

# Preface and acknowledgements

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**The Present Perfect and the Preterite in Late Modern and Contemporary English: A corpus-based study of grammatical change**

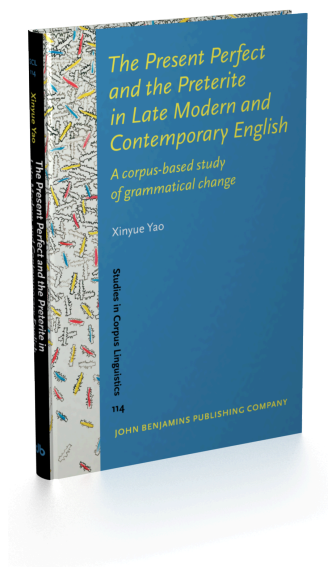
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## Preface and acknowledgements



This book has been a long time coming – much longer than was originally intended. The writing plan developed when I was working on my doctoral thesis project. Over the past decade, I have substantially modified and expanded the thesis by improving the depth and coherence of the main arguments, the balance of corpus data, the methodological rigor of statistical techniques, and much more. Unlike the thesis, this book is focused on diachronic change in Late Modern and contemporary English. It examines an unprecedentedly wide range of historical texts representing speech-based and typical written registers. Compared with my previous publications on the topic, this book is more comprehensive and innovative in its theoretical insights and analytical techniques. It uncovers new evidence both in favor of and against previously suggested pathways of grammatical change. Also, it sets forth a contact-based account for American-British grammatical differences, building on systematic cross-linguistic/dialectal comparisons.

This book has benefited from the intellectual input and encouragement from many scholars over the years, in particular the following: Douglas Biber, Qianrui Chen, Peter Collins, Julia Davydova, Johan Elsness, Marianne Hundt, Elena Seoane, Yifan Sun, Valentin Werner, and Jiajin Xu. I am indebted to Douglas Biber, Marianne Hundt, and Christian Mair for facilitating access to some of the corpus data back in the 2010s; to Ute Römer and an anonymous reviewer for their valuable comments on an earlier manuscript; to Susan Hendriks and Kees Vaes for kind assistance in the editing and production stage. Special thanks are also due to my colleagues and students at the English Department and the Linguistics Teaching Unit at Renmin University. They have offered a most supportive and stimulating atmosphere for the writing of this book. Finally, funding from the National Social Science Fund of China (Project No. 17CYY064) is gratefully acknowledged.

Earlier versions of the ideas and facts presented in this book have appeared in the following research articles:



- 2016. The evolution of the “hot news” perfect in English: a study of register-specific linguistic change. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 17(1): 129–152.
- 2014. Developments in the use of the English present perfect: 1750–present. *Journal of English Linguistics* 42: 1–23.

-  2013. [with P. Collins]. Recent change in non-present perfect constructions in British and American English. *Corpora* 8(1): 115–135.
-  2012. [with P. Collins]. The present perfect in World Englishes. *World Englishes* 31(3): 386–403.