1 Introduction: Late Modern English syntax in its linguistic and socio-historical context

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1.1 Late Modern English syntax: setting the scene

At the end of the twentieth century, the Late Modern period still had to be described as 'the Cinderella of English historical linguistic study' (Jones 1989: 279). Fortunately, this scenario has changed over the last fifteen years or so. Among other things, the change of emphasis within historical linguistics to socio-historical and corpus-based approaches led to a surge of interest in Late Modern English (roughly the period between 1700 and 1900). In August 2001, the University of Edinburgh hosted the first international conference on Late Modern English (LModE). These are now organised on a triennial basis. Research on aspects of LModE has since been published in conference proceedings and more focused thematic volumes such as the one on the nineteenth century edited by Kytö et al. (2006). Introductory textbooks (Beal 2004 and Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2009) have also been added to the growing body of literature, and new (editions of) language histories of English now routinely add a chapter or section on the Late Modern period (e.g. Algeo and Pyles 2005, Barber et al. 2009 or Brinton and Arnovick 2011).[1]

Despite the recent progress in the historiography of the English language between 1700 and 1900, morphological and syntactic change in LModE is still the least researched aspect of this period. (According to the eighteenth-century grammarian Lowth, English grammar could be described in only ten lines;[2] this is obviously a contemporary misjudgement on the basis of the importance that people attributed to morphology.)

Late Modern syntax has received excellent and fairly comprehensive coverage in a book-length chapter of the *Cambridge History of the English Language*, volume IV (Denison 1998). But while this chapter provides a

[1] The chapter in Algeo and Pyles is essentially a short comparative history of British and American English from 1800 up until the twenty-first century.

[2] See the extract from the facsimile of *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762) on the cover of this book. In full, this extract from the preface reads "The English Grammar which hath been last presented to the public, and by the person best qualified to have given us a perfect one, comprises the whole Syntax in ten lines: For this reason; 'because our language has so little inflexion, that its construction neither requires not admits many rules.'"

wealth of examples to illustrate syntactic developments (some of them from corpora), it does not attempt to exploit the resources available at the time in a systematic corpus-linguistic approach. In fact, the rich body of primary material has only recently begun to be studied in more depth and employing corpus-linguistic methodology (e.g. the contributions on syntactic change in Kytö et al. 2006 for the nineteenth century). This kind of research is facilitated by an ever growing number of available corpora:[3] in addition to general reference corpora like ARCHER (*A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers*) and CONCE (*Corpus of Nineteenth-Century English*), there are more specialised resources like the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* Extension Corpus, the *Old Bailey Corpus* (OBC), the *Network of Eighteenth-Century Texts* (NEET) corpus or the collections of letters from immigrants (e.g. *CORIECOR*). It is also possible to make use of large databases of fiction writing as a source of evidence (e.g. *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online* or *Literature Online*), even though these were not compiled with linguistic research on LModE in mind. Increasingly, corpus-linguistic resources afford rich annotation: the *Corpus of Historical American English* (COHA) and the *Corpus of Late Modern English Texts* (CLMET 3.0) are both part-of-speech-tagged (albeit with different tagsets) and *the Penn Parsed Corpus of Modern British English* (PPCMBE) is also syntactically annotated. An extended version of the original ARCHER corpus has recently also been tagged and parsed, with different POS-tagging that allows direct comparison with COHA, on the one hand, and the PPCMBE, on the other.[4]

Rydén (1984: 512) refers to the eighteenth century as 'the first century in the development of English where the extant texts allow us to view and evaluate syntactic usage in a reasonably full contextual light (stylistic, social or otherwise)'. In fact, a wealth of contextual information is available for the whole of the Late Modern period, enabling new kinds of research, e.g. on the sociolinguistic details concerning the spread of innovative patterns or the decline of recessive constructions.[5] In addition, scholars have started to systematically relate corpus data on syntactic change to contemporary grammatical descriptions of the phenomena in order to gauge the possible effects that grammars from the period may have had on language change (see e.g. Auer 2006 or Anderwald submitted and this volume).

The present volume brings together state-of-the art research into LModE syntax by prominent scholars in the field in the first book exclusively dedicated to the topic. The contributions all make systematic use of existing

[3] Some of these resources became available as contributors to this volume were working on their chapters.

[4] The accuracy of the tagging and parsing of ARCHER 3.2 with the Treebank Tagger and dependency parser could be improved significant by normalising the spelling before the corpus was annotated (see Schneider 2012).

[5] The great majority of syntactic studies are concerned with the emergence of new patterns or distinctions. Research on recessive constructions or syntactic demise is much rarer (see e.g. Hundt, Forthcoming a and Anderwald or McCafferty, this volume).

corpora. Corpus evidence is not merely used to arrive at more detailed descriptions of syntactic patterns in the LModE period. As the subtitle of this chapter indicates, the aim is to provide both linguistic and socio-historical context for the case studies. Accordingly, a number of contributions in this volume discuss their findings against the background of internal processes of change and within a theoretical framework, such as grammaticalisation theory and/or construction grammar (e.g. the chapters by Brinton, Claridge and Kytö or Nesselhauf). The rich body of textual evidence available is used in these chapters to draw inferences on the precise nature of historical change. This, in turn, is used to feed into grammaticalisation theory (e.g. Breban or Cuyckens et al.), including the discussion of sociolinguistic foundations for grammaticalisation discussed in the chapter by Mair.

True to the aim of this volume, some contributions contextualise their findings within the socio-historical background of the period (e.g. Anderwald, Smitterberg or Szmrecsanyi et al.); others provide information on regional variation in British (BrE) and American English (AmE) (e.g. Anderwald, Auer, Mair, Rohdenburg) and language contact (McCafferty). In fact, language contact in the Late Modern period merits a volume in its own right, so the single contribution selected for this volume obviously only covers a tiny aspect of syntactic change in varieties other than (standard) BrE and AmE. However, the compilation of suitable corpora that will allow detailed studies on language contact and the emergence of New Englishes is still one of the lacunae in English historical linguistics (see Hundt Forthcoming b). Yet other contributions in this volume take variation across text types into account as one factor in the ongoing change they study (e.g. Nesselhauf or Szmrecsanyi et al.). Smitterberg takes a complementary approach in that he puts text types centre stage, using different syntactic patterns as a diagnostic for stylistic change in LModE syntax.

As regards methodology, two complementary approaches can be observed in the chapters of this volume: some studies make use of the corpus data for fine-grained qualitative analyses and micro-analyses of change (e.g. the contributions by Breban or López-Couso and Méndez-Naya); others apply sophisticated statistical modelling to variation and change (i.e. Szmrecsanyi et al. and Cuyckens et al.). Some studies focus exclusively on data from the Late Modern period (e.g. Breban; Anderwald even restricts her study to change and related grammatical descriptions in the nineteenth century); others go beyond 1945, contrasting and comparing evidence from the eighteenth and/or nineteenth century with more recent corpus data (e.g. the contributions by Hundt or Mair).

While there are various connections in terms of outlook and methodology between the chapters of this volume, they are grouped together according to their thematic focus: case studies on change in the verb phrase, the noun phrase, complementation patterns and category change; in addition, there are two chapters on the syntax–pragmatics interface, and one each on text-type related change and contact-induced change.

1.2 Studies on change in the verb phrase

Lieselotte Anderwald (Chapter 2) relates corpus-linguistic evidence on the final decline of the BE-perfect in nineteenth-century BrE and AmE (a change that was led by AmE) to evidence from contemporary grammars. Her investigation of a large corpus of nineteenth-century British and American grammars shows that grammarians on both sides of the Atlantic initially simply lacked adequate grammatical terminology to describe the recessive syntactic pattern, resulting in a misanalysis of the construction. Moreover, she is able to make a link between prescriptive comments, on the one hand, and the lack of suitable grammatical concepts available to the grammarians. When adequate terminology did become available, the 'faulty' description lingered longer in American grammars where the BE-passive had declined more quickly. In Britain, where the BE-passive was still a low-frequency phenomenon in language use for a little longer, grammarians switched to a more 'adequate' description earlier.

The following two chapters look at variation in the use of *do*-support with two grammaticalising (modal) (auxiliary) constructions. Anita Auer (Chapter 3) investigates the diachronic development of negation patterns with *let us/let's*, taking both regional and social variation into account: she finds that *do*-support in negation of *let's* is more frequent in British than in American English and that men are ahead (by about eighty years) of women in adopting *do*-support. The results are slightly different for the variant in which *do*-periphrasis follows the verb: it is exclusively found in AmE, with evidence suggesting regional predominance in southern dialects and women as early adopters. Christian Mair (Chapter 4) uses evidence from LModE and corpora of present-day AmE for a detailed study on the social embedding of ongoing grammaticalisation of semi-auxiliary *(have) got (to)*. He traces the origin of main-verb syntax with the semi-auxiliary to regional and ethnic varieties of AmE in the second half of the nineteenth century. Evidence from the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) is used to critically discuss the problems that both main-verb syntax and social variation pose for the study of grammaticalisation. His study demonstrates the usefulness, in particular, of large corpora for the study of ongoing grammatical change that has its origin in non-standard usage of previous centuries: it is only these vast historical collections of text that provide evidence on the ultimate roots of this particular change, precisely because it originates in non-standard usage and is therefore rarely attested in writing.

The last two chapters in this section use a construction grammar approach to variation. Nadja Nesselhauf (Chapter 5) employs data from the British part of ARCHER in her case study on *'ll* and its development in comparison with both *will* and *shall*. Fine-grained semantic analyses of the forms in the second half of the eighteenth against the second half of the twentieth century show that the increase in the contracted form is not simply an example

of the frequently discussed development towards more colloquial written styles. She argues that, in addition to its old uses, a new form–meaning pattern (i.e. a 'construction' in the construction grammar sense of the term) emerged, that of expressing a spontaneous decision. Constructionalisation of this additional meaning would find support in the frequent co-occurrence of enclitic *'ll* with certain hosts (i.e. pronouns, and in particular the first-person singular *I*), which she assumes to be stored as a whole rather than as two separate items. Marianne Hundt (Chapter 6) also takes a construction grammar approach in her investigation of mediopassive constructions, i.e. patterns such as … *books that (won't) sell*. She uses evidence from a corpus of advertising copy, COHA and COCA to verify whether these constructions are more likely to require some kind of modification in earlier decades of the Late Modern period or whether this constraint is stable across time. Five different case studies show that the constraint affects different verbs to different degrees and that variability is closely related to the interaction between constructional meaning and verb meaning. While bare mediopassives, on the whole, are typical of twentieth-century usage and facilitated by a prior strengthening of the modal semantics of the construction, weakening of the modification constraint may affect individual verbs differently, making instantaneous use of bare mediopassives possible for a verb like *clamp on* without a prior increase in the modified mediopassive use.

1.3 Studies on change in the noun phrase

The two chapters on changes in the noun phrase illustrate the two complementary methodological approaches mentioned above: fine-grained qualitative analyses of individual lexico-grammatical patterns, on the one hand, and rigorous statistical modelling of a binary syntactic choice, on the other.

While quantifier uses of adjectives such as *various* and *numerous* are first attested in the Early Modern period, it is during LModE that the change is consolidated. Tine Breban (Chapter 7) uses data from the PPCMBE and CLMET in a micro-analytical study of the two items to detail aspects of actualisation and paradigmaticisation of this syntactic change. Her study goes 'beyond mere syntactic change' in that collocational expansion and contextual embedding are taken to be key steps in the process. Furthermore, the case studies are used for a critical discussion of the role that semantic reanalysis plays in grammaticalisation. The case studies that Breban presents suggest that this role has to be reconsidered in two respects: (a) instead of semantic change, changes in the collocational behaviour of the grammaticalising item can be the starting point for change, and (b) instead of ambiguity the emergence of new meanings in underspecified contexts triggers change.

Benedikt Szmrecsanyi and his co-authors (Chapter 8) provide a detailed quantitative study of the genitive alternation in two text types that are

relatively open to innovation, i.e. newspaper writing and personal letters. The evidence from ARCHER shows that, after an initial decline, the *s*-genitive gained ground again in the twentieth century. More detailed analyses of the nominal heads shows that the decline in the Late Modern period has to be attributed to cultural change (as reflected in text frequencies) rather than grammatical reasons, namely a decline in the frequency of possessors that have always had a preference for the *s*-genitive (animate nouns). The recent popularity of the *s*-genitive, by contrast, can be attributed to genuine grammatical change, i.e. the weakening of the animacy constraint. The latter type of change is seen as a case of grammaticalisation as it involves an expansion of the host class. In their discussion of possible explanations the authors offer a subtle argument that shows how cultural and technological change, change in discourse frequency of certain possessor types, changes in conceptualisation of animacy and/or possession are all connected to 'real' grammatical change, and how this can be modelled statistically.

1.4 Changes in complementation patterns

The two chapters in this section are concerned with what has been termed 'the great complement shift', i.e. the change from finite to non-finite clausal complements (CCs) (e.g. Vosberg 2006). Günther Rohdenburg (Chapter 9) contributes to the sizeable body of studies in this area by focusing on *that*-clauses following expressive, representative and directive verbs as well as a set of complex conjunctions. His data are drawn from various corpora and historical databases, as well as the OED quotation database. The detailed analyses confirm that complementation patterns of expressive and representative verbs show similar diachronic trends: *that*-clauses as complements are either lost completely, become restricted to certain patterns or, in a minority of cases, remain at the low level of usage found in the Late Modern period. Rohdenburg places these findings in the larger context of changes in the transitivity of these verbs. After directive verbs, *that*-clauses are a less recessive complementation type, partly because of the revival of the mandative subjunctive in AmE, as Rohdenburg argues. Complex conjunctions like *in (the) event* or *on/upon (the) condition* provide another stronghold for finite complementation. He is thus able to provide *some* diachronic evidence against the general trend of a shift from finite towards non-finite complement clauses.

Hubert Cuyckens and his co-authors (Chapter 10) apply regression analysis to the alternation between finite *that*-clauses (including the variant with a zero complementiser) and non-finite clauses (both gerundial and *to*-infinitival) as complements of three factual verbs, namely *remember*, *regret* and *deny*. Empirical evidence comes from the OBC and CLMETEV. The data are coded for various factors (semantic, structural, medium, etc.) that may influence the choice between the two complement clauses. Their

case studies contribute a new perspective on Rohdenburg's cognitive complexity principle, both by adding additional complexity factors that have a disfavouring effect on non-finite CCs, and by showing that other complexity factors in fact do not have such a strong effect. In terms of diachronic change, the evidence confirms previous research on the shift towards non-finite CCs. The authors conclude their study with a discussion of whether changes in the preference for certain complementation patterns can be considered instances of grammaticalisation or not.

1.5 Category change

Category change can be observed for individual lexical items in specific constructions or with respect to constructional types, as the first two chapters in this part of the book show. The third chapter in this section studies category change as part of items undergoing grammaticalisation.

Eva Berlage (Chapter 11) discusses subtle changes in two apparently similar composite predicates, namely *take advantage of* and *make use of*, i.e. combinations of a light verb (*take*/*make*) with a noun and preposition. Significantly, only *make use of* alternates with a simplex verb (*use*). Category change in this chapter is part of the changes in the cohesiveness of the two constructions: differences in the degree of noun-phrasiness of *advantage* and *use* in these two composite predicates is taken to account for differences in the degree of cohesiveness. Against a set of syntactic and semantic criteria, Berlage shows that *advantage* becomes less noun-phrasy whereas *use* becomes more noun-phrasy in the course of the Late Modern period: these opposite developments mean that *take advantage of* becomes more cohesive across time (i.e. it undergoes lexicalisation) whereas *make use of* becomes less cohesive (i.e. it undergoes delexicalisation). Future studies on composite predicates will have to show whether the two case studies can be generalised to constructions with different kinds of nominal (noun vs. deverbal noun) elements.

On the basis of CLMETEV, Hendrik de Smet (Chapter 12) shows that the trend for participial and gerund *ing*-clauses to become less distinct across time is continued in the Late Modern period, to the extent that the two are often superficially identical. However, the changes evidenced in CLMETEV do not only provide evidence of a further blurring of the distinction between verbal and nominal *ing*-clauses (e.g. in what De Smet calls 'blended complement construction'). The data also indicate that language users continue to be aware of the difference between participle and gerund, particularly in certain lexico-grammatical contexts. The chapter contextualises the partial collapse of the participle/gerund distinction within a more general discussion of phrasal and clausal syntax and the wider framework of construction grammar (i.e. with changes starting locally and working their way up on the constructional hierarchy to the macro-level).

Claudia Claridge and Merja Kytö (Chapter 13) provide a comprehensive investigation of *a bit (of) (a)* in the OBC during a period when the degree adverb grammaticalises and increases in discourse frequency. The study encompasses the whole range of constructional variants (lexical uses, quantifier, degree adverb, hedge, others). The authors' aim is to provide broad empirical coverage in a speech-related corpus and thus test hypotheses advanced in previous research. In the OBC data from the 1720s to 1913, non-lexical uses dominate. Their findings corroborate that the end of the eighteenth century is the crucial period for the grammaticalisation of the binominal quantifier *a bit of (a) NP* as it expands and is used with non-concrete nouns. Moreover, the quantitative evidence shows that this process happens faster in the case of the variant with the article. As far as the development of the degree adverb is concerned, the OBC data add important detail to previous research, especially with respect to co-occurrence patterns with verbs: according to Claridge and Kytö, these are likely to have spearheaded the grammaticalisation of the degree adverb. While adding valuable quantitative analyses to the existing body of research, the chapter nicely illustrates how even a very large, speech-related corpus such as OBC may still be too small for the analysis of some low-frequency items undergoing grammaticalisation.

1.6 The syntax–pragmatics interface

The two contributions in this section go beyond 'mere syntactic change', too, in that they study phenomena at the interface of syntax and pragmatics.

The focus of Laurel Brinton's contribution (Chapter 14) is on the metalinguistic and politeness functions of a set of *if*-clauses, namely those with second-person subjects and verbs of choice (such as *choose*, *like*, *wish*); more precisely, she studies those with ellipsis of the complement, which she refers to as *if*-elliptical clauses (*if*-ECs). These make their first appearance with the pragmatic meanings in the Late Modern period. The chapter takes a detailed corpus-based description of the form and function of these clauses in Present-Day English (PDE) as its starting point before tracing their development on the basis of a broad range of LModE corpora and text collections. Corpus data show that it is ultimately impossible to find a single source for the development of the metalinguistic function of *if*-ECs; this leads Brinton to suggest that it developed by a process of constructionalisation from a set of similar constructs involving verbs of choice which became increasingly abstract and less compositional while at the same time increasing in productivity.

Building on their earlier work on the history of epistemic parentheticals with *seem*, María José López-Couso and Belén Méndez-Naya (Chapter 15) use evidence from ARCHER to trace the history of this construction in

LModE. The focus of the chapter is on a detailed description of construction types with epistemic/evidential *seem*, in terms of both their grammatical properties and their pragmatic functions. Parenthetical clauses are attested in two subtypes in ARCHER, namely as bare parentheticals and as an (older) adverbial variant preceded by *as/so*. Bare parenthetical *it seems* first occurs at the end of the Early Modern period; in LModE, it is more frequent than the adverbial variant. The authors show that it is also less variable and thus the more grammaticalised of the two *seem*-parentheticals. While the pragmatic function of *seem*-parentheticals is to express the 'speaker's commitment towards the truth of the proposition expressed in their anchor clause', first-person experiencer NPs are rare in corpus data. But the authors also point out that the evidence provided in a relatively small corpus such as ARCHER can only be the starting point for a fuller description of epistemic parentheticals in LModE; in particular, the evidence is not conclusive with respect to the minutiae of change, e.g. in scientific texts.

1.7 Text-type and contact-induced change

One of the advantages of studying syntactic change in the Late Modern period is that the rich body of textual material allows us to trace how changes spread through different kinds of text because genre is typically an important factor in language variation and change. In research on ongoing grammatical change, newspapers were found to be a text type particularly open to syntactic changes related to changing stylistic norms, i.e. a trend towards more colloquial language use in writing (see e.g. Hundt and Mair 1999). Smitterberg (Chapter 16) uses a corpus of nineteenth-century newspapers and four case studies (progressives, phrasal verbs, *not*-contraction and conjoins of *and*) to verify whether this tendency can already be observed in the Late Modern period. It turns out that this is only the case for two of the four syntactic patterns, namely the progressive and conjoins of *and*. The results are contextualised within ongoing socio-historical change during the 1800s and contemporary corpus data from other text types. He is thus able to show how similar market forces may result in different stylistic preferences and patterns of change.

The volume opens with a chapter on the BE-perfect in the Late Modern period and it closes with the same topic, but from a different perspective: while Lieselotte Anderwald looked at the relation between grammatical description and change in her contribution, Kevin McCafferty (Chapter 17) uses evidence from a corpus of personal letters to investigate language contact as a factor in the use of BE-perfects in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Irish English (IrE), i.e. the period when the majority of speakers in Ireland shifted from Irish to English as their first (and often only) language. Even though BE-perfects are currently also recessive in this regional variety, they are used not only with (intransitive) mutative and motion verbs

(e.g. *change* and *go*) but also with transitives (e.g. *finish*). McCafferty's corpus data show that, while IrE follows the general trend towards a greater use of the HAVE-perfect, it is lagging somewhat behind BrE and AmE in the Late Modern period. BE-perfects in IrE are still used with a larger variety of verbs than in the reference varieties and even extended to transitives during this period. Pending more conclusive evidence on regional distribution, i.e. particularly in areas with prolonged language contact between Irish and English, McCafferty puts forward arguments for Irish influence on the emergence of BE-perfects with transitives during LModE.

The contributions in this volume all make use of the rich body of textual evidence available to draw inferences on the precise nature of historical change, including both external and internal factors. In this respect, the present volume also provides evidence that can be made fruitful to the study of earlier periods and language change in general.