

Help + Infinitive and Help + Object + Infinitive in BrE and AmE

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Abstract The aims of this paper are, first, to see how frequently the forms with *to* and the forms without *to* in help+infinitive and help+object+infinitive are used in current BrE and AmE, and, second, to see how these forms have undergone changes in their occurrences from around 1700 to the present in British English (BrE) and American English (AmE), and, third, to think about the possible causes that brought about the changes. In order to examine the forms above, a total of 45 monthlies and weeklies and five anthologies published in Britain and the United States were looked into.

In current BrE, help+bare inf. appears in about 55 percent of the instances and help+*to*-inf. in about 45 percent of the instances. In current AmE, help+bare inf. occurs in about 92 percent of the instances and help+*to*-inf. in about 8 percent of the instances.

In BrE, help+*to*-inf. was used in most cases from around 1700 to around 1970, from when help+bare inf. began to be used a little more saliently. Around 1993 the bare inf. displaced *to*-inf. and began to be used more frequently. In AmE, help+*to*-inf. was used almost as often as help+bare inf. from around 1700 to around 1900. From around 1910 to around 1930, help+*to*-inf. was used more often than the bare inf. Around 1950 help+bare inf. took the place of help+*to*-inf., and began to be used more frequently.

In current BrE, help+obj. +bare inf. accounts for approximately 67 percent, and help+obj. +*to*-inf. about 33 percent; in current AmE, help+obj. +bare inf. accounts for 94 percent, and help+obj. +*to*-inf. 6 percent. In BrE, help+obj. +*to*-inf. was predominantly used from around 1700 to around 1900, and it is not until around 1930 that the form without *to* began to be used a little more noticeably. Around 1970 the bare inf. took the place of the *to*-inf. and began to be used more often. In AmE, help+obj. +bare inf. was used almost as frequently as, or a little more frequently than, help+obj. +*to*-inf. from around 1700 to around 1970. Around 1970 help+obj. +bare inf. began to be used more noticeably than help+obj. +*to*-inf.

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I

In help+infinitive and help+object+infinitive constructions, the infinitive is either *to*-infinitive or bare infinitive. With respect to the difference in meaning, as *Collins Cobuild English Usage* also says (1992, 292), there seems to be no difference between the two.

- 1 a. This book may help to evaluate China as she really is. (*Spectator* [henceforth *SP*] 10 Apr. 1993: 33.)
- b. Keeping a food record can help identify your strongest cues. (*Reader's Digest* [henceforth *RD*] Feb. 1993: 99.)
- 2 a. This would help the firm to respond swiftly to the vagaries of the energy business. (*Economist* [henceforth *EC*] 1st-7th May 1993: 66.)
- b. Help your child explore his personality and interests to the fullest. (*RD* Feb. 1993: 77.)

Historically, help+*to*-infinitive and help+object+*to*-infinitive developed earlier than help+bare infinitive and help+object+bare infinitive. With help+infinitive, the earliest instance of the *to*-infinitive dates back to the twelfth century and the earliest one of the bare infinitive appeared about a century later, around 1280. The *OED* (1989, 2nd ed., *help* v. 5a) and Visser (1978 3:1353) give the following instances:

- 3 a. c. 1175 Lamb. Hom. 37, To seke gan, and pa deden helpen to buriene.
- b. c. 1280 Southern Passion (EETS) 591, þe floles bede þo þe wise some of hare oyle þere And helpe tende hare lampes.

With help+object+infinitive, the *to*-infinitive developed earlier: its earliest instance dates back to around 1200, while the bare infinitive appeared about 175 years later. Visser (1984 3: 2320) gives the following instances:

- 4 a. c. 1200 Orm. 4110, & all se mikell hallp itt hemm To clennsenn hemm off sinne.
- b. c. 1375 Will. off Palerme 1178, help me haue þe herre hand.

The *OED* (1989, *help* v. 5a) says that help+*to*-infinitive “may ... arise through ellipsis of the object” in help+object+*to*-infinitive. This, however, seems strange, for as we have just seen (3a, 4a), the help+*to*-infinitive form seems to have developed earlier than the help+object+*to*-infinitive form. Moreover, since their first appearances, these *to*-infinitive and bare infinitive

forms have waged a battle for supremacy down into the twentieth century.

The aims of this paper are, first, to examine how frequently these forms are used in current BrE and AmE prose, and, second, to take a brief look at how their occurrences have changed for approximately 300 years, and, third, to clarify the possible causes of the changes. (For the materials examined here, see the list at the end of this paper.)

II

1. Help+infinitive

1. 1 BrE

In order to see the occurrences of help+infinitive in current BrE, in all seven weeklies and two monthlies published in Britain in 1993 were examined. The reasons for my choice of weeklies and monthlies are, first, that they can help to obviate a particular writer's idiosyncracies in their language use because they are written by a variety of people, and, second, that they can reflect changes in society including changes in the language phenomena.

The following are part of the examples of help+to-infinitive and help+bare infinitive that appear in the materials published in Britain in 1993:

That will surely help to break the grip of the party bosses. (*EC* 17th-23rd Apr.: 12.)/ It believes that adopting such measures would help to put a stop to the country's widespread corruption. (*EC* 24th-30th Apr.: 46.)/ A levy on each package in German shops helps to pay for a waste-collection system ... (*EC* 1st-7th May: 62.)/ Patrizia helps to run the Anglo-Italian Club in Parma ... (*SP* 3 Apr.: 14.)/ Vague notions of community have not helped to resolve the crisis. (*SP* 17 Apr.: 5.)/ Ideally, the coming match should help to heal the wounds ... (*SP* 24 Apr.: 52.)/ Tonight she'll be helping to judge dressage at the Olympia International Showjumping Championships ... (*Tatler* [henceforth *Tat*] Apr.: 56.)

A fresh approach and a pugnacious mayor, Ed Koch helped put the city on its feet. (*EC* 17th-23rd Apr.: 36.)/ Recruiting Cambodians to help run the election has been equally popular, and troublesome. (*EC* 24th-30th Apr.: 32.)/ The government said it will help meet some of the cost of damage. (*EC* 1st-7th May: 21.)/ He returned to the BBC to help start the TV service ... (*SP* 3 Apr.: 32.)/ ... a Labour government ... helped starve to death a million-odd Biafrans ... (*SP* 10 Apr.: 77.)/ In 1991, America used the United Nations very efficiently to help defeat Iraq. (*SP* 17 Apr.: 5.)/ Once acknowledged and developed, these will help increase your earning capacity significantly. (*Tat* Apr.: 64.)

Table 1 gives the actual figures of occurrences of help+infinitive in the materials published in Britain in 1993.

Table 1

	Help + <i>to</i> -inf.		Help + bare inf.	
<i>Economist</i> 17th-23rd Apr., 24th-30th Apr., 1st-7th May	22	(Total) 33 (45.2%)	28	(Total) 40 (54.8%)
<i>Spectator</i> 3 Apr., 10 Apr., 17 Apr., 24 Apr.	10		10	
<i>Tatler</i> Mar., Apr.	1		2	

Table 1 shows that in current BrE help+bare infinitive occurs approximately 10 percent more frequently than help+*to*-infinitive.

1. 2 AmE

Two weeklies and seven monthlies published in the United States in 1993 were examined to see the current uses of help+infinitive there.

Here are part of the instances:

When time gets tough, it helps to remember you have a right to play as well as work. (*RD* Feb.: 82.)/Meredith's mother, Jane, believes letting children have input in making decisions helps to build self-confidence. (*RD* Mar.: 70.) /And this helped to form my impression. (*Harper's Magazine* [henceforth *Harp*] Apr.: 887.)/Moreover, Japan has a vital interest in helping to foster China's stability. (*Newsweek* [henceforth *NW*] 26 Apr.: 41.) /I do what she "tells" me to do — feed, burp, change, amuse ... help to sleep, reassure — without consciously choosing it. (*Harp* May: 38.)

The synthetic hormone tamoxifen ... helps prevent breast-cancer recurrence. (*RD* Mar.: 52.)/Nothing will help rescue the Russian economy until the state brings hyperinflation under control. (*TIME* 12 Apr.: 20.)/Language rights may help satisfy a minority, though they need not be limited. (*Harp* Apr.: 26.)/We moved to the cities to help build up heavy industry. (*Harp* May: 15.)/Aides estimate that they help stage at least one major media event a day, sometimes more. (*New Yorker* [henceforth *NY*] 5 Apr.: 44.)/The sale would help solve a cashflow problem. (*NW* 26 Apr.: 40.)

Table 2 gives the occurrences of help+infinitive in AmE in 1993.

Table 2

	Help+ <i>to</i> -inf.		Help+bare inf.	
<i>Reader's Dig.</i> Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr.	2	(Total) 5 (7.9%)	32	(Total) 58 (92.1%)
<i>Harper's Mag.</i> Apr., May	2		6	
<i>New Yorker</i> 9 Apr.	0		2	
<i>TIME</i> 12 Apr.	0		12	
<i>Newsweek</i> 26 Apr.	1		6	

Table 2 implies that in AmE help + bare infinitive is overwhelmingly used now. There are a surprisingly few occurrences of help + *to*-infinitive. If we compare Table 2 with Table 1, we will notice a fact of interest: although in BrE help + bare infinitive form is used in a fairly large proportion, it still falls far short of the number of instances in AmE. BrE shows itself more conservative than AmE in this respect.

2. Help+object+infinitive

2.1 BrE

In examining the occurrences of help + object + inf. in BrE in 1993, the same materials as in the case of help + inf. were used.

The following are part of the instances in BrE:

Tom Oliver... says this kind of industrial activity ... is helping the parcels business to grow at an annual rate of 25 percent. (*EC* 17th-23rd Apr.: 74.) /Opinion polls suggest that the issue of whether doctors should be allowed to help their patients to die is poised to rival abortion ... (*SP* 24 Apr.: 20.) /Jupiter helps you to gain some positive insight into your hidden characteristics ... (*Tat* Mar.: 69.) /Her English decorating background ... helped her to see the boundless possibilities of Trasierra. (*Tat* Apr.: 124.)

Lady Thatcher ... called for the West to arm Bosnia's Muslims to help them resist Serb aggression. (*EC* 17th-23rd Apr.: 62.) /Every executive director's office at the World Bank has a compensation expert, to help staff manipulate the intricate pay rules. (*EC* 24th-30th Apr.: 72.) /Later ... Dr Kevorkian was contacted by people who wanted him to help them commit suicide. (*SP* 24 Apr.: 20.) /A determined approach will help you succeed ... (*Tat* Mar.: 69.) /It helped him get off the charge, but he never bothered to finish it. (*Tat* Apr.: 40.)

Table 3 shows the actual number of occurrences of help + object + inf. in BrE in 1993.

Table 3

	Help + obj. + <i>to</i> -inf.		Help + obj. + bare inf.	
<i>Economist</i> 17th-23rd Apr., 24th-30th Apr., 1st-7th May.	6	(Total) 13 (33.3%)	14	(Total) 26 (66.7%)
<i>Spectator</i> 3 Apr., 10 Apr., 17 Apr., 24 Apr.	2		3	
<i>Tatler</i> Mar., Apr.	5		9	

It is obvious from Table 3 that as in the case of help + inf., the form without *to* is more often used than the form with *to*: in current BrE help + object + bare inf. appears twice as frequently as help + object + *to*-inf.

2. 2 AmE

In AmE the same materials were used as those listed in Table 2. The following are part of the instances of help + obj. + inf. in AmE:

Being an epidemiologist no doubt helped him to make the final diagnosis. (*RD* Jan.: 38.)/Helping someone to overcome shyness can do wonders for your own self-confidence. (*RD* Jan.: 97.)/It is the type of faith that has helped me to realize that opportunity always exists. (*RD* Mar.: 16.)

Avoiding eye contact will help you send a nonthreatening message. (*RD* Jan.: 77.)/This helps them conserve water by reducing sweat. (*RD* Feb.: 47.)/Will you help me run for president of freshman class? (*RD* Mar.: 66.)/These guidelines should help you prepare illustrations that will edify and delight our readers. (*Harp* Apr.: 20.)/This refers to a comedy magic routine that Jay helped Martin develop a few years ago ... (*NY* 5 Apr.: 72.)/There is popular opposition to an aid program that would help the U.S. compete. (*TIME* 12 Apr.: 19.)/Talking about an event in a narrative way helps a child remember it. (*NW* 29 Apr.: 50.)

Table 4 gives the actual figures of help + obj. + inf. in AmE in 1993.

From Table 4 it can be seen that in AmE help + obj. + bare inf. occurs about 16 times more frequently than help + obj. + *to*-inf. If one compares Table 4 with Table 3, one can easily see that although in BrE the bare inf. form is used to a considerable degree, it is not used as frequently as that in AmE yet.

Table 4

	Help +obj. +to-inf.		Help+obj. +bare inf.	
<i>Reader's Dig.</i> Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., May	3	(Total) 3 (6%)	36	(Total) 47 (94%)
<i>Harper's Mag.</i> Apr., May	0		4	
<i>New Yorker</i> 9 Apr.	0		3	
<i>TIME</i> 12 Apr.	0		3	
<i>Newsweek</i> 26th Apr.	0		1	

III

The results we have seen so far came from the examination of the materials published in Britain and the United States in 1993. Next we want to see how the occurrences of the four forms have changed from around 1700 to 1900.

1. Help+inf.

1. 1 BrE

Here we would like to see the changes from around 1700 to around 1900 in BrE. The materials chosen are the anthologies of major writers in English literature.

Here are part of the examples of help+to-inf. in BrE:

Then was he once jealous of poor John, though he knew John was his own creature, and helped to deceive me. (Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler* (1750), *Macmillan Anthologies of English Literature* [henceforth *Anthol*] 3 (London: Macmillan, 1989) 324.)/...it helped to intensify the deep silence. (William Wilkie Collins, *The Women in White* (1859), *Anthol* 4 (1989): 525.)/... helping to concentrate her feelings. (George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1869), *Anthol* 4 (1989): 407.)

In the materials examined, there were only eight instances of help+to-inf. in this period, and there were no instances of the bare inf. at all. Although it cannot be said so conclusively, help+to-inf. seems to have been predominantly used for these 200 years. However, as shown above, it is a fact that help+bare inf. is used in a fairly large proportion in BrE now. Accordingly, in order to see from which period in the twentieth century the bare inf. came to be used most saliently in BrE, 15 weeklies and monthlies published in Britain from 1910 to 1980 were examined. This period was further divided into five

so that the circumstances of the language change could be seen more distinctly: 1910, 1930, 1950, 1970 and 1980. The last year 1980 was merely added to examine the language change as clearly as possible. The weeklies and monthlies are grouped into five and each group has three weeklies or monthlies.

The following are part of the instances from 1910 to 1980:

He had helped to make it more so. (*English Review* (hereafter *ER*) Jan. 1910: 310.)/They were hurried up to help to stem the rush of oncoming Germans. (*Blackwood's Mag.* (hereafter *BM*) Jan. 1930: 44.)/These influences had helped to update the deficits in the six months preceding devaluation. (*EC* Jan. 1950: 33.)/It could help to put it back in the financial doldrums of a couple of years ago. (*EC* 3 Jan. 1970: 48.)

... and there again ... a crest to help break the outline. (*ER* Jan. 1910: 231.) /... the economics minister, whose popularity in the country helped win the Socialists the election. (*SP* 3 Jan. 1970: 6.)/This might help show just how cells are transformed into cancerous ones. (*EC* Jan. 1980: 58.)

Table 5 gives the actual figures from 1910 to 1980. The figures in 1993 were given from Table 1 just for comparison.

Table 5

	Help +to-inf.	Help+bare inf.
<i>Economist</i> 1 Jan. 1910 <i>Blackwood's Mag.</i> Jan. 1910 <i>English Review</i> Jan. 1910	7	1
<i>Economist</i> 4 Jan. 1930 <i>Blackwood's Mag.</i> Jan. 1930 <i>English Review</i> Jan. 1930	7	0
<i>Economist</i> 7 Jan. 1950 <i>Blackwood's Mag.</i> Jan. 1950 <i>Times Lit. Sup.</i> 6 Jan. 1950	3	0
<i>Economist</i> 3 Jan. 1970 <i>Spectator</i> 3 Jan. 1970 <i>Listener</i> 8 Jan. 1970	11	2
<i>Economist</i> 5 Jan. 1980 <i>Spectator</i> 5 Jan. 1980 <i>Listener</i> 3 Jan. 1980	6	5
(1993)	(33)	(40)

Table 5 indicates that in BrE help+*to*-inf. was in more use from 1910 to 1980. However, from around 1970 the bare inf. comes to appear somewhat saliently and at length it supersedes *to*-inf. between 1980 and 1993.

1. 2 AmE

As in the case of BrE, the anthologies of the works of major figures in American history from around 1700 to 1900 were looked into.

The following are part of the instances:

... cattle and men help to keep each other warm and dwell in warm meanness. (Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), *Concise Anthologies of American Literature* [henceforth CA] (New York: Macmillan, 1974) 188.) /I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. (Abraham Lincoln, "Letter to Horace Greeley" (1862), CA: 889.) /I would willingly help to defray the expenses. (Herman Melville, "Bartleby" (1853), CA: 602.)

Each copyist is bound to help examine his copy. (Herman Melville, "Bartleby" (1853) CA: 596.) /I should like to have them order me out to help put down an insurrection of the slaves ... (Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience" (1849), CA: 689.) /Tom Sawyer ... was actually going to help steal that nigger out of slavery. (Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), CA: 1214.)

In AmE there were a total of 17 instances of help+*to*-inf. between 1700 and 1900 as against 18 instances of help+bare inf. This shows that at least until around 1900 the two forms were used approximately in much the same proportion.

Next, we want to see what happened to these two forms after 1900. In order to examine this, four groups of weeklies or monthlies published in the United States in each of the following years were looked into: 1910, 1930, 1950 and 1970.

The following are part of the instances:

It was Schubert who helped to lead back to artistic sanity. (*Atlantic Monthly* [henceforth AT] Jan. 1910: 48.) /I ... helped to carry away twenty gallons ... (*American Mercury* [henceforth AM] Jan. 1930: 97.) /These self-spoken words help to do away with it. (*Harp* Jan. 1950: 110.) /Both of them help to strengthen conservative forces. (*Harp* Jan. 1970: 34.)

You can help cheer Clarence up. (*Harp* Jan. 1910: 210.) /Does it really help distribute securities? (*Harp* Jan. 1930: 207.) /Aluminium-painted roofs ...

helped ward off the scorching desert heat. (NW 3 July 1950:22.)/The sheriff helped put out the fire. (AT Jan. 1970: 41.)

Table 6 shows the figures of the two forms in AmE from 1910 to 1970. The figures of 1993 were added from Table 2 just for comparison.

Table 6

	Help + <i>to</i> -inf.	Help+bare inf.
<i>Harper's Mag.</i> Jan. 1910 <i>Atlantic Mon.</i> Jan. 1910 <i>Atlantic Mon.</i> Feb. 1910	4	2
<i>Harper's Mag.</i> Jan. 1930 <i>Atlantic Mon.</i> Jan. 1930 <i>Amer. Mercury</i> Jan. 1930	10	5
<i>Harper's Mag.</i> Jan. 1950 <i>Atlantic Mon.</i> Jan. 1950 <i>Newsweek</i> 3 July 1950	6	10
<i>Harper's Mag.</i> Jan. 1970 <i>Atlantic Mon.</i> Jan. 1970 <i>Newsweek</i> 5 Jan. 1970	10	15
(1993)	(5)	(58)

Table 6 shows that in AmE the bare inf. is not the only form that has been used consistently down to the present, and it was only between 1930 and 1950 that help +bare inf. began to displace the *to*-inf. Compared with that in BrE, this displacement happened much earlier in AmE.

2. Help+object+inf.

2. 1 BrE

In order to take a look at the occurrences of the two forms, the same materials were used as in the case of help+inf.

The following are part of the instances:

"Come; come;" returned Carathis, "be not so squeamish; but help me to arrange every thing properly". (William Beckford, *Vathek* (1786), *Anthol* 3: 560.)/But certainly a young man ... might help him to do good in a better way. (George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1869), *Anthol* 4: 466.)

There were only three instances of help +obj. +*to*-inf. in BrE between 1700 and 1900, and as in the case of help+bare inf., there were no instances of help+obj.+bare inf. in this period.

Next, in order to examine the actual occurrences of these forms between 1910 and 1980, the same materials as shown in Table 5 were used.

The following are part of the instances:

But help me take this hatch-cover off and let's look down her hold. (*BM* Jan. 1930: 51.)/His Department of Commerce is ... doing more to help American businessmen compete overseas.... (*EC* 3 Jan. 1970: 33.)/The Seventies was a decade when being ugly ... helped a person fit in. (*SP* 5 Jan. 1980: 8.)

Table 7 shows the figures of the two forms in BrE from 1910 to 1980. The figures in 1993 were added from Table 3 just for comparison.

Table 7

	Help+obj. + <i>to</i> -inf.	Help+obj. +bare inf.
1910	6	0
1930	0	2
1950	1	0
1970	0	2
1980	2	5
(1993)	(13)	(26)

Table 7 shows that from around 1970 the bare inf. form begins to appear consistently and around 1993 the bare inf. form comes to be used twice as frequently as the *to*-inf. form.

2. 2 AmE

The same materials as in help+inf. were used in examining the two forms in AmE.

The following are part of the examples:

Lord help me to learn, and be a sum and shield to me. (Samuel Sewall, "The Diary" (1717), *CA*: 116.)/Here he first helped him to take an attitude in which he could appease his burning thirst. (James Fenimore Cooper, *The Deerslayer* (1841), *CA*: 332.)/... symbol ... that helped him to accomplish work. (Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (1900), *CA*: 1884.)

... the venerable justice didn't ... tell him to help his wife do household labors. (Mark Twain, "The Story of the Good Little Boy" (1865), *CA*: 1105.)/But

Tom said he would let me help him do it. (Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), CA: 1269.)

Altogether there were 10 instances of help+obj.+to-inf. between 1700 and 1900 as against 12 instances of the bare inf. These two forms seem to have been used either in much the same proportion or with a little emphasis on the bare inf. in this period.

Next, in order to see the development of these forms in the twentieth century, the same materials as shown above were used.

Here are part of the instances:

The advantage might have been more obvious had Mr. Haines not spent most of his time ... helping them to forget his presence in the house. (*Harp* Jan. 1910: 278.)/Help this man to have faith in you! (*AM* Jan. 1930: 66.)/ Lower operating and construction ... costs ... have helped them to understand American lives... (*NW* 3 Jan. 1950: 28.)/We ask finally that you help us to help our country. (*AM* Jan. 1970: 40.)

I'm going to help you arrange the trip. (*Harp* Jan. 1910: 210.)/...he helped him get a job. (*AM* Jan. 1930: 49.)/She at once set to work to help her tired master get rid of the interloper. (*Harp* Jan. 1950: 77.)/Such measures ... will help Meharry overcome a rather indifferent reputation. (*NW* 5 Jan. 1970: 32.)

Table 8 shows the figures of the occurrences of these forms in AmE.

Table 8

	Help+obj.+to-inf.	Help+obj.+bare inf.
1910	4	7
1930	5	5
1950	3	3
1970	4	9
(1993)	(3)	(47)

From Table 8 it can be assumed that in AmE the bare inf. form was used in much the same proportion as the *to*-inf. form until around 1950. From around 1970 the bare inf. form begins to appear more frequently and this form finally supersedes the *to*-inf. form.

IV

As shown above, both in current BrE and AmE the bare inf. forms occur more frequently than the forms with *to* in help+inf. and help+obj. +inf. constructions. It may be generally believed that in BrE help+*to*-inf. and help+obj. +*to*-inf. are used more frequently than the forms without *to*. Yet it is quite clear from above that this is entirely wrong. It is true that in today's BrE, the *to*-inf. forms are still largely used, but, in fact, there are more instances of the bare inf. forms. It can be said that the bare inf. forms are now almost accepted usages even in BrE. In connection with this, there is an explanation of much interest in the two *OEDs*. The first edition of the *OED* (1933, *help* v. 5a) says that the omitted forms of help+inf. and help+obj. +inf. are "*dial. or vulgar*" but the more recent *OED* (1989, *help* v. 5a) says that the bare inf. forms are "now common *colloq.*" forms. This change of explanation after more than 50 years means that the bare inf. forms are now really accepted in BrE.

Then why in current English has the *to* come to be omitted so often? There seem to be four reasons for this.

First, in order that a word might come to be omitted so often, generally the words that contain it need to be frequently used in everyday life, for a word that does not have much significance becomes a hindrance and tends to be omitted in everyday use. The *to* in help+inf. and help+obj. +inf. seems to be of such a sort. However, frequent use alone is not enough to explain the omission of a word. With help+inf. and help+obj. +inf., as shown above, the *to* began to be omitted already in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, which, together with the fact that these forms were well used in everyday life, furthered the tendency to omit the *to*.

Second, the omission of *to* is related to the current of the times. If the magazines and the media and all the people are omitting *to*, it becomes natural to omit *to*.

Third, the omission of *to* in help+inf. was probably influenced by the recent tendency to omit the *to* in such constructions: go+bare inf. (*Go see him, etc.*) and is, was, be+bare inf. (*All I can do is take notes, etc.*)¹

With help+obj. +inf., the omission of *to* was furthered by the fact the in ModE the bare inf. form is used in the following constructions: hear (see, feel, etc.)+obj. +inf. and make (let, bid, etc.)+obj. +inf.² It is exceedingly diffi-

cult to determine which of these two constructions was more influential. Probably both of them were.³

Fourth, in AmE the omission of *to* has much to do with the character of the Americans, that is, their strong inclination to prefer informal and simplified forms. And, as Foster also says (1968, 204), the recent, frequent occurrences of the forms without *to* in BrE are due to an American influence:

Some notable changes of this sort are once again products of American idiom, a typical example being seen in the omission of the preposition of "to" after *help*....But only in the nineteen-thirties and early 'forties did the construction really make headway in Britain. Its acceptance into the standard language was very rapid and J. Hubert Jagger...commented on "the speed with which the American habit of omitting *to* after *help* has invaded Britain". But in spite of this speedy acceptance of the new form the old one is still well entrenched and the two rivals seem destined to battle it out for some time to come.

Foster says that in the 1930s and early '40s the bare form made an inroad upon Britain, but unfortunately it could not be corroborated here in my study: although in my survey there were seven instances of *help* + *to*-inf. in 1930 in BrE, there were no instances of *help* + bare inf. in the same year.

Notes

1. The following are some of the other instances of *be*+bare inf.:

The last thing you want to do is run. (*RD* Mar.1993: 76.)/ All I had to do was make a statement criticizing the United States. (*RD* Mar. 1993: 134.)/ The best he can do is watch the skiers from his wheelchair. (*RD* Apr. 1993: 126.)/ The only way to do that is sit on your hands and defiantly do nothing. (*SP* 10 Apr. 1993: 13.)/ The last thing he wanted to do was live. (*SP* 24 Apr. 1993: 18.)

In the materials I examined (the materials are the same as those listed in Table 1 (BrE) and Table 2 (AmE)), in AmE in 1993 there were 10 instances of *be*+bare inf. (10.3 percent) and there were 87 instances of *be*+*to*-inf. (89.7 percent). In BrE in 1993 there were only three instances of *be*+bare inf. (3.2 percent) and there were 90 instances of *be*+*to*-inf. (96.8 percent). We can see from this that the omission of *to* is more prevalent in AmE in this case, too.

2. Strictly speaking, these two constructions are not the same. *I saw him run* can be paraphrased as *I saw that he ran*, but *I made him run* cannot be paraphrased as *I made that he ran*. It can be paraphrased as *I made him that he ran*. Visser says that these construc-

tions with *that*-clauses really existed side by side with the bare inf. forms in OE, and that in some cases they were more common than the inf. without *to*. (See F. Th. Visser, *An Historical Syntax of the English Language*, 3 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973) 2236-40.) Help + obj. + bare inf. does not have the same structure as these two, but it is highly probable that these forms influenced help + obj. + inf.

3. Although in current English, the *to*-inf. is not used in hear, (make, etc.) + obj. + inf., it was commonly used in the earlier stages of English. (See Visser 3: 2250-65). The *to*-inf. was later replaced by the bare inf. It is noteworthy that, just as in the case of the verbs of perception and causing, the *to* in help + obj. + inf. is going to be totally omitted.

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