

Abstract

Many adjectives in the English language can take either of the two comparative forms: a synthetic one with the suffix -er, or the analytic one with more. This thesis focuses on the determinants that influence the choice of one or the other in spoken English. Many variables that have an effect on the choice have been discovered in academic literature: the theoretical part takes stock of those that can be studied in a corpus, and shows different approaches and findings on their impact and significance. All of them were found to have an effect in the written language – making the aim of this thesis to contrast the comparative distribution and the impact of the variables influencing it between the two corpora.

The analytical part is conducted on two samples – one of 612 tokens for the analysis of internal, and one of 216 tokens for external variables. Both consist of the same 53 types. All data is taken from the spoken BNC2014. Ten variables and their influence on the comparative formation are examined in the data. The material from the spoken corpus is compared to the findings from the written BNC to also establish the difference in variability.

Keywords: adjective comparison, spoken language, comparative alternation, phonological variables, morphological variables, syntactic variables