

Another example of grammatical comparison

Consider a statement such as the following (taken from p. 331): ‘AmE prefers collective nouns in the singular (the government is), whereas BrE allows plural also (the government are)’ – the implication being that AmE does not use the latter. The GloWbE statistics support this, but provide a more informative account:

government is:	USA	9,376	GB	9,148
government are:	US	681	GB	1,528

One then has to be careful. An examination of the source texts shows that several of the US examples involve plural subjects (as in *the Pentagon and the Iraqi government are...*) or some sort of noun phrase postmodification (as in *almost all of the people in government are involved*), so some further analysis is needed. In a check of the first 100 examples, only 13 are clearly *government are*, mainly from blogs, so the generalization about usage seems to be strongly supported.