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These kind of words: number agreement in the species noun phrase in international academic English

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

As a professional copy-editor, I am the person who gives a final polish to the printed text of an academic book or a journal paper. I am the one who implements the publisher's style guide, the one who changes *prioritise* to *prioritize* – or vice versa depending on the publisher – the one who checks all the cross-references, the footnotes and the bibliography, and the one who, it is hoped, helps authors to avoid saying things that they did not intend to say. I am also the one who makes numerous other, visible or non-visible (to the author), changes to a text, changes that often reflect grammar or idiom. For example, in a text presented as British English, I might change (1a) to (1b):

(1a) The organised nature and the pattern should be considered **in light of** all pirate attacks, and not just those committed by each pirate group, although there is certainly sufficient organisation within each group.
(AJL_1300026)[1]

(1b) The organised nature and the pattern should be considered **in *the* light of** all pirate attacks, and not just those committed by each pirate group, although there is certainly sufficient organisation within each group.

In an academic paper, I might change (2a) to (2b):

(2a) Some of **this data is** already in analysis-friendly form, such as social network information (…), diurnal activity patterns (…), reputation (…), or Facebook "likes" (…).
(LCO_1400030)

(2b) Some of ***these* data *are*** already in analysis-friendly form, such as social network information (…), diurnal activity patterns (…), reputation (…), or Facebook "likes" (…])

But what motivates these changes? What emboldens me, and other copy-editors throughout the English-speaking world, to change texts written by adult, educated, native and non-native expert users of academic English? The answer is sometimes to be found in the authority of a usage guide.[2] For example, on *in light of*, in *Fowler's*

1 The form of the source of the quotations, here "[AJL_1300026]" is explained in §5.4.1.
2 See Lukač and Stenton (2023, p. 280) for an analysis of how copy-editors and proof-readers approach this problem with the use of *data*.

Dictionary of Modern English Usage (2015), historically probably the most influential of all usage guides,[3] Jeremy Butterfield, the editor of its fourth edition, has this to say:

> **2** *in light of, in the light of.* Both phrases work as complex prepositions meaning 'in view of; with the help of knowledge accorded by some fact' … The shorter form is the standard in NAmer. English, but is also used in BrE, where the longer form is more common. …
>
> (Butterfield, 2015, p. 479)[4]

On *data*, Sidney Greenbaum and Janet Whitcut's *Longman Guide to English Usage* (1988), one of my personal favourites (not least because I agree with most of what it contains), has:

> Although **data** is strictly a plural (from the rarely used singular *datum*), it is now coming to be used as an aggregate singular noun: *All this data is new.* This usage is avoided by careful writers of British English, but is better established in American English and everywhere in the field of data processing. It is still safer to treat the word as a plural, at least in formal writing …
>
> (Greenbaum and Whitcut, 1988, p. 184)

These, and many other, usage guides lay out what their authors believe to be best practice, precisely so that the writers and editors who consult them can avoid using words or phrasing that might lead to misunderstanding or even condemnation by their peers. As Randolph Quirk writes in his 'Introduction' to Greenbaum and Whitcut: "In this book, the authors offer expert guidance on points of English where any of us can feel uncertainty, where any of us can go wrong" (Quirk, 1988, p. x). Such usage guides have been published since at least 1770 (see §1.2 below), and form an important part of this study.

I referred above to visible and non-visible changes that I make in a manuscript which I'm editing. By non-visible I mean a change that the author accepts without comment, and perhaps even without noticing, when checking the proofs. Equally, however, an author might simply reinstate what was in the original manuscript when they return their marked proof. Sometimes, though, I have been in correspondence with an author during which specific changes were discussed and my editorial revision was either accepted or reversed. For example, for the phrase that is the topic of this study – what Biber et al. (1999, p. 255) have termed the 'species noun' phrase, e.g. *these kind of things* – I might typically change (3a) to (3b):

3 For example, in his 2009 Oxford World's Classics reprint of the first edition of 1926, David Crystal says: "No book had more influence on twentieth-century attitudes to the English language in Britain" (2009, p. [vii]). In his introduction to the fourth edition of 2015, Jeremy Butterfield refers to "Fowler's almost superhuman status as an arbiter of 'correct' English" (2015, p. ix).

4 Fowler's first edition of 1926 notes simply that *in light of* "will not do" (Fowler, 1926, p. 324).

(3a) **These kind of planning requirements make** it virtually impossible for home occupations (sex services) to apply for, let alone receive, development consent.
(IJC_6-2_C***s)[5]

(3b) **These *kinds* of planning requirements make** it virtually impossible for home occupations (sex services) to apply for, let alone receive, development consent.

This follows Greenbaum and Whitcut (1988, p. 398) and Butterfield (2015, p. 455). The latter's advice also includes: "Should you wish to avoid a formulation which might be open to criticism, alternatives [i.e. to *these kind of*] available are *these kinds* (or *sorts*) *of* and *of this kind* (or *sort*)". My revision in example (3b) makes all of the variable words plural in *These kinds of planning requirements make*, and is therefore consistent in terms of number agreement. That academic writers are aware of, and sensitive to, the criticism mentioned by Butterfield is apparent in a response I had from an author in 2018 concerning example (4):

(4) Each of the six cases involved an unmarried woman who had concealed her pregnancy and given birth in secret; all but one had given birth alone and none had given birth with medical assistance. As such, **these were the kind of cases** where the infanticide law was supposed to apply, and where a mental disturbance was likely to be presumed according to social norms in relation to how this offender was understood, and ought to be treated, in light of the circumstances involved.
(LST_1700020)[6]

This example is not quite as straightforward as (3a) and (3b), in that *these* is not a determiner modifying *kind*, as in *these kind of planning requirements*, but is a plural pronoun subject in number agreement with the plural verb *were*; there nonetheless remains a potential number conflict between the singular species noun *kind* and the following plural noun *cases*. According to Biber et al., this number variation between *kind* and *cases* falls within the usage they noted in academic (ACAD) English: "we … find singular species nouns combining with a following plural noun … ***What sort of things*** *are effects?* (ACAD)" (1999, p. 255).

When I copy-edited the *Legal Studies* (LST) paper from which example (4) is taken, I left this specific phrase as it was, and the copy-edited manuscript went to proof. However, when the author returned her marked proof to me, she raised a query on *these were the kind of cases*: "Is this correct? Should this read: *these were the kind of case*? or *these were the kinds of cases*??" This author was clearly concerned about

5 The asterisks here hide the identity of the author.
6 This example is not part of my corpus as it dates from after the period of data collection (see §5.2.1).

the number agreement between the species noun (*kind* vs. *kinds*) and the following noun in the *of*-phrase (*cases*), and this number agreement seemed to take precedence over whatever meaning she had intended. Was there just one or more than one kind of case? In the event I changed the proof to *these were the kinds of cases*, in part because of the use of *six cases* in the preceding sentence, although an argument could also be made for the singular on the basis of the use of *each* in that sentence. During copy-editing I also changed *in light of the circumstances involved* to *in the light of the circumstances involved*, as the paper generally followed British English conventions, and the author accepted this without comment.

I mentioned above that the answer to a usage problem is sometimes to be found in a usage guide. I also, along with most other copy-editors,[7] make use of dictionaries and grammars, such as the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (1999) by Biber et al. referred to above. Another source of advice for me is a corpus of academic English which I had compiled from the (unedited) text of all the journal papers that I copy-edited between 2006 and 2016.[8] This corpus thus comprises a set of base-line data that enables me to check and confirm the pronouncements of the usage guides and grammars against an actual body of specific and relevant usage, unedited as it was. The use of this corpus also addresses one of Tieken-Boon van Ostade's (2020) criticisms of Albakry's (2007) newspaper corpus study, where she points out that "[i]f Albakry had wanted to find evidence of the actual *influence* of usage guides, he should have started out from baseline data comprising unedited texts" (2020, p. 206). Similarly, Owen (2020, p. 304) notes that "because of editorial intervention, a corpus study does not always describe what educated writers actually do". He therefore used academic authors' original Microsoft Word documents that had been copy-edited with Track Changes activated so that he could assess the extent of that editorial intervention.

Such is the background to the current study. What actually brought this study into being, however, was a chance online encounter I had with Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, Professor of English Sociohistorical Linguistics at the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics. We were both looking for online information on Janet Whitcut, I because I was trying to trace an old colleague, and Tieken-Boon van Ostade because the Greenbaum and Whitcut usage guide mentioned above was included as part of the data for the project she was leading called 'Bridging the Unbridgeable: Linguists, Prescriptivists and the General Public' (the BtU project). I had previously worked with Tieken-Boon van Ostade when I copy-edited the ms for her book *The Bishop's Grammar: Robert Lowth and the Rise of Prescriptivism* (2011). After some correspondence about what I was then doing, and how I was approaching it, Tieken-

7 See e.g. Lukač and Stenton (2023).
8 This corpus will be described briefly below.

Boon van Ostade invited me to Leiden to join her research team. I suggested that I could investigate variation in number marking in the species noun phrase in my corpus of academic English and in the historical context of usage guide advice from 1770 to 2010, as found in the BtU Hyper Usage Guide of English (HUGE) database (see §1.3 below). This study thus adopts a socio-historical approach within the context of the BtU project, as it examines the views of linguists, prescriptivists and the general public on a single language topic over a period of 240 years.

1.2 The usage problem

But what exactly is the usage being investigated, and why is it of interest to the usage guide and grammar writers, amongst others? The point of a usage guide is not just that it deals with usage variation, but that it deals with usage problems, and Ilson (1985, pp. 166–167) has suggested that for an instance of usage variation to be seen as a usage problem it must satisfy three criteria (and see Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2020, esp. Chapter 5, for a fuller treatment of this): it must be more than a potential variation, Ilson argues, i.e. the variants must actually occur in speech and/or writing; they must be widespread, and not restricted to a single (regional) variety; and it must be possible to discuss them without causing offence, which is one reason why usage guides rarely include profanities.[9] It might seem reasonable to add that the usage variants should actually constitute a usage problem in the sense that the use of a variant form might attract criticism, as with the use of *these kind of* mentioned above.

The variation in usage in the species noun phrase is of interest first because, in my career as a copy-editor, this variation was a topic that was often discussed, especially with the editors of volumes of papers contributed by different authors, with a view to adopting a 'consistent' usage. Second, the variant forms constitute a topic which is presented in many of the usage guides in HUGE, and has been from the earliest dating from 1770 to the latest from 2010. Third, one variant of the species noun phrase, e.g. *these kind of errors*, has been the topic of previous attitude surveys, including Leonard (1932), Mittins et al. (1970), and within the BtU project itself in the early twenty-first century.

The usage is also of interest because, as shown in the few examples given above, different usages, or usage variants, can be appropriate in different contexts. The usage guides quoted above both contain advice on where a variant usage might be

9 For example, none of the four major editions of Fowler's *Modern English Usage* (1926, 1965, 1996, 2015) contains advice on the use of *fuck*, and neither do the 1998 or 2022 editions of Garner's *Dictionary of Modern American Usage*/*Garner's Modern English Usage*, which is presumably what led the publishers of Howard's *Guide to Good English in the 1980s* (1985) to claim on the front cover flap that "[f]or the first time, there is open advice about *four-letter words*".

appropriate. Butterfield notes differences in usage between American English and British English with *in* (*the*) *light of*, as do Greenbaum and Whitcut in the use of singular *data*. Greenbaum and Whitcut also mention formal writing and careful writers (in contrast to informal writing and speech). They also comment on a usage, singular *data*, that they see as changing over time. Butterfield refers to usages which might be open to (unspecified) criticism, and Quirk comments on the possibility of a usage simply being an error. This last aspect of variant usage, whether "[t]he tacit principle – that among variant usages if one is correct, the other must be wrong – was an invention of codifiers ill at ease with variant customs" (Finegan, 1980, p. 38), will recur throughout this study.

However, if I, as a copy-editor, am going to rely, at least in part, on these usage guides to help me make my editing decisions, a reasonable question must be: How reliable is the advice presented in those guides? As mentioned above, usage variation in the species noun phrase is described in Biber et al.'s *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (1999). This is a modern reference grammar, and in it the term 'species noun' describes those nouns that "are used to refer … to the type of entity or mass expressed by a following *of*-phrase. … Common species nouns are: *class*, *kind*, *make*, *sort*, *species*, *type*" (1999, p. 255). In this study, I concentrate on *kind*, *sort* and *type*, in phrases such as *these kind of*, *those sorts of*, *this type of*, as these are the examples that most commonly feature in the usage guides (see Chapter 3). They are also the most frequent in the corpus that I compiled and that will be the basis for part of this study, the Stenton Corpus (see Chapter 5).[10] Biber et al. continue:

> Species nouns combine with countable as well as uncountable nouns. With countable nouns there tends to be agreement in number between the species noun and the following noun (e.g. *that kind of thing* v. *all kinds of things*). But we also find singular species nouns combining with a following plural noun and plural species nouns combining with a following singular noun:
> …
> I don't know **what kind of dinosaurs** they all are. (CONV)
> …
> Thieves tended to target **certain types of car** he said. (NEWS)
> …
> There is a close relationship between species nouns and determiners. … The determiner preceding the species noun occasionally agrees with the noun in the *of*-phrase rather than with the species noun (as in *these kind of people*).
>
> (Biber et al., 1999, pp. 255–256)

Biber et al. also list *Differences **of this kind** are both substantial and early to appear* (ACAD†) (1999, p. 258) as a variant of the phrase that I am investigating, as did

10 The words *class*, *make* and *species* between them account for just 7.9% of the examples in the Stenton Corpus, which will be described briefly below and in greater detail in §5.2.

Butterfield above. This confirms that there are both variant forms of the species noun phrase, appropriate in different contexts (i.e. ACADemic, CONversation and NEWS; the dagger indicates that the example has been truncated), and that these variants can be used to avoid number conflict. It is not difficult to find instances of these variant forms in use, as shown in examples (5–8) below. All the variants described by Biber et al. are used by adult educated speakers of English in the relatively formal setting of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom Parliament; many of the Members of Parliament in fact read from a prepared script.[11]

(5) We do not hear that very often in this Chamber; I welcome **that kind of intervention**.
(Hansard, 4 November 2016[12])

In (5) there is a singular (SG) species noun (SN), *kind*, preceded by a singular determiner (DET), *that*, and followed by *of* and a singular second noun (N2), *intervention*. This species noun phrase thus shows number agreement between the three of its constituents that can vary for number: *that kind ... intervention*.

(6) The immigration and asylum chambers of the First-tier Tribunal and the Upper Tribunal have been set up specifically to deal with **these kinds of matters**.
(Hansard, 4 July 2012)

In (6) there is a plural (PL) species noun, *kinds*, preceded by a plural determiner, *these*, and followed by *of* and a plural N2, *matters*. This species noun phrase again shows number agreement in all the constituents that can be marked for number: *these kinds ... matters*.

There are also examples where the number marking of the constituents of the species noun phrase is mixed, as in (7) and (8):

(7) I often hear Ministers say **these kind of things**.
(Hansard, 5 September 2013)

(8) Will my noble friend take back to her colleagues the possibility of further work under the integration strategy to ensure that **these kinds of opinion** held in the country are pushed back by views within government?
(Hansard, 15 March 2017)

In (7), there is number agreement between the determiner and the N2, *these ... things*, but not between the determiner and the species noun, *these kind*, nor between the

11 See Kelly (2013) and Caruso et al. (2015) for comments on the making of the Hansard record in the UK and Canada, respectively.

12 The selection of examples from Hansard will be explained in §2.2. All references to Hansard in this study refer to the United Kingdom.

species noun and the N2, *kind ... things*. In (8), there is number agreement between the determiner and the species noun, *these kinds*, but not between either of those and the N2, *these kinds ... opinion*.

These examples are all from modern times, and the advice from the usage guides above is also taken from modern guides, but number agreement in the species noun phrase, although not specifically referred to in those terms, can be found in the usage guides across the whole period of the HUGE database, from 1770 to 2010, and beyond. Here, I will give just one example from each century. Robert Baker's *Reflections on the English Language*, first published in 1770, is often regarded as the first English usage guide (see e.g. Leonard, 1929, p. 35; Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2020, p. 21), and in his second edition of 1779 Baker includes the following entry:[13]

> THESE (or *those*) sort of men.—These (or *those*) kind of people.
> One would think this way of speaking must be insufferable to an ear of any delicacy: yet we have many approved authors, who take no care to avoid it. … *Men of this sort* … is … much less inelegant … and what should hinder him from saying *this sort of men*? …
> (Baker, 1779, pp. 99–100)

In the nineteenth century, Henry Alford, in his *The Queen's English*, published in 1864 and sometimes taken to be the start of the usage guide tradition proper in Britain (see e.g. Busse, 2015) proclaims:

> I mean the expression *"these"* or *"those kind of things."* Of course we all see that this is incorrect and indefensible. We ought to say *"this kind of things," "that kind of things."*
> (Alford, 1864, pp. 69–70)

In a book that straddles the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we have Alfred Ayres, in the second edition of his *The Verbalist*, published in 1911 (first edition 1881), commenting:

> "*Those* kind of apples *are* best": read, "*That* kind of apples *is* best." It is truly remarkable that many persons who can justly lay claim to the possession of considerable culture use this barbarous combination. …
> A plural pronoun [i.e. determiner] and a singular noun do not go well together.
> (Ayres, 1911, p. 297)

Here, Ayres, although again focusing on the number agreement between the plural determiner *those* and the singular species noun *kind*, adds another constituent to the usage problem by including the verb – *are* / *is* – in the scope of the number agreement, as also seen in examples (2) and (3) above. In the twenty-first century, in the fifth

13 In his first edition Baker included a different problem concerning *these sorts of goods*, which I discuss in §3.4.3.

edition of his *Garner's Modern English Usage*, published in 2022,[14] Bryan Garner writes:

> ***these kind of; *these type of; *these sort of.** These illogical forms were not uncommon in the 1600s and early 1700s, but by the mid-1700s they had been stigmatized. Today they brand the speaker or writer as slovenly. … Of course, it's perfectly acceptable to write *these kinds* or *these types* or *these sorts*, as many writers conscientiously do …
>
> (Garner, 2022, p. 1094)

Note that none of these usage guides focuses on number agreement that includes the second noun (N2), as seen in examples (3), (4), (6), (7), and (8) above. This topic is explored in detail in Chapter 3.

Whilst both Biber et al.'s modern reference grammar and the modern usage guide writers quoted above show similar variant usages, and all describe how different variants may be appropriate in different contexts, it is only the usage guide writers who also evaluate or pass judgement on the different variants: "insufferable to an ear of any delicacy" (Baker, 1779, p. 99); "incorrect and indefensible" (Alford, 1864, p. 69); "this barbarous combination" (Ayres, 1911, p. 297); and "slovenly" (Garner, 2022, p. 1094). These comments take us to the nub of another topic that will recur throughout this study: that of 'value', particularly in relation to judgements being made on the variant usages described, and sometimes on the people who use them, as seen in the quotations from the usage guides above. John Joseph (1987) comments on this in a discussion of the role of education in the maintenance of the standard language, which also echoes the comment made by Finegan above:

> The awareness of variants seems inevitably to be accompanied by value judgment. For any number of possible reasons, wherever variants are in competition, one will always be preferred to the other, creating hierarchies which it is the task of language education to inculcate. The canonical form of such education is 'Say *x*, not *y*'.
>
> (Joseph, 1987, p. 16)

Joseph sees differences in the use of value between the usage guide writers and modern grammarians such as Biber et al. He notes that the latter see themselves as part of the tradition of scientific linguistics which, since the early nineteenth century, has "undertake[n] the study of [language] forms without regard to their position on the value hierarchy" (Joseph, 1987, p. 17). In short, they see themselves as "'descriptive,' as against the 'prescriptive' stance which had always characterized the bulk of language study" (1987, p. 17). For Joseph, this is wrong. He continues:

14 This usage guide was not included in the HUGE database because of its later publication date, but I have included it in my study as the first edition of 1998, then titled *A Dictionary of Modern American English*, is included in HUGE and has a broadly similar approach. I discuss the wider scope of my research into usage guides in §3.2.

> The prescriptive–descriptive dichotomy – or better, continuum – reduces essentially to the matter of conscious value judgment. Unfortunately, even if one takes great pains to write a descriptive grammar, readers may impose a prescriptive interpretation on it.
> (Joseph, 1987, p. 18)

Deborah Cameron has noted that "[t]his overriding concern with value is the most significant characteristic that separates lay discourse on language from the expert discourse of linguists" (1995, p. x).[15] She adds that "the term 'prescriptivism' has a particular value attached to it, a negative connotation that is almost impossible to avoid" (1995, p. 3). More recently, Jacob Rawlins and Don Chapman have questioned this conflict of prescriptivism versus descriptivism as an "untenable binary" or a "false binary" (2020, p. 5), and Joseph has characterised anti-prescriptivism as a "relic of purifying tendencies that we think we have generally moved beyond", and calls upon his fellow linguists "to recognize our own covert prescriptivism" (2020, p. 28). Cameron (1995, p. 6) has described "the standard notion of linguistic rules as 'descriptive' – crudely, 'natural' rather than normative – [as] either disingenuous or … a category mistake". Here, I take 'category mistake' to mean that the idea that 'descriptivism' and 'prescriptivism' can be used to label two distinct approaches to language study is a serious error, as they are in practice inseparably intertwined, or form a continuum, as seen by Joseph (1987, p. 18; see also Beal, 2004, p. 90, and Straaijer, 2011, p. 262). This is a view that had already been expressed most succinctly by Leonard Palmer: "All descriptions are devised for use; all are in fact 'prescriptive'" (1972, p. 72, ftn. 1). The tensions of this false binary will recur throughout this study.

In another modern reference grammar, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (1985), Quirk et al. refer to the "general prescriptive tradition" that applies to "formal writing" and that is "embodied … in usage guides for the general public" (1985, p. 14), and this view of usage guide writers is typical of modern grammarians and linguists (see e.g. Horobin, 2016, Chapter 3; Rankin and Whong, 2020, pp. 81–89). However, this is not necessarily the view that the usage guide writers had of themselves, as I show in Chapter 3.

1.3 The current study

In this study, I investigate the usage of the variant forms of the species noun phrase from a number of different perspectives. I start by looking at how the species noun phrase is described in three modern reference grammars (Chapter 2): Quirk et al.'s *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (1985),[16] Biber et al.'s *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (1999), and Huddleston and Pullum's

15 I show in §3.3 that not all usage guide writers fit into this category of lay people.
16 In the interests of full disclosure, I was the copy-editor for this grammar.

The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language (2002). These three grammars essentially see the different usages of the species noun phrase as being variants appropriate for different registers, with number agreement between the constituents being the norm for formal writing.

In Chapter 2 I also investigate a number of theoretical approaches which try to account for differences in usage by positing different meanings with different grammatical analyses for the different variants. The first of these approaches takes a diachronic, or historical, view which sees *kind of* in *these kind of N2* not as a noun followed by a preposition, but rather as a particle that has gradually become grammaticalised over time and which thus functions as a post-determiner, i.e. it follows a determiner (*these*) whilst still pre-modifying the N2, and as such has no impact on the number of the preceding determiner or of the following N2. The species noun itself thus cannot function as the head of the noun phrase, and it is the head which would typically determine the number marking of any determiners and of the verb. The determiner and the N2 can therefore show number agreement, and the N2, as head of the noun phrase, can control the number of any verb (see e.g. Denison, 2002, 2005; De Smedt, Brems and Davidse, 2007; Brems and Davidse, 2010; Brems, 2011). Within this analysis, *these kinds of* and *these kind of* are treated not as variant structures but as different structures with different referential meaning in terms of their pragmatic and discourse functions.

A second approach also focuses on the notion of the 'headedness' of the species noun phrase, returning to the analysis of DET + SN + *of* + N2. This analysis, however, does not see the species noun as the necessary head of the noun phrase with a following prepositional phrase – *of* + N2 – and thus as controlling or determining number agreement between the determiner and the species noun, along with any following verb. Instead, this approach sees the species noun phrase as a complex or 'double-headed' noun phrase, where either the species noun or the N2 can function as the head, and can therefore determine the grammatical number of the noun phrase as a whole, depending on the relative syntactic or lexico-semantic 'weight' attached to each of the two nouns (see e.g. Keizer, 2007, Chapter 7; Brems, 2011, Chapter 6).

A third approach sees *these kinds of* and *these kind of* not as variants but as different syntactic structures with different syntactic derivations. In this approach, *kind* in *these kind of* includes a marker on its lexical entry which means that, unlike a noun which is not so marked, it is not assigned the same number value as the determiner and the N2 and is thus not subject to the agreement operation in its derivation (see e.g. Klockmann, 2017a). This analysis makes the species noun a 'numberless' noun. In contrast, in the syntactic derivation of *these kinds of*, both *these* and *kinds* (strictly, *this* and *kind*) would not have the numberless marker in their lexical entries, and so would be subject to any agreement operation in their syntactic derivations. These

different derivations are taken to give the two structures different meanings. These various analyses should be particularly helpful in the discussion of the corpus analysis in Chapter 5. Chapter 2 thus presents the views of the linguists.

In Chapter 3, I investigate the treatment of the species noun phrase in the usage guides in the HUGE database, with some additions, as noted above. In this investigation, I generally follow the set of questions raised by Robin Straaijer, who built the database, and who suggests how it might be used:

> One aspect of usage problems about which we have questions is their individual histories. *When does a certain usage become problematic, or perceived as such, and when does a certain usage stop being (perceived as) problematic or disputed?* In other words, when do usage problems 'begin' and 'end'? *And which usage problems persist?* Another aspect is the discussion of usage problems in usage guides. Questions are: *Does the discussion of specific usage problems change, and if so, in what way? And are there differences in usage advice for different varieties of English?*
> (Straaijer, 2015, p. 2)

Straaijer also asks: "*Why do these things happen? And what is the role of usage guides in these processes?*" (2015, p. 2). These last two questions are more complex, and I return to them in my discussion in Chapter 6. I showed above that the topic of number agreement in the species noun phrase features in usage guides from 1770 to 2022. Of the seventy-seven guides in the HUGE database, forty-seven of them include an entry on the species noun phrase. However, the fact that a usage issue persists in the usage guides does not in itself mean that it is always treated in the same manner, or even that exactly the same aspect of the problem as a whole is highlighted. My analysis of the different entries in the guides is broadly based on Edmund Weiner's (1988, p. 178) tripartite division of a typical usage guide entry into exemplification, explanation and recommendation, to which I add the notion of value discussed above. As part of this investigation, I analyse the recommendations of the usage guides in order to address Straaijer's final question: *And are there differences in usage advice for different varieties of English?* Chapter 3 thus includes a discussion of whether there are discernible differences between the British and the American usage guides, the only two varieties systematically collected for the HUGE database, as well as an investigation of any register differences in the recommendations. Having addressed these questions, I then move on to an analysis of whether the treatment of the topic changes over the period of study (1770–2010), i.e. Straaijer's *Does the discussion of specific usage problems change*, *and if so*, *in what way?*

Throughout the period studied, my focus is on the grammar of the species noun phrase, rather than on its meaning. This is the starting point for an investigation into the rationale behind the recommendations of the usage guide writers, and in particular into how they see the role of grammar and the grammarians, and how they see the

relationship between grammar and usage. This includes a discussion of how the usage guide writers themselves understand the notion of prescriptivism, i.e. whether they see themselves as part of Quirk et al.'s "general prescriptive tradition" (1985, p. 14), as mentioned above. Part of this discussion involves whether, as suggested by Pam Peters (2020, p. 616) "[t]he lack of lateral referencing in many usage books … suggests their remoteness from linguistic research and scholarship, and a reluctance to refer even to the work of other usage commentators". This addresses the comments made above about the innate prescriptivism of the usage guide writers. Chapter 3 thus presents the views of the prescriptivists.

In Chapter 4, I present the results of a survey into attitudes to number variation in the species noun phrase, as shown by a group of people who responded to an online poll using Qualtrics Online Survey Software, between December 2016 and July 2017. I start this chapter by presenting a brief historical sketch of the major surveys of English usage, both in the United States (e.g. Leonard, 1932) and in the United Kingdom (e.g. Mittins et al., 1970), and of the BtU surveys from the second decade of the twenty-first century (e.g. Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2013, 2018, 2020; Ebner, 2017; Kostadinova, 2018a; Lukač, 2018a). I then describe in detail the current survey, including a discussion of two of its more distinctive features: the presentation of the examples in context, and the use of highlighting to identify the feature of interest.

The previous surveys from each of the three periods identified here (1930s, 1960s, 2010s) all include attitudes to number agreement in the species noun phrase. Just as the analysis of the usage guides between 1770 and 2010 enables me to address Straaijer's question of whether the discussion of the species noun phrase in the usage guides changed over time, so in this chapter I investigate whether public attitudes to number agreement in the species noun phrase have changed over time. This also allows me to consider whether the survey respondents have become more accepting of variation over time, as suggested by Christian Mair in his *Twentieth-Century English: History, Variation and Standardization* (2006, §6.2, pp. 183–193).

The survey conducted for the current study is, I believe, unique in that it focuses on only one usage problem (number agreement in the species noun phrase) in only one register (academic writing), in twelve different examples. The use of a substantial language context for the examples (as in example (4) above), rather than a single sentence, as in previous surveys, allows me to test not only whether the respondents found particular usage variations acceptable, but also whether their acceptance of the variation might itself be influenced by the larger context in which it appears. Whilst it can be fairly said that being asked a similar question twelve times does tend to reveal the respondents' boredom threshold, I was hoping that it would lead to some responses which might be seen to vary as the contextual influences on the usage in question vary. Chapter 4 thus presents the views of the first group of the general public.

In my corpus analysis in Chapter 5, I set out to investigate whether the authors in the Stenton Corpus used or avoided the variant structures described in the usage guides (Chapter 3) and in the grammars (Chapter 2). The Stenton Corpus consists of about 12.5 million words of unedited English manuscripts accepted by six academic journals published by Cambridge University Press between 2006 and 2016. In all, the corpus consists of 1,031 papers, written by 1,657 different authors. For some of the analyses the corpus was divided into two separate sub-corpora, one for Law and one for Language, and this enabled the investigation of any sub-register differences.

What differentiates the Stenton Corpus from other corpora of written English currently available is that the papers included in it have not been copy-edited, and they thus represent the usage choices of those 1,657 authors, and not the choices of a much smaller number of copy-editors. Another feature of the corpus is that it does not represent a single regional variety of English. The 1,657 authors were based in fifty-nine different countries at the time of writing, and would have comprised a mix of native and non-native users, writing at a high level of proficiency. I therefore regard the corpus as representing 'International Academic English'.

For the corpus analysis I generated a series of concordances, i.e. a "display of every instance of a specified word or other search term together with a given amount of preceding and following context" (McEnery and Hardie, 2012, p. 241), to yield all the examples of the species noun phrase, and then sorted and analysed them by working through the concordances, rather than by statistical analyses. In all concordances I looked for two types of prescribed examples: e.g. *this type of error* and *these types of errors*. I also wanted to investigate whether the authors in the Stenton Corpus avoid the variant usage *these kind of error*(*s*), as proscribed by the usage guides, or whether, as described by Denison (2002), Keizer (2007), Davidse et al. (e.g. 2008), and Klockmann (2017a), they regard *these kinds of errors* and *these kind of errors* as different structures with different meanings and/or functions. Also investigated is whether, as mentioned by both the usage guides and the reference grammars, the authors make use of the *errors of this kind* variant to avoid a number mismatch in the species noun phrase and in the clause of which it is a constituent.

In the course of this analysis I found a candidate for a further variant of the species noun phrase, not covered in the usage guides or in the grammars: *this error type* and *these error types*. This variant was found in sufficient numbers to be included in the analysis. The identification and inclusion of this further variant allowed me to investigate a broader range of options for number marking in the species noun phrase. Chapter 5 thus presents the views of the second group of the general public.

In my discussion in Chapter 6, I will draw my conclusions on the use of the species noun phrase in International Academic English, based on my analyses of the linguists, the prescriptivists, and the general public, bringing together and commenting on

common threads and themes that have appeared throughout Chapters 2 to 5. I also reflect on some aspects of the study that with hindsight I would have undertaken differently, and on research topics that remain outstanding.