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

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4 The survey

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3 I set out what the usage guide writers thought on the topic of number agreement in the species noun phrase, especially in terms of their proscriptions, prescriptions and explanations, the last of these based in part on their knowledge of other professional writers on language, including other usage guide writers. In this chapter I want to present the results of a survey of the attitudes of a group of members of the public as determined by an online poll, before moving on in Chapter 5 to an analysis of a corpus compiled to reveal the actual usage of a large group of academic authors.

In the context of the historical scope of the current study, surveys of usage and of attitudes to usage are a relatively recent research activity (see e.g. Leonard, 1932, p. 95), and the distinction between these two types of survey is not always an easy one to make. After a brief historical sketch of the major surveys of English, both in the US and in the UK (§4.2), I will describe in detail the current survey (§4.3), including its most distinctive features: the use of multiple examples of the same usage topic, i.e. number agreement in the species noun phrase, and the presentation of those examples in context. I also include a brief description of the respondents. I then present the results of the current survey: first as a set of stand-alone results, then in comparison to the results of the previous surveys reviewed earlier in the chapter (§4.4). The chapter ends with some concluding remarks (§4.5).

4.2 Surveys: a brief review

As noted above, the distinction between a usage survey and an attitude survey is not always clear, and this will be discussed in detail in my analysis of Leonard (1932) in §4.2.1. Gilman, in his usage guide chapter titled ‘A brief history of English usage’, makes mention of three “survey[s] of opinion” (1989, p. 10a): Leonard (1932), which Gilman refers to as “the first” (1989, p. 10a), Crisp (1971), which he describes as a replication of Leonard (1932), and Mittins et al. (1970). The Leonard and Crisp surveys were carried out in the United States; that of Mittins et al. in the United Kingdom, though it should be noted that, whilst Mittins et al. confined themselves to British respondents (1970, pp. 5–6), Leonard’s study included both American and British respondents (1932, pp. 219–221).

Tieken-Boon van Ostade and Ebner (2017), in their overview of how “highly frequent usage problems can be analyzed as to their current acceptability” (2017,

p. 1), also refer to surveys in the US by Hairston (1981), Albanyan and Preston (1998), and Gilsdorf and Leonard (2001), but comment that "for Great Britain only one usage attitude study focusing on Standard British English could be identified, *Attitudes to English Usage* (Mittins et al., 1970)" (2017, §2). It is, however, not clear from Mittins et al. whether they restricted themselves to respondents from Great Britain or from the whole of the United Kingdom, i.e. including Northern Ireland. Ebner (2017) also notes surveys by Bryant (1962) for American English and by Sandred (1983) for Scots, both of which feature in her study (Ebner, 2017, p. 93), and she also refers to studies by Peters (1998a, 2001), Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2013), and Queen and Boland (2015). Ebner herself conducted a usage survey on British English (2017, esp. Chapters 7–9), whilst Kostadinova conducted a parallel study of American English (2018a, esp. Chapter 7). Both of these surveys were part of the Bridging the Unbridgeable project (see §4.2.3 below).

In her 'Foreword' to Leonard (1932), Weeks refers to "[o]lder studies of usage" (1932, p. xvi), but these are not specified. Aiken (1934, p. 291) also notes that "[o]f making English surveys there is no end, but English surveys having real importance are possibly not so common", but again these surveys are not listed. Mittins et al. (1970, p. 4) mention "earlier enquiries of this kind", but once again they do not provide any further details.

As noted above, Sandred (1983) surveys Scots rather than Standard English. I regard Bryant (1962) as a usage survey rather than an attitude survey (see Bryant, 1962, p. xix, where she refers to "the dependable evidence available – not only that from the various scholarly dictionaries, from the treatises of linguists, and from articles in magazines featuring English usage, but also that from some 900 fresh investigations undertaken especially for use in this book"). Ebner herself later in her study refers to Bryant as "a corpus study" (2017, p. 115). I have consequently not included these two surveys in the current study. Queen and Boland's (2015) focus on a very specific register (e-mails) makes it unsuitable for comparison with the current study, which is also register-specific, but which is based on a different, academic, register, so I will not consider it any further here either.

Peters's Langscape project (esp. 1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2001) is potentially of interest as she does have a section on number agreement (1999), but that includes only subject–verb number and anaphoric pronoun reference, so again is not directly comparable with the current study.[1] Peters did, however, report that "American respondents showed a stronger preference for formal agreement" (1999, p. 7), and I was able to investigate whether that also holds true for the current study (see §4.4).

1 Only one usage guide included anaphoric pronoun reference to a species noun phrase; see §3.4.2, ftn. 16.

Kostadinova (2018a, p. 58) concludes that "[t]he most notable studies of attitudes towards usage in English include Leonard (1932), Marckwardt and Walcott (1938), Mittins et al. (1970), and Crisp (1971)",[2] and Ebner (2017, p. 98) also regarded Leonard (1932) as "one of the earliest usage attitude studies [she] could identify". Based on the above, in this study, for comparative purposes, I will therefore focus on Leonard (1932; including Marckwardt and Walcott, 1938; see §4.2.1 below) and Mittins et al. (1970; see §4.2.2 below) for a historical perspective, before looking at the more recent surveys carried out within the Bridging the Unbridgeable project (§4.2.3 below). All these studies also have the advantage that they included the topic of the current study: number agreement in the species noun phrase, e.g. *these kind of*.

Ebner (2018b, p. 27, §4) offers an appealing explanation for the relative lack of surveys in Great Britain. Basing her approach on Milroy (2000, p. 61) and Cameron (1995, pp. 93, 107), and quoting Halliday (1992, p. 72), she posits that, whilst ethnicity can be seen as a defining issue in the standard language in the United States, in Great Britain that issue was and remains social class. Halliday refers to 'classism' in this connection, and suggests that, whilst it is now considered acceptable to show up, for example, sexism and racism, overtly commenting on classism would pose a threat to a social order based on capitalism. Halliday (see e.g. 2002, pp. 118–119; 2013, p. 15) had for a long time been working towards a Marxist theory of language, and there would be much here to investigate, but that remains beyond the scope of the current study. In what follows, then, I will concentrate on attitudes to number agreement in the species noun phrase over time, as investigated by Leonard (1932, together with Marckwardt and Walcott, 1938; cf. §4.2.1 below), by Mittins et al. (1970; cf. §4.2.2), and by the Bridging the Unbridgeable project (cf. §4.2.3), before presenting the current survey (§4.3).

4.2.1 The Leonard (1932) survey

In the Foreword to what is generally regarded as the earliest modern survey of English usage, Leonard's *Current English Usage* (1932), Weeks distinguishes between two major types of survey:

> To ascertain the actual English usage … of educated people, two types of survey can be made. One tabulates the forms of expression and punctuation found in the work of the better contemporary authors. The other secures from these and other educated persons statements as to the forms of expression and punctuation they would employ in given sentences.
>
> (Weeks, 1932, p. xiii)

2 I was unable to access Crisp (1971) because of the closure of the University Library in Cambridge during the 2020–2022 coronavirus pandemic. My references to Crisp are therefore based on Kostadinova (2018a, esp. pp. 60–61).

These two types are often known as 'usage surveys' and 'attitude surveys', respectively. However, and as noted above, in practice they are often quite difficult to tease apart. As expressed by Weeks, any survey in which respondents give an opinion would be classed as an attitude survey, which is how Weeks describes the Leonard study (1932, p. xiii), but Leonard himself instructed his respondents to "[s]core, please, according to your observation of what is actual usage rather than your opinion of what usage should be" (1932, p. 97), thereby positioning his study as a usage survey.

In what they described as a "tentative and preliminary account" of what was to become Leonard's 1932 'usage study', Leonard and Moffett describe the 1932 study as an attempt to "find out what various judges have observed about the actual use or non-use by cultivated persons of a large number of expressions usually condemned in English textbooks and classes" (1927, p. 345). At the same time, they acknowledged the difficulty of that undertaking: "The judgments are no doubt influenced in considerable part by the feelings and logical preconceptions of the persons reporting; but these also are important facts" (1927, p. 359).

This conflict also surfaced in contemporary reviews of the Leonard survey, with Bentley (1933, p. 62) noting that "[i]t is quite misleading … when the authors of the report use repeatedly words or terms which indicate that they regard the votes of the 'judges' as opinions or judgments rather than as observations". Krapp (1933, p. 46) observed that the Leonard survey's purpose was "the strictly practical one of finding some basis of decision with respect to a number of forms of current English about the standing of which there may be reasonable ground for difference of opinion", i.e. an attitude survey. W.E. Leonard (1933, p. 57), who was himself a contributor to the Leonard survey, felt that "Bentley's criticisms are theoretically sound". He continued: "I was troubled, both when S. A. L. [i.e. S.A. Leonard] was preparing the questionnaires and when I looked over the returns, by the distinction to be kept between personal approval of a usage and appraisal of the usage *per se* as in one or another of the four categories" (1933, pp. 57–58; the four categories will be described below). W.E. Leonard did, however, maintain that this problem did not invalidate the survey.

Other critics of the Leonard study include Lloyd (1939), Russell (1939), and Larsen (1940). The later dates of these three reviews reflect that the authors were reviewing not just the Leonard study itself but also the later re-visiting of it by Marckwardt and Walcott's *Facts about Current English Usage* (1938). Both the original Leonard study and the later one by Marckwardt and Walcott were carried out under the auspices of the National Council of Teachers of English in the United States, and were intended to be of benefit to practising teachers to enable them to form judgements on the information given in the dictionaries, grammars and usage guides that they used for reference. Marckwardt and Walcott's view of the Leonard study is

therefore of some consequence: "The first significant fact to remember, then, is that *Current English Usage* deals primarily not with usage itself but with opinion about the usage of words and expressions usually questioned or condemned in grammars and handbooks" (1938, pp. 2–3). Marckwardt and Walcott then set out the purpose of their own study as "to supplement the survey of opinion, which forms the basis of the Leonard monograph, with a survey of the recorded usage of the same 230 items" (1938, p. 15). This they did by analysing a number of "convenient and authoritative" reference works, including the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1933 [1928]), Webster's *New International Dictionary* (1934, second edition), Horwill's *Dictionary of Modern American Usage* (1935), Hall's *English Usage* (1917), and the grammars of Jespersen (1928–1931) and Curme (1931; 1935) (Marckwardt and Walcott, 1938, pp. 16–17). The Marckwardt and Walcott study is then clearly a survey of usage according to the definition set out by Weeks above, albeit at one remove, as all of the sources they list are themselves usage surveys of one sort or another. The Marckwardt and Walcott study thus made no direct use of respondents, in contrast to the Leonard study, and so it would seem that Weeks's distinction is sound, and that she was correct in her categorisation of the Leonard study as an attitude survey. It is worth noting, however, that the Leonard study was completed by his associates after his untimely death in a boating accident, and so he may not have seen or endorsed this categorisation (Leonard, 1932, p. xxi).

The Leonard survey presented respondents with a list of 230 different "items of usage" (1932, p. 99) and asked them "to indicate what seemed to them to be the norm of usage among educated people generally" (1932, p. 96). When doing this, the respondents were asked to place each usage into one of four categories, or registers:

> 1. Formally correct English … 'Literary English'.
>
> 2. Fully acceptable English for informal conversation, correspondence, and all other writing of well-bred ease … 'standard, cultivated colloquial English'.
>
> 3. Commercial, foreign, scientific, or other technical uses … 'trade or technical English'.
>
> 4. Popular or illiterate speech … 'naif, popular, or uncultivated English'.
>
> (Leonard, 1932, p. 97)

In a footnote to their paper, Leonard and Moffett (1927, p. 345, ftn. 1) wrote: "An additional category, 'technical English,' was tried but found of no value for this study". As this would seem to contradict the 1932 survey (see '3' above), I take it to mean that it was originally intended as a separate category.

One example of an item of usage, of interest for the current study, was "Don't get *these* kind of gloves" (1932, p. 129), in which the problem lay in the apparent number conflict between plural *these* and singular *kind*. This example was presented as a single sentence (cf. §4.3.3 below) with the word *these* highlighted (cf. §4.3.4). The survey was based on the assumption that "allowable usage is based on the actual practice of cultivated people" (1932, p. 95); in this case the respondents were 229 linguists, teachers, authors, editors, businessmen, and members of the Modern Language Association (MLA) (1932, p. 96; and see §4.4.2: LEONARD (1932) below for more on the MLA). Apart from their occupations, we don't know anything further about the respondents. This lack of sociolinguistic data was addressed in the later Bridging the Unbridgeable (BtU) surveys (see §4.2.3 below). The results of the Leonard survey, and of the Marckwardt and Walcott (1938) follow-up study, will be discussed in §4.4.2 below.

4.2.2 The Mittins et al. (1970) survey

Another attitude survey, generally taken to be the first of its kind in the United Kingdom (see §4.2 above), is Mittins et al.'s *Attitudes to English Usage* (1970), and this survey was again undertaken for the benefit of teachers (1970, p. 3), under the auspices of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne Institute of Education English Research Group. The authors were clear that they were conducting a survey of attitudes, and the explanatory note to their respondents included:

> We are interested in varying attitudes to these usages in different situations. We are not seeking opinions on what is 'right' or 'wrong', nor are we asking about your own practice in speech or writing.
> (Mittins et al, 1970, p. 5)

As in the Leonard (1932) survey, the four chosen situations in Mittins et al. (1970, p. 4) reflected register differences: "Informal Speech, Informal Writing, Formal Speech, Formal Writing." These do not relate directly to Leonard's categories, and this mismatch of categories between surveys will prove to be a recurring problem when trying to compare the results of the various surveys described in this chapter.

The 457 respondents to the Mittins et al. survey included school teachers and examiners, together with teacher-trainees, lecturers in further and higher education, business managerial staff and staff in sales, advertising or public relations, writers, civil service administrators, and members of the professions (1970, pp. 5–6). For their study, Mittins et al. did have an age breakdown of their respondents but were unable to use it in their analysis because of time constraints (1970, pp. 18–19, 21–23). One example Mittins et al. included, which is of interest for the current study, was:

These sort of plays need first-class acting.
(Mittins et al., 1970, pp. 9, 84–85)

As with the Leonard (1932) study, the example was presented as a single sentence, with the words *These sort of plays* highlighted, and again the point at issue was the apparent number conflict between *These* and *sort*. The Mittins et al. study is clearly an attitude study, and these attitudes were analysed mainly quantitatively, but, as pointed out by Ebner (2018a, p. 139), the authors also made a qualitative analysis, although this was included in their results "only … sporadically". The results of the Mittins et al. survey will be discussed in §4.4.2 below.

4.2.3 The Bridging the Unbridgeable (BtU) surveys

More recent attitude surveys have been undertaken within the Bridging the Unbridgeable (BtU) project at the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics in the Netherlands. These have been reported in Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2013, 2018, 2020), Ebner (2014, 2017, 2018a), Tieken-Boon van Ostade and Ebner (2017), Kostadinova (2018a, 2018b), and Lukač (2018a, 2018b). The sub-title of the BtU project is 'Linguists, Prescriptivists and the General Public' (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2020, p. xii), and the project as a whole was interested in "the interplay – or lack of it – between different groups of people concerned with language use: linguists, language professionals like editors, text writers, translators and teachers, and the general public" (2020, p. 41). The BtU project as a whole aimed to investigate this by adopting a three-pronged approach: the prescriptivists were represented in analyses of a database of usage guides prepared specifically for the project, the HUGE database (see §3.2 for a description of this); the linguists were represented in corpus analyses comprising selected usage guides (see e.g. Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2020, esp. Chapter 4) and also by modern grammarians (see e.g. Ebner, 2017, p. 10); and the general public were represented in surveys and in interviews (see below). In this description of the BtU project, I will concentrate on the surveys.

One of the objectives of the BtU project was to replicate (parts of) the Mittins et al. (1970) survey, and so a series of online polls was carried out repeating all of the Mittins et al. examples (see Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2020, p. 20, ftn. 19). The project was also intended to expand on the Mittins et al. survey by adopting a more rigorous sociolinguistic approach (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2013, p. 3). In order to do this, a "new method to elicit attitudes to questions of usage" was developed (2013, p. 11). This new method aimed to expand the reach of the surveys to engage previously neglected groups of respondents, including "exploring the Web as a means for eliciting data for analysis" (2013, p. 11; see also Lukač, 2018a, pp. 20–22).

Percy (2009, 2010) has demonstrated that parts of the general public have had a voice on matters of usage since the eighteenth century, through letters and articles in periodicals such as the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review*, whilst Drake (1977) notes that *The Galaxy*, *The Nation*, *Round Table* and *Godey's* all published letters on usage during the nineteenth century, to which list Crystal (2018, pp. 90–106) adds *Punch*. So various sections of the public have had a voice for at least as long as usage guides have been published (i.e. since 1770; cf. §1.2). However, one of the aims of the BtU project has been to extend the range of that voice not only by including members of the public from a number of different backgrounds but also by systematically seeking their views on a large scale, and by asking the respondents to comment on particular usages via interviews and online polls. Some usage guides, for example the *Harper Dictionary of Contemporary Usage* (Morris and Morris, 1975) and the *American Heritage Guide to Contemporary Usage and Style* (Pickett et al., 2005) had also established 'usage panels', generally of those people considered to be expert users of the language who could be called upon "to reach a verdict on whether the usage problems discussed could be considered acceptable or not, and consequently to offer readers guidance on whether it would be advisable to use a particular form or construction" (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2020, p. 168). Tieken-Boon van Ostade, however, did not accept that these panel members were in any way representative of the general public (2020, p. 172).

Part of Ebner's (2017) study dealt with "the current attitudes of the English general public towards specific usage problems" (2017, p. 8), and with comparing these attitudes to those found in earlier studies, typically not including the wider public. In doing this, she hoped to "identify the true attitudes of members of the general public towards usage problems" (2017, p. 9). Kostadinova (2018a), however, strikes a more cautious note, picking up on a point made by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2013, p. 4; and see §4.3.4 below):

> While it should be borne in mind that speakers' attitudes are merely reports on speakers' ideas about language, rather than their actual attitudes (which are notoriously hard to tap into), reported attitudes can nevertheless reveal something about what speakers think about the use of specific features. In other words, it may be difficult to find out what speakers' actual attitudes are, but it is less problematic to find out the attitudes speakers think they are expected to have. In the context of attitudes influenced by prescriptive language ideology, this is important to keep in mind.
>
> (Kostadinova, 2018a, p. 208)

This is an important issue that I will return to in §4.4.5 below.

Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2013) provides a list of the type of questions designed to draw out the public's views on disputed usages:

> The web form contained the following instructions:
>
> We are interested in what you think about this sentence. Is it acceptable in English today, would you use it yourself? If so, where and when? If not, why not? If you think the sentence is unacceptable, why would that be the case? Do you ever hear (or see) people using it? What kind of people? Do you object to anyone using it?
>
> Please tell us about all this in a short piece of text in the box below, which we will be able to use in our research about attitudes to usage. Thank you!
> (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2013, p. 5)

In order to facilitate comparison with the Mittins et al. (1970) survey, the four registers used in that earlier survey were maintained (cf. §4.2.2 above), but, in keeping with the ethos of the BtU project, 'netspeak' (i.e. "internet usage or chat language, texting") was added, following Hedges (2011), and a further option, 'unacceptable under any circumstances', was added at the request of the early respondents (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2020, p. 148, ftn. 13). The register preferences were therefore extended over previous surveys:

> ok in informal speech
>
> ok in informal writing
>
> ok in formal speech
>
> ok in formal writing
>
> ok in netspeak (internet usage or chat language, texting …)
>
> unacceptable under any circumstances
> (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2013, p. 5, Figure 1)

As mentioned in §4.2.2 above, these variations in how register differences are presented do make it more difficult to compare responses across surveys and over time. Marckwardt and Walcott (1938, pp. 50–51) had earlier found that actual usage was much less conservative than suggested by the Leonard (1932) attitude survey (cf. §4.4.2 below). An expected finding of the BtU project was that the level of acceptability of many of the usage items would have increased over time, reflecting a general tendency noted in Mair (2006, §6.2, pp. 183–193; and see Peters and Young, 1997), especially when sociolinguistic variables such as age and gender are taken into account. One of the aspects of usage that I will be investigating is whether there is any evidence in the more recent BtU surveys and in the current survey for any increased acceptability of variation in number agreement in the species noun phrase, a usage topic which has featured in all the previous surveys considered here.

4.3 The current survey

4.3.1 Hosting and promoting

To gain further insight into attitudes to number agreement in the species noun phrase,[3] I organised an online survey using Qualtrics Online Survey Software.[4] The survey was designed and analysed as an attitude survey, in that it sought the views of the respondents on whether the examples were appropriate for use in a particular context: academic journals. There is thus no comparison of attitudes to different registers, as in the Leonard (1932), Mittins et al. (1970), and BtU studies, although some respondents did comment on register variation (see §4.4.5). The usage survey part of my study lies in an analysis of a corpus of academic journal writing, the Stenton Corpus (see §1.3 for a description of this), and this will be the subject of Chapter 5.

The current survey was intended to ascertain attitudes towards a selection of species noun phrase expressions of mixed number agreement (see Chapter 2). The survey was promoted on the Bridging the Unbridgeable blog on 6 December 2016 and 14 February 2017, at the 'Life after HUGE?' symposium in Leiden on 9 December 2016, and in *English Today* in June 2017 (Stenton, 2017), as well as on Linguist List and ResearchGate on 19 April 2017. The survey examples all came from the Stenton Corpus, and were chosen to represent different aspects of number agreement in the species noun phrase, as exemplified in §2.2. The full examples are listed and described in Appendix D, with their shortened forms given below (§4.3.2). I used the similar, single-sentence, example from Mittins et al. (1970, pp. 9, 84–85; cf. §4.2.2 above), as also used in the BtU survey, to introduce the current survey:

> *These sort of plays* need first-class acting.

This Mittins et al. example was used as it is very simple, and because I would be able to compare the results from my respondents with those from Mittins et al., and also from the Leonard (1932) (see §4.2.1 above) and the online BtU surveys (§4.2.3). I took the data from the current survey in mid-July 2017, when the number of respondents had tailed off. There were 102 responses in total.

The examples in the survey were presented in context, i.e. the linguistic context, rather than context of use or social context. This is sometimes referred to as 'co-text' (Matthews, 2014, p. 78; and see §4.3.3 below). This context typically included the sentence before and the sentence after the featured usage. This presentation is in

3 As noted in §§2.3.1 and 2.3.2, this covers both number agreement within the species noun phrase and number agreement between the species noun phrase and the verb.

4 See <https://www.qualtrics.com/uk/core-xm/survey-software/> (last accessed 17 July 2023).

contrast with previous surveys, including the Leonard (1932), Mittins et al. (1970), and online BtU ones, which all presented their examples in a single sentence, and this was intended to reveal whether the text beyond the immediate sentence had any impact on the respondents' attitudes to the usage in question. I show in §4.4.4 below that this was indeed the case for some of the respondents, and this inclusion of the context is discussed further in §4.3.3 below. I also highlighted the usage in question within the example, as in the Leonard (1932), Mittins et al. (1970), and some of the BtU surveys. This use of highlighting has been criticised, and I address these criticisms in §4.3.4 below.

4.3.2 Survey examples and questions

The survey examples, apart from the introductory one from Mittins et al. (1970, pp. 9, 84–85), were all taken from the manuscripts included in the Stenton Corpus (see Chapter 5), and as presented they had not been professionally copy-edited. Once submitted and accepted, the copyright of these manuscripts passed to Cambridge University Press, who in turn granted me permission to use them anonymously for analysis. All examples featured a version of the determiner + species noun + *of* + N2 structure as in *these kind of plays* (see §2.2 for a presentation of the variant structures in the species noun phrase).[5] The short examples, i.e. with just the phrases of interest, are listed here in order of presentation.[6] The full examples in context are listed in Appendix D:

[1] these type of representative arrangements [must … be constructed] [IJC_10-1][7]

[2] these kind of overt social cues [JCL_09-08-088]

[3] this kind of language data [offers] [LCO_1400019]

[4] these types of death [IJC_1600005]

[5] these types of devoicing [occur] [JCL_08-08-081]

[6] this type of error [… was observed] [JCL_09-10-086]

[7] this type of fisheries [AJL_1400034]

5 The N2 OF THIS TYPE variant was not included because, as I show in §5.5.2, the examples of this variant in the Stenton Corpus were all of the same form, i.e. there was no number variation. The THIS N2 TYPE variant had not been identified at the time of the survey.

6 I have used brackets for these survey example numbers to distinguish them from examples elsewhere which use parentheses. These same bracketed numbers will be used throughout this chapter for ease of reference.

7 The form of the source of the quotations, here "[IJC_10-1]" will be explained in detail in §5.2.1.

[8] these types of gesture [are … involved] [JCL_1500062]

[9] that type of goods [AJL_1600003]

[10] these types of knowledge [inform] [JCL_1600005]

[11] these kinds of law [IJC_11-1-***][8]

[12] this type of passives [has … been reported] [JCL_1200051]

Not all of these examples contain an error, in the sense of a conflict of number agreement (see e.g. [6] above). Appendix D includes a presentation of the structure of the examples, with notes on the potential number agreement problem for each example. This was part of the rationale for investigating whether there is any gradience in the responses to the examples (see §4.4.3 below; see also §4.3.4 on the problem that highlighting raises with this issue). A consequence of the examples being taken from academic papers which had not yet been copy-edited (see §1.3 and §5.2) is that there remains the possibility that the examples in context contain other potential errors (and see the discussion of this topic by Quirk and Svartvik, 1966, p. 13, in §4.3.4 below). These other potential errors were not highlighted or indicated in any way.

The number of similar examples, twelve in all (plus the introductory example from Mittins et al., 1970, pp. 9, 84–85), and their presentation in context, are distinctive aspects of the current survey, and this approach has not, to the best of my knowledge, been used in previous surveys. These features were designed to facilitate investigation of two aspects of number variation in the species noun phrase: whether there is a cline of acceptability, or gradience, in the responses, and whether the context influenced those responses. However, both of these aspects of the survey could also be seen as potential drawbacks in maintaining the interest and concentration of the respondents. Quirk and Svartvik (1966), working within the Survey of English Usage at University College London, long ago pointed out the difficulties caused, for example, by fatigue:

> [W]hile requiring a method that provided a reasonable wealth of data, we insisted that it must not fatigue the informants by reason of either excessive duration or monotony of form. Fatigue is, of course, particularly liable to invalidate the direct-question type of inquiry, where, after exercising their judgment on acceptability a few times with some confidence, informants commonly complain (or reveal) that their feeling for such distinctions is seriously impaired.
>
> (Quirk and Svartvik, 1966, p. 15)

Comments from some of the respondents to the current survey did indeed suggest that fatigue, or boredom, was an issue (“My response is a shot in the dark after I died of

8 The asterisks hide the identity of the author of this file.

boredom …", R79[9]), and some of these comments will be presented in §4.4.5 below. Previous surveys, Leonard (1932) for one, have included many more examples, but in each case they were single-sentence examples of different usage problems. I discuss this issue more fully in §4.4.3 below.

As mentioned in §4.3.1 above, the context included the sentence before and the sentence after the featured usage, as shown for [1] below, unless the species noun phrase was itself in the first or last sentence in a paragraph.

[1] In addition, in a support model, an individual is also free to appoint one or more representatives to make decisions for them, if that is what the individual desires. However, legislation surrounding **these type of representative arrangements** must also be constructed in a way that respects the rights in the CRPD and ensures that the individual can challenge the actions of the representative and can make changes to the arrangement, including revoking the designation of a particular representative.
[IJC_10-11]

For example [1], I expected that the respondents would find the mixed number marking on *these type* unacceptable, in line with the reference grammars cited in Chapter 2 and the usage guides analysed in Chapter 3.

In the survey, the examples were introduced by a statement of whether they were from a language journal or a law journal, and their date, which was not their date of publication, but the date on which the manuscript was sent out by the journal editors for copy-editing. This initial information was followed by a series of questions and instructions on how to approach the survey:

> [1] This example is from a law journal (2013):
>
> Would you find this acceptable in an academic paper?

The possible answers were YES / NO / DON'T KNOW. If the respondent answered either YES or DON'T KNOW, they were told:

> Please go on to the next example.

The next instruction was:

> If NO, please revise the phrase in bold in the box below.

This procedure, to ask the respondents to provide an alternative, has not generally been used in previous surveys. Albanyan and Preston (1998; see §4.2 above) asked their respondents, for instance, to "write the sentence you would use in writing or very formal speech situations" (1998, p. 33), but these free responses were subsequently

9 R79 refers to a survey respondent. Appendix E gives details of all the respondents.

coded by student fieldworkers against a list of "expected corrections" (1998, p. 33). The final instruction in the current survey was:

> Please add any other comments in the box below.

Ebner (2017, p. 131) has suggested that "providing the participants with the opportunity to comment on each question … allows for greater insight into what participants think about specific usages". I will show in §4.4.4 below that this was indeed the case in the current study.

4.3.3 Contextualising the examples

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first survey to concentrate on a single usage variant with multiple examples, presented in context, i.e. in a linguistic context. The context was included to discover if the text beyond the immediate sentence had any influence on attitudes to the usage in question. Ebner (2014, pp. 3–4) and Tieken-Boon van Ostade and Ebner (2017, §4.4) discuss the importance of context in surveys and usage guide treatments of the so-called 'dangling participle', e.g. "*Pulling the trigger*, the gun went off unexpectedly" (from Mittins et al., 1970, pp. 9, 86–88). Tieken-Boon van Ostade and Ebner (2017, §4.4) noted that "the comments made by the questionnaire respondents highlight the importance of the context. Reading a sentence like the Mittins one in isolation, one will certainly wonder who pulled the trigger, while contextual information would have made this clear." Peters (2004, p. 138) also comments on the function of what she terms the "context of discourse": "Castigation of 'dangling' constructions almost always focuses on sentences taken out of context. In their proper context of discourse, there may be no problem."

A consequence of what both Peters and Tieken-Boon van Ostade and Ebner are saying here is that the inclusion of the context of an example could potentially change the attitude of a respondent, by for example eliciting an 'acceptable' instead of an 'unacceptable' response to a survey question ("… ties in better with the previous sentence"; R113). Another usage guide, Gilman (1989), which presents a historical approach to the treatment of usage problems in usage guides, also comments on the use of context in resolving potential ambiguity in the use of *actual*:

> Copperud's [1970] objection to *actual* lies in a single quoted sentence: 'The stocks were sold at prices above actual market prices.' The trouble with this example is that it lacks its preceding context. In a majority of instances of the use of *actual* in our files, it contrasts with some other adjective, either stated or implied.
>
> (Gilman, 1989, p. 23)

Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2020, p. 167) comments that "[q]uite a few [survey] informants indicated that they thought the [example] sentence confusing or unclear,

and one of them, an 84-year-old retired British teacher, noted that the sentence was difficult to understand out of context". It is therefore surprising that context hasn't been included more often in attitude surveys.[10] However, including the context does not necessarily imply that the respondents would read it all. With the target phrase highlighted (see §4.3.4 below) in a considerable amount of context, together with a large number (=12) of similar examples, there could be a tendency for the respondents to skip the context and concentrate on only the highlighted text. This could account for the different amounts of time needed by the respondents to complete the survey (see §4.4 below) and could also account for some of their comments (see §4.4.5). My assumption, however, is that, with the context of the example being shown, the respondents might be more likely to find the example acceptable, in the sense of my survey question: "Would you find this acceptable in an academic paper?"

4.3.4 Highlighting the examples

I highlighted the usage in question within the example (see [1] in §4.3.2 above), following the practice of Mittins et al. (1970), but this use of highlighting to identify the usage has been criticised. Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2013, p. 4) points out that one of the difficulties with highlighting the phrase of interest is that the respondents "would be biased against features which they knew, however dimly, to clash with accepted standard practice". This notion of bias was also discussed by Tieken-Boon van Ostade and Ebner (2017, §2), and by Ebner (2017, p. 98; 2018a, pp. 139, 140, 148), with Ebner pointing out that a particular respondent's comment "emphasizes the methodological advantage of not highlighting the usage problems" (2018a, p. 148). The comment Ebner quoted, made by a student, was: "Seems pretty correct to me all round and no real comments!" (2018a, p. 148).

This in itself is, of course, an interesting response to a survey example. Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2013) noted of her respondents on the example *Their errors will likely be in their use of style words* that "many failed to see *likely* as a potential usage problem" (2013, pp. 5, 7), given that the form was not highlighted, and again this is an interesting response. In reporting on the same survey in 2020, Tieken-Boon van Ostade commented that "many people … failed to identify what usage problem they were asked to comment on. There would therefore be something to be said for highlighting the issue tested after all" (2020, p. 168). In contrast, Ebner (2017, p. 111) took the view that "consciously highlighting the investigated items no longer seems to fit the contemporary research undertaking as awareness [i.e. of the problem being investigated] is becoming an increasingly important factor", and, as mentioned above in §4.2.3, Kostadinova (2018a, p. 208) warned of the danger of discovering

10 Kostadinova (2018a) does include the context, but then greys it out so that it is unreadable (see her Figure 4.2 on p. 121 for an example of this).

only "the attitudes speakers think they are expected to have". This would suggest that in the examples in my study the respondents would see a potential number conflict highlighted and so 'correct' it. Labov (1975, pp. 97–98) provides an early example of a similar problem from his fieldwork in Philadelphia, where he noted that speakers insisted that they had never heard a particular construction (positive *anymore* sentences, as in *John is smoking a lot anymore*), but were nonetheless observed to use that very construction themselves (cited in Sampson and Babarczy, 2014, p. 80). The Leonard (1932) survey highlighted the item in question, as did the Mittins et al. (1970) survey, and when this latter survey was replicated as part of the BtU project, "[i]t was kept as it was, with the usage problems being highlighted as in the original" (Tieken-Boon van Ostade and Ebner, 2017, p. 3).

For the current study, one of the factors contributing to the decision to highlight the phrase of interest was that, as noted above (§4.3.2), the Stenton Corpus, which was the source of the examples (see §5.2), is made up of texts which had not yet been copy-edited, and so were more likely to contain what could be seen as errors in addition to the phrase of interest. Indeed, a number of respondents who commented on the examples indicated that they would have liked to make more substantial revisions to the text as a whole (e.g. "… this isn't the only bit of rewriting I would do!", R100; "What a text!!", R124; and see §4.4.4 below). Ebner (2017, p. 110) comments on a similar dilemma as revealed in the Albanyan and Preston (1998) survey: "Despite the advantage of obtaining unbiased judgments, Albanyan and Preston also had to deal with participants identifying and correcting other parts of the stimuli sentences." Quirk and Svartvik (1966), as part of their investigation into grammaticality vs. acceptability, noticed a similar problem with examination papers:

> We have experimented with the use of examination papers containing the conventional questions which require comments on sentences with various kinds of ill-formedness, and we have found that if a sentence contained one common deviation (let us say, a 'dangling' participle), this would be duly noticed and dutifully condemned, but that if a sentence contained a 'dangling' participle and in addition a 'split infinitive', an informant might notice and condemn only the latter.
>
> (Quirk and Svartvik, 1966, p. 13)

In part because the topic of interest in my survey was so specific – a single usage issue – and in part because it was presented in (an un-copy-edited) context, I decided that it was more helpful to highlight the phrase than not.

What the above discussion indicates, I think, is not that highlighting should or shouldn't be used, or indeed that context should or shouldn't be included. We simply don't know the consequences of either approach. Perhaps we need to recognise that different approaches to the two topics might yield different results, insights and/or

interpretations. For example, is a respondent who simply doesn't see a potentially problematic usage more or less reliable than one who finds a highlighted usage acceptable? In both cases they would not 'correct' it. What are needed here are parallel studies in one of which the issue is highlighted/presented in context, while in the other it is not, but that is for a later study. Parallel studies would also, however, introduce more variables in the results, again making comparisons across different studies potentially more difficult.

A different approach to this problem of recognition of the phrase of interest was introduced in the surveys conducted by Ebner (2017) and Kostadinova (2018a). They both used post-survey interviews to help gain insight into their respondents' judgements. Ebner hoped to "obtain an insight into the affective, behavioural and cognitive components of usage attitudes" (2017, p. 132). For Kostadinova, the main purpose of the interview was to "allow respondents to reflect on the survey, as well as to communicate thoughts and observations they may have felt were impossible to address in the survey" (2018a, p. 121). These interview sessions were very labour-intensive, which in itself imposes limits both on the number of respondents (63 for Ebner; 79 for Kostadinova) and on their geographical spread, making it an informative but restricted tool. Interviews were not used in the BtU replication of the Mittins et al. (1970) survey, nor are they used in the current survey, at least in part because the identities of the online respondents were unknown.

4.3.5 The survey respondents

Of the 102 people who responded to the survey, 72 provided (some) personal data. These are not large numbers, especially when compared with some of the earlier surveys (see §4.2 above), although it is comparable to the number of respondents to the online BtU survey. Ebner (2017, p. 177) notes that one of the limitations of an online survey is that "it is known that online questionnaires are prone to a self-selection bias (…). This bias is also indicative of specific traits shared by the respondents, such as a general interest in language or eagerness to make one's opinion public." Perhaps because of this inevitable self-selection process, my respondents do indeed seem to form a somewhat small homogeneous group, more like the respondents in Leonard (1932) and Mittins et al. (1970) than those in the BtU surveys. This homogeneity may also be a consequence of how the survey was promoted, i.e. on various media that would be used by language professionals (see §4.3.1 above). Nevertheless, I will show in Table 4.4 in §4.4.3 below, by analysing the responses at two different time-points, why I think my respondents contribute a reliable result.

At the end of the survey I asked the respondents to provide some personal details:

Thank you for completing this acceptability survey. Now we just need some details about you.

Are you a native speaker of English?

YES / NO

If 'yes', which variety do you write in? For example: British, American, Indian.

OPEN

If 'no', which variety do you write in? For example: British, American, Indian.

OPEN

What is your main occupation?

OPEN

How old are you?

OPEN

What is your gender?

MALE / FEMALE / PREFER NOT TO SAY

These questions were chosen in response to Tieken-Boon van Ostade's comments on the need to introduce more sociolinguistic rigour into attitude surveys (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2020, pp. 203–205; and see §4.2.3 above). For example, both Ebner (2018a) and Kostadinova (2018b) demonstrated that age and sex were factors in the acceptability ratings of some of the usage variants in their studies. As can be seen from the list above, education was not included in the current study. For this survey, I did not perform any statistical analyses, and there were no apparent patterns when the respondents were grouped by language variety, occupation, age or gender, so I didn't find that respondents using American English showed a stronger preference for formal agreement, as noted by Peters (1999, p. 7; cf. §4.2 above). A detailed description of the respondents is given in Appendix E. In the next section, I will provide an analysis of how the respondents approached the survey, before presenting the results.

4.4 The survey results

Qualtrics records both the amount of time that the respondents spent on the survey and how much of the survey they completed. Given that the time figures range from 31 seconds to just under 23 hours, there would seem to be an issue with how the respondents signed off from the survey, so the figures may not be entirely reliable; nonetheless, some patterns do emerge, as shown in Figure 4.1.

Seventy-two respondents completed the survey (i.e. they are recorded as completing 100%), at a time of between about 4 minutes (216 seconds) and about 23

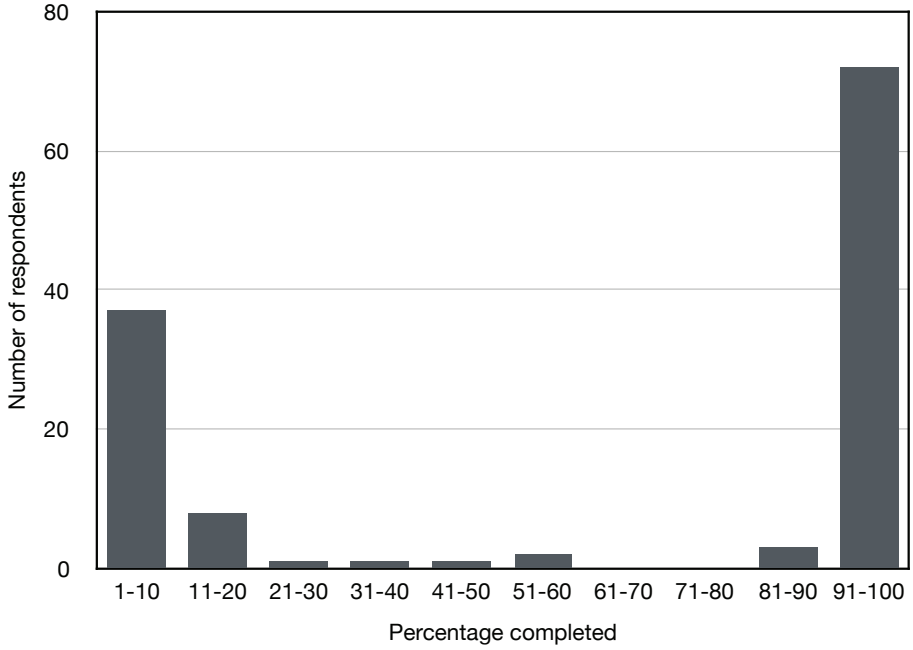

Figure 4.1 Percentage of the survey completed by the respondents

hours (81,759 s), but with most of those (=59) spending no more than 30 minutes on it. These are by definition the same 72 respondents who provided personal data. At the other end of the scale, 23 respondents completed just 2% of the survey, suggesting that they looked at it and decided not to continue. This number also includes me checking on the progress of the survey, but failing to log in as an administrator, which also accounts for some of the gaps in the numbering of the respondents in Appendix E, and why the numbering runs from 2 to 125, even though there were only 102 respondents. My logging in also contributes to the size of the 1–10 column in Figure 4.1. A number of respondents (=14) logged off at 9%, which was the time it took them to answer the first question only, perhaps because they realised that the thirteen examples might not be substantially different and so simply lost interest (e.g. "… after I died of boredom", R79). Ebner (2017, p. 124) notes that "[t]he length of a survey can have an immense influence on the success of the data collection". Between these two ends of the scale (i.e. 2%–9% and 100%), there were relatively few respondents (=16) who completed between 15% and 85% of the survey.

4.4.1 Results of the current survey

The list below shows the number of respondents voting Y(ES), N(O) and D(ON'T) K(NOW) in response to the question "Would you find this acceptable in an academic paper?" (see §4.3.2 above). These results are also illustrated in Figure 4.2. These numbers are followed in the list by the T(otal) number of respondents for that example, and then by the percentage of the highest vote, which was always Y or N. Figure 4.3 shows the percentage of respondents who voted Y, N and DK for each example. These percentages are used in my discussion of a potential cline of responses in §4.4.3 below. The short forms of the examples are given in the list below, apart from the introductory example from Mittins et al. (1970) which is given in full (I will comment on the Mittins et al. example in §4.4.2 below, together with similar examples from the earlier and later surveys); the full forms are listed in Appendix D. In the following discussion I have retained the original example numbers throughout, for clarity.

These sort of plays need first-class acting.[11]
(from Mittins et al., 1970, pp. 9, 84–85)
Y = 19; N = 75; DK = 8; T = 102 [N = 74%]

[1] these type of representative arrangements [must … be constructed]
Y = 9; N = 79; DK = 0; T = 88 [N = 90%]

[2] these kind of overt social cues
Y = 8; N = 70; DK = 2; T = 80 [N = 88%]

[3] this kind of language data [offers]
Y = 65; N = 13; DK = 1; T = 79 [Y = 82%]

[4] these types of death
Y = 54; N = 21; DK = 4; T = 79 [Y = 68%]

[5] these types of devoicing [occur]
Y = 70; N = 6; DK = 3; T = 79 [Y = 89%]

[6] this type of error [… was observed]
Y = 77; N = 1; DK = 0; T = 78 [Y = 99%]

[7] this type of fisheries
Y = 36; N = 39; DK = 2; T = 77 [N = 51%]

11 This example from Mittins et al. was not included in the results below, as examples [1] and [2] show a similar number conflict.

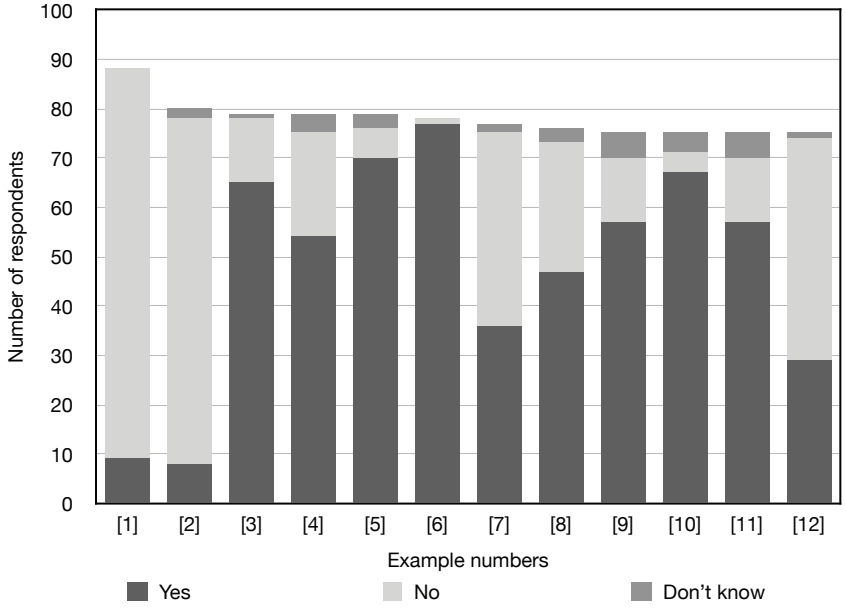

Figure 4.2 Number of respondents who voted 'Yes', 'No' and 'Don't know' for each example

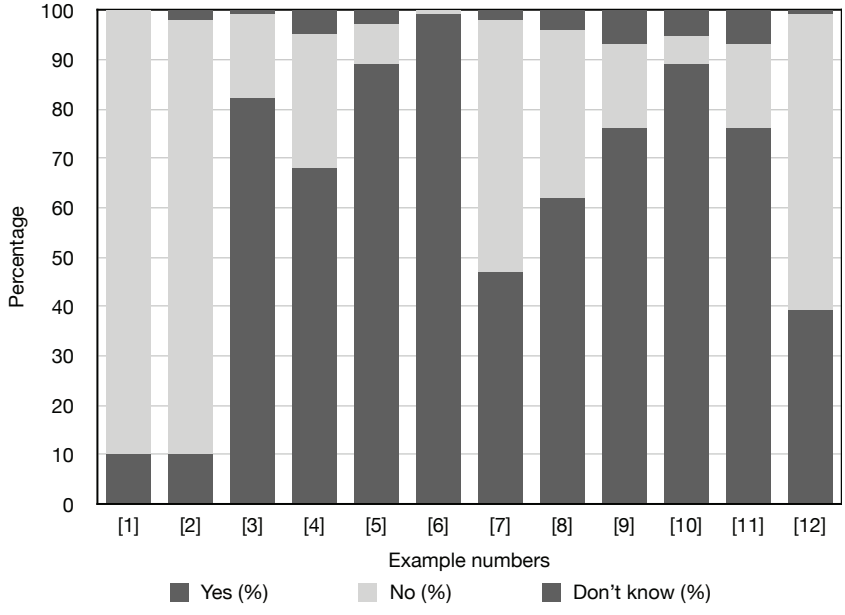

Figure 4.3 Percentage of respondents who voted 'Yes', 'No' and 'Don't know' for each example

[8] these types of gesture [are … involved]
Y = 47; N = 26; DK = 3; T = 76 [Y = 62%]

[9] that type of goods
Y = 57; N = 13; DK = 5; T = 75 [Y = 76%]

[10] these types of knowledge [inform]
Y = 67; N = 4; DK = 4; T = 75 [Y = 89%]

[11] these kinds of law
Y = 57; N = 13; DK = 5; T = 75 [Y = 76%]

[12] this type of passives [has … been reported]
Y = 29; N = 45; DK = 1; T = 75 [N = 60%]

The first thing to note here, and which is apparent from Figure 4.2, is that, after the first response, i.e. to the example from Mittins et al. (1970), the number of responses drops from 102 to 88 for example [1], then gradually reduces to 75 for examples [9] to [12]. I have already suggested that this may be due to either fatigue or simply to boredom (see §4.3.2 above). It was for this reason that Kostadinova (2018a, p. 209) simplified her (single sentence) examples, and, as noted above, Ebner (2017, p. 124) likewise had concerns about the length of a survey. Some comments from the respondents on this aspect of the survey are given in §4.4.5 below. The examples also cover a wide range of responses, as can be seen in Figure 4.3, from 99% Y ([6]) to 90% N ([1]), with just one example, [7], being more evenly split at 51% N:47% Y.

Those respondents who chose Y(ES) or D(ON'T) K(NOW) were then asked to move on to the next question, whilst those who responded N(O) were asked: "If NO, please revise the phrase in bold in the box below" and then "Please add any other comments in the box below". In practice, this last option was also open to the other respondents, some of whom did comment (see §4.4.5 below). In retrospect, there was no good reason not to guide all respondents to these last options. A detailed analysis of these results is given in §4.4.2 below.

Having briefly described the results from the current survey, I now want to look at the results from the previous surveys described in §§4.2.1–4.2.3 above. These will be assessed principally in terms of their reported attitudes to the examples which include the species noun phrase. The example used in Leonard (1932) and Marckwardt and Walcott (1938) was *Don't get these kind of gloves*, whilst both the Mittins et al. (1970) and BtU surveys used the example that was also used to introduce the current study: *These sort of plays need first-class acting*. As there was only one example containing the species noun phrase in each of the previous surveys, there will be no opportunity to discuss gradience in these studies (see §4.4.3 below).

4.4.2 Comparison of survey results

As mentioned above, there have been three previous surveys which have tested the acceptability of an apparent mismatch of number in the species noun phrase: Leonard (1932; plus Marckwardt and Walcott, 1938), Mittins et al. (1970), and Tieken-Boon van Ostade's BtU surveys (2013, 2020). I shall present their results in turn below, and then compare them with the results from the current survey.

LEONARD (1932)

The Leonard survey (see §4.2.1 above) tested *Don't get **these** kind of gloves*. This was ranked by the respondents at 198 out of 230 different examples of questionable usages, with 1 being the most acceptable and 230 the least acceptable. It was classed as 'disputable', meaning that at least 75% of the judges disapproved of it. Leonard commented:

> The linguists ranked this higher [i.e. more acceptable] than did any other group of judges. The editors placed it, by unanimous consent, at the very bottom of the list of usages; the English and speech teachers rated it nearly as low. Evidently this expression is not at present acceptable as cultivated English in the United States.
>
> (Leonard, 1932, p. 129)

In their follow-up survey, Marckwardt and Walcott (1938) comment on how Leonard (1932) was an attitude survey and not a usage survey; that the term 'disputable' itself was "not appropriate in the description of a linguistic fact"; and that it served only to highlight the "extreme variation of opinion" (1938, p. 33). In their own usage survey they found that "106 of the 121 items, which according to a survey of opinion seemed to be disputable [i.e. Leonard (1932)], are, on the basis of recorded fact, actually in cultivated use today" (1938, p. 49). This number included *Don't get these kind of gloves*. Marckwardt and Walcott comment that this demonstrates "how much more conservative a survey of opinion about language is apt to be than the facts of the language actually warrant" (1938, pp. 50–51), and this perhaps again lends weight to Kostadinova's warning about discovering only "the attitudes speakers think they are expected to have" (2018a, p. 208; see §4.2.3 above).

In Table 4.1 overleaf, I present the detailed results of Leonard from his Appendix F (1932, pp. 222–223) and the 'Summary Sheet of Ballots – Grammatical Usage Study' (1932, tip-in[12]). Although Leonard used four categories in his questionnaire (see §4.2.1 above), the results were distilled into just three different categories for the analyses: formal, colloquial and illiterate.[13] This change alone drew much

12 The tip-in is a long folded page added at the end of the book.

13 By 'illiterate' here Leonard means "naif, popular, or uncultivated English" (1932, p. 97;

contemporary criticism of the accuracy and interpretation of the results (see e.g. Bentley, 1933, pp. 61–62, and the discussion in §4.2.1 above).

Table 4.1 Results from the Leonard (1932) survey: percentage of respondents who found the example acceptable in the different registers[14]

Group	Formal	Colloquial	Illiterate
Editors / Authors	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	47 (98%)
Linguists	1 (4%)	10 (36%)	17 (61%)
Business men	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	22 (96%)
Teachers (NCTE, MLA, Speech)	11 (9%)	34 (28%)	77 (63%)
Totals	12 (5%)	46 (21%)	163 (74%)

From Table 4.1, it can be seen that, although the linguists were indeed among the most accepting of the usage at 4%, together with the teachers at 9%, overall only 5% of the respondents found it acceptable in a formal register. As shown in the table, the three sets of teachers are grouped together in Leonard (1932, p. 221), although their results are presented separately in the Summary Sheet. The MLA website suggests that its members may not be representative of the school teachers who Leonard was writing for, and may not be directly comparable to the NCTE teachers and the speech teachers in the table. Broadly speaking, it would seem that the NCTE addressed the practical needs of language teachers, whilst the MLA was also concerned with academic research into language teaching. It is not clear from Leonard whether the Speech teachers refers to speech-language pathologists / speech therapists or to teachers who prepare students to give public speeches.[15] In fact, if the three figures are separated out, for 'Formal':'Colloquial':'Illiterate', we find Speech 0:6:8; NCTE 0:5:45; MLA 11:23:24. The MLA figures do seem to distort the other teacher groups, with 19% of the MLA members finding the usage acceptable in formal English; that is nearly five times the rate of the linguists who found it acceptable, which does not seem to support Leonard's own characterisation of the results.

see §4.2.1 above).

14 I have conflated the two groups of Editors and Authors so that the results can be more easily compared with the current survey. In fact, the two sets of results were almost identical, with 96% of the Authors and 100% of the Editors finding the usage illiterate.

15 For more on this distinction see <https://learn.org/directory/category/School_Administration/Teacher_Education_for_Specific_Subjects/Speech_Teacher.html> (last accessed 18 March 2022).

Mittins et al. (1970)

The Mittins et al. survey (see §4.2.2 above) included the example *These sort of plays need first-class acting*, which they found had a "percentage acceptance-rate" of 29% across all four registers (1970, p. 13). In their discussion of the results, the authors comment:

> Our respondents were on the whole not disposed to accept the usage at all readily. With only 29 per cent acceptances, it ranked 37th of the fifty items. Students, though twice as lenient as any other group, averaged only 45 per cent approval. The 'spread' between Informal Speech and Formal Writing was about average, but—with groups separately and together—the widest gap was between Informal Speech (53 per cent general acceptability) and Informal Writing (33 per cent). It is interesting to note that of our 457 respondents fewer than sixty claimed to accept in Formal Writing a construction authorized in the works of Shakespeare and other 'classic' writers of English.
>
> (Mittins et al., 1970, p. 85)

Although Mittins et al. do not provide a breakdown of their figures, as Leonard (1932) had done, from their narrative of the results it can be seen that less than 13% of their respondents (<60/457) found the usage acceptable in formal writing. This is more than Leonard's 5%, and may indeed represent a shift in acceptability over the intervening four decades of the sort that Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2020, p. 137; and see below) was expecting to find. The next section reveals what she did find.

The Bridging the Unbridgeable (BtU) survey

In the BtU study reported in Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2013, 2020; and see §4.2.3 above), the examples from the Mittins et al. (1970) survey were repeated, but this time in an online poll with a much smaller number of respondents. This means that the example *These sort of plays need first-class acting* was again included. The results for this example are shown in Figure 4.4 overleaf.[16]

The 86 votes are spread over five registers, but only 5% of respondents found the sentence an acceptable usage in formal writing, with 24% finding it 'unacceptable under any circumstances'. An additional 8% found the usage acceptable in formal speech; Mittins et al. (1970) did not provide a comparable figure. In general, the usage was found acceptable in some circumstances/registers by 75% of the respondents. This would seem to be much higher than the results from both Leonard (1932) and Mittins et al. (1970), and on the face of it would seem to support the contention that the usage as a whole, as opposed to the usage in a particular register, had become more acceptable

16 It should be noted that this poll remains open and, as of 28 November 2023, had eighty-six responses. Online <https://bridgingtheunbridgeable.com/2012/08/24/7th-usage-poll-2/>.

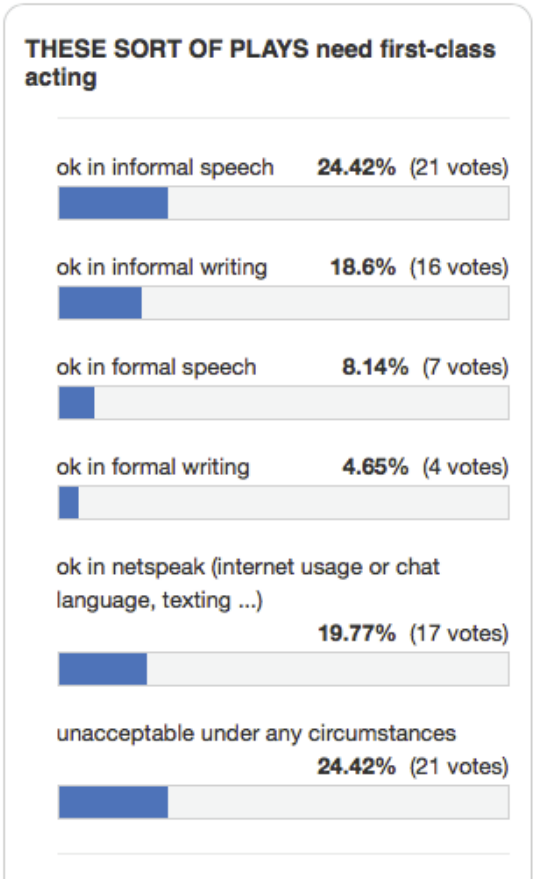

Figure 4.4 Results for *These sort of plays need first-class acting* from the BtU survey

over time. However, although we have no comparable survey data for this example in registers, Mittins et al. do point out that with students it had an average acceptability rating of 45%, and that for informal speech the figure for the whole group was 53%. Marckwardt and Walcott (1938, pp. 50–51) commented that their usage survey results showed that Leonard's attitude survey results were much more conservative than actual usage, as represented in reference books (see §4.2.1 above). Again, it is difficult to draw direct comparisons over time, even with surveys that were intended specifically for that purpose, a problem arising in part from the unknown heterogeneity of the respondents in the online BtU survey.[17]

In the results of the three studies summarised above, there is an at least implicit assumption that the respondents were reacting to the mismatch of number between the plural determiner *these* and the singular species nouns *kind* and *sort*. But, as was shown in Chapter 2, these aren't the only words in the example sentences that can be marked for number. In both example sentences – *Don't get these kind of gloves* and *These sort of plays need first-class acting* – the N2s *gloves* and *plays* are marked for plural. Further, in *These sort of plays need first-class acting* the verb *need* is also marked for plural. None of these studies investigated whether this additional plural marking had an effect on the respondents' decision-making. This is likely a consequence of all three studies choosing to highlight only the determiner (Leonard)

17 Tieken-Boon van Ostade (p.c.) has pointed out that 83 represents the number of responses, not necessarily the number of different respondents, and the same is true, of course, for the current survey.

or only the species noun phrase (Mittins et al. and the BtU studies), an approach also followed in the current study.

COMPARISON WITH THE CURRENT SURVEY

As mentioned in §4.3.2 above, the Mittins et al. (1970) example was also used to introduce the current survey, both as a simple example to start the survey, and to provide a direct comparison with the earlier surveys. In the current survey the results for this example were:

> **These sort of plays** need first-class acting.
> Y = 19; N = 75; DK = 8; T = 102 [N = 74%][18]

These results are broadly in line with those from Mittins et al. (1970), which showed 29% acceptance (i.e. 71% N(O)) overall, but only 13% acceptance (87% N(O)) in formal writing. This result would therefore seem to be at variance with the assumption made in many modern attitude surveys that acceptance rates would tend to increase over time. Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2020), for example, writes about the acceptability of the flat adverb (i.e. *did it quicker / go slow*):

> … it is surprising to see a decrease of acceptability of the flat adverb in the course of time rather than an increase, as would be expected in view of the process of colloquialisation which, according to Mair (2006), characterised the development of the English language in the course of the twentieth century. According to this process, one would expect features which used to be considered only relatively acceptable in informal registers to have become more widely acceptable in other registers as well. This is indeed what we found for quite a few of the Mittins et al. features whose acceptability we looked at after 40 to 50 years' time (see also Ebner 2017).
> (Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2020, pp. 137–138)

But not, it seems, for *these sort of plays*. Table 4.2 shows the three sets of results for this example, plus the result from Leonard (1932) for comparison.

Table 4.2 Comparison of results from the four surveys

Survey	Overall acceptability	Acceptability in formal writing
Leonard (1932)	c. 26%	5%
Mittins et al. (1970)	29%	< 13%
BtU survey	75%	5%
Current survey	19%	19%

18 See §4.4.1 above for an explanation of the symbols used in these results.

Table 4.2 shows that overall acceptability of the number-mismatched species noun phrase has remained quite stable between 1932 and the present, at 19–29%. The one exception to this is the result from the BtU survey at 74%. In a formal register, the level of acceptability ranges from 4–5% for the BtU and Leonard surveys to 13–19% for the Mittins et al. and the current surveys.

There seem to be three processes at work here. One is the issue of more general acceptability over time; another is the usage being accepted in more (formal) registers over time; and a third is that of any greater acceptability of the usage over time being a reflection of the different composition of the survey respondents. However, these are not so much discrete categories as interweaving tendencies. Here, I want to look at one of these: whether the nature of the respondents may have affected the results in the various surveys. I have shown that, whilst 75 of the respondents to the current survey found the Mittins et al. example unacceptable, 19 found it acceptable. Sixty-eight of these 94 respondents (72%) provided personal details. I classified these respondents into one or more of six occupational groups, as follows:

A academic
B businessperson
E editor / writer / translator, etc.
L linguist
S student
T teacher

These are not exclusive categories, so that for example a PhD student in linguistics would be classified as S, A, L. I have counted undergraduates as S, but PhDs as S as well as A (for the full list see Appendix E). So, for the 68 respondents for whom I have personal information, 56 found the example unacceptable (NO) and 12 found it acceptable (YES). How the different groups voted is illustrated in Table 4.3 and Figure 4.5, and is discussed below.

These responses total 94, which is a result of some of the 68 respondents being classified in more than one category, and should not be confused with the total number of different respondents, which was also 94. For all occupational groups, the NO votes outweighed the YES ones, sometimes substantially. The teachers voted NO at 100%, but there were only four of them. The one group that stands out is the editors, who voted NO at 16:1. It was also the editors in Leonard's (1932) survey who placed it "at the very bottom of the list" (1932, p. 129). All other groups in the current study were between 2:1 and 5:1.

Table 4.3 Analysis of the respondents' acceptability judgements on the Mittins et al. example in the current survey

Group	Total responses	'No' responses	'Yes' responses
Academics	30	25 (83%)	5 (17%)
Linguists	21	16 (76%)	5 (24%)
Editors	17	16 (94%)	1 (6%)
Students	17	12 (71%)	5 (29%)
Businesspeople	5	4 (80%)	1 (20%)
Teachers	4	4 (100%)	0 (0%)

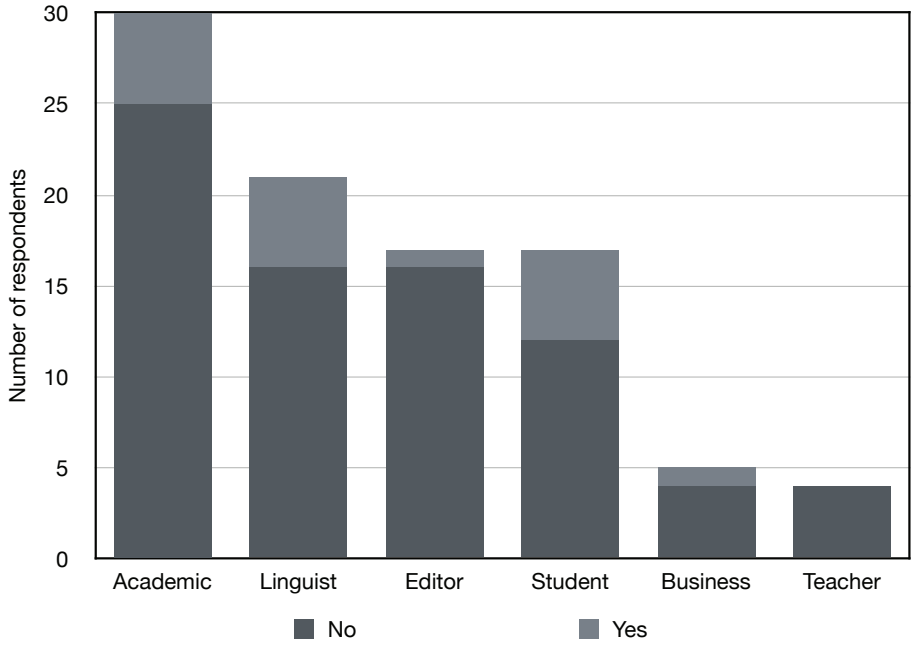

Figure 4.5 Analysis of the respondents' acceptability judgements on the Mittins et al. example in the current survey

Overall, then, for Leonard (1932) more than 75% of the respondents found the usage unacceptable; for Mittins et al. (1970), 71% did so; and in the current survey 74% found the Mittins et al. example unacceptable. This would seem to show remarkable consistency over a period of nine decades, albeit from a relatively consistent respondent base. The one different figure was from the repeat of the Mittins el al. survey carried out online by the BtU group, at 26%, but as mentioned we don't know anything about the make-up of this last group, who also had more response categories to choose from.

Other surveys carried out within the BtU project also showed an increasing acceptance of some usage features over time (see Ebner, 2017, pp. 367–371, §10.3; Kostadinova, 2018a, pp. 243–250, Chapter 8; Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2020, pp. 137–138). However, none of these included the example of interest for this study, and the increased acceptance may well have reflected a widening of the notion of the general public (see §4.2.3 above).

As well as investigating whether there has been a change in the acceptability of the number-mismatched species noun phrase over time, I was also interested in whether there was any gradience in the responses to the current survey (cf. §4.3.2 and §4.4.1 above). This was not possible with the earlier surveys as they used each usage topic in only one example. The potential for gradience is therefore reported in the next section.

4.4.3 Support for a cline of acceptability

I mentioned above (§4.3.2) that one of the issues I was interested in was whether there was any gradience or 'gradient acceptability' in the responses to the different examples, i.e. whether "sentences that share the same or similar structures differ to varying degrees in acceptability" (Francis, 2022, p. 1). What may be judged unacceptable in one (linguistic) context may nonetheless be found to be acceptable in another. This was in large part the reason for including the example sentences in context (see §4.3.3). Here, I am trying to bridge the rating vs. ranking methods for acceptability testing (see e.g. Mohan, 1977, p. 138; Levelt et al., 1977, p. 88), in the sense that, although each example was rated as acceptable or unacceptable, usage as a whole over the twelve examples could also be seen as ranked, i.e. with some examples seen as either more or less acceptable than others. This might seem to be at odds with Pullum's statement that:

> Faced with an instruction to select the grammatical form from a list like this:
> *these kind of things*
> *these kinds of thing*
> *these kinds of things*
> *these kind of things*
> a speaker of English will display complete bewilderment.
> (Pullum, 1974, pp. 68–69)

but that comment was made in the context of distinguishing the role of 'performance factors' from the "grammatical processes and constraints operating in number agreement" (Pullum, 1974, p. 68). Gradience in this sense has not been investigated in earlier surveys, and indeed could not be, as in those surveys each usage problem was presented in only one example sentence.[19] Instead, the earlier surveys demonstrated

19 Note that gradience as used here is different from Kostadinova's 'recognition level'

ranking between the different usage problems (see Ebner, 2017, Chapter 4, for a discussion of this in five usage surveys). To investigate gradience I have therefore ranked the twelve examples from the Stenton Corpus used in the current survey by their acceptability ratings, as shown by their highest percentage responses. These are listed, together with their structural descriptions, in Table 4.4 overleaf.[20] The percentage rankings are also illustrated in Figure 4.6 overleaf.

I mentioned above (§4.4) that, although the total number of respondents was small at 102, I thought that my results were nonetheless reliable. In support of this, it is helpful to compare the figures from 23 January 2017, when there were only 28 respondents, with the final figures. These are shown in Table 4.5 overleaf, again ranked by percentage. What this comparison in Table 4.5 shows is that there is a large degree of similarity between the two sets of responses, with most examples being similarly rated, and no example moving from YES to NO or vice versa. Given that the 28 respondents were a sub-set of the 102, this may not be entirely surprising, but it does show that scaling up the numbers of respondents did not substantially affect the rankings, suggesting that the relatively low number of respondents compared to some other surveys need not be a handicap in the current survey.

What the ranking shows is that the most acceptable example ([6]) is the one where all the variable elements (determiner, species noun, N2, verb) show the same number, in this case singular. This has an approval (YES) rating of 99%. The one dissenting voice (R79, m, 73, BrE ns, retired psychologist[21]) preferred *these types of error*. This response seems odd, as only one type of error is specified in the text (*word order incorrect*; see Appendix D), and there is a contrastive singular anaphoric pronoun *that* later in the same sentence, which was not revised. However, plural *errors* occurs both later in the same sentence and in the previous and following sentences, perhaps suggesting that context did play a role, albeit a misleading one in this case. This topic will be considered further in §4.4.5 below.

The two examples which were least acceptable ([1] at 90% NO and [2] at 88% NO) were the only two examples where there was a number mismatch between the determiner and the species noun: *these kind* and *these type*. The other nine examples ([5], [10], [3], [9], [11], [4], [8], [7], [12]) all had number agreement between the determiner and the species noun, though not necessarily also with the N2 and/or the verb. The question then arises as to whether there were any further patterns evident in these responses.

(2018a, pp. 241–242).

20 I comment on the number marking of the N2 in Appendix G4.

21 See Table E1, Appendix E, for a complete list of the respondents and their details.

Table 4.4 Examples ranked by their acceptability ratings

[6]	this type of error [… was observed] Y = 77; N = 1; DK = 0; T = 78 [Y = 99%] DET.SG + type.SG + of + N.SG/NC [+ V.SG]
[5]	these types of devoicing [occur] Y = 70; N = 6; DK = 3; T = 79 [Y = 89%] DET.PL + type.PL + of + N.NC [+ V.PL]
[10]	these types of knowledge [inform] Y = 67; N = 4; DK = 4; T = 75 [Y = 89%] DET.PL + type.PL + of + N.NC [+ V.PL]
[3]	this kind of language data [offers] Y = 65; N = 13; DK = 1; T = 79 [Y = 82%] DET.SG + kind.SG + of + N + N.PL/NC [+ V.SG]
[9]	that type of goods Y = 57; N = 13; DK = 5; T = 75 [Y = 76%] DET.SG + type.SG + of + N.PL [no V]
[11]	these kinds of law Y = 57; N = 13; DK = 5; T = 75 [Y = 76%] DET.PL + kind.PL + of + N.SG/NC [no V]
[4]	these types of death Y = 54; N = 21; DK = 4; T = 79 [Y = 68%] DET.PL + type.PL + of + N.SG/NC [no V]
[8]	these types of gesture [are … involved] Y = 47; N = 26; DK = 3; T = 76 [Y = 62%] DET.PL + type.PL + of + N.SG/NC + [V.PL]
[7]	this type of fisheries Y = 36; N = 39; DK = 2; T = 77 [N = 51%] DET.SG + type.SG + of + N.PL [no V]
[12]	this type of passives [has … been reported] Y = 29; N = 45; DK = 1; T = 75 [N = 60%] DET.SG + type.SG + of + N.NC/PL [+ V.SG]
[2]	these kind of overt social cues Y = 8; N = 70; DK = 2; T = 80 [N = 88%] DET.PL + kind.SG + of + ADJ + ADJ + N.PL [no V]
[1]	these type of representative arrangements [must … be constructed] Y = 9; N = 79; DK = 0; T = 88 [N = 90%] DET.PL + type.SG + of + ADJ + N.PL [+ V.UM]

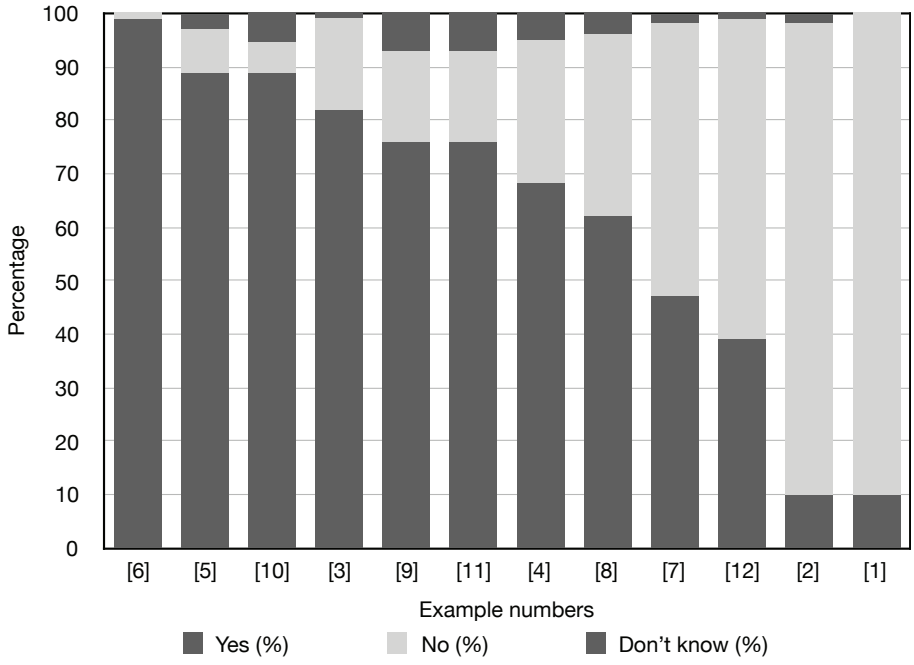

Figure 4.6 Respondents' example ratings ranked by acceptability

Table 4.5 Comparison of the responses in the current survey at two different time-points

Example	102 responses	28 responses
[6]	Y = 99%	Y = 100%
[5]	Y = 89%	Y = 82%
[10]	Y = 89%	Y = 73%
[3]	Y = 82%	Y = 82%
[9]	Y = 76%	Y = 73%
[11]	Y = 76%	Y = 73%
[4]	Y = 68%	Y = 76%
[8]	Y = 62%	Y = 53%
[7]	Y = 51%	Y = 50%
[12]	N = 60%	N = 53%
[2]	N = 88%	N = 82%
[1]	N = 90%	N = 89%

The three examples with the highest acceptability rating (below [6]) were [5] at 89%, [10] at 89% and [3] at 82%:

[5] these types of devoicing [occur]

[10] these types of knowledge [inform]

[3] this kind of language data [offers]

The first two of these examples include an N2 which is typically not marked for number: *devoicing* and *knowledge*. Whilst *devoicing* is not listed, *knowledge* is labelled as 'uncount' in the *Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (*COBUILD*; 2018, ninth edition [1987]), chosen for reference since it provides extensive grammatical information as an EFL dictionary. The *OED* contains no number information for *devoicing* (s.v. *devoice***)**, but does include some senses of *knowledge* with a plural form (s.v. *knowledge***)**. An analysis of the Stenton Corpus reveals that *knowledge* vs. *knowledges* scores 4957:15; *devoicing* vs. *devoicings* scores 147:00. All fifteen examples of *knowledges* came from six law papers. It therefore seems reasonable to categorise both *devoicing* and *knowledge* as being typically unmarked for number, as in examples [5] and [10]. This being the case, in these examples there is no number conflict for the respondents to object to. However, some respondents did not find these examples acceptable, and suggested revised wordings. For example [10], *these types of knowledge* [*inform*], the respondents' suggested revisions were:

this type of knowledge informs[22] (=2)

knowledge of this kind informs (=1)

knowledge of such things (=1)

The three singular versions are a little puzzling, as two different types of knowledge are referred to in the preceding context (see Appendix D). It would therefore seem possible that these respondents regarded the number of the N2 *knowledge* and the verb *informs* as more dominant than that of the determiner and the species noun, i.e. that they regard the N2 as the head of the species noun phrase (see §2.3.3). Only four respondents commented on the example, but the two who preferred *this type of knowledge* (R118, f, 21, AmE nns, student; R124, f, 59, AmE ns, editor) didn't comment further. The other two (R52, m, 74, AmE ns, retired linguist; R113, 55, BrE ns, translator) both found example [10] acceptable, but nevertheless went on to comment that "'knowledge' is never plural in form (another collective)" (R52) and

22 One of the two respondents did not, in fact, change the verb form, but the verb was not included in the instruction to "please revise the phrase in bold" (see §4.3.2). In retrospect, this was an error on my part.

"Sounds OK as there is no plural form of knowledge (is there?)" (R113), which again perhaps lends credence to the idea that the N2 *knowledge* was seen as the head of the species noun phrase for these respondents. One respondent (R100, f, 51, BrE ns, writer) introduced the *N2 of this kind* variant, which was not included in any of the twelve examples in this survey, but was mentioned in the grammars (see Chapter 2) and the usage guides (see Chapter 3). As noted in §3.4.2, this variant tends to be used only in the singular / unmarked form.

Of the other two respondents who commented, R100, who preferred *knowledge of this kind informs*, said "No loss to sense and much more elegant"; R3 (m, 69, BrE ns, editor), who preferred *knowledge of such things*, said: "You can know about different things in different ways, but the knowing itself is one and the same thing – there aren't different types of it." This last comment and rephrasing manages to avoid any potential number conflict by post-modifying *knowledge* with *of this kind*, and this use of *such* as a means of avoiding potential number conflict in a species noun phrase was noted by Biber et al. (1999, p. 258; and see example (24) in §2.3.3).

In the case of example [5], *these types of devoicing* [*occur*], the preferred revisions were:

this type of devoicing (=4)[23]

devoicings like these (=1)

such devoicing occurs (=1)

Here again, the preceding context specifies two different types, or 'contexts' of devoicing (see Appendix D), so it is puzzling that four respondents wanted to change the species noun phrase to singular throughout. The only respondent who said NO and who gave an explanation (R114, m, 60, BrE ns, translator) commented: "It would appear that there's only one type involved." The other comments both centred on whether there was more than one type of devoicing being discussed: "I find this acceptable if it refers to more than one type of devoicing, but unacceptable if it refers to only one type" (R90, m, 57, BrE ns, accountant); and "My 'yes' is dependent on accepting 'types' here, but I think it's the wrong word in this context. The author should have written something like 'such examples of devoicing'" (R3, m, 69, BrE ns, editor). Here again the respondents have adopted the use of *such*, and *like*, to avoid any potential number conflict.

The third example in this group, [3] *this kind of language data* [*offers*], includes the N2 *data*. This is listed in *COBUILD* as either an uncount or plural noun, especially when not being used in a computing context. The *OED* notes:

23 Again, the verb was not included in the re-phrasings.

> The use of *data* as a mass noun became increasingly common from the middle of the 20th cent., probably partly popularized by its use in computing contexts, in which it is now generally considered standard (compare sense 2b and the recent uses cited at datum *n.* 1b, some of which are ambiguous as to grammatical number). However, in general and scientific contexts it is still sometimes regarded as objectionable.
> (*OED*, s.v. *data*)

The use of *data* with a singular or plural verb is also a staple of the usage guides.[24] It too attracted comments in the current survey, and these will be examined in §4.4.4 below. Overall, then, for these three examples there was no number conflict to reject.

The remaining examples ([9], [11], [4], [8], [7], [12]) are in many respects the most revealing. Setting aside example [9] for the moment, if we look again at the ranking, we find that where there is plural number agreement between the determiner and the species noun ([11], [4], [8]), then it doesn't seem to matter if the N2 is singular; the phrase as a whole remains acceptable to the respondents, albeit by a declining majority. However, the 'tipping point' occurs where there is singular number agreement between the determiner and the species noun, but where the N2 is plural ([7], [12]), although [7] is quite finely balanced. Example [9] on the surface looks as though it ought to belong with examples [7] and [12], i.e. with a singular determiner and species noun and a plural N2:

[9] that type of goods [no V]

[7] this type of fisheries [no V]

[12] this type of passives [has … been reported]

Example [9] includes the N2 *goods*, which is listed as a plural noun in *COBUILD*. The *OED* includes:

> In the sense of 'personal property, possessions, *esp.* movable property'.
>
> (a) In *singular*. Now *rare*.
>
> (b) In *plural* with *plural* agreement.
>
> (c) In *plural* with *singular* agreement. *Obsolete*.
> (*OED*, s.v. *good* B III 9 a).

Quirk et al. (1972, p. 169, §4.55) treat *goods* as a *plurale tantum*.[25] Later (1985, p. 301, §5.77), they add that "[t]hey [i.e. *pluralia tantum*] have plural concord". This position

24 See Lukač and Stenton (2023) for a recent survey of the attitudes of copy-editors and proof-readers to the number of *data*.

25 A *plurale tantum* is a noun which appears only in a plural form, often with a specific meaning (see Matthews, 2014, p. 307; Aarts et al., 2014, pp. 310–311); and see Klockmann's (2017a, p. 276) analysis in §2.4.4.

is also taken in Biber et al. (1999, p. 290, §4.5.5D). However, Huddleston and Pullum (2002) note that:

> These [i.e. "plurals denoting aggregates of entities"] are cover-terms for sets of entities of unlike kind: the plurality of the entities again matches the plural form, while their heterogeneity prevents counting. The aggregate nature of the denotation is comparable to that of the non-count singulars given in [6] above [e.g. *furniture*], and the difference in number between the singular and plural forms is difficult to explain in general terms.
> (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002, p. 343)

There would thus seem to be an argument for treating *goods* as 'not plural', even though it would appear to carry plural marking, and this is the approach taken in Baker's usage guide (1770, p. 115; cf. §3.4.2). This also seems to be the view of the (few) respondents who commented on example [9]. Of the seven respondents who did comment, only three mentioned the number of *goods*, and none of those three found it unacceptable. Overall, then, most of the respondents seem content to treat *goods* as non-plural, despite its apparent plural marking.

Given this potential difficulty with the grammatical number of *goods*, it is surprising that an entry for *goods* does not feature more often in the usage guides. In the seventy-seven guides in the HUGE database, only twelve include a note on *goods*, and only six of those comment on its number: Anon (1856 [*Live*]), Turck Baker (1910), Evans and Evans (1957), Follett (1966), Sutcliffe (1994), and Peters (2004). These guides all treat *goods* as plural, apart from Follett (1966, p. 149), who notes that it is "plural in form and meaning … [but] tend[s] to be forced into the singular".

If, then, *goods* is interpreted as 'not plural', and possibly even as singular, its position in the cline is explained: there is no number conflict to correct. Given that assumption, on the evidence of the responses gathered in the current survey, it does seem possible to identify gradience in the decisions of the respondents, and therefore to posit a cline of acceptability of number variance in the species noun phrase, as follows:

> Most acceptable is where the determiner, the species noun, the N2 (and the verb) all share the same number (pattern [i] below).
>
> Least acceptable is where there is a number mismatch between the determiner and the species noun [iii].
>
> In between are those examples where the determiner and species noun match in number, but where they don't match the number of the N2 [ii]. This group can itself be sub-divided, so that:

MORE ACCEPTABLE is where the determiner and species noun match for number, and the N2 is not marked for number or is singular (as I have shown, these two are not always easy to distinguish) [iia]

LESS ACCEPTABLE is where the determiner and species noun are singular, and the N2 is plural [iib].

Examples of these patterns are listed below in order of acceptability:

[i] this type of error [… was observed]

[iia] these kinds of law

these types of gesture

[iib] this type of fisheries

[iii] these kind of overt social cues

This cline closely matches the treatment of the species noun phrase in the usage guides (see the examples listed in Appendices C1 and C2). The usage guides overwhelmingly identified pattern [iii] as the problem, with 66 out of 78 examples in 39 different guides highlighting THESE KIND (and see Appendix G6 for a note on *of* here). In terms of the usage guide recommendations, 107 out of 128 examples in 39 different guides showed pattern [i] as the preferred variant; 21 examples showed pattern [ii], with 8 examples of [iia] and 13 of [iib]. There were no examples of pattern [iii]. There is thus a very similar approach to number agreement in the species noun phrase between the usage guide writers and the respondents to the current survey. It would also seem, in their practice at least, that the respondents of the current survey do not subscribe to the post-determiner analysis of *kind of* offered by e.g. Denison, as described in §2.4.1.

4.4.4 The respondents' revisions

The survey respondents were asked to provide an alternative to those examples which they found unacceptable (i.e. if they answered NO; see §4.3.2 above). These revisions can be seen as the respondents' equivalents to the recommendations/prescriptions made in the usage guides (cf. §3.4.2). Here, I investigate those examples where the majority response was NO, starting with the example with the highest NO response, [1]. This is shown below together with an analysis of its number assignment.

[1] **these type of representative arrangements** [must … be constructed]

Y = 9; N = 79; DK = 0; T = 88 [N = 90%]

DET.PL + type.SG + of + ADJ + N.PL [+ V.UM]

In [1] there is a plural determiner (*these*), followed by a singular species noun (*type*), a plural N2 (*arrangements*) and a verb (*must ... be constructed*) which is unmarked for number.[26] The 79 respondents who voted NO offered the following alternatives (it should be noted that the respondents were specifically asked to revise the phrase in bold; see §4.3.2 above):

these types of representative arrangements (=44)

this type of representative arrangements (=19)

this type of representative arrangement (=17)

this type of arrangement (=1)

these types of arguments (=1)

representative arrangements of this type (=2)[27]

The preferred option was thus for all three parts of the species noun phrase, i.e. the determiner, the species noun and the N2, to show the same number marking, either all plural (=44) or all singular / unmarked (=17). Next was for the determiner and species noun to have the same number marking (singular), but for the N2 to remain plural (=19). I would also include *this type of arrangement* as all singular, with *representative* being omitted as irrelevant to the issue in question or an error; similarly with *these types of arguments* as all plural, with the substitution of *arguments* possibly being an error. There were also two respondents who avoided the number conflict by using *arrangements of this type*, a variant which was listed in both the grammars (§2.3) and some of the usage guides (§3.4), but which was not included in the survey, which concentrated on the THIS KIND OF variant. The revisions can thus be conflated as follows:

these types of representative arrangements (=45)

this type of representative arrangements (=19)

this type of representative arrangement (=18)

representative arrangements of this type (=2)

What seems to be the case here is a preference for number agreement across the (three parts of the) species noun phrase, either all plural or all singular (45 + 18 = 63), then for agreement between the determiner and the species noun as singular but with a plural N2 (=19), and then for the two revisions to post-modification of

26 Whether *representative* is treated as an adjective or a nominal does not affect the analysis here (and see Appendix D for this example in context).

27 Where the respondents included the verb, it was unchanged.

the N2 with *of this type*. The constant here, however, is that in every case (=84)[28] there is number agreement between the determiner and the species noun. Where there is number agreement between the determiner and the N2 (45 + 18 = 63), this also includes number agreement with the species noun, and there are no examples of number agreement between the determiner and the N2 which do not also include the species noun.

A similar pattern emerges with the other majority NO examples. All the revisions, including those of the respondents who voted NO when the majority voted YES, can be seen in Appendix D, together with some notes on their preferences. In each case the pattern was similar to that seen for [1] above, i.e. a preference for:

> number agreement across the three parts of the species noun phrase (either singular / unmarked or plural)
>
> number agreement between the determiner and the species noun (with the N2 being either singular / unmarked or plural)
>
> rephrasing as e.g. *N2 of this type* (with the N2 being either plural or singular / unmarked for number)

In every case bar one, there was number agreement between the determiner and the species noun, and in the one exceptional case the respondent offered no further comment. These responses are very much in line with those seen in the previous section. This is perhaps not surprising, as these analyses essentially give two views of the same examples from the same group of respondents. It also follows that these responses are again broadly in line with the recommendations of the usage guide writers. None of the respondents mentioned a usage guide, or indeed any other reference material, but this may be in part because they were not specifically asked to do so. In a similar survey carried out in 2020 and reported on in Lukač and Stenton (2023), respondents were asked about their reference choices, and they provided a large number, from the very specific (Fowler's *Modern English Usage*, first edition) to the very general (colleagues, Google, Internet), but by far the most popular reference was the *Chicago Manual of Style*, whose 'Grammar and Usage' section was written by Bryan Garner, who is also the author of a usage guide (Garner, 1998) which is included in this study. The Lukač and Stenton survey was, however, directed specifically at copy-editors and proof-readers.

In addition to those respondents who voted YES or NO, there were also the D(ON'T) K(NOW)s. In total, there were only 30 DK responses, which came from 21 respondents. Of those 21, 18 completed 100% of the survey questions. The number of DKs per respondent ranged from 1 (=9), 2 (=4), and 3 (=3) to 4 (=2). Relatively few of the

28 There are more re-phrasings than respondents as some respondents listed more than one.

DKs included a comment, possibly because they were not encouraged to (see §4.3.2 above), but of the five respondents who did comment, four of the comments were on the number of the N2: *grounds*, *law*, *gesture* and *data*. These and other comments will be investigated in the next section.

4.4.5 The respondents' comments

The survey respondents were also invited to comment on the examples and their revisions to them. This in practice tended to restrict the comments to those who found an example unacceptable (i.e. those who voted NO), but in some cases other respondents commented as well. Respondents were asked to comment as I was interested in the reasons why they found an example acceptable or not, and in particular whether register or context played a part in their decisions. In practice, the number of responses was too small to draw any conclusions from, so here I will simply present some of the responses which I found interesting and which could usefully be investigated further. The analyses presented here will focus on whether the respondents addressed the grammar or the meaning of the example sentences, or whether, as seen above, they preferred to rewrite the example (SYNTAX VS. SEMANTICS VS. REWRITES); on whether they considered that the example might not be appropriate for an academic journal, but might be perfectly acceptable in a more informal context (REGISTER); and on whether the linguistic context of the example as presented influenced their decision-making (CONTEXT).

SYNTAX VS. SEMANTICS VS. REWRITES

For this analysis, I allocated each comment to one of three broad categories: syntax, semantics and rewrites. This categorisation arose from analysing the comments, and was not decided upon in advance. The categories themselves broke down into sub-categories, so that, for example, 'syntax' would include:

number agreement of DET + SN + N2

number agreement of DET + SN

number agreement of SN + N2

number of N2

'semantics' would include:

meaning of N2

meaning of SN

context

and 'rewrites' includes the various rephrasing mentioned above. Examples of each of these responses are given in Table 4.6. The numbers in parentheses show the number of responses in that category; the numbers in brackets refer to the survey examples.

The numbers of comments in each category were broadly comparable: syntax (=44), semantics (=41) and rewrites (=30). The comments on syntax were fairly evenly distributed between number agreement between the determiner, and/or the species noun, and/or the N2 (=24) and the number of the N2 itself (=20). For the latter, most comments were on whether *data* (=12) and *goods* (=3) should be treated as singular or plural (cf. §4.4.3 above); the rest (=5) were on whether *gesture*, *knowledge*, *law* and *passive* could be treated as mass nouns, i.e. as unmarked for number. The remainder of the syntax comments dealt with whether there should be number agreement between the determiner and the species noun (=11), between the determiner, the species noun and the N2 (=8), and between the species noun and the N2 (=5). There were no comments on number agreement between the determiner and the N2. This seems to be a common feature of the analyses of the current survey. The semantics comments were generally about whether the N2 was referring to one or more than one type of N2 (=31); a further nine comments drew on the linguistic context in support of treating the N2 as referring to one or to more than one. A single comment referred to the choice between *kind* and *type*: "I prefer the word 'type' instead of the word 'kind' in this context" [3] (R69, m, 80, AusE ns, editor; this chimes in with Sayce's, 2006, pp. 61–63, comments about the use of *type* in §3.4.2: RECOMMENDATION). The third group is somewhat heterogeneous in that it includes those comments which suggest that the example would be better if more or less substantially rewritten (=30).

REGISTER

Previous surveys have included register as a variable, typically asking respondents in which register an example would be appropriate, e.g. informal/formal speech or writing. For the current survey, the respondents had been told that all of the examples came from just one formal register – academic writing – but there were nonetheless a few register-specific comments from the respondents. I include just two of these below for illustration, with emphasis added in bold:

> Nouns and demonstrative adjectives must agree in number and gender, particularly in a **formal** context such as this. In **speech**, 'these sort …' is not uncommon.
>
> [1] (R50, m, 68, BrE ns, writer)

> Since you said it was for a **journal**, I would make these changes but if it were more **informal**, my sense is data is being re-analyzed almost as a non-count or perhaps singular w/o a plural.
>
> [3] (R54, m, 67, AmE ns, professor)

Table 4.6 Examples of the respondents' comments by category

Categories			Examples of respondents' comments
Syntax (44)	Number agreement (24)	DET + SN (11)	"The pluralization of sort/kind with a plural demonstrative is mandatory in my dialect." [2] (R77, 18, AmE ns, student)
		DET + SN + N2 (8)	"If plural marking, then in every position in the syntagma." [7] (R56, f, 29, BrE nns, lecturer)
		SN + N2 (5)	"Hmm. singular 'type' seems to accord better with singular 'fishery'." [7] (R125, BrE ns, translator)
	Number of N2 (20)	singular/plural (15)	"This is because data has lost plurality for me." [3] (R45, m, 29, AmE ns, student) "It squeaks in, as there is not a singular form for 'goods'." [9] (R3, m, 69, BrE ns, editor) "It looks as if 'law' is used here in a rather generic sense. Perhaps in that case the singular is fine." [11] (R62, f, 64, BrE nns, professor)
		mass (5)	"'Data' being a mass noun here." [3] (R92, f, 21, BrE ns, student)
Semantics (41)	One or more types (31)		"Would not be acceptable if it refers to deaths of only one type." [4] (R122, m, 57, BrE ns, accountant)
	Context (9)		"Again, I sense that technically it should be 'this type of passive', but it sounds OK as it is, and 'passives' ties in better with the previous sentence. Better continuity." [12] (R113, f, 55, BrE ns, translator) "'Representative' reduces the agreement problem for me." [1] (R124, f, 59, AmE ns, editor)
	SN (1)		"I prefer the word 'type' to the word 'kind' in this context." [3] (R69, m, 80, AmE ns, editor)
Rewrite (30)			"This is ambiguous. The preceding passage covers (seemingly) two types of death. If the phrase in question seeks to make a differentiation between the two, all well and good. But to make a 'positive' differentiation? In favour of, or for or against, which type? After several attempts I have bamboozled myself :-(." [4] (R89, m, 63, BrE ns, proof-reader)

CONTEXT

I have already suggested that context seems to have played a part in the respondents' decision-making (see §4.4.4 above). Here, I want to see whether it was explicitly mentioned by them. Only 14 of the 102 respondents did comment, so again I will simply list a few representative examples

[1] these type of representative arrangements

> Here, unlike the earlier example (these type of plays), it seems that the context holds more genera. I took the earlier example to be concerned with many plays of the same type. Here, it looks like we're dealing with many types.
> (R51, m, 65, AmE ns, professor: NO)

[8] These types of gesture are

> We are speaking of two types of non-representational gesture. 'These types of gesture' is correct.
> (R87, m, 78, BrE ns, retired teacher: YES)

[The previous sentence starts with *Of the non-representational gestures, the two …* (see Appendix D).]

[12] This type of passives has

> Again, I sense that technically it should be 'this type of passive', but it sounds OK as it is, and 'passives' ties in better with the previous sentence. Better continuity.
> (R113, f, 55, BrE ns, translator: YES)

It would seem, then, that some of the respondents were sufficiently influenced by the context in making their assessment to comment on it, although the numbers are small. Nine out of the twelve examples were commented on, perhaps suggesting that other respondents were similarly influenced, but did not comment, especially if they voted YES or DK. The alternative, of course, is that they were simply unaware of the contextual influence. It would be helpful in a repetition of this survey to encourage the YES and DK voters to comment as well, and to see if they were indeed overtly aware of the context in their decision-making.

4.5 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, continuing the practice of the Bridging the Unbridgeable (BtU) project, I presented the first part of my investigation into the third group studied in that project: the general public. I did so by conducting an online attitude survey of

what respondents thought about a set of examples featuring number variation in the species noun phrase. The examples were all drawn from manuscripts in the Stenton Corpus of International Academic English, which were intended for publication in a number of academic journals.

I started by describing the distinction between an attitude survey and a usage survey (§4.2), and then presented three previous attitude surveys: those of Leonard (1932; cf. §4.2.1) in the US; Mittins et al. (1970; cf. §4.2.2) in the UK; and the BtU surveys (2013–2020; cf. §4.2.3), in particular their online survey which was by definition not limited to any one region. In all three surveys, I was primarily interested in the responses to just two examples: *Don't get these kind of gloves* (Leonard, 1932) and *These sort of plays need first-class acting* (Mittins et al., 1970; Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2013, 2020). The latter example was also used to introduce the current survey. The focus of these examples was to ascertain whether the respondents objected to the apparent mismatch of number between the determiner (*these*, *These*) and the species noun (*kind*, *sort*). The responses to these examples in the earlier surveys and in the current one also enabled me to take a diachronic perspective on the attitudes of the general public to number agreement in the species noun phrase over a period of eighty-one years (cf. §4.4). In particular, I investigated whether there had been an increase in acceptability over time, as might have been expected following the argument of Mair (2006).

The current survey introduced a number of procedural innovations. First of all, it tested the same usage topic – number agreement across the species noun phrase – with multiple examples, thirteen in all (§4.3.2). Secondly, those examples were presented in context, rather than as a single sentence (§4.3.3). A third aspect of the current survey, highlighting the usage in question (§4.3.4), has been criticised and might appear to be falling out of favour in usage surveys. The number of similar examples was extremely useful in terms of analysing the responses and in providing the basis for the suggestion of a cline of acceptability (§4.4.3). The use of the extended context for the examples was successful in that, judging by the comments of some of the respondents, it might have been influential in the making of the acceptability judgements, leading to a rise in the percentage of the respondents who found the examples acceptable in a formal context. Both of these issues require further specific investigation. One aspect of these procedural innovations, however, is that they didn't seem to have had much impact on the overall response to the usage issue being tested, in that, apart from the BtU survey, the acceptability of the usage in formal writing has remained more or less consistent for nine decades.

With regard to the first issue, the acceptability rate over time, it was found that overall there had been no substantial change in the acceptability of *Don't get these kind of gloves* / *These sort of plays need first class acting* (cf. §4.4). Leonard (1932)

found 26% acceptability; Mittins et al. (1970) found 29% acceptability; and the current survey found 19% acceptability, albeit only in formal writing as that was the only register considered. The outlier here is the BtU survey, in which the usage was found to be acceptable in some registers by 75% of the respondents. The results were slightly different for levels of acceptability in a formal context: Leonard (1932) found 5% acceptability; Mittins et al. (1970) found less than 13% acceptability; the BtU survey 5%; and the current survey 19%.

In terms of the current survey, and especially its contextual basis, a major finding was that I could indeed identify gradience in the responses, which leads to the positing of a cline of acceptability, as shown in §4.4.3 above. Broadly speaking, the results suggest that respondents find most acceptable those examples where there is number agreement between the determiner and the species noun, and they find least acceptable those examples where there is a number mismatch between the determiner and the species noun. Those examples which included number agreement/disagreement fell between these two poles. This analysis was, perhaps not surprisingly, supported by those survey respondents who provided a re-phrasing of the species noun phrase (cf. §4.4.4), as this was looking at the same material by the same people, but from a different viewpoint.

This cline of acceptability closely matches the treatment of the species noun phrase in the usage guides (see the examples listed in Appendices C1 and C2). Also, as noted in the 'Concluding remarks' for Chapter 3 (cf. §3.7), the usage guide explanations in terms of the mismatch of grammatical number also tie in closely with the descriptions of the modern reference grammars in Chapter 2.

The next chapter features the second part of the contribution of the general public, in the form of a group of academic authors. It also provides the usage component of the survey by investigating a corpus of writing: the Stenton Corpus of International Academic English.

To add a final note on procedure, there were a number of matters that arose during the course of this online attitude survey, in part because it was the first component of the current study to be addressed. The survey was initially intended as a pilot study, to be followed by an attitude survey of all the 1,657 authors whose manuscripts were included in the Stenton Corpus (cf. §5.2.3). However, once the survey had been closed and the data collected and analysed, it became clear that the larger undertaking would make a study in itself, and was well beyond the scope of the current study. However, given the findings of the current survey (see above), in particular the establishing of a cline of acceptability, and the attitudes revealed in the survey, especially their links with the reference grammars described in Chapter 2 and the usage guides analysed in Chapter 3 (as well as with the corpus analysis to be seen in Chapter 5), this need not be viewed negatively. The particular survey procedures that could be refined are:

including within the survey examples of the species noun variants OF THIS KIND OF N2 and THIS N2 KIND;

using the examples in context with some respondents and single-sentence examples with others;

highlighting the species noun phrase with some respondents, both those with context-based examples and those with single-sentence examples, and not highlighting with others;

asking all of the respondents to comment on the examples;

gathering more data on the respondents in the different groups in a manner that would be susceptible to statistical analysis.

This, I believe, would make an interesting project for further research.