

SYNTACTIC CHANGE IN LATE MODERN ENGLISH

Late Modern English presents a *stability paradox* to linguists; despite the many social changes that took place between 1700 and 1900, the language appeared to be structurally stable during this period. This book resolves this paradox by presenting a new, idiolect-centred perspective on language change, and shows how this framework is applicable to change in any language. It then demonstrates, through the use of four original case studies, how an idiolect-centred framework can be reconciled with corpus-linguistic methodology. These case studies concern colloquialization (the process by which oral features spread to writing) and densification (the process by which meaning is condensed into shorter linguistic units), two types of change that characterize Modern English. The case studies also shed light on the role of genre and gender in language change and contribute to the discussion of how to operationalize frequency in corpus linguistics. This study will be essential reading for researchers in historical linguistics, corpus linguistics, and sociolinguistics.

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SYNTACTIC CHANGE IN
LATE MODERN ENGLISH

Studies on Colloquialization and Densification

ERIK SMITTERBERG

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