Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

# Language prescriptivism : attitudes to usage vs. actual language use in American English

Kostadinova, V.

**Citation**
Kostadinova, V. (2018, December 18). *Language prescriptivism : attitudes to usage vs. actual language use in American English*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/68226

| | |
|---|---|
| Version: | Not Applicable (or Unknown) |
| License: | Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden |
| Downloaded from: | https://hdl.handle.net/1887/68226 |

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page

Universiteit Leiden

The handle http://hdl.handle.net/1887/68226 holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

**Author**: Kostadinova, V.
**Title**: Language prescriptivism : attitudes to usage vs. actual language use in American English
**Issue Date**: 2018-12-18

# Language Prescriptivism

## Attitudes to usage *vs.* actual language use in American English

Printed by

Ridderprint BV
Pottenbakkerstraat 15
2984 AX Ridderkerk
The Netherlands

+31 (0)180 463 962
www.ridderprint.nl

Cover design: Olga Kepinska and Viktorija Kostadinova.
Cover illustration: A keyword analysis of the dissertation text produced with WMatrix.

Copyright © 2018 Viktorija Kostadinova. All rights reserved.

# Language Prescriptivism

## Attitudes to usage *vs.* actual language use in American English

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van
de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof. mr. C.J.J.M. Stolker,
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties
te verdedigen op 18 december 2018
klokke 12:30 uur

door

Viktorija Kostadinova

geboren 3 november 1986
te Kochani, Macedonië

| | |
|---|---|
| Promotores: | prof. dr. Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade |
| | prof. dr. Anne Curzan (University of Michigan) |
| Promotiecommissie: | prof. dr. Mike Hannay (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) |
| | prof. dr. Raymond Hickey (University of Duisburg and Essen) |
| | prof. dr. Maarten Mous |
| | dr. Dick Smakman |
| | prof. dr. Marina Terkourafi |

За тато

# Contents

Acknowledgements . . . . . xi

**1 Language prescriptivism** **1**
1.1 Introduction . . . . . 1
1.2 Defining prescriptivism . . . . . 5
1.3 Usage guides . . . . . 12
1.4 Language variation and change . . . . . 15
1.5 Speakers and attitudes . . . . . 18
1.6 Research questions . . . . . 21
1.7 Outline . . . . . 22

**2 Studying prescriptivism** **23**
2.1 Introduction . . . . . 23
2.2 Studies of usage guides . . . . . 24
2.3 Studies of prescriptivism . . . . . 32
2.4 The effects of prescriptivism . . . . . 36
2.5 Prescriptivism and language variation and change . . . . . 41
2.6 Usage problems and linguistic variables . . . . . 47
2.7 Ideologies and attitudes . . . . . 54
2.8 Conclusion . . . . . 62

**3 The language features: selection and previous studies** **65**
3.1 Introduction . . . . . 65
3.2 Selection of usage problems . . . . . 66

3.3 *Ain't* . . . 69
3.4 The discourse particle *like* . . . 73
3.5 Non-literal *literally* . . . 76
3.6 Negative concord . . . 80
3.7 Pronouns in coordinated phrases . . . 82
3.8 The split infinitive . . . 84
3.9 Conclusion . . . 87

**4 Methodology** **89**
4.1 Introduction . . . 89
4.2 General approach . . . 90
4.3 Usage guides: data and analysis . . . 92
4.4 Actual language use: data and analysis . . . 105
4.5 Attitude survey: data and analysis . . . 117
4.6 Conclusion . . . 122

**5 Metalinguistic commentary in American usage guides** **123**
5.1 Introduction . . . 123
5.2 Coverage of the language features in usage guides . . . 124
5.2.1 *Ain't* . . . 125
5.2.2 The discourse particle *like* . . . 128
5.2.3 Non-literal *literally* . . . 129
5.2.4 Negative concord . . . 130
5.2.5 Pronouns in coordinated phrases . . . 131
5.2.6 The split infinitive . . . 134
5.2.7 Summary . . . 135
5.3 Treatment of the language features in usage guides . . . 137
5.3.1 *Ain't* . . . 139
5.3.2 The discourse particle *like* . . . 140
5.3.3 Non-literal *literally* . . . 141
5.3.4 Negative concord . . . 142
5.3.5 Pronouns in coordinated phrases . . . 143
5.3.6 The split infinitive . . . 145
5.3.7 Summary . . . 146
5.4 Expressions of attitudes to usage in usage guides . . . 146
5.4.1 *Ain't* . . . 148

5.4.2 The discourse particle *like* . . . 150
5.4.3 Non-literal *literally* . . . 150
5.4.4 Negative concord . . . 151
5.4.5 Pronouns in coordinated phrases . . . 151
5.4.6 The split infinitive . . . 152
5.4.7 Summary . . . 153
5.5 Dimensions of usage . . . 154
5.5.1 *Ain't* . . . 156
5.5.2 The discourse particle *like* . . . 158
5.5.3 Non-literal *literally* . . . 158
5.5.4 Negative concord . . . 159
5.5.5 Pronouns in coordinated phrases . . . 161
5.5.6 The split infinitive . . . 163
5.6 Conclusion . . . 164

**6 Patterns in actual language use** **167**
6.1 Introduction . . . 167
6.2 *Ain't* . . . 168
6.3 The discourse particle *like* . . . 175
6.4 Non-literal *literally* . . . 177
6.5 Negative concord . . . 183
6.6 Pronouns in coordinated phrases . . . 185
6.7 The split infinitive . . . 192
6.8 Identifying prescriptive influence at the textual level . . . 196
6.9 Conclusion . . . 203

**7 Speakers' attitudes to usage in American English** **207**
7.1 Introduction . . . 207
7.2 *Ain't* . . . 209
7.3 The discourse particle *like* . . . 215
7.4 Non-literal *literally* . . . 219
7.5 Negative concord . . . 224
7.6 Pronouns in coordinated phrases . . . 225
7.7 The split infinitive . . . 230
7.8 The ratings compared . . . 233
7.9 Discussion and conclusion . . . 238

**8 Conclusion** **243**

Appendix A: Usage problems in the HUGE database . . . . . 251

Appendix B: Usage guides in American English . . . . . 259

Appendix C: Corpus data extraction . . . . . 271

Appendix D: Annotations in usage guide entries . . . . . 279

Primary Sources . . . . . 307

Secondary Sources . . . . . 313

Samenvatting in het Nederlands . . . . . 333

Curriculum Vitae . . . . . 337

# Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank the people who have helped most directly with the content of this dissertation. I am grateful to my promotor, Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, for the opportunity to work on this project, for her help, and for valuable discussions throughout the years. I thank the members of the Bridging the Unbridgeable project for the stimulating discussions during our project meetings. I would also like to acknowledge the NWO funding provided for the project. I thank Anne Curzan for her inspirational course at the LSA Linguistic Institute in 2013, as well as her comments on the final manuscript. I am grateful to the members of the committee, Mike Hannay, Raymond Hickey, Maarten Mous, Dick Smakman, and Marina Terkourafi for their evaluation and useful feedback.

I thank all my respondents and friends in Los Angeles. I especially want to thank those who helped me find respondents in the first place: Elizabeth Conn, her boyfriend, Aaron, and her parents, Cathi and Richard, for their interest in my research, as well as their kindness, generosity, and invaluable support. I *literally* would not have been able to do this without them.

I would like to thank the many friends and colleagues who I've met at conferences, and with whom I've discussed my project. Those discussions proved to be a panacea for the pain of not knowing where the project was going. I particularly want to thank Folgert Karsdorp for introducing me to Python, and for thus providing the trigger for my data analysis; Marten van der Meulen for being both an enthusiastic and critical debater on issues of shared interest; and Mark de Rooij for statistical help. I thank Elly Dutton for (proof)reading the n-th final draft of my thesis and convincing me that the end was in sight.

I thank everyone at LUCL for all the help, support, drinks, talks, and the rare but important chats at the coffee machine. I am especially appreciative of my time with the other members of the PhD Council, particularly Andreea, Bora, Elly, and Marieke. I would like to thank Niels Schiller, Gea Hakker, and all other former and current members of the LUCL management team and secretariat for always being helpful and friendly.

My colleagues at the University of Amsterdam have been continuously encouraging in the final year of the process. I thank them all for their interest in my work and for helping in various ways, which has meant a lot to me. In addition to all of this, Rina de Vries kindly offered to do me the huge favour of taking care of the Dutch summary of my thesis.

I am beyond grateful to my friends and paranymphs, Elly and Olga, for everything; from our early day shenanigans, through all the 'hangage' and 'cuaffage', to their support and encouragement in the last stage of this process. Words cannot describe (it's a cliche cos it's true) how much they have meant and done for me. Bobby has been a great friend and colleague, and I thank him as much for the laughs as for his help with LaTeX and statistics. Jamie's conversations were distracting, enriching and always fun. My Skopje friends Sashe Nikolovski, Sashe Tasev, Slavcho, Kata, и компанија, have given me unwavering support and encouragement over the years, and have enriched my life with wonderful visits, trips, parties, and discoveries.

Мајче, ете со што се мачев последните шест години. Ти благодарам за поддршката, љубовта и бескрајната верба во мене.