

# Infinitival Complementation Choices with *Help* in Present-Day American and British English

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The objective of this study is to determine the factors that affect the choice of infinitival clausal (*to*-infinitive or bare infinitive (BI)) complements with the verb *help* in Present-Day English. The data are retrieved from the British National Corpus Baby (BNC Baby) for British English and the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) for the period 1995–2000. The factors analysed are: The Distance Principle, the Complexity Principle and the avoidance of identity (Rohdenburg 1996, 2003; Mair 2002; McEnery and Xiao 2005; Schlüter 2005; Lohmann 2011). Distance is analysed through the number of words of the subject and of the material intervening between the main verb and the infinitival clause (Haiman 1983: 782-83). As regards the Complexity Principle, the scenarios investigated are: presence/absence of an intervening noun phrase between *help* and the infinitival clause, mood and tense of the main verbal group. Avoidance of identity is investigated through *horror aequi* and Rhythmic Alternation. In addition, text-type distribution, subject animacy and the semantic-pragmatic characterization of the constructions are also analysed here. The influence exerted by these factors is determined by a logistic regression analysis.

The findings show, first, a significant increase of BI complements in American English. Second, the presence/absence of an intervening NP strongly determines complementation choices: the BI pattern is favoured by the occurrence of a noun phrase between *help* and the complement clause. Third, as for distance and complexity, the *to*-infinitive is attested in higher proportions when the number of the intervening words between *help* and the infinitival clause increases. Fourth, in accordance with *horror aequi*, BI complements are preferred when *help* is preceded by a *to*-infinitive. Fifth, the high frequency of *help* plus BI in informal registers evinces the success and textual extension of this complementation choice. Sixth, the data do not give support to Rhythmic Alternation. And, finally, the model determines that neither subject animacy nor the semantic-pragmatic characterization of the constructions are statistically significant.

## References

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