



English Language Development.

Trends. Prospects. Challenges.

The problem of standard.

Standardization milestones

- ▶ **1500**, Westminster English dominating dialect. The dominance of Latin was not questioned English was inferior.
- ▶ **1712**, foundation of an **English Academy** (with the task of 'Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue')
- ▶ **1755**, publication of Dr Samuel Johnson's **Dictionary of the English Language**.
- ▶ in **1795** Lindley Murray. Wrote and published the first edition of **The English Grammar Adapted to the Different Classes of Learners**.
- ▶ By **1800**, the rules of English grammar had been established.

Great English Grammar Settlement is under **threat**:

- ▶ **New social attitudes** (permissive approach to standard and language learning)
- ▶ **The internet**, (merging of spoken and written language)
- ▶ **Globalisation** (gazillion of alternations in numerous territorial substandards)

Global exposure to the English language



- ▶ First Language
- ▶ English as a Second Language or **ELF**
- ▶ English as a Foreign Language

linguist's view vs. populist's view


- ▶ (1) the concept of a closed and finite rule system is inadequate for the description of natural languages;
- ▶ (2) as a consequence, the writing of variable rules to modify such rule systems so as to accommodate the properties of natural language is inappropriate;
- ▶ (3) the concept of such rule systems belongs instead to a world of stereotypes about language, which are usually politically or ideologically motivated and which must be constantly re-examined, or to written language, which is different in nature and not an alternative representation of spoken language.'

Changes suspected to be going on in present-day standard English

- ▶ **a** tendency to regularise irregular morphology (e.g. **dreamt** **Æ dreamed**)
- ▶ **b.** revival of the "mandative" subjunctive, probably inspired by formal US usage (we demand that she **take** part in the meeting)
- ▶ **c.** elimination of shall as a future marker in the first person
- ▶ **d.** development of new, auxiliary-like uses of certain lexical verbs (e.g. get, want – cf., e.g., The way you look, you **wanna** / **want to** see a doctor soon) 6
- ▶ **e.** extension of the progressive to new constructions, e.g. modal, present perfect and past perfect passive progressive (the road would not be being built/ has not been being built/ had not been being built before the general elections)



- ▶ f. increase in the number and types of multi-word verbs (phrasal verbs, have/take/give a ride, etc.)
- ▶ g. placement of frequency adverbs before auxiliary verbs (even if no emphasis is intended – I never have said so)
- ▶ h. do-support for have (have you any money? and no, I haven't any money Æ do you have/ have you got any money? and no, I don't have any money/ haven't got any money)
- ▶ i. demise of the inflected form whom j. increasing use of less instead of fewer with countable nouns (e.g. less people)

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- ▶ k. spread of the s-genitive to non-human nouns (the book's cover)
 - ▶ l. omission of the definite article in certain environments (e.g. renowned Nobel laureate Derek Walcott)
 - ▶ m. "singular" they (everybody came in their car)
 - ▶ n. like, same as, and immediately used as conjunctions
 - ▶ o. a tendency towards analytical comparatives and superlatives (politer Æ more polite)

Syntactic changes

- ▶ Syntactic changes are seen as embedded in a context where semantic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic factors perform function of determinants of change.
- ▶ Study of ongoing grammatical change in present-day English, presumably should be corpus-based
- ▶ point of departure: mid-20th century standard American and British written English, documented in 2 matching reference corpora, namely the **Brown** and **LOB corpora**

Corpus-based approaches are combined with other methods in detailed studies of **lexicogrammatical phenomena**


- ▶ recent emergence of the topic-introducing preposition **as far as** (e.g. "as far as my situation, I am less than optimistic ...")
- ▶ emergence of prepositional uses of **following**.
- ▶ emergence of **(be) like** as a quotation-introducing form in some spoken registers of American English (and increasingly in British English)

Major current trends in the tense, modality, aspect and voice systems of English

- ▶ An increase in the frequency of occurrence of progressives in general,
- ▶ The establishment of the progressive in a few remaining niches of the verbal paradigm in which it was not current until the 20th century.
- ▶ Dramatic increase in the frequency of the progressive from late Middle English onwards has been confirmed
- ▶ emergence of the progressive passive (dinner was being prepared) approximately 200 years ago

Progressive forms in the press sections of the four reference corpora

	1961	1991/92	Difference (%age of 1961)
British English (LOB/ F-LOB)	606	716	+18.2%
American English (Brown/ Frown)	593	663	+11.8%

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- ▶ There might be some grammatical symptoms of a more general stylistic change, in which the norms of written English have moved closer to spoken usage, where the progressive has presumably always been more common than in writing

TEXTING SAMPLE

- ▶ **A: HRU**
- ▶ **B: AAK**
- ▶ **A: D4D**
- ▶ **B: TTLY**

TEXTING SAMPLE

- ▶ **A: *How are you?***
- ▶ **B: *Alive and kicking.***
- ▶ **A: *Down for date?***
- ▶ **B: *Totally.***

Some 21st Century additions to the dictionary

Derpy	Cyberbullying
Totes	Bromance
Woot	Amazeballs
Jeggings	Adorbs
Sexting	