CURRENT USAGES: A STUDY OF ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS
USED IN HOUSTON, TEXAS

AN INVESTIGATIVE PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY
ANITA VIOLA HOWARD

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
AUGUST 1944
R = VI T = 69
PREFACE

It is very difficult for an instructor in English to determine what to teach. He finds numerous and striking discrepancies between the rules and cautions governing usage found in the textbooks on grammar and the regularly observed customs of language. The interpretation given to these accumulated contradictions varies in accordance with the language philosophy of the observer. Pooley says:

To the purist these differences are indications of the decay of Modern English, by which too many corruptions are permitted a degree of tolerance dangerous to the integrity of the language. Such a one urges, therefore, a renewed enforcement of the rule and a multiplication of cautions to correct the 'errant tongue.' To the liberalist, however, these discrepancies are signs of change and growth in language, by which rules and restrictions, even those at one time accurately descriptive in English usage are now obsolescent or contrary to current use.¹

It is evident, therefore, that the purist and the liberalist are diametrically opposed, and that this opposition must result in the great confusion and uncertainty regarding correct usage in the present day.

Yet, each teacher must make some kind of decision with reference to teaching usage. Up to the present, almost the only authoritative statements of acceptable practice in English usage have had to be sought in dictionaries, grammars, and handbooks. Dictionaries have had as their prime function the recording of usage, but by their very nature most of their citations have to be drawn from literary examples of acknowledged value. This method, valid though it may be, must of necessity result in a lag of several years between the adoption of a given usage and its appearance in a dictionary. Dictionaries, themselves, admit their

¹Robert C. Pooley, Grammar and Usage in Textbooks on English (Madison, 1930), pp. 11-12.
limitations in recording all the accepted meanings and pronunciations.\(^1\)

Since this is true, it is obvious that they could not be expected to record all usages. Grammars and handbooks are often prepared by persons who are not experts in linguistics but in teaching methods. Many of these authors wish to "standardize" the language or to perpetuate their theories of correctness, which, for the most part, are based upon eighteenth and nineteenth-century theories with no regard for present day usage.\(^2\) As a rule they are slower than the dictionaries in acknowledging language changes. Therefore, Leonard warns us that the dictionaries, grammars, and handbooks should not be thought of as "eternal statutes handed down from heaven like the table of Mosaic law. They are history, not dogma; description, not command—descriptions of the changing speech habits of the mass of men."\(^3\)

In the face of these differences, Sterling A. Leonard says:

To ascertain the actual English usage and punctuation practice of educated people, two types of survey can be made. One tabulates the forms of expression and punctuation found in the work of the better contemporary authors. The other secures from these and other educated persons statements as to the forms of expression and punctuation they would employ in given sentences. If their practice differs for speech and writing, these data also are secured.\(^4\)

---


\(^4\)Ibid., p. xiii.
Leonard and his associates used the second type in a study of usage, which was published as *Current English Usage*. The first significant fact to remember is that *Current English Usage* deals primarily not with usage itself but with opinions about the usage of words and expressions usually condemned in grammars and textbooks. Sample sentences were submitted to two hundred and twenty-nine judges who were asked to indicate how the sentences should be written, or whether certain constructions they contain were illiterate, permissible, or good, and what they have observed about the actual use or non-use by cultivated persons of a large number of expressions usually questioned or condemned in grammars and textbooks. Among the judges were well-known authors, editors, business men, linguists and teachers in schools and colleges—the teacher group heavily predominating.¹

Several studies have been made on current usages and much information has been collected from time to time by leading authorities on textbook rules that do not harmonize with the general usage of the language. From their studies, the investigators have noted that there are many questions as to what is correct usage, and that many textbooks are still clinging to outworn eighteenth century theories, thus presenting conflicting and contradictory usages. Therefore, it is the purpose of this paper to check English grammars used in Houston, Texas, to see how close the textbooks have followed current usages, to find to what extent they have made use of recent authorities, and to point out necessary modifications for the teachers who must use them.

The following fifteen rules have been selected for this study because

¹Ibid.
they are adequate to show the tendencies of the textbooks, and because they represent moot questions on usages that have recently been thoroughly investigated:

The pronoun I or me
Who and whom
Split infinitive
Double negative
Agreement of subject and predicate
Shall and will
Adjectives and adverbs
Like as a conjunction
Sit, set and lie, lay
Uses of the verb get
Further and farther
Due to
Can and may
Above as an adjective
The position of only

The following books, adopted by the State of Texas and used in the Houston (Texas) system, are the basis for this study:


I shall compare rules of the texts with the findings of Leonard and Pooley, and the opinions of the most recent and authoritative reference grammars.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. THE STUDY OF USAGES</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. RULES ON USAGE IN THE HOUSTON TEXTBOOKS</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pronoun I or Me after the Linking Verb</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who and whom</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Split Infinitive</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double Negative</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement of Subject and Predicate</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shall and Will</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives and Adverbs</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like as a Conjunction</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sit, Set and Lie, Lay</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses of the Verb Get</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further and Farther</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can and May</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above as an Adjective</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Position of Only</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III. CONCLUSION</strong></td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BIBLIOGRAPHY</strong></td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

THE STUDY OF USAGES

Before going into an analysis of the specific items of this study, it seems pertinent to discuss usage and the basic attitude one takes toward the newer trends in speech. Usage, according to the Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia (1906), is the "established or customary mode of employing a particular word, phrase, or construction." Difficulty arises in the interpretation of this definition because it becomes necessary to find out what is "established" and "customary" in the practice of a great many speakers and writers of the English language. The Practical Standard Dictionary (1934) defines usage as "a use of words or forms considered as sanctioned or unsanctioned by reputable writers." Since we know that language is constantly changing, it is not easy to determine what is "sanctioned" and just what persons may be considered "authorities." Webster's New International Dictionary (1934) says usage consists of "the methods or principles ... of a body or group of persons, as those of a certain profession, business, craft, etc." English usage, therefore, may be said to consist of the methods or principles of expression of that body of people who employ the English language. It is to a great extent established, a customary mode of speech, and in the opinion of many people, it should somehow be sanctioned by reputable authorities; but even with all these insistences, it is frequently hard to decide on the best usage of contemporary English.¹

From Lounsbury, we learn who the dictators of the language are:

The standard of speech is the usage of the cultivated. Such men are absolute dictators of language. They are the lawgivers whose edicts it is the duty of the grammarians to record. What they agreed upon is correct; what they shun, it is expedient to shun, even if not wrong in itself to employ. Words coined by those outside of the class to which these men belong do not pass into the language as a constituent part of it until sanctioned by their approbation and use. Their authority, both as regards the reception or rejection of locutions of any sort is final. It hardly needs to be said that 'the man in the street' is not only no dictator of usage, but that he has no direct influence upon the preservation of the life of any word or phrase.1

Thus, good usage is not something to be evolved from one's own consciousness, or to be deduced by some process of reasoning; it is something to be ascertained. It must be learned just as language itself is learned. Furthermore, there is no short cut to its acquisition. Grammars may in some instances help us; in some instances they do not help us; but in others they sometimes serve as hindrances. In no case, however, can they ever be appealed to as final authorities. There is one way and only one way of attaining the end desired as a theoretical accomplishment, and fortunately it is a course open to everyone. Knowledge of good usage can be acquired only by associating in life with the best speakers or by observing the literature of the best writers. The latter resource is always available. It is the practice and consent of the great authors that determine the correctness of speech. The pages of these are accessible to all. If they differ among themselves about details, choice is allowable until a general agreement settles in course of time upon one mode of expression as preferable to another or to any other proposed.2

2Ibid., p. 98.
When we say that usage is the standard of speech, we mean not merely
good usage, but present good usage. Neither the grammar nor the vocabu-
lary of one age is precisely the grammar or vocabulary of another. Each
period is not necessarily better or worse; it is simply different. The
fact that the good usage of one generation may be distinctly improper
usage in a generation which follows is frequently exemplified in the
meanings given to individual words, and sometimes in the words themselves.
This we all accept as a matter of course. But the same statement can be
made just as truly of grammatical forms and constructions. The variations
are not impressive because they are comparatively few, but they occur.¹

In a study to determine what the standard of usage is, Hall quotes
nineteen writers of language; of these, eighteen agree in the main. One,
Richard Grant White, is arrayed against the others. As to authority in
standard English, the eighteen men differ in no important details. They
all agree substantially that "the man in the street" counts little in
matters of usage; that educated, cultivated, learned men and women fix the
standard of language.²

Although authorities are now in general accord as to what class es-
establishes our standards of speech and writing, there are many points of
difficulty regarding specific items, because of the differences in
practice. Leonard, Pooley, and others have from time to time gathered
materials for the purpose of presenting a consensus of "authorities" on
most questions; and many discussions of specific items have appeared in
periodical publications. The present movement, obviously, seems to be

¹Ibid., p. 99.
going in the right direction.

This lack of general and final agreement is not surprising, for the solution of problems of English usage is determined in many instances by the attitude that one takes toward the whole subject of linguistic usage. If one is inclined to be puristic or somewhat dogmatic, he will certainly hold more firmly to older, even obsolescent usage, and will be impatient with newer trends in speech; but if, on the other hand, he belongs to that school of amiable acquiescence which bows low before popular usage, then he will just as certainly take up a position in the vanguard of linguistic progress. Finally, if thinking continues vital and advancing, then the language that expresses that thinking must change to keep pace with it. The living language, expression of a vital personal thinking, changes a little each year, and this continuous change and growth also stands in the way of a general and final agreement on questions of usage in English.¹

There are at the present time several schools of thought in respect to usage. We have the pedantic purist, who insists upon the locutions merely because they themselves have acquired them or observed their use by other persons whom they regard as authorities. The purist is not so easily labeled; however, it is possible to recognize without much difficulty the pedantic purist. Krapp says, "A purist is one that harasses himself or others by an unnecessary concern over the forms of speech. For the purist is one who pushes what might otherwise be a virtue to the point where it becomes a vice."² Despite the definition by Krapp, there are


still other persons of a commendably puristic turn of mind who are sensitive to the meanings of words and phrases and spend time and effort in thoughtfully examining English usage, refining a little here and pruning a little there, seeking always the better word or phrase. It is, then, chiefly the pedantic purism of the dogmatic and unchanging authoritarian that has driven some equally unthinking people over into the much-protesting and perhaps equally unsatisfactory schools of amiable acquiescence and irresponsible innovation.

The next school of thought is composed of those who believe in amiable acquiescence and who are inclined to liberalize usage to too great an extent. This attitude has been expressed in the assertion that "the more people make a given mistake, the less one should be corrected," and in the setting of percentages of approval of certain questionable expressions, such as fifty percent, or seventy percent, or slightly more. Careful consideration would have to be given to the true significance of the percentages that have been figured as a result of surveys made. Such a vote on a question of usage may be a very superficial and unsatisfactory proceeding.

There is a third group, the malcontents, who recommend complete abolishment of the study of English grammar. We shall omit this group in this study as inconsequential to our general problem. Somewhere a sensible mean should be found between the pedantic purism of one teacher and the unrestrained and altogether amiable acquiescence of another. It is wise, therefore, for the teacher of English to examine thoughtfully the unrestrained and journalistic generalities of certain members of this school of amiable acquiescence and not be carried away by the easy and categorical assertions of some of the more fluent and vague writings on
the subject.\(^1\)

It should be obvious from the foregoing discussions of the three schools of thought in the matter of English usage that it is the excesses within these schools that are objectionable. We need an intelligent selection and direction in the matter of English usage. As Kennedy says,

It is not the puristic attitude, merely, that we resent, but the pedantic extremes of the purists; it is not intelligent acquiescence in the trends of present day usage and teachings that we deplore, but the excessive amiability of certain acquiescent enthusiasts; and it is not the desire to make helpful and constructive changes in the method of study and the use of our language that we find harmful and confusing, but the irresponsible and haphazard innovations by highly individualistic and too often ignorant persons.\(^2\)

Pedantic purism, amiable acquiescence, and irresponsible innovations have all played their part in bringing the subject of English usage to a present state where we need to do something about it.

All teachers of English usage should know that there are levels of language which correspond to the levels of intellectual capacity in individual speakers in the various kinds of language employed. These various speech levels must be recognized and to a certain extent made use of if a well-educated speaker of English language is to display an understanding and a versatility in other matters. There should be a clear understanding of the differences between "formal literary English," "good colloquial speech," and "popular speech". Formal literary English is the language of written English; it is used chiefly for serious and important occasions whether in speech or writing. Good colloquial English is suitable for informal conversation, correspondence, and all other writings

\(^1\) Arthur Kennedy, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-50.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 30.
of well-bred ease; not wholly appropriate for occasions of literary
dignity.\(^1\) Kennedy says colloquial English ranges from very good to very
slovenly and illiterate, and calls for a good deal of thought.\(^2\) In this
regard, Krapp states:

> The line of demarcation between formal or colloquial English
is not sharp, just as it is not between colloquial and popular
English.... It is perhaps better, therefore, to speak of these
three kinds of speech, literary, colloquial, popular, not as
three distinct and separate species, but rather as three
tendencies of development of what is at bottom one speech, and
that a popular speech in the sense that it comes directly from
the experiences of men and women, in the immediate affairs of
life.\(^3\)

Popular speech is not used by persons who wish to pass as cultivated. It
represents the uneducated speech.\(^4\) Kenyon tells us that the most important
of all levels is the familiar colloquial, because it is most used by the
most important people, and because it forms the basis of the formal style,
both spoken and written. He further states that a thoughtless mistake
made by many teachers and writers on English is to assume that the most
formal style is the only one to be considered correct, to whom the word
colloquial is synonymous with bad.\(^5\) Wyld also makes the observation that
there is very little actual difference between the best formal and the
best colloquial style.\(^6\) Therefore, it is the duty of the English

---

Usage* (New York, 1938), p. 3.


(Ann Arbor, 1940), p. 17.

6. Ibid., p. 17, quoting Henry C. Wyld, *The Teaching of Reading*
instructor, for the practical purposes of teaching, to allow locutions generally acceptable in good colloquial speech.

In conclusion, the teacher of English should keep several things in mind concerning usage. First, as Fries states,

The only grammatical correctness there can be in English (or in language generally) must rest on usage. If the rules of grammar do not harmonize with the general usage of language, it has no validity. Rules or laws of grammar are like laws of botany, or physics, or biology; they are general statements attempting to describe the ways in which language operates to express ideas, and valid in so far as they are accurate generalizations. But the facts of usage are in all cases fundamental. If the facts are not in harmony with the rules of generalizations we have had in our grammar hitherto, then these rules must be restated and expanded to include all the facts. There can thus never be in grammar an error that is both very bad and very common. The more common it is, the nearer it comes to being the best of grammar.¹

Difficulties do not arise where the usage is fairly unanimous; much trouble arises when usage is divided. The appeal to usage is futile, because the difficulty is created on account of the division of usage. Since there are divisions of usage among the educated, and since we do not have a satisfactory measuring rod to decide who belongs to the educated group, we cannot say that the practice of the educated group should determine the judgment. It is probably more sound to say that the spontaneous usage of that large group who are carrying on the affairs of English speaking people is the usage to be observed and to set the standard. When this usage is practically unanimous in respect to any form or construction, then that form or construction is correct English grammar. If the usage differs in any form or construction, we must set up some

¹C. C. Fries, "What Is Good English?" *English Journal*, XIV (October, 1925), 690-691.
other principle or decision.\footnote{Ibid.}

The second important point for teachers has been stated by Kennedy: "There is far too much talk among teachers about "Pure English" when they ought to be studying the language to see how they can lead the pupil to "better English."\footnote{Arthur Kennedy, "Study of Current English," \textit{English Journal}, XXII (June, 1933), 495.} Thus, for a standard of usage, one may keep in mind, Pooley's definition of good English:

Good English is that form of speech which is appropriate to the purpose of the speaker, true to the language as it is, and comfortable to speaker and listener. It is the product of custom, neither cramped by rule, neither freed from all restraint; it is never fixed, but changes with the organic life of the language.\footnote{R. C. Pooley, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 149.}

Thus, the English teacher will strive to teach the pupils to speak clearly and according to certain conventional standards, that is, good colloquial speech, and also to express themselves with force and with grace.

Third, and last, as the materials in the following chapter show, many rules and statements in our textbooks concerning usage are at variance with the facts of past and present usage, and the teacher has the responsibility of evading those rules that are artificial and of teaching the truth of language.
CHAPTER II

RULES ON USAGE IN THE HOUSTON TEXTBOOKS

It is the purpose of this chapter to compare the rules of the textbooks of grammar used in the schools of Houston in regard to syntactical problems with the usage of standard literature and the customs of polite society. The items used in this chapter were selected to ascertain to what extent the textbooks have made use of the investigations of recent authorities on controversial points. In each case an effort was made to present as full a summary as possible of the available evidence.

The Pronoun I or Me after the Linking Verb

Seven of the eight textbooks used for this study gave the rule that the nominative forms are used to complete the meaning of linking verbs; for example: It was Mary and he (I, she, we, or they). Was it he? That is he. These are they. There seems to be no controversy over the use of the noun after the linking verb because the accusative case form is the same as the nominative. However, the use of the pronoun presents a problem, since the case forms are different. In general, cultivated speech follows the rules of the pronouns except in the case of the first person, and for years grammarians have been trying to combat the expression It is me.

As to the origin of it is me, scholars are not unanimous. Hall says:

Latham, one of the earlier English scholars, compared it with the French c'est moi. More recent scholars—Earle, Lounsbury, and others—think that the French phrase may have influenced the English. Jespersen, however, believes that I tends to become me after the verb; the pronoun gets into the place usually occupied by the object and so takes the objective form. He cites the Danish det er mig as analogous to the English it is me. We have it on good authority, also, that it is me is almost universal in Norwegian literature, while it is I is just coming in. A pretty safe theory, then,
would be that the English *it is me* is a blending of the Teutonic and French post verbal pronoun forms.\(^1\)

Krapp conveys a tone of doubt and uncertainty regarding the position of *it is me*. After listing some examples, he says:

Nevertheless, the preponderance of theoretical opinion is not on the side either of *me*, or of *her*, *him*, etc., as nominative... By the historical rules of grammar such construction is incorrect. But this test in itself is not decisive, for many uses now in good standing are historically incorrect. The question is whether these particular uses have established themselves is beyond debate. The answer to this question must obviously be in the negative.\(^2\)

Fries, however, writes the following in favor of *it is me*:

Although we condemn *it is me* as violating the rule for case following the verb *to be*, all of us accept *it is you* as perfectly good English. A historical view of the inflection of the personal pronouns of the first and second person reveals the following situation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First Person</th>
<th>Modern English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Old English Forms</strong></td>
<td><strong>Modern English</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nom. ic</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>(mine) my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. min</td>
<td>These became in</td>
<td>me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dat. me</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acc. (mec) me</td>
<td>me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                  | Second Person                 |                |
| Nom. ge          | ye                            |                |
| Gen. eower       | These became in               | your           |
| Dat. eow         | you                           | you            |
| Acc. (eowic)     | you                           |                |

Historically, *it is me* uses precisely the same case-form as *it is you*. *Me and you* were both dative—accusative forms in Old English. In respect to the pronoun of the second person, however, *you* gradually displaced *ye* in some situations and then *ye* disappeared from common use. *You*, the old dative—accusative form, is now accepted in *it is you* solely because

\(^1\)Lesslie Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

we use it in that situation. If, then, it is me is to be
censured as incorrect grammar the only sound basis for
that decision must be that we do not use me in this
expression. Obviously, the rule that 'the verb to be'
takes the same case after it as is used before it' is not
the final measure to be applied in this case but must yield,
as rules have always done, to the drift and development of
the language.  

Custom, which made you a singular pronoun in correct usage, is just as
surely establishing the combination of it is me in colloquial English,
grammar and logic notwithstanding; however, the textbooks used in this
study recognize neither the process nor the result.

The failure of the textbooks to make some allowances for common
usage is the more surprising in view of the long history of it is me and
the quantities of print that it has evoked in attack and defense. According-
ing to Leonard, Priestly, writing in 1762, says:

All our grammarians say that the nominative case of pronouns
ought to follow the verb substantive (is, and the like) as well
as precede it; yet many forms of speech, and the examples of some
of our best writers would lead us to make a contrary rule, or at
least, would leave us at liberty to adopt which we like best.
Are these the houses? Yes, they are them. Who is there? It is
me. It is him. It is not me you are in love with. (Addison)
It cannot be me. (Swift)  

The students of language were more liberal in accepting this usage
than were other educated groups. The widespread acceptance of it is me is
revealed in the Leonard-Moffett study; thus the linguist rated it is me
2.1 on a scale of 4 points in which 2 represented "cultivated informal
English." It must be added, though, that other groups of judges were more
conservative, as the following table shows: On a scale of 4 points in

---

1C. C. Fries, op. cit., pp. 687-688.

2Sterling A. Leonard, Doctrine of Correctness in English Usage, p. 186,
quoting Joseph Priestley, "Lectures on Theory of Language and Universal
which 1 represents "literary or formal English" and 4 "uncultivated English," the average rating of it is me for

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23 authors</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 editors</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 business men</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 members of M. L. A.</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 members of English Council</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 teachers of speech</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, the above table shows that this usage is acceptable in colloquial English.

T. L. K. Oliphant, in his well-known volumes, shows that me as a nominative runs through English literature for centuries. It occurs both in the predicate position, that is, after the verb, and also alone in reply to a question; for example, Who said that? Me. It is especially common in the drama. What is really happening to pronouns in general has recently been summed up by Jespersen:

On the whole, the natural tendency in English has been towards a state in which the nominative of pronouns is used only where it is clearly the subject and where this is shown by close proximity to (general position immediately before) a verb, while the objective is used elsewhere.

In the same vein, Curme states:

... the predicate pronoun should be in the nominative and in choice language usually is, but in popular and loose colloquial speech there has persisted since the sixteenth century a tendency to employ here the accusative of personal pronouns as the predicate complement after the copula.

---


Consequently, according to Pooley, the honest textbook of the future must face the facts. One must bow to social customs. In his discussion of the first person singular after the verb to be, he must say:

In formal literary, and solemn style the pronoun I is used; in colloquial usage, custom has also established the pronoun me. The tone and purpose of the speech or writing must in all cases determine the choice of the pronoun.¹

Therefore, the conclusion reached by Perrin in favor of the usage seems to be a reasonable position for teachers of language:

The argument over it is me is a case of theory vs. practice. The theory is that after the verb be the nominative form should always be used, but this theory is consistently contradicted by the actual usage of good speakers.... All the grammars of English regard it's me as acceptable colloquial usage—and since the expression is not likely to occur except in familiar speech, that gives it full standing.²

Who and Whom

Not very much comment is made concerning who and whom in the textbooks used in this study; however, this general statement is made by Hatfield, Newlum, and Blair: Who is used in the nominative case and whom is used in the objective case; for example, Whom do you wish to see? Tanner and Platt say:

The case-form of the relative pronoun who or whoever must be determined by the construction of the pronoun in its own clause as She is the girl who I think will succeed. The case-form of the interrogative pronoun who must be determined by its construction in the sentence as Who did you say that man is? and Whom do you plan to visit?³

¹R. C. Pooley, op. cit., p. 73.
Such sentences as *Who did they punish?* *Who did you give it to?* and *Who are you going to invite?* are condemned in the eight textbooks as examples of bad grammar and incorrect usage. Pooley states:

Such condemnation is by no means representative of current usage, as any careful observer of cultivated speech and informal writing can readily testify. In the initial position in questions *who* is far more prevalent than *whom* even though it may be grammatically the object of a following verb or preposition. On the contrary, when the pronoun immediately follows the verb or preposition, cultivated usage requires the objective form as in *For whom was it sent?* and *You saw whom?* The use of the nominative in the initial position seems to be the result of certain inherent language habits, one of which is the feeling for a nominative form at the beginning of a sentence and another the reluctance to make a grammatical decision before the context requires it.

For this usage, the American grammarian, Webster, strangely enough calls on analogy with Latin grammar for his defense, although he usually avoided classical analogy in his treatment of usage. He says:

*Who did you speak to?* was never used in speaking, as I can find, and if so, is hardly English at all. There is no doubt in my mind, that the English *who* and the Latin *qui* are the same word with mere variations in dialect. *Who* in the Gothic and Teutonic, has always answered to the nominative *qui*; and the dative *cui* which was pronounced like *qui*, and the ablative *que*.... So that *Who did you speak to?* *Who did you go with?* were probably as good English in ancient times as *Cui dixit?* and *Cum quo ivisti?* in Latin. Nay, it is more than probable that *who* was once wholly used in asking questions, even in the objective case: *Who did he marry?* until some Latin student began to suspect it bad English, because it was not agreeable to the Latin rules. At any rate *Whom do you speak to?* is a corruption and all the grammars that can be found will not extend the use of the phrase beyond the walls of a college.

The modern linguist is scarcely prepared to agree with Webster that the dative use of *whom* is a corruption, nor to defend wholeheartedly his

---


etymology. As a matter of fact, who has been used as an objective form throughout the history of English. The New English Dictionary says, "Common in colloquial use as the object of a verb, or a preposition following at the end of a clause." Fowler agrees that the interrogative who is often used in talk where grammar demands whom, as in Who did you hear that from? No further defense than colloquial is needed for this, and in the sort of questions that occur in printed matter other than dialogue, the liberty is seldom taken. The opposite mistake of a wrong whom is not uncommon in indirect questions.\(^2\)

Robertson states that there is a strong tendency to use who, rather than whom, whenever the word comes first in the sentence, no matter whether it is subject or object. There is, however, a further point to be made about the present use of whom and who (both interrogative and relative). The general leveling of inflections in English provides a powerful impetus to substitute a caseless and generalized who even where traditional syntax calls for whom. After all, many people get through life without ever saying whom. The interrogative who coming first in the sentence is the entering wedge of a more general movement to eliminate whom completely.\(^3\)

The objective who is and long has been, fully established in cultivated usage, says Kenyon. In the sentence Who did he marry? who is in the objective case and is properly used. This is not meant in some special and esoteric sense, but in the ordinary acceptance of our use in the concept of case in present English. According to its use, it and you can

\(^1\)R. C. Pooley, op. cit., p. 75.


\(^3\)Stuart Robertson, Development of Modern English (New York, 1939), p. 500.
Kenyon holds to this idea about who:

The difference in the age of the nominative you and the objective who in cultivated use is inconsiderable when we remember that both have existed for nearly five hundred years. How much longer will the grammatical sticklers require objective who to be used by the educated before recognizing its existence by the side of nominative you?¹

Curme says that we have in general abandoned the use of the old inflectional endings in favor of modern means of expression. He further states that there is in colloquial speech a strong tendency to employ modern forms, as Who (instead of whom) did you meet? Who did you give it to? instead of Whom did you give it to? or To whom did you give it? We should withstand the very strong drift here toward the modern forms and use the more expressive older ones.²

In Leonard's study, the linguist rated Who are you looking for? higher than any of the other groups of judges; the other groups placed the expression among disputed usages. All the groups except the business men and authors gave majorities for approval. This is accepted in informal spoken English, but most authorities do not approve it for written English.³ Leonard also adds:

'All cultivated persons unless they make a heroic and conscious effort invariably say, Who is it for? and Who did you see?... On the contrary no cultivated person says A man who I saw or less often, A man that I saw.'⁴

²George O. Curme, College English Grammar (Richmond, 1925), p. 48.
The use of the word, *whom*, not only presents a problem when used in the beginning of a sentence, but also when used as a relative pronoun. Of this use, Pooley says that the case of the relative pronoun in such sentences as *There is a man who I know will be faithful*, is sometimes disputed. *Who* is ordinarily parsed as the subject of the verb *will be*, the clause *I know* being considered parenthetical. He further says that some writers, perhaps influenced by the stress on the objective *whom* in the school room, use *whom* in such a sentence, making it objective of the verb *know*. While such usages do occur, they are by no means common enough to challenge seriously the customary nominative *who*.\(^1\) Perrin states: "When *who* is the subject of a verb separated from it by other words, the nominative is used, as *He made a list of all the writers who (subject of were) he thought were important in the period*.\(^2\) He further adds that *whom* sometimes occurs here, probably as a result of trying to keep the formal practice of using *whom* when it is a preceding object.\(^3\)

Therefore, the textbooks are against the use of *who* in the initial position of a sentence, and Krapp is doubtful of its position too. However, we see that Curme, Pooley, Leonard, Robertson, Fowler, and Fries acknowledge the drifting of *whom* to *who* in colloquial use; although they do not approve it for written English. Thus, the textbooks are quite right in distinguishing the case forms for the relative pronoun for strictly literary use, but to insist that these literary and formal distinctions be made in informal writing and speech, as has been shown, does

\(^1\) R. C. Pooley, *op. cit.*, p. 76.


\(^3\) Ibid.
violence to the observed facts of current usage.

Split Infinitive

Three of the eight textbooks used in this study had no discussion of the split infinitive.¹ The general idea given by Blair, and Tanner and Platt was that a modifier should be placed where it does not separate the parts of an infinitive. Newlun and Meacham (p. 227) stated: "Do not place a modifier between the infinitive verb and its sign to," and gave the following examples:

Wrong
1. He wanted to gaily ride down the street.
2. She begged us to not be inconsiderate.

Coherent
1. He wanted to ride gaily down the street.
2. She begged us not to be inconsiderate.

The question as to whether one may "split" an infinitive by placing an adverbial modifier between the to and infinitive verb has been hotly debated for a century. In spite of the quantities of print on the subject, and the definite statements of linguists and grammarians, the writers of most textbooks still cleave to the nineteenth-century version, stating their objections with varying degrees of certainty. Although the texts say that a modifier should not be placed between the parts of an infinitive, many writers, whose discussions will follow, say that an occasional violation of this rule for the purpose of securing emphasis is permissible; for example: I must ask you to kindly return my book.

¹Junior English Activities, Book One, Junior English Activities, Book Two, and Senior English Activities, Book One.
Curme says that the wide use of the split infinitive is another indication that English has been moving. However, the construction has been in use in the literary language since the fourteenth century and has often been employed by our best writers.\(^1\) He felt that the split infinitive was an improvement of English expression, published his views in a language journal, and soon found that he had made a fortunate move. Letters soon came in from all parts of the country and they have brought him a large number of split infinitives and questions from the leading authors of the last century, showing a constant growing use of this construction in the literary language.

Developing more fully his explanation of the need for the divided infinitive on the grounds of clarity and emphasis, Curme writes:

> When the adverb precedes a verb, the verb seems more important to our feeling than the adverb even though the adverb may also be stressed. But when we are not calling attention to the verbal activity so much as to some particular in connection with it, we place the adverb expressing that particular after the verb. It is this feature that has furthered the development of the split infinitive.\(^2\)

Otto Jespersen states that linguistic instinct now takes to to belong to the preceding verb rather than to the infinitive, a fact which, together with other circumstances, serves to explain the phenomenon usually mistimed "the split infinitive." He further explains:

> The name is bad because we have many infinitives without to... Although examples of an adverb between to and the infinitive occur as early as the fourteenth century, they do not become very frequent until the latter half of the nineteenth century. In some cases they decidedly contribute to the clearness of

---


the sentence by showing at once which word is qualified by the adverb.¹

There seems to be no doubt, says Jespersen, as to the complete independence of the preposition to and the root infinitive. Either the root infinitive may stand alone, not only with certain verbs but in groups of infinitives by an initial to or the to itself may stand alone as the sign of a previously expressed or implied infinitive.²

According to Leonard, the statement *We can expect the commission to at least protect our interest* has been "established." Business men and English teachers ranked this higher than the linguists did; authors and speech teachers, who alone considered it disputable usage, ranked it lowest. Several linguists said that the use of the split infinitive is in fact sufficiently common in good writing to class it as established. Common sense suggests its avoidance when nothing is gained in clearness. The evidence in favor of the split infinitive is sufficiently clear to make it obvious that the teachers who condemn it arbitrarily are wasting their time and that of the pupils.³

J. Lesslie Hall presents an interesting comparison of rule and usage for the split infinitive in the middle of the nineteenth century:

*Shall an adverb ever be put between to and the other parts of an infinitive? This is a "burning question" and one on which verbalists differ....* Dean Alford, in 1864, said, "Surely this is a practice entirely unknown to English

---


speakers and writers.\textsuperscript{1}

At that very moment, according to Hall, Dean Alford could have found the split infinitive in the writings of Dickens, Matthew Arnold, Mrs. Gaskell, Browning, George Eliot, of his own day; Burns, Byron, Coleridge, Goldsmith, and others of earlier periods. In addition, Hall quotes many authorities in grammar, including Krapp, Lounsbury, and Jespersen, as defenders of the split infinitive. He cites Lounsbury's list of twenty-one authors who have used the split infinitive; then adds the names he has found, making a total of fifty-five authors who have used the split infinitive occasionally. The split infinitive spread considerably in the nineteenth century, but not among the standard authors; they used it sparingly…. One has to search the great literature to find the split infinitive; it crops up frequently in scientific journals, daily papers, reports of mercantile societies, and such places. It is used pretty frequently by well-educated men not especially careful of their English. We must all admit, then, that the split infinitive is neither an innovation nor a vulgarism, but a rarity in pure literature; that it is very clear and very convenient, and has a right to a trial in the language.\textsuperscript{2}

It is a mistake to think that it is always an absolute error to split the infinitive, for sometimes it is almost impossible to do otherwise, if the meaning is to be made clear. Lloyd gives this example to prove that statement: \textit{He failed to entirely comprehend it}. This obviously means that his comprehension was partial, though not complete. If we write, \textit{He

\textsuperscript{1}J. Lesslie Hall, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 266, quoting Dean Alford, \textit{The Queen's English} (n.p., 1866), p. 188.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., pp. 268-271.
failed entirely to comprehend it, the interpretation would naturally be that there was no comprehension at all, and the same thing might be true if we make it, He failed to comprehend it entirely. There is no way to make the thought clear except by splitting the infinitive or rewording the sentence completely.\(^1\) Krapp argues that there is no logical objection to putting the adverb between the parts of the infinitive, and says further that no one ever objects to dividing the infinitive in "-ing;" example: His plan for heavily taxing the people. He adds that the split infinitive is not only a natural, but often an admirable, form of expression.\(^2\) Robertson agrees that the split infinitive has had sanction for at least three centuries, and there are signs today that the unreasonable prejudices against it as vulgar and uncultured are beginning to abate.\(^3\)

Of this usage, Kennedy says that possibly the objection to the practice arises primarily from the fact that the infinitive and its sign to form a compact and special kind of phrase, slightly different from any other in the language. He further states:

It has generally been considered bad practice to split the infinitive, even though very good writers have sometimes done it, and even though there is no very strong logical argument against it. Rhetoricians are gradually coming to realize that it is sometimes necessary to interpose the adverb in infinitives where no other word will prove quite so effective. If one wishes to stress the action, one can hardly avoid writing He built an altar to just miss the ceiling and He tried to further improve foreign trade.\(^4\)

Fowler tells us in his book how to use the split infinitive, points

\(^2\)George Krapp, Modern English, pp. 298-300.  
\(^3\)Stuart Robertson, op. cit., p. 505.  
out the danger, and divides the English speaking world into four classes:
(1) those who neither know nor care what a split infinitive is, (2) those
who do not know, but care very much, (3) those who know and condemn, and
(4) those who know and approve.¹ Fowler, like Jespersen, Curme, Robertson,
Kennedy, Lloyd, Hall, and Lounsbury, belongs to the fourth class.

Since we find occasional violators of this rule in our literature
and since the violations cover a long period in the history of English,
teachers should not be so dogmatic in their teachings of the split infini-
tive. For, as Leonard says, "The evidence in favor of the split infini-
tive is sufficiently clear to make it obvious that teachers who condemn it
arbitrarily are wasting their time and that of the pupils."²

Double Negatives

Much emphasis is placed on avoiding the use of the double negative in
the eight textbooks used for this study. All the texts said, in substance,
that one does not use two or more negatives in the same sentence. To avoid
double negatives, they say, be on your guard in using hardly, scarcely, no,
no one, none, not, nobody, nothing, and neither in the same sentence with
another negative word. Tanner and Platt say, "Except when they coordinate
do not use two or more negative words in the same sentence."³ Hatfield
says, "Such words as scarcely, hardly, none, only, and but should not be

¹H. W. Fowler, _op. cit._, pp. 558-561.
²S. A. Leonard, _Current English Usages_, p. 124. For the origin,
development and complete outline of the functions of the infinitive see
George O. Curme, _Syntax_, pp. 455-467, 474-482.
³My English Book Three, p. 511.
used with other negatives like no or not."¹

Examples

1. I haven't no work to do. (Wrong)
2. I have no work to do. (Right)
3. I haven't any work to do. (Right)

In older literary English, as in current popular speech, two or three negatives were felt as stronger than a single negative on the same principle that we drive in two or three nails instead of one, feeling that they hold better than one. Under Latin influence this older usage has disappeared in literary English.²

According to Hall, two negatives were very frequently used in Anglo-Saxon, and are found in Gothic, Old High German, and Middle High German. They occur frequently in Chaucer, Malory, the Miracle Plays, Caxton, Latimer, and other works and authors of the early modern period.³ Oliphant says, "Caxton was unable to pass the Double Negative on to Tyndale, a generation later."⁴ But, though Tyndale avoided it, it was used by others of his day and of later days. During the sixteenth century some authors used it and others avoided it, while others as well-known dropped it. At the end of the sixteenth century, we find it used considerably by Shakespeare, though the editors have changed the texts of Shakespeare in many passages.⁵

¹W. Wilbur Hatfield, Senior English Activities, Book One (New York, 1938), p. 216.
²George O. Curme, College English Grammar, p. 154.
³J. Lesslie Hall, op. cit., p. 75.
⁴Ibid., quoting T. Oliphant, op. cit., p. 330.
⁵Ibid., p. 75.
That two negatives used in a negative predication reverse the meaning and form a positive statement is a curious tradition. Thus, Pooley writes:

It was first enunciated by Lowth in the 18th century and is still warmly cherished by English teachers. It was all the more surprising that this conception survives with no apparent diminution in strength when one recalls the current prevalence of the phrases can't hardly and can't scarcely in the daily usage of educated people, including the majority of teachers. Sentences containing these phrases may be frowned upon by the more exacting teacher, but they are never misconstrued to be entirely affirmative; thus I can't hardly read this is never interpreted as meaning I read this with great ease. The double negative in most cases may be fairly excluded from writing and speech of the present day on the grounds that it is out of style, currently unacceptable, but surely not on the grounds of logic or paradox. But the textbooks still adhere to the old tradition.... Such expressions as, I didn't get no book and I haven't seen nobody may be considered entirely outside the range of acceptable current English, even though that range be liberally interpreted, but the forms didn't hardly, haven't hardly, wouldn't hardly can less certainly be excluded.¹

It is true that a ballot of English teachers in the state of Colorado on this usage revealed an overwhelming opinion that haven't hardly is definitely illiterate English. But it is also true that a large number of these teachers use the expression unconsciously in informal speech. It would seem, therefore, that haven't hardly has at present no standing in written English in spite of its notably widespread use in speech.²

Leonard and Moffett likewise found general disapproval in the use of the double negative. In their study, I haven't hardly any money was frowned upon by the judges. On a scale of four points, in which one represented literary usage and four illiteracy, the general average of

¹R. C. Pooley, op. cit., pp. 95-94.
²Ibid.
scores was 3.8. The British judges ranked it 4.0.¹

Of this usage, Kennedy says that the use of the double negative is still very common in colloquial English, although the practice is no longer tolerated in standard literary usage.² Nevertheless, the use of a number of negatives in a sentence may be called pleonastic, but it is certainly not illogical.³ The double negative fought hard for its life in the sixteenth century but succumbed finally to scholastic influences. It is out of vogue but not ungrammatical. It sometimes crops out at inopportune times in our speech. In the words of Hall, it may be added that "the double negative springs from the desire for emphasis and seems to be natural to human language."⁴ Therefore, in spite of the use of the double negative in speech, at the present time, it has no standing in written English, but it is often heard in colloquial speech. However, Perrin makes the following statement:

The objection to it is not that "two negatives make an affirmative," for they do not—only a person being perverse would misunderstand a double negative. The objection is simply that the construction is not now in fashion among educated people.⁵

²Arthur Kennedy, Current English, p. 554.
⁴J. Lesslie Hall, op. cit., p. 77.
⁵Porter G. Perrin, op. cit., p. 485.
Agreement of the Subject and Predicate

The idea that a predicate must always agree in person and number with its subject was expressed by all eight authors. However, many exceptions to this rule were given by Tanner and Platt,\textsuperscript{1} and Hatfield,\textsuperscript{2} namely,

(1) Subjects that require singular verbs, (a) A compound subject joined by \textit{and} (sometimes omitted) when the parts denote one person or thing or express a single idea. Example: \textit{The Stars and Stripes waves in the breeze.} (b) A compound subject when the parts are modified by such words as \textit{each}, \textit{every}, \textit{many}, etc. Example: \textit{Each boy and each girl was examined.} (c) Two or more subjects joined by \textit{or} or \textit{nor}, if they are singular. Example: \textit{Either a radio or camera is a satisfactory gift.} (d) Nouns that, though plural in form, are singular in meaning, such as \textit{measles}, \textit{mumps}, \textit{news}, and \textit{mathematics}. (2) Subjects that require plural verbs, (a) A compound subject joined by \textit{and} when the parts denote different persons, places or things. Example: \textit{A secretary and treasurer were elected.} Many rules are given as an exception. We use a singular verb with a singular subject (except \textit{you}) in speaking of one and a plural verb with a plural subject in speaking of more than one. When a relative pronoun is the subject of its clause, the verb must agree with it. The relative pronoun is singular if its antecedent is singular and plural if its antecedent is plural.

Of this usage, Hall says that a verb must agree with its subject in person and number is an old rule of grammar and that in our young days we

\textsuperscript{1}My English, Book Three, p. 296, and My English, Book Four, p. 326.

\textsuperscript{2}Senior English Activities, Book One, p. 172.
never dreamed that this rule ever admitted an exception. No teacher, no
grammar, ever suggested a possibility. In recent years, however, we read
in progressive textbooks that a verb must decline to agree with its sub-
ject. We are told that a group of subjects may be conceived as a unit
and take a verb in the singular. If we should look back into our Anglo-
Saxon period, we see plural subjects taking the singular verb. These
Anglo-Saxon sentences cannot be represented in Modern English on account
of the loss of inflections. But they are real incongruences just as if
we should say, Two men goes to the city and James and John sees the sights.
They are rare but prove that the rule was not absolutely rigid.¹

Jespersen tells us that the spoken language of Denmark discarded
concord in verbs three hundred years ago and the written language more
recently, so that the verb no longer carries a sign of person and number.²
Bradley, the English lexicographer, intimates that English may some day
do the same thing; for example, He go, she go, etc. That is, the pronoun
alone will show person and number. Jespersen would no doubt place this
under "progress in language"; but the purist would say that the language
was going to perdition.³

It may be noted that many of the Elizabethan authors paid little
attention to the subject-predicate agreement. Numerous passages may be
found in Malory, Latimer, Marlowe, Shakespeare, and many other authors.
The great grammarians all note that is and was are used with plural

¹J. Lesslie Hall, op. cit., p. 55.
³J. Lesslie Hall, op. cit., p. 55.
subjects for many centuries, especially when they stand before the subject. There is tears for his love. Here is more of us. Fire and food is ready, are typical for Shakespeare. Two or three is enough to bear witness, so is the pains of the soul, which doings of the vicar was damnable are taken here and there from Latimer's sermons. One grammarian, Lounsberry, regards this *is* and *was* in Elizabethan literature as plural, and to them traces the illiterate *is* and *was* in present-day English.¹

Pooley writes that Milton also used free syntax in subject-predicate agreement; so did Cowley, Swift, Defoe, Hume, Lamb, Thackeray, and indeed almost every writer of note to the middle of the nineteenth century. From that time on, however, the rules of the eighteenth century became rigid in the formalism of the nineteenth century, with a resultant closer attention to formal agreement. But examples of freer usage as in Kipling's "The tumult and the shouting dies" still serve to remind us that formal agreement in the subject-verb relationship may be violated when the sense of the expression is stronger than the feeling for concord. From the literature, it appears that concord was settled entirely by the meaning of the passage prior to the eighteenth century, as is witnessed by Shakespeare's very free use; in the eighteenth century regimentation set in, only slightly affecting the writers of that century, so that the earlier freedom very largely, though not entirely, disappeared. But many problems were left unsolved by the rules.²

Curme explains the difference between the old practice and present rule:

¹J. Lesslie Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
²R. C. Pooley, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-82.
The predicate agrees—wherever the form will permit—with the subject in person, number, gender, and case. On account of the lack of distinctive forms, the verb often cannot be brought into agreement with the subject, but so far as the form will permit, present usage requires strict concord, while older usage was not so strict. ¹

Fries cites many examples where this agreement of form is not carried out. The following examples and explanations were made by him:

The family is here or The family are here. It depends upon whether I have in mind the family as a single unit or the individual who makes up the group. The word family is grammatically singular in form and in the older English the verb used with it would also have the form indicating singular number. The agreement in Latin, or in Greek, or in Old English is an agreement based purely on form. In Modern English, that form of the verb is used which accords with the meaning in the subject. ²

Continuing, he says that in most situations the meanings and forms coincide: books is plural in meaning as well as in form, as in men, or oxen, or they. But sometimes meaning and form conflict: There were two thousand foreigners on the boat, of whom one half were Italians. This last five years has been a time of reconstruction. Wherever there is this conflict, the tendency of the English language today is to give the concord based on meaning the right of way. If this question of agreement must be decided, usage in number cannot be the basis of the decision. The rule is perfectly clear, insisting that the verb should agree with the antecedent in number. Yet, these rules imply an inflectional system like Old English or Latin, and this condition does not exist in Modern English. ³

In conclusion, Fries says:

¹George O. Curme, Syntax, p. 49.
²C. C. Fries, op. cit., p. 694.
³Ibid., pp. 694-696.
Where agreement in number is the issue, I shall insist that, although no one set of forms is the sole correct one because of the division of usage, it would be a reasonable and sound decision to choose the one that is in harmony with the tendencies of the development of our language as these can be seen from its history. This method is but yielding to those patterns which constitute the genius of the English language.¹

The concord of subject and verb is a problem to the teacher of English. Since there are so many variations to the general rule, some type of agreement should be reached by our textbook writers; so that the textbooks will not be cluttered with many rules. Pooley has offered a good revision for the rule:

Any rule formulated for this case must point out (1) that two singular subjects joined by or or nor when felt to be singular and alternate are followed by a singular verb, (2) that when they are felt to be plural or grouped are followed by a plural verb, (3) that in questions the plural verb is always used, and (4) that in negative statements the plural verb is very common.²

Therefore, if the textbooks do not give exceptions to the rule of the subject and predicate, it becomes the duty of the teacher to supplement the texts by giving exceptions to the general rule.

**Shall and Will**

Six of the eight textbooks used for this study gave a rule for the use of **shall** and **will**. The idea conveyed in the texts was: In declarative sentences, to express merely future time, use **shall** in the first person and **will** in the second and third persons. To express willingness, determination, or promise use **will** in the first person and **shall** in the

¹Ibid., p. 696.

²R. C. Pooley, op. cit., p. 82.
second and third persons.

1. A week from today I shall be sixteen. (Simple futurity)
2. I will do that errand for you now if you like. (Willingness)
3. I will not do it. (Determination)

In interrogative sentences, the general rule is to use the auxiliary that is expected in the answer.

1. Shall you have time to do this for me? (Question)
2. I shall have time. (Answer)
3. Will you do this for me? (Question)
4. I will do this for you. (Answer)

Except in rare instances, use shall in asking a question that involves the first person. The reason for this is plain: wherever I (we) ask a question, generally merely future tense is involved, for I am not likely to ask another what I am willing to do. Therefore, the correct auxiliary is the one to express simple futurity.

1. Shall I see you at school tomorrow?
2. Shall I help you with that?

Note: In answering a question a person often repeats the question and then answers it. In such a case, if will was used in the original question, it is retained in the repeated question. Will I come to your party? Of course, I will. (The original question was Will you come to my party?)

In early Anglo-Saxon shall and will were principal verbs and had distinctive meanings. Shall meant to be under obligation or compulsion, a meaning which persists in the modern prophetic and imperative shall. Will on the other hand, meant to wish or desire. Then, in the later Anglo-Saxon, they were used as auxiliaries in building the future tense: and the original meanings faded, especially in will, but did not disappear. Before the seventeenth century, grammars and usage agreed in using will or shall with all persons to express future time. Shall was then, as now, also used to form the imperative of the second and third
persons.¹

Fries has pointed out that many of the grammars before 1765 and in a number that followed, there was no indication of any discrimination between the uses of shall and will in the formation of the future. The first grammar following Ward's of 1765 to accept his explanation of the meanings of shall and will and incorporate the rules he had derived was Lindley Murray in 1795. Only after the first quarter of the nineteenth century did the complete discussion of the rules for shall and will in independent-declarative statements, in interrogative sentences, and in subordinate clauses become a common feature of textbooks of English grammar.² Henry Sweet thinks that the fluctuation between shall and will was at first unmeaning, but that the present use seems to be the result of a desire to keep the original meanings of the verbs as much as possible to the background.³

After giving a survey of the various functions of the two verbs, shall and will, Jespersen points out that they still to some extent preserve the old meanings of volition and obligation, but often combine these with the idea of futurity, and finally very often denote futurity, pure and simple, without any visible trace of the original meanings. Matters are thus far from simple, chiefly because the English language to express the three distinct ideas of volition, obligation, and futurity possesses only two auxiliaries; but also because there is always some

---


inherent difficulty in speaking with certainty of what is yet to come, more particularly so if it is to be viewed as independent of human will...

A distinction must be made between the will of the speaker and that of the subject of the sentence: these are identical in the case of the first person, but not in the second and third persons. Hence, we have in various sections found different rules according to grammatical person of the subject.\(^1\)

Jespersen further adds that it must be recognized that the idea of volition (determination, desire, willingness) and of obligation (necessity, restraint, duty, etc.) are in themselves often vague and indefinite. Emotions such as diffidence, modesty, etc., also further the difference between statements and questions, and exert their influence on the choice of the auxiliary. It is no wonder, therefore, that different rules should have prevailed with regard to these verbs at different periods and still prevail in different parts of the English speaking world.\(^2\)

In the Leonard study, the sentence My colleagues and I shall be glad to help you showed a curious disagreement between the English teachers and the linguists. Of the teachers, none disapproved and 75% considered it appropriate to the most formal use. Of the sixteen linguists, four disapproved altogether, while the remaining twelve were evenly divided between approval as formal literary English and as good colloquial usage. Such disagreement among experts, while exhibiting a strong tendency toward complete approval, gives little justification for dogmatism on the subject

---


\(^2\) Ibid.
of shall and will by teachers.\(^1\)

In the same study, I will probably come a little later was considered disputable. In the first person, shall has, from the early Middle English period, been the normal auxiliary for expressing mere futurity. Experts are unwilling to dogmatise on the distinction (if any) between shall and will. The whole matter is at present surrounded by a cloud of uncertainty. There seems to be no doubt that the hard and fast rules laid down by most rhetorics and handbooks are not to be relied upon. Probably what distinctions ever existed are gradually disappearing. About two-thirds of the judges approved this particular sentence.\(^2\)

Leonard also says that whenever the subject of the verb is represented as in control of the situation, will is used in all three persons. Shall is used in all three persons to represent that some other force, not the subject of the verb, is in control. Since shall is rather uncommon, it is, when stressed or emphasized, frequently heard in the first person for determination.\(^3\)

Robertson writes that the elaborate code of distinction between shall and will that has been built up by theorists is of course simply ignored in general present usage. Most educated Americans would write, I shall be glad to come, but they would say, I'll be glad to come. Now I'll must be, phonetically, the contraction of I will, not of I shall; so the phrases commonly used in American speech I'll be there and I'll be glad to serve

---

\(^1\)Sterling A. Leonard, Current English Usage, p. 114.

\(^2\)Ibid., pp. 114-115.

do, in a sense, level the distinction between I shall and I will.¹

Robertson adds that perhaps all that can safely be said of contemporary trends with reference to shall and will is that there is a general drift, more marked in American than in English practice, away from shall and toward will in almost every category. At the same time, it is unwise to assume that shall is always pedantic or affected; in a question with the first personal pronoun, for example, shall is almost always preferred in general American practice. The popular drift to will has, of course, been opposed by the conservative tradition of the schools as well as the survival of an older attitude toward "rule" in our grammars; and the opposition has been successful enough to make it expedient for anyone who desires to conform to generally accepted standards to pay some deference to it. However, to use only will as the sign of the pure future in all three persons would certainly be an improvement over the confused and confusing distinctions that are still recommended. The popular tendency, then, is one that should be encouraged rather than combated; it may be observed that the best of present-day grammarians, Poutsma, Curme, and Jespersen on the whole incline to this attitude.²

The cultured speakers of Southern England are more accurate than most of those in America in observance of a distinction between shall and will. C. A. Lloyd thinks that all educated people should certainly be familiar with the rules of shall and will. If, having attained this familiarity, they do not see fit to observe them, they have at least the advantage that

¹Stuart Robertson, op. cit., pp. 516-517.

²Ibid., pp. 519-520. For a longer discussion on shall and will see Otto Jespersen, Modern English Grammar, IV: 235-300.
the failure to do so cannot be attributed to ignorance on their part.¹

From Curme, we learn that the new usage of employing *shall* in the first person and *will* in the second and the third has by reason of its expressiveness become more or less established in the literary language, but as it is a natural expression only to the people of England proper, who have developed it, deviations from the rule are not infrequent. Outside of England proper there has come into wide use in colloquial speech a simpler future, formed by employing *will* in all three persons. As this is a natural American expression, we have considerable difficulty in learning the literary future.²

Pooley's study reveals that the use of *shall* and *will* as future auxiliaries has long engaged the attention of textbook writers. In view of the evidence now available concerning these forms, both from the standpoint of their history and their contemporary usage, it seems advisable for textbooks in elementary and junior high school levels to omit any discussion of correct usage for *shall* and *will*. Textbooks designed for the senior high school and college should either omit all reference to correctness or else give the whole story: traditions, rules, facts of past usage. Only by so doing can they pretend to any approximation to current usage.³

Thus, there is much confusion between *shall* and *will* among the teachers and the linguists. This controversy deprives the words of any definite meanings. Therefore, it behooves the teacher not to be too dogmatic on the subject, since there is a tendency toward the approval of

¹C. A. Lloyd, _op. cit._, p. 237.
³R. C. Pooley, _op. cit._, p. 61.
The eight textbooks used for this study said that after certain verbs, use a predicate adjective to denote the quality or the condition of the subject; use an adverb to indicate the manner in which the action of the verb is performed. Such verbs are feel, look, smell, taste, sound, appear, remain, grow, prove, turn, hold, and keep; for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The milk turned sour.</td>
<td>The car turned quickly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child grew strong.</td>
<td>The vines grow rapidly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother appeared weary.</td>
<td>An officer appears unexpectedly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He looks shy.</td>
<td>He looked shyly at her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She proved loyal to me.</td>
<td>I proved my cases easily.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two of the texts, *My English, Book Three* (p. 310) and *My English, Book Four* (p. 340), allowed for the following exceptions for the use of bad or badly after feel:

Most authorities, especially recent authorities either declare unqualifiedly for I feel bad or indicate a preference for it. However, I feel badly has a considerable weight of usage behind it. We may say either, then, and be correct; we shall not be wrong whichever we use. Generally, however, in such a case, when there is some other expression that will serve as well, it is part of wisdom to use it. For example, if we mean to say that we are ill, why not avoid both bad and badly and say instead I feel ill or I do not feel well.

The only question of grammatical form arising in connection with the modern adverb, according to Pooley, is that of the adverb formed without -ly as hard, loud, soft, fast, and slow, are sometimes called the flat adverb. That some of these words are properly adverbs is not denied by the textbooks, but they disagree as to which ones may be accepted. The advent of the automobile necessitating the caution drive slow has placed
This usage before the eyes of everyone.\(^1\) This problem of the adjective and adverb is by no means a recent one, as is shown by the fact that Dr. Samuel Johnson lists words like *slow* as an adjective only in direct defiance of the contrary usage of Milton and others.\(^2\) The real solution is suggested by Leonard:

Euphony seems rarely to have been appealed to for resolutions of problems like the use of *slow* and *slowly*, *feel bad* or *badly*, and the like, which probably are actually settled to fit sentence cadence.\(^3\)

Pooley further adds that for textbook purposes the matter might be stated thus:

Some adverbs have two forms, one identical with the adjective of similar meaning, as *loud*, *soft*, *quick*, and the other formed with -ly, as *loudly*, *softly*, *quickly*, and *slowly*. Either form is grammatically correct, but the sound of the adverb in the sentence determines to some extent which form to select. Hence in imperative sentences, *Come quick*, *Drive slow*, and *Speak soft*, the short form is quite generally used; in declarative sentences, *We walked slowly*, *They spoke softly*, the longer form is frequently used. In any type of sentence the sound of the adverb in the sentence is the determining factor.\(^4\)

Lloyd recognizes the fact that some people object to *Drive slow* and say *Drive slowly*. One would find that the dictionary says *slow* is in excellent standing as an adverb. It cannot take the place of *slowly* in every connection, but in some circumstances it is just as good or possibly better.\(^5\) From Fowler, we learn that it is appropriate whenever slowness

---

\(^1\) R. C. Pooley, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

\(^2\) S. A. Leonard, *Doctrine of Correctness*, p. 70.

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 155.

\(^4\) R. C. Pooley, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-66.

is the main idea to be expressed—and that is exactly the situation in
the warning, Drive slow.¹

Krapp agrees that slow is an adverb. It is correct both historically
and by the test of use in adverbial constructions like Go slow, or This
clock runs slow. Theoretically, he says,

Grammarians often replace all uses of slow as an adverb on
the grounds that adverbs must end in -ly. But how about soon
and many other adverbs like this which cannot end in -ly.
The rule is entirely artificial, and adverbs without the
ending of -ly are established beyond question in good use.²

In Leonard's study, fifty-six people felt that this sentence, That's
a dangerous curve; you'd better go slow, should be established. Fifteen
percent of all the judges approved this as formal literary English; the
same proportion condemned it as illiterate (but only four of the twenty-
seven linguists); the rest approved it as colloquial. The Standard New
International and New English Dictionary approved slow as an adverb. In
the same study, Drive slow down the hill was established. A large majori-
ty of judges approved this as good colloquial English; except among the
business men and authors, My father walked very slow down the street was
established. Among these distinctions, apparently based squarely in
consideration of euphony, the fact emerges that slow is safely established
as an adverb.³

Therefore, in explaining the adjective and adverb, the teacher of
English should take into consideration the historical forms and current

¹H. W. Fowler, op. cit., p. 188.
practices in the use of these parts of speech. In the words of Robertson, she may keep in mind that euphony and rhythm sometimes take precedence over traditional syntax.¹

Like as a Conjunction

The eight textbooks used in this study state that whatever its function, *like* is not a conjunction. According to Tanner and Platt,² *like* is a vulgarism when used in place of *as* or *as if*, and may properly be followed by a noun or pronoun, but not a clause of comparison. Examples:

*It looks as if* (not *like*) *there has been a frost*. *He came as* (not *like*) *he had promised.*

*Like* as an isolated conjunction is not a recent use, having been employed by Shakespeare and his predecessors. It was usually considered an abridgment of *like as* and was not objected to. Leonard records that *like* as a conjunction was "neither used nor mentioned in 18C grammars."³ Pooley points out:

*It was common in the nineteenth century, even creeping into literature, is seen by these examples collected by Hodgson:*  
*Bidding the customers like Queen Eleanor did fair Rosmund (Mayhew, 1864); A timid nervous child like Martin was (Ibid); And if each man would only add his mite, like the pilgrim adds his stone to the heap in the desert... (Js. Bromfield, 1866); A nation must laugh...like a satyr or like those bitter fisher women did in France... or like we have laughed under Punch's auspices for many years. (J. Hain Friswell, 1870).*⁴

---

¹Stuart Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 523.
The use of *like* as a conjunction is a usage on the border line in American English. Although the textbooks in general are opposed to admitting the conjunction *like* into accepted usage, it has firmly established itself in the educated speech of many sections of the United States, and if we may judge from current dramatic literature, it is common in many parts of England. Many people who are otherwise accurate in speech use *like* freely as a conjunction with no sense of guilt.

*Like* as a conjunction can neither be fully defended as standard English, nor fully condemned. Pooley writes that he has seen the conjunction in the dialogue of recent plays by Galsworthy, Shaw, Drinkwater, and Philpotts.¹ Of this usage, Sonnenschein says that it is not good English to use *like* as a subordinate conjunction, but adds that these constructions are often heard and are considered vulgar; as *Like fowls do* and *He acted like I did.*² After a brief note on the older English, *like as*, Curme states: "The present tendency in colloquial and popular speech is to simplify these forms of *like*; example, *It looks like he is afraid.*"³ Although many people avoid the use of *like* as a conjunction, it is finding its way into literature and colloquial conversation.

It has been pointed out that this usage is used in many sections of the United States; and in England, it is heard in the conversation of literary men of high standing. Lloyd says:

Some adverse criticism has been made of the president's use of *like* as a conjunction in the expression *like I do*. As is undoubtedly preferable here, but if Mr. Roosevelt wishes to

¹R. C. Pooley, op. cit., p. 135.
³George Curme, Syntax, p. 283.
argue the matter, he can point to Shakespeare, Darwin, Southey, Newman, Morris, Hazlitt—all writers of good standing who have used like as he did.1

Leonard used the following sentences in his study:

1. We don't often see sunsets like they have in the tropics.
2. It looks like they meant business.
3. Do it like he tells you.

A decided majority of judges condemned these expressions as uncultivated; however, there were enough votes for acceptance to prevent its being placed among indisputably illiterate usage.2

In teaching, the use of like as a conjunction is likely to present a problem. It seems safe to write that one should not use like as a conjunction in writing, but could use it in good colloquial English. In the words of Krapp, one might say:

It is first of all a widespread custom of the speech; it has arisen naturally and in the same way that as has, and unless one starts from the a priori position that there is only one legitimate form of expression for every idea in speech, it makes as strong a bid for favor as the conjunction as.

Sit, Set and Lie, Lay

Only one text, Senior English Activities, Book One (p. 146) gives any type of rule for sit and set. Thus, to sit means to occupy a seat," to "rest", and does not take an object. To set means to "put" or to "place" and in this sense, set always takes an object. Blair and Hatfield gave exercises, but no rules to govern them. Two of the texts, Senior English Activities, Book One (p. 146) and My English, Book Three(p. 515), gave

---

1C. A. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 105.

2Sterling A. Leonard, Current English Usage, p. 147.

3George Krapp, Modern English, p. 520.
the following rules for lie and lay: Lie means to "recline," "to be stretched out," and is not followed by an object; while to lay means to "place" or "put" and takes an object.

Examples: I shall lie down here. The desert lies to the north of us. Mary laid the parcels on the table.

My Own Language, Book Seven, My English, Book Four, and American English gave exercises for the use of lie and lay, but no rules to govern them.

The confusion of the parts of the verb pairs sit, set and lie, lay is a considerable problem. Many cultivated people, otherwise accurate in verb usage, admit great uncertainty in the use of these verbs. The textbooks on a whole are clear in their presentation of the transitive and intransitive functions of these verbs.

Pooley points out some of the literary confusion and anomalous idioms in his study of the usage:

No textbook questions the correctness of the sun sets, but many authors make an issue of the poultry idiom. One hesitates to say The dove is sitting or setting on the eggs or Hen sits or sets on the egg. Finally one settles on The dove is sitting on the eggs and Hen sits on the egg, although one is fully conscious of the real distinction between sitting (casually assuming a sitting position) and setting (purposefully incubating eggs.) If one concedes that the purpose of the language is to convey complete and accurate meanings, the idiom the hen sets is vastly preferable to the hen sits.

In the same vein, Lloyd writes:

Grammarians' hens sit, while those of the farmers set. Farmers have more hens than grammarians; so the large majority of hens set—in the opinion of their owners, at least. However, the hen is not really a setting hen, but a sitting hen, though I very greatly fear that she will never be so referred to on the farm.

---

1R. C. Pooley, op. cit., p. 142.

The verb to sit is predominantly intransitive, but it has one or two transitive functions worthy of note, according to Pooley:

There is a subtle distinction between set the baby down and sit him up. The more grammatical set him up is too general; it denotes a change from a recumbent position. But sit him up means specifically cause him to sit. Similarly set him here by me lacks the exactness of sit him here by me. It is unfortunate that these distinctions, commonplaces of everyday speech, should be tacitly or openly condemned by schoolbook rules. They should be recognized and commended as types of accuracy far superior to the merely formal accuracy of textbook definitions of transitive and intransitive verbs.¹

The confusion of sit and set is nothing compared with lie and lay, because in the case of the latter the same form appears twice: Lay is the present of lay and the past tense of lie. Lloyd believes that a large part of the trouble in the present situation is due to the fact that our students in general get just a smattering of grammar—just enough to make them an easy prey to the multitude of superstitions that are gravely taught in the name of good English.² He further states that it is surprising how many Americans say they are laying when they are lying.³

From Horwill we learn:

The distinction between lay and lie is not strictly observed in America. (It was not observed by Jane Austen, but today a confusion between the two words is regarded in England as a solecism). The women wrapped themselves in a bedspread and laid down on the track.⁴

These words in their normal uses convey clear, distinct, and accurate meanings that are vague in our present day speech. Pooley states a new

¹R. C. Pooley, op. cit., p. 145.
²C. A. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 130.
³Ibid.
use for these words:

...whenever any of these words ordinarily transitive or intransitive, acquires a new, distinct, and accurate meaning by a shift in function from transitive or intransitive or the reverse, the new use should be defined and accredited instead of being condemned as a violation of purely formal rules. To acknowledge it so is to show a commendable appreciation of the real purpose of language.¹

Uses of the Verb Get

The use of the verb get is not mentioned in Senior English Activities, Book One, My English, Book Four, American English, Better English Usage, and My Own Language, Seventh Grade. One of the texts, Junior English Activities, Book Two (p. 510) gave exercises but no rules to govern them. My English, Book Three states: "Avoid the redundant use of got with forms of the verb have to denote possession. For example: Swans have (not have got) long necks."

The use of have got for to possess or to have is very common. Many textbooks, including the one mentioned above, object to the coupling of get, meaning obtain, and have, meaning possess, on the grounds of logic and correctness. Of this usage, Curme writes:

With one verb, namely get, the present perfect form is often still a present tense, as originally with all verbs: I have got (= have) a cold, a new car, etc. I have got (= have) to do it. Have got, however, is not an exact equivalent of have; it has more grip in it, emphasizing the idea of the possession or necessity as the result of recent circumstances: He has a blind eye, but Look, he has got a black eye.²

The process by which a perfect tense comes to have its present meaning is described by the New English Dictionary and by Jespersen. The

¹R. C. Pooley, op. cit., p. 143.
²George Curme, College English Grammar, p. 285.
N. E. D. says: "The present tense of have forms a present of completed action or present perfect. Colloquially, one sees I have got for I have." In other words, I have got originally meant have obtained in the past and I now have in the present. Jespersen, commenting upon the shifting aspects of tense in certain words, calls it a pure present, and puts have got (have) among the phrases adopted from the vernacular. Perrin says that got is redundant, and is generally confined to colloquial and vulgate usage in expressions like Have you got a pencil? I've got to study now.

He further states:

Have you a pencil? and I have to study now mean just as much and sound more formal—but in free and easy speech the got adds a little emphasis, being more vigorous than have. Ordinarily in writing these constructions are confined to dialog.

Have got is used in literature and occurs frequently in current usage. From Hall, we learn that Bradley, Kellner, and Jespersen recognize the usage; and it has been used by the following writers and speakers of repute: Goldsmith, Lamb, Thomas Hood, Carlyle, Thackeray, A. H. Clough, Gladstone, D. G. Mitchell, Ruskin, Holmes, Sir Henry Taylor, L. Kellner, and Dickens; thus if names count, have got should have some standing and not be branded as a vulgarism. Moreover, it is used too widely in polite society to be so treated.

In the Leonard-Moffett study, we note, in the sentence, I have got my own opinion on that rated 2.5 meaning fully acceptable cultivated

---

1 Otto Jespersen, Philosophy of Grammar, p. 270.

2 Otto Jespersen, Growth and Structure of the English Language, p. 223.


4 J. Lesslie Hall, op. cit., p. 122.
informal English. One might say that the opinions of the judges in this study fully substantiate the claim that have got is good current usage, since they represent competent linguists in America and Great Britain.

There is some dispute as to the correct past participle of the verb get. The textbooks used in this study say that the third principal part of the verb get is got and not gotten, and that gotten is obsolescent. In the New English Dictionary, we find got (gotten), and the dictionary adds: "In England the form gotten is almost obsolete except diametrically, being superseded by got; in United States literature gotten is still very common, although Webster, 1864, gives it as obsolescent." Perrin adds:

Gotten was brought to America by the colonists of the seventeenth century, when it was the usual English form, and has remained in general American usage ever since, while in England the form has given way to got. Today both forms are used by Americans as the past participle, the choice between them depending largely on the emphasis and rhythm of the particular sentence.

Hall cites in his study a list of fifty authors who used gotten ranging from Caxton to Sir Henry Taylor. He further adds:

Another thing in favor of gotten is euphony; it is often less abrupt and less jerky in the sentence. For instance, take a passage from the Psalms (Ps. 98.1 in Bible): "his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory" (King James Version); "With his own right hand and with his holy arm hath he gotten himself the victory" (Prayer Book version). Change gotten to got in these passages and note the loss in cadence and melody. Are not both passages seriously injured?

According to Fowler:

---

3J. Lesslie Hall, op. cit., pp. 111-112.
Have got for possess or have is good colloquial but not good literary English. Gotten still holds its grounds in American English. In British English it is in verbal use (that is, in composition with have, am); but as a mere participle or adjective occurs in poetical diction.

Therefore, one could use have got in colloquial speech, since it has been used in literature, has the approval of many linguists, and is used in polite society.

Further and Farther

No emphasis is placed on farther and further in the books used for this study. Only one text, My English, Book Three (p. 338) said:

"Farther should be used of distance, whether literal or figurative, as He walked two miles farther than I. Let us pursue the subject no farther. Further should be used of something additional, as He gave no further reason for it."

It seems that no distinction was felt in the eighteenth century, but was evidently discovered and fostered by the nineteenth century grammarians. Leonard found no reference to the use of further and farther in the eighteenth century other than in Johnson's Dictionary, in which the use of both words was allowed.

Curme gives a very clear description of the uses of further and farther in saying:

We use farther and further with the same local and temporal meaning, but further has also the meanings: additional, more extended, more, etc. The cabin stands on the farther (or further) side of the brook. I shall be back in three days at the farthest (or at the furthest). There is a

\footnote{1}{H. W. Fowler, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 217.}
\footnote{2}{Sterling A. Leonard, \textit{Doctrine of Correctness}, p. 289.}
tendency to employ further to express the idea of additional, more extended action: I shall be glad to discuss the matter further with you.¹

Fowler writes that the history of these two words appears to be that further is a comparative of far and should, if it were to be held to its etymology, mean more advanced, and that farther is a newer variant of further, no more connected with far than further is, but affected in its form by the fact that further, having come to be used instead of the obsolete comparative of far (farrer) seemed to need a respelling that should assimilate it to far. Continuing, he says that people prefer one or the other for all purposes, and the preference for the majority is for further; the most that should be said is perhaps that farther is not common except distance is in question. On the whole, though differentiations are good in themselves, it is less likely that one will be established for farther and further than that the latter will become universal. In the verb, further is very much more common.²

According to Leonard's study, I felt I could walk no further was considered established. Only the business men and the speech teachers placed this among disputable usages. The other five groups of judges felt that it was established; their ranking ranged from 12 to 28. All American dictionaries give farther and further as synonyms.³

Krapp points out this distinction:

Farther is the comparative degree of far, with a variant further in the sense of more, far, more distant. But in

¹George Curme, Syntax, pp. 501-502.
²H. W. Fowler, op. cit., p. 171.
³Sterling A. Leonard, Current English Usage, p. 171.
the sense in addition, also more, the form further is the one usually employed.1

The New English Dictionary says:

In standard English the word farther is usually preferred where the word is intended to be the comparative of far, while further is used where the notion of far is altogether absent; there is a large intermediate class of instances in which the choice between the two is arbitrary.

It seems, then, from the evidence, that farther and further may be used interchangeably in all meanings, but when we mean in addition, further is preferred.

The use of farther or further to mean as far as presents an additional problem, about which Pooley gives the following warning:

The sanction given to the interchangeable use of farther and further does not, however, extend to the phrase all the farther in the sense of as far as. While such sentences as, This is all the farther the train goes, are extremely common in popular speech; however this locution has no standing in cultivated English, either spoken or written. Usage may eventually make it an accepted idiom, but the time has not yet arrived.2

Due To

In most of the textbooks due to is not mentioned; however, Tanner and Platt state that due to is misused for on account of, owing to, and because of; due may be correctly used as an adjective followed by a phrase introduced by to, as; His illness was due to exposure.3

The history and development of this usage has been discussed at length by Kenyon, who says that due, like owing, is a participle; thus both of

1George Krapp, Comprehensive Guide, p. 239.
2R. C. Pooley, op. cit., p. 130.
these words in their earlier use modified substances. However, like other participles, they had a tendency to dangle, that is, to become detached from a specific substance and modify instead a phrase or a clause.¹ He further states:

It is doubtful if it is ever used by those who have a sharp sense of syntactical relations and a quick sense of the force of English words, unless they use it deliberately, believing that the poor abuses of the time want countenance. Its frequency is certainly greater among the less educated, but it appears to be rapidly working its way upward, for some highly respectable writers admit it. It seems to be about equally common in America and in England.²

In support of this position, Pooley adds:

In the evolution the word owing has gone all the way, gaining complete emancipation from participial use in the phrase owing to, which is partly prepositional. It may therefore introduce an adverbial modifier with perfect impunity. Due to, on the other hand, has lagged somewhat behind in this evolution, and is on that account frowned upon by some in spite of the parallel development of owing to.³

Of this usage Krapp holds that due to is often incorrectly used as a conjunctive adverb, as in The battle was lost, due to the lack of ammunition. The better form, he states, would be The battle was lost, owing to the lack of ammunition, or because of, etc.⁴ After citing a number of sentences by different authors in regard to due to, Krapp concludes by saying:

In recording the foregoing examples of the development and present use of due to, as a preposition, I should like to make my own position clear. I neither approve or condemn

¹John Kenyon, "The Dangling Participle, Due," American Speech, VI (October, 1930), 61.
²Ibid., p. 68.
³R. C. Pooley, op. cit., p. 126.
its use. My speech-feeling is against it; I do not use it, and it always offends my grammatical prejudices. ... on the other hand, I am forced to recognize the facts. Due to as a preposition has traveled precisely the same path as the now accepted owing to... Undoubtedly, it began with the least educated, where it is still most common; but so did hundreds of changes in usage and pronunciations that have obtained the best of standing. In fact, there is no surer guarantee of permanence to a new language development that has gained general currency than having a widespread basis in popular practice. Strong as is my own prejudice against the prepositional use of due to, I greatly fear it has staked its claim and squatted in our midst along side of and in exact imitation of owing to, its aristocratic neighbor and respected fellow-citizen.¹

Fowler feels that under the influence of analogy, due to is often used by the illiterate as though it has passed, like owing to, into a mere compound preposition; due, like ordinary participles and adjectives must be attached to a noun, and not to a notion extracted from a sentence.² He gives many examples showing that this use is current in England and that it is by no means confined to the illiterate. Kennedy writes that many Americans are using due to as a preposition as in Due to his illness he could not come; but careful users of good English still insist upon keeping due an adjective, as His illness was due to carelessness.³

However, Lloyd holds the opposite view:

For example, The postponement of the game was due to the rain. The adjective due modifies the noun postponement, and is itself modified by a prepositional phrase to rain. But in the sentence, The game was postponed due to rain, which we often hear, though the authorities are generally opposed to it, there is no noun which due can modify, and it is evident that due to is used as a compound preposition in the sense of because of, taking rain as its object, and forming with rain

¹Ibid., p. 126.
²H. W. Fowler, op. cit., p. 123.
³Ibid., p. 171.
a phrase modifying the verb was postponed.¹ He feels that due to has as much justification as owing to, which is well-established as a preposition. The next twenty years should see the matter settled, either with due to fully approved for prepositional use or definitely relegated to the speech of those whose habits carry little weight.²

In Leonard's study, the linguists and the members of the Modern Language Association voted 2 to 1 against the inclusion of The child is weak, due to improper feeding among the approved usages. The other groups of judges gave a considerable majority in its favor. There was wide disagreement among the groups as to the proper placement of the expression; it may be included, therefore, among the disputed usages.³

Although we hear the use of due to in colloquial speech, we see that the majority of the leading authorities are opposed to its use. It may be a matter of time before it is accepted as good colloquial English. However, it appears to be rapidly moving toward general acceptance, in spite of any logical or esthetic arguments on the contrary.

Can and May

Can and may are only mentioned by one textbook, namely, My English, Book Three (p. 196) which states that can implies power or ability; may implies possibility or indicates permission. The testimony of Webster's New International Dictionary on this point is interesting and partly self-contradictory. Under can it says: "Loosely, to have permission, to

¹C. A. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 295.
²Ibid.
be allowed—equivalent to *may*." But in the discussion of the two words under *may*, it says: "The use of *can* for *may* in asking permission is incorrect, but in denying permission *cannot* is common." In other words it is wrong for the child to say, *Can I get my book?* but right for the teacher to answer, *No you cannot.* It seems that it would be rather difficult to explain to the child why *can* is right in the answer, but wrong in the question.

The judges of the Leonard-Moffett study were far more liberal in their acceptance of the word *can* used to denote permission. Probably the fitness of the expression *Can I be excused from class* is a matter of taste, rather than usage. But it cannot be listed as vulgar or uncultivated in the face of the large number of judges who recognize its frequent use by cultivated people.¹

Lloyd writes:

> One point of English that teachers are insistent upon is that *may* must always be used in asking permission. It starts in early years. In asking for permission the most appropriate word is unquestionably *may*. The child, if he had sufficient knowledge, could certainly make out a very strong defense for the use of *can* in asking for permission. There is no law of English that says that the use of *can* must be restricted to cases of physical ability. What the child means is, *Can I with your permission?*²

The confusion of *can* and *may* is shown in this reference taken from *Pupil Activity English Series, Book Eight* (p. 164) by T. J. Kirby and M. F. Carpenter:

> *Can* is a greedy and aggressive verb. It gets into every sentence in which it belongs, and it often crowds into sentences in which *may* properly belongs. Therefore, many

²C. A. Lloyd, op. cit., p. 145.
people use can where it should not be used and where it is not correctly used. Remember that can does not ask for nor give permission; can is correctly concerned only with power or ability. Do you use the words correctly?

Pooley says that in spite of this warning can was permitted to crowd into a sentence, in which may properly belonged in a composition exercise which began, Say, Mary, why can't I come to your party? This was found in the same text on p. 252. From the context, he states, it is perfectly clear that the speaker lacks neither power nor ability to attend the party; it is permission which is denied. Then can is used in the opening sentence of a model exercise because it is customary usage and attracts no attention, and if you compare it with the correct form, Say, Mary, why mayn't I come to your party? you will discover how odd and unusual may form is. Therefore, says Pooley, in polite usage, when the auxiliary comes first, as in a question, there is a tendency to distinguish between may for permission and can for ability. But when an interrogative participle precedes, especially in a negative sentence, can't is vastly predominant over mayn't or may not as in Why can't I go out tonight?

The distinction may be summed up by saying that may and can in their simpler forms are frequently used discriminately; however, confusion and inconsistencies among writers of grammars are often found. The distinction made by Perrin seems to be a safe one to follow:

In formal English careful distinction is kept between the auxiliary can when it has the meaning of ability, being able to, and may, with the meaning of permission. You may go now. He can walk with crutches. You may if you can. In less formal usage may occurs rather rarely except in the sense of

---

1R. C. Pooley, op. cit., p. 122.
2Ibid., pp. 122-125.
possibility: It may be all right for her, but not for me. Can is generally used for both permission and ability: Can I go now? You can if you want to. I can do 80 miles an hour with mine. This is in such general usage that it should be regarded as good English in speaking and informal writing. Can't almost universally takes the place of the awkward mayn't: Can't I go now? We can't have lights after twelve o'clock.¹

Above as an Adjective

Only one text, My English, Book Three (p. 355) states that it is better not to use above as an adjective; the other texts do not mention it. We often see in writing the use of the word above as an adjective, as in See the above statement. According to Pooley, J. C. French says that above in the example above is undesirable.² Pooley explains that the word undesirable must imply that objection to the usage is based upon one of two grounds: either that above as adjective or noun is a neologism, with no stand-in in literature, or else in older form now obsolescent. It is not difficult to prove that neither contention can be upheld.³

The New English Dictionary gives the usage full sanction by citing a similar example, "above stands attributively, as above explanation; or the noun may also be used as the above will show." Hall defends it and cites many examples of its use in Benjamin Franklin and in Hawthorne. The last-named author wrote the above pictures and the above paragraph and also, It is not of pictures like the above that galleries, in Rome or elsewhere, are made up.

¹Porter G. Perrin, op. cit., pp. 405-406.
³Ibid.
⁴J. Lesslie Hall, op. cit., p. 52.
With regard to the use of above in literature, Reuben Steinbach offers overwhelming evidence. He cites many uses from outstanding rhetoricians and authors, namely:

I have seen the above events in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (Chapter XIV) and the above ceremony. (Chapter XXII)


The above list in Robert Bridges's *On English Homophones*.

The above explanations in Otto Jespersen's *Chapter on English*, 1918, p. 156.

Kennedy, as well as Pooley, thinks that the adjectival use of above in the above statement is permissible. Kennedy says that the usage seems to have acquired respectable status, for it was not even considered in Leonard's study.¹ The teacher of English should feel free to use the above statement and the like, for he has the authority of scholars and standard literature.

The Position of Only

Seven of the eight textbooks mention the position of only in sentences saying, in general, to give special attention to the placing of only and to notice the differences in meaning of the following sentences:

Only I saw him speak to her.
I saw only him speak to her.
I saw him only speak to her.
I saw him speak to her only.

Concerning this usage in the eighteenth century, Leonard says:

¹Arthur Kennedy, *English Usage*, p. 94.
The rules for placing modifiers were of course dictated by a general purpose of securing greater clarity; but when grammarians came to look about for actual instances, they rarely confined themselves to sentences which might actually cause difficulty or misunderstanding in their context, since such sentences are not really common in experienced writers. Instead, critics took the usual shortcut of pitching upon sentences of a fixed type regardless of their clarity. Sentences containing adverbs like *only* came in handy.¹

In his study, Pooley explains why the authors of textbooks say that the adverb *only* should be placed as near as possible to the word it modifies; thus, most textbooks frown upon the free position of *only* in such sentences as: *If I had only five dollars* and *He only wanted to speak to me.* In spite of the almost universal acceptance of these constructions in colloquial speech and much current writing, the textbooks maintain that unless the word *only* is in immediate adjacent position to the word it modifies, the meaning becomes obscured and ambiguous. Therefore they list the rule that has been previously stated. He further says that all these rules and examples are based upon the assumption of the word or phrase it modifies; thus some degree of ambiguity or obscurity results. This assumption is unsound, for in common speech the phrase *I only had five dollars* is normal and never misunderstood. In fact, should a speaker desire to limit a subject in a sentence, he is compelled to stress the pronoun and supply a word like *alone* to be sure his meaning is clear.²

Hall tells us that the position of *only* is nothing new. He states:

The position of *only* has long been a burning question in English. Not to go farther back than 50 years, Dean Alford said in 1864 that the pedants were very strict but the language very liberal. 'The adverb *only*,' says he, 'in

many sentences where strictly speaking it ought to follow its verb and to limit the objects of the verb, is in good English placed before the verb. 'I only saw a man,' he says, is our ordinary colloquial English; but the pedant would compel us to say, 'I saw only a man.' The question is the same in our day; rhetorical scholars and grammarians make their rule; the great authors, the great majority of them, are utterly oblivious of the rule and care nothing for it.¹

The best and most helpful statement as to only, according to Hall, is found in *Mother's Tongue III* by Gardiner, Kittredge and Arnold, thus:

> Good usage does not fix absolutely the position of only with respect to the word it modifies. There is but one safe rule: Shun ambiguity. If this is observed, the pupil may feel secure.²

Hall adds this information in favor of only. He cites 104 authors misplacing only in over 400 passages. The worst offenders are Dr. Johnson, Scott, Poe, Thackeray, George Elliot, Hallam, Dickens, Mrs. H. Ward, Froude, G. K. Chesterson, and Henry Drummond.³

Curme speaks of only as a distinguishing adverb:

> It has the peculiarity, as a sentence adverb by directing attention not only to the verb and thus to the sentence as a whole, but also to any person or thing that becomes prominent in the situation as a whole, standing either immediately before or after the noun or pronoun. John passed only in Latin. John passed in Latin only. John has passed only once in Latin. John only (= barely) passed in Latin.⁴

Perrin says the importance of the position of only has been greatly exaggerated and logically it should stand immediately before the element

---

²Ibid., p. 189.
³Ibid., p. 190.
⁴George Curme, *College English Grammar*, p. 156.
modified: I need only six more to have a full hundred. He adds:

But usage is not always logical, and in this construction it is conspicuously in favor of placing the only before the verb of the statement. There is no possible misunderstanding in the meaning of: I only need six more to have a full hundred.2

The English teacher, therefore, may take the suggestion of Fowler in deciding how to use only:

The design is to force us all, whenever we use the adverb only, to spend time in considering which is the precise part of the sentence strictly qualified by it, and then put it there—this whether there is any danger or none of the meaning's being false or ambiguous, because only is so placed as to belong grammatically to a whole expression instead of a part of it, or to be separated from the part it specially qualifies for another part.3

1Porter G. Perrin, op. cit., p. 621.
2Ibid.
CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

It has been the purpose of this study to show that the rules of the English textbooks are in many instances partially or totally misrepresentative of current English usage and to point out some means by which the English teacher can lead her pupils to "better English."

There is a disagreement in grammar rules in the textbooks taught in the schools. This is either shown by what the authors say or do not say about a rule. The result is that the teacher is put in a quandary as to what rules to teach when she changes textbooks from one grade to another; for one finds conflicting views. In theory, the textbooks are cleaving to a traditional set of standards and attitudes; thus the rules fail to represent accurately and faithfully Modern English as it is actually used in cultivated speech and writing. None of the textbooks seem to be cognizant of this fact, that is, the fallacy of confusing a purely literary standard with good usage. There is a lumping together of formal expression and good usage as though they were one and the same thing. The authors seem to define "bad usage" as an English expression not regularly a part of formal style. Yet, the use of formal style is only needed by a relatively few, and serves a small percentage of adults; therefore it is much less needed by children in school. The textbooks, however, are all built around the theory that the only good English is formal style; and that only one standard prevails, which is observed by all cultivated persons. As far as can be determined by a careful study of these texts, the authors have kept to the traditional theory of grammar.

Language has often been thought of as something fixed, and controlled
by rules which are prescribed by grammarians. Sooner or later, we will realize that English grammar is not represented as a body of fixed rules, but as a part of the evolutionary process. Fries says:

It matters not whether one likes or dislikes a particular locution, whether it is in accord or not with any theory of propriety of speech he may have adopted; whether or not he is able to satisfy his grammatical conscience in regard to the purity of its character, but the question is simply, Is the particular word or construction under consideration sanctioned by the authority of the best writers of the past and present?^1

And Pooley reminds us of this changing process in language:

English is at many points developing, usually in the direction of greater simplicity and accuracy. Sometimes, however, the natural tendency toward simplicity destroys accuracy, although in general, simplicity and accuracy go nicely together.2

Many people have difficulties in accepting the changes the language makes through usage. They will assent to the idea that the sounds, spelling, and meanings of words alter with the passage of time; but they feel that the grammatical principles that they were taught in childhood are such eternal verities that to question them would be impious.3

Many teachers may not be ready to adopt and recommend many of the new constructions established. Krapp says that we are still too much under the thumbs of our classic grammarians and rhetoricians who "churned the language into shape." Style cannot remain stationary; we have been engaged in refining the language for three hundred years, and the direction of growth seems clearly indicated.4 The old and new forms are often both

---

2R. C. Pooley, *op. cit.*, p. 149.
3Stuart Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 492.
in wide use at the same time; thus there is a choice between them. Teachers may often prefer the old to which they themselves are accustomed, but they should meet the new, with open tolerant minds. The inclination to change, everywhere in colloquial speech, has always been characteristic of the language of live people. Thus, on the basis of the grammatical study made by Leonard, those usages upon which the judges strongly agree can be profitably taught, while those usages upon which the judges are evenly divided, dogmatism is unjustified. Leonard says that extensive drill on either form of a divided usage would clearly be a loss of time; and it would be a wasted effort to attempt to eradicate any construction listed in Current English Usage as established—no matter what the personal preference of the instructor or the dictum of the adopted text.¹

In order to handle our present day problems of usage, the teacher may be only moderately puristic in her attitude; thus Kennedy writes:

With all the contradictions in theory and practice in English usage, there remains one final and definite conclusion, about which there need be no compromise; the teachers of English should be insistent always on the desirability of raising the levels of usage; they should not, through any false theory of amiable acquiescence, let down to the level of the more ignorant and unthinking majority. People look up for leadership and guidance, not down.

Good teachers of English will familiarize themselves more carefully with the fundamental pattern of English language, as it is compacted and presented from time to time by grammarians in reducing the body of grammatical fact to a simple and usable entity.²

Therefore, one can safely say that the rules in the textbooks are not always safe guides as to what are correct and acceptable forms and constructions in English; that the teacher of English should teach cultivated

¹Sterling A. Leonard, Current English Usage, p. 188.

²Arthur Kennedy, English Usage, pp. 140, 150.
colloquial English, since standard English is that English which is employed by the great majority of intelligent speakers of the language. We also need a program of study which will make it possible for teachers of English to select wisely the matter which should be presented to students. Kennedy recommends:

Such a program must be based upon an understanding of the various linguistic levels of English, and upon a more general agreement about our aims in teaching high school and college courses in English, upon a definition of usage and a comprehension of its scope, and upon an adequate examination of the various insistent questions on usage themselves.¹

Our linguistic expression of thinking must keep pace with our thinking. It is the business of teachers of English, primarily, to see that the use of the English language is kept well-tuned to the thinking of the millions of people who use it. Thus, "Thinking is changing, and language must change to keep pace with it, and the great problem at this time is to organize both, and keep both within reasonable and practical bounds."²

¹Ibid., pp. 30-51.
²Ibid., p. 140.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


________. "What Is Good English?" English Journal, XIV (October, 1925), 685-697.


________. "The Dangling Participle, Due," American Speech, VI (October, 1930), 61, 70.


