

A Handbook of Varieties of English

A Multimedia Reference Tool. Volume 1: Phonology. Volume 2: Morphology and Syntax

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Global synopsis: morphological and syntactic variation in English

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Global synopsis: morphological and syntactic variation in English

Bernd Kortmann and Benedikt Szmrecsanyi

1. Introduction

Compared with the regional synopses, it is in this chapter that we shall adopt a truly bird's-eye, or even satellite, view at morphosyntactic variation across the non-standard varieties in the English-speaking world. Relevant questions that will be addressed include the following: Which are the least and, more interestingly, most frequent morphosyntactic features in non-standard varieties of Englishes worldwide, and thus true candidates for what Chambers (2001, 2003, 2004) has called *vernacular universals* (section 4)? What in this respect can be said and which distinctive patterns and correlations can be identified for the seven world regions investigated in this Handbook (section 5), for first (L1) and second (L2) language varieties and Pidgins/Creoles within and across the seven world regions (section 6), and for individual areas of morphosyntax (section 7)? It will turn out that the patterns identified in section 6 are a crucial key to understanding the patterns in sections 5 and 7.

The primary source for the answers to these and other questions addressed in this global synopsis is a catalogue of 76 morphosyntactic features from 11 domains of grammar which was sent to the authors of the morphosyntax chapters of this Handbook (see section 2). For each of these 76 features the authors were asked to specify into which of the following three categories the relevant feature in the relevant variety (or set of closely related varieties) falls:

- A pervasive (possibly obligatory) or at least very frequent
- B exists but a (possibly receding) feature used only rarely, at least not frequently
- C does not exist or (especially for Pidgins and Creoles) does not apply

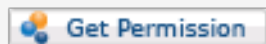
This feature catalogue and the classifications going with it are also the basis for the interactive world maps on the CD-ROM showing the regional distribution of individual (groups of) morphosyntactic features in non-standard varieties of English. In the first place, the feature catalogue is a method necessary for determining whether a feature not mentioned in a given Handbook chapter really does not exist in the relevant variety or set of varieties, or was simply not deemed salient enough by the author(s) to be worth mentioning (for example, because it is a typical feature of non-standard varieties in general). The 'A' vs. 'B' classification was introduced in order to provide us with more information than simply on the presence or

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