I fear: The Historical Development of the Verb fear and its Changing Patterns of Complementation*

Yoko Iyeiri

The present paper discusses the historical development of various patterns of complementation of the verb fear, paying particular attention to (that)-clauses, infinitives, and gerunds. It will be shown that there is a notable contrast between fear in negation and the same verb in affirmative sentences. The former experiences major shifts of complementation in history, in the process of which the use of to-infinitives and gerunds rises, while the historical development of the latter is characterized by a different path, i.e. the expansion of the parenthetical use of fear. Consequently, the development of to-infinitives and gerunds is not at all prominent with fear in affirmative sentences. Furthermore, this paper also touches upon clauses introduced by but and lest as minor constructions of fear. Their use declines by the 20th century, when the verb undergoes the consolidating process of various possible complementation patterns available in the history of English.

1. Introduction

The verb fear, whose historical development is the central concern of the present paper, is often classified in existing research under the category of “verbs of emotion, affection, or liking.” Visser (1963-1973: § 1847), for example, allocates this verb the category of “verbs of affection and disaffection, fearing, desiring, wishing, etc.” Among more recent studies, Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 170) provide the category of “verbs of cognition, emotion, and attitude” along with the illustrative verbs of agree, believe, forget, hope, intend, know, like, love, realize, regret, remember, suppose, think, understand, want, wish, and wonder as well as fear, whereas Dixon (2005: 160) simply gives the category of “liking verbs” to the same type of verbs.
Despite the fact that *fear* is often quoted as one of the representative verbs of this category, its syntactic patterns have hardly been discussed in the literature, while some other verbs have often attracted scholarly attention. Bladon (1968), for instance, discusses the uses of infinitives and gerunds after *like, love, hate, dislike* and *prefer*, but not *fear*. De Smet’s (2004) interest is also centered upon the verb *like* and De Smet and Cuypkens’ (2005) interest upon the verbs *like* and *love*. This does not mean, however, that the syntactic patterning of *fear* is of no interest. It displays a variety of complementation patterns and their shifts in the history of English, which certainly merit our attention. The history of the verb reveals how the patterns of complementation can change within the span of several hundred years and offers hints as to possible paths various verbs can take in their historical development.

One of the hindrances in relation to research into *fear* is its relatively infrequent appearance in texts. To collect a sufficient number of relevant examples from different centuries, I have chosen to analyze the entire dataset of the second edition of *The Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) on CD-ROM, which yields 2,192 examples of the verb *fear*.¹ About half of them present complements of one kind or another, on which the following discussion is essentially based. With respect to Present-day English, I have also investigated LOB and FLOB as supplementary corpora, since 20th-century examples of *fear* in the *OED* are rather restricted in number.

2. *Fear* in Present-day English

Dictionaries tend to spare only limited space for usage of the verb *fear* in Present-day English. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, for instance, refers to some different shades of meanings of this verb within about a score of lines and points out the occurrences of *that*-clauses and *to*-infinitives as its complements. The same applies to the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English* (see Hornby 2005), which gives a limited number of citations for the verb *fear*,
mentioning the use of gerunds as well as that-clauses and to-infinitives as its complements.

Indeed the three syntactic patterns of that-clauses, to-infinitives, and gerunds are observed with fear in Present-day English, as illustrated by the following examples in LOB and FLOB:

(1) “I fear that if I don’t I shall lose any regard you have for me, so I will say at once that I do.” (FLOB, P)

(2) They feared to see “their commerce and manufactures completely destroyed by competition and the interruption in the supply of Austrian coal.” (LOB, J)

(3) It was as if she feared being loved, wrapping a cloak of scorn for sentiment and outward affection around herself as if it might protect her from those payments that love required. (FLOB, N)

These patterns are, however, not equally frequent in contemporary English. The analysis of LOB and FLOB shows that the employment of (that)-clauses (i.e. clauses introduced by the conjunction that or clauses whose introductory that is elliptical) is predominant with fear. LOB yields 24 examples of fear followed by a complement, of which as many as 23 illustrate the use of (that)-clauses. Likewise, FLOB, whose data are 30 years later than those of LOB, presents 27 relevant examples of fear, of which as many as 24 reveal the use of (that)-clauses. In other words, the use of (that)-clauses is pretty much established with fear in Present-day English, whereas other constructions like to-infinitives and gerunds are marginal, though mentioned in dictionaries. In the following, I would like to discuss how the current state of affairs of fear has developed in the history of English and how the existence of other marginal constructions can be explained in historical terms.
One possible reason why the treatment of the syntactic features of *fear* is slight in Present-day English dictionaries is that even the construction *fear* *(that)* ..., which is the predominant form, is formal and increasingly replaced by *be afraid* *(that)* ... on informal occasions (Swan 2005: 28). The infinitival construction “*fear to*-infinitive” is also considered to be formal and equivalent to *be afraid to do* ... (see Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, s.v. *fear*). It is feasible that the overall use of the verb *fear* itself is less and less common, although further research is certainly necessary to prove this point.

Before embarking upon the discussion, it is relevant to state that there may be some differences in meaning among different complementation patterns. Although I am fully aware of this, I would also take the view that changes of syntactic patterns cannot always be explained from the perspective of meanings. Even in contemporary English, verbs of similar meanings can often present different constructions, e.g. *forbid* and *prohibit*. Instead of placing too much emphasis upon the meaning, the precise judgement of which is not always an easy task, the discussion below highlights the shifts of complementation patterns of the verb *fear*. This, I believe, will in turn provide hints about the understanding of various meanings of the same verb.

3. *Fear* and the use of *(that)*-clauses, *to*-infinitives, and gerunds

As mentioned above, the *OED* provides 2,192 examples of *fear* in total excluding duplicated ones, of which about half are followed by complements of one sort or another.⁴ The term “complement” in the present paper is used for subordinate clauses and infinitival or gerundial phrases which function as a core and essential argument for the verb *fear* (cf. Dixon 2006: 15). The discussion of this paper is based upon *fear* with complements, and the present section, in particular, treats the relationship among the three major types of complementation: *(that)*-clauses, *to*-infinitives, and gerunds.
As illustrated by the following, the three types of complements, which are employed in Present-day English, are attested in the historical data of the OED as well:

(4) He feared that if they had not their pardons in likewise, they would either make business or they would avoid. (1514 Ld. Mountjoy in Strype Eccl. Mem., I.i.9)

(5) He leaped out of the bathe vnbathed, because he feared the bathe shoulde haue fallen. (1570 Foxe A. & M. (ed. 2), I.57)

(6) Hee feared to run into any such inconvenience, as might cause his friends to relapse from him. (1633 T. Stafford Pac. Hib., i.v.35)

(7) He, like me, hated and feared being carried in this ship, for all his whistling in the dark. (1968 J. M. White Nightclimber, xix.132)

Despite the limited occurrences of to-infinitives and gerunds in Present-day English (see Section 2 above), they are relatively well attested in history, although in the light of the frequent attestation of (that)-clauses, they are still marginal. See Figure 1, which shows the raw frequencies of the three complementation patterns.5

---

Figure 1. The raw frequencies of fear followed by (that)-clauses, to-infinitives, and gerunds (OED)
Yoko Iyeiri

Since the number of quotations per century is not constant in the *OED*, it is imperative to make a comparison and contrast within each century only. Certainly, it is unwise to compare and contrast the frequencies of different centuries under the same type of complements. Still, this graph presents some clear overall tendencies. The use of *(that)*-clauses is stable with *fear* throughout the history of English, and the second most frequent pattern is the one which employs *to*-infinitives.

Interestingly enough, however, a closer look at the *OED* dataset reveals that there is a marked difference in terms of the complement patterns between *fear* in affirmative sentences and *fear* in negation. The two figures below, which again display the raw frequencies of relevant examples in different centuries, depict the contrast:

![Figure 2. The raw frequencies of affirmative *fear* followed by *(that)*-clauses, *to*-infinitives, and gerunds (*OED*)](image1)

![Figure 3. The raw frequencies of negative *fear* followed by *(that)*-clauses, *to*-infinitives, and gerunds (*OED*)](image2)

First of all, Figures 2 and 3 demonstrate that there is an obvious contrast between *fear* in affirmative sentences and the same verb in negation, in
respect of the frequencies of the relevant examples themselves. More specifically, it has a marked tendency to occur in affirmative sentences. Figures 2 and 3 in total yield 925 examples, of which as many as 870 (94%) are attested in affirmative sentences (Figure 2). Fear is almost next to a positive polarity item in the dataset under analysis.⁶

Secondly, the patterning of complementation differs significantly between affirmative fear and negative fear. With the former, the employment of (that)-clauses is distinctively frequent from the 16th century to the 20th century throughout, whereas with the latter, the same type of complementation occurs much more sparingly. Infinitives and gerunds are more common than (that)-clauses with fear in negation, although the dearth of the data of negative fear makes it difficult to draw definite conclusions for some centuries. In view of the fact that most examples of fear are encountered in affirmative sentences, it is of no surprise that the general inclination of fear reflects its usage in affirmative sentences, where we observe the frequent occurrence of (that)-clauses with fear as discussed above. All in all, it is most important to make a separate treatment of fear in affirmative sentences and the same verb in negation, in discussing the historical development of its complementation patterns.

4. Fear in negation and the use of (that)-clauses, to-infinitives, and gerunds

As for fear in negation, the occurrence of (that)-clauses is not as frequent as in the case of affirmative fear. Instead, some notable historical rises and falls of to-infinitives and gerunds are observed. Since the syntactic development of negative fear (rather than affirmative fear) is, in a way, well in accordance with the historical development of various other English verbs, I will discuss fear in negation first. Fear in affirmative sentences will be discussed in the next section.

With fear in negation, there is a notable attestation of to-infinitives during the early Modern English period, which is later on replaced by the increasing use of gerunds. This is most likely related to what Rohdenburg (2006) calls the Great Complement Shift. While the term
is used for a series of complement shifts English has experienced in the past few hundred years, he puts the following at the top of his list: “the rise of the gerund (both ‘straight’ and prepositional) at the expense of infinitives (and that clauses)” (p. 159). A number of existing studies also point out the occurrence of the shift from to-infinitives to gerunds in the later period of Modern English. About various verbs in texts later than 1710, for instance, Fanego (1996: 49) mentions that gerunds are “becoming gradually more common” than infinitives.7 In other words, the behaviours of the verb fear in negation are much in line with those of other verbs in terms of the historical development of syntactic patterns.

Unfortunately, the historical tendency of (that)-clauses after fear in negation is not clear in Figure 2 due to the dearth of relevant examples, while Rohdenburg’s Great Complement Shift implies the possible occurrence of the shift from that-clauses to gerunds. In my view, however, the historical shift of complementation patterns is a combination of the following two different stages: (a) the decline of that-clauses often leading to the rise of to-infinitives, and (b) the later replacement of to-infinitives by gerunds. A number of scholars point out the replacement of that-clauses by to-infinitives, saying that it most probably occurred to many verbs in later Middle English onwards. Fischer (2003: 27-28), for example, argues that that-clauses started to be replaced by to-infinitives in the course of the Middle English period. See also Fischer, van Kemenade, Koopman, & van der Wurff (2000: 211), Los (2005: 297), Fischer & van der Wurff (2006: 175), and van Gelderen (2006: 169). Although those who discuss the rise of to-infinitives and those who discuss the rise of gerunds are usually different, both are likely to be two different stages of a single sequence of complement shifts. And there is a gap of time between them: the rise of to-infinitives takes place first and it is followed by the rise of gerunds.

In the case of fear in negation, relevant examples are available only from the Modern English period in the OED, which makes the shift from (that)-clauses to to-infinitives practically invisible. Considering the
fact that the development of *fear* in negation conforms to the historical development of various other verbs in respect of the replacement of *to*-infinitives by gerunds, it is presumably a reasonable conjecture that the same verb also experienced the decline of *(that)*-clauses, at least in some measure, before the notable occurrence of the *to*-infinitive in the 16th century as displayed in Figure 3. To prove this, however, it is necessary to investigate another source of data, which would be a separate piece of research.

5. The parenthetical use of *fear*

Although *to*-infinitives and gerunds are also attested with *fear* in affirmative sentences, the complement shifts as described above in relation to *fear* in negation are not at all clear here. This is, I propose, due to the fact that the possible instability of *(that)*-clauses from later Middle English onwards, which was equally observed with affirmative *fear*, led to a different path from the development of *to*-infinitives. To be clearer, the different path taken by affirmative sentences is the development of the parenthetical use of *fear*, as in:

(8) He is altogether French and will seek to draw this King into France, where his life *I fear* will be vendible.
   (1581 Burghley in D. Digges Compl. Ambass. (1655), 394)

(9) Take my armour of quickly, ’twill make him swoune, *I feare*.
   (1598 B. Jonson Ev. Man in Hum., v.ii)

(8) and (9) are unequivocal cases of the usage under discussion, where *I fear* is used parenthetically and where the original subordinate clause has almost obtained the matrix clause status.

Besides examples like (8) and (9), the *OED* provides abundant ambiguous examples like (10) and (11), where the conjunction *that* is elliptical or unexpressed and where *fear* is not dislocated:
(10) *I feare* our happinesse is at the height.  
(1594 Shakes. *Rich. III*, i.iii.41)

(11) *I feare* I may doe wrong to your sufficiencies in the reporting them. (1599 B. Jonson *Cynthia’s Rev.*, i.iv)

In sentences of this kind, it is almost impossible to tell whether *I fear* is purely parenthetical. If it retains its original meaning and function, the clause where the conjunction *that* is unexpressed is a subordinate one, while at the same time it is also possible that the clause is almost like a matrix one and that its subject is the topic of the entire sentence.

The whole issue is essentially a matter of cline. The path taken by *I fear* is similar to what Thompson and Mulac (1991b: 313) argue about the development of the parenthetical use of *I think*. They provide:

(12) a. *I think* that we’re definitely moving towards being more technological.  
    b. I think *θ* exercise is really beneficial, to anybody.  
    c. It’s just your point of view you know what you like to do in your spare time *I think*.

According to them, the topic of the sentences increasingly moves from the subject of the matrix clause to the subject of the complement clause as one goes down the list. The category shift of *I think* is more advanced in (12b) than in (12a) and in (12c) than in (12b). They hold that *I think* in (12b) and (12c) is already what they call an “epistemic phrase”, i.e. parenthetical in use, and that it functions “roughly as an epistemic adverb such as *maybe* with respect to the clause it is associated with” (p. 313). Their argument is essentially in line with Huddleston and Pullum’s (2002) argument that *I think* can be “backgrounded to the status of a modal qualification, informationally comparable to a parenthetical” (p. 953).
Likewise, the category shift of *I fear* was a gradual one, and as a consequence, it is not always easy to judge whether *I fear* in a particular example is parenthetical or not. All one can investigate is: (a) whether the conjunction *that* is elliptical (as in 12b); and (b) whether the dislocation of *fear* takes place (as in 12c). As for the former question, see Table 1, which exhibits the raw frequencies of the conjunction *that* expressed or unexpressed with *fear* in affirmative sentences in the *OED* data:

Table 1. The raw frequencies of (*that*)-clauses with *fear* in affirmative sentences (*OED*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>centuries</th>
<th>13th</th>
<th>14th</th>
<th>15th</th>
<th>16th</th>
<th>17th</th>
<th>18th</th>
<th>19th</th>
<th>20th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>that</em> expressed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>that</em> unexpressed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident here that the conjunction *that* is most commonly unexpressed from the 16th century onwards, although the competitive frequencies between “*that* expressed” and “*that* unexpressed” in the 20th century will need further investigation. By contrast, the ellipsis of *that* is much less common with *fear* in negation, as Table 2 shows:

Table 2. The raw frequencies of (*that*)-clauses with *fear* in negation (*OED*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>centuries</th>
<th>13th</th>
<th>14th</th>
<th>15th</th>
<th>16th</th>
<th>17th</th>
<th>18th</th>
<th>19th</th>
<th>20th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>that</em> expressed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>that</em> unexpressed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unfortunately, the total occurrences of (*that*)-clauses themselves are limited in the case of *fear* in negation, making the interpretation of statistical figures slightly difficult. Still, this table seems to indicate that the ellipsis of *that* is less frequent in the case of *fear* in negation. Or, one could, at least, confidently conclude that the resources for the development of the parenthetical use of *fear* are much more restricted in the case of negation in any case.

As expected, the dislocation of *I fear* (including other subject forms like *we fear*) is a prominent feature of affirmative sentences. A total of 714
instances of (that)-clauses with fear in affirmative sentences includes 123 examples of dislocation, whereas the 15 examples of (that)-clauses with fear in negation do not include a single instance of this phenomenon. As illustrated above by (8) and (9), the dislocation can be observed in middle positions within the sentence as well as at the final position. The following are some additional examples to clarify this point:

(13) For farder Credit off your Worde, you will stande (I feare) for banckeroute. (1566 T. Stapleton Ret. Untr. Jewel)

(14) Though such things pass on those that sermons hear, It will not do with play-judgers, I fear. (1672 Lacy Dumb Lady Prol.)

Furthermore, the proportions of the dislocation at issue reveal a diachronic increase as Table 3 shows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>centuries</th>
<th>13th</th>
<th>14th</th>
<th>15th</th>
<th>16th</th>
<th>17th</th>
<th>18th</th>
<th>19th</th>
<th>20th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dislocation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall chronological increase of the proportions in this table depicts the process of the development of the parenthetical use. The proportions of 17.9% and 15.3% in the 16th and 17th centuries are not at all small, however. In other words, potential candidates for the parenthetical use of fear already appear at an early stage of the development of the verb. This is most likely why to-infinitives and gerunds are always marginal in respect of the complementation patterns of fear in affirmative sentences.

Incidentally, “that unexpressed” with fear in affirmative sentences always includes a large number of I fear and we fear, i.e. examples with first person subjects, showing that parentheticals tend to be fixed in form:“
I fear: The Historical Development of the Verb fear and its Changing Patterns of Complementation

(15) *I fear* he hath other fish to fry. (1660 Evelyn *Mem.* (1857) III. 132)

(16) *I fear me* this traveller hath dined but lightly.\(^1\)

(1828 Scott *F.M. Perth*, xii)

(17) *We fear* the sons are no great improvement upon the sires.

(1878 Spurgeon *Treas. Dav.* Ps., cvi.7)

See the table below, which shows how frequent they are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centuries</th>
<th>13th</th>
<th>14th</th>
<th>15th</th>
<th>16th</th>
<th>17th</th>
<th>18th</th>
<th>19th</th>
<th>20th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>I fear (I fear me)</em> and <em>we fear</em></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The totals of “that unexpressed”</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is difficult to tell from this table whether the proportions are rising or falling in historical terms. By excluding the data of the 15th and 20th centuries, one could possibly state that the fixed forms *I fear* and *we fear* account for around 70% to 80% of “that unexpressed” in affirmative sentences throughout. The 15th century provides too few relevant examples to allow any fair judgement, while the situation of the 20th century may be indicative of a re-established use of *that*-clauses today, which will be touched upon later in the present paper.

Finally, the proportions of *I fear* are particularly large when compared with those of *we fear*. The totals of *I fear* and *we fear* in Table 4 reaches 370, of which 353 are examples of *I fear*. Thus, the subject of the matrix clause of “that unexpressed” has a strong tendency to be the first person singular and its verb tends to be in the present tense.

6. **Fear and clauses of other types**

The discussion has hitherto been focused upon the three complementation types of *(that)-clauses, to-infinitives, and gerunds and their related forms.
It is noteworthy, however, that *fear* is on occasions followed by clauses other than *(that)*-clauses in the history of English:

(18) *I fear lest* it should be discovered by · · · clear reducting to letters no better than nonsense. (1816 Lamb in *Final Mem., vi.247*)

(19) *I doe not feare but that* these few Souldiers will be able to returne againe. (1641 T. Edwards *Reasons agst. Indep., 20*)

(18) illustrates the use of *lest* *(that)*, and (19) the use of *but* *(that)*. Although other examples like *unless* and *whether* are also encountered, their frequencies are extremely low. The present section accordingly deals with the use of *lest* *(that)*-clauses and *but* *(that)*-clauses, both of which are relatively commonly evidenced with verbs of negative connotations in general and not restricted in use with the verb *fear.*

Strictly speaking, clauses introduced by *lest* *(that)* may not be a pure complement of *fear*, since they are adverbial in nature. They are worth mentioning in the context of the present paper, however, in two respects. First of all, their examples are copious (84 in total in the *OED* dataset), displaying how essential their existence is in the discussion of the syntactic development of *fear*. Secondly, they seem to show an almost complementary distribution with *but* *(that)*-clauses, which are certainly related to *(that)*-clauses, in respect of their occurrences. The *OED* (s.v. *fear*) states that the use of *but* *(that)*-clauses is found in negative sentences, and indeed four examples of *but* *(that)*-clauses in the data of the present research are all attested with *fear* in negation. By contrast, the data of the present investigation show that *lest* *(that)*-clauses are strongly inclined to be witnessed with affirmative *fear*. Of the 84 examples of *lest* *(that)*-clauses, as many as 82 take place in the affirmative context. Needless to say, the fact that *lest* *(that)*-clauses are much more frequent than *but* *(that)*-clauses is attributable to the character of *fear*, whose occurrences are skewed towards affirmative sentences.
While discussions on \textit{lest} (\textit{that})-clauses in existing research are sparse, \textit{but} (\textit{that})-clauses are often considered to be a form which took the place of (\textit{that})-clauses with expletive negation\textsuperscript{12} and therefore to have commonly occurred during the early Modern English period when the phenomenon of expletive negation receded in the history of English (cf. Warner 1982: 222-223). As far as the data of the verb \textit{fear} are concerned, three of the four examples of \textit{but} (\textit{that}) are indeed attested in the 17th century, but there is a single lingering instance of it in the 19th century. Similarly, the use of \textit{lest} (\textit{that}) was remnant up to the 19th century. Later on, their use quickly declines, and by the time of the 20th century they are almost unavailable. As far as the \textit{OED} quotations are concerned, there are no 20th-century examples of clauses introduced by \textit{but} (\textit{that}) or \textit{lest} (\textit{that}) with \textit{fear}. Relevant examples are also unavailable in the 20th century data of \textit{LOB} and \textit{FLOB}.	extsuperscript{13}

7. \textbf{Additional comments on (\textit{that})-clauses with \textit{fear}}

Before moving on to the conclusion, I would like to make some additional comments on the results discussed above. Although overall tendencies of the historical development of \textit{fear} are fairly consistent as explored above, its situation in the 20th century is erratic in some respects. The ellipsis of \textit{that} is, for example, a marked feature with affirmative \textit{fear} in general, but in the 20th-century data of the \textit{OED}, clauses with “\textit{that} expressed” make a good competition with those with “\textit{that} unexpressed”. Also, the dislocation of \textit{fear}, which is on the steady rise in history, suddenly declines in the 20th century, as far as its proportion is concerned. Moreover, the ratio of the fairly fixed forms of \textit{I fear} and \textit{we fear} is also smaller in the 20th century than in the other centuries in the \textit{OED}. In other words, the parenthetical use of \textit{fear} seems to recede to a certain extent in the 20th century.

Taking into account the fact that the \textit{OED} quotations in the 20th century are much more limited than in the 19th century, an immediate conclusion as to the 20th-century situation should be avoided. Further
investigation of this matter is certainly called for. However, one could possibly postulate that the use of subordinate clauses introduced by *that* were re-established to a certain extent in the 20th century after a long period of various competitions among different patterns including not only *(that)-clauses, to-infinitives, and gerunds but also clauses introduced by *but (that)* and *lest (that)*. The 20th century is certainly a period when things were settled and consolidated and when the number of variable forms was reduced. In other words, the forms which survived a long period of competitions have now regained and reconfirmed their own statuses in the 20th century.

8. Conclusions

The present paper has discussed the historical development of various complementation patterns of *fear*, which in Present-day English most frequently dominates *(that)-clauses. Clearly, there is a sharp contrast between *fear* in negation and the same verb in affirmative sentences, and therefore they need to be explored separately. The occurrence of *fear* in negation is rather restricted, but its limited examples illustrate interesting complement shifts in the history of English. The early Modern English period saw the rise of *to-infinitives*, which was later on caught up with by the rise of gerunds, although the rise of *to-infinitives* is slightly difficult to observe due to the scarcity of relevant examples in the *OED*.

These shifts are, by contrast, not at all prominent with *fear* in affirmative sentences. This is most likely attributable to the fact that the same verb in affirmative sentences took a different path of development from the early Modern English period onwards. What is outstanding here is the development of the parenthetical use, which is first characterized by the ellipsis of the conjunction *that* and then by the dislocating of *I fear*, etc. In the parenthetical use, the subject of *fear* tends to be the first person (especially singular), and the verb that follows tends to be in the present tense. The *OED* presents copious examples of potential
candidates of this parenthetical use with *fear* in affirmative sentences from the early Modern English period onwards, although the 20th century seems to display the opposite inclination of using *(that)*-clauses of the original kind, which may indicate a possible re-establishment of clauses of this type in recent years.

Apart from *(that)*-clauses, *to*-infinitives, and gerunds, the verb *fear* is also followed by *but *(that)**-clauses and *lest *(that)**-clauses, and this phenomenon is witnessed in some measure at least up to the 19th century. Here again, there is a contrast between *fear* in negation and the same verb in affirmative sentences. *But *(that)**-clauses occur in the former, whereas *lest *(that)**-clauses are particularly favoured in the latter context. The use of *but *(that)**-clauses and *lest *(that)**-clauses suddenly declines around the turn of the 20th century, however. Although *fear* in Present-day English may need further investigation, one could possibly conclude that the 20th century was a period of consolidation of the various possible patterns of this verb. Hence, it observes the decline of some forms and the revived establishment of others.

**NOTES**

* This research was in part supported by Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (No. 18320076). I would like to express my thanks to the anonymous referees for their useful suggestions and necessary corrections of the first draft of this paper.

1. Duplicated examples in the *OED* are counted only once. Unless otherwise specified, the examples in the present paper are cited from the *OED*.

2. Italics in the quotations are mine. This practice is followed throughout the present paper.

3. For the sake of comparison, I have also investigated the complementation patterns of *fear* in American English by using Brown and Frown. Apparently, the use of types other than *(that)*-clauses is slightly more extensive in American English than in British English. The Brown corpus yields 15 relevant examples, which include four *to*-infinitives and one gerund. Similarly, Frown, which is some 30 years later than
Yoko Iyeiri

Brown in compilation, gives a total of 46 relevant examples, which include one to-infinitive example and six gerundial ones.

4. All examples of the verb fear are counted, so long as it is accompanied by complements. In some cases, therefore, fear itself is in the infinitival or gerundial form.

5. As for the dates of the texts from which the examples are extracted, I have followed the datings of the OED. For practical reasons, I have regarded “c1500” as “1500”, and so forth.

6. The relatively infrequent examples of fear in negation include a notable usage of need (e.g. need not fear). The OED quotations contain a total of 62 examples of negative fear with complements, of which 11 occur along with need.

7. In fact, Potter (1975: 134) even alludes to its increase in current English. Furthermore, Mair (2003) and Skandera (2003) point out the increasing use of gerunds in current American English.

8. Brinton (2001) maintains that the same tendency is observed with I mean, you see, I think, I guess, I know, and you know (y’know).

9. The relationship between the ellipsis of that and various linguistic conditions where it occurs has been extensively discussed in the literature, although previous studies tend to deal with verbs like think, tell and know rather than fear and their focus tends to be placed upon Present-day English. For further details, see Thompson and Mulac (1991a, 1991b) and Tagliamonte and Smith (2005).

10. The reflexive use of fear as illustrated by this example is also counted here. The OED (s.v. fear) states that it is archaic now in the phrase I fear me, although it was constant in former days.

11. See, for example, Iyeiri (forthcoming), who investigates the historical development of the complementation patterns of doubt.

12. The occurrence of unnecessary negative words in the subordinate clauses dominated by negatively-coloured verbs is a phenomenon widely attested in Old and Middle English. This is called expletive negation. See, for example: “They moche doubted that theyl shold not fynde theyr counte ne tale” (1483 Caxton Gold. Leg., 197/3).

13. Interestingly enough, the Brown corpus, which includes American English of the 1960s, includes a single instance of lest: “He suggested offering half to Sir Edward, fearing lest ‘he shall thiuke it to good for us and procure it for himselfe, as he served us the last time’” (Brown, G). The participle form fearing lest ... as illustrated by
I fear: The Historical Development of the Verb fear and its Changing Patterns of Complementation

ing this example seems to be rather idiomatic, considering the fact that it also occurs from time to time in the historical dataset of the OED.

REFERENCES


----- and Hubert Cuyckens (2005) “Pragmatic Strengthening and the Meaning of Complement Constructions: The Case of Like and Love with the to-infinitive,” Journal of English Linguistics 33, 3-34.


I fear: The Historical Development of the Verb fear and its Changing Patterns of Complementation


(Kyoto University)
[yiyeiri@bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp]