

“Clara Basil is the most strangest person I know”

Double Comparison in British and American English
– frequency and perceptions

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1. INTRODUCTION

What could be more quicker and easier and more effective than that?

The comparison of adjectives can be tricky, as can be seen from the sentence above. The English language contains two different ways of forming a comparison, and this can sometimes cause mix-ups. Since the regular use of comparison has already been studied in great detail, I am more interested in taking a look at the irregular, the non-standard way of comparing an adjective. This area of linguistics has not been very popular among linguistics and researchers, therefore there have not been not many studies against which I could compare my results. However, I find this subject very interesting and worth researching.

The objective of this study is to investigate the use of double comparison in British and American English in order to discover whether there are differences and similarities in the usage. The research will be conducted in two parts: first, I will conduct a corpus-based study which compares the two varieties of English, and after that I will study British and American native speakers' opinions on double comparison using a questionnaire. Before conducting the study I will establish a solid theoretical background for the present research by introducing the main features of comparison and some aspects of British and American English. The focus of the theoretical part of this paper is mainly historical, since most of the previous research on this field has concentrated on the historical development of the double comparison. However, since I am mainly interested in the modern usage of double comparison, I will use modern corpora, the British National Corpus (the BNC) and the

Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), in the corpus-based study. I will study both written and spoken forms of the two varieties. The second part of the study, i.e. the questionnaire, is based on the results of the corpus-based study.

Based on my previous unpublished proseminar study on double comparison in Indian English, I assume that the double comparison is not very frequently found in either British or American English. However, I believe that the double comparison is becoming more acceptable in both varieties. For the first part of the study, I expect to find it more in spoken than in written language, since written language tends to be less tolerant towards grammatical changes. I also expect to find more double comparison in American English compared to British English, because American English tends to affect British English and act as a source for new linguistic patterns (see section 2.4. in this study). For the second part, I believe that the native speakers accept double comparison as correct, at least to some degree. However, I assume that the general view on double comparison is intolerant. Between the two variants I believe that the American participants are more tolerant towards double comparison. I also assume that younger people and men are more likely to accept double comparison than older generations and women, because language change (and the acceptance of non-grammatical forms) usually occurs with the help of young language users who do not emulate the language of the older people (see, e.g. Croft 2000), and because women are more likely to use standard forms than men (see e.g. Holmes 1997).

The inspiration for this study arises from my previous research with Indian English, which revealed that double comparison is very rarely used in India. It will be interesting to see

whether the same applies to British and American English and whether there are any differences in the use of double comparison between the two main varieties of English. In addition to this, it will be interesting to discover how native speakers respond to double comparison and whether they accept it as a correct way to convey comparison even though it is considered non-standard.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this section I will present previous studies conducted in the field of double comparison and look at the most important concepts in relation to this study. I will discuss topics significant to this paper, such as inflectional and periphrastic comparison, the history of comparison and some aspects of British and American English. The aim of this chapter is to establish a theoretical background for this study.

2.1 Comparison in general

Both Biber *et al.* (1999: 521) and Quirk *et al.* (1985: 458) state that comparison is a characteristic of gradable adjectives. According to Quirk *et al.* (1985: 458) adjectives can be compared in three different ways, that is to a higher, to the same and to a lower degree. When comparing to a higher degree, there are three possibilities, absolute, comparative and superlative. Both the comparative and the superlative degree are marked for comparison. Greenbaum (1996: 139) states that the comparative form is used when comparing two units and the superlative when comparing more than two units. However, sometimes the superlative is used when comparing two units, e.g. “She is the youngest (of the two sisters)”, but this is considered loose and informal (Quirk *et al.* 1972: 286). Quirk *et al.* (1985: 463) write that, in general, the comparative form is more frequent than the superlative.

There are two different forms of comparison in Modern English, inflectional and periphrastic comparison. The inflectional form was the first to occur in the English language, and it was then followed by the periphrastic form during the Old English period. Kytö and Romaine

(1997: 331, 335) state that although English is striving for a more analytical syntax, the majority of both the comparatives and superlatives in Modern English are inflected. According to their studies, the two forms compete quite evenly in the Early Modern English period, but by the Modern English period the inflectional comparison has outnumbered the periphrastic forms by roughly 4 to 1.

2.1.1 Inflectional and periphrastic comparison ¹

The inflectional forms of comparison are marked by *-er* in comparative and *-est* in superlative (Biber *et al.* 1999: 522, Quirk *et al.* 1985: 458). Here are examples of (1) the comparative and (2) the superlative:

(1) Lisa is *taller* than John.

(2) Lisa is the *tallest* of them all.

Some adjectives have irregular forms of comparison. Such words are for example *good* and *bad*, whose ‘stems ... are different from the base’ (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 458), meaning that the comparison is formed by words which differ from the absolute, unmarked form of the adjective: *good/better/best* and *bad/worse/worst*.

There can also be some changes in spelling when using the inflectional forms. Biber *et al.* (1999: 522) and Quirk *et al.* (1985: 460-1) point out three different cases where the spelling

¹ Curme (1931) uses the terms ‘synthetic’ and ‘analytic’; Biber *et al.* (1999) use the term ‘phrasal’ for periphrastic comparison.

of the word changes when the endings are added: (1) the silent *-e* is omitted before the comparative ending is added, e.g. *nice/nicer/nicest*, (2) a single consonant at the end of the word is doubled, if it is preceded by a single stressed vowel, e.g. *big/bigger/biggest*, and (3) a final *-y* preceded by a consonant is changed to *-i*, e.g. *tidy/tidier/tidiest*.

The periphrastic comparison, on the other hand, is realised by the additional degree adverbs *more* in comparative and *most* in superlative (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 458):

(3) Lisa is *more beautiful* than Mary.

(4) Lisa is the *most beautiful* girl John has ever seen.

Biber *et al.* have investigated the frequency of periphrastic comparison in different registers. According to their findings, there are only a few adjectives which occur frequently with periphrastic comparison. They also found that the periphrastic comparison is very rare in conversations, but it is common in academic writing and news. To their surprise they also discovered that *most important* occurs relatively frequently in academic prose, although the use of superlatives in academic writing is relatively rare (Biber *et al.* 1999: 524-5).

Both Biber *et al.* (1999: 522) and Quirk *et al.* (1985: 461) write that the choice between inflectional and periphrastic forms is normally made according to the length of the adjective. Adjectives which consist of only one syllable are usually compared by the inflectional form, e.g. *small/smaller/smallest*. However, there are a few exceptions. Adjectives such as *real*, *right* and *wrong* can only take the periphrastic form. However, according to Quirk *et al.*

(1985: 462), most monosyllabic adjectives can alter between the inflectional and the periphrastic comparison. Biber *et al.* (1999: 522) believe that the reason why some monosyllabic adjectives take the periphrastic form is due to a need for prominence or, in speech, for emphasis. Kytö and Romaine (1997: 346) suggest that the choice between the two alternatives is made not only according to the length of the adjective, but also according to the origin: native adjectives are compared by inflection and foreign adjectives by periphrasis. They also state that previously the two were thought to be in free variation, and that it was the writer who decided which of the two forms s/he would use (Kytö & Romaine 1997: 338).

According to Quirk *et al.* (1985: 462), adjectives consisting of two syllables can vary in their choice between the two forms. Disyllabic adjectives which end in the unstressed vowel –y, e.g. *easy*, usually take the inflected form. Also, adjectives which end in syllabic /l/, e.g. *simple*, syllabic /r/ (in American English) or /əʳ/ (in British English), e.g. *bitter*, *clever*, and adjectives ending in –ere, –ure, e.g. *sincere*, *secure* are normally compared by the inflectional form (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 462; Biber *et al.* 1999: 522-3). Adjectives with more than two syllables can only take the periphrastic form, except for negative adjectives with the prefix *un-*, e.g. *unhappy/unhappiest*. Participles used as adjectives are normally compared by periphrasis, e.g. *interesting/more interesting* (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 462; Biber *et al.* 1999: 522-3). According to Quirk *et al.*, ‘most adjectives that are inflected for comparison can also take the periphrastic forms with *more* and *most*. With *more*, they seem to do so more easily when they are predicative and are followed by a *than*-clause’ (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 462):

(5) Lisa is *more sad* than Mary is.

Some monosyllabic adjectives which are normally restricted to the inflectional comparison, e.g. *big, hard, old*, seem to be able to take the periphrastic form in comparative constructions formed with the correlative *the...the* (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 463):

(6) The $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{more old} \\ \textit{older} \end{array} \right\}$ we get, the $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{more wise} \\ \textit{wiser} \end{array} \right\}$ we become.

2.1.2 Comparative clauses

Comparative constructions are a sub-category of subordinate clauses and they can be expressed using ‘two intersecting dimensions of contrast’ (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1099), that is scalar/non-scalar and equality/inequality:

Table 2.1.2.1 *Dimensions of contrast*

	Equality	Inequality
Scalar	Lisa is <i>as old as</i> Tom.	Lisa is <i>older than</i> Tom.
Non-scalar	I took the <i>same bus as</i> last time.	I took a <i>different bus from</i> last time.

Scalar comparative constructions are made on a particular scale, e.g. *old/older*, whereas non-scalar comparisons are concerned with identity and likeness. A *bus* is not gradable and the non-scalar constructions compare the two buses. Of these two, the scalar comparison is more

frequent and central (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1099-1100). Equality, on the other hand, is easily recognizable: if Lisa is as old as Tom, then Lisa's age is *equal* to Tom's, and if Lisa is older, then her age is *not equal* to Tom's (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1100).

Quirk *et al.* (1985: 1127) state that in comparative constructions 'a proposition expressed in the matrix clause is compared with a proposition expressed in the subordinate clause', meaning that there is some standard of comparison on which the comparison is made:

(7) Jude is healthier than her brother.
 matrix clause subordinate clause (comparative clause)

In example (7) the standard of comparison is health. In addition to adjective phrases, e.g. *healthier*, the standard of comparison can also be a noun phrase, e.g. *more problems*, or an adverb phrase, e.g. *more slowly* (Greenbaum 1996: 347). The basis of comparison (Jude's brother) is expressed in the subordinate clause (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1128; see also Biber *et al.* 1999: 526). In some cases the basis of comparison can be left implicit, because it can be seen from the context. To make the basis of comparison explicit to the receiver, it is possible to use comparative phrases or clauses after the comparative form of the adjective. In the following sentences the comparative clauses are underlined and the basis of comparison is John:

(8) Will and John often watch football together but...
 ...Will likes the games more than John likes the games.

...Will likes the games more than John likes them.

...Will likes the games more than John does.

...Will likes the games more than John.

Comparative clauses are usually elliptical, meaning that they omit elements which are found in the matrix clause in order to avoid repetition (Greenbaum 1996: 347; Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1130-31):

(9) *James is older than Mark is old.

→ James is older than Mark is.

→ James is older than Mark.

Quirk *et al.* (1985: 1130) argue that ‘ellipsis is the rule rather than the exception in comparative constructions’, because normally the matrix clause and the comparative clause are closely parallel in structure and content. That does not need to be the case, though. If the standard of the comparison is the same in both clauses, the comparative clause can be independent in structure (see examples 10, 11 and 12):

(10) How quickly does he speak?

(11) How quickly can his secretary take dictation?

→ the standard of comparison is speed

(12) He speaks more quickly than his secretary can take dictation.

(Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1130-31)

After the ellipsis has taken place, the comparative clause normally only contains (13) the subject or (14) the object (Quirk et al. 1985: 1132):

(13) Pavarotti sings opera better than *Domingo* (sings opera).

(14) The movie amused John more than (it amused) *his friend*.

In some cases, there can be ambiguity as to whether the remaining noun phrase in the subordinate clause is the subject or the object:

(15) Lucy likes her mother more than her father.

In this sentence, it is unclear whether the meaning is “...than her father likes her mother” or “...than she likes her father”. To avoid the ambiguity, the noun phrase (*her father*) can be replaced by a pronoun *he/him* in Standard English to clarify whether it is the subject or the object (Quirk et al. 1985: 1132). However, some other styles use the objective case for both the subject and the object, since *than* might be considered a preposition, therefore requiring the objective case of the pronoun. In fact, Greenbaum (1996: 348) suggests that when the remaining noun phrase is a pronoun that has both the subjective and the objective case, e.g. *I/me*, it would be better to use the objective case even though the pronoun would be the subject of the comparative clause:

(16) Lisa will finish faster than *me*. (...than *I* will finish.)

However, Quirk *et al.* (1985: 1132) point out that in order to avoid such a problem it would be best to expand the clause so that it clearly expresses the function of the noun phrase:

(17) Lucy likes her mother more than he does.

(18) Lucy likes her mother more than she likes him.

2.2 Comparison in Old English and Middle English

According to most relevant studies (see, e.g. Curme 1931: 502; Kytö & Romaine 2000:172; Brinton & Arnowick 2006: 198), only the inflectional form was used during the Old English period, from approximately the 5th to the 12th century. The present day inflectional endings –*er* and –*est* are descended from the Old English equivalents –*ra* and –*ost*. Brinton and Arnowick (2006: 270) state that the periphrastic forms became more common in the Middle English period, more correctly in the 13th century. During this time, however, the periphrastic comparison was common with mono- or disyllabic adjectives, which is opposite to Modern English. According to Kytö and Romaine (2000: 172-3), the new periphrastic construction outnumbered the old inflectional forms in some environments, but in others the old construction survived. After a peak during the Late Middle English period, the periphrastic forms have lessened, and research has shown that in Modern English the majority of comparatives and superlatives are inflected (Kytö & Romaine 2000:172-3).

Linguists are not unanimous in the origin of the periphrastic form. Some, e.g. Brinton and Arnouck (2006: 270), believe that the periphrastic construction was influenced by Latin and French. However, González-Díaz (2006a: 730) has investigated the origin of the periphrastic construction and according to her results periphrastic forms already existed during the Old English period:

English comparatives are *not* Latin borrowing, but a native development. Periphrastic forms not only occur in OE translations of Latin original texts, but they also appear in vernacular texts (39% of the total number of examples analysed) written approximately in the same period in which the translations were made. (González-Díaz 2006a: 730)

González-Díaz' findings prove that periphrastic forms were already used in the ninth century, which is much earlier than linguists have previously thought. González-Díaz (2006a: 730) admits, however, that Latin may have had an influence on the periphrasis. She considers it unlikely, though, since Latin constructions were formed differently than the English.

In addition to the origin, it is also unclear why this new periphrastic form was developed, since the inflectional form already existed. Kytö and Romaine (2000: 172) state that English had already started to shift 'toward a more analytical syntax' and therefore the inflectional forms were displaced by the periphrastic forms. However, as mentioned above, the new forms did not replace the old ones, except for in certain environments. González-Díaz (2006a: 732) argues that the speakers felt that the inflectional forms were not good enough to express the degree of comparison and therefore a new construction was developed. She also

states, that ‘periphrastic forms are (...) semantically more transparent comparative structures than inflectional forms’ (González-Díaz 2006a: 733), since the additional adverbs *more* and *most* make the comparison more explicit. Kytö and Romaine (1997: 347) suggest that the change from inflectional to periphrastic comparison may have first occurred in written language, since speech has other means for expressing explicitness and emphasis, such as prosody.

2.3 Double comparison

Because of the development of the periphrastic form during the Old English period, the English language contains two constructions for comparison. Therefore, it is possible to have so called *double periphrastic forms*². They are relatively rare in Standard English, but they do occur in many dialects, such as Yorkshire (Wakelin 1977: 117) and in many creoles and post-colonial variants of English (Włodarczyk 2007: 198). Since the double comparison is not considered grammatical in Standard English, many grammars, such as Quirk *et al.*, do not mention them, and others, such as Greenbaum, are content to state that the double forms persist in non-standard usage of English. This may also be the reason why the double comparison has not been studied in great detail. However, according to González-Díaz (2006b: 651-2), the double comparison might be achieving acceptance in Modern English. Her studies show that the double comparison is accepted, at least to some extent, in leisure

² Several names occur, Kytö and Romaine (2000: 192) mention e.g. *double*, *multiple*, *pleonastic* and *hybrid forms*.

domains such as radio programmes or TV news scripts, and also in educational domains, such as lectures.

The double comparison consists of both the inflectional and the periphrastic form. Kytö and Romaine (2000: 192) point out that ‘most of them are periphrastic in nature’, hence the name double periphrastic comparison. The following examples illustrate the double comparison in (19) comparative and (20) superlative:

(19) It is *more easier* to send a letter.

(20) This is the *most greatest* day of my life!

There are a few exceptions, which are doubly marked for comparison, but which consist of the inflectional ending only, e.g. *worser*, *bestest* (Kytö & Romaine 2000: 192). Even triple comparison appears in some dialects, e.g. *more betterer* in Cornwall (Edwards & Weltens 1985: 117). González-Díaz (2008: 212) states that, according to several studies, the rise of double comparison may have been a side effect of reorganising the comparative system, or, in other words, ‘the result of an accidental combination of the existing (inflectional) and the new (periphrastic) comparative form’.

Although the double comparison is considered non-standard in Modern English, it was originally used by the upper classes and accepted amongst the educated (González-Díaz 2006b: 649). It was even described by Ben Jonson in his *Grammar* (1640) that the double comparison is characteristic for high style, ‘imitating the manner of the most ancientest and

finest Grecians' (González-Díaz 2004: 192). According to González-Díaz (2006b: 649), the double periphrastic comparison was also suitable for written domains during both Middle and Early Modern English periods. For example, Shakespeare used it in his plays. Here follows an extract from *King Lear* (1605) (González-Díaz 2004: 190):

(21) Cordelia: Then poore *Cordelia*, and yet not so, since I am sure.

My loue's **more richer** then my tongue (emphasis added)

González-Díaz (2007: 242) admits that since the double comparison always includes one syllable more than the simple counterpart, it might be used for rhythm or because of metrical constraints. However, she states that it cannot have been the only reason for using the double forms. Written texts of that time conveyed the speech of the high classes, and the double forms occur with other linguistic features connected to elevated style, such as *do*-support in affirmative declarative sentences. There were also instances of double comparison in contemporary prose works, which were regarded as high style, as in *Euphues and his England* by John Lyly (1580). Therefore, it can be stated that 'the double forms in Shakespeare were perfectly accepted in educated environments' (González-Díaz 2007: 243)

However, already at that time the double comparison was considered non-standard by some linguists. González-Díaz (2006b: 648) states that 'as early as 1594, Paul Greaves' *Grammatica* describes them as an example of 'barbarous' speech', although Greaves admitted that the double comparison was generally used by '*the docti*', that is, the learned.

The reason why the upper classes and the educated started to use the double periphrastic comparison is unclear. González-Díaz (2006b: 629) writes that ‘previous scholarship has suggested that reduplication is a means of word formation that manifests a measure of iconicity’. She suggests that the double form is therefore ‘more suitable than either of its simple counterparts for conveying a high intensity of comparison’ (González-Díaz 2006b: 629-30). Włodarczyk (2007: 201), on the other hand, suggests that the use of the double comparison makes the comparison more explicit and transparent, since ‘one morphological marker is reinforced by a second marker’. González-Díaz (2008: 157) points out that, according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), ‘more and more of the same form implies more of the same meaning’, which in the case of double comparison should mean that it should be considered to be more emphatic than the simple counterparts. This is not the case, however, since it only applies to some examples from the Middle and Late Modern English periods, and from the Late Modern English onwards the comparative force is equal to the simple comparison. Kytö and Romaine (2000: 173) point out, however, that in all times the double comparison has been outnumbered by the simple inflectional and periphrastic forms.

As mentioned above, the double comparison was considered non-standard by some linguists already in the 16th century. Standardisation might, therefore, be one reason why the double comparison has gradually disappeared from Standard English. Kytö and Romaine (1997: 338; 2000: 173) and Włodarczyk (2007: 198) see standardisation and prescriptivism, especially in the 18th century, as the main influence for the disappearance of the double forms. However, González-Díaz (2004: 196) points out that the influence ‘of these two

factors ... should not be overestimated'. She states that although standardisation had started in the 16th century, at that time the double forms were not yet considered non-standard. In her opinion, standardisation could have reinforced the stigmatization of the double forms but it had not started the process. On the contrary, she proposes two possible factors which might have caused the loss of prestige of double comparison: 'the spread of Euphuism to lower classes and the influence of Latin grammars' (González-Díaz 2004: 197).

In the 1580s, the educated upper class started to neglect the use of artificial, high style in speech, that is Euphuism, and by the end of the 1590s it had disappeared altogether. However, it spread amongst the low classes, therefore making the use of double comparison unattractive to the upper classes. It seems that since the double forms began to appear in the speech of the lower classes, the upper classes related them to an uneducated style. Hence, the double forms were stigmatized amongst the upper classes (González-Díaz 2004: 197).

González-Díaz (2004: 201) describes the situation by using the 'invisible-hand theory':

Those speakers using double forms would be considered "insiders" (i.e. belonging to the (upper class) group) whereas those who did not use them would be branded as "outsiders". It is at this point that the invisible-hand process operates: the positive social value attributed to the double comparatives led to its imitation and subsequent propagation down the social strata. (González-Díaz 2004: 201-2)

The influence of Latin grammars can be another reason why the double comparison was considered non-standard. As González-Díaz (2004: 198-9) points out, the Renaissance had a great impact on the Early Modern English period (from roughly 1500 to 1700 (Brinton &

Arnowick 2006: 9)). During that time Latin grammars were investigated and imitated in great detail and it was described ‘at its highest level of purity and perfection’ (González-Díaz 2004: 199). In Latin grammars, the double comparison was not described at all because it was considered vulgar. It is not surprising, then, that the English grammars also started to neglect the double forms of comparison. González-Díaz (2004: 199) states that ‘the social stigma of Latin double comparatives was transferred to English double forms’.

There might even be a third explanation for the disappearance of the double forms, as pointed out by González-Díaz (2008: 158). She suggests that there might have been other emphatic comparative constructions which have taken over the double comparison. Her studies show that *even* as a modifier of simple comparative constructions, as in e.g. *The rates shall be even higher next year*, started to increase approximately at the same time as the double forms began to decrease. Therefore, there might not have been a need for double comparison, since the meaning of *even*+simple comparison is very similar to that of double comparison. She concludes, however, that this is not a very convincing hypothesis, and points out that it might actually be vice versa: the loss of double forms might have favoured the rise of *even*+simple comparison.

As mentioned earlier, there have been few studies on the appearance of double comparison in Modern or Present-Day English. According to González-Díaz (2008: 135, 159), the research has focused on the historical development of double comparison, but no in-depth studies have been produced. She has, however, studied double comparison also in Present-Day English. She states (2008: 204-5) that the social and cultural changes (such as the

expansion of the reading public, the impact of Rousseau's philosophy and the English colonial power), which occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries, had a great influence on the social status of the double forms even though they were only indirectly related to linguistic issues. These changes resulted in the 'gradual undermining of the current prescriptive models, and, more importantly, ... an interest in 'peripheral' linguistic practices (such as double periphrastic forms' (González-Díaz 2008: 205). The twentieth century grammars followed the non-prescriptive tendencies of the late 19th century, and considered, as in the previous century, that dialects exemplified the laws of language more clearly than the Standard variety. In the second part of the 20th century, the dialectal varieties gained more social acceptability, because of two factors: firstly, 'the flourishing of postcolonial literatures and their call for acknowledgement of valuable literary traditions ... made explicit the relativity and arbitrariness of social linguistic conventions' (González-Díaz 2008: 205-6). Secondly, educational research began to develop around the 1960s, and it presented new educational concepts and methods, which in their turn led to a virtual disappearance of prescriptive grammar teaching in schools. Nowadays, the educational authorities recognise the importance of language variation in the study of English.

In her study on double comparison in Present-Day English, González-Díaz (2008: 207) has found that in written texts the double comparison is not only restricted to non-standard varieties, which was the case in Late Modern English period, but it is also spreading across written informal registers. In relation to spoken language, González-Díaz has noticed that the double forms occur in many environments, such as TV programmes, lectures and council meetings. This suggests that although double comparison is considered non-standard they

seem to have lost the strong social stigma they held in the 18th and 19th centuries. She also discovered (2008: 209) that the use of double comparison is not only restricted to low social classes; instead they are gradually spreading up the social ladder.

To conclude her study, González-Díaz (2008:212-3) states that since double comparison can be seen as an accidental combination of the simple inflectional and periphrastic forms, or as a result of grammatical pleonasm, i.e. redundancy, the first instances of double comparison may have qualified as ‘linguistic junk’, meaning that they cannot be given any distinctive functional load. She points out, however, that due to their emphatic nature, they seem to have been suitable for environments where particular emphasis was needed. Yet, there have always been issues of register and style attached to double comparison:

In their social expansion, double forms were probably devoid of any emphatic meaning, as speakers did not attach any especial *linguistic* value to double forms but rather a social one. In this way, double forms started to be mainly used as an ‘educated’ alternative to simple comparative structures rather than as an emphatic variant of the latter – in other words, they could well have been pragmatically exapted. (González-Díaz 2008: 213)

2.4 Introduction to British and American English

The two main varieties of English, British (BrE) and American (AmE) have been frequently discussed. Some linguists argue that the two should be seen as different languages, whereas

others are less radical, thinking that they are variants of the same language (Rohdenburg & Schlüter 2009: 1). Hargraves (2003: 13) argues that one might regard BrE and AmE as being in a parent-child relationship of some kind, but that the parent must be regarded as an enfeebled aristocrat and the child as a selfish leviathan, because of the increasing number of native American speakers and worldwide distribution of AmE in different medias. In his opinion, the child has not completely taken over the place of the parent, but it has ‘succeeded in reducing the parent to an emeritus competitor in the world marketplace of English’ (Hargraves 2003: 14). There are widely recognized differences between the two, most strikingly so in the phonological domain, that is the pronunciation. The differences in pronunciation have also been widely noted by linguists (Algeo 2006: 2). Rohdenburg and Schlüter (2009: 1) argue that although the two are variants of the same language, it might be reasonable to ask whether they have two different grammars. However, extensive and comprehensive studies on the grammar are not frequent (Algeo 2006: 2).

Before taking a closer look into the two main varieties of English, it might be useful to note that neither British nor American English is the equivalent of Standard English (StE). They are rather sub-systems of StE (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 18). Strevens (1972: 44) clarifies the difference between Standard English and other dialects of English: whereas other (local) dialects are spoken locally or used by people from that locality, Standard English does not belong to any particular place. Another difference between StE and other dialects is that StE can be spoken with any accent, including foreign (Strevens 1972: 44-45). Strevens (1972: 45) concludes that StE ‘is the embodiment of what all educated speakers of English agree to be internationally accepted usage’. Quirk *et al.* (1985: 18) see StE as a unanimous spelling and

punctuation system, which then divides into two sub-systems, BrE and AmE. Hargraves (2003: 18) states that ‘there is no likelihood that a world standard of English will emerge, and there is no reason that such a thing is desirable’.

The distinction between BrE and AmE started to establish itself in 1607, when the first English settlement was founded in Jamestown (Stevens 1972: 27; Kövecses 2000: 19; Finegan 2006: 384). Kövecses (2000: 19) and Finegan (2006: 384-96) separate three different stages in the development of AmE: the colonial period (1607-1776), the national period (1776-1900) and the international³ period (1900-present day). According to Kövecses (2000: 19) the first, colonial period was linguistically the most important for two reasons: firstly, the first speakers of English appeared in North America and secondly, they came into contact with other languages, such as Native American, Spanish, German and Dutch, which led to a distinctive vocabulary. The second period was remarkable because during that period the variety of English spoken in North America, or after the War of Independence, in the United States, was made the national language of the country (Kövecses 2000: 21). At this point the status of AmE had converted from being a colonial language into a junior partner beside BrE (Stevens 1972: 42). During the third period, the status has shifted yet again, since it is now considered of equal value with BrE, and today it is more frequently BrE which is influenced by AmE than vice versa (Stevens 1972: 42). However, AmE has retained many of the archaic, Elizabethan features of English spoken in the 17th and 18th centuries (Kövecses 2000: 25).

³ Finegan (2006: 396) uses the term ‘modern period’

The attitudes which the BrE and AmE speakers have towards the English on the other side of the Atlantic reflect the course that the dialects have taken since they separated. Hargraves (2003: 14) argues that as AmE has been pushed forward by demographics, politics and geography and therefore forced BrE into a secondary status, some BrE speakers think of AmE as *daughter gone bad*, meaning that they regard AmE as inferior, and claim AmE has had a negative impact on ‘the Queen’s English’. Many AmE speakers, on the other hand, think of BrE only as a funny accent, but previously BrE was considered a force to be rebelled against. According to Hargraves (2003: 14), the development of AmE dialects has followed its own ways, and rarely took into account the BrE standards. Later the influence of BrE ceased to be a concern; nowadays there is no need for American speakers to regard BrE as a threat.

Since AmE enjoys a powerful worldwide status it is natural for other varieties of English, including BrE, to be influenced by it, even unintentionally (Hargraves 2003: 16). The amount of AmE appearing repeatedly is likely to cause incursions into other dialects, and eventually such incursions become naturalised and cease to be invaders. These Americanisms may even be widely used in BrE while they already have ceased to appear in AmE. There is, however, one area of broadcasting where the British outnumber the Americans, which in turn may lead to an equal influence or even British-to-American influence: the proportions of British foreign correspondents is disproportionately bigger than their number in the English-speaking population of the world. Therefore, there might be occurrences of BrE usage in the speech of an AmE person. Hargraves (2003: 18) points out that, due to globalization and

information technology advances, opportunities for mutual influence will continue to increase.

2.4.1 Some grammatical differences

As Quirk *et al.* (1985: 19) point out, the number of grammatical differences between the two varieties is few, and most users are likely to know the biggest differences. Therefore, they do not prevent communication. According to Quirk *et al.* (1985: 19), the most conspicuous differences are (22) the past participles of *get*, (23) the choice between singular and plural verb in relation to a singular collective noun and (24) the choice between *should* and the present subjunctive:

(22) BrE: *get/got/got* AmE: *get/got/gotten*

(23) BrE: The police $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} is \\ are \end{array} \right\}$ in favour of the decision.
 AmE: The police *is* in favour of the decision.

(24) BrE: He insisted that they *should leave* immediately.

AmE: He insisted that they *leave* immediately.

Hargraves (2003: 35-56) presents a few areas where there are differences between the two variants in relation to nouns, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, articles and pronouns. He, too, mentions the choice between singular and plural form of a noun and the subjunctive. He also

mentions other verb constructions, such as (25) differences in the use of present perfect tense, (26) gerundive constructions following *want*, *need* and *look like*, (27) transitivity matters (e.g. agree, give, protest, write) and (28) double imperatives with *come* and *go*:

(25) BrE: *Have you done* your homework yet?

AmE: *Did you do* your homework yet?

(26) BrE: It *looks like raining* on Sunday.

AmE: It *looks like it will rain* on Sunday.

(27) BrE: The staff *protested against* the lay-offs.

AmE: The staff *protested* the lay-offs.

(28) BrE: *Go and write* the answer on the board.

AmE: *Go write* the answer on the board.

When it comes to adverbs, Hargraves (2003: 49-50) mentions the difference in the use of *too* and *as well*, where the latter is considered formal by the AmE speakers, whereas BrE does not make that distinction. Also, in AmE *too* can occur at the beginning of a sentence as a stylistic device, which does not occur in BrE. The commonest differences in prepositional usage include e.g. *different than* (AmE)/*to* (BrE), *enrol in* (AmE)/*on* (BrE), *in* (AmE)/*at* (BrE) *school*, *on* (AmE)/*at* (BrE) *the weekend*. A minor difference is the BrE use of *whilst* and *amongst* interchangeably with *while* and *among*, which are the only forms occurring in AmE. There are also some differences in article usage: BrE omits *the* in some places where AmE uses it, e.g. *in/to hospital*, *at table* (Hargraves 2003: 52-3). On the other hand, BrE may add an article to places where there is no chance of misunderstanding the meaning, e.g. *Did*

you watch the snooker last night? In these cases AmE would only use an article if the noun was followed by another noun. When using the relative pronouns *that* and *which*, Americans tend to follow the rule of using *that* for restrictive relative clauses and *which* for nonrestrictive, while British use *which* in both cases. Both varieties use *who* to refer to an entity which is not strictly a person but a group consisting of persons, but AmE normally uses *that* to refer to such entities, e.g. *the committee who/that made the decision* (Hargraves 2003: 53-4). It should be noted, however, that many of the features presented above are found in both varieties and by no means limit communication. There are only few constructions which could be considered incorrect between the two variants, and the differences are more likely to cause disturbance than misunderstandings (Hargraves 2003: 35).

Mondorf (2009:105) has studied the differences in comparison in BrE and AmE. According to her findings, there are two major differences in comparative formation between the two. First, AmE tends to use the periphrastic forms more often than BrE. Secondly, BrE generally uses more comparative forms of both inflectional and periphrastic than AmE. One reason for these differences might be regularisation, that is that AmE develops more regular forms whereas BrE maintains the old, irregular grammatical constructions (Mondorf 2009: 106). Algeo (2006: 129) has discovered that both varieties favour the inflectional comparison for adjectives ending with *-y*, e.g. *healthier* instead of *more healthy*.

2.4.2 Some lexical differences

Since the grammar of BrE and AmE is not considerably different, it might be interesting to take a look at lexical differences. As mentioned earlier, AmE came into contact with many languages and the vocabulary was forced to develop. However, as Kövecses (2000: 149) points out, there always has been and always will be interaction between the two varieties, and therefore two distinct, national vocabularies of English will never appear. Nowadays, the writers of English are given some kind of license for variation, and using a word, a phrase or way of expressing an idea which is out of the ordinary is considered to be an intentional choice (Hargraves 2003: 19). Strevens (1972: 54-60) distinguishes three types of vocabulary; 1: *the common word-stock*, 2: *common ideas, different words* and 3: *words with no counterparts*. Here are some examples of two of these categories, (29) common ideas, different words and (30) words with no counterpart:

	BrE	AmE
(29)	<i>trousers</i>	pants
	pants	<i>shorts</i>
	<i>waistcoat</i>	vest
	vest	<i>t-shirt</i>
	<i>trunk</i>	boot
	petrol	<i>gasoline</i>
	<i>lift</i>	elevator

nappy

diaper(30) BrE: *wicket, fast bowler, silly mid-off* (terms of cricket)AmE: *canyon, caribou, home run, pitcher*

Hargraves (2003) gives a thorough description of lexical differences in several environments, such as money and business (*common stock* (AmE)/*ordinary shares* (BrE)), the law and government (*pretrial detention* (AmE)/*remand* (BrE)), education (*recess* (AmE)/*break* (BrE)), health (*internal medicine* (AmE)/*general medicine* (BrE)), food, clothing and shelter (*potato chips* (AmE)/*crisps* (BrE)) and transport (*horse trailer* (AmE)/*horse box* (BrE)). He also lists idioms and expressions, which differ in form, such as *tempest in a teapot* (AmE)/*storm in a teacup* (BrE), and others, which are unique to one dialect, such as *roll in the aisles* (AmE)/*fall about laughing* (BrE), or *like Grand Central Station* (AmE)/*like Piccadilly Circus* (BrE).

In addition to differences in lexical items, there are also differences in spelling. Stevens (1972: 64) suggests that some differences in spelling arise from great variation within the Elizabethan English. Since AmE has standardised some archaic features and BrE might have developed a different standard, it is not surprising that such differences occur. According to Stevens (1972: 64), ‘the biggest single influence (...) was Noah Webster’ who helped to establish the American English spelling. Some of Webster’s proposals for the AmE spelling, e.g. the deletion of *-u* in words ending with *-our*, the deletion of the second consonant in

words with double consonants, e.g. *traveller/traveler*, and the replacement of *-re* by *-er* in words of French origin, e.g. *theatre/theater*. Other differences in spelling include the variation between *-ise/-ize*: AmE prefers spelling with *-ize*, e.g. *regularize*, whereas both varieties occur in BrE, *-ise* somewhat more frequent. Kövecses (2000: 167-8) states that by suggesting these changes in spelling the American scholars attempted to simplify English. In Present-Day English, the non-standard spelling is considered to be a mistake, opposite to the writer's freedom for the choice of words. The inconsistencies of spelling cause problems to both native speakers and learners of English, and there have been attempts to unify the spelling system, but none of these attempts have succeeded (Hargraves 2003: 19-20).

3. METHODOLOGY

As mentioned earlier, the study will be conducted in two parts: the first part consists of a corpus-based study which compares British and American English usage of double comparison. I will use two modern corpora, the British National Corpus (the BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), both of which exist online. The corpora, and the queries made of them, will be introduced and discussed in the following subsections. The second part of the study consists of a questionnaire, which is based on the corpus-based study. The aim of the questionnaire is to determine whether native speakers accept the use of double comparison even though it is considered non-standard. The questionnaire will be described in section 3.4 and it can also be found as an appendix.

3.1 The BNC

The BNC is the largest monolingual corpus of contemporary British English available. According to Burnard (2009a), the BNC consists of over 100 million words of which 90% is written and 10% spoken material. The written part includes extracts from e.g. newspapers, academic publications and popular fiction. The spoken part, on the other hand, consists of spoken language collected in different contexts, formal as well as informal. Since the corpus is synchronic (i.e. the texts should be roughly from the same period), most of the texts derive from 1975 onwards; however, some imaginative text samples date back to 1964 (Burnard 2009b).

The texts for the written part were selected according to three criteria: domain, time and medium (Burnard 2007). The domain of the text means the type of writing it contains (i.e. informative or imaginative), the medium indicates the kind of publication the text occurs in (e.g. book, periodical, unpublished) and the time indicates the date of publication. The selected texts are further classified according to different descriptive features, which include information of, for example, publication, author and the target audience (*ibid.*).

According to Burnard (2007), the spoken part of the BNC consists of two components: a demographic part, which includes conversational English, and a context-governed part, which consists of speech in specific kinds of events, such as sermons. For the demographic part 124 volunteers were recruited to record their conversations over a period of up to a week. The recruits were chosen carefully so that there were equal numbers of men and women, equal numbers of the six age groups (0-14, 15-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-59, 60+), and equal numbers from each social class (AB, C1, C2, D⁴ (Burnard 2009c)) . For the context-governed part an approximately equal amount of speech was collected in the following four contextually based categories: educational, business, public/institutional and leisure (Burnard 2007).

⁴ AB=Higher management: administrative or professional; C1= Lower management: supervisory or clerical; C2=Skilled manual; D=Semi-skilled or unskilled

3.2 The COCA

Davies (2009a) states that COCA is the largest corpus of contemporary English with more than 400 million words of spoken and written language, thus being also the largest corpus of American English. It contains over 160,000 texts. The corpus is updated once or twice every year, and at the moment it contains data from 1990-2009. The texts are equally divided between five categories: spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts. It is therefore a fully balanced corpus.

Because there are five categories of texts and the corpus is fully balanced, each category comprises 20% of the material (Davies 2009b). This means that 80% of the texts are written and 20% are transcripts of spoken English. As mentioned before, the written part consists of fiction (e.g. short stories, movie scripts), popular magazines (e.g. *Time*, *Cosmopolitan*), newspapers (e.g. *New York Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*) and academic journals from different academic fields. Unlike the spoken part of the BNC, the spoken material in the COCA does not include everyday conversation. Instead, it consists of transcripts of more than 150 TV and radio programs, such as *Good Morning America* and *Oprah* (*ibid.*). There are a few problems with these kinds of transcripts: the speeches might be written beforehand, and the conversations might not be natural, because the participants know that they are being recorded (Davies 2009c). However, Davies points out that at least 95% of the speech is unscripted apart from some formulaic sentences such as “Welcome to the program”. He also states that even though the participants knew they were being recorded the material shows

very little unnatural features, and does in fact represent casual conversations quite accurately in terms of, for example, overall word choice and false starts (*ibid.*).

Table 3.2.1 *Comparison of the COCA and the BNC* (Davies 2009d (modified))

Feature	COCA	BNC
Availability	Free / web	Free / web
Size (millions of words)	400	100
Time span	1990-2009	1970s-1993
Number of words of text being added each year	20 million	0
Can be used as a monitor corpus to see ongoing changes in English	Yes	No
Wide range of genres: spoken, fiction, popular magazine, newspaper, academic	Yes	Yes
Size of spoken (millions of words)	83	10
Spoken = conversational, unscripted?	Mostly	Yes
Variety	American	British

3.3 Queries

Altogether, six queries were made for each corpus in order to gather the material for the study: 1) simple inflectional comparative (adj.CMP), e.g. *nicer*, 2) simple periphrastic comparative (more+adj.ALL), e.g. *more beautiful*, 3) simple inflectional superlative (adj.SPRL), e.g. *nicest*, 4) simple periphrastic superlative (most+adj.ALL), e.g. *most beautiful*, 5) double comparative (more+adj.CMP), e.g. *more nicer*, and 6) double superlative

(most+adj.CMP), e.g. *most nicest*. The results of the simple comparatives and superlatives were shown in lists of the 100 most frequent adjectives in comparison. The double forms, on the other hand, were not that many: although there were 100 double comparatives in the COCA, there were only 41 double comparatives in the BNC. The double superlatives were even less frequent: there were 54 double superlatives in the COCA and only 12 in the BNC. After the queries were made, the results were analysed by calculating the percentages of the simple and double comparatives and comparing them.

3.4 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to measure the native speakers' opinions on double comparison. It consists of 20 complete sentences, which have either the double comparative or superlative, and the participants were asked to evaluate whether the sentences were 1) correct, 2) incorrect or 3) either correct or incorrect. If they chose the third alternative, they were asked to explain their choice. The participants were also asked about their gender (male/female), nationality (American/British/other), age (-22, 23-32, 33-42, 43-52, 53-62, 63-) and educational level. Since the questionnaire was conducted electronically, the participants were able to answer it quickly. In order to reach as many native speakers as possible, I sent the questionnaire to different universities and colleges in Britain and the United States. All in all I received 156 answers, but some of the respondents had some other mother tongue than (American or British) English, so they were excluded from the analysis. Thus, the total number of participants is 145, of which 64 are British and 81 American native

speakers. The questionnaire is based on the corpora in that the sentences in the questionnaire were found either in the BNC or the COCA. The sentences are presented here, and the whole of the questionnaire can be found as an appendix:

1. Clara Basil is the most strangest person I know.
2. It's about the most smelliest thing you could ever smell.
3. She breathed more easier as her load became lighter.
4. It's the most deadliest animal on earth.
5. Are you the most beautifulest girl in the world?
6. We need a sense, more better sense of where the president is.
7. There is a story that things are getting more worse in some ways.
8. That position puts him firmly in a more bolder approach than many other Republicans are contemplating.
9. Most people probably would have thought of him as the most wickedest man in town.
10. Future researchers may want to explore the relationship between ethnicity and epistemological styles using more larger samples.
11. Let us please seek for more stronger motives.
12. If you are used to the low rectangular shape of most best sanders, the bizarre profile of the BD75E take some getting used to.
13. No one looked more livelier than Denis Hollywood in the last seven minutes of the contest.

14. Measured in dots per inch, the greater the number of dots, the more smoother and cleaner appearance the character/image will have.
15. I was the saddest and most miserablest I've ever been.
16. Then mingle the most gruesomest, grisliest ghost stories in among your jokes.
17. Owner occupation seems to be a factor in more greater readiness to vote.
18. This has been the most fastest growing part of the holiday taking in this country over the past two or three years.
19. We're facing attitudes which are much more harder to change.
20. Chubb is probably one of the most commonest type of locks.

After receiving the answers, I analysed them by calculating the amount of each choice (correct/incorrect/either correct or incorrect) and comparing the two variants of English. I also included age and gender in my study, because I believe that they have a significance in whether the double comparison is accepted as correct.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter I will present and discuss the results of this study. I will first concentrate on the corpus-based study in section 4.1, and then I will present the results of the questionnaire in section 4.2⁵.

4.1 Results of the corpus-based study

The results of the first part of this study are presented and discussed here. Firstly, I will discuss the frequency of the inflectional, periphrastic and double comparatives and superlatives in the two corpora. Then I will take a closer look at the 20 most frequent comparatives and superlatives and compare the two varieties. Lastly, I will examine the difference between spoken and written language in relation to comparison. The results are presented in figures and tables. The figures show the results in percentages, and are based on the numerical data, which can be found in appendix 1. For figures 4.2.1-4 all the adjectives were taken into account. The four tables (4.1.5-8) present the 20 most frequent simple and double comparatives and superlatives in AmE and BrE. The reason for limiting the amount of the adjectives to the 20 most frequent is that there were so few double forms that taking all the (doubly marked) adjectives into account would not have affected the results. Also, due to limitations in time it was not possible to analyse all the adjectives.

⁵ Unless otherwise stated, the statistical test used is a chi-square test. The results refer to the following values: $p < 0.001$ very highly significant; $p < 0.01$ highly significant; $p < 0,05$ significant; $p > 0,05$ no significance

In order to make the figures and tables easier to read I have used abbreviations. For figures 4.1.1-4.1.4 and tables 4.1.5-4.1.8 the abbreviations used are:

inf. comp. = inflectional comparative (e.g. *smaller*)

per. comp. = periphrastic comparative (e.g. *more fearless*)

double comp. = double comparative (e.g. *more happier*)

inf. super. = inflectional superlative (e.g. *smallest*)

per. super. = periphrastic superlative (e.g. *most fearless*)

double super. = double superlative (e.g. *most happiest*)

In addition, for figures 4.1.9-4.1.12 the abbreviations used for written language are:

fiction = fictional texts

newsp = newspaper texts

acad = academic texts

mag = magazine texts

misc = miscellaneous texts

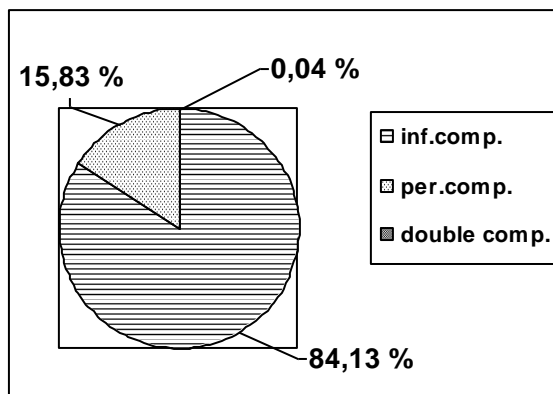


Fig. 4.1.1 *Comparatives in AmE*

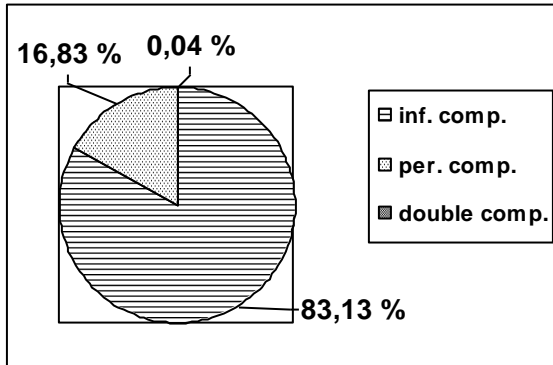


Fig. 4.1.2 *Comparatives in BrE*

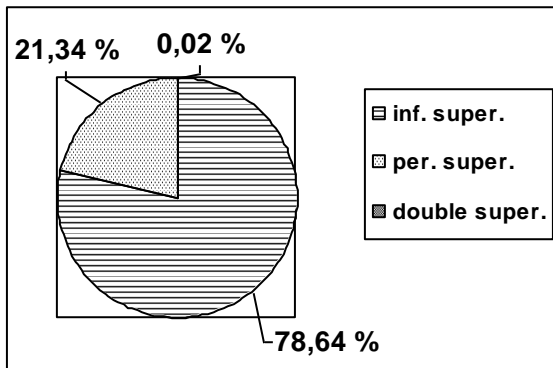


Fig. 4.1.3 *Superlatives in AmE*

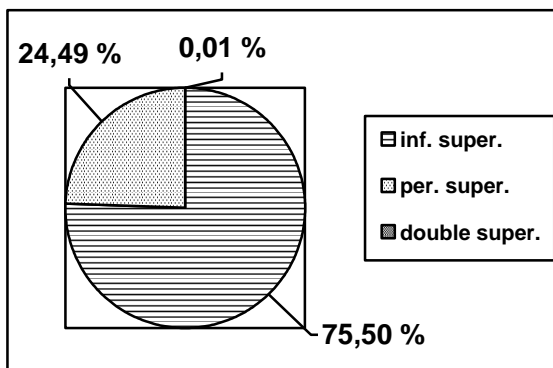


Fig. 4.1.4 *Superlatives in BrE*

As can be seen from figures 4.1.1 and 4.1.2, the double comparatives are very rare in both AmE and BrE compared to the simple inflectional and periphrastic comparatives: less than one percent of all the comparatives are doubly marked. In both varieties the inflectional comparatives are the most frequent, which follows Kytö and Romaine's (1997: 331, 335) study: in Modern English the inflectional forms outnumber the periphrastic forms by roughly 4 to 1. When comparing AmE and BrE, one can see that the double comparatives occur as frequently in both varieties, but since the amount of the double comparatives is very small it is clear that they are not used for comparison in either of the varieties.

This can also be seen in relation to the superlatives: figures 4.1.3 and 4.1.4 show that the double superlatives are extremely rare in both varieties compared to the simple superlatives, because the amount of the doubly marked superlatives is less than one percent. In addition to this, there is no discernible difference between AmE and BrE, so based on the results AmE does not use the double forms for comparison more (double comparatives $p > 0,05$; double superlatives $p > 0,05$). This disagrees with my first hypothesis, since I assumed that there would be more use of double comparison in AmE.

Table 4.1.5 20 most frequent *inf.*, *per.*, and double comparatives in AmE

	AmE		
	inf. comp.	per. comp.	double comp.
1.	better	more likely	more older
2.	higher	more important	more younger
3.	older	more difficult	more later
4.	greater	more effective	more smaller
5.	lower	more complex	more higher
6.	larger	more efficient	more better
7.	smaller	more comfortable	more stronger

8.	worse	more serious	more larger
9.	younger	more expensive	more easier
10.	further	more powerful	more lower
11.	bigger	more complicated	more worse
12.	earlier	more common	more clearer
13.	later	more recent	more longer
14.	easier	more interested	more happier
15.	stronger	more interesting	more healthier
16.	longer	more sophisticated	more broader
17.	closer	more accurate	more calmer
18.	broader	more concerned	more bolder
19.	harder	more positive	more tougher
20.	wider	more aggressive	more scarier

Table 4.1.6 20 most frequent *inf.*, *per.*, and double comparatives in BrE

	BrE		
	inf. comp.	per. comp.	double comp.
1.	further	more likely	more older
2.	better	more important	more smaller
3.	higher	more difficult	more easier
4.	greater	more complex	more higher
5.	lower	more effective	more younger
6.	older	more general	more lower
7.	later	more recent	more clearer
8.	larger	more serious	more stronger
9.	smaller	more expensive	more better
10.	earlier	more efficient	more subtler
11.	worse	more detailed	more freer
12.	younger	more common	more livelier
13.	wider	more powerful	more later
14.	easier	more sophisticated	more shorter
15.	longer	more interesting	more greater
16.	bigger	more complicated	more further
17.	stronger	more concerned	more wordier
18.	cheaper	more attractive	more wider
19.	closer	more appropriate	more warmer
20.	shorter	more specific	more smoother

Table 4.1.7 20 most frequent *inf.*, *per.*, and double superlatives in AmE

	AmE		
	inf. super.	per. super.	double super.
1.	best	most important	most happiest
2.	largest	most likely	most foremost
3.	biggest	most recent	most strangest
4.	latest	most popular	most smartest
5.	greatest	most common	most greatest
6.	worst	most powerful	most hardest
7.	highest	most famous	most deadliest
8.	oldest	most effective	most beautifulest
9.	lowest	most significant	most angriest
10.	youngest	most successful	most biggest
11.	closest	most difficult	most funniest
12.	strongest	most beautiful	most deepest
13.	earliest	most other	most proudest
14.	finest	most interesting	most simplest
15.	nearest	most prominent	most highest
16.	longest	most serious	most unlikeliest
17.	newest	most dangerous	most wildest
18.	smallest	most expensive	most wickedest
19.	hardest	most influential	most unsexiest
20.	foremost	most valuable	most smelliest

Table 4.1.8 20 most frequent *inf.* and *per.* superlatives and 12 most frequent double superlatives in BrE

	BrE		
	inf. super.	per. super.	double super.
1.	best	most important	most best
2.	latest	most likely	most beautifulest
3.	largest	most common	most miserablest
4.	greatest	most popular	most latest
5.	highest	most famous	most hardest
6.	biggest	most recent	most gruesomest
7.	worst	most significant	most fearfullest
8.	nearest	most successful	most fastest
9.	earliest	most effective	most easiest
10.	lowest	most other	most commonest
11.	finest	most powerful	most coldest
12.	oldest	most interesting	most cockiest
13.	youngest	most obvious	
14.	smallest	most difficult	

15.	eldest	most beautiful	
16.	strongest	most appropriate	
17.	simplest	most serious	
18.	slightest	most striking	
19.	longest	most expensive	
20.	easiest	most useful	

Tables 4.1.5 and 4.1.6 present the 20 most frequent inflectional, periphrastic and double comparatives in AmE and BrE. As can be seen from the tables, there are 13 (out of 20) adjectives which have both the inflectional and the doubly marked form; in AmE: *better, higher, older, lower, larger, smaller, worse, younger, later, easier, stronger, longer* and *broader*; in BrE: *further, better, higher, greater, lower, older, later, smaller, younger, wider, easier, stronger* and *shorter*. On the other hand, none of the adjectives have both the periphrastic and the double form. This applies both to AmE and BrE. Tables 4.1.7 and 4.1.8, which present the 20 most frequent superlatives in AmE and BrE, show the same phenomenon: the inflectional comparative is more likely to get the double form. This disagrees with Kytö and Romaine (2000: 192). According to them, the double forms are periphrastic in nature, but the results of this study show that, in fact, they are based on the inflectional form, since the inflectional comparatives and superlatives are doubly marked more often than the periphrastic.

Tables 4.1.5 and 4.1.6 also show another interesting feature. When comparing the AmE and BrE inflectional, periphrastic and double comparatives, one can see that there are less double comparatives in common between the two varieties than there are inflectional or periphrastic. In other words, there are 18 inflectional (*better, higher, older, greater, lower, larger, smaller,*

worse, younger, further, bigger, earlier, later, easier, stronger, longer, closer, wider) and 15 periphrastic (*more likely, more important, more difficult, more effective, more complex, more efficient, more serious, more expensive, more powerful, more complicated, more common, more recent, more interesting, more sophisticated, more concerned*) comparatives which are found in both AmE and BrE, whereas there are only 10 double comparatives (*more older, more younger, more later, more smaller, more higher, more better, more stronger, more easier, more lower, more clearer*) in common. This implies that although the 20 most used comparatives are approximately the same in both varieties, the double comparatives tend to be different, probably because the double forms are not accepted as grammatically correct, and are therefore slips-of-the-tongue. Combined with the fact that, as mentioned above, 13 comparatives have both the inflectional and the double form, the result indicates that the double comparatives are likely to be linguistic errors. However, since the double forms can be used to intensify the comparison (González-Díaz 2006b: 629-30) or to make it more explicit (Włodarczyk 2007: 201), it can also be assumed that some of the double comparatives are intentional. For instance, in written language the writer can correct the errors, but the double forms are still found in written texts:

AmE:

(31) “She breathed more easier as her load became lighter.” *Total Health* – magazine

(32) “...students in semi-urban area with computer facilities performing more better than those in much more urban centres.” *College Student Journal*

- (33) “That position puts him firmly in the camp counseling a more bolder approach than many other Republicans are contemplating.” *New York Times*

BrE:

- (34) “...no-one looked more livelier than Denis Hollywood in the last seven minutes...” *The Belfast Telegraph*
- (35) “...the greater the number of dots, the more smoother and cleaner appearance the character/image will have.” *Miscellaneous articles*

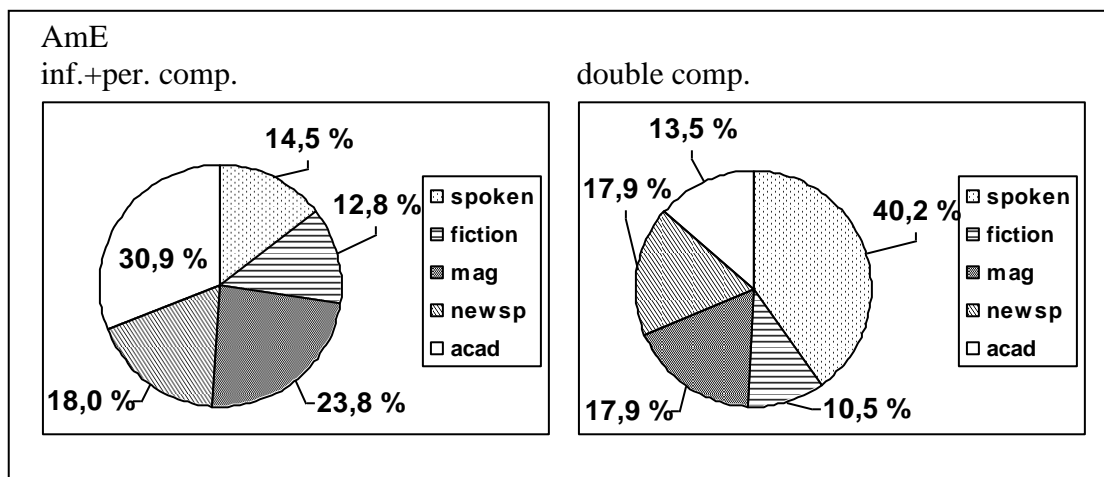


Fig. 4.1.9 AmE: 20 most frequent comparatives in spoken and written language

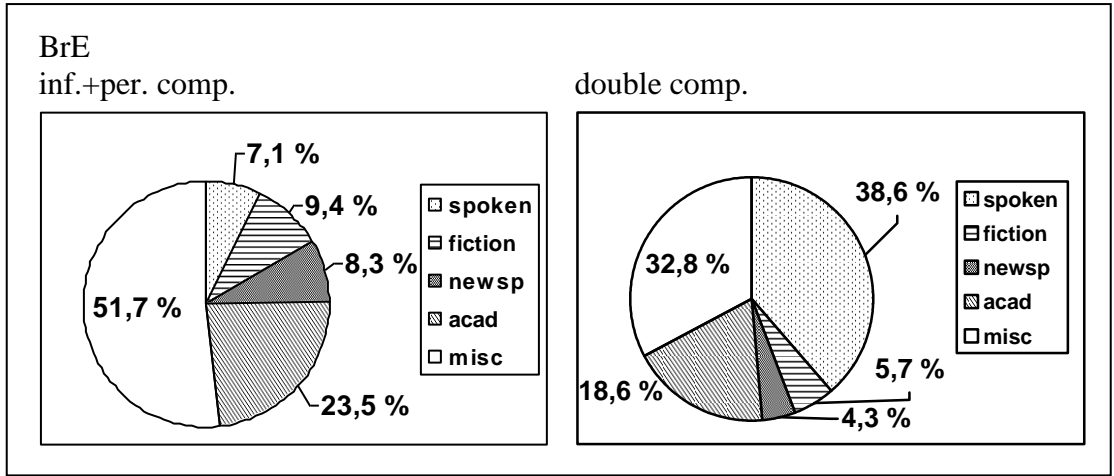


Fig. 4.1.10 BrE: 20 most frequent comparatives in spoken and written language

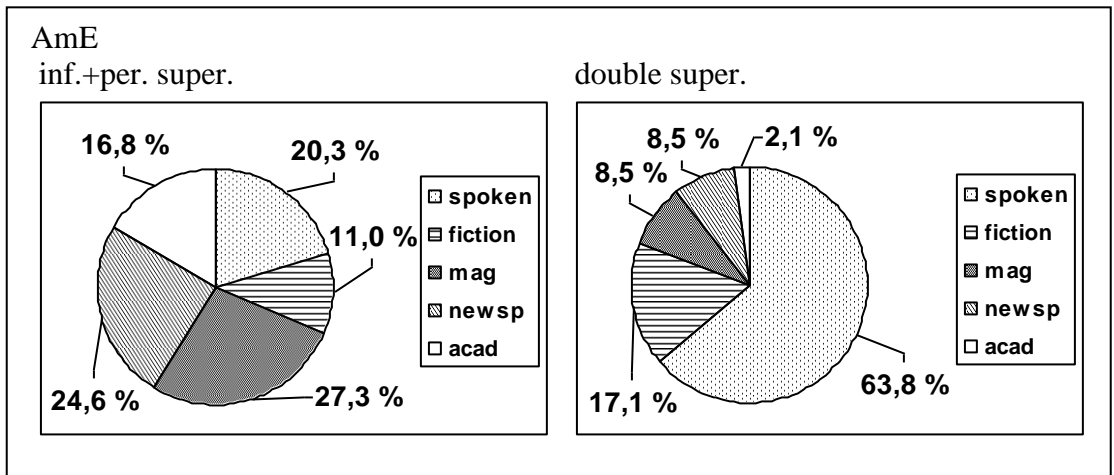


Fig. 4.1.11 AmE: 20 most frequent superlatives in spoken and written language

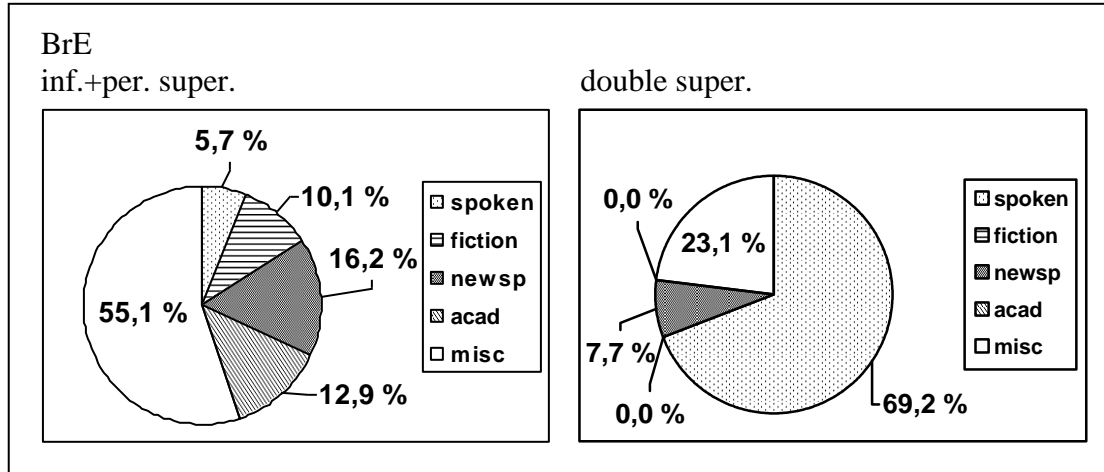


Fig. 4.1.12 BrE: 20 most frequent superlatives in spoken and written language

The difference between spoken and written language can be seen from figures 4.1.9-12. In both varieties the simple comparatives occur most frequently in written language, in AmE in academic (30,9%) and in BrE in miscellaneous texts (51,7%) (fig. 4.1.9 and 4.1.10). The simple superlatives occur most frequently in written language, as well, in AmE in magazines (27,3%) and in BrE in miscellaneous texts (55,1%) (fig. 4.1.11 and 4.1.12). When it comes to spoken language, BrE seems to use both the simple comparatives and superlatives least frequently in spoken language: figures 4.1.10 and 4.1.12 show that only 7,1% of the comparatives and 5,7% of the superlatives occur in spoken language. In AmE, on the other hand, the simple comparatives and superlatives occur least frequently in fictional texts instead of spoken language, as can be seen from figures 4.1.9 and 4.1.11.

Although the simple comparatives and superlatives are the most frequent in written language, it is not surprising that all the double forms occur most frequently in spoken language (fig. 4.1.9-12). In both varieties more than double (63,8% AmE/ 69,2% BrE) the amount of all the

double superlatives are used in spoken language. For double comparatives the percentages are not that high (40,2% AmE/ 38,6% BrE), even though they still are the majority. Here are some examples of the double forms in spoken language:

AmE:

(36) “And the -- more younger folks dying these days than older folks.”

CBS/Sunday Morning

(37) “It will be worse. Much more worse, and maybe much more serious.” *CBS/60*

MINUTES

(38) “That was the most strangest sensation, I guess, I ever felt, when somebody hit me like that” *ABC/20/20*

(39) “It's about the most smelliest thing you could ever smell.” *NPR/Morning*

Edition

BrE:

(40) “Couple of years after the war it got sort er bit more freer, you see.”

interview

(41) “Owner occupation seems to be a factor in more greater readiness to vote.”

lecture

(42) “Are, are Manchester United not the most cockiest fans going aren't they?”

conversation

(43) “He said, he said I'm the most beautifulest girl in the world” *conversation*

According to my hypothesis, the double forms are more frequent in spoken language, and based on the results it can be said that they do occur more in spoken than in written language in both varieties of English, and that the differences are statistically very highly significant (BrE double comparatives $p < 0,001$; AmE double comparatives $p < 0,001$; BrE double superlatives $p < 0,001$; AmE double superlatives $p < 0,001$). However, when comparing written and spoken language it has to be noted that the corpora are not fully-balanced between written and spoken texts. This is not a problem, though, because even with the spoken parts of the corpora being smaller, the results show that the double forms are used more in spoken language.

The results of the corpus-based study show that overall the double forms are very rarely used in both AmE and BrE, which is not surprising. However, there are some features of the double forms which are interesting. Firstly, they do not appear to be periphrastic in nature, as Kytö and Romaine (2000: 192) have suggested. Instead, they are more inflectional in nature. Secondly, the doubly marked forms seem to be different in AmE and BrE, which implies that they are linguistic errors. Also, the overall amount of the double forms suggests that they are not grammatically accepted. However, since they are used in spoken language to quite an extent, it might be fair to say that the double forms are gaining some acceptance, at least in spoken language.

4.2 Results of the questionnaire

As mentioned above, the sentences in the questionnaire occur in the corpora used in the first part of the study and are therefore examples of real language usage. Therefore it was interesting to see what native speakers think about the double comparatives and superlatives and whether they accept them as correct.

The results of the questionnaire will be presented here in figures and tables. In order to make them easier to read, I have used the following abbreviations:

C = correct

IC = incorrect

E = either correct or incorrect

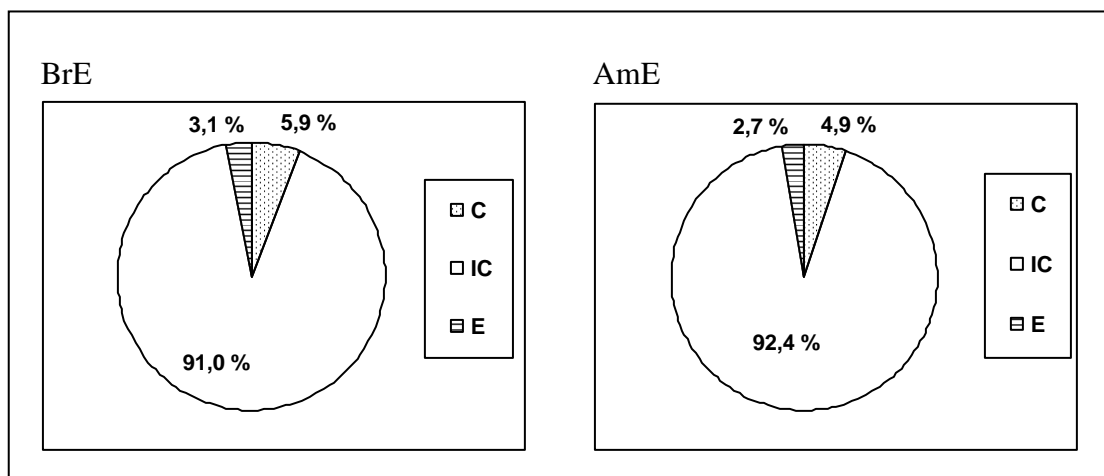


Fig. 4.2.1 *The percentages of the alternatives*

Figure 4.2.1 gives an overall view on the answers. As can be seen from the figure, the alternative *incorrect* has been chosen most often by both the British and the American participants. This is not surprising, because the double forms are considered non-standard and colloquial. However, some of the sentences have clearly been seen as correct by the participants, because 5,9% of all the British and 4,9% of all the American answers state that the sentence is *correct*. The alternative *correct* has also been chosen more often than *either correct or incorrect*, which indicates that the double forms are accepted at least to some extent. Surprisingly, the British seem to be more willing to accept the double comparison as correct, which disagrees with my hypothesis; however, there is no statistical difference between the two variants ($p > 0,05$). All in all, since the alternative *incorrect* is clearly the most commonly chosen, it can be argued that neither British nor American native speakers accept the use of double comparison.

Since some of the participants have chosen the alternative *correct*, it might be interesting to take a look at the sentences separately to see if some of the sentences are accepted more often than others. Tables 4.2.2 and 4.2.3 present the 20 sentences and the percentages for each alternative:

Table 4.2.2 *BrE: The sentences and the percentages for each alternative*

	BrE		
	C	IC	E
1. Clara Basil is the most strangest person I know.	0	98,4	1,6
2. It's about the most smelliest thing you could ever smell.	3,1	95,3	1,6
3. She breathed more easier as her load became lighter.	4,7	95,3	0
4. It's the most deadliest animal on earth.	9,4	87,3	3,1
5. Are you the most beautifulest girl in the world?	4,7	90,6	4,7
6. We need a sense, more better sense of where the president is.	0	98,4	1,6
7. There is a story that things are getting more worse in some ways.	0	98,4	1,6
8. That position puts him firmly in a more bolder approach than many other Republicans are contemplating.	4,7	93,7	1,6
9. Most people probably would have thought of him as the most wickedest man in town.	3,1	95,3	1,6
10. Future researchers may want to explore the relationship between ethnicity and epistemological styles using more larger samples.	7,8	79,7	12,5
11. Let us please seek for more stronger motives.	6,2	71,9	21,9
12. If you are used to the low rectangular shape of most best sanders, the bizarre profile of the BD75E take some getting used to.	12,5	84,4	3,1
13. No one looked more livelier than Denis Hollywood in the last seven minutes of the contest.	10,9	89,1	0
14. Measured in dots per inch, the greater the number of dots, the more smoother and cleaner appearance the character/image will have.	15,6	82,8	1,6
15. I was the saddest and most miserablest I've ever been.	1,6	96,8	1,6
16. Then mingle the most gruesomest, grisliest ghost stories in among your jokes.	6,3	90,6	3,1
17. Owner occupation seems to be a factor in more greater readiness to vote.	6,3	93,7	0
18. This has been the most fastest growing part of the holiday taking in this country over the past two or three years.	4,7	95,3	0
19. We're facing attitudes which are much more harder to change.	7,8	92,2	0
20. Chubb is probably one of the most commonest type of locks.	9,4	90,6	0

Table 4.2.3 AmE: *The sentences and the percentages for each alternative*

	AmE		
	C	IC	E
1. Clara Basil is the most strangest person I know.	0	98,8	1,2
2. It's about the most smelliest thing you could ever smell.	4,9	92,6	2,5
3. She breathed more easier as her load became lighter.	3,7	96,3	0
4. It's the most deadliest animal on earth.	3,7	96,3	0
5. Are you the most beautifulest girl in the world?	1,2	95,1	3,7
6. We need a sense, more better sense of where the president is.	1,2	96,3	2,5
7. There is a story that things are getting more worse in some ways.	3,7	96,3	0
8. That position puts him firmly in a more bolder approach than many other Republicans are contemplating.	3,7	95,1	1,2
9. Most people probably would have thought of him as the most wickedest man in town.	2,5	95	2,5
10. Future researchers may want to explore the relationship between ethnicity and epistemological styles using more larger samples.	2,5	87,6	9,9
11. Let us please seek for more stronger motives.	3,7	87,7	8,6
12. If you are used to the low rectangular shape of most best sanders, the bizarre profile of the BD75E take some getting used to.	6,2	85,5	8,6
13. No one looked more livelier than Denis Hollywood in the last seven minutes of the contest.	12,3	85,2	2,5
14. Measured in dots per inch, the greater the number of dots, the more smoother and cleaner appearance the character/image will have.	13,6	86,4	0
15. I was the saddest and most miserablest I've ever been.	6,2	92,6	1,2
16. Then mingle the most gruesomest, grisliest ghost stories in among your jokes.	6,2	88,9	4,9
17. Owner occupation seems to be a factor in more greater readiness to vote.	6,2	92,1	1,2
18. This has been the most fastest growing part of the holiday taking in this country over the past two or three years.	7,4	90,1	2,5
19. We're facing attitudes which are much more harder to change.	4,9	95,1	0
20. Chubb is probably one of the most commonest type of locks.	4,9	95,1	0

As can be seen from the tables, most of the sentences have been evaluated as incorrect by both the British and American participants. Sentence 1, for example, has not been accepted as correct by anyone. The British participants have also been reluctant to accept sentences 6 and

7 as correct, whereas the Americans have not been that disapproving, even though they, too, think of the sentences as being incorrect. Since all the British participants reject these sentences there must be a reason for it. The first sentence might be seen as incorrect because of the position in the questionnaire: it is the first sentence, so it might have had an effect on the participants. It is also possible that the adjectives in the sentences have an impact on the participants' answer. Thus, *most strangest*, *more better* and *more worse* are seen as incorrect more often than, for example, *more greater* in sentence 17 or *most miserablest* in sentence 15. Even *most beautifulest* in sentence 5 is seen correct more often than the three by the British participants, even though *beautifulest* (and *miserablest*) is not an actual word. Since the participants were not asked to explain every choice they made, the reason for this cannot be stated. It would have been interesting to know why some people accepted e.g. *most beautifulest*, but not *more better*.

Although most sentences have been evaluated as incorrect, there are a few sentences which seem to be accepted by some of the British and the American participants. Sentences 13 and 14 are accepted as correct considerably more often than the others; sentence 13 is evaluated as correct by 10,9% of the British and 12,3% of the Americans, and sentence 14 by 15,6% of the British and 13,6% of the American participants. In addition, 9,4% of the British accept both sentence 4 and 20 as correct. Sentences 13 and 14 both include a double comparative: *more livelier* and *more smoother*. Therefore, it could be argued that at least the Americans are more tolerant towards the double comparative than the superlative, but considering the amount of sentences which also include the double comparative but which have not been accepted as correct, it must be stated that it is not necessarily the form of adjective which

affects the choice. Instead, it might be some other words in the sentence or the context (in this case, the imaginary context). The British, on the other hand, also accept *most deadliest* in sentence 4 and *most commonest* in sentence 20 as correct, so it does not seem to matter whether the adjective is comparative or superlative. As mentioned earlier, it would have been interesting to know why the participants answered as they did, but it would have made the questionnaire much more time-consuming, and therefore there probably would not have been as many participants.

If the participants chose the alternative *either correct or incorrect*, they were asked to explain their choice, which most of them did. The explanations are very interesting and some of them quite detailed. It seems that the British participants mostly explained their choice by comic effect, and the Americans by conversational tone. For example, sentence 9: *Most people probably would have thought of him as the most wickedest man in town* was said to be humorous by a British participant, whereas an American stated that ‘maybe its [sic!] ok in slang’. Some of the sentences have also been evaluated as either correct or incorrect because the speaker might have changed their mind about the adjective, thus using the double form. Sentence 7: *There is a story that things are getting more worse in some ways* is a good example. One of the British participants answered: ‘the speaker might have been going to say ‘more complicated’, or something similar, but changed her / his mind mid-utterance and said ‘worse’ instead’. Also sentence 6: *We need a sense, more better sense of where the president is* seems to be a case where the speaker has changed their mind according to both the British and the American participants.

There are also a few sentences which are a bit incorrect according to the participants, but which they have still chosen to evaluate as either correct or incorrect instead of incorrect. An American participant commented on sentence 8: *That position puts him firmly in a more bolder approach than many other Republicans are contemplating* by saying ‘It’s not good but it seems correct’, and a British participant said that sentence 14: *Measured in dots per inch, the greater the number of dots, the more smoother and cleaner appearance the character/image will have* is ‘a bit incorrect, but not a biggie’. These statements clarify why some participants accept the sentences as correct: double comparison is an alternative to simple comparison in some contexts. This agrees with my hypothesis, since I assumed that the double comparison will be accepted to some degree. However, as I already mentioned, the alternative *incorrect* is clearly the most commonly chosen, and therefore it would be false to say that the double comparison is widely accepted by the native speakers.

Some participants also explained their choice, even though they chose the alternative *incorrect*. Most of them stated that the use of the additional adverb, i.e. *more* or *most*, is redundant. Some of them also mentioned that the use of double forms is not proper English. One of the participants actually asked if the questionnaire is a joke, which tells quite a lot about the native speakers’ opinions about the double comparison. This is not surprising since the double comparison is considered to be non-grammatical in all the main grammars, such as Biber *et al.* (1999), Greenbaum (1996) and Quirk *et al.* (1985).

Since I assumed that age and gender have an impact on the acceptance of the double forms, I will now take a look at them. The age and gender distributions in both varieties were very

uneven and this must be taken into consideration when drawing conclusions. The following table shows the amount of participants in each age and gender group:

Table 4.2.4 *The age distribution*

	BrE	AmE
-22	34	3
23-32	13	38
33-42	3	14
43-52	7	11
53-62	4	9
63-	3	6

Table 4.2.5 *The gender distribution*

	BrE	AmE
female	50	56
male	14	25

As can be seen from table 4.2.4, the most participants belong to the younger age groups, whereas there are only a few participants in the older age groups. This probably has an effect on the results. Also the age distribution shown in table 4.2.5 is disproportionate: there are a very few men compared to women taking part in the questionnaire. However, some conclusions in relation to age and gender can be made.

Table 4.2.6 *The percentages of the alternatives in each age group*

	BrE				AmE		
	C	IC	E		C	IC	E
-22	6,6	90,6	2,8		1,7	96,6	1,7
23-32	5	94,2	0,8		5,2	92	2,8
33-43	0	80	20		6,4	89,3	4,3
43-52	3,9	94	2,1		2,3	95,4	2,3
53-62	3,8	96,2	0		3,9	94,4	1,7
63-	5	95	0		8,3	91,7	0

I assumed that younger people would be more likely to accept double comparison, and this seems to be the case with the British participants; the participants in the age groups -22 and 23-32 are the most likely to accept the double forms as correct. However, it is surprising that also the participants in the age group 63- accept double comparison to some degree; in fact, they are equally willing to accept it as the 23-32 –year-old participants. Statistically there is no difference between the age groups in accepting the double comparison as correct ($p > 0,05$). However, the fact that the younger British participants have also chosen *either correct or incorrect* more often than the older indicates that they are not as strict when it comes to double comparison, and therefore it can still be argued that they are more likely to tolerate the double forms. This is also consistent with González-Díaz's (2008: 209) findings: in her study, most people using double comparison were under 30 years of age, which in her opinion indicates that the younger generations are leading the change in relation to accepting the double forms, as they do not have the same linguistic prejudices as the older generations, and also, they do not consider the double comparison as a construction which should be avoided by all means.

The American participants seem to be different in their opinions. The age group that has chosen *correct* the most often is 63-, which is the opposite of the British participants. However, also the age groups 23-32 and 33-42 have accepted the double forms more often than the rest of the groups. In addition, they have chosen *either correct or incorrect* the most often. Therefore, based on the results it can be said that age is not significant with respect to accepting double comparison as correct in relation to AmE ($p>0,05$).

When it comes to gender I believed that men are more likely to accept the double forms than women, though I did not expect the difference to be remarkable. The following table presents the choices made by the female and male participants:

Table 4.2.7 *The percentages of the alternatives in each gender group*

	BrE				AmE		
	C	IC	E		C	IC	E
female	6,4	91,9	1,7		6,5	90,7	2,8
male	4,3	87,8	7,9		3,6	93,6	2,8

The results showed that my hypothesis was partially correct: British women and men do not differ statistically ($p>0,05$), but there is a significant statistical difference between American women and men ($p<0,05$). As can be seen from the table, the American women have chosen *correct* almost twice as often as the American men, who, on the other hand, have chosen *incorrect* the most often, so therefore it can be argued that at least the American women are more tolerant towards the double comparison than men. González-Díaz (2008:209) has also

arrived at the same result: 'women are the trendsetters of the social upgrading of double forms'.

The results are a bit surprising, because I believed that men, rather than women, would accept the double forms. I assumed that women would be more aware of correct language usage, and therefore less likely to accept double comparison, whereas men would be more tolerant towards it, but as the results show, that is not the case in this study. It is unclear why the results turned out the way they did; maybe the adjectives were easier for women to accept, or maybe women thought of a context where the sentence would be correct, e.g. 'used for babytalk'. These results are also interesting because there was no difference between the nationalities. However, it has to be kept in mind that the gender distribution was very uneven, and this might have had an effect on the results.

As I studied the results, it became evident that some of the participants had chosen *correct* or *either correct or incorrect* more consistently than others. This tendency to choose those alternatives seems to occur regardless of nationality, age or gender. There are only a few participants who have only chosen *correct* or *either correct or incorrect* once or twice and otherwise chosen *incorrect*. Most participants have either been consistent in choosing *incorrect* for every sentence, or varied between the different alternatives. The tendency to choose *correct* also shows in that most of those participants who have chosen *correct* have done so several times. This indicates that some individuals are more willing to accept the double forms as correct than others, and that nationality, age and gender are not the key aspects in whether a person sees double comparison as correct. They do have some

significance, as shown above, but it cannot be said that one of those features affects more than the other. The tendency to accept double forms occurs in some people, whereas others find double comparison unacceptable and non-grammatical.

There were a few problems connected to the questionnaire, which in their part might have affected the results. First of all, the gender and age distributions were uneven, as mentioned earlier. This caused problems while evaluating the results. The reason for this is that the questionnaire was only sent to universities and colleges in order to reach as many native speakers as possible, and therefore the personal details of the participants could not be controlled. Also, because the overall amount of participants was quite low, it would not have been useful to restrict the amount of participants in each group in order to gain even distributions. However, I have taken this into consideration while analysing the results, and accepted that, because of this, I have not been able to draw firm conclusions from the data. Some suggestions on double comparison can be made, however.

The other problem concerns a few of the sentences in the questionnaire. I did not mention sentences 10 or 11 while I was discussing the results, because the comparison in the sentences can be understood in two different ways, which affects the evaluation of the correctness. In these sentences the additional adverb *more* can be regarded as meaning ‘additional’ instead of belonging to the comparison, as in *Let us please seek for more/additional stronger motives* (sentence 11). Many participants had therefore chosen *either correct or incorrect*, but because the sentences were questionable, I did not include them in the discussion. Otherwise they would have distorted the results. I also excluded

sentence 12 from the discussion because the meaning of the sentence turned out to be difficult to understand for many participants, and this might have affected the results in a negative way. These problems must be taken into consideration in future studies.

5. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was, on the one hand, to investigate the use of double comparison in American and British English, and, on the other hand, to ask native language users their opinions about the doubly marked adjectives. I began by comparing the two main varieties of English by using two modern language corpora, the BNC and the COCA, which I found to be the best available sources for spoken and written language. After conducting the corpus-based study, I prepared a questionnaire for both British and American native speakers. The participants were asked to evaluate 20 sentences, which were taken from the corpora. My hypothesis for the first part of the study was that the double forms are not frequently found in either of the varieties, but that they would occur more often in AmE. I also assumed that there would be more double comparison in spoken language. For the second part of the study, I believed that the native speakers would accept the double comparison to some extent, but that they would find it mostly incorrect. In addition, I assumed that the American native speakers are more tolerant towards the double forms and that younger people and men would be more willing to accept them.

The results of the corpus-based study showed that the double comparison is very rarely found in both varieties, and that there is no statistical difference in the use of double comparison between AmE and BrE, which disagrees with my hypothesis. However, it can be stated that, as I expected, the double comparison occurs more often in speech, and that the difference is statistically very highly significant, although the double forms are also found in written language. While studying the data I also discovered that the double comparatives and

superlatives are likely to be linguistic errors, but in some cases they might be used as intensifiers. This might be why they occur in written texts as well.

In the second part of the study I analysed the native speakers' answers and discovered that the double comparison is indeed accepted to some extent, but statistically there is no difference between the two varieties, which was unexpected. Nor did Age and gender seem to have a great impact on the participants' answers: younger people were slightly more willing to accept the double forms, but again the difference is not statistically significant. Surprisingly, American women were statistically more tolerant towards double comparison than men, which disagrees with my hypothesis. However, the most important factor was a personal tendency to accept double comparison as correct, which occurred regardless of nationality, age or gender.

This study has shown that the status of double comparison might not be as black-and-white as presented in grammars and other linguistic guides. These somewhat surprising results leave room for more research in this area; for example, it would be interesting to conduct a similar study on other regional varieties of English, such as Jamaican English, or on an English dialect, such as Welsh English. The English language, as with any other language, is constantly developing, and this may enable double comparison to gain more ground in future expressions of comparison.

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APPENDIX 1

Numerical data

Table 1 Comparatives

	AmE		BrE	
	numerical	%	numerical	%
simple inf.	657408	84,13	188579	83,13
simple per.	123693	15,83	38177	16,83
double comp.	331	0,04	91	0,04
total	781432	100	226847	100

Table 2 Superlatives

	AmE		BrE	
	numerical	%	numerical	%
simple inf.	401377	78,64	87163	75,5
simple per.	108920	21,34	28271	24,49
double super.	81	0,02	13	0,01
total	510378	100	115447	100

Table 3 AmE 20 most frequent comparatives in spoken+written language

	AmE					total
	spoken	fiction	magazine	newspaper	academic	
inf.+per. comp.	87830	77113	143939	108417	186892	604191
double comp.	92	24	41	41	31	229

Table 4 BrE 20 most frequent comparatives in spoken+written language

	BrE					total
	spoken	fiction	newspaper	academic	misc	
inf.+per. comp.	12581	16828	14774	41794	91886	177863
double comp.	27	4	3	13	23	70

Table 5 AmE 20 most frequent superlatives in spoken+written language

	AmE					
	spoken	fiction	magazine	newspaper	academic	total
inf.+per. super.	82425	44841	111179	99941	68529	406915
double super.	30	8	4	4	1	47

Table 6 BrE 20 most frequent superlatives in spoken+written language

	BrE					
	spoken	fiction	newspaper	academic	misc	total
inf.+per. super.	5175	9116	14710	11703	50048	90752
double super.	9	0	1	0	3	13

Table 7 The amounts and percentages of the alternatives

	BrE			AmE	
	amount	%		amount	%
correct	76	5,9	80	4,9	
incorrect	1165	91	1497	92,4	
either	39	3,1	43	2,7	
altogether	1280	100	1620	100	

Table 8 The amounts and percentages of each gender group (BrE)

	BrE					
	C		IC		E	
	amount	%	amount	%	amount	%
female	64	6,4	919	91,9	17	1,7
male	12	4,3	246	87,8	22	7,9

Table 9 The amounts and percentages of each gender group (AmE)

	AmE					
	C		IC		E	
	amount	%	amount	%	amount	%
female	73	6,5	1016	90,7	31	2,8
male	18	3,6	468	93,6	14	2,8

Table 10 The amounts and percentages of each age group (BrE)

	BrE					
	C		IC		E	
	amount	%	amount	%	amount	%
-22	45	6,6	616	90,6	19	2,8
23-32	13	5	245	94,2	2	0,8
33-42	0	0	48	80	12	20
43-52	11	3,9	263	94	6	2,1
53-62	3	3,8	77	96,2	0	0
63-	3	5	57	95	0	0

Table 11 The amounts and percentages of each age group (AmE)

	AmE					
	C		IC		E	
	amount	%	amount	%	amount	%
-22	1	1,7	58	96,6	1	1,7
23-32	40	5,2	699	92	21	2,8
33-42	18	6,4	250	89,3	12	4,3
43-52	5	2,3	209	95,4	6	2,3
53-62	7	3,9	170	94,4	3	1,7
63-	10	8,3	110	91,7	0	0

Table 12 The p-values

	p-value
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BRE AND AME corpora	
double comparatives	0,934925312
double superlatives	0,95396
SPOKEN AND WRITTEN	
BrE double comparatives	8,52801E-07
AmE double comparatives	7,59128E-13
BrE double superlatives	0,00020042
AmE double superlatives	4,56254E-12
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BRE AND AME questionnaire	0,393027
AGE	
BrE	0,294507
AmE	0,236511
GENDER	
BrE	0.2379
AmE	0.02514

APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire

This study compares some features of American and British English. Please answer the questions regarding personal information first. All answers are confidential.

Personal information

sex male female

nationality American British other

age -22 23-32 33-42 43-52 53-62 63-

educational level _____

Examples

Please evaluate the correctness of the following sentences. Choose the alternative you find the most appropriate. If you choose "either correct or incorrect", please explain your answer.

correct incorrect either

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1. Clara Basil is the most strangest person I know. | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> | |
| 2. It's about the most smelliest thing you could ever smell. | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> | |
| 3. She breathed more easier as her load became lighter. | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> | |

4. It's the most deadliest animal on earth.
5. Are you the most beautiful girl in the world?
6. We need a sense, more better sense of where the president is.
7. There is a story that things are getting more worse in some ways.
8. That position puts him firmly in a more bolder approach than many other Republicans are contemplating.
9. Most people probably would have thought of him as the most wickedest man in town.
10. Future researchers may want to explore the relationship between ethnicity and epistemological styles using more larger samples.
11. Let us please seek for more stronger motives
12. If you are used to the low rectangular shape of most best sanders, the bizarre profile of the BD75E take some getting used to.
13. No one looked more livelier than Denis Hollywood in the last seven minutes of the contest.
14. Measured in dots per inch, the greater the number of dots, the more smoother and cleaner appearance the character/image will have.
15. I was the saddest and most miserablest I've ever been.

16. Then mingle the most gruesome, grisliest ghost stories in among your jokes.

17. Owner occupation seems to be a factor in more greater readiness to vote.

18. This has been the most fastest growing part of the holiday taking in this country over the past two or three years.

19. We're facing attitudes which are much more harder to change.

20. Chubb is probably one of the most commonest type of locks.

SUOMENKIELINEN TIIVISTELMÄ

Adjektiivien vertailu voidaan englannin kielessä muodostaa kahdella eri tavalla, päätteen tai adverbien avulla. Tämän vuoksi vertailu voi tuottaa hankaluuksia ja jopa virheellisiä rakenteita, kuten tuplavertailumuotoja. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, kuinka yleisiä tuplavertailumuodot ovat, ja kuinka britti- ja amerikanenglantia (BrE ja AmE) äidinkielenään puhuvat suhtautuvat niihin. Tutkielman teoriaosassa tarkastellaan adjektiivien vertailua sekä vertailumuotojen alkuperää ja kehitystä ja tuplavertailumuotoja. Lisäksi teoriaosassa käsitellään britti- ja amerikanenglannin eroja. Tutkimusosa koostuu kahdesta erillisestä tutkimuksesta: ensimmäisessä selvitetään sekä kirjoitetun että puhutun kielen korpuksia apuna käyttäen kuinka yleisiä tuplavertailumuodot ovat britti- ja amerikanenglannissa, ja toisessa tarkastellaan, kuinka natiivipuhujat kokevat tuplavertailumuodot. Tarkoituksena on selvittää, onko britti- ja amerikanenglannissa eroja tuplavertailumuotojen käytössä.

Mielenkiinto tuplavertailumuotoja kohtaan johtuu aiemmasta tutkimuksestani, jossa selvisi, että ne ovat erittäin harvinaisia intianenglannissa. Tästä johtuen halusin selvittää koskeeko sama ilmiö myös britti- ja amerikanenglantia. Oletan kuitenkin, että tuplavertailu ei ole yleistä kummassakaan. Ensimmäisen tutkimuksen osalta oletan, että tuplavertailumuotoja esiintyy enemmän puhutussa kielessä. Luulen myös, että amerikanenglannissa niitä esiintyy enemmän. Toisen tutkimuksen osalta oletan, että tuplavertailu on natiivipuhujien mielestä jokseenkin hyväksyttävä vertailumuoto, joskin luulen, että yleinen käsitys on negatiivinen.

Lisäksi luulen, että amerikanenglannin natiivipuhujat hyväksyvät tuplavertailun helpommin, ja että nuoret ihmiset ja miehet ovat hyväksyvämpiä kuin vanhemmat ja naiset.

Kuten mainitsin, adjektiivien vertailu voidaan muodostaa kahdella tavalla, päätteen tai adverbien (perifrastinen) avulla. Adjektiivia vertaillessa erotetaan positiivi (perusmuoto), komparatiivi ja superlatiivi. Kun vertailu muodostetaan päätteen avulla, perusmuotoon (*wild* 'villi') lisätään komparatiivissa *-er* (*wilder* 'villimpi') ja superlatiivissa *-est* (*wildest* 'villin'). Joillain adjektiiveilla on epäsäännöllinen vertailu, jolloin komparatiivi ja superlatiivi voivat poiketa perusmuodosta, esimerkiksi *good/better/best* 'hyvä/parempi/paras'. Joidenkin adjektiivien kirjoitusasu voi muuttua, kun niihin lisätään vertailupääte. Tällaisia ovat mm. sanat, joissa on lopussa hiljainen *-e* (*nice* 'mukava'), joka väistyy päätteen edestä (*nicer/nicest* 'mukavampi/mukavin'); sanat, jotka päättyvät yhteen konsonanttiin (*big* 'suuri'), joka vertaillessa tuplaantuu (*bigger/biggest* 'suurempi/suurin'); ja sanat, joissa lopussa konsonanttia seuraa *-y* (*tidy* 'siisti'), joka vertaillessa vaihtuu *-i*:ksi (*tidier/tidiest* 'siistimpi/siistein'). Perifrastinen vertailu muodostetaan adverbien *more* (komparatiivi) ja *most* (superlatiivi) avulla, esimerkiksi *beautiful/more beautiful/most beautiful* 'kaunis/kauniimpi/kaunein'. Se, kumpaa vertailutapaa käytetään, riippuu pääasiassa adjektiivin pituudesta: yksitavuiset adjektiivit saavat tavallisesti päätteen, kun taas kaksitavuiset voivat vaihdella päätteen ja adverbien välillä. Tätä pidemmät adjektiivit vertaillaan yleensä perifrastisesti. Joidenkin tutkijoiden mukaan valinta vertailutapojen välillä voi johtua myös adjektiivin alkuperästä, mikä tarkoittaa, että vieraskieliset adjektiivit vertailtaisiin perifrastisesti ja alkuperältään kotimaiset päätteillä.

Alunperin adjektiivieja on englannin kielessä vertailtu vain päätteiden avulla, ja perifrastinen vertailu alkoi yleistymään 1200-luvulla, jolloin sitä käytettiin lyhyiden adjektiivien kanssa. Ei ole selvää, miksi perifrastiset vertailumuodot kehittyivät, sillä vertailu pystyttiin tekemään päätteiden avulla. On ehdotettu, että englannin kieli oli kehittymässä analyttisemmaksi, johon perifrastinen vertailu sopi, mutta tämä on epätodennäköistä, koska se ei syrjäyttänyt jo olemassa olevaa vertailutapaa. Jotkut tutkijat ovat sitä mieltä, että ehkä perifrastiselle vertailulle oli tarve, koska se on näkyvämpi ja voimakkaampi kuin päätteellinen vertailu. Sen kehittyminen kuitenkin mahdollistaa tuplavertailumuodot. Perifrastisen vertailumuodon alkuperä on epäselvä: joidenkin kielitieteilijöiden mukaan sen kehittymiseen vaikutti latina ja ranska, mutta erään tutkimuksen mukaan perifrastista vertailua on esiintynyt englannin kielessä jo 800-luvulla. Tässä tutkimuksessa todetaan myös, että on epätodennäköistä, että latina olisi vaikuttanut perifrastisen vertailun kehittymiseen, sillä latinassa adjektiivien vertailu muodostetaan eri tavalla.

Tuplavertailumuodoilla tarkoitetaan adjektiivin vertailua, jossa on sekä pääte, että adverbi, esimerkiksi *more uglier/most ugliest* 'rumempi/rumin'. Nämä muodot ovat kieliopin näkökulmasta virheellisiä, joten monet kielioppiteokset eivät mainitse niitä ollenkaan. Niitä esiintyy monissa murteissa; jopa kolmoisvertailua (*more betterer*) on todettu esiintyvän eräissä murteissa, esim. cornishissa. Tuplavertailua ei ole tutkittu paljoa, ja suurin osa tutkimuksesta keskittyy muinais- ja keskienglantiin. Eräät tutkimukset ovat kuitenkin osoittaneet, että tuplavertailumuodot ovat alun perin kuuluneet yläluokan ja koulutetun väen puheeseen, ja niitä ovat käyttäneet myös sen ajan kirjailijat, kuten Shakespeare ja Lyly. Samanaikaisesti on kuitenkin esiintynyt mielipiteitä, joiden mukaan tuplavertailumuodot ovat

virheellisiä ja vulgaareja, ja niiden levittyä muihinkin luokka-asteisiin yläluokka lopetti niiden käytön, jonka jälkeen ne alkoivat kadota kokonaan. Kielen standardisoituminen ja latinan kaltaisten puhtaiden kielioppien ihannointi saattoi myös osaltaan vaikuttaa tuplavertailumuotojen häviämiseen. Tuplavertailumuodoista nykyenglannissa on tehty hyvin vähän tutkimuksia, mutta näyttää siltä, että sosiaaliset ja poliittiset muutokset yhteiskunnassa luovat positiivista pohjaa niiden käytölle. Erään tutkimuksen mukaan ne hyväksytään helpommin puheen lisäksi myös kirjoitetussa kielessä, niillä ei ole enää niin vahvaa sosiaalista leimaa kuin aiemmin, ja ne näyttävät esiintyvän myös yhä koulutetumman ja yläluokkaisemman kansanosan kielessä.

Britti- ja amerikanenglannin yhteneväisyyksistä, eroista ja niiden asemasta on keskusteltu pitkään. On jopa väitetty, että niitä pitäisi kohdella eri kielinä, joilla on omat kieliopit, joskaan laajoja tutkimuksia aiheesta ei ole tehty. Englannin kieli vietiin Amerikkaan 1600-luvulla, jolloin ensimmäiset britit saapuivat. Sen jälkeen nämä kaksi varianttia ovat kehittyneet omiin suuntiinsa, vaikkakin ne edelleenkin ovat lähes toistensa kaltaisia. Nykyisin amerikanenglannilla on maailmanlaajuisesti valta-asema, ja sen vaikutusta brittienglantiin ei voi väheksyä. On hyvä huomata, että kumpikaan näistä englannin varianteista ei ole englannin kielen standardi, joka on tiettyyn paikkaan sitomaton, yhteinen sovittu kirjoitusasu ja välimerkkien systeemi, jolla on erilaisia variantteja, kuten britti- ja amerikanenglanti.

Vaikka britti- ja amerikanenglanti ovat hyvin samankaltaisia, niillä on kuitenkin tunnistettavia eroja, erityisesti fonologian eli ääntämisen osalta. Sanastossa eroavaisuudet

johtuvat lähinnä kulttuurieroista sekä kontakteista muihin kieliin. Esimerkiksi 'housut' on tyypillisesti brittienglanniksi *trousers* ja amerikanenglanniksi *pants*. Eroja sanastossa löytyy lähes kaikissa konteksteissa, kuten esimerkiksi koulutuksessa, terveydenhuollossa ja liikennesanastossa. Kieliopilliset erot ovat pieniä eivätkä haittaa kommunikointia, mutta voivat aiheuttaa hämmennystä. Esimerkiksi verbin sija kollektiivisubstantiivien yhteydessä voi vaihdella: brittienglannissa käytetään sekä yksikkö- ja monikkomuotoista verbiä (esim. *The police is/are ready*), kun taas amerikanenglannissa suositaan yksikköä (esim. *The staff was heard on the issue*). Vertailumuotojen käytössä on myös havaittu olevan eroja: amerikanenglannissa käytetään enemmän perifrastista vertailua kuin brittienglannissa, minkä arvellaan johtuvan kieliopin säännöllistymisestä.

Kuten mainitsin, tutkimusosa jakautuu kahteen osaan, korpustutkimukseen ja kyselyyn. Korpustutkimuksen materiaali on kerätty kahdesta korpuksesta, brittienglannin korpuksesta BNC:stä (British National Corpus) ja amerikanenglannin korpuksesta COCA:sta (Corpus of Contemporary American English), jotka ovat laajimmat kyseisen kielen korpuksat. BNC:ssä on yli 100 miljoonaa sanaa, joista 90% on kirjoitettua (esimerkiksi sanomalehdistä ja akateemisista julkaisuista poimittua) ja 10% puhuttua kieltä. Suurin osa teksteistä on vuodesta 1975 alkaen, mutta muutamia vanhempiakin tekstejä löytyy. Kirjoitetun kielen tekstit on jaoteltu kolmen eri kriteerin mukaan: tyyppi (fakta/fiktio), julkaisuaika ja julkaisutyyppi (esimerkiksi kirja, aikakauslehti, julkaisematon). Puhutun kielen tekstit on jaoteltu kahteen osaan (keskustelut/kontekstisidonnainen puhe), jotka on edelleen jaoteltu puhujan iän, sukupuolen ja koulutustason mukaan. COCA sisältää yli 400 miljoonaa sanaa, ja sitä päivitetään vuosittain. Tekstit on jaoteltu viiteen samankokoiseen osaan: puhekieli, fiktio,

aikakauslehdet, sanomalehdet ja akateemiset julkaisut. BNC:stä poiketen COCA ei sisällä jokapäiväisiä keskusteluja, vaan puheosa koostuu yli 150 televisio-ohjelman transkriptioista, mistä johtuen osa puheesta voi olla etukäteen kirjoitettua. Suurin osa on kuitenkin spontaania.

Korpuksissa tehtiin kuusi erillistä hakua, joissa haettiin tietoa päätteellisestä, perifrastisesta ja tuplakomparatiivista sekä -superlatiivista. Tulokset analysoitiin laskemalla kunkin muodon prosentuaaliset määrät ja vertaamalla niitä toisiinsa. Analyysissa tarkasteltiin myös eri vertailumuotojen esiintymistä puhutussa ja kirjoitetussa kielessä.

Kysely koostui 20 lauseesta, jotka poimittiin em. korpuksista. Vastaajia pyydettiin arvioimaan lauseiden oikeellisuutta valitsemalla kolmesta vastausvaihtoehdosta, *oikein*, *väärin*, tai *joko oikein tai väärin*. Mikäli vastaaja valitsi viimeisen vaihtoehdon, häntä pyydettiin selittämään vastauksensa. Kysely toteutettiin elektronisesti ja se lähetettiin eri yliopistoihin Britanniassa ja Yhdysvalloissa. Tavoitteena oli saada mahdollisimman paljon vastauksia. Yhteensä kyselyyn vastasi 156 henkilöä, joista 145 oli englantia äidinkielenään puhuvia. Heistä 64 oli brittejä ja 81 amerikkalaisia. Kyselyssä pyydettiin myös tietoa iästä (-22, 23-32, 33-42, 43-52, 53-62, 63-), sukupuolesta ja koulutustasosta. Kyselyn tulokset analysoitiin laskemalla ensin kaikkien vastausvaihtoehtojen prosentuaaliset määrät, jonka jälkeen sama tehtiin myös jokaisen lauseen kohdalla. Tämän jälkeen verrattiin britti- ja amerikanenglantia keskenään. Myös iän ja sukupuolen merkitys vastauksiin arvioitiin.

Korpustutkimuksen tulokset osoittivat odotetusti, että sekä britti- että amerikanenglannissa esiintyy hyvin vähän tuplavertailumuotoja. Hieman yllättävää on se, että brittienglannissa niitä näytti kuitenkin esiintyvän hieman enemmän kuin amerikanenglannissa, mutta tilastollinen analyysi osoitti, että britti- ja amerikanenglannin välillä ei ole eroa. Kuten oletin, tuplavertailua esiintyi huomattavasti enemmän puhutussa kuin kirjoitetussa kielessä, mutta tavallisiin vertailumuotoihin verrattuna sitä käytettiin harvoin. Tuloksia analysoidessa esiin nousi mielenkiintoinen seikka: 20 yleisintä tavallista vertailumuotoa ovat jokseenkin samat britti- ja amerikanenglannissa, kun taas 20 yleisintä tuplavertailumuotoa vaihtelevat, joten tämän perusteella voisi olettaa, että tuplavertailumuodot ovat useimmiten kielenkäyttäjien virheitä. Joissain tapauksissa ne voivat kuitenkin olla tarkoituksellisia, sillä ne tekevät vertailusta näkyvämpää ja painokkaampaa.

Kyselyn tuloksista kävi ilmi, että tuplavertailumuotoja pidetään kieliopillisesti väärinä, sillä vastausvaihtoehdoista oli prosentuaalisesti useimmin valittu *väärin*. Kuitenkaan mikään lause ei ollut jokaisen vastaajan mielestä väärin, sillä jokainen lause oli myös arvioitu *oikeaksi* tai *joko oikeaksi tai vääräksi* ainakin jonkun vastaajan toimesta. Verrattaessa britti- ja amerikanenglannin eroja tilastollisen analyysin avulla kävi ilmi, että niiden välillä ei ole eroa: kumpikaan ei hyväksy tuplavertailua oikeaksi toista enemmän. Tämä osoitti hypoteesini vääräksi, sillä oletin, että amerikanenglannin puhujat hyväksyisivät tuplavertailumuodot brittejä useammin.

Kun tarkastelin jokaista lausetta erikseen huomasin, että jotkut lauseet oli arvioitu oikeaksi useammin kuin toiset, kun taas toiset oli arvioitu vääräksi kaikkien vastaajien toimesta. Voi

siis olla, että adjektiivilla on vaikutusta siihen, arvioidaanko se oikeaksi vai vääräksi. Esimerkiksi *more worse* 'pahempi' arvioitiin oikeaksi harvemmin kuin *most miserablest* 'surkein', mikä on yllättävää, sillä *miserablest* ei ole oikea sana. Valitettavasti vastaajia pyydettiin selittämään vastauksensa vain, jos he valitsivat *joko oikein tai väärin*, joten syytä siihen, miksi jotkut lauseet ovat hyväksyttävämpiä kuin toiset ei tiedetä. Jokaisen vastauksen perustelevinen olisi kuitenkin vienyt kyselyn täyttämässä enemmän aikaa, joten sitä ei vaadittu.

Jos vastaaja valitsi *joko oikein tai väärin*, häntä pyydettiin selittämään vastauksensa. Selitysten perusteella voi sanoa, että useimmat britit perustelivat vastaustaan koomisuudella, kun taas amerikkalaiset totesivat lauseen kuuluvan puhemieheeseen. Jotkut vastaajat totesivat, että puhuja on saattanut muuttaa mieltään puhuessaan, joten lauseeseen on siksi tullut virhe, esimerkiksi hän on voinut ajatella sanovansa *more efficient* 'tehokkaampi', mutta onkin sen sijaan päättänyt sanoa *better* 'parempi'. Siksi lauseessa on tuplavertailumuoto *more better*. Jotkut lauseet olivat eräiden vastaajien mielestä vain hieman väärin, mutta heidän mielestään se ei haitannut. Tämä myös osoittaa, että tuplavertailumuodot hyväksytään oikeiksi ainakin jossain määrin, mikä todistaa hypoteesini oikeaksi. Täytyy kuitenkin muistaa, että vaihtoehto *väärin* oli valittu kaikista useimmin, mikä osoittaa, että tuplavertailu on useimpien mielestä virheellinen tapa vertailla adjektiivia.

Koska ikä- ja sukupuolijakaumat olivat hyvin epätasaisia, on tuloksista vaikea tehdä varmoja johtopäätöksiä, mutta iällä ja sukupuolella ei tulosten mukaan näytä olevan vaikutusta tuplavertailumuodon hyväksymiseen. Tuloksia analysoidessa kävi ilmi, että jotkut ihmiset

hyväksyvät tuplavertailun helpommin kuin toiset. Suurin tekijä tuplavertailumuotojen hyväksymisessä on henkilössä itsessään esiintyvä taipumus, joka ei ole riippuvainen kansallisuudesta, iästä tai sukupuolesta.

Kyselyssä oli muutamia ongelmakohtia, jotka vaikuttivat tuloksiin. Kuten mainitsin, ikä- ja sukupuolijakaumat olivat epätasaisia, joten niistä ei voi tehdä varmoja johtopäätöksiä. Tämä johtui siitä, että kysely lähetettiin yliopistoihin Yhdysvalloissa ja Britanniassa tavoitteena saada mahdollisimman paljon vastaajia, joten heidän henkilökohtaisia ominaisuuksiaan ei pystytty kontrolloimaan. Myös itse kyselyn lauseissa oli ongelmia: muutama vertailu oli tulkittavissa väärällä tavalla, joten niitä ei ole otettu mukaan analyysiin. Nämä ongelmakohdat täytyy ottaa huomioon mahdollisissa myöhemmissä tutkimuksissa.

Kuten kaikki kielet, englanti kehittyi koko ajan, ja tämä voi johtaa siihen, että tuplavertailun asema adjektiivien vertailumuotona muuttuu ja tulee hyväksyttävämmäksi. Jatkossa olisi mielenkiintoista tutkia tuplavertailun käyttöä esimerkiksi jossain brittienglannin murteessa, tai jossain muussa alueellisessa variantissa, kuten Jamaikan englannissa.