

Re: Negative of "used to" in Australian English

Source: <http://newsgroups.derkeiler.com/Archive/Alt/alt.usage.english/2007-07/msg00165.html>

- *From:* Bob Cunningham <exw6sxq@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Sun, 01 Jul 2007 09:26:10 -0700
-

On 1 Jul 2007 08:39:03 -0500, Michael West <> said:

On Sun, 01 Jul 2007 06:07:56 -0700, Bob Cunningham
<exw6sxq@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On Sun, 1 Jul 2007 11:58:17 +0200, trio@xxxxxxxxxxx (Donna
Richoux) said:

Oleg Lego <rat@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On Sat, 30 Jun 2007 16:17:50 -0700, Skitt
posted:

Michael West wrote:

But there is
nothing
grammatically
peculiar
about
"didn't use
to". It
follows the
usual rules.
"Didn't used
to" does
not.

Exactly!

I think part of the reason people write "didn't

Re: Negative of "used to" in Australian English

used to" is because there really isn't a present tense for "used to". You can't say "I use to participate in aue", if you mean "I currently participate in aue".

I like to think that the present and future tenses of "use" in the sense "be in the habit of" are not dead, but dormant. I see no reason why they should not be revived, so that future English users can say things like

After I retire, I will use to go to the park more often.

Nowadays, men don't use to wear mustaches as much as they used to.

Well, you can, but not if you expect anyone to understand what you mean.

So "didn't used to" parses out (for many) as "didn't <used to>".

What we're seeing now is the development of centuries of history. There's a difference between saying "You can't say this now" and "No one ever said this."

A truer statement of the present status would be "For the time being, you can't say this, but in another two or three generations it may again become common".

About "didn't used to", we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that US usage authorities recognize it to be a grammatical error, while those in the UK do not seem to.

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage, after giving a few examples of the erroneous "didn't used to", says

In American English, such usage is considered an error, but among the British it appears to have won some measure of acceptance

Re: Negative of "used to" in Australian English

[examples of British views]

In American English, according to our evidence, the usual and correct form is didn't use to.

And yet the Oxford Guide to English Usage (available for free download here:

<http://freebooksonline.blogspot.com/2007/06/oxford-guide-to-english-usage.html>

)

considers that "didn't used to" and "usen't to" are incorrect:

//begin quote

The correct spellings of the negative forms are:

usedn't to and didn't use to

not:

usen't to and didn't used to

end quote//

Come to find out, the same words appear in my copy of Oxford English (compiled by I.C.B. Dear, 1992). I hadn't noticed.

Burchfield, in The New Fowler's Modern English Usage, gives examples of "did used to" and "didn't used to" without commenting on their grammaticality. I've taken that to be implicit approval.

Gowers, in his Fowler's Modern English Usage Second Edition, says

The proper negative form is therefore He used not to or, colloquially, he usedn't to; but He didn't use to should be regarded rather as an archaism than as the vulgarism, like He didn't ought to [...], it is generally thought to be in England, though not in U.S.

Gowers doesn't comment specifically on the ungrammatical "didn't used to".

Fowler apparently didn't say anything at all about the "used to" issue in his first edition.

.