Let's *try to/and* grow a tree: Determinants of particle alternation after base-form *try* in five ENL varieties

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The verb *try* has two main complementation patterns, with *to* and *and*. Particle variation is only possible in the base form, i.e. *try and* is available only when both verbs happen to be uninflected. Recent studies (Hommerberg and Tottie 2007, Ross 2013, Brook and Tagliamonte 2016) have dealt with its diachronic evolution and dialectal variation by focusing primarily on differences between the North American varieties and British English.

This paper reviews the factors previously claimed to condition the alternation and its variation in corpora from five countries where English is the native language (ENL). The data come from four ICE components that provide a complete spoken and written sample: Australia, Canada, Great Britain, Ireland and New Zealand. The factors considered include 'variety', 'type of discourse' (spoken vs. written), 'formality', 'avoidance of repetition (*horror aequi*)', 'tense', 'following verb' and 'optimal syllable structure' (cf. Rohdenburg & Schlüter 2000). The statistical analysis makes use of two different methods of logistic regression and classification: binomial logistic regression and conditional inference trees (Levshina 2015).

The results suggest that the outcome is strongly conditioned by 'type of discourse': *try and* is more frequent in the spoken variant but *try to* is more frequent in the written variant. The New Zealand spoken data almost exclusively resort to the *and*-variant. The *to*-variant is more likely in the other four spoken varieties when *try* is in present or past tense; however, for the vast majority of the cases (i.e. *try* = imperative or infinitive) Australian, British and Irish speech tend towards the *and*-variant but Canadian includes both variants to the same proportion. As regards the written data, *horror aequi* (e.g. <u>*to*</u> *try to/and V*) is the most powerful trigger for the choice of the *and*-variant: a previous 'to' always favors the 'and' option, and this effect is especially strong in Canadian and British English.

The study confirms some of the distinctions previously reported but also highlights that the factors are not equally strong across registers and ENL varieties: New Zealand speech selects the *and*-variant by default and thus escapes the constraint of tense observed for the other spoken varieties (present/past tense favors the *to*-variant). Likewise, the effect of *horror aequi* is most clearly at work in the written medium.

References

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