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THE INFLUENCE OF AMERICAN AND BRITISH ENGLISHES ON GHANAIAN ENGLISH: A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF SOME SELECTED VERB FORMS AND MODALS

Kwaku Osei-Tutu

Abstract:

English has been the *de facto* official language of Ghana since the country gained independence from Britain in 1957. According to Dolphyne (1995:31) “it is... standard written [British] English that newspaper editors and editors of journals aim at, as well as teachers in their teaching of English at all levels.” Shoba et al. (2013) also reinforce this stating that British English has remained the standard of the Ghanaian educational system since colonization. In recent times, however, American English has become more popular in Ghana, especially in the entertainment industry (Anderson et al., 2009). Using data from the International Corpus of English (Ghana component – written and spoken; British component – written and spoken; and the American component – written), the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), and the corpus of Global Web-Based English (GloWbE), this paper looks at the frequencies of *got*, *gotten* and the modals *will*, *shall*, *should* and *must* with the aim of finding out which of the two native varieties Ghanaian English patterns after. The results of the study reveal that while Ghanaian English reflects some influence from American English by showing a tendency to pattern after it with regard to *got* and *gotten*, the same cannot be said regarding the modals *will*, *shall*, *should* and *must*.

Keywords: Ghanaian English, International Corpus of English, ICE-Ghana, Corpus-based, modals

1. Introduction

English arrived on the shores of Ghana (then, the Gold Coast) with British traders in the 16th Century (Adika, 2012) and various political events, culminating in colonization, led to the language becoming the language of administration. After the country gained independence from Britain on 6th March 1957, English remained the official language. Since then, despite calls for the adoption of (an) indigenous Ghanaian language(s) as the official language(s), English has remained the *de facto* official language of Ghana (Adika, 2012; Anderson, 2009; Dako, 2019). Because of Ghana's historical ties to Britain, the English spoken and written in Ghana has always traced its roots to British English. Spelling conventions, for instance, are typically British (for example, *colour*, *centre*, *tyre*, etc.) and there are still teachers across the educational spectrum who underline alternative spellings as incorrect. Apart from spelling, vocabulary is also another area where Ghanaian English is typically British (for example, *toffee* for *candy*, *biscuit* for *cookie*, *trousers* for *pants*, etc.). The tendency towards British English is corroborated by Dolphyne (1995: 31) who says "it is this standard written [British] English that newspaper editors and editors of journals aim at, as well as teachers in their teaching of English at all levels. Shoba et al. (2013) also reinforce this stating that British English has remained the standard of the Ghanaian educational system since colonization.

However, with the advent of television (especially, movies from Hollywood) and the internet, many words have made their way into Ghanaian English from American English – a development which is predicted by Owusu-Ansah (1994: 344), who, writing within the context of the early 1990s, notes that "... [though] Ghanaian English is still mostly influenced by British English, ... CNN broadcasts, which started recently, may change this in the future." Some of these words exist side-by-side with their British English counterparts (for example, British English *film* and American English *movie*); however, there are some which are still seen as indicators of American English (for example, *pants* for *trousers*). As part of the dynamics of English in Ghana is the often-recurring question of whether Ghanaian English is still mainly influenced by British English or has 'succumbed' to the influence of American English. While teachers and educators (as stated above) often argue that Ghanaian English needs to hold on to its British English heritage, it is easy to observe, especially in the media, the influence of American English (Anderson et al., 2009). In fact, some studies (such as Dako (2019) and Shoba et al. (2013)) have revealed that a lot of Ghanaian radio presenters copy American pronunciation in order to sound more sophisticated. The accent that has resulted from this imitation of the American accent has come to be referred to as LAFAs,

an acronym for *Locally Acquired Foreign Accent* (Bruku, 2010; Dako, 2019; Shoba et al., 2013).

It is, therefore, against this background that this paper conducts a cross-variety study of Ghanaian English, British English and American English by examining the occurrence of some selected high-frequency vocabulary items within their respective components of the International Corpus of English (ICE), the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the Corpus of Global Web-Based English (GloWbE) with the aim of finding out which of the two native varieties Ghanaian English patterns after. The vocabulary items which were selected are the verbs *got/gotten* and the modal auxiliaries *must, should, will* and *shall*. More will be said later about the rationale for selecting these specific items, but for now, the rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews some of the relevant work that has been done on Ghanaian English in order to situate this paper within the gap that it seeks to fill. Next, in Section 3, the research questions that drive the study are outlined. Section 4 then lays out the study design and explains the reasoning behind the methodology used for the study. Then, in Section 5, the paper presents the results of the data analysis and discusses their implications for the research questions of the study. Finally, Section 6 provides the concluding remarks of the paper.

2. Review of Relevant Literature

Though there has been a lot of research done on various aspects of English in Ghana (Adika, 2012; Anderson et al., 2009; Bruku, 2010; Dako, 2019; Dolphyne, 1995; Tingley, 1981) or Ghanaian English (Anderson, 2009; Asante, 2012; Dako, 2003; Huber, 2004, 2012; Huber & Dako, 2004; Sey, 1973; Shoba et al., 2013), not much, has been done based on corpus data. Many studies such as Sey (1973), Tingley, (1981), Dako (2003), Huber & Dako (2004) and Asante (2012) have made use of some sort of corpora by relying on examples drawn from newspapers and examination scripts, but very few (Brato, 2020; Huber, 2012; Schneider, 2015) so far have branched out beyond that to take advantage of a specialised database such as that of the ICE project and the benefits it brings. Of the papers mentioned above, Sey (1973) is considered the seminal work on English in Ghana as it was among the first to broach the topic and provide a broad overview (and some description) of the English used in Ghana. This overview includes aspects of phonology, semantics, pragmatics and lexis. As part of the peculiarities of lexis, he provides a list of words/expressions that are peculiar to Ghana, which he calls 'Ghanaianisms'. Dako's (2003) *Ghanaianisms: A Glossary* expands Sey's (1973) list and provides a comprehensive number of such expressions. Apart from these studies that explore the vocabulary or lexis of Ghanaian English, there are some

which deal with aspects of its syntactic structure. Among these, Huber & Dako (2004) is perhaps the most comprehensive and they point out particular tendencies of Ghanaian English such as omission and insertion of articles, lack of subject-verb agreement, cleft construction, topicalization, etc. While these studies have given some insight into the structure of Ghanaian English, they do not benefit from the input of a large corpus which this paper believes would lend even more authority to the definitive statements they make about the variety. With the advent of Corpus (based) linguistics as a methodology, it has been suggested that Ghanaian English will benefit from such a study. Indeed, Ngula (2014:188) argues that “[a] major problem inhibiting comprehensive studies into the distinctive linguistic features of GhE has been the lack of publicly available electronic corpora on the variety.” He goes even further to link this situation to the slow pace of progression from the Nativisation Phase to the Endonormative Phase of Schneider’s (2014; 2007; 2003) Dynamic Model of new Englishes. It is, therefore, not surprising that Ngula & Nartey (2014) argue that corpus-based studies will be a huge step in the development of Ghanaian English – an opinion which is shared by this paper.

As stated above, Huber (2012), Schneider (2015) and Brato (2020) are some of the studies which have relied on large corpus data to describe aspects of Ghanaian English. Schneider’s (2015) dissertation examines tense, aspect and modality in Ghanaian English by comparing the instances and uses of the progressive and the modal *will* in two corpora – a Ghanaian corpus (consisting of ICE-GH and a Corpus of Spoken Ghanaian English) and ICE-GB. Among her findings which are relevant to this study is that she points out that *will* is significantly more frequent in spoken Ghanaian English than it is in spoken British English – an issue that will be revisited later in this paper. In his work, Huber (2012) examines the complexity of relative clauses in Ghanaian English and compares them to those in British English to see what sort of mechanisms are at play in a variety that is currently undergoing Nativisation (within Schneider’s (2014; 2007; 2003) model of New Englishes. In order to achieve his aims, Huber also draws from the Ghanaian and British subcorpora of ICE (i.e., ICE-GH and ICE-GB, respectively). Brato’s (2020) study is similar to Huber (2012) and to this paper because it also looks at an aspect of Ghanaian English (Noun Phrase complexity) by undertaking a comparative study of two corpora. The difference is that, whereas this paper and Huber (2012) employ a synchronic approach by comparing corpora from a similar time frame, he favours a diachronic approach. In other words, the two corpora he compares (i.e. the Historical Corpus of English in Ghana and ICE-GH) are situated in different time periods. Despite this difference between the two studies, both researchers, by adopting a corpus-based approach, show how useful such databases are when it comes to efforts to describe varieties of English (in general) and Ghanaian English (in

particular). In fact, Huber (2012: 222) notes specifically that the corpora that make up the ICE project “lend themselves ideally to a direct comparison of varieties of English because of their identical design[.]”. This view, thus, supports this author’s position that there is much to gain from studies that make use of corpora such as ICE. Additionally, Huber (2012: 219) explains that his rationale for comparing Ghanaian English to British English is because the latter is the former’s “historical input variety” and, also, that the two varieties are still in contact. This rationale is also in line with this paper’s argument that Ghanaian English is still considered by many to be deriving its norms from British English (which is a point that Huber (2012) also makes). Additionally, Huber’s (2012) study finds that though relative clauses in British English show more complexity than those in Ghanaian English – due to certain features (some of which are traceable to indigenous Ghanaian languages) – taken individually, these constructions are not ungrammatical in British English *per se*, but occur with much more frequency in Ghanaian English when looked at from a wider perspective. This is a finding is also relevant to this paper because, as will be shown in Section 5, some of the tendencies shown by Ghanaian English are only significant because they occur more frequently in the variety than in either of the two native varieties.

While the studies discussed above have shown the rich contribution that corpus-based research can make to the description of Ghanaian English, all of them have considered British English (or, in the case of Brato (2020), an older version of Ghanaian English itself) as the only variety worthy of comparison¹. This is not altogether unexpected since, as stated in the introduction, there is a widely-held view in Ghana (as reported by researchers such as Dolphyne (1995) and Shoba et al. (2013)) that Ghanaian English has been influenced more by British English than by any other variety. General observations, though, show that certain features commonly associated with American English are prevalent in Ghanaian English. In fact, even a paper as early as Ciper (1971), in distinguishing Type I Ghanaian English from Native (i.e. British) English, mentions that *park* used in place of *sportsground*, might be an import from American English. Despite observations such as this, however, there are as yet no studies that have been able to provide any empirical evidence for this belief. Consequently, to help fill this gap, this paper sets out to look at some aspects of Ghanaian English and compare it to British English and American English in order to see which of the two native varieties Ghanaian English patterns more closely after. Even though differences in vocabulary are what most users of a language readily identify as specific to a variety, it is notoriously difficult to identify such trends in a corpus unless such vocabulary are

¹ It should be noted here, though, that one of the papers already mentioned (i.e., Owusu-Ansah, 1994) does compare Ghanaian English to American English; however, the author bases his study on a set of 44 (22 from each variety) informal letters written by Ghanaians and Americans.

high-frequency words. Consequently, this study looks at trends that have been reported in the verb forms of the two native varieties (British English and American English). The verbs that were selected are *got/gotten* and the modal auxiliaries *must*, *should*, *will* and *shall*.

The first reason that *got* and *gotten* were selected is because previous corpus-based studies (Algeo, 2006; Biber et al., 1999) have shown that even though both verbs are used in British English and American English, *got* is more prevalent in British English, while *gotten* is found more in American English. Algeo (2006:14), for instance, states that there are “32 times as many tokens of *gotten*” in American English than in British English in the Cambridge International Corpus. This, however, is not the only reason the words were selected. The second reason is that the distinction between *got* and *gotten* is generally considered by Ghanaians as a prototypical feature of British English and American English. In other words, Ghanaians perceive *got* as British (and, by implication, Ghanaian), while they see *gotten* as American with an (unfortunate) side-effect being that *gotten* is sometimes frowned upon by some teachers².

With regard to the modals, those selected are the primary modals which mark obligation or necessity (*must* and *should*) and volition/prediction (*will* and *shall*) in English. These were also selected because both Algeo (2006) and Biber et al. (1999) report that they are more frequent in British English than American English. Another reason this paper decided to look at modals is due to the findings of Collins (2009). In his study, he examines the use of modals and quasi-modals in World Englishes using the ICE corpus (Written Component) for all the varieties except American English, for which he uses a corpus he created himself (which he names C-US). The results of his study show that the general trend seems to be the rise of quasi-modals and the fall of modals. The aspect of his study that is most important to this study, however, is that his analysis showed that American English was the trend-setter in this shift in modal usage (in written texts). It will be interesting therefore to see whether Ghanaian English patterns more after American English with regard to the modals selected or whether it will stick to its historical roots. Additionally, as noted earlier in the literature review, Schneider (2015) finds that *will* shows up more frequently in the spoken Ghanaian English than in spoken British English. Thus, the results on the three-way comparison that this paper does will shed some light on whether there is any significance among the three varieties.

² This dislike of *gotten* is so strong that the author has seen examples of (university level) grammar exams in which students have to make the choice between *got* and *gotten*, and they are expected to select *got* as the right answer even though either word would fit in the context of the sentence.

3. Research Questions

In line with the discussion so far, the following research questions are addressed in the study:

1. How do the normed frequencies of the selected words (*got, gotten, must, should, will* and *shall*) compare across the three varieties (i.e., Ghanaian English, British English and American English)?
2. What can the answer to Research Question 1 tell us about the relationship among the three varieties?

4. Methodology

4.1 Data

As mentioned in the introduction, the study draws its data from the Ghanaian (Huber & Dako, 2013), British and American components of the International Corpus of English (ICE-GH, ICE-GB and ICE-US, respectively), the Corpus of Contemporary American English (Davies, 2008) and the Corpus of Global Web-Based English (Davies, 2013). The ICE corpora consist of written and spoken components. The written component is drawn from the following genres: academic, popular writing, instructional material, social letters, business letters, private and business emails, press reports, persuasive editorials and creative novels (Greenbaum & Nelson, 1996). The spoken component is drawn from private conversations, private phone calls, class lessons, broadcast (discussions and interviews), legal (presentations and cross-examinations), parliamentary debates, business transactions, demonstrations, unscripted speeches and spontaneous commentaries (Greenbaum & Nelson, 1996). The authors of texts used and speakers who were recorded were 18 years or older and had been educated in English. They were also either born in the country where the data was being collected or had moved to the country as children (Greenbaum & Nelson, 1996).

Since, according to the official website of the International Corpus of English (www.ice-corpora.net) the spoken component of ICE-US is not yet available to researchers for download, the comparison for American English was done with the Corpus of Contemporary American English (Davies, 2008), which is hosted at <https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/>. According to its website, the corpus (henceforth, COCA) which currently contains one billion words from various sources such as “spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers [and] academic texts”, is probably the most widely consulted corpus of English. Though the ideal corpus for

comparison would have been ICE-USA, it was still possible to achieve some uniformity in the data used by applying some restrictions to the selections made from both the COCA and ICE corpora. The first restriction was with regard to the genre of the samples selected. In this case, since the spoken section of COCA is broadcast news, the study restricts the data from ICE-GB and ICE-GH to broadcast discussions, broadcast interviews, broadcast news and broadcast talks; thus creating a comparable subcorpus (in terms of genre) of 152,634 words (ICE-GH) and 337,785 words (ICE-GB). Secondly, the spoken COCA corpus used for this study was drawn from 2009, 2010 and 2011 and the total number of words is 12,098,607. These years were chosen, firstly because the version of the COCA corpus available at the time of writing this paper did not allow for a more precise selection and, secondly, the data from ICE-GH was collected around this same period. With regard to the written corpora, the comparison was fairly straightforward since all three varieties – British English, American English and Ghanaian English – have written components in the ICE corpus. The total number of words in the various written corpora are 403,085 (ICE-GH), 423,581 (ICE-GB) and 436,749 (ICE-US).

Though ICE and COCA were the original databases on which the research depended, it became necessary to include the Corpus of Global Web-Based English (GloWbE)³ because it provides a much larger corpus (approximately, 1.9 billion words) than all the others and, as such, made it easier to find more tokens of some of the variables of focus. As its name suggests, GloWbE contains texts from online sources (with about 60% coming from blogs). Thus, including GloWbE serves as a good way to crosscheck the results gained from the smaller dataset. Table 1, below, provides an overview of the corpora used in the study.

³ many thanks to the anonymous reviewer who suggested the inclusion of GloWbE in the study.

Table 1: Breakdown of the Corpora

	Ghanaian English	British English	American English
Written (All Categories)	ICE-GH 403,085 words (191 texts)	ICE-GB 423,581 words (200 texts)	ICE-US 436,749 words (200 texts)
Spoken (Broadcast talks, news, discussion & interviews)	ICE-GH 152,634 words (55 texts)	ICE-GB 337,785 words (70 texts)	COCA 2,098,607 words (2009-2011)
GloWbE	38,768,231 words (50,967 websites)	387,615,074 words (446,192 websites)	386,809,355 words (357,416 websites)

4.2 Analysis

The analysis was done by finding the frequencies of the selected words: *got*, *gotten*, *will*, *shall*, *must* and *should* in the various corpora, with the aid of three concordancing software. The use of three different corpora was necessitated by the fact that COCA, GloWbE and ICE-GB have their own concordancers, which have to be used to access the data – the one for COCA and GloWbE is built into the website, while the one for ICE-GB is a stand-alone software (ICECUP) which is distributed as part of the corpus package. For the rest of the ICE data (i.e., ICE-GH and ICE-US), the AntConc software was used. Regarding the search parameters for eliciting the frequencies, in the case of *got*, since the study was not interested in the simple past tense of *get*, but the perfective form, the search was performed with *got* plus *have* and *has*. In other words, the search terms used were *have got* and *has got* (and the contracted forms, *'ve got*, and *'s got*). This ensured that only the perfective form *got* was retrieved from the corpora. After frequencies for all the words were generated, the raw counts were normalised to tokens per 100,000 words (for the ICE and COCA corpora). The normalising of the counts was another measure taken to allow for a more representative comparison between ICE and COCA because, according to Biber & Conrad (2009: 62), the process mitigates the disparity in comparing texts of different lengths by “providing the rate at which a feature occurs in a fixed amount of text.” In the case of this paper, the disparity in length was because, as Table 1 shows, the spoken section of the corpora used for this study were of varying lengths. As mentioned earlier, the GloWbE corpus was added as way to confirm the trends noticed in the ICE and COCA corpora, especially, with regard to the *got/gotten* tokens; thus, it was analysed separately and, due to its size, the raw counts were normed per million.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Got and Gotten

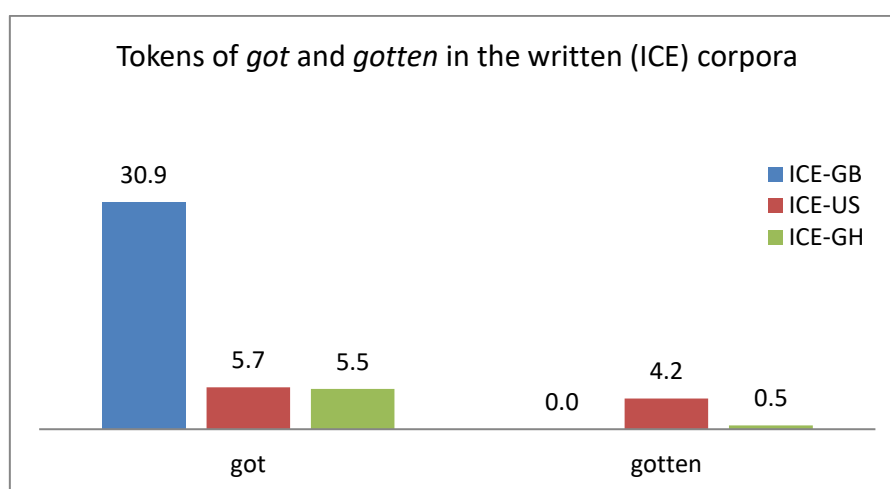


Figure 1 normalized frequencies (per 100,000w) of *got* and *gotten* in the written (ICE) corpora.

As Figure 1 shows, *got* appears in all three of the varieties in question; whereas *gotten* is not found at all in ICE-GB. From the figure, we can see that true to previous research (Algeo, 2006; Biber et al., 1999) *gotten* is more common in AmE. It is also clear from the normed frequencies that even in the varieties that use *gotten*, it is not as common (4.2 in ICE-US and 0.5 in ICE-GH) as *got*. The picture for *gotten* is not much different, barring the size-differences between the corpora, when we consider the instances of *got* and *gotten* in the GloWbE sample (which is presented below in Figure 2); though, with regard to *got* we see an increase in the frequency in American English.

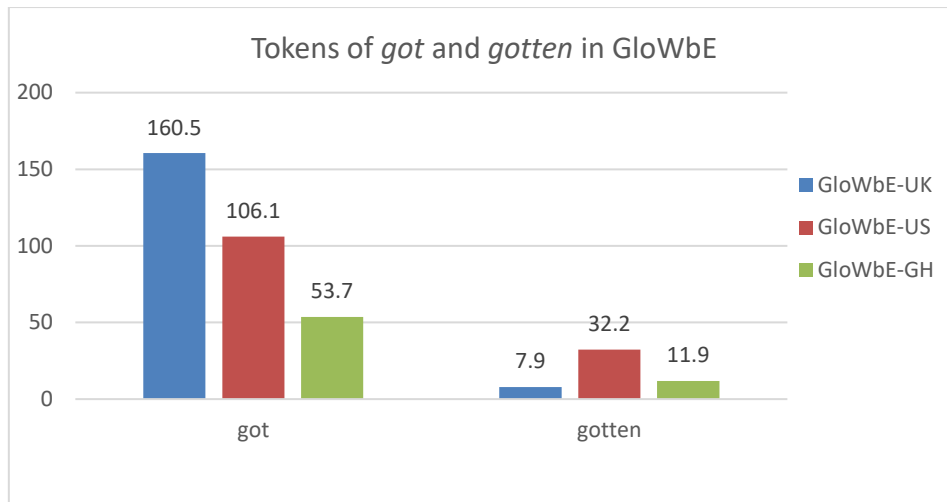


Figure 2: normalized frequencies (per 1,000,000w) of *got* and *gotten* in GloWbE.

What is even more interesting for this study is the difference in frequencies between GloWbE-UK (7.9) and GloWbE-GH (11.9), which seems negligible at first glance; however, a Chi-squared test of proportions ($X^2=66.747$, $df=1$) yields a p-value of $3.088e-16$ indicating that the difference in the frequencies of *gotten* between the two varieties is significant. Thus, one could argue that *gotten* is used significantly more in Ghanaian English than it is in British English. This, therefore, could be taken as an indication that Ghanaian English has broken with British English with regard to the use of *gotten*.

Additionally, a closer look at some the excerpts from the ICE data reveals some interesting trends:

- (1) Thankfully however, I have ***gotten*** a job in Accra with CHF international [ICE-GH: W1C-016]
- (2) The District Assembly has ***got*** sub-structures under it. [ICE-GH: W2D-008]
- (3) She had ***gotten*** married the previous year. [ICE-US: W1B-11]
- (4) She really sounds like she's ***got*** her act together. [ICE-US: W1B-008].
- (5) Well Professor Greenbaum has ***got*** chicken pox. [ICE-GB: S1B:012]

One noteworthy observation from the excerpts above is that Ghanaian English does not just seem to be using *gotten* more than British English, but it is also patterning its use after American English. This is because Algeo (2006; 14) points out that though the difference in the uses of *got* and *gotten* in British English and American English appears to be dialectal, American English shows a strong preference for using *got* for “static

senses like ‘possess’ in *I’ve got it* = ‘I have it’ and ‘be required’ in *I’ve got to go* = ‘I must go’”, whereas it prefers *gotten* for “dynamic senses like ‘acquire’ in *I’ve gotten it* = ‘I have received it’ and ‘be permitted’ in *I’ve gotten to go* = ‘I have become able to go.’” This is significant because, as the examples show, *gotten* as used in (1) refers to a dynamic sense (i.e., I have acquired a job), just the same way as the American English *gotten* in (3) (i.e., she acquired a spouse). Again, *got*, as used in the Ghanaian English example (2), is in a static sense (i.e., the District Assembly possesses sub-structures), the same way the American English *got* is used in (4) (i.e., she’s in full possession of her faculties). What this means is that Ghanaian English is indeed acquiring this use of *got* and *gotten* from American English.

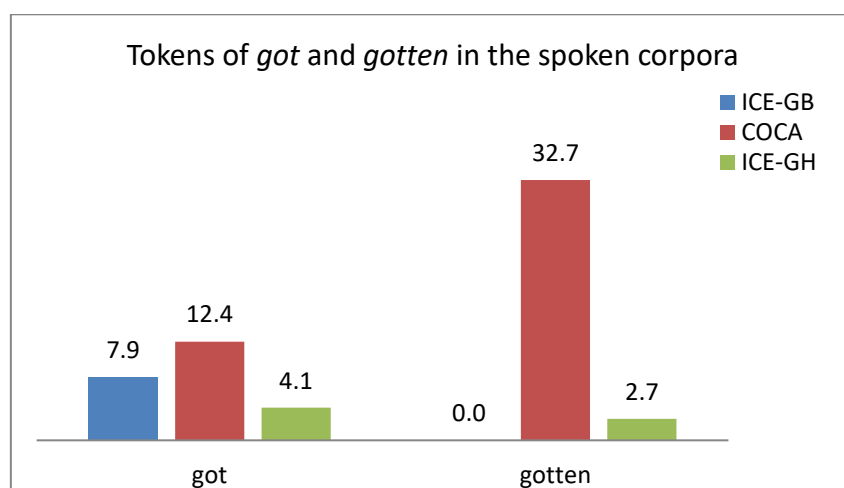


Figure 3: normalized frequencies of *got* and *gotten* in the spoken corpora

The first observation we can make about Figure 3 above is that there are a lot more tokens of *gotten* here than in Figure 1. This is expected since, as already mentioned above, *gotten* has been shown to be more common in speech than in writing (even in American English) (Algeo, 2006). Secondly, it is also worthy of note that COCA has more tokens of *got* than ICE-GB. At first glance, this might seem surprising; especially, since it was stated above that *got* has been found to be more common in British English than in American English. However, Biber et al. (1999) report that even though *got* is less common in American English (than in British English) in general, the combination *have got* is actually more frequent in American English. A closer look at the frequency of *got* in COCA in this study revealed that the majority (more than half) of the tokens occurred in the sequence *have got*. This, therefore, explains why COCA has a much higher frequency of *got* than ICE-GB in Figure 3.

Finally, Figure 3 also shows that while ICE-GH has a normed frequency of 2.7 for tokens of *gotten*, ICE-GB has no tokens at all. At first glance, the absence of *gotten* in ICE-GB might be attributed to smallness of the size of the corpus. However, a search of the spoken section of the British National Corpus (BNC) yielded only 20 tokens of *gotten* out of 10,409,858 words (which is a frequency of 0.2 per 100,000 words). Here again, even though the difference is not very big, a chi-squared test of proportions ($X^2=4.4598$, $df=1$) between ICE-GH and the BNC yielded p-value of 0.0347, which shows that the difference in occurrence of *gotten* in the two varieties is significant. Thus, despite the relatively low frequency of *gotten* in Ghanaian English, it is still significantly more frequent than it is in British English. This, therefore, points towards a preference for the American English form than the British English form, which is not surprising since the tendency has already been hinted at in the introduction (and elaborated upon below). Also, it is not surprising that ICE-GH shows more tokens of *gotten* in the spoken component than in the written component since speech tends to show language change far earlier than writing. Also, as mentioned earlier in the paper, Shoba et al. (2013) report that it is increasingly the case that some Ghanaian radio presenters adopt certain phonological features of American English in their speech (such as the rhotic and the TRAP vowel /æ/). It will, therefore, not be surprising if they show other tendencies of American English (in this case, a preference for *gotten* over *got*). This argument is supported by the fact that the spoken component was drawn from broadcast texts in the ICE corpus. Here are some examples of how *got* and *gotten* are used in the spoken corpora.

- (6) We haven't *gotten* our regulations together we are just about to mine this oil. [ICE-GH: S1B-039]
- (7) Do you think his travelling has *got* something to do with the rising tension in Togo? [ICE-GH: S2B-008D]
- (8) These people are crowding around this bank because they've *gotten* a message from the government [COCA, Spoken, CBS_NewsMorn, 2011]
- (9) No team has *got* within single digits of them this year. [COCA, Spoken, NPR_TalkNation, 2010]
- (10) Mrs Thatcher may have *got* Philip Oppenheim's support in the first round. [ICE-GB: S2B-003]

5.2 Will, shall, must and should

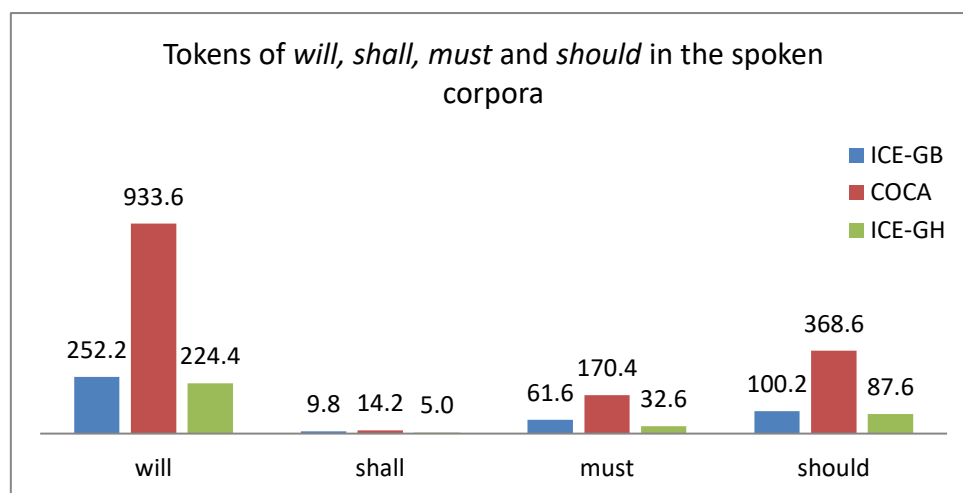


Figure 4: normalized frequencies of the modals in the spoken corpora

There are two main points of interest that arise from the frequencies of the selected modals. The first, as can be seen in Figure 4 above, is that ICE-GH consistently has lower frequencies for all the modals in the spoken corpora than ICE-GB and COCA. In fact, with all the modals in the spoken corpora, American English has the highest frequencies followed by British English and then Ghanaian English. Meanwhile, as Figure 5 below shows, this trend seems to be reversed in the written corpora where with all the modals, Ghanaian English has the highest frequencies followed by British

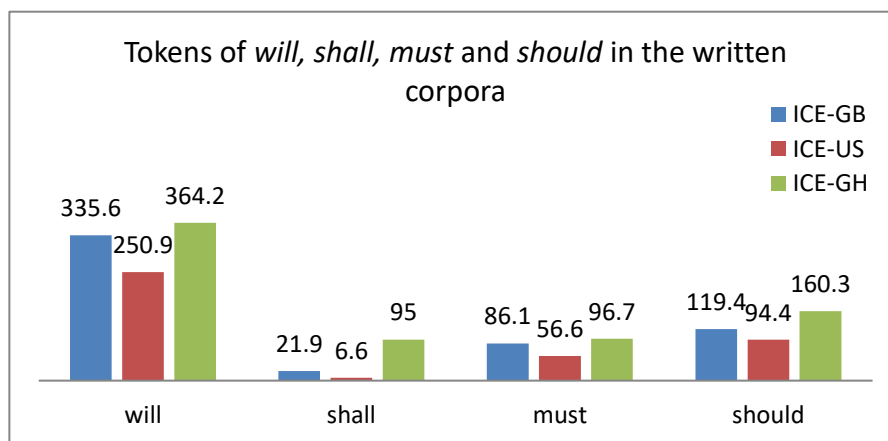


Figure 5: normalized frequencies of the modals in the written corpora

English and then American English. This reversal of the trend is the second point of interest.

One explanation that can be offered for this is based on Collins (2009). As mentioned above, he reports that within the Inner Circle (i.e., the Native varieties, *à la* Kachru (1985)) the modals are giving way to quasi-modals in writing, while this trend does not seem to have caught on as yet with the Outer Circle varieties (to which Ghanaian English belongs). The frequencies in Figure 5 (above) certainly seem to support his findings. In other words, it is possible that the use of the modals is still pretty high in Ghanaian English because it is yet to follow the trend that is developing in the Inner Circle. Such a possibility is understandable if the variety, as suggested by Huber (2012), is still not quite emerged out of the Nativisation Phase of Schneider's (2014; 2007; 2003) model. In other words, Ghanaian English may still be clinging to norms from the Inner Circle varieties (i.e. British English and American English), which are no longer being followed by said varieties. Furthermore, Figure 5 also shows that of all the modals, the one in which the difference stands out the most is *shall*, whose frequency of 95 in ICE-GH is more than that of the combined frequencies of ICE-GB (i.e., 21.9) and ICE-US (i.e., 6.6). A closer look at the contexts of occurrence of *shall* (in all three ICE corpora) shows that *shall* appears to occur in legal texts, religious texts and personal letters (used with the first-person pronouns – *I* or *we*). Here also, despite this general pattern of use, there is a noticeable distinction between ICE-GH, on the one hand, and ICE-GB and ICE-US, on the other hand. This is seen in the distribution of *shall* across the three genres mentioned above, as ICE-GH has more tokens of *shall* in legal and religious texts than in personal letters, while the opposite appears to be the case for ICE-GB and ICE-US. The following extracts from the three corpora illustrate this point:

- (6) Scripts *shall* be marked and recorded in ink by the Internal Examiner and *shall* be submitted together with the marks sheet to the Head of Department. The Head of Department *shall* submit the scripts together with the sheet to the External Examiner where appropriate. [ICE-GH:W1B-020]
- (7) Anyway my darling, I *shall* stop at the bottom of this page [ICE-GB:WIB-006]
- (8) ... becomes a submerged landmass, I *shall* move to SF and join her [ICE-US:WIB-004]

The trend may suggest that *shall* is still seen in more formal terms by users of Ghanaian English, whereas such a distinction is not made by users of British and American English. Apart from these differences, *shall* appears to be used the same way in all three varieties and it just seems more common in Ghanaian English than in the other two varieties. Additionally, with specific regard to *will*, Schneider (2015) provides two reasons for the higher frequencies in Ghanaian English (than British English) – the Ghanaian English preference for *will* where British English uses *would* and an extensive use of *will* to mark habitual situations in Ghanaian English.

Based on the discussion so far, it can be argued that with regard to *got* and *gotten*, Ghanaian English appears to pattern more closely after American English. This may indicate that despite the claims of Ghanaians to a British English heritage, Ghanaian English, the spoken version at least, may slowly be drifting towards American English. This observation is supported by Dako (2019:236) who states that “[w]hereas the Ghanaian does not see him/herself assuming a British identity in mode of speech, the American accent is highly regarded.” If as Dako suggests, there is such a high regard for the American accent in present-day Ghana, it is reasonable for one to conclude that other Americanisms – especially, something (which to the Ghanaian speaker is) prototypical of American English – may also be on the rise in Ghanaian English. Perhaps, it is in recognition of this trend that the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) permits students to use either British or American conventions in their writing⁴ during the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE). Before any more definitive conclusions can be drawn, however, more variables will need to be looked at. With regard to the modals, the discussion shows an interesting dichotomy between the spoken and written corpora. Following the work of Collins (2009), it would be interesting to see how often quasi-modals are used in ICE-GH as this might help explain the high frequencies of modals in the written component.

6. Conclusion

The study set out to compare a set of variables (*got*, *gotten*, *will*, *shall*, *must* and *should*) across three varieties of English (BrE, AmE and GhE) in order to determine if Ghanaian English was patterning after either of the two Inner Circle varieties. Based on the frequencies of the selected variables in ICE-GB, ICE-US, ICE-GH and COCA, and with the addition of data from GloWbE and the BNC where necessary, it is fair to say that in some ways Ghanaian English seems to be patterning after American English,

⁴ This was reported to the author by senior high school teachers who are WAEC examiners.

while in others it retains the trend often associated with new varieties of English (Collins, 2009), especially, for a variety that is not yet in the Endonormative (i.e. the penultimate) stage of the life cycle of these varieties (Brato, 2020; Huber, 2012; Schneider, 2014; 2007; 2003). In order for a firmer conclusion to be drawn, more distinctive features from British English and American English need to be isolated and compared with data from Ghanaian English. Also, once the spoken component of ICE-US becomes available, it may prove useful to compare these variables using just the ICE corpus, since that will make for a better comparison. These measures will also go a long way to mitigate some of the limitations of this study.

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