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**COMPETING FORMS OF ADJECTIVAL  
COMPARISON IN SOME MODERN  
VARIETIES OF ENGLISH ACROSS THE  
WORLD**

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# ABSTRACT

Terhi Hagman: Competing forms of adjectival comparison in some modern varieties of English across the world

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In English, there are two ways in which adjective comparison is normally expressed: either by adding the suffix *-er* to the adjectival stem, or by pre-positioning the adverb *more* to the adjective. The choice between the two alternatives depends on aspects such as the characteristics of the adjective, e.g. the number of syllables or the ending, or in some cases the complexity of the adjective phrase. In addition to these standard techniques, the speakers sometimes produce the so-called double forms, in which the periphrastic and inflectional structures are used simultaneously. Despite their occurrence, many grammars and speakers do not regard the form as acceptable.

The objectives of this pro gradu are to analyse the three aforementioned structures and their regional differences in Present-Day English, as well as to consider possible reasons for any dissimilarities. The theoretical framework consists of theories on categorising and characterising World Englishes, and an overview of adjective comparison in Present-Day English as well as a synopsis of the diachronic developments. The study has been divided into two parts, in which the standard and hybrid structures are investigated separately.

Quantitative methods are predominantly utilised in the present study. The empirical data was gathered from *The Corpus of Global Web-Based English (the GloWbE)*, which allows the user to examine a variety of linguistic phenomena in different regional varieties of English. The focus is especially on British, American, New Zealand, Australian, Indian, Singaporean, Kenyan, and Nigerian Englishes. The speakers of the first four varieties speak English as their mother tongue, whereas the last four are often learned as the second language. The study of the standard comparison forms concentrates on eight adjectives, *dear*, *happy*, *full*, *strict*, *narrow*, *handsome*, *beautiful*, and *pleasant*, and the adverb *often*. By contrast, the double forms are studied in more general terms, in order to determine whether the structure in question is particularly frequent in any of the regional varieties in comparison to the others.

The results revealed that the regional varieties mostly conform the norms presented in the existing literature, according to which all monosyllabic and longer adjectives ending in *-y*, *-le*, *-e*, and *-ow* prefer the inflectional variant. The most significant findings regarding the standard forms were connected with the overall frequencies of the words in the different varieties of English.

Nevertheless, a few surprising details surfaced from the data, because the hybrid structures were expected to be especially frequent in New Zealand English compared to at least some of the other varieties. This hypothesis was based on the detail that the variety was mentioned several times in literature in connection with the hybrid forms. However, the results of this study contradicted these notions, and the structure was the most infrequent in New Zealand English. By contrast, the form was clearly more common in the African and Asian varieties, and especially in Indian English. The phenomenon is believed to be the result of the fact that English is mostly spoken as the second language in these countries. In addition, the other languages spoken in these countries, such as Hindi, Mandarin Chinese, and Swahili, may have an effect on the matter, because degree comparison is expressed in different fashions compared to English. These ways include adding a word carrying the meaning of 'than' after the adjective. In some cases, comparison is not signaled explicitly at all, but it is discernible from the context. These points are assumed to cause problems for people who learn English a foreign or the second language, and therefore prompt double structures.

Keywords: adjective, comparison, comparative, comparative structure, World Englishes

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# TIIVISTELMÄ

Terhi Hagman: Competing forms of adjectival comparison in some modern varieties of English across the world

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Englannin kielessä adjektiivien komparatiivimuoto voidaan muodostaa pääsääntöisesti kahdella eri tavalla: joko *-er*-päätteen tai *more*-sanan avulla. Se, kumpaa vaihtoehtoa käytetään, riippuu tavallisesti muun muassa adjektiivin ominaisuuksista, kuten tavujen lukumäärästä tai adjektiivin päätteestä, ja joissain tapauksissa adjektiivilausekkeen monimutkaisuudesta. Näiden vakiintuneiden vaihtoehtojen lisäksi silloin tällöin tavataan niin sanottua kaksoismuotoa, jossa perifraasi- ja suffiksimuotoja käytetään samanaikaisesti. Tästä huolimatta monet kielioppaajat ja kielenkäyttäjät eivät kuitenkaan pidä kyseistä rakennetta kieliopillisesti hyväksyttävänä.

Tämän pro gradu -tutkielman tarkoitus on tutkia kolmea edellä mainittua muotoa ja niiden käytön alueellisia eroja nykyenglannissa. Tutkielman avulla on myös tarkoitus selvittää, mistä havaitut erot voisivat mahdollisesti johtua. Teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu teorioista, joilla maailmanenglanteja on pyritty jäsentelemään sekä katsauksesta adjektiivien vertailumuotojen käyttöön englannin kielessä nykypäivänä sekä historiallisesta näkökulmasta. Tutkimus on jaettu kahteen osaan, joissa vakiintuneita ja kaksoismuotoja tarkastellaan erikseen.

Tutkimuksessa on hyödynnetty pääasiassa kvantitatiivisia menetelmiä. Tutkittava aineisto on kerätty *The Corpus of Global Web-Based English (the GloWbE)* -korpukselta, jonka avulla on mahdollista tutkia erilaisia kielenilmiöitä useissa englannin alueellisissa variaatioissa. Tarkastelun kohteina ovat erityisesti britti-, amerikan-, uudenseelannin-, australian-, intian-, singaporen-, kenian- ja nigerianenglannit, joista neljää ensimmäistä tyypillisesti puhutaan äidinkielenä ja loput opitaan yleensä toisena kielenä. Standardeina pidettäviä muotoja tutkitaan kahdeksan adjektiivin, *dear*, *happy*, *full*, *strict*, *narrow*, *handsome*, *beautiful* ja *pleasant*, sekä *often*-adverbin avulla. Kaksoismuotoja sen sijaan tarkastellaan yleisemmällä tasolla, jotta voidaan selvittää, ovatko kyseiset rakenteet erityisen yleisiä missään tutkimuksen kohteena olleessa englannin variaatiossa muihin verrattuna.

Tutkimuksen tulosten perusteella havaittiin, että englannin alueelliset variaatiot noudattavat pääasiassa kirjallisuudessa tyypillisesti esitettyä jakoa, jonka mukaan esimerkiksi kaikkien yksitavuisten sekä tätä pidempien *-y*, *-le*, *-e* ja *-ow* -loppuisten adjektiivien vertailumuoto muodostetaan *-er*-päätteellä. Standardimuotojen merkityksellisimmät erot liittyivät pääasiassa adjektiivien yleisyyteen englannin eri variaatioissa.

Tuloksissa oli joitain yllättäviä seikkoja, sillä uudenseelanninenglannissa adjektiivinvertailun hybridimuotojen odotettiin olevan erityisen yleisiä muihin variaatioihin verrattuna. Hypoteesin perusteena oli se, että lähdekirjallisuudessa maan variaatio mainittiin useasti hybridimuotojen yhteydessä. Näin ei kuitenkaan ollut, vaan muotoa havaittiin kyseisissä variaatioissa suhteellisesti vähiten. Sen sijaan Aasian ja Afrikan variaatioissa, ja erityisesti intianenglannissa, muodot olivat selvästi yleisempiä. Ilmiön uskotaan johtuvan siitä, että englantia puhutaan kyseisissä maissa pääasiassa toisena kielenä. Lisäksi muiden alueilla puhuttavien kielten, kuten hindin, mandariinikiinan ja suahilin, uskotaan todennäköisesti vaikuttavan asiaan, sillä adjektiivin vertailu ilmaistaan englanttiin verrattuna erilaisilla tavoilla, kuten ainoastaan *kuin*-sanaa vastaavilla sanoilla. Usein vertailua ei edes ilmaista eksplisiittisesti, vaan se on ymmärrettävissä kontekstin perusteella. Näiden seikkojen uskotaan tuottavan hankaluuksia englantia toisena tai vieraana kielenä opiskeleville.

Avainsanat: adjektiivi, vertailu, vertailumuodot, komparatiivi, maailmanenglannit

Tämän julkaisun alkuperäisyys on tarkastettu Turnitin OriginalityCheck –ohjelmalla.

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## 1 Introduction

Observe the following samples of adjective comparison in English, captured from *the Corpus of Global Web-Based English* (henceforth referred to as *the GloWbE*):

- (1) (a) "... and raspberries are always better at this Farmers Market than the supermarkets. They're **sweeter** and the prices are decent. I usually wait until it's almost summer..." (yelp.com)
- (b) "The **more important** point is that unemployment has been on a sustained downward trend." (nytimes.com)
- (c) "... to go to London. My language skills improved slightly... I'm a little **more politer** than I was before arriving in London (I'm originally [sic] from New Jersey..." (huffingtonpost.co.uk)

The examples in (1) illustrate the ways in which adjectives can be compared in English. The adjectival comparison forms, presented in bold, in sentences (a) and (b) are generally considered standard, whereas the one in sentence (c) is not by most speakers. The purpose of the present thesis, therefore, is to study the competing forms of adjectival comparison and their use in modern British, American, Australian, New Zealand, and some Outer Circle varieties of English in order to establish whether any regional variation can be detected. The varieties of the Outer Circle, where English is typically learned as a second language, selected for this study are Indian, Singaporean, Kenyan, and Nigerian Englishes. The adjectival comparison structures in question are inflectional, periphrastic, and the so-called double comparison forms. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to corroborate whether there are any regional differences in the distribution of these structures. The research questions to be answered in this thesis are defined as follows:

1. Is it possible to identify any significant differences between the regional varieties chosen for this thesis? What kind of differences are there in the use

of adjectival comparison structures between Inner and Outer Circle varieties of English?

2. How do the more recent members of the Inner Circle, Australian and New Zealand English, behave in this regard?
3. What could explain these differences? How does the choice of the comparison form depend on the type of adjective or the register?

For these purposes, data drawn from *the GloWbE* will be analysed, because this particular corpus allows the user to perform searches according to a specific local variety of English. The New Englishes studied in the thesis are expected to follow the norms of the metropolitan varieties of the language, i.e. British or American English. However, it will be interesting to perceive whether any deviation arises from the data. Because the double comparison structures are generally rather marginal, their frequencies are anticipated to be fairly low in all of the varieties. The present thesis will be divided into two segments. The introductory section will consist of chapters presenting an outline of a theoretical framework and the relevant background material on the key concepts of the phenomenon, whereas the second half will include the analysis section, in which the corpus data of different varieties of English will be introduced and analysed.

This particular topic has not attracted considerable attention in previous research, and especially the double comparison structures are not covered in great detail in previous works. A reason for this is most likely their non-standard status. Furthermore, most of the earlier studies on adjectival comparison generally do not focus on the sociolinguistic aspects, namely, the comparison of the possible differences between distinctive regional, and especially the more recent, varieties of English. Instead, research from a diachronic standpoint has been slightly more popular.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

The present chapter will be dedicated to a theoretical background focussing on the fundamental concepts and theories on adjective comparison and regional linguistic variation. The discussion will begin with an overview on the history and principles of the usage of adjective comparison and especially of the double periphrastic comparison structure. Subsequently, standard and regional varieties of English will be investigated in connection with prescriptive and descriptive attitudes. The successive sections include a discussion on the linguistic situations of the Outer Circle countries in Asia and Africa as well as the most recent additions to the Inner Circle varieties, i.e. Australian and New Zealand Englishes. The final section of the theoretical background will be dedicated to a discussion on Corpus Linguistics and its benefits as well as problems in a study of this nature.

It should be noted that Standard English is used in a descriptive manner as a reference point to explain the phenomenon examined in the thesis. *A Standard English phrase* is therefore used as a metalinguistic gloss and should not be taken as the only correct form that speakers should use. The differences between prescriptive and descriptive approaches in linguistics will be discussed later in the present thesis.

### 2.1 Adjective Comparison in English

In Standard Present-Day English, there are two different techniques in which the comparative degree of adjectives can be expressed. This can be done by adding the suffix *-er* to the adjectival stem, or alternatively, by pre-positioning the adverb *more* to the adjective (González-Díaz 2006: 707). These categories are called the inflectional, or synthetic, comparison and the periphrastic, or analytic, comparison, respectively. The inflectional strategy produces forms such as *happier* or *greater*, whereas the periphrastic comparison means word forms such as *more beautiful* or *more comfortable*. From these examples alone, it can be concluded that a



factor relating to morphology, i.e. the length of the adjective, is often one of the conditioning principles in the distribution of the two alternative strategies. This and other factors will be discussed in a subsequent section.

In the Old English period, the comparative and superlative forms of adjectives were consistently designated by inflectional endings, which, according to González-Díaz (2008: 15), derive from the Germanic suffixes \*/iz/ and \*/oz/. Therefore, from a chronological perspective, the periphrastic constructions are more recent innovations. The first attestations of the periphrastic constructions in English date back to the thirteenth century (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 330). Nevertheless, there has been disagreement among linguists on their origin, and it has not been established whether the structures surfaced through contact with other languages or because of language-internal reasons (González-Díaz 2006: 707).

At the time of their earliest appearance, the periphrastic constructions were not very common at all and, in contrast to their modern-day usage, they were predominantly employed with shorter, monosyllabic, adjectives (Burrow & Turville-Petre 2005: 44). One possible reason for their emergence is the influence of Latin and, to some degree, French, in conjunction with the strong tendency of English to borrow words from other languages. Nevertheless, the frequency of the periphrastic alternative began to increase gradually after the 14th century, and this development continued until the beginning of the 16th century, when the structure had reached the level of regularity it has in the present-day language (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 329). Brook (1979: 180) suggests that nowadays the periphrastic alternative is advancing the use of synthetic comparison, especially in cases where the adjective is polysyllabic or slightly more unusual.

### 2.1.1 On the Distribution of the Standard Forms

According to most grammars, the number of syllables of the adjective often determines which strategy is employed. In brief, the consensus among grammarians seems to be that most monosyllabic and the disyllabic adjectives ending in *-y*, *-le*, *-e*, and *-ow* tend to favour the inflectional constructions, whereas in the case of other disyllabic and longer adjectives there appears to be more variation. The distinction between the two standard forms and their modern usage is summarized by Quirk et al. (1985: 461–463) as follows:

with most monosyllabic adjectives the inflected and periphrastic forms are interchangeable (although the former are normally used) while participle forms used as adjectives and the exceptions *real*, *right*, and *wrong* require comparison with periphrasis; (b) with many disyllabic adjectives inflection and periphrasis are also interchangeable, as with *common*, *cruel*, *handsome*, *pleasant*, *polite*, *quiet*, *solid*, and *wicked*, and those ending in an unstressed vowel, syllabic /l/, /ə/ or /ər/, while participle forms and the exceptions *eager* and *proper* require comparison with periphrasis; (c) trisyllabic or longer adjectives take only periphrastic forms.

There seems to be, however, more variability in this area than this and other similar accounts suggest (Mondorf 2009: 1). For instance, Mondorf (*ibid.*: 6) writes that the periphrastic construction is often preferred over the inflected variant in situations that are more cognitively complex and difficult to process, despite the length of the adjective. In other words, resorting to the periphrastic form is a method to diminish complexity. One reason for this could be that the periphrastic form explicitly indicates the beginning of the degree phrase that is possibly followed by a complex adjective phrase (*ibid.*: 7). This view is supported by Rohdenburg's (1996: 151) *Complexity Principle*, which states that “[i]n the case of more or less explicit grammatical options, the more explicit one(s) will tend to be favored in cognitively more complex environments”.

A positive correlation between the overall frequency of an adjective and the occurrence of the inflectional form has been attested in the existing literature (Mondorf 2009: 40). Furthermore, the most frequent adjectives are generally the ones with the least number of syllables, which is a factor widely agreed to have a positive connection with the synthetic structure (ibid). However, Mondorf (2009: 41) remarks that frequency can often be overridden by other features, such as the complexity of the syntactic environment or the length of the adjective.

### 2.1.2 Gradable Adjectives

Some adjectives are gradable, while others are not. This feature depends on the semantic properties of the word. Thus, a shared feature in all gradable adjectives is that there is some gradient property associated with their meaning with respect to which objects in their domains can be arranged (Kennedy 1999: 4). For example, books can be more or less interesting, whereas nothing can be more round or impossible. Therefore, adjectives and adverbs scrutinised in the present study naturally belong to the group of words that have these certain properties.

Adjectives are sometimes divided into two groups. *A qualitative adjective* describes some quality. These are words such as *large*, *wealthy*, *red*, or *smart*. In contrast, *a relational adjective* is “[a]n adjective derived from a noun whose role is in effect to relate that noun to a noun that it qualifies” (Matthews 2014). These include adjectives such as *unique*, *Indian*, *architectural*, *excellent*, and *boiling*. Most qualitative adjectives are typically gradable, whereas relational adjectives are regularly non-gradable (Bauer et al. 2015: 104). However, the situation is not always as straightforward. For instance, there are adjectives belonging to the qualitative group which cannot be graded. On the other hand, Bauer et al. (ibid.) note that “nearly any adjective can be coerced into a gradable reading if it can be construed as picking out a set of

qualities that can be present or absent in various degrees”. In addition, gradable adjectives can be preceded by a degree modifier such as *enough*, *very*, *extremely*, *slightly*, *quite*, *rather*, *so*, *pretty*, *too*, and *fairly*.

### 2.1.3 Double Periphrastic Comparison

In addition to the two standard alternatives, it is possible to encounter occasionally what Gonzalez-Diaz (2008: 136) calls double comparison forms, i.e. as defined by Corver (2005: 167), “the co-occurrence of a free comparative morpheme and a bound comparative morpheme”. This denotes phrases such as *more funnier* or *more nicer* that employ both comparison strategies simultaneously. It is important to note that Gonzalez-Diaz (ibid.) uses the term to refer solely to double *periphrastic* comparison variants, disregarding double inflectional forms, which are more restricted to a specific group of irregular comparative bases, i.e. forms such as *worser* or *betterer*. On the contrary, double periphrastic structures can be applied to a wider range of adjectives, “thus constituting a real comparative alternative to simple inflectional and/or periphrastic forms” (ibid). Similar approach will be taken in the present study, and therefore the double inflectional structures will be regarded as being beyond the scope of this study. On the other hand, these forms would most certainly constitute an interesting topic for future research. Consequently, the terms *a double comparison form* and *a double periphrastic comparison form* will henceforth be treated as synonyms.

In the existing literature, the origin of double periphrastic variants is discussed in extremely general terms, and there are mostly some scattered comments made in connection with the origin of the standard periphrastic forms. A specific date for their first appearance is generally unknown. According to Gonzalez-Diaz (2008: 141), some very infrequent occurrences begin to emerge in texts in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, Kytö and Romaine (1997: 330–331) suggest that when the simple periphrastic forms started to appear alongside

with the more traditional inflectional structures in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, this “added yet one more option to the system” (ibid). *The Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter referred to as *the OED*) presents the first attestation for the double comparison forms in Layamon’s *Brut* (c1275 [? a1200] *Pu eær muchele ahtere & ec mare hærdere*; “you are... more harder”) (more, 2018). However, Gonzalez-Diaz (2008: 137) states that double comparatives appear in texts as early as the second half of the ninth century. As mentioned by Corver (2005: 168–169), there is a plethora of examples of double comparatives, as well as double superlatives, in Shakespeare’s texts, two of which are presented in the following:

- a. The Duke of Milan / and his **more braver** daughter could controul thee.  
(Shakespeare, *The Tempest*)
  
- b. This was the **most unkindest** cut of all.  
(Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*)

It is important to remember that since no spoken records from the earlier periods exist, the investigation of the double comparison forms during earlier centuries is restricted to the written language exclusively.

The double periphrastic comparison structures are nowadays considered non-standard in English, but they were notably less uncommon in the Middle English period, for instance. *The OED* (more, 2018) notes that “multiple comparison is common in standard use until the 18<sup>th</sup> cent.”, while Gonzalez-Diaz (2008: 154) attests a steady decline in the frequency from the Early Modern English period to the present day. On the other hand, Kytö and Romaine (2000: 173) remind that these structures have always been considered marginal language and have generally been condemned by grammarians. The writers (ibid.) state that despite their being employed in literary language at a certain point of time, the forms gradually disappeared

from the written language as a result of standardisation of the language. *The OED* assigns the forms labels “*now regional (chiefly Sc.) and humorous*” (more, 2018).

Corver (2005: 170) compares the double comparison forms to other nonstandard double constructions, such as double negative. *Reduplication* is a feature found in many Asian and African Englishes with nonidentical functions (Bhatt & Mesthrie 2008: 116–117). The motivation for reduplication varies from pragmatic to semantic. What reduplication can thus achieve, for instance, is word-class conversion or conveying stylistic nuances and emphasis (ibid). However, Gonzalez-Diaz (2008: 140) writes that whether double comparison of adjectives can be equated with this phenomenon depends on how reduplication has been defined in typological research. Rubino (2005: 11) describes reduplication as a “systematic repetition of phonological material within a word for semantic or grammatical purposes”, which would mean that double comparison falls outside this criterion since its motivation cannot be either phonological or semantic. On the other hand, some works propose a broader definition of reduplication. One of these is Inkelas & Zoll’s (2005) *Morphological Doubling Theory (MDT)*, which places the concept of construction as the central element to explain morphological reduplicative processes. According to the authors, *a construction* means “any morphological rule or pattern that combines sisters into a single constituent” (Inkelas & Zoll 2005: 12). Therefore, this perspective supports the idea of double comparison belonging to the reduplication phenomena.

Bowerman (2008: 480) writes on the use of the feature in connection with South African English. He declares that “[t]he use of both the periphrastic and inflexional comparative in the same construction is largely a second language English feature; however, it occurs in Broad and even General varieties from time to time”. He continues that the genesis of double periphrastic comparison structures is generally unknown but estimates that “[t]he construction most likely stems from the lack of clarity, even in prescriptive English grammars, as to when

*more/most* and *-er/-est* should be used” (ibid). On the basis of this notion, it could be hypothesised that the double comparison forms might be more common in some regional or second-language varieties of English than others. This idea is certainly something to be explored in the present study.

## 2.2 Prescriptivist and Descriptivist Views

Throughout its history, there have been efforts to standardise English, and prescriptive grammar books are still being published in the present day. These books are intended to provide guidelines and principles on how to use the language in the right way, often centred around the personal views of the author. In a sense, publications of this nature can be regarded as resistance to linguistic change, because they usually strongly condemn any linguistic innovations that are only beginning to gain popularity at a certain point of time. This sort of approach to language change is called *prescriptivism*. On the reverse side of the coin to prescriptivism is *descriptivism*, which means merely observing and objectively describing the ways in which people use the language, and especially grammar, without providing strict rules. This point of view naturally allows more variety. In the existing literature, the two terms are often contrasted to each other. A typical definition and juxtaposition of the terms is provided by *The Oxford Companion to English Language* (1992: 286):

*Descriptivism* is an approach that proposes the objective and systematic description of language, in which investigators confine themselves to facts as they can be observed: particularly, the approach favoured by mid-20c US linguists known as *descriptivists*. *Prescriptivism* is an approach, especially grammar, that sets out rules for what is regarded as correct in language.

To rephrase, descriptivism focusses on what people do with the language, based on empirical data, whereas prescriptivism comments on how speakers should use the language and sets out rules, or prescriptions. It could be suggested that middle ground between prescriptivist and

descriptive ideas should be achieved, because norms make the language more accessible when everyone has the same rules, although it should not be forgotten that language is in constant change.

Prescriptivism in connection with sociolinguistics, and especially with regional varieties of English, is an interesting subject. People across the world have accepted the language as their own and added local flavours to it while using it for their own unique purposes. On the other hand, Curzan (2014: 38) makes a fairly fascinating point when stating that one approach to prescriptions is to view them as a means of promoting inclusive, non-discriminatory, and politically correct language. This point of view, however, is not traditionally presented in literature on linguistic prescriptivism, but it certainly is an interesting approach to the concept. The evolvement of English into the lingua franca across the world will be looked into in the next few sections.

Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008: 114) draw attention to an intriguing point in connection with the vocabulary of World Englishes when discussing the level of formality and the influence of written British or American varieties. According to the authors (*ibid.*), the speakers of the New English varieties even in colloquial speech tend to use words that are in the Metropolitan varieties, i.e. British and American, perceived as belonging to more formal registers. It could be assumed from this point that the same also holds true for grammar, sometimes even leading to hypercorrection, and, to draw further conclusions, this could imply that the use of adjectival comparison structures is close to the Standard Metropolitan varieties of British or American English and their formal registers. Therefore, it would be no surprise if the less formal British or American texts in the corpus had higher numbers of double comparison forms.



### 2.2.1 Colonial Lag, Lack of Competence, or New Linguistic Innovations?

It is not always clear whether a divergence from the norms of Metropolitan Englishes is a sign of a lack of competency or emerging linguistic innovations in New Englishes. This is an important question to discuss in connection with linguistic norms and deviation. It is widely accepted that if a deviation from the norms becomes widespread enough in an English-speaking society, it can be regarded as a new feature of that particular variety of English. The manner in which linguistic innovations often emerge is that patterns restricted to specific social or structural contexts gradually spread into slightly different environments and are slowly more and more accepted by a larger group of people (Schneider 2007: 85). Therefore, linguistic innovations are not actual novelties, but they normally are extremely subtle and gradual changes (ibid).

*Colonial lag* is a theory used to explain some of the differences between Present-Day British and Post-Colonial Englishes. According to the idea, colonial varieties of English change less than the variety spoken by the inhabitants of the coloniser country, i.e. British English, and therefore features previously present in British English are preserved in New Englishes. However, some researchers, such as Hundt (2009: 14), have criticised the theory for its overly simplistic view on a much more complex issue. On the other hand, based on this theory, it could be hypothesised that New Englishes have changed less, are more conservative, and use the inflected alternative more regularly. In addition, the frequencies of the double forms can be expected to differ from British English, for instance.

Several nonstandard patterns can be found in New English varieties. It is important to remember that because New Englishes are often a result of language contact, the existence of many of these patterns can also be accounted for by diachronic transmission from British dialects (Schneider 2007: 85). However, in addition to this superstrate effect, the substrate

languages of the region also precipitate different kinds of nonstandard features. This question will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

### **2.3 Theories on World Englishes**

Even though English has become the lingua franca, the universal language in commerce, media, politics, travel, etcetera, it has diversified and developed into countless distinctive local varieties that each have their own special features. According to Halliday (2009: 352), a global language is “a tongue which has moved beyond its nation, to become “international”; it is taken over, as a second tongue, by speakers of other languages, who retain some features of their national forms of expression”. In connection with sociolinguistics and especially studies on New Englishes, *substrate* and *superstrate languages* are terms used in literature to refer to languages co-existing in an area and affecting the local varieties of a language. The former denotes the original language of the indigenous people in a country, e.g. Hindi in India or Maori in New Zealand, whereas the latter means the language spreading locally and possibly replacing other, indigenous languages, i.e., in this case, English (Meshtrie 2008: 45). Features in New Englishes are usually ascribed to either one of these languages.

There is a plethora of ways and theories to categorise and characterise the global uses of English. One of the best-known theories is Kachru’s *Three-circle Model of World Englishes*, which categorises the English-speaking world into three groups based on the history and status of the language in each country. The theory is still widely referred to in literature on sociolinguistics despite it being first introduced over 30 years ago. Another well-known theory is the *Dynamic Model* developed by Schneider. The two models are discussed and contrasted to each other in the next sections. These theories are introduced in this thesis because they can possibly be used to explain some of the phenomena in the corpus data.

### 2.3.1 The Three Circles of English

It can be stated that the spread of the English language across the world happened in two diasporas. Firstly, from the Great Britain to North America, Australia, and New Zealand as a consequence of the relocation of English-speaking settlers. Secondly, as a result of colonialization and other political aspects. Naturally, these two events had individual historical, sociocultural, ideological, and linguistic circumstances, which have given rise to various phenomena requiring closer study.

Kachru (1985: 12) divides the English-speaking world into three circles as a method to conceptualise the polycentric situation of the language. These circles are based on the aforementioned diasporas, and they illustrate the different degrees in which English has spread and is used across the globe. Firstly, the Inner Circle includes the so-called ‘mother country’, i.e. the British Isles, and the areas where the speakers of English from Great Britain transported the language with them when travelling. These areas are North America, Australia, and New Zealand. What these countries have in common is that English is mostly spoken as a mother tongue.

Secondly, the Outer Circle contains the countries that encountered extended periods of colonialization by Britain. These include Asian and African countries such as India, Singapore, the Philippines, Nigeria, Malaysia, Pakistan, Tanzania, Bangladesh, and Kenya. English was transferred into these areas by colonial officers, businessmen, teachers, and missionaries who came to these countries from Great Britain, and it has since co-existed alongside rather different indigenous languages. Consequently, English is nowadays cultivated by the vast majority of indigenous polyglots. The language has thus established its status as a supplementary language in these regions (Kachru 2005: 14). People living in the Outer Circle countries use English as an additional language for their own needs, which include numerous national and international domains, such as commerce, tourism, and higher education. It also

has institutional and administrative significance (Davies 2014: 46). In addition, English is used as a common language between many distinctive ethnic and linguistic groups. The Outer Circle varieties of English, along with the more recent Inner Circle varieties, i.e. Australian and New Zealand Englishes, and their historical backgrounds as well as the current situation will be focussed on in the next few sections.

Lastly, the Expanding Circle denotes the countries, such as China, Korea, Thailand, Japan, as well as countries of Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America, where the language is still dispersing and is predominantly employed as an international medium in business, diplomacy, finance, and other such fields, but is also increasingly employed in education, media, and occupations such as engineering or medicine. These countries do not necessarily have history as colonised countries, for English has expanded into these regions at a later point of time (Kachru 1985: 13). Therefore, people in the Expanding Circle normally learn English as a foreign language (Kachru 2005: 14). The countries in which most people speak an English-based creole as their mother tongue and use the standard variety of English for official purposes also belong to the Outer Circle. These countries include Jamaica and Papua New Guinea, among others.

### **2.3.2 Schneider's Dynamic Model**

Another widely known but more recent model to characterise Post-Colonial Englishes is Schneider's *Dynamic Model*. It is based on the idea that in spite of all the differences on the surface level, there is an underlying, unchanging process which has guided the individual historical variations of Post-Colonial Englishes emerging in different regions, and which accounts for the similarities between them (Schneider 2007: 21, 29) This development emerges whenever a language is transplanted into a new area. Therefore, the model is different from some others in the way that it endeavours to recognise the similarities of different Post-Colonial

Englishes as well as distinct regional varieties and language minority groups, instead of placing an emphasis on a specific individual variety, its special features, or circumstances of use.

The evolution of Post-Colonial Englishes is essentially presented as five stages of identity reinventions and linguistic changes that affect the parties involved in a colonial-contact setting (Schneider 2007: 30). The phases that every postcolonial variety goes through are *Foundation*, *Exonormative Stabilisation*, *Nativisation*, *Endonormative Stabilisation*, and *Differentiation* (ibid.: 32). The stages are caused by and signify reconstructions of all participating speech communities (Schneider 2003: 244), and they are relatively identical in all varieties of English. The influence behind this development is the theory about the re-establishment of the group identities with regard to who belongs to ‘us’ or the ‘other’ by both settlers and indigenous residents in a particular territory. The former ‘other’ group inhabiting the same land becomes gradually included into ‘us’, while the former motherland of the colonisers becomes the new ‘other’ (ibid.: 242). This is emulated by the connected sociolinguistic and linguistic processes.

The theory adopts an evolutionary perspective and the idea of new varieties of a language developing in a competition-and-selection process between structures available to speakers in a “feature pool” of potential linguistic alternatives (Schneider 2007: 21). This is a theory developed by Mufwene (2001). The feature pool and the competition between possible features accounts for the differences between language varieties around the world. A particular feature is preferred in a variety because of the underlying hierarchy of constraints in that specific variety. These hierarchies can be different in the distinct varieties of a language.

## **2.4 English Across the World**

It is important to observe that the Inner Circle does not have unlimited power over the further development of the English varieties spoken in the Outer and Expanding Circles (Davies 2014:

46). Crystal (2012: 172) writes that the future of English will most likely be equally or even more firmly governed by the people who learn it as a second or foreign language as the native speakers. He predicts that a new linguistic innovation may start appearing in the speech of a group of non-native speakers and spread into other groups and writing (ibid). It should be thus reminded that one of the aims of the present thesis is to examine whether double comparison forms are on the increase in any of the local varieties of English studied and whether any conclusions regarding this phenomenon could be drawn.

According to Davies (2014: 46), the attitudes and their developments towards British or American English in postcolonial and multilingual cultures can be incredibly multifaceted and difficult to predict, and it should not come as a surprise that English may perhaps be less favoured in some situations than indigenous languages. Nevertheless, the numbers of foreign and second-language learners of English are continuously increasing, and at the same time, these speakers and their distinctive varieties of the language are gaining more prestige both nationally and internationally (Crystal 2002: 173). This could be manifested, for instance, in the way in which various indigenous words and expressions are no longer used as self-consciously in the national media or other more official contexts as previously, as well as in the manner in which code-mixing is no longer as strongly condemned in international communication.

## **2.5 Asian Englishes**

The status of English in Asian regions is in constant transformation, and, for example, the changing language policies affect the role of the language as an integral part of a national identity. According to Kachru (2005: 1), this has become particularly discernible after the 1950s when the attitudes towards nativized varieties with their unique features have developed in a

more positive direction instead of being considered a mere remnant of the colonial era and discarded with disdain.

In the South Asian metropolitan areas, English is blended with other languages, such as Hindi, and it is not always possible to distinguish which language the interlocutors are using to interact with each other (Kachru 2005: 2). This metropolitan language variety has already been institutionalized, and English acts as a point of convergence in the hybridization of multiple languages. In India, for instance, code switching is typically regarded as a marker of an educated speaker, and it promotes linguistic creativity and ease of communication. Baldauf (2004) calls Hinglish, the hybrid of English and Hindi, “the fastest-growing language in the country” and “a bridge between two cultures that has become an island of its own”.

According to Crystal (2003: 46), it is likely that the number of English-speakers in the Indian subcontinent exceeds the combined total of speakers in the United States and the United Kingdom, and there are estimates that as many as a third of the population of India alone are capable to successfully communicate in English. The varieties of the language in the subcontinent are collectively called South Asian English, which, despite being less than 200 hundred years old, are among the most significant ones today (ibid). Because of historical reasons, Britain and British English have had the most notable influence on the development and features of South Asian English.

In India, as well as, for instance, Pakistan, English has the status of an associate official language<sup>1</sup>, while Hindi is the official language in India, and in the same vein, Urdu has a similar position in Pakistan. In addition, English has the official language status in four states, and it is still widely used in areas such as legislation, the media, education, and business, among others, throughout the country, along with Hindi (Crystal 2003: 49). In some areas, it is even

<sup>1</sup> The linguistic situation in India is actually much more complex than presented here, as there are as many as 22 languages recognized by the Constitution. The situation will be discussed in more detail in Section 2.4.3.

preferred to Hindi as a lingua franca. In the other South Asian countries, English does not have an official status, but it is commonly used as the main medium of international communication. The Asian varieties chosen for this study, Indian and Singaporean Englishes, are explored more closely in the next two sections.

### **2.5.1 Singaporean English**

The contemporary history of Singapore began when it was recognised as a part of the British Empire on 29 January 1819. Until then, the small population of the island consisted of Malaysian farmers and fishermen, but soon the population multiplied, when immigrants mostly from China and a small proportion from India arrived in the country (Deterding 2007: 2). Although the number of Indians has always been relatively small, many of them worked as teachers at the time, which means that they had a substantial effect on the Singaporean varieties of English (*ibid.*).

The population of the country primarily comprises people of Malaysian, Chinese, and Indian origin, who all speak their own indigenous language, such as Mandarin Chinese, Malay, or Tamil. In addition to that, nearly everyone in Singapore speaks at least some English, which has been, alongside Mandarin Chinese, the principal medium of education on all levels. All of the four aforementioned languages have been given the official language status in the country, and, rather curiously, they belong to different language families. Deterding (2007: 5) reckons that the situation, in which virtually every citizen of the country grows to be fluent in two or more languages not even remotely related to each other, is a unique one worldwide.

An interesting feature characterising Singaporean English, and especially Colloquial Singaporean English (often referred to as CSE in the literature), is reduplication (Wee 2004: 105). This means doubling a word for the purpose of emphasis, expressing a continuous action, or referring to someone close or intimate, for instance. This feature is also



encountered in Indian English. Adjectival reduplication in Singaporean English causes “an intensification of the meaning of the base adjective” (ibid.: 108), and the first part of the reduplicated adjective could typically be replaced by the word *very*, for example. As discussed earlier, Inkelas & Zoll (2005) position the notion of *construction* in the centre of their theory to explain morphological reduplication. A *construction* is defined as “any morphological rule or pattern that combines sisters into a single constituent” (Inkelas & Zoll 2005: 12). It could hence be argued that since double forms can be defined as an instance of reduplication, which is an often-recorded characteristic of Singaporean English, double comparison forms could be a recurrent feature of the variety.

### **2.5.2 Indian English**

In contrast to Singapore, the linguistic situation in India is significantly more multifaceted. The reason for this is that there are as many as 22 languages recognised by the Constitution of the country. Originally, English was transplanted there by the British, who governed India from 1857 until 1947 when the country gained its independence, and, as mentioned earlier, it is at present acknowledged as an associate official language, with Hindi having the official language status.

Although there were individual visits of the British to the country, English was officially transplanted into India by the British who governed the country from 1857 until the independence in 1947. In 1600, Queen Elizabeth I granted a charter to the merchants of London, which resulted in the founding of the East India Company (Meshtrie & Bhatt 2008: 19). Hence, it was the sailors and the traders who originally introduced English to India. After gaining independence in 1947, there were struggles to banish the colonial language and replace it with Hindi, but these actions had mostly the opposite effects (Schneider 2007: 165). Because of protests by non-Hindi speakers and tension between different language groups, especially the

speakers of Hindi and Dravidian languages, English was temporarily declared an official language alongside Hindi. During this transition period, the idea was to replace English gradually with Hindi (ibid.:166). However, this proved to be unrealistic, and, in 1965, this status was extended for an unspecified period of time (Sailaja 2009: 4). Therefore, English has maintained its position as an inter-ethnically neutral link language. Sailaja (ibid.: 5) notes that English has an equal, if not more important, role as Hindi, because of the fact that the Constitution was originally written in the language and then translated into Hindi.

Today, Indian English is one of the most prominent varieties of English when it comes to the number of speakers (Schneider 2007: 172–173). The language is commonly used in commerce, education, administration, and mass media, among many other domains of use, and amid the educated groups, English is the primary language used for communication (Sailaja 2009: 5). A rather peculiar fact is that English is preferred for certain specific topics, such as when discussing politics or science, for instance, but feelings or personal relations are often communicated with the person's mother tongue, although, on the other hand, personal letters are more likely to be written in English (ibid).

English has been described as “bookish”, strongly conforming the norms of standard British English, and therefore sounding very formal even in spoken settings (Kachru 1983: 39). This notion would suggest the frequency of nonstandard use of adjective comparison is relatively low in the variety. Because English is only used by certain social groups and for specific domains and thus has not become an identity marker for the majority, it has not currently progressed past *Phase 3 Nativisation* in the *Dynamic Model*. However, there are already signs of it possibly advancing further in the future (Schneider 2007: 171).

## 2.6 African Englishes

In many African countries formerly under the dominance of Great Britain during colonialization, English still has a high status today. Even following the end of most colonies in the 1960s, it is used as the language of formal institutions to this day (Williams 2013: 68). Many African countries encompassed several ethnolinguistic groups that pursued separation following independence. In these countries, such as Zambia, where no particular group had a clear majority in terms of population, national unification was the primary concern immediately after gaining independence, and English has been playing an important role in the process (ibid.: 78).

On the other hand, this naturally has not been the situation in all African countries. In Malawi, for example, the indigenous Chichewa language was imposed as the primary medium of national unification by the President Banda from 1969 onwards, and English has been reserved as a unifying factor solely at the higher level of official institutions, such as the parliament (ibid). In contrast, in Rwanda, most of the population are fluent in the Kinyarwanda language, which has resulted in there being no need for an external, non-indigenous language to serve the purpose of unification. However, the importance of English in the country exists because of political reasons, for the USA and the UK both support the current policy, and, moreover, in 2009, Rwanda joined the Commonwealth, in spite of it never having been an actual British colony (ibid.: 79). Nevertheless, it is important to mention that the consequence of teaching English in schools and using it as an institutional language has not been solely the unity of a nation, but actually quite the contrary. Williams (ibid.) reminds that these actions have in fact created not one but two nations: one for the rich who have access to education and hence the language, and another for the poor to whom such possibilities are completely unattainable.

### **2.6.1 Kenyan English**

English arrived in East Africa later than in some Asian countries, for example (Schmied 2008: 151). For a long time, towns on the eastern coast were used as a route to India, and the local language Kiswahili was used as the lingua franca. In the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British and German rule was established in these areas (ibid). The English-speaking community in Kenya was notably small at first, which means that language contact between indigenous people and English settlers was relatively rare (Brunner et al. 2017: 83). In addition, early missionary schools used principally local languages. However, the number of settlers increased steeply by the establishment of the British colony in 1920, which helped to stabilise the status of the local variety of English as the main language of administration, law, and business (ibid).

There are differing views on the unique features of Kenyan English in the existing literature. On one hand, Schmied (2008: 451) asserts that in Kenyan, as well as other East African, varieties of English, deviations, especially in grammar, from the standard language appear in smaller frequencies, because they are very strongly stigmatised. On the other hand, Brunner et al. (2017: 86) note that “a wide range of features can be detected which deviate from the British norm”. On the basis of these varying statements, it could be assumed that the linguistic situation in the country, and especially the position of Kenyan English, is going through changes even today.

### **2.6.2 Nigerian English**

Alo and Mesthrie (2008: 324) argue that there are prescriptive critics who go so far as to deny the existence of Nigerian English altogether, because they perceive it merely as a “mixed bag of errors”. Nevertheless, English is widely used as a second language in the country, and the variety has developed its own distinctive local features. The language is mostly learned in school. It is often regarded as an official language, although there is no official government

statute or decree that specifies this (Gut 2008: 35). The reason for this impression is most likely the fact that English is preferred in primarily formal contexts, including government, education, literature, commerce, and as a lingua franca in interaction between the more educated groups of society.

Regarding adjective comparison in Nigerian English, Alo and Mesthrie (2008: 330) mention that in sentences involving the comparison of inequality, the comparison marker, i.e. the inflectional suffix or the periphrastic *more*, is often omitted, and the comparison is marked by the word *than*. The following example is from Chinebuah (1976, as cited by Alo & Mesthrie *ibid.*):

- (2) It is the youths who are  $\emptyset$  skilful in performing tasks **than** the adults.  
 ‘...more skilful...’

On the other hand, Ogenyi (2016: 631) discusses how the fact that some adjectives are non-gradable or absolute creates problems for Nigerian learners of English, and sometimes expressions such as *\*more correct* are produced. In addition, the existence of both the inflectional and the periphrastic comparison has been observed to be a problem for some learners (*ibid.*).

## 2.7 Australian and New Zealand Englishes

Because of the relatively short geographical distance between Australia and New Zealand, there has been a considerable amount of movement between the two countries since colonisation (Kiesling 2009: 74), which has certainly had an impact on both varieties of English. Compared to other British colonies, English was transplanted into the countries relatively late, as the first settlers arrived in 1788 in Australia and circa 1840 in New Zealand, and therefore the national varieties of English are currently at similar stages of development (*ibid.*). Furthermore, there are undoubtedly similarities with other major English varieties of the southern hemisphere, such as

South African Englishes (Starks et al. 2005: 13). Hay et al. (2008: 12) mention that New Zealand and Australia have always had a close relationship, which is manifested by mutual trade, security and foreign policies, as well as an agreement enabling New Zealanders to travel, live and work in Australia, and vice versa.

The motivation for choosing New Zealand and Australian varieties for this study is that they represent more recent members of the Inner Circle. Therefore, their features and contexts differ from British and American Englishes as well as from the Outer Circle varieties. The development and current sociolinguistic background of both varieties will be viewed individually in the following sections.

### **2.7.1 Australian English**

The British settlers arrived in Australia in 1788, when Governor Arthur Philip landed in the country with a group of convicts who were to be transported to Australia to undergo their prison sentence, and rather soon, the new colony was thriving and began to attract free immigrants (Kiesling 2004: 419). By 1840, when the importation of convicts was terminated, as many as 677,980 convicted men and 12,460 convicted women had been transported to New South Wales, and 54,640 men and 12,500 women had been transported as prisoners to an area that was later going to be called Tasmania (ibid). Unlike the colonies in Africa and Asia, the numbers of the European settlers soon exceeded those of the indigenous people. As in the USA, the size of the aboriginal population decreased significantly after the colonisation period. The following social segregation and exclusion eventually gave rise to a distinctive Aboriginal English variety.

Australian English initially emerged as a koiné, which Bhatt & Mesthrie (2008: 179) define as the result of contact involving different dialects of the same language. In the case of Australia, the speakers of these dialects originated predominantly from England, Ireland, and

Scotland. Kiesling (2004: 419–420) mentions the importance of convicts in the formation of the new dialect and discusses how the origins of the prisoners is not entirely clear, although it is known that approximately two thirds were sentenced in England and one third in Ireland, with London having the highest percentage of convicts out of all individual parts. It can be thus inferred that London had most likely the most significant influence on the characteristics of Australian English.

Despite the large number of indigenous languages in Australia, English is currently the only official language (Peters & Burrige 2012: 234). Guy (1991: 213) discusses how the language has been in this position since British colonisation, as it has superseded most of the original tongues and is the dominant language for most purposes and fields throughout the country. However, this does not mean that Australia is a monolingual country. The situation is quite the contrary, since there are several surviving original and immigrant tongues spoken within the borders of the country (ibid).

Shnukal (2001: 188) mentions double comparison as a characteristic feature of Torres Strait English, which is a variety spoken by the people of diverse backgrounds, such as indigenous Torres Strait, Malay, Japanese, and Filipino, among others, living on Thursday Island and its neighbouring islands in Torres Strait, North Queensland. It would be interesting to see whether the variety has impacted Australian English in general in this respect.

### **2.7.2 New Zealand English**

New Zealand is one of the most isolated countries in the world, which explains why it was one of the last countries to be inhabited. The Dutch navigator Abel Tasman and his crew were the first Europeans to reach New Zealand in 1642, but they did not disembark from their fleet and left the New Zealand waters after less than a month (Hay et al. 2008: 4). More than 100 years later, in 1769, Captain James Cook arrived on the east coast of the North Island and claimed

the country for the British. The establishment of Australia's convict settlement laid the foundations for the European settlement of New Zealand (ibid). In the beginning, New Zealand was not governed by Europeans but was merely an illegitimate outpost of the Australian colony of New South Wales with approximately 2,000 European inhabitants. The British government was originally unenthusiastic to make New Zealand its official colony, but because of unrest in the country, it was under considerable pressure to control the situation (ibid). New Zealand finally became an official British colony with the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi between the Britons and the Maori in 1840, after which the European population increased rapidly. The recurrent contacts between the Europeans and the Maori had a destructive effect on the latter group (ibid.: 5), and by 1858, the number of non-Maori inhabitants exceeded that of the Maori.

In the same vein to Australian English, the New Zealand variety was a result of a koinéization process. Although being a relatively recent English variety, New Zealand English is gaining prestige locally and is seen as a part of identity by the younger generation (Bell et al. 2005: 13). Currently, English is the primary language used in the government, media, education, and other workplaces. There is growing bilingualism among the Maori as well as multilingualism because of immigrants (ibid).

According to the existing literature, double comparison is, at least among some social groups, encountered in Zealand English. For instance, Schneider (2007: 84) mentions New Zealand English in connection with double comparatives in a list of extremely widespread morphosyntactic features found in nonstandard registers and Post-Colonial Englishes. In addition, Hay et al. (2008: 61–62) briefly discuss double comparison as a feature of New Zealand English. The authors mention that these forms are found in both written and spoken language.



## 2.8 Corpus Linguistics

Corpus linguistics is a selection of different techniques used for studying language. These procedures can be employed to observe countless distinctive areas of linguistics. One of the benefits of using corpora to study linguistic features is its accessibility. A public corpus can be accessed by anyone with an internet connection. Another advantage relating to accessibility is the replicability of research, because any researcher should be able to arrive at the exact same results by repeating carefully the steps of a previous study and using the same corpus. Furthermore, because corpora are comprised of large numbers of texts, the user is able to perform various kinds of research on a broad variety of linguistic features relatively easily. Many corpora are being constantly updated, which means that the data retrieved from them is usually fairly recent. This fact also allows any corrections or other changes on the data or the algorithm to be made fast if necessary.

On the other hand, it is important to remember that, like any other method of research, corpus linguistics is not without disadvantages. One of the problems is that the parts-of-speech tagging process is often conducted by an automatic software program which is susceptible to making errors. The tagging process, called *morpho-syntactic annotation*, is designed to make performing corpus annotation and searches faster and more effortless. Typically, the automatic analyser acquires its principles based on statistics drawn from manual annotation of a corpus and is then capable of applying these rules when conducting a similar analysis on a new set of data. Consequently, one type of error resulting from this process, for example, could be that two homographs, words with the same orthographic form but different meanings, belonging to different word classes are assigned a wrong label. The tagging software can be even more prone to making mistakes when the materials have to be scanned or manually typed from original documents, especially if these documents are handwritten.

One needs to be careful when selecting a set of corpus data to explore. McEnery and Hardie (2011: 2) note that it is important that the data selected for a study match the research questions which are to be answered. For example, it would be rather impractical to analyse a linguistic feature in a language variety in which this feature is not present. Another essential point to remember is that the lower the overall numbers are in a corpus, the more exaggerated the corresponding percentages tend to be. This means that in cases where there are only a few instances of a certain feature, it is rather difficult to draw any definite conclusions. On the other hand, in some cases the absence of a feature itself can be an interesting finding. Yet another problem when conducting a study of this nature is that a corpus does not always necessarily represent the original intention of the author. Instead, the role of the editor or the compiler of the corpus can be remarkably prominent, because he or she may have taken liberties by making corrections to the original text according to his or her personal perspectives. Thus, it can be concluded that corpora can never be entirely objective or unproblematic.

One more factor affecting objectivity is that the choice of materials to be included in a corpus influences its representativeness and credibility. The texts selected for a corpus are mostly edited, which results in predominantly standard language. This being said, there are some genres, such as blog texts, which are often characteristically more colloquial in style and can display more regional and non-standard features. McEnery and Hardie (2012: 2) remind that it is fundamental to be conscious of any potential internal variation in a corpus, because it can largely affect the degree of how successfully the research questions can ultimately be answered.

### **2.8.1 Normalised Frequencies**

There are certain points to be taken into account in corpus-based studies when linguistic features are examined across different texts and dialects. One of the most important things to

remember is that texts and corpora come in various sizes. Therefore, for the results of a study to be applicable to other studies, it is essential that external factors, such as the influence of the size of the (sub)corpus, be eliminated. If this phase is neglected, the results are misrepresentative and incorrect (Biber et al. 1998: 263). The technique for adjusting the raw frequencies and calculating their averages is known as *normalisation*, and it produces a number called *normalised frequency*. Normalised frequencies are calculated in the following manner:

$$\frac{\text{number of word tokens}}{\text{number of words in the (sub)corpus}} \times 1000,000 = \text{number of tokens per 1000,000 words}$$

This procedure allows all the occurrences of the studied patterns to be truly compared with each other. Because *the GloWbE* consists of several subcorpora of different size representing distinct varieties of English, the raw frequencies are first converted into normalised frequencies in order to ensure that the numbers are comparable.

### **3 Methodology and Data**

The chapter begins with a synopsis of the methods and techniques employed to gather and analyse the data, after which the corpus data is presented and analysed. Some important points on the methods employed have already been touched upon in the preceding section on corpus linguistics.

#### **3.1 Methodology**

The nature of this study is synchronic in that it concentrates on the comparison of present-day varieties of English and mainly quantitative because the comparison of these varieties is principally numeral. Because of the materials included in the corpus, the present study is

restricted to written language. However, comparison with spoken material would certainly be an interesting topic, because it would perhaps help to verify if, for instance, the double comparison forms are a recurrent feature of spoken English.

The materials for the present study are gathered from *The Global Web-Based English Corpus* (also referred to as *the GloWbE*). The corpus consists of approximately 1.9 billion words of text in 1.8 million web pages from 340,000 websites in twenty distinctive countries, which permits the comparison of different local varieties of the language in a rather effortless manner. These web pages were gathered in December 2012 by using Google's Advanced Search option, and they include blog texts as well as texts from other domains (the GloWbe). This shows clearly in the way the texts are divided into two categories, "General" and "Blog".

What is noteworthy about using this particular corpus is that the number of words from each dialect differs quite notably. For instance, the American and British English parts of the corpus include approximately 386.8 million and 387.6 million words, respectively, whereas the Kenyan English part consists of about 41.0 million words. These differences in size naturally affect the numbers of hits when performing searches. Therefore, normalised frequencies are needed in the analysis in order to ensure that the results of each local variety are comparable to each other. The query used for finding the double comparison structures in this thesis is *more \_j jr\**. For the inflectional and simple periphrastic comparison forms, the queries *\_j jr\** and *more \_j\** are employed, respectively.

The lexical item *more* belongs to several word classes and has several other definitions and usages apart from the adverb that is used to form comparisons. Naturally, it is possible that the word be encountered with these other meanings in a sentence preceding an adjective or adverb in the corpus data. An example of these uses is when the word is employed as a determiner indicating an increase in quantity, as illustrated in instances (3) and (4):

- (3) **More older people** entered the room.  
 (4) We need to buy **two or more bigger shirts**.

In examples (3) and (4) above, as in similar clauses, the meaning could be ‘additional’, ‘further’, ‘added’, or ‘extra’, for instance, and the word denotes rather a number or an amount of people or things. This naturally entails that the clause structure is parsed differently from those situations where *more* generates the comparative. Namely, in the comparative structure the word *more* belongs to the adjective phrase, whereas in examples (3) and (4) this is not the situation since *more* modifies the nouns *people* and *shirts*. It is expected that these kinds of instances might also be present in the search results of the corpus. As a consequence, prior to analysing the data on the double comparison structures, it is essential that these cases be excluded from the data. Therefore, the corpus data needs to be assessed manually in order to ensure that the irrelevant instances, as well as the erroneously labelled ones, do not distort the results of the analysis.

## 3.2 Data

The data gathered from *the GloWbe corpus* will be presented in the present section. The results have been divided into two parts. Firstly, the standard inflectional and periphrastic structures are examined, after which the few subsequent pages are dedicated to the non-standard double comparison forms.

### 3.2.1 Inflectional and Periphrastic Comparison

This section focusses on the standard comparison structures in English and their possible variation in different Englishes and domains of use. After presenting observations on these points, a few adjectives and an adverb will be examined more closely as an attempt to discover

any related patterns. Table 1 below exhibits the raw and normalised frequencies as well as the proportions for these forms in the local varieties selected for the present study.

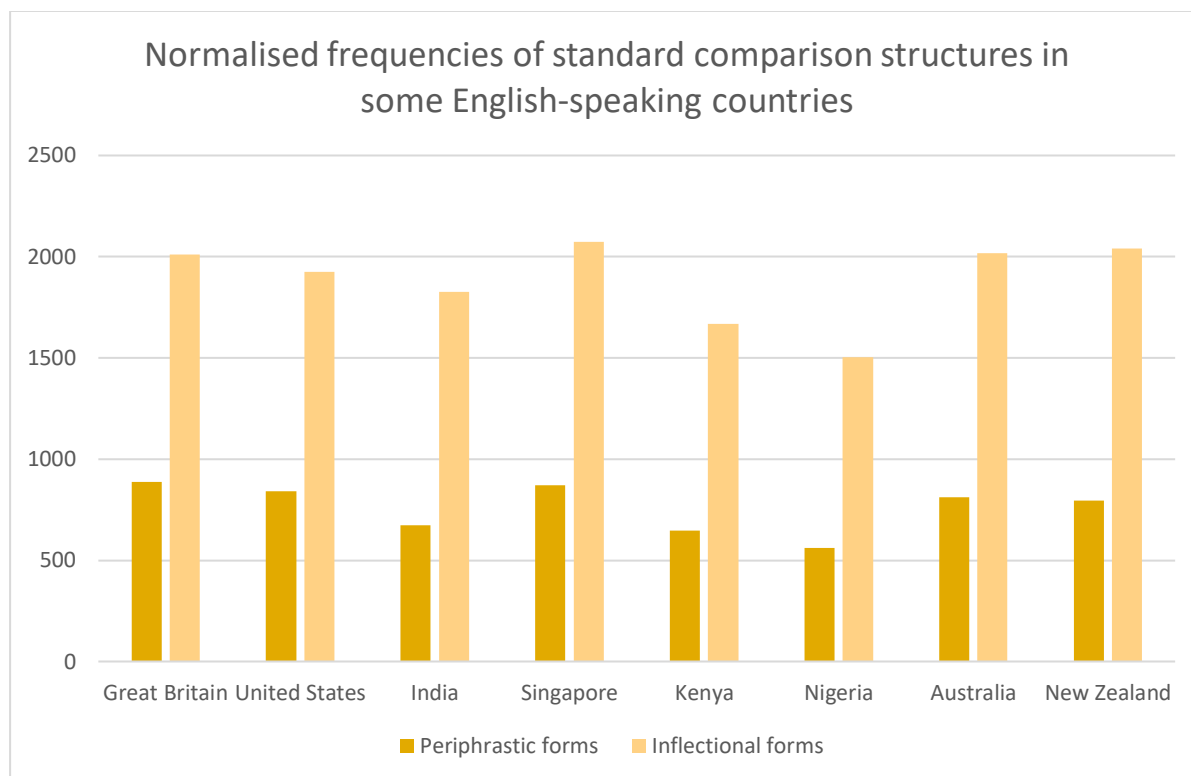


Figure 1: Normalised frequencies of standard comparison structures in some varieties of English

Variety of English	Normalised frequency		Number of tokens		Percentage	
	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms
Great Britain	886.22	2010.59	343,511	779,335	30.59	69.41
United States	842.66	1924.18	325,948	744,292	30.46	69.54
India	673.87	1824.73	64,982	175,960	26.97	73.03
Singapore	871.33	2073.80	37,445	89,121	29.59	70.41
Kenya	645.64	1668.63	26,508	68,516	27.90	72.10
Nigeria	561.06	1502.15	23,927	64,061	27.19	72.81
Australia	809.94	2017.97	120,040	299,080	28.64	71.36
New Zealand	796.08	2040.35	64,793	166,065	28.07	71.93

Table 1. Standard comparison structures in some varieties of English

As can be perceived from Table 1, it is evident that inflectional forms are notably more frequent in all of the varieties. This does not come as a surprise because of the history of the inflectional forms. The alternative is the older one of the two rivals, and hence it has always been particularly frequent, although, according to the existing literature, periphrasis has been gradually increasing in frequency. Another possible factor affecting its popularity could be the features of the adjectives to which the *-er* suffix is attached, such as the number of syllables, ending, semantics, or overall frequency in the language.

The normalised frequencies of both alternatives in Nigerian and Kenyan Englishes overall seem to be slightly lower than in the Asian varieties. One possible factor explaining this phenomenon could be the different phases in which these varieties are according to Schneider's *Dynamic Model*. Nigerian and Kenyan Englishes are on Phase 3, whereas Singaporean English has processed onto Phase 4. Indian English is also on Phase 3, but there are signs of emerging endonormative attitudes (Schneider 2007: 171). It is also possible that the African varieties use some other constructions, such as negation, for expressing degree.

This could be the case because of the influence of substrate languages. However, the proportions of inflectional and periphrastic forms are quite similar in all varieties. In this sense, all the varieties seem to mostly conform the trajectories recorded in the literature. The highest percentage of inflectional structures is found in Indian English, although it is not strikingly higher compared to other varieties.

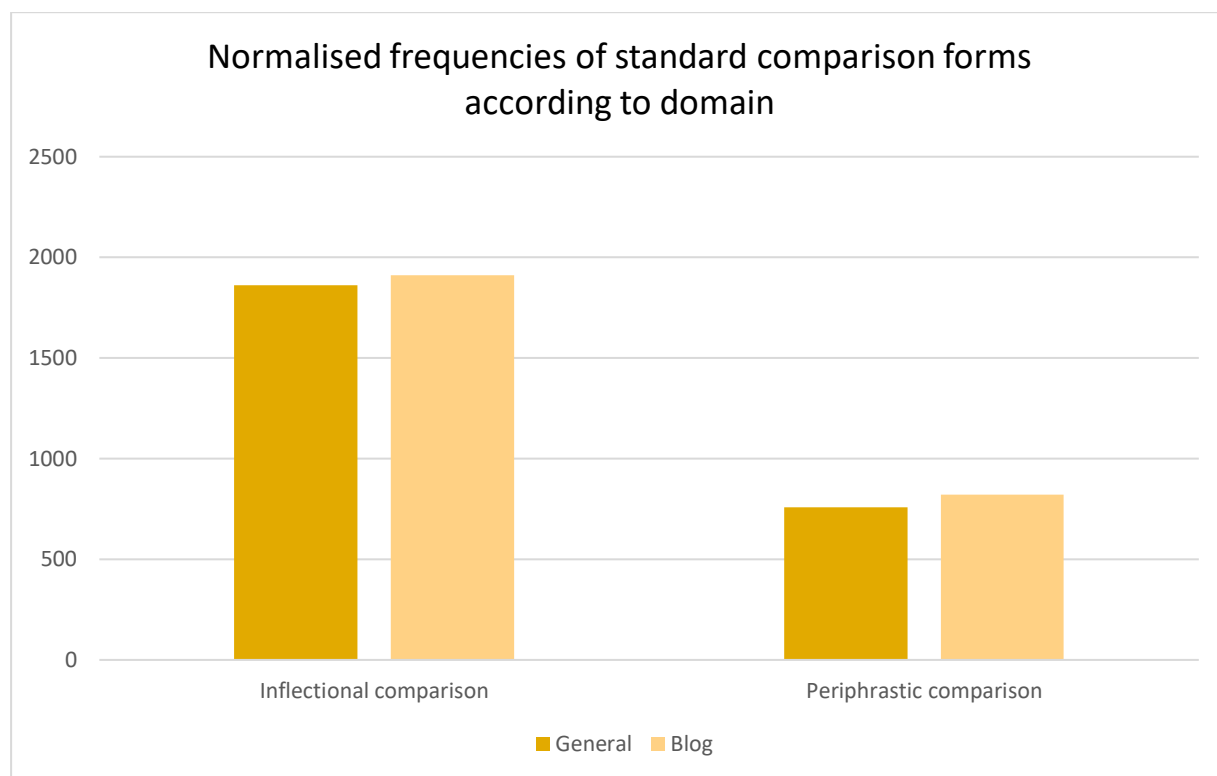


Figure 2. Normalised frequencies of standard comparison forms according to domain

Variety of English	Normalised frequency		Number of tokens	
	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms
General	758.34	1,861.92	985,453	2,419,556
Blog	819.57	1,910.67	478,396	1,115,291

Table 2. Standard comparison forms according to domain

The difference between blog texts and other domains does not appear to be prominent in either of the alternatives, since both comparison strategies are slightly more common in blog texts and inflectional comparison is clearly more frequent in both domains.



The distribution of the normalised frequencies between the two domains is presented in Figure 2 and Table 2 above.

### 3.2.2 Adjectives

The adjectives and adverbs chosen for a closer scrutiny in this thesis are *dear*, *happy*, *full*, *strict*, *narrow*, *often*, *handsome*, *beautiful*, and *pleasant*. These words were selected on the basis of their length, because the comparison of adjectives with varying number of syllables is one of the objectives in the present thesis. The adverb *often* was selected because it is gradable and preliminary searches showed variation between the two alternative structures. The normalised frequencies of these adjectives are presented in Tables and Figures 3–11.

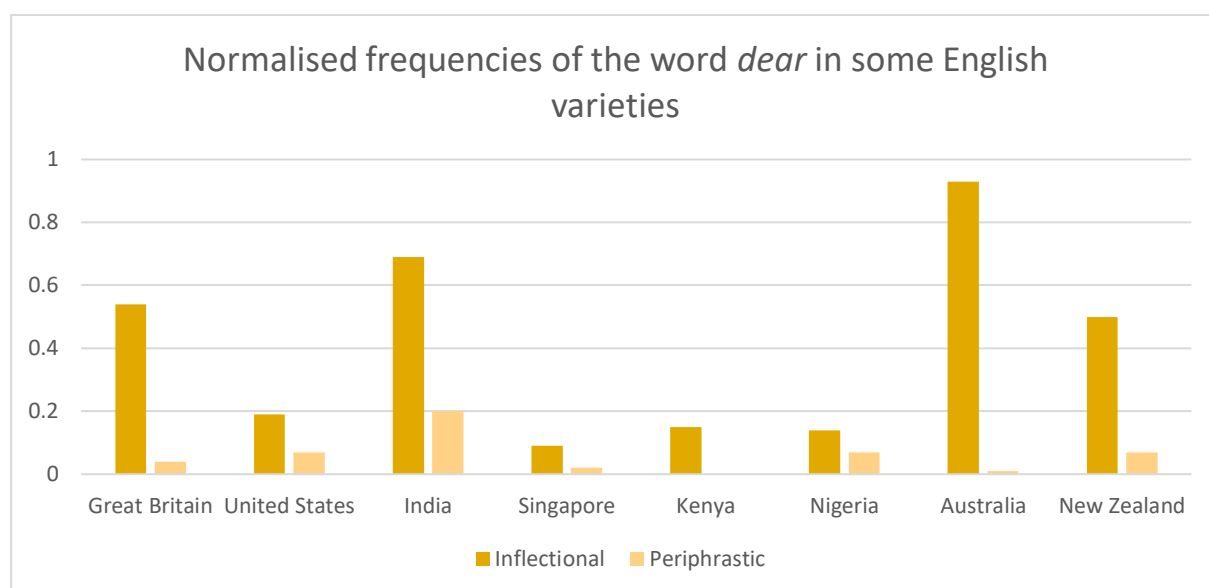


Figure 3. Normalised frequencies of the word *dear* in some English varieties

Variety of English	Normalised frequency		Number of tokens		Proportions (%)	
	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms
Great Britain	0.04	0.54	16	211	7.05	92.95
United States	0.07	0.19	26	75	25.74	74.26
India	0.20	0.69	19	67	22.09	77.91
Singapore	0.02	0.09	1	4	20.00	80.00
Kenya	0.00	0.15	0	6	0.00	100.00
Nigeria	0.07	0.14	3	6	33.33	66.67
Australia	0.01	0.93	2	138	1.43	98.57
New Zealand	0.07	0.50	6	41	12.77	87.23

Table 3. Raw and normalised frequencies and proportions of the word *dear* in some varieties of English

As can be seen from Table and Figure 3 above, India has slight variation in the word *dear*, as the periphrastic alternative seems to be slightly more frequent compared to the varieties. On the other hand, the normalised frequencies of both structures in Indian English are slightly higher, and therefore the periphrastic structure is proportionally on a similar level to American and Singapore English. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the word in general is very infrequent in the other Asian variety, Singaporean English, with merely five hits in total. In African Englishes, the numbers are roughly as low as this, which means that no conclusive remarks on the preference of one form over the other in the Singaporean, Kenyan, and Nigerian varieties can be made. In Australian English, the percentage of the inflectional form is the highest out of all Englishes, and there are only two hits for *more dear*.

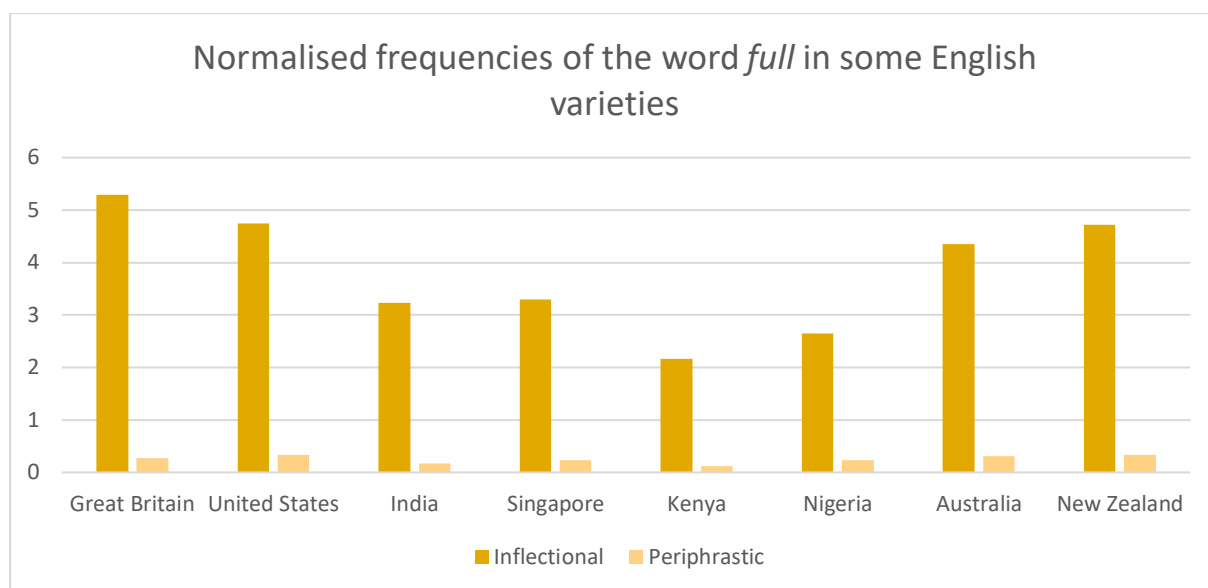


Figure 4. Normalised frequencies of the word *full* in some English varieties

Variety of English	Normalised frequency		Number of tokens		Proportions (%)	
	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms
Great Britain	0.27	5.29	104	2052	4.82	95.18
United States	0.34	4.74	133	1833	6.77	93.23
India	0.17	3.23	16	311	4.89	95.11
Singapore	0.23	3.30	10	142	6.58	93.42
Kenya	0.12	2.17	5	89	5.32	94.68
Nigeria	0.23	2.65	10	113	8.13	91.87
Australia	0.31	4.35	46	644	6.67	93.33
New Zealand	0.36	4.72	29	384	7.02	92.98

Table 4. Raw and normalised frequencies and proportions of the word *full* in some varieties of English

In the case of the adjective *full*, no discernible dialectal variation can be observed. The normalised frequencies vary between 0.12 and 0.36 for the periphrastic forms, and between 2.17 and 5.29 for the inflected structure. The proportions of the synthetic form remain above 90% in all varieties, and therefore it can be concluded that *fuller* is the preferred alternative in all regions.

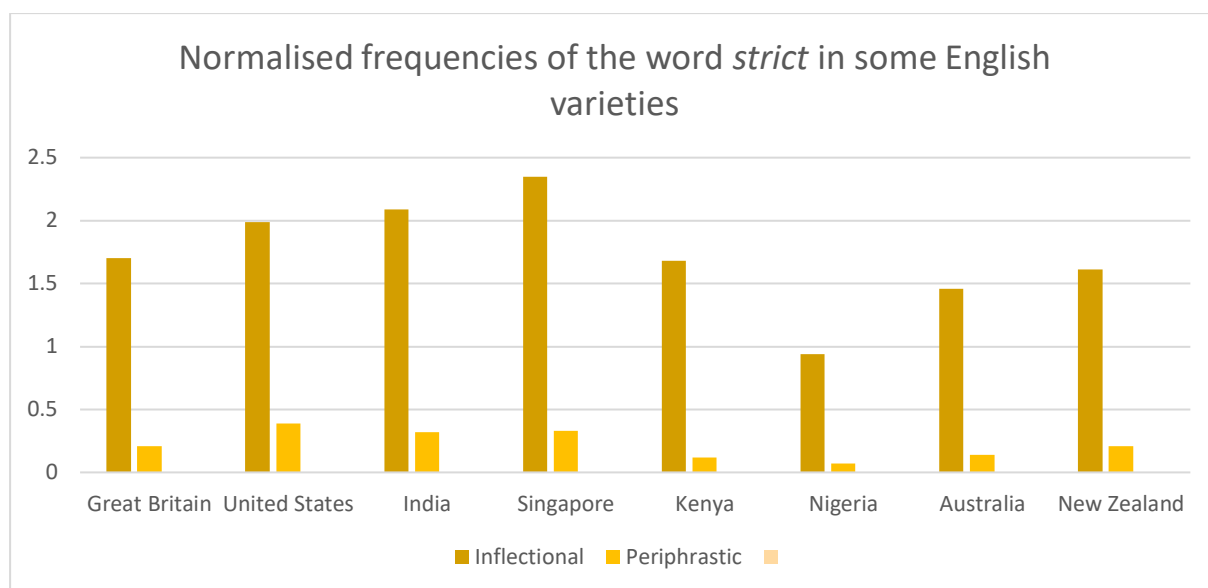


Figure 5. Normalised frequencies of the word *strict* in some English varieties

Variety of English	Normalised frequency		Number of tokens		Proportions (%)	
	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms
Great Britain	0.21	1.70	82	659	11.07	88.93
United States	0.39	1.99	150	768	16.34	83.66
India	0.32	2.09	31	202	13.30	86.70
Singapore	0.33	2.35	14	101	12.17	87.83
Kenya	0.12	1.68	5	69	6.76	93.24
Nigeria	0.07	0.94	3	40	6.98	93.02
Australia	0.14	1.46	21	217	8.82	91.18
New Zealand	0.21	1.61	17	131	11.49	88.51

Table 5. Raw and normalised frequencies and proportions of the word *dear* in strict varieties of English

The adjective *strict* appears to be slightly less frequent in the African varieties, since the normalised frequencies are the lowest ones in the data. It is evident that the inflectional form is more popular than periphrasis, as the proportions are above 80% in all varieties.

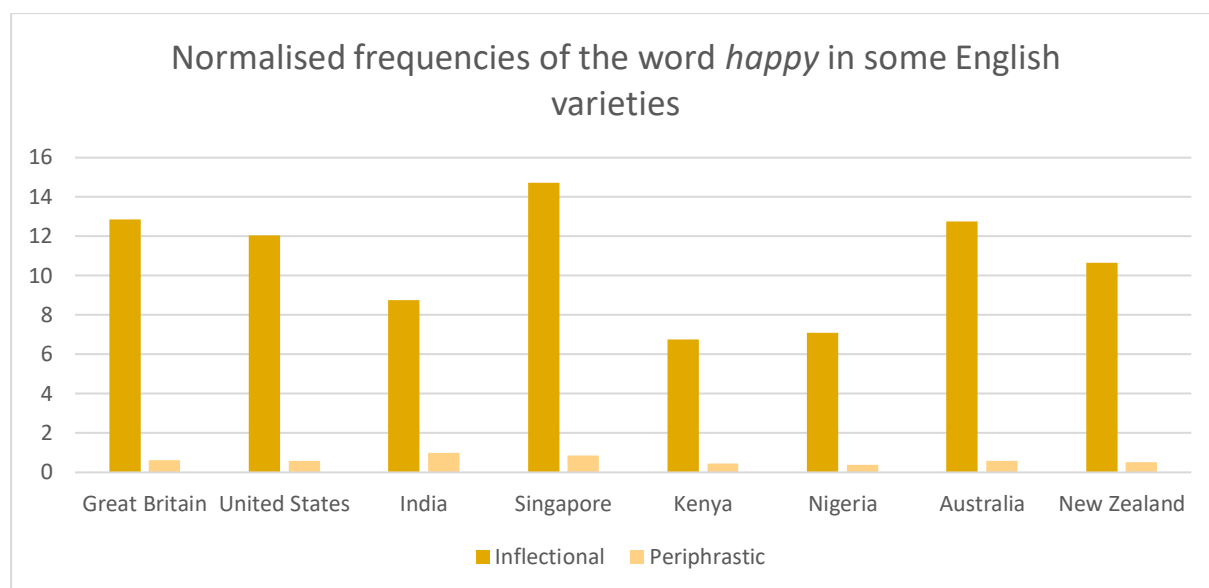


Figure 6. Normalised frequencies of the word *happy* in some English varieties

Variety of English	Normalised frequency		Number of tokens		Proportions (%)	
	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms
Great Britain	0.61	12.86	235	4986	4.50	95.50
United States	0.60	12.06	235	4663	4.80	95.20
India	1.00	8.77	96	846	10.19	89.81
Singapore	0.86	14.71	37	632	5.53	94.47
Kenya	0.46	6.75	19	277	6.42	93.58
Nigeria	0.38	7.08	16	302	5.03	94.97
Australia	0.59	12.77	88	1893	4.44	95.56
New Zealand	0.53	10.66	43	868	4.72	95.28

Table 6. Raw and normalised frequencies and proportions of the word *happy* in some varieties of English

There is a strong inclination for the adjective *happy* to prefer the inflectional structure in all varieties. This notion is in line with Mondorf (2009: 130) who observes that disyllabic adjectives ending in *-y*, along with a few other endings, tend to prefer inflections. The Inner Circle varieties appear to have the strongest tendency, although their differences to the other varieties are extremely trivial.

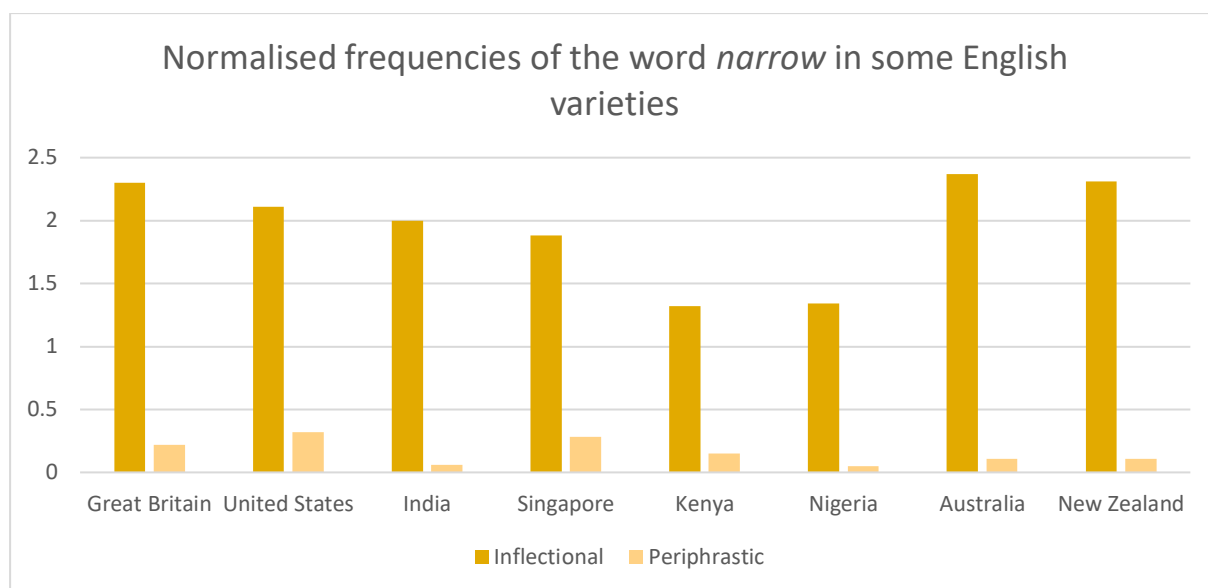


Figure 7. Normalised frequencies of the word *narrow* in some English varieties

Variety of English	Normalised frequency		Number of tokens		Proportions (%)	
	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms
Great Britain	0.22	2.30	85	893	8.69	91.31
United States	0.32	2.11	125	818	13.26	86.74
India	0.06	2.00	6	193	3.02	96.98
Singapore	0.28	1.88	12	81	12.90	87.10
Kenya	0.15	1.32	6	54	10.00	90.00
Nigeria	0.05	1.34	2	57	3.39	96.61
Australia	0.11	2.37	16	351	4.36	95.64
New Zealand	0.11	2.31	9	188	4.57	95.43

Table 7. Raw and normalised frequencies and proportions of the word *narrow* in some varieties of English

*Narrow* visibly favours inflections, which is by no means surprising, because Mondorf (2009: 130) witnesses that disyllabic adjectives ending in *-ow* tend to prefer the synthetic comparison form. The most variation proportionally appears to be in Singaporean and American Englishes.

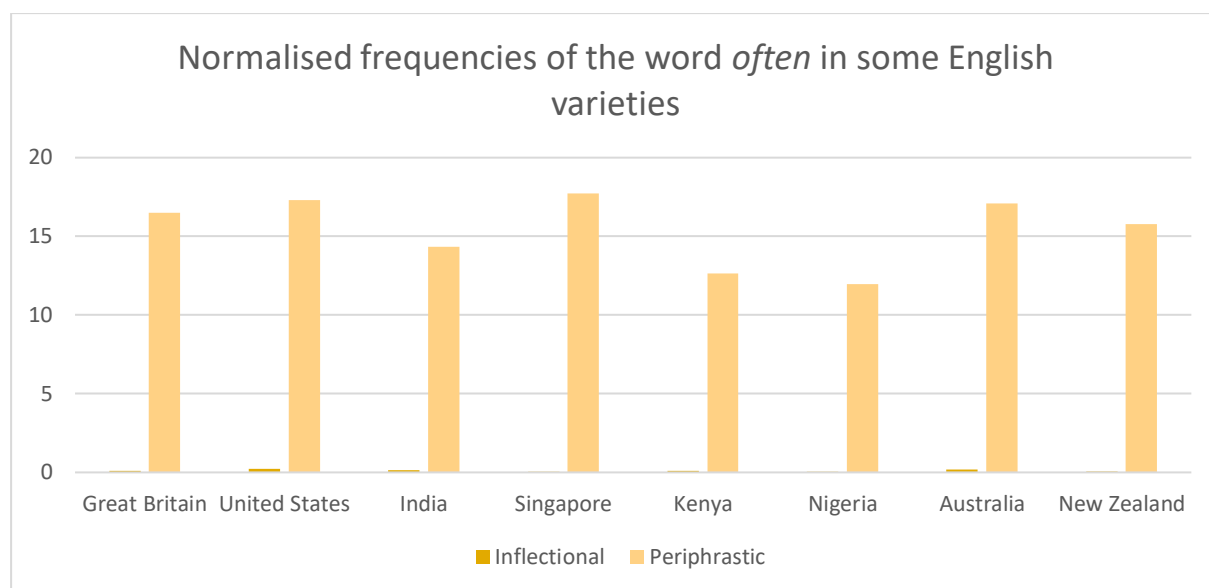


Figure 8. Normalised frequencies of the word *often* in some English varieties

Variety of English	Normalised frequency		Number of tokens		Proportions (%)	
	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms
Great Britain	16.50	0.08	6397	30	99.53	0.47
United States	17.29	0.24	6689	94	98.61	1.39
India	14.34	0.15	1383	14	99.00	1.00
Singapore	17.73	0.02	762	1	99.87	0.13
Kenya	12.62	0.10	518	4	99.23	0.77
Nigeria	11.98	0.02	511	1	99.80	0.20
Australia	17.11	0.20	2536	30	98.83	1.17
New Zealand	15.78	0.06	1284	5	99.61	0.39

Table 8. Raw and normalised frequencies and proportions of the word *often* in some varieties of English

In addition to adjectives, some adverbs can also be graded. Compared to some of the adjectives chosen for this study, *often* returns relatively many hits. The word prefers nearly exclusively the periphrastic variant in all varieties examined in this thesis, since the lowest percentage in the data is found in American English, and it is as high as 98.61%. Quite interestingly, *the OED* (often, 2020) attests *oftener* from Middle English. The first occurrence dates back to 1415. This insinuates that a change has taken place at some point, and the periphrastic variant has surpassed its inflectional rival.

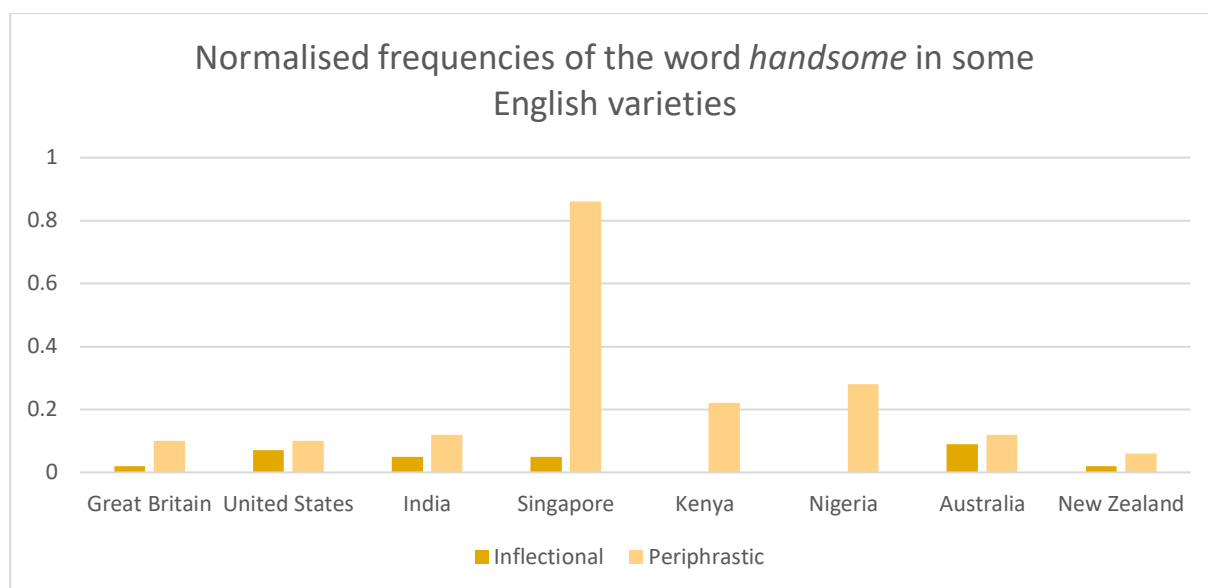


Figure 9. Normalised frequencies of the word *handsome* in some English varieties

Variety of English	Normalised frequency		Number of tokens		Proportions (%)	
	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms
Great Britain	0.10	0.02	40	9	81.63	18.37
United States	0.10	0.07	40	29	57.97	42.03
India	0.12	0.05	12	5	70.59	29.41
Singapore	0.86	0.05	37	2	94.87	5.13
Kenya	0.22	0.00	9	0	100.00	0.00
Nigeria	0.28	0.00	12	0	100.00	0.00
Australia	0.12	0.09	18	13	58.06	41.94
New Zealand	0.06	0.02	5	2	71.43	28.57

Table 9. Raw and normalised frequencies and proportions of the word *handsome* in some varieties of English

Rather curiously, the inflectional forms of *handsome* constitute over 40% of all occurrences in Australian and American English. In other varieties, conversely, the periphrastic form is more frequent and scores more than 70% of the totals. In the African varieties, no instances of *handsomer* are found. In New Zealand English, the combined number of hits is the lowest of all regional varieties.



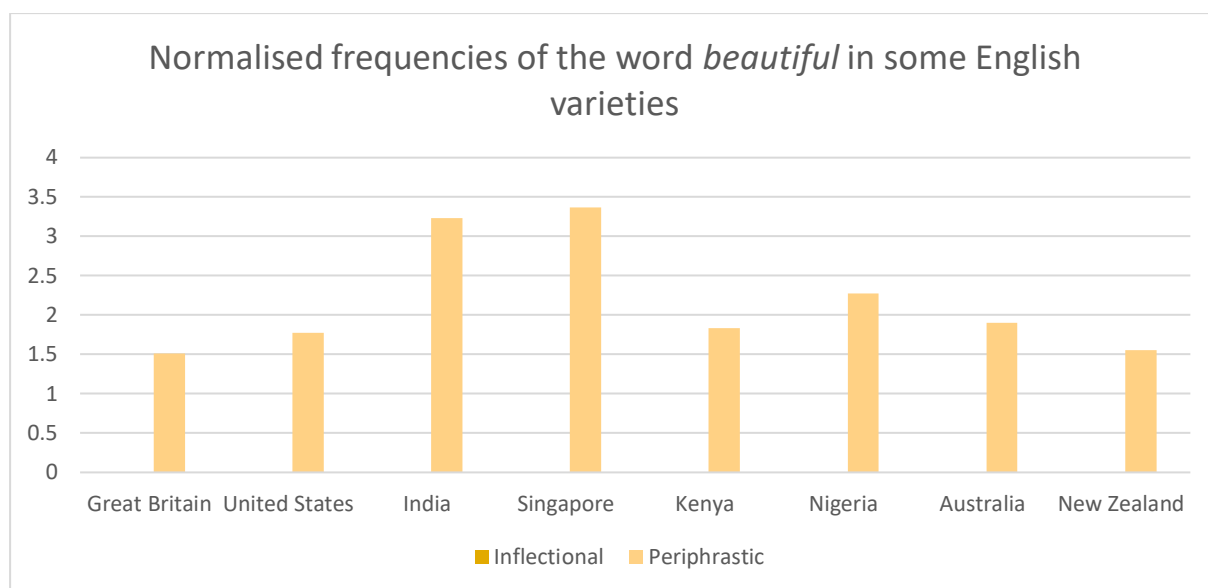


Figure 10. Normalised frequencies of the word *beautiful* in some English varieties

Variety of English	Normalised frequency		Number of tokens		Proportions (%)	
	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms
Great Britain	1.51	0.00	585	1	99.83	0.17
United States	1.77	0.00	683	0	100.00	0.00
India	3.23	0.00	311	0	100.00	0.00
Singapore	3.37	0.00	145	0	100.00	0.00
Kenya	1.83	0.00	75	0	100.00	0.00
Nigeria	2.27	0.00	97	0	100.00	0.00
Australia	1.90	0.00	281	0	100.00	0.00
New Zealand	1.55	0.00	126	0	100.00	0.00

Table 10. Raw and normalised frequencies and proportions of the word *beautiful* in some varieties of English

The trisyllabic word *beautiful* extremely visibly prefers the periphrastic alternative, as there is only one occurrence of *beautifuler*, which is from a British English blog post. A search was also performed on the form *beautifuler*, which did not return any hits in the varieties. In all varieties apart from British English, the analytic form thus comprises 100% of all tokens, despite the fact that the number of hits is relatively high in all varieties compared to some other adjectives in the present study.

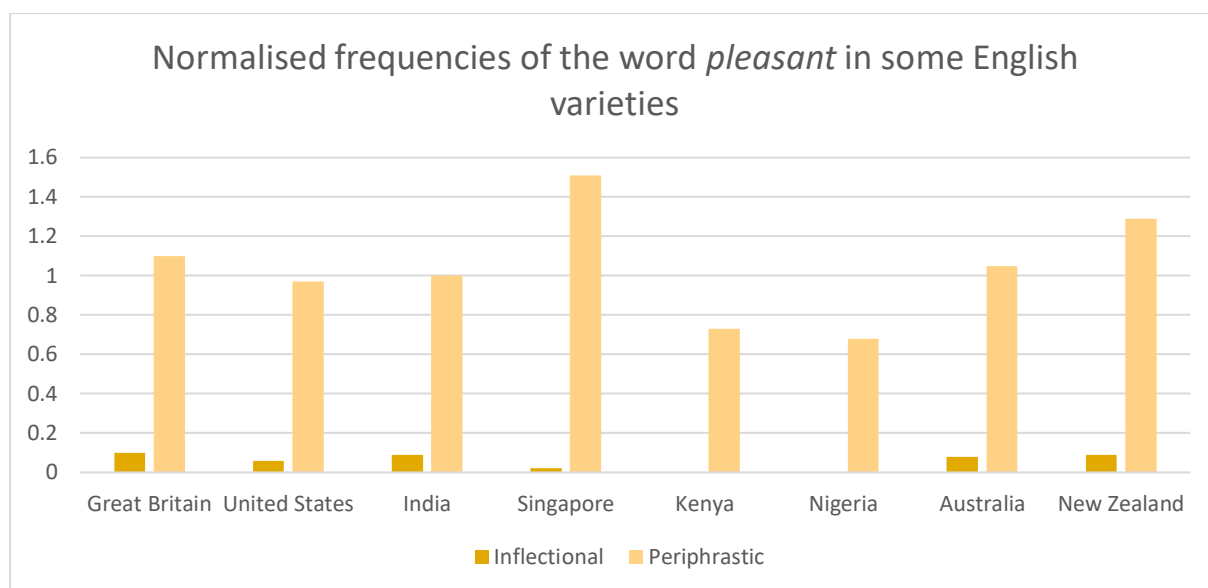


Figure 11. Normalised frequencies of the word *pleasant* in some English varieties

Variety of English	Normalised frequency		Number of tokens		Proportions (%)	
	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms	Periphrastic forms	Inflectional forms
Great Britain	1.10	0.10	425	37	91.99	8.01
United States	0.97	0.06	376	24	94.00	6.00
India	1.00	0.09	96	9	91.43	8.57
Singapore	1.51	0.02	65	1	98.48	1.52
Kenya	0.73	0.00	30	0	100.00	0.00
Nigeria	0.68	0.00	29	0	100.00	0.00
Australia	1.05	0.08	155	12	92.81	7.19
New Zealand	1.29	0.09	105	7	93.75	6.25

Table 11. Raw and normalised frequencies and proportions of the word *pleasant* in some varieties of English

When it comes to *pleasant*, the periphrastic structure is the favoured one. The African varieties have the strongest tendency favour the analytic form, although the synthetic alternative in other Englishes does not exceed 10%.

In general terms, it can be observed that while all dialects seem to conform the norm repeatedly discussed in the existing literature that the choice between the two comparison alternatives is conditioned by the number of syllables of the adjective as well as certain endings,

despite the fact that some slight differences can be detected between periphrastic and inflectional comparatives regardless of the length of the adjective. The results will be commented on in more detail in the Discussion.

### 3.2.3 Double Comparatives

The double comparison constructions are subsequently examined in the different varieties of English. The following sentences, taken from *the GloWbE*, illustrate the structures focussed on in the present section:

(5) So Google is making things yet again a little bit **more simpler** for us.  
(stateofsearch.com)

(6) I am shocked to see how children in India are as smart or **more smarter** than American college degree holders. (forbes.com)

The points of particular interest in this part are the frequencies of the structure and their possible differences in the regional varieties, as well as their use in different contexts and domains. Any differences between the Inner and Outer Circle varieties especially will be noted. Table 12 below demonstrates the numbers of tokens as well as normalised frequencies of double comparative forms attested in each of the English varieties that were selected for the thesis.

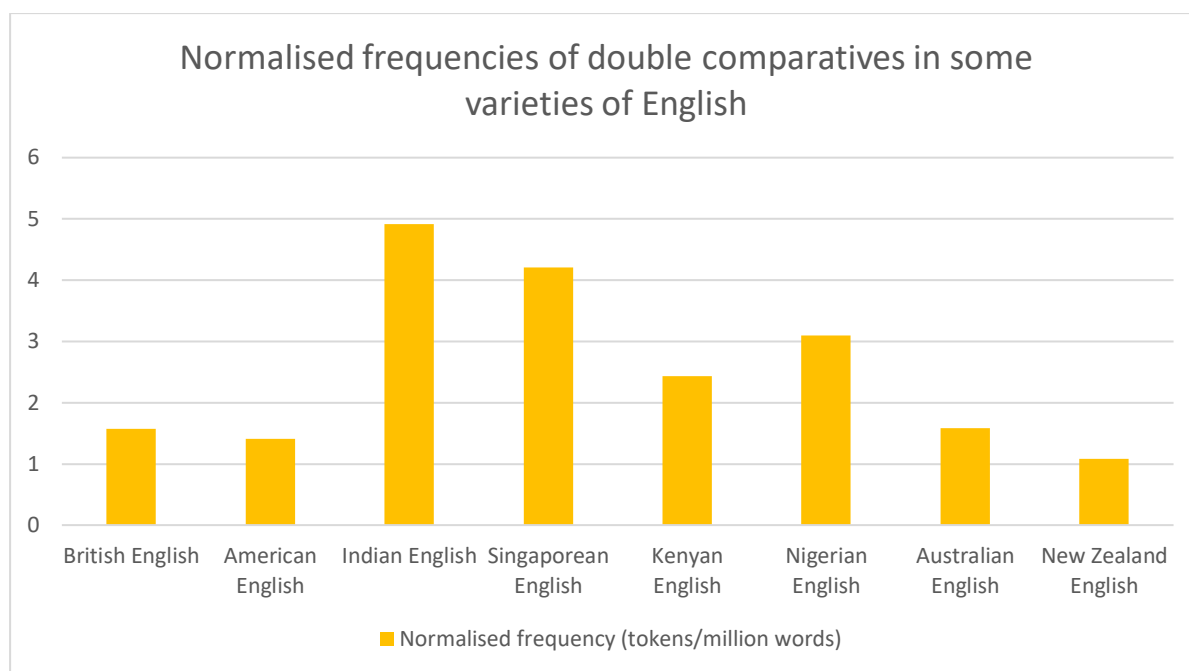


Figure 12. Normalised frequencies of double comparatives in some varieties of English

Variety of English	Total number of words in the corpus	Number of tokens	Normalised frequency (tokens/million words)
British English	387,615,074	607	1.57
American English	386,809,355	545	1.41
Australian English	148,208,169	234	1.58
New Zealand English	81,390,476	88	1.08
Indian English	96,430,888	474	4.92
Singaporean English	42,974,705	181	4.21
Kenyan English	41,069,085	100	2.43
Nigerian English	42,646,098	132	3.10

Table 12. Raw and normalised frequencies of double comparatives in some varieties of English

New Zealand English has the lowest normalised frequency in double comparison, 1.08 tokens per million words, whereas India has the highest number. Rather interestingly, the Asian and African varieties surpass the other varieties, none of which exceeds two tokens per million words. The normalised frequencies of double comparison structures in both Asian varieties of English seem to be the highest ones, and with a quick glance on the search results, it is noticed that this is not true only in Indian and Singaporean Englishes but also appears to

be the case in all of the other Asian varieties in the corpus. This goes against the hypothesis of this thesis according to which New English varieties would use more standard forms compared to British, American, Australian, and New Zealand English. On the other hand, returning to an earlier discussion, Bowerman (2008: 480) mentions in connection with South African English that double comparatives are a known second language English feature due to the lack of clarity, and that it also occasionally occurs in Broad and even General varieties. In addition, Mondorf (2009: 6) discusses how analytic constructions are often used to reduce the complexity of the message. Therefore, these observations support the results of the present study. Contradicting Schneider's (2007: 84) notion about double comparison being a feature of New Zealand English, the variety has the lowest numbers.

In the data containing the hybrid constructions, *more* often precedes a list of adjectives, some of which are also inflected, while some are not. The following examples (7) and (8) are from Nigerian and New Zealand Englishes, respectively:

(7) The only difference is that, online means of making money is much **more easier, safer and lucrative**... (enaijajobs.com)

(8) Governments want the market system to regulate itself rather than be involved to generate a **more cheaper and efficient** product.  
(<https://tallbloke.wordpress.com>)

It would seem that in these cases *more* is either used for emphasis or as a marker of the beginning of a comparing sequence. However, double forms quite regularly follow words that are intended to add more emphasis. Examples (9) and (10) are from Indian English and sentence (11) is from American English in *the GloWbE*:

(9) The British undergrads are three years degrees but **much more smarter** than the Indian graduates. (thehindu.com)

- (10) ... the star also has an **even more larger** fan base on Facebook.  
(<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>)
- (11) The obesity rate in Canada is **MUCH MORE lower** and Canadians are quite fit. (fourhourworkweek.com)

For instance, the double structures collocate with the adverb *even* in 42 cases in Indian English, whereas the word *much* precedes the comparative phrase in 82 instances in British English and 72 times in Indian English. This is noteworthy because it appears as if the double form has not been enough to highlight the degree. Example (11) illustrates this point even more clearly, as the sequence *much more* has been written in upper case letters.

Table 13 presents the distribution of double comparison forms between blog texts and other web pages. The “General” section includes texts such as news articles and corporate web sites, for instance. However, it is essential to mention that some of these numbers are not truly double comparison structures, but instead cases where *more* modifies the noun, for example. In addition, these numbers also include the double inflectional forms, which are otherwise disregarded in the analysis of the present study. Determining the actual numbers of double periphrastic comparison forms in the corpus would require significantly more manual assessment.

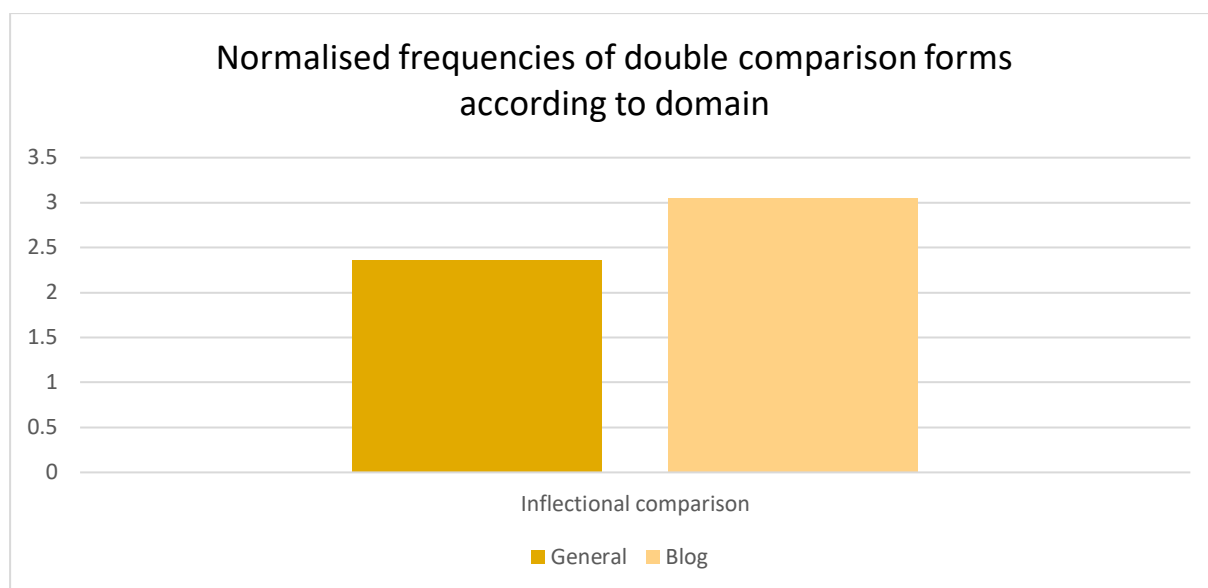


Figure 13. Normalised frequencies of double comparison forms according to domain

Section	Frequency	Size (m)	Per million
general	3,061	1,299.5	2.36
blog	1,781	583.7	3.05
<b>total</b>	<b>4,801</b>		

Table 13. Raw and normalised frequencies of double comparison forms according to domain

As was hypothesised earlier in the present study, the normalised frequency, i.e. the number of tokens per one million words, is higher in the domain of blog texts. This is probably because of the fact that, depending on the intended audience, some blog texts can be written in a less formal, in some cases even in colloquial or speech-like, register, and therefore they are perhaps more likely to include nonstandard constructions in order to capture a less formal tone. It could also be argued that another reason for their higher frequency might be that blog posts in some cases are not always as heavily edited or carefully written, which could explain their potentially more speech-like nature.

## 4 Discussion

The results and their implications of the data are discussed in this chapter. The findings regarding the standard structures and individual words will be analysed first, whereas the hybrid forms will be discussed subsequently.

### 4.1 Standard Structures

Overall, the interdialectal differences in the standard structures are rather trivial, as expected. Some adjectives return quite low numbers in the corpus, which prevents making any conclusive remarks apart from the notion that the words are possibly less frequent in the particular varieties or registers included *the GloWbE*. In fact, the most notable interdialectal differences are connected to the overall frequencies of the words that were chosen for the present study. The individual words studied in this thesis will be discussed individually in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, it is evident that the trisyllabic *beautiful* prefers analytic comparison and that the synthetic comparison form is extremely uncommon. However, *the OED* lists an instance of *beautifuller* from 1509, and declares that “a comparative form *beautifuller* and superlative form *beautifullest* are occasionally attested from the 16th cent. onwards, but are now rare and nonstandard” (beautiful, 2020).

According to Mondorf (2009: 130), disyllabic adjectives with certain endings, such as *-y* and *-ow*, have been historically more likely to be used with inflections, while nowadays there appears to be some variation. In *the GloWbE* data, however, both *happy* and *narrow* clearly prefer suffixes, although in the case of *narrow* there seems to be slightly more divergence.

It is apparent that the monosyllabic adjectives *dear*, *full*, and *strict* prefer the inflectional form in all varieties. *Dear* returns notably low numbers of hits in the African and



Singaporean varieties in comparison to other Englishes studied. It would be interesting to study in the future whether the word is truly less frequently used in these varieties or whether the genres and text types represented in *the GloWbE* have an influence on this phenomenon. In addition, it could be possible that the word has a synonym or near-synonym, possibly derived from a local language, which has replaced it.

Quirk et al. (1985: 461–463) argue that inflection and periphrasis are interchangeable with some disyllabic adjectives, such as *pleasant* and *handsome*. However, this notion does not seem to hold true in *the GloWbE* data. It is interesting that the proportions of the inflectional form of *handsome* are distinctively higher in Australian and American English, whereas the numbers in the other varieties are significantly lower and periphrasis is substantially more frequent. Contrastively, no instances of *handsomer* are attested in Kenyan and Nigerian Englishes, whereas the combined frequency of both forms is the lowest in New Zealand English. In opposition to *handsome*, the word *pleasant* extremely clearly favours periphrasis, which was the most evident in the African varieties.

The data reveals that the adverb *often* almost exclusively prefers periphrasis in all varieties. This fact is also mentioned in *the OED*, which remarks that the preferred comparison form is “now more frequently as *more often* or *most often*” (often, 2020). The first occurrence of *oftener* attested by the dictionary, however, dates back to 1415, which suggests that a change has happened at some point. This change has probably happened before English was transported into other parts of the world, because the numbers in all varieties are so similar, and thus no traces of the language of older times can be detected.

## 4.2 Double Comparatives

As was mentioned previously, the double periphrastic comparison forms started to decline in the Early Modern English period. Probable reasons for the decreasing trajectory could be the

rise of prescriptivism and the standardisation of the language. Today, the structure is widely agreed to be predominantly marginal, which is supported by the fact that there are instances in the corpus data explicitly commenting on the double structures. The following example is from Australian English in *the GloWbE*, in which the normalised frequency of the structure is among the lowest ones:

- (12) ! says: # 07:28am 02/11/12 # NRL players are skillful, fast, and more TOUGHER. It is good to see Folau doing what he was born to do
- out. Lucky says: # 08:22am 02/11/12 # GO!!! " **more tougher** " – says it all, really. I PREFER AFL because of the (thepunch.com.au)

This example exhibits how there is opposition among speakers against double comparatives. Despite resistance, it is likely that double comparison is more strongly a feature of spoken English than written language. This view is supported not only by the existing literature, but also the higher occurrence of the structure in blog texts included in *the GloWbE*.

It can be suggested that a possible reason for the presence of the hybrid constructions is that the inflected form is sometimes perhaps felt inadequate when expressing degree. As discussed earlier, *more* is often more readily analysed as the starting point of the degree expression. Since *more* has been historically used as an intensifier, and not as a marker of comparatives, it could be analysed as both in these situations. Therefore, double forms can appear when something is being emphasised and perhaps used in the place of *much*. On the other hand, in some cases it seemed as if the emphasis had not been enough, as these instances included the sequence *much more*.

In a discussion about New Zealand English, Bauer (2007: 10) notes that “it seems likely that double comparatives in many vernacular varieties of English are remnants from the time when they were part of standard usage”. In addition, Schneider (2007: 84) lists double

comparison as a feature of New Zealand English. However, *the GloWbE* data appears to contradict this notion, since New Zealand English has the lowest normalised frequency of all varieties chosen for this study. However, there certainly is a possibility that Bauer's statement is true of spoken language, which is excluded from the present data. This finding thus suggests that double structures are mostly missing from written registers of the variety.

As discussed previously, *the colonial lag theory* is sometimes employed to explain the differences between New Englishes and British English. According to the theory, colonial varieties of English change less than the variety spoken by the inhabitants of the coloniser country. While this theory could explain the situation in the Asian and African varieties, it does not seem viable for American, Australian and New Zealand Englishes which are similarly former colonies of Britain. As observed, the numbers of double comparison in these varieties were lower in comparison to the Asian and African varieties.

Schneider's *Dynamic Model* presents English varieties at different stages of development. According to Schneider, only one of the four Outer Circle varieties to have progressed further into *Phase 4 Endonormative Stabilisation*, is Singapore (2007: 155). The reasons for this are, for example, the ethnic neutrality of English and the strict educational policy of bilingualism, which ascertains that every child is taught in English as a 'First Language' in addition to his/her ethnic language, Mandarin, Tamil, or Malay, as a 'mother-tongue Second Language' (Foley 1998: 130–131). However, because the normalised frequency of double comparatives is the second highest in Singapore English and surpasses all varieties but Indian English, it is highly unlikely that the progress made by a New English country can be used as an explanation for the appearance of hybrid forms.

As discussed earlier, Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008: 114), the speakers of the New English varieties even in colloquial speech tend to use words that are in British and American English regarded as formal. Moreover, Indian English is sometimes characterised as "bookish",

very formal and norm-conforming, which implies that a deviation from standard language would be unlikely and perhaps less expected than in some other local varieties. Therefore, it was anticipated that New Englishes would use fewer double comparatives. However, it is rather interesting that the results seem to reveal the complete opposite situation, since Indian English has the highest number of the double structures relatively out of all the English varieties studied. The numbers appeared to be higher in all Asian varieties in *the GloWbE*. Hence, it is possible that some mutual denominator, such as substrate influence, between the Asian varieties exists. This idea is supported by the fact that in Hindi, for instance, the degree of adjectives in many cases is either not expressed explicitly, or alternatively, adjectives are sometimes compared by adding the postposition *से*, meaning ‘than’, and indicating the object of comparison, to the positive form of the adjective (Templin 2012). Unlike in English, other markers of comparison, such as suffixes, are not required, unless, as noted by Kachru (2006: 65–66), the word has been borrowed from Sanskrit, in which case a suffix is used. These forms, however, occur only in educated speech and formal written language (*ibid*). Therefore, the different paradigms of English and Hindi perhaps may cause confusion for people speaking Hindi as their mother tongue and could hence prompt double structures. In Mandarin Chinese, one of the main languages in Singapore, the situation is similar in that most adjectives do not have different forms for expressing degree, and the comparison often becomes clear from the context (Wiedenhof 2015: 182). If necessary, gradation can be expressed explicitly with a variety of adverbs, most of which can be translated directly as ‘very’ (*ibid*).

In the same vein, in Swahili, a language spoken in African countries such as Kenya, adjective comparison is formed in a different manner from that of English. The word *kuliko* can be used as a comparative expressing superiority or inferiority, and it carries the meaning of ‘than’ (Almasi et al. 2014: 153). For example, the expression *hodari kuliko* would

mean 'cleverer than' (ibid). It can therefore be concluded that substrate languages most likely have an effect on the way in which adjectives are compared in these Outer Circle varieties.

Another feasible explanation for the high occurrences of the hybrid forms, in addition to the influence of substrate languages, could be found in the status of English in the African and Asian countries. Firstly, India, Singapore, Nigeria, and Kenya belong to the Outer Circle in Kachru's model. Although the varieties have their own features, they typically are contingent on the Inner Circle for norms, especially regarding formal written language. In these countries, English is a second language for most people, and the competence of these speakers can vary greatly, which can cause problems in grammatical areas of this nature. This could indeed be one of the factors behind the differences between these particular varieties, because the Outer Circle appears to behave differently from the Inner Circle varieties where English is the mother tongue for the majority of people.

## **5 Conclusions**

The purpose of this thesis was to identify any differences between some regional varieties of English regarding adjective comparison. In addition, the present thesis pursued to discover potential reasons behind these differences. The varieties belong to either Inner or Outer Circle, based on the status of English in the countries in which they are spoken, which, along with the influence of the substrate languages, was suspected to be one of the main reasons behind the differences that were discovered.

On the basis of the results, it can be concluded that no major differences in standard adjective comparison can be detected between the English varieties studied in this thesis. The most significant dissimilarities are related to the overall frequencies of the words. It was also attested that the normalised frequencies of both alternatives in African Englishes overall were slightly lower than in the Asian and Inner Circle varieties. This could possibly

mean that synonyms for these words are preferred in the Nigerian and Kenyan varieties. Another likely factor could be the influence of the text type or register, for example, although verifying this would require further research. On the other hand, it is interesting that the proportions of the inflectional form of *handsome* were especially high in Australian and American English, whereas the numbers in the other varieties were significantly lower and periphrasis was observed to be significantly more frequent.

A few surprises were detected in the data. As witnessed earlier, the normalised frequencies of double comparison forms are higher in the Asian and African varieties compared to the Inner Circle varieties. This is the most visible in Indian English, which has the highest numbers. As was mentioned, no consensus had been reached in the literature whether this would be the case. Potential reasons for the finding could be found in theories discussed by Bowerman (2008: 480) and Mondorf (2009: 6) about the lack of clarity, even in some prescriptive grammars, on the distribution of the standard periphrastic and inflectional structures, as well as the position of English in these countries. On the other hand, New Zealand English has the lowest numbers. A few writers mention the double forms as a feature of the variety, which was not supported by the data. However, it is indeed possible that the structures are a more recurring feature of spoken New Zealand English.

As was discovered, some of the differences could be attributed to the substrate language influence. Degree comparison is expressed differently in at least some of the indigenous languages spoken in the countries that were studied. The speakers of Hindi, Swahili, and Mandarin Chinese, for instance, were attested to express degree in different ways to English and, as a consequence, encounter problems in this respect. This notion would certainly be an intriguing subject to explore more in detail in the future. In addition, it will be interesting to see whether the substrate influence becomes, in general as well as in regard to adjective comparison, more prominent and recurrent in English more globally at some point. As

mentioned earlier, Crystal (2012: 172) predicts that the future of English will be equally or even more strongly administered by the people learning it as a second or foreign language as those who speak it as their native tongue. He envisages that a new linguistic innovation could emerge among a group of non-native speakers and spread into other groups and finally even written language (ibid).

It is important to note that some of the words can belong to more fixed constructions, such as *more often than not*. The influence of these has been overlooked in this thesis, but it is possible that the high frequency of *handsomer* in American and Australian Englishes could be explained by this phenomenon. Furthermore, any possible variation between comparatives and superlatives has been left out in order to keep the present study concise. Lindquist (2000: 131–132) notes that, regardless of them often being treated as a uniform group, these can perform differently in certain circumstances.

In the future, it would be interesting to investigate the developments of the hybrid structures and to attempt to determine whether they are increasing and perhaps even becoming a widespread feature in these varieties. Additionally, it would be intriguing to explore the use of double constructions more thoroughly across different domains, registers, and especially in spoken English. The data drawn from *the GloWbE* and previous research suggest that this phenomenon could indeed be more strongly a feature of spoken or at least more informal language. The texts in *the GloWbE* corpus, as in many other corpora including mostly written language, is more or less heavily edited, and therefore the findings do not always represent the choices of the original author. However, drawing any firmer conclusions would certainly require further investigation.

In connection with the double forms, it would be rather interesting to focus on the structures with irregular comparative forms. These would be cases such as *betterer* or *worser*, which were excluded from this study. Moreover, double comparison forms could be contrasted

with double superlatives in future research, because, in spite of them often being grouped together, comparatives and superlatives do not always perform in the same fashion (Lindquist 2000: 132). For instance, their frequencies could be compared in order to establish whether any differences would be observed. Should any dissimilarities surface, it would certainly be fascinating to explore possible reasons behind such a phenomenon. Another question perhaps worth exploring in the future could be the diachronic developments of the standard structures. It would be interesting to observe whether the periphrastic forms become even more frequent or whether the situation remains the same. In connection with this matter, the developments of distinct varieties of English could also be examined. However, these aspects are beyond the scope of the present study and therefore reserved for future research. All in all, there are clearly various fascinating possibilities for expanding the present study.



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