

A UNIVERSITY GRAMMAR OF ENGLISH

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Based on *A Grammar of Contemporary English*
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PREFACE

In preparing this shorter version of *A Grammar of Contemporary English*, our aim has been to satisfy the needs of university students who require the comprehensiveness of the original work but not its detail or extensive theoretical discussion or wealth of exemplification. But, insofar as it has been compatible with so curtailed a treatment, we have been careful to preserve the structure of the parent book so that reference to the fuller study can be easy and direct, chapter by chapter, as required.

In order to accommodate actual student needs in our treatment, we consulted a number of friends and colleagues all over the world: scholars with rich and varied experience of teaching English at institutions with widely different traditions; scholars whose opinion we valued on the kind of abridged *Grammar* that would best suit their students' needs. We are happy to acknowledge our gratitude to John Algeo (Georgia), M. A. G. Cerrudo (Buenos Aires), Rudolf Filipović (Zagreb), Jan Firbas (Brno), Denis Girard (Paris), Harold V. King (Michigan), Gerhard Nickel (Stuttgart), Wolf Praeger (Lörrach), Andrew Rogers (Texas), Alfred Schopf (Freiburg), and Takashi Shimaoka (Tokyo), all of whom studied *A Grammar of Contemporary English* in proof, with abridgment for student use in mind. Above all, we have benefited from the skilled and detailed guidance generously provided by R. A. Close (London) from his fund of university teaching experience in Japan, China, Czechoslovakia, Chile, Greece, and elsewhere.

Awareness of the correspondence with the parent book is taken for granted throughout the present treatment, and no reference is made to it in the bibliographical notes with which we conclude chapters. Nor do we refer in these chapter notes to other major descriptions of English (by Jespersen, Kruisinga, etc), though they are of course listed in the Bibliography, pp 462-4, in acknowledgment of their permanent relevance to grammatical studies and their contribution to our own research. For all grammarians draw freely on the work of their predecessors and at the same time use their new vantage point to see where

fresh headway can be made. We have indeed precisely this double relation with *A Grammar of Contemporary English*: as well as producing an epitome of the larger work, we have taken the opportunity to improve the description in numerous respects. In this way, we have made the labour of the present enterprise as fruitful and stimulating to ourselves as we hope it will be rewarding to our students.

RQ SG

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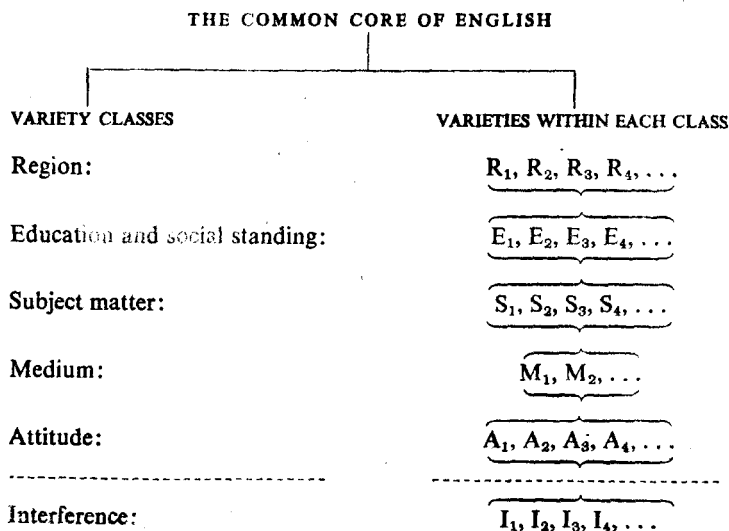
ONE

VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

1.1

Variety classes

There are numerous varieties of the English language, and what we ordinarily mean by 'English' is a common core or nucleus which is realized only in the different forms of the language that we actually hear or read. We can distinguish six kinds of varieties ranged as below and interrelated in ways we shall attempt to explain.



The fact that in this figure the 'common core' dominates all the varieties means that, however esoteric or remote a variety may be, it has running through it a set of grammatical and other characteristics that are common to all. From this initial point onwards, it is claimed by the sets

of braces that each variety class is related equally and at all points to each of the other variety classes. We shall however return and make qualifications to this claim. The classes themselves are arranged in a meaningful order and the justification will become clear in what follows.

Regional variation

1.2

Varieties according to region have a well-established label both in popular and technical use: 'dialects'. Geographical dispersion is in fact the classic basis for linguistic variation, and in the course of time, with poor communications and relative remoteness, such dispersion results in dialects becoming so distinct that we regard them as different languages. This latter stage was long ago reached with the Germanic dialects that are now Dutch, English, German, Swedish, etc. but it has not been reached (and may not necessarily ever be reached, given the modern ease of communication) with the dialects of English that have resulted from the regional separation of English-speaking communities both within the British Isles and throughout the world.

Regional variation seems to be realized predominantly in phonology. That is, we generally recognize a different dialect from a speaker's pronunciation before we notice that his vocabulary (or lexicon) is also distinctive. Grammatical variation tends to be less extensive and certainly less obtrusive. But all types of linguistic organization can readily enough be involved.

1.3

It is pointless to ask how many dialects of English there are: there are indefinitely many, depending solely on how detailed we wish to be in our observations. But they are of course more obviously numerous in the long-settled Britain than in the more recently settled North America or in the still more recently settled Australia and New Zealand. The degree of generality in our observation depends crucially upon our standpoint as well as upon our experience. An Englishman will hear an American Southerner primarily as an American and only as a Southerner in addition if further subclassification is called for and if his experience of American English dialects enables him to make it. To an American the same speaker will be heard first as a Southerner and then (subject to similar conditions) as, say, a Virginian, and then perhaps as a Piedmont Virginian. One might suggest some broad dialectal divisions which are rather generally recognized. Within North America, most people would be able to distinguish Canadian, New England, Midland, and Southern varieties of English. Within the British Isles, Irish, Scots, Northern, Midland,

Welsh, South-western, and London varieties would be recognized with similar generality. Some of these – Irish and Scots for example – would be recognized as such by many Americans and Australians too, while in Britain many people could make subdivisions: Ulster and Southern might be distinguished within Irish, for example, and Yorkshire picked out as a subdivision of northern speech. British people can also, of course, distinguish North Americans from all others (though not usually Canadians from Americans), South Africans from Australians and New Zealanders (though mistakes are frequent), but not usually Australians from New Zealanders.

1.4

Education and social standing

Within each of the dialect areas, there is considerable variation in speech according to education and social standing. There is an important polarity of uneducated and educated speech in which the former can be identified with the regional dialect most completely and the latter moves away from dialectal usage to a form of English that cuts across dialectal boundaries. On the other hand, there is no simple equation of dialectal and uneducated English. Just as educated English cuts across dialectal boundaries, so do many features of uneducated use: a prominent example is the double negative as in *I don't want no cake*, which has been outlawed from all educated English by the prescriptive grammar tradition for hundreds of years but which continues to thrive in uneducated speech wherever English is spoken.

Educated speech – by definition the language of education – naturally tends to be given the additional prestige of government agencies, the learned professions, the political parties, the press, the law court and the pulpit – any institution which must attempt to address itself to a public beyond the smallest dialectal community. The general acceptance of 'BBC English' for this purpose over almost half a century is paralleled by a similar designation for general educated idiom in the United States, 'network English'. By reason of the fact that educated English is thus accorded implicit social and political sanction, it comes to be referred to as Standard English, and provided we remember that this does not mean an English that has been formally standardized by official action, as weights and measures are standardized, the term is useful and appropriate. In contrast with Standard English, forms that are especially associated with uneducated (rather than dialectal) use are often called 'substandard'.

1.5

Standard English

The degree of acceptance of a single standard of English throughout the

world, across a multiplicity of political and social systems, is a truly remarkable phenomenon: the more so since the extent of the uniformity involved has, if anything, increased in the present century. Uniformity is greatest in what is from most viewpoints the relatively unimportant matter of spelling. Although printing houses in all English-speaking countries retain a tiny area of individual decision (some preferring *-ise* and others *-ize* in words like *realise*; some preferring *judgment* and others *judgement*; etc), there is basically a single system, with two minor subsystems. The one is the subsystem with British orientation (used in all English-speaking countries except the United States) with distinctive forms in only a small class of words, *colour*, *centre*, *levelled*, etc. The other is the American subsystem: *color*, *center*, *leveled*, etc. In Canada, the British subsystem is used for the most part, but some publishers (especially of popular material) follow the American subsystem and some a mixture (*color* but *centre*). In the American Mid-West, some newspaper publishers (but not book publishers) use a few additional separate spellings such as *thru* for *through*.

In grammar and vocabulary, Standard English presents somewhat less of a monolithic character, but even so the world-wide agreement is extraordinary and – as has been suggested earlier – seems actually to be increasing under the impact of closer world communication and the spread of identical culture, both material and non-material. The uniformity is especially close in neutral or formal styles (1.12) of written English (1.11) on subject matter (1.10) not of obviously localized interest: in such circumstances one can frequently go on for page after page without encountering a feature which would identify the English as belonging to one of the *national standards*.

National standards of English

1.6

British and American English

There are two national standards that are overwhelmingly predominant both in the number of distinctive usages and in the degree to which these distinctions are 'institutionalized': American English and British English. Grammatical differences are few and the most conspicuous are widely known; the fact that AmE has two past participles for *get* and BrE only one (3.14), for example, and that in BrE the indefinite pronoun *one* is repeated in co-reference where AmE uses *he* as in

One cannot succeed at this unless $\left\{ \begin{smallmatrix} \text{one} \\ \text{he} \end{smallmatrix} \right\}$ tries hard

Lexical examples are far more numerous, but many of these are familiar to users of both standards: for example, *railway* (BrE), *railroad* (AmE);

tap (BrE), *faucet* (AmE); *autumn* (BrE), *fall* (AmE). More recent lexical innovations in either area tend to spread rapidly to the other. Thus while radio sets have had *valves* in BrE but *tubes* in AmE, television sets have cathode ray *tubes* in both, and *transistors* are likewise used in both standards.

1.7

Scotland, Ireland, Canada

Scots, with ancient national and educational institutions, is perhaps nearest to the self-confident independence of BrE and AmE, though the differences in grammar and vocabulary are rather few. Irish (or Hiberno-) English should also be regarded as a national standard, for though we lack descriptions of this long-standing variety of English it is consciously and explicitly regarded as independent of BrE by educational and broadcasting services. The proximity of Britain, the easy movement of population, and like factors mean however that there is little room for the assertion and development of separate grammar and vocabulary.

Canadian English is in a similar position in relation to AmE. Close economic, social, and intellectual links along a 4000-mile frontier have naturally caused the larger community to have an enormous influence on the smaller, not least in language. Though in many respects Canadian English follows British rather than United States practice, in many other respects it has approximated to AmE and seems likely to continue in this direction.

1.8

South Africa, Australia, New Zealand

South Africa, Australia and New Zealand are in a very different position, remote from the direct day-to-day impact of either BrE or AmE. While in orthography and grammar the South African English in educated use is virtually identical with BrE, rather considerable differences in vocabulary have developed.

New Zealand English is more like BrE than any other non-European variety, though it now feels the powerful influence of Australia and – to no small degree – of the United States.

Australian English is undoubtedly the dominant form of English in the Antipodes, and it is even exerting an influence in the northern hemisphere, particularly in Britain, though much of what is distinctive in Australian English is confined to familiar use.

1.9

Pronunciation and Standard English

This list does not exhaust the regional or national variants that approximate to the status of a standard (the Caribbean might be mentioned, for

example), but the important point to stress is that all of them are remarkable primarily in the trivial extent to which even the most firmly established, BrE and AmE, differ from each other in vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. We have been careful, however, not to mention pronunciation in this connection. Pronunciation distinguishes one national standard from another most immediately and completely, and links in a most obvious way the national standards to the regional varieties.

In BrE, one type of pronunciation comes close to enjoying the status of 'standard': 'Received Pronunciation' or 'RP'. Because this has been largely associated with a private education system based upon boarding schools insulated from the locality in which they happen to have been situated, it is significantly non-regional and of considerable prestige. But RP no longer has the unique authority it had in the first half of the twentieth century.

1.10

Varieties according to subject matter

Varieties according to the subject-matter involved in a discourse are sometimes referred to as 'registers'. While one does not exclude the possibility that a given speaker may choose to speak in a national standard at one moment and in a regional dialect the next – and possibly even switch from one national standard to another – the presumption has been that an individual adopts one of the varieties so far discussed as his permanent form of English. With varieties according to subject matter, on the other hand, the presumption is rather that the same speaker has a repertoire of varieties and habitually switches to the appropriate one as occasion arises. Most typically, perhaps, the switch involves nothing more than turning to the particular set of lexical items habitually used for handling the subject in question: law, cookery, engineering, football.

Although in principle the type of language required by a particular subject matter would be roughly constant against the variables already discussed (dialect, national standard), the use of a specific variety of one class frequently presupposes the use of a specific variety of another. A well-formed *legal sentence*, for example, presupposes an *educated* variety of English.

1.11

Varieties according to medium

The only varieties according to medium that we need to consider are those conditioned by *speaking* and *writing* respectively. Most of the differences involved arise from two sources. One is situational: the use

of a written medium normally presumes the absence of the person(s) to whom the piece of language is addressed. This imposes the necessity of a far greater explicitness: the careful and precise completion of a sentence, rather than the odd word, supported by gesture, and terminating when the speaker is assured by word or look that his hearer has understood.

The second source of difference is that many of the devices we use to transmit language by speech (stress, rhythm, intonation, tempo, for example) are impossible to represent with the crudely simple repertoire of conventional orthography. They are difficult enough to represent even with a special prosodic notation: *cf* App II. This means that the writer has often to reformulate his sentences if he is to convey fully and successfully what he wants to express within the orthographic system.

1.12

Varieties according to attitude

Varieties according to attitude are often called 'stylistic', but 'style' like 'register' is a term which is used with several different meanings. We are here concerned with the choice of linguistic form that proceeds from our attitude to the hearer (or reader), to the subject matter, or to the purpose of our communication. And we postulate that the essential aspect of the non-linguistic component (that is, the attitude) is the gradient between stiff, formal, cold, impersonal on the one hand and relaxed, informal, warm, friendly on the other. It is useful to pursue the notion of the 'common core' (1.1) here, so that we can acknowledge a neutral or unmarked variety of English, bearing no obvious colouring that has been induced by attitude. On each side of this, we can then distinguish sentences containing features that are markedly formal or informal. In this book, we shall for the most part confine ourselves to this three-term distinction, leaving the middle one unlabelled and specifying only usages that are relatively formal or informal:

(rigid ~) FORMAL ~ (neutral) ~ INFORMAL (~ familiar)

1.13

Varieties according to interference

Varieties according to interference should be seen as being on a very different basis from the other types of variety discussed. In this case, we refer to the trace left by someone's native language upon the foreign language he has acquired. Thus, the Frenchman who says 'I am here since Thursday' is imposing a French grammatical usage on English; the Russian who says 'There are four assistants in our chair of mathematics' is imposing a Russian lexico-semantic usage on the English word 'chair'. But there are interference varieties that are so widespread

in a community and of such long standing that they may be thought stable and adequate enough to be regarded as varieties of English in their own right rather than stages on the way to a more native-like English. There is active debate on these issues in India, Pakistan and several African countries, where efficient and fairly stable varieties of English are prominent in educated use at the highest political and professional level.

1.14

Relationship between variety classes

In presenting the table of varieties in a schematic relationship (1.1), reference was made to each stratum of varieties being equally related to all others. But, as we have seen, there are limitations to this. Since writing is an educated art, we shall not expect to find other than educated English of one or other national standard in this medium. Indeed, when we try on occasion to represent regional or uneducated English in writing, we realize how narrowly geared to Standard English are our graphic conventions. For the same reason there are some subjects that can scarcely be handled in writing and others (*eg* legal statutes) that can scarcely be handled in speech.

Attitudinal varieties have a great deal of independence in relation to other varieties: it is possible to be formal or informal on biochemistry or politics in AmE or BrE, for example. But informal or casual language across an 'authority gap' or 'seniority gap' (a student talking to an archbishop) presents difficulties, and on certain topics (funerals) it would be unthinkable distasteful. An attempt at formal or rigid language when the subject is courtship or football would seem comic at best.

Our approach in this book is to keep our sights firmly fixed on the COMMON CORE which constitutes the major part of any variety of English, however specialized, and without which fluency in any variety at a higher than parrot level is impossible. Only at points where a grammatical form is being discussed which is associated with a specific variety will mention be made of the fact that the form is no longer of the common core. The varieties chiefly involved on such occasions will be AmE and BrE; speech and writing; formal and informal.

1.15

Varieties within a variety

Two final points need to be made. First, the various conditioning factors (region, medium, attitude, for example) have no *absolute* effect: one should not expect a consistent all-or-nothing response to the demands of informality or whatever the factor may be. The conditioning is real but relative and variable. Secondly, when we have done all we can to account

for the choice of one rather than another linguistic form, we are still left with a margin of variation that cannot with certainty be explained in terms of the parameters set forth in 1.1 and discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

For example, we can say (or write)

He stayed a week	or	He stayed for a week
Two fishes	or	Two fish
Had I known	or	If I had known

without either member of such pairs being necessarily linked to any of the varieties that we have specified. We may sometimes have a clear impression that one member seems rarer than another, or relatively old-fashioned, but although a rare or archaic form is likelier in relatively formal rather than in relatively informal English, we cannot always make such an identification. All societies are constantly changing their languages with the result that there are always coexistent forms, the one relatively new, the other relatively old; and some members of a society will be temperamentally disposed to use the new (perhaps by their youth) while others are comparably inclined to the old (perhaps by their age). But many of us will not be consistent either in our choice or in our temperamental disposition. Perhaps English may give rise to such fluctuation more than some other languages because of its patently mixed nature: a basic Germanic wordstock, stress pattern, word-formation, inflection and syntax overlaid with a classical and Romance wordstock, stress pattern, word-formation – and even inflection and syntax. The extent to which even highly educated people will treat the Latin and Greek plurals in *data* and *criteria* as singulars or will use *different to* and *averse to* rather than *different from* and *averse from* – and face objections from other native speakers of English – testifies to the variable acknowledgment that classical patterns of inflection and syntax (Latin *differre ab*, ‘to differ from’; *aversus ab*, ‘averse from’) apply within English grammar. It is one of the senses in which English is to be regarded as the most international of languages and it adds noticeably to the variation in English usage with which a grammar must come to terms.

Bibliographical Note

On varieties of English, see Crystal and Davy (1969); McDavid-Mencken (1963); Quirk (1972).

TWO

ELEMENTS OF GRAMMAR

2.1

The purpose of this chapter is to explore certain outstanding features of English structure in such a way as to provide, as it were, a small-scale map of areas that will be viewed in much greater detail in later chapters. As with any small-scale map, a great many features will be ignored and complicated contours will be smoothed out. The reader's attention will not be distracted even by forward references to the parts of the book in which the focus will allow such complication to become visible. But to compensate for the disadvantages in this degree of oversimplification, we have hoped to achieve the advantages of the geographical analogue as well. In other words, we have tried to provide enough broad information to enable the reader to understand – and place in a wider context – the more detailed discussion that subsequent chapters involve.

Parts of a sentence

2.2

Subject and predicate

In order to state general rules about the construction of sentences, it is constantly necessary to refer to smaller units than the sentence itself. Our first task must therefore be to explain what these smaller units are that we need to distinguish, confining our attention for the present to a few sentences which, though showing considerable variety, are all of fairly elementary structure.

Traditionally, there is a primary distinction between **SUBJECT** and **PREDICATE**:

John	carefully searched the room	[1]
The girl.	is now a student at a large university	[2]
His brother	grew happier gradually	[3]
It	rained steadily all day	[4]
He	had given the girl an apple	[5]
They	make him the chairman every year	[6]

Although such a division obviously results in parts which are (in these examples) very unequal in size and dissimilar in content, it is of course by no means arbitrary. The subject of the sentence has a close general relation to 'what is being discussed', the 'theme' of the sentence, with the normal implication that something new (the predicate) is being said about a 'subject' that has already been introduced in an earlier sentence. This is of course a general characteristic and not a defining feature: it is patently absurd in relation to sentence [4], for example. Another point is that the subject determines concord. That is, with those parts of the verb that permit a distinction between singular and plural, the form selected depends on whether the subject is singular as in [2], *the girl is*, or plural as in [6], *they make*.

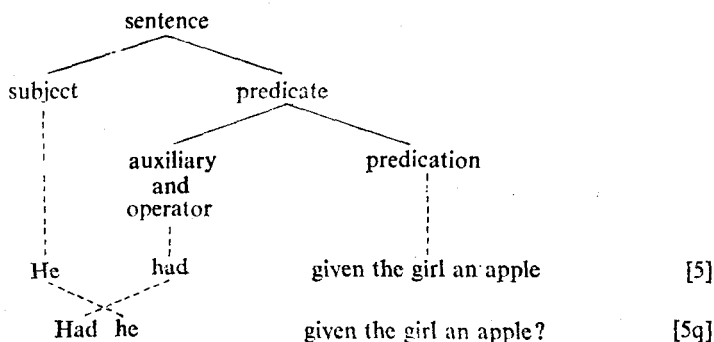
Furthermore, the subject is the part of the sentence that changes its position as we go from statement to question:

Had *he* given the girl an apple? [5q]

2.3

Operator, auxiliary, and predication

In contrast with the subject, there are few generalizations that we can usefully make about the predicate since – as our examples have illustrated – it tends to be a more complex and heterogeneous unit. We need to subdivide it into its elements or constituents. One division has already been suggested; this distinguishes AUXILIARY as OPERATOR (as in [5q]) from what we may call the PREDICATION. The distinctions may be illustrated as follows:



This particular division of the sentence helps us to understand, for example, how interrogative and negative sentences are formed, how certain adjuncts are positioned, and how certain types of emphasis are achieved.