

# Innovation at the Grammar-lexis Intersection in World Englishes<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

It has often been claimed that the English complementation system lies at the intersection of grammar and lexis, an area where, in the process of nativization in new varieties of English, innovation and change commonly occur (Olavarria de Ersson and Shaw 2003; Schneider 2007). The current study aims to contribute to this field by looking at the complementation profile of the verb REGRET as used on the internet (*Corpus of Global Web-Based English* (GloWbE), Davies 2013). The manual analysis of more than 18,000 examples unveils new distributions, uses and patterns of complementation with this verb in 16 different L1 and L2 varieties of English worldwide, for which tentative cognitive explanations are offered.

*Keywords:* innovation; complementation; World Englishes; internet language.

## 1. Introduction

The diachronic evolution of the English complementation system has been widely studied (see Warner 1982; Fischer 1988, 1989; Fanego 1990, 1992, 1996a, 1996b, 1998, 2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2010, 2016; Rohdenburg 1995, 2006, 2014; Rudanko 1998, 2000, 2011; Miller 2002; Los 2005; Vosberg 2006; De Smet, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2013, 2014 among others). However, complementation has not received much attention in the area of World Englishes, despite it being considered an area prone not only to variation and change but also to innovation (Mukherjee and Hoffmann 2006: 148; Schneider 2007: 86). Notable exceptions are studies that look at frequency and distributional variation in the various canonical patterns of the complementation system, mainly the ditransitive pattern and the frequency of *to*-infinitives and gerunds following a large number of verbs (cf. Olavarria de Ersson and Shaw

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<sup>1</sup> I am very grateful to Elena Seoane for her help with interrater reliability tests and her comments on an earlier draft of this paper, and to the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments. For funding, my gratitude goes to the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (grant FFI2017-82162-P) and the University of Vigo.

2003; Mukherjee and Hoffmann 2006; Mukherjee and Schilk 2008; Mukherjee and Gries 2009; Schilk, Bernaisch and Mukherjee 2012; Schilk, Mukherjee, Nam and Mukherjee 2013; Bernaisch 2013; Nam, Mukherjee, Schilk and Mukherjee 2013; Deshors 2015; Deshors and Gries 2016; Gries and Bernaisch 2016).

This study will address innovation as this is understood by Bamgbose (1998; cf. Section 2 for further details), looking specifically at the area of verbal complementation, and will take the complementation profile of the verb REGRET as a case in point. With REGRET, innovation can be found at two levels: (i) new uses or meanings of the canonical complementation patterns (cf. Section 4.1), especially with regard to the temporal relation between the main clause and the complement clause, and (ii) the emergence of new complementation patterns that are not considered in grammars (see Section 4.2).

The data for this study is taken from the *Corpus of Global Web-Based English* (GloWbE). This corpus contains about 1.9 billion words of online text from twenty different countries. Since this is language of the internet, it represents not only the second language of the speakers of the World Englishes being studied, but also the interethnic lingua franca for communication within the internet community. I will look at (i) two native varieties of English, namely British English and American English (other indigenized L1 varieties available in the corpus that were also formed in contact situations, such as Australian and New Zealand English are not included in this study); (ii) all fourteen non-native varieties of English available in the GloWbE corpus: eight ESL (English as a Second Language) varieties from Asia (those spoken in India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Hong Kong), five ESL varieties from Africa (South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania) and one ESD (English as a Second Dialect variety) from the Caribbean (Jamaica).

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 briefly discusses the previous literature on the fields of verbal complementation, World Englishes, and language innovation and change; Section 3 describes the methodology used; and Section 4 discusses the results. Finally, Section 5 provides a brief summary of the findings and suggestions for future research.

## 2. Theoretical Background

English has spread across the world, to become the most widely spoken language. The number of English speakers globally is difficult to calculate but is thought to be somewhere between 1,500 million and 2 billion. This includes: (i) speakers of English as a first language (L1), (ii) speakers of English as a second language (L2), and (iii) speakers of English as a foreign language.<sup>2</sup>

There are a number of reasons to explain the global spread of English. First, the expansion of the British Empire took English to many parts of Asia, Africa and the Caribbean during the 17th to 19th centuries. Second, the particular association of English with the industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries, giving rise to the sociopolitical power of the USA in the 20th century, ensured the continued spread of English in both post-colonial and non-post-colonial countries (Schneider 2011, 2018). Due to this historical expansion, English is today an official or co-official language in many countries around the world, used not only in government, law, business, and education, but also for everyday communication within communities; indeed, in many of these countries English has indigenized, that is, has developed its own distinctive linguistic features (McArthur 1998: 10; Mesthrie and Bhatt 2008: 12; Schneider 2018: 6 among others). Moreover, English is now a global language, used as a lingua franca (ELF) for international communication (Kachru 1996: 910; Saraceni 2008; Jenkins 2009a: 39, 2009b: 38, 2017; Pakir 2009; Seidlhofer 2009; Mauranen 2011, 2012, 2018).

Different terminology is used to refer to these varieties of English around the world, each of them placing their emphasis on various elements. The most widely accepted terms are “New Englishes” (Platt, Weber and Ho 1984), which emphasizes their new status even if a number of these varieties emerged many centuries ago, “Postcolonial Englishes” (Schneider 2007), which highlights their colonial history, and “World Englishes” (Kachru 1992), which includes not only

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<sup>2</sup> In the different editions of *English as a Global Language* (Crystal 1997, 2003; 2008), Crystal gives estimates of 1,350 million speakers, 1,500 million, and 2 billion speakers of English respectively. On the other hand, Ethnologue estimates the total number of speakers of English to be 1,500 million (Schneider 2018: 2). The difference between estimates depends mainly on whether pidgins and creoles are included in the count, and other decisions as to which groups are considered to be fluent speakers of English (Crystal 2009; Schneider 2018: 2).

institutionalized L2 varieties of English but also native and learner varieties as well as pidgins and creoles. The term “World Englishes” is also considered the most neutral term and is the one that gives the name to the research subdiscipline concerned with the study of these varieties which emerged in the 1980s.

The new varieties of English differ from the standard one, as codified in grammars of English, at all levels of analysis: phonological, lexical, grammatical, pragmatic, and so on. According to Schneider (2007: 86), many innovative patterns tend to occur “at the intersection between grammar and lexis” and “a classic example is the complementation patterns which verbs and adjectives typically enter.” On similar lines, Olavarria de Ersson and Shaw (2003: 138) describe complementation as “an all-pervading structural feature of language and thus likely to be more significant in giving a variety its character than, for example, lexis.” Hence, verb complementation is an area of innovation and change which merits attention, as shown in previous studies dealing with ditransitive verbs (e.g. *provide, supply, give, send...*) and the variation between *to*-infinitive and *-ing*/gerund-complement clauses (cf. Olavarria de Ersson and Shaw 2003; Mukherjee and Hoffmann 2006; Mukherjee and Schilk 2008; Mukherjee and Gries 2009; Schilk, Bernaisch and Mukherjee 2012; Schilk, Mukherjee, Nam and Mukherjee 2013; Bernaisch 2013; Nam, Mukherjee, Schilk and Mukherjee 2013; Deshors 2015; Deshors and Gries 2016; Gries and Bernaisch 2016). This article seeks to contribute to the understanding of complementation in World Englishes by looking at the complementation profile of one specific verb, REGRET, across different L2 varieties of English.

REGRET is a retrospective verb, that is, it can be followed by a gerund complement (with or without an expressed subject) which has a retrospective or ‘anterior’ meaning—it encodes the actual performance of the action expressed in the complement clause—as in example (1), and also by an infinitive complement, which has a prospective or ‘posterior’ meaning—the meaning is thus also more hypothetical or potential—as in example (2) (Quirk et al. 1985: 1193).

- (1) *I regret **telling** you that John stole it.* [“I regret that I told you that John stole it” or “... that I am now telling you...”] (Quirk et al. 1985: 1193)

- (2) *I regret to tell you that John stole it.* [“I regret that I am about to tell you that John stole it”] (Quirk et al. 1985: 1193)

In addition, it can also be followed by a finite *that*/zero declarative complement clause, which can have ‘anterior’, ‘posterior’ and ‘simultaneous’ meanings (Noonan 2007: 110-114), as in examples (3)-(5) respectively. According to Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 160), ‘simultaneous’ meaning can also be expressed by the gerund, as illustrated in (6).

- (3) ‘anterior’: *I regret that I didn't do this earlier.* (GloWbE-United States)  
 (4) ‘posterior’: *We regret that due to a high volume of applications, only those applicants selected for further discussions will be contacted.* (GloWbE-United States)  
 (5) ‘simultaneous’: *We are regretting that we now know what we know.* (GloWbE-United States)  
 (6) *I regret being alive still.* (GloWbE-United States)

Therefore, the scope of variation in the complementation of REGRET for the expression of ‘anterior’ and ‘simultaneous’ meanings includes the variants gerund and *that*/zero complement clause; for the expression of ‘posterior’ meaning the variants are *to*-infinitive and *that*/zero complement clauses.

Other complementation patterns are possible with REGRET, namely a noun phrase (henceforth NP), as in (7), an interrogative complement clause (8), and the *it that* construction (9); (cf. Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 937-939, 963, and FrameNet<sup>3</sup>).

- (7) *If he had regretted his kiss the evening before, É* (FrameNet)  
 (8) *Was he regretting what had happened between them?* (FrameNet)

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<sup>3</sup> FrameNet is a lexical database of English which annotates examples according to their use in actual texts, in particular those in the British National Corpus (British English), the U.S. newswire texts offered by the Linguistic Data Consortium (American English), and the American National Corpus (American English). It provides their meaning, usage and valence information (<https://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu/fndrupal/>).

(9) *I know and I regret it that most website owners love to have kinds of flashy stuff.* (GloWbE-Philippines)

As noted above, this study seeks to identify innovative patterns or uses that may take place within the complementation profile of the verb REGRET. Innovation is here understood in Bamgbose's (1998: 2) terms: for him, an innovation is "an acceptable variant" and should be distinguished from an error, the latter being simply "a mistake or uneducated usage." He argues that "the main question that arises with innovations is the need to decide when an observed feature of language use is indeed an innovation and when it is simply an error", and in order to make this decision, defining both innovations and errors is crucial. To make such a distinction, Bamgbose (1998: 3-5) proposes five internal factors that lead to a linguistic feature qualifying as an innovation:

- a. Demographic: the number of users of a pattern in the acrolectal variety. When a form is not used in the acrolectal variety, it is more "likely to be stigmatized as non-standard" (Bamgbose 1998: 3).
- b. Geographic: whether the feature is spread across a country and is not limited to a single geographical region or language background (Hindi English, Marathi English).
- c. Codification: whether the feature is found in grammars, dictionaries, course books, and reference manuals.
- d. Authoritative: whether the feature is used by professional writers, teachers, media practitioners and publishing houses.
- e. Acceptability: whether the feature is accepted by the linguistic community.<sup>4</sup>

Section 3 below describes the methodology used to identify innovative patterns in the clausal complementation of the verb REGRET.

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<sup>4</sup> Other categorizations include linguistic innovation vs linguistic conventionalization (Croft 2000) and error vs conventionalized innovation (van Rooy 2011). In both cases, linguistic innovation and conventionalized innovation require the new patterns/forms to be spread, accepted, and selected by the speech community. That is, they need to fulfill at least some of Bamgbose's criteria.

### 3. Methodology

As mentioned above, the data for the study was retrieved from GloWbE.<sup>5</sup> This corpus contains data from the years 2012-2013 and is divided into two main text-types: Blogs, which accounts for about 60% of the corpus, and General (40%), which contains other web-based materials, such as newspapers, magazines and company websites. One interesting feature of this corpus is that the language it represents sometimes resembles that of conversations and reflects the turn-taking system, especially in internet blogs, as in examples (10) and (11).

- (10) ***I have to disagree with the previous comment about EVF cameras.***  
*An EVF is just a point & shoot digital camera with a second, smaller*  
 (GloWbE-United States)
- (11) ***Like I've mentioned before, you should have just stayed stayed single the whole time. I did tell you that you're those type of guys that isn't ready to commit to one relationship in serious mode seeing you're always looking at other girls.*** (GloWbE-Philippines)

The characteristics of the corpus do not allow for an analysis of all 5 factors cited by Bamgbose (1998, cf. Section 2). The first of these, demographic, considers the number of speakers in the acrolectal variety that make use of a specific structure. The GloWbE corpus does not contain metalinguistic data on speakers, and thus it is not possible to know if they use a basilectal, mesolectal or acrolectal variety. However, since writers are using English on the internet, presumably for communicative purposes as an interethnic language, we might assume that they will try to use the most proficient variety of English that they have in their repertoire. In fact, if we have a look at GloWbE, we see that the varieties writers use are not of a mixture of English with their substrate languages but are clear and intelligible for any reader with a

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<sup>5</sup> It becomes necessary to acknowledge some limitations of the GloWbE corpus. Firstly, the lack of accuracy in determining the geographical background of the writers, since there are no metadata available. Secondly, the comments section of newspapers and blogs are included in the corpus, so that it becomes impossible to ascertain the country of origin of the writers, and thirdly, the difficulty to know the particular variety used by the writer, that is, acrolectal, mesolectal, or basilectal (cf. Davies and Fuchs 2015: 26; Mukherjee 2015: 35; Hoffmann 2018: 179).

command of English. Therefore, the first factor, demographic, will be analyzed in terms of the number of tokens retrieved in each variety of English under study. The second factor, geographic, considers whether the feature is spread across a country. The GloWbE corpus, again, does not contain metadata about the origin of the writers and therefore it is not possible to know whether they come from the same or from different parts of the country. Thus, we will deal with this factor by looking at the spread of a specific feature across the different varieties in the data; if a feature is spread across different countries we must assume that it is spread across the English-speaking population in general. Therefore, I will consider that a feature is geographically spread when it is present in all the four subgroups considered. The other three factors proposed by Bamgbose (1998), authoritative, codification, and acceptance, cannot be directly derived from GloWbE and hence will not be considered here. Future studies will be required to see whether the features found in the 14 L2 varieties in this study increase over time, as well as whether they are codified in grammars and are accepted by the linguistic community.

As noted in Section 1, the study examines 16 varieties of English (see also Table 1 below). A search of the data for the verb REGRET (*regret\*\_v\**) yielded 18,023 examples. Since the number of examples retrieved for the two native varieties of English is very high, I took a random sample of 2,000 examples per variety; for the non-native varieties I analyzed all the examples in the corpus (cf. Table 1). Then, all the examples were manually annotated for the complementation type, i.e. NP, (S) *-ing*, *to-inf.*, *that/zero*, *-wh*, *it that*, PP, S + *to*-infinitive, bare infinitive, and so on.

Table 1. Total of examples analyzed per variety

Variety	Number of examples
British English	2,000
American English	2,000
Indian English	1,298
Sri Lankan English	632
Pakistani English	972
Bangladesh English	396
Singapore English	957
Malaysian English	880
Philippine English	744

Hong Kong English	539
South African English	565
Nigerian English	1,153
Kenyan English	709
Ghanaian English	608
Tanzanian English	427
Jamaican English	543
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18,023</b>

A preliminary analysis of the data shows some repeated examples and also examples in which REGRET was used either as a noun or as an adjective (see examples (12) and (13) respectively), which were excluded from the analysis. Other examples that had to be discarded were instances in which the original source was not the internet, as in example (14), which cites John Milton's "Second Defence of the People of England" (Milton 1653); further examples taken from songs and poems were found and discarded.

- (12) *I would say this record displays a wide range of themes- family, love, **regret**, fear, youth, aging, desire, etc.* (GloWbE-Great Britain)
- (13) *...whose style of preaching you find painful below that of his **regretted** predecessor?* (GloWbE-United States)
- (14) *a beginning) was glorious; but, with deep emotions of concern will they **regret**, that those were wanting who might have completed the structure. They will lament* (GloWbE-United States)

The presence of such examples also led me to manually assess precision and recall, defined as a "measure of the ability of the system to retrieve relevant documents while at the same time holding back non-relevant ones" (Van Rijsbergen 1979: 11). Precision and recall were analyzed for each variety under study, following Hundt and Schneider (2009), who analyze the suitability of using a parser "as a tool for descriptive linguistics" (Hundt and Schneider 2009: 1) and who argue that parsing performance may vary in different varieties of English due to unexpected differences in the various L2 patterns with respect to L1 ones. As shown in Table 2 below, both precision and recall rates are above 90% in all varieties with the sole exception of American English,

where recall is 89.2%. This shows that the search *regret\*\_v\** is above average (see for example Hundt, Schneider and Seoane 2016).

Table 2. Precision and recall

	<b>Verbs retrieved of all</b>	<b>% recall</b>	<b>REGRET*_v* vs. false positives</b>	<b>% precision</b>
British English	111 of 117	94.9	5466/304	94.7
American English	99 of 111	89.2	5153/298	95.4
Indian English	102 of 105	97.1	1212/63	95.1
Sri Lankan English	86 of 89	96.6	589/34	94.5
Pakistani English	86 of 91	94.5	870/75	92.1
Bangladesh English	79 of 80	98.8	365/16	95.8
Singapore English	105 of 109	96.3	887/47	95.0
Malaysian English	100 of 105	95.2	803/55	93.6
Philippine English	98 of 102	96.1	700/34	95.4
Hong Kong English	90 of 93	96.8	485/40	92.4
South African English	104 of 108	96.3	529/25	95.5
Nigerian English	105 of 111	94.6	1082/44	96.1
Kenyan English	113 of 118	95.8	561/34	94.3
Ghanaian English	85 of 90	94.4	645/48	93.1
Tanzanian English	109 of 115	94.8	397/20	95.4
Jamaican English	81 of 84	96.4	495/32	93.9

The following section presents the results obtained after the analysis of the complementation patterns of the verb REGRET in each variety.

#### 4. Results

This section reports on the manual analysis of the 12,917 valid attestations of the verb REGRET retrieved from the corresponding components of GloWbE. It also offers an in-depth analysis of variation found in the complementation patterns (*that*/zero clauses vs. *to*-infinitive

and gerund clauses) with special attention to new uses of the canonical patterns and new emerging patterns.

Table 3 below shows the number and percentage of tokens of the verb REGRET classified according to the complementation they take (rows 1 to 8). They are further classified into L1 vs L2 varieties, with the latter being grouped geographically (Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean).

Table 3. Overview of the complementation patterns of REGRET per variety of English

	L1	L2		ESD	TOTAL
		Asia	Africa	Caribbean	
<b>1</b> NP	2,281 60.3%	2,850 50.3%	1,472 49.0%	264 57.1%	6,867
<b>2</b> (S) <i>-ing</i>	814 21.5%	1,026 18.1%	589 19.6%	82 17.7%	2,511
<b>3</b> <i>to-inf</i>	92 2.4%	189 3.3%	72 2.4%	24 5.2%	377
<b>4</b> <i>that/zero</i>	386 10.2%	737 13.0%	466 15.5%	54 11.7%	1,643
<b>5</b> <i>wh-</i>	72 1.9%	149 2.6%	81 2.7%	3 0.6%	305
<b>6</b> <i>it that</i>	-	<b>1</b> <b>0.01%</b>	-	-	1
<b>7</b> intransitive	116 3.1%	522 9.2%	258 8.6%	31 6.7%	927
<b>8</b> other CC patterns	19 0.5%	195 3.4%	65 2.2%	4 0.9%	283
TOTAL examples	3,780	5,669	3,004	462	12,915

Rows 1 to 6 include the patterns that are covered in reference grammars, that is NP, gerund with and without an explicit subject, *to*-infinitive, *that/zero* CCs, *wh-* CCs, and the *it that* construction (see

examples (1) to (9) in Section 2). From this group, it is interesting to note that the *it that*<sup>6</sup> construction, which is recorded in the grammars, is only registered once, in Philippine English (marked in bold in Table 3; cf. example (15)). According to Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 963), REGRET and RESENT are the main two verbs that display this “behaviour”, with both the *it* and the *that*-complement clause as direct object of the verb, and with the possibility of omitting the *it* direct object without any change in meaning. Clearly, this construction is not at all frequent in current internet language, which might imply that it is becoming obsolete or simply that it is more frequent in other oral or written text-types.

(15) *I know and I **regret it that** most website owners love to have kinds of flashy stuff.* (GloWbE-Philippines)

The next group, rows 7 and 8, covers complementation patterns not previously reported in the literature of the verb REGRET and thus potentially innovative. Row 7 deals with REGRET as an intransitive verb, which appears in the corpus 927 times, as in example (16). This use is not acknowledged in any of the reference grammars checked (Quirk et al. 1985; Biber et al. 1999; Huddleston and Pullum 2002) or in FrameNet, though it is mentioned in one dictionary (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*), although without being exemplified.

(16) *My family suffered a great deal and I **regret,**” the transformed man says.* (GloWbE-Tanzania)

However, there are two main reasons why this pattern might not be considered a new or innovative pattern. Firstly, according to the OED, when REGRET entered the English language from the French verb *regretter*, it could be used both transitively and intransitively (see examples (17) and (18) respectively). The intransitive use already had the meaning ‘to feel or express sorrow or regret’. Therefore, the current intransitive construction is not new to REGRET from a diachronic

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<sup>6</sup> The exceptional nature of this example led me to explore the possibility that it might be a dummy *it* (cf. Mondorf 2016), but an examination of the broader linguistic context of this example suggested that it should be interpreted as an instantiation of an *it that* construction.

perspective. The second reason is that even though the examples are syntactically intransitive, there is usually a retrievable direct object in the context. This can be seen in example (19), where the previous clause *We had hurt someone* is understood as the direct object of the verb REGRET (*We **regretted** at that very moment that we had hurt someone*). In the historical examples, (17) and (18), on the contrary, the direct object cannot be retrieved from the linguistic context.

- (17) *Art þou my perle þat I haf playned, **Regretted** by myn one, on nyzte?*  
(13... E.E. Allit. P.A. 243)  
“Are you my pearl, which I have mourned and grieved for...” (Putter 1996)
- (18) *The barounes and the people also wepyd and **regreted**, in cursyng theym that the fals wordes had founde.* (C1450 King Ponthus (Digby) in Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc. Amer. (1897) 12 69 (MED))
- (19) *We had hurt someone. We **regretted** at that very moment and we wanted to do something to make it up but* (GloWbE-Malaysia)

Finally, row 8 in Table 3, with the label “other CC”, includes all the new complementation patterns that are not considered in the grammars and are not historically attested. These will be analyzed in more depth in subsection 4.2. Before that, I will provide an overview of the distribution of the available canonical complementation patterns and a brief account of their new uses.

The main variability in the complementation of the verb REGRET is that between (i) gerunds and finite complement clauses where the action expressed in the CC is ‘anterior’ or ‘simultaneous’ to the time indicated by the main verb REGRET, and between (ii) *to*-infinitives and finite complement clauses where the action expressed in the CC is ‘posterior’ to the time indicated by REGRET. As for (ii), the corpus data here confirms that both *to*-infinitives and finite complement clauses can be used with ‘posterior’ meanings (see examples (20) and (21) respectively). However, in most cases, alternation between them is not possible: what is expressed with a finite complement clause cannot be expressed with an infinitive one, and vice versa (see example (22)).

- (20) *I **regret** to say that accumulated problems in the judiciary do not yield to any immediate and ready-made solution.* (GloWbE-Bangladesh)
- (21) *...they **regret** they will not be able to attend.* (GloWbE-Great Britain)
- (22) *If we have not received your completed and signed booking form with the appropriate deposit within 7 days, we **regret** that your reservation will lapse.* (GloWbE-Great Britain)

Therefore, for the study of the distribution of the available canonical patterns, I will focus on the alternation between gerunds and finite clauses, in which the meaning expressed by the CC is ‘anterior’ or ‘simultaneous’ to that expressed in the main clause. Table 4 sets out the distribution of these two patterns across the different varieties, grouped as L1 and L2 varieties. It shows a preference for the gerund in all the varieties; however, this preference is lower in L2 varieties and there is a stronger tendency for the use of finite patterns.

Table 4. Distribution of gerunds and finite patterns with ‘anterior’ and ‘simultaneous’ meanings

	L1	L2		ESD	TOTAL
		Asia	Africa	Caribbean	
<i>-ing</i>	770 68.3%	976 60.4%	558 57.2%	78 61.4%	2,382
finite	357 <b>31.7%</b>	639 <b>39.6%</b>	418 <b>42.8%</b>	49 <b>38.6%</b>	1,463
TOTAL	1,127 100%	1,615 100%	976 100%	127 100%	3,845

The Fisher exact test shows that the difference between the four groups with regard to the choice between the gerund and finite patterns is significant at  $p < .05$ ; p-value is  $9.215075 \times 10^{-7}$ .

These results seem to confirm previous research that revealed a stronger tendency towards a more transparent mapping of form and meaning in L2 varieties of English (cf. Nesselhauf 2009; Steger and Schneider 2012; Laporte 2012; Gilquin 2015; Callies 2016; among others). More precisely Romasanta (2017) studies the complementation

of the verb REGRET in British English, American English, Hong Kong English, Nigerian English, and Jamaican English, and concludes that the stronger tendency for the use of finite patterns in L2 varieties may be explained by both substrate influence and cognitive processes of transparency and isomorphism.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, Romasanta (forthcoming) concludes that other syntactic and semantic factors may also play a role in the choice of more transparent patterns, such as animacy of the subject in the main clause, coreferential subjects, voice of the complement clause, length of the complement clause, presence of negative markers in the complement clause, presence of intervening material between the main clause and the complement clause, among others.

#### 4.1. New Uses of the Canonical Complementation Patterns

The verb REGRET exhibits new uses of the canonical patterns described above. The innovation has to do with the meaning of the CC, in particular with the temporal relation between the time expressed in the main clause and the time expressed in the complement clause. As seen in section 2, complement clauses can express three different meanings, that is, ‘anterior’, ‘simultaneous’ or ‘posterior’ meanings. *That* complement clauses can express the three meanings, gerunds can express both ‘anterior’ and ‘simultaneous’ meanings, and infinitives have a ‘posterior’ meaning.

Starting with the ‘anterior’ meaning, the canonical patterns are *that* complement clauses, as in example (23), and gerunds, as in example (24). However, as can be seen in Table 5 below, examples with ‘anterior’ meaning expressed with *to*-infinitive CCs have also been attested in the corpus. In many examples like these, which express ‘anterior’ meaning with a *to*-infinitive clause, the verb of the complement clause is usually a verb of the senses, such as SEE and HEAR, as in example (25); other verbs such as LEARN, MEET, and LET are also recorded (see examples in (26)).

(23) *We deeply regret that Ms. Cobell did not live to see this day*  
(GloWbE-Bangladesh)

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<sup>7</sup> The distinction between ‘anterior’, ‘simultaneous’, and ‘posterior’ meanings was not considered in this publication.

(24) *I **regret** having taken the decision that caused him a lot of hurt*  
(GloWbE-India)

(25) *We **regret** to hear that two members of your group got sick.*  
(GloWbE-Great Britain)

(26)

a. *we **regret** to learn of the disturbance this caused you and your baby* (GloWbE-United States)

b. *Please feel free to contact me and you will never **regret** to meet with me* (GloWbE-Ghana)

c. *I then **regretted** to let him leave without telling him that what he is doing is short sighted* (GloWbE-Philippines)

Table 5. Distribution of complement clauses expressing ‘anterior’ meaning

	L1	L2		ESD	TOTAL
		Asia	Africa	Caribbean	
(S) <i>-ing</i>	739	919	513	75	2,246
<i>that / zero</i>	234	432	249	36	950
<i>to-</i> <i>infinitive</i>	<b>17/1.7%</b>	<b>47/3.4%</b>	<b>14/1.8%</b>	<b>4/3.5%</b>	<b>82/2.5%</b>
TOTAL	990	1,398	776	115	3,278

The Fisher exact test shows that the difference between the four groups with regard to the expression of an ‘anterior’ meaning is significant at  $p < .05$ ; p-value is 0.00005322458.

As mentioned in Section 3, for the study of innovation I follow Bangbose’s (1998), in particular his demographic and geographic criteria, since the other three criteria (authoritative, codification, and acceptability) cannot be examined in GloWbE. From a demographic and geographic perspective, Table 5 shows that examples of this new use of the *to*-infinitive with an ‘anterior’ meaning are present both in L1 and L2 varieties, with the Caribbean and Asia displaying the highest percentages (3.5% and 3.4% respectively). Therefore, this pattern seems to be both demographically and geographically spread. The percentages, however, are rather low and future studies are necessary to confirm this apparently innovative use of an already existing pattern.

The next meaning, ‘simultaneous’ meaning, is usually expressed either with *that* complement clauses, as in example (27), or gerunds, as in example (28). However, as seen in Table 6 below, the corpus also registers four examples with the *to*-infinitive expressing ‘simultaneous’ meaning. All the examples occur in L2 varieties of English from Asia and Africa, namely those from Singapore, Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria. All four examples are given in (29). Interestingly, three of these have BE as the CC verb.

(27) *I do highly regret that the old beautiful days are over down there* (GloWbE-Tanzania)

(28) *We regret allowing medicine to rot or expire in government stores yet patients die-that must not happen* (GloWbE-South Africa)

(29)

a. *She regretted to be an Engineer trained background* (GloWbE-Singapore)

b. *The same way it is burdensome for on to have plenty money on him and sometimes regret to have plenty money as those problems the money would solve rather becomes worse* (GloWbE-Ghana)

c. *I'm tired and regret to be a Kenyan* (GloWbE-Kenya)

d. *Never regret to be a Nigerian my brothers.* (GloWbE-Nigeria)

Table 6. Distribution of complement clauses expressing ‘simultaneous’ meaning

	L1	L2		ESD	TOTAL
		Asia	Africa	Caribbean	
(S) -ing	35	69	46	4	154
that / zero	115	200	161	12	488
to-infinitive	-	1/0.4%	3/1.4%	-	4/0.6%
TOTAL	150	270	210	16	646

The Fisher exact test shows that the difference between the four groups with regard to the expression of a ‘simultaneous’ meaning is not significant at  $p < .05$ ;  $p$ -value is 0.8450237.

The number of examples with *to*-infinitive expressing ‘simultaneous’ meaning is very low, since only four out of 646 examples attested with

‘simultaneous’ meaning have a *to*-infinitive CC, representing just 0.6% of the total. Regarding Bamgbose’s (1998: 2) demographic factor, therefore, this pattern is not demographically spread. As for the geographic factor, it seems that this pattern is tentatively favored in African varieties (Nigerian, Ghanaian, and Kenyan English) where three of the four examples are found. In general, however, this innovative use of an already existing pattern would not qualify as an innovation, in Bamgbose’s (1998) terms, in internet language.

Finally, the ‘posterior’ meaning is usually expressed either with *that* complement clauses, as in example (30), or *to*-infinitives, as in example (31). Table 7, however, shows that gerunds also express meaning: two are attested in the L1 varieties of English (British English and American English) and one in Philippine English (see examples in (32)). Example (32c.) may be understood as expressing ‘anterior’ meaning; however, if we look at the context of the sentence, the writer is talking about an invitation she received for a future event, and therefore she regrets *not being* there in the future.

- (30) *I'm very much looking forward to visiting Leipzig and **regret that** I will not be able to stay for ABC station botches Petraeus book cover* (GloWbE-Great Britain)
- (31) *We **regret to state**, that several lives were lost on this unfortunate occasion.* (GloWbE-Jamaica)
- (32)
- a. *I **regret saying** this, but that Hereulho Gomes is looking alright and I'm thinking maybe* (GloWbE-Great Britain)
  - b. *As much as I **regret reminding** you, you did once mistake polished aluminum diamond plate for chromed steel plate and there's about 1750 difference in melting points.* (GloWbE-United States)
  - c. *Today I was looking at a beautiful invitation sent to me for an art exhibit opening next week, which I'm pretty excited about. It was practically an artwork in itself, and I marveled at the ingenuity and craftsmanship that came with such a lovely invite. There were also several other invites for the last week of June on my table, and I am so **regretting not being** around for any of these events.* (GloWbE-Philippines)

Table 7. Distribution of complement clauses expressing ‘posterior’ meaning

	L1	L2		ESD	TOTAL
		Asia	Africa	Caribbean	
<i>that</i> / zero	17	19	18	2	56
<i>to</i> -infinitive	63	119	48	19	249
(S) <i>-ing</i>	<b>2/2.4%</b>	<b>1/0.7%</b>	-	-	<b>3/1.0%</b>
TOTAL	82	139	66	21	308

The Fisher exact test shows that the difference between the four groups with regard to the expression of a ‘posterior’ meaning is significant at  $p < .05$ ; p-value is 0.002894456.

The number of examples is very low and therefore it is not demographically and geographically spread.

To summarize this section, we can say that the canonical complementation patterns that are being used with new meanings normally display very low numbers and are not spread across the population or across countries (cf. Tables 6 and 7). Such examples could therefore be considered production errors. However, the pattern with higher percentages of occurrence, that is, the use of *to*-infinitives with an ‘anterior’ meaning (Table 5), might be worth exploring in further research using new datasets that allow for an analysis of future developments in this complementation pattern.

In the next subsection, I will focus on the label “other CC patterns”, used in Table 3: complementation patterns that are not treated in reference grammars.

#### 4.2. Emergence of New Complementation Patterns

The final form of innovation in the complementation profile of REGRET can be found in the emergence of new complementation patterns that are not contemplated in grammars or dictionaries. These other forms of complementation are included in Table 8.

Table 8. New complementation patterns

	L1	L2		ESD	TOTAL
		Asia	Africa	Caribbean	
<b>1</b> PP	16	189	60	4	269
<b>2</b> S + <i>to</i> -infinitive	-	1	-	-	1
<b>3</b> bare infinitive	2	-	-	-	2
<b>4</b> it + <i>to</i> -infinitive	-	1	-	-	1
<b>5</b> <i>that</i> + <i>-ing</i>	-	1	-	-	1
<b>6</b> <i>that</i> + <i>to</i> -infinitive	-	1	-	-	1
<b>7</b> (S) past part	1	1	5	-	7
<b>8</b> <i>for</i> NP <i>-ing</i>	-	1	-	-	1
TOTAL	3,780	5,669	3,004	462	12,915

The first pattern shown in Table 8 is the use of the verb REGRET followed by a prepositional phase (henceforth PP; see example (33)). Table 9 provides the number of examples retrieved with this pattern and the percentage it represents within the total number of instances analyzed for each regional group. It shows that this pattern is most productive in Asian and African varieties with 3.3% and 2% respectively, whereas they only represent 0.4% and 0.9% in the L1s and the Caribbean.

(33) *But you will NEVER regret for visiting there!* (GloWbE-Singapore)

Table 9. Examples of the pattern REGRET + PP and representation in the sample

	L1	L2		ESD	TOTAL
		Asia	Africa	Caribbean	
REGRET+PP	16 0.4%	189 3.3%	60 2.0%	4 0.9%	269 2.1%
TOTAL	3,780	5,669	3,004	462	12,915

Looking at Asia and Africa in more detail, Figure 2 shows that within this continent, Malaysian English and Bangladesh English are the varieties that make most frequent use of this pattern (5.4% and 4.7% each), and within Africa, it is Ghanaian English and Kenyan English that resort to this pattern most often (with 3.4% and 2.3% respectively).

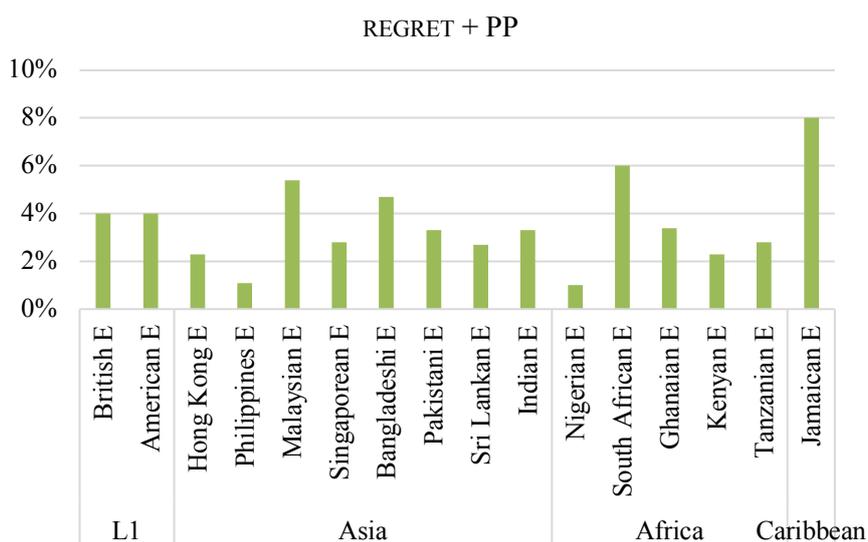


Figure 2. Number of examples of the pattern REGRET + PP across World Englishes

Turning now to the specific prepositions used, in Asia we find examples with all the prepositions attested in the data (11 different prepositions in total). Some of these, such as *at*, *from*, *towards*, *upon*, and *with*, which only occur followed by a NP, are even exclusive to Asia (see examples (34) - (38) respectively). On the other hand, in African varieties the range of prepositions is more restricted. As for the native varieties and Jamaican English, they only make use of 5 and 3 different prepositions respectively.

Table 10. Prepositions used in the structure REGRET + PP

		L1	L2		ESD	TOTAL
			Asia	Africa	Caribbean	
for	<i>-ing</i>	2	46	27	1	76
	NP	5	50	9	-	64
	TOTAL	7	96	36	1	140
about	<i>-ing</i>	2	2	-	-	4
	NP	3	30	12	2	47
	TOTAL	5	32	12	2	51
over	<i>-ing</i>	-	1	1	-	2
	NP	-	15	3	-	18
	<i>to-inf.</i>	-	1	-	-	1
	TOTAL	-	17	4	-	21
of	<i>-ing</i>	2	5	2	-	9
	NP	-	8	-	-	8
	bare inf.	-	-	1	-	1
	TOTAL	2	13	3	-	18
on	<i>-ing</i>	-	1	-	-	1
	NP	1	11	3	1	16
	TOTAL	1	12	3	1	17
at	<i>-ing</i>	-	1	-	-	1
	NP	-	6	-	-	6
	TOTAL	-	7	-	-	7
in	<i>-ing</i>	-	4	2	-	6
	NP	-	1	-	-	1
	TOTAL	-	5	2	-	7
from	<i>-ing</i>	-	1	-	-	1
	NP	-	1	-	-	1
	TOTAL	-	2	-	-	2
towards	NP	-	2	-	-	2
upon	NP	1	1	-	-	2
with	NP	-	2	-	-	2
TOTAL		16	189	60	4	269

As can be seen in Table 10, the preferred preposition in Asia, Africa, and the native varieties is *for*, and it is followed by both gerunds and NPs, with 76 and 64 examples each, as in examples (39) and (40)

respectively. The next most frequent preposition is *about*, which is again used in all the varieties and is the preferred preposition in the Caribbean variety, but the total number of examples here is just one third of those in the case of *for*. As to *about*, the preference is for NP (see example (41)) since only 4 examples from the total of 47 occur with the gerund. These two prepositions, *for* and *about*, are the only ones to appear in all the varieties of English studied. All the other prepositions, *over*, *of*, *on*, and *in*, are used across the different varieties but not in all of them, and they occur with both gerunds and NPs.

- (34) *I try not to **regret** at most decisions i do but after reading this post, ...*  
(GloWbE-Philippines)
- (35) *And Why Bhai Balwant **regrets** from his action, as he took the revenge...* (GloWbE-India)
- (36) *Therefore, I don't **regret** towards the support that never came from certain politicians.* (GloWbE-Sri Lanka)
- (37) *you will be left with nothing than **regretting** upon your decision later on.* (GloWbE-Great Britain)
- (38) *which I really did a very stupid mistake, I really **regret** with that mistake.* (GloWbE-Malaysia)
- (39) *I **regretted** for coming here because then I only saw trash covered streets,...* (GloWbE-Jamaica)
- (40) *Ever since I **regretted** for my action but I can't blame...* (GloWbE-Ghana)
- (41) *Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) informed us that we will not **regret** about anything in this life...* (GloWbE-South Africa)

Table 11 shows the use of the verb REGRET followed by a preposition by grouping the examples in terms of the complement of the preposition instead of the preposition itself. The use of a preposition followed either by a gerund or an NP occurs in all the varieties, and both patterns are productive, with 100 and 172 examples in total, respectively.

Table 11. Number of examples of the pattern REGRET + PP categorized in terms of the complement of the preposition

	L1	L2		ESD	TOTAL
		Asia	Africa	Caribbean	
prep+ <i>-ing</i>	6 37.5%	61 32.3%	32 53.3%	1 25.0%	100
prep+NP	10 62.5%	127 67.2%	27 45.0%	3 75.0%	172
prep+ <i>to-inf</i>	-	1 0.5%	-	-	1
prep+bare inf	-	-	1 1.7%	-	1
TOTAL REGRET+PP	16 100%	189 100%	60 100%	4 100%	269

One possible explanation for this use of the verb followed by a preposition is through analogy with a number of patterns. On the one hand, it may be an analogy with prepositional gerunds like *she delighted in doing it*, since similar examples with the verb REGRET are found in my data, such as *but I don't regret the least in paying nearly double the 2009 pricing* (GloWbE-Malaysia). However, analogy with prepositional gerunds would only explain the use of REGRET followed by a preposition + gerund, and not the use of preposition + NP. Another possible source of analogy is the noun REGRET, which can be followed by different prepositions + gerund, especially *about, at, for*, as in *It reflects a moral regret for having violated a situation of trust*, and with these and other prepositions + NP, namely *about, at, for, in, of, over*, as in *Audrey has no regret about her decision*. Most of the prepositions found in my data can be used with the noun REGRET, but there are some new ones: *on, from, towards, upon*, and *with*. Finally, other possible sources of analogy are the semantically related construction *be sorry for/about something*, which has the meaning of 'regret', and other prepositional verbs such as *long for*, first attested in c1225, cf. OED *s.v. long, v.1*. These data may point towards the emergence of a new prepositional verb, especially with the preposition *for* (*to regret for something*), a phenomenon investigated in previous studies (cf. for example Schneider 2004; Mukherjee and

Hoffmann 2006; Mukherjee 2009; Nesselhauf 2009; Zipp 2010; Schneider and Zipp 2013; Tan 2013, 2016; Hoffmann 2018).

This PP complementation pattern of REGRET is both demographically and geographically widespread, and therefore it might be considered as an innovation that could be gaining ground in present-day English, both in L2 and (especially) in L1 varieties.

Returning to Table 8, from rows 2 to 8 we find, firstly, S + *to*-infinitive, which only appears once, in Bangladesh English (see example (42)) and, secondly, bare infinitives, with one example in each native variety of English (see examples in (43)). Note that in example (43a) there is intervening material between the verb REGRET and the verb of the complement clause, which may be the reason for the use of the bare infinitive instead of the expected *to*-infinitive. Thirdly, there is also one example of the construction *it* + *to*-infinitive, illustrated in (44). This example is from Sri Lankan English and resembles the construction *it that* found in Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 963). There is also one instance with the complementation pattern *that* + gerund, and another one with *that* + *to*-infinitive (see examples (45) and (46)), both occurring in Sri Lankan English. In example (46), *that* may be understood as a complementizer or as a fronted object of the verb *buy*. It is also interesting to note that in both examples the verb TO BE appears before REGRET (*You are regret, I am regret*). This *to be regret* construction is also found in other examples, such as those in (47). These examples occur in varieties from both Asia and Africa, but not in the variety from the Caribbean (Jamaica) or in the L1 varieties.

(42) *He said that they cannot **regret** the Hall Mark Group to accept the less amount of money as commercial bank (GloWbE-Bangladesh)*

(43)

a. *Accordingly as someone who likes Portugal and its people I **regret** very much have to tell you that the -1% economic growth forecast... (GloWbE-Great Britain)*

b. *You will never **regret** have done it! (GloWbE-United States)*

(44) *But I **regret** it to say he has forgotten a number of world records he has established up to now (GloWbE-Sri Lanka)*

(45) *Whether you are **regret** that not shopping more products from taobao or tmall on Double 11? (GloWbE-Sri Lanka)*

(46) *To be honest, i am **regret** that not to buy on Single day, because the price difference is large comparing today to that day* (GloWbE-Sri Lanka)

(47)

- a. *I was very **regret** to choose stay at home having nothing to do.* (GloWbE-Hong Kong)
- b. *I hope am not **regret** to do this.* (GloWbE-Philippines)
- c. *Though still at the top we are **regret** the loss and for us to clinch the title.* (GloWbE-Kenya)

The next pattern is the use of the past participle, as in examples (48a) to (48d), which occurs mostly (5 of 7 examples) with the verbs SEE and BE (*seen* and *been* respectively). Hundt (2016) investigates the use of *seen* and *been* for *seeing* and *being* in “unusual auxiliary-participle combination” such as *\*are been seen* and *\*have been seen*, and looks at metalinguistic comments, native speaker judgments, corpus data, historical evidence, evidence from dialects, and child language. Her conclusion is that *seen* and *been* may be simply a spelling variant of *seeing* and *being*, since the two pairs can be homophones in spoken English. Thus, it seems safe to apply this hypothesis of *seen* and *been* being spelling variants to the case of verb complementation. However, two of the examples in my data, one with *bought* and another one with *missed*, do not seem to support this, since *bought* and *buying* and *missed* and *missing* are not homophones. Another hypothesis, as a reviewer pointed out, could be that this is a case of syntactic ellipsis, where the perfect auxiliary *having* is elided (*In fact I regret having seen them...*). Future research might clarify whether this is an analogical extension of REGRET + *seen* and REGRET + *been* to other verbs. Finally, example (49) illustrates the one case of the complementation pattern *for NP -ing*, which occurs in Sri Lankan English.

(48)

- a. *In fact I **regret** seen them playing in Yankee Stadium once, where i lived closed by it* (GloWbE-United States)
- b. *I really **regreted** been a Ghanaian for is this the way we can insult our leaders* (GloWbE-Ghana)
- c. *in around 30 MINUTES LOL... i **regretted** bought the ticket... thought that Chen Jin will play* (GloWbE-Malaysia)

- d. *I **regretted** missed the opportunity to talk to the women after the meeting as we had to dash to Bulawayo on the then wet bumpy and slippery road and in the dark* (GloWbE-South Africa)
- (49) *We are **regretting** for them considering the type of any war.* (GloWbE-Sri Lanka)

Given the low frequency of these new complementation patterns, and that they are not spread across different varieties of English (they occur mainly in four Asian and three African varieties of English), these should probably be considered to be performance errors.

### 5. Conclusion

This paper has dealt with innovation in the complementation system of REGRET across different L1 and L2 varieties of English by looking at new uses of the canonical complementation patterns and new patterns found with this verb.

To begin with the general data, some L2 varieties of English exhibit a higher proportion of finite patterns than the L1 varieties. Two explanations for this difference that will have to be tested in future research are the potential influence of the substrate languages, and the effect of cognitive processes such as the tendency towards isomorphism and transparency that take place in situations of language contact and second language acquisition.

As for the innovations, two of the criteria proposed by Bamgbose (1998) were tested for all the new patterns and uses found: demographic and geographic distribution. The only pattern that fulfills these two criteria is the use of REGRET followed by prepositions, especially the preposition *for* as in *I **regretted** for coming here* (GloWbE-Jamaica). Different hypotheses were proposed for this new use of REGRET: i) analogy with prepositional gerunds (as in *She delighted in doing it*), ii) analogy with the noun REGRET, which can be followed by different prepositions, and iii) analogy with *be sorry for/about*, which is semantically equivalent to REGRET.

Other potential innovations, which do not fulfill Bamgbose's factors (1998) but will have to be explored in the future, are the use of *to*-infinitives with retrospective meanings, as in *I am tired and **regret** to be a Kenyan* (GloWbE-Kenya), and gerunds with prospective meanings, as

in *I regret reminding you* (GloWbE-United States). These new uses are not yet spread demographically and geographically, but future studies might detect a gradual increase in use.

In sum, through the analysis of the complementation profile of REGRET, this paper has found further evidence in support of the fact that, as Schneider (2007: 86) and Olavarría de Ersson and Shaw (2003: 138) among others have noted, the intersection between lexis and grammar in general terms, and complementation in particular, is frequently the locus of variation and change, especially during the process of structural nativization in L2 varieties of English. However, more research is still needed. Further corpus data, for example, containing metalinguistic data on speakers would help to identify more clearly the demographic and geographic factors involved in potential innovations. The other three parameters proposed by Bamgbose (1998), authoritative, codification and acceptability, also merit future research.

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