundt 1998a). It will therefore be a worthwhile enterprise to extend the angle to other varieties of English spoken around the world, which can be expected to exhibit their own characteristic grammatical divergences.

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- ARCHER *A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers*.
- BNC *British National Corpus* 1995. Version 1.0. BNC Consortium/Oxford University Computing Services.
- Brown *Brown University Corpus* (representing written American English from 1961) ICAME.
- CobuildDirect telnet://titan.collins.co.uk (For a description of the corpus, see
Corpus. Sinclair 1987 and <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/encap/clcr/gordon/cobuild.pdf>).
- d91-00, 02, *Daily Telegraph and Sunday Telegraph* on CD-ROM 1991-2000,
04 2002, 2004 Chadwyck-Healey/ProQuest.
- D92-95 *Detroit Free Press* on CD-ROM 1992-5 Knight Ridder Information Inc.
- EAF *Early American Fiction* 2000 Chadwyck-Healey.
- EAF1 First part of the EAF containing only those authors born in the eighteenth century (*1744-*1799).
- EAF2 Second part of the EAF containing only those authors born in the nineteenth century (*1801-*1827).
- ECF *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 1996 Chadwyck-Healey.
- ECF1 First part of the ECF containing only those authors born in the seventeenth century (*1660-*1699).
- ECF2 Second part of the ECF containing only those authors born in the eighteenth century (*1700-*1752).
- EEPF *Early English Prose Fiction* 1997-2000 Chadwyck-Healey. In association with the Salzburg Centre for Research on the English Novel SCREEN.
- EPD *English Prose Drama* 1996-7 Chadwyck-Healey.
- ETC *Early Twentieth Century Corpus* - a selection of British and American writings by authors born between 1870 and 1894. Source: Project Gutenberg. Compiled in the Research Project

- 'Determinants of Grammatical Variation in English', University of Paderborn. Details are available upon request.
- ETC/A American writings in the ETC.
- ETC/B British writings in the ETC.
- FLOB Match of LOB compiled at Freiburg University (representing written British English from 1991) ICAME.
- Frown Match of Brown compiled at Freiburg University (representing written American English from 1992) ICAME.
- g90-05 *Guardian* (including *The Observer* 1994-2004) on CD-ROM 1990-2005 Chadwyck-Healey/ProQuest.
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