

Practice Unit 9

1. In view of the difficulties involved in distinguishing between "languages" and "dialects" described in Unit 9, comment on the following wide-spread usage:
"In Nigeria English continues to be used as an official language because none of the local dialects would be acceptable in this function to the entire population."
Consult the Summer Institute of Linguistics' Ethnologue Languages of the World database to find out about the major "dialects" of Nigeria. How many speakers do they have? Do they have standard writing systems?
2. Check the spelling of sensitive words in American top-level web domains such as .us, .gov or .edu and compare your results to those obtained from the British top-level national domain .uk. Do conventions in Canada (.ca), .ie (Ireland), .in (India) or .nz (New Zealand) follow British or American orthographical norms?
3. Consult corpora documenting various national standards of English for occurrences of the following variables:
 - *got* vs. *gotten*
 - *learned* vs. *learnt*, *dreamed* vs. *dreamt*, *dived* vs. *dove*
 - *garbage* vs. *rubbish*
4. In the preceding task you were asked to search for word forms, which is computationally easy. Now devise an intelligent search routine to investigate the use of the mandative subjunctive in the same corpora.
5. Consult reference materials to find out at least one more contrast between British and American standard English at the level of spelling, grammar and vocabulary.
6. In present-day English there is a choice between the following constructional options after verbs of prevention such as *prevent* or *stop*:
 - a. *I tried my best, but I was unable to prevent him from leaving the room.*
 - b. *I tried my best, but I was unable to prevent him leaving the room.*
 - c. *Good, that should stop them from trying this trick again.*
 - d. *Good, that should stop them trying this trick again.*

Check reference grammars or corpora of present-day English to find out whether the use of these variants is regionally restricted.