Propositions

1. Linguistic norms and the study of such norms are approached differently by the three key players – prescriptivists, descriptivists and the general public – in the usage debate.

2. With Mittins et al.’s *Attitudes to English Usage* (1970) being the only identifiable study on usage problems in Standard English published in the UK, the scientific study of usage attitudes seems to have attracted less attention in Great Britain than in the United States of America.

3. An overview of previous usage attitude studies shows a gradual move towards the sociolinguistic investigation of usage attitudes and a shift away from the attitudes of language experts towards including lay people’s attitudes.

4. Usage attitudes show a sociolinguistic stratification according to age, gender and nativeness for a number of usage problems (e.g. *data are*) but not for all such problems.

5. What kind of attitudes are elicited, i.e. subconsciously or consciously offered attitudes, depends greatly on the technique applied. Although it is important to be aware of this difference, consciously offered attitudes should not be discarded as they provide an insight into norms and conventions that are widely agreed upon in a speech community.

6. A connection between educational policies and the rise of proscriptions against usage problems could be identified as beginning in the 1980s.

7. The application of a mixed-methods approach towards the study of usage and language attitudes can contribute to a better understanding of what attitudes are and how they are socially stratified within a speech community.

8. Obtaining a representative sample of a speech community is crucial for a sociolinguistic analysis, but is difficult to achieve.

9. The interplay between accent and language use calls for a detailed experimental investigation.

10. While folk linguistics has often been sidelined in usage attitude studies, the study of lay people’s attitudes towards usage provides insights into how language is understood, shaped and used by the speakers of a speech community.

11. Double negatives are still considered a big no-no, while split infinitives seem to boldly become more acceptable.

12. Believe it or not: studying usage attitudes is genuine research.