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***The committee has/have decided... On concord patterns with collective nouns in inner and outer circle varieties of English***

Grammatical differences between major varieties like American and British English have been one of the core areas of corpus-based research ever since the first two ‘standard’ one million word corpora – Brown and LOB – were compiled from material published in 1961. More recently, patterns of grammatical variation in other national standards like Canadian, Australian or New Zealand English have become accessible to detailed corpus-based analyses. Many varieties from the outer circle in Kachru’s (1986) model of global English have not been subject to closer analysis of syntactic variation on a systematic basis, partly because computer corpora of these varieties have not been available so far.

The paper will investigate one syntactic variable – concord after nouns such as *government*, *committee*, *team* or *family*. For inner circle varieties, the possible patterns of regional, stylistic and diachronic variation have been described in a number of studies (cf. Bauer 1994; Hundt 1998; Levinson 2001). The outer circle varieties selected for comparison are Singaporean and Philippine English – one a British-based, the other an American-based variety of English as a second language. For both varieties, components of the International Corpus of English (ICE) have recently been made available. Additional data will come from a corpus compiled from online newspapers. The data will show that neither Singaporean nor Philippine English pattern exactly like their ‘parent’ variety.

References

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