ISLE highlights?

ISLE2
Boston
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David Denison, University of Manchester

Conference themes

- How do methods of investigation take into account the data under study?
- In what ways do linguistic premises, perspectives, and models shape the methods to use?
- Which methods and models, developed in such disciplines as anthropology, cultural and demographic history, economics, psychology, and textual editing enhance linguistic analysis?
- Do current methods depart in significant ways from those typical of research in the past?

Highlight

This ISLE conference highlights that English linguistics is flourishing.

- Such a use of *highlight* (v.) not possible for me but evidently OK for others. A small case study (expanded from Denison 2009) acts as the framework of this talk.
- Also an excuse to survey some ISLE highlights (n.).

1. Introduction
2. Problem examples
3. Status of data
4. Change in progress?
5. Methodological approaches
6. So what? – more general observations
7. ISLE matters

2. Problem examples

V + *that*-clause in student work

1.	Hundt's study (2009), which **advocates that** the subjunctive is in fact replacing the periphrastic […]	✓
2.	this **highlights** once more **that** […]	?*
3.	with Poussa **criticising that** the French influence was sporadic	*
4.	Sweet **defines that** "grammar may be regarded either from a theoretical or practical point of view. […]"	*
5.	This study has **displayed that** older participants have more stable and confident results than […]	*
6.	Follet (1966) […] **poses that** the informality of *try and* leads to […]	*
7.	Steven Pinker, (1994) **puts forward that** chimps often just imitate the messages of the trainer	*
8.	which can be reinforced by Milroy et al, who **utters that**, "In other locations […]"	*

How to react?

- Correct their bad writing?
- Can all the examples be lumped together? (I have 22+ verbs in my collection, usually with multiple tokens.)
- Ask why this is happening now.
- Is their English simply different from mine?
- Is it error, or language change, or neither?

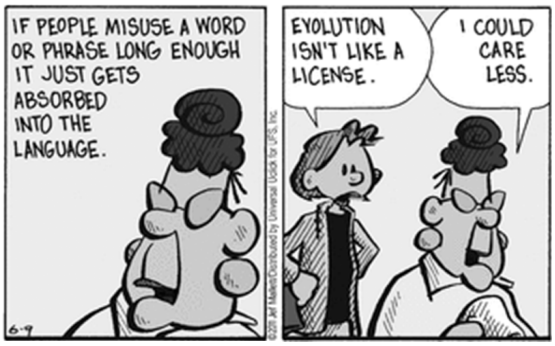
3. Status of data

Error?

- Students in question tend to be relatively unskilled writers, insecure about written expression:
  - neither convinced that they had been right nor clear that they were wrong.

'... communication verbs controlling *that*-clauses (apart from *say*) are most frequent in academic prose'
(Biber et al. 1999: 668)

- Such verbs are needed to avoid risk of plagiarism.
- Word processor thesaurus for 'elegant variation'?
- Once written, usage can get entrenched.



Frazz, by Jeff Mallett , 9 June 2011
hat-tip to Mark Liberman, Language Log

We know because we know

- What right do we have to pronounce on errors?
- Grammarians and lexicographers (and many other linguists) tend to be highly educated, well versed in a particular form of standard written English, and are often rather older than typical student.
- To some extent it's a comfortable coterie not dissimilar to that of the prescriptivists of the Queen's English Society – except that we like to think we are more knowledgeable, more tolerant and more amenable to the power of evidence.

What's *wrong*?

- **Prescriptivists** simply assert that a given usage is or is not 'good English', where 'good' = what they and/or their teachers use(d).
- When more than purely idiosyncratic peevishness, 'good' = general usage of educated native speakers ≈ Standard English.
- **Linguists** can formulate *and test* 'correctness conditions' for any variety.

(Geoff Pullum, blog post '"Everything is correct" versus "nothing is relevant"')

Correctness conditions

A linguist can make a mistake in formulating correctness conditions. How would anyone know? Through a back and forth comparison between what the condition statements entail and what patterns are regularly observed in the use of the language by qualified speakers under conditions when they can be taken to be using their language without many errors (e.g., when they are sober, not too tired, not suffering from brain damage, have had a chance to review and edit what they said or wrote, etc.).

(Pullum 2005)

Error vs. innovation

- Distinction crucial to Kachru's concentric circles model.

(Hundt & Mukherjee 2011)

- In historical linguistics, some errors turn out (with hindsight) to be innovations.
- The sporadic occurrence of 'new' *V-that* patterns has affinities with learner English and with new Englishes.
- These are ***native speakers*** using (misusing?) words and patterns ***in writing*** that would be rare or non-existent in their everyday conversation.

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Error vs. innovation

- Routinely in describing
  - spoken English
  - young people's English
  - historical English
  - EFL
  - ESL
  - ELF

  we embrace evidence of difference and change.
- Why not in this case?

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First classification of verbs

- Classify them by their complementation possibilities when used in context of a human subject stating a fact, expressing an opinion, etc.
- Relevant subcategorisations:
  - ± **N-*that*** as direct object
    (a complex NP headed by an abstract noun like *fact, claim, suggestion*, etc., with a *that*-clause as complement of N, e.g. *the claim that the Earth is flat*)
  - ± ***that*-clause**

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Grammars, dictionaries

- Relevant (lists of) verbs checked in
  - Biber et al. (1999: 362-3, 660-70)
  - Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 958-9, 1017-22)
  - Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik (1985: 1176-7, 1180-3)
  - Collins COBUILD (1987) – but their REPORT-CL covers more than just *that*-clauses

Factual and suasive verbs

verb	+ N-*that*	+ *that*-clause
(admit), agree, argue, comment, complain, conclude, contend, decide, declare, deem, feel, hint, hope, insist, object, point up, promise, realise, reason, reckon, remark, reply, retort, say, teach, think, warn, write	×	✓
accept, acknowledge, add, affirm, allege, allow, announce, assert, assume, believe, (claim), concede, confirm, consider, convey, (deduce), (determine), demonstrate, deny, disclose, discover, doubt, emphasise, establish, explain, (find), forget, guarantee, hold, imagine, (indicate), infer, (judge), maintain, mention, observe, (point out), (predict), (presume), ?pronounce, propose, prove, recognise, regret, repeat, report, see, (show), state, (stipulate), stress, submit, suggest, (suppose), suspect, understand	✓	✓

A

B

Factual and suasive verbs

verb	+ N-*that*	+ *that*-clause	
advance, articulate, *back up, challenge, communicate, contradict, convey,* ***define****, discuss, dispute[#], encourage, endorse, enlarge upon, espouse,* ***express****, oppose, promote, put across,* ***put forward****, question[#], rule, support, sustain, underline, underscore,* ***utter***	✓	×	**C**
advocate, criticise, describe, display, exemplify, explicate, highlight, identify, illustrate, inform[§], instigate, pose, posit, quote, refute, reinforce, rule out, summarise, take into account, view	?	?	**D**

- Group C apparently don't occur with a *that*-clause
- Group D not explicitly mentioned by grammars in this context
  - [[#]OK + *whether*-clause; [§]OK + indirect object + *that*-clause]
- I have examples of verbs in bold with a *that*-clause

4. Change in progress?

Group A: verb *argue* in *OED*

- From Old French
- Relevant senses
- intr. 'bring reasons, to reason, dispute' 1303-
- trans. 'bring forward reasons for or against sth' a1513-
- + *that*-clause 1548-

Group C: verb *discuss* in *OED*

- From Latin, 1340-
- irrelevant meanings ('disperse', etc.) c1374-1804
- trans. 'try as a judge' 1340-
- trans. 'declare, pronounce' 1389-

- Relevant trans. sense 'investigate or examine by argument' [c1450], 1530-
- Examples of *discuss the N that …* 1946-
- No examples of *discuss that …*

Group D: verb *highlight* in *OED*

- Early literal meaning of noun in painting/photography.
- 1934- as verb, already figurative (from noun)
- Recent association of verb (not in *OED*) more with highlighter pens, highlighting text in word processor?
- No examples of *highlight the N that …*, but *highlight the way in which …* (1996), *highlight the need for information about …* (1999)
- *highlights that …* 1996, 2006 (both medical)

  2006 *Mother & Baby* Aug. 138/1 Immunologist and allergist Dr Amolak S. Bansal highlights that two thirds of a baby's immune system is in the tummy.

'Impossible' V + *that*-clause

	Brown family	ICE-GB	BNC	COCA	MICUSP
advance	×	×	×	1990-	✓
criticize	×	×	×	1998-	✓
define	×	×	✓	1993-	×
display	✓	×	✓	×	✓
highlight	×	×	?✓	1994-	✓
pose	×	×	×	1992-	×
put forward	×	×	✓	1996-	×
utter	×	×	✓	×	×

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'Impossible' V + *that*-clause

	OED entry	OED quotes	OBC	PPCMBE, ARCHER	COHA
advance	×	×	×	×	1835-
criticize	×	×	×	×	2002
define	1563†	1661	×	×	1861-
display	×	×	×	×	1990
highlight	×	1996-	×	×	2001-
pose	c1385-?1440		×	×	1926-
put forward	1702, 1876		×	×	×
utter	×	×	1812	×	×

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Recency Illusion

- Recency Illusion, the belief that things YOU have noticed only recently are in fact recent. This is a selective attention effect. [...]
  Professional linguists can be as subject to the Recency Illusion as anyone else.
- Another selective attention effect, which tends to accompany the Recency Illusion, is the Frequency Illusion: once you've noticed a phenomenon, you think it happens a whole lot, even "all the time".

(Arnold Zwicky, Language Log, 7 Aug 2005)

Status of web data

- Need to avoid non-native speaker data(?).
- Absence of meta-linguistic comments may be significant, presence certainly is.
- What is frequency threshold which suggests incipient change rather than random error?

Hundt (in press)

- Most individual 'new' *V-that* patterns are of low frequency, but perhaps we are approaching a more significant constructional frequency.

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advance that [from COCA]

I advance that until we take the bigger frame, the issue of homophobic bullying and violence [...]

Even though the DSM definition has changed, I would advance that the earlier definition prevails in popular and academic discussions of trauma.

In doing so, I advanced that maintaining the masculine hegemony is in conflict with sustained and healthy attachment behaviors,

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contest that [from BNC]

A0B 440 We contest that there are no laws written in stone, and that there is room for hybrids.

AN3 1141 He contests that petty commodity production is a separate mode of production from the capitalist one, but that it articulates with it to facilitate the expanded reproduction of the capitalist mode (Quijano 1974).

- Different meaning in:

K5M 9894 They did not contest that they participated in the crime ring, but said they had no choice because of pressure from Chinese secret societies.

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endorse that [from BNC, COCA]

ARW 93 Neither would I infer that Spare Rib's readers would endorse that I'm straight, white, no longer middle class, anti-IRA, have mixed feelings about Israel's policies, can't knit, bake, have unbiddable hair and a 34-inch chest. [BNC]

- Only two examples in COCA, very recent. This one is probable but not certain:

This is one of the main reasons that investigators endorse that physical education is the most adequate environment for sociomoral education (COCA, 2007)

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espouse that [from COCA]

Gardner 1985, p. 197) communicates this same demand, espousing that further research is needed " to generalize the findings reported to brands (1992, ACAD CurrentPsych; COCA)Like Carl Rogers, the feminist relational approach espouses that the more the worker presents as a genuine human being, the more effective (2003, ACAD SocialPsych)

Others have espoused that relationships in American society are primarily codependent (Shaef, 1987). (2002, ACAD OrthoNursing)

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express that [from COCA]

From all accounts today, certainly, people have expressed that they feel it's a tragedy,

I was talking to a close friend and expressing that how can no one pick this up?

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5. Approaches

Analogy 1 and 2

1. Forms like *advance that X* occur on the analogy of verbs that can be complemented by a *that*-clause instead of N-*that*, such as *reason* (group A above).

- But why?

2. Forms like *advance that X* occur on the analogy of a large number of verbs that can be complemented either by a *that*-clause or by N-*that*, such as *demonstrate* (group B above).

- Pattern extension more plausible.

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Analogy 3

3. Forms like *advance that X* occur on analogy of large number of verbs that can be used either transitively or intransitively.

- Development of intransitive (elliptical) use, as in

  Jim hadn't eaten his dinner.

  Jim hadn't eaten.

perhaps leads to use of new intransitive pattern,

  Jim advanced

to which *that*-clause can be added to specify proposal.

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Analogy 4

4. Some at least of these verbs can be used earlier where subject is *words, article, book*, etc., rather than human agent. Thus *express* in *OED*, and likewise perhaps *endorse* in COCA:

Because grounded theory endorses that data analyses occur simultaneously with data collection, interviews continued until saturation occurred … (COCA, 2008)

- Analogy then is extension to human agent subjects.

- Number 2 is *prima facie* the most plausible of these.

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Analogy: issue of principle

- Is analogy is a theoretically justifiable mechanism?
- Is analogical explanation falsifiable?
- Long tradition of debate, with next-but-one President of ISLE mounting a defence of analogy (Fischer 2007) and in turn being criticised.

Analogy: issues of practice

- Can possible analogical sources be discriminated on corpus evidence?
  - by closeness of semantic fit
  - by closeness of pragmatic behaviour
  - by interchangeability in other contexts of alleged model and target verb(s)
  - by availability (e.g. numbers and frequency of source patterns at the appropriate time)
- Cf. paper on morphological productivity by Lindsay & Aronoff at ISLE2 based on 'ecosystem' of linguistic forms.

Construction Grammar

- Affinities with analogical extension.
- Relevant macro-construction: abstract reporting pattern
- Meso-construction : V + *that*-clause
- Micro-constructions: *argue that, say that, discuss that, highlight that, …*
- Much recent historical work by Traugott, Trousdale, Bergs and others.

Corpus linguistics

- Genre variation may well be significant: would expect earlier appearance and higher frequencies in text types with little or no editorial interference.
- Compare Google Books corpus (huge database, but expect lower frequency) with other historical corpora.
- Separation of V and *that* may make pattern less salient and therefore less prone to editorial interference; so far only contiguous examples checked.

Corpus linguistics

- Tagged or lemmatised corpora should help to distinguish e.g. *advance* v. from *advance* n., *that* as conjunction from *that* as determiner, pronoun, etc.
- Tagger may have been trained on data where such examples don't occur.
- COHA gives first 20 hits for *display that* from 1823 to 1967 for tagged search string
  [display].[v*] that.[cst]

  But *that* = D (×15), *display* = N (×3), so accuracy is 10%. (And neither of the 2 correctly tagged hits is relevant.)

Corpus & statistical techniques

- Problem invites large corpora and automated methods.
- Much innovative work over recent years by Stefan Gries, Martin Hilpert, Lars Hinrichs, Benedikt Szmrecsanyi and others, including papers at ISLE2.
- Also Stefan Diemer on new Google search tools .
- Hubert Cuyckens & Martin Hilpert workshop on 'Current methods in English diachronic linguistics: How can new corpus-based techniques advance historical description and linguistic theory?'

Questionnaires

- Scope for psycholinguistic work on a captive cohort of student writers
- Anette Rosenbach testing of genitive alternation by forced choice
- Bruce Fraser and Klaus Schneider on disparity between corpus evidence and native speaker judgements, at ISLE2 workshop on spoken English

Learner English

- MICUSP
- Sylviane Granger, Louvain
- Barbara Seidlhofer, Vienna
- etc.
- ICLE corpora
- Peter Siemund, Julia Davydova, and Georg Maier on varieties of English in the classroom

The 'native speaker'

- Stephanie Hackert discusses approaches to 'the native speaker' (2009), including the attempt to replace it by *proficient speaker*.
- The present dataset – particularly where proficient native speakers are faced with the problem of writing prose – is in effect an extension of the same set of questions.

Written vs. spoken

… we believe that we have uncovered evidence that grammatical innovations in written discourse can go well beyond increased 'iterations and embeddings'. In particular, focusing on noun phrase constructions in English, we document extensions in the range of grammatical variants, the range of lexical associations, and the range of grammatical/semantic functions. These functional extensions have emerged out of the communicative demands of written discourse rather than spoken interaction.

(Biber & Gray in press,2011),

Stance (Biber et al. 1999)

… the expression of stance is backgrounded in noun complement clauses. With verb complement clauses, the subject of the verb is often a human agent or experiencer, so that the stance reported by the verb can be attributed directly to that person. In contrast, the stance conveyed by a controlling head noun is not normally attributed to anyone, so that readers must infer that the noun reports the stance of the writer.

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Stance (cont.)

The opposite distribution of verb complement clauses (preferred in conversation) and noun complement clauses (preferred in academic writing) can thus be attributed to two factors. First, conversation has an overall preference for verbal rather than nominal structures, while academic prose shows the opposite pattern, preferring to integrate information in noun phrases.

(Biber et al. 1999: 650)

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Register

- If new uses are violating traditional academic conventions by a switch from complex NP (N-*that*) to *that*-clause, this is at least consonant with Biber et al.'s work on stance if we assume that the writers concerned are (inadvertently or otherwise) practising a more conversational style.

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Acquisition, salience

- How would the learner discover which verbs take which complementation?
- UK students very unlikely to use a dictionary, and e.g. Collins COBUILD gives *discuss* + REPORT-CL – referring to *discuss what …*, not *discuss that …*.
- New usage appears to be non-salient
  ⇨ change from below (in sense that not conscious).
- But perhaps users are aspiring to a more high-status register.

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Perceptual dialectology

- Groups of native speakers with different varieties.
- Starting-point of talk: disparity between my own usage and that of my students.
- My attempt to 'place' their usage in space of possible Englishes.
- Would techniques of perceptual dialectology be relevant? Chris Montgomery (at ISLE2), Dennis Preston.

Prescriptivism

- The history of prescriptive ideas and their influence is an important research strand which could bear on these questions.
- See for instance the 18C work by Carol Percy, the ECEG-database (Nuria Yáñez-Bouza and María Rodríguez-Gil 2010), the work of Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade and colleagues.
- 19C research by Lieselotte Anderwald and others.
- Modern prescriptivism is documented by Arnold Zwicky, and cf. Don Chapman's paper at ISLE2.

Much else to celebrate

- Apologies for relevant work not mentioned, and the huge range of approaches in English linguistics that I couldn't legitimately bring to bear.

6. So what?

Limits of English, Englishes

- Perennial problem of recognising just what is English, just what is acceptable written, academic English
- Domains where it has practical consequences:
  - TEFL
  - UK national school exams (GCSE, A-level)
  - US college entrance tests (SAT, ACT and AP)
  - etc.

7. ISLE matters

ISLE Research Network top 10/25

- Applied Linguistics + Cognitive Science + Computational Linguistics + corpus linguistics + Discourse Analysis + General Linguistics + Historical Linguistics + Intercultural Communication + Language Acquisition + Lexicography + Linguistic Theories + Linguistics & Literature + Morphology + Parsing + Phonetics + Phonology + Pragmatics + Psycholinguistics + Scots + Semantics + Sociolinguistics + Statistics + Syntax + Text/Corpus Linguistics

Unpublished PhD research

- Very important for research students to be able to make contact with others working on related topics
  - published authors
  - unpublished fellow-students
- Please maintain a research profile on ISLE website, *especially* current and incomplete projects.

ISLE matters!

- Book of abstracts for ISLE2 conference clearly demonstrates this.
- At business meeting will discuss role of ISLE outside conferences.
- Thanks to ISLE Executive Committee and other committees for efforts over last three years.
- Thanks to Eugene Green, Emily G J, Karen G and local Boston committee, and all who have put this conference together.
- And to you, for listening.

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