



# 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

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

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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

<b>Derpy</b> <b>Totes</b> <b>Woot</b> <b>Jeggings</b> <b>Sexting</b>	<b>Cyberbullying</b> <b>Bromance</b> <b>Amazeballs</b> <b>Adorbs</b>