

Name: Teresa Ong

Affiliation: Griffith University, Queensland, Australia

Email: ongtesa@gmail.com

Title:

A Corpus-Based Investigation of *Prevent* and *Stop* Complementation Clauses in 19th, 20th and 21st Century American English

Abstract:

English is rapidly evolving over time. This situation influences a change in certain grammatical patterns. One area in English grammar which is suspected to be undergoing particularly vigorous change and restructuring is non-finite complementation clauses. In order to identify specific constructions involving non-finite complementation clauses, Leech, Mair, Hundt, and Smith (2009) suggest the use of some specific superordinate or matrix verbs such as *start*, *begin*, *help*, and *prevent*. These non-finite verb forms have received a lack of attention in the literature on progress change. Hence, this study employs a corpus-based approach to find out how two semantically comparable verbs, *prevent* and *stop* used in complementation clauses have changed in American English from the 19th century until 21st century. Two specific variants are considered:

(i) noun phrase + *from* + -ing (e.g. She *prevented/stopped* it *from* eating.)

(ii) noun phrase + -ing (e.g. She *prevented/stopped* it eating.)

All complementation clauses were extracted from the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) and examined in respect of quantitative changes from 1810 to 2009, with a focus on the overall frequencies and proportional values. This study observed that towards the 21st century, the ‘with from’ variant became a dominating trend for both *prevent* and *stop* complementation clauses. These analysis results showed that linguistic change in American English is still in progress and could contribute to the structure of language teaching materials or the revision of existing grammar books, especially those aimed at non-native English speakers.

References:

Leech, G., Mair, C., Hundt, M. and Smith, N. (2009). *Change in Contemporary English: A grammatical Study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.