



Grammatical Change in English World-Wide

EDITED BY
Peter Collins

Studies in Corpus Linguistics

67

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Peter Collins

University of New South Wales, Australia



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Grammatical Change in English World-Wide

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Volume 67

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Introduction

Peter Collins

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Until fairly recently we have had to rely on unsystematic and impressionistic sources for information on grammatical change in contemporary English, by contrast with sound change in progress, which has been subject to a good deal of sociolinguistic research. As corpus-based studies have begun to gather momentum, there are signs that real progress is being made. The most significant research to date is that reported in Leech et al.'s landmark 2009 volume, *Change in Contemporary English*. In this innovative contribution to the long tradition of research on the historical development of the grammar of English, the authors demonstrate the capacity of a corpus-based approach to quantify recent changes in a range of grammatical categories, including the modal auxiliaries, progressive, subjunctive, passive, genitive and relative clauses, in British and American English. At the same time they explore the role played in this process by a range of linguistic factors (such as grammaticalisation), discourse-level factors (such as colloquialisation) and socio-historical factors (such as Americanisation and prescriptivism). A more recent volume whose focus is also on current, relatively short-term, change in English grammar – more specifically the verb phrase – is Aarts et al. (2013). While Leech et al.'s work is based on the 'Brown family' of corpora, contributors to Aarts et al. avail themselves of a wide range of corpora, and there is a notable concern with questions of methodology.

The focus in both of these collections, which demonstrate the power of corpus linguistic techniques to provide valuable quantitative insights into changes in the English language, is squarely upon the British and American 'supervarieties' of English. The investigation of postcolonial varieties of English from a diachronic rather than synchronic linguistic perspective has, however, been largely neglected. The existence of this gap in the World Englishes research paradigm was recognised by Noël, Van der Auwera & Van Rooy, in their capacity as editors a recent special issue of the *Journal of English Linguistics* (Volume 42, 2014, "Diachronic Approaches to Modality in World Englishes"). The papers in this issue seek to illuminate distinctive grammatical patterns in selected postcolonial varieties using concepts and methods from historical linguistics, eschewing the hitherto more common approach involving synchronic comparisons between postcolonial Englishes and the parent variety, accompanied

by explanations proffered in terms of such notions as language contact, or language acquisition, or “universals of New Englishes”.

Following Noël et al.’s lead, the contributions to this volume apply and extend the techniques of corpus linguistics and diachronic linguistics to the task of describing and explaining grammatical change in English varieties (or sub-varieties in some cases) other than the two supervarieties. The book is divided into two parts, based on Kachru’s (1985) distinction between ‘Inner Circle’ varieties on the one hand, those in which English is the first language for the majority of the population and the language in which almost all public and private interaction is conducted (Part 1), and on the other hand ‘Outer Circle’ varieties, in which English is usually a second language learnt in school, despite its status as an official language (Part 2). Part 1 contains five chapters on ‘antipodean’ southern hemisphere Englishes (by Collins, Peters, Rodriguez Louro, and Yao on Australian English, and by Hundt on both Australian and New Zealand English); two on Irish English (by Kirk, and Van Hattum); and two on Canadian English (by D’Arcy, and Meyer). One paper, by Mair, explores the implications for other Englishes of changes that have occurred in British and American English. The chapters in Part 2 represent the following regions: South-East Asia (Collins’s on Philippine English, and Noël & Van der Auwera’s on Hong Kong English); South Asia (Davydova’s and De Clerck & Vanopstal’s, both on Indian English; and Mukherjee & Bernaisch’s on Indian, Pakistani and Sri Lankan Englishes); the Caribbean (Hackert & Deuber’s on Bahamian and Trinidad/Tobago Englishes); and Africa (Fuchs & Gut’s on Nigerian English, and Van Rooy & Piotrowska’s on Black South African English).

Four overarching research questions were identified as considerations for contributors to bear in mind in preparing their papers, as follows:

1. How do the diachronic tendencies observed in a particular variety differ from those of the parent variety (British English for all the postcolonial Englishes bar Philippine English, whose parent is American English)?
2. What are the possible causes of the diachronic tendencies observed? These may include, for example, the evolutionary status of a variety in Schneider’s (2007) dynamic model, the characteristic style orientation of a variety (has English become rooted in informal registers or is it a formal choice?), English teaching traditions and learner strategies in institutionalised L2 varieties, prescriptivism (as manifested in the pursuit of codification and in the presence of a complaint tradition), and internal changes in registers (such as the increasing use of direct speech or free indirect speech in fiction).
3. Do you observe different rates of change in the same direction from one variety to another, or in different directions? Do the observed changes converge with, or diverge from, or run in parallel with, those in the parent variety? Are the changes regionally specific, found in a particular variety but not attested in others)? How

- are the changes observed to be explained (for example, is there evidence of colonial lag or colonial innovation)?
4. Are there any universal routes of development? Any variety-specific mechanisms? Any mechanisms that distinguish non-native Englishes from native Englishes?

While most of the chapters address central grammatical categories, such as progressives (Collins; Fuchs & Gut; Kirk; Van Rooy & Piotrowska); modality (Mair; Noël & Van der Auwera; Van Hattum); the present perfect (Yao), ditransitive constructions (Meyer), and *do*-support (D'Arcy; Hundt), a smaller number are concerned with morphology (De Clerck & Vanopstal on *-t/-ed* variation in verbs; Peters on adverb suffixation), and with topics on the periphery of grammar (Mukherjee & Bernaisch's paper on cultural key words is concerned with the lexis-grammar interface; Rodriguez Louro's on epistemic markers with the pragmatics-grammar interface; Davydova's on quotatives with the discourse-grammar interface). The majority of chapters focus on a single variable, but two explore the 'bigger picture' afforded by investigation of a set of variables (Collins on Australian English; and Hackert & Deuber on Caribbean Englishes).

A major challenge for contributors was the paucity of resources suitable for the historical study of postcolonial Englishes. Within the World Englishes paradigm the most well-known and widely used resource is the International Corpus of English (ICE) collection. While, strictly speaking, the chronologically parallel ICE corpora are amenable only to synchronic comparisons, they have been used as the basis for indirect, apparent time, comparisons by various linguists (for discussion of the apparent-time construct see Labov 1994:43–72). Some previous ICE-based studies have extrapolated findings for ongoing change from differences between speech and writing, based on the assumption that changes tend to be more advanced in spoken than in written texts (e.g. Collins 2009; Van der Auwera, Noël & de Wit 2012). A further possibility – exploited in Fuchs & Gut's chapter on the progressive in Nigerian English – is the use of synchronic corpora for apparent time studies that compare speakers of different age groups based on the assumption that changes will be more advanced in the usage of younger than older speakers. Yet another strategy is to identify changes in apparent time via comparisons of postcolonial varieties and their 'parent' variety, based on the assumption that extent of divergence will be an indicator of advancement (Mair & Winkle 2012; Mukherjee & Bernaisch in this volume).

The problem of a short supply of corpora suitable for the real time historical study of postcolonial Englishes is addressed in various ways by the contributors to this volume.

Some use the strategy employed in Leech et al. (2009) of using parallel or near-parallel (sub-)corpora representing differing time points. Mair in fact introduces the latest member of the American Brown-family (the 1930s 'Before-Brown' corpus) in

order to demonstrate the descriptive advantages of extending the three-decade period investigated in Leech et al. (2009), including provision of a better benchmark for use in investigations of the New Englishes. Some chapters draw comparisons between an ICE corpus and (selected categories from) another corpus with an earlier sampling date. For example, Collins's chapter on Philippine English makes use of a recently compiled 'Brown-family' corpus ('Phil-Brown') along with the written categories of ICE-Philippines to compare developments between the 1960s and 1990s. Peters' chapter compares data from ICE-Aus and ICE-GB with that representing earlier Australian and British English collected by herself. Kirk draws comparisons between data collected from ICE-Ireland and the Corpus of Irish English Correspondence (CORIECOR), which comprises approximately three million words of personal letters dating from about 1700 to 1940.

Other contributors use historical corpora in which texts are sampled over a period of time at regular intervals. The studies by Collins (Part 1), Hundt, Peters, Van Hattum and Yao all make use of Clemens Fritz's facetiously named Corpus of Oz Early English (COOEE), compiled for his doctorate on the origins of Australian English (see Fritz 2007). COOEE comprises four macro-genres, fourteen text categories, and covers the period from 1788 to 1900. Yao and Collins's chapters also use a recently-compiled multigeneric corpus of 20th century Australian English (AusCorp), comprising news, fiction, and scientific texts organised in ten year periods. In order to draw comparisons with earlier British and American English, Collins, Yao and Hundt draw data from ARCHER (A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers), version 3.2, a multigeneric corpus with texts divided into 50-year periods from 1600 (for British English) and 1750 (for American English) till the end of the 20th century. Hundt's New Zealand data are derived from the 19th and 20th century Corpus of Early New Zealand English (CENZE), which was designed to be as similar in its design to ARCHER as the availability of texts would allow. The diachronic dimension of Meyer's study derives from his use of two generically-matched corpora: a 19th century corpus (comprising texts from the new Corpus of Early Nineteenth-Century Ontario Newspaper English, and various non-fiction and fiction texts) and from the multigeneric Strathy Corpus of Canadian English (which comprises over 50 million words of texts produced from the 1920s to the present day). Van Hattum uses a self-compiled corpus of historical Irish English and English English trial proceedings and personal letters, taken from a variety of sources including CORIECOR, the Old Bailey Corpus, COOEE and ARCHER.

The historical corpora described thus far are all multigeneric. Some contributors use monogeneric corpora comprising newspapers collected across a set of time points. D'Arcy's study is based on a set of issues of a Canadian newspaper, the *British Colonist*, from 1858 to 1935. Noël & Van der Auwera's database comprises issues of Hong Kong's *South China Morning Post* and several major American and British newspapers, at three data points (1990, 2000, and 2010). Hackert & Deuber's study is based on press

data from two countries (the Bahamas, and Trinidad and Tobago), at two time points (1968 and 2002–2012, “pre-” and “post-independence” respectively). Van Rooy & Piotrowska use a database comprising mainly 20th century (1884–2012) newspapers, (with a smaller amount of fiction). Also monogeneric is Kirk’s primary data-source, CORIECOR.

Of the other types of corpus data used, brief mention may be made of the collections of transcribed spoken material used in two chapters. Rodriguez-Louro uses a collection of oral histories housed in the State Library of Western Australia, recorded from speakers born between 1874 and 1983 and grouped into four categories: 1874–1889, 1922–1933, 1951–1958, and 1964–1983. Davydova draws on data obtained via sociolinguistic interviews from a multilingual community in the south of New Delhi, collected between 2007 and 2011, a part of the Hamburg Corpus of Non-Native Varieties of English. Finally there is one chapter – the only one – which makes systematic use of a web-based corpus: De Clerck & Vanopstal use data from the Indian component of the GloWbE corpus, along with a disparate array of other corpora.

The first chapter in Part 1, by *Peter Collins*, explores developments in ten morphosyntactic variables in Australian English over the past two centuries (-*t/-ed* past verb forms, ’s-genitives, the mandative subjunctive and *were*-subjunctive, concord with collective nouns, light verbs, non-finite complementation with *help* and *prevent*, *do*-support, and *be*-passives). Data derived from the news and fiction sections of two historical corpora, COOEE and AusCorp, are compared with those representing British and American English from ARCHER. Australian grammatical patterns are found to be mostly – in all but two cases – more advanced than those of its British colonial parent, this divergence reflecting Australia’s increasing independence from British linguistic norms. At the same time Australian usage is shifting towards that of American English – the new centre of gravity of grammatical change in English world-wide – which emerges as the most advanced variety on eight of the ten variables.

Alexandra D’Arcy investigates the expression of stative possession by *have* and (*have*) *got* in Canadian English (specifically that of Victoria, British Columbia). British and Southern hemisphere varieties – notably Australian and New Zealand English – are known to have been shifting towards *have got*, more rapidly than North American varieties, where *got* has long been subject to strong prescriptive censure. Despite the position of Victoria as Canada’s ‘most British city’, it follows the North American pattern of resistance towards *have got*. According to D’Arcy the explanation is to be found not merely in “sociohistorical timing and contexts”, but also in the interaction of language internal-forces: the expansion of *do*-support for stative *have* has exerted an inhibiting effect on the spread of the innovative form *have got* in North American dialects, but not in British dialects, where the shift from auxiliary to full verb status has been less wide-ranging.

Marianne Hundt confirms that the variability of *do*-support in 19th century British English, particularly with verbs of the so-called 'know-group' (Ellegård 1953), was also a feature of the Antipodean colonial Englishes in New Zealand and Australia. In the second half of the 19th century, Hundt notes, the Antipodean varieties develop in parallel with their colonial parent and with their more established American post-colonial sibling, albeit with American English slightly ahead of the other varieties in the regularisation of *do*-support. Most strongly resistant to this trend has been the lexical verb *have*, which Hundt shows – confirming the results of previous studies – to have been more resistant in the British (and Antipodean) varieties than in American English.

John Kirk investigates changes in the frequency and uses of the progressive in Irish English since the late 18th century. He finds the progressive to be highly frequent in Irish English, but does not attribute this to increases in such basic uses as the progressive passive and 'special uses' such as the interpretive and futurate progressives, in view of their comparable frequencies in his British data. While such uses are shared in common with the majority of Englishes world-wide, Kirk describes the progressive in Irish English as "Janus-like", with further features transferred from Irish (e.g. progressives with auxiliary *do* as in *Don't be worrying*, and 'extended-now' progressives as in *How long are you living here?*). Kirk makes the interesting suggestion, which would certainly warrant further investigation, that Irish English might have influenced the development of the progressive in varieties of English world-wide, through emigration in the 19th century to larger British cities and to the new world.

While *Christian Mair's* chapter differs from the others in its concern with the 'supervarieties' of World English, its relevance to the volume is grounded in Mair's contention that the more reliable the information we have about the two global reference varieties in the 20th century, the more reliable they will be as benchmarks for the study of the many New Englishes which have developed distinctive endonormative profiles only in the 20th century. Mair's study follows in the footsteps of research on modality based on the "Brown family" of corpora (LOB, FLOB, Brown and Frown), and more specifically studies such as Leech & Smith (2009) and Leech (2013) which extend the diachronic coverage of earlier studies based on the British branch of the family. Mair's study doubles the three-decade time depth of the American branch, with data from the 'Before-Brown' corpus complementing that from Brown and Frown. The modals are found to have remained entrenched in written American English, despite a significant decline for *must*, *may* and *shall*, while the semi-modals have either remained stable or increased in frequency (with the single exception of *be to*).

Matthias Meyer focuses on passive clauses containing 'ditransitive' verbs such as *give*, *sell* and *teach* in Canadian English: 'first passives' (e.g. *He was given the letter*), 'second passives' (e.g. *The letter was given him*) and 'prepositional passives' (e.g. *The letter was given to him*), in 19th century and present-day Canadian English. The main

diachronic development he notes is a shift from the dominance of prepositional passives in the 19th century data to that of first passives in the present day, the survival of both types being supported by their functional complementarity. Meanwhile second passives have become even rarer than they were in the 19th century, as in American English.

Pam Peters investigates five adverbs which have 'dual' ('zero' and *-ly*) forms, such as *bad/badly*, *high/highly*, and *slow/slowly*, in Australian and British English of the 19th and 20th centuries. Peters observes a decline in the use of the zero forms over the course of the 20th century in Australian English, albeit one milder than has occurred in British English, suggesting that the divergence between the varieties could be attributed to either colonial lag or emerging republican independence. She also notes that free variation between dual adverb pairs is more commonly found in Australian English than in British English, where zero adverbs are associated with a more limited set of verbs.

Celeste Rodriguez Louro focuses primarily on the expression *I think*, and its grammaticalisation in Australian English from a stance marker taking a clausal complement to an 'epistemic/evidential parenthetical' used to express opinions and mitigate negative judgements. Multivariate analysis of Rodriguez Louro's oral history data reveals differences between speakers born in the period 1964–1983 and those born earlier (for example a preference by the latter for *I think* in clause-initial position, but for clause-medial/-final position by the former) which suggests that grammaticalisation of *think* was essentially a late 20th century phenomenon. Another finding of the study is that *guess* only entered the Australian English system of epistemic/evidential verbs in the early 20th century, quite possibly as an import from American English.

Marije Van Hattum's study suggests that developments with *may* and *might* in 19th century Irish English and English English run largely in parallel. In objective possibility contexts *might* is found to have been restricted to either past or remote contexts, whereas *may* was used only in non-past and non-remote contexts. In subjective possibility contexts, however, *might* increasingly lost its ability to signal past time reference, and along with *may* was increasingly used with the perfect construction to express propositions about past time situations. The only period showing a statistically significant difference between the two varieties was the early 19th century, where *might* was used more frequently in non-past, non-remote contexts in Irish English. Van Hattum suggests that this finding may be attributable to Irish influence (the past form *b' fhéidir* 'perhaps' being preferred over the present form *is féidir* in non-past, non-remote contexts).

Xinyue Yao compares the developmental patterns associated with the present perfect and the preterite in Australian English with those in British and American English. In the two reference varieties the present perfect has been losing ground to the preterite since the 18th century, attributable in large part to a functional shift which has

seen the present perfect become associated more with 'extended-now' contexts than resultative contexts. American English has been leading the way, not merely in the rate of frequency decline of the present perfect (relative to the preterite), but also in its increasing limitation to temporally specified, negative, and other contexts. Yao finds the ratio of present perfects to preterites to have been relatively stable in Australian English, displaying a British-like conservatism that suggests a retention of patterns found in earlier stages of the language.

The first chapter in Part 2, by *Peter Collins*, seeks to shed light on the 'evolutionary' status of Philippine English via comparisons of the progressive in 1960s and 1990s data. According to Schneider (2007: 141) the endonormative consolidation of Philippine English is little more than incipient, a view opposed by Borlongan (2011), who argues that it has in fact reached an advanced level. Collins's findings suggest that the jury must remain out on this debate. Using findings reported by Leech et al. (2009) for the two 'supervarieties' – British English and American English (the colonial 'parent' of Philippine English) – as a benchmark for comparison, Collins presents results that in some cases support Schneider's position (for example Philippine English follows American English in its distaste for progressive passives, and in the relative popularity of progressives with stative lexical verbs), and in other cases support Borlongan's position (for example Philippine usage diverges from American, and British, in its dispreference for present progressives and contracted progressives).

Julia Davydova explores recent diachronic developments in the quotative marking of Indian English. The study investigates three major components of the IndE quotative system: (i) conservative mainstream forms such as *say* and *think*; (ii) global innovative variants such as *be like*; and (iii) local innovations such as *okay (fine)*. The most conspicuous developments noted are a sharp decrease in the frequency of verbs of reporting, contrasting with a strong rise in that of *be like* and *okay (fine)*. Looking more closely, Davydova finds sociolinguistic proliferation, with older mainstream variants preferred by mesolectal male speakers and innovative variants by acrolectal female speakers, a finding noted to be consonant with that of other non-Western societies in which women have been found to be less conservative than men.

In their chapter *Bernard De Clerck & Klaar Vanopstal* seek to determine if the trend in British and American English towards the adoption of *-ed* endings over *-t* endings in the conjugation of irregular verbs is attested in Indian English as well. They find that Indian English uses a set of hybrid features, some similar to British English and some to American English. Ultimately they question the relevance to their results of Inner Circle dependent concepts such as colonial lag or colonial innovation, preferring to interpret the processes of change they identify in Indian English as driven by variety-independent, localised forces. In attempting to account for internal variation they note a tendency, albeit mild, for vowel change to be a factor in the retention of *-t* forms.

Robert Fuchs & Ulrike Gut compare the usage of speakers of three different age groups in ICE-Nigeria: 'older' (50 years and older), 'middle-aged' (30–49 years), and 'younger' (18–29 years). Using a multivariate logistic regression analysis, they find that while there is no significant difference in the frequency of progressive use between younger and middle-aged speakers, both groups have a significantly higher frequency than older speakers. The conclusion that is inferred from this, that the progressive is on the increase in Nigerian English, as it is generally in English world-wide (compare Collins, Van Rooy & Piotrowska in this volume). Also found to be significant factors in changing progressive use are ethnicity (with the rate of use by Yoruba speakers significantly higher than that of Igbo speakers) and text category (a higher frequency occurring in more persuasive texts and a lower one in more formal ones). Finally, the frequency of extended uses of the progressive with verbs referring to habitual durative activities and stative verbs is found to be stable across age groups in Nigerian English.

Stephanie Hackert & Dagmar Deuber compare developments in four grammatical features – contractions of negatives and verb forms, the *be*-passive, relative *that* vs *which*, and pseudotitles – in newspaper reportage in the Bahamas and in Trinidad and Tobago, over the past half-century or so. The results are interpreted in the light of several broad factors. Americanisation appears to have been a mildly influential factor, with changes in the Caribbean data (e.g. increase in contractions, relative *that*, and pseudotitles, decline in *be*-passives) in the same direction as those in American usage, albeit of considerably less magnitude. There is also mild evidence for colloquialisation (with contraction rates), and densification (with pseudotitles). One clear difference with American (and British) newspaper language is the retention by Caribbean journalists of a distinct "flavour of formality".

Joybrato Mukherjee & Tobias Bernaisch explore lexicogrammatical routines in three South-Asian Englishes (Indian, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan). More specifically, they examine the collocation between the 'cultural keywords' *government*, *religion* and *terror* and the verbs that follow them, in the relevant components of the South Asian Varieties of English (SAVE) corpus. The data is synchronic, but understood to have diachronic ramifications: the greater the divergence between a particular South Asian variety and its British colonial parent (as measured by a 'diversity/unity (*d/u*) ratio' proposed by the authors), the greater its diachronic advancement is assumed to be. Of the three keywords studied, *government* is found to have a high degree of shared verbal collocates, *religion* a lower degree, with *terror* in between.

The context for *Dirk Noël & Johan Van der Auwera's* study is the exchange between Millar (2009) and Leech (2011, 2013) concerning frequency changes in modality. Millar's finding of a frequency increase in the modals in the American news publication *Time Magazine* between 1923 and 2006, appeared to undermine previous findings by Leech and others (e.g. Leech 2003; Leech et al. 2009) of a decrease in the modals in American and British writing in general. In response Leech claimed that his original

findings were not merely, as Millar had alleged, a by-product of the limited timespan (1961–1990s) covered by his corpora: Leech's finding of a decline remained intact when he extended the temporal scope of his investigation to a period comparable to that of Millar's study. Rather, argued Leech, the contradictory findings were to be explained in terms of the contrast between his use of 'representative' corpora and Millar's use of a genre-specific corpus. Noël & Van der Auwera, who argue the descriptive benefits of studies such as Millar's, deriving from the role played by genre in language change, restrict their study to newspapers, comparing modal and quasi-modal frequencies in major Hong Kong, American and British newspapers between 1990 and 2010. The British and Hong Kong press are found to pattern similarly, with the modals in decline and the quasi-modals on the rise, whereas in the American press both modal categories are increasing in frequency, the quasi-modals particularly strongly.

Bertus Van Rooy & Caroline Piotrowska show that Black South African English exhibits the rising trend for the progressive attested in varieties of English world-wide, but they are unable to determine with certainty whether it results from the influence of White South African English, or whether it has been internally fuelled. As in 20th century British and American English (see Leech et al. 2009: 142) there is little evidence, despite frequency increases, for changes in the functions and uses of the progressive. The capacity of the progressive in Black South African English to combine more readily than that in the native varieties with stative and achievement verbs, and to express an extended time period, have been constants in the variety rather than changing features. Van Rooy & Piotrowska argue for the likelihood of transfer from substrate (Bantu) languages.

The papers in this volume show that the imaginative use of both available corpora and of newly-prepared purpose-built corpora can provide fresh insights which promise to address the 'diachronic gap' in the World Englishes paradigm. It is to be hoped that the book will provide a stimulus for more studies in this relatively new field of enquiry. Finally, I would like to thank the contributors for agreeing to participate in this project, and to record my gratitude to Xinyue Yao for her gracious help in the preparation of the manuscript for publication.

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