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Shall and *shan't* in contemporary English – a case of functional condensation*

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1. Introduction

This article deals with the gradual deconstruction and eventual loss of morphosyntactic constructions from a Construction Grammar point of view. The exemplary case study is the development of *shall* and its related forms *shall not* and *shan't*. This article offers new ideas insofar as it particularly focuses on the special role of the latter two forms, which have often been neglected in previous studies. Moreover, while the phenomenon of erosion and loss is not new in historical linguistics and language change theory, the present article tries to evaluate the advantages of couching it in a Construction Grammar framework. On the basis of empirical data it will be shown that *shall* and its corresponding forms are no longer used productively[1] in contemporary English. It will be suggested that in the case of such deconstruction and eventual loss, constructions are often not simply eliminated and dropped from the constructional inventory; rather, they are gradually reduced in their paradigmatic forms and functions. This process can be characterized as the functional condensation of a construction. In the case of *shall, shall not* and *shan't* this process also interacts in a complex way with extralinguistic factors such as folk linguistic ideas, stylistic stigmatization and prescriptivism.

2. *Will* and *shall*: Prescriptive and descriptive perspectives

In the following, we will first look at some prescriptive approaches, both past and present, to the "correct" use of *shall* and *will* and their corresponding negative forms *will not, won't* and *shall not, shan't*.[2] After that, we will turn to actual language use, and describe, on the basis of empirical data culled from major corpora of contemporary British and American English, the actual distribution and frequency of these elements.

2.1. The prescriptive perspective

"The 'correct' use of *shall* and *will* has long confused English speakers. Codified by eighteenth-century prescriptivists, rules for the use of these auxiliaries – rightly or wrongly – have continued to appear in modern handbooks and grammars of the English language" (Arnovick 1997: 135). In contemporary English both *will* and *shall* can be used for the expression of futurity. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 195) point out that "there is a well-known prescriptive rule that treats *shall* and *will* as complementary" and that, according to this rule, *shall* is used for futurity in the first person, whereas the second and third person take *will.* Some advocates of this rule (in more or less strong forms) include *The Oxford Dictionary and Usage Guide to the English Language* (1995), Murphy's *English Grammar in Use* (1994: 44), Alexander's *Longman English Grammar Practice for Intermediate Students* (1990: 134), the notorious Fowler's *Modern English Usage* (1983), *s.v. shall*, and the recent *Cambridge Grammar of English* (2006: 649, 880). Statements range from clear and simple rules to semi-descriptive rules couched in variationist pep-talk: "When we are referring to the future, we use *will* with all persons ... but in British English, we ***often*** use *shall* with *I/we* .... Negative short forms are: *'ll not*, *won't* (= will not) or *shan't* (= shall not) .... In American English, *shall* and *shan't* with future reference are rare" (Alexander 1990: 134, emphasis added).[3] The history of this prescriptive rule, which dates back at least to the sixteenth century, has been the subject of many publications (e.g. Poutsma 1924: 222; Joos 1968: 161; Facchinetti 2000; Fries 1925; Tieken-Boon van Ostade 1985; Sundby, Bjørge and Haugland 1991: 190–191, 392; Arnovick 1997), so there is no need to rehearse this in greater detail at this point. As with most other modals, *shall* and *will* also have free (i.e. full) and contracted negative forms: *will – will not – won't* and *shall – shall not – shan't.*

Eventually, this means that, from a prescriptive point of view, the use of *shall / shall not / shan't* and *will / will not / won't* is actually quite clear and can even be outlined in two simple matrices (tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. The morphological paradigm of WILL/SHALL

	Positive	Negative full form	Negative contracted/inflected form
WILL	Will	Will not	Won't
SHALL	Shall	Shall not	Shan't

Table 2. WILL/SHALL differentiated by function (in declarative clauses)

	1st person	2nd and 3rd person
WILL	Volition	Prediction
SHALL	Prediction	Command

The "correct" use, according to these rules, is illustrated in examples (1)–(12) below.

(1) *I will give you two thousands dollars worth of silver pesos.* (FROWN) [1st person, volition, *will*[4]]

(2) *I hope I shall see you again quite soon.* (FLOB) [1st person, prediction, *shall*]

(3) *You have [my] word – nothing will go wrong* (FROWN) [3rd person, prediction, *will*]

(4) *Microsoft shall pay Inktomi for all Inktomi's services hereunder relating to the development and delivery of the Derivative Technology as follows*: (http://cobrands.contracts.findlaw.com/agreements/inktomi/microsoftsoftwaredev.html) [3rd person, command, *shall*]

(5) *"We will not say that!" Cameron's voice shouted back.* (BNC, *King Cameron.* Craig, David. Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1991, pp. 15-113.) [1st person, volition, *will not*]

(6) *I won't excuse or explain my conduct.* (BNC, *Authors.* Miller, Karl. Oxford: OUP, 1989, pp. 60–163) [1st person, volition, *won't*]

(7) *"I promise," he told them, "that I shall not fail your trust and that I shall lead the country to free elections."* (BNC, *Guardian,* elect. edn. of 1989. Foreign material) [1st person, prediction, *shall not*]

(8) *We shan't be having Fru Blicher's buffet until well after nine.* (BNC, *Tomorrow.* Taylor, Elizabeth Russell. London: Peter Owen Pubs, 1991, pp. 52–137) [1st person, prediction, *shan't*]

(9) *'As I said earlier this year, there will not be enough of any one crop to give self-sufficiency, [but the contribution this small plot has made to the good budget has ten times repaid the outlay on seeds and materials.]'* (BNC, *Gardeners' World.* London: Redwood Pub., 1991) [3rd person, prediction, *will not*]

(10) *It probably won't get us very far, but you never know, one of them might come up with something.* (BNC, *Part of the furniture.* Falk, Michael. London: Bellew Pub. Ltd, 1991, pp. 1-146) [3rd person, prediction, *won't*]

(11) *Moustaches shall not extend below the vermilion border of the upper lip or the corners of the mouth and may not extend to the side more than one-quarter inch beyond the corners of the mouth* ... (BNC, *An inside job: policing and police culture in Britain.* Young, Malcolm. Oxford: OUP, 1991, pp. 2–106) [3rd person, command, *shall not*]

(12) *But he shan't stay! Make no mistake about it, he shan't stay!* (BNC, *Ruth Appleby.* Rhodes, Elvi. London: Corgi Books, 1992, pp. 109–226) [3rd person, command, *shan't*]

As can be seen in the examples, *shall* indeed signifies a wide range of meanings including prediction and determination/intention on the part of the speaker, mainly with first-person subjects, and permission or prohibition for the hearer (not) to do something, mainly with second- and third-person subjects. Note also that *shall* can express the speaker's wish to certify that something will be the case (e.g. "You shall receive..."). *Will*, on the other hand, can signal volition on the part of the speaker with first-person subjects, and fairly neutral prediction with all other subjects. (For a comprehensive discussion, see, e.g., Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 188–196.)

2.2. The descriptive perspective

In this section we will now turn to actual language use regarding *will, shall* and their corresponding forms. Apparently, modern usage no longer follows the rules and paradigms outlined in section 2.1, and the examples in (1) to (12) are rather the exception than the rule. Examples like (13) where *will* together with a first-person subject can only be interpreted as simple prediction ("I will have to") are in fact the norm.

(13) *I will have office hours next week. unfortunately as of this week i* ***will*** *have to leave a little early, next week probably, by twenty to four.* (MICASE SEM495SU111)

In terms of sheer frequency, *will*, for example, is in general much more common, as table 3 shows.[5] Here we see the number of occurrences of *shall* and *will* in the British National Corpus (BNC[6]) with pronominal subjects (irrespective of their interpretation as markers of volition or prediction[7]).

Table 3. Will and *shall* with pronominal subjects (in declarative clauses) in the BNC, per million words

	I	We	Other	Total
WILL	67.35	79.97	454.02	601.34
SHALL	54.90	50.30	8.87	114.07

As can be seen in table 3, *we will* is the most common combination in the British National Corpus (ca. 80 occurrences per million words), followed by *I will* (ca. 67 occurrences per million words). *Shall* is clearly lagging behind with only 50 (*we shall*) and 55 (*I shall*) occurrences per million words. With all other persons, the result is even clearer: ca. 455 occurrences of *will* clearly outweigh *shall* with only ca. 9 occurrences per million words. This leads to a distribution of about 600 occurrences of *will* versus 114 occurrences of *shall* per million words of running text in total. Also note that with first-person singular pronoun subjects, the difference between *will* and *shall* is actually smallest, with only 67 versus 55 occurrences per million words, respectively. In American English we find yet another situation. Here, according to most grammars, *shall* is used only rarely, if ever, for futurity (cf. Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 195; Carter and McCarthy 2006: 880) and almost exclusively carries permissive and prohibitive meaning. This can be seen in the frequencies of *will* and *shall* with pronominal subjects in the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE[8]) in table 4.

Table 4. Will and *shall* with pronominal subjects (in declarative clauses) in MICASE, per million words

	I	We	Other	Total
WILL	133.63	88.19	297.56	519.38
SHALL	2.77	2.77	0.54	6.08

In table 4 we can see that *will* outweighs *shall* almost 30 times in the first person plural, almost fifty times in the first person singular and more than 500 times in all other subject types. In fact, there is only one occurrence of *shall* with a pronominal subject that is not in the first person, a quotation from the Bible (Gen 3:16) during a lecture, which is given in example (14).[9]

(14) *...um, in in th- Genesis in the Adam and Eve story when God punishes or curses Eve and says um you shall desire your husband and he will um, be your master.* (MICASE, LES605SU080, Women in the Bible Lecture, Speaker 6)

In total, we find ca. 520 occurrences of *will* versus only 6 of *shall* per million words of running text in MICASE. None of the six clearly signals futurity. This is of course partly due to the nature of the corpus. Here we are dealing with academic spoken English only, whereas the BNC offers a much more representative sample of registers and genres. Nevertheless, even in academic spoken US English a much higher frequency of *shall* could be expected if *shall* and *will* were still on par. In fact, the figures given in tables 3 and 4 above clearly show that *shall* is generally less frequent than *will* and practically non-existent in American English academic discourse. A better comparison between British and American English can be made on the basis of FROWN and FLOB.[10] These offer comparable text type differentiation. The results are presented in tables 5 and 6.

Table 5. Will and *shall* with pronominal subjects (in declarative clauses) in FLOB, per million words

	I	We	Other	Total
WILL	58	64	425	547
SHALL	65	61	5	131

Table 6. Will and *shall* with pronominal subjects (in declarative clauses) in FROWN, per million words

	I	We	Other	Total
WILL	77	73	231	381
SHALL	27	28	6	61

Tables 5 and 6, derived from comparable corpora, essentially confirm what has been said before. In both varieties, *shall* and *will* are not on a par. In terms of sheer frequency, *will* is about five times more common than *shall*. The clearest differences, however, appear in the context of first-person subjects. This is also where the most surprising results can be found. In British English (FLOB), *shall* is still used frequently here, in fact even more often than *will*. In American English (FROWN), *will* is about three times more common in this context. How can this be explained? It can be argued that this difference is partly due to the fact that FLOB is comparatively small compared to the BNC, and that it only contains written genres, which, of course, has some bearing on the forms that are used. If *shall* is actually associated with formal, written genres then these results are to be expected. FLOB only contains written genres and thus shows a higher proportion of *shall* than the BNC, which also contains spoken, informal genres, which have a higher proportion of *will*. This is also confirmed by the general distribution of the forms, which is different for the two corpora. *Shall* is generally more common in FLOB than in the BNC. The bottom line thus remains. There are clear, discernible differences between BrE and AmE regarding the use of *will* and *shall*. BrE has a much higher proportion of the latter with first-person subjects, especially in the singular.

2.2.1. *A historical excursus*

The development and distribution of *will* and *shall* was also the topic of Fries's (1925) investigation. Here it was shown on the basis of data from American and English plays that the proportion of *will* and *shall* with first-person subjects remained almost stable until the early twentieth century (at a level of ca. 8:2, see figure 1), while there was a clear split with a dramatic increase of *will* with second-person subjects beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century (see figure 2), and with third-person subjects beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century (see figure 3).

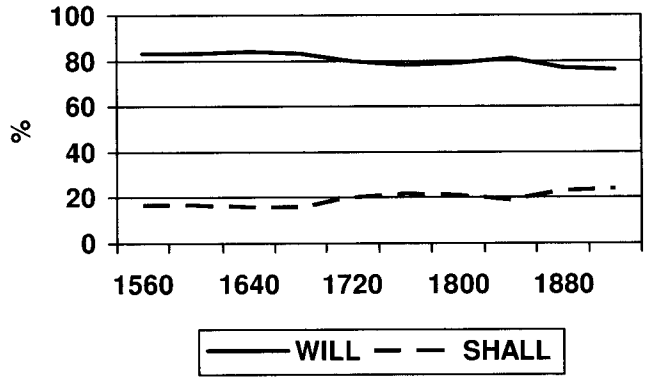

Figure 1. Shall and *will* (in %) in English and American plays (1560–c.1915), first-person subjects (Fries 1925: 995)[11]

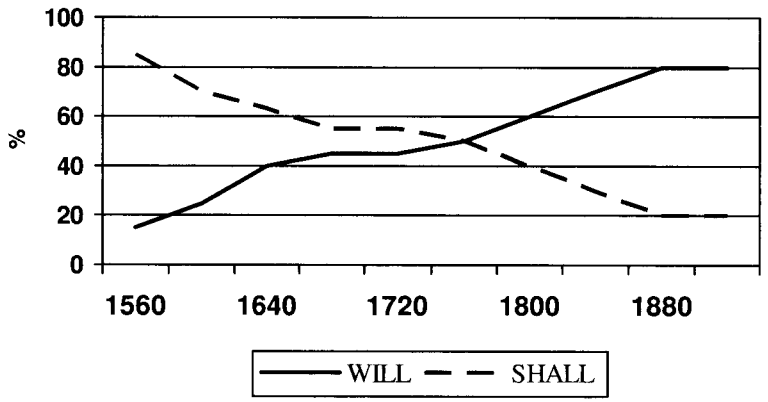

Figure 2. *Shall* and *will* (in %) in English and American plays (1560–c.1915), second-person subjects (Fries 1925: 996)

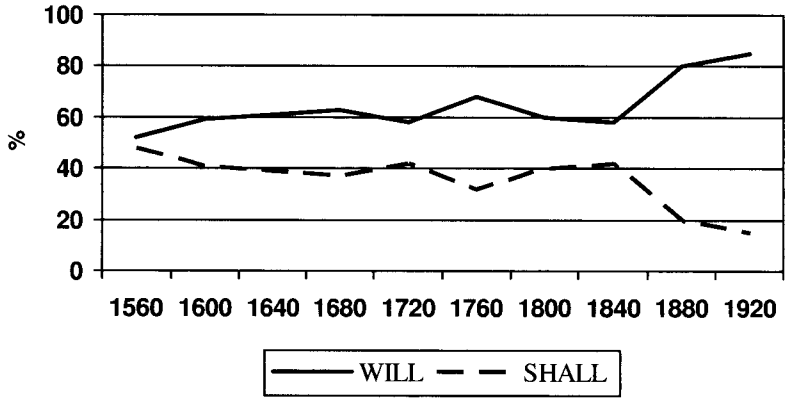

Figure 3. *Shall* and *will* (in %) in English and American plays (1560–c.1915), third-person subjects (Fries 1925: 997)

How do Fries's findings relate to the present-day situation as it was described above? On the basis of the data presented in figures 1–3 it can be concluded that the present-day situation is actually the third step in a multiple level process that seems to have begun with second-person subjects. Here we see the earliest differentiation and the beginning erosion of *shall*. As a second step, we see the reduction of *shall* with third-person subjects, about one hundred years later. According to Fries, first-person subjects retained a *shall/will* ratio of about 1:4 until about 1915. This can, of course, be explained by the fact that with first-person subjects *shall* is very often used in interrogative contexts: *shall I/we*? Compensation strategies for this function – apart from *should* – seem to be particularly complicated (see section 3.4. below). Interestingly, the data presented in tables 3 and 4 above show different results for contemporary English. The BNC has a ratio with first-person subjects of about 5:7, the MICASE of about 1:37. In other words: in contemporary mixed genres we find a higher frequency of *shall* than in early twentieth-century drama; in contemporary academic spoken discourse we find a much lower proportion of *shall*. These differences could certainly be due to genre or register factors. Also note that tables 3 and 4 exclusively show occurrences in main clauses with pronoun subjects. So the truth probably lies somewhere in between. In contemporary informal spoken American English we can expect a very low frequency of future *shall* and very few occurrences of *shall* with deontic (i.e. permissive/prohibitive) readings. This is, of course, due to register factors. On the other hand, a mixed register/genre corpus like the BNC also brings with it a frequency of deontic *shall*s that is perhaps higher than the average in a specific genre like drama.

A more recent and more comprehensive study than Fries's is Nesselhauf (2007). She investigates *shall* and *will* and their related forms in a nineteenth-century subcorpus of ARCHER and in a compilation of literary texts (WebFict) from the same period. In both ARCHER and WebFict she finds a modest decrease in *shall* (from about 25% to 20%) at the expense of *will*. At the same time, there is also a remarkable increase in *shall* with first-person singular pronoun subjects in declarative clauses (from 31% to 45%), and a decrease in all other persons, except for first-person plural subjects, which remain more or less stable. Quite interestingly, the increase in *shall* does not happen at the expense of *will* – which remains more or less stable at 33% – but at that of *'ll*, which drops in frequency in this context from 36% to 20%. Roughly the same results can be seen in WebFict, although here we see a drop in frequency of *will* with first person singular subjects, and a more moderate increase in both *shall* (from 30% to 35%) and *'ll* (from 27% to 32%). These findings support the results of the present study in so far, as we see the sharpest decrease in second-person subjects, followed by third-person subjects. First-person subjects tend to retain *shall* for the longest time, and can even show an increase in the nineteenth century. In how far the latter is due to the nature of the corpora investigated and/or influences from prescriptivism remains to be seen.

2.2.2. *Negative forms*

One further complicating factor which has often been overlooked is that, being modal auxiliaries in terms of form, *will* and *shall* can be realized in full and reduced negative form: *will not, shall not, won't* and *shan't.* These, interestingly, again show quite different distributions. While *will not* and *won't* are common, *shall not* and in particular *shan't* are practically non-existent in most functional varieties of both contemporary American and British English. MICASE, for instance, contains 45 occurrences of *will not* per one million words and only 2 of *shall not* versus 196 *won't* and not a single *shan't.* In the BNC we find 108 *will not* per one million words of running text, 12 *shall not*, 154 *won't* and 12 *shan't.* The spoken section of the BNC leads to an interesting shift in proportions: here we find 49 occurrences of *will not* per one million words of running text, only 2 of *shall not*, 553 of *won't* and 14 *shan't.* By way of comparison, FROWN and FLOB give 124 *won't* per one million words, 208 *will not*, 2 *shan't* and 8 *shall not.* These results are summarized in table 7 below.

Table 7. Occurrences of *will not, shall not, won't, shan't* in three major corpora of contemporary English (per million words of running text)

	MICASE	BNC total	BNC spoken	FROWN & FLOB
Will not	45	108	49	208
Shall not	2	12	2	8
Won't	196	154	553	124
Shan't	---	12	14	2

The distribution of the different forms is quite illuminating, but hardly surprising. *Won't* is the preferred form in the spoken corpora, *will not* in the written ones. *Shall not* does exist, but it occurs mostly in the written section and in very special contexts. In MICASE, for example, one *shall not* comes from a quotation of a written text, and two from legal texts that are read out. In the spoken BNC, however, the contexts are more diverse and range from transcripts of legal texts, historical texts and quotations, to religious and literary texts. However, it practically does not occur in informal spoken discourse, even in British English. *Shan't* is again different. It is non-existent in academic spoken US English as represented in MICASE, and it is very rare in FROWN and FLOB. We find some occurrences in the BNC, with a strong bias towards the spoken section, where

fourteen occurrences in one million words of running text can be found. These are distributed across virtually all spoken genres, from political debate through classroom discourse and broadcast to informal conversation. Still, this should not distract us from the fact that even here in spoken English English, *won't* outnumbers *shan't* by almost 40 to 1. This might lead to the idea that *shan't* is actually an artefact of modern prescriptive grammars and that it was never actually used as a regular grammatical form. This, however, is not the case. The UVA (University of Virginia Text Archives) with English literary texts since 1500 contain 1,389 *won't* and a surprising 294 *shan't.*[12] Table 8 lists a few examples.

Table 8. Shan't in literary works of the nineteenth and early twentieth century (based on the UVA database)

Author, Title (Year)	*Shan't*
Anthony Trollope, *Can you Forgive her?* (1845)	34
D. H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers* (1913)	19
Charles Dickens, *Pickwick Papers* (1836)	11
Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811)	3

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) cites example (15), from 1664, as the first written occurrence of *shan't*, next to Dryden's line from 1667, given in (16).

(15) *My life and I sha'nt part* (1664, S. Crossman in Palmer *Bk. Praise* 1865, 167, *OED* s.v. *shall*).

(16) *By this leg but you shan'not* (1667, Dryden *Secret Love,* I, ii, *OED,* s.v. *shall*)

Similarly, Mindt (1992: 232) in his study of mid-twentieth century English and American drama and conversation mentions an unusually high number of occurrences of *shall* and *shan't.* Apparently, *shall* and particularly *shan't* were used productively at one point, albeit mostly in literary discourse. Even in American English literature, a significant number of *shant*s can be found. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) contains a surprising 11 instances. Nesselhauf's recent study (2007) also convincingly shows that both *shall not* and *shan't* are still part of nineteenth-century English. She finds 43 occurrences of *will not,* 20 of *won't,* but only 16 of *shall not* and 5 of *shan't* in her 1800–1849 part of ARCHER, in contrast to 28 *will not,* 29 *won't,* 12 *shall not* and 7 *shan't* in the 1850–1899 part. So there is even a slight increase here. This may be

statistically insignificant, but it shows that *shan't* certainly was part of nineteenth-century English. In her nineteenth-century WebFict corpus Nesselhauf comes to quite surprising results. Both *will not* and *shall not* show a significant decrease in frequency, whereas both *won't* and *shan't* show a significant increase, with the latter rising from 3 occurrences in 1800–1849 to 16 in 1850–1899. Obviously, Nesselhauf's results are in line with those presented here. *Shall* and *shan't* clearly seem to be part of literary style and discourse of the nineteenth and probably also the early twentieth century. The fact that *won't* also gained in frequency hints at the possibility that literary writers at the time deliberately tried to include seemingly "natural" spoken language and "informal" style in their works. However, whether their representation is actually accurate, remains an open question.

So, how can these findings be interpreted? Apparently, neither *shall* nor *shan't* nor its full counterpart *shall not* have completely died out. Both *shall* and *shall not* can be found in specific genres such as legal English, the language of religion and philosophy, and most of all literature. *Shall not* rarely, if ever, occurs in spoken discourse. A non-representative sample study of the BNC shows that *shall* (in a simple search including *shall not*) occurs with the following proportions per million words:

Written Miscellaneous: average 195 per million words
Admin: 1,232
Advert: 82
Biography: 132
Commerce: 341
Email: 42
Essay (school): 184
Essay (university): 53
Hansard: 1,088
Institutional: 155
Instructional: 18
Personal letter: 705
Professional letter: 196

Apparently, *shall* is most common in administrative, legal genres, in commerce and, surprisingly, in personal letters. While the latter remains to be explained, the other functions are confirmed by the findings in Coates's study (1983: 186) which shows that 77 occurrences (34%) of *shall* in the (written) Lancaster Corpus (N=225) are used with second- and third-person subjects in written "quasi legal contexts", signalling obligation. In the spoken Survey Corpus, only 4 occurrences (2%) were used in the same function. The fact that in these functions *shall not* (and also *will not*) occur proportionally more frequently is due to the fact that written, formal language still does not allow contracted forms, which are generally considered more informal, spoken forms. However, this leads to an interesting dilemma. *Shall* is generally seen as a very formal, written form, as Joos has already pointed out:

> These nine are all the first-person uses of *shall* in *Trial*, and we have seen that this is even less of a "future" than *will*. This point is likely to be hard to grasp by people who, like Americans generally, have been taught to think that *shall* is a particularly solemn, impressive, and therefore presumably *forceful* word: they are apt to associate it with the proverbial "an Englishman's word is his bond" or with its archaic use in the drafting of documents and ordinances. (Joos 1968: 161)

Thus, *shall* is associated with written, formal genres, where only the full form *shall not* is possible. This in turn means that the contracted form, which is associated – qua being a contracted form – with informal, spoken language, has no place in the linguistic system. This is in fact reflected in the data presented above: *shan't* is practically nowhere to be found, except maybe for certain literary genres and styles.

2.3. Interrogatives

Another particularly interesting problem has not been discussed yet. As modals, *will* and *shall* and all of their forms can also be used in interrogative inversion, as in (17)–(21):

(17) *Mm. A nig-nog! Um Will I get in the er if I sell them back?* (BNC)
(18) *I'll keep you to that. Will it just be the two of us or will your harem be coming along?* (FLOB)
(19) *"Shall I collect the key?" she offered.* (FLOB)
(20) *Shall I still be the Me I've become and know better...?* (FLOB)
(21) *But where shall the master himself go to sleep?* (BNC)

Shall in interrogatives usually asks for the addressee's volition or permission, as in (19) and (20). Example (21) shows that in some cases this

reading might not be very strong, though, since in (21) the question could ask for general future events. *Will* in interrogatives can ask for general future events and state of affairs, as in (17) and (18). With first-person subjects, however, *will* can also be associated with the speaker's volition, resulting in somewhat awkward questions concerning the speaker's own thoughts and wishes. *Will I...?* could then be paraphrased as *Do I wish to...?* The latter is of course highly unusual in daily discourse, and would only be possible in contexts with speakers who do not possess full mental capabilities and free will. Consequently, in English Standard English, *will* with first-person subjects does not allow agentive verbs, since these would underline the (lack of) speaker's will and intention in this context (cf. Coates 1983: 188). Note, however, that *will*-questions with first-person subjects are not completely ruled out, but overall extremely rare; (17) shows an example with a non-agentive verb, which essentially asks for general predictions. In the BNC we only find 9.61 occurrences per million words (41% of which are plural subjects), FROWN only contains one instance (no plural), BROWN has six (66% of which are plural), FLOB shows four (75% plural), and LOB only three (66% plural). MICASE has 5.56 questions with *will* in the first person per million words (70% of which have plural subjects). The unusually high number of plural subjects might be due to the fact that with plural subjects the volitional reading is even further backgrounded and the question rather aims at some general future reading. On the other hand, certain complex phrases seem to be rather fixed, phrasal residues of *shall*. In MICASE, five out of 35 occurrences of *shall* are in the context of "shall we say (.)", another two in the context of "shall we say (?)". Note that the former apparently functions more like a discourse marker than an actual interrogative while the latter still has some interrogative flavour. Three occurrences are in "as we shall see", and three occur in the context of "shall we move on/begin". This means that at least fourteen out of 35, i.e. 40% of the occurrences, are in rather fixed contexts. Carter and McCarthy (2006: 880) note in a similar vein: "AmE does allow *shall* in first-person interrogatives, especially those functioning as suggestions and in **semi-fixed expressions** such as *How shall I say it?*" (my emphasis).

This situation has some important consequences for the linguistic system. If *shall* is disprefered because of its association with formal registers and its lack of negative (contracted) forms, a compensation strategy needs to be developed. Some S-less varieties, like American English, turn to similar modals like *should* (which is also preferred because of its greater modal remoteness), or more complex constructions like *do you want me to V.*

Some other S-less varieties, like Scots for example, actually allow for *will* in first-person interrogatives, even with agentive verbs, as in (22).

(22) SADIE: *Right. Will I fix her somethin?*
MAGGIE: *Sadie's asking if you'd like something to eat, Beth?*
SADIE: *Will I fix her somethin?*
(Janet Paisley, *Refuge* (1997), *Scottish Corpus of Text and Speech*, SCOTS, www.scottishcorpus.ac.uk)

Summing up so far, a brief survey of the Corpus of London Teenage Speech (COLT) shows the distribution of declarative, negative, and interrogative constructions with *will* and *shall* in contemporary English English (table 9).

Table 9. SHALL/WILL in COLT (Corpus of London Teenage Speech)

D(eclarative) Q(uestion) Neg(ation)	Person (P): total (Percentage of plural)	Examples
D: *will*	1st P: 89 (17% plural) 2nd, 3rd P 412	*I will look like I'm scraping my knee...* *My dad will fuck with my head*
D: *shall*	1st P: 15 (20% plural) 2nd, 3rd P: 0	*I shall be getting the, I shall be getting the erm stolen goods, by the end of next week*
Q: 1st person *Will Shall*	8 (13) – (75% plural) 124 (48% plural)	*What will we do in the test?* *Mum! Shall I hit him?*
Neg: *won't*	1st P: 120 (13% plural) 2nd, 3rd P: 209	*I won't be able to have my pizza.* *[belch] cauliflower won't take long.*
Neg: *will not*	1st P: 3 2nd, 3rd P: 2	*I will not express my true feelings for you.* *If you work hard you will not be in that situation.*
Neg: *shan't*	1st P: 1 2nd, 3rd P: 0	*I shan't put the next one in the test I don't think*
Neg:*shall not*	1st P: 0, 2nd, 3rd P: 0	

Table 9 shows that in contemporary spoken English (especially in English English), *shall* still exists, but that it is largely restricted to first-person interrogatives. In simple declarative clauses, *shall* is still possible with first-person subjects, in a proportion roughly similar to that found by Fries (1925). In negative constructions, the full form *shall not* is practically non-existent in informal spoken language (just as *will not*, which shows that this is due to genre conventions). Interestingly, however, the contracted (and technically informal) form *shan't* is also not possible in informal, teenage language, and *won't* is the clearly preferred form here.

3. Functional condensation and the loss of *shall*

In this section we will look at one possible route and explanation for the gradual loss of *shall* and *shan't* over time, in particular from a construction grammar point of view. It will be argued that the loss of *shall* in some of its functions and forms is a case of *functional condensation* which reduces the applicability of constructions in certain forms and functions, and thus gradually removes them from the constructional inventory of the language.

3.1. Construction Grammar: A very brief sketch

(Vanilla) Construction Grammar (henceforth CG) assumes that language is essentially a structured inventory of constructions, i.e. conventionalized form-meaning pairings at all levels of linguistic structure. These form-meaning pairings, or constructions, may or may not be non-compositional or sufficiently frequent.[13] Constructions encapsulate both language-internal (semantic) and language-external (pragmatic, discourse-contextual) information. A schematic representation of constructions is given in figure 4.

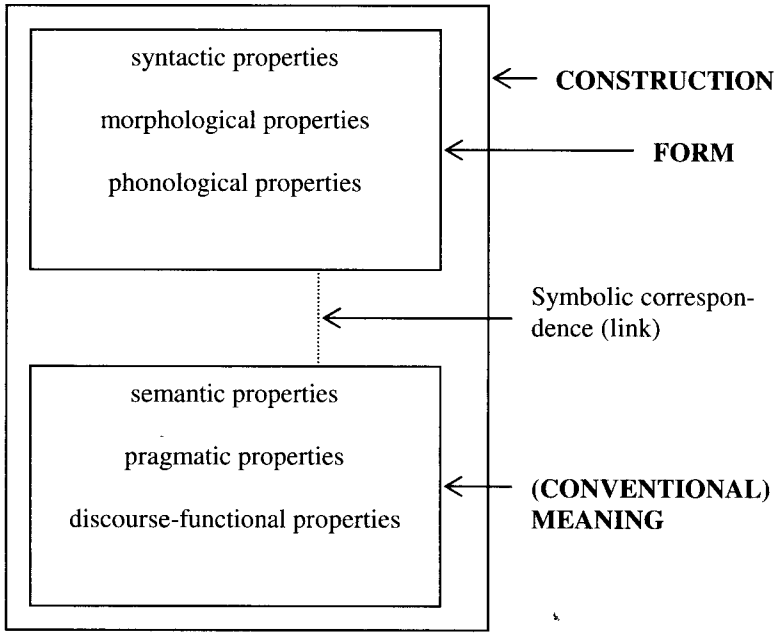

Figure 4. The symbolic structure of constructions (Croft and Cruse 2004: 258)

Constructions are to be found on different levels of granularity, both in terms of their complexity and abstractness. This means that we find at least a two-by-two matrix. There are very specific and simple constructions such as single lexical words, specific and complex constructions (e.g. complex idioms like *when push comes to shove*), abstract and simple constructions (e.g. word classes such as "noun") and abstract complex constructions such as the subject-predicate construction. At the same time, following Östman and Fried (2004), we also need to distinguish between constructions (abstract mental units, much like the traditional phoneme) and constructs (the concrete realization of constructions, comparable to allophones). Other current approaches distinguish between constructions and allostructions (Cappelle 2006, 2008) and micro-, meso- and macro-constructions (Traugott 2008; see also Trousdale this volume). "Macro-constructions" are defined as higher-level, more abstract functional constructions, "meso-constructions", encountered on the next level, are seen as groupings of similarly-behaving constructions, and finally, we find single, basic constructions ("micro-constructions") in which all elements are more or less fixed. This means that the traditional idiom just mentioned would be clas-

sified as a micro-construction, the subject-predicate construction, on the other hand, as a macro-construction. Meso-constructions are groups of constructions that behave in similar ways and thus, for example, contrast with other groups of similarly behaving constructions. As an example, Traugott (2008) mentions the *(a) kind of* set versus the *a bit (of)* versus the *a shred (of)* set of similar looking but notably different groups of (meso)-constructions. Traugott points out that all three levels are to be interpreted as abstractions, as types.

This raises the question what kind of construction(s) we have to deal with in the case of *shall, shall not, shan't, will, will not, won't* and how the granularity models just mentioned play a role in the loss of certain forms. It could certainly be argued, following Hilpert (2007), that *shall* + V, i.e. the modal verb followed by a bare infinitive, constitutes one particular semi-schematic construction, and so does *will* + V. However, the multitude of meanings associated with *shall* +V and *will* + V are difficult to capture in this case. The present article refers instead to another feature of CG, namely the explicit inclusion of co-textual and contextual information in constructions: "by *construction* I intend a conventional association of any or all of the following kinds of grammatical information: syntactic, semantic – including 'pragmatic', lexical and phonological" (Kay 2002: 1). Goldberg is even more explicit on this point: "Another notion rejected by Construction Grammar is that of a strict division between semantics and pragmatics. Information about focused constituents, topicality, and register is presented in constructions alongside semantic information" (Goldberg 1995: 7). Since English does not have a strictly grammaticalized element for futurity like Latin {– *b* –} or Turkish {– *eceg* –}, for example, expressions of futurity are heavily dependent on co- and context (see Bergs 2008a, b). Co-textual factors include intralinguistic information (e.g. syntagmatic alignment), contextual factors include extralinguistic information (e.g. style, register, encyclopaedic world-knowledge). It is, for example, not just *shall* + V which conveys the meaning 'futurity', it is *shall* + V in a specific morphosyntactic co-text or even, in some cases, extralinguistic context. Whilst with third-person subjects, for example, it has a deontic function in the sense of *have to*. So the actual constructions this article is concerned with are not just simple semi-abstract patterns with empty slots, but often much more complex configurations of various elements whose specific meaning in many cases is quite holistic. *Shall* with first-person subjects usually signals futurity, but with third-person subjects it conveys deontic aspects – where exactly should this meaning lie? With the verb or with the pronoun? And why is this quite different with *will*? The answer

can only be that both readings are holistic functions on individual constructions. While this is not the place to enter into a fully fledged discussion of the issue, it should at least be mentioned here that from this perspective, a number of constructions apparently share the same job, e.g. the expression of futurity (albeit in different nuances, perhaps). It could be argued that these constructions form a constructional family, united by similarity in function, but not necessarily in form (as in Michaelis 1998, for example). In so far, this approach somehow resembles Traugott's model with micro-constructions (here: the individual constructions with their specific configurations) and meso-constructions (here: groups, networks, and families of constructions united by form, function, or both). This might lead to two different networks of constructions: one based on meaning and one based on form. Both networks are, of course, susceptible to change. In CG, language is treated as the structured inventory of constructions. If we assume that the constructional inventory of a given language is essentially open, but finite (not unlike the lexicon), it follows that new constructions can be added or deleted from this inventory (again, not unlike the lexicon). On the questions of how new constructions may be added and thus enter the language, see the articles in Bergs and Diewald (2008a, b). In this article, we deal with how (micro-)constructions are deleted from the inventory, and how this loss of micro-constructions could eventually lead to the loss, or at least the re-organization of constructions on the meso-level. Note that the question of erosion and loss of linguistic forms is not new in historical linguistics (see below), but that it has never been couched in Construction Grammar terms before. This article is concerned with the details and consequences of modelling these processes in a Construction Grammar framework.

3.2. Functional elaboration and condensation

Functional elaboration is a term coined by Einar Haugen in his 1972 paper on standardization. Haugen claimed that standardization processes typically consist of four individual steps: selection, elaboration, codification and acceptance. In order for a standard to develop, this new standard variety first needs to be selected from a number of possible alternatives. The selected variety needs to be functionally elaborated, i.e. it should be possible to use this variety in all language "functions" or domains: formal, informal, spoken, written, religion, law, music, sports, philosophy and academia, etc. A linguistic standard also needs to be codified, i.e. it needs