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Honors Thesis

PRESCRIPTIVE LISTS:

A TAXONOMY OF LISTS USED IN PRESCRIPTIVE DISCOURSE

by
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Submitted to Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment of graduation requirements
for University Honors

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ABSTRACT

PRESCRIPTIVE LISTS:
A TAXONOMY OF LISTS USED IN PRESCRIPTIVE DISCOURSE

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English prescriptive discourse generally shares language rules in the form of entries, many of which contain lists. However, while lists have recently caught the attention of scholars in several fields, not much if any research has been dedicated to the use of lists in prescriptive discourse. This thesis begins the exploration of the use of lists in prescriptive discourse by creating a taxonomy of lists found in prescriptive reference works such as usage guides and style guides. The study then discusses how characteristics of lists and of the categories featured in the taxonomy interact with prescription, opening the door for further investigation on the effects of list use on prescriptive discourse and those who use it.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Lists are everywhere, but why would anybody want to study them? We make grocery lists and to-do lists and then throw them away. We reference lists on the internet and in textbooks but forget about the lists once we find the information we need.

However, lists are also used in a wide variety of genres. For example, there are lists in religious texts like the Bible and in epic poems like the Iliad. Lists are also used in studies for various disciplines, including historiography, science, literature, philosophy, technology, and others (Barton et al. 2022; Doležalová 2009). The presence of lists in so many genres suggests that they are useful for presenting information, yet most of us have never stopped to consider why. This thesis will examine the use of lists, specifically in the genre of prescriptive discourse.

Prescriptive discourse seeks to tell us how we should use language. This direction can come in the form of rules and corrections from parents and teachers. It can also come from volumes created to give prescriptive advice, such as dictionaries and style guides. Prescriptive discourse tends to emphasize sharing information, so it would seem that lists are ideal for it. In fact, prescriptive discourse has used lists before in the form of spelling lists and dictionaries (which have list-like qualities). Despite the apparent usefulness of the list for this genre, the device we generally associate with prescriptive discourse (at least in written reference works) is not the list, but the entry.

A typical entry in prescriptive discourse is shown below.

that

1. That or which. Writers are often urged to use *that* to introduce restrictive clauses and *which* to introduce nonrestrictive clauses, and the advice can be helpful for those who use *which* everywhere, perhaps in the belief that it's more elegant than *that*. In practice, the choice between *which* and *that* in restrictive clauses is likely to depend on rhythm, sound, emphasis, and personal taste. If *that* has already been used in the sentence, writers may shift to *which* to avoid repetition. On the other hand, when the restrictive clause is compound, *which* may be chosen as a clearer signal to the reader that the construction is being repeated: "He had an exploratory operation for cancer which the doctors were reluctant to undertake but which he was convinced he needed" (David Halberstam, *Atlantic*). *Which* normally introduces nonrestrictive clauses in all varieties of usage.

Figure 1: "That," Index to English

This entry comes from the usage guide *Index to English* (Ebbitt and Ebbitt 1990, 257). As seen in the image above, prescriptive entries are generally prose descriptions or arguments that explain or support language rules, in this case, the use of "that" or "which." The above entry explains which form to use in which situation, implying when not to use the other form. It also provides some explanation of the rule, lists exceptions, and shows an example. While not every prescriptive entry is the same, this entry format is generally familiar to those who have used prescriptive reference works.

Entries have been used in English prescriptive discourse at least since Robert Baker's 1770 work *Reflections on the English Language*, which is generally regarded as the first usage guide. His entry style imitated the 1647 *Remarques Sur La Langue Françoise* by Vaugelas, showing that the entry structure has been part of prescriptive discourse since at least the seventeenth century. Curiously, however, lists predated entries in prescriptive discourse, showing up at least as early as 1582 in *Mulcaster's Elementarie*, which listed thousands of English words in a generally successful attempt to standardize English spellings. However, while lists are still used frequently in prescriptive discourse, we seldom equate lists with entries as a device for prescriptive discourse.

Examining lists and the way they interact with entries as prescriptive devices for discourse is a question that research has yet to address. To answer this question, we must first figure out how lists are being used in prescriptive discourse, and this leads to the question for this study: What kinds of prescriptive lists are there in prescriptive discourse?

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The list is one of the earliest forms of writing. Sumerians, in their cuneiform tablets, kept track of their sales with tokens bearing symbols of sheep, cattle, and other commodities. These tokens were sealed inside of envelopes, which then had the symbols inscribed, or listed, on the front (Houston 2016, 80; Belknap 2004, 8–9). While writing technologies have advanced since the era of cuneiform tablets, the list has continued as a writing device that is now used in virtually all genres.

Despite the long-lasting and widespread presence of lists in writing, “the list has received, until recently, little or no attention in histories of knowledge, literature, or the visual arts” (Barton et al. 2022, 2). In fact, the lack of attention to lists is a common trend in most fields, as Doležalová (2009) claims when she states that “scholars actually do work with lists, but they often do not consider the implications” (2). Recent curiosity about lists has led to their examination in multiple fields, from Rabbinic text studies to technology, and as scholars have begun investigating lists, interesting questions have arisen.

First, scholars have wondered if there is a general definition of list form. As Doležalová (2009) points out, because lists have historically received little consideration, there is a lack of general scholarship or theory about lists themselves (2). The closest any

scholar seems to have come to a general definition of list form appears in Robert Belknap's *The List: The Uses and Pleasures of Cataloguing*, where he defines lists as "frameworks that hold separate and disparate items together" or "formally organized block[s] of information ... composed of a set of members" (2004, 2, 15). As scholars examine lists within their own disciplines, most use Belknap's definition as a starting point.

Belknap's definition comes from his exploration of what he terms "literary lists," (2004, xiii). He claims that these are lists that appear in literature and are meant to be read through to "receive the information the writer wishes to communicate" (Belknap 2004, 5). He suggests that part of the fun of literary lists is that they invite readers to find meaning and connection between items in these lists (Belknap 2004, 5). Belknap's work briefly explores the question of whether different types of lists merit different definitions as he explains the difference between literary lists and nonliterary (or pragmatic) lists, which are more utilitarian (2004, 5). His work then turns to focus mainly on literary lists, showing that even the most accepted general definition of a list comes from a discipline-specific study.

Since the definitions currently available for lists are tied to specific disciplines, some researchers, such as Liam Young (2017), have argued that list studies don't need to begin by defining lists generally. Young (2017) states, "Starting with an essential definition of what a list is or means—or even using these as animating questions—shuts down the generative potential of analysis. It locks the researcher into a trajectory that, in its quest for scientific accuracy, leads only towards negation—the list is *not* that, or the list is *only* this and never that" (16). Young (2017) recommends that list research begin

instead with the question of what lists do, and enough research has been done on lists so far to examine some general characteristics described by multiple scholars.

One element of lists that is consistently mentioned across disciplines is the idea that lists are versatile (Barton et al. 2022; Von Contzen 2022; Havel 2009; Belknap 2004). Lists can come in varying forms or lengths and can be interpreted in various ways (Belknap 2004). They can be added to and reorganized as necessary (Havel 2009). They can transfer easily to different media (Von Contzen 2022). The simple versatility of a list makes it easy to apply the structure to multiple disciplines and writing situations, suggesting that the device can be used to accomplish multiple purposes.

Another mentioned feature of lists is that they are meant to be used as tools rather than to be read (Barton et al. 2022; Doležalová 2009; Von Contzen 2022). As Doležalová (2009) writes, “One does not read but only uses a list: one looks up the relevant information in it, but usually does not need to deal with it as a whole – and is happy about this fact” (1). Mainberger, too, explained that “lists don’t tell, they show; they require looking, not reading” (quoted in Von Contzen 2022, 134).¹ In short, readers generally use lists as reference tools, rather than trying to process them the same way as other literature. Belknap and others who study literary lists may argue this point, but in his description of nonliterary lists, Belknap (2004) agrees that “nonliterary lists must have a practical composition in order to be useful” (5), showing that the idea of lists being tools, if not applicable to all categories of lists, is still recognized by most scholars.

¹ Note that this quote comes from Sabine Mainberger’s 2003 work *Die Kunst des Aufzählens: Elemente zu einer Poetik des enumerativen*, written in German. Von Contzen (2022) seems to have translated this quote.

Lists are also referred to as containers meant to store information for easy retrieval (Belknap 2004; Doležalová 2009; Barton et al. 2022). This storage of knowledge, when published or preserved, can function as a sort of time capsule, or “artifact,” as Lehmhaus (2022) argues—a “material embodiment of epistemic conventions within a certain culture and time at a specific locality” (55). This principle can be applied to specific disciplines, where lists can store accepted knowledge to any specific field at any specific point in time. This storage function of lists is perhaps particularly intriguing and can explain the need to constantly release new editions of resources so their contents (and lists) communicate accepted and relevant knowledge.

Scholars also recognize that lists often embody paradoxes, which interact with the extreme versatility of the form. Lists have been characterized as both knowledge-storers and knowledge-makers (Barton et al. 2022, 4, 9). They have been described as simultaneously “obeying the aesthetics of brevity” while “fall[ing] under the rhetoric of amplification” (Goullet 2009, 69). Additionally, as Belknap (2004) points out, lists must be examined from the perspective of “the individual units that make up a list” as well as the perspective of “the function or purpose of the list as a whole” (16). The ability of lists to fulfill a variety of paradoxical functions makes it easy to use lists for various purposes, so it follows that different disciplines, with their different purposes, would understand and use lists in a variety of ways.

The versatility of lists, their tendency to be used or referenced rather than read, their potential use as containers, preservers, and disseminators of knowledge, and even their paradoxical nature all make lists fitting forms for prescriptive discourse. Yet amongst the relatively recent scholarship on lists, not much attention has been paid to the

use of lists in prescriptive discourse. The exception, perhaps, would be in the field of lexicography, where scholars have dedicated some attention to the creation of lists for dictionaries. These scholars have found that a significant part of the time needed to produce any dictionary is spent building the word list and selecting the canonical forms that will be used as the dictionary's headwords (Landau 1984, 98, 357). These headwords generally represent the standard or preferred dialect of a language, suggesting some of the power lists may have in communicating prescriptive rules. This study begins the investigation of lists within prescriptive discourse in general by categorizing the types of lists that are found throughout, seeking to uncover some of the relationship between lists and the prescriptive rules they help to communicate.

III. METHODS

I began my research by selecting the prescriptive discourse I would examine for use of lists. For this study, I decided to examine dictionaries, usage guides, and style guides—resources most commonly used by editors and writers preparing for publication. Five reference works were selected for each category, including five of the most common style guides in publication and editing as well as dictionaries and usage guides listed in *The Copyeditor's Handbook*. The resources I examined are listed below.

Dictionaries: *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, eleventh edition*; *The American Heritage College Dictionary, fourth edition*; *Random House Webster's College Dictionary 2001*; *Webster's New World Dictionary, fifth edition*; *Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged 2002*

Usage Guides: *Garner's Modern English Usage, fourth edition*; *Index to English, eighth edition*; *Merriam Webster's Dictionary of English Usage, 1994*; *Fowler's Dictionary of*

Modern English Usage, fourth edition; *The Careful Writer: A Modern Guide to English Usage*

Style Guides: *The Chicago Manual of Style*, seventeenth edition; *MLA Handbook*, ninth edition; *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, seventh edition; *The Associated Press Stylebook*, fifty-fifth edition; *New Oxford Style Manual* 2016

After selecting these fifteen reference works, I began looking through each of them and marking lists, making notes of their characteristics as I went. Lists were marked if they conveyed some level of prescription and generally not marked if a case could not be made for them being prescriptive. My judgment of lists as lacking prescription was based on three main criteria. First, lists were viewed as less prescriptive if the rules where they appeared were devoid of prescriptive direction (whether explicit or implicit) to use the lists in making a language decision. Second, lists were seen as less prescriptive if they contained “common knowledge,” or information that editors or writers could understand easily through the prose description of a rule alone. For example, one rule said to capitalize “entities that appear on maps,” then listed items like countries or states that language users would likely know appear on maps without needing the list (*The Chicago Manual of Style* 2017, 478). Ultimately, with this second criterion, I often judged a list’s prescriptiveness based on whether the list would likely be used by an editor, and this judgment came from my own editorial education and experience. Third, lists were viewed as less prescriptive if they lacked prominence in a rule. Some features that gave lists prominence were their length and their position in a rule (e.g., if they came before or in the middle of the prose description rather than after). Those lists that were judged as

lacking prescription based on these criteria were not marked. Additionally, only vertical lists were marked, not run-in lists.

It is important to note that while the five dictionaries did have some lists, these were lists of words under prefixes where the words had, as one dictionary put it, “no special meanings” (Webster’s New World 2016, 321). The lexicographers’ decision to include these lists of words seems twofold: (1) the words’ meanings can be easily inferred based on the definition of the prefixes as well as the definition of the root words, and (2) the dictionaries can add the words to their entry counts without taking additional space for definitions. Since these lists did not seem any more prescriptive than the rest of the dictionaries’ entries, they were excluded from the data. (This relates to criterion one above, which categorizes lists as less prescriptive if there is a lack of prescriptive direction to use lists in making language decisions.)

Neither *The Careful Writer* nor *Merriam Webster’s Dictionary of English Usage* included any lists. These were the only two of the fifteen resources examined to not include a single list. The absence of lists in these two resources and the exclusion of lists found in dictionaries means that out of the original fifteen resources examined for lists, only eight directly contributed to the taxonomy. Together, the eight reference works produced a pool of roughly 192 lists. Once the lists had been marked, I entered them into a spreadsheet, sorting them into categories based on the notes about their characteristics. This initial sorting resulted in five categories of lists.

Once the spreadsheet was complete, I used the notes for the lists in each category to generate names and definitions for the types of lists found. During this process, two additional categories were added to the initial five because of some nuances in list

characteristics. With the names and definitions generated, examples were selected from each category to include in the taxonomy. The names, definitions, and examples are shown in the taxonomy below. (Tables showing the full data, including the number of each list type found in each reference work, are included in the appendix.)

IV. TAXONOMY

The following table shows the names and definitions for the categories in this taxonomy. Following the table, I will discuss each category more thoroughly and provide characteristics of each type.

| Name | Definition |
|--|--|
| Prescribed Only (Pre) | A published rule in list form showing only what a language user should do. |
| Proscribed Only (Pro) | A published rule in list form showing only what a language user should not do. |
| Prescribed with Variants (PreVnts) | A published rule in list form showing what a language user should do, plus some variants. |
| Prescribed and Proscribed (Pre&Pro) | A published rule in list form showing what a language user should do and what a language user should not do. |
| Prescribed with Variety (PreVar) | A published rule in list form showing what a language user should do for certain varieties of English. |
| Prescribed Only, Illustrative (PreIII) | A published rule in list form showing illustratively what a language user should do. |
| Proscribed Only, Illustrative (ProIII) | A published rule in list form showing illustratively what a language user should not do. |

Table 1: Taxonomy Overview

Category 1: Prescribed Only (Pre) (A published rule in list form showing only what a language user should do.)

Lists in the Pre category usually share the following features: (1) they often contain information considered so well known or well established that there is no need for explanation apart from a given list; (2) they often (though not always) represent closed or semi-closed classes of words; (3) they include no variant forms, even if some are known; (4) they are meant to be used referentially; and (5) they explain standards

necessary for writers to conform to when writing in a certain style. (This last feature is most applicable to lists appearing in style manuals for publication, although lists in other prescriptive reference works often do show standards writers should comply with if they wish their writing to be considered standard English.) The discussion of the following examples of Pre lists will examine each of these features at work.

An example of a Pre list is found in the *Chicago Manual of Style* (2017) in the section “Changes in Form of Personal Pronouns” (238). This list is shown below.

| THE FORMS OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| <i>Singular Pronouns</i> | | | | |
| | <i>Nominative</i> | <i>Objective</i> | <i>Genitive</i> | <i>Reflexive</i> |
| <i>First person</i> | I | me | my, mine | myself |
| <i>Second person</i> | you | you | your, yours | yourself |
| <i>Third person</i> | he | him | his | himself |
| | she | her | her, hers | herself |
| | it | it | its | itself |
| <i>Plural Pronouns</i> | | | | |
| | <i>Nominative</i> | <i>Objective</i> | <i>Genitive</i> | <i>Reflexive</i> |
| <i>First person</i> | we | us | our, ours | ourselves |
| <i>Second person</i> | you | you | your, yours | yourselves |
| <i>Third person</i> | they | them | their, theirs | themselves |

Figure 2: "The Forms of Personal Pronouns," The Chicago Manual of Style

This list is more complex than other lists found in prescriptive discourse, as it features categories for both number and case, but the basic characteristics of a Pre list are met. First, these words are some of the most common in the English language and have been established in their roles as personal pronouns for decades. They are likely included in list form because that is the way they would appear in any grammar of standard English. Additionally, this list represents a part of speech that is considered a closed class. Also, while variants exist for these personal pronouns (for example, *y'all* or the singular *they*), these variants have not yet been widely accepted in the language.

Therefore, in agreement with characteristic three of Pre lists, these variants are not included here. This list may also be used referentially, though it shows knowledge that is basic enough for native English speakers that many may not need to refer to the list. (The distinction here is that the list is not intended to exemplify how a rule would apply to other pronouns, partly because no other standard pronouns exist.) Finally, while other style guides (for example, APA) support the use of the singular *they*, the *Chicago Manual of Style* still advises against its use. Thus, the absence of this variant on the list also demonstrates characteristic number five of Pre lists, presenting a standard that language users must conform to when writing or publishing in Chicago style.

While the above list from the *Chicago Manual of Style* shows all identified characteristics of Pre lists at work, not all Pre lists will show closed classes. A good example comes from *Garner's Modern English Usage* in the section “-able” (2016, 5). The list is shown below.

Unlike *-ible*, *-able* is a living suffix that may be added to virtually any verb without an established suffix in either *-able* or *-ible*. Following are only some of the hundreds of adjectives preferably spelled *-able*:

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| actionable | contestable | lapsable |
| addable | contractable | lovable |
| admittable | conversable | mixable |
| advisable | convictable | movable |
| affectable | correctable | noticeable |
| allegeable | definable | offendable |
| analyzable | detectable | patentable |
| annexable | diagnosable | persuadable |
| arrestable | discussable | preventable |
| ascendable | endorsable | processable |
| assertable | enforceable | protectable |
| assessable | evadable | ratable |
| averageable | excisable | redressable |
| avertable | excludable | referable |
| bailable | expandable | retractable |
| blamable | extendable | revisable |
| changeable | extractable | rinsable |
| chargeable | ignitable | salable |
| circumscribable | immovable | suspendable |
| commensurable | improvable | tractable |
| committable | inferable | transferable |
| condensable | inventable | transmittable |
| connectable | investable | willable |

Figure 3: "-able," Garner's Modern English Usage

This list of preferred suffix spellings meets four of the five characteristics of Pre lists. First, the list shows information that is established enough (even if troublesome) that a list is sufficient to convey the information. Additionally, the list does not include variant spellings. Also, while the list is not comprehensive, it is meant to be referenced. Nothing in the description of the rule suggests that the examples are meant to illustrate rules that can be applied to other trouble words. Finally, while Garner's usage guide is not a style guide dictating standards for intended publications, it is still recommended to follow these guidelines for works intended to be written in standard English. However, words ending in "-able" cannot be considered a closed class of words. The prose before this list explains that "-able" is a "living suffix" (Garner 2016, 5) that continues to be

added to new words. This list is therefore a great example of how Pre lists often show closed classes but do not have to.

One interesting feature of Pre lists is that the level and directness of their prescription can vary. Some Pre lists, such as the list of personal pronouns discussed above, seem simply to inform language users about English standards. Other Pre lists are introduced outright with phrases suggesting that the forms presented should be used. In other lists, however, prescription seems to be a byproduct of the list rather than the focus of the rule. For example, one Pre list shows the dates when shortened forms for words (such as “ad” for “advertisement”) came into the language, indirectly prescribing what the shortened forms should be. In some few cases, words shown in a Pre list can represent forms that are “not proscribed” more than they are prescribed. For example, Garner’s list in the section “Hybrids” (2016, 474) comes across more like a list of words that are “okay to use” rather than prescribed. Overall, the way Pre lists are introduced in any given rule can influence how strong or direct the prescription seems, but all Pre lists are still united in only showing prescribed forms.

Together, Pre and PreIII lists made up the majority of lists found in this study. This section focused on the features that make the Pre category unique, but some of these features will appear again later when we discuss PreIII lists.

Category 2: Proscribed Only (Pro) (A published rule in list form showing only what a language user should not do.)

The Pro category of lists was one of the least common in the prescriptive discourse I examined. (Only ProIII lists occurred with less frequency.) All lists from this study that fit this category come from *Garner’s Modern English Usage*. Generally, the

main characteristics of Pro lists are that they (1) show forms that should not be used by those wishing to comply with the standards of a language, register, or style; (2) are not comprehensive; (3) are intended to be used more referentially than illustratively; and (4) may or may not imply the prescribed forms of the items included in the list.

One example of a Pro list comes from the section “Noncomparable Adjectives” (Garner 2016, 20). The rule states the “illogic of such combinations” (Garner 2016, 20) before listing the “more common noncomparable adjectives,” as shown below.

| Among the more common noncomparable adjectives are these: | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| absolute | inevitable | singular |
| adequate | infinite | stationary |
| chief | irrevocable | sufficient |
| complete | main | unanimous |
| devoid | manifest | unavoidable |
| entire | only | unbroken |
| false | paramount | uniform |
| fatal | perfect | unique |
| favorite | perpetual | universal |
| final | possible | void |
| ideal | preferable | whole |
| impossible | principal | |

Figure 4: “Noncomparable Adjectives” Garner’s Modern English Usage

By virtue of being a Pro list, the list is not comprehensive. It would be difficult to give examples of every adjective someone may use comparatively when they should not. However, the list itself is meant to be used referentially, not just as examples. Therefore, the list is likely meant to draw attention to these specific adjectives, which Garner especially does not want to be used comparatively.

It is important to note that the words included in the above list are not proscribed except when used in the context of comparable adjectives. The rule described in prose is

thus essential to understanding the meaning of this list. This is not the case for all Pro lists. Other Pro lists mark their proscribed forms in such a way that readers would know just from the list not to use the listed forms. An example comes from *Garner's Modern English Usage* in the section "Double Modals" (2016, 300). The list is shown below.

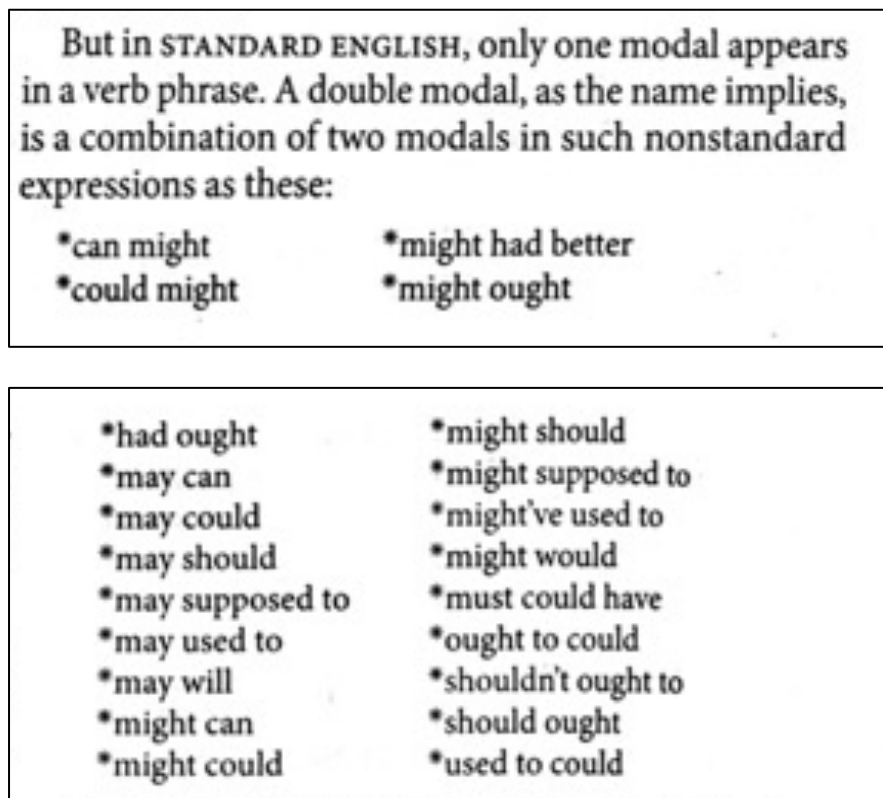


Figure 5: "Double Modals," Garner's Modern English Usage

Garner's key at the bottom of the page (and throughout the usage guide) explains that asterisks mark "invariably inferior forms" (2016, 300), so the asterisks in this list make it clear that the items included are proscribed forms, even without referencing the prose that introduces them as nonstandard. Again, there may be other double modal constructions in existence, so this list cannot be considered comprehensive. However, as there are only nine modals and not many more semi-modals in the language, the number of items Garner includes on the list seems to indicate that the list is meant to be viewed

referentially. This list is also an example of how Pro lists can imply prescribed forms. The implied prescribed form for each item on the list would be use of just one of the modals shown.

While it was easier to identify common characteristics of Pre lists, this was less simple with their Pro counterparts. (The nature of Pro lists also makes them difficult to distinguish from ProIll lists, as will be discussed in a later section.) Pre lists show information that is well-established, exclude variant forms, and often represent closed classes of words. In contrast, Pro lists often focus on innovative language and variants, neither of which can be closed classes because they relate to language change, which continues to happen over time. Because of this, Pro lists may seem more commanding, because they are based more on opinions about what is not considered standard language than on knowledge that can be considered well known and established. Since all lists for this category came from Garner, this may reflect his personal style or attitudes toward language, though it would take a study with more data to make this generalization.

Category 3: Prescribed with Variants (PreVnts) (A published rule in list form showing what a language user should do, plus some variants.)

Lists in the PreVnts category generally have the following characteristics: (1) they show prescribed forms; (2) they generally include variants for some of the prescribed forms, but not all of them; and (3) they tend to mark the variants as less preferred, whether overtly or implicitly.

An example of a PreVnts list that marks the preferred forms overtly comes from *Fowler's Dictionary of Modern English Usage, Fourth Edition* under the entry “-ve(d), -ves” (Butterfield 2015, 857). The list is shown below.

-ve(d), -ves, etc. from words in *-f* and *-fe*. Corresponding to the change of sound discussed in **-TH (θ) AND -TH (ð)** that takes place in the plural, etc., of words ending in *-th*, like *truth*, there is one both of sound and of spelling in many words ending in *-f* or *-fe*, which become *-ves*, *-ved*, *-vish*, etc. As the change is far from regular, and sometimes in doubt, an alphabetical list follows of the chief words about which some doubt may exist, showing changes in the plural of the noun and in the parts of the verb and in some derivatives (d.). When alternatives are given, the first is recommended.

beef. Pl. *beeves* fattened bulls or cows, *beefs* kinds of beef; d. *beefy*.
calf. Pl. *calves*; v. *calve*; d. *calfish*.
dwarf. Pl. *dwarfs* or *dwarves*; v. *dwarf*, pa. t. *dwarfed*; d. *dwarfish*, *dwarfism*.
elf. Pl. *elves*; d. *elfin*; *elvish*, *elfish*.
half. Pl. *halves*; v. *halve*.
handkerchief. Pl. *handkerchiefs*.
hoof. Pl. *hooves* or *hoofs*; v. *hoof*, *hoofed*, *hoofing*; d. *hoofy*.
knife. Pl. *knives*; v. *knife*, *knifed*, *knifing*.
leaf. Pl. *leaves*; v. *leaf*, *leafs*, *leafed*, *leafing*; *-leaved*; d. *leafy*.
life. Pl. *lives*; v. *live*; *-lived*; d. *lifer*.
loaf. Pl. *loaves*.
oaf. Pl. *oafs*; d. *oafish*.
proof. Pl. *proofs*; v. *prove*, pa. pple *proved*/*proven*.
roof. Pl. *roofs* or *rooves*.
scarf. Pl. *scarves* or *scarfs*.
scurf. d. *scurfy* having scurf; *scurvy* paltry, mean.
self. Pl. *selves*; d. *selfish*.
sheaf. Pl. *sheaves*; v. *sheave*; adj. *sheaved*.
shelf. Pl. *shelves*; v. *shelve*.
staff. Pl. *staffs*, (mus. etc.) *staves*; v. *STAVE*.
thief. Pl. *thieves*; v. *thieve*; d. *thievery*, *thievish*.

turf. Pl. *turves* or *turfs*; v. *turf*; d. *turfy*.
wharf. Pl. *wharves* or *wharfs*; d. *wharfage*, (Aust. and NZ) *wharfie*.
wife. Pl. *wives*.
wolf. Pl. *wolves*; v. *wolf*, *wolfs*, *wolfed*; d. *wolfish*, *wolvish*.

Figure 6: "-ve(d), -ves" Fowler's Dictionary of Modern English Usage

As shown in the image above, the sentence right before this list informs readers that “when alternatives are given, the first is recommended” (Butterfield, 857). This overtly marks the variants in the list as less preferred. An example of a list that implicitly marks variants as less preferred comes from the *New Oxford Style Manual* in the section “Regnal years” (2016, 201). The list gives the abbreviation for monarchs’ names in regnal years, as shown below.

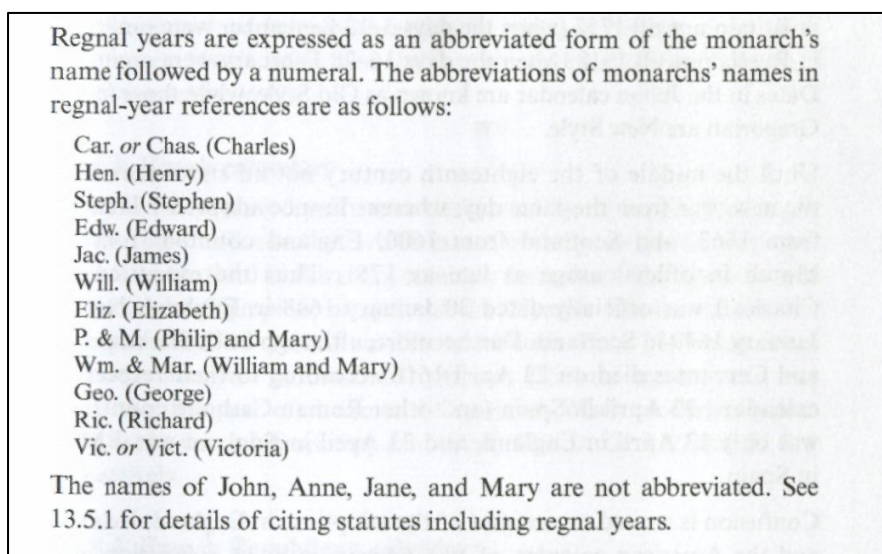


Figure 7: "Regnal Years," New Oxford Style Manual

Only two items on this list have variants offered, illustrating the characteristic of PreVnts lists that not all items in the list need to have variants. The structure of a list tends to give prominence to items that come first. In this list, that may be especially true because there are so few items that have variants listed. Therefore, an order of preference in variants on this list is implicit by list structure, even if this was not the original intent of the author.

While most PreVnts lists only show variants for some items on the list, the number of variants included when preference is implicit can affect a list's level of prescription. For example, lists of biblical abbreviations in the *Chicago Manual of Style* show variants for nearly all of the Old and New Testament book titles (2017, 597–599).

Including a greater number of variants seems to give more validity to the variants shown, presenting them more as alternative options than less preferred forms. This effect may also be due to the fact that these lists appear in a style guide, and these manuals sometimes do give multiple options for publications in their represented styles. It is interesting to note, however, that while list structure generally shows a natural preference for whichever variant comes first, including variants for a majority of list items can weaken this implied preference (if the variants are not overtly marked as less preferred in the rule).

Category 4: Prescribed and Proscribed (Pre&Pro) (A published rule in list form showing what a language user should do and what a language user should not do.)

Lists in the Pre&Pro category may include two lists next to each other with one list showing all prescribed forms and one list showing all proscribed forms. They may also have just one list showing the prescribed and proscribed forms for each item on the same line. The key characteristics of Pre&Pro lists are that (1) every prescribed form has a corresponding proscribed form and (2) that they may use different words or titles for the prescribed and proscribed forms that don't inherently mean "correct" or "incorrect." No matter what titles are used, however, the prescription and proscription are generally clear. Below are examples of each of the characteristics discussed above.

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| <i>Instead of</i> | in this day and age | today |
| | at this point in time | now |
| | during the time that | while |
| | in the event that | if |
| | at the conclusion of | after |

Figure 8: "Wordiness" Index to English

The example above comes from Ebbitt and Ebbitt's *Index to English, Eighth Edition* in the section "Wordiness" (1990, 278). The list contains a matching prescribed form for each proscribed form. While there is only one label for the whole list, the prescribed forms are set aside in a way that makes them look like a second list corresponding to the first. In contrast, the list below from the section "Wordiness and Redundancy" in the APA manual (2020, 115) includes both the prescribed and proscribed forms in one cohesive list.

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| they were both alike | one and the same |
| a sum total | in close proximity to |
| four different groups saw | completely unanimous |
| were exactly the same as | positioned very close |
| absolutely essential | period of time |
| has been previously found | summarize briefly |
| small in size | the reason is because |

Figure 9: "Wordiness and Redundancy" APA Publication Manual

The prose before this list explains that "the highlighted words are redundant and should be omitted" (APA, 114). This list therefore implies the prescribed forms as the words that are not highlighted, but prescribed and proscribed forms are both included in the same list.

One last example, from *Fowler's Dictionary of Modern English Usage* in the section "disability, the language of" (Butterfield 2015, 220), shows a Pre&Pro list using titles specific to the list's content. (Since the list titles are the features of interest here, only the beginning of the lists are shown.)

4 Some of the terms below are better established than others, and some groups with disabilities favour specific words over others. These lists are offered only as a general guide.

| <i>Older term</i> | <i>Neutral term</i> |
|-------------------|--|
| able-bodied | non-disabled |
| asthmatic (noun) | person with asthma |
| backward | having learning difficulties, having a learning disability |
| blind | partially sighted, visually impaired |

Figure 10: "Disability, the language of," Fowler's Dictionary of Modern English Usage

Here, the title "Older term" does not necessarily connote proscription, but when paired with the title "Neutral term," a proscription versus prescription relationship is established between the two lists. It is also interesting to note that there are variants offered for some of the prescribed forms on the list. While this is not a typical feature of Pre&Pro lists, it adds an extra layer of prescription with order of preference, as discussed in the previous section about PreVnts lists.

Pre&Pro lists represent another list category where the level of prescription can vary depending on the lists' interaction with the prose descriptions of the rules where they appear. The strongest level of prescription comes when prescribed and proscribed forms appear in separate lists with titles clearly indicating which forms they are. Strong prescription can also be suggested when the prose part of a rule directly states which forms are prescribed or proscribed. However, there are some Pre&Pro lists where two

lists juxtapose forms that should be used in different contexts (e.g., “affect” and “effect” from Garner’s “Word-Swapping” [2016, 972]). In these cases, the prescription and proscription (to use the correct forms in the correct contexts, not the other forms) is implied. Overall, while the directness of prescription and proscription in different Pre&Pro lists may vary, the prescription and proscription are generally clear.

Category 5: Prescribed with Variety (PreVar) (A published rule in list form showing what a language user should do for certain varieties of English.)

PreVar lists generally share the following characteristics: (1) they show only the prescribed forms for a given variety of English, (2) they may show multiple varieties, and (3) they strongly imply the proscribed forms. An example of a PreVar list comes from the *New Oxford Style Manual* in the section “Spelling patterns” (2016, 411). This rule shows two lists with the preferred spellings of words in US English and British English. The lists line up so that the words on each line of the lists correspond to each other, as shown below.

21.4.1 Spelling patterns

The main spelling differences between British and US English are detailed in 3.1 and 3.2. Table 21.1 lists some words that do not conform to a single pattern of spelling differences and that may easily slip past editorial notice (though many will be detected with spellchecking software).

Table 21.1

| US | British |
|-----------------|-------------|
| adz | adze |
| ax | axe |
| behoove | behove |
| caliper | calliper |
| carburetor | carburettor |
| checkered | chequered |
| checkers (game) | chequers |
| chili | chilli |
| gelatin | gelatine |
| glycerin | glycerine |
| granddad | grandad |
| jewelry | jewellery |
| karat | carat |
| licorice | liquorice |
| maneuver | manoeuvre |
| mustache | moustache |

(continued)

CHAPTER 21

Table 21.1 (Continued)

| US | British |
|--------------|---------------|
| novitiate | noviciate |
| pajamas | pyjamas |
| peddler | pedlar |
| phony | phoney |
| pita bread | pitta bread |
| plow | plough |
| pudgy | podgy |
| raccoon | racoön |
| tartar sauce | tartare sauce |

Figure 11: "Spelling Patterns" New Oxford Style Manual

As shown above, these lists contain only the prescribed forms for their stated varieties. However, setting the two lists together in this way sets up a pattern similar to the Pre&Pro lists from category four. Anyone wishing to comply with US or British

spelling standards would view the other variety's list as containing proscribed forms. In cases where PreVar lists only include one variety of English, the implied proscription is that any form of the given words that does not appear on the list should not be used. Thus, proscription is strongly implied by PreVar lists, but they merit their own category because the proscription depends on the target variety of English.

Category 6: Prescribed only, Illustrative (PreIII) (A published rule in list form showing illustratively what a language user should do.)

As mentioned previously, PreIII lists are similar to their Pre counterparts, though with some key differences that this section will explore. Characteristics of PreIII lists include the following: (1) they show only prescribed forms, (2) they do not show variants, (3) they are not comprehensive and do not show closed classes, (4) they are meant to be used illustratively, rather than referentially, and (5) they often exemplify principles explained in the prose part of a rule. A great example of a PreIII list comes from the *Chicago Manual of Style*, in the "Hyphenation guide" (2017, 446). The first page of the hyphenation guide is shown below.

| Category/specific term | Examples | Summary of rule |
|---|---|---|
| 1. COMPOUNDS ACCORDING TO CATEGORY | | |
| age terms | <i>a three-year-old</i> <i>a five-year-old child</i> <i>a fifty-five-year-old woman</i> <i>a test for nine-to-ten-year-olds</i> <i>a group of ten- and eleven-year-olds</i> but <i>seven years old</i> <i>eighteen years of age</i> | Hyphenated in both noun and adjective forms (except as in the last two examples); note the space after the first hyphen in the fifth but not the fourth example (see 7.88). The examples apply equally to ages expressed as numerals. |
| chemical terms | <i>sodium chloride</i> <i>sodium chloride solution</i> | Open in both noun and adjective forms. |
| colors | <i>emerald-green tie</i> <i>reddish-brown flagstone</i> <i>blue-green algae</i> <i>snow-white dress</i> <i>black-and-white print</i> but his tie is <i>emerald green</i> the stone is <i>reddish brown</i> the water is <i>blue green</i> the clouds are <i>snow white</i> the truth isn't <i>black and white</i> | Hyphenated before but not after a noun. |
| compass points and directions | <i>northeast</i> <i>southwest</i> <i>east-northeast</i> <i>a north-south street</i> <i>the street runs north-south</i> | Closed in noun, adjective, and adverb forms unless three directions are combined, in which case a hyphen is used after the first. When <i>from . . . to</i> is implied, an en dash is used (see 6.78). |
| ethnic terms. See proper nouns and adjectives relating to geography or nationality in section 2. | | |
| foreign phrases. See non-English phrases | | |
| fractions, compounds formed with | <i>a half hour</i> <i>a half-hour session</i> <i>a quarter mile</i> <i>a quarter-mile run</i> <i>an eighth note</i> | Noun form open; adjective form hyphenated. See also number entries in this section and half in section 3. |

Table 2: "Hyphenation Guide," The Chicago Manual of Style

While the hyphenation guide is a table, we will focus specifically on the lists found in the center column. These lists show only prescribed forms (no variants) and illustrate the principles described in the “Summary of rule” section in the right-hand column. However, as hyphenation is not a closed class, and it would be impossible to include every possible scenario for each of the categories in the table, the lists are not comprehensive. Instead, they give representative examples that language users can compare to their own situations and then make decisions accordingly. The fact that the lists of examples come before the rule summaries (reading left to right) suggests that

readers likely look at the lists first, resorting only to the summaries if they need additional clarification for their particular questions.

As mentioned previously, PreIII lists are similar to Pre lists, but some nuances make them their own category. Some of these differences, such as the fact that PreIII lists do not show closed classes and that PreIII lists are meant to be used illustratively, were mentioned in the characteristics above. Another difference between Pre lists and PreIII lists is the way the lists are introduced by the prose in a given entry. The prose introducing a Pre list generally directs the reader to review the list to understand the given rule. The prose before PreIII lists may attempt to explain rules in a way that they can be applied to various situations. The PreIII lists then illustrate principles outlined in the prose. Thus, the same rule could use a Pre list in one reference work and a PreIII list in another depending on the amount of explanation included in the prose and on whether the list is giving the rule or illustrating it.

While recognizing that there are differences between Pre and PreIII lists, it is curious to note that the two lists may sometimes be used (and may be intended for use) in much the same way. The lists shown in the hyphenation guide above are rather short, but some PreIII lists can be longer, increasing a language user's chances of finding their target word on the list. Additionally, some PreIII lists illustrate rules for words that may be unfamiliar to language users (for example, foreign words, proper names, or nicknames), in which case the language users may rely more on the lists than on the prose explanations. Thus, some PreIII lists may be used referentially, even if they seem to be set up for illustrative use. This idea will be explored more in the discussion section.

Finally, it is important to note that some reference works (for example, style guides) contain many lists that could be considered PreIII lists, giving examples for nearly every principle explained in prose, even when the prose descriptions seem sufficient on their own. While some of these lists were included in the data, generally the PreIII lists that seemed more prescriptive were marked for this study. The judgment about lists that seemed more prescriptive was based on the three criteria mentioned in the methods section (prescriptive direction in a rule to use the lists, the contents of the lists and whether they showed “common knowledge” or were likely to be used by editors, and the prominence of the lists in rules). For example, lists that showed exceptions to rules, lists showing less familiar content such as nicknames or foreign words, or lists whose setups gave them more prominence in their respective rules, as in the hyphenation table above, would be marked. In these instances, the lists seemed perhaps more useful. However, more examples of lists simply illustrating principles explained in the prose can also be found in the reference works from the study.

Category 7: Proscribed only, Illustrative (ProIII) (A published rule in list form showing illustratively what a language user should not do.)

As mentioned earlier, ProIII lists are difficult to distinguish from their Pro counterparts. Like Pro lists, they (1) show forms that should not be used by those wishing to comply with the standard form of a language (or a specific register or style), and (2) are not comprehensive. Unlike Pro lists, they (3) tend to be more illustrative than referential.

An example of a ProIII list comes from *Garner’s Modern English Usage, Fourth Edition* in the section “Archaisms” (2016, 66), which is shown below.

| | | |
|--|--------------|-------------------------|
| ARCHAISMS. A. Generally. Many writers indulge in antiquated phrasings known primarily through the King James Version of the Bible or through Shakespeare. Avoid them, unless you're being jocular. Among the ones to be especially wary of are these: | | |
| alack | haply | shew (for <i>show</i>) |
| anent | howbeit | spake |
| anon | in sooth | to wit |
| begat | maugre | verily |
| belike | meseems | whilom |
| betimes | methinks | withal |
| divers | nigh | wot |
| durst | peradventure | ye |
| fain | perchance | yea |
| forsooth | saith | |

Figure 12: "Archaisms," Garner's Modern English Usage

The prose leading up to the list makes it clear that this list is not comprehensive, but rather shows the words "to be especially wary of" (Garner 2016, 66). However, the rule also makes it clear that there are other phrases from the Bible and Shakespeare that could be considered archaisms. Thus, Garner proscribes using the words in the list and any words like them. In this way, the list does seem to be more illustrative than referential. However, the distinction between these types of lists and Pro lists is very slight, and the categories could likely be merged unless more collected data reveals a bigger distinction. They are kept separate in this paper to emphasize their comparison with Pre and PreIII lists.

V. DISCUSSION

While creating this taxonomy, I noted several features of lists that interacted with the rules in which they appeared to communicate prescriptive (or proscriptive messages). Some of these features were mentioned in the taxonomy and will be explored further in

this discussion. Other features, relating to list structure and prescriptive discourse in general, apply to multiple categories from the taxonomy and will be discussed in this section as well. Overall, the list features discussed in this section contribute to the authority of the messages found in prescriptive reference works and merit further study beyond their identification in this work.

One important feature to mention is that two somewhat contradictory (or paradoxical) ideas seem to lend themselves to the use of lists in prescriptive discourse. First, lists are often used when information is considered so well established that a list is sufficient to carry the information to a reader. Second, lists are used when the information they convey is not established enough for a prose description of the rule to make sense without including a list.

When information is well established, lists are often viewed as sufficient vehicles to carry the information to readers. We explored this idea in category one of the taxonomy, when discussing Pre lists for closed or semi-closed classes of words. For closed classes, such as our example of personal pronouns, the words have been established in their classes for so long that readers are expected to know them as such. Having to look up separate rules for each pronoun would take much longer than simply reviewing a list, and thus a list is the most practical way to organize this information. These lists, as previously discussed, are prescriptive because of what they exclude. Even if other variants exist, the fact that they are not even listed as variants in Pre lists gives the items on the list more weight and thus establishes a standard dialect.

Pre lists for closed classes are not the only kinds of lists that function as sufficient vehicles for information. Some lists, including the Pre lists that do not show closed

classes as well as some PreVar lists, are briefly introduced with prose, but the bulk of the prescriptive information is conveyed by the lists themselves. Additionally, some lists, such as PreIll lists, have longer prose introductions that attempt to lay out specific principles to follow before listing examples for each of the principles described. Generally, these lists clarify principles that can be confusing in the prose, and many readers may jump to the lists and end up with the same information more quickly.

Ultimately, in cases where language information is viewed as well established, list form seems to be used out of convenience for both the author and the reader. Lists in these cases can convey prescription or authority either because of what is left out of the lists or because the simple presence of lists gives the information they contain more weight.

In contrast, sometimes general uncertainty about the extent of a described rule makes use of a list more prudent. In these cases, using a list can seem like an attempt to convey what information does exist while recognizing that the rule cannot give all the answers. Pro lists certainly illustrate this principle. Rules containing Pro lists are essentially saying that it is impossible to list everything a speaker or writer can do wrong relating to a rule, but they should definitely avoid saying or writing the things on the list. Other rules that illustrate this principle of uncertainty often signal their uncertainty with qualifiers in their prose introductions. A good example comes from *Index to English* in the section “Comparisons of Adjectives and Adverbs” (65). The rule and list are shown below.

| Comparison of adjectives and adverbs 65 | | | |
|--|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <p>1. Choosing the form. We say “a longer walk,” not “a more long walk.” We say “a more beautiful picture,” not “a beautifuller picture.”</p> <p>a. To the root form (the positive degree), some adjectives and adverbs add <i>-er</i> to make the comparative degree, <i>-est</i> to make the superlative degree.</p> | | | |
| | <i>Positive</i> | <i>Comparative</i> | <i>Superlative</i> |
| <i>Adjective</i> | early | earlier | earliest |
| | hoarse | hoarser | hoarsest |
| | unhappy | unhappier | unhappiest |
| <i>Adverb</i> | fast | faster | fastest |
| | soon | sooner | soonest |
| <p>b. Other adjectives make the comparative and superlative degrees by preceding the root form with <i>more</i>, <i>most</i>.</p> | | | |
| | <i>Positive</i> | <i>Comparative</i> | <i>Superlative</i> |
| <i>Adjective</i> | exquisite | more exquisite | most exquisite |
| | afraid | more afraid | most afraid |
| | pleasing | more pleasing | most pleasing |
| <i>Adverb</i> | comfortably | more comfortably | most comfortably |
| | hotly | more hotly | most hotly |
| <p>Three-syllable adjectives and adverbs are ordinarily compared with <i>more</i> and <i>most</i>, one-syllable adjectives and adverbs with <i>-er</i> and <i>-est</i>. Two-syllable adjectives and adverbs are usually compared with <i>more</i> and <i>most</i>, but many can take either form: <i>able</i>—<i>abler</i>, <i>more able</i>, <i>ablest</i>, <i>most able</i>; <i>empty</i>—<i>emptier</i>, <i>more empty</i>, <i>emptiest</i>, <i>most empty</i>. When you're in doubt, <i>more</i> and <i>most</i> are the safer choices. In earlier times, it was all right to use both methods of comparison at once, as in Shakespeare's “most unkindest cut of all,” but now double comparatives and double negatives (except for such locutions as “not unhappy”) are classed as nonstandard.</p> | | | |

Figure 13: “Comparisons of Adjectives and Adverbs,” Index to English

Notice that the use of the words “some” and “other” in the prose of (a) and (b) makes it necessary for a reader to view the lists. This example illustrates that the rule itself is not fleshed out enough or easy to apply without the list of examples. Even though the prose after the given lists attempts to flesh out a transferable rule, words like “ordinarily” and “usually” still convey the rule’s uncertainty. There are also exceptions to these rules shown in the lists above, and the rule has to present a “when in doubt” solution that may or may not always lead to the most correct result.

In the case of less established rules, lists are used more out of necessity than convenience. The rules that use lists in this way rely heavily on the lists to convey their

intended messages. This dependence on the list makes the list the most significant (and perhaps the most authoritative) element of the rule.

Another observation about the use of lists in prescriptive discourse is that list structure itself creates a certain sense of authority or prescription. Since placing items in vertical lists sets them apart from surrounding prose, the items on any list are given more weight simply because they appear on a list. This effect may intensify when lists appear in prescriptive discourse, but certain features of list structure itself can ascribe more authority to a list.

One interesting feature of list structure that can influence the way a list is viewed in prescriptive discourse is the order in which items are placed on the list. This principle was discussed in the taxonomy category for PreVnts lists, where we saw that when variants are presented in lists of prescribed words, they are generally conveyed as less preferred options, even if a preference is not overtly stated in the list or the prose description. In general, list structure tends to communicate a hierarchy of preference.

An additional feature of list structure that influences a list's perceived authority or prescription is the list's length. PreIll lists, for example, illustrate principles explained in the prose part of a rule or provide representative examples of words where the rule is applied so readers can apply the illustrated rule to their own situations. Since these lists are illustrative, they are not comprehensive. However, the length of the list can suggest that a list be used referentially rather than illustratively. An example of a list where this is the case is shown below.



Figure 14: "Popular Place Names and Epithets," The Chicago Manual of Style

Note that this list, from the *Chicago Manual of Style* (2017, 480) is a PreIll list. The rule to be followed is clearly stated in the prose preceding the list and could be followed without the list. Therefore, the list contains examples that illustrate the prose rule. However, the list is so long and includes so many examples that it almost seems that the authors were trying to make it a referential list rather than an illustrative list. Indeed, an editor or other language user consulting this rule would likely look to the list first in the hopes that the place name they need is included there before they would try to apply the prose rule on their own. This example suggests that the length of a list can increase a

list's sense of weight and authority, even if the list seems to be included as an illustrative one.

An additional factor contributing to the perceived authority of a list is the type of discourse in which the list appears. Even among prescriptive discourse, different types of prescriptive reference works may contribute to different amounts of perceived weight and authority in the lists they contain. The prescriptive reference work that seems to contribute most to a list's authority is style guides.

Of all the resources examined, style guides were the only prescriptive resources to always include lists. This is significant because style guides are generally the authoritative resources for editors and publishers. For stricter publications, if a company's chosen style guide says to do or not to do something, that is generally the final decision for an editor at work. Style guides are more decisive on issues than other prescriptive discourse may be, because rather than covering multiple opinions on an issue or presenting the history of different variants, they make a decision over any existing variants to keep publications in the style consistent. The fact that all five style guides from this study included lists thus suggests the usefulness of lists in conveying prescriptive decisions.

In general, style guides tended to include lists that showed prescribed forms rather than proscribed forms (Pre, PreVnts, PreVar, and PreIll). In fact, none of the style guides included any Pro lists, and out of all of the lists found in style guides, only a few were Pre&Pro lists. The majority of lists from style guides were in the Pre or PreIll categories. This is interesting because, as noted in the taxonomy, Pro lists often seem more commanding than their Pre counterparts. The fact that style guides use more Pre or PreIll

lists than Pro lists suggests that the authority of these lists comes more from the nature of the style guides than from the lists themselves.

Below is an example of one type of list found in style guides. This list comes from the AP style guide in the section “Baseball” (2020, 427).

| | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| baseball The spellings for some frequently used words and phrases, some of which are exceptions to Webster's New World College Dictionary: | |
| <i>backstop</i> | <i>pinch hit</i> |
| <i>baseline</i> | <i>pinch hitter (n.)</i> |
| <i>bullpen</i> | <i>pitchout</i> |
| <i>center field (n., adj.)</i> | <i>put out (v.) putout</i> |
| <i>center fielder</i> | <i>(n.)</i> |
| <i>designated hitter</i> | <i>RBI (s.), RBIs (pl.)</i> |
| <i>doubleheader</i> | <i>right field (n., adj.)</i> |
| <i>double play</i> | <i>rundown (n.)</i> |
| <i>fair ball</i> | <i>sacrifice</i> |
| <i>fastball</i> | <i>sacrifice fly</i> |
| <i>first baseman</i> | <i>sacrifice hit</i> |
| <i>foul ball line</i> | <i>shortstop</i> |
| <i>foul tip</i> | <i>shut out (v.)</i> |
| <i>ground-rule double</i> | <i>shutout (n., adj.)</i> |
| <i>home plate</i> | <i>slugger</i> |
| <i>home run</i> | <i>squeeze play</i> |
| <i>left field (n., adj.)</i> | <i>strike</i> |
| <i>line drive</i> | <i>strike zone</i> |
| <i>line up (v.)</i> | <i>Texas leaguer</i> |
| <i>lineup (n.)</i> | <i>third base coach</i> |
| <i>major league(s) (n.)</i> | <i>triple play</i> |
| <i>major league (adj.)</i> | <i>twilight</i> |
| <i>major leaguer (n.)</i> | <i>doubleheader</i> |
| <i>outfielder</i> | <i>walk-off</i> |
| <i>passed ball</i> | <i>wild pitch</i> |

Figure 15: "Baseball," AP Stylebook

Notice that the prose in this rule does nothing more than direct readers to the list.

Especially of note is the fact that the prose mentions some of the spellings included in the

list are “exceptions to *Webster’s New World College Dictionary*” (427). Returning to the principle discussed at the beginning of this section, one factor guiding the use of lists in prescriptive discourse is that lists are convenient and simple when conveying information that is well established. While style guides certainly include lists which *convey* well-established information (baseball terms could be well established for some individuals), the lists they present conveying their authoritative decisions on style-specific issues are often meant to *establish* information. (Indeed, different style guides may give different directions on the same topics.) This suggests that what is well established in the case of many lists in style guides is the authority of the style guide itself, and lists are the most convenient tool for presenting information that the style has decided is official. Further research could explore editors’ and other readers’ responses to lists in style guides compared to other prescriptive discourse and could also investigate the way these responses affect the use of lists in writing or editing.

One more topic to discuss relating to this study is the lists from dictionaries, which were excluded from the taxonomy. As mentioned previously, the dictionaries only contained lists under prefixes. The words in the lists were not given definitions because they have “no special meanings” (Webster’s New World 2016, 321) outside of the definitions for the prefixes and their root words. These lists may have been intended to describe the language, but they are likely used more prescriptively by readers, and in this the lists do not differ much from the normal dictionary entries. Simply put, a dictionary is a long list of words, which could be seen as prescriptive for spelling, pronunciation, or hyphenation of words in the same way that the lists under their prefix entries could be

seen as prescriptive for these things. Further research could examine the relationship between the list format of a dictionary and the prescription the format suggests to readers.

VI. CONCLUSION

Scholars have described lists as versatile, as tools, and as containers, and these qualities also apply to the lists found in prescriptive discourse. The various categories presented in this taxonomy show that prescriptive lists are versatile, especially since many categories are so similar yet have tiny nuances that make them different enough to stand on their own. We saw this when we compared Pre and PreIII lists as well as Pro and ProIII lists. The taxonomy also shows lists as tools: whether lists seem intended for referential or illustrative use, they are nonetheless intended to be used to find information quickly. The taxonomy also shows that lists are containers of knowledge. For example, the prescriptive lists in style guides show the accepted forms for rules in their styles at certain points in time.

Scholars have also described lists as paradoxical, and this trait is also evident in prescriptive lists. For example, illustrative lists, which are meant to give examples of how to apply a rule, are often long enough to be used referentially, as we examined in the PreIII list category and in the discussion section. Additionally, PreVnts lists appear to show only prescribed forms, but because they usually contain lists for multiple variants at a time, these lists strongly imply proscription, making them seem more like Pre&Pro lists. We saw this in our examination of these lists in the taxonomy.

Overall, many qualities of lists are also reflected in prescriptive discourse as a genre. Prescriptive reference works are tools meant to be used, not closely read. Typical language users look up rules in a usage guide rather than reading it like a novel.

Similarly, prescriptive resources are containers for accepted language standards at a given point in time, which explains the perpetual production of new editions. Finally, prescriptive resources can also be paradoxical, because even if they are intended to describe the language, they are often structured (and used) prescriptively.

The similarity between lists and prescriptive discourse makes the genre's use of lists natural, while also suggesting the need for further investigation on the matter. This study focused on the kinds of lists used in prescriptive discourse. Future research could investigate the use of lists historically in prescriptive discourse, the function of the various lists in different forms of prescriptive discourse, or the effects that different types of prescriptive lists have on language users and their language choices. This study opens the door to further conversation on prescription by listing, suggesting that different kinds of lists in prescriptive discourse may convey different prescriptive messages, and suggesting that, at least in the study of prescriptive discourse, there is value in studying lists.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Prescribed Only Lists

| Resource | Section | Page(s) |
|----------|---|---------|
| Chicago | "Seven Classes of Pronouns" (5.38) | 237 |
| Chicago | "Changes in form of Personal Pronouns" (5.41) | 238 |
| Chicago | "List of Words and the Prepositions Construed with Them" (5.195) | 284–286 |
| Chicago | "All Seven Syntactic Patterns" (5.223) | 295 |
| Chicago | "The Word 'Not'" (5.231, list of contractions at the end of the rule) | 299 |
| Chicago | "Names of Letters" (7.68) | 438 |
| Chicago | "Traditional Period Names" (8.73) | 495 |
| Chicago | "Speeches" (8.76) | 496 |
| Chicago | "Battles and Campaigns" (8.114) | 512 |
| Chicago | "Abbreviations for Canadian Provinces and Territories" (10.28) | 584 |
| Chicago | "SI Base Units" (10.54) | 606 |
| Chicago | "SI Prefixes" (10.56) | 607 |
| Chicago | "Naming Conventions for Chemical Elements" (10.63) | 610–611 |
| Chicago | "US Abbreviations for Length, Area, and Volume" (10.66) | 612 |
| Chicago | "US Abbreviations for Weight and Capacity" (10.67) | 612 |
| Chicago | "Some Common Chinese Names" (11.85) | 652 |
| Fowler | "Abbreviations" (B) | 3 |
| Fowler | "-able, -ible" (7) | 5 |
| Fowler | "-able, -ible" (8) | 6 |
| Fowler | "Cases" (1) | 136 |
| Fowler | "-ce, -cy" | 141 |
| Fowler | "Italian Sounds" | 441 |
| APA | "Preferred Spelling" (6.11, list 1) | 161 |
| APA | "Preferred Spelling" (6.11, list 2) | 162 |
| APA | "Hyphenation" (6.12, figure 6.2) | 164 |
| APA | "Unit of Measurement Abbreviations" (6.27, table 6.4) | 175 |
| APA | "Time Abbreviations" (6.28) | 176 |
| APA | "Latin Abbreviations" | 176 |
| APA | "Statistical Symbols and Abbreviations" (6.44, table 6.5) | 183–186 |

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|--------|---|---------|
| APA | "Abbreviations in References" (9.50) | 306–307 |
| APA | "General Forms" (11.2, table 11.2) | 357 |
| Garner | "-able" (A, both lists) | 5 |
| Garner | "-atable" | 81 |
| Garner | "Correlative Conjunctions" | 225 |
| Garner | "-edly" | 317 |
| Garner | "Hybrids" | 474 |
| Garner | "Irregular Verbs" (A) | 529–531 |
| Garner | "Lay; Lie" (A) | 553 |
| Garner | "Morphological Deformities" | 607 |
| Garner | "Phrasal Adjectives" (G) | 693 |
| Garner | "Plurals" (C) | 703 |
| Garner | "Plurals" (D) | 703 |
| Garner | "Plurals" (D, alien-looking words) | 704 |
| Garner | "Plurals" (G) | 704 |
| Garner | "Postpositive Adjectives" | 716 |
| Garner | "Pronouns" (A) | 734 |
| Garner | "Spelling" (A) | 849 |
| Garner | "Vogue Words" | 949–950 |
| Oxford | "Verbs Ending in <i>-ise</i> or <i>-ize</i> " | 50 |
| Oxford | "Verbs" (The two lists that say "exceptions") | 53 |
| Oxford | "Foreign Plurals" (first two lists) | 56 |
| Oxford | "Compound Words" (section on "compound scientific terms") | 61 |
| Oxford | "Titles of office, rank, and relationship" (list of exceptions) | 102 |
| Oxford | "Words Derived from Proper Nouns" (first two lists) | 105 |
| Oxford | "Books of the Bible" | 147–149 |
| Oxford | "References to Shakespeare" | 150–151 |
| Oxford | "Upper- and Lower-Case Abbreviations" ("Names of days and months...") | 179 |
| Oxford | "Abbreviations" (French) | 212 |
| Oxford | "Abbreviations" (German) | 219 |
| Oxford | "Judges' Designations and Judgments" | 264 |

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|-----------------|---|---------|
| Oxford | "Units" | 268–269 |
| Oxford | "Chemical Elements" (table 14.3) | 284 |
| Oxford | "Titles and Subtitles" | 354 |
| AP | "anti-" | 19 |
| AP | "Currency Conversions" | 73 |
| AP | "Datelines" (both lists) | 77 |
| AP | "in-" (last list) | 151 |
| AP | "Military Titles" (all lists) | 194–195 |
| AP | "State Names" | 282 |
| AP | "-wear" | 317 |
| AP | "Sports Identification Codes" | 424 |
| AP | "Baseball" | 427 |
| AP | "Basketball" | 430 |
| AP | "Football" | 438 |
| AP | "Hockey" | 441 |
| MLA | "Common Academic Abbreviations" | 294 |
| MLA | "Titles of Works" | 295–300 |
| MLA | "Guidelines and Examples for Abbreviating the Title of Any Work" (*Note that this list could also be Prell for some of the descriptions embedded in the list) | 300–301 |
| Ebbitt & Ebbitt | "Adverbs" (1) | 11 |
| Ebbitt & Ebbitt | "Be" | 33 |
| Ebbitt & Ebbitt | "Comparisons of Adjectives and Adverbs" | 65 |
| Ebbitt & Ebbitt | "Conjunctive Adverbs" | 71 |
| Ebbitt & Ebbitt | "Idiom" | 132 |
| Ebbitt & Ebbitt | "Pronouns" | 207 |

Table 2: Proscribed Only Lists

| Resource | Section | Page(s) |
|----------|------------------|---------|
| Garner | "Adjectives" (B) | 20 |
| Garner | "Clichés" | 172 |
| Garner | "Commercialese" | 184 |

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|--------|-----------------|-----|
| Garner | "Double Modals" | 300 |
| Garner | "Nonwords" | 630 |

Table 3: Prescribed with Variants Lists

| Resource | Section | Page(s) |
|----------|---|---------|
| Chicago | "Possessive Versus Attributive Forms for Groups" (7.27) | 425 |
| Chicago | "Abbreviations for Academic Degrees" (10.21) | 580–581 |
| Chicago | "Abbreviations for US States and Territories" (10.27) | 583–584 |
| Chicago | "Scholarly Abbreviations" (10.42) | 590–596 |
| Chicago | "Abbreviations for the Old Testament" (10.45) | 597–598 |
| Chicago | "Abbreviations for the Apocrypha" (10.46) | 598 |
| Chicago | "Abbreviations for the New Testament" (10.47) | 598–599 |
| Chicago | "Miscellaneous Technical Abbreviations" (10.49) | 600–604 |
| Chicago | "Statistical Abbreviations" (10.50) | 604–605 |
| Chicago | "US and General Abbreviations for Time" (10.68) | 613 |
| Chicago | "Commercial Abbreviations—Some Examples" (10.69) | 613–616 |
| Fowler | "-ex, -ix" (2) | 285 |
| Fowler | "Greek g" (3) | 356 |
| Fowler | "-ve(d), -ves" | 857 |
| Garner | "Denizen Labels" (all lists) | 259–262 |
| Oxford | "Plurals of Nouns (-fs and -ves)" | 55 |
| Oxford | "Compound Nouns" | 55 |
| Oxford | "Foreign Plurals" (third list) | 56 |
| Oxford | "Regnal Years" (11.7) | 201 |

Table 4: Prescribed and Proscribed Lists

| Resource | Section | Page(s) |
|----------|---|---------|
| Chicago | "City Names in Languages Other Than English" (14.131) | 814 |
| Fowler | "-able, -ible" (4) | 4 |
| Fowler | "Disability, the Language of" (4) | 220 |

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|-----------------|---|---------|
| Fowler | "-man, man-" (1) | 503 |
| Fowler | "U and Non-U" | 838 |
| APA | "Wordiness and Redundancy" (4.5) | 115 |
| Garner | "Back-Formations" | 90 |
| Garner | "Casualisms" (C) | 148–149 |
| Garner | "Class Distinctions" | 169 |
| Garner | "Vocabulary Markers in AmE" | 170 |
| Garner | "Pronunciation Markers in AmE" | 170 |
| Garner | "Dysphemism" | 313 |
| Garner | "En-, In-" | 330 |
| Garner | "Formal Words" | 406–407 |
| Garner | "False Latin Plurals" | 475–476 |
| Garner | "Inelegant Variation" (*note that this list illustrates a principle) | 509 |
| Garner | "Jargon" | 536 |
| Garner | "Pronunciation of Foreign Names" (1, 3) | 615 |
| Garner | "Plurals" (B) | 703 |
| Garner | "Prepositions" (B) | 723 |
| Garner | "Pronunciation" (B) | 737 |
| Garner | "Word-Swapping" (*Note that proscription and prescription is implied depending on context) | 972 |
| Garner | "Zombie Nouns" | 983 |
| Oxford | "Words Derived from Proper Nouns" (list 3, *note that proscription is implied depending on context) | 105 |
| Oxford | "Place Names" (foreign cities) | 122 |
| Ebbitt & Ebbitt | "Principal Parts of Verbs" (1) | 205–206 |
| Ebbitt & Ebbitt | "Wordiness" (2) | 278 |

Table 5: Prescribed with Variety Lists

| Resource | Section | Page(s) |
|----------|--|---------|
| Fowler | "Doubling of Consonants with Suffixes" (3, list 2) | 235 |
| Fowler | "oe, œ, e" | 565–566 |
| Garner | "Directional Words" (A) | 283 |

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|--------|---|-------------|
| Garner | "Spelling" (B) | 851 |
| Oxford | "Medical Terminology" (Table 14.2) | 281 |
| Oxford | "Spelling Patterns" (Table 21.1) | 411– 412 |
| Oxford | "Spelling Ambiguities" (Table 21.2) | 412– 413 |
| Oxford | "Variants with Common Etymology" (Table 21.4) | 418– 419 |

Table 6: Prescribed Only, Illustrative Lists

| Resource | Section | Page(s) |
|----------|--|-------------|
| Chicago | "Agreement in First and Second Person" (5.143) | 271 |
| Chicago | "Plurals of Noun Coinages" (7.14) | 421 |
| Chicago | "Hyphenation Guide" (7.89) | 446– 457 |
| Chicago | "Names with Particles" (8.5) | 462 |
| Chicago | "Honorifics" (8.33) | 474 |
| Chicago | "Epithets (or Nicknames) and Bynames" (8.34) | 474 |
| Chicago | "Ethnic and National Groups and Associated Adjectives" (8.38) | 476 |
| Chicago | "Regions of the World and National Regions" (8.47) | 479 |
| Chicago | "Popular Place-Names or Epithets" (8.48) | 480 |
| Chicago | "Political Divisions—Capitalization" (8.51) | 481– 482 |
| Chicago | "When to Lowercase Words Derived from Proper Names" (8.61) | 486 |
| Chicago | "Organizations, Parties, Alliances, and so Forth" (8.66) | 490 |
| Chicago | "Descriptive Designations for Periods" (8.72) | 494 |
| Chicago | "Cultural Periods" (8.74, especially the second part) | 495 |
| Chicago | "Historical Events and Programs" (8.75) | 495– 496 |
| Chicago | "Movements and Styles—Capitalization" (8.79) | 497– 498 |
| APA | "Hyphenation" (6.12, figure 6.3) | 164 |
| APA | "Diseases, Disorders, Therapies, Theories, and Related Terms" (6.16) | 166 |
| Garner | "Phrasal Adjectives" | 690– 692 |
| Garner | "Tenses" (A) | 895 |
| Oxford | "-ie and -ei" (3.1.4) | 50 |
| Oxford | "-able and -ible" (3.1.5, all lists) | 50–51 |

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|--------|---|--------|
| Oxford | "Verbs" (3.2.1, all lists except for the two that say "exceptions") | 52–54 |
| Oxford | "Plurals of Nouns" | 54–55 |
| Oxford | Lists for "foreign phrases" | 60–61 |
| Oxford | "Dates and Periods" (5.6) | 99–100 |
| Oxford | "Events" (5.7) | 100 |
| Oxford | "Legislation and Official Documents" (5.8) | 101 |
| Oxford | "Honours and Awards" (5.9) | 101 |
| AP | "Co-" | 54–55 |
| AP | "-down" | 91 |
| AP | "Down-" | 91 |
| AP | "Half-" (all lists) | 135 |
| AP | "-in" | 151 |
| AP | "In-" (first 2 lists) | 151 |
| AP | "Off-, -off" | 217 |
| AP | "-out" | 222 |
| AP | "Out-" | 222 |
| AP | "-over" | 223 |
| AP | "Over-" | 223 |
| AP | "Post-" | 237 |
| AP | "Pre-" | 238 |
| AP | "Super-" | 286 |
| AP | "-up" | 306 |
| AP | "Up-" | 306 |
| MLA | "Hyphens with Prefixes" (2.46) | 31 |
| MLA | "Surnames Used Alone" (2.73–2.81) | 43–48 |

Table 7: Proscribed Only, Illustrative Lists

| Resource | Section | Page(s) |
|----------|-----------------|---------|
| Garner | "Archaisms" (A) | 66 |
| Garner | "Redundancy" | 777 |

