54. Late Modern English: Syntax [draft version, June 2011]

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1. Introduction
2. Categorical innovations of the Late Modern English period
3. Statistical and regulatory changes
4. Concluding remarks

Abstract

The Late Modern English period provides an essential link between the syntactic innovations of Early Modern English and the established system of Present-day English. This chapter reviews a number of major syntactic developments taking place in the period, involving both categorical and statistical changes. Among the former, we discuss two important innovations in the domain of voice: the rise of the progressive passive, with its implications for the symmetry of the auxiliary system, and the emergence and consolidation of the *get*-passive. The 18th and 19th centuries also see the completion and/or regulation of long-term tendencies in various areas of syntax, such as the verb phrase (the consolidation of the progressive, the decline of the *be*-perfect and the regulation of periphrastic *do*), and subordination (changes in the complementation system, in particular the replacement of the *to*-infinitive by *-ing* complements, and in relative clauses, with the regulation of the distribution of the different relativizers).

1. Introduction

The Late Modern English period has received much less scholarly attention than earlier stages in the history of English, partly because of its closeness to the present day and its apparent similarity to the contemporary language. This neglect has been particularly noticeable in the case of syntax. It is a well-known fact that the most substantive syntactic changes in the history of English had already taken place when our period opened, the 18th and 19th centuries representing mainly a transitional stage between the categorical innovations of Late Middle English and, especially, Early Modern English and the "established" system of Present-day English. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that the developments which occur in the Late Modern English period are confined, with a few notable exceptions discussed below, to changes concerning the regulation of variants introduced in previous periods, with certain patterns or construction-types becoming more frequent than others, and to the consolidation of processes which had been in progress for some time. We believe, however, that the importance of Late Modern English syntax should not be underestimated, and that we should look at the 18th and 19th centuries in our search for the definitive link to Present-day English syntactic usage. In what follows we will first consider the most important categorical innovations of the period (section 2), and then move on to the discussion of individual selected areas of syntax affected by statistical and regulatory changes between 1700 and the early 20th century (section 3). The analysis of these changes has undoubtedly been facilitated by the wealth of language material representing the 18th and 19th centuries in comparison to earlier stages, as well as by the availability in recent years of computerized corpora covering our

period, among others, *A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers* (ARCHER), *A Corpus of Nineteenth-Century English* (CONCE), *The Corpus of Late Modern English Prose*, *The Century of Prose Corpus* (COPC), *The Corpus of Late Modern British and American English Prose* (COLMOBAENG), and databases such as Chadwyck-Healey's *Eighteenth Century Fiction* (ECF) and *Nineteenth Century Fiction* (NCF).

Our account of Late Modern English syntax is, of necessity, incomplete. Other relevant changes, such as the expansion of multi-word verbs (e.g. *give over*, *put up with*, *take a look*), the development of the prop-word *one* or of the so-called emerging modals (e.g. *have to*, *have got to*, *want to*; cf. Krug 2000), the last steps in the fixing of SVO order, changes in the syntax of the noun phrase, and the influence of prescriptivism on the avoidance of preposition stranding and the split infinitive, among others, have been left out of this overview article due to limitations of space. For information on these and other Late Modern English syntactic changes, the reader is particularly referred to Denison's (1998) comprehensive and authoritative chapter in volume IV of the *Cambridge History of the English Language*.

2. Categorical innovations of the Late Modern English period

It is the domain of voice that witnessed the most important categorical changes taking place in the course of Late Modern English: on the one hand, the emergence of the progressive passive and, on the other, the grammaticalization of the *get*-passive construction.

2.1. The rise of the progressive passive

One of the few grammatical innovations of the Late Modern English period is the development of the progressive passive construction (e.g. *The patient is being examined*). This pattern emerged towards the end of the 18th century. Before that time, the progressive was either avoided, as in (1)—in Present-day English one would say *was being dragged*—or the so-called passival (i.e. an active progressive with passive meaning) was used, as in (2) (both examples from Denison 1998: 148, 151).

(1) *he found that the coach had sunk greatly on one side, though it* ***was*** *still* ***dragged*** *forward by the horses;* (1838–39 Dickens, *Nickleby* v.52)

(2) *But* ***are*** *there six labourers' sons* ***educating*** *in the universities at this moment?* (1850 Kingsley, *Alton Locke* xiii.138)

Early instances of the progressive passive construction are given in (3) and (4) below. Example (4) illustrates the coexistence of the old passival and the new progressive passive in the early 19th century.

(3) *like a fellow whose uttermost upper grinder* ***is being torn*** *out by the roots by a mutton-fisted barber.* (1795 Southey I.249.24; Traugott 1972: 178)

(4) *While the goats* ***are being milked****, and such other refreshments* ***are preparing*** *for us as the place affords.* (1829 Landor, *Imag. Conv., Odysseus, etc.*; Denison 1993: 428)

The progressive passive pattern was prescriptively condemned. Nineteenth-century purists declared it to be "not English", "an outrage upon English", "a monstrosity", a "corruption of language", etc. (Bailey 1996: 222–223). Nonetheless, the construction firmly became part of the English language in the course of the period, perhaps because, as Denison (1998: 151) notes, "the adoption of the progressive passive makes the English auxiliary system much more symmetrical."

2.2. The grammaticalization of the *get*-passive construction

Another categorical change affecting the domain of the passive in the course of the Late Modern English period is the emergence and consolidation of the *get*-passive construction (e.g. *He got fired from his first job*). According to Strang (1970: 151) and Givón and Yang (1994: 131), it is not until the second half of the 18th century that unequivocal examples of the *get*-passive are found. Some earlier instances do, however, occur (cf. [5] and [6]). Notice that other early candidates of the construction (cf. [10] below) are somewhat dubious and could be interpreted as involving a predicative structure rather than a true passive construction (cf. Strang 1970: 150–151; Denison 1993: 420).

(5) *I am resolv'd to* ***get introduced*** *to Mrs. Annabella;* (1693 Powell, *A Very Good Wife* II.i.p.10; Denison 1998: 320; Gronemeyer 1999: 29)

(6) *So you may not save your life, but* ***get rewarded*** *for your roguery* (1731 Fielding, *Letter Writers* II.ix.20; Denison 1993: 420)

The early 19th-century instances in (7)–(9), all from Denison (1993: 434, 436), illustrate the occurrence of the *get*-passive in combination with auxiliary verbs and with the progressive, which testifies to the rapid expansion of the construction in our period.

(7) *I* ***shall get*** *plentifully* ***bespattered*** *with abuse* (1819 Southey, *Letters*; OED, s.v. *bespatter*)

(8) *Her siren finery* ***has got*** *all* ***besmutched*** (1832 Carlyle in *Fraser's Mag*. V.258; OED, s.v. *besmutch* v.)

(9) *My stomach* ***is*** *now* ***getting confirmed****, and I have great hopes the bout is over* (1819 Scott, *Let.* in Lockhart [1837] IV viii 253; OED, s.v. *set-to*, def. 2b)

It is not until the 20th century, however, that the *get*-passive becomes firmly established. Hundt's (2001: 85, Table 3) raw figures for the combination *get* + past participle in the ARCHER corpus confirm the gradual increase of the construction through time: 11 examples in the 18th century, 26 instances in the 19th century, and 75 occurrences in the 20th century.

Of particular interest in the history of the *get*-passive is its controversial origin. On the basis of the evidence from a corpus of data from the mid-14th to the mid-20th century, Givón and Yang (1994: 144–145) suggest that the construction originates in the causative use of the verb *get* through a process of reflexivization and de-transitivization along the following lines: *She got him to be admitted* (causative

structure with *be*-passive complement) > *She got herself to be admitted* (causative-reflexive construction with *be*-passive) > *She got to be admitted* (intransitive-inchoative structure) > *She got admitted* (*get*-passive construction). Givón and Yang acknowledge, however, that other related structures, among them the intransitive-locative construction (e.g. *She got into the house*) and the inchoative-adjectival *get*-construction (e.g. *She got anxious*), may also have played a role in the development via analogy (1994: 127, 144–145).

Givón and Yang's account has been called into question in a number of recent studies. In her investigation of the relationship between frequency and the grammaticalization of the *get*-passive, Hundt (2001) concludes that the importance attached by Givón and Yang to reflexive constructions in the process of change may have been overestimated (2001: 64–67). On the contrary, the evidence from ARCHER seems to indicate that causative passives without *be* may have played a more crucial role in the grammaticalization of the *get*-passive than assumed by Givón and Yang (Hundt 2001: 67–68).

An alternative diachronic pathway of development has been proposed by Gronemeyer (1999) and, especially, Fleisher (2006), who maintain that it is the inchoative use of *get* (e.g. *She got anxious*), rather than its causative value that lies at the root of the *get*-passive. In Gronemeyer's view, "the *get*-passive evolved out of the inchoative construction when the matrix subject is reanalysed as controlling the implicit internal argument of the participle, rather than the implicit external one as in the inchoative" (1999: 29). Fleisher (2006) also defends the inchoative-to-passive pathway identified by Gronemeyer, but takes a novel perspective on the mechanisms responsible for the change. In his view, structural ambiguity is not the only factor leading to reanalysis, but semantic and pragmatic forces (e.g. perfective aspect in the case of the *get*-passive) are also among the critical motivations for syntactic change. He maintains that Givón and Yang's causative source hypothesis is highly problematic syntactically, semantically and thematically (2006: 239–245) and, using the drama and prose sections of the *Literature Online* corpus (LION), he identifies two stages in the development of passive *get* from inchoative*get* : (i) up to 1760, when the past participles occurring with *get* are interpretable as adjectives and can therefore yield an inchoative reading, as in example (10) below; and (ii) after 1760, when such a restriction disappears and the class of participles entering the construction is expanded considerably, as shown in (11) (2006: 227, 230–232).

(10) *A certain Spanish pretending Alchymist … **got acquainted** with foure rich Spanish merchants…* (1652 Gaule, *Magastrom* 361; OED, s.v. *get* v., def. 34b; Denison 1993: 419; Fleisher 2006: 227)

(11) *from thence you **got expell'd** for robbing the poors' box* (1778 Foote, *A Trip to Calais*; Fleisher 2006: 231)

3. Statistical and regulatory changes

In addition to the categorical innovations discussed so far, the Late Modern English period witnessed the completion of a wide variety of changes which had started in earlier stages and the regulation of variants in several syntactic domains. This section offers a representative selection of such statistical and regulatory changes in the verb

phrase (progressive, perfect, and auxiliary *do*) and in subordination (complementation and relative clauses).

3.1. The progressive

The progressive construction has been part of the English language since Old English times (Traugott 1992: 187; Denison 1993: 371) and became an established pattern in Early Modern English (Denison 1998: 130; see Vol. 2, Chap 39). Its core use is to express an ongoing event. Noteworthy during the 19th century is a marked increase in the use of the progressive, described in various sources, among them Dennis (1940), Strang (1982), Arnaud (1983), Denison (1998), Hundt (2004), Smitterberg (2005), and Núñez-Pertejo (2007).

Strang observes an increase of the progressive in narrative prose during the period which was mostly observable in main clauses (1982: 442). She also points to its expanded use with different types of main verbs and in combination with perfective, passive and modal auxiliaries (1982: 452–453).

Using data from CONCE, Smitterberg makes a case for the progressive becoming integrated in the English language during the 19th century, where "integration" is understood to cover grammaticalization, obligatorification, the use of the progressive in combination with other verbs, and the extended range of uses of the progressive in different situations (2005: 57–58). The increase of the use of the progressive in a number of genre categories is shown in Figure 54.1.

[Reproduced at the end of the paper.]

Figure 54.1: The increased use of the progressive in 19th-century English. The three periods are delimited as follows: period 1: 1800–1830; period 2: 1850–1870; period 3: 1870–1900 (from Smitterberg 2005: 66)

Using the Mossé-coefficient (M-coefficient), which calculates the number of occurrences per 100,000 words, this figure shows an increase in the use of the progressive in all but one genre over the three periods. The increase in the letters genre and in the speech-based genre of drama is especially notable. Smitterberg's conclusion is that "the progressive increased considerably in frequency over the 19th century, though not quite so much as other scholars have reported" (2005: 88).

We can compare the number of instances of the progressive in Smitterberg's data with the figure found by Núñez-Pertejo (2007: 363), who studied the progressive in the 18th century using British English data from the COPC and ARCHER. She reports a much lower overall frequency of the construction of 77.6 per 100,000 words in the relevant subsections of the combined corpora, as shown in Table 54.1. (For ease of comparison with the data supplied by other authors discussed in this chapter, we have normalized the frequencies of Núñez-Pertejo's data to instances per 100,000 words.) This figure compares with her finding of 35.6 instances per 100,000 words in the last subperiod of the Early Modern English part of the *Helsinki Corpus* (1640–1710; Núñez Pertejo 2004).

Table 54.1: The frequency of the progressive in COPC and ARCHER (from Núñez-Pertejo (2007: 363) (NF = normalized frequency per 100,000 words)

COPC			ARCHER		
Subperiod	#	NF	Subperiod	#	NF
1680–1699	46	63.5			
1700–1749	125	61.3	1700–1749	160	91.8
1750–1780	114	60.1	1750–1780	187	107
Subtotal	**285**	61.9	Subtotal	**347**	99.7
Total in the combined corpora (285+347): **632**; NF: 77.6					

Work by Hundt (2004) has shown that the increase in the use of the progressive continued during the 20th century. Mair and Leech (2006: 323; based on Mair and Hundt 1995) compared the use of the progressive in written Present-day (British and American) English during the period 1961–91, finding a similar trend. The results appear in Table 54.2.

Table 54.2: Progressive forms in the press sections (A–C) of the four reference corpora (significances: LOB/F-LOB $p < 0.01$, Brown-Frown $p < 0.05$; LOB-Brown and F-LOB-Frown $p > 0.05$) (from Mair and Leech 2006: 323)

	1961	1991/92	Difference (percentage of 1961)
British English (LOB/F-LOB)	606	716	+18.2%
American English (Brown/Frown)	593	663	+11.8%

These data show that the frequency of use of the progressive from the 1960s to the 1990s increased in written British and American English.

All the sources mentioned so far are based on written data. Aarts, Close, and Wallis (2010) use the *Diachronic Corpus of Present-Day Spoken English* (DCPSE), which contains 400,000 words from the *London Lund Corpus* (LLC; 1970s) and 400,000 words from the British component of the *International Corpus of English* (ICE-GB; 1990s), to study the use of the progressive construction in spoken English. The results are further evidence of an increase in the use of the progressive during the 20th century.

Naturally, some care in interpreting the data from the various sources is called for, given possible differences in the composition of the corpora (text types) and differences in how progressive constructions are counted (e.g. is *be going to* excluded?). Nevertheless, it seems unmistakeably the case that the use of the progressive has increased steadily over the last few centuries.

What could be the explanation for an increased use of the progressive? It appears that an expansion of the use of particular meanings has played a role. Nesselhauf (2007) has found that the "progressive futurate" (e.g. *I'm leaving tomorrow*) tripled in use between 1750 and 1990, while others, among them Wright (1994, 1995), Smith (2005) and Smitterberg (2005), have suggested that the so-called "interpretive", "explanatory" or "modal" use of the progressive, as in (12) below, which experiences a marked increase in the 19th century (cf. Kranich 2009), has contributed to the

increase in frequency of the progressive construction, particularly of the present progressive, in British English.

(12) *If the Government claim they have reduced taxes, they* ***are hoodwinking*** *you.*

Here the clause in the progressive is said to furnish an interpretation or explanation of the situation mentioned in the subordinate clause. This may well be the case, though some linguists have cautioned against distinguishing different functions for the progressive. Thus, Visser is said by Denison (1998: 145) to be "taking a ruthless line against those who find a multiplicity of functions" for the progressive. In any case, Smitterberg (2005) notes that his results regarding the use of the interpretive progressive during the 19th century are inconclusive as regards an increase in its use, due to the low incidence of the construction, though he does note that there is a trend for it to be used in speech-based genres. Mair and Hundt (1995), writing about the 20th-century increased use of the progressive, deny that an expanded functional load plays a role, and claim that "[t]he increase is shown to be due to a growing tendency to use the progressive in cases where it has long competed with the simple form and not, as is sometimes alleged, to the establishment and spread of new forms and uses of the progressive" (1995: 111). The increase can be explained, they argue, either by pointing to the "colloquialization" of written English, or by observing that "the change consists in the fact that in cases in which the simple form can be used alongside the progressive, the latter tends to be chosen with increasing frequency—to the point that an originally marked or rare 'progressive' comes to constitute the statistical norm" (1995: 118). They suggest that both explanations play a role, with colloquialization being the dominant one. On colloquialization pertaining to the progressive and phrasal verbs in the 19th century, see Smitterberg (2008). Further research on colloquialization is nevertheless needed both for Late Modern English and Present-day English.

3.2. The decline of *be* as perfect auxiliary

One of the most conspicuous statistical changes taking place in our period concerns the variation between *be* and *have* as perfect auxiliaries with verbs of motion and mutation (e.g. *go*, *come*, *grow*, *become*, etc.), as shown in (13) and (14).

(13) *A young man* ***has gone*** *to the happy hunting grounds.* (1826 Cooper, *Last of Mohicans* [1831] 400; OED, s.v. *hunting-ground*)

(14) *You would be sorryish to hear, that poor Moll Cobb …* ***is gone*** *to her long home.* (1793 Seward, *Lett.* [1811] III. 330; OED, s.v. *sorryish* a.)

The process of decline of *be* in such a context, which had already started in Late Old English and continued steadily in Middle English and Early Modern English (see Vol. 2, Chap. 39) was fairly well advanced when the Late Modern English period opened. Although the use of *have* with these verbs increased considerably from 1700 to 1800 (from 20% to 38% in Rydén and Brorström's (1987) corpus of comedies and private letters; from 39% to 56% in Kytö's [1997: 33] analysis of the multi-genre data in the ARCHER corpus), it was the 19th century that saw the most rapid changes in the encroachment of *have* upon the *be*-domain (85% of intransitives in ARCHER take

have instead of *be* in the period 1800-1900; cf. Kytö 1997: 33). The proportion of mutative verbs taking *be* as perfect auxiliary seems to have been reduced by half during the first decades of the 19th century, *have* almost completely taking over by the turn of the century (92% of the relevant cases in Rydén and Brorström's data [1987: 198, 200]). In addition to the attacks on the use of perfect *be* by 18th- and 19th-century grammarians (cf. Visser 1963−73: section 1898; Rydén and Brorström 1987: 210), internal factors such as analogy (non-mutative verbs have always been more numerous than mutative ones), the neutralization of the *is*/*has* distinction under the clitic form *'s*, and the avoidance of potential ambiguity (*be* is functionally more heavily overloaded than *have*) played a decisive role in the process of change (Traugott 1972: 145; Rydén and Brorström 1987: 23, 197, 287; Denison 1993: 366, 1998: 136).

Typical contexts strongly favouring the choice of *have* in Rydén and Brorström's data of Late Modern English informal written prose include, among others, the following (cf. also Kytö 1997: 56−59): so called action contexts (i.e. iteration and duration), unreality or uncertainty contexts (e.g. conditional and optative clauses, negative and questioned contexts), and the perfect infinitive. The early 18th-century examples in (15) and (16), both from Denison (1993: 368), illustrate the use of *have* with a mutative verb in an iterative context and a conditional clause, respectively.

(15) *The letters* ***have come*** *so regularly of late that* ... (1714 Wentworth 383.3)

(16) *if he* ***had not come*** *up as he did he would have had a Feaver or convultions* (1717 Verney I 397.22)

Additional factors conditioning the use of *be* and *have* with intransitive verbs in the period are (i) text type (e.g. journals show higher figures for the *have* auxiliary than other text types in the 18th-century ARCHER data; cf. Kytö 1997: 44, Table 12); (ii) gender (women writers are more conservative than men writers in the Late Modern English subperiods in ARCHER; cf. Kytö 1997: 50−51); and (iii) the nature of the main verb (for example, loan verbs attracted "the use of a rising [*have*] rather than a receding [*be*] form" (Kytö 1997: 64), while the high-frequency items *go* and *come* retained the use of *be* much longer than other verbs; cf. Kytö 1997: 67, Table 29).

3.3. The regulation of periphrastic *do*

The 18th and 19th centuries also saw the last steps in the regulation of the uses of the so-called dummy auxiliary *do*. Periphrastic *do* appeared for the first time in the Late Middle English period, and gradually became more common in the following centuries (see Vol. 2, Chap. 47). By 1700 its use was already very close to the modern one, with *do* being frequent, though not obligatory yet, in negative and interrogative constructions, as well as in affirmative declarative clauses, especially with an emphatic function. In non-emphatic affirmative constructions, however, the use of *do* was considered redundant and superfluous by the mid-18th century, a "vitious mode of speech" in Dr. Johnson's words (1979 [1755]: 8). In her detailed analysis of an 18th-century corpus of informative prose, epistolary prose, and dialogue in plays and novels, Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1987) shows that this use of *do* was indeed dying out by that time. Obviously enough, this "superfluous" *do* survived longer in poetry,

given its usefulness as a line-filler. Consider in this connection example (17) below from Wordsworth.

(17) *The hapless creature which **did dwell** / Erewhile within the dancing shell.* (1827 Wordsworth, *The Blind Highland Boy* 193–194; Beal 2004: 73)

Tieken-Boon van Ostade's (1987) data also show that non-periphrastic negation and question formation continued to occur in the early part of the Late Modern English period (an average of 24% and 5% of the relevant cases, respectively), though *do*-less structures gradually declined through the 18th century. Factors such as style and the author's background influenced the use/non-use of periphrastic *do* (cf. Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2006: 261). In Tieken-Boon van Ostade's (1987) view, the normative grammars of the time seem also to have played an important role in the regulation of the use of the auxiliary in these contexts, so that the process could be characterized, in Labovian terms, as a change from above. Robert Lowth (1979 [1775]: 41), for example, maintains that the auxiliary *do* "is of frequent *and almost necessary use* in interrogative and negative sentences" [emphasis added].

The old pattern of negation without *do* seems to have been particularly persistent with high-frequency verbs, such as *know* and *doubt* (*I know not*, *I doubt not*) (cf. Tieken-Boon van Ostade 1987: 128–129, 158–160, 174). The preservation of structures of this kind is in keeping with the cross-linguistic tendency for "combinations of words and morphemes that occur together very frequently […] to be stored and processed in one chunk" (Bybee 2003: 617), thus becoming particularly resistant to change. Residual usage of *do*-less negatives disappeared rapidly after 1800, though occasional instances of such semi-idiomatic expressions occur even in the last decades of the 19th century and in the early 20th century:

(18) *Whether he uses tobacco thus openly as a friendly fumigative only I **know not*** (1897 *Daily News* 13 Feb. 6/4; OED, s.v. *fumigative* a. and n.)

(19) *It must have been some old sacred language—Phoenician, Sabæan, I **know not** what—which had survived in the rite* (1910 Buchan, *Prester John* xi. 183; OED, s.v. *Sabæan, Sabean* a. and n.)

3.4. Shifts in the complementation system

The system of complementation has been subject to important changes from Old English times to the present day, some of them consolidating in our period and culminating in an important rearrangement of the system, which has recently been labelled the "Great Complement Shift" (Rohdenburg 2006: 143). (See also Vol. 2, Chap. 39, section 5.)

As far as finite complementation is concerned, our period sees the continuation of the "long-term trend in English" (Denison 1998: 256) to replace finite complements by non-finite clauses, mostly by infinitives. However, recent research has shown that, since *that*-clauses are easier to process than non-finite structures, they tend to be retained in complex cognitive contexts, such as insertions of intervening material or negated complements (cf. Rohdenburg 1995, 2006). Complexity factors have also been attributed an important role in the variation between infinitives and *-ing* complements, as will be commented on below.

Apart from the decline of *that*-clauses, the grammar of finite complementation has not changed much over the last three centuries. In our period the major complementizers continue to be *that* and zero, but the advance of the latter, which had started in Middle English and continued at a rapid pace in Early Modern English, experienced a halt in the "norm-loving" 18th century (Rissanen 1991: 288; cf. also Denison 1998: 259), especially in formal writings (cf. Finegan and Biber 1995). Another outstanding aspect in the domain of finite complementation is the partial revival of the so-called mandative subjunctive in complements to verbs of commanding, requesting and the like (i.e. manipulative predicates). The use of the subjunctive had been decreasing steadily ever since the Middle English period in all types of subordinates, complement clauses included. From the 19th century onwards, however, there is a slight recovery of the mandative subjunctive. While in American English the subjunctive has always been the default option in complements to manipulative predicates, in British English its re-emergence seems to be closely linked with the written language and particularly with legal texts (Denison 1998: 262–264; Huddleston and Pullum et al. 2002: 995). It would be worth investigating whether prescriptivism, which has been claimed to have had an effect on the resurgence of the subjunctive in adverbial clauses in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Auer 2006), could also have played a role in its revival in complementation structures.

While we can speak of relative stability in the area of finite complementation, the realm of non-finite complementation experienced "fundamental and rapid changes" in our period (Mair 2003: 329), some of them still underway in the present day. It should therefore come as no surprise that non-finite complementation has become an active research topic over the last few years. Perhaps the most relevant change in this area is the replacement of *to*-infinitives by *-ing* complements, which started in Late Middle English, but gained momentum from the 19th century onwards (Strang 1970: 100).

Gerunds have their origin in Old English action nouns in *-ing*/*-ung*, and behaved as nouns until Late Middle English, when they started to acquire verbal properties (among them the ability to take objects, to take a subject in the oblique case, to be modified by adverbs restricted to verbs, and to be negated by means of *not*). In the Late Modern English period *-ing* forms range from the clearly nominal (example [20]) to the clearly verbal (example [21]), featuring also hybrid structures, which had become frequent from the late 17th century onwards. These hybrids were particularly common in positions where verbal gerunds were not licensed at first, notably as preverbal subjects (example [22]). There is no agreement as to the function of the definite article in such structures: Fanego (2007: 192) argues that it is used to identify the *–ing* clause as a complement (i.e. it serves a complementizer function), while, according to De Smet (2008: 64–67), it retains its article-like functionality. Hybrids have declined in frequency since the late 18th century and, although they had virtually disappeared by the late 19th century, occasional examples can still be found in 20th-century English (Aarts 2007: 229).

(20) *In order to this I secretly employ'd my Confessor, a very good Ecclesiastick, to propose**the purchasing of my Estate and Houses**, or rather Palaces* […] *to my Wife's Relations;* (1739 Aubin, *Count Albertus* Ch. 7, 278; ECF)

(21) […] *he has, or I fancy he has, all the insolence of a happy rival; 'tis unjust, but I cannot avoid* ***hating him****;* (1769 Brooke, *Emily Montague* Vol. 1, Letter 27, 149; ECF)

(22) […] *he chose to make the first Declaration to herself;* ***the gaining her Affections*** *being the material Point, he considered all others of little Consequence.* (1725 Haywood, *Fatal Secret* 271; Fanego 2007: 192)

It has been surmised that true hybrids, which "are characterized by an equal number of properties from two categories", are difficult to process and are therefore generally avoided in languages (Aarts 2007: 229, 233). In addition to this processing factor, the demise of hybrid structures may have been influenced by other determinants, among them the increasing polarization of the gerund into a purely verbal type (reinforced by the dramatic increase of the progressive, discussed in section 3.1 above) and a purely nominal type (supported by the steady growth of action nouns like *destruction*, *blockage*, and *betrayal*, cf. van der Wurff 1993), and the condemnation of prescriptive grammarians (cf. Visser 1963–73: sections 1124, 1040; Fanego 2006). Prescriptivism may also be held responsible for the promotion of genitive over objective noun phrases as subjects of gerunds (e.g. *I hate his/him telling sexist jokes*) in educated speech until the 20th century (Denison 1998: 269; Mair 2006a: 223; Mugglestone 2006: 285).

From the beginning of their use, verbal gerunds have encroached upon the domain of *to*-infinitival complements. There is general agreement that the type of matrix verb plays an essential role in this change. The model seems to be one of lexical diffusion, with verbs of avoidance (*avoid*, *forbear*, etc.) being the first ones to adopt the newer construction, which then spread to other verbs of negative implication like verbs of refusal (*decline*, *deny*, *refuse*, etc.) (cf. Fanego 2007: 170; also Rudanko 2000: chapter 7). The variation between *to*-infinitives and gerunds after verbs of negative import is influenced by stylistic tendencies like *horror aequi* (Rohdenburg 2003: 236), as gerunds tend to be avoided if the matrix predicate is itself an *–ing* form (Rudanko 2000: 111–112).

In Late Modern English *-ing* complements advanced to verbs like *remember* when used retrospectively. The typical construction until the second half of the 18th century was the perfect infinitive (De Smet and Cuyckens 2007: 192), as in example (23). From that time onwards, perfect infinitives had to compete with *-ing* complements (example [24]), which were felt to be particularly suitable for that function, perhaps because they were "indifferent to time distinctions" due to their original nominal nature (Fanego 2007: 175).

(23) […] *and she pointed to the high gallery where I had seen her going out on that same first day, and told me she* ***remembered to have been up there, and to have seen me standing scared below****.* (1861 Dickens, *Great Expectations* Vol. II, Ch. X, 166; NCF)

(24) *I perfectly* ***remember carrying back the Manuscript you mention and delivering it to Lord Oxford.*** (1740 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *Complete Letters* (Halsband), 354; Fanego 2007: 175)

Although the gerund with retrospective verbs had to face the rejection of grammarians in the early 19th century (Visser 1963–1973: section 1777), it had ousted the perfect infinitive almost completely by 1900 (but cf. Mair 2006a: 226 and De Smet and Cuyckens 2007: 193, who report the existence of sporadic examples of the older construction as late as the second half of the 20th century). The decline of the perfect infinitive and the concomitant increase in the use of *–ing* complements with retrospective verbs seems to have been delayed in certain environments, such as (i) cognitively complex contexts, like extractions and insertions of intervening material (cf. the so-called Complexity Principle, Rohdenburg 2003); (ii) in cases of *horror aequi*, where two *-ing* forms would be adjacent (Vosberg 2003); and (iii) when the complement was a verb of perception or encounter (De Smet and Cuyckens 2007: 193). Once well established with *remember*, *-ing* complements could spread to other semantically related verbs like *forget* (19th century), and *recall* (20th century) (Fanego 2007: 175).

Another group of verbs which takes the gerund much more commonly in the Late Modern English period is that of the aspectuals (*begin*, *cease*, *commence*, etc.), while conatives (*try*) and emotive verbs (*enjoy*, *hate*, *like*) are first found with the gerund in our period (Fanego 2007: 178).

In addition to the type of matrix predicate, research by Fanego (2004) has shown that the function of the complement has a bearing on the spread of gerund clauses. Originally verbal gerunds appeared almost exclusively after prepositions (cf. also De Smet 2008), an environment in which the occurrence of the *to*-infinitive was virtually precluded (cf. Fanego 2007: 170n. 9), then moving to object function, and finally spreading to subject function. Unlike other complement-types, gerunds in subject function have always been resistant to extraposition (cf. Kaltenböck 2004 on Present-day English; Fanego 2010 for a historical overview). This behaviour might be related to their original nominal nature, as nouns cannot be extraposed. The spread of gerunds to the preverbal subject function, which takes place from the second half of the 19th century (cf. Fanego 2010), seems to have been facilitated by the existence of hybrids introduced by the definite article, as in example (22) above. According to Fanego (2010), the selection of the gerund over the infinitive in preverbal position seems to be determined by the length of the complement, since preverbal gerunds are typically lighter than infinitives.

Finally, another non-finite complement type undergoing changes throughout the Late Modern English period is the *for…to*-construction. This pattern originates in Middle English structures of the type *it is good/bad/shameful* [*for* NP][*to X*] (Fischer 1992: 330–331), where the *for*-phrase has a benefactive reading and does not form a constituent with the following *to*-infinitive. The genuine *for…to*-construction first appeared in extraposed subject function (example [25]), where it was well established by the beginning of the Early Modern English period. Unlike in benefactive structures, in the *for…to*-construction the *for*-phrase and the infinitive operate as a single unit, with the *for*-phrase analysed as the subject of the *to*-infinitive. Expansion to the object function, as in (26), is relatively late (Cuyckens and De Smet 2007: 99; De Smet 2007: 79), and does not seem to have really taken off until the 20th century (Mair 2006b: 125).

(25) *By this tale men may se it is no wysedome* ***for a man to attempte a meke wom~n pacye~ce to far***. (1526 *A Hundred Mery Talys* 115, *Helsinki Corpus*; Cuyckens and De Smet 2007: 94)

(26) *As soon as ever it's possible, we'll arrange* ***for you to live with someone who will preserve appearances***. (1893 Gissing, *The Odd Woman*; De Smet 2007: 85)

3.5. Relativizers

Another interesting area of regulatory change in our period is that of relativization. Once the *wh*-forms (*which*, *whom*, *whose* and *who*) came to be used as relative markers during Middle English, in addition to *that* and zero, the inventory of English relativizers had already become identical to that of the present day. The modern period, in particular the 18th century, saw the imposition of a number of constraints on the patterns of distribution of these forms, such restrictions being still operative in the contemporary standard language.

One of these regulating tendencies concerned the distinction between human *who* and non-human *which* along the so-called animacy parameter. When *which* emerged in Middle English as a relativizer, it could be used with reference to both personal and non-personal antecedents, and this usage continued in the Early Modern English period (cf. Vol. 2, Chap. 49). Eighteenth-century grammarians vehemently condemned the "misuse" of human *which* (cf. example [27] below), which progressively became less common, though it could occur in non-standard English even by the end of the century (cf. Austin 1985: 18–19).

(27) *I was at Mr. Barrons when Mr. Paynter* **wich** *is my Master Came ther* (Elizabeth Clift's letters; Austin 1985: 26)

The use of the invariable relativizer *that* was subjected to regulation along the information parameter also during Late Modern English. In his famous "Humble Petition of *Who* and *Which*" (1711, number 78 of the *Spectator*), Addison complains about the excessive use of *that* characteristic of the 17th century. The functional overload of *that*, which served also as a complementizer and a demonstrative, may well have supported the tendency to confine it to restrictive (or defining) clauses and to promote the use of the "maximally distinctive and minimally ambiguous" *wh*-relativizers (Beal 2004: 76) since the 18th century (cf. also Rissanen 1999: 295; Beal 2004: 113). Ball (1996: 248–251) convincingly shows that *who* and *which* rapidly gained ground at the expense of invariant *that* in the period 1700–1800, and that the expansion of the *wh*-forms continued somewhat more gradually in the 19th century.

Statistical and regulatory changes also affected the use of the zero relativizer at this time. Visser reports how "in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a remarkable decline in the currency of the zero-construction becomes perceptible" (1963–1973: section 630), zero becoming progressively associated with informal style. As today, the omission of the relativizer in Late Modern English seems to have been particularly disfavoured in the subject function:

(28) *O there is that disagreeable Lover of mine Sir Benjamin Backbite Ø has just call'd at my Guardian's* (1777 Sheridan, *School for Scandal* I.i 363.22; Denison 1998: 281).

4. Concluding remarks

We hope that the foregoing discussion has shown that the syntax of Late Modern English deserves detailed attention, because it is in this period that some fundamental long-term changes culminate and that the foundations of important Present-day English usages are to be found. In the last few years various monographs (overviews of 18th and 19th century English like Bailey (1996); Görlach (1999, 2001); Beal (2004); Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2009), among others), as well as studies of particular grammatical features (e.g. Smitterberg 2005; Fanego 2007), collections of papers (e.g. Dossena and Jones 2003; Kytö et al. 2006; Pérez-Guerra et al. 2007; Tieken-Boon van Ostade and van der Wurff 2009; Hickey 2010), and conferences (e.g. *The Late Modern English Conference* 1–4) have succeeded in partially making up for the traditional neglect of the period. We believe, however, that there is still room for further research, both in the areas discussed in the present chapter and regarding the other issues mentioned in the introduction. The wealth of materials covering the period (especially corpora), which have been made available over the last decade, will undoubtedly facilitate the task of those willing to bridge the descriptive gap between the Early Modern English and Present-day English periods.

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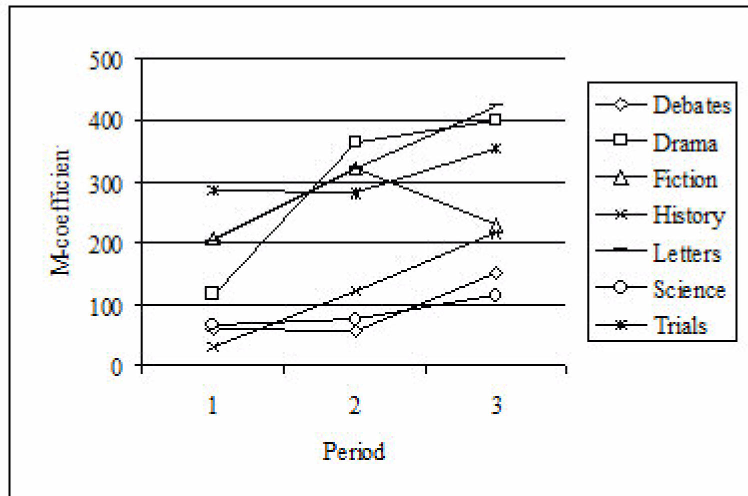

Figure 54.1