Chapter Four

The elusive butterfly of Scottish Standard English

Ole Schützler

Leipzig University

Abstract

Despite its antiquity, Scottish Standard English (SSE) is perhaps the least documented L1 standard variety of English. Historical, political and linguistic reasons are discussed, and it will be argued (1) that there is a long-standing (problematic) narrative of diachronic assimilation to Southern British Standard English, which sets SSE apart from other L1 varieties; (2) that, within the Scots sociolinguistic continuum, SSE suffers from what has been called 'the Scots bias'; and (3) that pluricentricity is implicitly associated with fully autonomous nation states, which tacitly weakens the position of SSE. Supported by a case study, the paper concludes with a sketch of possible strategies for future research on SSE: Which biases do we need to overcome, which features should we look out for, which contexts of use should we inspect, and what resources do we need to develop to put SSE on an equal footing with other standard varieties of English?

Key words: Scottish Standard English; Scots; standardisation; pluricentricity; British English

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1 A metaphorical introduction

The image of the butterfly in the title of this paper is meant to capture in a single snapshot some of the circumstances that have put Scottish Standard English (SSE) at a disadvantage compared to other standard varieties of English. Here, 'disadvantage' means that the variety is somehow less visible, less rigorously explored, and perhaps taken less seriously than others – in short, it has remained a hard-to-spot variety that continues to slip the net of linguists.

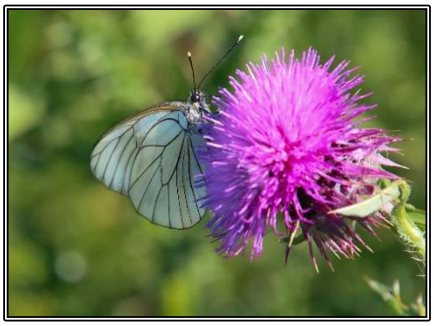

Figure 1: The elusive butterfly[1]

If we take the butterfly in Figure 1 to represent SSE in its natural habitat, Scotland, we can see that it is difficult to focus on for mainly two reasons: (i) a lack of contrast against a background of a similar hue as the butterfly itself, and (ii) a distracting, colourful eye-catcher, namely the thistle on which the animal has alighted. In morphology and syntax, standard varieties generally do not contrast very strongly – on the one hand, there is a strong pull towards uniformity particularly in writing (cf. McArthur 1987); on the other hand, accent features are more immediately available for sociolinguistic assessments by language users and therefore tend to be drawn upon for differentiation. However, this does not typically undermine the position of particular standard varieties, nor does it stop linguistics from taking an interest in them. In the case of SSE, I will argue, lack of grammatical distinctness – for instance, relative to Southern British Standard English (SBSE) – draws a lot of comment in the literature, which, in combination with other forces, may create the impression that there is not much to see. The distracting eye-catcher, on the other hand, I would argue to be the Scots language. This is much more clearly defined on historical and linguistic grounds, and Scottish linguists have traditionally concentrated on its ‘otherness’.

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[1] Picture retrieved from https://pixabay.com/photos/butterfly-thistle-insects-nature-5227479/ [accessed: 14 March 2022].

To return to the butterfly: If we overcome the challenges posed by the lack of contrast and the distractor, we will notice that the creature under investigation (SSE) does have an interesting texture rich in fascinating detail and complexity. Further, we will realise that it plays an important role in the linguistic ecosystem of Scotland. It is important that there should be a Scottish Standard variety of English, and as such it should be investigated with the same determination as General American, Irish English or New Zealand English, for instance.

This, then, is the agenda of the present paper: To provide an outline of the relatively weak position of SSE in present-day English linguistics, discuss possible historical and contemporary reasons to account for it, and make suggestions concerning a possible roadmap for research on this small but important standard variety of English.

Section 2 provides a discussion of statements from the literature that can support the elusive-butterfly assumption. Section 3 highlights research on SSE, showing that there is a bias towards phonological investigations, while other linguistic levels are less represented; some reasons are discussed. In section 4, I will consider three ways in which our perspective on SSE may have been shaped, including their negative effects. Section 5 summarises a case study that illustrates one way in which the (as I have argued) deficient situation can be improved, both in terms of the concrete linguistic features we look for and the resources that we use. Finally, section 6 summarises across the many facets of this paper and makes suggestions for the future.

2 Scottish Standard English in the literature

Particularly since the late 1970s and early 1980s, SSE as a standard variety is regularly discussed in the literature. This may in part be due to the appearance of first-generation sociolinguistic research on the Scottish scene around that time (e.g., Macaulay and Trevelyan 1977; Romaine 1978; Speitel and Johnston 1983), as it was necessary to have a clearer concept of the standard pole of the sociolinguistic continuum. Further, the incipient discourse on SSE coincided with the strengthening discourse on varieties of English world-wide (e.g., Strevens 1980; Ferguson 1982; Kachru 1988). And, finally, there were also moves towards devolution in Scotland around the same time (cf. Dewdney 1997).

The themes of this paper can be traced from earlier publications through to the present day. This section will survey relevant sources, sometimes using verbatim quotations whose content will then be systematically related to the points made near the end of section 1. The discussion proceeds chronologically, but a thematically arranged summary is provided.

Following a discussion of characteristic features of a middle-class Scottish accent of English, Aitken (1979: 105) turns to potential grammatical features, with the general observation that

> [m]iddle-class Scottish Standard English is rather more Scottish in its grammar than has hitherto been realised, though […] this is a phenomenon of the spoken not the written language.

Aitken implies a previous neglect of SSE grammar and states the general tendency for written language to be more homogeneous, internationally (again, cf. McArthur 1987). He then proceeds to list a number of candidate features, including the avoidance of *not*-contraction (i.e., preferring *she's not* / *she'll not* over *she isn't* / *she won't*), modal-verb constructions (see section 5), a higher incidence of progressive forms with verbs such as *need*, *want* and *hope*, and a number of other assorted constructions and idioms. Aitken (1979: 106–107) distinguishes between 'covert Scotticisms' and 'overt Scotticisms' (also see Dossena 2005 for a more recent and more substantial study of Scotticisms). The former include grammatical constructions like the ones mentioned above, but also lexical or idiomatic expressions. Overt Scotticisms, on the other hand, 'are almost by definition of a highly traditional Scottish character', i.e., based on Scots lexical items (e.g., *laird*, *kirk*, *hame*, *bairns*, …) or morphology (e.g., *dinna*/*dinnae*, *willna*/*willnae* for *don't* and *won't*). For both types of Scotticisms, Aitken (1979: 110) concludes that

> we are totally lacking in any but impressionistic observations of the frequency, occasions of incidence, and distributions by region, socio-economic class, sex, age and degree of style formality, of all of these different categories of Scotticisms.

Significantly, Aitken's assessment goes some way towards a typology of candidate features for SSE (here: 'overt' vs 'covert'); the problem he identifies seems to be entirely empirical in nature.

McArthur (1979: 57) comments on deficits concerning our knowledge of the inner sociolinguistic workings of SSE and the macro sociolinguistics of SSE in the context of global Englishes. He formulates two related questions that he hopes to see addressed in the 1980s ('over the next few years').

> Some questions that I can begin to debate here can be further elucidated over the next few years. They include these two questions:

> **1** What is the web of relationships between the popular forms of English – the playground language and so on – in Scotland, and the forms at the other end of the continuum, where they shade into World Standard English?
> **2** What is the relationship between Scottish Standard English and the other national standards, and in particular how does it relate to its neighbour in southern England, one accent of which has often been identified as a 'British' norm and considered the 'best' or preferred form of spoken Standard English?

McArthur's questions thus refer research on SSE to two frameworks that were gaining momentum at the time and have since then increased in importance: Sociolinguistics and World Englishes. I would read McArthur as describing a set of interrelated problems that result in an overall descriptive deficit:

i. We know that there is a continuum between informal/vernacular ('popular', 'playground') and formal ('Standard English');
ii. we do *not* know how different formal variables behave across this continuum;
iii. we cannot adequately describe the standard pole (SSE) – a point implied, rather than overtly expressed by McArthur; and therefore,
iv. we cannot easily compare this standard to other global varieties.

I would agree that these questions form a single complex: Our description of SSE must derive from an inspection of variation *within* the Scots continuum (i.e., comprising the entire social and stylistic continuum); only then can we look beyond it. The 'next few years' that McArthur refers to have certainly more than elapsed – another indication that more fundamental problems may be involved.

Wells (1982: 394) plays down the grammatical autonomy of SSE. Although perhaps understandable in a book on English accents, this nevertheless diminishes the standing of the variety, not allowing for more than a few lexical features:

> The official and usual literary language of Scotland has for three centuries been Standard English – pronounced, though, with a Scottish accent and retaining a few scotticisms in vocabulary.

This representation implies a Standard English with its centre outside Scotland, rather than one that can have one of its centres *within* Scotland.

Giegerich (1992: 45–46) foregrounds three aspects that also recur elsewhere in different guises. Firstly, he emphasises that SSE differs from SBSE in only few features as far as grammar and lexicon are concerned; secondly, attention is drawn to Scots and its substantially more different structural features; finally, Giegerich points out that the accents associated with SSE are very distinct:

> Scottish Standard English (SSE), the variety of Standard English spoken in Scotland, has few lexical and syntactic characteristics that set it apart from the Standard English used in England. In this respect, SSE is very different from the Scots spoken in the non-Gaelic-speaking part of the country. […] SSE is, however, spoken with accents that are quite radically different from any other accent of Standard English.

Concerning the first point, standard varieties of a language typically tend not to differ radically at the grammatical or lexical levels, while differences in accents are likely to be more substantial, or perhaps at least more noticeable or salient (cf. Mair 2007: 84, 97). This is why McArthur (1987: 10) can speak of a ‘more or less “monolithic” core, a text-linked World Standard’: The various (written) standard varieties are similar enough to be compatible with the notion of a (somewhat flexible) general World Standard. Stressing the similarity of SSE and SBSE, however, chimes in with the notion of political dependence – after all, Scotland is the smaller partner in the political compound of the United Kingdom. Giegerich’s point concerning the distinctness of Scots would seem unnecessary in other contexts: We would always expect specific regiolects or sociolects to be structurally more distinct than the standard.[2] For instance, when gauging, say, differences between General American and SBSE, the associated nonstandard varieties would probably not play a role. Finally, Giegerich has a point when describing the mainstream accent of Scottish English as ‘radically different’ from other standard accents, but this statement, too, further plays down the potentially important lexical or grammatical features that may exist. In sum, regarding lexicon and grammar in this representation, SSE suffers from an emphasis of similarities to its nearest neighbour SBSE, an emphasis of the distinctive features of Scots, and the fact that it is mainly associated with a salient accent.

McClure’s (1994: 79) definition of SSE focuses on the variety’s national autonomy and also describes in rather neutral terms the role of grammatical, lexical and phonological features in defining it:

> [SSE] is now an autonomous speech form, having the status of one among the many forms of the international English language, and is recognised as an established national standard, throughout the English-speaking world […]. Like other national forms of English, it is characterised to some extent by grammar, vocabulary and idiom, but most obviously by pronunciation.

McClure continues the sense of Scotland as a nation; instead of primarily referring it to its southern neighbour SBSE, the wider English-speaking world is the canvas against which SSE is placed. McClure regards relatively small grammatical differences vis-à-vis other standards as unsurprising and natural. Like McArthur (1979) and Aitken (1979) above, McClure (1994: 85) also highlights an empirical problem faced by non-phonological research on SSE:

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[2] While I am aware of the language status of Scots, I will for present purposes treat it as a cluster of non-standard dialects, from a functional or sociolinguistic perspective.

> On the phonetic and phonological levels, it is very easy to demonstrate the distinctive nature of SSE. This is also true of other levels, but here it is more difficult to obtain precisely quantifiable data. There is no difficulty in listing an abundance of words, idioms and syntactic constructions which would mark their user as a Scot, in that they are not heard in the English of other countries. What is less easy, and in some cases impossible since the necessary research has not been carried out […], is to make nonimpressionistic pronouncements on the status, frequency and predictability of such usages.

Once again, there is greater confidence regarding the identification of distinctive phonological features. The problem lies in the availability of 'quantifiable data', assumedly due to the fact that large language samples are needed to investigate lexis, syntax or morphology.

Corbett, McClure and Stuart-Smith (2003: 4) pronounce on the matter in an equally balanced way. A relatively high degree of homogeneity across standard varieties, due to ideologies as well as modern mass culture, is natural; SSE is not singled out as being in any way particularly similar, for instance to SBSE; and the existence of grammatical, idiomatic and lexical features is acknowledged:

> […] Scottish Standard English differs in some features of grammar and idiom from those standard varieties of English found south of the border, in North America, in Australasia and now elsewhere. For example, it is widely believed that the Scottish Standard English system of modal auxiliary verbs is influenced by Broad Scots, although more extensive study is needed to determine exactly how […].

Again, the lack of an empirical foundation is evident: It has not been shown but is merely 'believed' that modal verbs differ in SSE. This is an echo of Aitken's (1979; see above) untested list of candidate features, which also includes modal verb constructions. The authors (Corbett, McClure and Stuart-

Smith 2003: 4) make a revealing statement as to the suspected reasons for the general lack of research into SSE in the early 2000s:

> Partly because it falls somewhere between Broad Scots and southern Standard English, Scottish Standard English is also under-researched […].

Somehow, SBSE and Scots are felt to be dominant reference varieties, almost as if there were a continuum between these two. Again, testing this perspective against other standard varieties is helpful: For instance, we would hardly consider New Zealand English or Australian English as 'falling between' their associated non-standard dialects and some other national variety, like SBSE or General American, although such constellations differ only in that they involve greater geographical distances and full political independence.

Millar (2018: 3) juxtaposes and balances two perspectives in his discussion of SSE, one in which Scots has converged upon Standard English, and another in which the opposite is the case:

> [...] Scottish Standard English is more than just a local form of the international variety (although it is certainly that as well), it contains features within it which derive from Scots. These are largely lexical, but do include morphosyntactic features as well. [...] What needs to be emphasised here, however, is that, while Scottish Standard English has undoubtedly influenced Scots, the opposite is also the case.

Ultimately, this mutual convergence upon one another of the two languages also means that the resulting language variety can still be viewed as a kind of Scots – this alternative perspective can certainly contribute to a more nuanced general picture.

In contrast to Millar's (2018) point of view, there are also cases in which we can trace a relatively overt Anglocentric (i.e., southern English) perspective in writings about SSE. For instance, Svartvik and Leech (2016: 147) describe the variety diminutively as ‘standard English with a Scottish flavour’ and use a significant pair of parentheses in their label ‘Scottish (standard) English’. They go on to highlight the lack of lexical and grammatical characteristics that set SSE apart from other L1 varieties. Finally, they explain the genesis of SSE as resulting from ‘long-lasting political, economic and linguistic intercommunication with England’. Let us briefly return to the wording ‘Scottish flavour’ and imagine the unlikely – unthinkable, even – case of someone referring to ‘Standard English with an American flavour’. The special treatment of SSE would seem to rest on political dependence and power relations, not linguistic facts.

The mixed picture that emerges from my literature review can be summarised in a few general points. For one, it is uncontroversial – at least in theory – that SSE does exist and that it may be characterised by features at all linguistic levels. However, we find statements ranging from very confident and assertive of Scottish national identity and its expression through a widely recognised standard variety (e.g., McClure 1994) to statements that seem to play down the importance of SSE and may even be slightly dismissive (e.g., Svartvik and Leech 2016). Notably, many authors make a point of the grammatical similarity between SSE and other Standard Englishes, in particular SBSE. This, I argued, is rather unusual for a standard variety. In the same context, reference is often made to Scots as a more ‘muscular’ variety characterised by more clearly recognisable features. Concerning features of SSE, intuitions, impressions and beliefs abound, while empirical evidence is lacking. Somewhat frustratingly, this theme can be traced from the late 1970s well into the new millennium, which is not suggestive of a particularly dynamic development. The summary of research in the next section is intended to illustrate the lack of research on SSE, but also to highlight that this applies predominantly to grammar, lexicon, and potentially other non-phonological linguistic levels.

3 Research on SSE

In the following sections, I will survey some of the research that targets, or can at least be brought to bear on SSE, at the levels of phonology (section 3.1), grammar and lexicon (section 3.2). Standard reference works and textbooks are also included since the representation of middle-class usage in these more visible sources is considered significant. While the selection of sources is not comprehensive, it is considered representative of the imbalance that exists between phonological and non-phonological perspectives. In section 3.3, the identified blind spots are summarised and partly motivated from the (non)availability of resources.

3.1 Phonology

Several descriptions of Scottish English vowel phonology refer to a standard (i.e., SSE) accent, or even focus explicitly on it. Some early publications are prescriptive in nature and have a didactic agenda, taking steps towards the kind of codification that exists for RP (cf. Wells 2008; Roach, Setter and Esling 2011). However, efforts of promoting a Scottish middle-class accent as a teaching model do not seem to persist.

Williams's (1912) manual of phonetics is geared towards Scottish students. It aims to provide a sound knowledge of a standard accent she calls 'Polite Scottish' (9). Points of reference throughout the book are this Polite Scottish and 'Polite English', corresponding to RP. Because her objective is a general introduction to phonetics (via a contrastive description of two British standards), Williams effectively outlines the entire SSE accent. Grant (1914), apart from being a general introduction to phonetics and phonetic transcription, aims to teach the pronunciation of 'the more conservative pronunciation of educated Scotland' (1914: v), which would seem to correspond to Williams's (1912) 'Polite Scottish'. Grant also advances that this accent might qualify as a pronunciation model for foreign learners, as it is ‘easier to acquire than the Southern type of English’. In this, he goes one step beyond Williams. McAllister (1963) also targets an educated/standard Scottish accent in her pronunciation manual. She not only sheds light on twentieth-century changes in the Scottish accent, but also comments on strongly local pronunciations and their levelled alternatives. In doing so, McAllister effectively addresses the sociolinguistics of Scottish accents.

Abercrombie’s (1979) book chapter (‘The Accents of Standard English in Scotland’) is probably the earliest in a series of more concise, non-didactic publications on the topic. Focusing mostly on vowel phonology, Abercrombie is concerned with properties that set an educated/middle-class Scottish accent apart both from RP and non-standard Scottish accents. By juxtaposing his Scottish vowel system with an SBSE/RP system, and by outlining several ways in which the former can assimilate to the latter, Abercrombie highlights vocalic variables of potential interest in investigations of Scottish middle-class speech. He (1979: 83–84) also suggests that the SSE accent is ‘efficient, frugal, and straightforward’, as it is easy to understand internationally, has a relatively simple vowel system, is rhotic (and therefore phonologically less complex), and conforms well (or at least better than RP) to the phonologies of other European languages. Abercrombie concludes that

> [b]ecause of these things Scottish Standard English provides a very good model of pronunciation for foreign learners of English, particularly because it also escapes the political associations that go with RP and with ‘General American’, the models that are usually taught.

Though underpinned with reasonable arguments, Abercrombie’s suggestion – taken up again in Abercrombie (1991: 53) – has unsurprisingly not led to any changes in teaching practices.

Wells (1982: 399–412) also contributes to a definition and codification of a standard accent of Scottish English. At the same time – and like McAllister (1963) and Abercrombie (1979) – he also describes patterns of variation that can help to identify sociophonetic variables, such as more or less central /ɪ/, more or less fronted /u/, the potentially diphthongised (here interpreted as ‘anglicised’) vowels /e/ and /o/, and possible long-short pairs corresponding to Scottish English /a/, /ɔ/ and /u/.

Giegerich (1992: 45–47, 53–57) is exceptional in including a standard accent of Scottish English in his textbook on English phonology, alongside RP and GA. Even if this is perhaps mainly because SSE phonology differs from the dominant standard accents in interesting and instructive ways, it has also undoubtedly had the effect of raising awareness of SSE as a standard. Like others, Giegerich highlights variation within SSE.

Further sources describing the phonology of SSE are McClure (1994: 80–85), Jones (2002: 25–30), and Stuart-Smith (2008), neither of which need to be discussed in detail here. All of them describe not only the common core of educated Scottish English pronunciation, but also some of its variability. Jones (2002) is somewhat unfortunate in regularly using ‘Standard English’ to refer to an RP/SBSE accent (24, 25), or using ‘British Standard English’ and ‘Received Pronunciation’ interchangeably (23), thus not only confounding or blurring what is typically kept apart as dialect and accent, respectively, but also not being sufficiently careful about what can or cannot be ‘British’ in accents of English.

Concerning the central characteristics of a Scottish standard accent of English, Jones (2002: 25–30) provides a list of features that define what he calls a ‘Modern Scots’ accent, but which clearly has scope over SSE in his discussion. These include the salient monophthongal realisations of the FACE and GOAT vowels; the absence of paired vowels along the lines of the BATH-TRAP, GOOSE-FOOT and THOUGHT-LOT lexical sets; a relatively central KIT vowel; rhoticity (and the concomitant absence of ingliding diphthongs and potentially different vowels in words like *nurse*, *bird* and *earth*, as discussed in Li, Gut and Schützler 2021); a contrast between /ʍ/ and /w/ (see Schützler

2010; Brato 2016); the (lexically highly restricted) use of the fricative /x/; and the absence of phonological vowel length due to the Scottish Vowel Length Rule (SVLR; see Aitken 1981 for an early discussion). Like other authors writing on the subject, Jones (2002) acknowledges that all of these features are variable – an SSE accent is an idealisation and will in reality behave more like a continuum, with specific features leaning more towards a non-standard Scottish accent – e.g. more strongly centralised KIT – and others potentially leaning towards SBSE usage, like the incipient diphthongisation of FACE and GOAT (see Schützler 2015). It would still seem, however, that rhoticity, monophthongal close-mid vowels and at least a partial adherence to SVLR and the potentially linked absence of tense-lax vowel contrasts are defining features.

These summaries illustrate that there is a substantial literature on the basic properties, functions and variability of the SSE accent, going back to the early twentieth century. In addition, empirical investigations of accent variation in Scottish English also shed light on what (and how variable) a middle-class SSE accent is. In many cases, variation between more vernacular or working-class usage and standard usage is explored, in some cases middle-class speech in particular is investigated. Below, rather than summarise results, I will only highlight the settings and designs of individual studies.

Macaulay and Trevelyan's (1977) Glasgow study takes into account classic social variables such as gender, socioeconomic status and different speaking styles, and a total of five phonological variables. Only slightly later, Romaine (1978) investigates the speech of 24 Edinburgh schoolchildren of working-class background, focusing on rhoticity. However, she also draws important conclusions concerning middle-class usage, i.e., SSE. In their study of Edinburgh English, Speitel and Johnson (1983) investigate 26 variables in the accents of 91 adult speakers, across different styles and age groups; a study by Johnston (1984) draws on part of the same dataset, with a focus on the accent of Morningside, Edinburgh.

Stuart-Smith (2003) complements her own data with earlier datasets compiled by Macaulay (cf. Macaulay and Trevelyan 1977) and Macafee (1994). Apart from detecting patterns of sociolinguistic variation for her two phonological variables, she anticipates later description of SSE vis-à-vis nonstandard accents (e.g., Stuart-Smith 2008). Carr and Brulard (2006) look for a potential RP influence on the SSE vowel system among the members of a single Edinburgh-based working-class family, complemented by recordings of politicians and journalists. Again, the value of the study lies not only in its empirical findings but also in the general discussion of the SSE vowel system that is presented.

Since the early 2000s, several sociophonetic studies have contributed to a better understanding of standard usage, even if they often focus primarily on working-class speech. A few representatives are Stuart-Smith, Timmins and Tweedie's (2007) investigation of eight consonantal variables in a sample of 32 Glasgow speakers, various studies that focus on rhoticity (e.g., Lawson, Stuart-Smith and Scobbie 2018; also Lawson, Scobbie and Stuart-Smith 2011) and a more recent study by Li, Gut and Schützler (2021) that looks at potential mergers of vowels in NURSE contexts (as in *bird*, *earth*, *nurse*). Further, there have been at least two monographs dealing with sociophonetic variation in Aberdeen (Brato 2016) and Edinburgh (Schützler 2015), respectively. All of these are no more than a selection. Particularly research groups at the University of Glasgow and at Queen Margaret University Edinburgh remain active in the field of Scottish English sociophonetics.

3.2 Grammar and lexicon

While several textbook chapters and a few monographs are devoted to full descriptions of the SSE accent, such works hardly seem to exist for grammar and lexicon. As discussed in section 2, authors like Aitken (1979) and McClure (1994) list candidate features of SSE grammar, but do not describe the system as a whole. Textbook chapters by Jones (2002: 9–22, 32–44) and

Miller (2008) draw on non-standard material rather than SSE. Monographs such as Grant and Dixon (1921), Purves (1997) and Bergs (2005) explicitly focus on Scots, in marked contrast to corresponding works on pronunciation (e.g., Williams 1912; Grant 1914; McAllister 1963). While they can certainly inform research on SSE grammar, they do not themselves describe the variety.

Empirical studies of SSE grammar or lexicon are equally rare. Douglas (2009) investigates lexical usage in Scottish newspapers, a text type representing standard usage compatible with a mass readership. She considers three dimensions of variation: ‘East Coast vs West Coast’, ‘tabloid vs broadsheet’ and ‘pre 1999’ vs ‘post 1999’. The data for Hillberg’s (2015) work on personal and adverbial relativisers are also taken from Scottish newspapers, which are compared to similar sources from Ireland and Southern Britain. Again, the author uses newspapers as a representation of SSE. On a smaller scale, Schützler and Herzky (2021a) investigate the use of (semi-)modal verbs of strong obligation in SSE, using data from the Scottish component of the *International Corpus of English* (*ICE*; see sections 3.3 and 5). In contrast to the studies by Douglas and Hillberg, Schützler and Herzky (2021a) inspect spoken as well as written language.

3.3 Blind spots and lack of resources

As shown above, there is still a phonological bias both in descriptive and empirical work. The general lack of research on SSE grammar has regularly been lamented in the literature (see section 2). Why, then, has there not been a greater effort to redress the balance?

Schützler, Gut and Fuchs (2017: 279) identify a set of interrelated causes and effects that result in the lack of research on morphosyntactic and lexical aspects of SSE, shown in Figure 2. Apart from the leftmost box, the points made here are based on what the literature review in section 2 revealed (e.g., Aitken 1979; McArthur 1979; McClure 1994).

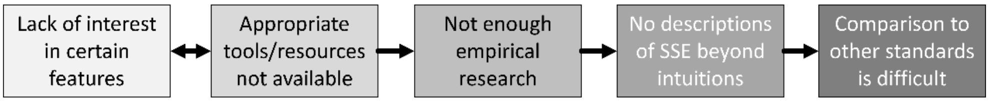
Lack of interest in certain features
Appropriate tools/resources not available
Not enough empirical research
No descriptions of SSE beyond intuitions
Comparison to other standards is difficult

Figure 2: Deficits in research on the grammar of SSE

If there is a belief that SSE has no potential for autonomy as concerns its grammar and lexicon, researchers will take little interest in features from these areas. Accordingly, there is little incentive to develop tools and resources (e.g., corpora) necessary for the respective research, and their unavailability will then be a discouraging factor. Moving further to the right of the causal chain, these circumstances result in a dearth of empirical research, so that it is difficult to describe SSE as a grammatical system, and to compare it to other standard varieties of English.

Concerning resources, Corbett and Stuart-Smith (2012: 76–77) list a number of corpora that could be used in research on SSE. These include restricted corpora, for instance Macaulay's (cf. Macaulay and Trevelyan 1977) Glasgow corpus, Speitel and Johnston's (1983) Edinburgh corpus, Macafee's (1994) and Stuart-Smith's (2003) Glasgow corpora, to which could be added Pollner's (1985) Livingston corpus and others.[3] But, as discussed by Corbett and Stuart-Smith (2012), there are also a number of publicly available corpora, such as the *Scottish Corpus of Texts & Speech* (*SCOTS*; Douglas 2003; Anderson and Corbett 2008; https://www.scottishcorpus.ac.uk/), and the *Corpus of Modern Scottish Writing* (*CMSW*; https://www.scottishcorpus.ac.uk/cmsw/).

The earlier, restricted corpora with a potential for research on SSE naturally form a somewhat fragmented and difficult-to-access set. In the very early 1990s, John Kirk made an attempt to generate a corpus based on the design of the emerging *International Corpus of English* (*ICE*; Greenbaum 1996; Nelson, Wallis and Aarts 2002). Including material from the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland, this was meant to complement what was labelled *ICE-GB* but in fact constituted a corpus with a strong south-eastern (i.e., English) bias (p.c. John Kirk). The idea was not realised due to a lack of funding at the time, and efforts were later redirected towards the creation of *ICE-Ireland* (e.g., Kallen and Kirk 2007), while at the University of Glasgow the abovementioned *SCOTS* and *CMSW* corpora were compiled and other *ICE* corpora proliferated (cf. Kirk and Nelson 2018).

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[3] I refer to relevant publication dates, not to corpus compilation dates.

Where did this leave corpus-linguistic research on SSE? While conceived by some as a Scottish complement to the *ICE* corpora, and valuable though they are in documenting and making accessible a large number of texts from various Scottish sources, neither *SCOTS* nor *CMSW* connect comfortably to *ICE* and thus to research on World Englishes. This is mainly due to the absence of a rigorous and compatible sampling scheme: (i) The corpora do contain a variety of spoken and written texts, but not representative of standard language in the same way as *ICE* – for instance, there are spoken interactions, letters, but also large amounts of poetry; (ii) in comparison to *ICE*, *SCOTS* and *CMSW* have a strong diachronic dimension; and (iii) the numbers of texts within different categories or even the total size of the corpus is not handled in a unified way.

The idea of a Scottish component of *ICE* was revived in 2010 by Ulrike Gut and the author. Work on compiling the corpus began around 2014; a first discussion of the aims and methodologies of the undertaking is found in Schützler, Gut and Fuchs (2017). Like other components of *ICE*, *ICE-Scotland* will contain 1 million words from a standardised set of text types representing spoken and written registers of English. Registers – and speakers/writers – are selected so as to tend towards ‘educated’, ‘middle-class’, or ‘standard’ usage. That is, material was not excluded on the basis of linguistic structures found therein, but the selection mechanism applied at the level of contexts of production, and the (social) background of producers. By providing annotated text and audio files, *ICE-Scotland* caters to researchers interested in phonology, lexicon and grammar (see Schützler, Gut and Fuchs 2017 for details). For more detailed documentation of the design and rationale of *ICE* see Nelson, Wallis and Aarts (2002), Kirk and Nelson (2018) and Appendix A.

In sum, then, we do see that corpora for the investigation of SSE grammar and lexicon do exist, even if many of them are not openly available to the community or pose problems in terms of structure and representativeness. Putting this together with the more recent effort of the Scottish component of *ICE*, however, there is perhaps reason for some optimism, even if using the available resources to the full requires some effort.

4 Three explanations

I will take a step back and revisit the blank spots and biases discussed in sections 2, 3.1 and 3.2. The putative explanations I present must not be misunderstood as direct causes, and certainly not as the only possible reasons for the present-day situation. The debate will consider historical aspects, peculiarities of the language situation in Scotland, and assumptions made in the World Englishes paradigm. From all three perspectives, there is a problem of 'vision', i.e., a certain way of looking at SSE that can be explained against the background of certain historiographical and theoretical traditions.

4.1 The narrative of loss

What I call the 'narrative of loss' is an unconscious overextension of the traditional account of how SSE emerged from contact between Scots and English: Salient features of Scots did not make it into the standard variety, but it does not automatically follow that there are no differences between SSE and SBSE.

According to Romaine (1982: 59), conceptually written Scots (e.g., official writing or printed texts) anglicised first, and by the year 1700 retained only few distinctive grammatical features. Like Romaine, Meurman-Solin (1997: 16–18) differentiates between different registers and finds that the change towards southern forms happened later and was less dynamic in private correspondence, compared to other text types, but also that female writers were more conservative. As Millar (2020: 100) puts it: ‘By the end of the seventeenth century, Scots had been largely thrust sociolinguistically underground in written domains.’ The emergence of SSE can thus be understood as linguistic levelling in a British nation state in the making since 1603 and finalised in 1707. Two fallacies might ensue. For one, tightening political integration – capped by political union – need not be equated with complete linguistic union, even at the level of standard language. For another, even if we assume a complete disappearance of salient Scots features, less salient features may well have remained part of the SSE repertoire (cf. Meurman-Solin 1993). The ‘Narrative of Loss’, then, means focussing too indiscriminately on assimilation and convergence, and not looking closely enough for differences that remain.

Millar (2020: 106–108) discusses the emergence of SSE against the background of the Scottish Enlightenment (and its notion of ‘improvement’) in the mid-to-late eighteenth century. Apart from philosophical and technological advances, there was also a sense among the elite of moving forward linguistically. Variation was corruption, and an interest in material and social gain, more regular contact to SBSE speakers, as well as the efforts of elocutionists all led to accelerated anglicisation of spoken Scots. The Enlightenment promoted ‘a state of national linguistic hegemony’ on a British basis, with efforts ‘to establish linguistic uniformity and conformity’ (Jones 1997: 267). Again, assuming that this meant complete convergence, even in standard registers, probably goes too far. Limits to convergence were probably also imposed by the fact that, as Millar (2020: 108–109) explains, most middle-class speakers at the time would have acquired their knowledge of SSE ‘second-hand through the specifically Scottish elite varieties developed through regular direct contact’.

The eighteenth century has generally been associated with codification and prescriptivism. According to Beal (2016: 336), the aftermath of the Acts of Union of 1707 saw the so-called ‘doctrine of correctness’ (Leonard 1929) take effect, with many grammars striving at a correction of provincial (including Scots) usage (cf. Beal 2016: 313). Several factors coincided to weaken the position of Scots and thus erode its structural properties via accelerated levelling – more strongly emerging British identities, early Empire, prescriptive attitudes to language, and the proliferation of grammars. Such a combination of forces may have left little room for a more nuanced view on remaining differences between intra-national standards.

Changing attitudes and identities, at least among the higher echelons of Scottish society, are summarised by Millar (2020: 125):

> [T]he post-1707 order created considerable opportunities for at least some Scottish people, albeit opportunities which often included the assumption of a new British identity that inevitably involved a downplaying (if not abnegation and abdication) of Scottish identity and culture (including language).

Negotiating the properties and boundaries of early SSE thus happened in a climate unfavourable to diversity, accompanied by strong lobbying and overt educational efforts working towards Anglicisation. Millar (2020: 109) points out that the process of levelling Scots towards a language compatible with southern usage involved the transfer of features at *all* levels; however, the use of grammatical features would have remained unconscious and unacknowledged.

The dialectalisation of Scots is uncontroversial: Within the Union, Scotland was less powerful and influential as it had a much smaller population and economy than England (Millar 2012: 67; cf. Hickey 2012: 19). Millar (2012: 70–71) further argues that Scots never ranked as highly for its speakers as the English language did for its speakers; identification with the language was lower, and national monolingualism was not comparable to what it was in England (or France). Thus, the sense of autonomy of Scots from English may not have been as strong as a present-day perspective suggests – even then, there may have existed a sense of a single culture with a single linguistic continuum. Millar (2012: 75) links this perception of a single Standard English to the emergence of SSE:

> Indeed, it is likely that the reason why Scottish Standard English so successfully maintained its Scots features was that, in this crucial, founding, generation, most users were unaware of its presence.

Another perspective is added by Agutter (1990: 7), who argues that in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scotland 'shared forms may have been regarded as Scots and a text might have required a high proportion of characteristically southern forms before it was perceived as non-Scots.' Thus, what we may perceive as Anglicisation may not in fact have constituted a threat to a genuinely Scottish variety of English.

4.2 The Scots Bias

Schützler, Gut and Fuchs (2017: 247, 279) refer to the 'Scots Bias' as the diversion of attention 'away from the local standard variety of English towards the vernacular', i.e., Scots. This is due to (i) the historical standing of Scots as a (now dialectalised) language, (ii) its documentation (e.g., *DOST*; *SND*; *DSL* online; Grant and Dixon 1921; Purves 1997; Bergs 2005), (iii) its large number of readily identifiable linguistic features, and (iv) the fact that it is not subject to the narrative of loss within its remaining domains of use.

Standard grammars of English (Quirk et al. 1985; Biber et al. 1999; Huddleston and Pullum 2002) consider differences between BrE and AmE, but do not consider Standard English in Scotland, nor, for that matter in other L1 territories. Here, the reasonable tendency is to focus on the two major standard dialects. Concerning the lexicon, general dictionaries like the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (e.g., in the 11th edition; Soanes and Stevenson 2004) indicate if certain words have a regional or national association (e.g., British, US, northern English or Scottish). A bias only emerges when we turn to variety-specific dictionaries. These exist for American English (Stevenson and Lindberg 2010; Merriam-Webster 2020), but also Canadian (Barber 2004), Australian (Ramson 1988; Butler 2009), and New Zealand (Orsman 1997) English. Concerning lexical usage in Scotland, however, one is quickly referred to the *Concise Scots Dictionary* (2nd edition: Scottish Language Dictionaries 2017; 1st edition: Robinson 1985), *Chambers Scots Dictionary* (Warrack 1911), or the more comprehensive *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* (*DOST*; Craigie et al. 1931–2002) or *Scottish National Dictionary* (*SND*; Grant and Murison 1931–1976).[4] In other words: More rigorous discussions of lexical features are bound to happen within the context of Scots, perhaps even to the extent that recognisably Scottish words can only ever be Scots, not Scottish English – at least this is an impression that is created. This, I would argue, is a symptom of the Scots Bias. What, then, has caused this situation? Jones (1997: 273) points to powerful attitudes that tend to grant language status to Scots, based on historical and literary traditions. Alongside this historical Germanic language on Scottish territory, English will easily be classified not as an integral part of the linguistic ecology of Scotland but as an originally foreign – if now perhaps shared – language. Attributing distinctly Scottish features to such a variety is not easy.

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[4] Also see the online resource of the *Dictionaries of the Scots Language*; https://dsl.ac.uk/.

Thus, if we look at the sociolinguistic continuum between SSE and Scots described by McArthur (1979: 59), noticeable grammatical and lexical features do not easily qualify as features of SSE but tend to be categorised as Scots. There appears to exist an implicit view that grammatical and lexical (but not phonological) variation in Scottish Englishes is best described as relatively discrete switches, or shifts, between the distinct codes of Scots and English. Corbett, McClure and Stuart-Smith (2003: 2) comment on this kind of categorical thinking when they say that some linguists 'prefer to exclude "Scottish Standard English" from their definition of Scots, and focus on the more distinctive "Broad Scots" end of the continuum.' Millar (2018: 3), on the other hand, uses a metaphor that suggests a less abrupt kind of variation between Scots and SSE when he writes that speakers do not so much switch but 'commute' between the two.

Of course, grammatical variation happens along a continuum, too. Instead of positing that there are two codes, with properties that are known because they are laid down in grammars of Scots and English, respectively, we should take a register-driven approach and define SSE and non-standard Scots based on usage: Features selected by educated speakers in standard registers are features of SSE, irrespective of whether or not their historical origin can be traced to Scots. This does not differ from our approach to other varieties of English: If a feature gains acceptance and is used in standard-language contexts, it is a feature of the standard language, whatever its origin. Not applying this principle in the Scottish environment would be a symptom of the Scots Bias.

4.3 Pluricentricity and nationhood

A third point that can account for the lack of attention and recognition of SSE concerns the link between the pluricentricity of a language and the political status of subcentres. A pluricentric language is used as a national/official language in several countries and has developed variants of the standard in those countries (Ammon, Bickel and Lenz 2016: xxxix). For English, Ammon Bickel and Lenz mention the standards of Great Britain, the USA and Australia. We therefore have to assume that by *countries* (G. 'Länder') they truly mean independent nation states. Ammon, Bickel and Lenz (2016: xxxix) further differentiate between *full centres* and *half centres* (G. Vollzentren' and 'Halbzentren'), depending on whether or not the respective variant of the standard has been codified – typically in dictionaries, possibly also in grammars. Clyne (1992: 1) states that each centre of such a language provides 'a *national* variety with at least some of its own (codified) norms' [my italics] – a convention, however, that he traces back to Kloss (1978: II, 66–67).[5]

While the statements above stem from a German-language context, they are transferable to English, the pluricentric language par excellence. See, for instance, Schneider (2020: 31) on the term *World Englishes*: 'When using this term the perspective is usually a national one; regional dialects would probably qualify only indirectly.' This is no longer explicitly about pluricentricity, but implicitly it still is – see, for instance, the early mention of English pluricentricity by Kachru in the World Englishes context (1988: 3–4). In the more recent discourse on World Englishes, the term *epicentre* has gained currency. Peters and Bernaisch (2022: 321) define an epicentre as 'the locus of any regionally differentiated type of English' or 'a variety of English which exercises some linguistic influence over adjacent varieties over time'. It is striking that, in contrast to a traditional understanding of *pluricentricity*, neither nationhood nor standardness seem to be integral parts of the epicentre metaphor. Particularly the political neutrality of the term suggests that it might be of general usefulness beyond the South Asian and Australasian contexts in which, according to Peters and Bernaisch (2022), it has mainly been applied thus far.

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[5] See Dollinger (2019) for an excellent discussion of pluricentricity in the context of German.

A quotation from Siemund (2013: 7) shows why the link between pluricentricity and nationhood might put SSE at a disadvantage:

> Political borders […] allow us to distinguish British English (UK), American English (US), Canadian English, Australian English […]. We also find political boundaries below the national level [...]. They allow us to identify Somerset English, Scottish English, Ulster English, Texan English, Toronto English […].

Intentionally or not, this puts British English on a par with other L1 standard varieties of English, while Scottish English is on a par with other regional, potentially rather local (e.g., urban) varieties. The treatment of British English as a unified standard variety – with Scottish English as a regional variety embedded within it – can only be maintained if current political constructs take precedence over historical or identity-related factors. Hickey (2012: 21) refers to Scotland as ‘a region of the United Kingdom’. This is of course true from a political perspective (since Scotland *is* part of the UK), and Hickey merely raises this point to explain why he thinks that the use of SBSE is more likely in Scotland than in independent Ireland. In general, however, it might be advisable to differentiate between those regions that – like Scotland – come with national identities and those that do *not* – like Somerset or Texas in Siemund’s (2013: 7) statement above.

Earlier, McArthur (1979: 58) draws a comparison with the situation in German-speaking Europe. He focuses on the terminology used for British standard varieties:

> Clearly, to be specific, it will sometimes be necessary to talk about ‘German German’ and ‘Austrian German’. The first of these may seem tedious to the Germans, but not to the Austrians. This I would suggest parallels pretty closely the state of affairs in this island, except that we have an umbrella term ‘British’ which complicates matters. ‘English English’ and ‘Scots English’ would seem […] to be necessary terms, and the slight discomfort felt in England does not

> justify the frequent efforts (as we shall see shortly) to avoid the apparent clumsiness by talking about 'English English' as 'British English'.

The power of terminology must not be underestimated. Uncritically using the term *British English* may avoid the clumsiness that is mentioned but introduces a political bias. The term *Southern British Standard English* (SBSE) is one way around the awkwardness of *English English*, albeit at the cost of making the national dimension invisible.

In sum, there is a long-standing association of standard varieties of pluricentric English with independent nation states. In most cases, this is unproblematic, but in the case of Scotland it results in a blind spot that is not trivial.

5 Case study: Modals of strong obligation in SSE

In this section, I discuss selected aspects from a published study (Schützler and Herzky 2021a) to support the theme of this article. Studies of this kind heighten our understanding of SSE grammar due to (i) the nature of the data, (ii) the nature of the outcome variable, (iii) the assumptions that are made concerning patterns of variation, and (iv) the direct comparison to the immediately neighbouring standard variety, SBSE. Data and scripts used for analyses and to generate Figures 3 and 4, as well as the graphics files for Figures 2–4, can be accessed at https://osf.io/c6mda/. The original data are published as Schützler and Herzky (2021b).

5.1 Background and methodology

We hypothesise that constructions with the semi-modal *need to* are more frequent in SSE than in SBSE, mainly at the expense of constructions with *must*. The general variability in the frequencies of verbs that express strong obligation – also including *have to* and *have got to* – is well-documented in the literature (e.g., Leech 2003; Mair 2006; Smith 2003; Krug 2000). For

Scottish varieties, Miller and Brown (1982), Kirk (1987) and Miller (2008) discuss higher rates of *need to*, but it remains unclear whether this extends beyond varieties of (urban) Scots. Unless we include double modals, using different semantically equivalent modal verbs or semi-modals does not serve a salient dialect-marking function – all verbs are acceptable in standard usage, and not associated with Scots grammar. We are thus looking at an outcome variable that is immune to the Scots Bias, since it would be of interest in any variety of World Standard English.

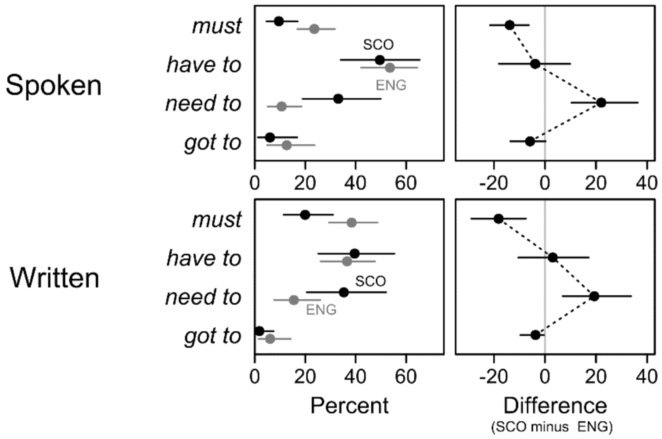
For the analysis, we inspected *n* = 898 tokens in *n* = 607 texts from *n* = 19 written and spoken genres in the British and Scottish components of the *International Corpus of English* (*ICE-GB* and *ICE-SCO*; see Appendices A, B and C). We used AntConc (Anthony 2018) to search for the forms *must*, *have/has to*, *need/needs to* and *got to*. Nonfinite, interrogative, past-tense and negated forms were excluded, as were epistemic meanings and non-obligation meanings of *got to*.

A Bayesian multinomial mixed-effects regression model was fitted with the R-package {brms} (Bürkner 2020), based on Stan (Stan Development Team 2019). The four levels of the outcome variable VERB were *must*, *have to*, *need to* and (*have*) *got to*. Predictors included VARIETY (English vs Scottish), mode (spoken vs written), grammatical SUBJECT (1st, 2nd and 3rd person, ignoring number) and SOURCE of obligation (objective, subjective; cf. Huddleston and Pullum 2002; Tagliamonte and Smith 2006). Source of obligation is the only factor in need of explanation here. The distinction between 'subjective' and 'objective' depends on whether the authority imposing the obligation rests in the speaker or writer, or whether it is a general rule or regulation (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 183; see examples in Schützler and Herzky 2021a). Two random factors were included for GENRE and TEXT. In the fixed part, SUBJECT, SOURCE and MODE were specified as interacting with VARIETY, but not with each other; for SOURCE and SUBJECT, random slopes (across levels of TEXT) were implemented; for GENRE, only a random intercept was specified (see Appendix D).

5.2 Results

Figure 3 focuses on the percentages of the four verbs in four isolated conditions (spoken and written language; subjective and objective sources) in SSE and SBSE, controlling for other factors. Differences between the two varieties are highlighted in the panels on the right.

(a) Mode of production



(b) Source of obligation

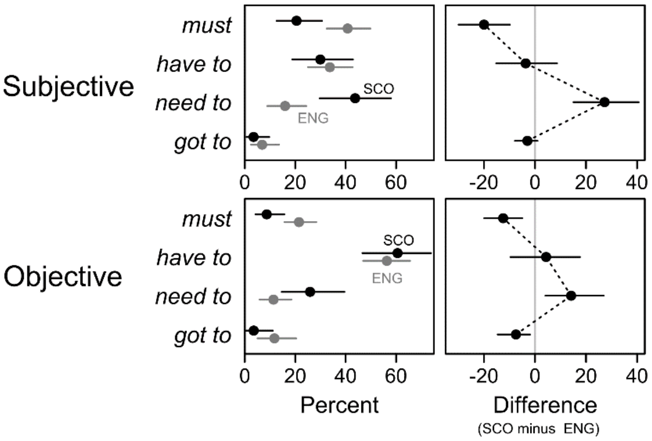


Figure 3: Expected percentages of modal verbs by (a) mode of production and (b) source of obligation (estimates with 90% uncertainty intervals)

We see that *need to* occurs at higher rates in SSE, while (*have*) *got to* and particularly *must* are more common in SBSE. No marked difference between varieties exists for *have to*. This general finding holds true across the different conditions, irrespective of the specific variation triggered by MODE and SOURCE. In terms of overall percentages, the main difference involves *need to* and *must*.

Figure 4 takes a different perspective on the data. For each verb, the percentage-point difference effected by a switch between conditions (spoken vs written; subjective vs objective) is plotted, with differently coloured symbols flagging up the difference between SSE and SBSE in this regard.

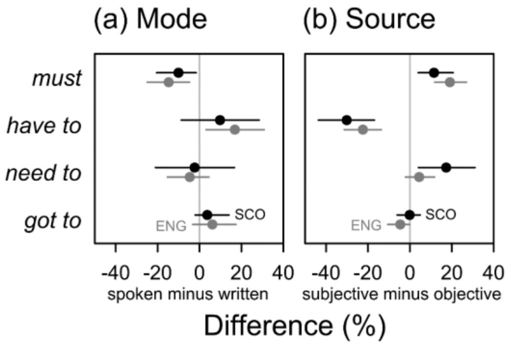


Figure 4: Responses to MODE (of production) and SOURCE (of obligation) in SSE and SBSE (estimates with 90% uncertainty intervals)

The effects of both MODE and SOURCE are similar in both varieties: *must* tends to correlate with writing and subjective sources of obligation, *have to* tends to correlate with speech and objective sources of obligation, *need to* does not respond strongly to mode of production but is more likely with subjective sources, and *have* (*got*) *to* is somewhat more common in speech and with objective sources – in both cases the effect is considerably smaller in SSE.

5.3 Implications

This case study of modal verbs of obligation is presented as a representative of studies that can shed light on features of SSE, for mainly four reasons.

Firstly, the data stem from a corpus that not only contains texts sampled from a range of standard registers, produced by educated speakers and writers, but which is also compatible with other corpora from the *ICE* family. Thus, our results have a better chance of being representative of SSE and comparable to similar studies of other varieties. Secondly, the outcome variable is of potential relevance in *any* standard variety of English. While it is of course also possible – or even necessary – to explore the occurrence of Scots features in SSE, focusing on a core category of global relevance brings home the point that SSE does connect to other global standards of English. Thirdly, treating the outcome as continuous and regarding patterns of variation as probabilistic, not categorical, serves as a reminder that this is also what we regularly look for between other (pairs or groups of) varieties: Differences that can be relatively subtle and not even accessible to the intuitions of native speakers. Finally, the direct comparison to the immediately neighbouring standard variety of SBSE provides a crucial reference point.

The results of the study also suggest that the impact of factors is rather similar in both varieties; we can therefore speak of a shared system of variable rules. At the same time, both varieties have somewhat different general preferences, mainly manifested in higher rates of NEED TO and lower rates of MUST in SSE. Thus, 'the two major standard dialects in mainland Britain are characterised by unity and diversity at different levels' (Schützler and Herzky 2021a: 153).

6 Summary and conclusion

This section provides a summary of the narrative presented in this article. In discussing the somewhat fragile and unsatisfactory position of SSE, I have adduced evidence from different domains and argued that different factors contribute to the situation. This section tries to bring the different strands together. To move matters forward from lamenting the status quo, I will also make a few suggestions as to how the community could develop the future of SSE in a constructive way.

6.1 Scottish Standard English in the web of history and ideology

This article started from the premise that even text-book descriptions of SSE present a mixed picture. Though in no doubt that this standard variety exists and displays linguistic features at potentially all levels, authors' voices range from those very confident and assertive of Scottish national identity and its reflection in a widely recognised standard variety to those who play down the importance of SSE. In the description of linguistic features, it is regularly stressed how similar SSE grammar is to other Standard Englishes, particularly SBSE. I have argued that this is unusual, because the grammatical similarity of standard Englishes should really go without saying. In contrast to this overstated 'blandness' of SSE, there is a tendency to foreground Scots as a variety with highly visible structural features.

Variable degrees of recognition of SSE correspond to (perhaps even result in) a dearth of empirical research, which contrasts with a large number of largely untested intuitions, impressions and beliefs. This was lamented as early as in the late 1970s, but the situation has not altered fundamentally – there is perhaps not quite stagnation, but a relatively sluggish development, and a survey of research output reveals a bias towards phonological research and some neglect of research on SSE grammar and lexicon. Corpora for the investigation of SSE are emerging, but still patchy – their development certainly seems to be lagging behind other varieties.

As to the underlying causes of the status quo, I proposed three factors, all of which have to do with 'vision' in the widest sense. The first two I dubbed the 'narrative of loss' and the 'Scots Bias', while the third one is based on the tendency to correlate the pluricentricity of a language with independent nation states. The narrative of loss has its historical point of departure in the levelling of the Scots language towards something considered British in standard grammatical and lexical usage. The implicit conclusion may have been that the dialectalisation of Scots and the emergence, through levelling, of SSE resulted in the disappearance of all Scottish features in standard usage. While the vast majority of linguists do not subscribe to this view, I still believe that it has had an impact on attitudes towards SSE, sometimes reflected in the literature.

Closely related to this, the Scots Bias results from the fact that Scots is very well documented and highly recognisable. Features of Scots are widely known, resulting in the unconscious maxim: ‘If it is different, it is Scots’. What is needed, however, is a register-driven approach with the maxim: ‘If it occurs in standard usage, it is SSE’. This, like the narrative of loss, is first and foremost a matter of perspective, not of linguistic fact.

Finally, there is considerable evidence that pluricentricity – i.e., the potential for several varieties of a language to develop their own standards – is in the eyes of many conditional upon the political autonomy of the respective territories. In this regard, Scotland’s position is unfortunate: While it is still ‘the Scottish Nation’, it is now part of the United Kingdom.

In sum, the recognition and visibility of the standard variety SSE is undermined and weakened in subtle ways by (i) the manner in which historical developments towards British integration and Union and their linguistic consequences tended to be recounted; (ii) the existence of a salient and magnetic, well-documented (non-standard) variety, Scots; and (iii) present-day political circumstances and their interpretation in the World Englishes paradigm.

6.2 The way forward

What, then, is the relevance of, what are the consequences of my stock-taking in this article? The first and most important objective must be about raising awareness. The points made in this article are not presented as historical truth but as a possible reading of the present-day position of SSE and its underlying causes. Irrespective of how fully one subscribes to this reading, my main intention is to make a positive contribution to the future of SSE in linguistics.

Concerning the narrative of loss, we need to find new ways of telling the story of Scottish-English relations and histories in linguistics: We are looking at a standard English that has actually resulted from tightening political bonds between and, eventually, the union of, two formerly independent countries. We should make this interesting, paradoxical development explicit, and, in doing so, we need to overcome the traditional notion that a new standard is invariably about *increasing* political distance, as in postcolonial varieties of English, for instance.

Once this change of perspective is effected, consequences for linguistic research on SSE should follow suit. Particularly the variety's grammar and lexicon need to be explored and codified more systematically. If we have expectations of discovering and describing interesting features of SSE, a first step needs to be a strengthening of resources – first and foremost corpora. These we need to share and develop, by making private/restricted corpora accessible, generating SSE-oriented subsets from corpora such as *SCOTS* and *CMSW* that are at present relatively heterogenous, internally, and completing and releasing in full the Scottish component of *ICE*.

The Scots Bias can be overcome firstly by using resources of this kind and taking a register-driven approach: Features may still have a traditional Scots association, but if we find them in texts produced in standard registers, they must surely qualify as features of SSE. Our implicitly categorical thinking about grammatical variation in Scottish varieties of English needs to be replaced by the assumption of a continuum at all levels: In principle, every phenomenon has the potential of appearing in standard usage. As to concrete phenomena for investigation, their selection will also be instrumental in overcoming the Scots Bias, as shown by the case study in section 5.

Finally, a few words on terminology are in place. If 'Scottish Standard English' is somehow too easily interpreted as being virtually the same as

‘Southern British Standard English’, at least at certain linguistic levels, then how about ‘Standard Scots’? This would then be the standard pole of a continuum that is otherwise (sociolinguistically) defined in the same way as the traditional continuum between SSE and (broad) Scots. This idea is implicit in Corbett, McClure and Stuart-Smith (2003: 1–2), who use the label ‘Scots’ for the language continuum as defined, for instance, by McArthur (1979). Similar tendencies can be found in Jones (2002: 24), who defines SSE as a ‘formal, upper-class version of Scots’, thus retaining a small but crucial distinction from English. And, even earlier, McArthur (1979: 58–59) calls the sociolinguistic continuum of English-based language use in Scotland ‘Scots English’, which appears to be an elegant compromise solution. The debate about labels would probably need to start from within the community of linguists working on the histories and sociolinguistics of varieties of Scots/English in Scotland. Eventually, changing the terminological conventions in our discipline will be a usage-based, long-term, incremental process.

On a closing note, I would suggest that Stewart’s (1968: 531) concept of national multilingualism, defined as ‘the use within a single policy of more than one language’ could easily be expanded to a notion of ‘multiple standards (of a single language) within a single policy’. Stewart (1968: 532) identifies mainly two policies that are possible in the contexts he has in mind: (i) accepting only one language (or, in our case, implicitly accepting only one standard variety), or (ii) recognising and preserving different languages (in our case: standards). I believe we need to work more actively towards the second solution, not merely for political reasons, but more importantly because it corresponds to linguistic facts. At a higher level, this would result in a broader, more flexible understanding of pluricentricity. In the concrete case of Scottish Standard English, it would speed up the limited progress that has been made with regard to our understanding of this elusive butterfly among standard varieties of the English Language.

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Appendix

A. The structure of the International Corpus of English

SPOKEN	DIALOGUES	*Private*	Face-to-face Conversations Phonecalls
		Public	Classroom Lessons Broadcast Discussions Broadcast Interviews Parliamentary Debates Legal Cross-examinations Business Transactions
	MONOLOGUES	*Unscripted*	Spontaneous Commentaries Unscripted Speeches Demonstrations Legal Presentations
		Scripted	Broadcast News Broadcast Talks Non-broadcast Talks
WRITTEN	NON-PRINTED	*Student Writing*	Student Essays Exam Scripts
		Letters	Social Letters Business Letters
	PRINTED	*Academic Writing*	Humanities Social Sciences Natural Sciences Technology
		Popular Writing	Humanities Social Sciences Natural Sciences Technology
		Reportage	Press News Reports
		Instructional Writing	Administrative Writing Skills/Hobbies
		Persuasive Writing	Press Editorials
		Creative Writing	Novels & Short stories

B. Genres and number of texts in the analyses

ICE-SCO does not generally use texts of 2,000 words but includes shorter ones, too, so that the number of texts may be higher for certain categories.

		n texts	
Mode	**Genre**	*ICE-GB*	*ICE-SCO*
SPOKEN	Broadcast discussions	20	2
	Broadcast interviews	10	9
	Business transactions	10	1
	Unscripted speeches	30	15
	Demonstrations	10	4
	Legal presentations	10	14
	Broadcast news	20	20
	Broadcast talks	20	43
	Non-broadcast talks	10	7
WRITTEN	Social letters	15	38
	Social sciences (academic)	10	3
	Humanities (popular)	10	11
	Social sciences (popular)	10	11
	Natural sciences (popular)	10	19
	Technology (popular)	10	22
	Press news reports	20	79
	Skills/hobbies	10	27
	Press editorials	10	14
	Novels & short stories	20	3
TOTAL (spoken)		140	115
TOTAL (written)		125	227
GRAND TOTAL		**265**	**342**

C. Raw token numbers by verb and variety

		MUST	HAVE TO	NEED TO	(HAVE) GOT TO
SBSE (*ICE-GB*)	*n*	240	285	84	50
	%	36 %	43 %	13 %	8 %
SSE (*ICE-SCO*)	*n*	65	79	89	6
	%	27 %	33 %	37 %	3 %

D. Model syntax

VERB ~ (SUBJECT + SOURCE + MODE) * VARIETY

+ (SUBJECT + SOURCE | TEXT) + (1 | GENRE)