

# 4 Grammar

It is only recently, with the advent of large computer corpora of reasonably representative materials from a number of varieties of English around the world, that it has become possible to discuss difference in grammar at all meaningfully. While many people are familiar with a very small number of differences, it was not always clear, before statistical treatments of such matters could be given, how much variation there was, and how many of the distinctions were absolute. The result of a few decades of corpus-based studies has largely been disappointing: there tend not to be striking absolute grammatical differences between national varieties. Rather it seems to be the case that where speakers of one variety prefer structure *a*, and speakers of another prefer structure *b*, both *a* and *b* are available to speakers of both varieties. As an example, consider the following.

In a study looking at the use of synthetic (*friendlier, friendliest*) and analytic (*more friendly, most friendly*) comparison of adjectives ending in *-ly* in the American newspaper *The New York Times* and the British newspaper *The Independent*, Lindquist (2000) shows, for example, that the British paper is a little more likely than the American one to use the synthetic form in attributive position (that is, premodifying a noun, as in *the friendliest person*) as opposed to in predicative position (*he was friendliest*). The figures are given in Table 4.1.

What results like those in Table 4.1 show is that British and American Englishes (at least as illustrated by these two newspapers) are very similar in their use of synthetic and analytic comparison, and that where there are differences, they are of a kind which can be discovered only by considering a large body of data, not just by looking at an individual example. Such results are typical.

## 4.1 Morphology

English has a handful of irregular plural forms of nouns: *oxen, brethren, children, men, women, feet, geese, teeth, lice, mice*. These do not vary from

Table 4.1 Attributive and predicative usage of synthetic and analytic comparison in two newspapers (from Lindquist 2000)

		<i>The New York Times</i>		<i>The Independent</i>	
		% attrib.	% predic.	% attrib.	% predic.
Comparative	synthetic	51	49	55	45
	analytic	44	56	37	63
Superlative	synthetic	88	12	96	4
	analytic	84	16	89	11

(The table is to be read such that 51 per cent of synthetic comparatives in *The New York Times* are attributive, and 49 per cent of them are predicative, etc.)

variety to variety, except that in New Zealand English *women* is becoming homophonous with *woman*, leading to confusion of spelling. English also borrows a lot of nouns from Latin, Italian, French and other languages, and these sometimes retain their foreign plurals: *tableaux*, *tempi*, *alumni*, *cherubim* and so on. Such plurals are often variable within a variety, but there is no reported case of national varieties being distinctive in terms of which plural they choose (despite the fact that this might seem a natural potential site for such variation). Similarly, English sometimes shows variation between an unmarked plural form for hunt-able/edible animals and a marked one (*fish* is probably the most variable noun, but consider also *deer*, *sheep* and *salmon*, which are less variable, and *antelope*, *duck*, which show a lot of variation – mainly semantically or pragmatically based). Again, such variability is not known to distinguish national varieties of English. There is also a set of nouns in English whose base form ends in a voiceless fricative and which make their plural by irregularly voicing that fricative and then adding the plural ending: *house*, *wolf* and *wreath* are clear examples. These are known to be variable both within varieties and between varieties. *Roof* is notorious for having a prescribed regular plural, *roofs*, while many speakers voice the plural and thus write *rooves*. The Disney version of *Snow White* featured seven *dwarves*, which caused some confusion in Britain where *dwarfs* was the normal plural, though Tolkien has *dwarves*. British English allows *wharfs*, while the plural in New Zealand is exclusively *wharves*. It is notable that the irregular forms mentioned here come from outside England: the normal trend in morphology is for the forms outside Britain to become regularised.

The variation in nominal morphology is trivial in comparison with the variation in verbal morphology. English has a large set of irregular verbs. On the whole, this set has been getting smaller since the common Germanic period: modern English has considerably fewer than Old

English had, for example. But there was always a fair amount of variation in these forms. In standard forms of the language, this variation decreased in the eighteenth century as part of the movement to 'fix' the language. Forms from the range in actual use at that period were artificially selected, sometimes arbitrarily, and became the 'correct' form in the standard language. Many of the alternatives continued to be used in non-standard varieties, which is why things like *We seen it*, *She done it* are still so common today. Sometimes the forms selected seem illogical: why should it be (in the English of England) *We have got it* but *We have forgotten it*? In Figure 4.1 a list of verbs which show some variation related to regional variety is given. Despite the markings that are given in Table 4.1, it is often the case that either form can be found in both the USA and in the UK; the marking shows preferences rather than absolutes. Unmarked examples are found everywhere. Australia and New Zealand typically show both types, sometimes with a preference for the British form (such as *spoilt*), sometimes with a preference for the American one (for example *dreamed*). Only standard forms are listed here: things like *She swum across the bay* are heard, but are rarely found in print.

Derivational morphology is largely the same throughout the English-speaking world. Diminutives in *-ie* are more frequent in Australasia than in most other places, and this tendency may have been inherited from Scottish English. *Rellies* for 'relatives, relations', for example, is an Australasian form. Some diminutives in *-ie* are found in other areas as well, though. Similarly, although the use of the suffix *-ee* as in *muggee*, *murderee* is more common in the USA than in other areas, the suffix is known and productive everywhere.

In principle we might expect to find derivational affixes used and accepted in only one country. This seems not to happen. Either an affix which is rare elsewhere is used more in one particular country (as with the *-ie* mentioned above, or with the Australian *-o* in words such as *garbo* 'dustman, garbage collector' or *journo* 'journalist'; this suffix is known in Britain in words like *ammo* and *beano*), or an affix is used mostly in one country, but the words produced by that affix are freely used elsewhere (as with the words on the pattern of *beatnik* such as *peacenik*, *refusenik* which were coined mainly in the USA).

## 4.2 Syntax

If there is very little syntax which can be used unambiguously to point to the particular origin of a text, there is nonetheless a lot of syntax which is variable, and where in principle a good statistical analysis of a large enough text could provide enough information to say where it originated.

beat	beat	beaten	
beat	bet	beaten	esp. Scotland, NZ
bet	bet	bet	
bet	betted	betted	esp. UK
burn	burned	burned	US
burn	burnt	burnt	UK
dive	dived	dived	
dive	dove	dived	only US and CDN
dream	dreamed	dreamed	esp. US
dream	dreamt	dreamt	esp. UK
dwel	dwelled	dwelled	US
dwel	dwelt	dwelt	UK
get	got	got	
get	got	gotten	US (not in all senses)
kneel	kneeled	kneeled	esp. US
kneel	knelt	knelt	
lean	leaned	leaned	esp. US
lean	leant	leant	esp. UK
leap	leaped	leaped	esp. US
leap	leapt	leapt	
learn	learnt	learnt	UK
learn	learned	learned	US
prove	proved	proved	
prove	proved	proven	esp. US, Scotland, NZ
shine	shined	shined	esp. US or = 'polish'
shine	shone	shone	UK /ʃɒn/, US /ʃo:n/, CDN usu. /ʃa:n/
smell	smelled	smelled	US
smell	smelt	smelt	UK
sneak	sneaked	sneaked	
sneak	snuck	sneaked	esp. US and CDN
spell	spelled	spelled	US
spell	spelt	spelt	UK
spill	spilled	spilled	US
spill	spilt	spilt	UK
spit	spat	spat	
spit	spit	spit	US only
spoil	spoilt	spoilt	UK
spoil	spoiled	spoiled	US
swell	swelled	swollen	UK, US
swell	swelled	swelled	UK, US
thrive	thrived	thrived	esp. US
thrive	throve	thrived	

Figure 4.1 Some variable verbs

### 4.2.1 Sentence structure

There is variation in the relative order of direct and indirect objects when these are both pronouns: some speakers can say *give it me* while others can only have *give me it*. Quirk *et al.* (1985: 1396) say that the former is only British English, but the comparison they make is exclusively with American English. Trudgill and Hannah (1994: 67) say that *give it me* is only northern, even in England (though the map in Cheshire *et al.* 1989: 203 shows that it is not quite as simple as northern versus southern). Everyone can have, and may prefer, *give it to me*.

So-called collective nouns, such as *government, committee, team* may take either singular or plural concord, either on a verb where such words are the subject, or in agreement with a later pronoun.

- (1) The company *is* able to provide 80 customer carparks at Ngauranga. (*The Evening Post* [Wellington, New Zealand] 2 April 1984, p. 8 col. 6) (singular concord)
- (2) The number two computer company worldwide *require* a sales representative. (*The Evening Post* [Wellington, New Zealand] 14 April 1984, p. 17 col. 3) (plural concord)

Through most of the twentieth century, it was claimed that British and American Englishes were distinguished in this way, with British using plural concord. In the course of the twentieth century, singular concord became more common in some types of British text, though not all collective nouns have changed at the same speed. *Government*, for example, is far more likely to be used with singular concord than *police*. On top of this, variation in singular or plural concord may have social implications in some places. Singular concord is now the norm with at least some of these collective nouns in formal newspaper usage the USA, England, Australia and New Zealand. In Australian English, this use of singular concord is spreading to sports teams, so that even a sports team with a plural name may be used with singular concord, as in (3) (Newbrook 2001: 120).

- (3) The Kangaroos [= North Melbourne] must improve *its* percentage.

The use of the unmarked verb stem, called the mandative subjunctive (see section 1.3, Quirk *et al.* 1985: 155–7), in sentences like (4) is also variable between varieties. US English uses the subjunctive more than British English, which tends to prefer to use the modal *should* instead (as in (4')), and may use an indicative verb (with concord marked, as in (4'')). New Zealand and Australian English show an intermediate level of subjunctive use in such cases. (For a good summary, see Hundt 1998: 89–97.)

- (4) I order that all experiments in Mordon *cease* forthwith and that the buildings *be* bulldozed to rubble. (Alistair MacLean, *The Satan Bug*, London and Glasgow: Fontana, 1962: 90)
- (4') I order that all experiments in Mordon *should cease* forthwith and that the buildings *should be* bulldozed to rubble.
- (4'') I order that all experiments in Mordon *cease* forthwith and that the buildings *are* bulldozed to rubble.

There is variation in commands beginning with the word *go* between such things as *Go jump in a lake!* and *Go and jump in a lake!* As is pointed out by Taylor (1989: 239), the version with no *and* is borrowed into Australian English only where it has abusive function. *Go and see who is at the door* has no alternative form in Australian English.

In South African English, a sentence-initial *no* is often found where it would not be used in most other varieties. Its value is to contradict the assumptions made in the preceding part of the dialogue (Branford 1994: 489; Trudgill and Hannah 1994: 32). Examples are given in (5).

- (5) 'Can you deliver it?'  
 'No, sure, we'll send it this afternoon.'  
 'How are you?'  
 'No, I'm fine, thanks.'

#### 4.2.2 Auxiliary verbs

One of the points of variation most often cited with reference to auxiliary verbs is the use of the modal auxiliary *shall* (and, to a lesser extent, *should*). The use of *shall* is usually seen as being particularly connected with the standard English of England; Australian (Trudgill and Hannah 1994: 19; Newbrook 2001: 129), New Zealand (Trudgill and Hannah 1994: 26; Hundt 1998: 58–61) Scottish and US Englishes (Trudgill and Hannah 1994: 59, 97) gain particular mention in the literature as those varieties which avoid *shall*, and use *will* in place of it. The degree to which the word *shall* is avoided (and the contexts in which it is avoided) is variable. Hundt (1998: 59) provides figures to suggest that New Zealand English is the least likely to use *shall*, but does not include Scottish English in her comparisons.

The verbs *dare* and *need* are unusual in that they can act either as main verbs (in which case they are followed by an infinitive with *to* – compare *want* in (6)) or as modal auxiliaries (in which case they are followed by a bare stem verb – compare *must* in (6)).

- (6) We want to come. (main verb)  
We must come. (auxiliary)
- (7) He didn't dare to look. (main verb)  
He didn't dare look. (auxiliary)
- (8) Does she need to be here early? (main verb)  
Need she be here early? (auxiliary)
- (9) All you need to do is tell it like it is. (main verb)  
All you need do is tell it like it is. (attested. Hundt 1998: 64)  
(auxiliary)

According to Trudgill and Hannah (1994: 61), US English does not have the auxiliary construction with these verbs, although other evidence (for example Hundt 1998: 62–3) suggests that this is an overstatement of the case, and that it would be better to say that the auxiliary construction is rare in US English. Collins (1989: 143–4) finds that *need* and *dare* are not used in precisely parallel ways in Australian English: *need* is used as a main verb, but while *dare* is more often found with the *do*-verb, it tends to be used without the *to*, leading to a mixed type. Similar results for *dare* are found by Bauer (1989a) for New Zealand English, though respondents accepted both the auxiliary and the main verb construction for *need*. Hundt's (1998: 63) figures for both New Zealand English and the English of England suggest that whether *need* is in affirmative, negative or interrogative sentences has a major effect on the construction actually used.

Similar problems beset *used to*. Although speakers may not be sure whether to write *use to* or *used to* to represent /ju:stə/, this marginal modal provides no problems in the affirmative (10). In the negative (11) and interrogative (12), however, there is variability.

- (10) I used to like olives.
- (11) I didn't use(d) to like olives. (main verb)  
I used not to like olives. (auxiliary)  
I usen't to like olives. (auxiliary)
- (12) Did you use(d) to like olives? (main verb)  
Used you to like olives? (auxiliary)  
Used you like olives? (auxiliary)

Usage in Australia is divided (Collins 1989: 144; Newbrook 2001: 116–17), though the use of the relevant form of *do* appears to be favoured in New Zealand English (Bauer 1989a: 11–14). In England, there are stylistic differences between the various options such that *I usen't to like olives* is more formal than the other options, and to a certain extent this distinction is passed on to the colonies, including the USA. The forms

with *do* are sometimes ascribed to American usage (Newbrook 2001: 117), but have clearly become the norm beyond the USA, and even in Britain in informal usage.

The semi-modal *ought* (*to*) presents a very interesting case of variability. First, it seems to be less used now than it used to be, being replaced by *should*. Second, it is used variably with and without the following *to*. And third, if it is repeated in a tag question there is variability in what form occurs.

(13) I ought to know the answer to that question.

Yes, you ought.

Yes, you ought to.

(14) You didn't ought to do that.

You oughtn't to do that.

You oughtn't do that.

(15) Ought we to send for the police?

Ought we send for the police?

(16) I ought to know the answer to that, oughtn't I?

I ought to know the answer to that, shouldn't I?

I ought to know the answer to that, didn't I?

The various patterns are not all well described. According to Quirk *et al.* (1985: 139-40), *ought* without *to* is preferred by both British and American informants in interrogatives and negatives, and *didn't ought* is not readily used. The same is true in Australian English (Collins 1989: 142). There it is also the case that although *ought* is recognised, *should* is more often used. In New Zealand English (Bauer 1989a: 10) *should* is preferred, and is used in tags even where *ought* is maintained. The tag question with *did* (illustrated in (16)) is given as British by Trudgill and Hannah (1994: 19), but is not mentioned by Quirk *et al.* (1985: 812).

In South African English, the progressive may be marked by the expression *be busy*, as in *We're busy waiting for him now* (Branford 1994: 490). This is a rare calque of an Afrikaans construction which has been picked up in English, and its origin explains why it is not used elsewhere.

#### 4.2.3 Complementation

In English we can say both *I believed that he was guilty* and *I suspected that he was guilty*. But while we can equally say *I believed him guilty*, we cannot say *\*I suspected him guilty*. The particular patterns a verb can take, whether it is intransitive, transitive or ditransitive, what kind of preposition follows it, what finite or non-finite clause pattern it requires, is a matter of complementation. In some cases, complementation depends on the



meaning: the difference between *she's baking* (intransitive), *she's baking a cake* (transitive) and *she's baking me a cake* (ditransitive) is clearly determined by meaning. But the *suspect/believe* distinction illustrated above is not related to meaning, but is an idiosyncratic feature of the individual verb, and as such it is open to variation (see Miller 2002: 49–52).

In practice, it is only the complementation patterns of a few verbs which are usually considered in this context, although there may be more variation here than we are aware of: on the whole we do not have enough information about the alternatives (such as that following *believe*) to know whether there is any regional variation in the way in which they are used. Each verb will be treated individually below, looking at them in alphabetical order.

*Appeal.* We are not concerned here with the use illustrated in *Her sense of humour appealed to me*, but in legal senses of *appeal*, often extended to the sporting arena. In British English, this is an intransitive verb, followed by the preposition *against*; in Australian and New Zealand it is also a transitive verb: *They appealed the decision*. The transitive use replaces the use with *against* in US English.

*Explain.* *Explain* may be ditransitive in South Africa: *Explain me this* (Lanham 1982: 341).

*Farewell.* It is not clear whether *farewell* is really a verb in many varieties of English, but in Australian and New Zealand Englishes it clearly is, and it is transitive: *We farewelled Chris, who's moving to Greenland, last night*.

*Fill.* In US English you tend to *fill out* the forms which, in British English, you would be more likely to *fill in*. Australian and New Zealand Englishes allow both.

*Progress.* *Progress* can be an intransitive verb everywhere: *The matter is progressing slowly*. However, a transitive use is beginning to be heard, possibly everywhere: *We are hoping to progress this matter*.

*Protest.* *Protest* is rather like *appeal*. While US English tends to prefer the construction *We protested the decision*, British English is more likely to use *We protested against the decision* (with the possibility of using *at* or *about* instead of *against*). Australian and New Zealand Englishes allow both.

*Reply.* *Reply* may be transitive in South African English: *He didn't reply me* (Lanham 1982: 341).

*Screen.* Hundt (1998) draws attention to the fact that New Zealanders (and to a lesser extent Australians) are perfectly familiar with the construction *The new James Bond film will screen next week*, while this is not familiar to British or American respondents (although a few examples were found in one US source). Transitive use of *screen* is general, as in *We will screen the new James Bond film in our largest theatre*.

*Visit.* *Visit with someone* is attested in Britain in the nineteenth century

(for example, George Eliot uses it in *Middlemarch*), but now appears to be virtually only used in US English (see the *Oxford English Dictionary*).

*Want*. Many varieties influenced by Scottish English permit the construction illustrated in *The dog wants out*, and also permit *These clothes want (or need) washed*. This appears to be dialectal in the USA (see for example LINGUIST List 2.555, 25 September 1991), as it also is in New Zealand.

You may be able to find further examples, though in many cases you need to be careful in pinning down the place where the variation occurs: for example everyone uses *meet with* in *Our cat met with an accident*, but *meet with* can be in variation with transitive *meet* for people meeting other people (but perhaps not on all occasions). I don't think you would *meet with* someone quite by accident on the way to the shops; *meet with* tends to be equivalent to *have a meeting with*, and thus to be more specific than transitive *meet*.

#### 4.2.4 Have

There is variation between *have* and *have got*, so that both (17) and (18) are possible. When such sentences are negated or questioned, this gives rise to the range of possibilities shown in (19) and (20).

- (17) He has a cold/a new car.  
 (18) He has got a cold/a new car.  
 (19) I haven't a cold/a new car.  
     I don't have a cold/a new car.  
     I haven't got a cold/a new car.  
 (20) Have you a cold/a new car?  
     Do you have a cold/a new car?  
     Have you got a cold/a new car?

These may or may not be completely synonymous. There could be a distinction between *I have a new car* (implying 'I wouldn't lower myself to drive around in a used vehicle') and *I've got a new car* (meaning 'I have just acquired a vehicle which I used not to own'). Trudgill and Hannah (1994: 63) point out another possible difference in meaning between *Have you (got) any fresh cod?* (meaning 'Is there any fresh cod in the shop?') and *Do you have fresh cod?* (meaning 'Do you generally stock fresh cod?'). However, it seems that for most speakers these distinctions are not regularly maintained.

This variation also works with *have to* meaning 'must'. So we find structures equivalent to those in (20) like those in (21).

- (21) Have you to leave immediately?  
 Do you have to leave immediately?  
 Have you got to leave immediately?

There are also differences of style, such that versions with *got* are more likely to occur in less formal language, with the result that they are often commoner in speech than in writing.

Despite all this variation, there is also variation here based on variety of English. For example, US English seems to use *do*-support in questions and negatives far more than British English does, and the same is true for Australian and New Zealand Englishes (Bauer 1989b; Collins 1989; Hundt 1998; Quinn 2000). The use of variants with *got* seems to be more common in New Zealand spoken English than in British spoken English (Bauer 1989b).

At the same time, there is evidence of ongoing change in this part of the grammar. All varieties seem to be adopting *have got* forms in the meaning illustrated in (21) (Hundt 1998: 55). Some of the variation between different varieties may be accounted for in terms of different speeds of adoption of this form rather than because the varieties have different established norms.

#### 4.2.5 Noun phrases

There has been a change in the course of the twentieth century in journalistic texts from the construction illustrated in (22) to the construction illustrated in (23) (Barber 1964: 142; Strevens 1972: 50; Trudgill and Hannah 1994: 75):

- (22) Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister, arrived in Washington today.  
 (23) British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher arrived in Washington today.

The difference may be motivated by the (marginal) gain in space. Whatever the reason, the change appears to be better established in US English than in British English.

There are some nouns, like *church*, which do not require an article in certain constructions where an article would otherwise be expected: *go to church* is good English, but *\*go to town ball* is not. Which nouns behave like *church* is a matter which can change from variety to variety. *Be in hospital* is good British English, but not good American English, and the same is true of *be at* or *go to university*. On the other hand *be in* or *go to class* is probably more usual in US texts than in British ones (Strevens 1972: 52,

Trudgill and Hannah 1994: 74). Similarly with musical instruments, following the verbs *learn* and *play* there is variation between using and not using *the*: *I play (the) piano*.

The indefinite pronoun *one* is rare in any but the most formal writing, and in less formal styles is replaced by an indefinite *you*. Its use to mean 'I' seems to be virtually restricted to British royalty. But where it genuinely means 'someone unspecified' it can be followed in US English, but not in British English, by *he* or *she*.

- (24) It simply does not follow that if *one* believes that abortion is murder then *he* would advocate killing individual abortionists. (From Koukl 1994; my italics LB)

The sentence in (24) could only appear in an American text; in a British text the italicised *he* would have to be *one*.

#### 4.2.6 Prepositions

Choice of preposition is often variable, as we have already seen with regard to complementation patterns. Even where there is no preceding verb, though, there can be variation in the use of prepositions, and, indeed, in whether a preposition is used or not.

Traditional British *at the weekend* has yielded in the last fifty years or so to the American *on the weekend*, although other prepositions such as *during*, *over* and (in New Zealand English) *in* are also possible in the same construction.

Other similar differences are found in the expressions *Monday to/through Friday*, *Ten to/of/till nine*, *Quarter past/after ten*, *to be in/on the team*, and so on.

In many temporal expressions, US English can omit a preposition that is necessary in other varieties: *I'll see you (on) Friday*, *(On) Saturdays, we like to go fishing*, *(At/on) weekends, we play golf*, *The term starts (on) March 1st*, *He works (by) day(s) and studies (at) night(s)*. In each case the shorter version started out being a US variant, but has been adopted to some extent in other parts of the world (Strevens 1972: 51; Trudgill and Hannah 1994: 80).

#### 4.2.7 Adverbs

Where prepositions are omitted in phrases like *She works nights*, *nights* becomes an adverb. Such constructions have already been considered.

In some varieties of English, *already* and *yet* can co-occur with a verb in the simple past tense, as in (25); in other varieties a perfect is required (26).

- (25) I ate already.  
Did you eat yet?
- (26) I have already eaten.  
Have you eaten yet?  
(Trudgill and Hannah 1994: 77)

In both Canadian and Australian Englishes, possibly also in South African English, *as well* can occur sentence-initially, as in *As well, there are three other cases of this* (Trudgill and Hannah 1994: 78; Newbrook 2001: 128). Why this feature should arise in precisely those three varieties and not in others (assuming that it is not found elsewhere) is something of a mystery.

### 4.3 Discussion

The list of features that has been given in this chapter is clearly not a complete list. Trudgill and Hannah (1994) list far more variable grammatical features, for example. Nevertheless, we can take it that the kinds of variability that have been listed here are reasonably representative of the kinds of variation that are found within inner circle Englishes.

What is striking about most of these features is how superficial they are. For example, patterns of complementation and prepositional choices are virtually matters of vocabulary: whether you say *in the weekend*, *on the weekend* or *at the weekend* is something that depends on the noun *weekend*, and has no obvious influence on other phrases; similarly, whether you *protest a decision* or *protest against the decision* depends on the verb *protest*, and need not spread beyond that individual word. The use of the definite article is not under threat in its core usages, it is only in a few expressions in very specific semantic fields that there is variation in its use. The use of auxiliaries illustrates stages in the development of a system where two forms have already become synonymous, and there is an attempt to sort out the synonymy: if *ought to* and *should* mean the same thing, perhaps it should be possible to use *should* in tag questions to *ought*, and we may not need *ought* at all; if *shall* just means *will*, they may not both be needed. In none of these cases is the system getting a major upheaval; rather adjustments are being made round the fringes.

When we come to consider the degree to which English is breaking up into a number of daughter languages in section 8.5, it will be useful to bear this in mind: there is no lack of variation in grammatical features, but the places where there is variation are not the major areas of the grammar.

It can also be argued that many of the changes are simplifications. This

is most obvious in the verbal morphology illustrated in Figure 4.1, where the colonial version tends to be the regular version. However, a change from *Have you any money?* to *Do you have any money?* is also a simplification, in that it makes *have* just like other transitive verbs: we would say *Did you spend any money?*, not *\*Spent you any money?*

## Exercises

1. As a class exercise, take two newspapers published in different countries and mark every occurrence of each of the variables discussed in this chapter. Does the variation go in the expected direction? What other comments do you have on the exercise?
2. What prepositions (if any) do you use in the following sentences?
  - a) I always win \_\_\_ rummy.
  - b) We are studying \_\_\_ dinosaurs at school.
  - c) We tried to prevent the hecklers \_\_\_ becoming a nuisance by splitting them up.
  - d) You have to stop her \_\_\_ turning up at all hours of the day or night.
  - e) She threw it \_\_\_ the window.
  - f) We live \_\_\_ Burberry Street.
  - g) I haven't seen him \_\_\_ ages.
  - h) He fell \_\_\_ his horse.
  - i) They incline \_\_\_ laziness.
  - j) They have found jobs \_\_\_ a nightclub.
  - k) We were sitting \_\_\_ the veranda, enjoying the view.
  - l) We need to deal \_\_\_ the matter promptly.
  - m) There are a couple \_\_\_ people I want to see.
3. Choose any one syntactic feature discussed in this chapter and decide whether the colonial variant is or is not a simplification in respect of the Home variant.
4. Good data on sentences like (17) to (20) can be very difficult to obtain for several reasons: (a) the constructions tend to be rare; (b) it is not always clear precisely what the speaker/writer intended the meaning to be; (c) people use constructions differently in speech and in writing; and so on. How would you attempt to carry out a fair survey of the differences in usage in this area from two varieties of English?