

Teaching Grammar. A guide for the National Curriculum

By [Richard Hudson](#). (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992)

## **Chapter 5. Some non-standard dialect features**

The following list of non-standard sentences is based on one compiled by Jenny Cheshire and Viv Edwards, who kindly allowed me to use their material.

Their questionnaire was produced as part of a research project ('The survey of British dialects', project C-00-23-2264, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council), whose purpose is explained in an article containing the original questionnaire, see Edwards and Cheshire (1989).

Unfortunately in revising their list I also had to omit the delightful illustrations by Dafydd Morriss.

Every sentence in the list is grammatical in some non-standard dialect.

Whatever your local dialect, the list should offer some sentences which belong to it, while possibly provoking discussion on some of the other sentences. The list is certainly incomplete as an inventory of grammatical features that vary locally, to say nothing of local vocabulary, so you may well be able to add to it from your own knowledge.

There are many different ways in which this list can be used. You could use it yourself as a checklist, and never show it to the class, or they could go through it with you; and in the latter case, you could go straight through the entire list or take it in parts. It could simply introduce the idea of dialect diversity - the non-stop tourist approach. It could provide the basis for an interesting project, to find where some of the sentences that aren't accepted in your area are used - the geographer's approach.

Individual local features that it reveals could be explored in some depth -

the linguist's approach. Children could take it home to discuss with their parents or (better still) grandparents, to look for generation differences and changes underway - the historical approach. Each of these approaches could lead to important insights and entertaining lessons. You may photocopy it freely.

### **FORMS OF PRESENT-TENSE VERBS OTHER THAN BE**

- (1) I **likes** toffees.
- (2) We **liken** toffees.
- (3) We **likes** toffees.
- (4) Thee **likes** toffees.
- (5) Thee **like** toffees.
- (6) She **like** toffees.
- (7) You **has** to see it to believe it.
- (8) We always **has** a big cake on our birthday.
- (9) What **have** her mother bought her?
- (10) **Do** it go fast?
- (11) **Does** we want to go fast?
- (12) Fred **do** motor mechanics at college.
- (13) I **does** it at school.
- (14) You **mun** be at your music class by 9 a.m.
- (15) You **maun** be at your music class by 9 a.m.
- (16) He's out of tune, he **mun** be tone deaf.
- (17) He's out of tune, he **maun** be tone deaf.

### **FORMS OF PAST-TENSE VERBS OTHER THAN BE**

- (18) He **done** that wrong.
- (19) I **give** her a birthday present yesterday.
- (20) I **gived** her a birthday present yesterday.
- (21) Is that the car I **see** last night?
- (22) Is that the car I **seed** last night?
- (23) Is that the car I **sawed** last night?
- (24) Is that the car I **seen** last night?
- (25) I **writ** a letter yesterday.

### **PRESENT- AND PAST-TENSE FORMS OF BE**

- (26) Billy **be** stupid.
- (27) Billy **am** stupid.
- (28) Mary and John **is** getting married on Saturday.
- (29) There's cars outside the church.
- (30) You **was** singing.
- (31) You **wan** singing.
- (32) We **was** singing.
- (33) We **wan** singing.
- (34) They **was** singing.
- (35) They **wan** singing.
- (36) I **were** singing, too.
- (37) So **were** John.
- (38) Mary **weren't** singing.
- (39) There **was** some singers here a minute ago.

### **OTHER VERB-FORMS**

- (40) We've **gotten** her a present too - a car!

(41) She **was** sat over there looking at her car.

(42) He **was** stood in the corner looking at it.

(43) I've **a-found** my keys. Let's go!

(44) We'd like to **looken** at the Tv you broke.

(45) We're **a-going** to start eating now.

## NEGATION

(46) **Dinna** run too fast.

(47) You **shouldna** go in there!

(48) You've **no** to go in there!

(49) My friend broke that, I **never**.

(50) No, I **never** broke that.

(51) **Will you not** try to mend it - we need an expert.

(52) That **ain't** working.

(53) That **in't** working.

(54) That **ay** working.

(55) He **in** arf stupid.

(56) **Not do** that, John.

(57) Count on me, I **won't** do **nothing** silly.

(58) **Anyone** mustn't go

## SUBJECTS: DUMMIES, INVERSION AND TAGS

(59) He's stupid, **him**.

(60) He's stupid, **is Billy**.

(61) **It's stupid** he is.

(62) **It was stupid** he was.

(63) **There's stupid** he is.

- (64) Would he do such a thing, **think you?**
- (65) I asked him **did he** know who had taken it?
- (66) The bride's walking into the church, **is it?**
- (67) I'm going to see them now, **isn't it?**

### VERBS IN COMBINATION

- (68) One of the singers said he'll not **can** stay.
- (69) He **might can** do it tomorrow.
- (70) The other one said he **won't can't** do it.
- (71) I **done bought** them a wedding present.
- (72) How the dog **do jumpy!** He'll knock it over.
- (73) I **d'eat** chicken every day.
- (74) I **do be eating** chicken every day.
- (75) I **did eat** chicken every day when I lived there.
- (76) I **did eat** chicken yesterday, too.
- (77) **Let you be listening** to me, Joanna.
- (78) **Do ee listen** to me.
- (79) **Don't be talking** like that.
- (80) We **managed mend** it ourselves.
- (81) He **has it mended** twice already.
- (82) We're **gone** shopping.
- (83) You **should of** left half an hour ago!

### USES OF TENSES AND VERB-COMBINATIONS

- (84) I **know** that builder **all my life**.
- (85) She's been a walking disaster **since** she's here.
- (86) **Are you waiting** long for the plumber?

(87) **Did** you **have** your dinner **yet**?

(88) **Are** you **wanting** something to eat?

(89) Look! The kettle **boils**.

(90) I **be eating** chicken every day.

(91) Who **is** this book **belonging** to?

(92) If you **had've** been there, you would have seen her.

(93) **If** you **would've** been there, you would have seen her.

(94) You **haven't got to** be late, or you'll be in trouble.

### VERB LINKERS

(95) I've come **for to mend** the window.

(96) I've come **for mend** the door.

(97) He's **after going** away, but he'll be back soon.

(98) I'd like to buy this house **without** you **want** it.

(99) Change the subject, **else** I'll go mad.

### NOUN PLURALS AND NUMERALS

(100) That town is nearly **twenty mile** away.

(101) To make a big cake you need **two pound** of flour.

(102) This string is **three inch** long.

(103) This is **a scissors**.

(104) Look at these coins. I found about **a fifty** of them.

### PRONOUN SUBJECT/OBJECT FORMS

(105) **Me's** got a good appetite.

(106) **Him's** got a good appetite.

(107) **Her's** got a good appetite.

(108) **Them's** got a good appetite.

(109) Give I a cup of tea!

(110) Give **he** a cup of tea!

(111) Give **she** a cup of tea

(112) Give **we** a cup of tea!

(113) Give **they** a cup of tea!

## POSSESSIVES

(114) This is **me** cup.

(115) This is **o'me** cup.

(116) This is **mines** cup.

(117) Eat up **thee** cake.

(118) Eat up **thy** cake.

(119) That's my car, where's **yourn**?

(120) This is **he's** cup.

(121) That's my car, where's **hisn**?

(122) That's my car, where's **hern**?

(123) **It** cover's got a mark on it.

(124) **O'it** cover's got a mark on it.

(125) This is **us** car.

(126) This is **wer** car.

(127) This is **wir** car.

(128) This is my book. **Whosen** is that?

(129) These are **my father boots**.

(130) These are **my father boots laces**.

(131) Don't break **the cup's** handle.

## PRONOUNS: MISCELLANEOUS

- (132) **Himself** gets scared.
- (133) Did you see **herself** there?
- (134) We service it **usselves**.
- (135) John likes doing that **hisself**.
- (136) Lots of people do it **theirselves**.
- (137) Give **it me**. That's my book.
- (138) Give **me it**. That's my book.
- (139) **Thee's** hungry, I expect.
- (140) Are **youse** hungry, you boys over there?

## **DEMONSTRATIVES**

- (141) Look at **them** spiders.
- (142) Look at **then** spiders.
- (143) Look at **they** spiders.
- (144) Look at **this** spiders.
- (145) Look at **yon** beetle.
- (146) Look at **then** beetle.
- (147) Look at **thir** beetle.
- (148) Look at **thick** beetle.
- (149) Look at **thicky** beetle.
- (150) Look at **thuck** beetle.
- (151) Look at **theasum** worm.
- (152) Look at **this here** worm.
- (153) Look at **that there** worm.

## **DETERMINERS**

- (154) We've got **a old** house.

(155) Your house is **an recent** one.

(156) We've got **old house**. [**no determiner**]

(157) Look at **time**; you're late for school! [**no determiner**]

(158) I'll have **the headache** if I carry on talking.

### RELATIVE CLAUSES

(159) The films **what** I like best are horror films.

(160) The films **as** I like best are horror films.

(161) The films **at** I like best are horror films.

(162) Let's go to that film **that** you wanted to see **it**.

(163) I've got a friend **can watch films all night**. [**no relative pronoun**]

(164) The film **what** was on last night was good.

(165) The film **as** was on last night was good.

(166) The film **at** was on last night was good.

(167) That's the girl **what's** mum loves horror films.

(168) That's the girl **what her** mum loves horror films.

(169) That's the girl **that her** mum loves horror films.

(170) That's the girl **as her** mum loves horror films.

(171) That's the girl **at's her** mum loves horror films.

### ADJECTIVE COMPARATIVE FORMS

(172) This is the **beautifullest** house I've seen.

(173) This is the **most beautifullest** house I've seen.

(174) I've never seen a **beautifuller** one.

(175) I've never seen a **more beautifuller** one.

(176) This is a **more better** one.

(177) This is a **more betterer** one.

(178) John's got a nice house, but yours is **more nice**.

(179) This is the **worstest** one I've seen.

(180) This is the **baddest** one I've seen.

(181) I've never seen a **worser** one.

(182) I've never seen a **badder** one.

### **ADVERBS, PREPOSITIONS, PARTICLES**

(183) I like pasta. It cooks real **quick**.

(184) He knocks his hat **off of** his head.

(185) Goodbye, I'll **away** now.

(186) She goes to church **of a Sunday**.

(187) We live **aside** the cinema.

(188) We're **going pictures**.

(189) I'm going **up my friend's house** later.

(190) I'm going **down my friend's house** later.

(191) I'm going **over my friend's house** later.

(192) That's the father **on** Mary.

(193) Stop it! He's my best friend, **like**.

### **References**

Edwards, Viv and Cheshire, Jennifer. 1989. The survey of British dialect grammar. In Jennifer Cheshire, Viv Edwards, Henk Müntermann and Bert Weltens (eds.) *Dialect and Education. Some European Perspectives*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 200-215.

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