

A N E W E N G L I S H G R A M M A R



J E F F D O L V E N

*If It Will Rain Tomorrow

If it will rain tomorrow, then
today it will rain, we can be sure,
which does not prove the contrary

although we always hope it will:
will rain tomorrow, that's to say,
as sure as anything under the sun

it will, and in the meantime we'll
keep tossing the basin into the air.
Someone can turn the water to rain.

*By convention, an asterisk indicates an instance of ungrammatical usage. All titles are drawn from examples given in Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey K. Pullum, *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

*The Flag Is Being Red

The flag is being red again:
red with anger, you might think,
but perhaps it's only saying *stop*
and frisk with me in the meadows, friend.
Or blushing, wrapped around itself
to hide somebody's nakedness.

Look, how it waves away our concerns.
It's only red like the poor are being
poor, not like the rich are rich.

*He Had Had Gone

He had had gone. The door slammed twice,
an echo? Or for emphasis?
It slammed again when we said it again.

Most doors swing both in and out,
though sometimes it takes a little push.
Others are one-way, interior valves.

Then there are doors that only open
once, and can never be shut again.
Say it again now: please, please.

*We Lunch Together Each Other Day

We lunch together each other day,
by custom at the Interwar:
but not today, I am afraid.

Today too much is already said.
One wishes it were otherwise.
Another day then? Any will do,
though yesterday would be ideal.
We lunch at noon by candlelight.
I loved each other, as did you.

*We've Got Any Milk

We've got any milk, but only any.
Was there one in particular you wanted?
Sadly, that's just the one we don't have.

Some of our milks are white and some
are perfectly clear and some are blue
in the bottle and vivid red in the glass.

Which of these many milks is yours?
Milk makes the man, but a man makes no milk.
You take what you get all the same.