Proper English Usage

A sociolinguistic investigation of attitudes towards usage problems in British English

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A sociolinguistic investigation of attitudes towards usage problems in British English

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For my parents.

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Abbreviations

AmE	American English
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BNC	British National Corpus
BrE	British English
CGEL	*The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*
CMC	Computer-mediated communication
COCA	Corpus of Contemporary American English
COHA	Corpus of Historical American English
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HND	Higher National Diploma
HUGE	Hyper Usage Guide of English
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measures
Mdn	Median
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
ONS	Office for National Statistics
OR	Odds Ratio
PEU	Proper English Usage
POS	Parts-of-speech
RP	Received Pronunciation
SPaG	Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar test
U3A	University of the Third Age

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1. Introduction

1.1. Proper English Usage?

When reading the title of this thesis, some startled linguists will intuitively gasp for air and shake their heads in disbelief. Is it really called *Proper English Usage*? As the author is a sociolinguist, it should have surely read *'Proper' English Usage*. But should it?

I selected this title purposefully as a reflection of the essence of the more than 300-year-old usage dilemma this thesis attempts to depict (Beal, 2009, p. 35). While linguists hesitate to make evaluative claims about the use of language varieties, let alone call anything *proper* without putting quotation marks around it, prescriptivists are not shy of passing judgments on what they consider proper language use; in fact, their entire existence is built on a dichotomous view of language as being either proper or improper, correct or incorrect, standard or nonstandard (Curzan, 2014, p. 13). This clearly conflicts with the view of linguists according to whom the study of languages is descriptive and prescriptivism should be eschewed (Cameron, 1995, p. 5). Caught between the battle lines of the so-called usage debate is the somewhat indefinite and passive general public, who often seem to be overlooked; yet, at the same time it represents the vast majority of language users and holds an undeniable authority. To the general public the concept of proper, standard and/or correct English often seems to be a reality, which is aptly noted by Cornips et al. (2015, p. 46) in their discussion of labelling practices in youth vernaculars by stating the following: "Languages may be fictions for us [linguists], but they are realities for others". This will also be illustrated in this thesis. Therefore, the lack of quotation marks in the title reflects a concept about language use which has, in the course of the past three centuries, developed into a myth. This myth has been demonized by linguists and has been kept alive by prescriptivists in their approach to language. Identifying

what the general public considers proper English usage therefore is necessary to provide a complete picture and, hence, is the purpose of this study.

What lies at the heart of this study is the so-called usage debate which constitutes a more than 300-year-old debate on language correctness which is still ongoing and has evolved considerably. The term 'usage debate' does indeed refer to the opposing views held by prescriptivists and descriptivists, yet it also describes a social and historical phenomenon. Constituting the main playing field of the key players, the usage debate has also been referred to as the "tug-of-war between descriptive and prescriptive approaches to English usage" (Peters, 2006, p. 759). Having originated in critical reviews of literary works (cf. Percy, 2009) and evolved into usage advice for linguistically insecure speakers in need of linguistic guidance which they found in so-called usage guides, the debate has now also reached the realm of the internet. Thus, not only has participation in the debate become possible to the wider general public, the debate has also found new channels and media through which it can be pursued. The usage debate is intrinsically connected with the rise of prescriptivism and prescription, the last stage of the Milroyan standardisation process of English (Milroy & Milroy, 2012), and therefore constitutes a vital component in the discussion of usage attitudes, both diachronically and synchronically.

1.2. Prescriptivism, Descriptivism and their Key Players

As an approach to language, prescriptivism fosters and promotes a set of traditional usage rules. These rules are often characterised by their strong affiliation to the Latin grammar tradition and connection to the teaching of English grammar (Mesthrie et al., 2009, pp. 12–20). While some prescriptive rules are clearly meant to resemble Latin rules, such as the one on never to split an infinitive, others have been based on aesthetical or logical reasoning

(Ilson, 1985, p. 165), yet their arbitrary character has been related to conventions of daily life by Milroy and Milroy (2012, p. 1), who make a comparison between observations on linguistic correctness and table manners, dress codes and the like. What becomes apparent through this characterisation is that the discussion of language usage is substantially connected to usage conventions and to both societal and linguistic ideological issues. A simplified differentiation between prescriptivism and descriptivism has been made by Ann Curzan (2014, pp. 12–13), who describes prescriptivism as "the bad guy" who will point out any linguistic lapses and provide a finger-wagging correction, while "the good guy", also known as descriptivism, will record and depict how language is used without imposing any evaluation of or judgment on speakers. A more detailed discussion of prescriptivism will be provided in Chapter 3. How this binary approach to language has developed will be explored in this thesis in detail.

It is important to circumscribe the key players and their role and functions in the usage debate: the linguists, the prescriptivists and the general public. The role of linguists in the usage debate seems to have been the one of the silent observer, who records language variation and change, yet distances himself from an evaluative discussion thereof (Cameron 1995, p. 3; Edwards, 2012, p. 17). A linguistic involvement in the usage debate either materialised as a scientific treatment of usage problems or attitudes towards usage problems, their respective historical development, or to caution against prescriptive attempts made by usage guide writers and other language mavens. Their attitude towards prescriptivism has caused linguists to neglect its study in an academic manner (Milroy & Milroy, 2012, pp. 3–4).

Unlike linguists, prescriptivists actively pursue the promotion of their understanding of correct English. Prescription is, according to Milroy and Milroy (2012, pp. 22–23), the final stage of the standardisation process of

English and it is said to be connected to the rise of the usage guide as a genre and cultural phenomenon. Serving as advice manuals on language use, usage guides used to be aimed at a socially mobile stratum of the society, which was also characterised by a degree of linguistic insecurity (Beal, 2008, p. 23; Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2009, p. 85; Milroy & Milroy, 2012, p. 22). The writers of these usage guides frequently exhibit strong prescriptive attitudes and prescribe usages they consider superior over other often conventional usages. Thus, the prescriptivists' role is to defend specific usages by instructing linguistically insecure native speakers and even advanced language learners on what to use and in particular on what not to use (Weiner, 1988, p. 173).

While usage guide writers and linguists have been involved in the debate, members of the general public make their voice heard only occasionally in what became known as the complaint tradition (Milroy & Milroy, 2012, pp. 24–46). In letters to the editor or by posting comments online, members of the general public express their attitudes towards issues of language usage. The general public's language use and its allegedly declining standards support prescriptivists' attempts to correct and fix the English language. This argument of falling language standards has been deeply imbedded in the ideology of prescriptivism and is connected to the idea of a "Golden Age" of the English language (Milroy, 1998, p. 60), a mythological era in the history of the English language in which everyone knew their grammar perfectly. Nevertheless, apart from these public complaints, the general public has remained somewhat passive in the debate and as a consequence may have been overlooked. Davies (2012) clarifies an often misunderstood concept which will be discussed below in this thesis: laypeople. It is important not to distinguish between laypeople and linguists categorically,

but rather to allocate the general public on a continuum ranging from "professional linguists to people with no metalinguistic competence at all" (Davies, 2012, p. 52). Where does the general public stand in the usage debate? Does it exhibit prescriptive or descriptive attitudes towards usage problems? What the general public thinks about usage problems is pivotal to a comprehensive study and thorough understanding of prescriptivism in British English, as laypeople's attitudes towards usage problems have been neglected in previous usage attitude studies.

1.3. What are Usage Problems?

Despite the ongoing debate, the definition of what constitutes a usage problem has often been neglected or side-lined, possibly because it proves to be a complicated issue. Ilson (1985, p. 166) highlights how tricky finding a suitable definition is by stating that "[n]ot every language problem is a usage problem". By combining various characteristics already identified by scholars, a better understanding of what usage problems are can be achieved.

According to Weiner (1988), who discusses the process of compiling usage guides, usage problems can be found in syntax, morphology, the lexicon as well as in pronunciation. Thus, usage problems cannot be limited to a specific area in language. Looking at the linguistic context of these usage issues, one characteristic component, however, can be teased apart: variability. Usage problems constitute problematic areas because there is more than one suitable variant. This has been described by Milroy and Milroy (2012, p. 22) as optional variability, which as a wider concept has been discussed in connection with the selection of a language variety to be standardised. As part of the standardisation process of languages a choice of one option to be incorporated in the codification of the standard was necessary and variation had to be suppressed (2012, p. 22). Cheshire (1999, p. 132) illustrates how

morphosyntactic variation was reduced in the standardisation process of English as codifiers strove to achieve their aim: "a single meaning should be expressed by a single form, and vice versa". Thus, we can assume that usage problems exist in contexts where there are still multiple options and the suppression of variability was probably unsuccessful. Be it the splitting or the not splitting of an infinitive or the traditional or new use of *literally*, it becomes clear that variability can cause problems in relation to what different groups of the speech community consider to be acceptable and part of a standard variety.

A special case of usage problems is so-called "old chestnuts", which are usage problems that seem to feature permanently in the debate, while other usage problems are either temporarily problematic or have a recurring character (Weiner, 1988, p. 173). The split infinitive is a good example of an old chestnut. Interestingly, old chestnuts seem to have acquired a special status in the debate, not only because of their permanent character, but also as a mythological feature. Many laypeople have heard of usage problems which can be characterised as old chestnuts, despite an otherwise lack of awareness of the usage debate. I will provide a discussion of this phenomenon in the analysis of the data I have collected to identify the general public's attitude towards usage problems (Chapter 7).

Ilson (1985, p. 167) provides a description of three criteria according to which features of language use can be called usage problems: "actual occurrence, fairly widespread occurrence, and discussability without giving offence". While the first two criteria are self-explanatory, the last criterion requires a clarification. As opposed to vulgarisms, whose public discussion is often deemed inappropriate, usage problems are characterised by being suitable for public discussion without offending anyone. What becomes obvious from Ilson's criteria is the involvement of the general public in the definition

of what usage problems constitute. Apart from their public "discussability" (Ilson, 1985, p. 167), usage problems need to be language features actually used by the general public and furthermore they need to be widely used by parts of the speech community. As already mentioned above, prescriptivists have used various arguments in order to justify their usage advice. Next to historical, logical and aesthetic arguments, an important argument is that correct usage distinguishes the educated from the non-educated, the wealthy from the less well-off speakers. Correct usage has been dividing society in this manner since the eighteenth century (Bloomfield, 1985, p. 265; Milroy & Milroy, 2012, p. 28), yet attitudes towards what constitutes correct usage are diverse. Therefore, it is important to assess the awareness of laypeople towards usage problems, as many issues discussed in the usage debate do not seem to bother them.

For the purpose of this study, I will attempt my own definition of usage problems based on the combination of various characteristics mentioned above. Usage problems are social constructs which can perform a divisive function in society through which the language use of parts of this society is deemed incorrect, uneducated and the like. Apart from being actual language features which are widely used in a speech community, usage problems need to allow a non-offence and appropriate public discussion. As usage problems occur in contexts that allow optional variability, the choice of one variant over another is often justified by historical, social, aesthetic or logical arguments. What needs to be borne in mind are the different degrees of awareness towards usage problems within a speech community. While prescriptivists know the traditional use of *literally* for instance, members of the general public may have a different understanding of what *literally* means nowadays. As I will illustrate in this thesis, awareness plays a crucial role in the usage debate.

1.4. Aims of this Study

In this thesis, I will attempt to close the gap between the three key players – linguists, prescriptivists and the general public – by incorporating the attitudes of the general public in the usage debate. By providing an in-depth and multimodal investigation of the general public's attitudes towards usage problems in British English, I will illustrate current attitudes held towards features such as the split infinitive, the use of *literally* and the double negative. Applying a data and methodological triangulation through different attitude elicitation tests enables a comprehensive understanding of how attitudes towards usage problems are expressed (Angouri, 2010, pp. 34–35). Thus, I will be able to highlight areas of disagreement and agreement in usage between the three key players and furthermore provide a solid insight into the general public's attitudes towards usage problems and their understanding of proper English usage. This study draws on a number of sociolinguistic methods and concepts, such as the concept of linguistic insecurity, to identify the crucial social factors in the usage debate. Doing so, the importance of a sociolinguistic study on prescriptivism is emphasised. The following research questions lie at the heart of this study:

1) What are the current attitudes of the English general public towards specific usage problems?
2) How can these attitudes be effectively and thoroughly identified and assessed?
3) Have current attitudes towards usage problems changed in comparison to attitudes identified in previous attitude studies?
4) Do current attitudes of the general public concur with or diverge from the attitudes expressed by prescriptivists?
5) What kind of usage evidence do corpora provide to support prescriptive or descriptive endeavours?

In order to answer these research questions, I have made use of a mixed-methods approach to identify the general public's attitudes towards usage problems. Using the Direct and Indirect Approach, as well as the Societal Treatment Approach, a methodological triangulation is applied through the data I have collected (Garrett, 2010). Furthermore, my aim was to provide both qualitative and quantitative data by combining a questionnaire as well as an interview session consisting of three further attitude elicitation tests. Applying this combination of different methods and types of data, I will be able to identify the true attitudes of members of the general public towards usage problems. In this study, I have made use of an online questionnaire, an open-guise test and usage judgment test, which will be discussed in detail in the Methodology Chapter (Chapter 5).

Attitudes to English Usage (1970) is a study conducted in the late 1960s by William Henry Mittins, Mary Salu, Mary Edminson and Sheila Coyne at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and lays the foundation of my investigation of usage problems in British English. As attitudes towards usage problems have, to my knowledge, rarely been subject to an academic investigation, the Mittins study is essential not only for a historical comparison of usage attitudes, but also for a discussion of the usage debate in Great Britain especially in relation to the teaching of English grammar. By drawing on previous usage surveys such as *Attitudes to English Usage*, I will be able to make a historical comparison of attitudes and so identify possible changes in attitudes.

Eliciting attitudes only shows one side of the story and therefore the study of attitudes towards usage problems needs to be completed by an investigation of actual language use. That is why I will make use of corpora, such as the British National Corpus (BNC), to investigate two of the key characteristics of usage problems: their widespread and actual use. However, it

should be noted that the corpus survey is only complementary to the attitude data as the main focus of this study is on the elicitation of usage attitudes of members of the general public. As this thesis makes use of a comprehensive methodology and incorporates a diverse set of data, it is not only possible to provide an updated usage survey, but also highlight the social ties attached to the usage debate in Great Britain, in particular England. Furthermore, I will include a survey of usage problems as discussed by usage guide writers to add the second key player in the usage debate to the analysis. This survey is enabled through an investigation of the Hyper Usage Guide of English (HUGE) database created by Robin Straaijer (2015) as part of the Bridging the Unbridgeable project. A survey of HUGE will add the perspective of usage guide writers, who seem to be prone to express prescriptive or proscriptive attitudes, rather than descriptive ones. This survey will enable me to identify usage guide writers' attitudes to the usage problems investigated from a diachronic and synchronic perspective.

Despite the lack of detailed studies by linguists on attitudes towards prescriptivism and usage problems, it is still necessary to outline their stance on such issues. This will be attempted by providing the views of the authors of *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (*CGEL*), Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey Pullum, two prominent linguists who discuss the differences between prescriptive and descriptive tendencies towards the study of language, in particular in writing grammars. Pullum and Huddleston (2002, pp. 6–11) summarise three key fallacies of prescriptivists: 1) Taste tyranny, 2) Confusing informal style with ungrammaticality and 3) Spurious external justifications. What Pullum and Huddleston (2002, p. 7) describe as the taste tyranny deals with prescriptivists' tendency to disregard the language use of the general public and to emphasise their own personal judgments and preferences in usage. This phenomenon has also been noticed by Oliver Kamm

(2015, p. 52), a journalist-cum-usage guide writer, who adopts a descriptive approach to usage. This contradiction in the language use of the majority and the advocating of usages seemingly abandoned or disfavoured by the general public is striking. It seems as if prescriptivists aim to impose their own aesthetic judgments onto the wider general public and are so ignoring actual language use:

> The authoritarian prescriptivist whose recommendations are out of step with the usages of others is at liberty to declare that they are in error and should change their ways; the descriptivist under the same circumstances will assume that it is precisely the constant features in the usage of the overwhelming majority that define what is grammatical in the contemporary language, and will judge the prescriptivist to be expressing an idiosyncratic opinion concerning how the language ought to be. (Pullum & Huddleston, 2002, p. 8)

While the difference between prescriptivists' and descriptivists' views could not be any starker, the above quotation essentially describes the usage debate between prescriptivists and descriptivists. Yet, the general public only assumes a passive role as providers of language use and recipients of language advice. The second fallacy discussed by Pullum and Huddleston (2002, p. 8) targets a commonly held notion by prescriptivists that "only formal style is grammatically correct". Linguists strongly advocate a better understanding of what grammaticality entails. Pullum and Huddleston (2002, p. 8) exemplify this on the basis of a discussion of the use of *who* in place of *whom*. While some usage guide writers deem *who* in place of *whom* as in *Who did you hear that from?* quoted by Fowler (1926, p. 723) in speech as colloquial use, linguists criticise prescriptivists' tendencies to distinguish between "talk" and "grammar". According to Pullum and Huddleston (2002, p. 8), a better understanding of standard language needs to be shown by emphasising the overlapping, yet also slightly diverging character of rules governing informal and formal styles. The third and last fallacy discussed by Pullum and Huddleston (2002, p. 8–11) deals with so-called spurious external justifications. This

means that the basis of prescriptivists' judgments about the validity of usage rules frequently stems from dubious sources, such as the use of classical languages such as Latin as a model for English grammar. This phenomenon will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. Despite the alleged absence of linguists from the scientific debate about language usage, Pullum and Huddleston's account of where they think prescriptivists are misleading or wrong serves as a good indication of linguists' attitudes towards prescriptivism and usage problems. In this study, I will make use of grammars and language advice manuals written by linguists to add the linguist's perspective to the debate, which hopefully is more detailed than simply assuming the 'Anything goes' approach to language which is frequently alluded to in the usage debate. By including the views of all three key players and initiating a focus on the general public, I will consequently attempt to bridge the gap between the three players in the usage debate.

1.5. The Usage Problems Investigated

Despite discussing attitudes towards usage problems in general, I have made a selection of fourteen usage problems which will be focussed on in this thesis. These fourteen usage problems, which can be found in Table 1.1, are a combination of old chestnuts and recent usage phenomena. I based my selection of old chestnuts on previous attitude studies, such as the Mittins study, and added more recent usage problems, such as the different uses of *like*, to the list illustrated below. Eleven of the fourteen usage problems are investigated in both the online survey and the open-guise test, whereas the usage judgment test includes six usage problems three of which are exclusively investigated in this particular test.

As can be seen from Table 1.1, I have used different variants of one usage problem in my methodology. While some usage problems are discussed

using a term, such as split infinitives or preposition stranding, others are only referred to by a prototypical variant, as can be seen by the examples *literally* and *data are*.

Table 1.1 Usage problems investigated

	Usage problem	Test variants: Online survey	Open-guise test	Usage judgment test
1	*different from/than/to*	differently than	different to/than	
2	*data are*	data are	media are/is	
3	flat or suffixless adverb	go slow	real(ly) great	…work close with… … handle tasks responsible.
4	*like*	like	Like	
5	Americanisms	Burglarize	meet (up) with	
6	*less than*	less/fewer	less/fewer	
7	double negative	wasn't seen nowhere	didn't do nothing/anything	
8	dangling participle	Pulling the trigger, the gun…	Rushing to catch the last bus, Susan's shoe… When Susan was rushing to catch the last bus, her shoe…	Having worked as an IT administrator, the job… Having worked in my previous company for four years, my aspiration…
9	*I* for *me*	between you and I	Mark and I/me	
10	split infinitive	to even think	to secretly admire to admire secretly	to effectively set goals
11	*literally*	literally	literally	
12	sentence-initial *And*			And
13	*very unique*			very unique
14	*impact* as a verb			…this job will impact my future…

In the detailed discussion of the usage problems and their development I will make use of the HUGE database to provide an overview of the stigmatisation history of the usage problem in British English usage guides.

1.6. Chapter Outline

In Chapter 2, I will discuss the beginning of the usage debate in the second half of the eighteenth century. As language ideologies, in particular the standard language ideology, seem to influence the debate, a necessary link between such ideologies and the usage debate is made. By investigating this link, I will discuss the notion of standard and correct English. What is Standard English? What are its characteristics and when is it applied? I will focus on two main areas of the application of a standard variety – the standard in the media and the standard in education; both contemporary playing fields of the usage debate in which prescriptivism and standard language exercise a gatekeeping function. While the first case study of standard language in education will deal with the historical events and developments taking place throughout the second half of the twentieth century in the educational system of England, the second case study of standard language in the media will deal with language use and ideologies in the media. I will look at style guides used by media institutions to illustrate how media is reflecting the language of society while trying to observe its role as a language guardian. Standard language ideologies in the media will be discussed on the basis of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and its 2003 *News Styleguide* written by John Allen. In this chapter I will introduce the different types of prescriptivism discussed by Curzan (2014) as well as Deborah Cameron's (1995) approach adopted in *Verbal Hygiene*. The aim of the second chapter is to provide a theoretical overview of and the necessary background information on the usage debate as a social and historical phenomenon.

The third chapter serves as an introduction to key concepts in attitude studies and as a preparation for the methodology chapter (Chapter 5). I will define how the concept of attitudes has been incorporated in the study of language and how attitudes differ from other related concepts such as opinions, beliefs and values. Furthermore, the concepts indicator, marker and stereotype are included in this discussion as they are essential for the understanding and interpretation of the elicitation tests I have conducted for this study. I will also provide a historical overview of the development of attitude studies in linguistics and attempt a definition of what usage attitudes are. Furthermore, the main approaches to the study of (language) attitudes are introduced: the Direct Approach, the Indirect Approach and the Societal Treatment Approach.

In Chapter 4, I will provide a historical overview of attitude studies in English, starting with a study conducted by S.A. Leonard (1932) in the United States of America. The reason for the inclusion of this study is that Mittins and his colleagues also based their investigation on Leonard's study. Other usage attitude studies are introduced to highlight their development as well as to identify their shortcomings for the benefit of my own study. What can be clearly seen from such a comparison and discussion is not only the gradual incorporation of usage attitude studies in the field of sociolinguistics, but also the sheer lack of such studies in general and particularly in Great Britain.

The fifth chapter contains the methodology of this study. I will describe which methods I have used and how I have collected the data. The three main attitude elicitation tests are presented in detail and are contextualised within the three main approaches to the study of attitudes introduced in Chapter 3. Chapter 5 also includes a description of the language varieties spoken in England, the region as well as the possible areas of regional variations, which need to be taken into account.

Before the data analysis is tackled, I will provide an overview of the fourteen usage problems investigated in this study. This overview contains a description of why these particular usage features are considered problematical by prescriptivists. Chapter 6 also contains summaries of earlier studies dealing with the selected usage problems. Hence, this chapter provides essential background information on my selection of fourteen usage problems.

The data collected for the purpose of this study is analysed in Chapters 7–9. As multiple methods and tools are used to identify the general public's attitude, the data analysis takes on a step-by-step approach beginning with the analysis of the questionnaire. The findings of the online questionnaire are discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, while the results of the interview sessions consisting of an open-guise test, usage judgment test as well as a direct attitude test are discussed in Chapter 9. These elicitation tests are analysed in a similar manner, yet it is made sure that possible links between the different tests are not overlooked. Attitudes to the usage problems investigated are also discussed in relation to the corpus evidence and the HUGE database in these chapters.

In Chapter 10, the results of the data analysis will be discussed in detail. Here it is essential to make the connection between theory and the data evidence. Thus, I will draw on the indexicality of language and the social variables investigated in this study to explain current attitudes towards usage problems in England. A comparison with Mittins et al.'s (1970) study is included in this chapter, which will bring forward possible changes in the acceptability of usage problems over the years.

Chapter 11 contains the conclusion of this study. A brief, yet comprehensive overview of my study of Proper English Usage is provided in which not only vital background information on the usage debate and methodolog-

ical issues are discussed, but also the main findings of my study are summarized. My study is an attempt to enable a better understanding of the usage debate in England by bridging the gap between the three key players through the inclusion of the often-forgotten general public in the debate.

2. The Usage Debate

2.1. Introduction

Since the purpose of this study is to include the general public in the usage debate by assessing their attitudes towards a selection of usage problems, it is vital first to provide the necessary background information on what the usage debate is and how it has come about. That English usage is a disputed topic which has been recurrently discussed in society does not only highlight the social interest in language, but it also hints at an ongoing dispute between prescriptivists and descriptivists, two of the key players in the debate. Yet, while this dispute did not always necessarily appear to be actively directed towards the opposing camp, the usage debate can also be considered a social and historical phenomenon which has persisted in society since its origins in the eighteenth century. What the role of the general public has been in this debate will also be explored in this chapter. For this reason, I will link the usage debate to the notion of standard language and language ideologies, since this seems to be an often-neglected characteristic of standard languages. By drawing this link between standard language and ideologies, the notion of correct language is established, which gave rise to prescriptions in the mid-eighteenth century (cf. Beal, 2010; Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2014). Prescription is a central and formative practice of the usage debate, which also constitutes the last stage of Milroy and Milroy's (2012) standardisation process. Based on this discussion, I will sketch the beginning of the usage debate in the mid-eighteenth century and highlight its connection to the rise of prescriptivism. Providing a brief and comprehensive overview of how prescriptivism developed, I aim at highlighting the importance of the usage debate and its historical development. The difference between prescription and prescriptivism (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, forthc./a), Deborah Cameron's (1995) 'verbal hygiene', and Ann Curzan's (2014) strands of prescriptivism

need to be established which will aid a better understanding of the issue at hand, i.e. the problem behind a stigmatised feature can be associated with these strands. Furthermore, it is important to emphasise recent developments in the usage debate such as the emerging of a moral panic evolving around the decay of the English language in British society, and to this end I will draw on the application of Standard English in education and the media, two contexts in which the notion of correct Standard English exercises a gate-keeping function.

2.2. The Usage Debate and Standard Language

When talking about standard languages, an ineradicable link is established between the standard variety and language ideologies. This link, which has often been neglected by linguists and sociolinguists in particular (cf. Milroy, 2001, p. 531), is investigated in this chapter and will be shown to play a crucial role in the usage debate. While debates on standard languages among linguists have often been heated (see e.g. Bex & Watts, 1999) and have failed to result in a consensual conclusion on what Standard English is, let alone whether it exists, standard languages are considered a reality by the general public. This difference between linguists' and non-linguists' views on linguistic entities, be it language varieties or specific features of a variety, has already been mentioned in the Introduction. Whether linguists should use 'Standard English', standard English or Standard English is an unfamiliar and perhaps irrelevant question for most members of the general public for whom the term is simply a reference to an existing entity, as is the notion 'proper' or 'correct' English. Hickey (2012, p. 1) acknowledges the different views on standard languages and the view held by laypeople who consider Standard English as just another "single form of language". The notion of a standard language is, however, often accompanied by that of correctness. Leith (1997, p. 33)

explains how a standard language may cause many speakers to believe that they do not speak their own language in a proper and correct manner. This belief is also reflected in Fairclough's (2001, p. 48) description of Standard English and associations commonly made with it:

> Standard English was regarded as *correct* English, and other social dialects were stigmatised not only in terms of correctness but also in terms which indirectly reflected on the lifestyles, morality and so forth of their speakers, the emergent working class of capitalised society: they were *vulgar*, *slovenly*, *low*, *barbarous*, and so forth.

The link made here between Standard English and a speaker's character and lifestyle highlights the social implications of nonstandard language use and reflects frequently voiced concerns about one's own alleged language deficits. The issue of variation in spelling conventions has often been mentioned and discussed, yet without finding a consensus (cf. Bex & Watts, 2001; p. 9; Hickey, 2012, p. 1), so it seems as if no agreement on this matter has been reached. As with the title of this thesis (cf. §1.1), I will use the capitalised spelling variant without quotation marks, i.e. Standard English, in this chapter and throughout this study to bridge the gap between linguists and laypeople and to put an emphasis on the importance of the role played by laypeople in the usage debate. When using the term Standard English in this thesis, I mean Standard British English, as attitudes towards British English usage problems are the subject of this investigation.

Oliver Kamm, journalist and author of a descriptive usage guide called *Accidence Will Happen* (2015), provides a concise overview of the usage debate. In doing so, he draws a connection between the beginning of the usage debate and education. While Latin and Greek were the subjects traditionally taught in school, being taught in English seemed inconceivable (Kamm, 2015, p. 79). Early English grammars of the sixteenth century served the purpose of teaching foreigners English as well as introducing English-speakers to the

study of Latin (Baugh & Cable, 2002, p. 274). Classical languages, such as Greek and in particular Latin, were seen as a role model for English and the epitome of language (cf. Kamm, 2015, pp. 80–81). That is why the study of the English language and English grammars were heavily influenced by Latin. Some of these early links between education and the usage debate are even felt today, not only in that Latin grammar used to be a yardstick to judge English, but also in that prescriptivists base their judgments on principles reflecting Latinate rules, such as the infamous rule on split infinitives. While Kamm (2015, p. 81) stresses the fundamental differences between Latin and English by stating that "[d]ifferent languages have different rules. They need not have the same ones", this notion was not widespread during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Using Latin as an example in the attempt to fix English, on the other hand, became an important endeavour which took shape in proposals for the introduction of an official institution that might regulate the language.

While the Royal Society, a society dedicated to science founded in 1660, unsuccessfully proposed a language committee in charge of English usage in 1664, proposals for the establishment of an English language academy were voiced recurrently (Nevalainen & Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2006, pp. 281–282). The Italian Accademia della Crusca, which was founded in 1582, and its French and Spanish counterparts served as language authorities on standardising their respective languages by codifying the selected variety and imposing a set of rules on the speakers of the language. Among advocates for an English academy which was meant to hold similar responsibilities were well-known authors such as Dryden, Defoe and Addison, but the most prominent academy promoter was Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), whose *Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue*, published in 1712, contains several interesting observations of

English at his day (Nevalainen & Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2006, p. 283). Swift (1712, pp. 31–32) argued that the decay of English would result in literature becoming unintelligible, which, according to Swift, would be linked to and caused by language change and variation. Swift's proposal aimed at institutional support from the government and the aristocracy who he would like to see appoint suitable members of an academy following the French model "to intimidate where these [the French] have proceeded right, and to avoid their mistakes" (Swift, 1712, p. 30). Interestingly, Swift (1712, pp. 28–29) strongly argues in favour of women being included in these language decisions, stating that their absence in the debate had resulted in the present decaying state of English. Swift's idea of preventing language change and variation and fixing the state of a language forever is also deeply imbedded in the standardisation process of English and can still be found today. An English academy, however, was never realised, the reason being most likely the death of Queen Anne in 1714 who was meant to serve as patron of such an academy (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, forthc./b). Cheshire (1991, p. 14) argues that the absence of an English academy in the UK is based on "a cultural and philosophical view of the freedom of the individual in language choice and language use, as in other forms of social behaviour, which makes legislation unpalatable". These views are also seen as the reason why English has never legally obtained the legal status of the official language of the UK (Cheshire, 1991, p. 14). Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), who initially set out to fix the English language in his dictionary, in particular English spelling (Mugglestone, 2008, p. 243), stated the following on the lack of an official authority: "That our language is in perpetual danger of corruption cannot be denied; but what prevention can be found? The present manners of the nation would deride authority, and therefore nothing is left but that every writer should criticise himself" (Johnson, 1779, p. 12). That self-criticism was meant

to be the sole means of fixing English did not seem to fulfil the needs of society at that time.

Nevertheless, authority on language was still sought and found in Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) and Robert Lowth's *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762). While Leith (1997, p. 35) states how Johnson's decisions on the spelling of English have shaped modern English, Crystal (2005, p. vii) describes the historical importance of Johnson's dictionary by stating that "[i]t was written at a critical time in English linguistic theory, at the very beginning of a period which would introduce prescriptive principles into English language study, and when the demand for a standard language was at its strongest". Lynch (2009, pp. 92–93) goes on to conclude that Johnson's dictionary enabled its readers to obtain a better understanding of the workings of the English language in that it also constituted "one of the largest anthologies of English literature ever published, and one of the largest dictionaries of quotations". Johnson's dictionary also contained a brief grammar of English in its preface which was, however, not well received and was criticised accordingly. It is argued that the shortcomings of the grammar were due to Johnson having little time left for finishing the grammar as the dictionary took longer than anticipated to complete (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2011, p. 55, drawing on Reddick, 1990, p. 27 for this). Nevertheless, Johnson's dictionary needs to be mentioned for emphasising the role of the users, which is also stated by Kamm (2015, p. 83): "Johnson's *Dictionary* exemplifies the principle that words mean what the users of a language, rather than official academies, take them to mean". This is in line with the frequently cited *norma loquendi*, the custom of speaking, according to which usage should be defined through custom (cf. Lynch, 2009, p. 92; Kamm, 2015, p. 80). Robert Lowth's *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762) constitutes an interesting publication due to the grammar's footnotes

in which Lowth commented on what he thought constituted bad usage by drawing on examples found in the works of well-known, albeit deceased authors (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2011, p. 57). Using footnotes to illustrate incorrect usage and to exemplify his rules, Lowth made use of an innovative way of what today we would call error-analysis, which was, according to Howatt (1984, p. 117), a "double-edged weapon". While students and readers of Lowth's grammar might have found it comforting to see others struggling with correct English as well, it must have been unsettling to see well-known and highly regarded authors such as Jonathan Swift be named and shamed for using bad English. It seems as if Lowth's approach was, however, well-received. Lowth's grammar gained not only authority, but also popularity, which is reflected in its numerous reprints and editions. Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2011, p. 66) states that the number of "34,000 copies, suggests 34 editions of reprints of 1,000 copies each", published during his lifetime. Interestingly, Lowth was eager to receive comments and suggestions from the readers of his grammar in order to improve it. Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2011, p. 62) states how one commentator must have drawn Lowth's attention to the double negative, whose "disappearance from Standard English is frequently associated – wrongly, as it happens – with Lowth", who included a prescription in the second edition of his grammar. Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2011, p. 75) describes Lowth's role in the stigmatisation of such usages as follows: "The canon of prescriptivism [which was defined by Vorlat (1996, p. 169) as the norms on which good English is based] may indeed have originated with Lowth's grammar, but in many instances the book merely formalized what was already being frowned upon elsewhere". That usage was criticised before Lowth's grammar has been shown by Percy, who investigated reviews in the *Monthly Review* and *Critical Review*, periodicals which have also been considered "a kind of academy, to publicise and disseminate standards of

English language and literature" (2009, p. 119). The language of literary works was critically commented on by reviewers and their reviews hint not only at the existence of prescriptive attitudes well before Lowth's grammar, but also at a degree of anxiety and insecurity among literary authors. Percy (2009, p. 123) states that "[r]eviewers sometimes used language as an index of an author's education and a book's quality, implying that there were common linguistic standards". The identification of the eighteenth-century as "the age of correctness", thus, seems to be accompanied by a growing feeling of anxiety and insecurity in society (Beal, 2010, pp. 22–23).

The eighteenth-century grammarians generally pursued three main aims in their work, which are summarized by Baugh and Cable (2002, p. 277) as follows: "(1) to codify the principles of the language and reduce it to rule; (2) to settle disputed points and decide cases of divided usage; and (3) to point out common errors or what were supposed to be errors, and thus correct and improve the language". These three aims highlight normative and prescriptive tendencies that prevailed in the second half of the eighteenth century. Including the first proscriptions of correct usage, Lowth's *Short Introduction to the English Language* constitutes the initial step taken in the direction of a prescriptive approach towards language. Yet, an essential publication introducing the prescription stage and shaping the usage debate permanently is Robert Baker's *Reflections on the English language* (1770), which is believed to be the first usage guide on English. Publications such as Baker's *Reflections*, which have turned into an enormously popular genre, can be classified as handbooks, usage manuals or usage guides which aim at providing speakers with advice on how to use language properly and correctly. Leonard (1929, p. 35) commented on the importance of Baker's publication by saying that it can be regarded as "the ancestor of those handbooks of abuses and corrections which were so freely produced in the nineteenth century".

Many followed Baker's example of proscribing and prescribing usage by drawing on examples of well-known authors to illustrate incorrect and improper language and having fixing English in mind. What became obvious with Lowth's grammar and Baker's usage guide was the need for linguistic guidance in the late eighteenth century. Hickey (2010, p. 8) describes how in the eighteenth century a newly established and affluent middle class aspired to be accepted by the elites and higher social classes. In order to improve their social standing, language became a crucial asset and means for social advancement. Members of the middle class were, however, plagued by what has come to be known as so-called linguistic insecurity (Labov, 1972, p. 65; 2006, p. 318). This linguistic insecurity affected both speaking and writing and propelled the usage guide tradition in that numerous handbooks, style guides and etiquette books were written targeting this particular group of speakers who wished to climb the social ladder (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2008a, p. 208; 2009, p. 85; Hickey, 2010, p. 18; Beal, 2010, p. 23). Nevertheless, the wealth of the middle class enabled it to find a remedy for this insecurity in "elocution lessons and printed guides which were to proliferate in the last few decades of the eighteenth century" (Beal, 2010, p. 23). Being known as "the age of correctness", the eighteenth century, especially its second half, saw an increase in such language advice literature (Beal, 2010, pp. 22–23). Despite the prescriptive usage guide authors' ongoing attempts to fix English, Nevalainen and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2006, p. 284) describe how this "illusion" of fixing a language had ceased to be dominant in the mid-eighteenth century. This realisation manifested itself already in Johnson, who initially set out to fix the English language in his dictionary, but who realised the impossibilities of such an undertaking (Mugglestone, 2008, p. 243; Lynch, 2009, p. 92).

While criticism of usage can be found already before Lowth, whose grammar writing efforts were part of the codification of the language, the usage debate is still very much associated with the last stage of the Milroyan standardisation process of English: prescription. For Milroy and Milroy (2012, pp. 22–23) the standardisation process of English can be described in seven stages: (1) selection, (2) acceptance, (3) diffusion, (4) maintenance, (5) elaboration of function, (6) codification and (7) prescription. What is stressed by Milroy and Milroy (2012, p. 23) is that standardisation is an ongoing process, and that it did not end after its final stage. Only a dead language, they argue, would have completed all seven stages of the standardisation process fully. Prescription is thus intrinsically connected to Standard English as the perceived final product of the process. While the codification stage of Standard English has produced dictionaries and grammars, such as Johnson's dictionary and Lowth's grammar mentioned above, the prescription stage is characterised by the production of usage guides. Henry Watson Fowler (1858–1933), an English lexicographer and schoolmaster, published the usage guide *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* in 1926. This usage guide, which has recently been published in its fourth edition, has become "the closest Britain has to an Academy of English" (Ezard, 1996, p. 10). Fowler has gained the status of a household name and his usage guide is often "regarded a role model for usage handbooks in Britain" (Busse & Schröder, 2010a, p. 45). That Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* has enjoyed huge popularity is not only shown in its four editions, but also in the number of copies sold. Gowers (1957, p. 14) states that Fowler's usage guide had been sold in more than half a million copies by 1957. Gowers (1965, vii), who was also responsible for the second revised edition of *Modern English Usage*, describes Fowler's stance on language as being that of a prescriptive grammarian who, however, was not shy of debunking myths about usages, such as the one about

different from being the only legitimate construction. On the task of revising Fowler, Gowers stated the following in the preface to the second edition:

> But his faults were as much a part of his idiosyncrasy as his virtues; rewrite him and he ceases to be Fowler. I have been chary of making any substantial alterations except for the purpose of bringing him up to date; I have only done so in a few places where his exposition is exceptionally tortuous, and it is clear that his point could be put more simply without any sacrifice of Fowleresque flavour (Gowers, 1965, ix).

This quotation highlights how Fowler's usage advice has become authoritative and that changing his advice, even after almost four decades, seemed impossible without causing damage to his reputation. Burchfield (1979, p. 17) quotes a letter written by Fowler in which he describes the intended audience of his usage guide as having an eye "not on the foreigners, but on the half-educated Englishman of literary proclivities who wants to know Can I say so-and-so?, What does this familiar phrase or word mean?, is this use English … the kind of Englishman, who has idioms floating in his head in a jumbled state, & knows it" (H.W. Fowler 5 April 1911; cited in Burchfield, 1979, p. 17). That the originally intended target audience of usage guides often consisted of linguistically insecure native speakers does not come as a surprise. This intention is also reflected in Fowler's description of his usage guide's audience in the quotation above. Yet, as the genre of usage guides has developed and English has gradually but steadily become a world language and lingua franca, the target audience of usage guides has been extended to include advanced learners of English (Weiner, 1988, p. 173).

Technological advancements such as the invention of mobile phones and the rise of the internet have not only made different languages available to the masses on a global scale, but they have also widened the manner of how language can be used. English has obtained a special status through these advancements and is now considered a world language (Baugh & Cable, 2002,

p. 9). Computer-mediated communication (CMC) has become of interest to linguists who study how language is used online. The global use of language and new modes of use such as CMC have, however, caused prescriptivists to proclaim vociferously the decay and irreversible doom of the English language (Crystal, 2006a, pp. 1–2). British prescriptivists, for instance, warn, now more than ever, about the invasion of Americanisms into British English, such as Simon Heffer in *Strictly English* (2010). Heffer (2010, p. 165) condemns, for instance, the tendency to use the verb *get* in American English as an "abomination" and continues listing words which he considers unnecessary in British English the use of which he attributes to American influence, such as the ones quoted below:

> Other Americanisms that change the idioms of our language to no apparent purpose include *on the weekend*, whereas the British have always done things *at the weekend,* and *in school* rather than *at school.* (Heffer, 2010, p. 182)

What becomes apparent in complaints about language decay and proclamations of the doom of the English language is a recurring theme of the English of the Golden Age, another myth according to which English in the past was more correct and proper than the current English variety (Watts, 2000, p. 35; Crystal, 2004, pp. 475–476). It has to be noted, however, that this particular era is mythological itself, although Jonathan Swift, for example, described the Golden Age of English as the state of English during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1603) (Howatt, 1984, p. 109). The claim that it existed and that English was indeed flawless during this period has been used recurrently in the usage debate as well. While many of these proclamations seem to be unfounded, linguists have investigated diachronic changes in language use and the impact of new technologies on language. Mair (2006, pp. 182–183), for instance, investigated changes and trends in twentieth-century English by using a corpus approach, through which he was able to identify trends affecting the formality

of English. According to Mair (2006, p. 186), written English is becoming more informal and is starting to resemble spoken English. That the difference between the two traditional media, spoken and written language, and the differences between degrees of formality would be reduced were predictions already made by Baron (1984, p. 131) in the late twentieth century. Mair's (2006, p. 187) so-called "colloquialization" of English combines these two tendencies and he provides examples from both American and British English corpora. The use of contractions like *it's* instead of *it is* and the avoidance of the passive voice in writing as being promoted for instance in many media style guides are just two of the features which support Mair's colloquialization trend.

The link between standardisation and the rise of prescriptivism from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards has been emphasised in this section. What becomes obvious in this discussion is the apparent need of the general public during the subsequent period for authoritative guidance on language issues. Apart from Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, authority has also been assigned to other publications and institutions. The completion of the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1928, after more than 40 years of work, provided the public with another authoritative source on English, albeit one following a descriptive aim (Brewer, 2007, pp. 2–5). Peters (2006) highlights an intriguing characteristic of the usage debate between prescriptivists and descriptivists. While linguists have made use of different methodologies, such as elicitation tests and corpus enquiries, in their analysis of English usage, prescriptivists rarely make use of such methods, let alone refer to the work of others (Peters, 2006, p. 764–765). The prescriptive treatment of English usage often consists of *ipse-dixit* pronouncements, through which usage guide authors tried to enforce authority (Peters, 2006, p. 762). The stark contrast in methodologies applied in the descriptive and prescriptive approaches to

English usage is astonishing. In light of these differences, the reception of descriptive and prescriptive efforts by the general public becomes even more noteworthy. While the descriptive efforts of linguists have been viewed critically or have not attracted a lot of attention from the public, "the voices of non-linguistically trained prescriptivists seem to gain remarkable prominence and public endorsement" (Peters, 2006, p. 775). Thus, it seems as if prescriptivists exert a powerful influence on the attitudes of the general public which is in need of authoritative guidance. Peters (2006, p. 774) consequently states that prescriptivists "predispose the community to accept that there may be good/bad usage wherever there are variants to consider". The influence of prescriptivists therefore not only seems to be easily exerted on the general public, but it also causes further insecurities among speakers who seem to be already troubled with such dilemmas.

2.3. The Notion of Correct (Standard) Language

While I have tried to outline the developments of the ongoing usage debate since the late eighteenth century in the previous section, I would now like to focus on the notion of correct language, which seems to be often equated with Standard English by the general public. In this section, I will first examine how Standard English has been defined by focussing on Trudgill's discussion of what it is not, before going on to examine two of the gatekeepers and enforcers of the notion of correct language: education and the media. That usage conundrums and schools are closely connected has been shown in the discussion above and will be further explored in this section. Peters (2006, p. 776) emphasises the role of education by stating the following: "Educational institutions are still expected to be mediators of standard English and bastions of 'correct' usage, and taken to task when any liberalization of the English language curriculum is mooted". Especially in Great Britain, education has an

immense influence on one's social standing, as it has become an indicator of social class membership (Argyle, 1994, pp. 4–6). Thus, it is important to describe how the usage debate is still holding its ground in education today and has continued to contribute to a moral panic among the general public in Great Britain, which has been described by Cameron (1995, p. 83) as the concentrating of anxieties and hostilities prevalent in a society on one issue. The role of the media has in a similar manner been described as that of a gatekeeper. Peters (2006, p. 775) highlights how publishers and media institutions keep "enforcing usage practices". Such usage practices are often out-lined in publishers' style guidelines and media institutions' in-house style guides, such as the BBC's 2003 *News Styleguide* (2003). The BBC's role and participation in the usage debate will also be examined in this section.

Since the existence of standard languages, such as Standard English, is a heated and disputed topic, definitions of such varieties are scarce (cf. Smakman, 2012). This is possibly due to the ideological dimension of standard languages which make a definition of what they are complex and difficult. Peter Trudgill (1999a) attempts such a definition by circumscribing Standard English based on what it is not. In his discussion, Trudgill (1999a, pp. 118–127) refutes five commonly held associations of what Standard English is:

1) Standard English is not a language
2) Standard English is not an accent
3) Standard English is not a style
4) Standard English is not a register
5) Standard English is not a set of prescriptive rules

The first rebuttal, "Standard English is not a language", refers to the above-mentioned widespread belief of the general public that Standard English is a single entity and a language in its own right. Refuting this association, Trudgill (1999a, p. 118) highlights the status of Standard English as a mere variety of

English. Another frequent association of Standard English is with accent, as described in the second rebuttal, as an identification of Standard English with Received Pronunciation (RP) is often made. Trudgill (1999a, p. 118) claims that RP is "a standardised accent of English", but "not Standard English itself". The third rebuttal discussed by Trudgill (1999a, p. 119) deals with Standard English being associated with a distinct style. While styles are often defined by their different degrees of formality, Standard English is not restricted to a single style since it can be found in both formal and informal contexts. The term 'register' in Trudgill's (1999a, pp. 121–122) fourth rebuttal refers to the determination of a variety "by topic, subject matter or activity", an association he proves to be false as register does not impede the use of dialectal varieties of English. This means that Standard English can be used to discuss the global economic crisis just as well as the latest fashion trends. The last rebuttal described by Trudgill deals with the essence of the usage debate, prescriptions of usage. In the following quotation Trudgill (1999a, p. 125) recites what may be described as the descriptive mantra of linguists:

> We have to make it clear, however, that [Standard English] grammatical forms are not necessarily identical with those which prescriptive grammarians have concerned themselves with over the last few centuries. Standard English … most certainly tolerates sentence-final prepositions, as in *I've bought a new car which I'm very pleased with*. And Standard English does not exclude constructions such as *It's me* or *He is taller than me*.

It is this last rebuttal which constitutes the core of the usage debate, as prescriptivists seem to apply a narrower definition of Standard English than descriptivists, i.e. linguists, do, linking Standard English exclusively to notions of correctness rather than taking grammatical correctness into account. Trudgill (1999a, p. 123) concludes his discussion by defining Standard English as a dialect of English which is, however, characterised by its social and cultural importance and role, while he also acknowledges the association

of RP with Standard English. That Standard English is an important variety of English cannot be disputed, especially in its written form. However, unlike other varieties of English, Standard English is also characterised as "a purely social dialect" (Trudgill, 1999a, p. 124) which lost its geographical character, and was estimated by Trudgill at the time to have 12–15 per cent of the British population as native speakers. What is, however, vital for this discussion is Trudgill's (1999a, p. 124) assignment of these native Standard English speakers to "the top of the social scale (or, as some would prefer, 'the very top')". Thus, it can be concluded that Standard English and its seemingly different interpretations by prescriptivists and descriptivists constitute a crucial point in the development of the usage debate.

Smakman (2012) conducted a survey of university students' attitudes towards standard language in seven countries, including England, which contains a number of possible characteristics of the countries' standard languages. In England, 200 university students took part in the study by providing a general description of Standard English and identifying prototypical speakers of the investigated variety (Smakman, 2012, p. 32). Even though the elicited attitudes concern Standard English today, the identified characteristics show an intriguing overlap with characteristics identified in previous historical studies on Standard English. According to Smakman (2012, p. 36), three characteristics were mentioned most frequently by the English university students, according to whom Standard English is non-regional, correct and connected to the higher social classes. That Standard English is often considered to be the correct language variety is connected to the prevalence of the standard language ideology and what James Milroy describes as "standard language culture" (Milroy, 1999, p. 18). What also needs to be borne in mind is that the standard language ideology, described above, is connected to political ideologies. As a consequence, standard languages can be utilised as

a means for the exclusion and inclusion of speakers (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 62; Lippi-Green, 1997, p. 64; Milroy & Milroy, 2012, pp. 50–51). The 'standard language culture' describes the awareness of how a standard variety is put on a pedestal and made a "superordinate" variety which is maintained through different media and channels, such as the school-ing system (Milroy, 1999, p. 18). James Milroy (1999, p. 18) emphasises how this way of thinking equates a standard variety not only with correct usage, but also with being the only legitimate language variety in general. Curzan (2014, p. 30) aptly states: "It is not just standard: it is 'English'". Excluding speakers on the basis of their insufficient command of the standard variety is a side effect enforced by the standard language culture and can affect a large proportion of the speech community. Despite being native speakers of English, many people grow up doubting their ability to use "correct" English (Milroy, 1999, p. 22). This exclusive character of Standard English contradicts the above-mentioned supra-regional character of this particular variety, making it a complex construct with several functions at the same time.

2.3.1. Education as a gatekeeper

Literacy plays a vital role in the development of the usage debate, as usage guides are aimed at speakers seeking guidance on how to improve their English. When education became compulsory in 1870, Standard English became available to the entire population through teaching, while Latin continued to be an important language in the education of the elite (Leith, 1997, p. 49). That Standard English started to be taught in schools had an impact on its standardisation, as it became "subject to attention and scrutiny, aimed at describing its forms and structures" (Leith, 1997, p. 49). However, not only was the written standard language used as a yardstick, but spoken English, too, became a means to establish a speaker's social background. With the

establishment of fee-paying public schools at the beginning of the nineteenth century, RP, an accent used mainly by the upper classes, became a true class accent, which was further enforced due to its use in these schools (Leith, 1997, p. 56). Apart from RP, the language use of the educated was believed to reflect standard language best and hence formed the basis for school materials. This common practice was commented on by S. A. Leonard (1932, p. xiv) when describing the informants of his study on American language use:

> While it is unfortunate that a more even balance among the groups of judges was not secured, and that few lay persons of taste and culture were included, still practically all the judges are people concerned with the study and use of language; and all are above the average in education. Consequently, the teacher may well examine seriously the results of this survey, compare them with the usage and punctuation requirements in his adopted texts, and ask himself whether it is worth while trying to teach rules which great numbers of educated men no longer observe.

What kind of language variety should be taught in schools has become a frequently asked question not only in the United States, but also in Great Britain (cf. Womack, 1959; Mittins et al., 1970). Cheshire (1997, p. 68) emphasises a fact which needs to be borne in mind and which still holds true today, namely that a reference to the language of the educated often more aptly denotes the language use of "those who consider themselves educated, or who wish to appear educated". The study on language use in England conducted by Mittins and his colleagues in the late 1960s aimed at providing teachers with contemporary advice on the validity of traditional language rules (see § 1.4). The question of what variety to teach and the frequently voiced, yet often unfounded claims concerning the decay of English grammar teaching in English schools caused a moral panic. It is argued that mass media play a vital role in the incitation of a moral panic (Cameron, 1995, p. 84), and this was indeed shown to be the case at the time. That this moral panic revolving around the perceived decay of the English language and society has survived

needs to be borne in mind. This is for example illustrated by the numerous newspaper articles and reports on the recent introduction of a new and highly controversial Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar Test, the so-called SPaG test, at Key Stage 2 by the former Education Secretary, Michael Gove (cf. Sellgren, 2012; Rosen, 2013). Describing the panic revolving around the decay of the English language during the 1980s, Cameron (1995, p. 86) states:

> … because of English teachers' wilful neglect of grammar, children were leaving school illiterate and undisciplined. The 'permissive' teachers became the main scapegoats, along with the linguistic and educational theorists who had brainwashed them with half-baked theories and trendy leftwing nonsense.

Cameron here describes the beginning of the moral panic concerning the decay of English which can be traced back to a newspaper article published in 1982 which decried the falling standards in English grammar teaching by blaming the loose morals of the 1960s for these developments. Although claims about the decay of English grammar had not been new, it was the first time that falling language standards were brought into connection with falling standards in general. It was argued that there was not only this connection, but that the lack of proper grammar teaching had caused this predicament in the first place (Cameron, 1995, p. 86).

This alleged decay of English grammar teaching is connected to changing policies and approaches to language teaching occurring in the twentieth century. While traditional teaching techniques such as rote learning used to be the norm until the early twentieth century, the advancements made in the study of language caused considerable doubt about their appropriateness and effectiveness (Hudson & Walmsley, 2005, p. 595). Henry Sweet (1845–1912), one of the most prominent philologists of his time, did not only contribute to the development of modern linguistics, but also argued for using the students' native language as a starting point for teaching English in schools (Hudson & Walmsley, 2005, p. 595). What is striking is that while the need for instruction

in English usage and grammar was growing, a scientific study of English grammar was neglected by late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century scholars in England. Hudson and Walmsley (2005, pp. 596–597) state that instead the need for language guidance was met by publications "produced primarily by free-lances [sic] or practicing teachers". The grammar taught in schools was hence mainly prescriptive and modelled on the Latin system, causing a dilemma which was worsened by the growing focus on studying contemporary English literature at the time (Hudson & Walmsley, 2005, p. 598). This neglect of the linguistic study of English grammar came to an end when Randolph Quirk established the Survey of English Usage in 1959 at University College London. Later joined by Michael Halliday, the two men became the driving force behind the scientific study and description of English grammar (Hudson & Walmsley, 2005, p. 607).

Hudson and Walmsley (2005, p. 595) distinguish three key periods in the history of English grammar teaching. The period before 1960, as described above, which is characterized by its traditional teaching techniques and lack of scientific study, was followed by a period of confusion, which lasted from 1960 to roughly 1988. During this period, as Hudson and Walmsley (2005, p. 609) argue, English grammar teaching was absent from schools in England, as it was a disputed and complex subject, not only as to how the subject should be taught, but whether it should be taught at all. The end of this period was marked by the introduction of the first National Curriculum for primary and secondary schools in 1988 (Hudson & Walmsley, 2005, p. 613). Most importantly, this second period is characterized by various governmental reports which aimed at improving the teaching of English in the schools. This period is also characterized by what Hudson (2010, p. 40) calls a "strong 'top-down' pressure from the government to find solutions" for the English grammar teaching dilemma. The Newbolt Report, published in 1921, was

drawn up by a committee headed by Sir Henry Newbolt (1862–1938), and it discussed grammar teaching under the headline of "The problem of grammar" (Department of Education and Science, 1921, p. 278). The confusion about what ought to be taught in English schools is expressed clearly in this report as follows:

> Is it then impossible at the present juncture to teach English grammar in the schools for the simple reason that no one knows exactly what it is? If by 'English Grammar' be meant a *complete* description of the structure of the language with special attention to its *differences* from other languages, it is certainly far too early to attempt to teach it. .... Further, just because English grammar deals with a language so different from the foreign languages, ancient and modern, which the student will have to learn, it is eminently unsuitable as an introduction to linguistic study. Yet, as we have seen, it is highly desirable that children should obtain some kind of general introduction to linguistic study, and that this introduction should be given them through the medium of their own speech. What is to be done? (Department of Education and Science, 1921, pp. 289–290)

Although the committee acknowledged the importance of teaching students their native tongue, as recommended by Sweet, the lack of a scientific study of English clearly obstructed its teaching in schools. This confusion was carried into the 1960s, in which further government reports discussed the future of English grammar teaching. The link between political ideologies and language ideologies can be easily identified in this debate. Cameron (1995, p. 87) highlights how growing right-wing political movements fostered the public's moral panic by publishing pamphlets and articles on this issue. The dispute peaked in the early 1980s, which saw the publication of John Honey's *The Language Trap* (1983), a controversial discussion on Standard English in the British schooling system, which was especially criticised by linguists such as David Crystal, the Milroys and Peter Trudgill, who Honey accused of providing misleading ideas on the teaching of English. Honey's pamphlet was connected to another governmental policy report, the so-called Bullock Report (1975), which recommended that the children's language variety used at home

should be acknowledged in school, and which highlighted possible differences between children from advantaged and disadvantaged homes by drawing on Basil Bernstein's (1971) restricted and elaborated codes.

Bernstein's use of the term 'code' needs to be clarified here. These two codes represent "functions of a particular form of social relationship or, … qualities of social structure" (Bernstein, 1971, p. 77), which means that the relationships between social groups are affected by the use of linguistic codes, if not defined by them. However, Bernstein (1971, p. 79) argues that children from working-class backgrounds only have access to one linguistic code, the so-called restricted code, which is defined by a limited set of syntactic elements, for example. The elaborated code, on the other hand, enables a wider variety of syntactic elements, and can be accessed by children from more privileged backgrounds. According to Bernstein (1971, p. 151), a connection could be established between working-class children's limited access to the elaborated code and their success in school and in life in general. Bernstein (1971, p. 151) argues that "[s]uch children's low performance on verbal IQ tests, their difficulty with 'abstract' concepts, their failures within the language area, their general inability to profit from school, all may result from the limitations of a restricted code". His ideas and suggestions seem to have been adopted by the report committee, who made a connection between social class and language acquisition, stressing the importance of the children's home language, as illustrated in the following quotation:

> There is an undeniable relationship between social class and language development, but we must qualify all that follows by pointing out that social class is a rather crude indicator. What is really at issue is the language environment in which the child grows up, and particularly the role played by language in his relationship with his mother (Department of Education and Science, 1975, p. 52).

Honey, on the other hand, criticised this approach. He argued that schools should teach Standard English as they would otherwise fail children with a working-class or ethnic-minority background (Cameron, 1995, p. 87).

Weak points in teaching English grammar at English schools were recognised by the government, which initiated further reports. One of these reports was the so-called Kingman Report, which was published in 1988. Since the Kingman Report did not produce the outcome the conservatives and pro-grammar teaching advocates had hoped for, as the prescriptive approach to teaching English and its relation to Latin were deemed not suitable, another committee was assembled and tasked with finding recommendations for the teaching of English grammar at school, which were then published a year later as part of the Cox Report (1989) (Cameron, 1995, p. 89). Despite the controversial status of the Kingman Report, both government reports reached the consensus that English grammar should be taught explicitly in schools, but that traditional teaching approaches were no longer suitable (Hudson & Walmsley, 2005, p. 610). The Cox Report provides an insight into these changing views:

> However, many people feel that with the rejection of grammar teaching much of value was lost. We would agree that a certain analytic competence has been lost, and with it the valuable ability to talk and write explicitly about linguistic patterns, relations and organisation. … There are, however, more useful ways of teaching grammar than those which have been the cause of so much misunderstanding and criticism. (Department of Education and Science, 1989, p. 66)

Neither the Kingman nor the Cox Reports fulfilled the expectations of the conservatives, who would have liked to see a stronger emphasis on the traditional teaching of grammar (Cameron, 1995, p. 89). The media's role in reporting the government's disappointment with the reports contributed to the ensuing moral panic. Nevertheless, a National Curriculum affecting primary and secondary education in English and Welsh schools was introduced in

1988. Besides turning out to be the most problematic subject, the main characteristics of the National Curriculum for English are the abandonment of a prescriptive approach in language teaching and of references to nonstandard or dialectal language use as erroneous, which according to Hudson and Walmsley (2005, p. 613) "is ironic since one of the main reasons why the Conservative government introduced the National Curriculum in 1988 was to eliminate 'bad grammar' – the only interpretation of grammar that they recognised". The third key period of English grammar teaching described by Hudson and Walmsley (2005) is consequently defined by the abandonment of the prescriptive approach in favour of a more descriptive approach in which students are supposed to learn about the variability of English. Marshall (2016, p. 8) highlights an intriguing connection between education and politics, which has already become visible in the discussion of educational reports above, by describing how the Conservative Party has "achieved the changes they wanted not through a national curriculum but through a testing regime". What Marshall is referring to here is the introduction of new tests, such as the above-mentioned SPaG test, which ultimately aim at the re-introduction of formal grammar teaching. This re-introduction is triggered by the test requirements, such as naming word classes and using appropriate terminology. Marshall (2016, p. 11) states that "in order to pass the test schools will provide decontextualised grammar lessons to prepare children for them. They will be parsing sentences looking for types of clauses". Although such formal grammar lessons are not part of the curriculum, turning schools into academies and free schools, another policy change initiated by the Conservative Party, means that the National Curriculum is no longer obligatory in such schools (Marshall, 2016, p. 8). Hence, an interesting connection between politics and grammar teaching can be identified in English schools.

Reactions to the introduction of the SPaG test in the early 2010s, furthermore, showed that the debate about language use in schools is far from being settled. What lies at the heart of this debate are different language ideologies. The dichotomous distinction between correct and incorrect language is not only deeply entrenched in the mind of society in general, but has been used as the basis of assessment in education for centuries. It is, however, argued that this dichotomy should be abandoned in favour of a distinction between "appropriateness" in different contexts rather than "correctness". This knowledge of using contextually appropriate language is also known as "sociolinguistic competence" (Graham, 1997, p. 13; Bayley & Regan, 2004, p. 323), which describes a speaker's ability to determine the social and contextual appropriateness of language. Advocates of this approach, such as Mittins et al. (1970), the Milroys (2002) and Pullum (2016), claim that such an approach would be more beneficial for children and they therefore often criticise dubious test items. Pullum (2016), for instance, recently highlighted this phenomenon in an online article based on the example of the following two test items:

(1) I have just received a message but I haven't read it yet.

(2) I received a message but I haven't read it yet.

Pullum highlights how there is a subtle difference between American and British English with respect to these two sentences, the latter preferring the present perfect tense as used in item (1) rather than the simple past as in (2) which is, in turn, favoured in American English. That is why from a linguist's point of view both sentences are considered correct. Yet some teachers who favour traditional grammar teaching, with its insistence on a dichotomous view on language and correctness, keep the ongoing debate alive. So it seems as if the standard language ideology and the prescriptive ideology still exert

power over some educationalists and their views on teaching. The role played by prescriptivism in the educational context is emphasised by Curzan (2014, p. 16), who argues that what she calls institutional prescriptive "efforts can have real effects on individual speakers' lives and speech patterns, on how speakers think about and use language, and on what speakers feel licensed to say about others' and their own language use". That this notion of judging other speakers by their language use is an interesting phenomenon of human nature has already been discussed by Nash (1986, p. 1). Being often considered conveyors of Standard English, schools and other educational institutions are often subject to criticism with regard to an alleged lack of English language teaching. How this role as a conveyor of Standard English is perceived by English speakers will be discussed below.

2.3.2. The media as gatekeeper

Having tried to provide some insight into the debate evolving around standard language ideologies in education, I would like to briefly discuss the gatekeeping role of another institution: the media. Media institutions, such as the BBC, have often been assigned the role of language guardians (Luscombe, 2009, p. 1). However, it is intriguing to see that the language use of media institutions, be it newspapers, television channels or radio stations, has been frequently discussed in two manners. While members of the audience regard such institutions as language guardians and consider their language use as correct and reflecting the standard, others are eager to voice their dismay about the alleged misuse of language by exactly the same institutions (Cotter, 2010, p. 195; Ebner, 2016, p. 308). The difficulty of pleasing its audience has been acknowledged by the BBC. John Allen, the author of the BBC's *News Styleguide* (2003, p. 8), puts it as follows: "Our task is to tread a fine line between conservatism and radicalism, to write in such a way that we do not

alienate any section of our audience". The basis for such diverging views on the language use of media institutions such as the BBC constitutes language issues falling into the grey area between standard and nonstandard language. Usage problems, such as the misuse of the apostrophe, are frequently found among features the audience complains about in letters to the editor (Lukač, 2016).

How language ideologies affect language use in the media has been shown by Cotter (2010, p. 195), who establishes a link between the credibility of a report and correct language use in her distinction between journalistic language ideologies, craft ideologies and journalistic language values. Craft ideologies build on the concept of 'craft', which encompasses journalistic practices and the creation of an identity as a journalist (Cotter, 1995, p. 30). Cotter's (1995, p. 195) discussion of the journalistic language ideology includes the notion that "[a]ccuracy equals credibility", while craft ideologies convey the notion of "[g]ood writing equals clarity". Both notions are connected by two core journalistic language values: precision and prescription. Thus, a clear connection to the standard language ideology is established. As Cotter herself puts it:

> Knowing, following, and maintaining the prescriptive rules about language use will ensure precision; precision helps to safeguard both accuracy … and clarity … and is thus a fundamental professional value (Cotter, 2010, p. 195).

That prescriptive rules are maintained by journalists has not only been argued by Cotter in the quotation above, but also by Albakry (2007, p. 29), who has shown in his study of American newspapers how prescriptivism is the dominant approach found in style guides. Whether this is also true for the BBC's style guide was a question which I attempted to answer in a corpus-based and comparative study of usage advice and metalinguistic language use in two usage guides and the BBC's in-house style guide (Ebner, 2016). The

BBC's stance on two usage problems, *concede victory* and *data* as singular or plural, as discussed in its 2003 *News Styleguide*, was compared to the treatment of these two usage features in Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (1926) and Burchfield's *The New Fowler's Modern English Usage* (1996), the third edition of Fowler's *Modern English Usage*. The BBC's style guide was originally intended for the training of new journalists and as an in-house reference. Since this particular style guide discusses radio news reporting, its recommendations affect written language, which is, however, meant to be spoken (Allen, 2003, p. 23). The metalanguage used in the discussion of the usage problems in the three language advice manuals studied was investigated making use of a keyword analysis and concordance analysis using WordSmith Tools through which it is possible to identify the "aboutness" of the investigated corpora (Culpeper, 2009, p. 30). The BNC wordlist was used as a reference corpus. The results of this study showed that the BBC's prescriptive attitudes were strongly expressed in the language used to discuss usage issues. My concordance analysis emphasised this by the BBC's "unique use of evaluative collocations such as *bad English*, *poorly written* or *well written English*" (Ebner, 2016, p. 318).

When it comes, however, to the two usage problems which were directly compared, the BBC's language advice was surprisingly lenient, thus contradicting Albakry's findings. While the BBC recommended the use of *data* as a singular, its stance on *concede victory* has been somewhat unclear, which has also been shown by Luscombe (2012). That is why I will focus on the BBC's treatment of *concede defeat* here. By surveying a number of style guides, Luscombe was able to show the BBC's changing attitudes towards a number of usage problems. While defeat was traditionally conceded by the losers of elections and the like, recent developments also caused victories to be conceded. Luscombe's (2012, p. 153) survey of style guides that treated

the feature showed the following changes in the BBC's attitude to this particular usage issue:

1967–79:	no mention
1983:	'Concede: We now accept that concede can refer either to victory or defeat.'
1990:	'Concede: Losers at elections concede victory, not defeat'
2000:	'Concede: Losers at elections concede victory, not defeat'
2003:	'Concede: Losers at elections concede victory, not defeat'

Luscombe's overview of the BBC's attitude towards *concede defeat*, as illustrated above, is intriguing as the cooperation insisted on the use of *concede victory* from 1990 onwards. The BBC's descriptive approach to the use of *concede victory* is remarkable, especially since the BBC is often referred to as a "beacon of correct English" whose task it is to maintain the standard variety (Allen, 2003, p. 7). The driving force behind the BBC's acceptance and promotion of such descriptive usage features is its audience who engages in a negotiation with the BBC on its language use (cf. Ebner, 2016, p. 318). Allan Bell (1995, p. 23) emphasises the relationship between media institutions and their audiences in that he describes how the language use of the media reflects "language use and attitudes in a speech community". Even though the BBC is considered an authority, the power of the audience cannot be neglected as their complaints and comments need to be taken seriously by the BBC. Allen (2003, p. 7) describes the delicate relationship between the BBC and its audience, who finance the institution through a yearly license fee, by stating the following: "Our use, or perceived misuse, of English produces a greater response from our audiences than anything else. It is in nobody's interest to confuse, annoy, dismay, alienate or exasperate them".

One important aspect of the BBC's role as language guardian is also its role as the defender of Britishness (cf. Ebner, 2016, p. 317). A clear distinction

is made in its 2003 *News Styleguide* between British and American usage by dedicating an entry to Americanisms (cf. Luscombe, 2012, p. 158). The fear of the Americanisation of British English is often mentioned in complaints about language change, as is exhibited by Law (2014), who quotes two such complainants:

> Tony Robinson from Cheltenham says, "In these days of mass communication it is sad to see the English language being battered by the ever advancing tide of Americanism." Mark Hughes from Walsall doesn't like it either: "The thing that drives me demented is the rampant Americanisation of everything, especially British English, and the habit of turning nouns into verbs, such as prioritise and incentivise. Yuk!"

What is intriguing is the fact that the influence of the American media is often held responsible for changes occurring in British English. The American media are not only said to influence British English negatively, their spread is also held accountable for the decrease in minority languages (Cormack, 2007, p. 57; Phillipson, 2014, p. 59). Nevertheless, Trudgill (2014) argues that most changes spread through communication between interlocutors, rather than through the mere influence of watching American movies for instance, so he considers the alleged influence of American media on British English less relevant.

Being a product of media institutions, style guides need to be distinguished from usage guides which, on the other hand, are a social and cultural phenomenon. Straaijer's (forthc.) description of the usage guide genre included an investigation of the usage guides contained in the HUGE database and showed that many of these publications are alphabetically organised. Alphabetically organised usage guides underline their purpose as reference works which are not meant to be read from cover to cover, but rather to be consulted on different occasions (Ebner, 2016, p. 311). Unlike usage guides, the purpose of style guides is to provide their readers with instructions on

achieving a specific composition, be it an essay, report or the like (cf. Ebner, 2016, p. 311). Therefore, their setup usually follows a bottom-up approach starting from smaller concepts and ending with a final product, such as a well-written essay. The aim of style guides, such as Griffith's *Writing Essays about Literature* (2010), is to instruct readers on how to achieve a text which conforms to social norms and expectations held by society (cf. Ebner, 2016, p. 311). Since such social norms have been widely accepted in society, there is a high level of uniformity in terms of contents of specific types of style guides (Bennett, 2009, p. 46). Furthermore, Cameron (1996, p. 317–318) argues that style guides are a possible outlet for media institutions to reflect the political ideologies they follow. The aim of such style guides is not only to guarantee consistency in the media's output, but also to establish the media's voice and style. As Cameron (1996, p. 316) puts it, the language policies expressed in style guides are in fact ideological:

> Though [style policies] are framed as purely functional or aesthetic judgements, and the commonest criteria offered are 'apolitical' ones such as clarity, brevity, consistency, liveliness and vigour, as well as linguistic 'correctness' and (occasionally) 'purity', on examination it turns out that these stylistic values are not timeless and neutral, but have a history and a politics.

According to Cameron (1996, p. 331), this underlying ideological value of style policies should not be neglected in any analysis of media language. That newspaper articles and even broadcast news are to varying extents scripted and hence edited needs to be borne in mind when using media output as data sources. Journalists consequently possess a language awareness which is combined with the editors' enforcements of the style policies manifested in style guides and style sheets.

Another interesting phenomenon is that journalists and copy editors often decide to share their knowledge with the general public by publishing usage guides. A survey of the 77 usage guides included in the HUGE database

showed that thirteen of the usage guides were written by editors or writers. One such journalist-turned-usage guide author is Simon Heffer, who published *Strictly English* in 2010. How the advice offered by journalists and copy editors differs from usage guide authors with other professional backgrounds, such as Ernest Gowers, a civil servant who wrote *Plain Words* (1948), is a question worth investigating. One of the most recent usage guides written by an editor is Mary Norris' *Between you & me* (2015), in which the author shares her knowledge and experience as a copy editor for *The New Yorker*.

That standard language and its application in institutions like the news media have an effect on people's perceptions of what Standard English constitutes is a valid assumption which often results in native speakers doubting their own language abilities. Those who claim to know better do not eschew to voice their dismay about the decline of Standard English in letters to the editor. Both institutional applications of Standard English described here, education and the media, also highlight the impact and the scope of the ongoing usage debate. What Standard English is and how it should be applied are two focal issues not only in the domains of education and the media. The diverging views held by prescriptivists and descriptivists on these two issues are central to the usage debate and ensure its continuation.

2.4. Defining Prescription and Prescriptivism

While a brief definition of prescriptivism has already been provided in the Introduction, I would like to elaborate on the distinction between prescription and prescriptivism in this section. It is also necessary to discuss different interpretations of prescriptivism, such as Cameron's (1995) 'verbal hygiene' as well as the different types of prescriptivism introduced by Ann Curzan (2014), which also illustrates how scholars have dealt with prescriptivism.

Furthermore, Tieken-Boon van Ostade's (forthc./a) definition of the Age of Prescriptivism needs to be included in this discussion as well.

Unlike the eighteenth century, in which the codification and prescription of English was mainly undertaken by individuals such as "grammarians and lexicographers operating in a market-place unfettered by guidelines, unsanctioned by imprimatur, and unencumbered by official meddling", as Finegan (1998, p. 540) puts it, the nineteenth century saw the beginning of institutional endeavours pursuing codification efforts, such as the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which has been regarded as an authority on language ever since. From the late nineteenth century onwards, it became clear that there were two prevalent approaches to the study of language: a prescriptive and descriptive approach, also often referred to as prescriptivism and descriptivism. While descriptivists based their language advice and discussions on *norma loquendi*, actual language use as found in society, albeit the language used primarily by the educated, prescriptivists were eager to provide guidelines and rules often based on their own judgments, which has been discussed above as the so-called *ipse-dixit* tradition. Prescription as the last stage of the standardisation process of English according to Milroy and Milroy (2012) describes a manner of presenting language advice, yet the difference between prescription and proscription, which could be regarded as a corollary of prescription, needs to be clarified. While a prescription contains a rule on how language should be used, a proscription constitutes a prohibition of a particular usage. To illustrate the difference, I will use examples of a prescription and a proscription against the use of *literally* as an intensifier as found in the HUGE database. This usage problem will also be discussed in detail in this study (see Chapter 6). For the purpose of contrast, a descriptive example is also provided. The purpose of bold in the quotations below is to indicate added emphasis.

Prescription: literally, when used, as it often is, as a mere intensive, is a slovenly colloquialism, **its only correct use being to characterize *exactness to the letter*.** (Partridge, 1942, p. 172, emphasis added)

Proscription: It shouldn't need saying, but if you don't wish to be taken literally, **don't use *literally.*** The word means actually, not figuratively. (Bryson, 1984, p. 83, emphasis added)

Description: In its primary sense, literally urges you to take a fact "according to the letter," i.e. word for word or exactly as the utterance has it. **Yet for most of the last two centuries it has also been used to underscore figures of speech or turns of phrase which could never be taken at face value**: *They were literally green with envy.* In cases like that, literally defies its literal sense and seems to press for factual interpretation of the idiom, however far-fetched. … **This use of literally is recognized in all major dictionaries, though some add cautionary labels or usage notes.** (Peters, 2004, p. 326, emphasis added)

As can be seen from Partridge's prescription, he recommends using *literally* only when something is meant in the literal and traditional sense of the word. This prescription is clearly contrasted with Bryson's (1984, p. 83) condemnation of the hyperbolic use of *literally* in that he explicitly says: "don't use *literally*". Peters' advice (2004, p. 326) describes the traditional as well as new use of *literally* without passing a judgment on its acceptability. What also becomes clear from this illustration is that language advice can be rather complex and can consist of not only prescriptions and proscriptions, but also descriptions of how a particular usage feature is used.

From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, the usage debate between prescriptivists and descriptivists, a social and historical phenomenon, has become gradually more complex due to the beginning of systematic studies of English which evolved into the establishment of linguistics as a scientific field. Modern linguists, especially sociolinguists, have notoriously eschewed an active involvement in the debate insisting on a description of how language is used by its speakers without passing judgments

(Cameron, 1995, p. 3). Cameron (1995, p. ix) emphasises how laypeople's needs for guidance on language matters frequently clash with linguists' endeavours at merely describing a language. The debate evolving around usage produced a seemingly unbridgeable gap between laypeople, prescriptivists and linguists. However, only few linguists have engaged in the debate by providing a linguistic discussion of usage problem. One of these is Pam Peters, who conducted the so-called Langscape Surveys (Peters, 1998) to gather data on attitudes towards language use for her usage guide *The Cambridge Guide to English Usage* which was published in 2004. Although her approach consequently is descriptive, it provides readers with guidance on how to deal with usage problems. Cameron (1995, p. 3) introduced the term 'verbal hygiene' to refer to a phenomenon affecting language use which she, however, does not consider a synonym for prescriptivism. Discussing the issues with the term 'prescriptivism', Cameron (1995) highlights how it has obtained a negative connotation among linguists. The fact that linguists' negative attitudes towards prescriptivism are very similar in nature to the attitudes of those who advocate prescriptivism is intriguing, as both key players exhibit the tendency to ignore each other's existence and diminish their influence. Pullum's (2009) comments on Strunk's (1918) *The Elements of Style* serve as an example of such tendencies. Cameron states the following about these similarities between prescriptivists' and linguists' attitudes: "All attitudes to language and linguistic change are fundamentally ideological, and the relationship between popular and expert ideologies, though it is complex and conflictual, is closer than one might think" (Cameron, 1995, pp. 3–4).

While linguists are often said to describe how language is used by its speakers, prescriptivists would like to see what speakers consider the ideal and proper form of a language to be adopted by everyone. It is important to acknowledge the role speakers of a language play in the usage debate. Despite

being often considered a living entity, language as a system of rules as well as the origin of these rules have been frequently discussed critically. Whether the rules, which linguists deduce from patterns of language use, originate from the language system itself or from within the speaker is an often-disputed question in linguistics (cf. Chomsky, 1986, p. 3, Evans, 2014, p. 98). How speakers use their acquired knowledge about language in interaction with other speakers is characterised by their ability to apply agreed upon norms of interaction. Cameron (1995, p. 6) argues that the rules which linguists provide on the basis of usage description hence capture "behavioural regularity" which stems from "speakers' apprehending and following certain norms". Thus, including the behavioural, social and linguistic norms of a speech community in a discussion on language use is inevitable. While agreed upon norms and linguistic conventions do not seem to be considered problematical with respect to their usage, disputed, unsettled or changing norms constitute the basis for the usage debate. This is for example illustrated by the changing meaning of *literally* which is nowadays also used in a hyperbolic manner. While some have accepted these new norms, others struggle to accept them, or are even unaware of their existence.

In *Fixing English* (2014, p. 24), Ann Curzan provides a fine-grained and unprecedented distinction into four strands of prescriptivism which will be briefly summarized and exemplified by providing a usage problem for each strand:

1) Standardizing prescriptivism
2) Stylistic prescriptivism
3) Restorative prescriptivism
4) Politically responsive prescriptivism

The first strand of prescriptivism she discusses, standardizing prescriptivism, is undoubtedly connected to the standardisation process of English and comprises rules aiming "to promote and enforce standardization and 'standard'

usage" (Curzan, 2014, p. 24). Standardizing prescriptivism aims at diminishing the variation in the standard variety in order to achieve stability, which is one of the main aims of the standardisation process according to Milroy and Milroy (2012, p. 19). That is why Curzan (2014, p. 28) also refers to this as the "first key strand of prescriptivism". An example of a usage problem falling under this first strand is multiple negation, which is a linguistic feature considered not to be part of Standard English. Stylistic prescriptivism, on the other hand, affects mainly formal written norms of usage, while spoken usages barely falls into this category (Curzan, 2014, p. 33). The above-mentioned norms and conventions of usage come into play here, as stylistic prescriptivism is not simply a matter of the use of standard or non-standard language. Curzan (2014, p. 33) states that, as correctness and formality, especially in written formal texts, seem to be connected, stylistic prescriptivism is "a nicety that distinguishes those who 'know better' from those who don't, but it does not distinguish standard English speakers from nonstandard English speakers". Thus, knowing the linguistic norms and conventions is pivotal in order to conform to stylistic prescriptivism as this strand of prescriptivism consists of rules discussing stylistic issues within the standard language. Curzan (2014, p. 35) uses preposition stranding as an example of stylistic prescriptivism, which is, according to her, "quite specialized in terms of acceptability" and a rule deduced from formality. Hence, the question whether one should use *To whom did you speak?* or *Whom did you speak to?* is a matter of stylistic prescriptivism. The third strand, restorative prescriptivism, consists of efforts made to restore traditional usages, or to "turn to older forms to purify usage" (Curzan, 2014, p. 24). Such rules and efforts aim at restoring earlier usages, which some argue to be the pure forms, and seem to be connected to the myth of the Golden Age discussed in section 2.2 above. Curzan (2014, p. 37) says that this relatively small class of usage

rules shows an overlap with rules falling into the standardisation and stylistic prescriptivism strands, which raises the question of why to distinguish this particular strand of prescriptivism after all. She attributes this distinction to a number of usage rules that neither aims at the stabilization of Standard English nor at the enforcement of stylistic preferences, but which rather aims at "the resurrection of a form no longer standard or even preferred" (Curzan, 2014, p. 37). The distinction between the adjectives *healthy* and *healthful* could be classified as an example of restorative prescriptivism. An example of this can be found in the fourth edition of *Fowler's Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (2015) edited by Jeremy Butterfield, who discusses how *healthful*, albeit the older word, has never gained ground in Great Britain and seems to be an American phenomenon (see above):

> Stateside, such people insist that the only correct word to convey the meaning 'conductive to health' is *healthful*, and that *healthy* can never, never ever, be so used. One should therefore, they claim, speak of *healthful eating, food, diets, lifestyles, meals*, etc. (Butterfield, 2015, p. 368).

The fourth and last strand distinguished by Curzan (2014, p. 24) is politically responsive prescriptivism, which includes rules designed to "promote inclusive, non-discriminatory, politically correct, and/or politically expedient usage". Political correctness, which can be considered the only truly successful measure of prescriptivism, seems to be less controversial to linguists, as it is often excluded from discussions about prescriptivism, which highlights the ideological aspects of prescriptivism. Curzan's (2014) four strands of prescriptivism are a useful addition to the discussion of prescriptivism as it not only helps to distinguish different categories of rules, but also emphasises the overarching characteristics many usage rules share. Her discussion of prescriptivism and its distinction into four strands is further supplemented by the general differentiation between individual and institutional prescriptivism (Curzan, 2014, p. 16). Being backed by "the cultural

and social power" of authoritative institutions, institutional prescriptivism is spread and enforced through various publications, its "adoption in schools, [and] use as a standard for newspaper editing" (Curzan, 2014, p. 16). The application of institutional prescriptivism has been illustrated above in the discussion of education and the media as gatekeepers of the notion of correct Standard English. From a historical perspective, institutional prescriptivism was preceded by individual prescriptivism, as grammarians and usage guide writers aimed at establishing themselves first as an authority. Today, however, Curzan (2014, p. 16) argues that individuals depend on intuitional authorities to strengthen their own authority and so make use of institutional prescriptivism.

As briefly mentioned above, prescription formed the last stage of the ongoing standardisation process defined by Milroy and Milroy (2012). However, Tieken-Boon van Ostade (forthc./a) argues for prescriptivism not only to be distinguished from this last stage, but also for prescriptivism to be added as another stage in the seven-stage standardisation process and thus making it the current stage of the standardisation process of English. Furthermore, she proposes a new definition and use of the term 'prescriptivism' which she argues needs to be distinguished from the process of prescription, and earlier definitions of prescriptivism, which have been discussed above. According to Tieken-Boon van Ostade (forthc./a), prescriptivism should be defined as the negatively perceived treatment of prescriptive efforts, which manifests itself in parodies of usage guides, for example. Basing her argument on the negative perception of prescriptive tendencies in the twentieth century, Tieken-Boon van Ostade (forthc./a) emphasises that it is not the eighteenth century, but rather the period from the twentieth century until today that should be defined as the Age of Prescriptivism. Placing the Age of Prescriptivism at this point is triggered by the increasing popularity of usage guides and the beginning

stigmatisation of many usage problems in the twentieth century, a phenomenon which will be discussed in detail in this study.

2.5. Concluding Remarks

In order to enable a better understanding of the usage debate, it was essential to provide an overview of the debate's development, not only as a debate itself but also as a historical and social phenomenon. Having sketched out the beginning of usage criticism in eighteenth-century periodicals (Percy, 2008, 2009), Lowth's prescriptive footnotes (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2011) and the birth of Baker's usage guide (Leonard, 1929), I have attempted to describe the evolution of the usage debate which has culminated in the form of the usage guide tradition which continues to this very day. It is important to bear in mind that usage guides are not only the product of the Milroyan prescription stage of the standardisation process of English, but that they also fulfil an authoritative role for the general public. The market for usage guides arose and gained in importance and popularity due to the linguistic insecurity of speakers from the rising middle class in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Social climbers who were keen on advancing their social standing saw language use, both spoken and written, as a means for achieving such improvements. That language ideologies need to be taken into account when discussing the usage debate should not be overlooked. The notion of correct Standard English which consolidated in the second half of the eighteenth century has shaped the usage debate permanently. The notion's application in education and the media highlights not only the topicality of the usage debate but also shows how institutional prescriptivism has been used to enforce the notion further. With the establishment of linguistics as a scientific discipline the gap between prescriptive and descriptive approaches to English usage widened. The reception of the efforts of prescriptivists' and descriptivists' in

the study of English usage can be seen as proof of how deeply indoctrinated the notion of correct Standard English is among the speech community as efforts made by prescriptivists seem to be well-received by the general public, while descriptivists' efforts are barely acknowledged.

3. Defining (Usage) Attitudes: What Are They and How Can They Be Studied?

3.1. Introduction

The concept 'attitude' is central to the analysis of current attitudes towards usage problems in British English and therefore needs to be defined and appropriated for this investigation. Its definition and delineation can, however, be considered somewhat difficult due to its manifold applications in various fields of science. This is further complicated by the use of 'attitude' as a more general label not only to study attitudes as such, but also opinions, intentions, and behaviour in general, thus contributing to the "confusion and ambiguity surrounding the attitude concept" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 1). The focus of this chapter therefore lies on defining language attitudes in general by drawing on earlier definitions of attitudes and on attempting a definition of usage attitudes in particular. Before tackling a definition of the latter concept, I will provide a brief discussion of the theoretical background of the concept 'attitude', which will deal with the differences between attitudes, beliefs, opinions and values, as well as the different layers of attitudes themselves. These layers describe the three different components of attitudes, which can be identified as affective, behavioural and cognitive components.

After providing an overview of the development of language attitude studies, I will discuss the three main research approaches applied in linguistics to identify and measure attitudes. By providing the theoretical background about what attitudes are and how the concept has been incorporated into linguistics and sociolinguistics in particular, a definition of usage attitudes is possible which is vital for the discussion of attitudes towards usage problems, the main topic of this study. For the definition of usage attitudes, I would like to incorporate three possibilities explaining the basis for attitude judgments towards different language varieties described by Edwards (1999, pp. 102–103) and draw further on Preston's concept of language regard (2010, 2011,

2013). Providing an overview of language attitude studies also allows for a discussion of different research approaches and an identification of data-gathering tools applied in attitude studies in linguistics. With this discussion, the necessary background information is provided to examine previously conducted usage attitude studies in the following chapter.

3.2. The Concept 'Attitude'

While the concept 'attitude' has long been deeply rooted and considered a key theme in social psychology (Allport, 1935, p. 789; Oppenheim, 1992, p. 174; Edwards, 1982, p. 20; 2006, p. 324; McKenzie, 2010, p. 19), its importance for linguistics was only gradually discovered. Garrett (2010, p. 19) stresses the significance of Labov's *The Social Stratification of English in New York City* (2006), first published in 1966, in which speakers' attitudes towards prestigious and stigmatised language features were used to explain language change and variation. Social psychologists as well as laypeople have often applied the concept 'attitude' to explain human behaviour (Ajzen, 2005, pp. 1–2). Despite its long history in social psychology, the concept remains complex and difficult to define due to advancements in the field and the tendency of social psychologists to suggest their own definitions of the concept to match their respective theories (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 6). In order to find a suitable definition for the discussion of usage attitudes, I will provide an overview of the key components and characteristics of attitudes and furthermore contrast the concept 'attitude' with related notions such as belief, value, opinion and perception.

Oppenheim (1992, p. 174) states that "most researchers seem to agree that an attitude is a state of readiness, a tendency to respond in a certain manner when confronted with certain stimuli". What can be gathered from his statement is, first and foremost, the necessity of a stimulus or attitude object.

According to Ajzen (2005, p. 3), an attitude object can be an "object, person, institution, or event" which can either trigger a favourable or unfavourable response to the perceived attitude object in a person. McKenzie (2010, p. 19) also adds abstract ideas to Oppenheim's list of attitude objects. A linguistic example of an attitude object could be the Queen's English. The importance of the role of the stimuli needs to be stressed, Oppenheim argues, as attitudes are often described as "dormant" and "inaccessible to direct observation" unless a person is confronted with the attitude object (Oppenheim, 1992: 175; Ajzen, 2005, p. 3). Only after confrontation with the stimulus will attitudes be expressed in either a verbal or behavioural response or evaluation of the attitude object. The observability, or rather accessibility, of attitudes has been discussed by Garrett (2010, p. 20), who states that attitudes are "psychological construct[s]" which "cannot be observed directly". Garrett bases his discussion on Oppenheim's definition of attitudes, which can be found below, and argues that in order to identify an attitude, one needs to infer it from the response obtained after the confrontation with the attitude object. In his definition, Oppenheim (1982, p. 39) lists observable processes, such as verbal statements and ideas, on which the inferred attitude could be based:

> An attitude is a construct, an abstraction which cannot be directly apprehended. It is an inner component of mental life which expresses itself, directly or indirectly, through much more obvious processes as stereotypes, beliefs, verbal statements or reactions, ideas and opinions, selective recall, anger or satisfaction or some other emotion and in various aspects of behaviour. (Oppenheim, 1982, p. 39)

Oppenheim describes attitudes as an "inner component of mental life", yet he fails to mention how attitudes emerge or how they are constructed, an oversight which he corrected ten years later (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 174). Social psychologists have argued that attitudes are learned, and have subsequently formulated various theories as to how the acquisition process takes place.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975, pp. 21–52) and Erwin (2001, pp. 21–41) provide overviews of the main learning theories of attitudes, whose discussion, however, is not the main objective of this chapter. I will therefore only mention the two main sources I consider important for the present investigation of usage attitudes, i.e. those which constitute personal experience and social environment (Garrett, 2010, p. 22). A distinction is made between observational learning, which describes learning an attitude by observing the behaviour of others, and instrumental learning, which includes attending "to the consequences of attitudes and whether these bring rewards or detriments" (Garrett, 2010, p. 22). Both observational and instrumental learning can be found in a school setting. Being confronted by the rules and workings of the standard variety, students will form "some fundamental language attitudes" which depend on their personal experience and social environment (Garrett, 2010, p. 22). More recent definitions of attitudes, however, incorporate suggestions that some attitudes are partially formed on a biological basis and thus should not be considered solely the product of a learning process (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 3). This is also visible in Eagly and Chaiken's (1993, p.1) definition of an attitude as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour". One of the most frequently quoted definitions of attitude is Allport's attempt at defining the concept, which is said to "encompass most of the agreed upon meaning" (Gardner 1982, p. 132). Allport (1954, p. 45) defines 'attitude' as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related". Allport's definition does indeed include several of the key elements discussed above, such as the attitude object, the observability of attitudes as well as a hint at the learning theory of attitudes. For this reason, I consider Allport's definition of attitude,

albeit a rather old one, the most suitable definition for the purpose of my study and as a starting point for my discussion of usage attitudes. Before this attempt to define usage attitudes is however made, I would like to discuss briefly the three key components of attitudes outlined above and contrast the concept 'attitude' with other related terms.

3.2.1. Three key components of attitudes

The previous discussion showed that defining attitudes is a complex undertaking as not only the key components of attitudes need to be discussed, but also the contextual prerequisites of how an attitude emerges. The difficulty of this complexity becomes evident in our understanding of attitudes as comprising a dichotomous scale ranging from positive to negative attitudes and in the subsequent measurement of attitude, for which Oppenheim (1992, p. 175) provides the following assessment:

> Our thinking on the nature of attitudes has been rather primitive. Most of the time we tend to perceive them as straight lines, running from positive, through neutral, to negative feelings about the object or issue in question. Our attempts at measurement then concentrate on trying to place a person's attitude on the straight line or linear continuum in such a way that it can be described as mildly positive, strongly negative, and so on – preferably in terms of a numerical score or else by means of ranking. There is no proof, however, that this model of a linear continuum is necessarily correct, though it does make things easier for measurement purposes. For all we know, attitudes may be shaped more like concentric circles or overlapping ellipses or three-dimensional cloud formations. (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 175).

To discuss such attitude models, the three components that 'attitude' comprises need to be clarified. Early definitions of the concept 'attitude' (e.g. Allport, 1954, p. 45; Oppenheim, 1982, p. 39) agree on the affective nature of attitudes and include the most obvious component: an emotion. This is particularly obvious in Oppenheim's definition in which he provides a list of responses including "emotions", "anger or satisfaction". To give an example,

the affective component of a positive attitude towards a linguistic variety such as the Queen's English could be expressed verbally with a favourable evaluation. As mentioned above, attitudes are inferred, which makes emotions an easily identifiable source for them. While the affective component of attitudes is clearly an essential and more obvious part of the concept, scholars have tried to unveil the underlying components and incorporate these into a definition. Besides the affective component, the previously discussed definitions also include two further components. Attitudes have often been described as a "mental and neural state of readiness" (Allport, 1954, p. 45) or "inner component of mental life" (Oppenheim, 1982, p. 39), which highlights their cognitive dimension. This component is expressed through thoughts and beliefs (Baker, 1992, p. 12). Thinking that the Queen's English is the only correct language variety, for example, would therefore be considered an expression of the cognitive component. Additionally, one can identify a behavioural component, which is described by Allport (1945, p. 45) as "exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response" and by Oppenheim as "a state of readiness" (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 174). The behavioural component is sometimes also referred to as the conative or action component (e.g. Baker, 1992, p. 13). To continue the example of the Queen's English, the behavioural component of a positive attitude towards the attitude object, the Queen's English, could be realised in the acquisition of the variety. These three components constitute the so-called ABC model of attitudes and are illustrated in Figure 3.1 below based on Baker (1992) and Augoustinos et al. (2006).

This tripartite structure of attitudes, which is often referred to as the classical or triadic model of attitudes (Erwin, 2001, p. 13), raises a number of questions concerning the measurement of attitudes, such as the following. What exactly is measured in an attitude test? Since most studies produce and

rely "on single-response measures to infer beliefs, attitudes, and intentions", the measurement of one or more of the three components becomes a critical issue (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, pp. 53–54).

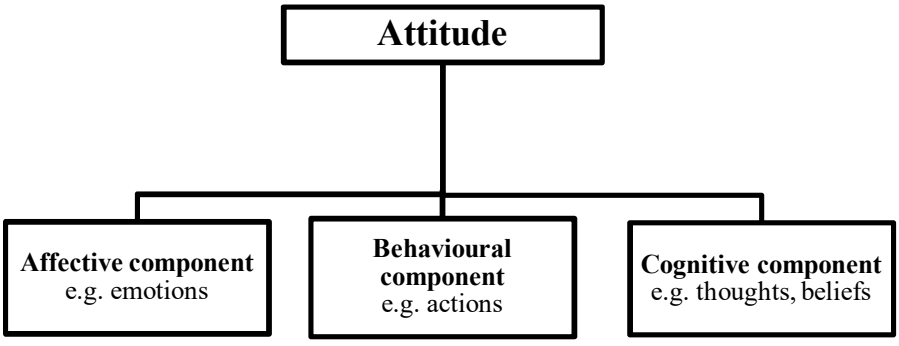

Figure 3.1 ABC model of attitudes

In this respect, the inference of attitudes from an evaluation has caused some confusion. Attempting to separate the three components in empirical studies, the affective and cognitive components have been found difficult to distinguish (Ajzen, 2005, p. 20). These three components together with the key elements discussed above need to be borne in mind when devising tests to measure attitudes.

To summarise the key components and processes, I would like to make use of Oskamp and Schultz's (2005, p. 11–12) visualisation of the so-called Latent Process Viewpoint, which describes the evaluation process and which was introduced by DeFleur and Westies (1963). In Figure 3.2 I adapted Oskamp and Schulz's model to fit the terminology used in this discussion. Thus, instead of using the term stimulus event in Figure 3.2 below, I decided to use the term attitude object. This model enables not only a summary of the main processes involved in the attitude formation process, but also allows a clear visualisation emphasising the observable and latent components of

attitudes. Hence, the fact that attitudes are inferred upon the observation of affective, behavioural and cognitive responses is highlighted in the Latent Process Viewpoint model.

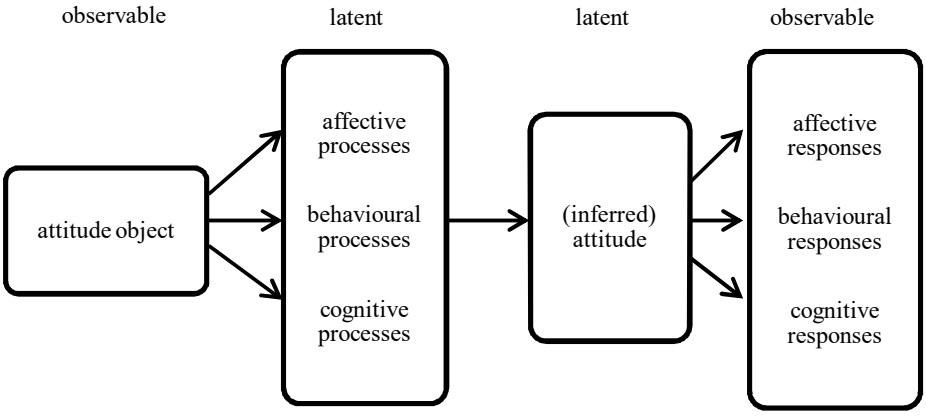

Figure 3.2 Latent Process Viewpoint (Oskamp & Schultz, 2005)

3.2.2.Related terms

The tendency to use 'attitude' as a general label to discuss related terms such as beliefs, values and the like as well as to use some of these terms synonymously can cause confusion, and therefore it is necessary to distinguish attitudes from these related terms. Although the difference in meaning is sometimes only subtle, I will briefly distinguish the terms 'values', 'opinions', 'beliefs', and 'perception'.

Values are considered "superordinate ideals" which we aspire to (Garrett et al. 2003, p. 10) and thus they encompass broader notions such as happiness, justice and freedom (Oskamp & Schultz, 2005, p. 14–15). Attitudes are often described in terms of their depth and are contrasted with these related terms. Oppenheim, for instance, considers attitudes and related concepts as

being placed on different levels of superficiality. While opinions are placed on the most superficial level, values, which Oppenheim also calls "basic attitudes", provide the foundation for attitudes (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 176). The importance of values in attitude formation is not only discussed by Oppenheim, but also by Oskamp and Schultz (2005, p. 15), who argue that values are "central in a person's whole system of attitudes and beliefs" and therefore are more resilient to change.

Opinions, as mentioned above, are considered to be more superficial than attitudes or values. This is also reflected in their observability, as most opinions are expressed verbally (Baker, 1992, p. 14). The distinction between depth levels, i.e. superficial levels compared to more intrinsic ones, is important as this can affect the measurement of attitudes. This is further explained by Garrett (2010, p. 32) who argues that formulating attitudes might be more difficult than opinions, and that expressed opinions do not necessarily have to be identical reflections of an underlying attitude. To give an example, expressing a neutral opinion on the Queen's English may in fact be connected to an underlying negative attitude either towards the variety itself, its speakers or even bigger notions such as the monarchy. Baker (1992, p. 14) states that opinions and attitudes are often used synonymously and mentions the lack of emotions in opinions as a key difference between the two terms.

Beliefs have been described as the cognitive component of attitudes and are also said to possibly lack emotions (Garrett, 2010, p. 31). While describing beliefs as thoughts and ideas, the question is raised how an affective thought or idea should be treated and measured. Oskamp and Schultz (2005, pp. 13–14) defined the type of belief, including a value judgment, as an intermediate category called evaluative beliefs. An example of such an evaluative belief would be the following statement: The Queen's English is beautiful. The connection between the affective and cognitive components of attitudes is

stressed by Garrett (2010, p. 31), who states that beliefs "may trigger and be triggered by strong affective reactions", which makes beliefs which merely express the cognitive component rather uncommon.

Perception is another term which is often used interchangeably with the term attitude. However, when reading Edwards' definition of perception, subtle differences can be distinguished. According to Edwards (2006, p. 324), perceptions are defined as "the filter through which sensory data are strained". This filter varies among individuals due to its unique formation and maintenance, which depends on the individual's cultural environment and experiences (Edwards, 2006, p. 324). Perceptions, therefore, play a role in the discussion of what attitudes are, as the individual's filter seems to influence attitude formation. To continue the example of the Queen's English, the variety may be perceived differently by an actual speaker of the variety and a speaker of Cockney English for example. Their respective experience and environments serve as a filter through which the Queen's English is perceived.

3.3. The Concept 'Attitude' in Linguistics

Having distinguished between these related terms, I would like to give a short overview of how the concept 'attitude' has been incorporated into linguistics. Since this study deals with attitudes towards usage problems, a definition of what usage attitudes are is advisable. Despite having a long tradition in the social sciences, particularly the behavioural sciences and social psychology, the study of attitudes requires a discussion of its contextualisation and incorporation into linguistics. When discussing language attitudes, several questions are immediately triggered. Whose attitudes are we concerned with? Which language, language variety or linguistic aspect is investigated? How are attitudes to these phenomena measured? In order to answer questions such as these, an overview of previously conducted language attitude studies is

needed to illustrate how attitudes have gradually been incorporated in the study of language.

Today, investigating attitudes has become an important part in many linguistic areas, such as second language acquisition, bilingualism, perceptual dialectology and sociolinguistics. This, however, has not always been the case, as only from the 1960s onwards was more attention paid to attitude studies in linguistics. What is also characteristic of the early stages of language attitude studies in the field of linguistics is that there was a complete isolation from attitude studies conducted in the social sciences, which impeded the exchange of valuable research experience (Cooper & Fishman 1974, p. 5; Garrett, 2002, p. 626). For all that, language attitude studies found fruitful ground from the 1960s onwards in linguistics with its incorporation into the fields of social psychology of language, sociolinguistics, and communication studies (Garrett, 2003, p. 626; Speelman et al., 2013, p. 84). Important studies such as that of Lambert et al. (1960) on attitudes towards French and English in Canada, which will be discussed below, contributed to and promoted the development and implementation of attitude studies in these fields by demonstrating their usefulness beyond the fields in which they had originated.

Early investigations of the development of language attitude studies indicate a tendency to categorise these studies according to specific factors. One possible way of categorising such studies is demonstrated by Agheyisi and Fishman (1970). Their overview of early language attitude studies conducted in the 1960s is based on a bipartite categorisation according to research topics as well as to the research tools applied in these studies. By compiling this overview Agheyisi and Fishman (1970, p. 144) discovered that the majority of language attitude studies were conducted in areas in which the social significance of language varieties, language choice and usage were investigated. Another categorisation of attitude studies was undertaken by

Cooper and Fishman (1974), who differentiated language attitudes according to the attitude object and created a demarcation between language attitudes and attitudes in general. Thus, Cooper and Fishman (1974, p. 6) established four language attitude categories based on the attitude object:

1) Attitudes towards a language
2) Attitudes towards a specific language feature
3) Attitudes towards language use
4) Attitudes towards language as a symbol (e.g. group marker)

Niedzielski and Preston (2000, pp. 8–9), who have worked in and considerably shaped the folk linguistic framework, state that language attitude studies do not aim to identify linguistic levels as such, but stress the association of linguistic features with their users. They define language attitude as follows:

> A language attitude is, after all, not really an attitude to a language feature; it is an awakening of a set of beliefs about individuals or sort of individuals through the filter of a linguistic performance, although, admittedly, association with a linguistic feature and a group may be so long-standing that the attitude appears to be the linguistic feature itself. (Niedzielski & Preston, 2000, p. 9)

This association between linguistic features and a specific type of speakers has also been mentioned by Edwards (1982, p. 20), who highlights the importance of attitude studies for sociolinguistics. To give an example, an attitude towards the Queen's English may in fact be an attitude held towards a very particular group, namely its speakers. It is argued that the association of the Queen's English with this particular group becomes so strong that the two attitudes appear to be the same. That is why this association is crucial for the understanding of language attitude studies, which needs to be borne in mind for the rest of the discussion.

Creating categories of language attitude studies as done by Cooper and Fishman (1974) is not only a useful means to get an overview of what is

understood by language attitudes, but it also enables a better understanding of the essential components when studying language attitudes. Whose attitudes are investigated towards which component? To apply this question to the research carried out here, I am investigating the attitudes of members of the general public towards usage problems. So, what are usage attitudes then?

3.3.1.Defining usage attitudes

As discussed in the introduction to this study, usage problems are disputed language features which prescriptivists argue are not part of the standard language. However, these features are in actual use and are widespread among the general public, who might or might not be aware of their disputed status. Due to the reduction of optional variability in the language standardisation process (Milroy & Milroy 2012, p. 22), these language features are in competition with what prescriptivists consider to be the correct standard forms. Drawing on the standard language ideology, Lesley Milroy (1999, p. 175) describes how such optional variability is considered "an undesirable deviation from a uniquely correct form". The stigmatisation of usage problems is a process which plays a crucial role in this discussion, since there seems to be a difference in awareness of the stigmatisation of particular usage features between language users. This difference in awareness has been studied by various linguists before, such as Labov (1972), Cheshire (1982), Trudgill (1986) and Levon (2006), to name a few. Distinguishing language features according to their level of awareness in a speech community resulted in their categorisation into three different types of sociolinguistic variables: markers, indicators and stereotypes. These three types of variables are said to stratify differently in a speech community. Labov (1972, p. 237) argues that indicators are linguistic variables which "show a regular distribution over socio-economic, ethnic, or age group, but are used by each individual in more or less

the same way in any context". This means that a linguistic feature would be used differently by various age groups or ethnic groups. This social stratification also means that indicators are not very obvious and that considerable linguistic knowledge is needed to be able to recognise them (Mesthrie et al. 2009, p. 88). Rácz (2013, p. 25) describes indicators as not provoking value judgments from other members of the speech community. An example quoted in Rácz (2013, p. 25) would be the vowel /a:/ in Norwich which Trudgill found to be more fronted than the standard variant stating that the social and contextual situation would not influence its pronunciation greatly (Trudgill, 1986, p. 10). Unlike indicators, sociolinguistic markers, according to Labov (1972, p. 237), are "[m]ore highly developed sociolinguistic variables", in the sense that they not only stratify socially, but also stylistically. Focussing on phonetic variables, Labov provides the variable (-*ing*), which has a stressed (-*ing*) and an unstressed variant (-*in*), as an example of a sociolinguistic marker (1972, pp. 237–239). This linguistic variable is said to vary according to different speech style, so that we find the unstressed variant (-*in*) more frequently in informal context such as casual speech and among speakers of the lower social classes as shown by Trudgill in his study of sociolinguistic variation of English in Norwich (1974, pp. 91–92). Rácz's explanation of markers highlights their significance in terms of sociolinguistic investigations, as he states that "[m]arkers correlate with a sociolinguistic identity. If a marker attaches to a nonstandard dialect, speakers will try to avoid it in more formal style settings and will regard its use as *base* or *erroneous*" (2013, p. 25). Lastly, sociolinguistic stereotypes are variables that are not only socially stratified but whose social variation is also noted by the speech community (Labov, 1972, p. 314; Mesthrie et al., 2009, p. 88). This is described by Rácz (2013, p. 26) as becoming a "subject of naïve linguistic awareness". The increased use of high-rise terminals or so-called 'uptalk' has gradually become a linguistic

stereotype (Cameron, 2001, p. 112). The distinction between indicator, marker and stereotype is a necessary one and will be applied in the data analysis of this thesis. By identifying the speech communities' awareness towards usage problems, it will be possible to assess whether a usage problem such as *literally* as an intensifier is more a marker or a stereotype, for example.

An important question raised in connection with language attitudes and attitudes in general concerns what forms the basis of speakers' judgments. Edwards (1982, 2006) discusses three different types of basis for language attitudes on which speakers tend to justify their judgments. The first type constitutes the so-called intrinsic difference according to which speakers evaluate language varieties or features based on their "intrinsic linguistic inferiorities/superiorities" (Edwards, 1982, p. 21). By stressing the intrinsic superiority of Standard English for example, one will automatically assume all other English varieties to be inferior to this standard variety. The second type of judgment basis also deals with an inherent quality, namely a variety's or feature's aesthetic quality (Edwards, 2006, p. 325). This type has also been called the "inherent value hypothesis", which has been investigated in studies such as Giles et al. (1974) which attempts to verify the hypothesis that varieties possess such inherent aesthetic values. While French Canadians consider European French varieties as aesthetically more pleasing, Giles et al.'s (1974) study showed that Welsh speakers who are unfamiliar with these varieties do not judge them differently when it comes to aesthetics. Thus, the inherent value hypothesis could not be proven in their attempt to verify the assumption that some varieties possess aesthetic values. The third type of judgment basis discussed by Edwards (1982, 2006) is the so-called social perception basis, which he believes to be the only plausible option with respect to the speakers' judgment basis. According to the social perception basis, speakers are said to make evaluations to reflect the social conventions of their speech community,

in the process of which they show an awareness of what is considered prestigious or carries status in a speech community (Edwards, 1982, p. 21). Edwards (2006, p. 326) states that speakers "listening to a given variety acts as a trigger or a stimulus that evokes attitudes (or prejudices, or stereotypes) about the community to which the speaker is thought to belong". This ties in neatly with Niedzielski and Preston's definition of language attitudes discussed above. Niedzielski and Preston's (2000) discussion of folk linguistic awareness highlights how laypeople's understanding of language varieties differs from that of linguists or language specialists. What can be identified as Edwards' (2006, pp. 324–325) intrinsic difference basis and aesthetic quality value are reflected in their discussion of laypeople awareness. Niedzielski and Preston (2000, p. 18) illustrate below how laypeople's perceptions of what constitutes "good language" need to be scrutinised and that a simple equation of "good language" with "good speakers" is simply insufficient to grasp language attitudes. Niedzielski and Preston (2000, p. 18) state that "good language is not good just because it is (and has been) used by good speakers. Good language for the folk is a much greater abstraction; it is good because it is logical, clear, continuous (in an etymological sense), and so on". As part of the folk linguistics and perceptual dialectology framework, Preston (2010, p. 100, 2011, p. 10) has coined the term 'language regard', to encompass not only beliefs about language, but also reactions to language. Language regard serves as an umbrella term covering implicit attitudes to linguistic features as well as explicit opinions about these features which may entail an effective evaluation or not (Nerbonne et al., 2011, p. 3). Preston (2011, p. 10) argues that it is possible to obtain beliefs about language without an effective evaluation and so prefers the use of the term 'regard' to 'attitude' as the latter has an evaluative component as discussed above.

Figure 3.3, which is based on Preston (2010), illustrates the language regard process, a process of how beliefs about and reactions to language, its structure, its use and status emerge.

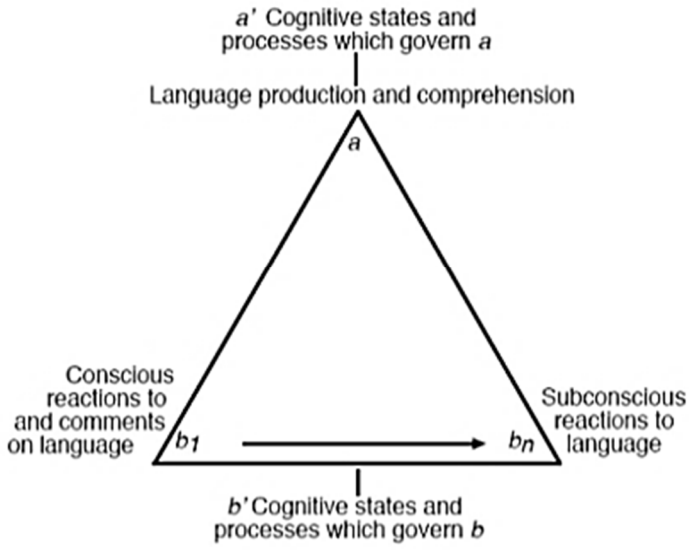

Figure 3.3 Preston's (2010, p. 101) Language Regard concept

Preston (2010, p. 101; 2011, p. 10) argues that speakers are not necessarily aware of what they say or of what is being said by others, a finding which he bases on Sibata (1999) and calls "The Communicative Mandate". By adding the element of salience to his framework, Preston states that speakers will notice forms which are different from the ones they use themselves or expect to hear from others, calling this the "Contrastive Mandate" (2010, p. 101). To exemplify the latter concept, if one did not expect one's interlocutor to use *literally* in a non-literal sense but as an intensifier based on his or her physical appearance or other stimuli, one would notice the feature, according to the Contrastive Mandate. As illustrated in Figure 3.3, language production and comprehension at the top of the triangle and marked with *a* constitutes the starting point of the language regard process. Preston (2010, pp. 102–104)

explains that a variety or feature such as *literally* as an intensifier is first noticed by the hearer due to the difference in use or expectation before a classification of the feature or variety is made. In order to do so, the speaker draws on his knowledge and experience, represented as *b'*, to form his regard towards *a*, which is consequently imbued by the speaker's knowledge (Preston, 2010, p. 2). Preston (2011, p. 13) states that *b'* constitutes the main object of investigation in language regard and describes how variable b' can range from b_1 to b_n on a consciousness dimension.

To illustrate the language regard process, I will provide an example. A speaker produces a double negative which the hearer either does not normally use himself or does not expect to hear from that speaker based on extralinguistic aspects about the speaker such as their physical appearance, age or the like. If we identify the observed double negative, as in *didn't do nothing*, according to Preston's scheme (2011), the following steps may be identified:

> The speaker produces a double negative (*didn't do nothing*) which will be referred to as *a* hereafter.
>
> Step 1: As the hearer would not use or does not expect to hear a double negative, he notices *a* in the production of the speaker
>
> Step 2: The hearer then classifies *a* as a dialectal language use.
>
> Step 3: The hearer draws on his knowledge about and experience with this feature and "caricatures" of dialect speakers from *b'* (Preston, 2010, p. 102) and instils these into *a*
>
> Step 4: Finally, the hearer produces his response in b_1

As discussed above, language attitudes are not necessarily attitudes to linguistic features or a language variety, but are rather connected to beliefs held towards their user. A long-standing and strong connection between such beliefs about their speakers and the linguistic feature or variety itself may

result then in the attitude being representative of the linguistic feature or variety (Niedzielski & Preston, 2000, p. 9). Preston incorporates this assumption in his language regard process by drawing on Irvine's (2001, p. 33) iconization, a transformational process in which the linguistic features become a representation of their social images. He argues that due to previous exposure and imbuement of *a*, a hearer might not necessarily draw on his knowledge, but previously imbued characteristics might be directly triggered (Preston, 2010, pp. 102–103; 2013, p. 95). According to this modification, we would obtain a different process, which can be described as follows:

> The speaker produces a double negative (*didn't do nothing*) which will be referred to as *a* hereafter.
>
> Step 1: As the hearer would not use or does not expect a double negative, he notices *a* in the production of the speaker
>
> Step 2: The hearer then classifies *a* as sloppy based on his previous imbuing of *a*
>
> Step 3: The hearer draws on "associated beliefs about" sloppy language (Preston, 2010, p. 103)
>
> Step 4: Lastly, the hearer formulates a folk belief in b_1

This automatization of responses through previous exposure is crucial in the discussion of usage attitudes as it could well be at play when conducting attitude elicitation tasks. What Preston's discussion of language regard also highlights is that the set of beliefs and experiences of speakers vary not only culturally but also individually (2013, p. 96). Nevertheless, whether language regards are truly evaluation-free beliefs about language, as is argued by Preston (2011, p. 10) and was discussed above, needs to be questioned. If folk beliefs contain an effective evaluation of a language variety or language feature, as for example in classifying dialectal language use as sloppy, a case

could be made for assuming that the language regard process also includes attitudes.

What then are usage attitudes? The key element of usage attitudes is the speakers' awareness of the disputed status of linguistic features which become salient due to their stigmatisation or deviance from a norm. If speakers have not been exposed to the discussion of disputed usage features, be it through their education, their social environment or the mass media, they will not be aware of the feature's stigmatised status. As shown by Edwards' (1982, 2006) discussion of the three bases of judgments, speakers who do not have this awareness will base their judgment on either their understanding of the intrinsic difference of a variety by assuming a linguistic superiority or inferiority of a linguistic feature or variety or on an inherent aesthetic value. I suspect that speakers who are aware of the disputed status of usage problems will base their judgments on the third social perception basis which emphasizes the language conventions in a speech community. Therefore, usage attitudes are evaluations of usage problems which are either found to be acceptable or unacceptable depending on the context of use agreed upon within a speech community, or an evaluation of users of usage problems. Awareness of the stigmatised status of usage problems is a key characteristic of usage attitudes and it is either acquired through exposure in education, the speaker's social environment or the media.

3.4. Research Approaches to the Study of Language Attitudes

Now that the terminology and concepts that are relevant to this study have been clarified, an overview of research approaches developed to study language attitudes in general can now be undertaken. I will focus on the three main approaches: the Direct Approach, the Indirect Approach and the Societal Treatment Approach. In spite of the initial isolation of attitude studies, several

research techniques have been transferred from the social sciences to linguistics. As sociolinguistics was still a relatively young discipline in the 1970s, it is no surprise that the social sciences provided a wide array of established and approved research tools for linguists. Examples of such tools are attitude questionnaires and semantic differential scales, which will be explained later in this chapter. Yet, new research techniques have been developed as well and have been gradually incorporated into sociolinguistics in order to meet new or different needs.

An overview of the kind of techniques applied in language attitude studies was made by Agheyisi and Fishman (1970, pp. 142–143), which comprises the use of surveys, questionnaires and interviews, participant observation and case studies. This overview allows a comparison between the analytical approaches which have been adopted from the social sciences and the research tools that have been applied in the study of language attitudes. Apart from the topical differences of attitude studies in the social sciences compared to those carried out within linguistics, Miller (1977, p. 66) provides an overview of analytical approaches applied in this field which include a large array of research tools such as questionnaires, interviews, case studies, experiments and observations. Such basic, yet fundamental, research techniques can be found in both the social sciences and linguistics, as becomes clear from a comparison of the techniques listed by Agheyisi and Fishman (1970) and Miller (1977). The matched-guise technique, for instance, pioneered by Lambert et al. (1960), is an example of a technique that was developed specifically for the study of language attitudes. What lies at the heart of all these research methods is, however, the understanding of the concept ‘attitude’, which is intrinsically linked to the development of different approaches to the study of language attitudes. Having discussed the beginnings of language attitude studies relatively broadly here, I will now take a

closer look at the development of these research approaches when applied to sociolinguistics. The following discussion of the three main research approaches, the Direct Approach, the Indirect Approach and the Societal Treatment Approach, is led to identify their advantages and disadvantages.

3.4.1.The Direct Approach

The Direct Approach targets respondents' cognitive, behavioural and affective levels as they are expected to express their attitudes overtly. Elicitation of language attitudes is usually done by asking explicit and direct questions in interviews or questionnaires (Garrett, 2010, p. 39; McKenzie, 2010, p. 37), which is how this approach has obtained its name. An example of its application can be found in MacKinnon's (1981) study of the attitudes of Scottish people towards Gaelic. Using a questionnaire with questions targeting the explicit opinions of Scottish people towards Gaelic and its use illustrates this Direct Approach, which is, however, often considered to be intrusive and thus could lead to biased and distorted responses (Garrett, 2004, p. 1252).

At first glance, asking respondents for their attitudes directly seems to be the easiest and most straightforward method to obtain results. However, there are a number of disadvantages to this approach which have to be considered. Being asked to express one's attitude directly could result in the production of opinions rather than the respondents' true attitudes. Especially in interviews, respondents may be inclined to provide socially desired responses, as when replying to questions on socially and politically sensitive issues (Garrett, 2010, p. 44). It is, therefore, possible that the results obtained do not reflect the respondents' true attitudes (Oppenheim, 1966, p. 117; Baker, 1992, p. 12–13; McKenzie, 2010, p. 42). In interview situations, a phenomenon known as the Observer's Paradox (Labov, 1972) may occur, in which the participants' response could be influenced by the mere presence of the

interviewer or observer and the interview environment itself. Although this phenomenon usually applies to language production and language use, it can also have an effect on the participants' responses in attitude elicitation tests. A distinction is made between what is known as the Hawthorne effect – how the respondents' perception of the researcher and the study can influence the respondents' answer – and what has been called the Pygmalion effect – how the researcher is influenced by his or her perceptions of the respondents and their abilities to complete specific tasks or the like (McKenzie, 2010, pp. 43–44). The effects of the researcher's own sociological background, such as their age, sex and ethnicity, has long been acknowledged by linguists as potentially detrimental to the reactions of participants and thus needs to be considered in the data-gathering process. Furthermore, the construction of the questions used to elicit attitudes poses a number of dangers that distort attitude measurements not only in interviews but also in questionnaires. Slanted or biased questions can lead the respondents to answer in a specific, predetermined way, which would result in obscured data and thus should be avoided (Oppenheim, 1966, pp. 62–63).

A special form of the Direct Approach method can be found in perceptual dialectology, a field of folk linguistics established by Dennis Preston (1989). As already discussed previously in this chapter, folk linguistics investigates the beliefs and opinions of laypeople towards language. In order to investigate their beliefs about and attitudes towards language, several direct methods are applied in perceptual dialectology, such as having participants draw dialect maps or rank dialects according to their proximity to the participant's own dialect (McKenzie 2010, 44). Although this falls under the Direct Approach method, perceptual dialectology sees an advantage in providing a familiar context for the respondents (McKenzie, 2010, p. 44). In order

to avoid the intrusive character of the Direct Approach, a subtler approach was sought and found in the Indirect Approach.

3.4.2. The Indirect Approach

By applying complementary, less direct and to some extent deceptive techniques, the application of the Indirect Approach aims to obtain language attitudes in a different manner (Garrett, 2010, p. 41). As opposed to the Direct Approach method, explicit questions are avoided since the validity of language attitudes obtained by the application of direct methods has been questioned, as discussed above. An advantage of the Indirect Approach is that its application enables the researcher to retrieve sensitive data, such as people's attitudes towards foreign accents, which, if directly asked for, could cause respondents to answer in a manner they would consider to be socially appropriate or desirable. The multidimensional character of attitudes, furthermore, may be better accessed by the Indirect Approach, as this method allegedly reaches beyond the conscious level (McKenzie, 2010, p. 45). To obtain subconscious attitudes, which are implicit attitudes held by a speaker who might not be even aware of them, the Indirect Approach is therefore considered most suitable. Kristiansen (2015, p. 87) argues for the importance of subconscious attitudes as they "appear to be a driving force in linguistic variation and change in a way that consciously offered attitudes are not".

Pioneering research in developing a technique to study language attitudes was conducted by W. E. Lambert (1960) and his colleagues at McGill University, who developed one of the most popular and frequently applied techniques in the Indirect Approach: the matched-guise technique. This technique involves the rating on Likert scales by participants of recordings of bilingual speakers who read exactly the same extract in both languages, thus keeping variation in voice quality, intonation and the like to a minimum. This

technique provides the opportunity to get respondents' attitudes in a rather indirect and subtle way (Lambert et al., 1960, p. 44). In Lambert et al.'s study (1960) of bilingualism in Canada, listeners' attitudes towards French and English speakers were investigated by the application of what was, at that time, an innovative approach. French and English-speaking bilinguals were recorded reading a text in both languages (Lambert et al., 1960, p. 44). The participants of the study, French and English-speaking students, were then asked to rate these matched voices, as well as two so-called filler voices which served as a distraction, on a six-point Likert scale on alleged personal characteristics of the speakers such as height, good looks, intelligence, self-confidence and kindness (1960, pp. 44–45). After having assessed the recordings, the participants were asked to complete various questionnaires to provide further insights into their attitudes to the languages investigated. Lambert et al. were thus able to obtain the participants' attitudes on both languages. Surprisingly, the French participants ranked the English guises higher in favourability, as did the English, and additionally ranked their own linguistic group of French speakers lower than the English participants did (1960, p. 48). These insights would probably not have been obtained by asking the participants directly about their attitudes towards French and English speakers and their respective languages. The matched-guise technique as a tool applied in the Indirect Approach clearly highlights the main difference to the Direct Approach. Due to its slight deceptiveness and diminished obviousness, the matched-guise technique makes respondents believe that they are judging different speakers and not just two bilinguals. Moreover, the Indirect Approach enables the researcher to target attitudes which may be hidden or which are unconscious to the respondents themselves (Oppenheim, 1966, p. 161).

Garrett et al. (2003, pp. 57–61) have identified variables that may be considered by researchers in order to avoid possible pitfalls that come with the

complexity of attitude studies. One of the main criticisms of the matched-guise technique deals with issues of authenticity and contextualisation (Garret et al., 2003, pp. 57–61). Not providing a context in which the recorded messages take place and mimicking authentic accents are two issues which should be borne in mind when applying the matched-guise technique. Despite its advantages, the Indirect Approach may, however, entail ethical problems, as the respondents are led on to believe in a different focus of the study. According to McKenzie (2010, p. 45), ethical issues can, however, be counter-balanced by debriefing the participants after completing the test. Despite increasing attention for such ethical considerations when carrying out indirect attitude elicitations, the matched-guise technique's popularity does not seem to have suffered from such criticism, but seems to have sparked interest in developing the technique further.

One variant of the matched-guise technique constitutes the verbal guise technique. This indirect technique is in fact very similar to its predecessor, but the issue of authenticity is avoided as various authentic accents or dialect speakers are recorded (McKenzie, 2010, p. 50). Many studies have been conducted in which the verbal guise technique was applied (e.g. Giles, 1970; Coupland & Bishop, 2007) in order to investigate attitudes towards different accents or dialects. One of the first studies incorporating the verbal guise technique in Great Britain was published by Howard Giles in 1970, who investigated respondents' attitudes towards British and foreign English accents. In his study, 177 secondary school children were asked to rate recordings of one male speaker reading a passage in thirteen accents on a seven-point Likert scale on three dimensions: aesthetics, communication and status (Giles, 1970, pp. 212–214). Using these three dimensions, Giles aimed at identifying how pleasant or unpleasant a particular accent appeared to the listener on the aes-

thetics dimension, how comfortable the participant would feel in a conversation with the speaker in question on the communicative dimension, and how prestigious the speaker came across on the status dimension (Giles, 1970, p. 215). The fact that only one speaker was used for the thirteen recordings was concealed by informing the participants that the researcher had made a great effort to find these different speakers (Giles, 1970, p. 216). Disguising the speaker follows the standard procedure of a matched-guise test, yet in contrast to the traditional matched-guise test, the verbal guise technique only includes one recording of each variety and hence speaker. Thus, Giles's study constitutes a bridge between the matched-guise and verbal guise techniques as it incorporated thirteen different recordings of accents, which were, however, read by only one speaker.

Giles's study, moreover, constitutes a special instance of attitude studies as it applied both the Direct and the Indirect Approaches by including an attitude rating scale (Giles, 1970, p. 213). The pupils were first asked to listen to the recording, then rate it on the seven-point Likert scale for the three dimensions and identify which accent had been recorded, and lastly to rate each of the sixteen accents on a single seven-point Likert scale to determine their pleasantness. Thus, the experiment included both vocal and conceptual accent stimuli. The results of Giles's study showed that at the time the two investigated age groups of 12 and 17-year-old school children rated Received Pronunciation highest on all three dimensions in the vocal stimuli test, while the Birmingham accent scored lowest (1970, p. 218). Giles was able to identify various correlations between the social factors age and sex and how the accents were rated by the participants, finding that for instance male participants as well as the younger age group rated the French accent less favourably than female participants and the older age group did (1970, p. 221). Applying this Indirect Approach to identifying attitudes towards both British and

foreign accents, Giles was able to retrieve the participants' attitudes without falling into the social-desirability trap, which especially plays a role when surveying socially sensitive matters.

The open guise test is a recent variant of the traditional matched-guise test pioneered by Barbara Soukup, who questioned the effectiveness and purpose of disguising the multiple speakers in the original test setup (2013, p. 269). Therefore, this test involves informing the participants about hearing the same speaker twice as opposed to disguising this fact, as is customary in a matched-guise test. The recorded speaker makes use of two different styles, which in Soukup's investigation were Standard Austrian German and the Middle-Bavarian dialect (2013, p. 275). Informing the participants about hearing the same speaker twice is based on Labov's (1972, p. 208) principle that "there are no single-style speakers", a characteristic which is also reflected in Soukup's bidialectal speakers. Soukup's application of the open-guise test in her study of perceptions of bidialectal language use produced different ratings by study participants despite them having been informed about listening to the same speaker twice. According to Soukup (2013, p. 279), the recorded Standard Austrian German speakers sounded significantly more educated and arrogant, while the same speaker using Middle-Bavarian was considered to be more relaxed and honest.

3.4.3. The Societal Treatment Approach

The last of the three main approaches to the study of language attitudes that I will discuss in this chapter is the so-called Societal Treatment Approach, which is a content analysis of already existing data (Garrett, 2010, pp. 46–48). As opposed to the Direct Approach method, attitudes are not elicited but are inferred by the researcher by examining already existing attitudinal expressions (McKenzie, 2010, p. 41). The data can, for example, be compiled

by newspaper letters-to-the-editor expressing the reader's views on language (Schmied, 1991; Lukač, 2016) or speech behaviour exhibited in literature or films (Walshe, 2009). By choosing texts as a data source, this approach can be qualitative and quantitative and seems to provide immense possibilities to study language attitudes. Despite the vast amount of already existing data, the Societal Treatment Approach has been frequently overlooked in the past (McKenzie, 2010, p. 41), which could be due to specific research topics and questions, as well as to the perceived danger of inferring attitudes from the data resulting in subjective interpretations by the researcher. The researcher's individual disposition to the texts and experience with the subject matter, therefore, can influence his or her perception of the data, which may ultimately result in the researcher's own personal attitude being reflected in the results.

This issue with the Societal Treatment Approach is illustrated by Kristiansen (2003), who compiled an overview of attitudes towards Danish language varieties by collecting the results on three main research approaches to attitudes studies. Despite being able "to make pretty reliable inferences about the valuation and hierarchization of language varieties in Denmark" especially in public domains, he notes that the Societal Treatment Approach has not been used frequently (2003, p. 58). A successful application of the Societal Treatment Approach is Walshe's (2009) study of Irish English as represented in movies. She investigated phonological, grammatical, lexical and discourse features of Irish English in 50 films produced in Ireland between 1935 and 2007 (2009, pp. 1–4). By compiling a corpus of these films, she made a systematic analysis of how Irish English is portrayed in films. Walshe also included an analysis of how foreign actors' Irish accents were perceived by reviewers and laypeople (2009, p. 260) and so was able to avoid the inference and subjective treatment of attitudes by the researcher. Stereotypical expressions used by the film characters and their accents were among the

features investigated. Using corpora like these and subjecting them to the Societal Treatment Approach could, however, shift the focus from a qualitatively driven approach to a quantitative one. While the Societal Treatment Approach has been used in studies of public domains, institutions and media output, the Direct and Indirect Approaches have been favoured in studies of speaker attitudes.

3.5. Concluding Remarks

Despite its long history in social psychology, the concept 'attitude' still proves to be a complex topic, even though it has made its way as a topic worth analysing even in linguistics. By establishing Allport's definition (1954) as the starting point of the study of usage attitudes, I have tried to illustrate how attitudes emerge and to describe the different components they encompass. Furthermore, drawing on folk linguistics and perceptual dialectology to illustrate the differences in understanding language attitudes between laypeople and linguists was necessary for the investigation of usage attitudes of the general public. For the definition of usage attitudes, I drew on the folk linguistic paradigm, originally designed by Dennis Preston, and made use of Edwards' (2006) discussion of the judgment bases of attitudes.

When discussing research approaches and tools, questions concerning the population studied, the subject of investigation and the means of attitude measurement are essential, as is the constant consideration in choosing a suitable approach. Above all, the concept and definition of 'attitude' need to be borne in mind when doing so. As discussed in this chapter, the concept 'attitude' is treated as a multidimensional construct involving cognitive, affective and behavioural components (Garrett, 2010, p. 23; Lambert & Lambert, 1973, p. 72); these components are catered to in research approaches to different extents. Therefore, previous studies such as Leonard's study of

educated speakers' attitudes towards usage problems in American English (1932), for instance, have made use of already established and validated research techniques whose application has, in fact, implications for whether the concept 'attitude' is treated as a multidimensional or one-dimensional construct by the researcher, whether attitudes are simply considered to be expressed verbally, or whether affective, behavioural and cognitive effects are taken into account when assessing attitudes.

My review of the three main research approaches to the study of language attitudes has shown various methodological flaws in each of them. One suggestion to avoid these flaws is to adopt a combination of different research approaches as exemplified by Giles's (1970) study of British English and foreign accents incorporating both direct and indirect approaches. Such a mixed-methods approach results in a complementation of research approaches and the eradication of methodological flaws if applied carefully. The combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods provides further possibilities to avoid drawbacks of the different research approaches and techniques and to obtain attitudes that are more representative of the actual attitudes held by the participants. For my own analysis, I will make use of a mixed-methods approach combining direct with indirect elicitation techniques in order to avoid obtaining merely superficial opinions. Therefore, the methodological downsides of the techniques will be minimised.

4. Usage Attitude Studies: a Brief Review

4.1. Introduction

The complexity of the concept 'attitude' and the manifold ways in which it is incorporated in various sciences as discussed in the preceding chapter indicate a certain degree of flexibility and versatility of the study of attitudes. In the following account, an emphasis will be put on the study of attitudes towards language use by foregrounding five specific studies: S.A. Leonard's (1932) *Current English Usage*, Margaret M. Bryant's (1962) *Current American English*, W.H. Mittins et al.'s (1970) *Attitudes to English Usage*, Karl Sandred's (1984) *Good or Bad Scots?* and Ahmed Albanyan and Dennis Preston's (1998) *What is Standard American English?*. I decided to discuss these five studies in more detail not only to illustrate the development of usage attitude studies, but also since these studies make use of different elicitation techniques discussed in the preceding chapter. As these so-called usage studies serve as a starting point and basis for my own investigation of usage attitudes in British English, a comparison is made to evaluate their methodologies and possibly improve upon them for my own study.

4.2. Five usage attitude studies

One of the categories identified by Cooper and Fishman (1974) in their investigation of language attitude studies included attitudes towards language use. Language use can be seen as something very personal. As speakers, we adapt the way we speak to our environment and to whom we are talking, be it friends, family, colleagues, or complete strangers. The way we use language differently in diverse contexts can, however, become somewhat habitual. According to Curzan (2014, p. 23), "[t]he most basic definition of *usage* is the way in which words or phrases are actually or customarily used – spoken or written – in a speech community". When addressing a family member, one

will usually adopt more informal language, whereas one would do the opposite in a job interview. Thus, language use at the individual level can turn into language usage, which describes the habitual use of language within a speech community, as depicted in Figure 4.1 below.

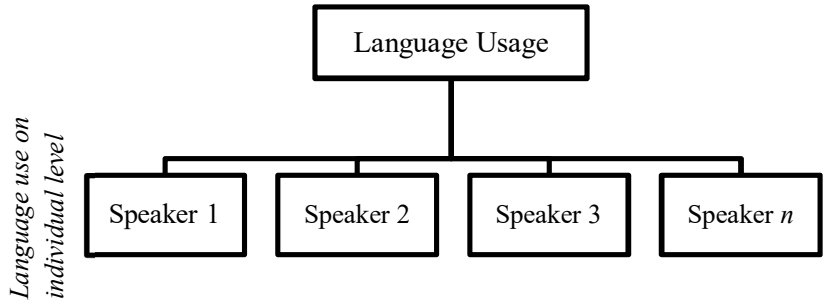

Figure 4.1 Language usage vs. language use

Although language has been widely acknowledged to vary and language variation has been studied, both variation of language use and variation in language usage have often been subject to criticism by prescriptivists. Language use, despite being personal, and language usage have been discussed broadly within societies, and correct usage, the topic of the present study, has become the subject of many books offering linguistic advice and guidance. What needs to be noted here is an apparent difference in the definition of the word ‘usage’ in British and American English. Peters (2006, pp. 759–760) describes the two distinct meanings of the word ‘usage’. Peters (2006, p. 760) demonstrates how the meaning described by Curzan above seems to be common in the United States of America, while the second meaning of ‘usage’ as the correct and normal way of using a linguistic feature is predominant in Great Britain. Peters (2006, p. 760) draws attention to the descriptive nature of the American use of ‘usage’ and to how the prescriptive and descriptive

tendencies of the British definition are neutralised by defining usage as correct and normally used at the same time.

In order to identify speakers' attitudes to and correlate them with actual usage, several usage attitude surveys have been conducted in the past century. In this chapter, I will present five such studies which provided the basis for my own investigation. The first usage attitude study I have been able to find, entitled *Current English Usage*, was published by S. A. Leonard in 1932 in the United States of America, which was followed 30 years later by Margaret M. Bryant's *Current American Usage: How Americans Say It and Write It* in 1962. In 1970, W. H. Mittins and colleagues published another usage attitude survey, *Attitudes to English Usage*, in effect providing a British counterpart to Leonard's study. A rather more specialised survey was conducted by Karl Inge Sandred in 1983 focussing on Scots in the city of Edinburgh. This survey, *Good or Bad Scots?, Attitudes to Optional Lexical and Grammatical Usages in Edinburgh*, is of interest to this study because of its methodology. The most recent usage attitude survey included in this discussion, called *What is Standard American English?*, was conducted by Ahmed Albanyan and Dennis Preston in the late 1990s in Michigan. A comparison and classification of these surveys allows me not only to offer an illustration of the development of the field of usage attitudes surveys, but also serves as a starting point and source of information for my own study.

Besides these five usage studies, a few other attempts have been made to capture attitudes towards language usage, such as the one that resulted in the *American Heritage Dictionary*, which employs a usage panel consisting of language experts who decide on the acceptability of usage items (Picket, 2000). Another study was undertaken by Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade in order to investigate usage attitudes of speakers with varying backgrounds by applying a qualitative approach to assess attitudes and enabling participants to

comment freely on three usage problems through an online survey (2013, pp. 3–4). Pam Peters conducted a large-scale survey over the course of two years aiming to "shed some light on the language preferences of supraregional reading/writing communities, and on their affiliations in relation to the British/American divide" (2001, p. 9). By compiling and publishing six questionnaires in the journal *English Today*, Peters managed to obtain a large number of informants who commented on lexical, grammatical and punctuation issues by stating their preference between two possible variants such as *aging* or *ageing* (1998, p. 5). Apart from these studies, a number of usage attitude studies or attitude studies in general incorporated a small number of usage problems were conducted in the United States of America. Studies such as Hairston (1981), Gilsdorf and Leonard (2001), and Queen and Boland (2015) highlight an interesting phenomenon in that usage attitude studies seem to have found fruitful ground in the United States, while similar efforts are largely absent in Great Britain. Despite focussing on only five studies in the following comparison, I have considered all these previous attempts in the composition of my methodology.

4.2.1. Leonard's *Current English Usage* (1932)

The usage survey conducted by Leonard comprises two parts: one focusing on punctuation and the second on what was then current grammar usage; it is the latter part which I am particularly interested in since it relates most to my own work so I will focus on it primarily in this section. Leonard's intention was to investigate whether native speakers of English classify specific usages as "illiterate, permissible, or good" (Leonard, 1932, p. xiii). As opposed to the assessment of the acceptability of usage as provided in dictionaries and usage guides, which is usually based on literary and acknowledged sources and is characterised by a considerable lag between the adoption of new usages and

their appearance in dictionaries and usage guides, Leonard intended to provide a poll investigating actual usage by applying a direct elicitation technique (1932, p. 93).

Leonard conducted his study for the National Council for Teachers of English in the US, which positions the study in the educational field. Explaining the study's rationale, Leonard questioned the actuality and teachability of language rules (1932, p. xiii). In order to make an informed decision on this matter, he argued that actual usage had to be determined by conducting a survey before being subjected to his own evaluation. According to Leonard, usage was not just anybody's usage, but the usage of the educated world (1932, p. xiii). Thus, the 229 preselected participants of his study were divided into seven groups based on their educational and professional backgrounds. Leonard's grouping of informants is an indication of his understanding of who is part of the educated world. His seven groups were composed of language experts – lexicographers, philologists and grammarians – English teachers of the National Council, well-known authors, influential editors, prominent business men, members of the Modern Language Association, and teachers of speech (1932, p. 96). Leonard's study thus made use of a convenience sampling technique in which representativeness of the population is not considered a priority, but a specific group of people has already been identified as suitable informants (Buchstaller & Khattab, 2013, p. 76; Rasinger, 2013, pp. 51–52). The choice of technique is linked to Leonard's understanding of the superiority of educated usage.

Leonard's grammar usage survey consisted of two ballots; the first was sent to all seven groups of informants, while the second was only sent to the group of language experts and the teachers of the National Council for Teachers of English, which resulted in a lower number of responses (1932, pp. 96–98). The survey included 230 expressions of disputed language usage

which the judges were asked to rank according to four previously provided definitions ranging from "[f]ormally correct English" and "[f]ully acceptable English for informal conversation, correspondence" to "[c]ommercial, foreign, scientific, or other technical uses" and "[p]opular or illiterate speech" (1932, p. 97). The items investigated were underlined in the expressions, thus explicitly indicating where a potential problem could lie. The second ballot of 130 additional sentences with the same instruction of allocating the expressions to the established definitions was sent to a smaller group defined by their high educational qualifications (1932, p. 98). As opposed to the 229 received replies to the first ballot, the second was only completed and returned by 49 judges, which could be due to the length of the survey and the means of distribution: Leonard foregrounded the linguists among his informants due to their important role, stating that they possess the most significant expertise (1932, p. 99).

The approach taken by Leonard can thus be identified as an example of the adoption of the Direct Approach method discussed in Chapter 3 due to its explicit request for his informants' understanding of which usage features are considered acceptable and which could be potentially troublesome. As a result of this method, the participants' opinions resulted in a ranking and classification of the investigated expressions into established, disputable and illiterate usage (1932, p. 99). This list of acceptable expressions was thus supposed to establish what was considered correct usage and thus to help teachers decide on what to teach. By way of a final conclusion Leonard stated that his investigation enabled teachers to pass judgment on what needed to be taught and on what no time should be wasted (1932, p. 187).

Leonard's study proved to be an important piece of work, not only as it was one of the earliest usage attitude studies I could identify, but also because

he made and promoted a crucial observation: grammar can change. In presenting this argument, he proposed that grammar is neither static nor fixed, as is often believed to be the case by purists, but rather reflects the habits or usage of the educated world, or as he put it: "[i]f these habits change, grammar itself changes, and textbooks must follow suit" (1932, p. 188). This statement reflects the purpose of Leonard's study, which was to facilitate teachers in teaching grammar by surveying educated users of English and identifying current grammar usage. Leonard's *Current English Usage* strikes a new tune in an era which had been defined by changing ideologies with respect to the notion of grammar being defined as a fixed system of rules which many take as language laws. Leonard's study marks an important point which indicates the roots of this movement in the early twentieth century, though the question whether his views were of any influence is not easily answered.

4.2.2. Bryant's *Current American Usage* (1962)

Bryant's investigation of attitudes towards current American usage constitutes an interesting, yet somewhat deviating usage study as it applies a different approach towards identifying current usage attitudes. First initiated by the Committee on Current English Usage, which had been instituted by the National Council of Teachers of English in 1950, the investigation aimed at identifying frequent usage problems in spoken and written American English. What makes this usage study a peculiar case is the manner of data collection as well as the data selection itself. As opposed to Leonard's study, Bryant and her predecessor responsible for the data collection, Professor James B. McMillan, made use of already existing data, such as that found in the *Linguistic Atlas of New England* (1930–43) compiled at the time by Hans Kurath, as well as data obtained from "various scholarly dictionaries, … the treaties of linguists, and … articles in magazines featuring English usage" (1962, p.

xiv). However, Bryant stated that additionally about 900 new investigations were made for their undertaking, which consisted of an analysis of selected scholarly literature as well as an investigation of the interview data collected in the *Linguistic Atlas Survey*. Looking at the frequencies of the specific items investigated, the researchers deduced attitudes towards the items by stating which variant was found more frequently in which contexts. That is why Bryant's investigation can be seen as an early corpus analysis making use of the Societal Treatment Approach (see §3.4.3). However, the data collection prompts various questions concerning the consistency of the method used, and primarily the question as to whose attitudes are indeed investigated. When using written data in a Societal Treatment Approach, one needs to bear in mind that the data could have been proofread and edited, and hence that they do not reflect the attitudes of the speaker, but those of the editor responsible for revising the text.

As the title of Bryant's book suggests, both spoken and written data were used to identify current usage, which, however, poses a problem due to the lack of recordings of "educated speech" which could have served as a basis for comparison (1962, p. xx). The distinction between spoken and written language is crucial, as the supremacy of or rather the emphasis on written language is often highlighted in education and society (Milroy & Milroy, 2012, pp. 52–55). Nevertheless, the author emphasised the fact that the majority of data included in this investigation originated from written data (1962, p. xxi). In the introduction to her book, Bryant provided a discussion of what formal, informal and colloquial English is and in which contexts these varieties of English could be expected to be found, as well as a description of three types of speakers distinguished by their educational and social backgrounds (1962, p. xxiii–xxiv). Hence, a Type I speaker would neither have received formal education, be well-read, nor have an extensive network

reaching beyond his social background (1962, p. xxiv). A Type III speaker would be the complete opposite of a Type I speaker, while a Type II speaker would take an intermediate position regarding his or her educational and social background.

Some 240 usage entries are listed in *Current American Usage*, including old chestnuts such as the split infinitive, the placement of *only*, and *try and*, as well as regional variants such as *might could*, which Bryant identified as "*a colloquialism, confined principally to the South, where it is often used by Type II speakers (with some secondary school education*) [italics in original]" (1962, pp. 138–139). In her discussion of *might could*, Bryant referred to a study conducted by a certain G. Thomas, who stated that it is a feature most frequently found in the speech of Type I and Type II speakers in the South of America (1962, p. 139). While the details of five studies are included in the appendix to Bryant's book, no information can be found on G. Thomas's study. The lack of information on the studies Bryant and her colleagues conducted represents the main drawback of her *Current American Usage*. Despite the large number of usage issues discussed in this study, the little information on the data used to elicit attitudes and sampling technique applied, as well as lack of consistency in whose attitudes were investigated, cannot be neglected in discussing the acceptability of such usage items.

4.2.3. Mittins et al.'s *Attitudes to English Usage* (1970)

In the United Kingdom, a usage study similar to Leonard's was conducted by William Henry Mittins, Mary Salu, Mary Edminson and Sheila Coyne in the late 1960s. Just like Leonard's *Current English Usage*, the survey was situated within an educational context and it included 55 usage items which were analysed concerning their acceptability for the purpose of identifying current usage attitudes in British English. The number of usage problems investigated

by Mittins and his colleagues was considerable lower than in Leonard's study. The questionnaire was sent to more than 500 people and was returned by 457 respondents. Similar to Leonard, the educational context played a crucial role in the selection of survey participants in this study. Despite refraining from not mentioning any further details on how the participants were selected, Mittins and his colleagues state that the questionnaire was delivered to students personally, which suggests that they probably applied what is known as a convenience sampling technique. According to Buchstaller and Khattab (2013, p. 76), students are frequently used in convenience sampling. Given the context in which the survey was conducted, it does not come as a surprise that the 457 participants of the study were mainly situated within educational professions (Mittins et al., 1970, p. 2). In fact, Mittins et al.'s study was part of a wider initiative of the Schools Council for Curriculum and Education in 1966 in which four research areas, oral and written fluency, literacy and usage, were investigated in depth at different universities in the United Kingdom (Burgess, 1996, pp. 55–56).

More than 30 years after Leonard's study, new insights into the study of language had been obtained and this is reflected in the methodological approach taken by Mittins and his colleagues. Prescriptivism had been losing its influence under the prominent descriptive approach which had come to characterise the modern study of language. Linguistics being described as a descriptive and not prescriptive discipline had become a fundamental, yet also challenged, concept entrenched in linguists' minds (Cameron, 1995, pp. 5–6). Mittins et al. (1970, p. 2) herald the sentiments of the early second half of the twentieth century and state that the then current notion of linguistic correctness has been misleading and should give way to acceptability and appropriateness instead. The native speaker gained in importance and came to serve as a means of assessing what was considered linguistically correct. As Hall

(1964, pp. 9–10) put it, "[t]he only time we can call any usage totally incorrect is when it would never be used by any native speaker of the language, no matter what his social and intellectual standing". Such new insights distinguish Mittins et al.'s study from Leonard's *Current English Usage* (1932), who stressed the importance of the educated world when determining correct usage. Nevertheless, Mittins et al. drew considerably on Leonard's study by using some of his stimuli expressions in their test. Moreover, a similar questionnaire structure was used, in which respondents were asked to classify the expressions, all of which contained an underlined usage problem, according to a four-situation framework (Mittins et al., 1970, p. 4). Was a specific usage accepted in formal writing or speaking, or in informal writing or speaking? For five of the 55 usage problems, the researchers had made a pre-selection of contexts, as they argued that some of these expressions could clearly be attributed to one or two situations only (1970, p. 4). The use of *go slow* in the expression *There's a dangerous curve; you'd better go slow,* for instance, was restricted to the contexts of informal speech and writing as the researchers believed it to be impossible in formal contexts due to the informal style of the expression (1970, p. 4). They later came to regret this, however, and mentioned that the decision to restrict these stimuli in terms of context choice was made too hastily (1970, p.4).

The questionnaire was sent to respondents and handed out to students when possible. The participants were asked to indicate their opinions by ticking the appropriate boxes when they felt the expression was acceptable, inserting crosses when it was rejected, and question marks when they were in doubt (1970, p. 2). Thus, the researchers obtained a list of usage items that could be ranked according to their general acceptability (1970, pp. 13–14). In the discussion of the results, the researchers included a historical overview and discussion of the usage problems for which they drew on British and

American usage guides such as Gowers' *Plain Words* (1948) and Krapp's *A Comprehensive Guide to Good English* (1927) respectively. One of the criticisms that could be levelled at Mittins et al.'s approach is that their respondents had a rather focussed background and were mainly situated within the educational field. It is, moreover, not surprising to see that Mittins et al. (1970, p. 3) mention the same purpose for their enquiry as Leonard did. This highlights that the descriptivism and prescriptivism debate in teaching English had been ongoing for decades and had by that time, despite all previous efforts, not been resolved. Helping teachers to strike a balance between a prescriptive approach towards language and the allegedly 'anything-goes-attitude' of descriptivists was the main aim of the study (1970, p. 3). Unlike Leonard, Mittins et al. identified further variables, other than education, which could influence respondents' usage and judgments. Con-textual information and age were amongst these and were partially incorporated in the questionnaire. Unfortunately, Mittins et al. could not include a full analysis according to age due to a lack of time, but they did manage to investigate 11 usage items according to variation of acceptability across age groups (1970, pp. 21–23). Other social variables, such as gender, were not investigated by Mittins et al., which could be due to the fact that the kind of sociolinguistic approach adopted in the study was as yet in its early days (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2013, p. 3).

Mittins et al. (1970, pp. 112–115) conclude that the results of their study showed that many of the usage problems they investigated were still considered disputable, such as the use of *very unique*. They stress the role of the teacher in educating future generations and appeal to the requirement of teachers to acknowledge the changing nature of language and teach students the notion of different registers (1970, pp. 113–114). Providing students with a set of different language contexts and making them understand differences

in formality may help, they suggest, to improve their language awareness. Furthermore, teachers are recommended to keep eyes and ears open to current usage and discussions to be able to make informed judgments about appropriate usage (1970, p. 113).

Mittins et al.'s *Attitudes to English Usage* shows considerable similarities to Leonard's *Current English Usage*, not only in the use of several identical expressions as stimuli and in their participants' educational background, but also in the methodologies they applied. Both used a Direct Approach in their attitude studies, both studies made use of a questionnaire which was sent to a selected group of respondents and both explicitly highlighted the investigated items. However, a clear evolution from Leonard's to Mittins et al.'s attitude study can nevertheless be identified in the fact that new insights into linguistic investigations, such as a discussion of a possible correlation between acceptability and age, were incorporated. The 1960s saw the emergence of sociolinguistics as a new linguistic discipline, which was formed by seminal studies such as Labov's (1966/2006) *The Social Stratification of English in New York City*. Such sociolinguistic studies take social factors such as gender, age and regional background into account. Mittins et al.'s investigation already made use of social factors, even if in a very limited way. Karl Inge Sandred's *Good or Bad Scots?* (1983), on the other hand, which was based on the survey by Mittins et al., shows a fuller incorporation of social factors, and as such is a distinct improvement on his predecessors.

4.2.4. Sandred's *Good or Bad Scots?* (1983)

Karl Inge Sandred investigated attitudes towards grammatical and lexical items in Edinburgh. Scotland's capital is situated in a linguistically interesting, yet complex environment. Scots, which developed from Old Northumbrian, has been in direct opposition with English, which historically goes back to

dialects spoken in the East Midlands (Sandred, 1983, p. 13). The unification of the crowns and integration of Scotland into Great Britain took a toll on Scots, as its speakers were actively discouraged from using the language. This discouragement was at the same time accompanied by a process of Anglicisation, which, despite a short romantic period in the early nineteenth century during which there was increasing interest in Scotland, has continued ever since (1983, pp. 15–16).

Sandred's main interest lies in assessing the attitudes of Lowland Scots towards the regional variety Scots and Scottish Standard English (1983, p. 11). The bipartite distinction between urban and rural varieties in Scots is central to his investigation. Scots can be seen as representing two distinct varieties: Doric Scots, which is associated with the variety spoken by the elite and by urban speakers, and Demotic Scots, which is associated with rural and "vulgar" speakers (1983, pp. 18−19). This distinction between good and bad Scots, as well as the existence of a third language variety, i.e. Scottish Standard English, makes Sandred's investigation a valuable contribution to the study of language attitudes.

Sandred selected his informants on the basis of the Voters' Roll, which is a list of registered voters, which therefore implies that only those who are eligible to vote and are registered as local inhabitants were among his sample. Furthermore, Sandred selected four areas in so-called wards, which can be characterised according to social factors such as class and economic well-being (1983, p. 28). Thus, Carmond, "a well-to-do area" in Murrayfield, a poor, working-class area of a local authority housing estate in Craigmillar, a middle-class area in Morningside, and a working-class area of skilled workers and professionals in Colinton were selected for Sandred's investigation (1983, p. 28). Applying a random sampling technique, Sandred selected ten participants from each ward from the Voter's Roll which resulted in a total of 40

participants – not, in fact, a very large sample (1983, p. 29). After selecting the informants, he sent out information letters and called his informants up to arrange appointments for the interview.

Sandred's questionnaire consisted of 27 sentences which contained highlighted grammatical or lexical usage problems, so that the presentation of stimuli is the same as in the two previously discussed attitude studies conducted by Leonard and Mittins et al., which he used as a reference. During the interviews, Sandred asked his informants to complete the questionnaire and to classify the items into either good or bad English, good or bad Scots, or any other suitable description (1983, p. 125). Additionally, the informants were asked to identify possible users of these items, their income, age, gender, social class, and residential area. This illustrates that Sandred's study is a rather more overtly sociolinguistic study than Mittins et al.'s study, as it takes into account these social factors. What is also different from the studies previously discussed is that Sandred asked directly whether the informants used these items themselves. This is also the only instance in which Sandred brings in contextual factors by asking whether the informants used these items in public or in private conversations (1983, p. 125). The selection of items was based on avoiding an interference between the spoken and written media, which would have meant taking pronunciation into account for example, which he wanted to avoid (1983, p. 44).

Sandred's argument for highlighting the item of investigation for the first time brought the issue of language awareness into attitude surveys. He argued that by explicitly highlighting an item, informants' reactions could be assessed, which would lead to the creation of overt and covert scores for each of the 27 grammatical and lexical items investigated (1983, p. 44). If an informant knew about the item, he argued, it achieved an overt score reflecting the respondent's awareness. By calculating the scores of all responses of the

informants, Sandred also obtained a ranking of items. Nevertheless, his methodology differs considerably from Leonard's and Mittins et al.'s studies as a focus is put on social variables, social class, age and sex, rather than on merely contextual differences in acceptability. Sandred's study showed, for example, that attitudes towards the use of the preposition *on* instead of *for* in the stimulus sentence *Wait* on *me here* can be analysed sociolinguistically by correlating the acceptability ratings with the social variables. In this particular case, Sandred identified lower acceptability ratings with older informants, higher acceptability ratings of *wait on* in the lower working class (LWC) as well as with male informants (1983, pp. 74–77).

In general, Sandred's methodology differs from previously conducted usage surveys as his informants were not exclusively situated within the educational field, but were more carefully selected in terms of their social background. Unlike Leonard's and Mittins et al.'s studies, Sandred's *Good or Bad Scots?* shows a clear sociolinguistics background in that for example he correlates his findings with social factors such as age and gender. Additionally, Sandred included a direct question concerning the informants' own use of these items, whereas Leonard asked his informants to state their observations of acceptability in actual language use, rather than their own preferences (Leonard, 1932, p. 97). Similarly, Mittins et al. (1970, pp. 4–5) had stated that the informants should not record their own linguistic practice, but that they should indicate what they thought was acceptable usage in specific contexts. Sandred applied a rather direct approach towards the study of attitudes towards Scots usage problems and hence follows both Leonard and Mittins et al. in this respect.

4.2.5. Albanyan and Preston's *What is Standard American English?* (1998)

Albanyan and Preston conducted a usage experiment at Michigan State University in the late 1990s in which they asked undergraduate students taking a class on language in society to survey local participants as part of a fieldwork exercise (1998, p. 32). The lack of information on the sampling procedure makes it difficult to identify the applied sampling technique. Since, however, only the results of European-American undergraduate students from Michigan, aged between 17 and 30, were reported in Albanyan and Preston's study, it is very likely that the sampling technique was convenience sampling (see § 4.2.1). The survey sample consists of 4,459 participants who were presented with twelve stimuli sentences in the experiment. These sentences include different types of usage problems which were considered part of nonstandard American English by the authors, such as the use of nominative subject pronouns in conjunctions as in *The award was given to Bill and I*, the use of *try and* and number agreement as in *There's two men from Detroit at the door*. (1998, pp. 30–31). Albanyan and Preston drew on a number of sources to discuss the historical development and the contemporary usage of these structures in American English.

Similar to Mittins et al.'s study, the participants were asked to indicate the contexts in which they would use the stimuli sentences. Five contexts were provided, including an informal context describing the use of a sentence with close family members and friends, a general context for the use in conversations with less familiar people, a formal context for very formal situations, as well as the options 'all contexts' and 'never' (1998, pp. 32–33). Furthermore, the participants were asked to provide an alternative or an improvement of the word or construction for the contexts for which they considered the usage not appropriate (1998, p. 33). Unlike the previously discussed usage attitude surveys, Albanyan and Preston did not highlight the problematical usage in the

stimuli sentences and therefore the participants were not influenced on their judgments. Despite the advantage of obtaining unbiased judgments, Albanyan and Preston also had to deal with participants identifying and correcting other parts of the stimuli sentences, as for example in the sentence *Everybody should watch their coat* (1998, p. 30). Some participants identified *everybody* in this sentence to be incorrect and replaced it with *everyone*, while others simply changed *coat* to *coats* (1998, pp. 39–40). Their approach to studying attitudes towards nonstandard usage is very similar to the previously discussed studies in that the Direct Approach was applied.

In the analysis, Albanyan and Preston made a diachronic comparison between the acceptability of usage problems in their study and Mittins et al.'s study, which also enabled them to make a comparison between the usage of American and British English native speakers. Although this comparison was only possible for the usage problems investigated in both studies, Albanyan and Preston were nevertheless able to identify trends and changes in the acceptability of specific usages, such as the use of the subjunctive in the sentence *If I was you, I would quit*, on which the researchers reported a lower rate of acceptability in American usage than in British usage 20 years before (1998, p. 37). The nature of the study seems to have had implications for the minimal sociolinguistic analysis which aimed at identifying a correlation of the acceptability of standard forms with the social factor gender, the only social variable collected by the undergraduate students conducting the experiment (1998, p. 45). The results showed that women stated more frequently than men never to use the nonstandard usage in eleven of the twelve sentences (1998, p. 45), which coincides with Trudgill's Norwich study and his findings of overt prestige (1974).

This most recent attitude usage survey in the list highlights an interesting, yet well-known phenomenon. What Albanyan and Preston (1998, p. 45)

call "conservative usage shibboleths" are also known as old chestnuts (Weiner, 1988, p. 173). While some usage problems seem to be short-lived, others are more persistent and are handed down from one generation to the next. The question whether old chestnuts have become acceptable is not so easy to answer, as is also illustrated in Albanyan and Preston's study: "we were frankly somewhat surprised to find that some old usage shibboleths (*whom*, subjunctives) have as much sway for these young respondents as they did" (Albanyan & Preston, 1998, p. 45). The reason for this is assumed to lie in the schooling the participants received, which ultimately connects the purpose of these usage attitude studies to teaching (1998, p. 45). In order to identify attitudes towards actual usage, one therefore has to be aware of the status as well as the historical development of usage problems.

Albanyan and Preston's study contributes to our understanding of the field of usage studies in that a clear difference to earlier studies can be detected by including a diachronic comparison. Yet, the comparison of attitude studies needs to be done cautiously since the replication of such studies is very difficult. This is due to attitudes and language use being very personal (see § 4.2) and thus the nature of the study sample can heavily influence the possible outcomes of a comparison. In the case of Albanyan and Preston's comparison with Mittins et al.'s study, two very different samples were used. While Albanyan and Preston surveyed American undergraduate students, Mittins et al.'s sample consisted mainly of language professionals and teachers rather than students only. Furthermore, consciously highlighting the investigated items no longer seems to fit the contemporary research undertaking as awareness is becoming an increasingly important factor as is the sociolinguistic aspect of usage attitude studies. In addition, the participants were asked to pronounce on their own language usage and not the usage of other speakers. These factors together with the immense difference in sample size of the two

studies show that comparisons between usage attitude studies are very complex and restrained by limitations.

4.3. Why Usage Attitude Surveys Are Important

By comparing the methodology and tools applied by Leonard (1932), Bryant (1962), Mittins et al. (1970), Sandred (1983) and Albanyan and Preston (1998), the specific characteristics of attitude surveys towards usage can be identified, as shown in Table 4.1 below. As opposed to language attitude studies, such as Giles's verbal guise test on accents (1970), usage studies heavily depend on the participants' awareness. Usage attitudes are not simply a matter of likeability of accents or the obvious choice between two different languages or dialects which the informant is asked to rate, rank or elaborate on. Since usage studies also involve a kind of dichotomy of actual usage and prescribed usage, language awareness plays a crucial role in the investigation of attitudes towards usage. Whether informants consider an item to be acceptable and appropriate or not largely depends on whether they know about the possible options which could be considered more suitable or "correct". Thus, particular attention has to be paid to language awareness when compiling a usage study. This is also demonstrated by Albanyan and Preston's study and the researchers' choice not to highlight the investigated usage item.

What makes usage attitude surveys furthermore important is that it is often explicitly stated that informants should voice their opinion either about the particular usage of others or their own. Table 4.1 illustrates that the focus on reporting on the usage of others has gradually shifted towards participants being asked to report their own usage.

Table 4.1 Comparison of five usage studies

Usage study	*Current English Usage* (1932)	*Current American Usage* (1962)	*Attitudes towards English Usage* (1970)	*Good or Bad Scots?* (1983)	*What is Standard American English* (1998)
Language variety	American English	American English	British English	Scots	American English
Approach	Direct Approach	Societal Treatment	Direct Approach	Direct Approach	Direct Approach
Participants	language experts, teachers, authors, editors	not applicable	language experts, teachers, students, general public	general public	students
Sample	convenience sampling	not applicable	convenience sampling	random sampling	convenience sampling
Sample size	229	not applicable	457	40	4,459
Usage problems investigated	230	some 240	55	27	12
Usage feature highlighted	Yes	not applicable	Yes	yes	no
Sociolinguist-ic analysis & (variable)	No	no	yes (age)	yes (age, gender & social class)	yes (gender)
Report on usage	usage of others	not applicable	own usage	both	own usage

The reason for this shift could lie in the long tradition of associating "correct" English with the language use of the educated and the aim to identify "proper" English through these studies. It is often believed that prescriptivism and the notion of correctness has caused and contributed to linguistic insecurity, a notion which Baldaquí Escandella (2011) argues goes back to Labov (1972), who described linguistic insecurity as a "measurement of the speaker's perception of the prestige of certain linguistic forms, compared to the ones the speaker remembers he or she normally uses" (2011, p. 325). This insecurity has also been mentioned by Lynch (2009, p. 39), who describes the anxieties a social climber faced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This increased concern about linguistic correctness triggered a growth in the publication of guide books on how to use language properly.

In general, it can be said that not enough research has been done on the subject of usage attitudes, while attitudes towards languages, dialects and accents have been thoroughly investigated. Despite the general lack of research carried out in the field, especially for British English, the original affiliation of usage studies with the field of educational science is another interesting phenomenon, yet the study of usage attitudes needs to be moved further to the field of sociolinguistics, as has been done by Sandred (1983) – and only partially by Mittins et al. (1970) before him – and Albanyan and Preston (1998). Nevertheless, a connection can be made to the educational sciences as linguistic insecurity has been linked with (perceived) lack of schooling (Albanyan & Preston, 1998; Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2013: 10). It has been argued that schooling increases the awareness of prestigious forms and of commonly used forms and that it consequently causes linguistic insecurity to occur (Baldaquí Escandella, 2011, p. 326).

Investigating previously conducted usage attitude studies highlights the researchers' different approaches and survey sample. Whereas Leonard's,

Mittins et al.'s and Albanyan and Preston's samples were focused on teachers, students and language professionals, Sandred's sample was random with the intention to be representative of the speech community he studied. Bryant's study provides a useful insight into how attitudes can be deduced through a corpus study. What lies at the heart of each study discussed in this chapter is the population selected for the study, which used to consist of the educated world only (Leonard, 1932, p. xiii). The reason for this might lie in the researchers' ambition to identify good or correct usage, which was believed to be used by educated speakers, and thus bring an end to the ongoing debate about usage. Despite all past efforts, the need for a more current and improved usage attitude survey is obvious. Instead of exclusively identifying the attitudes of the educated, it has to be made sure that surveys target the general public and allow for a sociolinguistic analysis of usage attitudes. Gere (1985, p. 75) indicates the need to identify what the general public thinks about language to identify actual usage attitudes:

> Where language is concerned, then, public opinion, the response of men and women representing all areas of society, has not been given attention. Ours is a culture which seeks public opinion on issues ranging from whether a woman should be nominated to the Supreme Court to whether liquid soap is preferable to bars of soap, but does not want to know what people think about their language. (Gere, 1985, p. 74)

As my own study aims to be a sociolinguistic investigation of attitudes towards usage problems in British English, the most suitable study population is the general public and therefore it forms the main target of my analysis.

4.4. Concluding Remarks

Since Leonard's attempt to record acceptable usage in the early 1930s, new techniques and insights into language and attitudes studies have been developed. Thus, it is no surprise that the methods applied in the studies discussed

here need to be revised and possibly improved. This does not, however, mean that previous methods or studies have thus become useless. Assessing what has been done before, what has worked and what has not, and which method brought what kind of results, while adopting newly developed methods to meet new insights, are essential steps in trying to guarantee a solid research methodology. Thus, the combination of methods, such as the Direct, Indirect and the Societal Treatment Approaches discussed in the previous chapter, as well as the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, should cover the multiple facets of attitudes to usage. In the following chapter, I will discuss in detail how I have made use of this comparison of previously conducted usage studies in composing my methodology. Furthermore, the nature of the study's population and its sample will be dealt with when I describe the speech community investigated.

5. Methodology

5.1. Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I discussed five studies which formed the starting point for my investigation of attitudes towards usage problems in British English. The identification of possible disadvantages of each research method and of the tools applied in these studies is not only a useful, but also necessary step towards identifying the most suitable way of eliciting and assessing usage attitudes in my study. In this chapter, I will provide a detailed account of how the research method I adopted for my study of usage attitudes was set up. Furthermore, a detailed description of the research tools I used together with a description of the population sample is included. By applying a mixed-methods approach, based on the findings of the overview of previous usage attitude studies, this methodology will introduce a new approach to the study of usage attitudes. Before describing the methodology, however, it is important to define the context in which my study took place. While the evolution of the usage debate and the application of Standard English in education and the media have been discussed in Chapter 2, the geographical research area focused on as well as its population and the language varieties in use there will be described in this chapter to complete the necessary background information for this study.

5.2. The Research Area, its Population and its Language Varieties

When discussing attitudes towards usage problems in British English, it is important to delineate the research area as well as its population. As discussed in the previous chapter, this study aims at moving away from solely including the educated elite and language experts that formed the pool of informants in earlier studies of usage attitudes and at applying an inclusive approach of the wider general public. In the next section, I will provide a brief description of

the characteristics of this study's research population based on the 2011 Census of England and Wales as well as define the geographical research context together with its language varieties. My survey sample will be presented in detail in Section 7.2 and 8.2 respectively. When assessing usage attitudes, special attention needs to be paid to English dialectal features which have to be acknowledged as being potentially part of the population's repertoire. This is also necessary due to the so-called vernacular maintenance, an opposing process to the standardisation of English in which regional norms which have been agreed upon in a speech community are maintained (Milroy & Milroy, 1997, p. 53). It is important to mention these dialectal features, as various usage problems in Standard English, such as the double negative, are part of most English dialects (Hughes et al., 2005, pp. 24–26).

5.2.1. The geographical research areas

As the main aim of my investigation is to identify current usage attitudes towards British English, it is of paramount importance to identify and define the language varieties used in the geographical research area and its population. While British English can be considered an umbrella term including various English varieties spoken in the United Kingdom such as Scottish Standard English or the Geordie dialect for example (Murphy, 2016), I decided to restrict my research area and, thus, the population and variety investigated to England only. Doing so would not only facilitate the data collection, but would also constitute a more focused analysis of usage attitudes. England consists of nine administrative regions as used by the Census for England and Wales and as illustrated in Figure 5.1: South West England, South East England, London, East of England, East Midlands, West Midlands, Yorkshire and The Humber, North West and North East England.

Figure 5.1 The nine administrative regions of England

The geographical focus of my study being on England, I decided to delimit my area of interest further to the Golden Triangle, not only for practical reasons but also for its historical, social and economic importance. This area, also known as East Midland triangle, is centrally situated in the country, and is bounded by London, Cambridge and Oxford (Crystal, 1990, pp. 187–188). The inclusion of this particular area enables a special, in-depth focus on usage attitudes in the Golden Triangle, a region which has been associated with the birthplace of Standard English, educational elitism, and the social and political

centre of England (Wright, 2000, p. 1; Baugh & Cable, 2002, pp. 192–194; Mesthrie et al., 2009, p. 21). The region's importance in relation to the rise of Standard English has already been mentioned in Chapter 2. While Oxford is situated in South East England, Cambridge can be found in the East of England; both regions encircle London, the capital of the United Kingdom.

5.2.2. The research population and language varieties spoken in England

According to the 2011 Census (ONS, 2015a, p. 229), England's population has, with 54 million people, never been larger. In comparison to the 2001 Census, all nine regions of England experienced population growth, with London's population increasing most by 11.6 per cent, followed by the South East as the most populous region, which grew by 7.6 per cent (ONS, 2015a, pp. 233–234). One major reason for this increase in population is migration, both national and international, to the United Kingdom. The high number of people migrating to England in recent years has also resulted in making England more ethnically diverse, yet the majority of people living in England and Wales identify themselves as 'White' followed by, for instance, 'Indian' and Pakistani' (ONS, 2015a, pp. 241–242). Migration is also likely to be the cause for the lower than expected median ages of the English population, which is 40 for females and 38 for males (ONS, 2015a, p. 233). In terms of gender, the English population is almost evenly divided with 49 per cent of English inhabitants being male and 51 per cent being female (ONS, 2012a).

The three administrative regions encompassing the Golden Triangle are home to 22.8 million people (ONS, 2015a). The national gender ratios are also reflected in the three regions, while ethnicity shows some differences between the three regions. On the basis of the data collected in the 2011 Census (ONS, 2015a), the following graph (Figure 5.2) shows the ethnicity distribution in the South East, East of England and London. Figure 5.2 illustrates that the

population of the capital is more ethnically diverse than that in the other two regions which show a fairly similar distribution of ethnic groups. In both the East of England and South East England, the biggest ethnic group with which the population identifies is 'White', followed by 'Asian/Asian British'. This is also true for London, although in different proportions. It has to be noted, however, that some boroughs of London are even more ethnically diverse than others, as was shown by Cheshire et al. (2011, p. 157) who discuss the emergence of a Multicultural London English, a variety which is characterised by its highly multilingual feature pool.

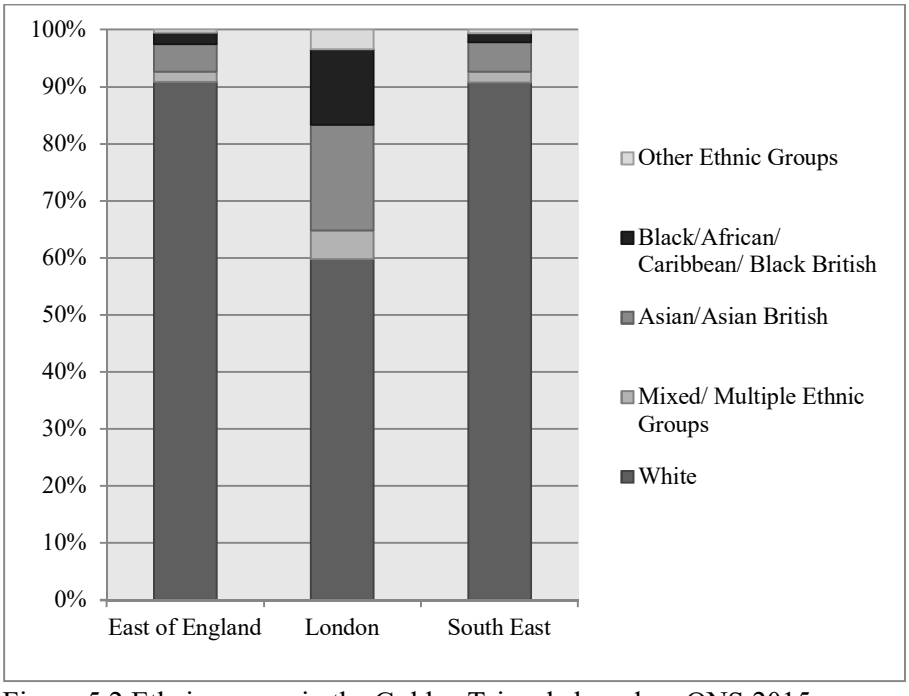

Figure 5.2 Ethnic groups in the Golden Triangle based on ONS 2015a

As the present study focuses on England, the subject matter of my investigation is English Standard English, which is, according to Trudgill (1999b, p. 4), "written and spoken more or less the same over the whole country". Yet, Trudgill recognises a few regional differences between English

Standard English used in the South and in the North, such as southern speakers preferring "*I won't* do it" as opposed to "*I'll not* do it" in speech, the variant preferred in the North (1999b, p. 4). Additionally, Trudgill also identified further regional differences between Scottish Standard English, Irish Standard English and English Standard English. As the main focus of this study is on the usage problems falling into the grey area between the standard/non-standard divide, grammatical differences between English dialects will be acknowledged whenever relevant, yet not discussed in detail.

According to the 2011 Census of England and Wales, a majority of 92.3 per cent of the inhabitants of England and Wales state English as their main language (ONS, 2015a, p. 245). Since England has become more ethnically diverse, it is no surprise to find various other languages in use as main languages, such as Polish, which was named as the second main language used by almost 8 per cent of the population (ONS, 2015a, p. 245). Ethnic diversity is especially prominent in the capital, London, which is further reflected in the various main languages used there. With about 22 per cent of London's population claiming a main language other than English, London is the most ethnically diverse and language-richest region in England (ONS, 2015a, p. 245).

5.3. A Mixed-Methods Approach to Study Usage Attitudes

In order to avoid some of the drawbacks of the research methods applied in earlier usage studies, I decided to combine several research approaches to form a mixed-methods approach in order to improve the shortcomings of the research methods identified and discussed in the previous chapter. This approach combines the Direct Approach, which has been commonly used in the study of usage attitudes, with the Indirect Approach, and consequently allows for the avoidance of biased and too explicit attitude elicitation techniques, which were identified as shortcomings of the usage studies discussed in

Chapter 4. Being provided with the perceived socially desirable answer by the participants can be avoided by incorporating a subtler indirect elicitation tool following the Indirect Approach. In the next section, I will explain each research tool used in my study – online questionnaires and interview sessions consisting of various indirect elicitation tests – and I will provide an outline of the development of this mixed-methods approach as well as state its potential drawbacks and its purpose. In order to include an overview of how the usage advice provided in usage guides has developed, I make use of the HUGE database, which will also be described in this chapter.

5.3.1. Online questionnaire

The use of questionnaires to assess attitudes has been criticised, despite their being one of oldest research tools adopted for analysis in this field, for possibly eliciting attitudes which were influenced by the manner of elicitation itself (Agheyisi & Fishman, 1970, pp. 142–143; Edwards, 1982, p. 20; Schilling, 2013a, p. 97). Scholars such as W.H. Mittins and his colleagues working on the *Attitudes towards English Usage* survey (1970), for instance, applied a direct approach in the form of a questionnaire whose directness was even more emphasised by highlighting the usage problem investigated. Thus, the participants' attention is directly drawn to the underlined elements, which makes it difficult to identify their actual attitudes, as it is possible that they might have been led to believe that something is wrong with the highlighted items in any case and constructed their answer accordingly.

In order to avoid this kind of directness, I decided to follow Albanyan and Preston's example (1998) and to not highlight the usage problems investigated. Keeping the option for a comparison with Mittins et al.'s study (1970) open, I included similar if not identical stimuli sentences. As opposed to the 55 items studied by Mittins et al., I decided to limit my investigation to

fewer items to enable an in-depth sociolinguistic analysis, and hence included only eleven usage items in the questionnaire, eight of which are also part of the study by Mittins and his colleagues. The length of a survey can have an immense influence on the success of the data collection. As opposed to previous means of distribution, informants tend to complete online surveys often in one go as the survey's accessibility needs to be taken into account. Furthermore, online questionnaires often bring with them a self-selection bias, which possibly highlights common traits of the participants (Olsen, 2008, pp. 809–810; Bethlehem, 2010, p. 162; Toepoel, 2016, p. 200). Another important sampling error which needs to be taken into account when using online questionnaires is the possibility of under-coverage (Bethlehem, 2010, p. 162). Since online questionnaires require internet access to be completed, certain groups of the general public may be excluded due to the lack of internet access, as a result of which the representativeness of the population could be biased. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) states that 83 per cent of all households in Great Britain had internet access in 2013 (ONS, 2013), a number which has since increased to 86 per cent in 2015 (ONS, 2015b).

A complete list of the stimuli sentences included in my study, as well as their counterparts in earlier surveys, may be found in Table 5.1 below. For my survey the stimuli sentences were updated and slightly modified compared to the Mittins study, as for example the stimulus sentence *Between you and I, she drinks heavily*, which was modified to *Between you and I, he will not be considered for the job* in order to make it less offensive and more suitable for all contexts. In Mittins et al.'s study, the former stimulus sentence was restricted in the choice of context and the formal writing context was excluded.

Table 5.1 Stimuli included in the online questionnaire with counterparts of previous studies

Usage Problem/ Usage Stimuli		Proper English Usage survey	*Attitudes towards English Usage* (1970)	*Current English Usage* (1932)
1	*different(ly) than*	The Americans look at this differently than the British.	They behaved differently at school than they did at home.	The British look at this differently than we do.
2	*data are*	The data are often inaccurate.	The data is sufficient for our purpose.	The data is often inaccurate.
3	*go slow*	That's a dangerous curve; you'd better go slow.	That's a dangerous curve; you'd better go slow.	Drive slow down that hill.
4	*like*	The restaurant is only like 2 minutes up the road.	-	-
5	*burglarize*	The bank was burglarized twice last month.	-	-
6	*less/fewer*	Pay here if you have less than 10 items.	There were less road accidents this Christmas than last.	-
7	double negative	He wasn't seen nowhere after the incident.	-	*
8	dangling participle	Pulling the trigger, the gun went off.	Pulling the trigger, the gun went off unexpectedly.	-
9	*between you and I*	Between you and I, he will not be considered for the job.	Between you and I, she drinks heavily.	-
10	split infinitive	He refused to even think about it.	He refused to even think of it.	We can expect the commission to at least protect our interests.
11	*literally*	His eyes were literally popping out of his head	His eyes were literally standing out of his head.	-

* Double negatives were investigated by Leonard (1932, pp. 130–131); however, none of his stimulus sentences matches the one used in my own study Proper English Usage survey in its structure.

The majority of the stimuli contained the disputed or marked use of the usage problem in question, except for item 2, which deals with the treatment of Latinate words as plurals. The reason for doing so was to identify attitudes

towards its unmarked usage rather than marked usage, as *data* being treated as a singular has become increasingly common due to technological developments. In light of this recent development, I aimed at investigating its original use as a plural.

As usage problems are a social phenomenon, they change with society. While some usage problems disappear or become acceptable, as is illustrated by Burchfield's (1996, p. 69) discussion of causal *as* meaning *because* or *since* following a main clause, a construction which was once condemned by Fowler (1926, p. 31), other usage problems develop a special recurring status. These so-called old chestnuts, which include the split infinitive and sentence-initial *and*/*but*, have developed into language myths or folk beliefs (Weiner, 1988, p. 173–174). Since more than four decades have passed since the *Attitudes towards English Usage* survey was conducted, new usage problems have emerged and need to be incorporated in an updated survey. I therefore included *burglarize* as a representative of Americanisms and the use of *like* as an approximative adverb into my study to enable a discussion of more recent usage problems as opposed to merely focussing on old chestnuts. Despite it not being a new usage problem, the double negative was not included in Mittins et al.'s survey; however, it poses an interesting case especially in the British English context due to its occurrence in many regional dialects and frequent association with nonstandard English (Milroy & Milroy, 1993, p. 198).

The questionnaire, which is partly reproduced in Appendix A, was compiled by using the software program Qualtrix. This software enables not only the creation and distribution of online surveys, but it also provides basic tools for the analysis of the collected data. The questionnaire I drew up comprises two main parts which were preceded by a short introductory text with information on the questionnaire and instructions on how to complete it. It has to be

noted that one disadvantage of online surveys is the lack of control in respect to the survey respondents. The information provided by the respondents cannot be checked (cf. Toepoel, 2015, p. 48). As this study is a sociolinguistic investigation of usage attitudes, a section asking for personal background information such as age, gender and education level of the participant concluded the questionnaire. The eleven usage stimuli made up the first part of the questionnaire, and participants were asked to rate these according to their acceptability in seven contexts. Similar to Mittins et al.'s study, a distinction was made between formal and informal contexts, as well as spoken and written contexts. However, these four contexts would not be enough as nowadays communication would be inconceivable without so-called "netspeak", i.e. online or mobile communication, which has gradually become a third language medium taking a middle position between spoken and written language (Crystal, 2006a, pp. 51–52). Furthermore, the online/mobile context was split up into formal and informal usage since even there users can distinguish their utterances according to style, while yet another option was added, not found in previous surveys, i.e. 'unacceptable'. The reason for this was to cater to informants' requests gathered in previously conducted small-scale surveys on the *Bridging the Unbridgeable* blog which followed Mittins et al.'s survey structure. The respondents were able to choose multiple contexts to express their judgements of the acceptability of a stimulus sentence. The introductory text includes examples of the previously mentioned contexts to make the distinction between the selection principles clearer. Furthermore, the participants were asked to state their own usage preferences and to go through the questionnaire as quickly as possible, as I aimed at obtaining their primary response. I stressed the fact that this was not a test and that there were no 'correct' answers. To this end it was emphasised that participants were not encouraged to 'cheat', i.e. looking up usage problems in a dictionary or online,

and to distract them from thinking that each sentence contained a mistake. A snapshot of the actual questionnaire can be seen in Figure 5.3.

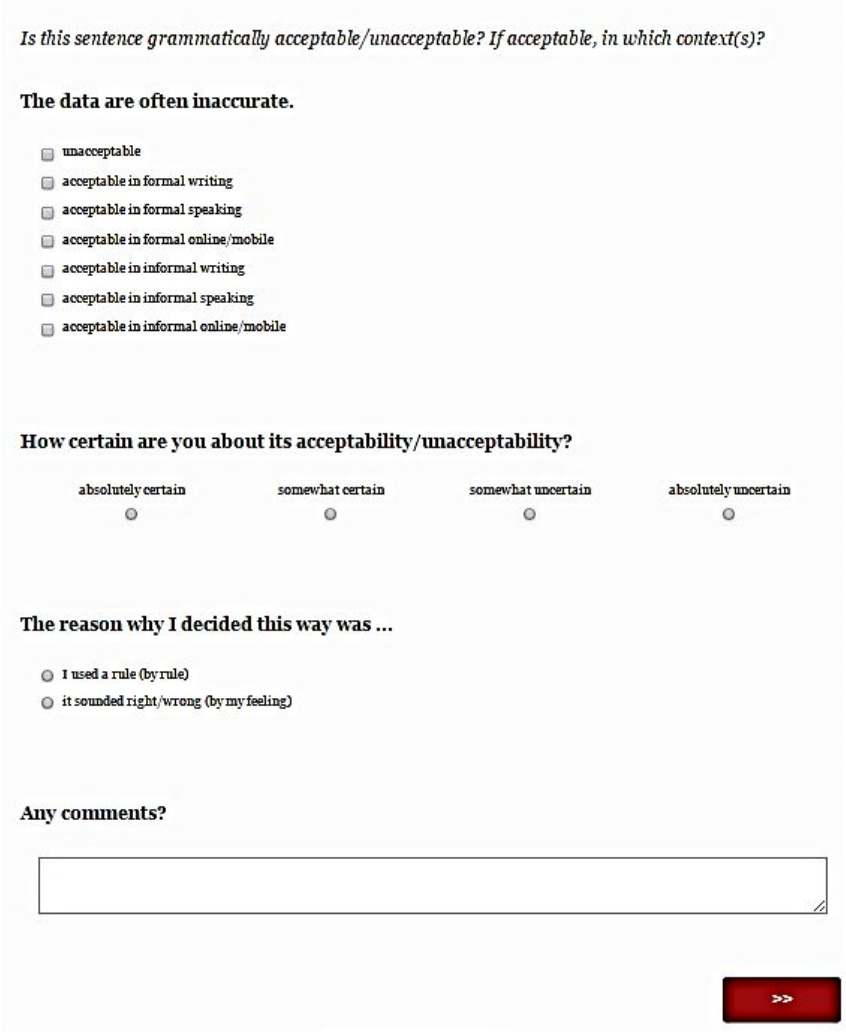

Figure 5.3 Screenshot of the survey question on *data are*

As can be seen from Figure 5.3, the main question concerning the acceptability of the stimuli phrases is succeeded by two follow-up questions concerning the participants' certainty with respect to the answers given and the rationale behind their decision. Additionally, each question block contained a textbox

allowing the participants to comment on the stimulus sentence, which put a qualitative dimension to this otherwise rather quantitative approach.

The second part of the questionnaire consists of twelve statements on the state of the English language and an open question concerning the participants' view on it. I included the statements representing frequently heard language myths in my questionnaire in order to identify whether participants believe in these myths or not. The statements were retrieved from various media websites and comment sections such as those given on articles in *The Telegraph*, so they reflect attitudes held and voiced by the general public online. I have listed them in Table 5.2 below. The participants were asked to state whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement on a four point Likert scale. The open question, *What do you think about the state of the English language?*, aimed at obtaining the participants' personal view on the state of the English language and thus resulted in additional qualitative data. This open question, however, was not compulsory.

As my study involves working with participants in Great Britain, it had to be approved by the research ethics committee of Queen Mary University of London, where I decided to start my fieldwork with a three-month research stay at the School of Languages, Linguistics and Film. The online questionnaire was piloted at the beginning of February 2014, and after a revision the questionnaire was launched online on 12 February 2014. It remained available to anyone with internet access for one year, during which period various measures were taken to attract participants to the survey.

Table 5.2 Part 2 of the Proper English Usage survey: language statements

	Language Statement	Source
1	Is proper English dying? Yes it is. Unfortunately, it is being hurried along towards its grave by nearly everything that we are exposed to in the print and electronic media.	Comment on Yang's (2011) "Is Proper English Dying? And Should Us Care?" in *Wall Street Journal*
2	It's good to know the (supposed) rules, but clear communication is obviously better.	Comment on Nichol's (2011) "7 Grammatical Errors That Aren't"
3	I think that the web is responsible for the explosive spread of what linguists will be calling "Bad English" in the future.	Comment on Yang's (2011) "Is Proper English Dying? And Should Us Care?" in *Wall Street Journal*
4	Twitter is influencing the development of the English Language negatively.	Comment on Jones's (2011) "Ralph Fiennes blames Twitter for 'eroding' language" in *The Telegraph*
5	To say that texting is killing language is to show ignorance of how language is a living thing that grows and adapts to changing use.	Comment on "Is texting killing language?" on Debate.org
6	Grammar is not just an educational issue. For some adults, it can sabotage friendships and even romantic relationships.	BBC article by Castella (2013) "Apostrophe now: Bad grammar and the people who hate it"
7	Most young people today cannot even complete a sentence whether written or spoken orally.	Comment on Jones's (2011) "Ralph Fiennes blames Twitter for 'eroding' language" in *The Telegraph*
8	Good grammar in this country seems to have gone out the window and you only have to listen to the BBC news for proof of it.	Comment on Jones's (2011) "Ralph Fiennes blames Twitter for 'eroding' language" in *The Telegraph*
9	Texting is causing a decline in standards of grammar and spelling in teenagers.	Article "Texting is fostering bad grammar and spelling, researchers claim" (2012) in *The Telegraph*
10	Grammar often seems to be a low priority in education.	Article by Meyer (2012) "Is Our Children Learning Enough Grammar to Get Hired?" in *New York Times*
11	Yes, bad spelling and grammar does make you look like an idiot.	Comment on "Does bad grammar and spelling make you look like an idiot?" (2011)
12	I think it is necessary for all British citizens to be educated in the same form of English to enable easy communication between each other.	Comment on "Laura Buckley asks: 'Why should Standard English be the language of education? And what about speakers of local dialects?' "(2013)

A call for participants was sent out via the *Bridging the Unbridgeable* and *Proper English Usage* blogs as well as various other social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. Flyers were distributed in London, Cambridge and Oxford, as well as on the English Grammar Day at the British Library on 2 April 2014[1]. The survey link was retweeted and shared online by various people, and, using the snowballing technique, participants who completed the questionnaire were kindly asked to share it and distribute the link among their friends and family (Atkinson & Flint, 2004, p. 1044). In the end, the questionnaire was completed 310 times. As my research focus is, however, on England, I decided to exclude all other responses from Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and abroad, which resulted in a final total of 230 completed questionnaires.

Using an online questionnaire not only enabled me to reach a large number of people in England, but it also facilitated a relaxed test-taking environment. Such an environment, according to Schilling (2013a, p. 99; 2013b, p. 78), is important to ensure the cooperation of participants who could get bored by or tired in an unnatural testing environment. As participants could fill in the questionnaire whenever they found the time to do so and wherever they wanted, the feeling of being tested could be minimised as much as possible. This is especially important when using a direct approach like the one I was adopting. As mentioned in Chapter 5, highlighting the usage problems in the stimuli phrases, as for example done by Mittins et al. (1970), can influence the responses of participants, which I aimed to avoid in this study. Additionally, providing the participants with the opportunity to comment on each question as well as having an open question at the end of the survey allows for greater insight into what participants think about specific usages

[1] Many thanks to Professor Charlotte Brewer and Jonathan Robinson for allowing me to do so.

and the state of English on a more general basis. Thus, the online questionnaire used in my study makes use of the direct approach method, though in a slightly subtler manner than previous attitude studies. The second part of the questionnaire, which is based on frequently mentioned perceptions of the current state of English, incorporated the Societal Treatment Approach into the online questionnaire; however, as I asked participants to state their degree of agreement, it could be considered a Meta-Societal Treatment Approach.

5.3.2. Interview sessions

The online questionnaire provided me with quantitative and qualitative data which enabled me to identify attitudes towards usage problems; yet, as the overview of previous language attitude studies in Chapter 5 has shown, neglecting a more indirect approach could cause problems with the reliability of informants' answers and would hinder obtaining a full picture of usage attitudes. Furthermore, eliciting attitudes towards spoken language by using only written stimuli is not an ideal approach. As none of the previous usage studies incorporated spoken stimuli to assess usage attitudes, no test case was available and a suitable tool had to be identified and, as it happened, to be developed by myself.

I decided to make use of an indirect approach in the form of a guise test and a usage judgment test, as well as a direct elicitation test of attitudes towards usage rules. The reasons why I decided to adopt these tools are that they allow an assessment of the participants' awareness of usage problems. All three tools were embedded in a semi-structured interview in which participants were asked for information on their educational backgrounds as well as more language specific questions through which I hoped to obtain an insight into the affective, behavioural and cognitive components of usage attitudes. An overview of the topics discussed in the interviews can be found

in Appendix E. Just as in the online questionnaire, the interview sessions and tools had to be approved by the research ethics committee. According to the committee's regulations, the interviews had to take place in a public space and each participant received an information sheet and had to give consent prior to participating in the interview session by signing a consent form. The interview sessions took between 30 minutes to an hour depending on how elaborately the participants answered the questions. Participants in the interview sessions received a small remuneration. While the online questionnaire aimed at a wider part of the English population, the interview sessions focussed on participants coming from the so-called Golden Triangle comprising London, Cambridge and Oxford. The three tools applied in these sessions will be discussed in detail next.

5.3.3. Open-guise test

In order to include a spoken stimuli assessment of usage attitudes into my study, I devised an open-guise test, which, as discussed in Chapter 4, is a more recent variant of the matched-guise test. For my study, two speakers, one male and one female, volunteered for the stimuli recordings of an unmarked and marked set of utterances. Both speakers were undergraduate students at Queen Mary University of London and in their early twenties. While the female speaker has lived in the proximity of Oxford all of her life, the male speaker moved from Manchester to London for his studies and was very much aware of his Northern accent which he consciously tried to accommodate as much as possible to a more southern accent. Both speakers were recorded using a prescriptive and descriptive set of eleven utterances, which can be found in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Unmarked and marked open-guise test utterances (usage controversy in bold)

	Unmarked Usage	Marked Usage
1	The media are covering the story intensively.	The **media is** covering the story intensively.
2	He didn't do anything. He is innocent.	He **didn't** do **nothing**. He is innocent.
3	This is really great.	This is **real** great.
4	Roller skating is different to ice-skating.	Roller skating is **different than** ice-skating.
5	The new store is just around the corner.	The new store is **literally** just around the corner.
6	When Susan was rushing to catch the last bus, her shoe slipped off her foot.	**Rushing to catch the last bus, Susan's shoe** slipped off her foot.
7	You told Mike and me the story.	You told **Mike and I** the story.
8	There were fewer road accidents last year.	There were **less** road accidents last year.
9	She used to admire him secretly.	She used **to secretly admire** him.
10	So we met them at the station.	So we **met up with them** at the station.
11	I don't know what to do.	I, **like**, don't know what to do.

As the test setup was intended to make the recordings appear as snippets of a conversation, the recordings were made in a café to ensure natural background noise. However, since the utterances were partially read out, the naturalness of the recordings was compromised (Schilling, 2013a, p. 105) which resulted in less natural stimuli. Once the recordings were made and prepared, the open-guise test was piloted with native and non-native English speakers to see whether the recordings would result in rating differences. The participants

were asked to rate the recordings on twelve five-point semantic-differential scales such as "friendly–mean", "honest–un-trustworthy", and "clever–unintelligent", and to base their judgments on how they would think the speaker came across to a public audience. After modifying the layout of the rating sheet, which can also be found in Appendix B, the open-guise test was implemented as part of the interview sessions. I have chosen to name these recordings unmarked and marked recordings which are the labels used throughout this study. The unmarked recording contains all variants which are accepted by prescriptivists, while the marked recording contains its disputed counterparts.

5.3.4. Usage judgment test and direct elicitation test

To avoid obtaining socially desirable answers instead of the participants' true attitudes towards usage problems in English, I devised a usage judgment test consisting of a formal job application letter, which may be found in Appendix C. This letter contained nine instances of six usage problems: two instances of the dangling participle, two flat adverbs, two instances of sentence-initial *And*, one split infinitive, *impact* as a verb and the use of *very unique*. All these items are considered usage problems and the majority are included in the HUGE database (Straaijer, 2015). The use of *impact* as a verb, however, is not found there, which could be due to its relative novelty in the usage debate. The participants were instructed to correct anything they thought was inappropriate for a letter of application. Each participant had as much time available to make corrections as needed; yet, once they returned the letter to me, no further changes could be made.

The usage judgment test is linked to the direct elicitation test, which includes the usage rules of the usage problems incorporated in the letter of application. These rules were taken from various usage guides using the

HUGE database as well as the *Guardian and Observer's Style Guide* (2015), which included advice on *impact* as a verb. I selected the rules based on the criteria of brevity and clarity, which means that the usage rule entry was neither supposed to be too long nor too complicated, as this could cause confusion with the participants. The usage rules can also be found in Appendix D and an example to illustrate the criteria of brevity and clarity can be found in the rule presented below:

> **and/but**
> Many of us have been taught never to begin a sentence with AND or BUT. Generally speaking this is good advice. Both words are conjunctions and will therefore be busy joining words within the sentence …
> (Burt, Angela. 2002. *The A to Z of Correct English*)

The usage advice on the issue of whether or not to start sentences with *and* or *but* has been taken from Angela Burt's *The A to Z of Correct English* (2002) and serves as a suitable illustration of the selection criteria brevity and clarity. Nonetheless, I decided to include one entry from Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (1926) to illustrate the development of *literally* as a usage problem. This entry slightly violated the criterion of clarity as it was written in a somewhat archaic style and required more attention from the participants and sometimes caused confusion. Besides providing rules for the six usage problems included in the usage judgment test, two further rules were added to disguise the obviousness of the link between the two tests. The participants were then asked to state their opinions of the validity of these usage rules. This direct elicitation of attitudes towards usage rules together with the indirect usage judgment test aimed to assess the participants' awareness of these usage problems. If participants knew of a usage conundrum incorporated within the letter of application, their responses to the respective usage rule in the direct elicitation test would be straightforward in either approving or disapproving of the usage rule, whereas participants lacking this

awareness would tend to provide socially desirable answers. In each case, this hypothesis is checked by comparing the participant's offered corrections in the usage judgment test with his or her responses in the direct elicitation test. Just as with the open-guise test, all of the tools as well as the semi-structured interview were first piloted and adapted if necessary before they were actually launched.

5.3.5. Semi-structured interview

As I also aimed at obtaining the participants' educational and social background information, I devised interview guidelines for a semi-structured interview to ensure the comparability of interview recordings. The interview questions, which can be found in the appendix (Appendix E), are arranged according to themes and are split into two main categories: general background information as well as language and usage related questions. The reason why a semi-structured interview seemed the most appropriate way of conducting an interview was that it allowed both for a certain degree of consistency of topics and room for personalisation. Although the elicitation of various different speech styles was not an objective of the interviews, the transcriptions of the recordings provide further insights into the language use of the participants as well as their attitudes towards specific language issues.

The interview sessions were structured as follows. After informing the participant about the purpose of the study and providing them with an information sheet as well as obtaining written consent, the participant was first asked to take the open-guise test, which was followed by the usage judgment test. The third part of the interview session was the semi-structured interview, and the final part, the direct elicitation test, concluded the interview sessions.

5.4. The HUGE Database

To conduct a systematic study of usage advice on the investigated usage problems, the HUGE database constitutes an indispensable resource. Based on this database a diachronic and synchronic study of usage precepts' of usage guide authors can be undertaken. As I aim to include their perspective, I will briefly describe the database's composition in the next section by providing an insight into the genre of usage guides.

As the focus of this study is on language advice found in a particular genre, namely usage guides, the earliest publication that needs to be taken into account is Baker's *Reflections on the English Language* published in 1770. However, prescriptive tendencies had already become visible and taken shape before Baker. Lowth's *Short Introduction to the English Language* (1762), works on rhetoric, which have been studied in detail by Yáñez-Bouza (2015), and eighteenth-century reviews (Percy, 2008, 2009) are examples of such instances. The popularity and instructive nature of Lowth's grammar made it, according to Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2008b, p. 16), the usage guide's "precursor". Nevertheless, Baker's publication marks an important step in the history of the usage debate, as has been discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Being most probably the first usage guide published, it represents the beginning of the usage guide tradition as it was the first publication dedicated to normative language usage. Straaijer (forthc.), who compiled the HUGE database as part of the *Bridging the Unbridgeable* project, describes usage guides as a genre by distinguishing them from other related written pieces, such as grammars, style guides and dictionaries. He concludes that the genre of the usage guide "is a strongly author-driven genre", characterised by a high degree of "variation in form and content within the boundaries of the genre" (Straaijer, forthc.). As early usage guides were dominated by the *ipse-dixit* approach (see Peters, 2006), this does not come as a surprise. The variability in form and

contents does not only affect how usage guide authors rule on the acceptability of usage problems, but is also visible in the authors' decisions on which issues to discuss (Straaijer, forthc.). What seem to be excluded from this variability are the so-called old chestnuts. The reason for their inclusion in usage guides may be their mythological status and "social salience" among speakers of English (Straaijer, forthc.).

The HUGE database largely comprises grammatical usage problems, which means that usage problems dealing with pronunciation or punctuation are not included (Straaijer, forthc.). It contains 77 usage guides, 39 of which are British and 38 American publications. For the selection principles adopted, see the HUGE user manual (Straaijer, 2015). This classification is based on the place of publication of the usage guides, as such publications are often written for a specific market. One exception needs to be mentioned, which is Trask's *Mind the Gaffe* (2001). This usage guide constitutes an exception in that Trask's complicated role as "an American who works in Britain" could make his usage guide suitable for both, American and British, markets (2001, p. 3). Nevertheless, Trask's *Mind the Gaffe* (2001) was included in the 39 British publications, yet his special status should be borne in mind. While Baker's *Reflections on the English Language* (1770) is the oldest usage guide, the three most recent additions to the database, Simon Heffer's *Strictly English*, Caroline Taggart's *Her Ladyship's Guide to the Queen's English*, and Bernard C. Lamb's *The Queen's English and How to Use it*, were all published in 2010. Thus, the HUGE database covers 240 years of the usage guide tradition and enables not only a diachronic, but also synchronic study of the usage debate. As the focus is on grammatical issues, 123 grammatical usage problems were selected as a starting point and their respective entries were collected from the 77 usage guides, resulting in a total of 6,330 entries. Figure

5.4 below shows the historical development of the usage guide tradition in terms of British and American publications included in HUGE.

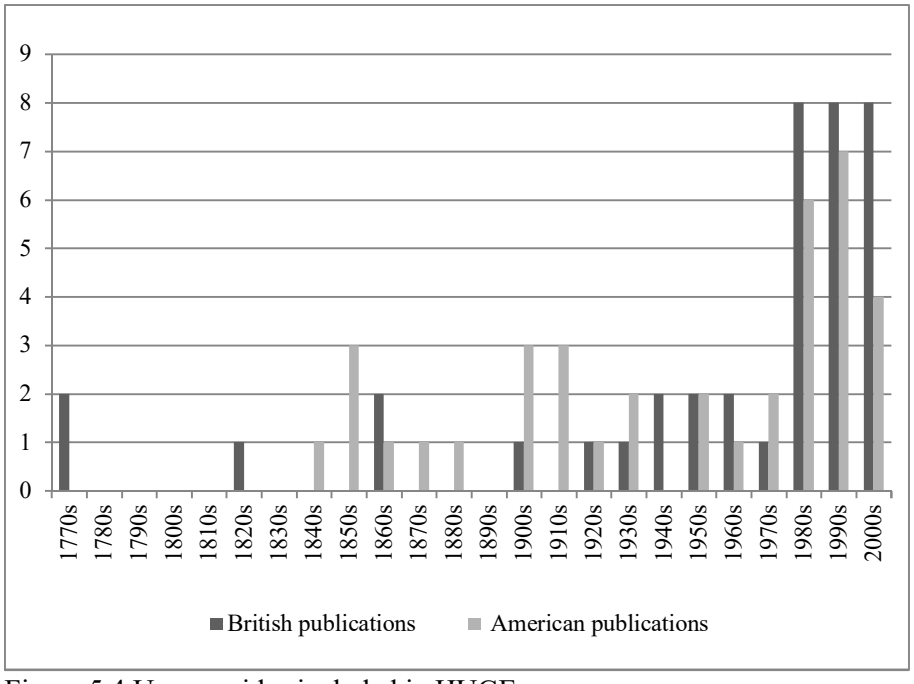

Figure 5.4 Usage guides included in HUGE

Figure 5.4 clearly shows how the market for language advice literature seems to have been booming since the beginning of the twentieth century, which could reflect a growing need of linguistically insecure speakers for guidance on standard language use. Furthermore, Figure 5.4 indicates how the first specimens of the usage guide genre seem to be British publications. What needs to be borne in mind, however, is that the usage debate was not only restricted to usage guides, but also was pursued in journals and magazines. Making use of various different media and channels has continued to define the usage debate and through technological achievements such as the internet, new channels have become arenas of the usage debate. Usage is now also

debated in comment sections of online articles or various fora, which widens the traditional scope of prescriptivism (see also Lukač, in progress).

The HUGE database constitutes a vital source for this particular study as it enables a systematic study of usage advice literature, which is necessary to highlight the stigmatisation history of the investigated usage problems. Such an analysis will add a historical dimension to current usage attitudes, which will foster a better understanding of their development. Furthermore, an overview of the treatment of usage problems in HUGE will illustrate not only when a particular usage problem came to be considered problematical, but it can also show how the treatment and advice of usage guide authors may have changed in the course of history.

5.5. The Corpora Consulted

In order to provide evidence of actual usage of the investigated usage problems, I will draw on corpus data.[2] Focussing on British English, the most important corpus for this study constitutes the British National Corpus (BNC). However, since some of the usage problems are considered Americanisms, I will also draw on the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA). The differences between these corpora need to be acknowledged and taken into account when comparing frequencies. While the BNC comprises 100 million spoken and written words which were collected during the late twentieth century, COCA is far more extensive and recent, as it consists of 520 million words collected from 1990 to 2015. Consisting of 90 per cent written and 10 per cent spoken material, the BNC is meant to "represent contemporary British English as a whole" (McEnery et al., 2006, p. 17). This needs to be viewed in connection with the construction of the BNC and COCA, as the former is considered a

[2] All corpora were accessed through http://corpus.byu.edu/.

static corpus and the latter a monitor corpus. As a monitor corpus, new material is added to the COCA, while this is not the case for the BNC (McEnery et al., 2006, p. 67). Hence, it is argued that studying language change could only be thoroughly done by making use of a monitor corpus as it is large enough and contains a diachronic dimension and static corpora tend to be outdated (Davies, 2012, pp. 169–170). It therefore needs to be borne in mind that data gathered from the BNC and the COCA and presented in this study are restricted in their comparability due to the difference in the time period the two corpora encapsulate.

Since both the BNC and COCA cover present-day English and a diachronic comparison of language use and variation may be necessary, I will also make use of two historical corpora of English which I briefly introduce here: the above-mentioned COHA and the Hansard Corpus. COHA consists of more than 400 million words of written data which spans the time period from 1810s to 2000s (Davies, 2012, p. 161). The Hansard Corpus also constitutes a diachronic, yet very specialised corpus, which was compiled by researchers at the University of Glasgow. It consists of 7.6 million speeches given in the British parliament, both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, between 1803 and 2005 and comprises 1.6 billion words (Wattam et al., 2014, p. 4094). Since the focus of this study is on attitudes, the corpus evidence should only be considered complementary and will be restricted to the investigated problems. Where possible I will make use of the Parts of Speech tagger (POS-tagger) to provide a clearer overview of frequency patterns. As some scholars have already studied some of the investigated usage problems by making use of corpora, their findings will add a more detailed perspective to the study of usage problems and will be reported where deemed useful.

5.6. Concluding Remarks

By restricting the research area to England, I was able to delineate the research population and focus on usage problems in English Standard English, which was a necessary step that needed to be taken before tackling the compilation of the methodology. As the focus of this study is on England, suitable research tools needed to be found to reach a large number of the population. Using an online survey and distributing it through various social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs proved to be the most suitable tool to achieve this. The review of usage studies discussed in Chapter 4 showed that none of the previous studies incorporated a more indirect approach towards eliciting usage attitudes. In order to analyse usage attitudes using the Indirect Approach required a further restriction of the research area, and for this reason I decided to focus on the Golden Triangle, which was chosen due to its role in the development of Standard English. Thus, the combination of both direct and indirect elicitation tools to assess usage attitudes is guaranteed. Applying a mixed-methods approach helps to dissect the different layers of attitudes and thus enables a better understanding of the subject matter. Furthermore, the inclusion of spoken stimuli in a usage study was long overdue as this dimension has been neglected in previous usage studies.

In the next chapter, the data analysis will be tackled. The two main research tools, the online questionnaire and interview sessions, will be discussed before comparing the results of the different tools to provide a fuller picture of what kind of usage attitudes are expressed.

6. Describing the (Usage) Problems

6.1. Introduction

As mentioned in the Introduction (see § 1.3), usage problems have been defined as linguistic features which are characterised by their widespread, actual use and their ability to be discussed without giving offence (Ilson, 1985, p. 167). Using aesthetic, historical and logical arguments, prescriptivists have tried to secure the status of the variant which had been chosen to be part of the standard variety in the standardisation process. By doing so, other variants have become the subject of stigmatisation. The usage problems investigated in this study have already been presented in the Introduction (see § 1.5), yet a more detailed description as to why these linguistic features are considered problematical needs to be undertaken, which is the purpose of this chapter.

Each of the fourteen usage problems will be discussed in order to explain why these features are considered problematical by prescriptivists and by summarizing scientific studies investigating these features. A more detailed analysis of the treatment of the investigated usage problems in British usage guides will be undertaken in Chapter 7 below. However, since two usage problems, the use of sentence-initial *and* and *very unique*, are only part of the usage judgment test, I will present the description of these features and the analysis of usage guides included in HUGE in Appendix F.

The HUGE database will be analysed making use of a slightly modified version of Yáñez-Bouza's (2015) tripartite categorisation into advocated, neutral and criticised treatments of usage problems. Since the categorisation of usage entries can be complex, Yáñez-Bouza (2015 p. 30) distinguished grammarians' precepts by applying a mutually exclusive categorisation method in her study of grammarians' attitudes towards preposition placement. Grammarians were accordingly classified as being either advocates, neutrals

or critics of preposition stranding. The mutual exclusivity of these three categories makes it easier to obtain diachronic and synchronic overviews of how usage advice on the investigated usage problems has developed over time. I will therefore apply a similar categorisation of usage guide entries into the categories "criticised", "neutral" and "advocated" in the analysis of usage guide entries. The category "neutral" contains usage advice which is neither straightforwardly advocating nor criticising the use of a linguistic feature, but rather contains contextual preferences. The descriptive overview of the usage problems provided in this chapter will not only lay the basis for a better understanding of the usage debate, but also offer the necessary background information on the usage problems investigated in this study. The usage problems will be discussed in the order in which they appeared in the online questionnaire.

6.2. *Different From/Than/To*

According to prescriptivists, *different* should be followed by *from*, rather than *to* or *than*. Their judgment is often based on the fact that the verb *differ* is also followed by *from* thus making *different from* the only legitimate construction (cf. Baker, 1770, pp. 7–8; Taggart, 2010, p. 67). Yet, *different to* and *different than* are also commonly used in American and British English, albeit with different preferential frequencies. While *different to* is said to be found more frequently in British English, *different than* seems to be more prevalent in American English (*Longman Dictionary*, s.v. *different*). That *different than* has, however, been used for a long time in British English is shown by the *OED*, which provides an example of its use dating back to the seventeenth century (*OED*, s.v. *than*). A comparative corpus study using British and American corpora to investigate usage frequencies of *different from/than/to* conducted by Busse and Schröder (2010b, p. 97) showed that *different from*

has indeed been the most frequently used construction in both varieties. However, their study demonstrates that there is a difference between British and American English with regard to the second most frequent variant. The corpus evidence gathered by Busse and Schröder (2010b, p. 97) showed higher frequencies for *different to* in British English than in American English, which, on the other hand, showed a clear secondary preference for *different than* over *different to*.

Despite the criticism found in prescriptive usage guides, *different than* has also been considered useful in specific contexts. Its usefulness has been demonstrated in a frequently cited example in usage guides from the novelist Joyce Carey, who is quoted as using the following sentence: "I was a very different man in 1935 from what I was in 1916". (Carey, quoted in Burchfield et al., 1984, pp. 101–102). While Cary used the construction favoured by prescriptivists, the sentence was also criticised as being "awkward" (Allen, 1999, p. 170). Using *different than* instead of *different from* would not require repeating already given information in the form of a relative construction. The sentence could accordingly be recast in the following two manners, which make use of the descriptive variant *than*:

1. a) I was a very different man in 1935 than I was in 1916.

   b) I was a very different man in 1935 than in 1916.

Although 1.a) and 1.b) are both grammatical, the tendency among prescriptivists to condemn *different than* seems to be founded mainly on their insistence on the legitimacy of *different from* because it is based on the verb *differ from*.

For my study, I decided to include the following stimulus sentence in an online questionnaire:

S1. The Americans look at this differently than the British.

The stimulus sentence was adapted from Leonard (1932, p. 156), whose study of usage attitudes in American English included the stimulus sentence *The British look at this differently than we do*. Mittins and his colleagues (1970, p. 56) also investigated attitudes towards the use of *differently than* using the sentence *They behaved differently at school than they did at home* in their study. While Leonard's study showed a wide range of judgments ranging from 15 per cent of his informants considering *differently than* formal English to 50 per cent condemning its use as illiterate (1932, p. 157), it seems as if the British did indeed look at this usage differently than the Americans did. Mittins et al.'s (1970, p. 58) study showed that *differently than* only achieved an average acceptability rating of 30 per cent at the time. This could hint at the construction's association with American usage. These findings from earlier usage attitude studies are also in line with Busse and Schröder's (2010b) corpus study.

This secondary preference of *different to* in British English was furthermore incorporated in an indirect elicitation test, the open-guise test (see § 5.3). Besides investigating attitudes towards *different than*, Mittins and his colleagues also included a stimulus sentence in their questionnaire which aimed at eliciting attitudes towards *different to*: *Roller-skating is very different to ice-skating.* The results of Mittins et al.'s study showed that this particular stimulus sentence also obtained a 30 per cent acceptability rating. Even though *different to* has been argued to be the second most frequent variant, it is somewhat surprising to find Mittins et al.'s respondents passing a similar judgment on this variant in comparison to *different than*. The reason for these findings could lie in the presentation of the stimulus sentences as the feature investigated was highlighted and could have consequently biased Mittins et al.'s informants towards disapproving of *different to*. As my open-guise test

consisted of recordings containing either the unmarked and accepted variants or their disputed counterparts, I used a slightly modified version of Mittins et al.'s stimulus sentence for the recordings. The recording containing the unmarked variants included the stimulus sentence *Roller skating is different to ice-skating*, while the marked counterpart made use of the stimulus sentence *Roller skating is different than ice-skating* (cf. Table 5.3). The use of these two stimulus sentences was purposefully selected as I was aiming at eliciting subconscious attitudes and hence the unmarked variant *different from*, which is the most dominant variant in both British and American English (Busse & Schröder, 2010b, p. 97), would have increased the obviousness of the test in that the participants would presume a clear-cut distinction between the two recordings contrasting a speaker making use of 'correct' and 'proper' English with a speaker of 'incorrect' and 'improper' English. In my view, using the secondary preference in British English, *different to*, therefore serves to conceal the purpose of the test better.

6.3. Latinate Plurals

Is it *data are* or *data is*? Is it the *media are* or *is*? Falling under Curzan's (2014, p. 36) restorative prescriptivism strand in the sense that an attempt is made to restore an older meaning or usage, British prescriptivists insist on words such as *data* and *media* being considered plurals and are consequently required to take a plural verb form. The reason for their insistence on words such as *data* to be used as plurals lies in their Latinate origin. According to some usage guide authors such as Partridge (1942, p. 89), who condemns the use of *data* as a singular noun, the widespread use of *data is* in British English is due to the influence and spread of American English, in which this variant is allegedly acceptable: "**data** is wrong when it is used for the correct singular, *datum.* '… [In American English, *data* may be singular or plural. *Webster's,*

Krapp, Perrin.]". Distinguishing between the singular *datum* and its plural form *data* has, however, despite prescriptivists' disapproval, lost ground due to technological advances made in the twentieth century, in particular in computing (*OED*, s.v. *data*).

Mittins et al. (1970) investigated this usage issue as well, by using the following stimulus sentence: *The data is often inaccurate*. Their study showed that the use of *data* as a singular had already become widely acceptable in the late 1960s. The usage item ranked fifth of the 50 investigated usage problems, achieving an average acceptability rating of 69 per cent (Mittins et al., 1970, p. 13). The Newcastle researchers provide detailed information on the contextual judgments made by the questionnaire respondents by stating that *data is* was considered acceptable by 82 per cent in informal speech and by 55 per cent in the context of formal writing (Mittins et al., 1970, p. 32). I used the following stimulus sentence in the online questionnaire:

S2. The data are often inaccurate.

Though the online questionnaire contained a fairly similar stimulus sentence to the one in Mittins et al.'s study, I decided not to use *data is*, but rather the *data are* variant as the former appears to have been widely accepted nowadays, as was shown in the Mittins study. Using the accepted version, *data are*, should therefore have a similar effect to using the disputed variant. While *data are* was used to elicit attitudes in the online questionnaire, I included the noun *media* in the open-guise test. As shown in the overview in Table 5.3 above, the recording containing the unmarked standard variants included the stimulus sentence *The media are covering the story intensively*, while the marked variant *media is* was used in the recording containing the disputed usages. As mentioned in Section 5.3.2, the indirect elicitation tests conducted as part of the interview sessions aimed at assessing the participants'

awareness towards these usage problems. What needs to be borne further in mind here is the distinction between customary usage and usage norms.

6.4. Flat Adverbs

Flat adverbs, also known as suffixless or zero adverbs (Peters, 2004, p. 591), constitute a usage feature which has often been considered problematical by usage guide authors and seems to hold the status of an old chestnut in the usage debate. An iconic example of this particular usage problem is the frequently cited *go slow* example as found, for instance, in Swan (1980, p. 13). While flat adverbs have been part of "most non-standard dialects" in British English, some variants of flat adverbs also occur in "colloquial Standard English" (Hughes et al., 2005, p. 33). A study conducted by Opdahl (2000) investigated differences between British and American English making use of corpora, and it showed that in British English the prescribed *-ly* variant is preferred. According to Peters (2015, p. 201), the reason for the preference of *-ly* variants in British English is the result of moral panic, a phenomenon which has been discussed in Chapter 2 and which has engulfed Great Britain as part of the usage debate from the 1980s onwards, as well as the potential influence of usage guide authors such as Eric Partridge and his *Usage and Abusage* (1942) after the Second World War. Partridge's advice on this issue does not only brand the use of flat adverbs as a sign of illiteracy, but it also includes a comment which identifies *-ly* variants as being more polite than flat adverbs (Partridge, 1942, p. 14).

A recent survey of attitudes towards flat adverbs conducted by Lukač and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (forthc.) showed how attitudes varied according to age and gender among a sample of Americans, Brits and non-native speakers of English. Among the investigated usage problems in their study is the flat adverb *go slow*, which was also studied in Mittins et al.'s *Attitudes to*

English Usage. Mittins and his colleagues showed that the flat adverb obtained an average acceptability rate of 54 per cent. What needs to be borne in mind, however, is that their stimulus sentence, *That's a dangerous curve; you'd better go slow*, was restricted in the choice of contexts (Mittins et al., 1970, p. 108). The researchers only allowed informal contexts, a decision which, as discussed above, they came to regret later. Lukač and Tieken-Boon van Ostade's study (forthc.) reports considerably higher acceptability rates for the stimulus sentence including *go slow* than the Mittins study. An acceptability rate of 92.1 per cent as the result of the analysis of an online questionnaire made them conclude that flat adverbs, such as *go slow*, no longer constitute a usage problem. Yet, it has to be borne in mind that the means of survey distribution they employed, i.e. through mailing lists of universities and research blogs, as well as highlighting the usage feature as in the Mittins study, could have had an influence on the survey respondents. Lukač and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (forthc.) also conducted a corpus analysis, which showed that *go slow* does indeed occur more frequently in COCA than in BNC and thus may be considered more an American usage problem than a British one. The details of this corpus study will be presented in the data analysis in the next chapter.

The stimulus sentence I used in the questionnaire is identical to the two studies previously mentioned, the only difference being that in my case the flat adverb was not highlighted in the stimulus sentence so that informants would not be biased towards the investigated feature (§ 5.3.1). The stimulus sentence used was the following:

S3. That's a dangerous curve; you'd better go slow.

The flat adverb stimulus used in the open-guise test highlighted the alleged association of flat adverbs with American English, as the flat adverb *real great*

was used in the marked recording. The stimulus sentence used in the unmarked recording made was *This is really great*.

6.5. The Use(s) of *Like*

The word *like* has numerous uses and functions, not all of which seem to be considered acceptable in Standard English, British or American. Some discourse-pragmatic functions of *like* have featured prominently in the usage debate, particularly in more recent years. The use of *like* both as a quotative particle, as in *be like*, and as a discourse particle, as in "She's like really smart" (D'Arcy, 2006, p. 340), have been the subject of a great number of linguistic studies (e.g. Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2004; D'Arcy, 2006, 2007; Fox, 2012; Durham et al., 2012; Nestor, 2013), and are often considered to be nonstandard language features by prescriptivists. While such uses of *like* are widely believed to be indicative of the decay of Standard English and are frequently associated with young and particularly American English speakers (see Durham et al., 2012, p. 317), sociolinguistic studies such as the ones mentioned here not only provide an insight into the development and spread of vernacular uses of *like*, but they also enable a better understanding of who the users of vernacular *like* are. Based on those studies, which seem to focus on the function of *like* as a quotative and a discourse particle, a clear gender difference was identified according to which quotative *like* tends to be favoured by female speakers (see Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2004; Durham et al., 2012, Fox, 2012). Hughes et al. (2005, p. 23) note that discourse-pragmatic functions of *like*, such as that of a discourse or quotative particle, are "becoming increasingly frequent in the speech of younger British and Irish people, regardless of whether they speak standard or nonstandard dialects". For this reason, I decided to include the alleged nonstandard *like* in my study of usage attitudes in England.

One function of *like* has only recently started to attract scholarly interest: the function of *like* as an approximative adverb. Standard approximative adverbs such as *about* and *roughly* as in *about two years ago* were found to be gradually replaced by *like* in Canadian English, as D'Arcy (2006) has shown in her ground-breaking study. While discourse particles are said to be void of semantic meaning and seem to be "imbued instead with pragmatic meanings(s)", D'Arcy (2006, p. 340) argues for *like* to carry "approximative meaning". This meaning is found in contexts where *like* appears in close proximity of numerical quantities, in the sense of "about", a usage which, D'Arcy argues, goes back to the early nineteenth century (2006, p. 340). An example of such usage can be found in 2.:

2. The guy weighed like a hundred pounds (D'Arcy, 2006, p. 343).

While previous studies did not distinguish between discursive and approximative *like*, D'Arcy (2006) urges scholars to be more cautious and precise about this distinction, which admittedly is difficult to make. The reason for this, she argues, is that *like* is found to be replacing the approximative adverb *about* in Toronto English, as is shown in her apparent-time study making use of a corpus of spoken vernacular Canadian English. Concluding her study's findings, D'Arcy states the following:

> … *like* has … accelerated in the system to the point where it is currently the preferred adverb for expressing approximation in numerical contexts among speakers under 30, at least in Toronto. The crossover pattern in the relative proportions of *like* and other approximative adverbs such as *about* … indicates a pattern of lexical replacement, one that has progressed swiftly in the community (D'Arcy, 2006, p. 351).

D'Arcy's (2006) findings reveal an ongoing lexical change. What is of interest in such lexical changes is their perception by members of the speech community. Emphasising how speakers' awareness tends to be greater in response to

lexical changes, she continues by quoting Chambers (2000, pp. 193–194) as follows:

> Words come to be associated with certain social groups, and their currency waxes or wanes depending on the social status of the groups. When a word declines in frequency, it almost invariably goes through a period when its use becomes increasingly restricted to older people.

While age did play a crucial role in the variation of *like* as an approximative adverb in D'Arcy's study, the speakers' sex played a less important role. D'Arcy (2006, p. 350) showed that while men tend to use approximative adverbs more frequently than women, their use of *like* and *about* was proportionally similar. The replacement of *about* with *like* is especially interesting given the findings of Biber et al.'s (1999, p. 113) study, which showed that the approximative adverb *about* is the most frequently used adverb in all registers they investigated.

Having discussed the distinct uses and functions of *like*, in particular its adverbial use, I would like to investigate attitudes towards the approximative adverb *like* in British English, as this function of *like* could potentially be considered an emerging usage problem which has so far been overshadowed by *like's* uses as discourse particle and quotative. Nevertheless, approximative *like* is gaining ground and is seemingly replacing the traditional approximative adverb *about*. The argument for the approximative adverb *like* being considered a usage problem is based on D'Arcy's (2006) findings for adverbial *like* varying according to age and to speakers' potential awareness of the feature. I created the following stimulus sentence to be included in my questionnaire:

S4. The new restaurant is like 2 minutes up the road.

I included a different nonstandard function of *like*, namely that of a discourse particle, in the open-guise test in order to cover this frequently discussed nonstandard function of *like*. The stimulus sentence used in the marked recording was the following: *I, like, don't know what to do*. As presented in the overview in Table 5.3 above, the unmarked stimulus sentence did not include *like* as a discourse particle.

6.6. Americanisms

American English has often been regarded as a threat to British English by laypeople, as it exercises its influence through "films, television, popular music, the Internet and the World Wide Web, air travel and control, commerce, scientific publications, economic and military assistance, and activities of the United States in world affairs" (Algeo, 2010, p. 183). According to Algeo (2010, p. 183), technological and cultural developments such as these have made American English to "the most important and influential dialect of the [English] language". That American variants are hence seemingly in competition with British English variants is a notion which has already emerged in the discussion of the previous usage problems investigated in this study. *Different than*, the use of *data* as a singular noun, and flat adverbs (see §§ 6.2–6.4) are associated with American English and are often classified by British English speakers as Americanisms. This categorisation is, however, subject to change, as many formerly-known Americanisms, such as the word *reliable*, are no longer regarded as such in Great Britain (Thomas, 1999, p. 177).

For this study, I decided to investigate attitudes towards the process of turning nouns into verbs, a practice which has been described as being more common in American English than in British English in which it is a frequent object of criticism (Thomas, 1999, p. 178). The formation of new words by means of verb conversions can be realised either by maintaining the noun

without adding any derivational affixes, as is the case with the verb *to impact*, or by adding suffixes such as *-ize* (Biber et al., 1999, p. 400). An example of the latter would the verb conversion of *to euthanize*/*euthanise* originating from the noun *euthanasia*, which was discussed by Allen (2003, pp. 19–20) in his *BBC News Styleguide*. As discussed in Chapter 2, the BBC is seen as a defender of Britishness by many viewers and listeners (cf. Ebner, 2016, p. 317), which explains Allen's careful advice against turning nouns into verbs by stating the following:

> English is not averse to the practice, but we should not risk alienating our audience by rushing to adopt new words before their general acceptance at large. *Euthanise* is not a verb you will find in any dictionary and it has no place in our output. (But who can say what will happen in the future?) … Our listeners and viewers must not be offended or have their attention diverted by the words we use (Allen, 2003, p. 20).

Shea (2014, p. 61), however, counters Allen's rejection of this alleged Americanism by stating that the first occurrence of *euthanise*, albeit in its *-ize* spelling variant, can be found in *The Times* (London) dating back to 1931 (*OED*, s.v. *euthanize*). Shea (2014, pp. 61–62) goes on to prove his claim that verb conversion should not be solely attributed to American English by showing how the majority of the examples listed by Allen in his *BBC News Styleguide* originated in Great Britain. It has to be noted that *-ise* is considered to be the British spelling variant of the *-ize* suffix (Biber et al., 1999, p. 402).

The stimulus sentence I used to investigate attitudes towards Americanisms in the online questionnaire was the following:

S5. The bank was burglarized twice last week.

The first occurrence of *burglarize* recorded in the *OED* is found in the *Southern Magazine* and dates back to 1871 (*OED*, s.v. *burglarize*). The author of this first citation is Maximilian Schele de Vere (1820–1898), a Swedish

philologist who emigrated to America and published *Americanisms: The English of the New World* in 1872, which aimed at describing the characteristic way Americans talked. The book contains a description of how *burglarize* had been used at the time, with Schele de Vere describing the word as follows:

> Burglarize, to, a term creeping into journalism. 'The Yankeeisms donated, collided and burglarized, have been badly used up by an English magazine-writer.' (*Southern Magazine*, April, 1871.) The word has a dangerous rival in the shorter burgle (Schele de Vere, 1872, p. 587).

Schele de Vere's description is intriguing in many ways. The spread of the word *burglarize* is mentioned not only as "creeping into journalism", but also in that it had been used by "an English magazine-writer", which is criticised by Schele de Vere (1872, p. 587) who continues by stating that the American *burglarize* is under threat of the standard English verb *to burgle*. Hence, Schele de Vere not only attempts to distinguish between the two variants, but also to establish *burglarize* as the legitimate American variant.

In order to cover a wider range of Americanisms, I decided to include the phrasal verb construction *to meet up with*, which was also investigated by Mittins et al. (1970, p. 45). Allen (2003, p. 20) mentions a similar construction, namely to *meet with*, which he categorises as an Americanism, while Luscombe (2012, p. 158) shows how the construction *to meet up with* was first proscribed by the BBC in the 1960s. Mittins et al. (1970, p. 46) mention Gowers's discussion of the feature in his usage guide *Plain Words*, in which he described the spread of this feature from "across the Atlantic" (1948, p. 42). The results of Mittins et al.'s study showed that *to meet up with*, which was incorporated in the stimulus sentence *We met up with him at the Zoo*, obtained a low average acceptability rate of only 14 per cent (1970, p. 47). Their stimulus sentence was updated and included in the marked recording in my own study: *So we met up with them at the station*. The modifications made

to the stimulus sentence were meant to increase its suitability for the open-guise test, as participants in this test were told to be listening to snippets of a conversation (see § 5.3.3). As mentioned in the preceding chapter (see § 5.3.4), a third attitude elicitation test was developed in the form of a letter of application. In this letter, I incorporated a verb conversion frequently associated with American English, i.e. *to impact*: *I am confident that this job will impact my future career considerably*. The test will show how salient the use of *to impact* was to the participants in my study. What this description of Americanisms has hopefully shown is that this kind of usage problem comes in many forms and shapes, be it verb conversions, phrasal verbs, or flat adverbs, as discussed above.

6.7. *Less Than*

The relationship between the determiners *less* and *fewer* is described as "fairly complex" in the *CGEL* (Huddleston, 2002, p. 1127). While non-countable nouns are usually modified by *less* if a negative notion is expressed, as in *Kim has less money than Pat*, countable nouns can either take *fewer* or *less*. An example of such an instance would be the following sentence discussed by Huddleston (2002, p. 1127): *He made fewer/less mistakes than the others*. This variability in usage between *less* and *fewer* with countable nouns is regarded as a usage problem. While descriptive grammarians such as Huddleston (2002, p. 1127) in the *CGEL* argue that *less* can indeed be used in connection with countable nouns, prescriptivists hold on to a strict distinction between *less* and *fewer* for uncountable and countable nouns respectively. Huddleston (2002, p. 1127), arguing in favour of both variants, writes that a sentence like *She left less than ten minutes ago* should contain *less* rather than *fewer* as "*ten minutes* expresses an amount of time rather than a number of individual units". He goes on to claim that "in such cases *fewer* is virtually impossible" (Huddleston, 2002, p. 1127). Whether countable nouns such as

minutes should indeed be viewed as expressing a single inclusive amount or rather as individual units seems to be the essence of the usage conundrum which is embodied in the iconic "10 items or less"-debate. The use of *less* in signs found at supermarket checkouts has often caused controversy in Great Britain. The BBC, for instance, reported how a British supermarket chain started to change their "10 items or less" signs to "Up to 10 items" after coming "under criticism from linguists" ("When to Use 'Fewer' Rather Than 'Less'?", 2008). While the article did not provide any information on who these linguists were, the Plain English Campaign, a British organisation which has been "fighting for crystal-clear communication since 1979" is mentioned as supporting the supermarket chain in question in finding an alternative (Plain English Campaign, 2016). Given linguists' passive role in the usage debate discussed in § 1.2, it does come as somewhat of a surprise to find them being the driving force behind the criticism of this use of *less*. Notable exceptions are, however, to be found in that some linguists, such as David Crystal (1984) and Peter Trudgill, in corporation with Lars Andersson (1990), have participated in the debate.

Mittins et al. (1970, p. 48) investigated attitudes towards the use of *less* with a countable noun by making use of the following stimulus sentence: *There were less road accidents this Christmas than last*. The sentence obtained an average acceptability rating of 35 per cent in the Mittins study and was consequently situated in the lower half of the list of usage problems investigated in the overall acceptability ranking (Mittins et al., 1970, p. 13). For my own questionnaire, I decided to draw on the "10 items or less"-debate, and composed the following stimulus sentence:

S6. Pay here if you have less than 10 items.

By using this stimulus, the awareness as to whether ten items are supposed to be considered one single inclusive amount or individual units is investigated. An instance of *less* followed by a countable noun was also included in the open-guise test (cf. 5.3.3). The stimulus sentence used in the marked recording was based on Mittins et al.'s study (1970, p. 48), but it was shortened for the speakers' convenience in the recording process of the open-guise test to *There were less road accidents last year*. The variant *fewer* was included in the unmarked recording (cf. Table 5.3).

6.8. Double Negatives

"Double negatives", "multiple negation" or "negative concord" are terms used to describe the co-occurrence of two or more negative elements in a single clause (cf. Anderwald, 2002, p. 101). While numerous studies have gone into great detail discussing negation and double negatives in particular (e.g. Cheshire, 1998; van der Wurff et al., 1999; Anderwald, 2002; Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2008a), my interest in this phenomenon lies in its stigmatisation and the impact of this on laypeople. While double negatives are found in "most parts of the British Isles", they are not considered part of Standard English (Hughes et al., 2005, p. 24). Hughes et al. (2005, p. 24) elaborate on this situation by stating that "it is in fact the standard dialect which has diverged from the other varieties, not the other way round". Pullum and Huddleston (2002, pp. 846) include a discussion of negative concord in *CGEL* stating that despite being "a grammar of Standard English, … the negative concord phenomenon is so widespread and salient that it deserves some mention here". That this particular linguistic feature has, however, become regarded as "wrong", "illogical" and "inferior" is due to its association with "working class speech", and is consequently being marked as a feature of "low prestige" (Pullum & Huddleston, 2002, p. 847; Hughes et al., 2005, p. 25).

The rule often applied against the use of double negatives stems from logic stating that two negatives make a positive (see Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 1982). Pullum and Huddleston (2002, p. 847) argue that the application of a logical rule is "completely invalid" as it "applies to logical forms, not to grammatical forms". Pullum and Huddleston (2002, p. 847) conclude that double negatives are not supposed to be considered a matter of logic, but of grammar. What is even more striking about their argument, given the lack of linguistic involvement in the usage debate, is their explicit judgment of those who consider double negatives incorrect.

> Despite its non-standard character every experienced user of English needs to be passively acquainted with the negative concord construction in order to be able to understand English in such ordinary contexts as film soundtracks, TV dramas, popular songs, and many everyday conversations. Those who claim that negative concord is evidence of ignorance and illiteracy are wrong; it is a regular and widespread feature of non-standard dialects of English across the world. Someone who thinks the song title *I can't get no satisfaction* means "It is impossible for me to lack satisfaction" does not know English (Pullum & Huddleston, 2002, p. 847).

Providing a historical perspective, Burchfield (1996, pp. 226–227) argued that double negatives used to stress the negativity of a phrase, yet sometime between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries the use of double negatives became "socially unacceptable". Whatever the reason for this development, the stigmatisation of double negatives has continued, as was shown in two studies conducted by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2005) and De France (2010). De France (2010) conducted a small-scale survey among university graduates in The Netherlands who were asked to rank ten usage problems, including the double negative, according to their acceptability from least to most acceptable. This study was based on an earlier study by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2005), who used the same ten usage problems to elicit attitudes from participants of the Federation of Finnish-British Societies. Comparing the findings of these two studies, De France (2010) shows that the double negative was the least

acceptable usage problem, which is indicative of the feature's stigmatised status. For this reason, I decided to include the double negative in my own study by using the following stimulus sentence:

S7. He wasn't seen nowhere after the incident.

I included the double negative in the open-guise test by using the stimulus *He didn't do nothing. He is innocent.* Both stimulus sentences used in the elicitation tests aim at identifying the feature's unacceptability, yet at the same time it has to be borne in mind that double negatives are frequently found in British English dialects. Since the informants of my study had the opportunity to comment on the stimuli, a more detailed insight into their attitudes can be obtained than a simple "acceptable/unacceptable" answer.

6.9. Dangling participles

Dangling participles are widely considered problematical due to a syntactical mismatch of subjects between the main clause and modifying clause which causes ambiguity and confusion. Syntactically, in such constructions the subject of the participle clause is not the same as the subject of the main clause which it is supposed to modify. In actual fact, however, discussions about the acceptability of dangling participles in the usage debate have often neglected the role played by context (cf. Ebner, 2014). This tendency to neglect contexts and to focus exclusively on written language is also reflected in the fact that dangling participles fall into the category of grammatical errors rather than stylistic ones (Aarts, 2014). That dangling participles cause sentences to be considered ungrammatical is also discussed in *CGEL* (Pullum & Huddleston, 2002, p. 611). While the main reason for the rejection of dangling participles seems to lie in the possible confusion and ambiguity caused by dangling modifiers, some participles, such as *speaking* or *provided*, have gained the

status of idiomatic usages and are now generally considered absolute constructions (DeBakey & DeBakey, 1983, pp. 233–234). To provide an example, the following sentence including *generally speaking* can be found in the BNC.

3. Generally speaking, individual cleverness by British players is abysmal compared to 90 per cent of overseas players. (AKE, written (newspaper))

Idiomatic constructions like the one in example above are no longer problematical. This is confirmed by a later analysis conducted by Hayase (2011, p. 90), who conducted a corpus-based analysis of dangling participles in the BNC and questioned the acceptability of some participles while others are supposedly "formally unacceptable".

Since dangling participles have been said to cause ambiguity, proscriptions are not uncommon, as are studies of their occurrence. One of these was conducted by Bartlett (1953, p. 354), who describes this particular usage feature as common in English literature and goes on to explain that "[t]he ubiquitous dangler which offends against sense and style is the fault of half-educated writers, trying seriously and awkwardly to sound like a book". Mittins and his colleagues included a dangling participle in their study with the stimulus sentence *Pulling the trigger, the gun went off unexpectedly*. Their analysis showed that this stimulus sentence was one of the least acceptable usage features in their general acceptability ranking as it only obtained an average acceptability rating of 17 per cent (Mittins et al., 1970, p. 14). Findings such as these enhance the status of dangling participles as problematical usage features. Drawing on Mittins et al.'s *Attitudes towards English Usage* (1970), I used a slightly modified version of their stimulus sentence in the online questionnaire:

S8. Pulling the trigger, the gun went off.

As mentioned in Section 5.3.3, the open-guise test also included an example of a dangling participle. Since this particular test was designed to contain snippets of a conversation, the following stimulus sentence was included in the marked recording: *Rushing to catch the last bus, Susan's shoe slipped off her foot*. The standard counterpart, *When Susan was rushing to catch the last bus, her shoe slipped off her foot*, was included in the recording containing the unmarked and accepted variants (cf. Table 5.3). Since I am interested in the role of context, I included two dangling participles in a letter of application as well, i.e. *Having worked as an IT administrator, the job seems to be the perfect match for my skills and experience*, and, *Having worked in my previous company for four years, my aspiration after a new challenge has taken over and made me seek a job in IT management*. The aim of this test was to assess the usage features' salience among speakers in cases where stimuli are presented in context.

6.10. *I* for *Me*

The use of the first person singular nominative pronoun *I* in places where the accusative pronoun *me* would be more appropriate from a prescriptive perspective seems to cause problems in cases where the pronoun appears in a context with another pronoun or proper name. This is most notoriously captured in the iconic phrase *between you and I*, which grammatically speaking, should read *between you and me*. However, it has to be noted here that this "*I* for *me*" issue encapsulates a wider variety of alleged pronoun misuse. Hence, it is possible to find this usage problem not only in prepositional phrases such as *between you and I*, but also after verbs, an example of which would be *She told Charles and I the whole story*, which was also included in Mittins et al.'s (1970, p. 89) investigation of usage attitudes. Although the use of the nominative pronoun *I* in the phrase *between you and*

I was in common use in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this linguistic practice became strongly criticised from the eighteenth century onwards (Mittins et al., 1970, p. 110). Mentioning yet another iconic instance of alleged pronoun misuse, Gowers (1954, p. 147) states the following about the perception of this usage issue in the mid-twentieth century: "… most people would think 'it is I' pedantic in talk and 'it is me' improper in writing". Gowers's comment thus indicates an interesting divide between different norms operating for speech and writing.

Mittins et al. (1970, p. 110) discuss two possible reasons for the persistence of this usage conundrum. Quoting Partridge's usage guide (1942), the Newcastle researchers argue that the pronoun confusion could possibly stem from the pronoun *you*, which remains *you* in both the nominative and the accusative (Mittins et al, 1970, p. 110). Secondly, referring to Gowers's *The Complete Plain Words* (1954), Mittins and his colleagues draw a possible connection between the *I* for *me* issue and a general confusion of *me* for *I*, as in an example quoted in Gowers (1954, p. 147): *Mrs. Forster and me are such friends*. Gowers elaborates this further by stating that "[o]ne might suppose that this mistake was corrected by teachers of English in our schools with such ferocity that their pupils are left with the conviction that such combinations as *you* and *me* are in all circumstances ungrammatical" (1954, p. 147). The phenomenon of hypercorrection, which is clearly at issue here, was already discussed by Menner in 1937, who describes this common process as "leaning over backward to be correct", which occurs "when a dialectal or substandard pronunciation which differs from that of Standard English occurs in Standard English *in other words*" (Menner, 1937, p. 165). Labov and Trudgill identified hypercorrections of phonological features in the speech of working-class speakers in the United States and England respectively (Trudgill, 1974, Labov, 2006). The use of nominative personal pronouns in coordinates such

as *between you and I* are described as a form of hypercorrection by Payne and Huddleston (2002, p. 463). Yet, it seems as if this particular usage problem has developed a special status in the usage debate and in the speech community, as its use is also found in the speech of news presenters and educated speakers (cf. Howard, 1993; Blamires, 1994). Thus, it seems as if the use of nominative personal pronouns is perceived as posher, more polite and correct than its prescribed standard counterpart with the accusative pronoun.

The Mittins study included the stimulus sentence *Between you and I, she drinks heavily*, which was, however, restricted in context choice to all contexts excluding formal writing (Mittins et al., 1970, p. 111). Regardless of this restriction, the stimulus sentence obtained an average acceptability rating of 23 per cent, which the researchers argued would have been even lower if the formal writing context had been included. Consequently, this usage problem was the least or close to the least acceptable features investigated (Mittins et al., 1970, p. 111). In my study, I included the following stimulus sentence, which was more formal:

S9. Between you and I, he will not be considered for this job.

The stimulus sentence used in the open-guise test was modelled on a different sentence also used by Mittins et al. (1970, p. 89), i.e. *She told Charles and I the whole story*, which was used to elicit attitudes towards the alleged misuse of *I*. The stimulus sentence was shortened to *You told Mike and I the story* and then included in the marked recording, while the standard counterpart including *Mike and me* was part of the unmarked recording. As I argue that awareness is a crucial component of usage attitudes, these two stimulus sentences could be perceived as deviating from other stimuli used in the recordings, which is due to the possible occurrence of hypercorrection, as described above.

6.11. Split Infinitives

The split infinitive is an intriguing usage problem due to its special status in the usage debate as a so-called "old chestnut" and prototypical usage problem (Weiner, 1988, p. 173). Its recurring character has made the split infinitive into a prototypical and well-nigh mythological usage problem, which has garnered considerable notoriety among speakers. Pullum and Huddleston (2002, p. 581), for instance, describe split infinitives as "probably the best-known topic in the whole of the English pedagogical grammatical tradition". The insertion of an adverb between the infinitive marker *to* and the infinitive, as in the famous Star Trek trailer *to boldly go where no man has gone before*, was first criticised in 1834 by an anonymous author in *The New England Magazine*, who proscribed against the use of split infinitives (Bailey, 1996, p. 248). The anonymous author P. argued as follows:

> *The particle*, TO, which comes before the verb in the infinitive mode, must not be separated from it by the intervention of an adverb or any other word or phrase; but the adverb should immediately precede the particle, or immediately follow the verb (1834, p. 469).

The origin of this particular usage problem can be traced back to the influence of Latin on earlier normative grammarians. While in Latin infinitives consist of only one word, English infinitives were supposed to reflect this inseparable character as well (Tieken-Boon van Ostade & Ebner, 2017). What is intriguing about this first proscription against the split infinitive is not only that is occurred in a magazine, but that the author also described how the split infinitive was used and perceived by his contemporaries. Hence, splitting infinitives was described by P. (1834, p. 469) as frequently occurring in the language used by "uneducated persons" as well as by language professionals like editors who had not received "a good education" and were therefore responsible for the occurrence of split infinitives in newspapers. The Latinate origin in the proscription of splitting infinitives can be seen as an explanation

for why uneducated speakers were more prone to this practice, since Latin was a central part of the education system at the time (see § 2.2). The anonymous author's comment also shows that Lowth, who has frequently been mentioned as the creator of the rule against split infinitives, cannot be held responsible for this stricture (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2011, pp. 117–118). In Great Britain, the earliest critical comment against splitting infinitives dates from only a few years later, and it was made by "a certain editor and co-founder of the publishing company Taylor and Francis, Richard Taylor, in 1840" (see also Tieken-Boon van Ostade & Ebner, 2017), who stated: "Some writers of the present day have a disagreeable affectation of putting an adverb between *to* and the infinitive" (as discussed in Visser 1972, pp. 1036–1037). Both critical comments were made in the nineteenth century, which can be seen as an indication of the construction's beginning stigmatisation. Reflecting the linguist's perspective, Pullum and Huddleston (2002, p. 581) describe not only how proscriptions against the split infinitive are caused by the "disapproval" of language changes among nineteenth-century grammarians, but they also argue how "[n]o reason was ever given as to why the construction was supposedly objectionable". The latter argument refers to how Latin served as a basis for English grammar description and the inclination of viewing English infinitives in the same manner as Latin infinitives. Thus, Pullum and Huddleston (2002, p. 581) call the term 'split infinitives' "a misnormer", as in their view "nothing is being split". Furthermore, it has to be borne in mind that splitting an infinitive with an adverb is not only done for rhythmical reasons, but also to add emphasis or to change the meaning of a sentence, as is shown in the examples below (cf. Crystal, 2006b, pp. 126–127).

4. a) I'll ask her and then get back to one of you two to actually do the letter contact. (FM2, spoken (meeting))

   b) They failed completely to understand the problem.

c) They failed to completely understand the problem.

While 4.a), an example taken from the BNC, illustrates a split infinitive for added emphasis, 4.b) and 4.c) serve as examples which show how the placement of the adverb can cause a difference in meaning (Crystal, 2006b, p. 127).

Mittins et al. (1970, p. 72) included the stimulus sentence *He refused to even think of it* in their study, which obtained an average acceptability rate of 40 per cent and was ranked in a middle position of the 50 usage problems investigated. Referring to the comments obtained by their respondents, Mittins and his colleagues argue that "[m]any of the comments referred to the issue in general terms", though they suggest that some respondents rated the stimulus sentence "in isolation and found [it] to have no advantage over the more puristic 'He refused even to think of it'" (Mittins et al., 1970, pp. 72–73). A similar stimulus sentence was used in my online questionnaire:

S10. He refused to even think about it.

Both the open-guise test and as the usage judgment test contained stimulus sentences which aimed at eliciting attitudes towards the split infinitive. While the marked recording of the open-guise test contained the stimulus sentence *She used to secretly admire him* (see Table 5.3), the following stimulus sentence was included in the usage judgment test: *I know how to effectively set goals and achieve them*.

6.12. *Literally*

The alleged misuse of *literally* instead of *figuratively* or *metaphorically* has caused a heated debate among prescriptivists and descriptivists in the last few decades. Thus, a sentence like *He literally was heartbroken* is deemed incorrect by prescriptivists, who argue that the original meaning of *literally* to mean *really* or *to the letter* would leave the gentleman with a physically

broken heart. In their view, *literally* would need to be properly replaced by *figuratively* since a figure of speech is described. This debate in Great Britain was fuelled by the *OED*'s acceptance of *literally* in a non-literal sense in September 2011 (*OED*, s.v. *literally*). The meaning of *literally* in the *OED* entry, which is labelled "colloquial", states the following: "Used to indicate that some (freq. conventional) metaphorical or hyperbolical expression is to be taken in the strongest admissible sense: 'virtually, as good as'; (also) 'completely, utterly, absolutely'" (*OED*, s.v. *literally*). The *OED*'s description suggests that *literally* is often used as a hyperbole and in fact expresses the complete opposite of the word's original meaning. This function of *literally* has also been discussed by Claridge (2011, pp. 108–111), who emphasises its intensifying function. The *OED* further explains that the colloquial, hyperbolic use of *literally* has developed into "one of the most common uses" of the word, while adding that this particular use is regarded as "irregular in standard English since it reverses the original sense of *literally* ('not figuratively or metaphorically')" (*OED*, s.v. *literally*).

The use of *literally* as an intensifier and in a non-literal meaning is not only often seen as a sign of the decaying state of the English language, but it is also made responsible for such developments (Nerlich & Chamizo Domínguez, 2003, p. 193). What may come as a surprise perhaps is that the first recorded use of the alleged 'new' meaning of *literally* in the *OED* dates back to as early as 1769. Hence, despite its recent popularity and the frequency of the feature in the usage debate, *literally* as an intensifier has a seemingly longer usage history than stigmatisation history as *literally* in a non-literal sense was first discussed only in Strunk's *The Elements of Style* published in 1918. Kostadinova (2015, p. 3) connects the spread of prescriptive sentiments towards *literally* to the popularity of usage guides such as *The Elements of Style*.

Despite its disputed status, the word *literally* rarely seems to be the subject of linguistic research. Israel (2002) investigates the semantic and pragmatic change of *literally* and argues for *literally* not being considered misused or incorrect:

> … people use the word in this [non-literal] way precisely because they do understand the notion of literal meaning, and they associate it, naturally enough, with plain speaking and honest expression. *Literally* seems to be following a well-traveled path which has taken words like *really*, *truly*, and *very* from early metalinguistic functions to later expressive functions. *Very* has completed this path to become a full-fledged scalar intensifier; *literally* still has a long way to go (Israel, 2002, p. 424).

Nerlich and Chamizo Domínguez (2003, p. 193) also describe the lack of linguistic studies that deal with the different uses and meanings of *literally*. In their study, they point out that *literally* is often taken to have either a literal or non-literal meaning, while a possible double meaning of *literally* is neglected. For all that, speakers' attitudes towards the use of non-literal *literally* were also investigated in the Mittins study, in which the stimulus sentence *His eyes were literally standing out of his head* was used which obtained an average acceptability rating of 35 per cent; accordingly, it ranked 31st of the 50 usage problems investigated (Mittins et al., 1970, p. 63). While their stimulus sentence achieved an acceptability rate of 16 per cent in the most formal context, formal writing, its acceptability rating was much higher in informal speech with 58 per cent (Mittins et al., 1970, p. 63). Mittins and his colleagues indicated how *literally* in its non-literal meaning was gaining enough popularity for them to conclude that "discouragement [of its use], it seems, might prove nothing more than a retreating action" (1970, p. 63). The stimulus sentence used in my own study is a slightly modified version of the one used by Mittins and his colleagues.

S11. His eyes were literally popping out of his head.

Another instance of *literally* as an intensifier was included in my study by incorporating the following stimulus sentence in the marked recording of the open-guise test: *The new store is literally just around the corner*. The unmarked variant, on the other hand, did not include the intensifier *literally*, as was shown in Table 5.3 above.

6.13. Concluding Remarks

The description of the usage problems investigated in this study constitutes an important part in the analysis of usage attitudes as this chapter provided an insight into earlier scientific studies dealing with the usage problems, such as the comparative corpus studies of *literally* discussed in § 6.12. The aim of this chapter was not only to discuss my selection of usage problems as to why these features are considered problematical, but it was also important to illustrate the linguists' point of view in the usage debate. As mentioned in the Introduction (Chapter 1), linguists are often accused of having avoided an active participation in the debate. Yet, linguists such as Geoffrey Pullum, Rodney Huddleston and Douglas Biber et al. have indirectly contributed to the usage debate in the form of their grammars *CGEL* (2002) and *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (1999), both of which took an overtly descriptive approach. Thus, the addition of their attitudes to some of the usage problems studied is the first step to bridging the gap between the three key players in the debate. Two usage problems, sentence-initial *And* and *very unique* (see §§ 6.13–6.14), have not been included in this chapter but are discussed in more detail in Appendix F. This is due to the fact that they have only been included in the usage judgment test, while all other usage problems feature in more than one elicitation test (§ 1.5). Hence, I have decided to provide both the linguists' and usage guide authors' points of view on these

two issues in the appendix, which makes the description of usage problems complete.

7. Current Usage Attitudes in England: the Online Questionnaire (Part One)

7.1. Introduction

Having outlined my methodological approach in Chapter 5 and having described the usage problems investigated in this study in Chapter 6, I will now turn to the data analysis and present my findings in the following three chapters. In this chapter, I will discuss the results of the first part of the online questionnaire in detail. The second part, which includes the language statements and the open question, will be discussed in Chapter 8, while the data collected in the interview sessions is presented in Chapter 9. Since I have chosen a mixed-methods approach consisting of both indirect and direct elicitation techniques as well as quantitative and qualitative data for the analysis of current usage attitudes in England, it is important to keep in mind the purpose of each test that forms part of this approach as well as their respective methods since these could have implications for my interpretation of the results.

Before tackling the analysis, I will describe the data obtained through the questionnaire and how it was prepared for the analysis, before providing the details on the statistical tests used for the analysis. The first part of the online questionnaire contains the eleven investigated usage problems. Each usage problem will be discussed in detail as follows: first I will present corpus data for evidence of usage, before any sociolinguistic variation in the attitudes of the questionnaire respondents will be identified. For the corpus analysis, I will draw on the British National Corpus (BNC) and whenever a comparison with American English is made, on the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) (see § 5.5). Secondly, the contextual preference of the usage problem investigated will be demonstrated on the basis of the questionnaire respondents' contextual acceptability judgments, before I discuss any possible correlations between the respondents' degree of judgment certainty as well as

on what grounds the acceptability judgment was made (see § 5.3.1). Did respondents base their judgments, i.e. whether a particular feature was considered acceptable or unacceptable, on self-reported knowledge of a rule or on their intuition? Whether the overall acceptability judgment, or the question whether the questionnaire respondents found a particular usage problem acceptable or not, correlates with a specific degree of certainty or judgment basis could provide a new perspective on the usage debate in the sense that the respondents' linguistic security with regard to usage problems is tested. This perspective made it possible to explore whether there is a difference between respondents expressing a prescriptive or a descriptive attitude with regard to the certainty about their usage judgment and whether they based their judgment on a rule they had learnt, say, in school, or rather a gut feeling. The third step adds a qualitative dimension to this quantitative test in that it comprises an analysis of additional comments made by the survey participants on the usage problem; this will be achieved by identifying recurring and prominent themes in the comments. A qualitative dimension will contribute positively to the understanding of usage attitudes as such comments can provide further insights into a simple acceptable/unacceptable judgment.

To position the general public's attitudes in the usage debate, it is also necessary to include the views held by usage guide authors. This will be achieved through a survey of the HUGE database. As mentioned in Section 6.1, I will use a slightly modified version of Yáñez-Bouza's (2015) tripartite categorisation to determine a usage problem's treatment as either "advocated", "neutral" or "criticised". The HUGE survey is, however, restricted to those usage problems which are included in the database.

In order to be able to carry out a comparison of usage attitudes with Mittins et al.'s (1970) *Attitudes to English Usage* in Chapter 9, the average

acceptability ratings of the eleven investigated usage problems will be performed, which will be calculated by averaging all contexts indicating an acceptable judgment. This type of calculation was also used by Mittins et al. (1970) and consequently will allow me to make a careful comparison between the Mittins study and my own investigation of usage attitudes in the area studied. In interpreting the results of the comparison, however, I will take into account the slightly different methodologies used and populations surveyed. While Mittins et al.'s study focussed on students and educationalists, only a small number of members of the general public were included in their sample. The focus of my study is, however, on the attitudes of a sample of the general public. Hence, the results of such a comparison should only be understood as an indicator of possible tendencies of changing usage attitudes.

7.2. Results of the Questionnaire

While the online questionnaire was completed by 230 respondents from all over England, it is known that online questionnaires are prone to a self-selection bias (Olsen, 2008, pp. 809–810; Bethlehem, 2010, p. 162; Toepoel, 2016, p. 200). This bias is also indicative of specific traits shared by the respondents, such as a general interest in language or eagerness to make one's opinion public. Not only does the self-selection bias influence the questionnaire sample, the means of how the questionnaire was made available equally influences the composition of the survey sample. Posting the questionnaire on various social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, I tried to increase its visibility by targeting younger age groups. However, in order to reach older members of the general public who might not be members of these social media sites, a call for participants was included in a newsletter of the University of the Third Age (U3A), which attracted a lot of interest from older informants. Other means of making the questionnaire more widely available included

handing out leaflets at the annual English Grammar Day held on 4 July 2014 at the British Library, as well as putting up posters at various locations in London during my research stay at Queen Mary University of London between January and March 2014. The self-selection bias in combination with the means of questionnaire distribution clearly had an effect on the resulting survey sample and its representativeness of the survey population, as can be seen from Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1 Full sample breakdown

Participants' Gender	Participants' Gender					
	18–25	26–30	31–40	41–60	over 60	Total
Male	10	8	13	10	27	68
Female	37	15	23	27	60	162
	47	23	36	37	87	230

From the table above, the overrepresentation of female and older respondents becomes obvious. In order to minimize these biases in the data analysis, I proportionally and randomly stratified the survey sample according to the 2011 Census of England and Wales for the two social variables age and gender. This resulted in the survey breakdown illustrated in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Proportionally stratified sample breakdown

Participants' Gender	Participants' Age					
	18–25	26–30	31–40	41–60	over 60	Total
Male	8	8	13	9	17	55
Female	9	8	14	9	17	57
	17	16	27	18	34	112

In the 2011 Census, 49 per cent of the English population were male, and 51 per cent were female. Hence, the proportional stratification resulted in 57 female and 55 male participants to be randomly selected from the set of completed questionnaires. Consequently, the sample size was reduced from 230 questionnaires to 112. Age constituted a more complex social variable as different age categories were applied in the 2011 England Census and my attitudes survey. While the census made use of nine age categories ranging from 'Age 18 to 19' to 'Age 90 and over', I decided to use only five age categories, as already illustrated in Table 7.2 above, which was also due to the regulations of the ethics committee. According to these regulations, the survey participants needed to be over the age of 18. The census data was combined into five strata which corresponded roughly with the categories applied in the questionnaire. I decided to merge the age categories 41–50 and 51–60 used in the online questionnaire into one category, not only to reflect the census age category more closely, but also to compensate for the lack of male respondents falling into these two age categories. Because, all in all, only nine men from these age categories completed the online questionnaire, I decided to include all nine male participants in the proportionally stratified sample for the age group in question. The underrepresentation of middle-aged respondents and overrepresentation of younger and older age groups, which is probably due to the self-selection bias and the means of survey distribution mentioned above, led to a few differences between the England census data, the Proper English Usage (PEU) survey sample and the proportionally stratified sample. Therefore, some age groups, especially the 41–60 one, are underrepresented. The differences between the 2011 Census data, the full PEU survey sample and the stratified sample are indicated in the comparison presented in Table 7.3 below.

Table 7.3 Comparative overview of samples and the 2011 Census data (%)

Age strata		England Census 2011	PEU full survey sample	PEU stratified sample
stratum 1	18–25	11.9	20.4	15.2
stratum 2	26–30	8.8	10.0	14.6
stratum 3	31–40	26.3	15.7	23.7
stratum 4	41–60	24.7	16.1	16.4
stratum 5	over 60	28.4	37.8	30.4
Total		100 %	100 %	100 %

As Table 7.3 shows, stratifying the survey sample benefits representativeness as the stratified sample reflects England's population more closely than the PEU full survey sample. The underrepresentation of the age group 41–60, which shows a 8.3 per cent difference between the UK Census and the PEU stratified survey, consequently led to an overrepresentation of other age groups, especially the two containing the youngest participants of the survey.

As part of the social and educational background information requested at the end of the questionnaire, I asked the participants to provide information on their ethnicity as well as on their first language(s). I chose to use similar if not the identical labels as used in the 2011 UK Census, as shown in Table 7.4 below. While the majority of the stratified sample stated their ethnicity as "White", namely 104 participants, a few questionnaire respondents had a different ethnicity, which can be seen in Table 7.4. As discussed in Chapter 5, England's population shows different degrees of ethnic diversity. A comparison with the ethnic background of the stratified sample respondents to the composition of the population of the Golden Triangle, as illustrated in Figure 5.2 above, shows that the stratified sample resembles the regions South England and East of England more closely than the highly ethnically diver-

sified capital London. Ethnic diversity, moreover, often also entails multilingualism. In Table 7.5, an overview of the linguistic background of the stratified sample respondents is given.

Table 7.4 PEU stratified sample respondents' ethnicities in percentages (raw figures in brackets)

Ethnicity	Frequency
White	92.9 (104)
Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups (e.g. White and Black African ...)	1.8 (2)
African/Caribbean/Black British	1.8 (2)
Other ethnic groups	3.6 (4)
Total	100 (112)

Table 7.5 PEU respondents' linguistic background in percentages (raw figures in brackets)

First language(s)	Frequency
English	86.6 (97)
German	6.3 (7)
bilingual (English/Spanish, English/German, English/Jamaican Patois, English/Finnish/Norwegian)	3.6 (4)
Italian	1.8 (2)
Danish	0.9 (1)
Polish	0.9 (1)
Total	100 (112)

As the ethnicity breakdown of the stratified sample respondents reveals, the majority stated that English was their first language, followed by seven German native-speakers and four bi- or multilingual speakers. Speakers of other languages who live in England and participate in society are considered part of the speech community described in this study. Hence, restricting the sample to English native speakers would only cause a misrepresentation of the speech community.

Furthermore, the education level of the 112 questionnaire respondents constitutes an important factor as it is one of the four social variables investigated in this study. As can be seen from Table 7.6 below, the majority of the questionnaire respondents seem to be well-educated. A comparison with the 2011 England Census, which shows a greater diversity between the different education levels with roughly 28 per cent of the English population falling into the highest level described as "degree or above" (ONS, 2012b), indicates that this difference is caused by a sampling error most likely due to the self-selection bias of online questionnaires and the chosen sampling techniques.

Table 7.6 PEU respondents' education level in percentages (raw figures in brackets)

GCSEs	GCE A levels	other certificate (e.g. HND)	degree or above
0.9 (1)	2.7 (3)	9.8 (11)	86.6 (97)

It is therefore important to bear in mind the rather homogenous composition of the stratified sample with regard to level of education when investigating and discussing usage attitudes in this study. In order to enable a more meaningful comparison between education levels possible, I divided the sample presented in Table 7.6 above into two groups: university-educated and non-university-educated respondents. An overview of this categorisation can be found in Table 7.7. The combination of the three education levels GCSE, GCE A levels and other certificate (e.g. HND) seems necessary given the low number of questionnaire respondents with lower levels of education.

Table 7.7 PEU categorisation: university-educated vs non-university-educated (raw figures in brackets)

non-university-educated	university-educated
13.4 (15)	86.6 (97)

Being a marker of social class membership as well, level of education will be used in this study as a social variable (Block, 2014, p. 3). Since social class is an important yet highly complex and disputed variable, a more socially stratified sample would be needed to be able to conduct a thorough analysis of social class. A list of all professions is provided in Appendix H. Although the sample contains a relatively large number of teachers and other language professionals, it cannot be assumed that their attitudes towards disputed usage features differ. As I have argued above (see § 3.3.1), language awareness is a crucial component of usage attitudes. This component does not necessarily have to be equated with the level of education, or a speaker's profession. It cannot be assumed, for instance, that all teachers are aware of disputed usages, as indeed will be confirmed in the analysis. The reason for different degrees of awareness lies in the fact that teacher training as well as the teaching of English has changed considerably in England (see § 2.3.1). This is also evident from a government survey of teachers published in 1998 which concluded that "younger teachers had generally not been taught grammar explicitly as part of their own education" (*The Grammar Papers*, 1998, p. 26). Nonetheless, the professions of the questionnaire respondents are presented together with other background information in the qualitative analysis of comments.

The proportionally stratified sample will be conducted in the Statistics Programme SPSS 23. Since my data is not normally distributed, I will make use of a range of non-parametric tests to determine any correlations between the elicited data. Making use of the Mann-Whitney *U*-test, which compares the differences between ordinal or continuous dependent variables and independent variables, I will first identify any sociolinguistic significant correlation between the dependent variable acceptability rating and the independent social variable age (all *p*-values are two-tailed). To identify any significant correlations between acceptability ratings and the independent social variable

gender, I will make use of a chi-squared test (χ^2) to refute the null hypothesis according to which there is no difference between the acceptability judgments of women and men. In case the null hypothesis, i.e. that there is no difference between any specific social groups and their usage judgments, is refuted, an Odds Ratio (*OR*) will be calculated to identify whether one of the two traditional gender categories "male" vs "female" is more likely to find a particular usage problem more acceptable than the other. Whether nativeness plays a role in the variation of usage attitudes will be investigated by making use of Spearman's correlation coefficient, which will show any significant differences between the two groups "native" and "non-native" speakers and the acceptability ratings, as to whether a particular stimulus sentence was considered acceptable or unacceptable. Spearman's correlation tests will also be used to identify any possible differences between acceptability ratings and level of education, i.e. university-educated or non-university-educated respondents. I will also state the effect size for each of the investigated variables, which describes further the strength of the identified phenomenon.[3] In order to assess the influence of all four social variables on acceptability judgments and to identify a possible covariance between these independent variables, I conducted a binary logistic regression analysis for each usage problem (Field, 2013, p. 761). This analysis will enable me to see whether the social variables age, gender, nativeness and level of education co-vary in their influence on the dependent variable. The binary logistic regression analysis is used to create a model which predicts the presence or absence of a specific characteristic (Acton et al., 2009, p. 258). In my study, this specific characteristic constitutes an acceptable judgment made by the respondent as to whether a stimulus sentence was considered acceptable or not acceptable. Since I am interested in

[3] Effect sizes were calculated by making use of the effect size calculator available at http://www.polyu.edu.hk/mm/effectsizefaqs/calculator/calculator.html.

determining the influence of the four social variables investigated in this study, i.e. age, gender, nativeness and level of education (university-educated or non-university-educated), on the outcome variable, I decided to use the forced entry method in which all predictors, i.e. the social variables, are included in the model (Field, 2013, p. 322). In order to compare the categorical predictors to a referent, I determined that age groups are compared to the highest age group, non-native speakers are compared to native speakers, male speakers to female speakers and non-university-educated speakers to university-educated speakers. The reason why I chose these reference groups is not only previous studies (cf. Mittins et al., 1970; Trudgill, 1974; Albanyan & Preston, 1998), but also the results of the non-parametric tests conducted prior to the binary logistic regression analysis. Having provided a detailed overview of how the analysis of the questionnaire will be conducted, I will now move on to present the analysis for the eleven usage problems.

7.2.1. The usage problems

7.2.1.1. *Different from/than/to*

Having described the prescriptivists' issue with *different than* in Section 6.2 above, I will first discuss the corpus evidence of *different from*/*than*/*to*, before presenting the sociolinguistic analysis of the elicited attitude data and a qualitative analysis of comments. To complete the analysis, an overview of the treatment of this particular usage feature in the HUGE database is provided.

As described in the preceding chapter, *different to* and *different than* have been found to vary in frequency of usage in British and American English. A corpus study conducted by Busse and Schröder (2010b, pp. 97–98) showed that *different to* was the second most frequent variant of the *different from*/*than*/*to* issue in British English, while *different than* was in American English. While *differently than* shows a strikingly high frequency rate of 1,087

tokens in COCA, it produced merely 10 tokens in the BNC, as can be seen in Table 7.8 below. Looking into these differences in more detail by comparing the usage frequencies of *different than* in both corpora, it does not come as a surprise to find this particular variant more frequently in COCA, with 4,569 tokens, which correspond with the highest normalised frequency of 20.45 tokens per million words in spoken section of the corpus. In comparison to COCA, the BNC includes only a total of 50 tokens for *different than*. With a normalised frequency of 1.81 tokens per million words the spoken subsection of the BNC also shows the highest frequency rate.

Table 7.8 Overview of *different than* and *differently than* in BNC and COCA

BNC		Spoken	Fiction	Maga-zine	News-paper	Non-acad.	Acad.	Misc.
Different than (*n*=50)	Freq.	18	6	5	3	1	10	7
	per mil	1.81	0.38	0.69	0.29	0.06	0.65	0.34
Differently than (*n*=10)	Freq.	1	0	3	1	1	2	2
	per mil	0.10	0	0.41	0.10	0.06	0.13	0.10

COCA		Spoken	Fiction	Maga-zine	News-paper	Acad.
Different than (*n*=4,569)	Freq.	2,237	480	470	873	509
	per mil	20.45	4.58	4.27	8.24	4.92
Differently than (*n*=1,087)	Freq.	339	95	183	204	266
	per mil	3.10	0.91	1.66	1.93	2.57

What needs to be borne in mind, however, are the differences between the two corpora in terms of size and collection dates (see § 5.5). Therefore, looking into normalised frequencies and reporting the subsection in which *different(ly) than* is most frequently found can aid a better understanding of actual usage.

Confirming Busse and Schröder's findings of secondary preference differences between British and American English, a complementary corpus search of *different to* shows that this variant is indeed more frequently found

in the BNC, as the spoken subsection of the corpus shows the highest frequency of 13.35 tokens per million words, which corresponds with a much lower frequency in COCA, which only shows 1.52 tokens per million words in the same subsection.

As the focus of this study, however, is on a sociolinguistic investigation of usage attitudes, I will attempt to show whether any significant correlations can be found between the social variables investigated and the questionnaire respondents' acceptability judgments, i.e. whether respondents found the stimulus sentence (S1. *The Americans look at this differently than the British*) acceptable or not. Looking at the social variables age, gender, nativeness and level of education, I found the only variable which shows a significant correlation with the acceptability ratings is age. While gender (χ^2 (1) = 0.55, p = .814), nativeness (r_s = –.081, p = .395) and education level (r_s = .059, p = .534) show no significant difference in acceptability ratings, applying the Mann-Whitney U-test showed that age has an effect on attitudes towards the use of *differently than* in that younger respondents are more likely to find the construction acceptable (*Mdn* = 31–40-year-olds), while older respondents tend to find it rather unacceptable (*Mdn* = 41–60-year-olds, U = 1128, p = .024, r = –.21). The small effect size, however, weakens the assumption that the differences between acceptability ratings vary significantly. Yet, smaller effect sizes are not unusual in small samples such as the one used in this study (Field, 2013, pp. 79–80). A binary logistic regression analysis was conducted to predict an acceptability judgment of *differently than* using the social variables age, gender, level of education (university-educated or non-university-educated) and nativeness as predictors. If none of the social variables are included in the model, the model would make predictions with an accuracy rate of 60.7 per cent. The overall prediction accuracy was increased

to 66.1 per cent in the model including all predictors, and the results of the analysis are presented in Table 7.9.

Table 7.9 Results of binary logistic regression: *differently than*

		95 % CI for exp *b*		
Included	*B*(*SE*)	Lower	exp *b*	Upper
Nativeness	0.25 (0.77)	0.28	1.28	5.82
Gender	0.12 (0.41)	0.50	1.12	2.53
Age (18–25)	1.20 (0.64)	0.95	3.31	11.71
Age (26–30)	0.85 (0.63)	0.69	2.34	7.96
Age (31–40)	1.35 (0.59)*	1.22	3.85	12.10
Age (41–60)	1.03 (0.62)	0.82	2.79	9.45
Level of education	–0.16 (0.61)	0.26	0.85	2.80
Constant	–0.39 (0.44)			

Note R^2= .06 (Hosmer & Lemeshow), Model χ^2 (7) = 8.683, p = .276, p < .05*

Testing the fit of the model showed that the proposed model produced a good fit model (χ^2 (7) = 8.683, p = .276). The Wald statistics for the overall effect of age on the outcome variable are, however, not significant (p = .129) despite being significant for the age group of 31–40-year-olds (p = .021). The exp *b* value indicates the changes in the odds ratios as a result of a comparison of different units, i.e. age groups for instance (Field, 2013, p. 786). This value shows an odds ratio of 3.85 for the age group 31–40-year-olds in comparison to the reference group of over-60-year-olds, which means that the odds of finding this particular usage feature unacceptable rise with the age of the participants. These findings are in line with the results of the Mann-Whitney *U*-test, which showed a significant correlation of age with acceptability judgment. However, the overall effect of age is no longer significant when taking into account all social variables.

Having analysed the sociolinguistic variation of attitudes towards *different(ly) than*, I will now discuss the contextual preference of S1. Furthermore, possible correlations between the respondents' acceptability judgments

and their degree of certainty as well as judgment basis will be investigated. While 39.3 per cent of all judgments made by the questionnaire respondents fell into the context 'unacceptable', the average acceptability rating of *differently than* in stimulus sentence S1 amounts to 32.6 per cent. What becomes clear from the contextual acceptability rating of *differently than* in Figure 7.1 is the formality scale of the three media of language discussed above: writing, online/mobile and speech (see § 5.3.1). The use of *differently than* in language used in CMC contexts falls neatly in between the two traditional contexts of written and spoken language, thus confirming Crystal's (2006a, pp. 51–52) description of CMC as the new third medium. The contextual preferences of *differently than* are presented in the order of increased frequency of acceptability.

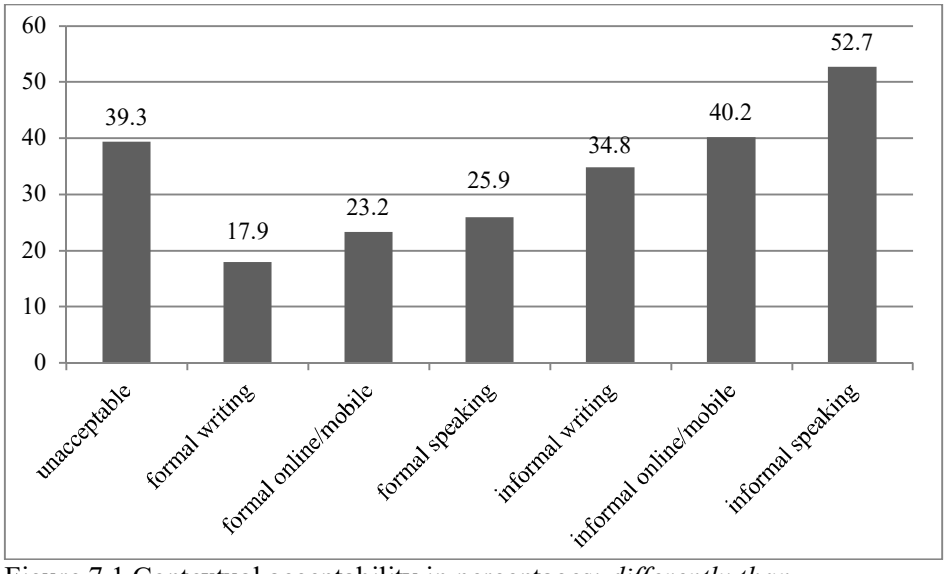

Figure 7.1 Contextual acceptability in percentages: *differently than*

The stimulus sentence S1. *The Americans look at this differently than the British* is considered acceptable in formal writing by 17.9 per cent of the informants only. The acceptability rate increases along the formality and media

scales and reaches its highest judgment in the informal speaking context, in which 53.6 per cent of all questionnaire respondents find the use of *differently than* acceptable.

Making use of a Mann-Whitney *U*-test, I was able to determine a statistically significant difference between respondents expressing negative and positive judgments with regard to the level of certainty about their acceptability judgment ($U = 1105$, $p = .009$, $r = -.25$). According to the statistical analysis, acceptability judgments determining the usage's unacceptability were made with a higher level of certainty (*Mdn* = "absolutely certain") than usage judgments of acceptability (*Mdn* = "somewhat certain"). To test whether the different respondents' acceptability ratings correlate significantly with their basis of judgment, a Fisher's exact test was used as well as Spearman's correlation coefficient to indicate the direction of the correlation. These tests showed that respondents' who consider *differently than* acceptable tend to base their judgments on a feeling rather than their knowledge of a rule ($r_s = .230$, $p = .014$), which also resulted in a significant difference according to the performed Fisher's exact test ($p = .023$).

A qualitative analysis of the 45 comments made by the questionnaire respondents produced three main topics, i.e. concerning offering corrections, distinguishing personal usage from that of others, and highlighting contextual usage. The above-mentioned findings of contextual preferences and the sociolinguistic variation of usage attitudes with respect to this particular usage problem will be complemented by metalinguistic comments of the questionnaire respondents which will enable a better understanding of and greater insights into their usage attitudes. The overlapping character of some topics identified in the respondents' comments makes a classification of comments not always straightforward. An overview of the identified themes can be found

listed for each sample sentence separately in Appendix J. For practical purposes, I decided to italicise the usage features in the comments of the questionnaire respondents in the examples below and throughout this study.

The topic of offering corrections brings to light an awareness among the questionnaire respondents of the stigmatised and disputed status of *differently than* in the stimulus sentence they were presented with in the online questionnaire. As can be seen from examples (1) – (4), the respondents identified *differently than* as the culprit in the stimulus sentence.

(1) Things differ from one another, not *to* or *than*.
(Retired dental surgeon, over 60 years old, male)

(2) One differentiates 'from' and compares 'to'. 'than' is just incorrect.
(Retired, over 60 years old, male)

(3) A thing is either different 'TO' or different 'FROM' another thing not different 'THAN'.
(Security consultant, over 60 years old, male)

(4) This is interesting – even though the 'rule' is about *different than/from/to*, it's the use of 'differently' that jars here. I think 'in a different way from (or than)' would sound more natural.
(Editor, 31–40 years old, female)

These comments also indicate the respondents' extension from *differently than* to the distinction between *different from/than/to*. Comments (1) and (2) exhibit prescriptive views in that only *different from* is considered the correct variant. What is furthermore interesting in comment (1) is that the respondent argues that the stimulus sentence is unacceptable because the verb *differ* is traditionally followed by *from*. A similar reasoning is provided in comment (2), which further extends the explanation to the verb *compare* being followed by *to*, indicating that *different to* is not a suitable option either. These comments contrast with comment (3), in which the respondent claims that both

different to and *from* are acceptable. Comment (4) is intriguing in that it illustrates how *differently than* is linked to *different from/than/to* in general and in that the respondent, a female editor, expresses her issue with the stimulus sentence by concentrating on the adverbial use of *differently* and stating that it "jars".

The second main topic constitutes a frequently recurring pattern in the metalinguistic comments studied in this thesis: distinguishing between personal usage and that of others. Examples (5) – (8) are examples of this theme and will be discussed in more detail.

(5) It's a common usage. But one I don't like.
(Education adviser, over 60 years old, male)

(6) I know this is not how I would say it.
(Specialist tutor for adult dyslexic students, over 60 years old, female)

(7) When I say unacceptable I mean I wouldn't use it.
(Manager in a museum, 41–60 years old, female)

(8) Not how I would say it as I would say "from" rather than the American way used here.
(Retired, over 60 years old, female)

What these comments have in common is not only the distinction between the respondents' personal usage and that of others, but also a distancing from the usage represented in the stimulus sentence which they perceive as unacceptable. Comments (5) – (7) state that the stimulus sentence does not represent the respondents' own usage, while the respondent in (8) distinguishes between her own usage of favouring the construction *different from*, and that of American English speakers', who she thinks would make use of the stimulus sentence presented. What became apparent in my analysis of such metalinguistic comments was a distinction that was made between American

and British English, as indeed in example (8). This is the third and last topic I would like to discuss here on the basis of examples (9) – (11).

(9) The use of "than" is American and grates.
(PhD student, 26–30 years old, female)

(10) In British English it should be "differently to" - the example is acceptably [sic] to users of American English; I would never correct an American for saying it!
(retired Primary and EFL teacher, over 60 years old, female)

(11) I understand it should be 'from' the British but in an informal context I would not correct this mistake in my own or other's language.
(English teacher, 18–25 years old, female)

As can be seen from these examples, *different than* is associated with American English by all three informants. In comment (9) a female PhD student states that this particular usage "grates". While comments (10) and (11) both provide corrections as in those that were discussed in examples (1) – (4), albeit in relation to *different to* and *different from* respectively, the retired teacher in (10) emphasises the acceptability of *different than* in American English. Interestingly, the English teacher in (11) provides further contextual information in that the descriptive use of *different than* in informal context would not trigger a correction with her, be it in her own usage or that of others. This last comment also emphasises the overlapping character of some of the comments.

Adding a qualitative dimension in the form of the respondents' comments to the analysis of usage attitudes towards *different from/than/to* emphasises the variability of attitudes towards usage problems in that the context in which particular usage problems appear seems to play a role. Furthermore, offering corrections and being able to extend the occurrence of *differently than* to the usage problem *different from/than/to* illustrates how a part of the general

public possesses a high degree of awareness towards this particular usage feature. That *differently than* in the stimulus sentence is associated with American English seems to confirm this notion, which is frequently disseminated in usage guides and other reference works, such as the *OED*, as discussed above. Therefore, it does not seem surprising to find respondents commenting on differences between Americans and British speakers with regard to usage. What is, however, important is the distancing of respondents to the allegedly incorrect use of *differently than*, as was demonstrated in comments (5) – (8). The comments analysed serve as an indication of the social salience of *different(ly) than* and *different from/than/to* as a usage problem. Having analysed the respondents' usage attitude data on *different(ly) than*, I will now turn to the treatment of this particular usage feature in the HUGE database.

In order to provide an overview of how *different(ly) than* has been treated by authors whose usage guides are included in the HUGE database, it is necessary to bear in mind that this particular usage feature has two further variants: *different(ly) to* and *different(ly) from*. The focus of this analysis is, however, on *different(ly) than*. *Different(ly) than* is discussed in 30 British usage guides included in the HUGE database. To classify these, I will make use of a slightly modified version of Yáñez-Bouza's (2015) tripartite categorisation of usage precepts into "criticised", "advocated" and "neutral". For this particular usage problem, I have also included a category "not mentioned" to indicate that the variant *different(ly) than* was not discussed in a particular entry. All in all, *different(ly) than* turns out to be the variant most often criticised since it appears in thirteen entries, followed closely by *different(ly) to*, which is criticised ten times. The prescribed variant *different(ly) from* was never criticised, which was to be expected as it is widely accepted and acknowledged as being part of Standard English. What needs to be borne in mind

is that usage guide authors tend to discuss the usage problem *different from/than/to*, which forms the basis of this analysis. The adverbial form *differently than* is, however, occasionally mentioned, as for example by Howard (1993; p. 124), who states that "[*t*]*han* is particularly useful after *differently*: 'they do things differently in New York *than* in London'". Before providing an overview of the treatment of *different(ly) than* in the usage guides included in HUGE in Table 7.10 below, I will exemplify the categories used as follows.

Criticised	XCIX. DIFFERENT THAN. *I found your affairs had been managed in a different manner than what I had advised*. Ibid. *A different manner than* is not English. We say *different to* and *different from*; to the last of which Expressions I have in another Place given the Preference, as seeming to make the best Sense. (Baker, 1770, p. 100)
Neutral	*Different than* is an established idiom in American English, but is not uncommon in British use… Both *different to* and *different than* are especially valuable as a means of avoiding the repetition and the relative construction required after *different from* in sentences *like I was a very different man in 1935 from what I was in 1916* (Joyce Cary). This could be recast as *I was a very different man in 1935 than I was in 1916 or than in 1916*…This construction is especially common when *different* is part of an adverbial clause (e.g. in a different way) or when the adverb *differently* is used, and has been employed by good writers since the seventeenth century … (Burchfield et al., 1984, pp. 101–102)
Advocated	Since the 18th century, *different than* has been singled out by critics as incorrect, but it is difficult to sustain the view in modern standard English that one version is more correct than the others. There is little difference in sense between the three, and all of them are used by respected writers. (Butterfield, 2007, p. 40)
Not mentioned	Sticklers would rather have 'different from' than 'different to' but some good writers (including Charlotte Bronte) have given 'different to' respectability. We shall not distinguish here. (Blamires, 1994, p. 20)

The first example listed here, which presents the earliest discussion of *different than* in a usage guide included in HUGE, namely Baker's (1770, p. 100), labels *different than* as "not English". Interestingly, Baker states that the other two variants could be found in English and he refers to an entry in his usage guide which, however, also describes the use of *different to* as an "impropriety" he would like to see banished from the English language (Baker, 1770, pp. 7–8). Burchfield et al. (1984, p. 101) on the other hand describe the difference in usage between American and British English and refrain from passing an explicit judgment on the use of *different than*. The stigmatisation of *different than* is also discussed in Butterfield (2007, p. 40), who however argues that there is "little difference between the three [variants]". Since there are three possible variants for this construction, Blamires' *The Queen's English* (1994) is interesting as it does not mention the often stigmatised and criticised *different than*, but rather distinguishes between *different from* and *different to*, which makes this particular instance an example for the last category "not mentioned". An overview of all usage guides discussing *different from/than/to* is given in. Table 7.10. What needs to be mentioned here is that the tables discussion the treatment of the usage problems investigated include both the date of the first publication and the edition used in the HUGE database (in brackets).

As can be seen from this table below, the majority of British usage guides discussing this particular usage problem criticise the use of *different than*, while only three advocate the variant. That *different than* is not mentioned in usage guides discussing the usage issue of which preposition is to follow *different* seems to be a temporal phenomenon. This neglect of *different than* could indicate a shift with respect to the prominence of the other two variants. The historical treatment of *different than* in HUGE is shown in

Figure 7.2 below, which illustrates the above-mentioned chronological development of this phenomenon.

Table 7.10 reatment of *different than* ("criticised", "neutral", "advocated" and "not mentioned") in British usage guides

criticised (13)	Baker1770, Baker1779, Vallins1953(1960), Gowers1965, Wood1962(1970), Burchfield1981, Greenbaum&Whitcut1988, Bailie&Kitchin1979(1988), Marriott&Farrell1992(1999), Burchfield1996(2000), Burt2000(2002), Taggart2010, Heffer2010
neutral (8)	Swan1980, Burchfield,Weiner&Hawkins1984, Howard1993, Weiner&Delahunty1983(1994), *PocketFowler*1999, Trask2001, Ayto1995(2002), Lamb2010
advocated (3)	Dear1986(1990), Peters2004, *OxfordA-Z*2007
not mentioned (6)	Alford1864, Fowler&Fowler1906(1922), Fowler1926, Gowers1948, Vallins1953(1960), Blamires1994
Total: 30	

Figure 7.2 illustrates that the beginning of the stigmatisation history of *different(ly) than* can be traced back to the late-eighteenth century. Interestingly, *different(ly) than* only re-emerged as a usage problem in the 1960s and was mainly criticised until the 1980s. Only in the 1980s did usage guide authors start to approve of *different(ly) than*, which, however, does not mean that they unanimously agreed on this feature's acceptability. Until the 1940s, *different(ly) than* was not mentioned in the usage guides as problematical, as the focus at the time was rather on the distinction between *different from* and *different to*. A notable exception is Baker's two editions of his usage guide published in 1770 and 1779 respectively. These findings contribute to Busse and Schröder's (2010b, p. 97) argument that in the twentieth century *different from* became the preferred variant in British English. That the focus shifted to stigmatising *different than* from the 1950s onwards could be due to the increasing importance and spread of American English after the Second

World War (Bauer, 1994, pp. 65–66). Figure 7.2 below shows how a prescriptive treatment of *differently than* seems to become more prominent in the 2000s.

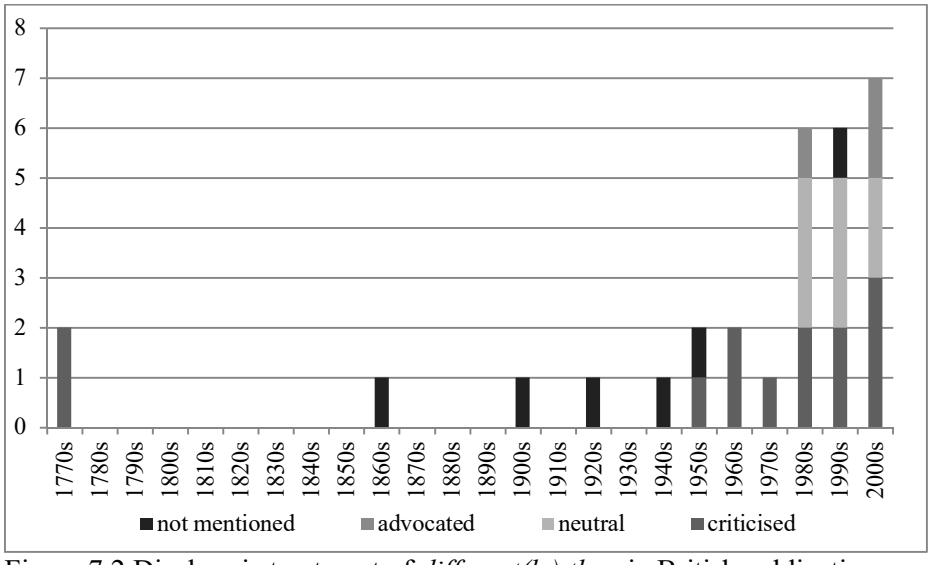

Figure 7.2 Diachronic treatment of *different(ly) than* in British publications

To summarize, with an average acceptability rating of 32.6 per cent, *differently than* showed a clear contextual preference in terms of acceptability judgments. While the stimulus sentence S1 (*The Americans look at this differently than the British*) indicates an acceptability rating of only 17.9 per cent in the formal writing context, it achieved its highest acceptability rating of 53.6 per cent in the informal speaking context. As can be seen from Figure 7.1 above, the three media of language – written, online, and spoken usage – fall neatly into an order of increased acceptability across the formality scale. The Mann-Whitney *U*-test brought to light how the social variable age showed an initially significant correlation with acceptability ratings, which would indicate an increase in intolerance towards the use of *differently than* with age. The overall effect of age on the acceptability judgment was, however, diminished in the binary logistic regression test which accounts for all possible

effects of the social variables investigated. Furthermore, questionnaire respondents who made prescriptive judgments show a greater degree of certainty and tend to base their judgments on the self-reported knowledge of a rule rather than a gut feeling.

My analysis of qualitative metalinguistic comments does not only reveal that some respondents possess a high degree of awareness of the usage problem at hand, but that they are also able to extend the adverbial *differently than* to the overarching issue of distinguishing between *different from*, *than* and *to*. Additionally, the comments show how respondents tend to distance themselves from a particular usage feature which they have perceived as unacceptable by differentiating between their own usage and that of others. As a result, the affiliation of *different(ly) than* with American English is enforced. Corpus evidence supports this finding, as *different(ly) than* occurs more frequently in COCA than in the BNC.

Analysing the entries in HUGE, a clear shift in the discussion and treatment of *different from/than/to* can be detected in the sense that until the 1940s *different than* was barely discussed in the advice literature. Since usage guides are a reaction to usage rather than an attempt to pre-empt usage, the spread of American English in the UK after the Second World War could pose a possible source for the stigmatisation of *different than* in British usage guides (cf. Bauer, 1994, pp. 65–66). Although *different than* has been found to be acceptable by some usage guide authors, such as Peters (2004), the feature remains highly disputed and stigmatised.

7.2.1.2. *Data are*

Having provided an insight into why the use of *data is* is considered problematical in Section 6.3 above, I will now turn to the analysis of the perception data. However, the findings of my corpus analysis are presented first. It does not come as a surprise to find the highest frequency of *data are* in the academic

subsection of the BNC given the stimulus sentence's (S2. *The data are often inaccurate*) formality and academic style. *Data are* scores a normalised frequency rate of 20.35 tokens per million words in this particular context. *Data is*, on the other hand, records a lower normalised frequency rate of 13.11 tokens per million words in the academic subsection of the corpus, which is also the subsection with the highest frequency rating. Since the spread and influence of American English has been associated with the increased use of the disputed variant *data is* in British English (cf. Peters, 2004, p. 140), I will also draw on COCA to identify possible differences in usage frequencies between American and British English; this needs to be considered with care given the corpora's characteristics described in Section 5.5 above. Hence the corpus findings presented throughout the study should be viewed as illustrations of usage tendencies in British and American English respectively. The focus of the corpus analysis does not lie on a diachronic comparison of usage frequencies, but on identifying general usage tendencies and interpreting them in relation to the corpora's subsections. The results of my corpus analysis are presented in Table 7.11.

Table 7.11 Overview of *data is* and *data are* in BNC and COCA

BNC		Spoken	Fiction	Maga-zine	News-paper	Non-acad.	Acad.	Misc.
Data is	Freq.	11	2	17	8	98	201	115
(*n*=452)	per mil	1.10	0.13	2.34	0.76	5.94	13.11	5.52
Data are	Freq.	0	0	5	0	99	312	75
(*n*=491)	per mil	0	0	0.69	0	6.00	20.35	3.60

COCA		Spoken	Fiction	Magazine	Newspaper	Acad.
Data is	Freq.	191	58	419	281	910
(*n*=1,859)	per mil	1.75	0.55	3.81	2.65	8.80
Data are	Freq.	42	18	351	158	2,320
(*n*=2,889)	per mil	0.38	0.17	3.19	1.49	22.43

That both variants obtain the highest frequencies in the academic subsection of COCA confirms the findings of the BNC. Additionally, the corpus search in COCA for *data are* resulted in a normalised frequency of 22.43 tokens per million words in the academic register, while *data is* only resulted in 8.80 tokens per million words, as can be seen in the table above.

In order to obtain a more detailed insight into the diachronic development of *data are* and *data is* in American English and so to determine whether American English could potentially have influenced British English, as claimed by usage guide authors, I will make use of COHA, a corpus of historical American English which was described in detail in Section 5.5 above. The results of this search are presented in Table 7.12 below.

Table 7.12 Overview of data is and data are in COHA by decade since 1810

COHA				
	Data is (*n*=177)		*Data are* (*n*=438)	
decade	**Freq.**	**per mil**	**Freq.**	**per mil**
1810	0	0	0	0
1820	1	0.14	0	0
1830	0	0	1	0.07
1840	0	0	0	0
1850	0	0	2	0.12
1860	1	0.06	9	0.53
1870	0	0	9	0.48
1880	0	0	1	0.05
1890	0	0	4	0.19
1900	1	0.05	14	0.63
1910	3	0.13	13	0.57
1920	2	0.08	22	0.86
1930	10	0.41	33	1.34
1940	8	0.33	62	2.55
1950	10	0.41	16	0.65
1960	11	0.46	42	1.75
1970	11	0.46	37	1.55
1980	26	1.03	53	2.09
1990	50	1.79	68	2.43
2000	43	1.45	52	1.76

A basic search of both variants in COHA shows that the variant *data is* has gained ground and has become more frequent in comparison to the accepted variant from the early mid-twentieth century onwards. The disputed variant resulted in 0.41 tokens per million words in the 1930s, while at the same time *data are* only obtained a standardised frequency rate of 1.34 tokens per million words. As can be seen from Table 7.12 above, *data is* has become increasingly more frequent over time, yet it has not exceeded the frequency of the prescribed variant *data are*. To provide a historical overview of the development of these two variants in British English, a corpus search of the Hansard Corpus was conducted. My findings for this corpus search are presented in the overview in Table 7.13.

Table 7.13 Overview of *data is* and *data are* in Hansard Corpus

	Hansard Corpus			
	Data is **(*n*=429)**		***Data are*** **(*n*=954)**	
decade	**Freq.**	**per mil**	**Freq.**	**per mil**
1800	1	0.20	0	0
1810	0	0	0	0
1820	0	0	0	0
1830	0	0	0	0
1840	0	0	0	0
1850	0	0	1	0.03
1860	0	0	4	0.12
1870	0	0	1	0.03
1880	0	0	2	0.03
1890	0	0	3	0.06
1900	2	0.03	18	0.28
1910	5	0.06	19	0.24
1920	7	0.10	24	0.33
1930	8	0.08	35	0.37
1940	12	0.13	11	0.12
1950	10	0.08	12	0.10
1960	23	0.15	25	0.16
1970	30	0.18	46	0.28
1980	110	0.60	271	1.47
1990	110	0.62	219	1.24
2000	111	1.25	263	2.97

This corpus shows that the use of *data are* has experienced a slump with regard to its normalised frequency in 1940. *Data are* shows a frequency rate of 0.12 tokens per million words, while *data is* ranks 0.13 tokens per million words. Before 1940, *data are* had predominantly been used and showed persistently higher frequency rates than *data is*, as can be seen from Table 7.13 below. Interestingly, the Hansard corpus bears evidence of a resurgence of the prescribed variant. This trend becomes strongly evident from the 1980s onwards when *data are* shows an increased normalised frequency of 1.47 tokens per million words compared to 0.60 for *data is*. For the last decade, the 2000s, my analysis of the Hansard Corpus indicates how *data are*, with a normalised frequency rate of 2.97 tokens per million words, is considerably more frequent than *data is*, which has a normalised frequency rate of 1.25. It needs to be borne in mind, however, that the normalised frequencies as well as raw figures in COHA and the Hansard Corpus are fairly low. Nonetheless, the corpus evidence illustrates general usage tendencies and shows how *data is* has been used more frequently in American English from the mid-twentieth century onwards. The findings of the Hansard Corpus indicate a shift occurring in the mid-twentieth century affecting the frequencies of usage of both variants, but it also highlights how *data are* has gained ground in parliamentary speeches from the 1980s onwards. Therefore, the corpus evidence demonstrates how *data are* is not only being used more frequently than *data is* in both BNC and COCA, but also that the feature is associated with formality, as the academic subsections showed the highest frequency rates in the corpora and a high degree of formality may be assumed to be characteristic of parliamentary speeches. The association of *data are* with formality is supported by the complete lack of occurrences of *data are* in the spoken, fiction and newspaper subsections of the BNC, as shown in Table 7.11.

As for the sociolinguistic analysis, the social variables age ($U = 1109$, $p = .076$, $r = -.17$) and gender ($\chi^2(1) = 0.1$, $p = .946$) in relation to acceptability ratings showed no statistically significant correlations. Similar results were obtained in the analysis of acceptability ratings and the social variable education (university-educated vs non-university-educated) ($r_s = .114$, $p = .232$). Interestingly, nativeness showed a weak positive correlation with acceptability ratings ($r_s = .278$, $p = .003$), indicating that native speakers tend to express a greater acceptability towards the use of *data are* in the stimulus sentence investigated. Using a binary logistic regression analysis to determine the influence of the social variables investigated in this study on the relationship identified between the social variable nativeness and acceptability judgment, I was able to identify a prediction accuracy of 67 per cent, if none of the social variables are included in the model as predictors. The application of a forced data entry method resulted in the proposed model with an increase of the overall prediction accuracy to 71.4 per cent. A summary of this model is provided in Table 7.14 below.

Table 7.14 Results of binary logistic regression: *data are*

		95 % CI for exp *b*		
Included	*B*(*SE*)	Lower	exp *b*	Upper
Nativeness	–1.85 (0.78)*	0.03	0.16	0.72
Gender	–0.28 (0.45)	0.32	0.76	1.81
Age (18–25)	–1.30 (0.66)	0.07	0.27	1.00
Age (26–30)	–0.08 (0.73)*	0.22	0.92	3.86
Age (31–40)	–0.45 (0.62)	0.19	0.64	2.16
Age (41–60)	–0.49 (0.69)	0.16	0.61	2.38
Level of education	–0.85 (0.63)	0.13	0.43	1.47
Constant	1.59 (0.52)*			

Note $R^2 = .10$ (Hosmer & Lemeshow), Model $\chi^2(7) = 13.99$, $p = .051$, $p < .05$*

Testing the fit of the model showed that the inclusion of all predictors produced a good fit model ($\chi^2(7) = 13.99$, $p = .051$). The Wald statistics confirmed that nativeness is the social variable whose inclusion in the model is most significant ($p = .017$). When comparing the age group of 26–30-year-olds to the reference group of over-60-year-olds, a significant correlation can be identified between these two variables ($p = .0498$). However, the Wald statistics for the overall effect of age indicate that this effect is cancelled out ($p = .367$). The exp *b* value indicates that being a non-native speaker increases the odds for obtaining a negative acceptability judgment, as the odds ratio is .16. These findings confirm the above-mentioned effect of nativeness with regard to the acceptability judgment on *data are*.

As mentioned above, the stimulus sentence (S2. *The data are inaccurate*) seems to be associated with formal contexts due to its formality and academic style. Figure 7.3 below shows the contextual acceptability distribution of *data are*. What is intriguing, however, is that this particular usage problem was considered unacceptable by 33 per cent of all respondents. As can be seen in the figure, the stimulus sentence is considered widely acceptable in all contexts ranging from 41.1 per cent in informal CMC to 63.4 per cent in formal writing, which resulted in an average acceptability rating of 48.5 per cent. It is interesting to see that this average acceptability rating is considerably lower than the one obtained by Mittins et al., whose data for *data is* obtained an average rating of 69 per cent.

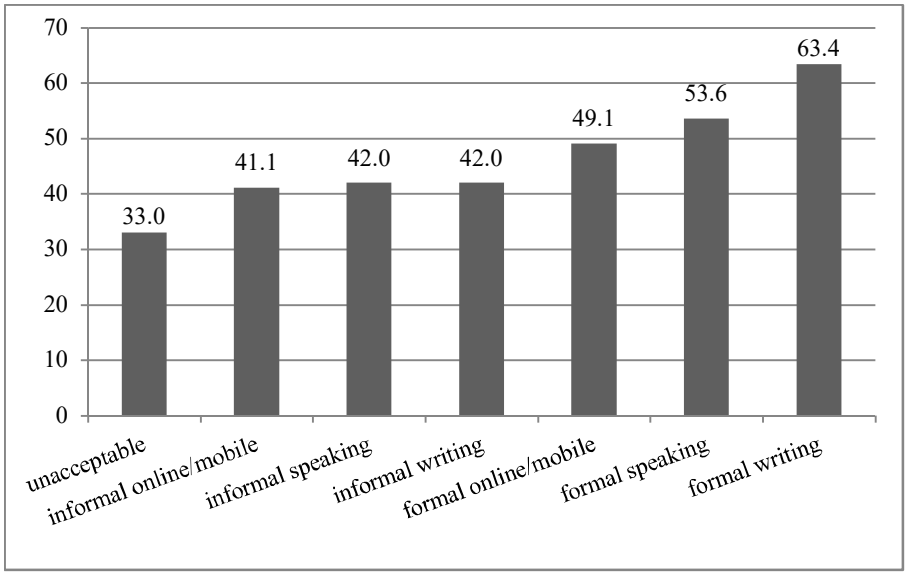

Figure 7.3 Contextual acceptability in percentages: *data are*

Figure 7.3 furthermore shows that both CMC-related contexts, informal and formal online/mobile usage, are no longer situated between the spoken and written language media, but precede the speaking and written media for this usage problem.

One way of assessing the respondents' attitudes towards *data are* is to identify any possible correlation between the general acceptability rating of the stimulus sentence and the respondents' certainty and basis of judgment (see § 5.3.1). While there was no statistically significant difference in terms of degree of certainty about their judgments between respondents who found this stimulus acceptable and those who did not ($U = 1254$, $p = .329$, $r = -.09$), a statistically significant difference between these two groups and their basis of judgment was identified using a Spearman's correlation coefficient and Fisher's exact test ($p = .004$). The group of respondents who found *data are* acceptable tend to base their judgments more frequently on a rule than those who rated the stimulus sentence containing the prescribed variant as unacceptable ($r_s = -.276$, $p = .003$). This finding adds an interesting perspective to the

discussion of usage attitudes as it indicates how those who report that they base their judgment on a rule consider the stimulus sentence acceptable, while those who do not base their judgment on a gut feeling. As discussed in Chapter 2, *norma loquendi* or customary usage seems to have influenced the latter group's judgment.

To turn to the analysis of comments, the respondents provided 53 comments altogether. Analysing these comments brought to light two main topics: offering a correction or explanation and commenting on personal usage. What needs to be mentioned here, however, is that the corrections provided affected the prescribed variant, which was changed into the variant *data is*. Explanations for these corrections were provided by those who seem to follow descriptive customs, while those who are aware of *data* being traditionally considered a plural noun offer an explanation for their judgments. Comments (12) – (15) serve as examples of the first and most frequently mentioned topic of offering a correction of *data are* or providing an explanation for the acceptability of *data is*.

(12) *data* should always be plural.
Retired arts consultant, over 60 years old, female)

(13) *Data* is the plural, *datum* is the singular.
(Security consultant, over 60 years old, male)

(14) The data is or was inaccurate.
(Civil servant, 31–40 years old, female)

(15) "The data'' is singular, so it should read ''The data IS .....''
(Retired, over 60 years old, female)

While (12) and (13) seem to be elaborations of respondents who express traditional views on this particular usage feature, comments (14) and (15) correct the prescriptive variant *data are* into the descriptive variant *data is*. Awareness of the growing acceptability of *data is* and its changing use as a plural are

illustrated in comments (16) and (17), which emphasise the difference between prescribed norms and customary usage.

(16) It sounds horribly unnatural, but I do know that 'data' is both technically plural and singular. I feel, however, that it is becoming naturalised in English and soon it would not be uncommon to see 'datas' as a plural.
(Student, 18–25 years old, female)

(17) The word 'data' although technically plural is generally acceptable as a singular noun.
(Stay-at-home mother, 31–40 years old, female)

The distinction between norm and custom is a vital one, which often seems to be forgotten in the usage debate. Yet, comments such as (16) and (17) illustrate how prescribed, traditional norms can be perceived by members of the general public. All in all, five of the comments make use of the word "technically" to refer to the traditional prescriptive norm of *data* as a plural noun, which is, however, followed by respondents stating that its use as a singular noun is commonly accepted as well, as it is for example illustrated in (17). Comments (18) – (20) provide further insights into how the use of the prescribed variant is perceived.

(18) I feel that Latinate plural agreements are still expected in formal contexts, especially if failure to use them might mark one out as ignorant. However, using this in an informal context could make one seem rather pompous or pedantic.
(English teacher, 31–40 years old, male)

(19) "data" is plural, however, using it in that context informally makes you sound a bit stuck up.
(Writer/Journalist, 26–30 years old, male)

(20) Feels wrong but I'm pretty sure it's grammatically correct.
(Student, 18–25 years old, female)

Not only does the respondent in (18) comment on the Latinate origin of the rule governing *data* as the plural form of *datum* as well, both respondents in (18) and (19) elaborate on the contextual use of *data are*. What is intriguing about those two comments is that they show an insight into the part of what consequences non-compliance with the norm or custom can cause. The respondent in (18) argues that the use of *data are* is "still expected in formal contexts" and that not complying with these expectations would be perceived as "ignorant". Yet, using the prescribed variant in informal contexts would be considered as "pompous or pedantic" (18) and "a bit stuck up" (19), as some respondents commented, which shows that usage has strong social connotations. Lastly, the comment in (20) serves as an example of how norm awareness and customary usage can affect speakers, such as this female student who, despite being certain about the grammatical correctness of the sentence, feels that something is "wrong" with the stimulus sentence.

The final component of the analysis constitutes the HUGE database analysis. 28 British publications discuss Latinate plurals, three of which do not mention *data are* explicitly, but rather discuss the issue at hand by using other Latinate plural nouns used in a singular manner such as *agenda* and *graffiti*. Before providing an overview of the categorisation of the usage entries into "criticised", "neutral" and "advocated", examples of each category are given below.

Criticised	DATA is plural only (*The d. are*, not is, *insufficient*./*What are the d.?*/*We have no d.*); the singular, comparatively rare, is *datum*; *one of the data* is commoner than *a datum*; but *datum-line*, line taken as a basis, is common. (Fowler, 1926, p. 108)
Neutral	This is a Latin plural and is generally used with a plural verb in English: The data available are inadequate.

	However, there is a growing tendency to consider *data* as a collective noun grouping together individual objects and to attach a singular verb to it: The data he has accumulated is sufficient for our purposes. (Bailie & Kitchin, 1988, p. 95)
Advocated	Originally data was a plural noun: *These data are all wrong*. But it's now widely used as a collective singular noun: *Let me know when all this data has been entered in the computer*. Both usages are acceptable in standard English. The singular is becoming more common than the plural, and it's the standard usage in the field of computers. (Ayto, 1995, p. 85)

As can be seen from these examples, Fowler's advice is bluntly straightforward, despite his acknowledgement of the prescriptive singular *datum* being rather rare. Bailie and Kitchin's *The Essential Guide to English Usage* (1988), on the other hand, contains a description of the use of *data* as a singular. However, the authors do not give advice on whether to use *data are* or *data is*. The example for the advocated category provides an insight into how the use of *data is* has been promoted in the past few decades by connecting this development to the field of computer sciences. Ayto (2002, p. 85) states that both usages can be considered "acceptable in standard English". Table 7.15 contains an overview of all usage guides and their tripartite categorisation into "criticised", "neutral" and "advocated". For the sake of completeness, the three usage guides which do not discuss the issue of *data are* explicitly but rather focus on other plurals are included in the category "not mentioned".

As can be seen from Table 7.15 the majority of the usage guides that deal with the usage problem *data is*/*are* take a neutral stance on the issue by not passing an explicit judgment or stating a contextual preference for either of the two usages. While nine usage guides criticise the use of *data is*, the usage is advocated in six of the 28 usage guides. What needs to be borne in

mind, however, is that advocating *data is* does not necessarily mean condemning *data are*. As shown in the example representing an advocated usage advice above, both variants are considered acceptable.

Table 7.15 Treatment of *data are* ("criticised", "neutral", "advocated" and "not mentioned") in British publications

criticised (8)	Fowler1926, Treble&Vallins1936, Partridge1942(1947), Gowers1965, Burchfield1981, Trask2001, Sayce2006, Heffer2010
neutral (11)	Wood1962(1970), Burchfield,Weiner&Hawkins1984, Greenbaum&Whitcut1988, Bailie&Kitchin1979(1988), Dear1986(1990), Howard1993, Weiner&Delahunty1983(1994), Amis1997(1998), Burchfield1996(2000), Crystal1984(2000), Taggart2010
advocated (6)	Marriott&Farrell1992(1999), *PocketFowler*1999, Ayto1995(2002), Burt2000(2002), Peters2004, *OxfordA-Z*2007
not mentioned (3)	Vallins1953(1960), Blamires1994, Lamb2010
Total: 28	

Criticism on *data is* in the usage guide tradition can be traced back to Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (1926). Figure 7.4 below illustrates how this usage problem is truly an issue of the twentieth century. *Data is* was widely condemned until the 1970s. The only usage guide published in this particular decade is Wood's *Current English Usage* (1962, p. 68), which mentions the use of singular *data* as "a collective denoting a single body of facts". Wood argues that *data is* is acceptable in certain contexts, though he leaves them unspecified. Technological advancements and the use of *data* as a singular in computing seems to have influenced usage guide authors' precepts towards *data is* (Ayto, 1995, p. 85). Figure 7.4 shows how usage entries discussing *data is* in a neutral or advocating manner have become more frequent from the 1980s onwards.

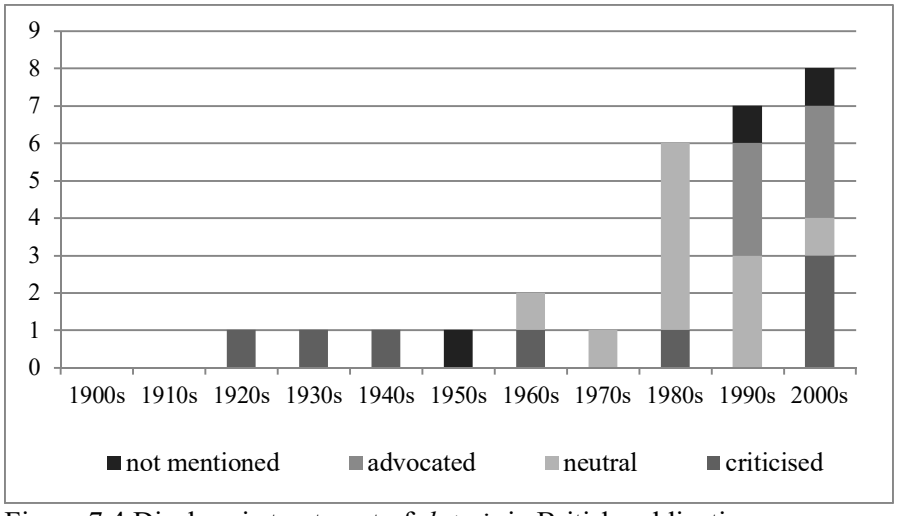

Figure 7.4 Diachronic treatment of *data is* in British publications

An intriguing trend in the treatment of *data is* can be detected in the 2000s, when we see an increase in criticism of the descriptive use of *data* as a singular noun. Among the three usage guides criticising the use of *data is* are Sayce's *What Not to Write* (2006) and Heffer's *Strictly English* (2010). Both authors use *ipse-dixit* pronouncements in their advice, as exemplified by Sayce (2006, p. 44), who briefly states the following: "The word 'data' is plural. The singular form is 'datum'. The data are reliable (*not* the data is reliable)". This recent increase in criticism towards the use of *data is* is in line with Tieken-Boon van Ostade arguing that the Age of Prescriptivism is now (cf. Chapter 2). Both Sayce (2006) and Heffer (2010) neglect contextual differences of *data* as a singular and its overwhelming use in computer sciences.

Although the Latinate origin of the distinction between singular *datum* and plural *data* constitutes the original usage conundrum (see § 6.3) and is often wrongly resorted to by prescriptivists, it seems as if *data* has extended its original meaning, in being taken as the plural of *datum*, to reflect a single collection of various facts. The use of the term *data* in technology seems to have promoted its widespread use as singular. The corpus evidence shows

only minor differences in frequency between *data is* and *data are* in both British and American corpora; *data are* occurs more frequently than *data is* in the academic subsections of the corpora, which is in line with the formality of this subsection. However, interesting tendencies can be identified in the Hansard Corpus of parliamentary speeches. While *data is* was seemingly gaining ground before the 1980s, a shift can be identified in this decade, which saw the resurgence of *data are*.

My sociolinguistic analysis of the respondents' acceptability judgments revealed a main effect for the variation between acceptability and nativeness, while no other social variable showed significant correlations. The importance of the social variable nativeness was confirmed in the binary logistic regression analysis. Despite the fact that they did not show a difference in the degree of certainty, the questionnaire respondents showed a clear difference in their judgment basis. Those respondents who found *data are* acceptable stated basing their judgment on the knowledge of a rule, while those who found it unacceptable reported basing their judgments on a gut feeling. These findings strengthen the distinction between norms and customary usage. With an average acceptability rating of 48.5 per cent, *data are* shows a fairly high acceptability.

The HUGE analysis of usage entries identified the origin of this usage problem's stigmatisation in Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (1926). Before the advent of the internet in the 1990s, *data is* was first treated in a neutral manner in the 1970s. In subsequent years, the use of *data is* was increasingly advocated, as was shown in Figure 7.4. Yet again, the 2000s show a resurgence of proscriptions against *data is*.

7.2.1.3. Flat adverb: *go slow*

After having provided a description of flat adverbs in the preceding chapter (§ 6.4), I will now undertake a detailed analysis of my usage attitude data by

first providing a summary of a recent corpus study conducted by Lukač and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (forthc.), before adding the perspectives of laypeople and usage guide authors on the use of the flat adverb in the stimulus sentence (S3. *That's a dangerous curve; you'd better go slow*). In a comparative corpus analysis conducted by Lukač and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (forthc.) it was shown that the flat adverb *go slow* occurred more frequently in COCA than in the BNC, in which both variants, *go slow* and *go slowly*, show almost equally high frequency rates. This study showed that *go slow* occurred most frequently in COCA in the subsections "fiction" and "magazines", while in the BNC the spoken and fiction subsections show the highest frequencies (Lukač & Tieken-Boon van Ostade, forthc.). The findings of the corpus analysis conducted by Lukač and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (forthc.) raise the question of whether *go slow* as a representative of flat adverbs or flat adverbs in general should be considered Americanisms. I will go into this question below.

My statistical analysis of a possible correlation between the social variables age, gender, nativeness and education level, and the obtained acceptability ratings produced the following results. While age ($U = 868$, $p = .357$, $r = -.09$), education level ($r_s = .070$, $p = .466$) and nativeness ($r_s = -.012$, $p = .899$) did not show any significant difference between those informants who rated the stimulus sentence as acceptable and those who did not, gender showed a significant difference ($\chi^2(1) = 5.233$, $p = .022$). Women turned out to be three times more likely to deem the stimulus sentence unacceptable than men ($OR = 3.81$). This result confirms Lukač and Tieken-Boon van Ostade's findings (forthc.) for the social variable gender. That women tend to reject the use of *go slow* could be a case of overt prestige, since women have been found to prefer standard variants (Trudgill, 1974, p. 94). Previous sociolinguistic studies proved that women tend to favour the standard variant or the variant

that carries more prestige (Trudgill, 1974, p. 94). The binary logistic regression analysis showed that a model which only includes the constant, i.e. excluding all social variables, predicts 80.4 per cent of all variation correctly. When all predictors are included in the model by means of a forced data entry method, the prediction accuracy of this model does not increase but remains the same. In Table 7.16 below, an overview of the proposed model is provided.

The model presented below proved to be a good fit ($\chi^2(7) = 8.82$, $p = .266$). The Wald statistics, however, confirmed that gender does indeed contribute meaningfully to the model ($p = .030$). The exp *b* value indicates that if the gender category is increased (1 = "male", 2 = "female"), the odds of obtaining a negative acceptability judgment increase with an odds ratio of 3.24. This confirms that women are three times more likely to reject the use of *go slow*, while a possible influence of other social variables included in the analysis can be ruled out.

Table 7.16 Results of binary logistic regression: *go slow*

		95 % CI for exp *b*		
Included	*B*(*SE*)	Lower	exp *b*	Upper
Nativeness	–0.03 (0.91)	0.16	0.97	5.78
Gender	1.17 (0.54)*	1.12	3.24	9.36
Age (18–25)	0.18 (0.72)	0.29	1.20	4.95
Age (26–30)	0.95 (0.87)	0.47	2.59	14.35
Age (31–40)	1.13 (0.78)	0.67	3.08	14.29
Age (41–60)	0.20 (0.73)	0.29	1.22	5.13
Level of education	–0.17 (0.70)	0.21	0.85	3.34
Constant	0.56 (0.50)			

Note R^2=.08 (Hosmer & Lemeshow), Model χ^2 (7) = 8.82, p=.266, $p < .05$*

As for the analysis of contextual preferences, the flat adverb *go slow* shows a clear divide between formal and informal contexts in which the stimulus sentence (S3. *That's a dangerous curve; you'd better go slow*) has been found acceptable by my own informants. While only 19.6 per cent of all

responses fell into the unacceptable category, Figure 7.5 below shows how the stimulus sentence was rated by the majority of respondents in all three informal contexts. Given the style and register of the stimulus sentence, it is no surprise to find the highest acceptability rating in the informal speaking context. With an average acceptability rating of 43.9 per cent, an unexpected decrease in acceptability can be noticed when comparing the stimulus sentence to Mittins et al.'s study which showed an acceptability rating of 54 per cent (Mittins et al., 1970, p. 109). Nevertheless, a comparison with the Mittins study should only be understood as presenting tendencies of possible changes having affected usage attitudes, as attitudes are notoriously difficult to compare given the methodological differences. Whether the lower average acceptability rating is due to such methodological differences, i.e. highlighting the usage problem and drawing on a different sample of informants, or to an increase in prescriptive attitudes over the years remains to be answered.

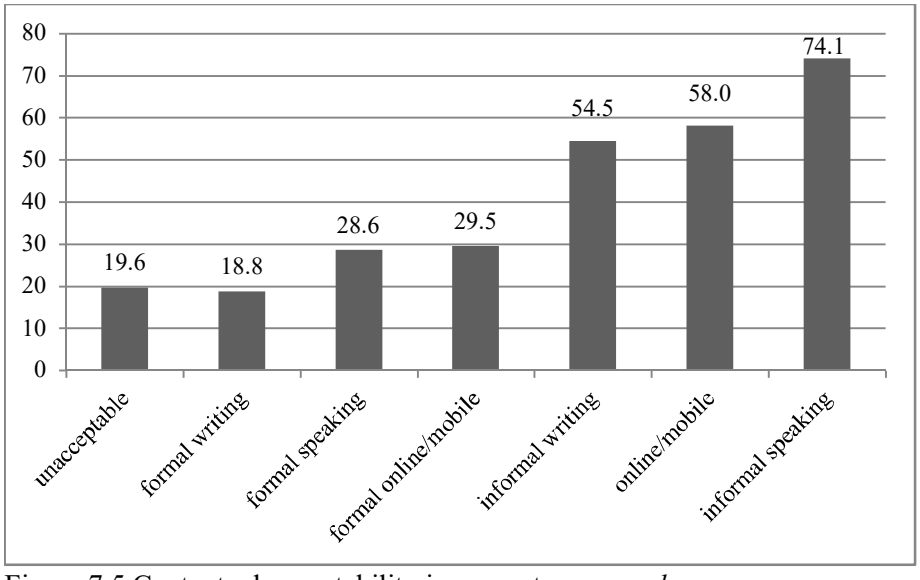

Figure 7.5 Contextual acceptability in percentages: *go slow*

Performing a *U*-test showed that there was a significant difference with regard to the different judgment groups and their respective reported degree of certainty ($U = 649$, $p = .003$, $r = -.19$). Yet, a more detailed analysis shows that the median in both groups constitutes "absolutely certain". According to the analysis of the judgment basis, a positive correlation between acceptability and basing the judgment on intuition, i.e. a gut feeling, could be determined ($r_s = .328$, $p = .000$), with Fisher's exact test showing a significance level of $p = .001$.

Investigating the metalinguistic comments obtained ($n = 42$) could provide an insight into why the questionnaire respondents expressed a lower acceptability overall when compared to Mittins et al.'s study. Many of the comments dealt with correcting the stimulus sentence, which indicates an awareness of the stigmatised feature. Examples of corrections can be found in comments (21) – (23) below.

(21) 'Slow' is an adverb & must take the -*ly* ending.
(Retired dental surgeon, over 60 years old, male)

(22) 'slow' is an adjective, so the adverb 'slowly' should be used.
(Retired school teacher, over 60 years old, male)

(23) go slowly. Adverb, not adjective please!
(Retired arts consultant, over 60 years old, female)

All three respondents whose comments are represented here make use of appropriate terminology to refer to the issue, and furthermore provide a correction stating that instead of *slow*, the adverb *slowly* should be used. Comment (21) seems to take a particularly firm stance on the issue by stating that the adverb "must take the -*ly* ending".

A number of respondents also mentioned other issues with this particular stimulus sentence, such as the use of a semi-colon or contractions. Comments (24) – (26) illustrate such issues and will be discussed in more detail.

(24) Semicolons sound a little stuck up for informal communicationn [sic].
(Writer/journalist, 26–30 years old, male)

(25) *Better go slow* is badly put, it should be 'slower' (than the present speed).
(Old Nuisance, over 60 years old, male)

(26) *That's* and *you'd* do not belong in formal communication.
(Administrator, 26–30 years old, female)

While the respondent in (24) argues that the semi-colon used in the stimulus sentence would be perceived as arrogant in informal contexts, the respondent in (25), who described his occupation as that of an old nuisance, criticises the conceptual representation of slowing down which, according to him, would be better phrased using the comparative *slower*. The last comment discussed here, (26), highlights yet another issue which needs to be borne in mind. Contractions as in *that's* and *you'd* are often perceived as informal features. As mentioned above, Mittins and his colleagues restricted this particular stimulus sentence in the choice of context with only informal contexts being available to their questionnaire respondents. This example illustrates the importance of selecting stimuli carefully. In order to make a tentative comparison with Mittins et al.'s study possible, I chose to make use of the same stimulus sentence.

A frequently established pattern identified in metalinguistic comments is the distinction between personal usage and the usage of others, which I would also like to illustrate briefly here. Comments (27) and (28) hint at the type of people who use flat adverbs such as *go slow*.

(27) This is very American, I would say 'slowly' but this phrasing wouldn't make me cringe.
(Account manager for a charity, 26–30 years old, female)

(28) It should have a colon. In addition, the last word should be "slowly"; I despise the use of adjectives as adverbs.
(PhD student, 26–30 years old, female)

Comment (27) includes an association of flat adverbs with American English, which has already been mentioned above. Stating that this stimulus sentence "is very American", the respondent, who is British, distances herself from this usage further by arguing that she would use the adverb *slowly*. In contrast to her rather lenient attitude towards flat adverbs, the PhD student in (28) corrects not only the semi-colon, but goes on to state that she despises flat adverbs.

Metalinguistic comments such as the ones discussed above provide a more detailed insight into usage attitudes and enable a better understanding of them. By analysing these comments, it was possible to see that the stimulus sentence used could potentially have influenced the respondents in their judgments, as the sentence contained features characteristic of informal language, such as contractions. Furthermore, the use of written stimuli to elicit attitudes towards spoken contexts needs to be mentioned here as problematical in a survey like this. These issues were, unfortunately, not raised in the pilot phase of the questionnaire, or I could have adapted the sentence accordingly (see § 5.3.1).

Having analysed the questionnaire respondents' attitudes towards the flat adverb *go slow*, I will now present the findings of the analysis of usage guide entries discussing this particular usage feature. Out of the 39 British usage guides included in HUGE, 25 discuss flat adverbs. Since the database uses the term "slow/slowly" as a label for flat adverbs in general, the entries investigated also contain other flat adverbs. Categorising the entries of these usage guides on the basis of their treatment, i.e. whether the use of flat adverbs is explicitly criticised or advocated, or whether no explicit judgment is made but rather a contextual preference is stated, resulted in ten usage guides falling

into the "criticised" category, thirteen into the "neutral" and two into the "advocated" category. Examples of each category are presented below, followed by an overview of all 25 usage guides and their categorisation in Table 7.17.

Criticised

As explained on page 29, adverbs are words used to describe verbs, adjectives or other adverbs and are often formed by adding *-ly* to the adjective:
The teacher was cross
She spoke to me ***crossly*** (i.e. in a cross way)
He was a heavy man
He moved ***heavily*** (i.e. in a heavy way)
In recent years, however, many sports commentators have chosen to ignore this distinction and say such things as *Federer is serving beautiful* or *Woods drove his tee shot perfect*. In fact, this usage has become so common that it may almost be considered the norm. But only if one is a sports commentator. For anyone else, it is ungrammatical and unacceptable. (Taggart, 2010, p. 52)

Neutral

Slow or **slowly** As with **quick**, *slow* often replaces the correct grammatical form *slowly*. Markings on roads read SLOW, rather than SLOWLY, and workers decide to **go-slow** as a form of industrial action. In commands or very short sentences, especially following the verb 'go', *slow* is often the usual form: 'Be careful and go slow'. In most other cases, especially in writing or in longer sentences, slowly is the correct form to use: 'she drove slowly through the village'; 'let's go slowly until we see how things work out'. (Howard, 1993, p. 371)

Advocated

Go slow is an accepted idiom. The normal adverb is *slowly*, and the comparative *more slowly*, but we say 'The car went slower and slower until it came to a standstill'. Perhaps we feel the word to be semi-adjectival, descriptive of the speed; and in any case *more and more slowly* would sound awkward. (Wood, 1962, p. 217)

The "criticised" example provided above describes how flat adverbs have increasingly spread in society, yet the author of the usage guide in question, Taggart (2010, p. 52), identifies sports commentators as being particular prone to the use of flat adverbs, which she calls "ungrammatical and unacceptable". Howard's (1993, p. 371) advice, cited as an example of the neutral treatment

of flat adverbs, distinguishes between different contexts and favours the use of *slowly* in written contexts. Wood's description of the flat adverb *go slow* as "accepted idiom" (1962, p. 217), on the other hand, constitutes the most lenient treatment of flat adverbs in the usage guides investigated. Table 7.17 includes the detailed categorisation of usage guide entries.

Table 7.17 shows that flat adverbs are rarely advocated in the British usage guides included in HUGE. In order to analyse the diachronic development of the treatment of flat adverbs in these usage guides, I will provide an overview in Figure 7.6 below.

Table 7.17 Treatment of flat adverbs ("criticised", "neutral" and "advocated") in British publications

criticised (10)	Baker1770, Baker1779, Moon1868, Burchfield,Weiner&Hawkins1984, Dear1986(1990), Weiner&Delahunty1983(1994), Trask2001, Taggart2010, Heffer2010, Lamb2010
neutral (13)	Alford1864, Fowler1926, Partridge1942(1947), Vallins1953(1960), Gowers1965, Bailie&Kitchin1979(1988), Swan1980, Greenbaum&Whitcut1988, Howard1993, *PocketFowler*1999, Burchfield1996(2000), Ayto1995(2002), Peters2004, *OxfordA-Z*2007
advocated (2)	Wood1962(1970)
Total: 25	

This overview shows that flat adverbs were already criticised from the earliest days of the usage guide tradition onwards, as the feature already occurs in both editions of Robert Baker's usage guide, published in 1770 and 1779 respectively. The difference between these two editions is the addition of a proscriptive comment on *tolerable well/good*, which Baker advocated instead of *tolerably* in his second edition (1779, p. 34). What followed was a period of criticism and neutral usage advice which, however, ended in a short period of acceptance in the 1960s and 1970s. This diachronic overview illustrates how flat

adverbs have consistently featured in usage guides from the 1960s onwards. Figure 7.6 below, however, clearly highlights how from the 1980s onwards prescriptive and proscriptive usage advice has been gaining ground.

To conclude, flat adverbs, such as the iconic *go slow*, have not only been considered old chestnuts in the usage debate, but they have also been frequently associated with American English. Based on an earlier study conducted by Lukač and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (forthc.), the corpus evidence showed that *go slow* does indeed occur more frequently in COCA than in the BNC. Although Lukač and Tieken-Boon van Ostade identified both gender and age as showing significant correlations in their attitude study with acceptability judgments, my own analysis, which exclusively concerned British users, revealed only an influence of gender on usage attitudes. The women in my sample are three times more likely to reject flat adverbs than men, which could hint at overt prestige. This finding was also confirmed in the binary logistic regression analysis. The reason for the difference between the two studies very likely lies in the different survey samples and methods applied.

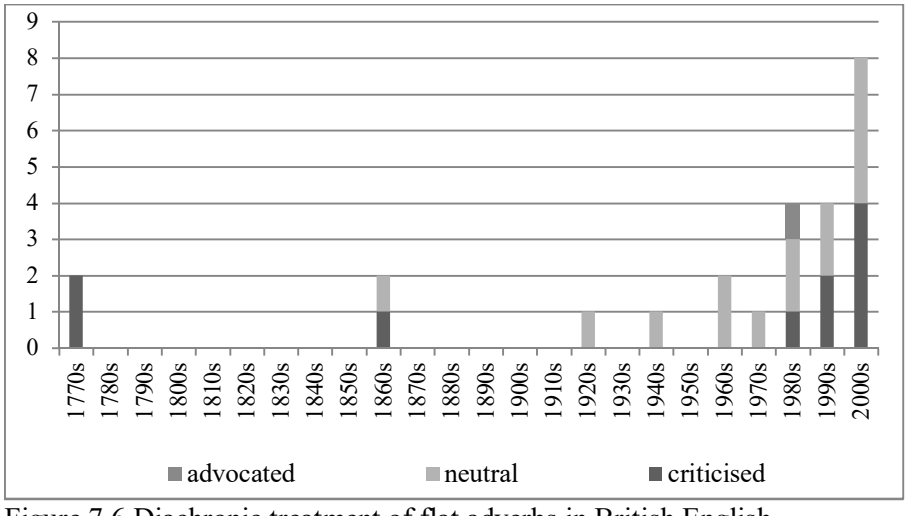

Figure 7.6 Diachronic treatment of flat adverbs in British English

The analysis of contextual preferences of the questionnaire respondents for the stimulus sentence (S3. *That's a dangerous curve; you'd better go slow*) showed the highest acceptability rating of nearly 75 per cent in the informal speaking context, while the lowest acceptability rating of 18.8 per cent was obtained for the formal written context. Hence, the average acceptability rating of the stimulus sentence containing *go slow* was 43.9 per cent, which was surprisingly lower than the average acceptability rating of 54 per cent identified by Mittins and his colleagues in the late 1960s (Mittins et al., 1970, p. 109). While the qualitative comments further provided an insight into how the use of flat adverbs is perceived, contextual differences were also commented on by the respondents. What needs to be emphasised here is the possible bias of other features of the stimulus sentence used in my investigation, such as the appearance of the semi-colon and the two contractions. These issues could have influenced the respondents' judgments as a result of which the judgment could not only have affected the occurrence of the flat adverb but also that of the semi-colon or the contractions. The HUGE database analysis showed that flat adverbs, such as the iconic *go slow*, has a long history in the advice literature. Furthermore, usage guide authors tend to predominantly consider flat adverbs critically, as usage of the feature is rarely advocated. Again, the last three decades covered by the database show an increased occurrence of critical treatments of flat adverbs such as *go slow* in HUGE.

7.2.1.4. *Like* as an approximative adverb

Of the two nonstandard functions of *like* investigated in this study (see § 6.5), attitudes towards the use of *like* as an approximative adverb were elicited by means of the stimulus sentence (S4 *The new restaurant is like 2 minutes up the road*). Firstly, corpus evidence of the use of *like* as an approximative adverb will be provided in this section before a sociolinguistic analysis of the

questionnaire respondents' attitudes is tackled. Conducting a corpus search in the BNC, I limited my search to patterns reflecting the stimulus sentence. Hence, making use of the POS-tagger in BNC, I searched for constructions involving *is/was/are/were like* being followed by a numerical expression. The same search was conducted for *about*. The corpus search showed that *about* (n = 1,764) is used considerably more frequently than *like* (n = 29) as an approximative adverb. The findings of the corpus search were limited to both adverbs fulfilling the approximative function, while *like*'s comparative functions, its use as a discourse particle, as well as *about* in the phrase *to be about* were carefully excluded. Examples of these types are given below in 5.a) and 5.b).

5. a) As a matter of fact we were like two atom bombs -- we'd go off together and there would be this tremendous explosion but we'd come down together, too. (CH8, written (biography))

   b) The superb women's road movie Thelma And Louise is about two pals who cock a snoot at men in general during an impromptu crime odyssey. (CBC, written (newspaper other social))

Looking at *like* as an approximative adverb from a qualitative perspective, I was able to identify a similar notion as expressed by D'Arcy (2006, p. 342), who states that *like* co-occurs with words referring to age only to express vagueness. In such contexts, *like* behaves syntactically in a similar manner as the traditional approximative adverbs *about* and *roughly* (see § 6.5). Below, two examples of *like* as an approximative adverb are given, one expressing vagueness in connection with age (6.a) while the other one expresses vagueness concerning quantity (6.b).

6. a) No, I was just getting charged full fares when I was like thirteen.(KPF, spoken (conversation))

   b) Oh I think that was one of two. The other one was like four hundred and ninety nine pounds. (KPU, spoken (conversation))

In order to add a contrastive perspective, I looked at the corpus findings of approximative adverb *like* in more detail, which made it possible to identify the majority of occurrences in spoken contexts, namely 27 out of 29 approximative adverbs. By contrast, the approximative adverb *about* shows a greater occurrence in all subsections of the BNC. Since *like* as an approximative adverb seems only recently to have been gaining ground and replacing *about*, a corpus search of the BNC can only be taken as an indication of trends due to the composition of the corpus (see § 5.5). In order to provide a clearer overview of the development of *like* as an approximative adverb, a study making use of more up-to-date corpora such as D'Arcy's study (2006) would be needed.

As was discussed in Section 6.5, D'Arcy (2006) showed the importance of age and gender in the variability in the use of approximative adverb *like* in Canadian English. Whether these social variables also play a role in the perceptions of this particular usage feature in British English will be examined here. My statistical analysis reflected the tendencies of lexical replacement of *about* by *like* in that the age of my informants proved to play a crucial role in the acceptability of the stimulus sentence ($U = 1046$, $p = .000$, $r = -.19$). This means that younger respondents tend to find the stimulus sentence acceptable (*Mdn* = 31–40-year-olds), while those who find it unacceptable tend to be older (*Mdn* = 41–60-years old). The other social variables, such as education level ($r_s = .091$, $p = .342$), gender ($\chi^2(1) = .001$, $p = .975$) and nativeness ($r_s = -.037$, $p = .695$), did not show any statistically significant differences. The results of the binary logistic regression analysis showed that the prediction accuracy of a model excluding all social variables is 58 per cent, which increases to 67 per cent if all predictors are included in the model illustrated in Table 7.18.

Testing the fit of the model showed that the model presented in Table 7.18 below is a poor fit ($\chi^2(7) = 20.32$, $p = .005$), which could be due to the quality of the data collected. Nonetheless, the Wald statistics confirmed the meaningful contribution of the social variable age to the model ($p = .002$), with the groups of 18–25-year-olds ($p = .016$), 26–30-year-olds ($p = .003$), and 41–60-year-olds ($p = .002$) displaying levels of statistical significance when compared to the reference group of over- 60-year-olds. The exp *b* values of these three groups indicate that older respondents exhibit higher tendencies to reject the use of *like* in S4. This is also illustrated by their odds ratios of 4.08, 8.87 and 10.29 respectively. This confirms the significance of the age factor which has already been identified in the Mann-Whitney *U*-tests. These findings are in line with Chambers' (2000) conclusion of lexical change to be found with specific age groups.

Table 7.18 Results of binary logistic regression: *like*

		95 % CI for exp *b*		
Included	*B*(*SE*)	Lower	exp *b*	Upper
Nativeness	0.44 (0.73)	0.37	1.55	6.52
Gender	0.04 (0.43)	0.44	1.04	2.44
Age (18–25)	1.57 (0.65)*	1.34	4.08	17.21
Age (26–30)	2.18 (0.74)*	2.08	8.87	37.83
Age (31–40)	0.71 (0.56)	0.68	2.03	6.05
Age (41–60)	2.33 (0.74)*	2.40	10.29	44.06
Level of education	–0.15 (0.62)	0.26	0.86	2.92
Constant	0.56 (0.50)			

Note $R^2 = .13$ (Hosmer & Lemeshow), Model χ^2 (7) = 20.32, $p = .005$*, $p < .05$*

The analysis of contextual preference of the stimulus sentence produced the following results, presented in Figure 7.7 below. The stimulus sentence showed its highest acceptability rate in the informal speech context with 55.4 per cent. Interestingly, the percentage of unacceptability ratings, namely 42 per cent, seems to suggest an almost equal divide between respondents with

respect to acceptability judgments. The stimulus sentence obtained an average acceptability rate of only 17.9 per cent. Figure 7.7 also shows how the stimulus sentence is considered to be informal rather than formal, since the formal contexts show the lowest acceptability ratings.

The analysis of the degree of certainty showed that there was a statistically significant difference between those informants who found the stimulus sentence acceptable and those who did not ($U = 1192$, $p = .006$, $r = -.19$), yet the median for both groups is the same (*Mdn* = "absolutely certain"). Additionally, a significant positive correlation was identified when I analysed the respondents' stated judgment basis, which showed that those who found the stimulus sentence acceptable tend to base their judgments on a gut feeling, while those who find it unacceptable report basing their judgments on a rule ($r_s = .244$, $p = .009$, Fisher's exact test $p = .012$). All this hints at a pattern describing a significant correlation between judgments indicating unacceptability and basing such judgments on a self-reported knowledge of a rule.

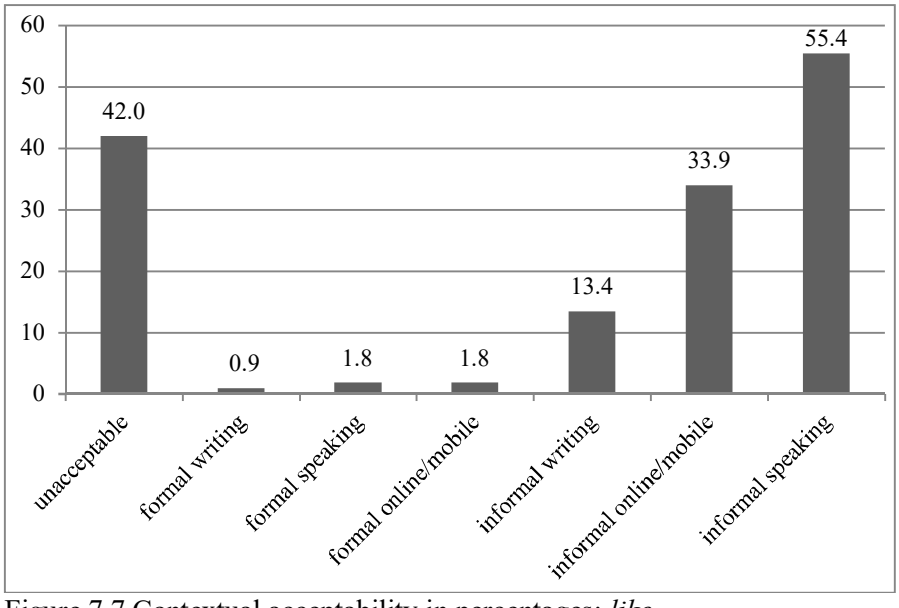

Figure 7.7 Contextual acceptability in percentages: *like*

As for the qualitative analysis of comments made by the questionnaire respondents, 49 respondents commented on the stimulus sentence that contained *like*. As the analysis of contextual preference showed, a relatively large proportion of usage judgments fell into the unacceptable category, namely 42 per cent. That is why it does not come as a surprise that the majority of the respondents distinguish between their own personal use and that of others. In particular respondents foreground the use of *like* by young speakers who are accused of frequently using and even over-using this particular feature. Comments (29) – (33) exemplify this theme.

(29) I'm old, so would never use it.
(Education adviser, over 60 years old, male)

(30) There is a generational issue here. I would never use 'like' in this way. But young people do.
(Retired educational publisher, over 60 years old, male)

(31) If you use *like* in any other sense than to show appreciation or to compare things being alike its showing that you're like an idiot - only half literate popstarlets [sic] talk like that!
(Petrophysicist in oil company, 31–40 years old, female)

(32) Completely breaks the rules but I do it in informal contexts, so it must be acceptable, right?
(Digital marketing consultant, 31–40 years old, female)

(33) I am guilty of this!
(Manager in a museum, 41–60 years old, female)

The association of this usage feature with young speakers was frequently mentioned in the comments obtained from the questionnaire respondents, and it transpires in the examples provided above. Both respondents in (29) and (30), who believe this feature to be found in the speech of young speakers, argue that their generation would not use *like* in this manner. Comments (31) and (32) were made by 31–40-year-old female professionals whose views are

intriguingly divergent. The respondent in (31) states that using this particular feature would mark the speaker as "an idiot" and goes on to describe the stimulus sentence as being representative of "half literate popstarlets". The respondent in (32) on the other hand admits breaking "the rules" in informal contexts, yet she also expresses a degree of uncertainty by questioning the acceptability of this feature. In stark contrast to (31), the respondent in (33) simply claims to be "guilty" of this type of usage herself. Analysing such comments enables a better understanding of the generational difference in usage which the comments seem to express.

What becomes obvious from the comments obtained is the different functions of *like* as perceived by the questionnaire respondents. While some consider *like* to be a filler, such as the respondents in comments (34) and (35), others find the use of *like* in the place of standard approximative adverbs such as *about* or *approximately* problematical. Comments (36) – (38) below mention this particular issue.

(34) Like 'like' is another way of saying 'errr'. Also don't like 'like' the use of numerals with text.
(Security consultant, over 60 years old, male)

(35) "Like" is completely unnecessary - allows speaker time to think
(Retired primary and EFL teacher, over 60 years old, female)

(36) This is sloppy yob speech. What use does the word *like* have here? *About* is the correct word.
(Retired, over 60 years old, male)

(37) I haven't yet adopted 'like' to mean 'approximately.
(Retired, over 60 years old, female)

(38) Did it ever harm anyone to use 'around' and 'approximately'?
(Student, 18–25 years old, male)

The difference in perception of the various functions of *like* is intriguing. While the use of *like* as a filler has frequently been studied, as discussed above (see § 6.5), the function of *like* as an approximative adverb still has to be investigated further, especially in British English. Comments such as (36), (37) and (38) show how *like* is used instead of other adverbs and is corrected to *about*, *approximately* and *around*. Replacing such adverbs with *like* is often considered incorrect, irritating and redundant, as indeed the comments in (39) and (40) illustrate.

(39) 'Like' is superfluous.
(Retired accounts clerk, over 60 years old, female)

(40) please can we scrap 'like' from the English dictionary
(Publishing, 31–40 years old, male)

While (39) serves as a representative example of many comments on the unnecessary use of *like* in the stimulus sentence, the respondent in comment (40) expresses negative sentiments towards the use of *like* in general, in that he thinks it should be removed from dictionaries. Given the stimulus sentence's overall negative perception, it does not come as a surprise to find no positive comments on the use of *like* with the informants.

Since studies on the approximative adverb *like* are not only relatively rare, with its distinction from other functions of *like* being relatively recent (cf. D'Arcy, 2006), this feature's function as an approximative adverb is not yet discussed in usage guides included in HUGE. *Like* is mainly discussed in terms of its alleged misuse and occurrence in place of the conjunction *as* in comparatives such as in the example quoted in Howard (1993, p. 32): "She did it perfectly like she always does". Taggart's *Her Ladyship's Guide to the Queen's English* (2010), however, also contains a condemnation of the function of *like* as a discourse particle. Commenting on the use of *like*, Taggart states that it is "one of the most overused and misused words in English and

was, even before the distressing colloquialism *And I'm, like, yeah, whatever* came into being" (2010, p. 76). In a similarly strict fashion, Heffer (2010, p. 125) describes discursive *like* as "abominable usage" characteristically used by young speakers. It seems as if *like*'s function as a discourse particle overshadows its other functions and is yet to be picked up by usage guide authors. Nevertheless, the questionnaire data as well as the findings of recent studies, in particular D'Arcy's works, hint at the increasing importance of *like* as an approximative adverb as well.

To summarize my analysis, I have shown that while many functions of *like* have been extensively investigated, such as its use as a discourse particle and quotative, the feature's approximative function has only recently attracted scholars' attention. D'Arcy (2006) shows, however, how in Toronto English *like* is replacing other standard approximative adverbs, in particular *about*. As Chambers mentions in respect to lexical changes, perceptions of the change are perceived differently in society and associated with a particular group. My findings show that usage attitudes towards the use of *like* as an approximative adverb revealed that age shows indeed a statistically significant correlation with acceptability ratings, which means that older informants are less likely to accept the use of *like* in the stimulus sentence used in this investigation. The importance of the main effect of age was confirmed in the binary logistic regression analysis. That this particular feature obtained a low average acceptability rating of only 17.9 per cent illustrates how almost half the respondents find this usage feature unacceptable or barely acceptable in formal contexts, as illustrated in Figure 7.7 above. If *like* is found to be acceptable, it is clearly associated with informal contexts.

The corpus evidence showed that *about* is the most frequent approximative adverb in the BNC. Nonetheless, occurrences of the use of *like* as an approximative adverb have also been recorded. The time period covered by

the BNC needs to be taken into account here. *Like* as an approximative adverb is not yet included in the advice literature. This phenomenon has already been described in that usage guides are a reaction to language use rather than a pre-emptive measure against future usage. Yet, my qualitative analysis of comments strengthens my assumption that *like* as an approximative adverb can be considered an emerging usage problem.

7.2.1.5. Americanisms: *burglarize*

As described in Section 6.6, the verb *burglarize* is the product of a word formation process which is realised by the addition of the derivational suffix *-ize*. However, *burglarize* is not a very common word in British English, as can be seen from the corpus search. While the *-ize* spelling did not produce any results for the word in the BNC, the *-ise* variant showed only one occurrence in the Miscellaneous subsection of the corpus, which under closer inspection turned out to be a religious text from the period 1975 to 1984. Conducting the same searches in COCA, it does not come as a surprise to find no occurrences of the *-ise* spelling variant, as this spelling is considered to be British (cf. Biber et al., 1999, p. 402). Yet the *-ize* variant produced an overall frequency rate of 39 counts. The spoken subsection as well as the newspaper subsection produced the highest standardised frequency ratings of 0.19 and 0.07 tokens per million words respectively. Hence, the corpus search does indeed indicate that *burglarize* is more frequent in American English than in British English.

By including the stimulus sentence (S5. *The bank was burglarized twice last week*) in the online questionnaire, attitudes towards the use of *burglarize* were elicited. The statistical analysis of the elicited usage attitudes showed no correlation between usage ratings and the social variables investigated. That neither age ($U = 1068$, $p = .353$, $r = –.09$), education level of the questionnaire respondents, i.e. whether they were university-educated or not ($r_s = .113$,

$p = .237$), gender ($\chi^2(1) = .107$, $p = .743$), nor nativeness ($r_s = -.147$, $p = .121$) showed a significant difference which could be indicative of a possible consensus within the speech community. A binary logistic regression analysis revealed that a model excluding the social variables investigated has a prediction accuracy of 74.1 per cent which, however, decreases to 72.3 per cent in a model containing all predictors. This model is presented in Table 7.19 below.

Table 7.19 Results of binary logistic regression: *burglarize*

		95 % CI for exp *b*		
Included	*B*(*SE*)	Lower	exp *b*	Upper
Nativeness	0.86 (0.72)	0.58	2.37	9.77
Gender	0.17 (0.46)	0.48	1.19	2.91
Age (18–25)	0.43 (0.77)	0.34	1.54	6.92
Age (26–30)	0.58 (0.76)	0.40	1.78	7.91
Age (31–40)	1.00 (0.66)	0.74	2.07	9.89
Age (41–60)	0.96 (0.71)	0.66	2.62	10.48
Level of education	–0.80 (0.83)	0.09	0.45	2.30
Constant	–1.74 (0.57)*			

Note R^2= .06 (Hosmer & Lemeshow), Model χ^2 (7) =7.24, p=.405, $p < .05$*

The model's fit was determined as good (χ^2 (7) = 7.24, $p = .405$). As can be seen from Table 7.19 above, none of the social variables is able to predict the acceptability judgment, which is in line with the findings of the non-parametric tests. As for the contextual analysis of usage judgments, the overwhelming unacceptable-rating of 74.1 per cent of the stimulus sentence supports the findings of the sociolinguistic analysis. Figure 7.8 below shows how the stimulus sentence produced a fairly evenly distributed acceptability judgment in the other contexts, with the informal speaking context showing a slightly greater acceptability rating of 19.1 per cent than the other contexts. The stimulus sentence obtained an average acceptability rating of only 13.4 per cent.

While there was no significant correlation between the usage judgment of the respondents and the basis of their judgments ($r_s = .143$, $p = .133$, Fisher's exact $p = .117$), a significant difference was found with regard to the respondents' certainty about their judgment ($U = 807$, $p = .001$, $r = -.28$). Despite finding this difference, the median states that both groups were absolutely certain about their judgment (*Mdn* = "absolutely certain"). The contextual preference of this particular usage feature thus seems to be in line with my sociolinguistic analysis of usage attitudes and reinforces the argument for a consensual agreement about the unacceptability of *burglarize*.

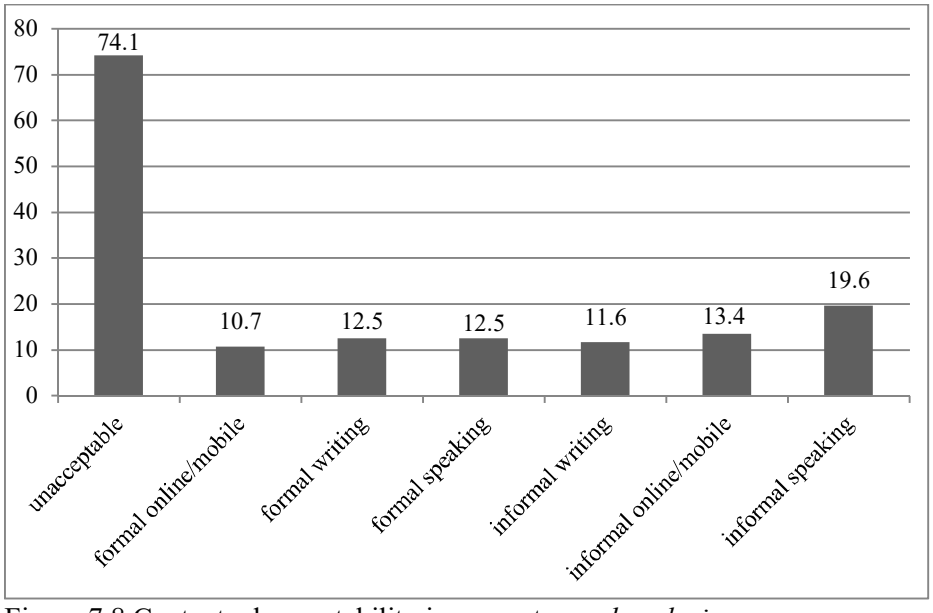

Figure 7.8 Contextual acceptability in percentages: *burglarize*

The above-mentioned finding indicating a consensus about the stimulus sentence's unacceptability is further strengthened by the analysis of the 59 comments obtained from the questionnaire respondents, who frequently mention the foreignness of *burglarize* and even claim doubting the existence and legitimacy of this particular word. Comments (41) – (43) below illustrate the foreignness of *burglarize* and identify it as an American usage feature.

(41) 'Burglarized' is a vulgar Yankeeism.
(Retired dental surgeon, over 60 years old, male)

(42) *burglarized*? *burgled*, I suppose you mean! Horrible Americanism.
(Retired arts consultant, over 60 years old, female

(43) 'To burglarise' is an over-the-top Americanism. It's 'to burgle' - or simply 'rob'.
(Student, 18–25 years old, male)

Calling burglarized a "vulgar Yankeeism", the respondent in (41) condemns this particular usage in no uncertain terms. In a similarly strong manner, the retired arts consultant in (42) corrects *burglarize* to *burgle* before describing *burglarized* as an "[h]orrible Americanism". The description of this usage feature as "an over-the-top Americanism" in (43) does not seem as harsh as the comments (41) and (42). About half of all comments on *burglarize* hinted at its foreignness and frequently associated it with American English.

An equally frequently recurring label is the condemnation of *burglarize* as a "non-word", a notion which is also often connected to *ain't* in American English (Curzan, 2014, p. 60). By stating that *burglarize* is not a word, respondents enforced the legitimacy of the British variant *to burgle*. Comments (44) – (46) illustrate this theme.

(44) *burglarized* is not a word in any circumstance and so I would correct this.
(English teacher, 18–25 years old, female)

(45) *Burglarized* simply isn't a word in my dialect.
(Software engineer, 31–40 years old, male)

(46) *Burglarized* is not a word.
(Accountant, 26–30 years old, female)

While the respondent in (44) claims she would correct *burglarized* as it was "not a word in any circumstance", not even considering its possible American

status, the respondent in (45) restricts his decision to his own dialect, in which he claims *burglarized* cannot be found. This notion is also reflected in (46). While the qualitative analysis has so far shown the respondents' associations of *burglarize* as an example of American English and as a non-word, other respondents condemn the stimulus sentence containing *burglarize* for other reasons. The comments provide an insight into how the use of *burglarize* will be perceived by some respondents and also into who the respondents believe makes use of this feature. Comments (47) – (49) deal with these issues.

(47) I hate this kind of daft error. Makes the speaker sound idiotic.
(Manager in a museum, 41–60 years old, female)

(48) This would mark someone as fairly uneducated (& perhaps trying to appear otherwise) - why not use the shorter *burgled*?
(University lecturer, 41–60 years old, male)

(49) Only chavs make up stupid words
(Digital marketing consultant, 31–40 years old, female)

All three comments quoted here attribute a lack of intelligence to a speaker making use of this particular usage feature. While the respondent in (47) argues that *burglarize* is a "daft error", which results in the speaker being perceived as "idiotic", the respondent in (48) attributes the stimulus sentence to a "fairly uneducated" speaker whose aim may be to sound educated. The last comment (49) marks *burglarized* as a "stupid" word which would only be used by a speaker of lower social standing. The use of the derogatory term 'chavs' as alleged users of the Americanism *to burglarize* emphasises this respondent's negative attitude towards this particular usage feature. The term 'chavs' has become widely discussed in the last decade in Great Britain as this derogative term has been used in a discussion on social changes affecting British society through which the white working class has become a demon-

ised, marginal group, according to Jones (2016, pp. 8–9). What can be gathered from the analysis of my respondents' comments is that the overall negative attitude towards *burglarize* as represented in the stimulus sentence is based on the feature's associations with American English and its being labelled non-word. In addition, the comments also indicate that the use of *burglarize* as well as its users will be perceived in a strongly negative light.

Since the HUGE database does not include Americanisms as a category of usage problems, I searched for entries which included the term 'Americanism'. The results of this analysis should therefore not be considered as a mere description of the concept 'Americanism'. Which features are considered to be part of this category? How many usage guide authors make use of this term? First of all, it is surprising to see only a small number of usage guides mentioning the term 'Americanism' in general. Only nine out of the 39 British publications, published between 1770 and 2010, discuss this type of usage problem by referring to them as Americanisms. Yet, it has to be noted that these nine usage guides discuss different usage problems that contain this term, which could hint at the author's subjective judgment of what should be included in usage guides (Weiner, 1988, p. 175). Some of these usage problems are the already discussed *different than* and *real* as a flat adverb used instead of *really*, lexical items such as *railroad* and *to run for office*, as well as morphosyntactic issues such as the use of the sentence adverbial *hopefully* or *to have got* for *to have*.

Table 7.20 includes an overview of Americanisms discussed in the nine usage guides. The table includes, however, only Americanisms which were considered controversial, while features which have been adopted into British English, such as the nonstandard *kinda* discussed in Peters (2004, p. 307), have not been included in the overview below. The majority of the usage features included in Table 7.20 below constitute lexical items. The issue of verb

conversions is, however, mentioned in *Pocket Fowler's Modern English Usage* edited by Allen (1999, p. 311), who criticises this practice using the example of *to hospitalize* which, according to him, is "regarded with some suspicion in BrE, but is standard in AmE".

Table 7.20 Overview of Americanisms discussed in British publications

Vallins1953	*to stem from*, *maybe*, *like* for *as*
Gowers1965	*to meet up with*, *to lose out on*, *I don't have* (for *I haven't got*), *to aim to do* (for *aim at doing*), *the first time in years* (in instead of *for*), *due to*, *like* for *as*, *elevator*, *automobile*, *fall*, *sidewalk*, *way above*, *way below*, *way up*, *way back*, *baby* (to refer to one's girlfriend), the use of *considerable* with material things, *Do you have a match?*, *in the event that* (for *in the event of*), *fixings* (for *trimmings*), *to protest the decision*, *to raise*, *to reckon*, *southpaw*, *to stem from*, *through* (for *Monday through Friday*)
Burchfield/Weiner/Hawkins1984	overly, overview, have (got), American pronunciation
Greenbaum&Whitcut1988	*OK*, *I guess*, *to check up on*, *to win out*, *to lose out*, the sentence adverb *hopefully*, *color*, *theater*, *gotten* (for *got*), *dove* (for *dived*), *snuck* (for *sneaked*), pronoun *he* to refer back to impersonal *one*, *real*, *sidewalk*, *candies*, *gas*, *blank*, *faucet*, *comforter*, *first floor (*for *ground floor*), *name for* (for *name after*), *public school*, *pacifier*, *wash up* (for washing one's face and hands), *around* (for *about*), American pronunciation, *climax*, *to consult with*, *importantly*, *through* (e.g. *Monday through Friday*), *transportation*
Dear1990	*overly*, *overview*, *have* (*got*), American pronunciation
Howard1993	*lonesome*, *different than*, *OK*, *reckon*, *stop off*, *stop over*

*PocketFowler*1999	sentence adverb *hopefully*, verb conversions such as *to hospitalize*, *gameshow*, *downsizing*, *ongoing*, *cop-out*, *hacking*, vocabulary falling under the umbrella term political correctness (e.g. *intellectually challenged* and *vertically challenged*), *backlog* (for *arrears*), *cagey*, *to fix a drink*, *to locate*, *overly*, *through* (I. *Monday through Friday*, II. *to be finished*), *to visit with*
Peters2004	*in back* (for *in the rear*), *Britisher* (for *Brit*), *cohort*, *kind of*
Heffer2010	*I don't think that helps any*, *quit* (for *quitted*), *to get* (e.g. *Can I get a beer?*), *elevators*, *checks*, *to fill out a form*, *rest room*, *movie*, *cookie*, *automobile*, *faucets*, *normalcy*, *specialty*, *momentarily*, *start over*, *meet with*, *to protest the decision*, *appeal the verdict*, *take the stand*, *attorney*, *law firm*, *chambers*, *courtroom*, *courthouse*, *to write one's family*, *on the weekend*, *at school*, *obligated*, *comedic*, *filmic*, *train station*, *railroad*, *parking lot*, *run for office*, *ouster*, *raise* (*a pay raise*), *to raise children*, *alright*, *I'm good*

The lack of discussion of this linguistic practice in general in usage guides becomes even more evident when a comparison is made with news style guides such as the *BBC News Styleguide*. Style guides such as the *BBC News Styleguide* (Allen, 2003) or *Guardian Style* (Marsh & Hodson, 2010) are interesting publications, since media institutions make their house style available to the public and so foster their image as language guardians. Allen included an extensive section on Americanisms in the BBC's style guide, in which verb conversions are discussed as well. Verb conversions are also discussed in *The Guardian and Observer's Style Guide* (2015), *The Times Style and Usage Guide* (2003), *The Telegraph Style Guide* (2010) and *Guardian Style* (2010), though only the verbs *to impact* and *to hospitalise* are discussed there. It thus seems that the issue is more typically considered a feature that should be discussed in newspaper style guides than in usage guides, which suggests that

they may be considered more typical of journalistic jargon than of usage generally.

Turning nouns into verbs is a linguistic practice which is frequently associated with American English. Yet, *euthanize*, an often-mentioned example of alleged American practice, was first recorded in the English *The Times* in the mid-twentieth century, so it appears to have been common practice in British English, too. Nevertheless, words such as *euthanize* and the investigated *burglarize* have become prototypical examples of American English usage, which is confirmed through the findings of my corpus search. *Burglarize* does indeed occur more frequently in COCA than in the BNC.

Verb conversions as a linguistic practice of turning nouns into verbs, either by maintaining the noun or by adding derivational suffixes, is viewed critically by the questionnaire respondents, as becomes apparent from the fact that it obtained a high unacceptability rating of 74.1 percent and a low average acceptability rating of merely 13.4 per cent. Analysing the comments obtained from the respondents confirms the word's association with American English – in the eyes of my British informants, that is. This association is explained through the process of what is referred to as "othering" (Dervin, 2012, p. 187) and associating *burglarize* as a non-word. The comments also revealed how users of the word would be perceived by the respondents, who state that its use is associated with a lack of education as well as intelligence. Given the feature's high unacceptability rate, it does not come as a surprise to find that none of the social variables investigated in this study correlate with the acceptability judgment.

Since the British usage guides in HUGE do not include Americanisms as a category as such, I conducted a full-text search of the database using the term 'Americanism', which revealed that only nine of the 39 British publications actually discuss Americanisms. What this search also brought to light

is the subjective judgments of the usage guide authors as to what constitutes an Americanism. That these nine usage guides rarely discuss verb conversions such as *burglarize* is not unexpected in light of the fact that this feature is often considered to be an Americanism. A comparison with style guides, such as the *BBC's News Styleguide* (Allen, 2003) but also various others, makes this even more intriguing, as verb conversions such as *to hospitalize* and *to impact* are frequently discussed in the style guides consulted. This strongly suggests that this feature is associated with journalistic jargon.

7.2.1.6. *Less than*

Having described the issue with using *less* with countable nouns in Section 6.7 above, I will now turn to the analysis of the perception data as well as corpus data. My corpus search for *less than* followed by a cardinal number plus noun or noun phrase showed that *less than* frequently collocates in this pattern with *per*, *cent*, *years*, *hours*, *months* and *weeks*, with *less than two years* being the most frequent pattern occurring in the BNC (73 times). A total of 1,248 instances including *less than* being followed by a countable noun are included in the BNC. By contrast, *fewer than* followed by a cardinal number plus noun was much rarer, showing a frequency rate of 127 occurrences. The corpus search brought to light collocations of *fewer than* with *per*, *people*, *times*, *employees*, *countries* and *years*. The most frequent pattern, *fewer than 20 people*, occurred only four times in the BNC. The collocates of *less* and *fewer* reveal a difference in that *less than* seems to be used more frequently for temporal indications, as in example (7.a) below, while *fewer than* occurs more frequently with countable nouns such as *employees* and *countries* as shown in (7.b). However, the corpus analysis shows that *less than* is also indeed used with countable nouns.

7. a) The money has been raised in less than two years. (K97, written (newspaper))

   b) Almost 90 per cent of companies have fewer than fifty employees. (B1U, written (academic))

Having presented the corpus evidence of actual usage, I will turn now to the analysis of the usage attitudes of the questionnaire respondents towards the use of *less than* in the stimulus sentence (S6. *Pay here if you have less than 10 items*). Similar to the usage problem *burglarize* discussed in Section 7.2.1.5, no significant correlation between the social variables age ($U = 1219$, $p = .686$, $r = –.04$), education level ($r_s = .041$, $p = .664$), gender ($\chi^2 (1) = .514$, $p = .473$) and nativeness ($r_s = –.142$, $p = .134$), and acceptability ratings could be identified. The binary logistic regression analysis revealed that a model excluding predictors, i.e. the social variables investigated, has a prediction accuracy of 71.4 per cent. The application of the forced data entry method in which all social variables are included in the model resulted in the proposed model in Table 7.21 below. Its prediction accuracy does not increase and remains at 71.4 per cent.

Table 7.21 Results of binary logistic regression: *less than*

		95 % CI for exp *b*		
Included	*B*(*SE*)	Lower	exp *b*	Upper
Nativeness	1.51 (1.11)	0.52	4.54	39.85
Gender	0.39 (0.44)	0.63	1.48	3.49
Age (18–25)	0.36 (0.69)	0.37	1.43	5.54
Age (26–30)	–0.29 (0.64)	0.21	0.75	2.65
Age (31–40)	0.26 (0.61)	0.39	1.30	4.32
Age (41–60)	0.22 (0.66)	0.34	1.24	4.51
Level of education	–0.19 (0.63)	0.24	0.83	2.85
Constant	0.55 (0.46)			

Note R^2=.04 (Hosmer & Lemeshow), Model χ^2 (7) = 4.75, p=.691, $p < .05$*

The model presented in the table proves to be a good fit ($\chi^2(7) = 4.75$, $p = .691$). The outcome of the binary logistic regression analysis confirms the findings of the non-parametric tests while taking into account any possible covariance between the four social variables. This means that attitudes towards the use of *less than* do not seem to vary according to any social group.

Analysing the contextual preference of the stimulus sentence showed that the questionnaire respondents rated this particular feature as fairly acceptable, in particular in the informal contexts in which *less than* was considered acceptable by the majority of the respondents. While *less than* obtained its highest acceptability rating of 60.7 per cent in the informal spoken context, the stimulus sentence seems to be less acceptable in formal contexts, which showed the lowest acceptability rating of only 22.3 per cent in the formal writing context. *Less than* obtained an average acceptability rating of 40.2 per cent. An overview of the contextual preference of *less than* is presented in Figure 7.9 below.

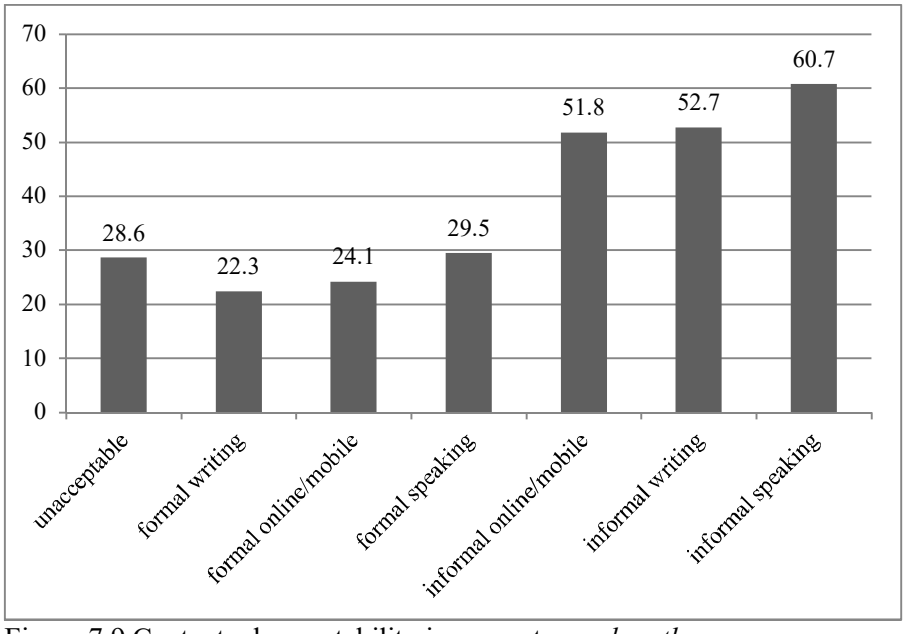

Figure 7.9 Contextual acceptability in percentages: *less than*

Despite identifying a significant difference between acceptability judgments and the degree of certainty ($U = 759$, $p = .000$, $r = –.39$), both groups indicated that they were absolutely certain about their judgment (*Mdn* = "absolutely certain"). However, a clear statistical difference was found between those who find *less than* acceptable and those who do not, with their judgment basis showing a positive moderate correlation ($r_s = .418$, $p = .000$, Fisher's exact test $p = .000$). This means that those who rated the stimulus sentence as acceptable said that they based their judgment on a gut feeling, while those who found it unacceptable based their decision on self-reported rule knowledge.

Analysing the metalinguistic comments ($n = 51$) made by the questionnaire respondents on this particular usage feature showed a high degree of awareness about the usage conundrum revolving around the use of *less* with countable nouns. The two most prominent themes I would like to discuss here are providing a correction and the widespread acceptability of *less* instead of *fewer* (see further Appendix I). Comments (50) – (53) represent the first theme and deal with the arguments used by the respondents as to why *fewer* should be used in the stimulus sentence instead of *less*.

(50) People seem to have given up using the word "fewer", which is correct when talking of a number of items.
(Retired, over 60 years old, female)

(51) Fewer. FEWER than 10 items. You can't chop an item in half.
(Youth worker, 26–30 years old, female)

(52) FEWER!! It's countable.
(Literacy Consultant, 41–60 years old, female)

(53) 'fewer' is correct here because you can count 'items' - old rule about countable and un-countable [sic] things applies.
(Retired school teacher, over 60 years old, male)

All four comments selected here argue for the countability of *items*. A youth worker elaborates on her correction of *less* to *fewer* in (51) by stating that one cannot "chop an item in half". A retired school teacher in (53) not only emphasises the correctness of *fewer*, but also explains the necessity of applying the "old rule about countable and un-countable [sic] things". What becomes apparent from the analysis of the comments is how the traditional rule advocating *fewer* still seems to hold true for some respondents. The above-mentioned argument of using *less* with countable nouns when quantity is regarded as a single inclusive unity was not mentioned by any of the respondents. What was, however, mentioned was the widespread acceptability of *less than* with countable nouns. This theme, which will be exemplified on the basis of comments (54) – (57), often co-occurred with providing a correction.

(54) Grammatically, it should be 'fewer than' for countable nouns. However, in reality, this 'rule' is widely broken.
(Teacher, 31–40 years old, female)

(55) Should be 'fewer,' but nearly everyone says 'less.'
(Retired solicitor, over 60 years old, male)

(56) Sadly the difference between *less* and *fewer* is just about dead now.
(Retired educational publisher, over 60 years old, male)

(57) The 'less'/ 'fewer' distinction is a lost cause.
(Education adviser, over 60 years old, male)

Less being used for countable nouns is found to be so widespread that it is considered acceptable by respondents such as those in (54) and (55), who both provide a correction of *less* by changing it to *fewer*. However, the loss of the distinction is bemoaned as well, as by the retried educational publisher in (56) and the education adviser in (57). The comments show that there seems to be a clear divide between those who have accepted the change, albeit somewhat

grudgingly, and those who insist on the traditional use of *fewer*. This divide is aptly illustrated by the two respondents in comments (58) and (59) below.

(58) Simple rule here: anyone who get upset about *fewer*/*less* distinctions needs to get out more (or to stay in less!).
(Teacher, 41–60 years old, male)

(59) Should be *fewer than*, but it is used so often in shops catering for the ignorant that one has come to accept it.
(Retired, over 60 years old, male)

While the teacher in (58) argues in favour of using *less* with countable nouns by referring to common usage, a notion which can also be identified in (55) above, the retired male respondent in (59) provides a correction and argues that shop signs using *less than* with countable nouns cater "for the ignorant".

Out of the 39 British publications in HUGE, 28 usage guides discuss the distinction between *less than* and *fewer than*. This particular usage feature was first dealt with critically in Robert Baker's *Reflections on the English Language* (1770), while the three most recent usage guides included in HUGE continue this feature's stigmatisation. Baker's advice is provided together with two other usage guide entries below to illustrate the categorisation applied.

Criticised This Word is most commonly used in speaking of a Number; where I should think *Fewer* would do better. *No fewer than a Hundred* appears to me not only more elegant than *No less than a Hundred*, but more strictly proper. (Bakker, 1770, p. 55)

Neutral Strictly speaking, the rule is that fewer, the comparative form of few, is used with words referring to countable things, including people: *fewer books*; *fewer than ten contestants*. Less, on the other hand, is used with things which cannot be counted: *less money*; *less music*. In addition, less is normally used with numbers when they are on their own, e.g. *less than 10,000*, and with expressions of measurement or time: *less than two weeks*; *less than four miles away*. To use less with

> countable things, as in *less words* or *less people*, is widely regarded as incorrect in standard English. It is a well-known usage point in English – so much so that an upmarket British store chain was forced by public demand to change the check-out signs in its food supermarkets from 'Less than five items' to 'Fewer than five items'. (Oxford A–Z, 2007, p. 59)

Advocated

> When you have a plural noun describing items that can be counted, use 'fewer'. If it's a plural noun describing items that can't be counted, use 'less'. Fewer books, fewer data, fewer people. Less work, less food, less coverage. The exception is when 'less' is followed by 'than' and an amount of something (such as distance, time or money). It's less than 3 metres. It takes less than an hour to get there. It costs less than £5. (Sayce, 2006, p. 53, bold in original)

Categorising the usage entries into advocated, neutral and criticised usage advice highlights a shift in how the distinction between *fewer* and *less* is discussed. The traditional distinction between *fewer* and *less* is mostly upheld, yet their comparative usage in the form of *fewer than* and *less than* has been subject to change since a number of usage guide authors such as Sayce (2006, p. 53) quoted above advocate the use of *less than* with countable nouns. The reasoning of usage guide authors is based on the above-mentioned notion that the following noun should be considered a single inclusive unit. Frequently mentioned exceptions of *less than* with countable nouns are measurements of time and distance (cf. Howard, 1993; Burt, 2002; Sayce, 2006). Table 7.22 provides a detailed overview of the categorisation of the 28 usage guides dealing with this usage problem.

Table 7.22 below indicates how a shift in perception most likely has occurred through which *less than* has become an acceptable exception to the traditional prescriptive rule, which is still overwhelmingly promoted in seventeen usage guides of the 28 usage guides. By providing a diachronic illustration of the categorisation in Figure 7.10, it is possible to pinpoint the decade in which *less than* started to be considered acceptable. The first neutral

advice with respect to the use of *less than* can be found in Swan's *Practical English Usage* published in 1980. From the 1990s onwards, a tendency towards more lenient usage advice on the *less than* issue can be identified as more usage guide authors deemed *less than* acceptable.

Table 7.22 Treatment of *less than* ("criticised", "neutral", and "advocated") in British publications

criticised (17)	Baker1770, Moon1868, Fowler1926, Treble&Vallins1936, Gowers1965, Wood1962(1970), Burchfield1981, Burchfield,Weiner&Hawkins1984, Greenbaum&Whitcut1988, Bailie&Kitchin1979(1988), Weiner&Delahunty1983(1994), Blamires1994, Marriott&Farrell1992(1999), Ayto1995(2002), Taggart2010, Heffer2010, Lamb2010
neutral (4)	Swan1980, Dear1986(1990), Amis1997(1998), *OxfordA-Z*2007
advocated (7)	Howard1993, *PocketFowler*1999, Burchfield1996(2000), Trask2001, Burt2000(2002), Peters2004, Sayce2006
Total: 28	

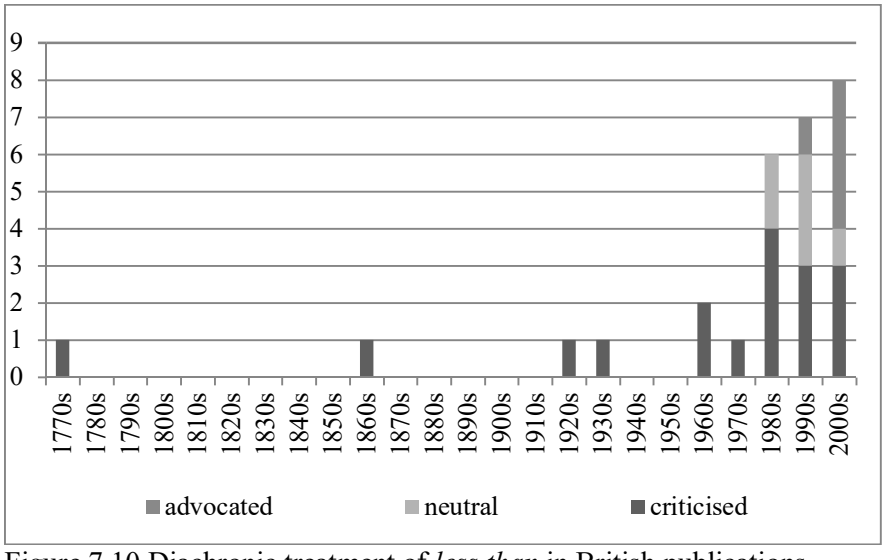

Figure 7.10 Diachronic treatment of *less than* in British publications

Despite this fairly recent increase in acceptability in the usage guides, a considerable number of usage guide authors continue to dismiss the use of *less than* with countable nouns. Most notably, the three most recent usage guides included in HUGE promote the traditional distinction between *less* and *fewer* (cf. Taggart, 2010; Heffer, 2010; Lamb, 2010). Mentioning the supermarket signage debate, Lamb (2010, p. 170), for example, shows his support for the prescriptive corrections by stating the following: "A supermarket was persuaded to change the signs *Five items or less* to *Five items or fewer*, which is correct".

The traditional distinction between *fewer than* and *less than* based on the countability of nouns seems to constitute a recurring usage problem in the usage debate. Whether constructions such as *10 items* should be treated as countable or not depends on whether they are perceived as an inclusive unity or as single entities. My corpus search showed an interesting difference between collocation patterns in that *less than* seems to collocate more frequently with temporal quantities, such as *years*, *months*, *hours* and *weeks*, than *fewer than* does. The majority of the questionnaire respondents indicated that the stimulus sentence was acceptable in informal contexts. The average acceptability rating of 40.2 per cent suggests that the stimulus sentence has a fairly high acceptability rate in comparison with other usage problems discussed in this study (see §. 6.2.5). Only 28.6 per cent of all usage judgments fell into the unacceptable category. Therefore, it also does not come as a surprise to find no sociolinguistic stratification of the questionnaire respondents' usage attitudes according to any of the social variables investigated. The usage feature's general acceptability is also mentioned by the respondents in the obtained comments.

As for the HUGE analysis, the distinction between *less than* and *fewer than* is indeed a recurring problem in the usage debate and it may therefore be

considered an old chestnut, all the more so since this particular item has been present in the usage guides since the tradition's earliest days. While its first critical treatment can already be found in Baker's *Reflections on the English Language* (1770), the usage feature has only recently become viewed as acceptable. Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that this feature is still widely condemned by usage guide authors who take a prescriptive stance on this issue, such as the three latest additions to the HUGE database.

7.2.1.7. The double negative

As described in Section 6.8 above, the stimulus sentence (S7. *He wasn't seen nowhere after the incident*) was included in the questionnaire to elicit attitudes towards the use of double negatives. Before these attitudes are investigated in regard to their sociolinguistic stratification, I will provide an overview of the occurrence of double negatives in the BNC. Using the POS-tagger, a BNC corpus search for the double negative used in the stimulus sentence and its standard variant *He wasn't seen anywhere* was conducted to identify patterns including the contraction of *not* being followed by a verb and the negative adverb *nowhere*. Sixteen patterns were identified, with the most frequent one being *n't going nowhere* ($n = 5$), *n't go nowhere* ($n = 5$), *n't got nowhere* ($n = 3$). While eleven of these sixteen occurrences can be found in the spoken subsection of the BNC with a normalised frequency rate of 1.10 tokens per million words, four appeared in the fiction subsection, which reflects a normalised frequency rate of 0.25 tokens per million words, and one single occurrence was recorded in the non-academic subsection reflecting a normalised frequency rate of 0.06 tokens per million words. That only sixteen occurrences of this particular double negative pattern are recorded in the BNC does not come as a surprise, as written texts are usually edited and double negatives are usually not considered acceptable in writing. The four instances of double

negatives in the fiction subsection are all found in reported speech, which indicates that the double negative is a feature frequently found in spoken contexts. By contrast, a corpus search substituting the Standard English variant *anywhere* for *nowhere* in the sentence showed a considerably higher overall frequency rate of 237 identified patterns of which *n't go anywhere* (n = 51), *n't get anywhere* (n = 49) and *n't going anywhere* (n =18) are the most frequent. Besides the generally higher number of patterns including the standard variant, all subsections of the corpus contain these occurrences, with the spoken subsection showing the highest normalised frequency rate of 9.23 tokens per million words followed by the subsections fiction (4.48 tokens per million words), magazine (2.20 tokens per million words) and newspapers (2.01 tokens per million words).

Turning to the sociolinguistic analysis of usage attitudes, I was able to show that none of the social variables investigated in this study showed a significant correlation with acceptability ratings for this feature. While the social variables education level (r_s = .078, p = .416), gender (χ^2 (1) = .313, p = .576) and nativeness (r_s = –.047, p = .623) resulted in clear non-significant correlations, age (U = 815, p = .079, r = –.17) showed the lowest p-value and was closest to statistical significance. In order to identify any possible influence of the independent variables on the acceptability judgment, I conducted a binary logistic regression analysis which accounts for any possible covariance between these independent variables. The binary logistic regression analysis showed that a model including only the constant, which means that none of the social variables were included in the model first, has an overall prediction accuracy of 78.6 per cent. The inclusion of all social variables in the proposed model, which is illustrated in Table 7.23 below, does not, however, change the prediction accuracy.

Table 7.23 Results of binary logistic regression: double negative

		95 % CI for exp *b*		
Included	*B*(*SE*)	Lower	exp *b*	Upper
Nativeness	0.06 (0.79)	0.23	1.06	5.00
Gender	0.28 (0.49)	0.51	1.32	3.43
Age (18–25)	1.71 (0.80)*	1.16	5.55	26.48
Age (26–30)	0.37 (0.97)	0.22	1.44	9.66
Age (31–40)	1.45 (0.76)	0.96	4.27	19.04
Age (41–60)	1.32 (0.81)	0.76	3.73	18.35
Level of education	–0.42 (0.84)	0.13	0.66	3.44
Constant	–2.41 (0.68)*			

Note R^2= .07 (Hosmer & Lemeshow, Model χ^2 (7) = 8.54, p = .287, p < .05*

While the model presented in the table above is considered a good fit (χ^2 (7) = 8.54, p = .287), the Wald statistics indicate that the overall effect of age is not significant (p = .177) in spite of the seemingly meaningful contribution of the group of 18–25-year-olds to the model when compared to the reference group of over-60-year-olds (p = .032). The exp *b* value indicating the changes in the odds ratios in the comparison of these two age groups furthermore highlights the odds of making a negative acceptability judgment increase with age (*OR* = 5.55). Yet, the overall effect of age is not significant, as the covariance of all social variables is taken into account in the binary logistic regression.

The contextual preference analysis revealed an overwhelming rejection of the stimulus sentence: 78.6 per cent deemed *He wasn't seen nowhere after the incident* as unacceptable. Few respondents found the stimulus sentence with the double negative acceptable in formal contexts. The formal writing context shows the lowest acceptability rate of 0.9 per cent. Surprisingly, this trend is found in the informal contexts as well. Only the informal spoken context registers 18.8 per cent of acceptable judgments. Thus, the low average acceptability rating of 7.6 per cent does not come as a surprise. Figure 7.11 below illustrates the contextual preference ratings in detail.

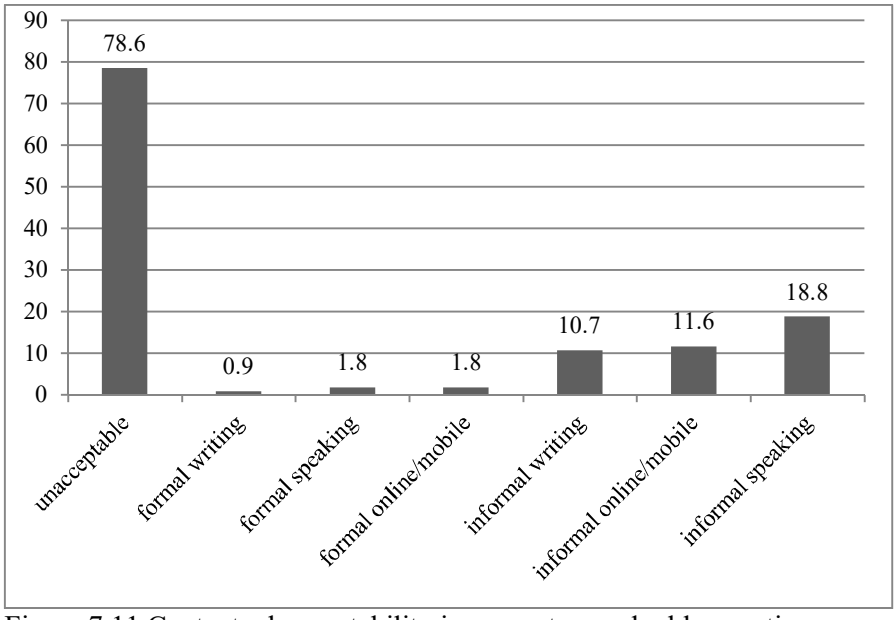

Figure 7.11 Contextual acceptability in percentages: double negative

With an average acceptability rating of merely 7.6 per cent, the double negative seems to be widely considered unacceptable. This overall rejection of the double negative by the majority of respondents is reflected in the respondents' high degree of certainty of their judgments. A statistical difference between acceptability and unacceptability ratings was identified ($U = 608$, $p = .000$, $r = –.52$), which showed, however, that the median of both groups was "absolutely certain". Nonetheless, an analysis of the judgment basis resulted in no significant differences between those who found the stimulus sentence acceptable and those who did not ($r_s = .010$, $p = .919$, Fisher's exact test $p = 1.000$).

51 respondents provided a comment on the stimulus sentence including the double negative. My analysis of these comments revealed that there was a high degree of awareness of double negatives among the respondents, which not only showed in the fact that respondents were able to identify the issue

using the correct terminology, but also in their corrections to the standard variant *anywhere*. This awareness is also accompanied with comments indicating a possible confusion caused by the double negative. The basis for this confusion is the above-mentioned rule of logic (cf. § 6.8) according to which two negatives make a positive, which has also been commented on by respondents. Comments (60) – (63) are examples of these findings.

(60) *Nowhere* should be *anywhere*.
(Civil Servant, 31–40 years old, female)

(61) Double negative = positive
(Stay-at-home mother, 31–40 years old, female)

(62) Double negative. Ambiguity.
(Proof-reader, 41–60 years old, male)

(63) Double negative. Contradictory.
(Old Nuisance, over 60 years old, male)

The comment provided by a civil servant who corrected *nowhere* into *anywhere* (60) serves as an example of the corrections made by questionnaire respondents. Comments (61) – (63) show the respondents' awareness of the usage feature by the fact that they name the issue and provide an insight into their perception of double negatives causing ambiguity by applying the rule of logic. The rule is quoted in (61), while the informants in (62) and (63) argue that the double negative causes ambiguity or confusion.

How users of double negatives are perceived by the questionnaire respondents has also surfaced in the comments obtained and is illustrated by comments (64) – (67) below.

(64) Double negatives are the domain of stupids.
(Digital marketing consultant, 31–40 years old, female)

(65) In ‘standard English’ is should be ‘anywhere’; the use of the double negative would be fine in some contexts but could make the user sound uneducated in others.
(Teacher, 31–40 years old, female)

(66) You can’t expect those with limited education to speak in correct sentences.
(Retired, private research, over 60 years old, female)

(67) ‘wasn’t seen nowhere’ sounds childish, but you would not expect a child to use the word incident.
(Engineering, 31–40 years old, male)

What becomes evident through the comments quoted here is the association of double negatives with a lack of education on the part of speakers who use them. While the respondent in (64) considers double negatives part of “the domain of stupids”, comments (65) and (66) make a similar, yet less harsh connection between the feature and lack of education. Lastly, the respondent in (67) argues that the double negative comes across as “childish”, which from a broader point of view could be connected to a lack of education.

Having discussed how users of double negatives are perceived by the questionnaire respondents, I would briefly like to discuss a number of comments which describe not only the notion of personal usage versus that of others, but also enable an insight into where double negatives are normally found.

(68) This sounds awful. I come from a part of the UK that has a strong regional accent - I would never say this, even though I’ve heard it many times.
(Accountant, 26–30 years old, female)

(69) This is standard usage in other dialects, but not mine.
(Software engineer, 31–40 years old, male)

(70) Not for me unless I’m putting on an accent.
(Retired, over 60 years old, female)

(71) The sentence has a double negative – we are not in Spain.
(Retired dental surgeon, over 60 years old, male)

While all four comments describe double negatives as alien to their own personal usage, it becomes obvious that they are identified as dialectal features or even, as in (71), foreign to English. The respondent in (68) recounts how the area she is from "has a strong regional accent", yet despite having heard double negatives many times, she claims never to use them herself. A similar notion is expressed by the respondent in (69). Comment (70) is interesting as the respondent states that she would use this kind of usage feature only when "putting on an accent". This is indicative of a sociolinguistic practice called "stylising the other" which is defined by Rampton (1999, p. 421) as "a range of ways in which people use language and dialect in discursive practice to appropriate, explore, reproduce or challenge influential images and stereotypes of groups that they don't themselves (straightforwardly) belong to". As (70) shows, the respondent states that double negatives are not part of her language variety, yet they invoke to her an image or even stereotype she has concerning speakers who do use them. While these three comments acknowledge double negatives as English features, the retired dental surgeon in (71) distances himself from double negatives by placing them outside Great Britain.

Double negatives are discussed in 27 of the 39 British usage guides included in HUGE. Robert Baker's *Reflections on the English Language* (1770) contains the first discussion of them. The categorisation of usage entries, however, showed that none of the usage guides advocate their use, which is most likely due to their aim of enforcing and promoting standard language features. Example entries of the "criticised" and "neutral" categories are found below, followed by a complete overview of the categorisation of usage entries in Table 7.24.

Criticised Avoid double negatives. They are offences against logic and, if they are an attempt at being funny, they fail. Sometimes they occur by accident: not obvious stinkers like "he said he would not never go there", which can only be the product of illiteracy and stupidity, but a phrase … such as "of all the casualties, she was the least unscathed". *Unscathed* is entirely the wrong word; it needs to be one of its antonyms, *injured* or *hurt*. …The obvious ones are not the problem, for all but the illiterate will spot them; it is those that come in longer sentences, usually including verbs that themselves have a negative import, that cause unexpected difficulties. Be especially alert to sentences such as "I cannot doubt that there may not be times when you feel like that", which will confound almost everyone who reads or hears it. (Heffer, 2010, pp. 57–58, 132)

Neutral … So, if you don't like double negative constructions, because you're a standard English user, then that's your privilege. You've been brought up that way. But don't fall into the trap of thinking that there's something intrinsically more logical about speaking or writing in that way.
Or go searching for ambiguity where there are none to be found. If people say *I ain't got no money*, they'll never be misunderstood. Would you really wish to argue that these speakers are saying that they *have got some*?
If people want to speak or write standard English, then, they've got to learn to avoid this kind of double negative construction, otherwise they'll be severely criticized. But the critics must learn to criticize for the right reasons: it's socially unacceptable, but it isn't illogical. … (Crystal, 1984/2000, p. 46)

Table 7.24 below shows that twice as many British usage guides discuss double negatives critically than in a neutral manner. The two examples stated above show that while Heffer (2010, p. 132) associates double negatives with illiteracy, Crystal (1984, p. 46) emphasises the universal and widespread character of this linguistic feature which accidentally is absent from Standard English. He continues by advising his readers to avoid double negatives when using this particular variety, but warns them against being judgmental and treating this feature as inferior. The diachronic development of the treatment of double negatives is illustrated in Figure 7.12 below.

Table 7.24 Treatment of double negative ("criticised" and "neutral" only) in British publications

criticised (18)	Anon1826(1829), Treble&Vallins1936, Partridge1942(1947), Vallins1951, Vallins1953(1960), Greenbaum&Whitcut1988, Bailie&Kitchin1979(1988), Howard1993, Weiner&Delahunty1983(1994), Blamires1994, Marriott&Farrell1992(1999), Trask2001, Ayto1995(2002), Burt2000(2002), Sayce2006, *OxfordA-Z*2007, Taggart2010, Heffer2010
neutral (9)	Baker1770, Fowler1926, Gowers1965, Wood1962(1970), Swan1980, *PocketFowler*1999, Burchfield1996(2000), Crystal1984(2000), Peters2004
Total: 27	

Despite being discussed in the oldest usage guide in the HUGE collection, double negatives are not dealt with until the 1920s, with the notable exception of *The Vulgarities of Speech Corrected* (1829). From the 1980s onwards, double negatives seem to have come under increased criticism, as can be seen in Figure 7.12.

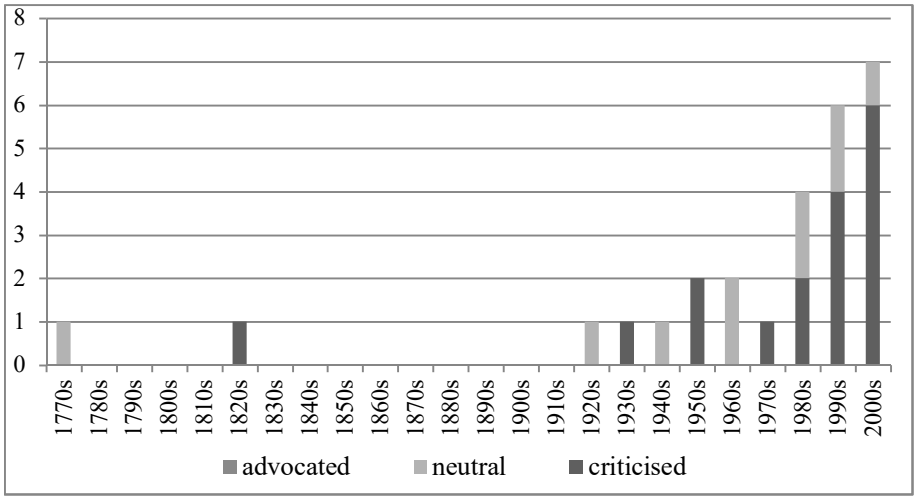

Figure 7.12 Diachronic treatment of double negatives in British publications

That the majority of usage guides investigated criticise the use of double negatives hints at the currency of this particular usage feature, which is most

likely due to their aim of maintaining the standard variety in this respect. The widespread use of double negatives in British dialectal varieties makes the double negative an interesting feature for analysis, particularly so since it is not considered to be part of Standard English, which is after all the domain within which usage guides operate. The assumption that two negatives make a positive, which stems from logic and has been dismissed by Pullum and Huddleston (2002, p. 847), still seems to hold true for some of the questionnaire respondents who argue that double negatives could cause ambiguity.

This feature has produced an overwhelmingly negative result from the questionnaire respondents, with almost 79 per cent calling the stimulus sentence unacceptable, which confirms the findings of Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2005) and De France (2010) discussed above (see § 6.8). This consequently resulted in a very low average acceptability score of only 7.6 per cent. When the stimulus sentence was found acceptable, this was the case in the informal contexts with informal speech showing the highest acceptability rate of 18.8 per cent (cf. Figure 7.12). Such an overall negative evaluation of the double negative indicates a relatively high probability that usage judgments will not vary according to any of the social variables investigated, i.e. age, gender, nativeness and level of education. This finding was also confirmed by the results of the binary logistic regression analysis.

My analysis of the comments provided by the questionnaire respondents brought to light a number of interesting themes which help us understand the respondents' judgments better. Based on this analysis the negative perception of users of double negatives became clear in that an association was made between double negatives and a lack of education. Drawing on stereotypical images of speakers, some of the respondents distance themselves from the nonstandard use of double negatives, despite making remarks on their

widespread occurrence even in their own direct vicinity. Interestingly, this stereotypical image of uneducated double negative users is reproduced by respondents who comment on making use of this linguistic feature when "putting on an accent" (74). This form of language styling further distances the respondents' language use from the usage of others.

The HUGE analysis showed not only that double negatives were first discussed in Baker's *Reflection on the English Language* (1770), but it further highlights how, apart from one usage guide published in 1829, the double negative seems very much a usage problem of the twentieth century. Its overwhelmingly negative treatment in the advice literature can be traced back to the aim of such usage guides to promote and fix the standard language variety.

7.2.1.8. The dangling participle

Dangling participles as a usage problem have been described in detail in Section 6.9 above and the analysis of attitudes towards the stimulus sentence containing this particular feature (S8. *Pulling the trigger, the gun went off*) is presented in the present section. Not only are dangling participles widespread (cf. Bartlett, 1953; Hayase, 2011), they also come in many different shapes, which makes a corpus analysis complex. To make up for this, I will draw on the findings of Hayase's study, who investigated a selection of 96 types of present participle constructions in the BNC. Among those 96 types are participles such as *approaching*, *entering*, *leaving* and *walking*. Restricting the selection to dangling participles solely occurring at the beginning of a phrase, Hayase (2011, pp. 92–93) obtained 956 examples which were divided into five categories based on their description of a situation: "Cognition, Motion, Perception, State, and Action". Of these five categories, dangling participles falling into the category "Cognition" were the most frequent. An example of such a dangling participle is quoted in Hayase (2011, p. 94): "*Comparing them*

to the English Baroque woodwinds, it is clear that they became the prototype and standard for English makers well into the 18th century". In the absence of a separate corpus study undertaken by myself, Hayase's study at any rate proves the actual occurrence of dangling participles.

As for the analysis of usage attitudes and contextual preferences of the stimulus sentence, the following results were obtained. From my sociolinguistic analysis it can be gathered that no individual age group ($U = 1451$, $p = .484$, $r = –.07$) deviates in their usage judgment. The other social variables investigated, education level ($r_s = –.026$, $p = .784$.), gender ($\chi^2(1) = .036$, $p = .850$) and nativeness ($r_s = –.030$, $p = .754$), did not show a significant correlation with acceptability ratings either, which was a finding also consolidated in the binary logistic regression analysis. This analysis showed that a model only including the constant has an overall prediction accuracy of 50 per cent. The application of a forced data entry method, however, revealed that the prediction accuracy increased to 56 per cent when all social variables are included in the model presented in Table 7.25.

Table 7.25 Results of binary logistic regression: dangling participle

		95 % CI for exp *b*		
Included	*B*(*SE*)	Lower	exp *b*	Upper
Nativeness	–0.15 (0.69)	0.22	0.86	3.36
Gender	0.10 (0.40)	0.51	1.10	2.38
Age (18–25)	0.39 (0.60)	0.45	1.47	4.79
Age (26–30)	0.00 (0.61)	0.30	1.00	3.34
Age (31–40)	0.82 (0.55)	0.76	2.26	6.69
Age (41–60)	0.05 (0.60)	0.32	1.05	3.39
Level of education	0.18 (0.59)	0.38	1.20	3.78
Constant	–0.32 (0.43)			

Note $R^2 = .02$ (Hosmer & Lemeshow), Model χ^2 (7) = 3.03 $p = .882$, $p < .05$*

Despite being a good fit model (χ^2 (7) = 3.03, p = .882), none of the predictors seem to make a significant contribution to it, which confirms the findings of the non-parametric tests applied above.

Figure 7.13 below shows the distribution of the contextual preference of the stimulus sentence including the dangling participle. This distribution is of interest since there seems to be an even divide between those who find the stimulus sentence acceptable and those who do not. A clear preference for informal contexts can be distinguished, with the informal speaking context receiving the highest acceptability rating of 42 per cent. The lowest acceptability rating can be identified in the formal speaking context which only obtained an acceptability rating of 10.7 per cent. Both CMC contexts fall neatly in-between the traditional speaking and writing language modes. With an average acceptability rating of 25.2 per cent, the dangling participle seems to have gained in acceptability when compared to Mittins et al.'s findings.

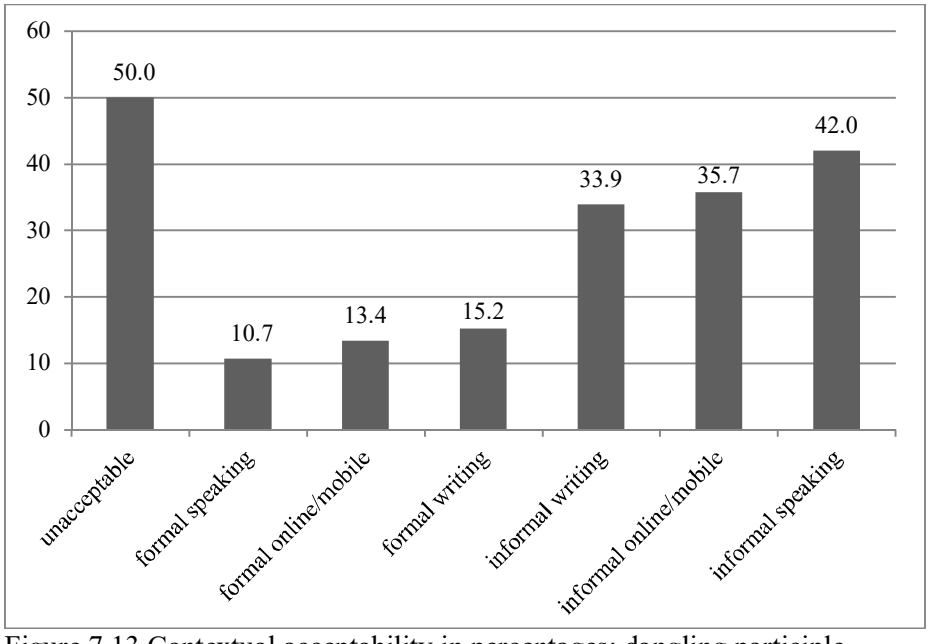

Figure 7.13 Contextual acceptability in percentages: dangling participle

Regarding the level of certainty, a significant difference between acceptability groups and degree of certainty could be determined ($U = 1044$, $p = .001$, $r = -.28$). Those who deemed the stimulus sentence acceptable claimed to be somewhat certain of their assessment (*Mdn* = "somewhat certain"), while those who found the stimulus sentence unacceptable expressed a higher degree of certainty (*Mdn* = "absolutely certain"). This difference in degree of certainty is also reflected in the respondents' judgment basis. While those who found the dangling participle acceptable tend to base their decision on a feeling, the respondents who indicated that the stimulus sentence is unacceptable seem to base their decisions on the self-reported knowledge of a rule ($r_s = .327$, $p = .000$, Fisher's exact test $p = .001$). These findings hint at deviating degrees of awareness towards the dangling participle as a usage problem.

49 respondents provided a comment on the stimulus sentence with which I tested attitudes towards the dangling participle. One striking theme emerging from the analysis of comments is that of respondents offering a correction or identifying the problem at hand. Comments (72) – (74) below illustrate this particular theme.

(72) Gun is the subject and cannot pull a trigger...
(Retired Primary Headteacher, over 60 years old, female)

(73) So, how does a gun pull its own trigger?! Confused subject of sentence.
(Stay-at-home mother, 31–40 years old, female)

(74) Clever gun.
(Local authority, over 60 years old, female)

The three comments highlight the respondents' awareness of the mismatch of subjects in the stimulus sentence. The gun's ability to pull its own trigger is called into question by all three respondents. That such dangling participles

can cause confusion is a further theme which emerged from the respondents' comments and is exemplified in (75) – (77).

(75) Sounds a bit dodgy.
(Student,18–25 years old, female)

(76) Unclear but possible.
(University lecturer, 41– 60 years old, male)

(77) it is not clear who pulled the trigger - it would need to be in context and even then it would not be a proper sentence.
(Retired teacher, over 60 years old, female)

While the respondent in (75) describes the stimulus sentence as "a bit dodgy", the respondent in (76) argues that the stimulus sentence could be "possible", despite being "unclear". These two comments illustrate that the stimulus sentence was perceived as flawed by some respondents. The respondent in (77) explains the ambiguity caused by the dangling participle with regard to who is responsible for the action of pulling the trigger, and goes on to notice how contextual information may clarify the confusion. Yet she states that context would "even then" not make the stimulus sentence "a proper sentence". The role of context clearly seems to be important in that it can help clarify who pulled the trigger. Various respondents commented on this phenomenon, such as in comments (78) – (80).

(78) The gun didn't pull the trigger. However in informal situations it depends on the utterance before/context, and if it is clear who pulled the trigger, then this would be communicatively effective.
(Freelance English Language, over 60 years old, female)

(79) I clicked unacceptable because of the lack of context - maybe there's a situation this would make sense?
(Student, 18–25 years old, female)

(80) In informal speech native speakers could say this, but I've marked it 'unacceptable' because you'd need a very specific good context to know what they mean.
(University lecturer in German, 41–60 years old, female)

These comments prove the importance of the stimulus sentence's context. While the respondent in (78) explains how context could make the stimulus sentence "communicatively effective" in an informal situation, both respondents in (79) and (80) explain how the lack of context influenced their decision to find the stimulus sentence unacceptable.

The HUGE analysis showed that the dangling participle was discussed in 27 of the 39 British publications, which form the basis of the ensuing discussion. The examples below illustrate the tripartite categorisation made to distinguish the treatment of the dangling participle in the HUGE database. It has to be mentioned that none of the 27 usage guides advocated the use of dangling participle.

Criticised: The participle should normally have a proper 'subject of reference'. C. T. Onions said that 'a sentence like the following is incorrect because the word to which the participle refers grammatically is not that with which it is meant to be connected in sense':
Born in 1850, *a part* of his education was received at Eton.
(*Correctly*: *Born* in 1850, *he* received part of his education at Eton.) (Burchfield, 1981, pp. 28–29)

Neutral: Good English suggests that the laxness of older writers in their treatment of the participle (adjective) phrase was by no means absent from modern writers as long as the 'loose' phrase did not render the meaning ludicrous or nonsensical. To judge from the following examples, the modern journalist cares no more than Addison for the logical relationship, based upon position in the sentence, of noun and qualifier (that is, participle phrase). It is, indeed, possible that English today is swinging back to a freer syntax. (Vallins, 1953, p. 55)

A detailed overview of the categorisation is provided in Table 7.26 below from which the stark difference in number between the two categories becomes apparent. Only three usage guides provide a neutral treatment of the dangling participles, while 24 deem dangling participles unacceptable. This overall critical attitude towards the use of dangling participles is also illustrated in the diachronic overview of this feature's treatment in usage guides provided in Figure 7.14 below.

Table 7.26 Treatment of the dangling participle ("criticised" and "neutral" only) in British publications

criticised (25)	Fowler&Fowler1906(1922), Fowler1926, Treble&Vallins1936, Partridge1942(1947), Gowers1948, Vallins1951, Gowers1965, Burchfield1981, Burchfield,Weiner&Hawkins1984, Bailie&Kitchin1979(1988), Swan1980, Greenbaum&Whitcut1988, Dear1986(1990), Weiner&Delahunty1983(1994), Blamires1994, Amis1997(1998), Burchfield1996(2000), *PocketFowler*1999, Trask2001, Burt2000(2002), Ayto1995(2002), *OxfordA-Z*2007, Taggart2010, Heffer2010, Lamb2010
neutral (2)	Vallins1953(1960), Peters2004
Total: 27	

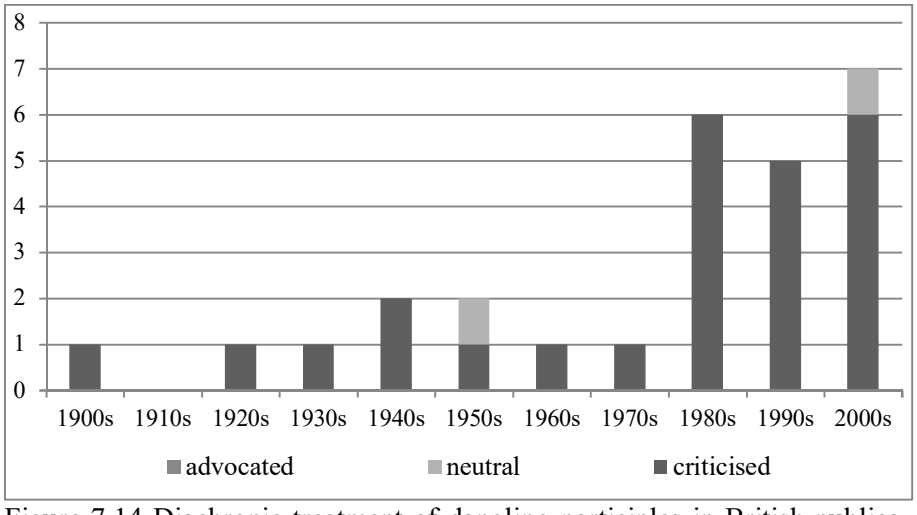

Figure 7.14 Diachronic treatment of dangling participles in British publications

This syntactic issue was first critically discussed in Fowler and Fowler's *The King's English*, published in 1906. Therefore, the dangling participle is undoubtedly a usage problem of the twentieth century (cf. Tieken-Boon van Ostade & Ebner, 2017). The most lenient usage advice on this usage feature can be found in Peters' *The Cambridge Guide to English Usage* (2004) from which an excerpt is quoted below.

> Castigation of "dangling" constructions almost always focuses on sentences taken out of context. In their proper context of discourse, there may be no problem. … The third example [Now damaged in the stern, the captain ordered the ship back to port.] would sound natural enough in the context of narrative:
>
> The bows of the vessel had been scarred by pack ice.
>
> Now damaged in the stern, the captain ordered the ship back to port...
>
> The narrative keeps the ship in the spotlight - in the topic position in both sentences ... If we rewrite the sentences to eliminate the dangling participles we lose the topicalizing effect they have. Any sentence in which they create a bizarre distraction should of course be recast. But if the phrase works in the context of discourse and draws no attention to itself, there's no reason to treat it like a cancer in need of excision. (Peters, 2004, p. 138)

Peters emphasises how context can be decisive in whether a dangling participle causes ambiguity or not, by providing an example from literature and drawing attention to the issue of topicalization as a literary device. Correcting dangling participles would entail a loss of focus, as Peters (2004, p. 138) aptly points out.

With a traditional focus on written language, studies on dangling participles have often neglected the role played by context and have often merely focused on their occurrence in corpora (cf. Hayase, 2011). As is often argued, the syntactic mismatch of subjects can cause ambiguity and confusion, yet this ambiguity and confusion is undoubtedly consolidated in cases where no context is provided. Having made use of a stimulus sentence without any accompanying context, I aimed at the respondents' reaction towards this particular use. As the results show, a clear divide between respondents can be identified in that half the respondents found the stimulus sentence acceptable, while the

other half found it acceptable only in various contexts. The dangling participle in the stimulus sentence obtained the highest acceptability rate of 42 per cent in the informal spoken context and the lowest rating of 10.7 per cent in the formal speaking context. A fairly similar stimulus sentence used by Mittins and his colleagues produced an average acceptability rating of 17 per cent in the late 1960s. Taking this finding into account, a tendency towards an increased acceptability of the dangling participle can be identified, as the average acceptability rating of 25.2 per cent shows, but only a very low one compared to other usage problems (Tieken-Boon van Ostade & Ebner, 2017).

My statistical analysis of possible correlations between usage judgments and the social variables investigated showed no significant results. However, respondents who discarded the stimulus sentence stated their judgment with a significantly higher level of certainty than those who found it acceptable. Furthermore, respondents identifying the stimulus sentence as unacceptable tend to base their decision on their knowledge of the rule. This is a pattern which has already been identified with other usage features discussed above (cf. Section 7.2.1.6). By adding a qualitative analysis of the obtained comments, I was able to identify not only an existing degree of awareness of the problematical status of dangling participles, but also to highlight the importance of context.

The analysis of usage entries included in HUGE emphasises an important finding, namely that the dangling participle has become a recurring usage problem in the advice literature only from the early twentieth century onwards. Furthermore, it has to be noted that usage guide authors overwhelmingly criticise this feature, even, as can be seen in Table 7.26 above, down to the three most recent usage guides included in the collection.

7.2.1.9. *I* for *me*

The use of *I* instead of *me*, as shown in the stimulus sentence (S9. *Between you and I, he will not be considered for this job*), has been described in detail in Section 6.10 above. The attitudes elicited through the online questionnaire will be analysed in this section; however, corpus data to show the feature's actual use will be presented first. A corpus search including the exact phrase *between you and I* produced only two occurrences in the BNC. Both occurred in subsections related to spoken contexts, the spoken subsection and direct speech in the fiction subsection. The phrase *between you and me*, on the other hand, showed a higher frequency rate with 43 occurrences. The highest normalised frequency rate for *between you and me* was recorded in the fiction subsection with 2.07 tokens per million words. This subsection was followed by the magazine (0.41 tokens per million words) and spoken subsections (0.40 tokens per million words). Using the POS-tagger, I also searched for pronouns following the phrase *between you and*, which produced *between you and they* as the only other instance of nominative pronoun use in the BNC. While the frequencies for the use of nominative pronouns such as *I* or *they* is relatively low, one has to bear in mind that some of the material included in the BNC, such as edited writing and scripted speech, has most likely been proofread, as a result of which such perceived pronoun errors would have been corrected.

The sociolinguistic analysis of usage attitudes revealed that only age showed a significant difference with regard to usage judgment ($U = 921$, $p = .000$, $r = -.36$). In other words, the younger the respondents, the more likely it is that they find the stimulus sentence acceptable (*Mdn* = 31–40-years old). The median of those who found the stimulus sentence unacceptable lies at the age group comprising the ages of 41 to 60. The other social variables, i.e. education level ($r_s = .107$, $p = .261$), gender ($\chi^2 (1) = .308$, $p = .579$) and

nativeness ($r_s = -.127$, $p = .183$), showed no statistically significant difference. Conducting a binary logistic regression analysis, I was able to show that the prediction accuracy of a model including only the constant increased from 53.6 to 67 per cent when all social variables were included. This model, which is presented in Table 7.27 below, was the result of a forced data entry method.

Table 7.27 Results of binary logistic regression: *between you and I*

		95 % CI for exp *b*		
Included	*B*(*SE*)	Lower	exp *b*	Upper
Nativeness	0.59 (0.79)	0.38	0.86	8.57
Gender	–.24 (0.42)	0.34	0.79	1.81
Age (18–25)	2.13 (0.70)*	2.14	8.38	32.89
Age (26–30)	1.77 (0.67)*	1.58	5.87	21.85
Age (31–40)	1.41 (0.58)*	1.31	4.08	12.77
Age (41–60)	1.16 (0.63)	0.93	3.18	10.81
Level of education	–0.58 (0.63)	0.16	0.56	1.94
Constant	–0.81 (0.47)			

Note $R^2 = .12$ (Hosmer & Lemeshow), Model χ^2 (7) = 18.32, $p = .011$*, $p < .05$*

While the model is of poor fit (χ^2 (7) = 18.32, $p = .011$), the Wald statistics show that the predictor age does make a meaningful contribution to the model as the overall effect of age is significant at $p = .011$. In particular, the age groups 18–25 ($p = .002$), 26–30 ($p = .008$) and 31–40-year-olds ($p = .016$) display low levels of statistical significance when compared to the reference group of over 60-year-olds. As can be seen in the table above, the odds ratios for these three groups indicate that older age groups are more likely to find the use of *between you and I* unacceptable. These findings confirm the results of the Mann-Whitney *U*-test discussed above.

Similar to the dangling participle discussed in section 7.2.1.8, almost half the respondents considered this usage feature unacceptable. A difference between formal and informal contexts can also be identified in Figure 7.15.

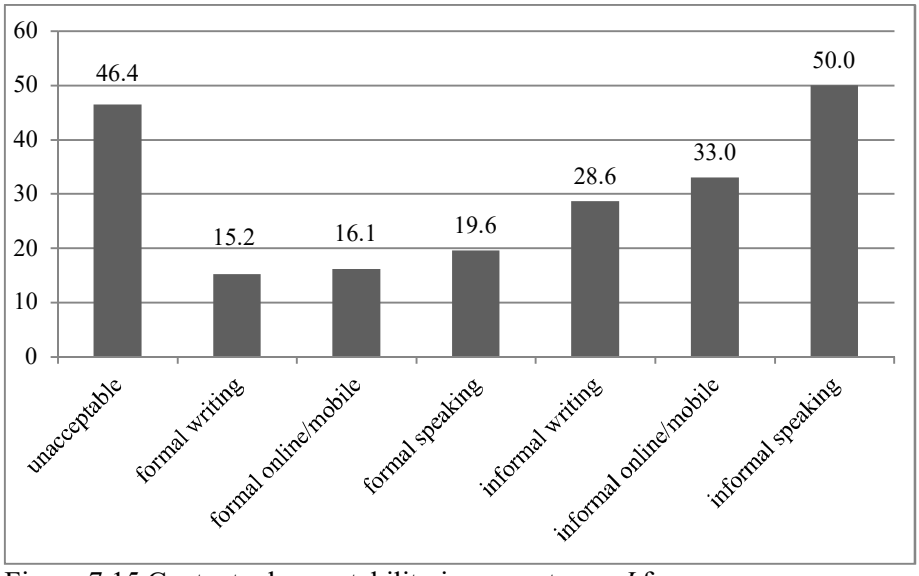

Figure 7.15 Contextual acceptability in percentages: *I* for *me*

The highest acceptability rating of 50 per cent was found in the informal speaking context, while the context with the lowest acceptability rate of 15.2 per cent was the formal writing context. With an average acceptability rate of 27.1 per cent *between you and I* as a usage problem ranks relatively low in comparison to other usage problems discussed above, such as the double negative (cf. §. 7.2.1.7).

Regarding the degree of certainty, a statistically significant difference could be identified ($U = 1105$, $p = .002$, $r = -.30$) between the two acceptability groups, which showed that those who found the stimulus sentence unacceptable exhibited a higher degree of certainty (*Mdn* = "absolutely certain") than those who did not (*Mdn* = "somewhat certain"). This is also reflected in the respondents' judgment basis. The moderate positive correlation ($r_s = .309$, $p = .001$, Fisher's exact test $p = .001$) identified between acceptability and judgment basis is indicative of the respondents' tendency to base their decision on the knowledge of a rule, if the stimulus sentence including *between you and I* was considered as unacceptable.

Regarding the qualitative analysis, the stimulus sentence produced 43 comments, most of which contained a correction of the perceived error in the sentence or showed some awareness of the usage problem included in it. While some of these corrections are straightforward and brief, such as comment (81), others allow for a more detailed insight into why these corrections were made. Examples of the latter type of comment can be found in (81) – (84) below.

(81) Should be 'me' not *I*.
(Retired accounts clerk, over 60 years old, female)

(82) Should be 'me,' but enough people say 'I' to make it acceptable.
(Retired solicitor, over 60 years old, male)

(83) I know that the *I* should be *me*, but cannot remember why.
(Retired social worker, over 60 years old, female)

(84) The *I* should be a *me* but I do not know what the rule is - just know.
(Admin manager, over 60, female)

The respondent in (82) elaborates on his correction by stating that the common use of *I* instead of *me* has made it acceptable. In contrast to such straightforward corrections, those made by the respondents in (83) and (84) are accompanied by an admission on the part of the respondent that they either do not remember or are not familiar with the rule. Besides offering corrections, some respondents distinguished between their own usage and that of others. Within this theme, the topic of hypercorrection emerged, which will be discussed in detail below. Comments (85) – (87) illustrate this theme.

(85) This seems wrong, *because you and I* isn't the subject of a clause here, so I would avoid this in formal and written contexts. However, 'you and I' is a common hypercorrection, and I probably do use it if not carefully considering my word choice.
(Software engineer, 31–40 years old, male)

(86) The nominative and oblique cases are there for a reason. They're not hard to tell apart, and I judge those who misuse them or hyper-correct themselves (or, even more irritatingly, others!). (Student, 18–25 years old, male)

(87) I would have written "you and me"- using "I" sounds like the speaker is trying too hard to be correct! (Student, 18–25 years old, female)

In comment (85), a respondent explains how he would avoid using *between you and I* included in the stimulus sentence in "formal and written contexts", yet he also admits using this phrase in careless situations. What is interesting in his comment is his identification of the phrase as a commonly used hyper-correction. The respondent in (86) also picks up on this phrase being prone to hypercorrections in that he claims to "judge those who misuse them [nominative and oblique cases] or hypercorrect themselves". He goes on to note that he finds hypercorrecting the use of other speakers even more irritating. In comment (87), another student describes the phenomenon of hypercorrection as speakers who are "trying too hard to be correct".

To conclude the analysis of the comments, I would like to discuss two comments which reflect a sentiment mentioned in Gowers (1954, p. 147), namely that the use of *I* in *It is I* is perceived as "pedantic", while *It is me* is deemed unsuitable in written contexts (see § 6.10). The respondent in comment (88) not only distinguishes between written and spoken contexts, but also between different degrees of acceptability, stating that in writing she would be "unforgiving" when encountering this particular feature, while the same phrase in spoken contexts would be acceptable. A similar judgment is made by the respondent in (89), who finds that *between me and I* "commonly misused" although the stimulus sentence does not "sound immediately unusual or incorrect".

(88) In writing, I don't see why you would make this mistake as it's a simple rule, so I would be unforgiving. In speech I think off hand you could easily make the mistake so it's fine.
(English teacher, 18–25 years old, female)

(89) In formal writing, you should use the grammatically correct alternative. *Between you and me.* However, this is commonly misused and the above doesn't sound immediately unusual or incorrect.
(Accountant, 26–30 years old, female)

These comments not only suggest a contextual difference between the two variants, which has already been identified in the contextual preference analysis above, but also show how customary usage influences speakers' perceptions.

Out of the 39 British usage guides in the HUGE database, 32 discuss "*I* for *me*" as a usage problem. This particular usage feature was first critically discussed in the early nineteenth century in *The Vulgarities of Speech Corrected* (1829). The three most recent usage guides published in 2010 also contain criticism regarding the "*I* for *me*" issue. Since this category comprises different variants of the same type of usage problem, my analysis of usage entries focussed on *between you and I* in particular, i.e. pronouns following a preposition and being connected with *and*. Four usage guides, i.e. Swan (1980), *The Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors* (1981), Blamires (1994) and Sayce (2006), did not discuss this construction, but instead focussed on other "*I* for *me*" issues such as the *It is me*/*I* example discussed in Section 6.10. A detailed overview of the usage entry categorisation is provided in Table 7.28, while examples are provided of each of the categories used in my classification (only "criticised" and "neutral"). The classification brought to light that none of the usage guide authors advocated the use of this particular usage feature.

Criticised

Yet there are educated people who lapse happily into the false grammar of 'between you and I, 'for you and I, ... So upmarket is this error, that *between you and I* has been called the 'nob's phrase'.

This has been going on for centuries: Shakespeare wrote 'All debts are cleared between you and I'; and for Pepys (1633-1703), kind words were exchanged 'between my poor wife and I'. In our own time many distinguished interviewers and newscasters have given us 'from you and I', 'from she and I'. No wonder that Robert Burchfield, a former chief editor of Oxford English Dictionaries, regrets that the 'nob's' ungrammatical between you and I is 'racing away into general, even educated use'. Nevertheless, 'between you and I, 'from you and I', 'for you and I', etc. should be avoided, even in speech, because for many of us they are ungrammatical and slipshod. ….

These recommendations are subject to review at the end of the century, if not sooner, by which time between you and I, etc. may have become accepted usage, whatever we think, We cannot dispute this has long been the *Queen's English*, since in 1954 Her Majesty pronounced on her return from a Commonwealth tour, 'This is a wonderful moment for my husband and I'. (Howard, 1993, p. 209)

Neutral

(d) after *between* and *but* (= except): 'Between you and I' has become a stock phrase--again in the belief that 'you and I' is more grammatical (and more genteel) than 'you and me'. *Between* governs both pronouns: therefore both are accusative. In the same way *but* is often followed by the nominative. The following examples, all from Shakespeare, will illustrate the faults referred to:

'All debts are cleared between you and *I*.'
'There is none but *he*
Whose being I do fear.'

'I never saw a woman
But only Sycorax my dam and *she*.'

MEU, however, from common usage both past and present, justifies and even prefers the conjunctive use of *but* in this construction: in other words, 'Whence all but *he* had fled' is correct Mod.E. idiom. (Treble & Vallins, 1936, p. 41)

The advice offered by Treble and Vallins (1936, p. 41) was among the most lenient, as it contains an insight into the frequency of *between you and I* which they label as a stock phrase. Its idiomatic nature was also mentioned by Partridge (1942, p. 54), who went on to describe the increased use of this construction by educated speakers as well. By contrast, Howard (1993, p. 209) prescribes the use of the objective pronoun *me* in the phrase investigated. By referring to *between you and I* as a "nob's phrase", Howard (1993, p. 209) likewise pointed to its spreading use among educated speakers, news spokespersons and even Queen Elizabeth II.

From the overview in Table 7.28 below the mainly negative treatment of *between you and I* becomes evident. While eighteen usage guides proscribe the use of nominative pronouns in phrases such as *between you and I*, ten usage guides offer slightly more lenient usage advice by providing contextual restrictions and recommendations. An example of such treatment is the above-mentioned advice by Howard (1993, p. 209). In Figure 7.16 below, an illustration of the diachronic treatment of *between you and I* is presented.

Table 7.28 Treatment of *between you and I* ("criticised" and "neutral" only) in British publications

criticised (18)	Anon1826(1829), Vallins1951, Wood1962(1970), Burchfield1981, Bailie&Kitchin1979(1988), Greenbaum&Whitcut1988, Dear1986(1990), Howard1993, Amis1997(1998), *PocketFowler*1999, Marriott&Farrell1992(1999), Burchfield1996(2000), Ayto1995(2002), Burt2000(2002), *OxfordA-Z*2007, Taggart2010, Heffer2010, Lamb2010
neutral (10)	Fowler&Fowler1906(1922), Fowler1926, Treble&Vallins1936, Partridge1942(1947), Vallins1953(1960), Gowers1965, Weiner&Delahunty1983(1994), Burchfield,Weiner&Hawkins1984, Trask2001, Peters2004
not mentioned (4)	Swan1980, *OxfordDictionary*1981(1984), Blamires1994, Sayce2006
Total: 32	

The graph in Figure 7.16 below shows how *between you and I* came under heavy criticism only from the 1980s onwards, which is a trend that has crystalised in the discussion of usage problems so far.

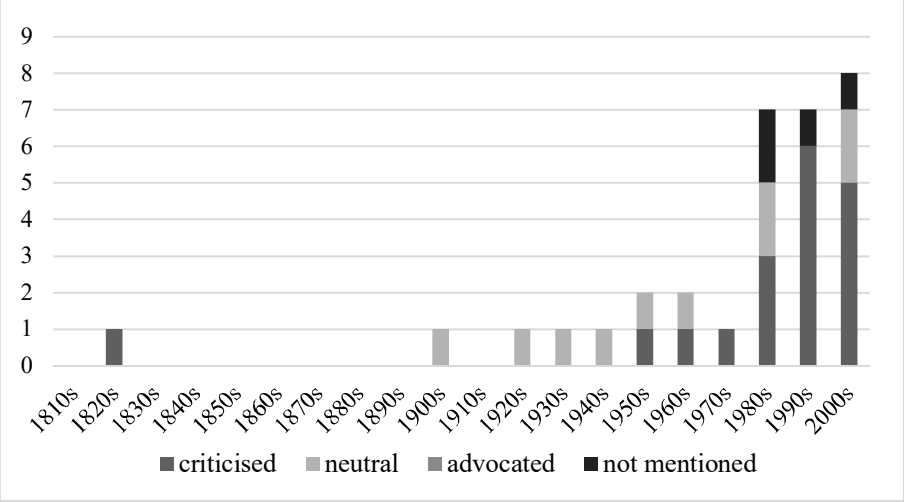

Figure 7.16 Diachronic treatment of *between you and I* in British publications

The iconic phrase *between you and I* has been shown to be an interesting usage problem due to it apparently being the product of hypercorrection. This phenomenon has also been pointed out by some of the questionnaire respondents, who mistakenly describe the use of *between you and I* as an effort to sound more educated. However, the comments also reveal that such hypercorrections may have the opposite effect as users of such constructions are described as uneducated.

The statistical analysis which I undertook showed that age does indeed play a role when it comes to usage judgments on the stimulus sentence containing *between you and I* in that older respondents tend to dismiss the phrase as unacceptable, while younger ones tend to find it acceptable. Interestingly, an almost similar divide between respondents and their judgments can be identified here, as has also been identified for the dangling participle. Nearly

47 per cent of all usage judgments fall into the category unacceptable, while a clear tendency was found towards accepting the stimulus sentence in informal contexts. Comparing its average acceptability rate of 27.1 per cent to Mittins et al.'s study, in which the same construction obtained an acceptability rating of 23 per cent, shows the constructions continued disputed status more than four decades later.

Despite being mentioned first in the early nineteenth century, *between you and I* can clearly be called as a usage problem of the twentieth century. Although its treatment is predominately critical, an increase of criticism can be identified from the 1980s onwards. This pattern has been identified with other investigated usage problems as well, such as the double negative discussed above.

7.2.1.10. Split infinitive

In my description of the split infinitive in Section 6.11 above, I attempted to illustrate this particular feature's status as a prototypical usage problem. Attitudes towards this phenomenon have been elicited by making use of the following stimulus sentence in the online questionnaire: S10. *He refused to even think about it.* Before presenting the sociolinguistic analysis, I will provide an overview of the occurrence of split infinitives in the BNC. Searching for the construction *to even think about* in the BNC showed nine instances, while the prescribed variant *to think even about* was not recorded in the BNC and *even to think about*, another more acceptable alternative, occurred with a raw frequency rate of eight occurrences. While this construction showed the highest normalised frequency rate of 0.25 tokens per million words in the fiction subsection of the BNC, the variant *to even think about* occurred most frequently in the magazine subsection, showing a comparable normalised frequency rate of 0.28 tokens per million words. In order to keep the corpus

search feasible, I restricted the search to adverbs directly preceding or following the infinitive.

Using the POS-tagger, I conducted a corpus search for split infinitive constructions with one adverb being placed between *to* and an infinitive. This search showed that the most frequently recorded split infinitive in the BNC is *to actually get* (36 instances), followed by *to really get* (27), *to actually do* (23) and *to even think* (21). A detailed overview of these four constructions with the highest frequencies and their prescribed alternatives is shown in Table 7.29. I chose to report only on the four most frequent constructions found in the BNC.

Table 7.29 Top 4 split infinitives and their prescribed variants (raw figures in parenthesis, BNC subsection with highest normalised frequencies in bold)

disputed variant	prescribed variant post-infinitive position	prescribed variant pre-infinitive position
to actually get (36) spoken (**3.31**)	to get actually (2) spoken (**1.20**)	actually to get (4) spoken (**0.30**)
to really get (27) spoken (**1.20**)	to get really (35) spoken (**1.41**)	really to get (15) spoken (**1.20**)
to actually do (23) spoken (**1.41**)	to do actually (2) spoken (**0.20**)	actually to do (6) spoken (**0.40**)
to even think (21) fiction (**0.82**)	to think even (1) miscellaneous (**0.05**)	even to think (31) fiction (**1.19**)

Table 7.29 above shows that the four most frequent split infinitive constructions and their prescribed variants either with the adverb in immediate post- or pre-infinitive position occur most frequently in spoken contexts. While the variants *to actually get* and *to actually do* show higher frequencies than their prescribed variants, *to get really* and *even to think* have higher frequency rates in the corpus than their disputed alternatives. Both *to get really*

and *even to think* could be more frequent due to speakers adding emphasis to the verb. That the placement of the adverb could cause a change in meaning, as in *Even he refused to think about it*, also needs to be borne in mind here. All three variants of the split infinitive construction *to even think* occurred most frequently in contexts other than the spoken subsection of the BNC.

Analysing possible correlations between usage judgment and the social factors investigated produced the following results. None of the social factors analysed showed a significantly different correlation with usage judgments (age ($U = 325$, $p = .052$, $r = -.18$), education level ($r_s = -.123$, $p = .196$), gender ($\chi^2(1) = .521$, $p = .470$), nativeness ($r_s = -.103$, $p = 278$)). The results of the binary logistic regression analysis were inconclusive, which is most likely due to the low number of judgments falling into the unacceptability category, as can be seen below. The use of the split infinitive was rejected by only ten informants who were all native speakers and university-educated. Furthermore, seven of these ten informants were over 60 years old. Hence, the group of informants rejecting the split infinitive is most likely too homogenous for this kind of analysis and a larger sample would be needed to test the influence of all social variables on the outcome variable in a reliable manner.

The contextual preference analysis indicates the stimulus sentence's widely acceptable status. With an average acceptability rating of 63.5 per cent, the split infinitive in the stimulus sentence shows the highest acceptability rating of 84.8 per cent in the informal speaking context and the lowest acceptability rating of 41.1 per cent in the formal writing context. Only 8.9 per cent of judgments fell into the unacceptable category. The contextual preference of the stimulus sentence investigating attitudes towards split infinitives is illustrated in Figure 7.17 below.

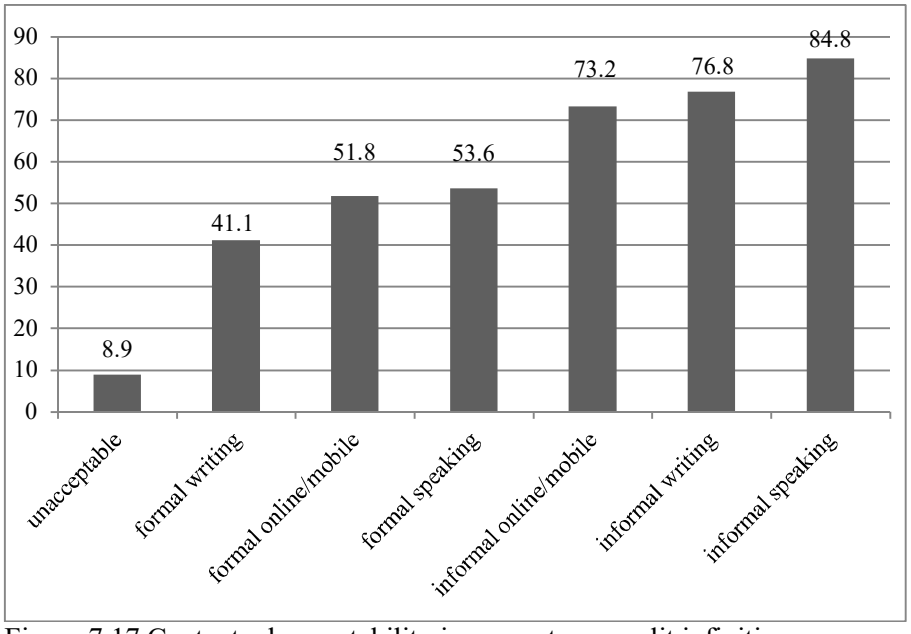

Figure 7.17 Contextual acceptability in percentages: split infinitive

While no statistically significant difference between informants who find the stimulus sentence acceptable and those who do not could be identified ($U = 477$, $p = .697$, $r = –.04$), the analysis of the informants' judgment basis showed that respondents who rated the stimulus sentence unacceptable tend to base their judgment on their familiarity with the rule. This also means that an acceptable judgment correlated positively with gut feeling ($r_s = .287$, $p = .003$, Fisher's exact test $p = .007$).

42 respondents commented on the stimulus sentence (*He refused to even think about it*). The most persistently recurring themes identified in these comments included the notorious status of split infinitives as a language myth. The respondents not only named the issue at hand, but also provided an elaboration on what they think about this particular usage feature. Comments (90) – (94) represent this theme.

(90) I think the *even* should go before the *to*? But I'm not sure.
(English teacher, 31 – 40, Male)

(91) Don't really mind a split infinitive.
(Teacher, 41–60 years old, female)

(92) Good enough for Star Trek, good enough for anyone - to proudly split any infinitives.
(Teacher, 41–60 years old, male)

(93) split infinitive!!!!!! however, I do know that this has changed over recent years - demonstrated by BBC.
(Retired primary and EFL teacher, over 60 years old, female)

(94) The infamous split infinitive..... another battle that has been lost.
(Retired language teacher, over 60 years old, female)

The comments quoted above not only reflect changes in the acceptability of split infinitives, they also provide a specialised insight into the attitudes of teachers. While the English teacher in (90) does indeed correct the split infinitive by moving *even* before *to*, he at the same time questions his decision and states his uncertainty about his correction. This comment needs to be viewed in contrast to the ones made by the respondents in (91) and (92), who are both teachers as well. In (91) a simple straightforward judgment of the acceptability of split infinitives is made. A similar notion is expressed by the teacher in (92) who, however, elaborates her judgment by referring to the famous opening of Star Trek and states "to proudly split any infinitives" herself. The last comments quoted above are made by two female retired teachers who express a slightly more negative perception of the changes affecting the acceptability of split infinitives. Following an outcry at identifying the split infinitive, the respondent in (93) goes on to weaken her initially negative reaction by stating that she has noticed a change in usage. In particular, she refers to the usage of the BBC, whose role of a language guardian has already been discussed in Chapter 2. This confirms not only how the language use of the BBC is subject to criticism from its audience, but also how the media reflects the language

use of society (see Bell, 1995, p. 23). Lastly, the respondent in (94) describes the "infamous split infinitive" as a lost battle.

Comments (95) – (97) deal with the theme of obtaining possibly negative judgments by other speakers triggered by the use of a split infinitive.

(95) Split infinitive. But I think these are fine! Others would disagree with me. I think it is absurd to base a rule on something that was formerly based on Latin, a completely different language family. But many would see this as an error...
(Lecturer, 31–40 years old, female)

(96) I wo0uld [sic] not, personally, use a split infinitive in formal writing in case I was judged by someone even more pedantic than me. I think it sounds fine, though.
(English teacher, 41–60 years old, female)

(97) This is like the 'fewer' example: I would avoid this in writing, but I find the rule pedantic and pointless. However, sometimes one has to respect the prejudices of others, and I would do so in this case.
(University lecturer in German, 41–60 years old, female)

All three comments quoted here express the respondents' tendencies to avoid splitting infinitives, since they realise that other speakers still perceive them as incorrect. The respondent in (95) emphasises the absurdity of the Latin origin of the split infinitive in English, yet concludes that split infinitives are still perceived as errors. In (96), a respondent claims to avoid split infinitives not to be "judged by someone even more pedantic than" her but continues by stating that the stimulus sentence "sounds fine". The influence of those who regard split infinitives as errors is illustrated in (97), in which a respondent argues that he respects "the prejudices of others" and consequently avoids split infinitives, despite stating how "pedantic and pointless" this rule is. These comments provide an insight into how the influence of prescriptivists can

affect actual usage in that even those who accept split infinitives avoid such linguistic constructions in order not to commit a mistake in the eyes of others.

The last two comments I would like to discuss here deal with the theme of finding a historical reason for the split infinitive rule.

(98) The issue of split infinitives was raised to distinguish classes, not to identify 'proper' English.
(University lecturer, 41–60 years old, male)

(99) There isn't really a sound or historically valid grammatical reason to ban spilt infinitives. In this sentence to move 'even' would detract from the force and meaning of the sentence. I think the 'never split an infinitive' argument is a bit feeble.
(Stay-at-home mother, 31–40 years old, female)

While the university lecturer in (98) argues that the rule against split infinitives was established "to distinguish classes, [and] not to identify 'proper' English", the stay-at-home mother in (99) claims that the "feeble" rule against split infinitives has no "sound or historically valid grammatical reason". These two comments complement the comments quoted above in that respondents acknowledge the outdated character of the rule; for all that, the influence of prescriptivists is retained and the myth about the split infinitive continues to be alive within the speech community.

In order to illustrate the history of this particular usage problem, I conducted a survey of all British usage guides included in HUGE. Being an old chestnut, the split infinitive is discussed in 34 British publications. The tripartite categorisation of the usage entries into "criticised", "neutral" and "advocated" is illustrated in the examples below. The overall results of this categorisation are illustrated in Table 7.30 below. As can be seen from this overview, the majority of usage guide authors assume a neutral position. Figure 7.18 contains an overview of the diachronic development of the split infinitive discussion in British usage guides.

Criticised: A correspondent states as his own usage, and defends, the insertion of an adverb between the sign of the infinitive mood and the verb. He gives as an instance, "*to scientifically illustrate*." But surely this is a practice entirely unknown to English speakers and writers. It seems to me, that we ever regard the *to* of the infinitive as inseparable from its verb. And when we have a choice between two forms of expression, "scientifically to illustrate," and "to illustrate scientifically," there seems no good reason for flying in the face of common usage. (Alford, 1864, p. 171)

Neutral: Avoid the split infinitive wherever possible; but if it is the clearest and/or most natural construction, use it boldly. The angels are on our side. (Partridge, 1942, p. 298)

Advocated: If you think a sentence will be more emphatic, clear or rhythmical, split your infinitive – there is no reason in logic or grammar for avoiding it. … If you can't bring yourself to split an infinitive, at least allow others the freedom to do so. (Cutts, 1995, pp. 96–97).

Table 7.30 Treatment of the split infinitive ("criticised", "neutral" and "advocated") in British publications

criticised (4)	Alford1864, Fowler&Fowler1906(1922), Treble&Vallins1936, Heffer2010
neutral (23)	Fowler1926, Partridge1942(1947), Gowers1948, Vallins1951, Vallins1953(1960), Gowers1965, Wood1962(1970), Swan1980, Burchfield1981, Burchfield,Weiner&Hawkins1984, Bailie&Kitchin1979(1988), Greenbaum&Whitcut1988, Dear1986(1990), Weiner&Delahunty1983(1994), Crystal1984(2000), Howard1993, Amis1997(1998), Marriott&Farrell1992(1999), *PocketFowler*1999, Burchfield1996(2000), Peters2004, Sayce2006, Lamb2010
advocated (7)	*OxfordDictionary*1981(1984), Cutts1995, Ayto1995(2002), Trask2001, Burt2000(2002), *OxfordA-Z*2007 Taggart2010
Total: 34	

This usage feature was first discussed and criticised by Alford in 1864 and was subject to a rather negative treatment until the 1940s. Figure 7.18 shows, however, how the traditional stricture on splitting infinitives made way for a more moderate attitude towards this usage feature. From the 1980s onwards,

usage advice on the split infinitive issue shifted yet again and the practice of splitting infinitives even came to be advocated.

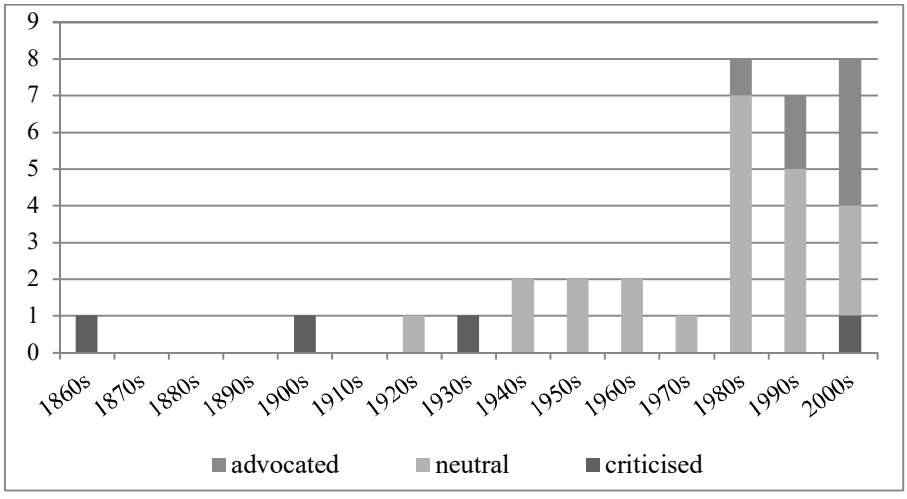

Figure 7.18 Diachronic treatment of the split infinitive in British publications

An exception to this gradual move toward acceptability is Simon Heffer's *Strictly English* published in 2010. Not only does Heffer condemn split infinitives, he also wrongly attributes the origin of the rule against splitting infinitives to Lowth's grammar.

> This began with Latinists, notably Lowth, arguing that since the infinitive was intact in that language, it had better be as intact as possible in our own too. There is no reason in that sense why this should apply in English. However, the division of *to* from its verb was seized on by the Fowlers, correctly in my view, as inelegant. … for the sake of logic and clarity to and the verb whose infinitive it forms are always best placed next to each other rather than interrupted by an adverb. In nearly 30 years as a professional writer I have yet to find a context in which the splitting of an infinitive is necessary in order to avoid ambiguity or some other obstruction to proper sense. (Heffer, 2010, p. 62)

What also becomes apparent from this overview is that the split infinitive is a usage problem of the twentieth century, as it was discussed in only one earlier usage guide (cf. Tieken-Boon van Ostade & Ebner, 2017). While some usage

guide authors started advocating the splitting of infinitives in the 1980s, the myth of the split infinitive seems to have persisted in the usage guide tradition.

The myth surrounding split infinitives has made this particular usage feature not only a recurring old chestnut in the usage debate, but also turned it into a prototypical usage problem which enjoys widespread notoriety among speakers. The corpus evidence does not only show that split infinitives are in actual use, but also highlights their frequent occurrence in spoken contexts. This finding was illustrated on the basis of the four most frequent split infinitive constructions found in the BNC. As Crystal (2006a, p. 126) argues, splitting an infinitive is said to follow "the heartbeat of English", by which it is said to make the construction sound more natural. That placing an adverb between the infinitive marker *to* and the infinitive can add emphasis or can cause a change in meaning further needs to be borne in mind (see § 6.11).

My sociolinguistic analysis showed that age again plays a crucial role in that older respondents are more likely to reject the split infinitive than younger ones. This generational difference in reflecting linguistic preferences in this respect could possibly result in split infinitives becoming irrelevant. With an average acceptability rating of 63.5 per cent, the stimulus sentence including the split infinitive has obtained the highest average acceptability rating of the usage problems investigated so far. In comparison with Mittins et al.'s study, which produced a 40 per cent average acceptability rating for a very similar stimulus sentence, a clear tendency of increased acceptability can therefore be identified. This growing acceptability of split infinitives is also reflected in the analysis of usage entries included in HUGE, which showed a clear move towards a more lenient treatment of split infinitives, with some writers even advocating its use. It should be mentioned that resistance towards the construction's acceptability is still provided by one very late usage guide author, i.e. Simon Heffer, which stresses the fact that the selection of usage

problems to be included in a usage guide is subject to the usage guide author's preferences. Although the split infinitive seems to enjoy an overwhelmingly high acceptability rate, its mythological status is still a fact. Despite mentioning the outdated character of the rule against splitting infinitives, respondents claim to follow the rule in order not to be judged negatively by others.

7.2.1.11. *Literally* as an intensifier

The changing meaning of *literally* as an intensifier has been described in Section 6.12 above, in which I have attempted to provide a more detailed insight into this particular usage feature's stigmatisation. By including the stimulus sentence (S11. *His eyes were literally popping out of his head*) in the online questionnaire, attitudes towards the non-literal, hyperbolic use of *literally* were elicited. Before presenting the results of the sociolinguistic analysis which I conducted, I will report on the findings of two corpus-based studies of *literally* which made use of qualitative methods. Nerlich and Chamizo Domínguez (2003) conducted an analysis of occurrences of *literally* found in the *Bank of English*, a corpus of modern English varieties comprising 450 million words (Lee, 2010, p. 109). Grouping instances of *literally* into three categories depending on their meaning, Nerlich and Chamizo Domínguez (2003, pp. 202–204) show the different uses of *literally*. While the first group comprises instances in which *literally* is used in its original literal sense, the second group contains occurrences of *literally* which show the gradually shifting meaning of *literally* which is often used for rhetorical purposes (Nerlich & Chamizo Domínguez, 2003). The third and last group includes occurrences of *literally* which show a completed shift of meaning, i.e. *literally* meaning "the opposite of what it meant before" (Nerlich & Chamizo Domínguez, 2003, p. 203). While the original meaning of *literally* is illustrated in an example taken from the *OED* (s.v., *literally*) in 8.a), Nerlich

and Chamizo Domínguez's study (2003, p. 203) provides examples of the intermediate and completely changed meanings of *literally* in 8.b) and 8.c) respectively.

8. a) She often became very angry with me for taking her literally.

   b) Pamper yourself quite literally from head to toe!

   c) I literally died laughing.

A similar categorisation as well as a corpus analysis was conducted by Claridge (2011), who made use of the BNC and the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English for this, adding a comparative dimension between British and American English to her study. Claridge (2011, pp. 100–101) distinguished between conventional uses of *literally*, semi-creative/conventional occurrences, and creative hyperbolic uses of *literally*. This tripartite categorisation corresponds with Nerlich and Chamizo Domínguez's categorisation described above. Having compiled a sub-corpus containing occurrences of *literally* based on the BNC data, Claridge reports on the distribution of the 376 instances of *literally*. While the majority of the instances from this BNC sub-corpus, namely 85 per cent, fall into the first category comprising conventional uses of *literally*, only 8 and 7 per cent fall into the semi-creative/conventional and creative expression groups respectively. Thus, her findings serve as an indication of how frequent the different uses of *literally* actually are.

My sociolinguistic analysis of the usage attitudes obtained through the online questionnaire produced the following results. While education level ($r_s = .099$, $p = .297$), gender ($\chi^2(1) = .014$, $p = .905$), and nativeness ($r_s = -.009$, $p = .921$) did not show any statistically significant differences according to the acceptability ratings, usage attitudes, once again, seemed to vary according to age ($U = 982$, $p = .048$, $r = -.19$). These findings show that younger respondents exhibit the tendency to consider the stimulus sentence including

literally acceptable (*Mdn* = 31–40-years-old), while older respondents tend to reject the stimulus sentence (*Mdn* = 41–60-years-old).

The binary logistic regression analysis showed that a model containing only the constant has an overall prediction accuracy of 71.4 per cent which increases to 72.3 per cent in the proposed model presented in Table 7.31 below containing all social variables as predictors. Despite being a good fit (χ^2 (7) = 6.20, p = .516), the model does not show any statistical significance with regard to the Wald statistics. While age showed a significant correlation with acceptability ratings in the Mann-Whitney *U*-test, the binary logistic regression analysis indicates that the significance of age is diminished when all social variables are taken into account (p = .368).

Table 7.31 Results of binary logistic regression: *literally*

		95 % CI for exp *b*		
Included	*B*(*SE*)	Lower	exp *b*	Upper
Nativeness	0.93 (0.79)	0.23	1.10	5.17
Gender	–.12 (0.45)	0.37	0.89	2.13
Age (18–25)	1.49 (0.84)	0.86	4.42	22.77
Age (26–30)	0.95 (0.74)	0.61	2.58	10.89
Age (31–40)	0.16 (0.57)	0.38	1.17	3.59
Age (41–60)	0.36 (0.65)	0.40	1.43	5.11
Level of education	–0.56 (0.62)	0.17	0.57	1.91
Constant	0.66 (0.46)			

Note R^2= .05 (Hosmer & Lemeshow), Model χ^2 (7) = 6.20, p=.516, p < .05*

The stimulus sentence was identified as acceptable in informal contexts by the majority of respondents, as all show an acceptability rate of above 50 per cent. The informal speaking context shows the highest acceptability rate of 68.8 per cent. In contrast, the stimulus sentence is considered less acceptable in the three formal contexts. It obtained the lowest acceptability rate of 10.7 per cent in the most formal context, formal writing. Overall, the stimulus

sentence which I used to investigate attitudes towards the use of *literally* obtained an average acceptability rating of 37.1 per cent. Nearly 30 per cent of the questionnaire respondents found the same stimulus sentence unacceptable, which is illustrated in Figure 7.19 below.

A statistically significant difference in degree of certainty could be identified ($U = 624$, $p = .000$, $r = –.48$) between respondents and their usage judgments. Those respondents who found the stimulus sentence unacceptable seemed to be motivated by a higher degree of certainty (*Mdn* = "absolutely certain") than those who found the stimulus sentence acceptable (*Mdn* = "somewhat certain"). Furthermore, respondents calling the sentence unacceptable tended to base their judgment on the knowledge of a rule, while those who found it acceptable reported basing their judgments on a gut feeling ($r_s = .436$, $p = .000$, Fisher's exact test $p = .000$).

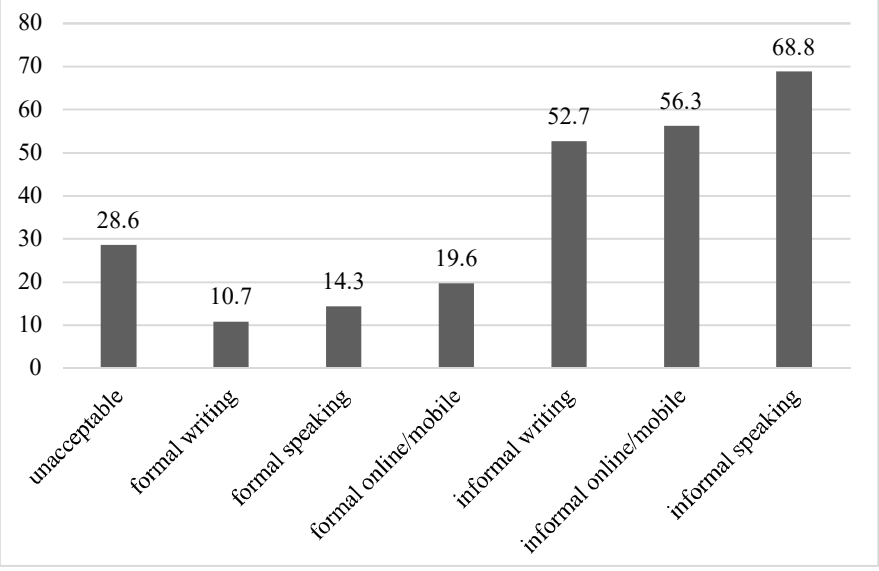

Figure 7.19 Contextual acceptability in percentages: *literally*

Analysing the 49 comments obtained, I identified the most prominent and recurring themes for the stimulus sentence which I used to test speaker

attitudes towards *literally*. While numerous respondents commented on the widespread use and acceptability of *literally*, which is illustrated in comments (100) – (102), the unacceptability of *literally* was also frequently mentioned by respondents and is illustrated in comments (103) – (105).

(100) people get annoyed by use of 'literally', I am guilty of saying *literally*, literally all the time, literally.
(Student, 18–25 years old, male)

(101) 'Literally' is used a lot in this way (i.e. not literally!) and I think this meaning is so common that one could argue it is now acceptable. Speakers who are more prescriptive (or purist) would disagree I am sure. I do not use *literally* in this way but it use is extremely widespread.
(Lecturer, 31–40 years old, female)

(102) Of course they weren't! However, the expression is used so often that it has become acceptable in informal verbal usage.
(Retired solicitor, over 60 years old, male)

While the respondent in (100) admits to using *literally* and produces a good example of his linguistic practice, the respondent in (101) emphasises how the use of *literally* as exemplified in the stimulus sentence is not only "so common that one could argue it is now acceptable", but it is also "extremely widespread". A similar notion is expressed in comment (102), made by a retired solicitor who argues that the frequent use of non-literal *literally* contributed to its acceptability. Yet he goes on to restrict the word's acceptability to "informal verbal usage". Both comments in (101) and (102) highlight how common and widespread usage has influenced the respondents' perceptions of the acceptability of *literally* in a non-literal sense. In contrast to such comments, a large number of respondents also mention the unacceptability of non-literal *literally* (n = 28).

(103) Wrong use of 'literally'.
(Retired accounts clerk, over 60 years old, female)

(104) 'Literally' is such a misused word!
(Stay-at-home mother, 31–40 years old, female)

(105) "literally" is another dreadful word.
(Proof-reader, 31–40 years old, male)

The respondents in comments (103) to (105) briefly yet assertively state the unacceptability of the stimulus sentence containing *literally*. Being described as the "wrong use of 'literally'", "a misused" or "dreadful word", *literally* in a non-literal sense clearly proves to be a current usage problem, as was already apparent from the comments (100) – (102) quoted above.

Studies on *literally* such as Nerlich and Chamizo Domínguez (2003) and Claridge (2011) differentiated three different stages of *literally*. Besides distinguishing between the word's original meaning and its use as a hyperbolic intensifier, *literally* is also found to be used in an intermediate function whose meaning depends on the interpretation of the interlocutor. That the changing status of the word has been perceived by questionnaire respondents is evident from comments (106) and (107). The comments also showed evidence of the intermediate status of *literally* in that a number of respondents were uncertain of the scene described in the stimulus sentence. Comments (106) – (110) illustrate this.

(106) The Oxford dictionary now says that "literally" means "not literally", so who am I to argue?
(Writer/journalist, 26–30 years old, male)

(107) *Literally* now can mean *figuratively*, I think I read this in a newspaper.
(English Teacher, 31–40 years old, male)

Comments (106) and (107), moreover, show awareness of the fact that the changing status of *literally* has been discussed in the media. While the re-

spondent in (106) refers to the adoption of *literally* into the "Oxford Dictionary", the respondent in (107) mentions remembering the discussion of this event in a newspaper. Both comments, however, express the notion of authority, through which the status of *literally* seems to be legitimatised.

(108) Well were they or weren't they?
(Student, 18–25 years old, male)

(109) literally? actually? physically?
(Retired arts consultant, over 60 years old, female)

(110) Hopefully they weren't literally popping out as I wouldn't know how to put them back in. Very dramatic & language is informal even slangy.
(Administrator, 26–30 years old, female)

While the respondents in (108) and (109) enquire the outcome of the scenario described in the stimulus sentence, another informant in (110) questions the process of eyes popping out, describing the language as "very dramatic" and "informal even slangy". The intermediate use of *literally* is highly dependent on the interpretation of the respondents and whether they take *literally* to mean "really" or "figuratively". All three respondents in the comments quoted above accepted the use of *literally* in the stimulus sentence, which further indicates how *literally* is associated with either the intermediate position or the non-literal sense of *literally*.

As mentioned in Section 6.12 above, the use of *literally* in a non-literal sense was first discussed in an American usage guide in 1918, namely Strunk's *The Elements of Style*. The first reference to this particular usage problem in a British publication followed a few years later, in Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (1926). A total of 27 British usage guides discuss this usage problem. Applying the modified version of Yáñez-Bouza's categorisation (2015) resulted in the overview presented in Table

7.32 below. Examples of each category are provided to illustrate the usage problem's treatment in more detail.

Criticised

One of the most commonly misused words. A friend recently told Her Ladyship, rather alarmingly, that her two siblings were *literally chalk and cheese*. One is a slim, dark man; the other a solidly built woman with fair hair. They also have very different personalities. Metaphorically or figuratively, therefore, they are chalk and cheese. Literally, Her Ladyship can assure her readers, they are nothing of the sort. (Taggart, 2010, p. 77)

Neutral

2. Comment on the use of:
(i) *virtually* in the following sentence: "Ruskin was *virtually* burned out when he was sixty",
(ii) *literally* in this sentence: "He *literally* glued his ears to the ground". …

2. (a) Correct; *virtually* is here an antonym to *actually*.

(b) If a man took a glue-pot and a brush and, by some acrobatic contortions, with the glue fastened himself to the ground by the ears, *literally* would be correctly used in this sentence. I *literally* fly to a man's help only if I go by aeroplane from where I am to where he is. To use *literally* with a metaphor is, obviously, to confuse the literal and the metaphorical. (See page 169). But the usage is very common; *literally*, in fact, loses its own literal meaning, and becomes an intensive or emphasising adverb in a kind of hyperbole. Vallins, 1951, pp. 199, 245)

Advocated

This word has a split personality: plain-speaking and tantalizing. In its primary sense, **literally** urges you to take a fact "according to the letter," i.e. word for word or exactly as the utterance has it. Yet for most of the last two centuries it has also been used to underscore figures of speech or turns of phrase which could never be taken at face value: They were literally green with envy.

In cases like that, **literally** defies its literal sense and seems to press for factual interpretation of the idiom, however far-fetched. Readers are tantalized - caught between the urge to believe and disbelief. (Peters, 2004, p. 326)

While Taggart (2010) holds on to the traditional use of *literally*, Vallins (1951) describes the widespread use of *literally* in a non-literal sense, despite providing a correction of its use. Peters (2004), once again, turns out to be the most lenient in providing usage advice in that she acknowledges and advocates the different meanings of *literally*.

Table 7.32 Treatment of *literally* ("criticised", "neutral" and "advocated") in British publications

criticised (20)	Fowler1926, Partridge1942(1947), Vallins1953(1960), Gowers1965, Wood1962(1970), Bailie&Kitchin1979(1988), Burchfield1981, Greenbaum&Whitcut1988, Howard1993, Blamires1994, Marriott&Farrell1992(1999), *PocketFowler*1999, Burchfield1996(2000), Trask2001, Burt2000(2002), Ayto1995(2002), Sayce2006, *OxfordA-Z*2007, Taggart2010, Heffer2010
neutral (6)	Vallins1951, Burchfield,Weiner&Hawkins1984, Dear1986(1990), Weiner&Delahunty1983(1994), Amis1997(1998), Lamb2010
advocated (1)	Peters2004
Total: 27	

Table 7.32 demonstrates how the traditional proscription against the use of *literally* in a non-literal sense prevails in the British usage guides included in HUGE. While 20 publications criticise this alleged new use, six take a neutral stance by accepting the usage problem in some contexts, and only one usage guide makes a clear distinction between the two uses and emphasises the role of the speaker in deciding the acceptability of this feature.

Placing this categorisation in a historical light, Figure 7.20 emphasises not only how *literally* is overwhelmingly criticised throughout the history of this usage problem, but also clearly illustrates how as an intensifier it is a typical usage problem of the twentieth century. Vallins's (1951) acknowledgement of the widespread use of *literally* and its changing meaning as illus-

trated in the examples above seems to be an exception in the early stigmatisation history of *literally* as an intensifier. Providing a neutral view by allowing contextual preferences became more frequent from the 1980s onwards. Yet, Figure 7.20 below also shows how prescriptions and proscriptions against the use of *literally* in a non-literal sense have become more frequent.

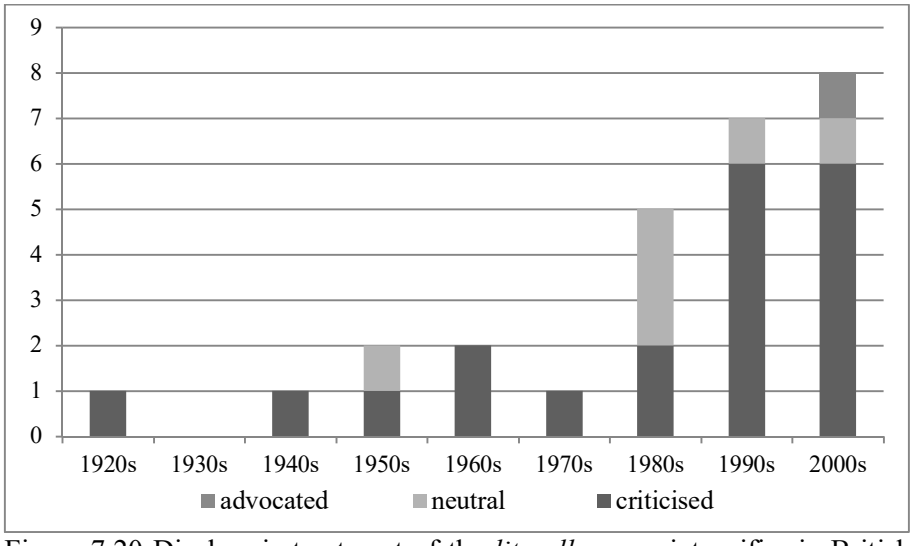

Figure 7.20 Diachronic treatment of the *literally* as an intensifier in British publications

The use of *literally* as an intensifier has been the subject of a heated public debate in Great Britain which was fuelled by the *OED*'s acceptance of *literally*. Although this usage feature has come to be viewed as problematical only fairly recently, its earliest recorded use dates back to the eighteenth century (see § 6.12). Interestingly, this "new" use of *literally* only became a regular feature in the usage debate after it was included in Strunk's *The Elements of Style* (1918), an American usage guide, followed by its treatment in Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (1926) only a few years later. The semantic shift which *literally* has been undergoing was captured and discussed in two studies which identify three different functions of *literally*

(Nerlich & Chamizo Domínguez, 2003; Claridge, 2011). Nevertheless, studies on the use of *literally* and of attitudes towards its hyperbolic use are relatively rare. The Mittins study included *literally* among the 55 items studied, and it obtained an average acceptability rate of 35 per cent. Interestingly, my own questionnaire results show only a slightly increased average acceptability rating of 37.1 per cent, which serves as a clear indicator of the disputed status of *literally*. The analysis of the comments demonstrates not only how respondents are aware of the changing meaning of *literally*, but also brings to light the possible confusion of respondents who are aware of the traditional and hyperbolic meaning of *literally*.

As far as the sociolinguistic analysis is concerned, age showed a statistically significant main effect, which was, however, diminished in the binary logistic regression analysis which takes any potential influences of the other social variables investigated into account. According to this main effect, younger respondents were more likely to accept the use of *literally* in the stimulus sentence than older ones. Respondents who made a negative usage judgment did so with a higher degree of certainty and stated basing their judgment on rule knowledge, while respondents who found the stimulus sentence acceptable showed a lower degree of certainty and tended to base their judgment on a feeling. Similar tendencies have been identified with already discussed usage problems and indicate that awareness of a particular usage feature may be translated into a more assertive judgment.

7.3. Concluding Remarks

The aim of the first part was to elicit attitudes towards usage problems by making use of a slightly less direct elicitation technique and of stimuli sentences which were partly taken from Mittins et al.'s *Attitudes to English Usage* (1970) and partly created for the purpose of this study. Therefore, a tentative comparison of changing usage tendencies could be achieved by comparing

essentially two snapshots of usage attitudes, which I will return to in Chapter 10. Although the usage features investigated were not highlighted, unlike in the case of the Mittins study, the respondents' awareness of the stigmatised features often did come to light, showing that respondents were aware of the usage problems concerned; they commented on them accordingly. While most questionnaire respondents expressed their attitudes towards the usage problems studied, some stimulus sentences contained other features which seemed to be more salient to them. This was, for example, the case with the stimulus sentence used to elicit attitudes towards the dangling participle (see § 6.2.3), which contained a semi-colon whose alleged inappropriateness unfortunately attracted the attention of several respondents, thus deflating their attention from the issue at hand. The analysis of the second part of the questionnaire will be discussed in detail in the following chapter making the online questionnaire analysis complete.

8. Current Usage Attitudes in England: the Online Questionnaire (Part Two)

8.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will present my analysis of the second part of the online questionnaire, which contained twelve statements on the current state of English as well as an open question aiming to elicit further qualitative data. Applying a mixed-methods approach when studying usage attitudes does not only mean combining both quantitative and qualitative data, as shown in the questionnaire analysis in the preceding chapter, but also means having to draw on the use of elicitation techniques that are characterised by varying degrees of explicitness. This means that a combination of the three main approaches I adopted in studying language attitudes discussed in Chapter 3, i.e. the Direct Approach, the Indirect Approach and the Societal Treatment Approach, should be applied. While the first and main part of the questionnaire makes use of the Direct Approach and was predominately quantitative in nature, of which the findings have been discussed in Chapter 7, the second part of the questionnaire included elicitation techniques which are less direct and produced mainly qualitative data. In order to provide a systematic analysis of my data, I will first discuss the twelve language statements in Section 8.2 before presenting the results of the open question in Section 8.3 below.

8.2. Meta-Societal Treatment Analysis of Comments on English Usage

By asking the questionnaire respondents to agree or disagree with these statements on a four-point Likert scale, I aimed to add an additional perspective to the study of usage attitudes in England today, which will allow for a better understanding of currently held beliefs with respect to nonstandard language use and the state of the English language. While some of the statements reflect

prescriptive notions, others are more lenient and can be taken to reflect the descriptive side of the debate.

The analysis of these statements will be conducted in two ways. Firstly, the respondents' overall agreement or disagreement will be analysed by arranging the statements into categories ranging from most to least agreement with the statement in question. Secondly, I calculated a usage judgment index which reflects the respondents' attitudes towards the stimulus sentences discussed in Chapter 7. The range of the index spans from zero to eleven – the questionnaire comprised eleven usage questions – with respondents who reject all descriptive uses obtaining the highest scores. The lower the usage judgment index the more lenient the respondent is. I expect to see a correlation between the degree of agreement and the index. To identify such correlations, I am using the non-parametric Kendall tau-b correlation coefficients. This analysis will allow an additional perspective on current usage attitudes in England.

In Table 8.1 below, the statements have been ordered according to the degree of cumulative agreement from the most frequently agreed with statement to the one least agreed with. While the majority of the statements in the list express prescriptive sentiments, the last two offer more lenient attitudes towards language change and are therefore separated from the other statements in the table. At almost 88 per cent, respondents agree with statement 1 in Table 8.1 on how the use of "bad spelling and grammar" can be perceived negatively. This statement is followed by two statements which touch on grammar teaching, and obtained the same percentage of agreement, namely 72.3 per cent. While statement 2 describes the public's perception of the low priority status of grammar teaching in schools, statement 3 complements this notion in that schools are seen as providers and propagators of a uniform code of English. That both comments obtained the same percentages of agreement shows that these two notions are very likely connected.

Table 8.1 Agreement with statements in percentages

	Statement	Agreement cumulative	Disagreement cumulative
1	Yes, bad spelling and grammar does make you look like an idiot.	**87.5**	12.5
2	Grammar often seems to be a low priority in education.	**72.3**	27.7
3	I think it is necessary for all British citizens to be educated in the same form of English to enable easy communication between each other.	**72.3**	27.7
4	Texting is causing a decline in standards of grammar and spelling in teenagers.	**62.5**	37.5
5	I think that the web is responsible for the explosive spread of what linguists will be calling "Bad English" in the future.	**52.7**	47.3
6	Is proper English dying? Yes it is. Unfortunately, it is being hurried along towards its grave by nearly everything that we are exposed to in the print and electronic media.	**50.0**	50.0
7	Grammar is not just an educational issue. For some adults, it can sabotage friendships and even romantic relationships.	**49.1**	50.9
8	Twitter is influencing the development of the English Language negatively.	**47.3**	52.7
9	Good grammar in this country seems to have gone out the window and you only have to listen to the BBC news for proof of it.	**26.8**	73.2
10	Most young people today cannot even complete a sentence whether written or spoken orally.	**22.3**	77.7
11	It's good to know the (supposed) rules, but clear communication is obviously better.	**78.6**	21.4
12	To say that texting is killing language is to show ignorance of how language is a living thing that grows and adapts to changing use.	**74.1**	25.9

Statements 4 and 5 deal with a commonly held belief about language change being propelled by technology. Texting in particular has often attracted a lot of criticism in this respect which, however, seems to be unfounded (Crystal, 2008, p. 7). According to the figures presented above, 62.5 per cent

of respondents agree with statement 4 and believe texting to be responsible for a perceived "decline in standards of grammar and spelling in teenagers". Slightly fewer respondents, 52.7 per cent, agree with statement 5 which attributes the blame to the internet. The alleged negative influence of the social media messaging service Twitter, as described in statement 8, is not perceived as strongly and negatively as statements 4 and 5.

Statement 6, which deals with the perceived doom of the English language, provides an interesting insight into the respondents' overall sentiments with respect to this issue. As Table 8.1 shows, a clear divide between the respondents can be identified, with 50 per cent agreeing with statement 6 about the decay of English. While the most agreed with statement deals with how grammar and spelling mistakes are perceived negatively, the topic of statement 7, which describes the social consequences of such mistakes, is agreed with by only 49.1 per cent of all respondents. What needs to be borne in mind with these two statements is, however, that while statement 7 deals with personal relationships, statement 1 takes a more general perspective. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise to find more lenient attitudes towards language use in informal and personal contact situations.

The two least agreed with statements, 9 and 10, provide an interesting insight into the respondents' attitudes towards language change in English with regard to two special themes which have already emerged in my analysis of the questionnaire findings, i.e. the use of Standard English in the media and the importance of age as a social factor in the usage debate. The role of media institutions such as the BBC has been discussed in detail in Chapter 2, where I demonstrated how the language use of the BBC is praised by some parts of its audience, while other audience members point out the many mistakes the BBC commits. That is why statement 9 was of particular interest to me, as it was expected to reflect this divided perception of the BBC. The questionnaire

respondents seem to regard the BBC's language use positively, as only 26.8 per cent of respondents agree with statement 9. Lastly, statement 10 deals with the generation gap which has been identified as a factor with some of the usage problems investigated, e.g. the split infinitive or *literally* as an intensifier (cf. 7.2.1.10 – 7.2.1.11). While statement 10 expresses a commonly held belief about the inadequate language command of young speakers, only 22.3 per cent of respondents actually agree to some extent with this statement.

Statements 11 and 12 exhibit more lenient views towards perceived language change. With 78.6 per cent agreement, statement 11, which discusses the importance of clear communication at the expense of rule knowledge, obtained the second highest agreement rate. A similarly high rate of 74.1 per cent can be identified for statement 12, in which language is considered a living entity which is naturally prone to change. This statement also contains the notion of texting as a potentially "killer language", which can be contrasted with statement 4, which received a rating of 62.5 per cent. The slightly narrower scope of statement 4 in which texting is blamed for the alleged falling standards in grammar and spelling among teenagers, however, needs to be taken into account. In contrast, statement 12 does not restrict texting to a specific age group. That age plays a crucial role in the sociolinguistic stratification of usage attitudes has already been shown in the discussion of attitudes towards the eleven usage problems included in the online questionnaire (cf. § 7.2.1).

The extent to which respondents agree with commonly held beliefs about the decay of English has added another dimension to the present study of usage attitudes. The analysis of the questionnaire respondents' agreement with commonly held beliefs about nonstandard language use and the state of English made it possible to confirm respondents' overwhelming agreement

with the need for the teaching of grammar in schools, as well as the respondents' perceptions of how technological advancements have influenced language negatively. On the other hand, respondents disagree with commonly held beliefs about young speakers' language inabilities and the BBC's flawed language use. What needs to be taken into account when analysing the above statements, however, is a social desirability bias, which most likely plays a greater role in this part of the questionnaire than with the stimulus sentences in light of the directness of the elicitation test. Unlike in the above-mentioned results of the online questionnaire in which the usage problems were not highlighted in the stimulus sentences, asking respondents to agree or disagree with commonly found beliefs is an approach characterised by its directness. As the statements express a positive or negative attitude more straightforwardly, respondents will be more prone to answer in a manner which they consider to be socially acceptable or desirable (Garrett, 2010, p. 44).

Having analysed the agreement rates of the respondents towards the twelve statements in the questionnaire, I would now like to see whether a correlation exists between the extent to which respondents agree or disagree with a particular statement and their judgments on the investigated stimulus sentences, as reflected in the usage judgment index. The respondents' judgments have already been discussed in Sections 7.2.1.1–7.2.1.11 above. To this end, I drew on the Kendall tau-b correlation coefficients, a correlation test which was chosen for reasons of its suitability for non-parametric data (Field, 2013, p. 278). The results of these correlation tests are displayed in Table 8.2 below. The order in which the statements are presented depends on the statistical significance of their correlation with the usage judgment index, starting with the most significant correlation.

Table 8.2 Correlations between the usage judgment index and agreement ratings, ordered by statistical significance (*p*-value)

	Statement	Correlation (Kendall τ-b)
9	Good grammar in this country seems to have gone out the window and you only have to listen to the BBC news for proof of it.	$\tau_b = -.308$, $p = .000$*
6	Is proper English dying? Yes it is. Unfortunately, it is being hurried along towards its grave by nearly everything that we are exposed to in the print and electronic media.	$\tau_b = -.215$, $p = .004$*
5	I think that the web is responsible for the explosive spread of what linguists will be calling "Bad English" in the future.	$\tau_b = -.188$, $p = .013$*
2	Grammar often seems to be a low priority in education.	$\tau_b = -.164$, $p = .031$*
8	Twitter is influencing the development of the English Language negatively.	$\tau_b = -.148$, $p = .048$*
3	I think it is necessary for all British citizens to be educated in the same form of English to enable easy communication between each other.	$\tau_b = -.135$, $p = .074$
4	Texting is causing a decline in standards of grammar and spelling in teenagers.	$\tau_b = -.107$, $p = .153$
10	Most young people today cannot even complete a sentence whether written or spoken orally.	$\tau_b = -.099$, $p = .196$
1	Yes, bad spelling and grammar does make you look like an idiot.	$\tau_b = -.031$, $p = .695$
7	Grammar is not just an educational issue. For some adults, it can sabotage friendships and even romantic relationships.	$\tau_b = -.018$, $p = .807$
12	To say that texting is killing language is to show ignorance of how language is a living thing that grows and adapts to changing use.	$\tau_b = .222$, $p = .004$*
11	It's good to know the (supposed) rules, but clear communication is obviously better.	$\tau_b = .157$, $p = .041$*

* Statistically significance ($p \leq .05$)

Of the twelve statements analysed, seven show a statistically significant correlation between agreement ratings and the usage judgment index (marked with an asterisk in the table). While five of these seven statements, which also projected a negative sentiment towards the state of English (statements 9, 6, 5, 2, and 8), showed negative correlations between the index and agreement levels measured, the two statements expressing a more descriptive view towards the state of English, i.e. statements 11 and 12, revealed positive correlations between these two variables. A negative correlation, such as the one identified for the statement "Good grammar in this country seems to have gone out the window and you only have to listen to the BBC news for proof of it", indicates that respondents who disagree with this statement also have a lower usage judgment index, which means that they found the usage features investigated in Chapter 7 above acceptable. While most of the significant correlations identified are weak negative correlations, the above statement showed a moderate negative correlation ($\tau_b = -.308$, $p = .000$). Interestingly, statements 11 and 12, which reflect more lenient attitudes towards language change and the state of English, both showed weak positive correlations with the usage judgment index, as can be seen in Table 8.2. This means that those respondents who agree with these two statements also scored lower on the usage judgment index, which is indicative of their lenient attitudes towards the usage problems investigated.

By including statements made by members of the general public which reflect commonly held beliefs about the state of the English language and language change I aimed to add another layer to my analysis of the respondents' attitudes. While such statements are most likely to provoke socially desirable answers, for reasons already explained, their correlation with the calculated usage judgment index can be considered suggestive in the sense that respondents who rated the usage features investigated as unacceptable are more likely

to agree with statements expressing prescriptive notions. This can be seen as a confirmation of the currency of such commonly held beliefs. If usage attitudes have so far been discussed as single attitudes towards a particular usage feature, the usage judgment index tries to present these single attitudes in a wider scope and to provide an insight into prescriptive and descriptive stances on usage as a whole. Having analysed respondents' agreement with statements on the state of the English language, I would now like to turn to the analysis of qualitative data provided by the respondents in response to an open question. These qualitative data enable us to gain an insight into the respondents' beliefs about the current state of the English language.

8.3. The State of the English Language

I will now turn to the analysis of the open question "What do you think about the state of the English language?". Answering this question was, however, not compulsory, which explains why only 83 of the 112 questionnaire respondents provided an answer to it. As with the comments on the eleven usage problems discussed in Chapter 7, I looked for recurring patterns and classified the respondents' answers accordingly. While some informants provided only a short positive or negative evaluation of the state of English, as exemplified in (111) – (114), others went into more detail and will be discussed further below.

(111) Vibrant as ever.
(Education adviser, over 60 years old, male)

(112) It's as healthy today as it's always been and always will be.
(Teacher, 41–60 years old, male)

(113) It's better than the state of the American language!
(Consultant, 18–25 years old, male)

(114) I have noticed a sad decline.
(Retired, over 60 years old, female)

As can be seen from these comments, evaluations of the state of English vary, with English being either perceived as "vibrant" and "healthy" or as being in a "sad decline". What becomes obvious from the answers obtained are two central issues which occur frequently in the respondents' answers. Firstly, the issue of education is mentioned in connection with a perceived decay of the language. Secondly, possible consequences of what is seen as a potential misuse of the language are discussed by the informants. Both topics will be analysed in detail and representative comments will be provided to illustrate both issues.

As demonstrated in Chapter 2 (see § 2.3.1), the use of a standard variety fulfils a gatekeeping function in education, which seems to have played a crucial role in the usage debate. Changes in teaching methods and approaches towards grammar teaching in the 1980s triggered a moral panic, which appears to have persisted even until today. Some respondents commented on the alleged decay of English and attributed the blame for this development to a lack of grammar teaching in the schools or to poor education in general. Comments (115) – (118) below illustrate such allocations of blame.

(115) I think that there is a lack of guardianship and that it is too easily being corrupted by poor education.
(Graphic designer, over 60 years old, male)

(116) I think that more focus should be placed on teaching grammar in schools. We seem too comfortable with poor grammar.
(Social worker, 31–40 years old, female)

(117) Inevitable evolution – driven by both neglect and modern teaching methods.
(Old nuisance, over 60 years old, male)

(118) Language evolves. The evolving process used to be somewhat slow, but just as technology has helped to speed up communication, it has sped up the process of evolving language. It's

> disconcerting to be subject to the change, and it takes some getting used t[o], but I do think there is somewhat of a decline in teaching English in general.
> (Youth worker, 26–30 years old, female)

While all four comments emphasise a perceived decline in teaching English grammar, the respondent in (115) further adds that there is a "lack of guardianship" with respect to Standard English, while another respondent in (117) also mentions neglect in teaching practices as playing a role in the current state of English. In addition to mentioning poor education, both female respondents in (116) and (118) comment on current teaching issues in schools. While a bigger focus should be put on grammar teaching, according to the respondent in (116), the informant in (118) comments on her perception of a decline in English teaching. These comments essentially express a dissatisfaction with current teaching practices in schools. In stark contrast to these comments, another respondent, whose education fell in the period in which confusion about grammar teaching prevailed (see Chapter 2), considers the English grammar teaching of her children better than the education she herself received in the 1970s (119).

> (119) I have to say that my children (15 and 18) have received a much better education in English grammar than I did when I was at school in the 1970s.
> (Housewife, 41–60 years old, female)

Technological advances and their influence on English were frequently mentioned by the questionnaire respondents. Comments (120) and (121) deal with the creation of new types of English due to technological advances such as texting or Twitter. Neither of these respondents condemn these new types of English, but rather stress the need for teaching to be adapted to these changes.

(120) I don't think that texting/e-communication are negatively affecting the English language, although they are definitely affecting it. I do think that because there is perhaps a greater difference between formal and informal types of grammar than there u[s]ed to be, and therefore that moving between them is a skill which we need to cover in more depth when teaching grammar.
(Archaeologist, 26–30 years old, female)

(121) The types of English used in texting, Twitter, etc. are absolutely fine, so long as people know that, in other contexts, they would be unacceptable or inappropriate. Furthermore, it's the duty of educationalists to help learners use all types of communica[t]ion effectively; people should be able to move effortlessly from one mode of discourse to another and be confident in all of them. People should know about 'less/fewer'; 'me/I'; 'was/were' and so on, and be able to speak and write in correct Standard Eng[l]ish when the occasion requires it. Teachers who fail to take this duty seriously are disadvantaging their students.
(Retired school teacher, over 60 years old, male)

One respondent's observation in (120) shows how the formality dimension seems to have widened to incorporate these new types of English increasing the differences between formal and informal language. Accommodating this new formality scale in teaching is considered a "skill" that needs to be taught in school, this particular respondent argues. In a similar manner, the respondent in (121), a retired school teacher, emphasises the importance of understanding contextual appropriateness. He emphasises the responsibilities of teachers to enable their students to comply with these new requirements as they would otherwise disadvantage students. In addition, the respondent in (121) mentions usage problems such as the distinction between *less* and *fewer*, the confusion between personal pronouns *I* and *me*, as well as the dialectal usage of *was* and *were*, and argues that students should be able to "speak and write in correct Standard Eng[l]ish". Thus, it seems as if he does not only distinguish between different types of contextual appropriateness, but also believes in enforcing the teaching of a standard variety in schools.

There is no doubt in that people tend to judge others by their language. The digital marketing consultant in (122), for example, claims that using "bad language" indicates not only "poor education and intelligence", but also that it serves as a personal indicator of who could potentially become her friend. While she does not go into further detail, it can be assumed that the respondent would dismiss people as potential friends based on their poor language use.

(122) Think bad language use shows poor education and intelligence and yes I do judge people on their use of English. However, I also think it's a good indicator of people I do or do not want to be friends with, so I don't want it taught for the sake if [sic] it, if [y]ou see what I mean!
I think language isn't in decline but changing but that's no excuse to forget the basics which have spent hundreds of years getting established, and for a good reason.
(Digital marketing consultant, 31–40 years old, female)

The following three comments (123) – (125) provide an insight into how incorrect language use is perceived and what kind of consequences can to be pected when language is used inappropriately. In particular, respondents tend to mention potential consequences of incorrect language use in job applications.

(123) English is changing, as it always has, in response to the changing demands placed on it by the society that uses it and its contexts of use. Individuals need to be made aware that everyone makes judgements on people's use of language and different context demand different patterns of use - answering job interview questions for most jobs with Facebook-style comments are unlikely to secure you the position. The only thing that does not change is the desire to harness the power of language by select groups w[h]o then place a hierarchy on different patterns of use & declare their own arbitrary patterns as superior.
(University lecturer, 41–60 years old, male)

The respondent in (123) not only mentions how English changes with the changing needs of society, but also describes how an unsuccessful job interview situation can be caused by inappropriate language use. As he puts it, "answering job interview questions for most jobs with Facebook-style comments are unlikely to secure you the position". While the changing character of English is not perceived negatively, this respondent emphasises that "select groups" aim at garnering "power of language" and establishing a hierarchy through which their language use is considered "superior". Comment (123) shows how important it is to be aware of power relations within a speech community, as these relations are exercised through language and hence foster potential social exclusion based on language use. Such power relations take effect especially in situations in which compliance with and command of the standard variety fulfils a gatekeeping function. Job applications represent a type of glass ceiling which seems cannot be broken when using nonstandard variants or nonstandard spelling. Comments (124) – (126) below provide an insight into these issues.

> (124) Yes, language is a living thing which adapts and changes over time. Grammar and spelling aren't always the most important thing. However, I think people use this as an excuse. If you apply for a job, your potential employer is first looking at a resume an[d]/or email in the first instance. They WILL make a snap judgement about you based on how well or poorly it is written. To say proper grammar serves no purpose (which some people do claim) is unrealistic. Conversational and formal English are two different [t]hings and children need to be taught how to utilize both.
> (Customer service administrator, 31–40 years old, female)

The respondent in (124) emphasises the fact that, according to her, snap judgments are inevitable. While agreeing with the commonly held belief that "language is a living thing", she also believes that "grammar and spelling" should not be given highest priority all the time. Interestingly, she continues by

stating that the assumption of language being a living entity is utilised by others "as an excuse" for their language use, and explains how the reality of the importance of "proper grammar" can affect the success of a job application. Therefore, she argues, the differences in formality between linguistic styles should be taught in schools. In a very similar manner, the respondent in (125) acknowledges the "natural changes in the language", yet argues for the application of "standard rules of grammar and orthogra[p]hy of English" in job applications. Pointedly, he provides an example by using nonstandard orthography and grammar to demonstrate what not to do in the professional world:

> (125) I think there are many people who try to fossilise English and are not accepting of natural changes in the language. Nevertheless, if u rite lyk dis den u iz neva gona get a job, so it is important to be aware of the standard rules of grammar and orthogra[p]hy of English.
> (Writer/journalist, 26–30 years old, male)

In the last comment to be discussed here, (126), a respondent confirms the gatekeeping function of written Standard English, discussed above, in that she claims never to have employed an applicant whose application documents were flawed by spelling mistakes.

> (126) Grammar and spelling are certainly in decline. Personally I never employed anybody who wrote a cv/application letter with spelling mistakes...
> (Retired arts consultant, over 60 years old, female)

By including a qualitative analysis of comment, I was able to foreground questionnaire respondents' perceptions of the role of Standard English, which, as discussed in Chapter 2, is often found to fulfil a gatekeeping function, while at the same time inadequacy of grammar teaching in schools is criticised. That

written Standard English seems to be particularly prone to notions of correctness needs to be highlighted, as text types such as job applications seem to be particularly subject to scrutiny.

8.4. Concluding Remarks

The second part of the questionnaire aimed at eliciting attitudes towards commonly held beliefs regarding the state of the English language. Making use of the Societal Treatment Approach to extract such beliefs, I aimed at eliciting the questionnaire respondents' degrees of agreement with these widely-held beliefs. This part, together with the open question on how respondents perceived the state of the English language, was characterised by a slightly less direct elicitation methods. The quantitative data obtained through the first part of the questionnaire provided not only an insight into whether specific usage features were considered acceptable or not, but also into the contextual preferences and appropriateness of the stimulus sentences as determined by the respondents. This highlighted the role of Standard English and its function as a gatekeeper. Besides emphasising the importance of education, respondents frequently mentioned in the second part of the questionnaire how non-compliance with usage norms of Standard English can affect one's social standing and mobility, as it restricts speakers' access to certain domains. In the next chapter, I will continue the analysis of my data by focussing on the interview sessions in which 63 informants completed further attitude elicitation tests (see § 5.3.2).

9. Current Usage Attitudes in England: the Interview Sessions

9.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will turn to my analysis of the interview sessions with informants who completed two indirect elicitation tests: an open-guise test and a usage judgment test (see § 5.3). In combination with the latter, a direct attitude elicitation test was also conducted with the respondents who were asked to agree or disagree with a set of usage rules. The results of each of these elicitation tests will be discussed in detail in this chapter. Firstly, the open-guise test (§ 5.3.3) will be analysed for which I will also describe the data and the statistical tests used in the analysis. Since this is a sociolinguistic investigation, it is again important to identify any possible significant correlations between attitudinal ratings and social variables. Secondly, the usage judgment test will be analysed and contrasted to the attitudes expressed in the direct elicitation test. Based on this analysis, the social salience of usage problems will be foregrounded. With the methodological approach taken in this study I will attempt to avoid the pitfalls and drawbacks of earlier usage studies. Despite avoiding some of these, this study also encountered various drawbacks which will be discussed at the end of the analysis.

9.2. Results of the Interview Sessions in the "Golden Triangle"

As mentioned in Chapter 5 (§ 5.3.2), I also conducted interviews with 63 informants in three cities situated within the so-called Golden Triangle: London, Oxford and Cambridge. In these interviews, which have an average length of 16:30 minutes, informants were asked to complete two further tests which aimed at eliciting attitudes towards usage problems in a more indirect manner. Since previous usage studies did not include spoken stimuli, as discussed in Chapter 5, the aim of this part of my study was to incorporate an open-guise

test, a variant of the matched guise test which was considered most appropriate. The particularities of this test have already been discussed in the previous chapter (§ 5.3.3). Furthermore, I developed a usage judgment test which aimed at eliciting attitudes indirectly as informants were asked to correct a letter of application which included nine instances of six usage problems (§ 5.3.4). Before I discuss the results of these tests, the informant sample will be briefly described.

The interviews were conducted within three inconsecutive weeks in the summer of 2014. Given the limited time available to me during the relevant fieldwork trips, quota sampling (Milroy & Gordon, 2003, p. 30) was chosen based on two simple factors: age and gender. These two factors had shown significant correlations with acceptability judgment in the online questionnaire analysis (see Chapter 7). For the variable age two categories were chosen with the dividing line being drawn at the age of 50 to divide the population into two large age groups. In the age group of informants aged 50 or below, the youngest informant was 20 years old and the oldest was 50, while the youngest informant in the age group of informants over 50 was 53 years old and the oldest informant was 86 years old. The mean age of participants in the young group is 31 years, while it is 66 years for the participants in the old group. The sample's overall mean age is 47.9. An overview of the informants' ages can be found in Appendix G. The aim was to interview at least fifteen informants in each subgroup resulting in a total of 60 informants. Table 9.1 shows the final result of the quota sampling.

Table 9.1 Quota sampling for interview session

	Female	Male	Total
Young (18–50)	18	15	33
Old (over 50)	18	12	33
Total	36	27	63

As can be seen from Table 9.1, the quota sampling was not completely successful due to the limited time available to me. Falling short of three informants to complete the desired fifteen, the Old-Male-informants category consists of only twelve informants. Both Young subcategories exceeded the set goal of fifteen informants by three in each category. Most of the interviews had to be arranged prior to my arrival, which required making use of various ways of recruiting informants. Not only did I draw on my own personal network for this, making the applied sampling technique take on traits of the friend-of-a-friend sampling technique, but I also made use of other social networks and platforms such as the U3A Cambridge and Daily Info Oxford, an online service for placing advertisements (see § 5.3.2). The informants received a small remuneration for their participation as well as coffee or tea. The interviews were all held at public places, such as cafés and restaurants, in line with the ethics committee regulations discussed in Chapter 5.

The statistical tests used for the analysis of the two elicitation tests reported on in this chapter are included in the software package statistics program SPSS 23 and were chosen due to their suitability for the analysis of non-parametric data. A Friedman's two-way ANOVA, also known as Friedman test, enables the testing of any possible differences between a number of related groups (Field, 2013, p. 251). As the data consist of semantic-differential scale ratings on four recordings (cf. § 5.3.3) provided by the participants in the open-guise tests, the Friedman test is the appropriate test to determine any rating differences. However, before the results of these Friedman tests are presented, a factor analysis was conducted on the twelve semantic-differential scales, not only to identify any underlying variable according to which these scales can be group, but also to identify any semantic-differential scales which showed a singularity in the informants' responses (Field, 2013, pp. 665–682). Furthermore, I use Wilcoxon's signed rank tests

as a Post hoc test to determine any differences between the two age and gender groups. As for the usage judgment test, Kendall tau-b correlation coefficients are calculated to identify any statistically significant correlations between the salience of usage problems and the social variables investigated: age and gender (see § 5.3.4).

9.2.1. Open-guise test

Having described and briefly summarized the test's sample and sampling technique, I will now discuss the findings of the statistical tests used for the analysis of the open-guise test. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the open-guise test consisted of four recordings of a female and a male speaker, who were recorded using eleven stimulus sentences in each recording. While one recording included unmarked stimuli, i.e. variants considered to be part of Standard English, the other recording used the descriptive and marked variants of these same stimulus sentences. The informants were asked to rate each recording on twelve 5-point semantic differential scales.

In order to analyse the data collected in the open-guise test, I made use of Friedman tests and Wilcoxon's signed rank tests. These non-parametric tests were chosen because the data was not distributed normally (Field, 2013, p. 228). They will allow for an identification of any statistically significant differences in the informants' judgments of the four recordings. I also conducted factor analyses for each of the four recordings, which resulted in the reduction of variables and the identification of underlying relations between the variables. A principal component analysis was used and a Varimax rotation applied to extract factors (Field, 2013, pp. 681–682), which showed that recordings 1, 3 and 4 produced two factors each, while the factor analysis for recording 2 showed three factors. Since the factor analysis should be consid-

ered an exploratory instrument, I decided to extract only two factors for recording 2, which is in line with the results of the other recordings. The variables "clever – unintelligent", "pretty – unattractive", "friendly – mean" and "honest – untrustworthy" were excluded as they could have caused problems due to their singularity in the informants' responses (Field, 2013, pp. 693–694). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measures for each recording as well as the results of the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, which essentially shows whether there are relationships between the variables included in the factor analysis and thus tests the null-hypothesis (Field, 2013, pp. 684–685), are provided in Table 9.2 below.

Table 9.2 KMO measures and Bartlett's test of sphericity

Recording	KMO measure	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity
Recording 1	.705	χ^2 (28) = 137.659, p = .000*
Recording 2	.628	χ^2 (28) = 92.519, p = .000*
Recording 3	.727	χ^2 (28) = 118.496, p = .000*
Recording 4	.644	χ^2 (28) = 86.137, p = .000*

* Statistically significance ($p \leq .05$)

Despite the above-mentioned KMO measures falling either into the mediocre category of measures in the .60s or in the middling category of measures in the .70s, the KMO measures indicate that the sampling adequacy is acceptable (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999, pp. 224–225). The extracted factors neatly circumscribe two broader concepts. Factor 1 comprises variables related to the agreeableness of a person (cf. McCrae & Costa, 1997, p. 513), while factor 2 includes variables which seem to describe a status-oriented person. For this reason, the second factor was labelled status-orientation. Table 9.3 below shows the variables composing the two factors for each recording and the factor loadings which indicate the relatedness of the variables (Field, 2013, p. 668).

Table 9.3 Factor composition and factor loadings

recording 1		recording 2	
Agreeableness		*Agreeableness*	
humble – arrogant	.811	authentic – fake	.798
authentic – fake	.733	generous – selfish	.793
generous – selfish	.699	hard working – lazy	.604
		humble – arrogant	.576
		determined – wavering	.461
Status-orientation		*Status-orientation*	
orderly – sloppy	.775	literate – illiterate	.769
wealthy – not wealthy	.760	wealthy – not wealthy	.678
literate – illiterate	.652	orderly – sloppy	.493
determined – wavering	.550		
hard working – lazy	.488		
recording 3		**recording 4**	
Agreeableness		*Agreeableness*	
humble – arrogant	.818	generous – selfish	.830
generous – selfish	.801	authentic – fake	.661
authentic – fake	.742	humble – arrogant	.576
		hard working – lazy	.531
Status-orientation		*Status-orientation*	
hard working – lazy	.741	literate – illiterate	.768
literate – illiterate	.700	orderly – sloppy	.631
orderly – sloppy	.640	wealthy – not wealthy	.590
wealthy – not wealthy	.560	determined – wavering	.567
determined – wavering	.457		

It needs to be pointed out here that recordings 2 and 4, which both consist of the marked variants described in Section 5.3.3 above, display a change in the variable components of the factors identified. The status-orientation factor seems to be more concrete in that fewer variables are loading onto this factor. Variables such as “literate – illiterate”, “wealthy – not wealthy” and “orderly – sloppy” are frequently associated with a degree of superiority (Zahn & Hopper, 1985, p. 118). While these three variables make up the status-orientation factor for recording 2, the variable “determined – wavering”

is added to this factor for recording 4. The reason for this shift will be investigated in more detail using Wilcoxon signed-rank tests and analysing the informants' comments. After having identified the two factors, I computed the scores by averaging the variables which make up each factor. This procedure was chosen in order to maintain the rating scale established through the semantic differential scales ranging from 1, representing a positive judgment, to 5 marking the opposite, negative end of the scale. The initial eigenvalues identified in the factor analyses, which are described by Child (2006, p. 47) as "the sum of all the variance in a factor", showed that for recording 1, the status-orientation factor accounted for 29 per cent of all variation while the agreeableness factor did so for 28 per cent. The eigenvalues for recording 2 explained for the status-orientation factor 21 per cent and for the agreeableness factor 29 per cent, for recording 3 27 per cent and 30 and recording 4, 25 per cent and 27 per cent for the status-orientation and agreeableness factors respectively.

Using a Friedman test, a statistically significant difference could be identified in the responses of the informants between the four recordings and the two factors ($\chi^2(7) = 119.861$, $p = .000$). As mentioned above, Wilcoxon tests were conducted to investigate these findings further. By comparing not only the results for the two recordings of the male and female speakers to each other, but also by comparing the male speaker's marked and unmarked recordings to the recordings of the female speaker, a clearer picture of the significant differences can be obtained. Hence, an intra- and inter-speaker comparison was conducted. To minimise the risk of Type I error, which in essence describes the risk of assuming effects where there are none, I applied a Bonferroni correction (Field, 2013, p. 69). According to this correction, the significance level is reduced to .0042. Overall, statistically significant differences could be determined only on the intra-speaker level. On this level, the

perception of the marked recording of the male speaker shows a statistically significant difference between the two established factors status-orientation and agreeableness, showing a more favourable rating by the informants on the agreeableness factor (*Mdn* = 3.20), $T = 13$, $p = .000$, $r = -.55$, than on the status-orientation factor (*Mdn* = 3.67). Similar results were found for the marked recording of the female speaker, which was also rated more favourably on the agreeableness factor (*Mdn* = 3.00), $T = 12$, $p = .000$, $r = -.50$ than on the status-orientation factor (*Mdn* = 3.50). Additionally, on the intra-speaker level, however across the usage dimension, three comparisons showed highly significant differences. Hence, the male speaker was rated more favourably on the agreeableness factor (*Mdn* = 2.67), $T = 17$, $p = .000$, $r = -.53$, and on the status-orientation factor (*Mdn* = 2.80), $T = 7$, $p = .000$, $r = -.76$ when using the unmarked utterances. The female intra-speaker comparison paints a similar picture for the status-orientation factor. The female speaker is rated significantly more favourably on this factor (*Mdn* = 2.40), $T = 8$, $p = .000$, $r = -.77$, when using the unmarked utterances. The female speaker's marked recording did not show any statistically significant rating differences according to the Bonferroni correction. These findings indicate how the use of unmarked variants can affect perceptions in that both the male and female speakers' unmarked recordings were rated more favourably by the informants than their marked counterparts on the status-orientation factor. However, this analysis also brings to light how both speakers' marked recordings were more favourably rated on the agreeableness factor. Comparing the different recordings to one another, none of the inter-speaker comparisons shows a statistically significant difference, which is due to the Bonferroni correction and the consequent lowering of the significance level to .0042.

While no significant differences between the recordings of the male and female speakers could be identified, the informants noticed the different accents of the two speakers. What needs to be borne in mind is that the female speaker's accent was possibly more characteristic of Standard English than that of the male speaker (cf. 5.3.3). These slight differences in accents may well have had an influence on the informants' perceptions of the speakers, so this is a factor that needs to be reckoned with in the interpretation of the results, despite the non-significant outcome of the Friedman test. The informants' comments bear evidence of noticing the speakers' accents. Some of these comments indicated that the female speaker was believed to have originated in the south or is thought only to have a "slight accent", as comments (127) and (128) illustrate; at the same time these comments confirm the perception of the female speaker as a more standard speaker than her male counterpart.

(127) No disguised accent (southern - South London?)
(Freelance editor, female, 30 years old)

(128) slight accent or an English tone.
(Retired computer engineer, male, 69 years old)

On the other hand, the male speaker's accent seemed to be less obvious and proved more difficult for informants to identify. Being placed in various regions by the informants, as can be seen in comments (129) – (131), the male speaker's accent seems to have disguised his origin.

(129) His accent sounded Scottish.
(PhD candidate in psychology, female, 26 years old)

(130) accent - northern UK/American?
(Editor, female, 30 years old)

(131) slight London accent.
(PhD candidate (Natural Sciences), male, 24 years old)

In order to get a more detailed overview of the informants' judgments, I decided to investigate in more detail the original variables of which the two factors consist, i.e. the semantic differential scales. Conducting another set of Wilcoxon signed-rank tests following the same intra- and inter-speaker comparison scheme as applied above, I needed to calculate a new Bonferroni correction, as the number of tests had increased considerably, resulting in a new significance level of .0016. According to these findings, the male speaker is considered significantly more hard working (*Mdn* = 3.00), $T = 6$, $p = .000$, $r = -.45$, literate (*Mdn* = 2.00), $T = 1$, $p = .000$, $r = -.78$, orderly (*Mdn* = 2.00), $T = 6$, $p = .000$, $r = -.59$, and wealthier (*Mdn* = 3.00), $T = 2$, $p = .000$, $r = -.48$, when using the unmarked variants. The female speaker is also considered more hard working (*Mdn* = 3.00), $T = 7$, $p = .0012$, $r = -.41$, literate (*Mdn* = 2.00), $T = 4$, $p = .000$, $r = -.72$, orderly (*Mdn* = 2.00), $T = 4$, $p = .000$, $r = -.63$, and wealthier (*Mdn* = 3.00), $T = 1$, $p = .000$, $r = -.56$, in the recording including the unmarked variants. On the inter-speaker level, none of the variables show a low enough significance level. The findings of the Friedman test therefore show how speakers making use of usage features falling into the prescriptive paradigm are considered significantly more hard working, literate, orderly and also wealthier.

By splitting the file into two groups based on age and gender respectively, the perceptions of the recordings of the male and female informants on the one hand and of the old and young informants on the other can be identified and compared. For this comparison, the Bonferroni correction of .0042 needs to be applied. The results for the Wilcoxon signed-rank tests for both gender groups can be found in Table 9.4.

As can be seen from the findings presented in the table below, the intra-speaker comparison shows two instances in which the judgments made by the female informants differ significantly while those of male informants do not.

The first rating difference can be identified for the marked recording of the male speaker, who is rated considerably more favourably on the agreeableness factor than on the status-orientation factor (*Mdn* = 3.00), $T = 6$, $p = .000$, $r = -.67$. The same tendencies could be identified for the female speaker's marked recording, which was rated more favourably on the agreeableness factor than the status-orientation factor by women (*Mdn* = 3.00), $T = 5$, $p = .000$, $r = -.65$. One further statistically significant rating difference between male and female informants was identified, which is found in the ratings of the male informants when comparing the male speaker's unmarked with its marked counterpart. As can be seen from the table above, the male speaker's unmarked recording was rated more favourably on the agreeableness factor (*Mdn* = 2.33), $T = 7$, $p = .001$, $r = -.61$. It is also worth mentioning the identified rating differences in the comparison of the status-orientation factors, which showed that the speakers were rated more favourably on the status-orientation factor when using the unmarked variants. However, no rating differences were identified between men and women with respect to this factor. The findings of the open-guise test with regard to gender differences show that women tend to make more significant rating differences when compared to the male informants in my sample. The reason for this could be women's higher degree of status-consciousness, which Trudgill (1974, p. 94) argued seems to be reflected in women's greater awareness of the significance and social consequences of language use. Since the status-orientation factor consists of variables such as "literate – illiterate" and "wealthy – not wealthy" (cf. Table 9.3), this factor seems to be more associated with the standardness and correctness of the unmarked recordings, which was shown for both gender groups. It therefore does not come as a surprise to see that female informants rated the marked recordings of the male and female speakers more favourably on the agreeableness factor than on the status-orientation factor.

Table 9.4 Wilcoxon signed-rank test results by gender

Intra-speaker					
		male speaker (u)	male speaker (m)	female speaker (u)	female speaker (m)
gender		S – A	S – A	S – A	S – A
Female	Z	–.904[b]	–4.004[c]	–1.697[b]	–3.919[c]
	p	.366	.000*	.090	.000*
Male	Z	–1.602[c]	–2.198[c]	–1.702[b]	–1.423[c]
	p	.109	.028	.089	.155
		male speaker		female speaker	
gender		A (m) – A(u)	S(m) – S (u)	A (m) – A (u)	S (m) – S (u)
Female	Z	–2.818[c]	–5.147[c]	–2.190[c]	–5.053[c]
	p	.005	.000*	.028	.000*
Male	Z	–3.188[c]	–3.379[c]	–.844[c]	–3.303[c]
	p	.001*	.001*	.399	.001*

Inter-speaker					
		female vs male speaker (unmarked)		female vs male speaker (marked)	
gender		A (f) – A (m)	S (f) – S (m)	A (f) – A (m)	S (f) – S (m)
Female	Z	–.177[b]	–1.249[b]	–.165[c]	–.134[c]
	p	.907	.212	.869	.893
Male	Z	–2.431[c]	–1.292[b]	–1.458[b]	–1.918[b]
	p	.015	.196	.145	.055

b. Based on positive ranks
c. Based on negative ranks
* Significance according to Bonferroni correction (p <.0042)
u = Unmarked recording m = Marked recording
S = Status-orientation factor A = Agreeableness factor

Splitting the file into young and old informants, I obtained the following results, presented in Table 9.5 below, which will form the basis for an analysis of rating differences between age groups. Table 9.5 shows a few instances in which both age groups make significantly different judgments. However, only four of the significant rating differences identified affect one of the two age groups, namely the group containing older speakers. These differences can be identified on the intra-speaker comparison level. A comparison between the obtained ratings on the status-orientation factor and the agreeableness factor showed that the old group rated the male speaker's marked recording more favourably on the agreeableness factor (*Mdn* = 3.20), $T = 5$, $p = .000$, $r = -.64$. Similar rating tendencies were identified for the female speaker's marked recording, which also showed a more favourable rating on the agreeableness factor (*Mdn* = 3.00), $T = 4$, $p = .000$, $r = -.66$, than on the status-orientation factor. The group of old informants furthermore showed statistically significant rating differences across the usage dimension, i.e. comparing the unmarked recording to the marked one. One of the two sets of rating differences was identified in the comparison of the agreeableness factors for the male speaker's recordings, which showed that older informants rated the speaker more favourably on the agreeableness factor when using the unmarked variants (*Mdn* = 2.50), $T = 4$, $p = .000$, $r = -.77$. Similar tendencies have also been identified for the female speaker, who was rated more favourably on the agreeableness factor (*Mdn* = 2.67), $T = 4$, $p = .000$, $r = -.71$, when using the unmarked utterances than the marked ones.

As can be seen from Table 9.5 below, significant rating differences between the unmarked and marked recordings of both speakers have been identified, which show that the speakers were rated more favourably on the status-orientation factor when using the unmarked variants. However, these findings did not vary according to age. The sociolinguistic analysis of age differences

in the open-guise test has confirmed the findings of greater linguistic intolerance found among older speakers in the online questionnaire discussed in Chapter 7 (cf. § 7.2.1).

Table 9.5 Wilcoxon signed-rank test results by age group

Intra-speaker					
		male speaker (u)	male speaker (m)	female speaker (u)	female speaker (m)
age group		S – A	S – A	S – A	S – A
young	Z	–1.741[b]	–2.638[c]	–2.611[b]	–2.103[c]
	p	.082	.008	.009	.035
old	Z	–2.207[c]	–3.488[c]	–.513[b]	–3.631[c]
	p	.027	.000*	.608	.000*
male speaker				female speaker	
Age group		A (m) – A(u)	S(m) – S (u)	A (m) – A (u)	S (m) – S (u)
young	Z	–1.628[c]	–4.340[c]	–.134[b]	–3.906[c]
	p	.103	.000*	.894	.000*
old	Z	–4.195[c]	–4.380[c]	–3.913[c]	–4.542[c]
	p	.000*	.000*	.000*	.000*

Inter-speaker					
		female vs male speaker (unmarked)		female vs male speaker (marked)	
age group		A (f) – A (m)	S (f) – S (m)	A (f) – A (m)	S (f) – S (m)
young	Z	–1.877[c]	–.435[b]	–.480[b]	–1.114[b]
	p	.061	.664	.631	.265
old	Z	–.544[c]	–2.102[b]	–.682[b]	–.377[b]
	p	.587	.036	.495	.706

b. Based on positive ranks
c. Based on negative ranks
* Significance according to Bonferroni correction (p <.0042)
u = Unmarked recording m = Marked recording
S = status-orientation factor A = agreeableness factor

Having provided the informants with the opportunity to comment on the recordings, I was able to obtain a more elaborate insight into the respondents' usage attitudes. This qualitative addition to the quantitative analysis of attitude data has already been shown to be indispensable in my discussion above of the informants' comments on the speakers' accents. The 63 informants provided a total of 144 comments which were distributed as follows over the four recordings: male unmarked recording ($n = 38$), male marked recording ($n = 35$), female unmarked recording ($n = 35$) and female marked recording ($n = 36$). In addition to the above-mentioned perceptions of the recordings, comments on each recording will be discussed below in order to illustrate the different informants' usage judgments. Various informants commented on the interplay between accent and usage in the male speaker's unmarked recording, as can be seen in comments (132) and (133).

(132) Grammatical accuracy (for the most part) seemed set against the accent - but the accent did not really affect judgements about character
(Teacher trainer & education advisor, female, 66 years old)

(133) Interesting consideration of precise grammar (e.g. fewer road accidents) & mistakes (media are); speaker sounded unenthused, self-conscious, distant (but not hostile) and camp; seemed to try to correct (northern) accent on words 'bus' & 'foot'
(Freelance editor, female, 30 years old)

The informant in (132) states how there seems to be a mismatch of expectations between the grammatical accuracy of the utterances and the speaker's accent. This is interesting in that this also seems to invoke an association of regional accents with ungrammatical speech. The grammatical accuracy of the utterances is also mentioned by the informant in (133), who further provides an insight into her perception of the speaker's character, which she identifies as self-conscious and distant. Interestingly, the informant in (133) identified

the speaker's northern accent and his attempt to accommodate to a more standard pronunciation. These comments demonstrate how both informants in (132) and (133) argue that the utterances were only partly grammatically correct, even though the stimuli used in the recordings were strictly standard. This stresses the importance of the informants' awareness of stigmatised usages I have discussed already in this study.

The two comments on the male speaker's marked recording below provide an insight into how the speaker is perceived with regard to the attitude he seems to convey through the recording.

(134) Had a slightly couldn't care less attitude.
(Unemployed, female, 45 years old)

(135) Sounds like wasn't worried about what other people thought about him.
(Secretary, female, 28 years old)

Both informants in (134) and (135) comment on the speaker's perceived carefree attitude. This is in line with the findings of the Friedman test, which showed that the unmarked recording of the male speaker obtained a significantly more favourable rating than the marked one did on the agreeableness factor.

Various comments on the female speaker's unmarked recording deal with her character, evaluating her in a positive way, as illustrated in comments (136) – (138):

(136) She sounds like a reasonable person.
(Postdoctoral researcher in biology, male, 32 years old)

(137) She sounded educated and spoke clearly. An interesting person.
(Unemployed, female, 45 years old)

(138) Sounds like a normal middle class, well educated person.
(IT coordinator, male, 34 years old)

While the informant in (136) describes the speaker as a "reasonable person", the informants in (137) and (138) point out the speaker's good education. Sounding "educated" contributes to her being perceived as an "interesting person" by informant (137). The informant in (138) describes the female speaker as "a normal middle class, well educated person". Unsurprisingly, the marked recording of the female speaker is not evaluated as positively as the unmarked counterpart.

(139) It's a weird combination of using incorrect forms and sounding quite middle class. It makes her sound even "worse" because you expect her to have the education to be able to know better.
(Student experience manager, female, 44 years old)

(140) Sounds more working class despite having the same accent as before. Some of the non-standard grammar makes her speech more passionate but perhaps less powerful.
(Teacher, male, 44 years old)

(141) She could be very clever etc. but from a poorer background
(Librarian, female, 67 years old)

An interplay between accent and grammatical accuracy can be identified in comment (139). The informant argues that the speaker sounds "even 'worse" due to the failed expectations that come with a standard-like accent and the expected education the speaker was presumed to have received. The female speaker is perceived in a similar way in (140), in which an informant observes how the speaker "[s]ounds more working class" when using the unmarked set of utterances, despite retaining the same accent. Although being perceived as "more passionate", the female speaker's use of the marked and disputed variants entails a lack of power. This evokes a clear association of the prescribed usages used in the unmarked utterances with power and prestige. Since the informant suggests that the female speaker sounds more working class, power is attributed to the middle and upper classes. This notion of a linguistically

powerless working class is also picked up by the informant in (141), who comments on the perceived economic well-being of the female speaker who she thinks could come "from a poorer background". These comments highlight how unmarked variants are associated with economically prosperous and powerful classes.

9.2.2. Usage judgment test

After completing the open-guise test, the informants were asked to correct a letter of application which contained nine usage problems (see § 5.3.4). This test builds on the assumption that specific usages are only considered problematical if speakers are aware of their stigmatised status and approve of the stigmatisation. Therefore, the usage judgment test clearly falls under the indirect approach to studying attitudes, as discussed in Chapter 3, as informants are told to correct anything they found inappropriate for a job application, which without doubt constitutes a formal text type. The corrections made by the informants cover a wide topical range. Besides correcting the language of the letter, informants also corrected stylistic issues and criticised the contents of the application, which was said to lack detailed information, for instance. The application letter can be found in Appendix C. Nonetheless, a focus is put on the identification and correction of the usage problems incorporated. In order to analyse the usage problems, I coded the results according to whether informants noticed and corrected a particular item, merely noticed it by underlining the usage problem in question, or whether they failed to do so, which indicates a lack of the feature's salience to the informants concerned. Figure 9.1 contains an overview of the frequencies of this categorisation.

Figure 9.1 below shows that both flat adverbs in the letter were the most frequently noticed and corrected usage problems, followed by the two instances of sentence-initial *And*. Interestingly, the dangling participles can be found on the other end of the frequency scale, with the first one (*Having*

worked as an IT administrator, the job seems …) being the least noticed and corrected usage problem.

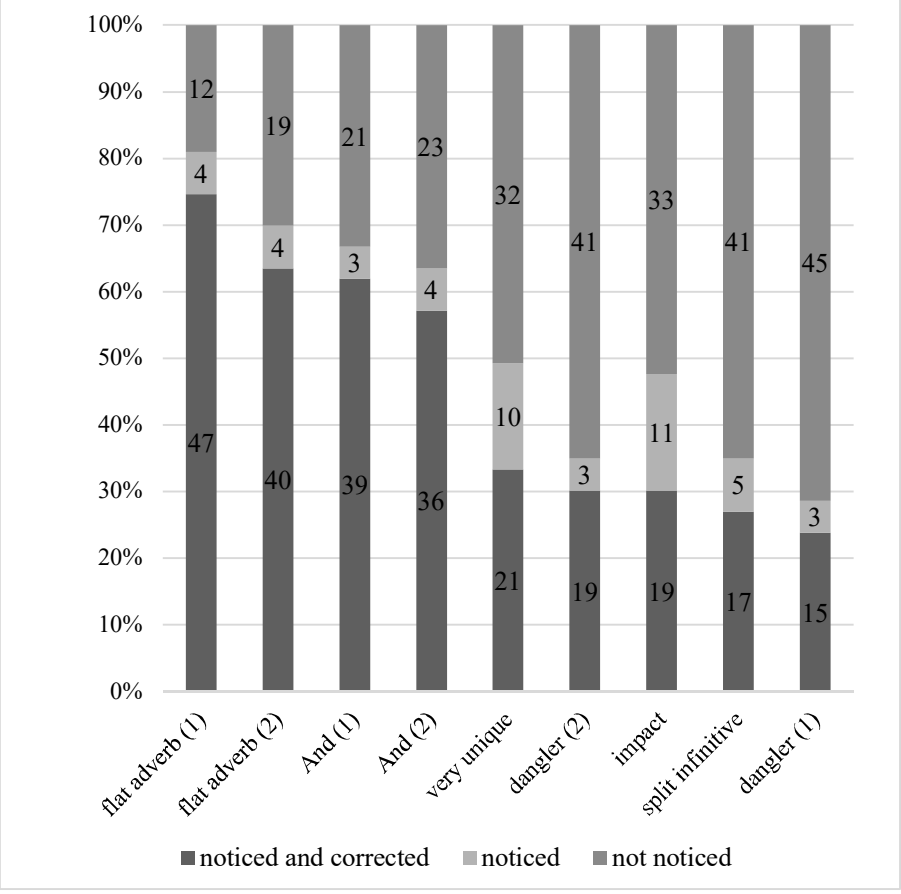

Figure 9.1 Degrees of salience of usage problems (raw figures in bars)

To see whether any correlations exist among the usage problems themselves, and also with the social variables age and gender, I conducted correlation analyses using Kendall tau-b. Instead of using the two age groups, as I did in the analysis of the open-guise test, I used the actual age of the informants for the tests to provide a more fine-grained analysis of correlations with this particular social variable. The results of this analysis can be found in Table 9.6, in which I have only present the results that proved significant.

Table 9.6 Significant correlations between salience of usage problems and age

age	**flat adverb (1)**	**split infinitive**	**flat adverb (2)**	***very unique***	***impact***
Correlation coefficient	–.289	–.269	–.206	–.329	–.237
Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.009	.046	.001	.019
N	63	63	63	63	63
dangler (1)	**dangler (2)**	***And* (1)**	***And* (2)**	***impact***	
Correlation coefficient	.581	.438	.289	.297	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.017	.012	
N	63	63	63	63	
flat adverb (1)	**age**	**dangler (2)**	**split infinitive**	***And* (1)**	**flat adverb (2)**
Correlation coefficient	–.289	.402	.340	.300	.253
Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.001	.005	.014	.037
N	63	63	63	63	63
	very unique	***And* (2)**	***impact***		
Correlation coefficient	.302	.241	.312		
Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.047	.008		
N	63	63	63		
dangler (2)	**dangler (1)**	**flat adverb (1)**	**split infinitive**	***And* (1)**	***very unique***
Correlation coefficient	.581	.402	.261	.280	.277
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.031	.022	.020
N	63	63	63	63	63
	***And* (2)**	***impact***			
Correlation coefficient	.263	.322			
Sig. (2-tailed)	.030	.007			
N	63	63			
split infinitive	**age**	**flat adverb (1)**	**dangler (2)**	**flat adverb (2)**	***very unique***
Correlation coefficient	–.269	.340	.261	.261	.418
Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	.005	.031	.030	.000
N	63	63	63	63	63
	***And* (2)**	***impact***			
Correlation coefficient	.271	.484			
Sig. (2-tailed)	.024	.000			
N	63	63			

***And* (1)**	**dangler (1)**	**flat adverb (1)**	**dangler (2)**	**flat adverb (2)**	***And* (2)**
Correlation coefficient	.438	.300	.280	.321	.681
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.014	.022	.008	.000
N	63	63	63	63	63
flat adverb (2)	**age**	**flat adverb (1)**	**split infinitive**	***And* (1)**	***And* (2)**
Correlation coefficient	–.206	.253	.261	.321	.348
Sig. (2-tailed)	.046	.037	.030	.008	.004
N	63	63	63	63	63
very unique	**age**	**flat adverb (1)**	**dangler (2)**	**split infinitive**	***And* (2)**
Correlation coefficient	–.329	.302	.277	.418	.235
Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.011	.020	.000	.047
N	63	63	63	63	63
	impact				
Correlation coefficient	.461				
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
N	63				
***And* (2)**	**dangler (1)**	**flat adverb (1)**	**dangler (2)**	**split infinitive**	***And* (1)**
Correlation coefficient	.289	.241	.263	.271	.681
Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	.047	.030	.024	.000
N	63	63	63	63	63
	flat adverb (2)	***very unique***			
Correlation coefficient	.348	.235			
Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.047			
N	63	63			
impact	**age**	**dangler (1)**	**flat adverb (1)**	**dangler (2)**	**split infinitive**
Correlation coefficient	–.237	.297	.312	.322	.484
Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	.012	.008	.007	.000
N	63	63	63	63	63
	very unique				
Correlation coefficient	.461				
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
N	63				

The data in Table 9.6 above show mainly weak negative correlations between the salience of a usage feature and the social variable age. Hence, it is clear that older informants tend to notice and correct the two incorporated flat adverbs (flat adverb 1 (*work close with*), $\tau_b = -.289$, $p = .005$; flat adverb 2 (*responsible*), $\tau_b = -.206$, $p = .046$), the split infinitive (*to effectively set goals*) ($\tau_b = -.269$, $p = .009$) and the use of *impact* as a verb ($\tau_b = -.237$, $p = .019$) more frequently than younger informants. With a moderate negative correlation between age and the usage problem *very unique* the same pattern can be identified ($\tau_b = -.329$, $p = .001$).

Using the Kendall tau-b correlation coefficients, further significant correlations could be identified. Thus, the first dangler (*Having worked as an IT administrator, the job seems …*) shows a strong positive correlation with the second dangler (*Having worked in my previous company for four years, my aspiration ...*), $\tau_b = .581$, $p = .000$. This means that those who noticed and corrected the first dangling participle in the application letter also tended to notice and correct the second one. Additionally, both instances of sentence-initial *And* (*And* 1, $\tau_b = .438$, $p = .000$, *And* 2, $\tau_b = .289$, $p = .017$) tended be noticed and corrected by those informants who corrected the first dangling participle as well. A weak positive correlation was moreover identified between the first dangling participle and the use of *impact* as a verb ($\tau_b = .297$, $p = .012$). Those informants who noticed and corrected the first flat adverb were also more likely to notice and correct the second dangling participle, ($\tau_b = .402$, $p = .001$), the split infinitive ($\tau_b = .340$, $p = .005$), both instances of sentence initial *And* (*And* 1, $\tau_b = .300$, $p = .014$, *And* 2, $\tau_b = .241$, $p = .047$), the second flat adverb ($\tau_b = .253$, $p = .035$), *very unique* ($\tau_b = .302$, $p = .011$), and the use of *impact* as a verb ($\tau_b = .312$, $p = .008$). Apart from the correlations already mentioned, which are also illustrated in Table 9.6, the second dangling participle also showed a positive correlation with the split infinitive ($\tau_b = .261$,

$p = .031$), both sentence-initial *And*s (*And* 1, $\tau_b = .280$, $p = .022$; *And* 2, $\tau_b = .263$, $p = .030$), as well as *very unique* ($\tau_b = .277$, $p = .020$), and *impact* ($\tau_b = .322$, $p = .007$). Besides the first flat adverb and the second dangling participle as mentioned above, informants who noticed and corrected the split infinitive were also more likely to notice and correct the second flat adverb ($\tau_b = .261$, $p = .030$), *very unique* (τ_b .418, $p = .000$), the second sentence-initial *And* ($\tau_b = .271$, $p = .024$) and *impact* as a verb ($\tau_b = .484$, $p = .000$). In addition to its correlation with the dangling participles and both flat adverbs, the first sentence-initial *And* correlates, unsurprisingly, with the second sentence initial *And* (*And* 2, $\tau_b = .681$, $p = .000$). Lastly, those informants who noticed and corrected the use of *very unique* also tended to notice and correct the second sentence-initial *And* (*And* 2, $\tau_b = .235$, $p = .047$), as well as the use of *impact* as a verb ($\tau_b = .461$, $p = .000$). While age showed a number of significant correlations with the usage problems investigated, gender showed no such differences, as can be seen in Table 9.7.

Table 9.7 Results of Mann Whitney *U*-tests for gender and usage problem's noticing

	dangler (1)	**dangler (2)**	**flat adverb (1)**
Mann-Whitney *U*	408.000	464.000	442.000
Z	–1.373	–.366	–.804
Sig. (2-tailed)	.170	.714	.421
	flat adverb (2)	***very unique***	***And* (2)**
Mann-Whitney *U*	439.500	459.000	408.500
Z	–.763	–.412	–1.231
Sig. (2-tailed)	445	.680	218
	***And* (1)**	**split infinitive**	***impact***
Mann-Whitney *U*	459.000	462.000	435.000
Z	–.440	–.397	–.780
Sig. (2-tailed)	.660	.691	.435

These findings confirm the importance of age in the usage debate, and highlight how context plays a crucial role when discussing usage attitudes in so far

as the dangling participle, which was one of the least acceptable usage problems in the questionnaire (cf. § 7.2.1.8), proved to be less problematical in the usage judgment test as both instances of the dangling participle were among the least noticed and corrected usage problems. This difference is most likely explained by dangling participles occurring in context rather than in isolation.

For the purpose of debriefing the participants in the interview sessions, I presented them with the corresponding usage rules for the investigated usage problems as well as one guise rule. The usage rules, which can be found in Appendix D, either condemned the use of the usage feature investigated, hence following the prescriptive tradition, or expressed a more lenient view on the issue at hand. The informants were asked to read the usage rules and state whether they agreed or disagreed with them, or did not have an opinion on the matter. I coded the informants' responses according to three categories: "agree", "disagree" and "neither agree, nor disagree". Connecting these findings with the usage judgment test, I was thus able to see whether and how social desirability could come into play, as it was assumed that the informants would tend to agree with the normative rules, even if they had not noticed or corrected the usage problems in the usage judgment test. Before discussing the results of the Kendall tau-b correlations, I will illustrate the general frequencies of the three categories in Figure 9.2 below.

Figure 9.2 shows that 47 informants agreed with the prescriptive rule condemning the gradation of *unique*, making it the most agreed-with usage rule. The least agreed with rule discusses flat adverbs, which expresses a lenient attitude towards their usage. Only 29 informants agreed with this rule, while sixteen informants disagreed.

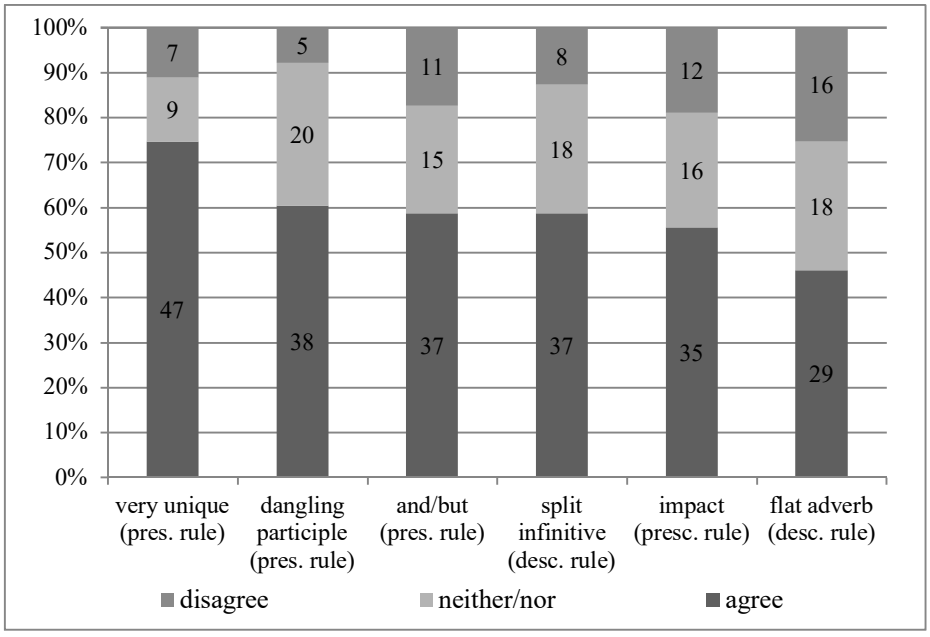

Figure 9.2 Informants' rule agreement categorisation (raw figures in bars)

When comparing these results to the findings of the salience of usage problems, as illustrated in Figure 9.1, a few intriguing differences came to light. While 47 informants agreed with the prescriptive rule on *very unique*, only 21 informants noticed and corrected this usage problem in the usage judgment test, and a further ten informants merely noticed it. An even stronger contrast between the findings of the salience of usage problems and informants' agreement with the usage rules can be identified in the case of the dangling participle. The two dangling participles were among the least noticed and corrected usage problems in the letter of application, yet Figure 9.2 above reveals that about sixty per cent of all informants agree with the prescriptive rule. This suggests that there is a difference between customary usage and usage norms. Lastly, the use of *impact* as a verb was noticed and corrected by only nineteen informants, while 35 of my informants agreed with the prescriptive rule. These findings are indicators of the existence of a social desirability bias triggered by the directness of the approach I took in eliciting these usage attitudes. The

attitudes obtained in the direct elicitation test can thus be identified as so-called subconsciously offered attitudes which describe the respondents' inclination to offer responses which they considered to be socially acceptable. In this case, the social desirability bias is directed towards usage norms which respondents believe to be accepted within the speech community they are part of. Figure 9.3 below illustrates this potential bias.

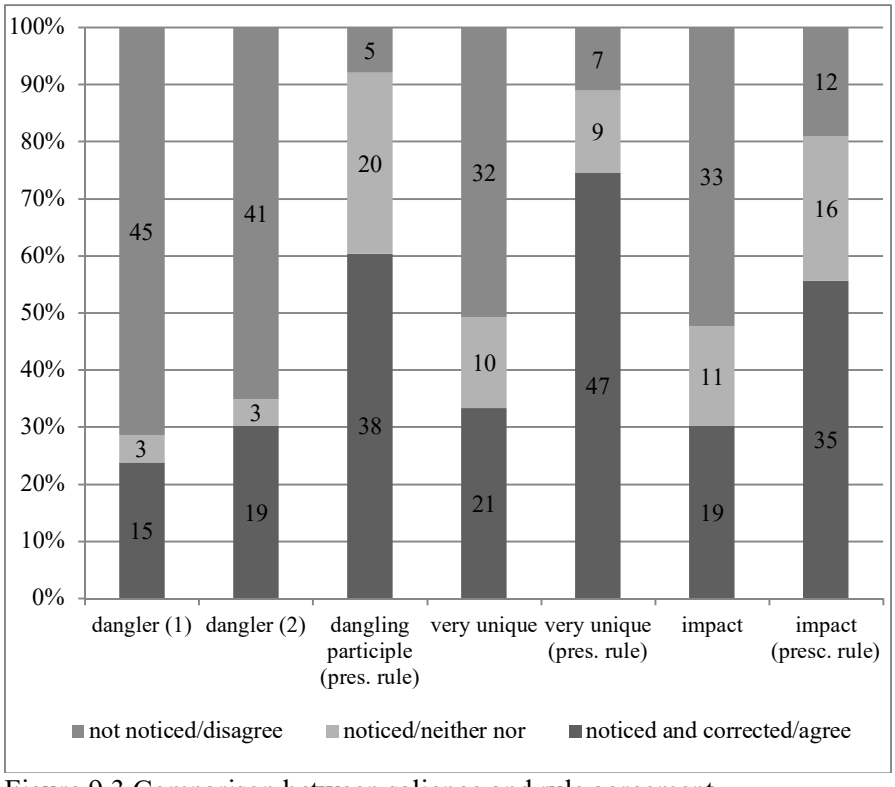

Figure 9.3 Comparison between salience and rule agreement

Making use of the Kendall tau-b correlation test, I attempted to identify any significant correlations between the informants' judgments with regard to the salience of the usage problems and their respective rule agreement. Table 9.8 below contains the results of these correlation tests.

Table 9.8 Results of the correlation test between salience judgment and rule agreement

Kendall tau-b correlation		
dangling participle (pres. rule)	**dangler (1)**	**dangler (2)**
Correlation coefficient	.034	.079
Sig. (2-tailed)	.780	.515
N	63	63
flat adverb (des. rule)	**flat adverb (1)**	**flat adverb (2)**
Correlation coefficient	.116	.007
Sig. (2-tailed)	.324	.952
N	63	63
***And* (pres. rule)**	***And* (1)**	***And* (2)**
Correlation coefficient	.094	.040
Sig. (2-tailed)	.040	.734
N	63	63
split infinitive (des. rule)	**split infinitive**	
Correlation coefficient	–.245	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.039*	
N	63	
***very unique* (pres. rule)**	***very unique***	
Correlation coefficient	.364	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.002*	
N	63	
***impact* (pres. rule)**	***Impact***	
Correlation coefficient	.082	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.478	
N	63	

* Statistically significance level p < .05

The table shows two significant correlations between the salience of usage problems and rule agreement. The findings in the table suggest that those informants who noticed and corrected the split infinitive in the usage judgment test tended to disagree with the descriptive rule on the use of split infinitives, $\tau_b = -.245$, $p = .039$. In addition, informants who agreed with the prescriptive rule against gradable *unique* also tended to notice and correct this usage problem in the usage judgment test, $\tau_b = .364$, $p = 002$.

9.3. Concluding Remarks

Both the open-guise test and the usage judgment test enabled a more intricate investigation of usage attitudes as they focussed on eliciting subconsciously held usage attitudes. The findings of the open-guise test suggest that the unmarked recordings of the male and female speakers tend to be rated more favourably than their marked counterparts which contained disputed language features. A detailed analysis of the variables of which the two factors, i.e. status-orientation and agreeableness, are composed shows that speakers who use the unmarked variants are considered more hard working, literate, orderly and wealthier. While rating differences have been identified on the intra-speaker level, a comparison between the recordings of the male and female speakers showed no significant rating differences. There were some respondents, however, who commented on the different accents of the speakers. My analysis of comments made by the informants allowed a more detailed insight into the informants' judgments and brought to light an association of prescriptive usage with the middle and upper classes and well-educated speakers.

The usage judgment test highlighted the salience of usage features, since respondents were asked to correct anything they found unacceptable and inappropriate in an application letter that was presented to them. The test showed that flat adverbs were the most frequently noticed as well as corrected usage problem, while dangling participles were less easily identified. This indicates a crucial component which is often forgotten or neglected in usage attitude studies: the role of context. As was shown with the example of the dangling participle, a usage problem which had been included in all three elicitation tests, respondents were more likely to label a dangling participle as unacceptable when presented without any context. The usage judgment test also highlighted the dangers of obtaining socially desirable answers. By asking respondents to agree or disagree with usage rules for the usage problems

investigated, I was able to show how the social desirability bias can cause respondents to agree with a particular usage rule despite having failed to notice or correct the corresponding usage feature. This was the case for the usage problems *very unique* and the split infinitive. It therefore needs to be concluded that the explicitness of an elicitation technique can have an impact on both the depth and validity of speakers' attitudes obtained. However, conscious usage attitudes should not be discarded as they are part of the speakers' overall attitudes towards a specific usage problem and users of this feature. By applying a mixed-methods approach, I was able to obtain a complete picture of the speakers' usage attitudes consisting of both conscious and subconsciously held attitudes.

The complexity of usage attitudes is highlighted in the analysis of the usage attitude data which I obtained by applying a mixed-methods approach. What is essential and needs to borne in mind when conducting attitude studies is the realisation that the outcome and obtained depth of information on usage attitudes greatly depends on the approach applied. While speakers' attitudes towards usage problems have traditionally been studied through direct elicitation techniques in the form of questionnaires (see § 4.3), indirect elicitation techniques, in particular the open-guise test and usage judgment test, have shown that speakers will offer subconscious attitudes towards usage features which are free from any influence exerted by the researcher or the test itself. Hence, the social desirability bias is minimised and the speakers' awareness of usage problems is foregrounded and becomes crucial in the attitude formation process of the speaker. By combining different elicitation techniques with an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, I was not only able to obtain elaborations and explanations from the respondents on their conscious usage attitudes, but was also able to elicit subconscious usage attitudes towards the usage problems investigated.

10. Discussion of Results

10.1. Introduction

Having presented the findings of the elicitation tests I have conducted for the purpose of identifying current usage attitudes in England in the preceding three chapters, I will now turn to the discussion of my results and will contextualise them within the usage debate. This will be done by drawing on the theoretical background presented in the previous chapters and by combining concepts and historical developments, such as Preston's concept of language regard (Chapter 3) and the Milroyan standardisation process (Chapter 2), respectively, with the results of the conducted usage elicitation tests.

Firstly, I will discuss the social variables which have been identified in Chapters 7 – 9 as relevant to the variability of usage attitudes by providing an overview of the results of the questionnaire. I will also discuss in detail the differences in the respondents' judgments based on their correlations with degree of certainty and judgment basis. Applying a mixed-methods approach has offered a detailed insight into current usage attitudes in England as the informants were able to comment on their usage decisions, by which they provided elaborative qualitative data. Thus, relevant concepts have come to light which would have remained concealed if I had used a traditional questionnaire to elicit such delicate attitudes. Concepts such as self-presentation and the speaker's distancing from usages perceived as unacceptable play a central role in the usage debate and will be discussed further.

My overview of previous usage attitude studies has shown that studies of usage attitudes held by the general public tend to be more frequent in the United States of America than in Great Britain. Why this is the case remains subject to speculation. However, a comparison is made between the findings of the questionnaire data presented in this study (see Chapter 7) and Mittins et al.'s *Attitudes to English Usage* (1970). However, it should be borne in mind

that attitude studies are difficult to replicate in general. Therefore, any findings of the comparison between these two snapshots of usage attitudes in British English need to be considered as mere tendencies of potential changes in usage attitudes.

My aim in applying a mixed-methods approach to studying the usage attitudes of laypeople has been to obtain a fuller picture of current usage attitudes. This approach resulted in the elicitation of both consciously and subconsciously offered attitudes. Despite being prone to the social desirability bias, consciously offered attitudes, which have so far been central in the general discussion on usage attitudes due to their elicitation through the Direct Approach (see Chapter 3), can confirm commonly held beliefs about language use. Moreover, they also provide an insight into the effects of the usage debate on laypeople. These effects will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Lastly, it is important to highlight the advantages of the mixed-methods approach I applied while also taking account of its pitfalls, as these can influence the outcome of my study and can have implications for future studies in the field.

10.2. The Social Stratification of Usage Attitudes in England

While previous usage attitude studies only gradually incorporated sociolinguistic theory and scarcely investigated the sociolinguistic variability of usage attitudes (cf. Mittins et al., 1970; Sandred, 1983; Albanyan & Preston, 1998), the aim of my own study was to examine whether and how social variables such as age, gender, education level and nativeness affect the usage attitudes of a speech community. What needs to be borne in mind here is that the speech community investigated in this study comprises the wider population of England, which consists of further smaller speech communities. Therefore, it was necessary to acknowledge regional differences of the English varieties spoken

in England, as was done for double negation investigated in this study (see § 6.8).

While the focus of previous studies has mainly been on the social variables age and gender, other variables have not been included in this study of usage attitudes (see § 4.3), despite the fact that they play an equally crucial role in language change and variability in general. A notable exception to this pattern is Sandred's (1983) investigation of attitudes towards Scots which also involved the variable social class. How nativeness, level of education or other social class membership markers can affect usage attitudes towards variation in usage still has to be investigated in detail. Undoubtedly, social class plays a crucial role in Great Britain, and its influence, especially in the usage debate, should not be overlooked. The importance of social class and its scholarly treatment have been described by Halliday (1992, p. 72) who states:

> It is acceptable to show up sexism – as it is to show up racism – because to eliminate sexual and racial bias would pose no threat to the existing social order: capitalist society could thrive perfectly well without sexual discrimination and without racial discrimination. But it is not acceptable to show up classism, especially by objective linguistic analysis … because capitalist society could not exist without discrimination between classes. Such work could, ultimately, threaten the order of society.

That social class plays a central role in British society is acknowledged by a renewed interested in the subject and by numerous recent publications on class issues (e.g. Skegg, 2004; Sayer, 2005; Savage, 2015; Jones, 2016). The reasons for this renewed interest is said to lie in the changes affecting society and an awareness about social class as a consequence of the growth of neoliberalism. Block (2014, p. 9) establishes a link between "the liberalisation of the British economy from the mid-1980s onwards" and a subsequent change in public discourse about social class in Great Britain. This change is reflected in the shifting emphasis from society as defined by "collectivist principles" to an emphasis on the individual, as is demonstrated by Margaret Thatcher's

often-cited comment: "… who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families …" (as quoted in Block, 2014, p. 9). Despite attempting an investigation into the relationship between usage attitudes and social class, the questionnaire sample I drew upon for the purpose of this analysis turned out more homogeneous than expected, not only with regard to the social class marker level of education which I intended to take into consideration, but also in terms of nativeness. Thus, a thorough analysis of social class differences could not be conducted, but will be pursued in future research. Nonetheless, my qualitative analysis of attitude data provided by the questionnaire respondents and interviewees brought to light the effects of social class in the usage debate and hence will allow me to offer an insight into how usage features are connected to social class differences.

In Table 10.1 below I have presented an overview of the eleven usage problems investigated in the online questionnaire. This overview shows the average acceptability rating for each of the usage problems investigated in the questionnaire, but also any social variable which correlated with the respondents' usage judgments. Furthermore, the overview contains a summary of how degree of certainty and judgment basis correlate with the respondents' usage judgments, as well as of when the usage problem was first discussed in the usage guides included in HUGE. The latter information is relevant because the usage problems' treatments in the advice literature has been a central part in the analysis. Empty cells in the table indicate that no significant relationship was identified in the analysis, or, in the case of the HUGE analysis, that the usage problem was not included in the database.

The overview of the findings presented in Table 10.1 demonstrates the importance of age in the usage debate, which shows a significant correlation with usage judgments for four of the eleven usage problems investigated.

Table 10.1 Overview of the eleven usage problems investigated in the questionnaire (Chapter 7)

Usage problem	Average accept-ability (%)	Social vari-able	Degree of certainty	Judgment basis	First mention in HUGE
split infinitive	63.5		–	acceptable –feeling, unacceptable – rule	Alford1864
data are	48.5	nativeness	–	acceptable – feeling, unacceptable – rule	Fowler1926
go slow	43.9	gender	both same degree of certainty**	acceptable – feeling, unacceptable – rule	Baker1770
less than	40.2	–	both same degree of certainty**	acceptable – feeling, unacceptable – rule	Baker1770
literally	37.1	age*	unacceptable judgments show higher degree of certainty	acceptable –feeling, unacceptable – rule	Fowler1926
different from/than/ to	32.6	age*	unacceptable judgments show higher degree of certainty	acceptable – feeling, unacceptable – rule	Baker1770
I for *me*	27.1	age	unacceptable judgments show higher degree of certainty	acceptable – feeling, unacceptable – rule	Anon1826
dangling participle	25.2	–	unacceptable judgments show higher degree of certainty	acceptable – feeling, unacceptable – rule	Fowler& Fowler1906
like	17.9	age	both same degree of certainty**	acceptable – feeling, unacceptable – rule	–
burglarize	13.4	–	both same degree of certainty**	–	–
double negative	7.6	–	both same degree of certainty**	–	Baker1770

* main effect, however no longer significant in binary logistic regression
** median is the same in the *U*-test

With all four of these usage problems, *literally*, *different from*/*than*/*to*, *I* for *me* and *like* the same pattern could be identified in that older respondents reveal an increased tendency of linguistic intolerance (see § 7.2.1). The importance of this age effect needs to be emphasised as the result of changes and trends in usage over time, such as Mair's (2006, p. 187) colloquialization of English usage, are noticeable in the language use of a speech community as well as between different generations. Thus, a colloquialization of English will most likely be noticed by older generations of a speech community, which would account for an increased linguistic intolerance found among these speakers. Identifying an age effect in four of the usage problems investigated confirms Mittins et al.'s (1970, p. 23) finding that there is a "well-defined decline in tolerance" with growing age. As younger respondents are seemingly more lenient towards usages such as the use of *literally* as an intensifier, this could suggest that such usage features may stop being considered problematical in the future.

Two previous usage attitude studies have investigated the effect of gender on usage attitudes, i.e. Sandred, (1983) and Albanyan & Preston (1998), which confirmed Trudgill's (1974, p. 94) findings of female speakers' overt appreciation of standard language forms, while male speakers openly favour language features carrying lower prestige. Gender proved to be the most influential social variable behind usage attitudes towards flat adverbs in that women were three times more likely to find the flat adverb in the stimulus sentence (*That's a dangerous curve; you'd better go slow*) unacceptable than men. Similar results were obtained by Lukač and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (forthc.) in their study of usage attitudes with respect to the differences they identified for native and non-native speakers of English. The reason why women favour standard language features more frequently than men was discussed by Trudgill (1974, p. 94) in his study of language variation in Norwich,

which showed that women tend to be "more status-conscious than men, generally speaking, and are therefore more aware of the social significance of linguistic variables". Due to their less secure social position in society, at the time of Trudgill's study at least, women feel the need to compensate for this unequal standing through the use of linguistic features. Trudgill (1974, p. 94) further states that

> [m]en in our society can be rated socially by their occupation, their earning power, and perhaps by their other abilities: in other words, by what they do. For the most part, however, this is not possible for women, who have generally to be rated on how they appear. Since they cannot be rated socially by their occupation, by what other people know about what they do in life, other signals of status, including speech, are correspondingly more important.

That Trudgill's explanation for finding overt prestige with women is based on what were then perceived as traditional occupations for women, such as secretarial work, housework and raising children, needs to be borne in mind here. The lack of prestige of such work resulted in women turning to prestigious language features because it allowed women to signal their social belonging. More than four decades have passed since Trudgill's Norwich study, but similar findings of overt prestige have strengthened the effects of gender on language use, which thus suggests the validity of the phenomenon of overt prestige in relation to studies that deal with norms and usage. However, Trudgill's (1974) explanation for overt prestige being connected to the lower social standing of women at the time remains one of the most frequently cited reasons for findings of overt prestige. Other studies have put forward further explanations for women overtly favouring prestigious language features. Gal's (1978) study of a language contact situation in Austria, for instance, showed that bilingual women turned to German at the expense of Hungarian, as the former was perceived as more modern than Hungarian. Gal's study highlights how women are not only often the driving force behind internal

language change, but also behind language shifts. In her study, Gal identifies the desire to modernise as a possible reason for women showing overt prestige. In a more recent study, Gordon (1997, p. 48) argues that overt prestige is caused by women who wish to distance themselves from the stereotypical speech of lower-class speakers, whereby she draws a connection between gender and social class. Connections such as these often seem to be overlooked in sociolinguistic analysis. That the avoidance of stereotypes, as in the case of the use of double negation, plays a role in the usage debate has already been mentioned above (see § 7.2.7), but will be discussed in more detail further on in this chapter.

One of the latest contributions to the discussion on the relationship between language and gender was made by Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet (2003, p. 10), who argue that gender is a social construct. They propose that gender is a "set of practices through which people construct and claim identities" (2003, p. 305). Eckert and McConnell-Ginet suggest that men tend to avoid "extreme usages", while women are more likely to use language as a means to "construct social differences among themselves" (2003, p. 302). In an earlier study on the language use of two social categories of American high school students, so-called jocks and burnouts, Eckert (1989) illustrated this phenomenon on the basis of multiple negation. It has to be noted that these two categories seem to reproduce adult social class categories in an adolescent context (Eckert, 1989, p. 4). While jocks showed generally the lowest and burnouts the highest uses of multiple negations (Eckert, 1989, p. 68), the most frequent uses were recorded among female participants only with burnout girls even outdoing burnout boys (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p. 295). Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's observations provide an interesting perspective on gender and language variation and could also help us explain how language is used to construct linguistic identities. However,

this view on gender makes questions on language variation even more complex than they already are, as language use needs to be seen in light of the self that a speaker is constructing. Which social factor influences the identity constructed by a speaker needs to be clarified as factors such as gender, social class membership or age could even vary from one communicative encounter to another.

If we define the speech community as inclusive of non-native speakers, the social variable nativeness also needs to be taken into consideration. However, the survey sample analysed in Chapters 7 and 8 only included a small number of non-native speakers of English, which, nevertheless, reflects the wider representativeness of the English population (see § 5.2). One of the usage problems investigated shows a significant correlation between usage judgments and nativeness: *data are*. Native speakers found the prescriptive use of *data are* more frequently acceptable than non-native speakers. An explanation for this finding could potentially be that different approaches and materials were used in the teaching of English to foreign language learners. Interestingly, Lukač and Tieken-Boon van Ostade's (forthc.) investigation, which included not only native speakers of American and British English but also non-native speakers of English, did not show any significant correlations between usage attitudes and the social variable nativeness. Nevertheless, finding a significant correlation between acceptability judgments and the social variable nativeness emphasises the importance of including non-native speakers' attitudes in the study of usage attitudes as these speakers are not only part of the speech community, but also participate in the usage debate in similar ways as native speakers do.

Although the questionnaire analysis has highlighted the importance of age, gender and nativeness in the variability of usage attitudes of respondents, the influence of other social variables, such as level of education or other

social class markers, cannot be rejected, though an equally balanced sample would be necessary to identify any possible correlations. What has also been shown in my analysis of social variables is that a covariance between such variables should be allowed for. While main effects have been identified for the social variable age in the analysis of the intensifier *literally* and *different from/than/to*, the binary logistic regression analysis has shown that the influence of these main effects is diminished when all social variables investigated in this study are included in the analysis.

While the online questionnaire allowed me to conduct a detailed analysis of a possible sociolinguistic variation of usage attitudes, the open guise and usage judgment tests I decided to carry out were restricted in the sense that only two social variables were tested: age and gender. Although gender did not show any significant differences with regard to the respondents' identification of usage problems in the usage judgment test, age proved to be, yet again, a crucial variable. Older informants were more likely to notice and correct flat adverbs, the split infinitive, *very unique* and *impact* as a verb in the sentences presented to them. The open-guise test not only showed age differences, but also differences between the judgments of male and female speakers. By analysing intra- and inter-speaker differences between the female and male speakers of the recordings, I was able to highlight usage judgment tendencies for older and younger informants participating in the open-guise test. Older informants rated the male speaker's unmarked recording, which contained usage features generally accepted by prescriptivists, more favourably on the agreeableness factor than the marked recording. This tendency was also identified for the comparison between the female speaker's unmarked and marked recordings. These rating differences, which were all statistically significant, were found only in the older group of informants. My analysis of the open-guise test also brought to light how the informants, who I had split up

into two age groups, rated the unmarked recordings of both speakers more favourably on the status-orientation factor than their marked counterparts. Although the traditional questionnaire I carried out (see § 7.2) has confirmed an increased linguistic intolerance among older speakers, the open-guise test showed that both the older and younger informants show statistically significant rating differences. That such rating differences can be influenced by other social variables, such as the variable gender, cannot, however, be ruled out. As for gender differences, female informants rated the marked recordings of the female and male speakers more favourably on the agreeableness factor when compared to their status-orientation factors respectively. Additionally, a significant rating difference by male informants was identified in the comparison of the male speaker's agreeableness factors across the usage dimension, i.e. comparing the unmarked to the marked recording. According to this rating difference, the male speaker was rated more favourably on the agreeableness factor when using the prescribed variants. From the analysis of the open-guise test it is clear that variables such as "literate – illiterate" and "wealthy – not wealthy", which composed the status-orientation factor, seem to correlate with the unmarked recordings. Since the female speaker was thought to use a variety closer to the standard, it does not come as a surprise to find that the female informants' linguistic behaviour reflects overt prestige.

Table 10.1 above also reveals an interesting pattern with respect to how prescriptive usage judgments in the answers to the questionnaire were made with a higher certainty level than descriptive judgments, and also how prescriptive usage judgments tend to be based on self-reported rule knowledge, while descriptive judgments frequently are the result of a gut feeling. These findings bring to light the essential distinction between usage norms and actual usage (see § 2.2). Whether usage advice should be based on idealistic norms or rather on how language is customarily used is a quintessential enquiry

which raises not only the question concerning authority but also that of ownership of the language. Even though England never appointed an official authority of the English language, unlike France or Spain whose academies have served as the official guardian of the languages respectively, authoritative power has been assigned to other institutions. As discussed in Chapter 2, the need felt by linguistically insecure speakers for an authority on language was met with the increasingly becoming popular genre of usage guides. Taking on the role of self-appointed guardians and authorities on language, usage guide authors did not eschew instructing linguistically insecure speakers who wished to improve their social standing in society by means of their language usage. In the course of time, the structure of British society has changed, resulting in a growing middle class and a working class which has become somewhat "demonised" and looked down upon (Jones, 2016), yet language use has kept its power to distinguish classes. What needs to be borne in mind here is that a discussion of such class differences entails an extension of the discussion into the schooling and education speakers in England receive, which will be discussed in more detail below.

My analysis of usage attitudes has shown that, as discussed in Section 3.3.1, some usage features constitute sociolinguistic stereotypes, as the possession of "naïve linguistic awareness" (Rácz, 2013, p. 26). Such sociolinguistic stereotypes are the Americanism *burglarize*, *like* as an approximative adverb, and *I* for *me* for example, because speakers possess a relatively great awareness of the disputed status of features such as these, as can be seen from the average acceptability rating and qualitative analysis of respondents' comments (see Chapter 7). However, it needs to be borne in mind that linguistic awareness plays a crucial role, which is reflected in Rácz's definition of sociolinguistic stereotypes (see § 3.3.1). Hence, for speakers who are highly aware of stigmatised usage features, these features will function as sociolinguistic

stereotypes which are associated with uneducated or sloppy speakers. For speakers who are not aware of a usage feature's stigmatised status this will not be the case and such features could be perceived as mere indicators or markers. The split infinitive could potentially be considered a marker as it is socially stratified according to age and is reportedly more acceptable in informal styles or contexts than it is in formal contexts (see § 6.2.10).

10.2.1. Self-presentation, distancing and linguistic identity

My qualitative analysis of attitude data, which I obtained through the elicitation tests I conducted, has added an important layer to the understanding of usage attitudes as informants not only provided explanations of their acceptability judgments, but the information obtained in this way brought themes to light which would have otherwise been left in the dark. Based on this information, it was possible to identify how speakers negotiate their identity and self-image on the basis of usage problems and perceive other speakers' identities on the same grounds.

How distancing can serve as a means to preserve a national linguistic identity has been described by Thomas (1991, p. 44), who states that together with differentiating between languages, distancing a group's language from other competing varieties can foster and strengthen the group's identity. In a similar manner, the questionnaire respondents distanced themselves from what they perceived as foreign, dialectal, or incorrect language use. Doing so strengthens their perception of themselves as knowledgeable and authentic speakers of British or English Standard English. Block (2014, p. 5) describes the notion of self-presentation and defining one's identity not only through the process of affiliation, but also through disaffiliation by quoting Sayer (2005, p. 54), who describes the frequently used "practice of defining one's identity

through a contrast with a stigmatised other". This tendency has also been mentioned by Gordon (1997, pp. 49–50) in her study of women's linguistic behaviour in New Zealand, which showed that overtly prestigious language features were used by female speakers in order to avoid a negative association with lower-class speakers. Such differences in language use, be they regional or sociolectal, are said to fulfil a function of signalling "social belonging" according to Joseph (2013, p. 140). This indexicality of language is complex and can comprise not only regional or social class indices, but also ethnic and religious ones (cf. Joseph, 2013, p. 141). According to Joseph (2013, p. 141) a difference between native speakers and non-native speakers needs to be foregrounded in that non-native speakers need to make "intense efforts" to learn and be able to understand and fully grasp the indexicality qualities of a language, which native speakers learn and get accustomed to right from the start. More importantly, however, the function of indices to indicate belonging brings with it the possibility to distinguish between "us" and "them", which according to Joseph (2006, p. 262) shows how linguistic identities are "double-edged swords". This type of othering is enforced by the distancing from unacceptable usage features my respondents showed in their comments on the usage features investigated. Numerous examples of this process have been provided in the analysis of the questionnaire (see § 7.2.1), such as example (49) replicated here:

(49) Only chavs make up stupid words.
(Digital marketing consultant, 31–40 years old, female)

Distinguishing one's personal usage from that of others and simultaneously assigning the binary distinction "acceptable/unacceptable" to either of the two groups is reflected in the above example. The respondent clearly assigns the "stupid" word *burglarize* to a particular group of speakers: chavs. Doing so, she draws a line between this group and herself. Negatively connoted words

such as "chavs" and "stupid" reflect her attitude not only to the use of *burglarize* but also to the group she associates with this usage. Examples such as this highlight how respondents perceive linguistic identities.

In the following quotation, Joseph (2013, p. 144) stresses an important issue which needs to be borne in mind in relation to linguistic identities.

> Whether or not a speaker is trying to project an identity is a relatively minor issue, compared to the much more important one of how that speaker's identity is perceived by other people – if only because everyone we encounter constructs an identity for us, based on whatever indices interpret us as projecting, whether or not we are aware of projecting them, let alone intending it. There are countless versions of you out there in the minds of others, each different from the persona you imagine for yourself, because everyone brings their own experience of life and of reading other people to bear in this work of interpreting the identity of those we meet.

What is intriguing in Joseph's argument presented here is the importance he assigns to how the identity of a speaker is perceived by other speakers. Their interpretation of the above-mentioned indices will result in a constructed identity and is influenced by their experiences whenever the speakers encounter one another. The notion of experience has already been discussed above and has been identified as key to the understanding of particular usage attitudes. Linking Joseph's argument to usage attitudes, it can be assumed that a speaker's identity will be constructed by others who interpret indices in the speaker's language use, no matter whether they are regional, social or ethnic indices. Speakers' experiences of stigmatised language features and of interpreting such linguistic cues will shape their perceptions of a speaker's identity. To provide an example, while double negation is found in numerous English varieties, it is not considered part of Standard English (cf. 5.2). The identity of a speaker who uses double negatives may then be constructed on the basis other speakers' experiences with dialectal varieties. Thus, a regional identity could be constructed for such a speaker, as could a social class identity, for example, as has also been illustrated from the questionnaire respondents'

answers. It is essential to acknowledge the importance of context in that the place and circumstances in which an encounter between speakers takes place could influence the identity construction of a speaker. Additionally, the relationship between speakers should be acknowledged as to whether the speakers are friends, acquaintances, or complete strangers. The situation speakers find themselves in and the relationship between the participants in the speech event bring to light a very important related concept, i.e. the concept of "face", which, however, needs to be distinguished from the concept "identity". While face in politeness theory has been defined as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61) and is considered to be a "punctual phenomenon" which takes place in an encounter between interlocutors (Joseph, 2013, p. 141), identity or more broadly speaking self-image is more "durative".

My discussion in Chapter 3 of Preston's (2010, p. 100) concept of language regard, which comprises both reactions towards language production and comprehension, can therefore be connected to the perception of a speaker's identity. As illustrated in Figure 3.3 above, the language regard process draws on iconization, through which linguistic features are turned into representations of social images. If speakers perceive the language use of another speaker, they will construct an identity of that speaker by drawing on this experience and on their ability to read indices. This process requires them to draw on their knowledge of the linguistic features or variety used. It is, however, possible that speakers do not draw on their previously gathered knowledge, but rather establish a direct link between the language comprehension and production of a speaker and a previously imbued judgment (Preston, 2010, pp. 102–103). An example illustrating such a language regard process has already been given in Section 3.3.1 above. Thus, if speakers were to perceive another speaker making use of a double negative, they could either

draw on their knowledge and experience with respect to the linguistic features encountered or make a direct link between the speaker's language use and any previously made judgments in order to form their language regard towards this particular speaker.

My findings with respect to the variability of usage attitudes and my discussion of them have shown how self-image and identity play a crucial role in the usage debate. Especially speakers who are aware of the existence of stigmatised usage features will distance themselves from what they perceive as unacceptable or incorrect usages. These affiliations with and disaffiliations from speakers with particular usages are essential in explaining how stigmatisations of usage features are kept alive. Usage problems can thus serve as linguistic indices which may reveal information about a speaker to others. Besides regional, social class and ethnic indices, usage problems can also hint at a speaker's age or educational background, as has been shown in my analysis of the questionnaire and open-guise test (see Chapters 7 – 9). Furthermore, the use or avoidance of particular usage problems is perceived by other speakers in particular ways, in that compliance with usage norms is considered to be a sign of a higher degree of status-orientation, as was also shown in the open-guise test. That it is as important, if not more so, to identify how speakers' identities are perceived by others as to identify how speakers intend to portray themselves has been stressed by Joseph (2013, p. 145). Yet, a crucial side-effect of perceived linguistic identities is the frequently made distinction based on social belonging between an in-group and an out-group. What comes with this distinction is the phenomenon of othering, which fosters a better understanding of how linguistic identities are constructed and interpreted.

10.2.2. Resurgence of prescriptive attitudes

The results of the questionnaire analysis included not only the linguists' perspective on the usage matters at hand, but also an investigation of usage advice literature. The latter adds the perspective of usage guide authors to the discussion and analysis of usage attitudes of the general public, not only to contextualise the public's attitudes to disputed usage features but also to bridge the gap between the key players in the usage debate. Thus, it is made possible to identify possibly diverging views on language use between the general public and usage guide authors.

Nine of the eleven usage problems investigated in the questionnaire, such as the dangling participle and the split infinitive (see Chapter 7), were included in the HUGE database and formed the basis of this discussion. The treatment of these nine usage problems was analysed by applying a modified version of Yáñez-Bouza's tripartite categorisation into "advocated", "neutral" or "criticised" treatment. This method did not only allow an overview of how the treatment of the usage problems has developed over time, but also provided the possibility to look at usage guide authors' usage attitudes in more detail. By combining the information gathered through the tripartite categorisation for all nine usage problems, I was able to identify how strict or lenient usage guide authors are in their usage advice. A list of the usage guides investigated and their respective treatment of the usage problems can be found in Appendix H. In Figure 10.1 below, an overview of the treatment frequencies is presented. The usage guides used in the treatment analysis are grouped into decades according to their date of publication. Despite comprising 240 years of the usage debate, the selection of usage guides included in the HUGE database shows gaps in which no new usage guide could be identified (see Figure 5.4). The three usage guides published in 2010 were incorporated in the overview in the decade of 2000 as they do not represent a complete decade,

which slightly skews my data. However, it has to be mentioned that these three usage guides exhibit mainly critical views on the nine usage problems, as can be seen in Appendix G. Two usage problems, sentence-initial *And* and *very unique*, are not included in the overview presented below, as they were not part of the online questionnaire.

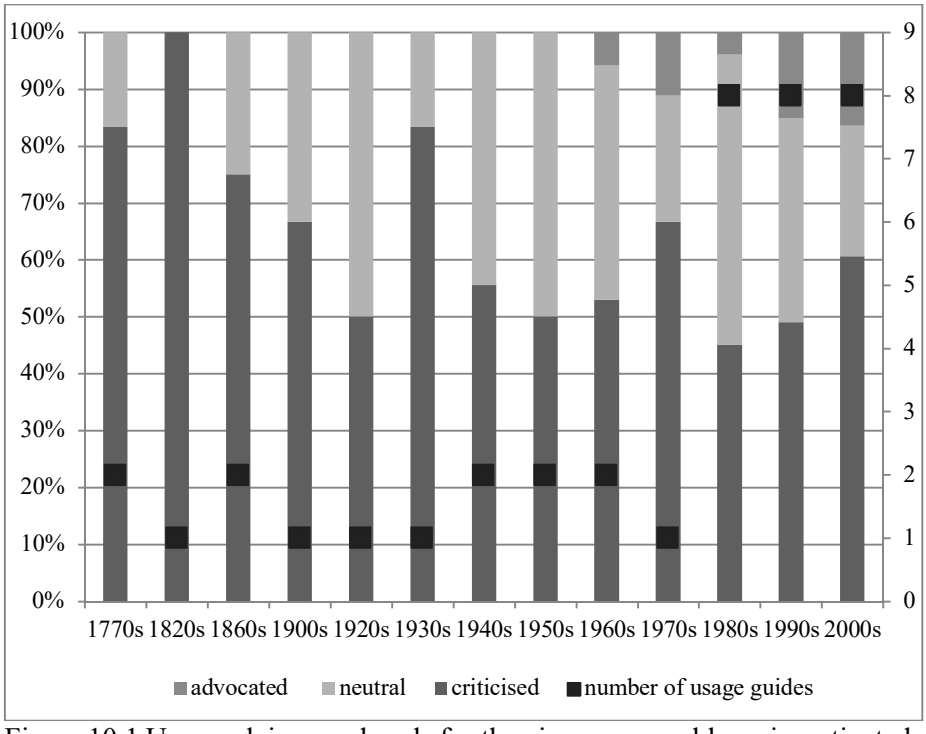

Figure 10.1 Usage advice per decade for the nine usage problems investigated

The overview in Figure 10.1 shows that only from the 1960s onwards do we find advocative treatments of usage features made by the usage guide authors. This development is most probably due to the growing influence of linguistics as a science, which, with its strict focus on descriptiveness, clearly had an effect on the treatment of disputed usage features as well. Interestingly, an enormous increase of usage guide publications, as indicated by the squares in the table above, can be detected in this overview. While the decades prior to 1980 experienced the publication of one or two usage guides, the 1980s in the

HUGE database comprises eight usage guide publications. The reason for this could lie in the changes affecting the education system which have been described in Chapter 2 in more detail (see § 2.3.1). When reading the introductions and prefaces of usage guides published from the 1980s onwards, one comes across comments such as the ones stated below:

> Something has gone seriously wrong, when so many people find themselves looking back at their English grammar lessons at school, remembering only the pain, or boredom, or – nothing. (Crystal, 1984, p. 10)

> It is widely believed that the reaction against teaching to a strict standard is responsible for a decline in the general quality of writing. Whether in fact there has been such a decline (and what, if so, has caused it) cannot be regarded as other than speculative and controversial. What is certain is that very many people indeed feel uneasy about their own usage and the usage around them. University professors of English receive a steady stream of serious inquiries on these matters from people in all walks of life: accountants, local government officers, teachers, clergymen, bank managers, secretaries, journalists, broadcasters, trade union officials, doctors. (Quirk in Greenbaum & Whitcut, 1988, p. iv)

> Education advisers are agreed that English is the most important subject in the curriculum. It is also the most contentious. There is much talk of 'traditional values', without any agreement on how far back they should go. Language reflects society, illumines new understandings, and problems near the end of the 20th century cannot be frozen in a 19th century idiom. We have never thought so much before about the language we all use. (Howard, 1993, p. vii)

> It so happens that this is a good time to explore error in English usage. There is a lot of it about. We hear complaints about falling standards of literacy in our country. We hear claims that our educational system is not doing its job in this respect. We may well wonder how justifiable the complaints are. No doubt there are always individuals for whom criticising the current state of our language is a favourite pastime, like criticising the state of our railways. There are always those who relish writing letters to the press in protest against some contemporary fad in English usage. Recently, however, doubts about the level of literacy in our country have assumed a new urgency. The concern has ceased to be a minority interest. (Blamires, 1994, p. vii)

Crystal (1984, p. 10) and Quirk (1988, p. iv) make a connection between the lack of appropriate education and linguistic insecurity among speakers. The

shift in teaching approaches with respect to English grammar occurring in the 1960s seems to point towards the possible influence English teaching can have on whether a speaker feels linguistically insecure or not. As discussed above, a higher degree of certainty about usage judgments was identified with speakers who claimed to base their decisions on a rule (see Table 10.1). This finding could suggest that linguistic insecurity would have increased through the absence of explicit grammar teaching, yet a thorough investigation of this subject is needed to confirm this hypothesis. Howard (1993, p. vii) and Blamires (1994, p. vii) emphasise how English and the teaching of English have become a central issue in British society. Their comments are significant as they mention the public discourse evolving around the state of the English language.

Figure 10.1 also shows an increase in prescriptive as well as descriptive usage attitudes expressed by usage guide authors at the expense of neutral usage advice. This tendency seems to harden the front between prescriptivists and descriptivists in the usage debate and could be indicative of the public's need for straightforward usage advice. Tieken-Boon van Ostade's (forthc./a) argument for the Age of Prescriptivism being today rather than the eighteenth century, as is often claimed, confirms the findings of my analysis, not only with respect to the numerous usage guides being published in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, but also in the fact that these publications take a firmer stance on language issues, be it a prescriptive or descriptive stance.

10.3. Usage Tendencies: a Comparison with the Mittins Study

As stated in the Introduction (Chapter 1), a study conducted in the late 1960s forms the starting point for my investigation of usage attitudes in England. Although a comparison between these two snapshots of usage attitudes needs to be conducted with care for reasons explained in Chapter 7, it does allow an insight into how tendencies towards usage problems have developed over the

last four decades. Eight of the eleven usage problems investigated in the questionnaire had also been dealt with by Mittins et al. I used the same or slightly modified versions of the stimulus sentences which were also used in the Mittins study (cf. 5.1). What needs to be borne in mind in this comparison is the different approach applied, as well as the different survey population I drew on for my own study. While the Mittins study largely focussed on identifying current usage attitudes of educationalists and students, my study's aim was to include the general public in the usage debate by assessing their usage attitudes. As for the different elicitation approaches adopted, Mittins et al. (1970) applied a more direct elicitation technique in that the researchers decided to highlight the usage feature investigated. As a consequence, their respondents could have been biased towards assuming an issue with the underlined part even if they would have otherwise not noticed it. The average acceptability ratings have been mentioned in the discussion of the usage problems in the previous chapter, yet a direct and detailed comparison is necessary here. In Table 10.2, an overview of the changes in the average acceptability ratings for the usage problems investigated is presented, grouped according to the change in acceptability. The usage issue of Latinate plurals is excluded from this comparison as I included the variant *data are* in my study, while Mittins et al. included the singular alternative. The reason for this decision has already been discussed in Section 6.3.

Table 10.2 below illustrates an interesting pattern in the changes affecting the average acceptability ratings according to which an increase in acceptability can be identified for each of the seven comparable usage problems. This is in line with Mair's (2006, p. 187) notion of colloquialization which English underwent in the course of the last centuries. Whether making the investigated usage features less explicit, that is, by not highlighting the investigated phrases, has influenced the judgment is difficult to determine, yet

it could be assumed that highlighting the usage features would have caused more respondents to make negative judgments, given the social desirability bias discussed above (see § 3.4.1). Nonetheless, it has to be noted that the differences between some of the usage features are rather marked and therefore could be indicative of their generally wider acceptance in spite of the elicitation method applied.

Table 10.2 Comparison of my own survey with Mittins et al.'s (1970) *Attitudes to English Usage*

***Proper English Usage* survey**	**average acceptability (%)**	**change (%)**	***Attitudes towards English Usage* (1970)**	**average acceptability (%)**
split infinitive	63.5	+ 23.5	split infinitive	40
dangling participle	25.2	+ 8.2	dangling participle	17
less than	40.2	+ 5.2	*less than*	35
between you and I	27.1	+ 5.1	*between you and I**	22
go slow	43.9	+ 3.9	*go slow**	40
differently than	32.6	+ 2.6	*differently than*	30
literally	37.1	+ 2.1	*literally*	35
data are	48.5		*data is*	69

* restricted in context choice

While the split infinitive shows an increase of 23.5 per cent, the use of *literally* as an intensifier only shows an increase of 2.1 per cent. Having been subject to a growth in the level of awareness among the general public, *literally* as an intensifier has developed into a social stereotype, which is evaluated negatively as the analysis of the questionnaire showed (see § 6.2.11). On the

other hand, the split infinitive does not seem to possess this quality anymore, so it could be considered an indicator only, as it was the group of older respondents who showed an awareness of its disputed usage. With an increase of 8.2 per cent in acceptability, the dangling participle ranks second in Table 10.2 above, though coming at a considerable distance from the split infinitive, followed by *less than* and the *I* for *me* issue in *between you and I*, which show an increase in acceptability of 5.2 and 5.1 per cent respectively. That some of the changes in acceptability over the years are small could be due to the differences in the directness of the elicitation approaches between my own and the Mittins study. This could be the case for *literally*, *different from/than/to* and the flat adverb *go slow*, which all show relatively small percentages in their increase of acceptability.

Although a comparison between usage attitude studies is tricky, doing so provides an intriguing insight into how attitudes towards usage problems could have changed in the course of four decades. The comparison, moreover, not only highlighted considerable differences in acceptability ratings, but also in the topicality of particular usage problems. Whether a usage problem is likely to be recognised by the general public is linked to its topicality and any public discussions evolving around it. As mentioned above, *literally* as an intensifier failed to increase in acceptance over the years, but instead has become a usage problem which many speakers find irritating and associate with younger speakers (see § 7.2.11). On the other hand, public discussions on the split infinitive are few and far between (Lukač, in progress). As discussed in the Introduction (see §1.3), usage problems have been characterised by their actual and widespread use, as well as by their ability to be discussed without giving offence (Ilson, 1985, p. 167). Hence, it could be argued that the difference in increased acceptability ratings between the split infinitive and other usage problems presented in Table 10.2 above stems from the fact

that split infinitives are not as frequently discussed in public as are other usage features which have a greater social salience. Splitting infinitives is no longer considered a cardinal sin by the majority of the general public, a view which is gradually reflected in the advice of usage guide authors (see § 7.2.10). The salience of usage features, therefore, plays a crucial role in determining whether a feature is considered problematical or not by the general public.

10.4. The Role of Education in the Usage Debate

As was discussed in detail in Chapter 2 (§ 2.3.1), the English education system fulfils a gatekeeping function which needs to be explored further as the findings of my elicitation tests indicate education to be a major factor and a recurring theme in the usage debate. Although schools are seen as purveyors of a standardised form of English, different teaching approaches have caused changes in the way English is taught in schools. These changes have also influenced the perceptions and attitudes of the general public with regard to what they think about language use, linguistic correctness and the suitability of the current teaching approach. Hudson (2010, p. 35) explains how an "extreme reaction against arid grammar-teaching in the 1960s and 1970s produced a language-vacuum", which he argues was ultimately filled by the growing scientific field of linguistics. This reaction is said to come from both "top-down official legislation", i.e. pressure from the government with respect to establishing educational policies, and "bottom-up grassroots enthusiasm among teachers" (Hudson, 2010, p. 35). Three key stages in English grammar teaching in England have been established by Hudson and Walmsley (2005, p. 593), who demonstrated how these changes have caused the so-called "death of grammar teaching", and furthermore resulted in the introduction of an English component into the National Curriculum in 1989. What Hudson (2010, p. 35) described as an "extreme reaction against arid grammar-teaching" resulted in

the abandonment of traditional grammar teaching. As a consequence of these developments the "first grammarless generation" was said to leave the British education system in the 1960s (Keith, 1990, p. 83). Following a period of confusion about what to teach and how to teach grammar in particular, the English component of the National Curriculum was finally implemented in primary and secondary schools in 1989.

The National Curriculum is an important step in the development of the usage debate due to the circumstances surrounding its creation and implementation. The involvement of the conservative government in its creation by commissioning a number of reports can be seen as a form of top-down pressure on the committees composing these reports and on finding a solution for the teaching of English grammar which suited the government's agenda. While reports such as the ones by Kingman (1988) and Cox (1989) were criticised by the government, the National Curriculum for English was characterised by the absence of prescriptivism (see Chapter 2). Hudson (2010, p. 41) puts it as follows:

> One of the main changes in our schools which is at least partly due to the influence of linguistics is a remarkable reduction in prescriptivism both among teachers and among those who draft official documents. Indeed, prescriptivism came to such a complete end that many English teachers were reluctant even to teach standard English.

That the government did not accept the findings of the Kingman and Cox reports caused a heated public debate and resulted in a moral panic concerning the decay of English and consequently the decay of British society which has subliminally subsisted in England to this day (cf. Cameron, 1995, p. 86).

My study has also shown how recent developments and changes affecting the testing and assessment of English in schools have, once again, caused a public debate and a resurfacing of the moral panic concerning the decay of

the English language (see § 2.3.1). Interestingly, a connection has been established between testing and language policies by Marshall (2016, p. 8) who argues that the Conservative Party's failed attempts to re-introduce traditional grammar teaching have now been successful in that a "testing regime" was introduced with the new SPaG test, which shifts the focus onto more traditional teaching methods. This finding is further enforced by the conservatives' plan to establish more academies, a school type which is not bound to the National Curriculum (Types of School, 2016), and to lift the ban on creating new grammar schools (cf. Riley-Smith, 6 August 2016). By freeing schools from the obligation to teach according to the National Curriculum and by introducing tests such as the SPaG test, schools will very likely start to "teach to the test", an approach in which the test defines what is taught in school. That social mobility is fostered by the opening of new grammar schools is doubtful, since Cribb et al. (2013) showed that "less than three per cent of all pupils going to grammar schools are entitled to free school meals, against an average of 18% in other schools in the areas where they are located" (2013, p. 3). This indicates the social mobility restrictions with which working-class children and children from disadvantaged homes are confronted, as these children are less likely to attend grammar schools.

The changes in teaching approaches as well as the introduction of the National Curriculum have affected the perceptions and attitudes of the general public towards language use considerably, since speakers have been exposed to the moral panic propelled by the media. The findings of my elicitation tests, in both the questionnaire and the interview sessions, bore evidence of this moral panic. This became especially evident in the respondents' answers to the open question on the state of English (cf. § 7.2.3). Numerous respondents commented on a perceived decay of the English language which they argued

to be triggered by a lack of appropriate teaching. That the open-guise test contained recordings made by two speakers one of whom had an accent which was perceived as more standard than the accent of the other speaker further highlights the importance of education. Yet, the open-guise test showed that speakers using the prescribed variants were considered more hard working, literate and orderly as well as wealthier than when using the marked and disputed counterparts (see § 9.2.1).

Given the developments in English grammar teaching in schools in England, it is significant that the number of usage guide publications has increased from the 1980s onwards. As discussed above, the lack of explicit grammar teaching is commented on in prefaces and introductions of usage guides published in the 1980s and 1990s. It is possible that such "grammarless" generations, as described by Keith (1990, p. 83), turned to usage guides for guidance on usage issues about which speakers felt insecure.

10.5. Testing Usage Attitudes

One of the research questions on which this study is based deals with identifying an effective and thorough method for the elicitation and assessment of usage attitudes. Having provided the necessary background information on what attitudes are and on what is in fact elicited in the course of perception tests, I proposed a mixed-methods approach to study the general public's attitudes towards usage problems. Combining both direct and indirect elicitation techniques, I aimed at providing a fuller picture and better understanding of usage attitudes.

As the findings of the three different elicitation tests I devised to this end have shown, usage attitudes can both be expressed in a conscious and subconscious manner. While a scientific focus has traditionally been put on subconsciously offered attitudes (cf. Kristiansen, 2015, p. 87), consciously

offered or explicit attitudes are equally important in the usage debate since subconsciously offered attitudes inform us about social conventions and norms idealised in society. This is due to the so-called desirability bias according to which respondents are said to answer questions in a way which they consider to be socially desirable or acceptable. What kind of attitude will be elicited greatly depends on the elicitation technique used.

While the questionnaire was based on a form of the Direct Method Approach to studying language attitudes, even though its directness was diminished by not underlining the usage features investigated, the open-guise and usage judgment tests I set up are part of the Indirect Method Approach. Both approaches have been described in detail in Chapter 3 (see § 3.4). The combination of these two approaches, as well as studying qualitative and quantitative data, have allowed a detailed study of contemporary usage attitudes in England, producing both conscious and subconscious attitudes, even in the direct elicitation test, the questionnaire. The indirect elicitation tests add important information to the discussion of usage attitudes in England, not only in that they have brought to light the validity of notions of correctness and standardness, but also in that these tests have provided an insight into the social salience of usage attitudes. Respondents have shown different degrees of awareness towards stigmatised usage features. Issues such as the use of *literally* as an intensifier or the nonstandard dialectal use of double negatives are more salient than old chestnuts such as the split infinitive.

As was discussed in Chapter 4, the pitfalls and disadvantages of elicitation techniques applied in previous usage attitude studies have influenced the compilation of the mixed-method applied in this study. That this study is subject to limitations, however, needs to be stressed as well. Since a comparison of usage attitudes between my own study and the Mittins study was a desired outcome of this study, I used Mittins et al.'s stimulus sentences, some

of which I decided to update because of their somewhat outdated character. For all that, basing the selection of stimuli for the questionnaire on previous usage attitude studies resulted in a few complications in that some stimulus sentences proved to contain more than one issue which could have caused the elicitation of usage attitudes towards another, unintended feature. This was the case with stimuli sentences such as the one used to examine attitudes towards the flat adverb and the use of *like*. The former contained a semi-colon which some respondents found unacceptable, while the latter contained a cardinal number rather than a spelt-out number, which some respondents commented on as well. Despite piloting the questionnaire, these issues did not seem to provoke any comments in the initial testing phase and the sentences were left unchanged in the final version of the test. As mentioned in Chapter 7, my sample of questionnaire respondents was rather homogeneous with regard to their level of education, which was most likely due to the sampling techniques applied. Proportionally stratifying the sample according to the 2011 Census of England (§ 7.2), I was able to achieve what I consider to be a representative sample of the English population with regard to the social variables age and gender. However, the sample is not fully balanced due to the questionnaire respondents' high conformity in educational background, which makes the sample not completely representative of the survey population. For the same reason, I was unable to conduct a thorough analysis of usage attitudes in correlation with social class, a key social variable in the English context. A study focussing on social class and education would provide further insights into the workings of usage attitudes.

10.6. Concluding Remarks

The discussion of my results brought to light crucial themes in the usage attitude data I collected by means of a mixed-methods approach and connected

my findings to the theoretical concepts introduced in previous chapters (cf. Chapter 2). I was able to identify a pattern of increased average acceptability ratings (cf. Table 10.2) in the comparison between the results of my questionnaire and the Mittins study (1970). Yet, given the studies' different aims and populations, these numbers should be considered as a mere indication of changes in usage tendencies. In addition to highlighting these changes in acceptability, a connection between the growing market of usage guides and changes affecting the teaching of English in schools could be established. It seems as if linguistically insecure speakers, such as Keith's (1990, p. 83) "first grammarless generation", are seeking guidance in language advice literature. My analysis of the usage guides included in HUGE showed that the genre of usage guides has experienced a boom since the 1980s (cf. Figure 10.1).

The application of a mixed-methods approach to the study of usage attitudes has brought to light current usage attitudes of the general public in England towards the usage problems investigated in this study. The inclusion of the general public's attitudes in the usage debate was a vital step to enabling a better understanding of social conventions, the compliance or non-compliance with existing norms, and the social consequences of language use. How speakers distance themselves from usage features they consider unacceptable brings forth both an in-group and an out-group mentality and highlights how speakers' perceptions of stigmatised and unacceptable language use are tied to their perceptions of a speaker's identity. That speakers who use such stigmatised features are rated less favourably than speakers using features which are considered to be part of the standard variety can be confirmed by the findings of the open-guise test (§ 9.2.1). Nonetheless, the social salience of usage problems and the awareness of speakers of such stigmatised features

needs to be taken into account when investigating and discussing attitudes towards usage problems.

11. Conclusion

Spanning more than 300 years, the debate evolving around usage in England has produced the specific literary genre of usage guides. These usage guides have been predominantly compiled by prescriptivists as an attempt to correct English usage which they felt had deteriorated in the course of time. Prescriptivists, who have been the driving force behind the development of the usage debate, do not shy away from expressing their opinions publicly and in a straightforward manner. On the other hand, descriptivists, usually comprising linguists, have often avoided an active participation in the discussion on proper English usage. Linguists in particular tend to follow the mantra of "linguistics is descriptive, not prescriptive" (Cameron, 1995, p. 5). The third key player in the usage debate is the often-forgotten general public, which plays an important part in the debate as they form the speech community using the variety prescriptivists would like to see purged and ascertained, while linguists study and describe language change and variation in this same speech community. It is intriguing to see scholars focussing on the attitudes of prescriptivists towards what are considered usage problems, while the attitudes of the general public seem to be widely neglected.

The aim of this study was to incorporate the general public fully into the usage debate by identifying and assessing their attitudes to a selection of fourteen usage problems. The inclusion of the general public's attitude in the usage debate was achieved by a systematic analysis of their attitudes towards what are often considered nonstandard language features. Applying a mixed-methods approach by combining both the Direct Method and Indirect Method approaches as well as by eliciting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data, I was able to identify consciously and subconsciously offered attitudes. These attitudes do not only provide an insight into how acceptable the usage

features investigated are in England today, but also highlight the social salience of these features.

Being a tricky subject to study, attitudes, and in particular usage attitudes, have been defined by various scholars from both social psychology and sociolinguistics. In spite of numerous definitions, one of the most frequently cited definition of what attitudes are is Allport, which dates back to the 1950s (Allport, 1954, p. 45). Defining attitudes as "a mental and neural state of readiness" which he argues to be "organized through experience", Allport emphasises how an attitude affects "the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related". The reason for the popularity of this definition of attitudes is Allport's incorporation of awareness and experience as vital factors in the composition of attitudes. In my study, I have also made use of Preston's (2010, p. 100) language regard concept, as it is a useful concept to illustrate laypeople's judgments about language. That such judgments are often formed as a result of previous experience and stereotypical perceptions of a speaker makes language regard an interesting addition to the study of usage attitudes. All these different definitions and concepts were used in my attempt to define usage attitudes as evaluations of usage problems which are either acceptable or unacceptable to use in a specific context which has been agreed upon within a speech community, or as evaluations of speakers who make use of such usage problems. As discussed throughout this study, a key feature of usage attitudes is the speaker's awareness of the stigmatised usage problems, which can either be acquired through being exposed to discourse revolving around disputed language features and through being made aware of their stigmatisation during a speaker's education, in their social environment or through the media.

Given the historical characteristics of the English usage debate and some of the usage problems studied, a historical dimension was added to this

study by describing how the debate has evolved. This discussion involved the concept of Standard English and the notion of correctness, which are two key issues in the usage debate. By drawing on Milroy and Milroy's (2012, pp. 22–23) standardisation process model, according to which prescription forms the last stage in the language standardisation process, I aimed at highlighting the fundamental differences between prescriptive and descriptive tendencies in the discussion of Standard English. The notion of basing descriptions of language use on the so-called *norma loquendi* which describes customary usage (cf. Lynch, 2009, p. 92; Kamm, 2015, p. 80) was included in the discussion and contrasted with the notion of basing language descriptions on idealised norms as these notions lie at the heart of the usage debate.

A focus was put on two institutions which serve as gatekeepers and alleged purveyors of the standard variety: the media and education. The use of the standard variety in these two institutional settings has also been investigated from a historical perspective, yet their present-day uses were foregrounded due to the character of this study. In the case of the media's use of the standard variety, it was important to emphasise the fact that the general public often assigns the role of a language guardian to media institutions such as the BBC (cf. Luscombe, 2009, Ebner, 2015). The media's output is, however, often subject to close scrutiny, and complaints are made by their audience members about alleged misuses of language. This has been captured in Milroy and Milroy's (2012, pp. 24–46) so-called complaint tradition (cf. Lukač, in progress.). Being aware of their complex role, the BBC acknowledges the importance of their audience and explains in their 2003 *BBC News Styleguide* the delicate task of treading "a fine line between conservatism and radicalism, to write in such a way that we do not alienate any section of our audience" (Allen, 2003, p. 8). This reflects Bell's (1995, p. 23) argument that media institutions tend to reflect the language use of the public, as it serves as

a mirror of what is going on in society. As for education, its gatekeeping function plays a vital role in the usage debate as well, and is connected to a moral panic which has engulfed English society for more than three decades. Changes in the teaching of English grammar in schools in England taking place during the mid-twentieth century have caused what has been described by Hudson (2010, p. 35) as a "language-vacuum", which resulted in the abandonment of traditional grammar teaching that has often been described as rigid. These changes in teaching and the creation and implementation of the National Curriculum for English in 1989 have proved to be linked to the usage debate resulting in the increase of usage guides published from 1980s onwards. Not only have more usage guides been published since the 1980s, but usage guide authors have also commented on the effects and consequences of the changes in the education system. Thus, it seems as if linguistically insecure speakers, who are very likely the product of a "grammarless" education (Keith, 1990, p. 83), will turn to usage guides to find guidance on language issues causing confusion. Furthermore, the changes in the approach taken towards grammar teaching have also influenced the general public's perceptions of the current state of the English language, as its allegedly decaying state has often been connected to a lack of appropriate education.

An overview of previous usage attitude studies brought to light the lack of scientific studies of the general public's usage attitudes in Great Britain. Besides Mittins et al.'s (1970) study, one further study investigated usage attitudes in Scotland, albeit towards Scots. Although the reasons for the lack of British English usage attitude studies are somewhat obscure, different standard language ideologies in the United States, where such studies are found more frequently, and Great Britain could serve as an explanation for this lack. Lesley Milroy (2001, p. 70) discusses these ideological differences and argues that while ethnicity seems to be connected to standard language ideology in

the United States, social class characterises standard language ideology in Great Britain. Attention has been paid to accents and dialects with regard to this standard language ideology (cf. Giles & Coupland, 1991, Mugglestone, 2007), whereas the domain of language usage has been widely neglected. In contrast, the subject seems to have found more fruitful ground in the United States as a higher number of studies investigating usage attitudes towards American English can be identified there (cf. Leonard, 1932; Bryant, 1962; Hairston, 1981; Albanyan & Preston, 1998; Gilsdorf & Leonard, 2001; Queen & Boland, 2015; Kostadinova, in progress). Nonetheless, Mittins et al.'s (1970) *Attitudes to English Usage* served as a starting point for my own investigation of usage attitudes in England and offered an opportunity for a comparison of possible changes in the acceptability of usage problems. By discussing in detail five previous usage attitude studies and compiling an overview of the characteristics of these studies I was able to demonstrate a gradual move towards a sociolinguistic analysis of usage attitudes as well as identify the different approaches applied to the study of usage attitudes (see Chapter 4). I was furthermore able to detect methodological pitfalls in the study of usage attitudes. What kind of usage attitudes are being obtained, i.e. consciously or subconsciously offered attitudes, depends on the elicitation method applied. The directness of the Direct Method Approach leads to eliciting possibly biased attitudes as the social desirability bias comes into play, while subconsciously offered attitudes can be elicited by making use of the Indirect Method Approach. For this reason, I decided to apply a mixed-methods approach and to combine a Direct Method Approach with an Indirect Method Approach, and this has led to satisfying results.

Applying a mixed-methods approach to the study of usage attitudes involved developing an online questionnaire, which included eleven usage problems and was based on the Direct Method Approach, and conducting

interview sessions consisting of an open-guise test and a usage judgment test, both of which followed the principles of the Indirect Method Approach. The questionnaire was completed by 230 respondents from England only. In order to make the sample more representative of the English population, I proportionally stratified the sample according to gender and age, which resulted in the reduction of the sample to 112 questionnaire respondents (see § 7.2). Since this study is a sociolinguistic investigation of usage attitudes in England, social variables important for the usage debate were included in order to determine whether usage attitudes vary according to age, gender, level education, or nativeness. The reason for including these four social variables lies in their analysis in previous usage attitude studies. Age was shown by Mittins and his colleague to play an important role in the stratification of usage attitudes with older respondents exhibiting a higher tendency for linguistic intolerance, while gender was included in Sandred's (1983) and Albanyan and Preston's (1998) investigations. Women have been found to be more critical with regard to language use favouring standard variants and prestigious varieties. Sandred's (1983, pp. 74–77) study of attitudes towards Scots was the only study which included a social class element illustrating how lower classes show higher acceptability rates of nonstandard language features. Nativeness has been included in a study conducted by Lukač and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (forthc.), but was not found to show any significant correlations.

The results of the online questionnaire showed a detailed picture of current usage attitudes held by my sample of the general public in England. Each usage problem was discussed in terms of its stigmatised status and historical development. In order to provide an insight into the actual use of the investigated usage feature, a corpus search was done making use of corpora such as the BNC and the Hansard corpus and where applicable COCA and COHA. The corpora's subsections in which a usage feature occurred most

frequently were discussed together with each feature's standardised frequency rates. It needs to be pointed out, however, that the corpus analysis was used as an exploratory tool highlighting each feature's usage tendencies. Since the focus of this study is on the sociolinguistic analysis of usage attitudes, corpus evidence was merely used to indicate differences in usage between British and American English and contextual usage frequencies (cf. Kostadinova, in progress). As some of the investigated usage features were part of corpus-based studies, I reported their findings in order to provide a more detailed insight into the usage debate and actual language use. Whether any of the social variables showed a statistically significant correlation with the acceptability judgment made by the respondents was determined by using Whitney-Mann *U*-tests, bivariate correlation tests and binary logistic regression analyses. Thus, I was able to identify not only the main effects of the social variables, but also to see whether there was a covariation of variables. The sociolinguistic analysis showed that age, gender and nativeness showed significant correlations with acceptability judgments. Mittins et al.'s finding of increased linguistic intolerance in older informants was confirmed in my study for four of the usage problems investigated, i.e. *literally* as an intensifier, the *I* for *me* issue, *different from/than/to* and the use of *like*. Gender showed one significant correlation with acceptability judgments for the use of the flat adverb *go slow*, which women are three times more likely to reject than men. With regard to nativeness, the use of *data are* showed higher tendencies of rejection with non-native speakers than with native speakers.

Besides providing an analysis of the sociolinguistic stratification of usage attitudes, I also included a qualitative analysis of comments made by the questionnaire respondents, which provided further elaborations and explanations on the respondents' decisions. I was able to highlight the distancing applied by speakers, which serves to identify an in-group and out-group

among speakers with respect to usage. The analysis of the questionnaire also contained an analysis of the respondents' certainty level and judgment basis, which showed that unacceptable judgments were made with a higher degree of certainty and were frequently based on the knowledge of a rule as opposed to a gut feeling. The aim of this additional analysis was to highlight the differences between customary usage and norms. Drawing on the HUGE database, I was able to present the stigmatisation history of nine of the eleven usage problems which were included in my study.

As part of the online questionnaire, respondents were asked to state their agreement with twelve language statements representing commonly held beliefs and myths about the English language. Their agreement was then correlated with the respondents' usage judgment index, which was compiled from the respondents' judgments made on the usage problems investigated. It turned out that seven of the twelve statements presented to questionnaire respondents showed a correlation between agreement and usage judgment. For five of these statements, which represented a negative emotion towards the state of English, a negative correlation could be identified with the respondents' usage judgment index, which means that respondents who disagreed with these statements also showed a lower index score indicating their lenient attitudes towards the usage problems investigated. The two statements expressing a positive attitude towards the state of English showed a weak positive correlation, which means that respondents agreeing with these statements also tended to exhibit lenient attitudes towards the usage problems investigated in the questionnaire. Since the statements represent authentic attitudes held by members of the general public, for this test I drew on the Societal Treatment Approach. The use of this test made it possible to identify not only the respondents' attitudes towards such commonly held myths, but also to test the consistency of their usage attitudes. The last part of the online

questionnaire consisted of an open question, which was, however, not compulsory and was completed by only 83 of the 112 respondents (see § 8.3). A qualitative analysis of the respondents' answers brought to light the importance of education in the usage debate. Frequently, answers contained comments on a perceived lack of education, which respondents found to be responsible for the decaying state of English.

The interview sessions were conducted in Cambridge, London and Oxford with 63 participants selected on the basis of a quota sampling method (see § 9.2.1). The two main elicitation tests conducted with the participants during the interview sessions aimed at eliciting subconscious usage attitudes. The results of these tests demonstrated how speakers evaluate those who use nonstandard language features. As the open-guise test showed, the speakers using the unmarked and accepted variants were rated more favourably on the status-orientation and agreeableness factors than when using the marked variants. Breaking the factors up into the variables of which they are composed, such as "arrogant – humble" and "literate – illiterate", allowed a more detailed analysis of the informants' attitudes. According to this analysis, informants rated both the male and the female speakers significantly as being more hard working, literate and orderly as well as wealthier when using the unmarked variants than when using the marked ones. The sociolinguistic analysis of informants' ratings showed that older informants tended to rate the male and female speakers more favourably on the agreeableness factor when using unmarked variants. Comparing the two age groups in the inter-speaker analysis, no significant differences could be identified. While the questionnaire's findings showed an increased linguistic intolerance for disputed usage features with older respondents, the open-guise test proves that younger informants also make similarly strict judgments, yet their judgments do not

differ from those of older informants. As for gender, women's higher awareness of the social significance of language use was confirmed in the open-guise test, which revealed that female informants showed more statistically significant rating differences than male informants.

The second implicit elicitation test consisted of a usage judgment test. This test consisted of a letter of application in which nine usage problems were incorporated. The informants were asked to highlight and correct anything they found unacceptable for this formal text type. The results of this test provide an insight into the social salience of the usage problems investigated. The two flat adverbs incorporated were the most frequently noticed and corrected usage problems, while two dangling participles were among the least noticed usage problems. In contrast to the online questionnaire and the open-guise test, the usage judgment test did not produce any evidence of overt prestige judgments among the female informants. Nevertheless, age was identified in the sociolinguistic analysis as a contributing factor in that older informants exhibited a higher tendency to correcting and noticing flat adverbs, the split infinitive, *very unique* and *impact* as a verb. As part of the debriefing of the informants, usage rules were presented to them with which they were asked to agree or disagree. This further provided an insight into the social norms and conventions of language use which seem to have been agreed upon within the speech community, as the social desirability bias could be identified through this test.

Having summarized the findings of the sociolinguistic investigation of usage attitudes presented in this study, I can now conclude that the general public's usage attitudes in England vary according to several social variables, i.e. age, gender and nativeness. Yet, the social salience of individual usage problems needs to be taken into account here as significant correlations could not be identified for all usage problems. This means that usage attitudes on

some of the investigated usage problems, such as *less than* for *fewer than*, *burglarize* and the double negative, are more unanimous than others. The age-effect has clearly proved to be a significant social factor in the variability of usage attitudes. That older informants tend to reject specific usages indicates possible differences in their upbringing or in the education they received. It can be assumed that objections to specific usage problems, such as the split infinitive, will sooner or later stop, as younger informants tend to exhibit more lenient attitudes towards these issues. My study has shown that gender and nativeness are further social variables which explain differences in usage judgments. Hence, women are more likely to reject the use of the flat adverb *go slow*, while non-native speakers seem to consider the use of *data are* unacceptable. Women's preference of standard variants confirms the phenomenon of overt prestige as a factor influencing women's language use (cf. Trudgill, 1974, p. 94). The inclusion of non-native speakers in my sample has proved to be significant as non-native speakers constitute an important part of the speech community in the sense that they are not only passively involved in the debate as part of the target audience of usage guides, but seem to assume a more active role in the usage debate (see Chapters 7 – 9). Just like native speakers, non-native speakers have been shown to express attitudes towards disputed usage features.

The application of a mixed-methods approach to the study of usage attitudes proved to be fruitful as both consciously and subconsciously attitudes have been obtained through the combination of direct and indirect elicitation tests. Thus, my study does not only provide a new methodological approach to investigate usage attitudes, but it also enabled a long overdue insight into usage attitudes in England. My aim in this study was to provide a better understanding of current usage attitudes in England by including the often-forgotten general public in the usage debate. Attempting to bridge the gap between the

three key players – prescriptivists, linguists and the general public – I included the perspective of each group in my investigation. This allowed me to identify usage issues which seem to provoke similar attitudes between all three key players, such as the nonstandard use of double negatives, as well as usage features which brought to light diverging usage attitudes between the three groups. Such diverging attitudes have for example been identified for the use of *literally* as an intensifier which seems be considered acceptable by the majority of speakers included in my sample, while the majority of usage guide authors attempts to uphold the traditional use of *literally*. Hence, it seems as if language use remains a dividing matter in England. The more than 300-year-old debate between prescriptivists and linguists seems far from being settled, as new usage features, such as the approximative adverb *like*, are likely to evolve into usage problems in the near future, while old chestnuts, such as the split infinitive and the dangling participle keep featuring in usage guides. Extending the study of usage attitudes to the general public has brought to light not only the general public's awareness of specific usage problems, but also the social stratification of attitudes towards usage problems. Including the general public's attitudes in the debate requires a reconsideration of the dynamics of the usage debate which has so far been dominated by prescriptive usage guide authors and descriptive linguists.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Introductory Text to Proper English Usage Survey

Welcome to the Proper English Usage survey!

I would like to invite you to be part of my research project on the use of the English language. You should only agree to take part if you want to, it is entirely up to you. Your contribution will be much appreciated.

Please read the following information carefully before you decide to take part; this will tell you why the survey is being done and what you will be asked to do if you take part. If you have any questions, please contact me via Email (**c.ebner@hum.leidenuniv.nl** or **c.ebner@qmul.ac.uk**).

* * * * *

The survey consists of two parts. Part A contains 11 example sentences which you will be asked to mark as either acceptable or unacceptable. Part B deals with statements about language use, for which I would like you to indicate whether you agree or disagree with them. At the end you are asked to give some basic information about yourself (e.g. age, gender...). The survey will roughly take 10 minutes depending on how much you will have to say.

Since I would like to get your opinion on the current state of the English language in Britain, please answer the questions according to what you consider acceptable in your own language use. **Would you say or write these sentences? If so, in which contexts? If not, why not?**

Note that **this is NOT a test**! There are **no 'correct' answers**. I am just interested in what you think about these sentences. Additionally, please go through the questions **as quickly as possible**, as your initial opinion is what I am hoping to get. Remember, this is about **your attitude and your opinion**!

* * * * *

If you decide to take part in this survey, then please go to the next page. You are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Your participation in this test will entirely be anonymous, and the data will not be given to any third party.

Appendix B

Open-Guise Rating Sheet

Evaluation Sheet

Recording _____
Participant No: _____

How does the speaker come across to a public audience in the excerpts of this conversation?

Clever	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**unintelligent**
Mean	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**friendly**
Honest	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**untrustworthy**
Hard-working	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**lazy**
Arrogant	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**humble**
Generous	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**selfish**
Wealthy	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**not wealthy**
Unattractive	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**pretty**
Literate	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**illiterate**
Fake	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**authentic**
Sloppy	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Orderly**
Determined	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Wavering**

Any additional comments?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix C

Usage Judgment Test Letter

Usage Judgment Test

Please read this application letter and highlight anything you consider not appropriate/acceptable.

Dear Mr Darcy,

I am writing to apply for the IT manager position advertised in *The Times*. As requested, I am enclosing my job application including all required certificates. Having worked as an IT administrator, the job seems to be the perfect match for my skills and experience.

My responsibilities included maintaining appliances and documentation, planning new acquisitions as well as helping and educating users. I worked close with IT management which allowed me to gain insights and experience in the field of IT management. Having worked in my previous company for four years, my aspiration after a new challenge has taken over and made me seek a job in IT management.

With my Master's degree in Computational Sciences I have obtained a solid understanding of programming and IT networks. Moreover, I am fully aware of the importance of keeping up-to-date with new technological developments. I know how to effectively set goals and achieve them. And furthermore, I have the ability to grow with a job and handle tasks responsible.

Working as an IT manager in your company is a very unique opportunity. And I believe that my previous work experience as well as my educational background will make me a suitable candidate for this position. I am confident that this job will impact my future career considerably.

Thank you for your consideration.

Faithfully,

Appendix D

Usage Rules

Usage rules

and/but
Many of us have been taught never to begin a sentence with AND or BUT. Generally speaking this is good advice. Both words are conjunctions and will therefore be busy joining words within the sentence …
(Burt, Angela. 2002. *The A to Z of Correct English*)

lie/lay/laid/lain
Lay is a transitive verb; it needs an object in order to complete its meaning. One must lay *something*; whether it be a table or – if one is a bird – an egg.
The past tense of this is *laid*:
I laid my cards on the table.
The past participle is also *laid:*
the hen had not laid any eggs when I looked this morning

Lie is intransitive, complete in itself. This is true whether one is lying to get oneself out of trouble or lying on one's bed. In the sense of telling an untruth, the past tense and past participle are both *lied*:
You lied to me!
I can't believe he would have lied about something like that.
In the sense of lying down, the past tense is *lay:*
I lay there for an hour but nobody came in.
The past participle is *lain:*
I would not have lain on the grass if I had realised that it was damp.
(Taggart, Caroline. 2010. Her Ladyship's Guide to the Queen's English)

slow, slowly *(advs.) Slow* is a Standard flat adverb: *Go slow. The traffic was slow-moving. My watch runs slow. Slowly* is acceptable in every situation where *slow* appears, plus a good many others where *slow* won't work, as in *He has only slowly won their approval.*
(Partridge, Eric. 1942. *Usage and Abusage*)

You must not split your infinitives
Splitting the infinitive means putting a word or phrase between 'to' and the verb word, as in:
The department wants to <u>more than</u> double its budget.
The passengers were asked to <u>carefully</u> get down from the train.
If you think a sentence will be more emphatic, clear or rhythmical, split your infinitive – there is no reason in logic or grammar for avoiding it. The examples above seem better split than not. Take care, though, lest the gap between 'to'

and the verb word becomes too great, as the reader could lose track of the meaning.
(Cutts, Martin. 1995. *The Plain English Guide*)

Hanging or unattached participles
The participle should normally have a proper 'subject of reference'. C. T. Onions said that 'a sentence like the following is incorrect because the word to which the participle refers grammatically is not that with which it is meant to be connected in sense':

Born in 1850, a part of his education was received at Eton.
(Correctly: Born in 1850, he received part of his education at Eton.)

(Partridge, Eric (1942). *Usage and Abusage*)

Literally
We have come to such a pass with this emphasizer that where the truth would require us to insert with a strong expression 'not literally, of course, but in a manner of speaking', we do not hesitate to insert the very word that we ought to be at pains to repudiate; cf. VERITABLE ; such false coin makes honest traffic in words impossible. *If the Home Rule Bill is passed, the 300,000 Unionists of the South & West of Ireland will be* literally *thrown to the wolves./The strong tete-de-pont fortifications were rushed by our troops, & a battalion crossed the bridge* literally *on the enemy's shoulders.* In both, *practically* or *virtually*, opposites of literally, would have stood.
(Fowler, H.W. 1926. *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*)

Impact
a noun, not a verb: say "affected" rather than the awful jargon phrase "impacted on". Only a tooth can be impacted
(*The Guardian and Observer's Style Guide*)

Unique
If something is *unique,* it is the only one of its kind. Consequently, there cannot be degrees of uniqueness: either something is unique, or it is not. Accordingly, locutions like *very unique* and *it most unique* are out of order. If you find it necessary to use a degree word like *very* or *most,* choose another adjective, such as *unusual* or *distinctive.* It is, however, proper to describe something as *unique in several respects.*
*(*Trask, R.L. 2001. *Mind the Gaffe: The Penguin Guide to Common Errors in English)*

Appendix E

Interview Question Topics

Interview Schedule

1) Demographics and Family Information
2) Work/Studies
3) School/First Language teaching in school
4) Language Insecurity and authority
5) Specific Usage problems

Module 1 – Demographics and Family Information

Where were you born?
For how long have you been living in ….?
Is your family originally from there as well?
Do you have any siblings?
What do your parents and family do for a living?

Module 2 – Work/Studies

What are you doing now specifically?
Do you study/work?
How do you like your studies?
Are you the first one in your family to go to university?
What are your plans for the future?/Do you like your studies/job?

Module 3 – School/First Language teaching in school

Where did you go to school?
Did you like going to school?
What was your favourite subject?
Did you learn any languages in school?
Can you remember how English was taught?
Have you ever received any explicit grammar rule teaching?

Module 4 – Language insecurity and authority

Do you think you got enough grammar teaching?
Do you think that English people know language rules? Do they follow them?
What do you think do native-speaker or non-native speakers know language rules better?
Have you ever been in a situation in which you felt insecure about your language use?
What do you do if you are not sure about your language use? E.g. if you write an essay/a job application?
Do you use books/check the internet/ask parents/friends?
Who do you think makes those language rules?
Do you think that those old rules are still valid today?
What do you think has caused the English language to change?

Module 5 – New media/standard language

Do you use any social media? E.g. Like twitter, Facebook?
Do you think you use language differently on those sites?
What about writing emails?
Do you think that people with official positions (e.g. politicians, journalists…) should use a specific type of English?
How would you define Standard English?
Who, do you think, speaks/uses it?
Do you think that language rules are necessary for a standard?

Appendix F

Description of Sentence-Initial *And* and *Very Unique*

Sentence-initial *And*

The conjunction *and* is classified as a coordinator that connects syntactically similar elements (Biber et al., 1999, p. 79). Yet, it is argued that *and* fulfils different roles depending on the register (Biber et al., 1999, p. 81). Providing a more detailed insight into the roles of this feature, Schiffrin (1986, p. 63) discusses how sentence-initial *and* can not only function as a grammatical connector, but also as discourse coordinator. She states that "just as *and* coordinates clauses into compound sentences, so too does *and* coordinate ideas into text" (1986, p. 63). The comparison of different registers, such as fiction, news and academic writing, in Biber et al.'s *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (1999, pp. 83–84) showed that the coordinator *and*, appearing at the beginning of a sentence as well as connecting two clauses, was most frequently found in the register conversation. Sentence-initial *and*, however, is less frequent in academic writing (Biber et al., 1999, p. 84). These findings are also confirmed in a corpus search of the BNC, the results of which are presented in Table A.1 below.

Table A.1 Frequencies of sentence-initial *and* in BNC

BNC	Spoken	Fiction	Mag-azine	News-paper	Non-acad.	Acad.	Misc
Freq.	18,305	19,040	4,194	7,160	4,573	2,837	6,396
per mil	1,837.18	1,196.78	577.53	684.09	277.23	185.04	306.98

Sentence-initial *and* occurs most frequently in the spoken subsection of the BNC with a normalised frequency of 1,837 tokens per million words, followed by the subsection fiction, with 1,196 tokens per million words. As found by

Biber et al. (1999, p. 84), the academic subsection contains the least instances of sentence-initial *and*, with a normalised frequency of 185 tokens only.

The reason for these frequency differences is said to lie in the proscription against using sentence-initial *and*. The ban on starting sentences with conjunctions such as *and* or *but* was described by Fowler (1926, p. 586) as a superstition and a rule of thumb. It is argued that this usage feature represents a stylistic issue rather than a grammatical one (cf. Peters, 2004, p. 38). The first rule against sentence-initial *and*, according to the information provided in the HUGE database, is found in Moon's *The Bad English of Lindley Murray and Other Writers* (1868), in which this practice was labelled "not scholarly". Of the 39 British usage guides, fifteen publications deal with the issue. Applying a slightly modified version of Yáñez-Bouza's (2015) tripartite categorisation to the usage entries on sentence-initial and in HUGE, I was able to categorise this feature's treatment in the usage guides, a summary of which is provided in Table A.2 below. Firstly, examples of each category are also presented to provide a more detailed insight into the treatment.

Criticised	Upon this passage I remark that it is not scholarly to begin a sentence with the conjunction "and"; nor is it in good taste to use one word in two different senses in two consecutive lines, as Mr. S. does when he speaks of "reading his article ..... upon the proper use of the article". (Moon, 1868, p. 95)
Neutral	In general, avoid beginning a sentence with *and*: its use is justified only when a very effective addition is desired or when an arresting accumulation is to be concluded. (Partridge, 1942, p. 34)
Advocated	Despite widespread belief to the contrary, there is no reason why a sentence should not begin with *and*. Provided it is used with moderation, it can be stylistically very effective. (Bailie & Kitchin, 1988, p. 30)

Table A.2 Treatment of sentence-initial *and* ("criticised", "neutral" and "advocated") in British publications

criticised (1)	Moon1868
neutral (5)	Partridge1942(1947), Burchfield1996(2000), *PocketFowler*1999, *OxfordA-Z*2007, Lamb2010
advocated (9)	Wood1962(1970), Bailie&Kitchin1979(1988), Greenbaum&Whitcut1988, Howard1993, Cutts1995, Ayto1995(2002), Burt2000(2002), Trask2001, Peters2004
Total: 15	

As can be seen from the table above, the majority of usage guides, namely nine out of fifteen, advocate the use of sentence-initial *and*. Interestingly, the first proscription against this particular usage feature also seems to have been its last. This is also illustrated in the diachronic development of the treatment in Figure A.1 below, which shows that sentence-initial *and* has gradually become more advocated by usage guide authors.

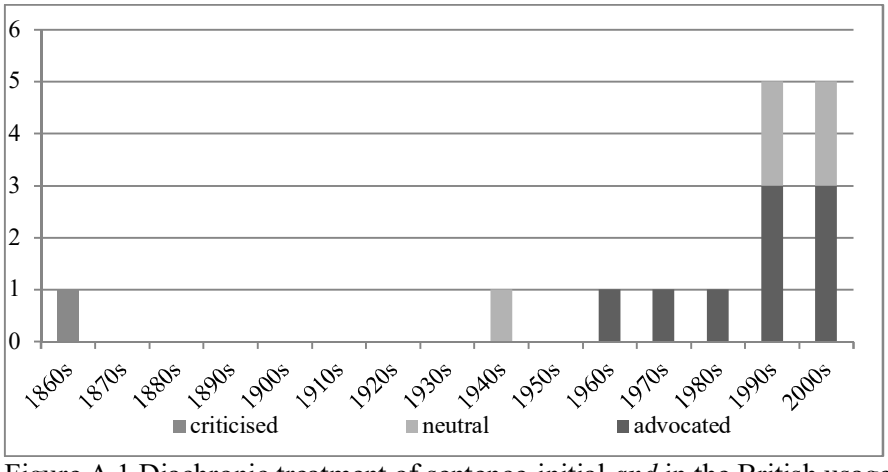

Figure A.1 Diachronic treatment of sentence-initial *and* in the British usage guides

The mythological status of sentence-initial *and* is often mentioned in the usage entries investigated. While Ayto (1995, p. 20) calls it "an old-fashioned

'rule'", Bailie and Kitchin (1988, p. 30) describe the existence of a "widespread belief" in the proscription. Yet, some usage guide authors, such as Trask (2001, p. 30) and Lamb (2010, p. 95.), provide cautionary advice to avoid overusing this particular feature. Lamb (2010, p. 95), in particular, emphasises how this feature is "a matter of style and choice", which could be the reason why sentence-initial *and* features in the usage debate in spite of a seemingly lenient treatment in usage guides.

Very unique

To complete my selection of usage problems to be investigated in this study, the use of *very unique* has been included in the usage judgment test. The issue with this feature is said to stem from the non-gradability of adjectives such as *perfect* and *unique* (Pullum & Huddleston, 2002, p. 531). Referring to these adjectives as so-called 'absolute' adjectives, Pullum and Huddleston (2002, p. 532) explain how, according to prescriptivists, these usage features are considered non-gradable and therefore cannot be used in "comparative constructions or degree modifiers such as *very*, *somewhat*, etc.". Hence, the use of *very unique* is considered nonstandard as uniqueness is argued not to be gradable. Referring to something as *very unique* is labelled illogical as something is said to be either unique or not unique. Yet, Pullum and Huddleston (2002, p. 532) discuss how the adjective has extended its original meaning to include the senses *exceptional* and *unusual*. According to this argument, constructions such as *very unique*, *rather unique* and *most unique* are said to be acceptable. Where the origin of this extension of meaning lies has, however, not been explained by Pullum and Huddleston. This development is also noted by the *OED*, which describes the use of gradable *unique* to mean "uncommon, unusual, [and] remarkable" (*OED*, s.v. *unique*).

Hence, it seems as if the conflict between the word's original meaning and its extended uses constitutes the problem with this particular usage feature.

To provide an insight into the actual use of *very unique* I conducted a corpus search of the BNC, which brought to light that *very unique* occurs only seven times in the corpus. Two instances of this usage feature can be found in the magazine subsection, while five of them fall into the miscellaneous category. With regard to the collocations of the word *unique*, I was able to identify the most frequent adverbs modifying the word by using the POS-tagger. The collocations *almost unique* and *quite unique* are the most frequent ones with 27 and 24 occurrences respectively. The low frequency rate of *very unique* could explain why this collocation does not appear in the list of collocations in the BNC.

The use of *very unique* was first proscribed in the HUGE database in *The Vulgarities of Speech Corrected* published by an anonymous author in 1826. Being discussed in 29 of the 39 British usage guides included in HUGE, *very unique* seems to have developed into a regular feature in the usage guide tradition. By categorising these usage entries on the basis of their treatment, i.e. "advocated", "neutral" or "criticised", an overview of the development of this usage problem could be obtained, which is presented in Table A.3 below. Examples of these categories are the following:

Criticised Unique means the only one. Something is either unique or it is not. It can't be 'almost unique', 'fairly unique', 'rather unique' or 'very unique'.
(Sayce, 2006, p. 93)

Neutral In its original meaning, **unique** means that there's only one of something: *This vase is unique - there are no others like it.* When it's used in this way, there's no point in using words like *very* or *most* with it. Either there's only one of something or there isn't. *Most unique* suggests that there are others, which goes against the meaning of **unique**. And *very unique* makes it seem as though you can have different degrees of being one.

Some people think that you shouldn't use *any* adverbs with **unique**. But that's not so. It's perfectly natural in English to say things like *absolutely unique* and *totally unique*, which simply emphasize the unique quality of what you're talking about. And there's nothing wrong with *almost unique* or *nearly unique*, which mean 'extremely rare, if not quite unique'. **Unique** has also come to mean 'remarkable, amazing'. In this sense, there's no harm in putting *very* or *most* in front of it (*I think he's the most unique man I've ever met*), but the usage isn't completely accepted in standard English, so it's best to avoid it in serious writing. (Ayto, 1995, p. 298)

Advocated There is a set of adjectives, including *unique*, *complete*, *equal*, *infinite*, and *perfect*, whose core meanings are absolute—in other words, they cannot be graded. Therefore, according to a traditional argument, they cannot be modified by adverbs such as *really*, *quite*, *almost*, or *very*. For example, since the core meaning of **unique** (from Latin 'one') is 'being only one of its kind', it is logically impossible, the argument goes, to modify it with an adverb: it either is 'unique' or it is not, and there are no in-between stages. In practice, however, these adjectives are so commonly modified by *quite*, *almost*, etc. that such uses go unnoticed by most people and must by now be considered standard English. (Butterfield, 2007, p. 162)

Table A.3 Treatment of graduable absolute adjectives (e.g. *very unique*) ("criticised", "neutral" and "advocated") in British publications

criticised (21)	Anon1826(1829), Moon1868, Fowler&Fowler1906(1922), Fowler1926, Treble&Vallins1936, Partridge1942(1947), Gowers1948, Vallins1951, Wood1962(1970), Gowers1965, Bailie&Kitchin1979(1988), Swan1980, Burchfield,Weiner&Hawkins1984, Blamires1994, Amis1997(1998), Burt2000(2002), Trask2001, Sayce2006, Lamb2010, Taggart2010, Heffer2010
neutral (6)	Weiner&Delahunty1983(1994), Greenbaum&Whitcut1988, Howard1993, Ayto1995(2002), Burchfield1996(2000), *PocketFowler*1999
advocated (2)	Peters2004, *OxfordA-Z*2007
Total: 29	

The table presented above shows how 21 of the 29 British usage guides criticise the gradability of absolute adjectives such as *very unique*. In contrast,

only two usage guides advocate the use of *very unique*, one of which was already quoted above. Butterfield's *Oxford A–Z of English Usage*, published in 2007, states how gradable absolute adjectives are commonly used and hence "must by new be considered standard English" (2007, p. 162). Some of the usage advice categorised as "neutral" distinguishes between the two uses of *unique*, as does Ayto (1995, p. 298) in the example quoted above. A diachronic overview of the treatment of gradable absolute adjectives brings to light that lenient attitudes towards usages such as *very unique* are a recent phenomenon, as can be seen in Figure A.2.

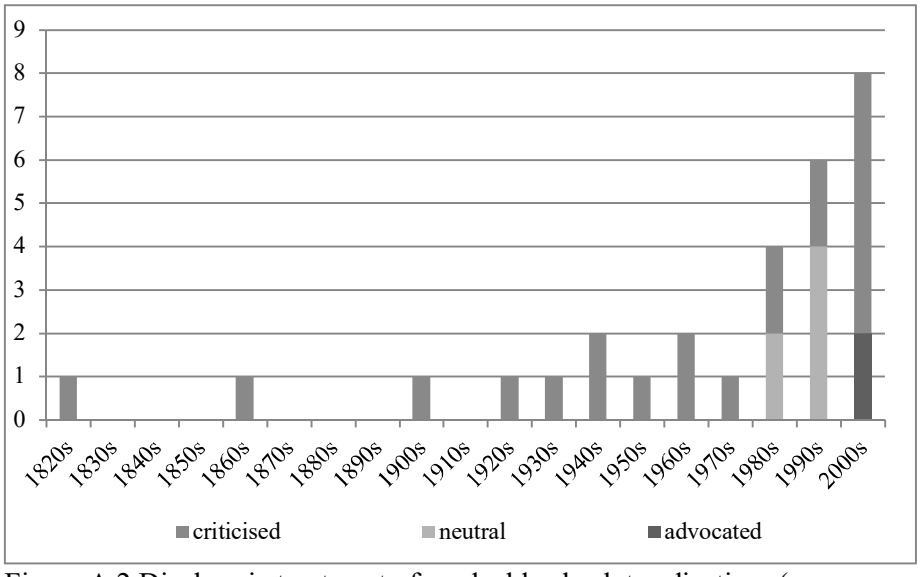

Figure A.2 Diachronic treatment of graduable absolute adjectives (e.g. *very unique*) in British publications

As mentioned above, the use of gradable absolute adjectives such as *very unique* was first criticised in the 1820s. Table A.3 shows an overwhelmingly negative treatment of this particular usage problem. Since the use of *very unique* has been criticised heavily in the advice literature, it does not come as a surprise to find so few occurrences of *very unique* in the BNC.

Mittins et al.'s study (1970, p. 51) investigated attitudes towards the use of *very unique* by including the stimulus sentence *The process is very unique* into their questionnaire. Obtaining an average acceptability rating of merely 11 per cent, *very unique* came in last of the 50 usage problems whose acceptability was not restricted in context choice (see § 4.2.3). The result obtained by Mittins and his colleagues led me to include *very unique* in my study. I incorporated the following stimulus sentence in the letter of application: *Working as an IT manager in your company is a very unique opportunity*. Investigating speakers' awareness towards this particular usage problem in context should provide a new perspective onto the issue.

Appendix G

Overview of Interview Session Informants' Ages

Full age	Age group	
	young group	old group
20	1	0
21	1	0
22	1	0
23	2	0
24	4	0
25	2	0
26	1	0
28	1	0
29	1	0
30	4	0
31	1	0
32	3	0
33	1	0
34	3	0
42	1	0
44	2	0
45	1	0
46	1	0
47	1	0
50	1	0
53	0	1
56	0	1
58	0	1
60	0	4
61	0	1
62	0	2
63	0	2
64	0	1
65	0	1
66	0	1
67	0	5
68	0	1
69	0	2
70	0	2
72	0	1
74	0	1
75	0	1
79	0	1
86	0	1
Total	**33**	**30**

Appendix H

Overview of Treatment of Usage Problems in HUGE

Decade	Year of publication	Usage guide	C	N	A	NM	Total
1770s	1770	Baker1770	3	1			**4**
	1779	Baker1779	2				**2**
1820s	1829	Anon1826(1829)	2				**2**
1860s	1864	Alford1864	1	1		1	**3**
	1868	Moon1868	2				**2**
1900s	1906	Fowler&Fowler1906(1922)	2	1		1	**4**
1920s	1926	Fowler1926	4	4		1	**9**
1930s	1936	Treble&Vallins1936	5	1			**6**
1940s	1942	Partridge1942(1947)	4	3			**7**
	1948	Gowers1948	1	1		1	**3**
1950s	1951	Vallins1951	3	2		1	**6**
	1953	Vallins1953(1960)	3	4		1	**8**
1960s	1962	Wood1962(1970)	4	3	1		**8**
	1965	Gowers1965	5	4			**9**
1970s	1979	Bailie&Kitchin1979(1988)	6	3			**9**
1980s	1980	Swan1980	1	5		1	**7**
	1981	Burchfield1981	6	1			**7**
	1981	*OxfordDictionary*1981(1984)			1	1	**2**
	1983	Weiner&Delahunty1983(1994)	4	5			**9**
	1984	Burchfield,Weiner&Hawkins1984	3	5			**8**
	1984	Crystal1984(2000)		3			**3**
	1986	Dear1986(1990)	3	4	1		**8**
	1988	Greenbaum&Whitcut1988	6	3			**9**
1990s	1992	Marriott&Farrell1992(1999)	5	1	1		**7**
	1993	Howard1993	3	4	1		**8**
	1994	Blamires1994	4			3	**7**
	1995	Ayto1995(2002)	5	2	2		**9**
	1995	Cutts1995			1		**1**
	1996	Burchfield1996(2000)	4	4	1		**9**
	1997	Amis1997(1998)	2	4			**6**
	1999	*PocketFowler*1999	3	4	2		**9**
2000s	2000	Burt2000(2002)	5		2	1	**8**
	2001	Trask2001	5	2	1	1	**9**
	2004	Peters2004		5	4		**9**
	2006	Sayce2006	3	1	1	1	**6**
	2007	*OxfordA-Z*2007	4	2	2	1	**9**
	2010	Taggart2010	7	1		1	**9**
	2010	Heffer2010	9				**9**
	2010	Lamb2010	4	3		1	**8**
Total			**133**	**87**	**21**	**17**	**258**

C= criticised, N = neutral, A = advocated, NM = not mentioned

Appendix I

Professions of Questionnaire Respondents

Account manager for a charity
Accountant (2)
Admin
Admin Manager
Administrative Manager in University
Administrator (2)
Am retired, but am involved in ongoing (unpaid) projects in my discipline (art, architecture, design history)
Analyst
Archaeologist
Artist
Civil Servant (3)
Consultant
Customer service
Customer services administrator
Editor (2)
education
Education adviser
Engineering
English teacher (4)
English Teacher (State Secondary - Boys)
Finance professional
Graphic Designer
Housewife
Independent chartered engineer
Law
Lecturer
Leisurely indolence
Literacy & ESOL teacher in FE
Literacy Consultant
Manager in a museum
Media Lecturer
media sales director
N/A
None. At home raising children
Old Nuisance
Petrophysicist in oil company
PhD student (4)
Political analyst
Political Caseworker
Postdoctoral Associate
Postgraduate Student
Project analyst
Proof-reader
Publishing
Researcher
Retired (13)
Retired accounts clerk
Retired dental surgeon
Retired educational publisher
Retired Primary and EFL teacher
Retired schoolteacher
Retired scientist
Retired Social Worker
Retired solicitor
Retired teacher
Retired with enough time to fill in surveys
Retired, private research
Retired
Retired. Was Arts Consultant
School teacher
Security consultant
Social Worker
Software engineer (3)
Specialist tutor for adult dyslexic students
Student (9)
Teacher (6)
Town planner
University administrator
University lecturer
University lecturer in German
Writer/journalist
Youth worker

Appendix J

Themes Identified in Respondents' Comments

S1 *differently than* (*n* = 45)

Correction/Awareness of usage conundrum	21
Personal usage	17
Contextual preference/usage	11
Other	5
Uncertainty	1

S2 *data are* (*n* = 53)

Offering a correction /explanation for data is or data are	47
Personal usage	23
Contextual usage	8
Common usage	6
Unacceptability	6
Other	2

S3 *go slow* (*n* = 42)

Correction	24
Different issue mentioned (e.g. semi-colon)	11
Personal usage	10
Acceptability of go slow in specific contexts	8
Unacceptable in specific contexts	3

S4 *like* (*n* = 49)

Young users of *like*/usage of others	22
Contextual usage	17
Redundancy/approximative adverb	16
Unacceptability	11
Other	6

S5 *burglarize* (*n* = 59)

Correction/not a word	33
Americanism/not British	23
Unacceptability	19
Consequences of usage	13
Usage of others	1

S6 *less than* (*n* = 51)

Corrections	33
Acceptability of less than	24
Contextual usage	14
Other	7
Unacceptability	2

S7 double negative (*n* = 52)

Corrections/Awareness of double negative	35
Perception of speaker/users/feature	12
Personal usage	12
Widespread usage/dialectal usage	10
Unacceptability	7
Ambiguity of meaning	5

S8 dangling participle (*n* = 49)

Correction/identifying the problem	24
Ambiguity	11
Insecurity	11
Context and/or effect	10
Own usage/teaching received	9
Sloppiness	4

S9 *between you and I* (*n* = 43)

Corrections/awareness	28
Personal usage/usage of others	12
Common usage	9
Unacceptability	9
contextual information	6
Other	1

S10 split infinitive (*n* = 42)

Identifying the problem	30
Acceptability of split infinitives	20
Own usage/teaching received	16
Unacceptability of split infinitives	10
Context and/or effect	10
Being judged by others	7
Latin rule	6
Insecurity	4
Aesthetic effect	3
Historical justification	2

S11 *literally* (*n* = 49)

Unacceptability of *literally*	28
Ambiguity /meaning	16
Acceptability of *literally*/widespread use	14
Changing status of word	10
Contextual preference	9

Samenvatting

Correct Engels Taalgebruik: een Sociolinguïstisch Onderzoek naar Attitudes ten Opzichte van Brits Engelse Taalgebruik in Groot Brittannië

Het zogenaamde *usage debate*, het debat over correct taalgebruik in Groot Brittannië, beslaat inmiddels al een periode van meer dan 300 jaar en werd, en wordt nog steeds, typisch bepaald door de rol die drie kernactoren er in spelen. Prescriptivisten, enerzijds, verkondigen zonder enige schroom hun mening, vaak op publieke en directe wijze. Anderzijds vermijden descriptivisten, onder wie zich meestal taalkundigen bevinden, dikwijls een actieve deelname aan de discussie over correct Engels taalgebruik. Met name taalkundigen hebben de neiging om het motto "taalkunde is descriptief, niet prescriptief" (Cameron, 1995, p. 5) te omarmen. De derde hoofdrolspeler in het debat over correct taalgebruik is het vaak vergeten grote publiek, dat desalniettemin een belangrijke functie heeft omdat deze groep taalgebruikers de taalgemeenschap vormt die de taalvariant gebruikt die de prescriptivist graag gezuiverd ziet, terwijl de taalkundige de taalveranderingen en taalvariatie bij diezelfde taalgemeenschap graag bestudeert en beschrijft. Het doel van deze studie, die een deel van het Bridging the Unbidgeable project is, was om het grote publiek volledig te betrekken in het debat over correct taalgebruik door hun attitudes ten opzichte van veertien geselecteerde taalgebruiksproblemen te identificeren en evalueren. Door gebruik te maken van een combinatie van verschillende onderzoeksmethoden (een zgn. *mixed methods approach*) – namelijk directe en indirecte methoden, specifieke elicitatietechnieken en het analyseren van kwalitatieve en kwantitatieve data – kon ik de bewuste en onbewuste houdingen van sprekers ten opzichte van de geselecteerde taalkwesties identificeren. Deze attituden geven niet alleen inzicht in hoe acceptabel de bestudeerde taalgebruiksvormen op dit moment

zijn in Engeland, maar kunnen ook informatie geven over de *social salience* (de sociale gemarkeerdheid, en daarmee het sociale belang) van deze vormen.

Gezien de historische eigenschappen van het Engelse taalgebruiksdebat heb ik, door de ontwikkeling van het debat door de jaren heen te omschrijven, een historische dimensie aan deze studie toegevoegd (hoofdstuk 2). Deze historische omschrijving gaat nader in op het Standaardengels als concept en op de notie van correctheid in taalgebruik, twee kernonderwerpen in het debat. Uitgaande van het door Milroy en Milroy (2012, p. 22–23) beschreven model over het standaardisatieproces voor het Engels, waarbij prescriptie de laatste fase vormt, heb ik mij ten doel gesteld om de fundamentele verschillen tussen prescriptieve en descriptieve tendensen in de discussie over Standaardengels te benadrukken. Hoofdstuk 2 bevat tevens een bespreking van de poortwachtersfunctie van het Standaardengels in het onderwijs en de media. Aan de hand van van eerdere studies over het onderwerp kon ik het tekort aan wetenschappelijke studies over de taalattitudes van het grote publiek in Groot Brittannië aan het licht brengen. Afgezien van het boek *Attitudes to English Usage* van Mittins et al. (1970) bestaat er slechts één andere studie over taalattitudes, en wel over de houding van Schotten tegenover het Schots. *Attitudes to English Usage* daarom diende als uitgangspunt voor mijn eigen onderzoek naar taalattitudes in Engeland, wat het mogelijk maakte potentiële veranderingen in de acceptatiegraad van taalgebruikskwesties sinds de publicatie van dit boek in kaart te brengen.

De *mixed methods approach* die ik heb toegepast bij mijn onderzoek naar taalattitudes bestond allereerst uit een zelfontwikkelde online vragenlijst waarin elf taalgebruikskwesties aan bod kwamen; deze vragenlijst was opgezet volgens de Directe Methode. Daarnaast organiseerde ik interviewsessies waarbij een zgn. *open-guise test* (zie §3.4.2) en een *usage judgement test* of taalbeoordelingstest (zie §5.3.4) afgenomen werden. Beide

toetsen waren gebaseerd op de principes van de Indirecte Methode. In totaal vulden 230 respondenten, allen woonachtig in Engeland, de online vragenlijst helemaal in. Om de steekproef zo representatief mogelijk te maken voor de samenstelling van de Engelse bevolking, stratificeerde ik de informanten naar de variabelen geslacht en leeftijd, met als resultaat dat de oorspronkelijke groep gereduceerd werd tot 112 respondenten (zie §7.2). Omdat deze studie een sociolinguïstisch onderzoek naar taalattitudes in Engeland betreft, zijn de sociale variabelen leeftijd, geslacht, opleidingsniveau en moedertaal opgenomen in de analyse. Om het daadwerkelijke gebruik van de bestudeerde taalkwesties te doorgronden, werd een corpusstudie uitgevoerd aan de hand van corpora zoals het British National Corpus (BNC), het Hansard corpus (een historisch corpus van Brits parlementair Engels), en, waar dat van toepassing was, Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) en Corpus of Historical American English (COHA). Om te bepalen of één of meerdere van de sociale variabelen statistisch gezien significant correleerde met de acceptatieoordelen van de respondenten, voerde ik Mann-Whitneytoetsen, bivariate correlatietoetsen en binaire logistische regresssieanalyses uit (zie § 7.2). Uit de sociolinguïstische analyse bleek dat leeftijd, geslacht en moedertaal significant correleerden met de gegeven acceptatieoordelen. Voor vier van de taalkwesties uit mijn studie vond ik een hogere graad van linguïstische intolerantie bij oudere deelnemers, precies zoals Mittins et al. dat ook hadden gevonden. Dit leeftijdseffect trad op bij het gebruik van de *split infinitive* (*He refused to even think about it*), *literally* als versterkend bijwoord (*His eyes were literally popping out of his head*), *I* voor *me* (*Between you and I, he will not be considered for the job*), en het zgn moderne *like*, als in (*The new restaurant is like 2 minutes up the road*). Al deze taalkwesties ondervinden in meer of mindere mate kritiek. Het geslacht van mijn informanten correleerde significant met de acceptatieoordelen die zij gaven

voor constructies met het onvervoegde bijwoord 'slow' in 'plaats van *slowly* als in go slow'; het bleek bovendien drie keer zo waarschijnlijk dat vrouwen dit type constructies verwierpen dan mannen. Wat betreft de variabele moedertaal liet het gebruik van 'data are' in plaats van *data is* een hogere mate van afwijzing zien bij niet-moedertaalsprekers ten opzichte van moedertaalsprekers van het (Britse) Engels.

Naast de analyse van de sociolinguïstische stratificatie van taalattitudes, heb ik ook een kwalitatieve analyse uitgevoerd met betrekking tot de opmerkingen die de deelnemers in de vragenlijst hadden toegevoegd. Dankzij deze analyse kon ik zichtbaar maken in welke mate de sprekers zich distantieerden van de taalkwesties, wat het weer mogelijk maakte om een *in-group* en een *out-group* van sprekers te onderscheiden. Het doel van deze extra analyse was om de verschillen tussen de geaccepteerde norm en het dagelijks taalgebruik te visualiseren. Met behulp van de HUGE database (Hyper Usage Guide of English.), die speciaal voor dit soort onderzoek binnen het Bridging the Unbridgeable project was ontwikkeld, kon ik een stigmatisatie-analyse uitvoeren van de geschiedenis van negen van de elf taalkwesties uit mijn studie. Als onderdeel van de online vragenlijst werd de deelnemers gevraagd naar de mate waarin zij het eens waren met twaalf uitspraken over taal die in feite veelgehoorde opvattingen en mythes over de Engelse taal weerspiegelden. Daarnaast stond het sprekers vrij een open vraag te beantwoorden, wat helaas resulteerde in een vrij lage respons (83 van de 112 respondenten, zie § 7.2.3). Een kwalitatieve analyse van de antwoorden van respondenten bracht het belang van educatie in het taalgebruiksdebat aan het licht. Vaak bevatten antwoorden commentaar op een bespeurd gebrek aan opleiding, hetgeen deelnemers als verantwoordelijk voor de afbrokkelende kwaliteit van het Engels aanwezen.

De interviewsessies werden uitgevoerd in Cambridge, London en Oxford – steden die samen de zgn. “Golden Triangle” markeren – en in totaal namen 63 informanten hieraan deel. De twee belangrijkste elicitatietoetsen die ik heb afgenomen onder de interviewdeelnemers hadden als doel om onbewuste taalattitudes naar boven te halen. Uit mijn statistische analyse bleek dat de informanten zowel de mannelijke als de vrouwelijke sprekers in de voorgelegde geluidsopnames als harder werkend, beter geletterd, netter en vermogender inschatten wanneer de sprekers in de opnames de ongemarkeerde (geaccepteerde) varianten gebruikten in plaats van de gemarkeerde (ongeaccepteerde) varianten, resultaten die statistisch gezien significant bleken te zijn. De tweede – impliciete – elicitatietoets bestond uit een taalbeoordelingstoets die een sollicitatiebrief omvatte waarin negen taalkwesties (geselecteerd uit de eerder genoemde lijst van veertien) waren verwerkt. Het was de taak van de informanten om die tekstuele punten te markeren, en ze te verbeteren als zij ze onacceptabel vonden gezien de formaliteit van de tekst in kwestie. De resultaten van deze taal-beoordelingstoets bieden inzicht in de sociale gemarkeerdheid en het sociale belang van de bestudeerde taalkwesties. De twee onvervoegde bijwoorden in de sollicitatiebrief werden het vaakst gezien en gecorrigeerd, terwijl twee *dangling participles* (Having worked *as an IT administrator, the job seems to be the perfect match for my skills and experience*) juist tot de taalkwesties behoorden die de deelnemers het minst opvielen (hoofdstuk 8). De sociale variabele leeftijd bleek op grond van de sociolinguïstische analyse hierbij een belangrijke factor te zijn, in de zin dat oudere informanten een sterkere neiging hadden om de onvervoegde bijwoorden, de gespleten infinitief, het gebruik van *very unique* en van *impact* als werkwoord te corrigeren en benoemen. Aan het einde van de interviewsessie kregen de informanten de regels over correct taalgebruik voorgelegd, en kregen zij de vraag voorgelegd of zij het eens of

oneens waren met de regels. Dit leverde inzicht op in de sociale normen en conventies rondom taalgebruik waarover consensus lijkt te bestaan binnen de taalgemeenschap, temeer omdat de *social desirability bias* (het risico op vertekening van de resultaten door de mogelijk sociaal wenselijke antwoorden te geven) door deze toets werd blootgelegd.

Na samenvating van de resultaten van mijn (sociolinguïstische) onderzoek naar de gevonden taalattitudes, kan geconcludeerd worden dat de taalattitudes van het grote publiek in Engeland variëren afhankelijk van een aantal sociale variabelen: leeftijd, geslacht en de moedertaal. Toch moet de sociale gemarkeerdheid van de verschillende taalkwesties hier geadresseerd ook bij betrokken worden, want niet voor elk onderzocht punt werd een significante correlatie gevonden. Dit betekent dat de taalattitudes ten opzichte van sommige van de onderzochte taalkwesties, zoals bij het gebruik van *less than* in plaats van *fewer than*, het gebruik van *burglarize* (inbreken, afgeleid van *burglar* + *-ize*) of de dubbele ontkenning, eenstemmiger zijn dan dat bij andere taalkwesties. Het toepassen een *mixed methods approach* was vruchtbaar omdat, door het toepassen van zowel directe als indirecte elicitatietoetsen, bewust maar ook onbewust geuite attitudes verzameld konden worden. Derhalve voorziet mijn studie niet alleen in een nieuwe methodologische benadering voor de bestudering van taalattitudes, maar biedt zij ook een lang ontbrekend inzicht in taalattitudes in Engeland dat tot doel heeft gehad een beter begrip van huidige taalattitudes in Engeland te bieden door het maar al te vaak vergeten grote publiek een stem te geven in het debat over taalgebruik.

Curriculum Vitae

Carmen Ebner was born on 13 October 1987 in Vorau, Austria. She went to Bundeshandelsakademie Weiz where she obtained her general qualification for university entrance (Matura) in International Business. After secondary school, Carmen attended Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, Austria, and obtained her BA in English and American Studies, before moving to Scotland and graduating from the University of St Andrews with an MLitt in English Language Teaching. In 2012, Carmen joined the project "Bridging the Unbridgeable: linguists, prescriptivists and the general public" supervised by Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade in which she studied attitudes towards non-standard language use in British English. In the past four years, she has published several articles and book chapters, as well as this present study.