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

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# 6 Conclusions

## 6.1 Introduction

At the end of this study, have we actually learnt anything about number agreement in the species noun phrase? I set out to examine how three groups of people – the linguists, the prescriptivists and the general public – both practise and consider number agreement in the species noun phrase in English, in phrases like *this type of error*, *these sorts of errors*, *these kind of errors* and *errors of this kind*, where *type(s)*, *sort(s)* and *kind(s)* are the species nouns. The main focus of the study was on this variation in number marking in the species noun phrase in a corpus of academic English writing in the historical context of usage guide advice from 1770 to 2010. These usage guide writers – the prescriptivists – are included in the BtU project’s Hyper Usage Guide of English (HUGE) database. In particular, I investigated whether and how the variant typically criticised and proscribed in many of these usage guides – *these kind of N2*<sup>1</sup> – with its mix of plural determiner and singular species noun, is used by the authors in the Stenton Corpus of International Academic English, or whether those authors prefer the prescribed variants which show number agreement between their constituents – *this sort of N2*, *these types of N2*, *N2 of this kind*. In addition to the practices of the general public as represented by the academic authors in the Stenton Corpus, I also carried out an online survey of a self-selecting group of respondents to determine their attitudes to the variant forms of the species noun phrase. These variant forms were established by reference to the third group of people in the BtU project – the linguists – represented here by three major late-twentieth-century reference grammars, and by a number of studies describing those variants from several theoretical standpoints.

The topic of number agreement in the species noun phrase was chosen for this study because this was a usage issue that frequently arose during my career as a copy-editor, particularly when I was working on books with a number of chapters contributed by different authors. In these books, both the academic editors and I were keen to establish a consistent approach to this and other usage variants. The idea of analysing this usage across a broader range of authors arose out of an initially informal corpus that I was then in the process of compiling from the manuscripts of papers submitted to Cambridge University Press for publication in some of their law and language journals. Having these papers in unedited manuscript form in a small corpus was a useful reference source during my copy-editing since it enabled me to check the

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<sup>1</sup> N2 here and elsewhere indicates the second noun in the phrase, the species noun itself being the N1.

practice of a large group of authors on a number of usage and stylistic issues, which I could then compare with the advice I found in the usage guides, dictionaries and grammars that I was also using for reference. Once formalised as the Stenton Corpus of International Academic English, this corpus was used to provide a set of baseline data for the current study as a whole (and see Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2020, p. 206, for more on this use of baseline data).

The HUGE database of seventy-seven usage guides was established as a basis for the investigations carried out within the BtU project (see especially Ebner, 2017, Kostadinova, 2018a, Lukač, 2018a, and Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2020).<sup>2</sup> Access to the text of these seventy-seven usage guides, a huge increase on the half-dozen or so of my own guides, enabled me to make a much more systematic analysis of the position of those usage guides on the topic of number agreement in the species noun phrase, and of how their advice might be reflected in the usage of the authors in the Stenton Corpus.

The addition of an online attitude survey into what members of the public thought about the variant forms of the species noun phrase provided more evidence of modern attitudes to those variants. However, comparing the results of the current survey with those from three earlier surveys, published in the 1930s, the 1970s and the 2010s, also enabled me to take a historical perspective on the variant usages. The expectation in this comparison, following the argument presented in Mair (2006, esp. §6.2) that English became more colloquial over the course of the twentieth century, was that the general public would have become more accepting of usage variations over time.

This concluding chapter brings together the results from these different strands of the current study. In fact, it proved to be the case that there was a great deal of harmony in how these three groups of people studied – the linguists, the prescriptivists and the general public – in practice viewed number agreement in the species noun phrase. The results from my analyses of the three groups will be considered in more detail below, but first, given this harmony in the views of the three groups studied, it is important to comment on why the variant forms of the species noun phrase are considered to be a usage problem. First, as mentioned above, in my career as a copy-editor, this variation was a topic which was often discussed, especially with the academic editors of volumes of papers contributed by different authors, with a view to adopting a ‘consistent’ usage. Second, the variant forms are a topic presented in many of the usage guides in HUGE, and have been from the earliest dating from 1770 to the latest from 2010. Third, one variant of the species noun phrase, e.g. *these kind of errors*, has been the topic of previous attitude surveys, including Leonard (1932), Mittins et al. (1970), and within the BtU project itself in the twenty-first century.

2 A list of publications arising from the BtU project can be found at <<https://bridgingtheunbridgeable.com/publications/>> (last accessed 2 June 2023).

In this study, the grammarians were found to present a description based on the ‘agreement rule’, which sets out that, in formal writing at least, the number marking on the determiner and the species noun should match, i.e. *this kind* and *these kinds*. They also noted that in informal writing and conversation this rule was often not followed, and that e.g. *these kind* was commonly used. The usage guide writers studied generally presented a similar analysis, recommending *this kind* and *these kinds* and criticising *these kind*, but they were typically more judgemental than the linguists in their evaluations and less inclined to tolerate what they saw as the ungrammatical variants. This is perhaps to be expected in guides which are consulted by readers and writers precisely because they are unsure of what is considered to be best practice. Those members of the general public who took part in the survey also proved to be intolerant of the ungrammatical *these kind* variant, again preferring *this kind* and *these kinds*. The academic writers showed similar preferences in that they provided only six instances of the *these kind* variant out of a total of 1,145 examples. All the groups studied were, however, more tolerant of number variation when the second noun (N2) and the verb were included in their examples, e.g. *these kinds of problem* and *these kind of military contributions are*. In essence, then, the usage guide writers and the linguists seemed to agree on how number is and should be realised in the species noun phrase, and the general public seemed to follow the pronouncements of the usage guide writers. However, a more detailed look at the data showed that this practice was not as clear-cut as it might have seemed.

## 6.2 The linguists

In Chapter 2, following a presentation of the different structures featuring the variant forms of the species noun phrase (§2.2), I presented the views of the linguists, as evidenced by the descriptions provided in three modern reference grammars (§2.3), and by a number of theoretical analyses which aimed to extend these descriptions (§2.4). The reference grammars presented an essentially traditional approach to number agreement in the species noun phrase, based on the ‘agreement rule’, with the determiner (DET), the species noun (SN), and the second noun (N2) in the *of*-phrase showing number agreement between these three constituents, e.g. *that kind of thing* and *these kinds of things*. In these examples, the species noun (*kind(s)*) is seen as the head of the noun phrase, with a following prepositional *of*-phrase. As the head, it governs, or determines, any number marking on the verb when the species noun phrase functions as the subject of a clause: e.g. *Those kinds of parties are dangerous*. However, the grammars consulted also noted that the number of the determiner sometimes co-varied with the number of the N2, especially when the DET and N2 were both marked for plural and the species noun was seen as singular, or as

unmarked for number: e.g. *these kind of questions*. This is analysed by them as the result of the species noun being re-classified from count to non-count. This anomalous usage was seen by the grammarians as informal, or restricted to speech – a register variant – whilst the number mismatch could be avoided by adopting the variant *N2 of this kind*, where the N2 can be marked for plural and where *of this kind* functions as a post-modifier to the N2: e.g. *questions of this kind*. Under this analysis there is therefore no number conflict between the determiner and the species noun, nor between the determiner and the N2.

Although the species noun, as head of the noun phrase in e.g. *these kind of N2*, would generally determine number agreement with any verb, apparent exceptions to this can be found in, e.g. *Those kind of parties are dangerous*, where the species noun *kind* is singular but the verb *are* is plural. This is explained by some authors in terms of the ancillary concepts of ‘notional concord’ and ‘proximity’, i.e. the number of the verb is determined by the number of the noun closest to it (*parties*) by ‘attraction’, rather than by the syntax of the clause. In such cases the N2 (*parties*) functions as the head of the noun phrase, and thus also determines the plural number of the determiner (*Those*). Here, *kind of* behaves like a (post-)determiner, i.e. it follows another, central determiner (*Those*), and the whole phrase (*Those kind of*) then pre-modifies the N2 *parties*.<sup>3</sup>

This distinction between a species noun being followed by a prepositional *of*-phrase and *kind of* functioning as a post-determiner underlies the theoretical studies discussed in the second part of Chapter 2 (§2.4). Although the descriptions differed in detail, at least in part because of their different theoretical orientations, fundamentally two of the main variants described in the reference grammars – *these kinds of* and *these kind of* – were analysed not as grammatical vs. ungrammatical, nor as register variants, but as different structures with different meanings. In these analyses, singular *kind* was re-classified as an uncount or mass noun, or treated as numberless in a three-way system of singular vs. plural vs. numberless. Unfortunately, these potentially interesting approaches could not be tested in the current study because of a lack of examples of e.g. *these kind of* in the Stenton Corpus: only six examples out of a total of 1,145 (0.5%) (and cf. §6.5 below). For the linguists, then, an initially straightforward analysis of *these kinds of* vs. *these kind of* being grammatical vs. ungrammatical was expanded and explained in terms of both grammar (proximity, numberlessness) and register (formal vs. informal).

3 This analysis of *kind of* as a post-determiner clearly does not apply to the variant *N2 of this kind*, which must therefore be seen as a separate structure in these analyses.

### 6.3 The prescriptivists

In Chapter 3, I presented two analyses of the usage guides in the HUGE database of the Bridging the Unbridgeable (BtU) project (§3.2). The first analysis addresses a common criticism of such guides, i.e. that they are often compiled by lay writers who show no appreciation of the work of professional linguists, nor indeed of other language scholars. Such usage guide writers are sometimes seen as making up their rules as they go along, hence the somewhat negative connotations of calling them the ‘prescriptivists’ in both the present study and the context in which it was conducted. This view is exemplified in what Peters (2020, p. 616) sees as “[t]he lack of lateral referencing in many usage books”. I showed in §3.3 that neither of these claims holds for the guides used in this study, in that many of the usage guide writers did refer to grammars and dictionaries, and indeed to other usage guides. This matches the finding of Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2020, pp. 15, 153–161). Also of note here was that the usage guide writers themselves were often critical of especially earlier grammarians and lexicographers.

The second analysis of the usage guides addressed a set of questions raised by Straaijer, who compiled the HUGE database, on the life-cycle of usage guide topics (§§3.4–3.6). These were:

*When does a certain usage become problematic, or perceived as such, and when does a certain usage stop being (perceived as) problematic or disputed? In other words, when do usage problems ‘begin’ and ‘end’? And which usage problems persist? Another aspect is the discussion of usage problems in usage guides. Questions are: Does the discussion of specific usage problems change, and if so, in what way? And are there differences in usage advice for different varieties of English?*

(Straaijer, 2015, p. 2)

I showed that number agreement in the species noun phrase was a topic that had featured in the usage guides in this study from the first (Baker, 1770, 1779) to the last (Taggart, 2010), and continued to be covered in more recent guides (Butterfield, 2015; Garner, 2022), so it certainly persisted. This does not, however, imply that all the usage guides in HUGE saw this as a usage problem. Of the seventy-seven usage guides in HUGE, forty-seven (61%) saw it as a sufficient problem to include a section on it. For those forty-seven guides, the presentation of the variant usages remained consistent over the years, especially in what was seen as the main problem (the exemplification or proscription), i.e. the number mismatch in e.g. *these kind of N2*. Typically, in the usage guides, this proscription is matched with a prescription, or recommendation, of the preferred variant, and sometimes with an explanation of why the proscription is to be avoided. It should be noted, though, that whilst these

forty-seven guides did include a section on the species noun phrase, not all of them saw it as a problem. Four of the guides, whilst recognising that their readers might expect to find a treatment of the different variants, nonetheless found all those variants acceptable in standard usage.

Most of the guides that did find some variants problematic highlighted the seeming mismatch of number between the determiner and the species noun in e.g. *these kind* as the problem (exemplification or proscription), preferring instead *these kinds* and *this kind* (recommendation or prescription). This ties in with the agreement rule presented in the reference grammars (cf. 6.2 above). Also linking the usage guides with the reference grammars was the observation that the ungrammatical variants are more likely to be found in informal writing and in speech, with more formal registers preferring number agreement. I could find no differences in the usage guides between British and American English, the two varieties that feature in the HUGE database. However, as was the case with the reference grammars, once the discussion moved beyond the determiner and the species noun, more variation in number marking was found to be acceptable. For example, various usage guides accepted *this kind of things*, *these kinds of food* and *these kind of trees*, all with mixed number marking. When the species noun phrase functions as the subject of a clause, and number marking on the verb becomes relevant, we again find a number of variants that were judged to be acceptable. For example, *this sort of men is*, *cars of this kind are*, *these kinds of tree are*, *this sort of men are* and *these kind of men are* all feature in one or more of the usage guides as examples of acceptable usage. A number of the usage guides also used the concepts of proximity and attraction in their explanations of some of these variant forms.

Insofar as there have been changes in the discussion over the years, an analysis of those guides which have been through multiple editions (§3.6) showed that the later editions offered a little more in the way of explanation and description of the problem, and of the use of the variants in different contexts, but this description and explanation was also a feature of some of the earlier editions. There was thus no evidence from the guides as a whole that the number-mismatched usage had become more acceptable over time. However, based on the findings of this study, the usage guides could usefully include more advice on the options available for avoiding apparent number conflict, as practised by the authors in the Stenton Corpus (cf. §5.6).

In general, then, the usage guides considered *these kinds of N2* to be more appropriate in more formal writing and speaking, whilst *these kind of N2* was acknowledged to be common in conversation and in informal writing, i.e. a register difference. This was also the view taken in the descriptions presented in the modern reference grammars analysed in Chapter 2 (cf. §6.2 above). It would thus seem that the analysis of number variation in the species noun phrase could be seen as one of those examples where



Huddleston and Pullum's observation (2002, p. 6) that there is in practice no reason why the linguists' reference grammars and the usage guides "should not agree on what they say about the topics they both treat" was broadly borne out.

## 6.4 The general public: the attitude survey

The third set of people in this study was the general public, and they were also represented by two different groups. The first included those who chose to take part in an online survey of their attitudes to number variation in the species noun phrase, and who are discussed here; the second comprised those authors who submitted papers to a number of academic journals published by Cambridge University Press, who are discussed below in §6.5.

In Chapter 4 I presented the results of an attitude survey on the acceptability of a number of short texts which included a species noun phrase, e.g. *these sort of plays*, *this type of error*, whose component parts sometimes showed a seeming mismatch of number. This survey introduced a number of procedural innovations. To the best of my knowledge, this was the first study to investigate attitudes to just one usage topic – number agreement in the species noun phrase – using multiple examples, instead of the more typical practice of using just one example of each of a number of topics, a feature of the three earlier surveys reviewed in that chapter (§4.2). The survey was also innovative in presenting each example in a substantial, typically three-sentence, context, instead of as a single sentence. This was to allow the respondents to use contextual clues in their determination of whether an example was acceptable to them. It was expected that having this context available might result in more people finding an example acceptable, as they would be able to resolve any indeterminacy of meaning they might find in a short single-sentence example.

The respondents were asked about the acceptability of twelve example sentences in context, each of which included a variant of the species noun phrase. They overwhelmingly favoured 'traditional' number agreement between the determiner and the species noun, e.g. *this type of error* (99% accepted), and equally overwhelmingly rejected the ungrammatical *these type of representative arrangements* (90% rejected), and these respondents were therefore in broad agreement with the descriptions given in the reference grammars, and with the prescriptions given in most of those usage guides which included an entry on the species noun phrase (§4.4).

However, it was the responses to the examples between these two extremes that resulted in an unexpected finding: the judgements of the respondents demonstrated gradience, which can be observed in a cline of acceptability. Examples from this cline are listed below in order of acceptability (cf. §4.4.3):



[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<sup>4</sup>

In [i] the determiner and the species noun (and the N2 and the verb) show the same number marking. In [ii] the determiner and the species noun match for number, but do not match the number of the N2. Within this group, examples with a plural determiner and plural species noun, and an N2 that is either plural or unmarked for number, are rated as more acceptable [iia]; those examples with a singular determiner and singular species noun and a plural N2 are rated as less acceptable [iib]. In [iii] there is a mismatch of number between the determiner and the species noun. The procedural innovations in this survey can therefore be considered successful in that they contributed to the determination of this cline of acceptability on the part of these respondents. This result should be useful for further studies of this kind.

In addition, I was able to show, in a comparative analysis of earlier surveys from the 1930s and the 1970s (cf. §4.4.2), that the negative attitude towards the mismatched usage has remained largely consistent over a period of nine decades. This finding suggests that, for this usage and for those people, there had been no increase in general acceptability over time. This finding contrasts with the argument of Mair (2006, see esp. pp. 187–193, 199, 204) that the level of acceptability of usage variants would be expected to increase over time, as was indeed attested by various studies within the BtU project in a range of registers.

## 6.5 The general public: the corpus analysis

In my work as a copy-editor I was fortunate in having access to a large number of academic journal manuscripts before they had been copy-edited (§5.2). A corpus of these manuscripts thus allowed me to investigate the writing habits of 1,657 different authors, rather than the editing practices of the much smaller number of copy-editors who would have been responsible for the published papers (in this case, just two copy-editors). The corpus was also analysed as two sub-corpora: those papers submitted to law journals and those submitted to language journals published by Cambridge University Press (CUP). These manuscripts comprise a corpus of about 12.5 million words: the Stenton Corpus of International Academic English. Once submitted and

<sup>4</sup> See Straaijer (p.c., 24 February 2024) in Appendix G6 for a further comment on this example.

accepted, the copyright of these manuscripts passed to CUP, who in turn granted me permission to use them anonymously for analysis. When analysing this corpus, I was able to identify a candidate for a further variant of the species noun phrase: *this N2 type*. This variant helped to increase the number of options available to the authors for using mixed number marking in the species noun phrase.

Analysis of this corpus showed that the preferences of these authors in their use of expressions containing the species noun phrase closely matched the descriptions from the modern reference grammars, the prescriptions of the usage guide writers, and the attitudes of the survey respondents (§5.5), i.e. a preference for the use of e.g. *these kinds of N2*, and avoidance of e.g. *these kind of N2*. The main findings are listed below (the differences in the two sub-corpora, Law and Language, are given in Chapter 5):

- [i] THIS TYPE OF N2 was the most frequent variant, followed by N2 OF THIS TYPE and THIS N2 TYPE (847 vs. 193 vs. 105).
- [ii] The THIS KIND OF N2 examples overwhelmingly showed number agreement throughout the species noun phrase, with only six examples of *these kind of N2*.
- [iii] All the N2 OF THIS TYPE examples showed number agreement between the determiner and the species noun.
- [iv] All the THIS N2 TYPE examples showed number agreement between the determiner and the species noun.
- [v] The THIS TYPE OF N2 variant as subject overwhelmingly showed number agreement throughout, i.e. including the verb (272/280).
- [vi] The THESE TYPES OF N2 variant as subject largely showed number agreement throughout (79/99).
- [vii] In the N2 OF THIS TYPE variant as subject there were no examples of a conflict of number.
- [viii] In the THIS N2 TYPE variant as subject, all of the N2s were unmarked for number, and there were no examples of a conflict of number.

Given that the number of examples like the proscribed *these kind of N2* was so small as to be negligible (6 out of 1,145 examples or 0.5%), it would seem that the academic authors in the Stenton Corpus did follow the proscriptions of the usage guide writers, and indeed the guidance of the modern reference grammars described in Chapter 2. However, on the basis of this study, it remains impossible to say whether the academic writers avoided the proscribed uses *because of* the advice in the usage guides. For that

we would need to undertake a survey of the authors on their use of reference materials (see e.g. Lukač and Stenton, 2023, for an example of this). Further, it is equally likely that the usage guide writers themselves based their proscriptions and prescriptions on the usage of groups such as these academic writers. This would also be the case with the reference grammars and their use of corpora to support their analyses (cf. §2.3).

## 6.6 Reflections on the current study

Now that the study is complete, it is time to reflect on what could, and should, have been done differently, or indeed better. In §2.4.5, in the chapter on grammar, I presented, very briefly, the views of Curme (1931) on the historical development of what became known as the species noun phrase (Biber et al., 1999). This was, I believe, a useful note given the comments made by Denison (§2.4.1) on the analysis of *kind of* as a post-determiner, and also in terms of the comments made in some of the usage guides in Chapter 3 (e.g. Butterfield, 2015) about how preferences for number marking in the species noun phrase have changed over time. This is a topic that could usefully be extended in order to shed more light on both the historical and modern analyses.

One topic that could shed more light on the analysis of the usage guides in Chapter 3 is that of lateral referencing (§3.3). This could usefully be extended to cover the whole text of all the seventy-seven usage guides in HUGE. This should yield a much fuller picture of the sources of the ‘technical’ information available to the usage guide writers from other, especially contemporary, works on language. This could be supplemented by a survey of their citation sources, to include those authors cited as either good or bad examples. This broad approach could also sit alongside those studies of individual usage guides, which present a detailed analysis of typically one or two authors on a wide range of topics (for a recent example of this, see Ticken-Boon van Ostade, 2023). These two approaches would help to demonstrate the degree to which these usage guide authors were a part of their linguistic community, rather than working in isolation.

The survey chapter (Chapter 4), could usefully be improved in a number of ways. First, in the context of the current study, it would be interesting to have the views of the authors whose work was included in the corpus analysis in Chapter 5 (and cf. §4.5 on this). This could be based on the model adopted in Lukač and Stenton (2023), who surveyed copy-editors and proof-readers world-wide. Second, it should include all the variants of the species noun phrase, i.e. including the new variant identified in the corpus analysis, and possibly others. Third, all of the respondents should be encouraged to comment on how and why they responded as they did. All of these aspects would then help to refine the notion of a cline of acceptability (§4.4.3).

For the corpus analysis (Chapter 5), the consequences of not finding a significant number of the post-determiner variant – e.g. *these kind of words* – of which there were only six examples out of a total of 1,145, cannot be over-stated. For example, do these numbers suggest that the analyses discussed in §2.4 are inappropriate or misguided? If e.g. *these kinds of N2* and *these kind of N2* are indeed different syntactic structures with different semantic and/or pragmatic implications, would it not be reasonable to expect to find examples of both in a substantial corpus of carefully prepared academic texts? Or, is the corpus itself somehow skewed? My starting assumption, based in part on forty years of copy-editing, would be that there would be more variation in an un-copy-edited corpus than one in which all the texts had been through some sort of copy-editing process. There is also the finding of the new *this N2 type* variant. Was this being used to avoid the mixed number of the *these kind of N2* variant? If so, why was it found only in the Language sub-corpus? These are important questions that need to be addressed. Perhaps a much larger corpus, or a number of corpora representing different registers, would be a useful next step in the analysis, to try to determine where the problem lies. For example, within the Cambridge English Corpus (cf. §5.3) there are the 500 million words in the Journal genre of the Cambridge Academic Corpus, i.e. a larger corpus of similar texts to the Stenton Corpus, or the vast 1.5 billion words of the Cambridge International Corpus, a corpus which contains many different registers, including spoken English. Either or both of these would provide a useful extension to the current study. However, such corpora, to the best of my knowledge, do not meet the requirement of the Stenton Corpus in being composed only of un-copy-edited texts, although the Cambridge Academic Corpus does contain a (relatively small) number of spoken texts, student essays, interviews, etc., which would meet this criterion.

Another aspect of the analysis that might become clearer with a larger corpus is the use of different species noun variants in different sentence functions (colligation; cf. §5.5.2). A further aspect of the corpus analysis that could be improved would be to extend the context of the species noun phrase, perhaps to paragraph level, in order to try to determine contextually the number assignment of the various elements, along with the use of pre-modifiers and parentheticals. This would enable a more rigorous analysis of number assignment, and therefore a better understanding of how these authors utilise the number marking options available to them. And, of course, it would be useful to broaden the scope of the investigation with a comparative survey using a different, and less formal, register.

## 6.7 Closing remarks

In proscribing e.g. *these kind of N2* and in prescribing e.g. *these kinds of N2*, all the groups analysed in this study – the linguists, the prescriptivists and the general public – do seem to be of the same opinion. This being the case, the question that must arise is: Why do the usage guides keep including it as a usage problem? Vorlat (1996; cf. §3.4.1 above) has suggested that there is a usage canon which the usage guide writers feel obliged to include, even if they themselves don't feel a particular usage to be a problem. The authors of twenty-nine of the usage guides in the HUGE database were found to not feel any need to include a section on the species noun phrase, and four of the forty-seven guides that did include it state that the variant usages do not cause any problems. If we then take into account the level of lateral referencing between the usage guides described in this study (cf. §3.3), this usage canon might begin to explain the similarities in their contents and the continuity of its treatment, from 1770 to 2010 and beyond.

There remain, for me, three areas of especial interest for further study. The first is whether gradience and the cline of acceptability would also be found in attitudes to other usage problem variants. The second is whether adopting a larger or a different corpus would yield sufficient instances of the *these kind of* examples to be able to test the post-determiner analyses of Denison (2002; cf. §2.4.1) and others, and in particular whether contextual, semantic or pragmatic factors had an influence on their use. The third is an investigation of the system of number in the English species noun phrase, and whether it constitutes a two- or a three-term system (singular vs. plural or unmarked vs. singular vs. plural), or indeed whether different noun phrases ('nominal groups' in their analyses) show evidence of different systems of number, as suggested in Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 369), and how in practice writers allocate number marking throughout the phrase, and the clause of which it is a constituent. Further investigation could also be made on the status of International Academic English as a genre. This is not a topic that could be addressed meaningfully in this study of just one set of usage variants, but the Stenton Corpus, and others like it, could certainly offer further possibilities.