The House of Stewart as Agent of Language Change

A Historical Sociolinguistic Corpus Analysis of Register Variation and Language Change in the Stewart Letters (1504-1669)

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Abstract

The present project set out to explore whether or not the members of one of the most powerful families in history functioned as agents of language change. Using the Parsed Corpus of Early English Correspondence (PCEEC), the present project examines and discusses linguistic conservatism and innovation in relation to the historical movement towards a Standard English. This is done by scrutinising six members of the house of Stewart that can be found in the PCEEC following theories and frameworks pertaining to the scientific discipline of sociohistorical linguistics. The findings of the present study suggest that the house of Stewart appears to have been in the vanguard of language change in several respects.

Keywords: Historical sociolinguistics, corpus linguistics, the Parsed Corpus of Early English Correspondence (PCEEC), Late Middle and Early Modern English, the house of Stewart.
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### 1 Introduction

“For just as there is no society without language, there is no language without society.”

(Breton 1991: 11)

The social nature of human language was noticed by dialectologists and historical anthropological linguists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but it took much longer for sociolinguistics to become established as a field of linguistics. The first record of the term *sociolinguistics* appeared in an anthropological journal discussing India in 1939, and the field came to be recognised by the 1960s. (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2014) The field of historical sociolinguistics, in turn, has emerged over the last thirty to forty years and can be said to have been pioneered by linguists such as Romaine (1982) and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1987) and, later, consolidated by the works of Milroy (1992), Machan and Scott (1992), Ammon, Mattheier and Nelde (1999), Jahr (1999), Kastovsky and Mettinger (2000), Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003), Bergs (2005), Willemsyns and Vandenbussche (2006) and Conde-Silvestre (2007), for instance. As regards the very nature of the term *historical sociolinguistics*, Romaine (2009: 5) describes it as one that immediately interconnects separate and distinct disciplines of research such as linguistics, history, sociology, anthropology, education, poetics, folklore and psychology. This more hybrid notion is echoed by Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003), as well, who report that the field, indeed, is a cross- and multi-disciplinary field of study which allows for a multiplicity of research approaches and opportunities.

According to Labov (1994: 21), “[t]he task of historical linguists is to explain the differences between the past and the present; but to the extent that the past was different from the present, there is no way of knowing how different it was.” This note is often used to describe, what is called, the *historical paradox*, which derives in part from the different social circumstances of the past and the present, on the one hand, and from historical linguists’ typically incomplete and defective data sources, on the other. Taking up the challenge of this paradox, Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2014) argue that the job of a historical sociolinguist is precisely to try to discover how different the past was, and explain that the means to overcome this paradox is manifold. Like all other historical fields of study, however, the most important standpoint, or *raison d’être*, of historical sociolinguistics is derived from the principle of uniformitarianism, which purports that the present can be used to explain the past – and vice versa.

Research of this kind is of key importance and relevance as the more traditional, one-way (sociolinguistic) relationship between the present and the past, in recent years, has become much more of a two-way-relationship (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003). This is because history has come to be appreciated in its own right as a key factor when it comes to understanding sociolinguistic variation and language change within broad contexts, past as well as present (Nevalainen 1996), and history also helps researchers, in
immeasurable ways, to approach questions such as: Which groups of people have been the biggest agents of language standardisation and how have the various social ranks shaped the English language throughout history?

The present project aims to shed further light to the two questions mentioned above by relating Renaissance English to social factors, and in doing so it can, hopefully, contribute to a growing discussion within historical sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics. This aim is approached by way of sociolinguistic analysis of historical personal correspondence, a methodology which Nevalainen (2003/2013) and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003) assert presents a valuable and unique opportunity to delve into and describe social variables in relation to language change. The scholarly interest in historical letters and letter writing, which has recently been renewed, has, further, given rise to a number of studies which delve into the culture of epistolarity from a range of different perspectives (Del Lungo Camiciotti 2014). Researchers such as Akrigg (1984), Heikonen (1996), Raumolin-Brunberg (1996), Lerer (1997), Nevalainen (1996/2002b/2013), Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003) and Evans (2013), for instance, have studied register variation and language change apparent in the Tudor and Stuart periods both quantitatively and qualitatively. Some of these studies have had primary focus on just one, or a few, individuals (see e.g. Akrigg 1984) whereas others have adopted broader foci and aimed at addressing the linguistic practices of more extensive groups of people (see e.g. Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003). Naturally, different primary materials have been the subjects of investigation, as well, including not only correspondence registers, but depositions, examinations and journals, for instance, too (Nevalainen 2013, cf. Lilja 2007; Walker 2007). However, since historical sociolinguistics is still in its pioneering (Raumolin-Brunberg 1996: 59) and fact-finding (Nevalainen 2002a: 191) stage, the emphasis for further research is echoed by many (see e.g. Biber 1995: 363; Nevalainen 1996: 8/2002a: 191; Nurmi 2000: 358-359; Raumolin-Brunberg 1996: 180).

Turning to one of the most robust findings in sociolinguistics today, one finds gender differentiation in language variation and change (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003). Chambers (1995: 124-125), for instance, refers to women as the guardians of the standard language, and by analysing historical personal correspondence, the historical sociolinguist is enabled the chance to check if this has been the case throughout history, as well. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003), further, stress that information about social status should not be excluded from the agenda of historical sociolinguistics, either, as social differences, most probably, were even more deeply entrenched in medieval and early modern realities than they are in western civilisations today. The present study pays attention to both sides of this coin.

In more precise detail, and in much the same way sociolinguists study present-day speech communities, the present project examines how three sixteenth-century incoming language processes of change (following Nevalainen 2013) find favour with the members of the house of Stewart. As noted by Del Lungo Camiciotti (2014), most scholarly
contributions centring on historical correspondence registers tend to consider the linguistic practices of big groups of people of the Late Middle and Early Modern periods (see e.g. Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003). However, there is also a growing body of research conducting in-depth investigations of the linguistic practices of just one or a few individuals, as well: Akrigg (1984) focused on James VI of Scotland and I of England, Heikkonen (1996) focused on Henry V, Evans (2013) focused on Queen Elizabeth I and Nevalainen (2013) focused on Henry VIII together with his secretaries, for instance. Adjusting the aim of research towards just one or a few individuals can be particularly beneficial and interesting as individuals can differ widely from the general public in terms of language use and their ability to promote language shifts (Nevalainen 2013). By providing an account of how three incoming language processes of change found favour with one of the most powerful families in history (Cannon & Hargreaves 2009), the present study provides an additional facet of understanding to the field of historical sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics and, more concretely, the discussion concerning historical linguistic conservatism and innovation.

1.1 Historical Background and the House of Stewart

The present section serves to paint a general picture of the society in which the informants under scrutiny lived, some characteristics of Renaissance English and the participants of the study are also given brief introductions.

1.1.1 Tudor and Stuart Britain

As hinted in Table 1.1, Tudor and Stuart Britain was a strictly hierarchical society (Lockyer 2005: 139-162/379-392/511-531).
Table 1.1 Titles in relation to estate and grade in Tudor and Stuart Britain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estate</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Title*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GENTRY</td>
<td>Nobility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Royalty</td>
<td>Lord, Lady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Archbishop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marquess</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Earl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Viscount</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baron</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bishop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gentry proper</td>
<td>Sir, Dame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baronet 1611–</td>
<td>Knight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Esquire</td>
<td>Mr, Mrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gentleman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professions</td>
<td>Army Officer (Captain, etc.), Government Official (Secretary of State, etc.), Lawyer, Medical Doctor (Doctor), Merchant, Clergyman, Teacher, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NON-GENTRY</td>
<td>Yeoman</td>
<td>Goodman, Goodwife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>(Name of Craft: Carpenter, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Husbandman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Craftsman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tradesman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Artificer</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>(Labourer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cotter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pauper</td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*occupational titles given in brackets)

(Raumolin-Brunberg 1996: 26).

In medieval Britain, society was divided into three estates: the clergy (whose concerns regarded prayer and spiritual wellbeing), warriors (the defenders of the country) and labourers whose hard work supported the other two estates. However, in time a new kind of hierarchy came into play (the one portrayed in Table 1.1), within which the main dividing line separated the gentry from the non-gentry. The gentry was made up of two different kind of categories, however: nobility and gentry proper. Although they are not listed in Table 1.1, there was also a group of people under the category of ‘pseudo-gentry’ – town dwellers without land but who, still, had a gentry-like way of life. Worth of note is also that there were social climbers who attained new and higher positions by means of successful careers or marriages, for instance – these often took the form of professionals who managed to receive a coat of arms and, thereby, acquire the title of Gent (Gentleman) and sometimes even Esquire (Stone 1966: 53). This honour was only given to those (men) who had studied at university and were able to live without having to resort to manual labour, however (Raumolin-Brunberg 1996: 25-29).

Within the gentry, one’s social rank (or station) was almost entirely based on land ownership and it was, generally, accompanied by a title (or marker of social rank). Commonly, people bore titles befitting their social rank: Lord and Lady were reserved for the nobility, Sir and Dame were reserved for the ranks of baronets and knights (the upper
gentry) and Mr (Master) and Mrs (Mistress) were reserved (mostly) for the lower gentry. Mistress was the traditional title for a gentlewoman and Master was the traditional title for a gentleman. Noteworthy is that the boundaries between these distinctions were sometimes permeable, however, as titles could be extended by courtesy to people of different social ranks and as their social application widened as time progressed. (Nevalainen 2000: 188-190). Table 1.2 displays in part what has been elaborated in the present section.

Table 1.2 The widening social application of titles among the upper ranks in Early Modern Britain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term/Rank</th>
<th>lord</th>
<th>lady</th>
<th>sir</th>
<th>madam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nobility</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knights and baronets</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentry</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Nevalainen 2002: 190).

The notion of a strictly hierarchical society is further elaborated by Raumolin-Brunberg (1996: 25), as well, who explains that there was a clear social hierarchy of literacy, too:

1) Professionals (100% literacy).
2) Gentry (97-98% literacy).
3) Yeomen and wealthier merchants.
4) Tradesmen and craftsmen.
5) Husbandmen.
6) Servants.
7) Labourers.
8) Women.

Despite the fact that there was a general social hierarchy of literacy, however, it is likely that there were at least a few people in every local community who knew how to read and write (Raumolin-Brunberg 1996: 25). From a more general sense, Stone (1996: 20) and Cressy (1980: 176) point out that the overwhelming majority of the population was not literate, however, as the gentry and the professionals constituted a very small demographic portion.

The education of sons of élite families during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries took place at home or at households of respected families. Spending some time at Oxford, Cambridge and the Inns of Court together with a grand tour of Europe was also common, however. Training for a life of power and social authority, manners, morals and proper behaviour of their rank was considered important. The education of women, in contrast, aimed at skills needed for domestic purposes – thinking it was necessary to teach women how to read and write was uncommon and all institutions of higher education were closed to them. (Raumolin-Brunberg 1996: 28-29) The social status of women appeared in stark contrast to that of men, as well – before they were wed, their social
status was the same as their fathers’ and after they were wed, it was that of the husbands’.
It is also noteworthy that women, generally, had the same level of literacy as men of the
lowest social ranking. (1996: 25)

Despite limited social and economic privileges for women in general, however,
Raumolin-Brunberg (1996: 38) reports that the situation for some of them might not have
been so underprivileged. Widows, for instance, could act as they saw fit and be in
possession of great fortunes from their late husbands, as well. Nevalainen and Raumolin-
Brunberg (2014) explain that the origins for this occurrence stem from the condition that
while gender often determined the manners in which men and women were received,
social status played an even bigger role.

Stone (1996: 16) estimates that approximately five percent of the population
represented the nobility and the gentry, whereas Raumolin-Brunberg (1996: 37) suggests
that this number is too generous and points to figures around one percent. According to
the more generous estimates of the time, Late Middle and Early Modern Britain was also
a largely rural society with just about ten percent of the population living in towns around
1500 (Nevalainen 2000: 256).

1.1.2 Late Middle and Early Modern English

As an introduction, it is noteworthy that the present essay makes use of a correspondence
corpus called the Parsed Corpus of Early English Correspondence (PCEEC) as primary
material for analysis. This corpus is elaborated in greater detail in Section 4.1, but for the
purposes of the present section it suffices to say that the corpus consists of personal letters
from the period of time between 1415 and 1681 (Nevalainen et al. 2011a) and, thus,
straddles Late Middle and Early Modern English and the Tudor and Stuart periods (Guy
1998; Coward 2003). As far as Late Middle and Early Modern English are concerned,
then, Lass’ (2001) view is that it would not make much sense to the modern listener in
terms of phonology:

A modern listener would find the (probably rather small) part of the language that was
comprehensible at all both surprising and rather confusing. The impression would be something like
a cross between Irish and Scots and West Yorkshire, with touches of American. (Lass 2001: 257)

Other researchers, such as Milroy (2002), suggest that the modern listener, probably,
would be able to understand more than what is described in Lass (2001), however, and
for the fairly well-versed modern reader, in turn, the doors to being able to conduct
linguistic research, for instance, are wide open (Nevalainen 2006; Del Lungo Camiciotti
2014).

As stressed by Nevalainen (2013), however, the quantity of the material passed on to
us is often at issue in the empirical study of language history. The combination of the
factors that the vast majority of the population in Tudor and Stuart Britain was not literate
(Cressy 1980) and that there was a clear social hierarchy of literacy (Raumolin-Brunberg
1996: 25), as well, paved the way for most letters to be produced by very specific (male)
groups of people, i.e. people belonging to the upper social strata. The people of the upper
social strata, in turn, consisted of the professional people and the gentry, but as there has, mainly, only existed a tendency to preserve letters of important historical events and letters written by historically important people (Nurmi 2000: 53-54), the social coverage is not as big as it could be.

Rightfully, Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2005: 39) also distinguish between literacy and, so called, pragmatic literacy, as only the former led to letter writing and, therefore, to inclusion in the PCEEC. What has been elaborated in the present section is often referred to as Labov’s (1994) famous ‘bad data’ claim, as well, which purports that “historical sociolinguistics … can be thought of as the art of making the best use of bad data” (1994: 11). Contrary to this claim, Nevalainen (2013) asserts that royal letters, for instance, can serve as a relevant source of primary evidence for language historians.

1.1.3 The House of Stewart

Subscribing to Nevalainen’s (2013) assessments regarding the linguistic relevance of historical royal letters and the importance of testing the relevance of social status, the present study chose to scrutinise the members of the house of Stewart that can be found in the PCEEC, a family which has received little linguistic attention so far. According to Cannon and Hargreaves (2009), the house of Stewart (whose spelling has transitioned from ‘Steward’ to ‘Stewart’ to ‘Stuart’, throughout the years) ruled Scotland for over 300 years in direct descent and inherited the thrones of England and Ireland in 1603. In Table 1.3, the members of the house of Stewart that can be found in the PCEEC (and, thus, fall under scrutiny) are given brief historical accounts (following Cannon & Hargreaves 2009).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Life</th>
<th>Relation</th>
<th>Social Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charles Stuart I.</td>
<td>1600-1649.</td>
<td>Son of James VI of Scotland.</td>
<td>Royalty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Cromwell.</td>
<td>1599-1658.</td>
<td>Son of Elizabeth Stewart (Cromwell).</td>
<td>Nobility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Stuart II.</td>
<td>1630-1685.</td>
<td>Son of Charles Stuart I.</td>
<td>Royalty.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The purpose of Table 1.3 is to deliver a clear and simple picture of who the informants are and how they relate to the house of Stewart, as the linguistic practices of these are what falls under the present study’s magnifier.
2  Aim and Scope

It goes without saying that the present study cannot include all subfields of historical corpus- and sociolinguistic analyses nor adopt a larger-scale aim – it must settle for what the size of the study allows. Consequently, only three out of 14 incoming language changes of the sixteenth-century are explored. As noted by researchers such as Evans (2013) and Nevalainen (2013), however, sharply scrutinising historical individual linguistic practices can prove especially beneficial and interesting, as well.

With regards to the members of the house of Stewart, the present project aims to answer the following research questions:

1) Out of the members of the house of Stewart that can be found in the PCEEC, how do these individuals rank in terms of linguistic innovation and conservatism?
2) In relation to the general linguistic patterns of the period, was the house of Stewart in the vanguard of language change or on the more conservative side?

These two questions receive further light thanks to the statistical models, analyses and discussions presented in Section 5, which all stem from the investigation concerning the following sixteenth-century language processes of change (following Nevalainen 2013):

a) The second-person subject form (‘ye’ vs. ‘you’).

b) The third-person singular present indicative suffix (‘-th’ vs. ‘–s’).

c) The first-person possessive dependent determiner (‘mine’ vs. ‘my’).

2.1  The Language Changes Under Scrutiny

2.1.1  The Second-person Subject Form ‘ye’ vs. ‘you’

As is exemplified in extracts (2.1) – (2.2), the subject pronoun ‘ye’ came to be replaced by ‘you’ during the Late Middle and Early Modern English periods (Nevalainen 2013).

(2.1)  *doe it by the Secretaire ye used last* (Charles Stuart I 1620, PCEEC).

(2.2)  *you will see Newcastles armie march vp into your bowells* (Oliver Cromwell 1643, PCEEC).

This language change might be associated with the general trend of the disappearance of the contrast in English, whereas what triggered the change is speculated to be phonological confusion since both forms had the same weak forms. A few things there remain more certainty about is the fact that the change was naturally binary, followed an S-shaped development, was very rapid and lasted for, approximately, 80 years, however (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 58-61). This can also be seen from Figure 2.1:
Figure 2.1 further makes transparent that ‘you’ replaced ‘ye’ the most swiftly during the course of the sixteenth century as second-person subject pronoun. The change was completed only within a couple of generations in all ranks and the linguistic development of this change speaks for a wide-ranging acceptability of the incoming form at the time.

As is demonstrated by example (2.1), however, a few people still favoured the more conservative form during the seventeenth century, as well.

When it comes to the main instigators of this language change, evidence points to that these were women, as is also hinted in Figure 2.2:
In addition to showing that the change was not only rapid, Figure 2.2 also purports that women markedly and consistently promoted the change from the early sixteenth century onwards. The systematic gender advantage emerges when the frequency level of ‘you’ exceeds 20 per cent. The male-female margin, in turn, is at its widest in the mid-course of the change.

Connecting to the previous paragraph, Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003) explain that the reason for the wide male-female margin might have its roots in that the change, at the time, diffused from upper and middle ranks to the lower, with only social aspirers lagging behind. During the latter half of the sixteenth century, these social status differences were levelled out, however, as can be seen in Figure 2.3.

2.1.2 The Third-person Singular Present Indicative Suffix ‘-th’ vs. ‘-s’

The replacement of the suffix ‘-th’ by ‘-s’ has been studied by a number of researchers, but, perhaps, most extensively in Holmqvist (1922). This change is usually considered as a very long process beginning in the north in the tenth-century and ending in the most resistant forms ‘hath’ and ‘doth’ in Late Modern English. The final consonant is where the focus of attention has been, here, the shift from ‘-th’ to ‘-s’. According to Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003: 68), this change embodied a puzzling behaviour which is hard to explain, but the shift followed an S-pattern, was rapid and can be said to have undergone the most drastic changes between 1580 and 1660. Extracts (2.3) – (2.4) exemplify the change and Figure 2.4 portrays a part of its diachronic development:
(2.3) *He and the bichopp off Murrey orderth every thynge* (Margaret Stewart (Tudor) 1504, PCEEC).

(2.4) *since youths loves their equalles best* (Elizabeth Stuart 1633, PCEEC).

![Figure 2.4](image)

**Figure 2.4** The replacement of the third-person singular suffix ‘-th’ by ‘-s’. Percentages of ‘-s’. (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 68)

The behaviour of this change can be described as puzzling in that the use of ‘-s’ increased in Late Middle English, saw a subsequent drop for about a century and then grew quickly again around 1600. When considering the general linguistic trend of the change, Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003) noticed there were considerable differences between the north and the south when it came to adapting to the incoming form, as well, but this for natural reasons as it was the north that introduced the more innovative rival.

![Figure 2.5](image)

**Figure 2.5** The replacement of the third-person singular suffix ‘-th’ by ‘-s’. Gender distribution of ‘-s’. (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 123)
Paying attention to Figures 2.4 and 2.5, there is good reason to think of the diffusion of the third-person present-tense suffix ‘-s’ in terms of two waves: one in the second half of the fifteenth century and another a century later. Figure 2.5, further, suggests that also this change was gender-sensitive and that women functioned as the stronger promoters of the second wave in the sixteenth century. (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 122)

When it comes to the male advantage during the latter half of the fifteenth century, Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003) voice words of caution, as the data available from this time consists almost exclusively of that of men. Data from the sixteenth century onwards is also heavily represented by men, but during this time there is a measurable amount of data from women available, as well. The gender advantage enters early on in the change from the ‘-th’ suffix to the ‘-s’ suffix: before the change has reached the frequency level of 20 to 30 per cent. According to Nevalainen (1996), the new incoming forms of the most resistant forms ‘hath’ and ‘doth’ testified stronger favour with women, as well: ‘have’ and ‘does’ were adopted earlier by women.

Although the changes under scrutiny run parallel in the first half of the sixteenth century, the difference between men and women is less striking with ‘-s’ than it is with subject ‘you’. The reasons for this may be found in the social orientations of the two changes: In social terms, subject ‘you’ spread from above and the middle whereas ‘-s’ spread from the lowest literate ranks to the middle and upper strata. (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 123)

![Figure 2.6](image)

**Figure 2.6** The replacement of the third-person singular suffix ‘-th’ by ‘-s’. Percentages of ‘-s’. (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 144)

The use of ‘-s’ also varied according to register: both Görlach (1990: 113) and Kytö (1993) found that besides private writings, ‘-s’ was also typically used in verse drama in the sixteenth century but avoided in formal registers.
2.1.3 The First-person Possessive Dependant Determiner ‘mine’ vs. ‘my’

The last language process of change under scrutiny, the replacement of ‘mine’ by ‘my’, follows the S-curve, as well, and witnessed the most activity from 1410-1681. The first-person possessive dependent determiner lost its -N inflection in Renaissance English – examples (2.5) and (2.6) demonstrate this change.

(2.5) Myn lord Chanselere come not here sone I come to Lundun (William Paston II 1454, PCEEC).

(2.6) neither will I presume to present my unworthy service to hir Majesty (Arabella Stuart 1603, PCEEC).

Schendl (1997) argues that the distribution of the elements was phonologically determined, i.e. that the forms in -N appeared before words with initial vowels or an initial <h> and that the N-less variants collocated with words of different initial phonology. However, as exemplified from extract (2.5) and as testified in Figure 2.7, history attests to a rather more multi-faceted depiction.

![Figure 2.7](image-url)  

Example (2.5) and Figure 2.7 show that the possessive collocated with words with initial consonants, as well, both in its more conservative and innovative form. Interestingly, Jespersen claimed that the analogical extension of the N-less form began “from the end of the 16th c.” (1927: 212), but it appears this claim has been disarmed now. Figure 2.7, further, illustrates the wave-like pattern according to which the short form diffuses from one linguistic environment to another. Words with an initial consonant were the first adopt the N-less variant and about 90 per cent of the words with an initial consonant occurred with this alternative already during the fifteenth century. The forms preceding
an initial <h> culminated during 1540-1579 and the frequencies for words with an initial vowel and ‘own’ rose steeply towards the mid-seventeenth century. Of special significance to mention is also the fact that assessing the pronunciation of individual words with an initial <h>, that pertain to the period of time under scrutiny, is problematic. Following Nevalainen’s and Raumolin-Brunberg’s (2003: 61) lead, items with an initial <h> were, therefore, selected mechanically according to the spelling.

Worth of note is that the present study has only considered the possessives ‘mine’ and ‘my’ and neither ‘thine’ nor ‘thy’, however, and the change has only been analysed in terms of one linguistic environment - one that takes into account all initial phonologies, as opposed to four separate. This choice of investigative consideration might prove problematic and difficult to justify as previous research has centred largely on forms preceding vowels, an initial <h> and the word own (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 62), but as the curious spirit pertaining to the present study was more interested in probing into the general development of how the form in -N transcended to the N-less variant within the house of Stewart, the initial plan was not abandoned. Instead, it was hoped that the original strategy would yield interesting and fruitful results that, in turn - although not perfectly well-matched with Nevalainen’s and Raumolin-Brunberg’s (2003) study -, would be compatible for comparison efforts, could contribute to discussions dealing with linguistic conservatism and progression as well as inspire future research agendas. Paying credit to the analyses and discussions carried out in the present paper, it is hoped that this decision has not been in vain.

Besides, it is a well-known fact that the use of ‘mine’ vs. ‘my’ diffused across all four linguistic environments, and although it might be of greater interest and wiser to consider only a select few separately when studying Late Middle and Early Modern English, the present study argues that paying attention to the remaining piece of the puzzle can be of interest, as well. This argument can be said to have spawned from the conclusions one can draw from Example (2.5) and Figure 2.7, but also the observation that the distinction between ‘mine’ and ‘my’ was only “pretty consistently observed in the standard language” (Barber 1976: 207, emphasis added). Barber (1976: 208) explains that before 1600, ‘mine’ and ‘my’ occurred “in free variation”, and then during the seventeenth century the form in -N gradually receded until it, eventually, disappeared (from literary prose) by 1700. Barber notes that the more conservative form was still used as conscious archaism even after 1700, however – but, although it was rare, this means that ‘mine’ still occurred before consonants even in the sixteenth century, for example in William Tyndale’s (an English scholar) translation of the Bible and in John Heywood’s (an English writer) works, as well (Spies 1897). Graband (1965: 252) further adds that the form in -N frequently got mixed up with the N-less variant in sixteenth century English and Shakespeare’s inconsistent use of the possessives has been a topic of conversation more than once, too (Franz 1939, cf. Scheler 1982). Probing into the linguistic practices like those of Shakespeare’s, Abbott (1870: 160) put forward a rule suggesting that the shorter
form was preferred before vowels in stressed position, but here Schmidt (1962) noticed that there exists a number of counterexamples that could work to nullify this rule.

All of what has been aforementioned is interesting in that it becomes easy to assume that the change from ‘mine’ to ‘my’ with regards to consonants was completed already before the sixteenth century if one pays attention to Nevalainen’s and Raumolin-Brunberg’s (2003: 62) graph (Figure 2.7), but clearly this does not hold true and that is what makes it interesting to see how the curve behaved after 1460-1499, as well. The size of the present study cannot hope to achieve such a thing, but it can tell how the house of Stewart fended in this regard and serve as potential material for comparison and discussion for future studies.

In terms of gender, the short possessive determiner ‘my’ bore witness to a systematic gender advantage, as well. Figure 2.8 illustrates this process.

![Figure 2.8](image)

Figure 2.8 ‘My’ and ‘thy’ vs. ‘mine’ and ‘thine’. Gender distribution of ‘my’ and ‘thy’. (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 119)

Once the frequency level of the n-less variant reached 30 per cent, the change begins to be promoted by women (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 119-120). Considering the social locus of this linguistic change, Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003) noticed little variability across the social spectrum at the beginning of the sixteenth century, whereas the change for the remaining part of the century was clearly driven from below.
Important to note is that Figures 2.8 and 2.9 both derive their data only from possessives in pre-adjacent position to words with initial vowels and the word ‘own’, however, and not the remaining linguistic environments.
3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Approach and Principle

As sociolinguistics, be it historical or contemporary, “always requires attention to both sides of the coin: language and society” (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2005: 35), the present study adopts a variationist approach and framework in that it is interested in creating statistical models of factors that can help explain linguistic practices in relation to social information. The idea that paying attention to the analyses carried out by social historians is of vital importance is echoed by Bailey et al. (2013), as well, who maintain that one of the core beliefs within variationist sociolinguistics is that in order to understand language, the variables as well as the categorical processes surrounding language need to be understood, too, with the mind-set that the variation witnessed is not random. This echoes Nevalainen’s and Raumolin-Brunberg’s (2005: 34) description of the approach, as well, which is that the variationist approach “is based on the assumption that language change does not take place without variation” and an approach that goes hand in hand with the uniformitarian epistemological stance - a principle which also the present study subscribes to. This principle maintains that the same natural laws and processes that operate today also have done so in the past, which, from a sociolinguistics point of view, means that the present can be used to explain the past (Nevalainen 2013, cf. Labov 2010: 375; Romaine 1982: 122).

3.2 Previous Research

The present section provides brief introductions of some previous research projects in the field of linguistics that are worth of mention and deemed to be of particular relevance to the present essay. Some of these will be considered parallelly in Sections 5 and 6, as well, but these sections will also consider research findings that are not mentioned in the present section.

3.2.1 Historical Sociolinguistics

Romaine’s (1982) study provided the first systematic attempt to analyse historical data using sociolinguistic models. In this study, relative markers in Middle Scots (1530-1550) fell under scrutiny from the perspectives of both linguistic and stylistic variation. Since then, the notion of ‘genre’ has dominated historical studies of language variation (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003).

As far as historical sociolinguistics is concerned more generally, Romaine (1982: 5) describes the term as one that immediately suggests an interconnection between separate and distinct disciplines such as linguistics, history, sociology, anthropology, education, poetics, folklore and psychology. The foundation for the new direction of historical sociolinguistics within the framework of variationist theory, in turn, was provided by the group of scholars working with Matti Rissanen in Helsinki (Kastovsky & Mettinger 2000:
5-6) and, as noted by Del Lungo Camiciotti (2014), for instance, this direction has guided many studies focusing on epistolary discourses across the centuries. Most of these studies have tended to adopt broader foci and concentrated on the linguistic practices of more extensive groups of people, and particularly of the eighteenth-century (see e.g. Postigliola et al. 1985). Interestingly, Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003: 57) also report that an abundance of studies dealing with individual linguistic changes have been conducted, as well, however. In Section 3.2.2 - 3.2.3, some of these studies (of both sorts) are elaborated.

3.2.2 Empirical Studies of Temporal Issues

Devitt’s (1989) study delved into the Anglicisation of Scottish English during the period of time between 1520-1659. This study examined five linguistic changes in terms of both real and apparent time and reached the conclusion that the S-shaped curve provides considerable descriptive power, although not all of the study’s findings form an S-pattern. The study, further, provides valuable methodological discussions.

Kroch (1989) introduced a constant-rate hypothesis of language change, which appears to challenge some widely accepted linguistic theories of language change, such as that of lexical diffusion. Considering the development of periphrastic auxiliary do in Late Middle English in Ellegård’s 1953 corpus, for instance, Kroch (1989) argues that language change proceeds at the same rate in all linguistic contexts.

Croft (2000), in turn, discusses Kroch’s (1989) constant-rate hypothesis in relation to general sociolinguistic variables and maintains there are difficulties in identifying the beginning and end of a process of language change and how languages change.

Ogura’s and Wang’s (1996) study discusses the snowball effect of lexical diffusion and argues that the rates of linguistic change vary from word to word, site to site and speaker to speaker. This study examined the third-person singular suffix, as well.

3.2.3 Empirical Studies of Epistolary Discourse

In her material of Middle Scots correspondence, Romaine (1982: 167-170) finds that the linguistic practices of women come closer to vernacular norms than those of men do. This finding is echoed by Meurman-Solin’s (2000) study, as well, which examined a number of sixteenth-century Scottish English letters. Kytö (1993), too, informs that the third-person singular present-tense indicative ‘–s’ was used more by women than by men in private letters between 1500-1640, which suggests women were more progressive in their language use.

Rydén and Brorström (1987: 206), however, find women more conservative than men when mutative transitive verbs changed from the older BE-dominated paradigm to a HAVE-dominated one (they are come vs. they have come, for instance). Next, Nevalainen (1991) noticed how men appeared to display more variation than women in terms of the shift from the colloquial form but to only (she’s but/only a child). Lastly, H. C. Wyld’s (1936)
study argues that women were not the dominant force when it came to language standardisation in the Early Modern English period.

According to Williams (2014), Nevalainen’s and Raumolin-Brunberg’s (2003) extensive study also “unquestionably marked a new phase in the historical study of languages and acted as the main catalyst in legitimising the field of historical variationist sociolinguistics”. This study explores eleven incoming sixteenth-century language processes of change (and more) across a wide range of people and proves that sociolinguistic models can fruitfully be applied to earlier states of a language like English.

3.2.4 Frequency Effects and Language Change

As will become clear from Section 4.2, one of the key features of measurement in the present study is word frequency. In what follows, previous research discussing the influence frequencies of occurrence might have on language change is presented.

Schuchardt’s (1885) study suggests that the frequency of occurrence for words can play an important role in linguistic transformations not just on smaller levels, but on more significant levels, as well. According to Honeybone et al. (2016), this echoes the basic frequency argument that words behave differently in language changes and accordingly to how frequently speakers use them.

As an example of a clear case where frequency effects have been present, both Bybee’s (2006) and Phillips’ (2006) studies refer to the Coronal Stop Deletion phenomenon. Phillips’ (2006) study, for instance, notices that, in some cases, there is a correlation between how frequently words are used by language producers and how probable it is linguistic units of the same words might undergo a process of deletion. Bybee adds that changes which “are the result of phonetic processes that apply in real time as words are used … words of high frequency will change at a faster rate than will words of low frequency” (2006: 270). This is not to say that low frequencies of occurrence do not have effects on language change, however, nor that the type of language change is always predictable from information about frequency (Bybee 1984). The view that findings regarding frequency effects in contemporary variations can be applied to the historical study of language, as well, as suggested by Bybee (2006) and Phillips (2006), for instance, is echoed by the works of Romaine (1982: 122), Labov (2010: 375) and Nevalainen (2013), for instance, too.

Tamminga (2014) provides a similar report to that of Bybee (2006): When language changes involve some sort of reduction during production, for instance, the linguistic representation of a word is likely to grow into (or produce) even more reduced forms that, in turn, are likely to be selected for production and subjected to further reduction, which, in the end, results in a consistent direction of development for words of a language. Tamminga (2014) concludes that words with higher frequencies of occurrence get more chances to be involved in processes of change, and so they change more rapidly.

Pierrehumbert’s (2002) study, instead, offers an account of how frequent words can lead changes not only in processes of reduction, however, but in non-reductive processes,
as well: “[A]ny systematic bias on the allophonic outcome would incrementally impact high frequency words at a greater rate than low frequency words” (2002: 118). Pierrehumbert (2002) explains that the effects of frequency can go both ways, i.e. just like words that undergo reduction do so in relation to how frequently they are used, so do words that undergo non-reductive changes.

Other researchers whose studies seem to indicate that frequencies can have an active role when it comes to language change include Stuart-Smith and Timmins (2006), Clark and Trousdale (2009) and Clark and Watson (2011).

### 3.3 Significance of the Present Work

Although a considerable number of letter studies have been carried out already (Del Lungo Camiciotti 2014) and there is risk of partial replication to these in terms of methodologies and results, the present work argues that additional attention is of strong benefit for the following reasons:

1) In the event that partially similar methodologies and aims are used or similar results are reached, extra robustness and credibility will have been credited to the methodologies and results.

2) Extra light will be thrown at the PCEEC in relation to the CEEC (Corpus of Early English Correspondence) in terms of (potentially non-existing) linguistic and social data.

3) Extra dimensions to the discussion of historical agents of language change as well as to historical sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics will be added.

4) The value and importance of further conducting research by means of the frameworks and theories pertaining to the fields of historical sociolinguistics and corpus linguistics will become highlighted.

The studies presented throughout are also of special value and relevance to the present study, and some even function as sources of inspiration. Furthermore, the present study is crowned significance as many researchers emphasise the need to conduct further historical sociolinguistic research (see e.g. Nevalainen 1996: 88/2002: 191; Raumolin-Brunberg 1996: 180; Biber 1995: 363; Nurmi 2000: 358-359) and as the present study throws extra light at text categories and individuals that strongly benefit from additional attention. The period from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century is also unique in that it represents a pre-normative era of grammar – social status and language change can, therefore, be explored without the norms and social evaluations that came with Standard English (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003). Chambers (1995: 51) also suggests that grammatical variables mark social stratification even more strongly than phonological variables do, rendering the inquisitive task of studying morpho(phone)logical change in written historical letters well worth the effort, in all probability.
4 Material and Method

4.1 Material

The present study makes use of the text files of the Parsed Corpus of Early English Correspondence (PCEEC) as primary material. The PCEEC is a correspondence corpus consisting of personal letters and is based on the full, unannotated and unpublished CEEC (Corpus of Early English Correspondence). The corpus contains over three-quarters of the original CEEC, measuring up to 84 letter collections, 4970 letters and approximately 2.2 million words from the period of time between 1415 and 1681. Personal letters, in this case, refers to letters written by an identifiable author to another identifiable recipient, and the letters are all in English. The corpus was, further, designed particularly with sociohistorical linguistics research in mind (Nevalainen et al. 2011a) which, among other things, means only original spelling editions have been included in the corpus. The aim of the corpus “has been to reach as broad a social representativeness as possible” (Nurmi 1998: 53).

As the present study only targets the members of the house of Stewart that can be found in the PCEEC, however, the whole corpus is not used. Therefore, a manual extraction was required in order to produce a new, smaller, corpus containing only letters from the Stewart family. Unfortunately, as the PCEEC in its original form is only compatible with CorpusSearch (a linguistics analysis software programme different from the one used in the present study, i.e. WordSmith), manual efforts were also necessary to ensure that all the codes were omitted and only relevant text was left to be scrutinised.

In Table 4.1, detailed information as to the distribution of words and letters across the members of the house of Stewart is provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Producer</th>
<th>Number of Letters</th>
<th>Number of Words</th>
<th>Words/Letter Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Stewart</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1630</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Tudor)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabella Stuart</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>31493</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Stuart</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1782</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Stuart I</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1665</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Cromwell</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2740</td>
<td>548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Stuart II</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>11471</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 154</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total: 53741</strong></td>
<td><strong>Average: 349</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At a first glance, Table 4.1 seems to suggest that Arabella Stuart might have been the most productive writer of the members of the house of Stewart under scrutiny, with 65
letters and almost 31500 words. However, on a words/letter ratio basis, the informants rank slightly differently. Table 4.1 also tells that this new corpus boasts 154 letters and 53741 words with an average of 349 words per letter across the informants.

The PCEEC was chosen as primary material as the present study subscribes to Nevalainen’s views (2013: 99-100) that “[p]ersonal letters are a valuable source of authentic language use for language historians” as they “provide valuable material for assessing linguistic” repertoires and can serve as “a relevant source of primary evidence”. Nevalainen (2013) further stresses that personal letters can carry very important information (especially holograph letters, i.e. letters written entirely by the people in whose names they appear) in that processes of language change found in writing do not, necessarily, need to be restricted to the written medium. Nevalainen (2013: 100) suggests that “[m]any, if not most, changes may be assumed to have a spoken language basis and as such represent what sociolinguists call a ‘change from below’ in terms of social awareness.” Del Lungo Camiciotti (2014) echoes this view and adds that letters provide invaluable data for historical sociolinguists as they directly deliver information regarding language history and Williams (2014), for instance, describes the PCEEC as unquestionably being in the very forefront in terms of quality of available primary materials for the historical study of language and also as a strong force of legitimisation within the field of historical variationist sociolinguistics.

Biber (1988/1995) maintains that linguistic variation is tied more closely to register variation than it is to simple written-spoken dichotomies, as well, and suggests that even languages with short histories of literacy display register variation in writing. What is more is that previous research also shows that even in early correspondence, personal letters, et cetera, often resembled spoken registers to a larger extent than other types of writing did (Biber 1995: 297, cf. Arnaud 1980; González-Álvarez and Pérez Guerra 1999; Curzan 2009: 54). This is desirable for the present project since spoken registers tend to show greater evidence of spontaneous utterances (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2000) which is something Raumolin-Brunberg (1996: 16) labels as a very important consideration when studying language producers’ behaviours.

According to Del Lungo Camiciotti (2014), Postigliola et al. (1985) and Boureau and Chartier (1991), it is also highly logical and relevant for epistolary research to centre on the Late Middle and Early Modern periods, as well, as the epistolary genre reached a perhaps unsurpassed sociocultural prominence as a form of communication and expression during this time (Del Lungo Camiciotti 2014).

4.2 Method
The present study falls within the scientific discipline of sociohistorical linguistics, to which field a great many important methodological considerations pertain. In the present section, the ones found especially important and relevant when delving into the Stewart letters are elaborated.
As an introduction, WordSmith Tools Version 6 was employed as it allows for the handling of large amounts of language while keeping track of the many contextual factors involved all at the same time (Biber et al. 1998: 3), and as it eliminates the risk of human error which manual data collecting can lead to.

For each of the older as well as newer forms under investigation, a concordance search was carried out, to provide the immediate contexts of the terms. However, as the Tudor and Stuart periods belong to the pre-normative era of spelling practices (Nevalainen 2013), a variety of spelling options were included in the searches to ensure there were no missed language instances. These are ‘ye’ and ‘yee’ and ‘you’ and ‘yow’ for the subject forms ‘ye’ and ‘you’, respectively, and the spelling variants ‘mine’, ‘myne’ and ‘myn’ and ‘my’ were used for the possessives ‘mine’ and ‘my’. For the suffix searches, no alternative options were necessary. In order to find out which spelling variants were relevant, the Word List function of WordSmith was employed. Including a variety of spelling options in the searches is of paramount importance as the spelling could vary greatly from sentence to sentence and even from word to word. On a more humorous note, even computerised software programs such as Microsoft Word present error notices when it deals with the letters, claiming that there are too many spelling errors for the program to check. Example (4.1) of a letter from Margaret Stewart (Tudor) to the royal minister Thomas Wolsey in 1516 demonstrates how greatly the spelling could vary:

(4.1) My Lorde Cardinal I comand me to you as hartly as I can
and vyt ze my lorde that I have spokyn vyt James Aborrow and
he hath schwon to me that ze and the lordys of Cownsel vould not that I
schuld cam to Bayners castel to day.
My Lorde I wyl doo as ze thinke best
but I pray you my Lorde as hartly as I can gys ther be no trubyl to day
to lat me com to morow.
I trust to God the schal be noo lych trobyl but that I may cam to morow
for and it be vell thys nyght I trust to god the varst be past.
And my Lorde I have I part of thyngs to doo that I most nedes have doon
that vyl be nedfol to me.
I pray my lorde to lat me have your aunsuer vyth thes berar
and God have you in hys kypeng.
Yours Margaret R.
To my Lorde Cardinal. (Margaret Stewart (Tudor) 1516, PCEEC).

During the course of the data collecting procedure, letters written in codes were also found. These could consist of either just letters and numbers placed randomly throughout the letter (a cypher was probably required to read them) or the people mentioned in the letters were referred to with capital letters or numbers. If it has not been done before, describing the linguistic characteristics of these letters in relation to their social context could serve as a very interesting point of departure for future research. Worth of note is
that none of these coded letters are included in the present study, however, as they did not house any of the forms under investigation.

Turning to the scrutinised material, information about frequency was recorded for each of the letters once the irrelevant data had been cleared. Additionally, social information such as names, social status, gender, letter dates and word counts were recorded, as well. These steps, in turn, provided the foundational pillars required for the production of the statistical models which are presented, analysed and discussed in Section 5.

A natural question which might present itself during the course of an investigation such as the present, is why linguists need to consider aspects of statistics in the first place. The answer to this question lies in the nature of the data that is scrutinised, as certain types of data positively demand statistical treatment whereas other types do not. The data used in generative grammar, for instance, tends not to demand neither the assignment of numerical values nor summaries or inferences drawn from them. In fields of study that tend to scrutinise data in which there is variation, however, there is a need for statistics, as statistics makes allowance for the possibility to summarise complex numerical data as well as draw inferences from them. (Woods et al. 1986) What is more, many researchers have noticed “that comprehensive studies of use cannot rely on intuition, anecdotal evidence, or small samples; they rather require empirical analysis of large databases of authentic texts” (Biber et al. 1998: 8, emphasis added).

As has been noted, the quantitative analyses of the present study will rely heavily on measurements of frequency. For the purpose of explicit clarification, these include both absolute frequencies as well as relative frequencies. The former refers to the number of times each item under investigation was observed whereas the latter refers to proportions (percentages) which are calculated by dividing each categorical absolute frequency by the total number of absolute frequency (Woods et al. 1986: 9). N.b. that whereas the figures relaying the relative frequencies (Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3) will adopt a diachronic manner of presentation, no such feature characterises the tables displaying the absolute frequencies (Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.5). The reason for this is that they serve different purposes.

The present study will, further, test the findings for statistical significance as “[s]ignificance tests show how likely it is that quantitative results could have occurred by chance” (Biber et al. 1998: 9). In the present study, Yates’ chi-square tests were carried out using the calculator in Preacher (2001) in order to determine whether the differences observed were statistically significant or not. The chi-square test was chosen as this is the test to be used to “compare two ‘nominal’ variables – when both variables represent groups rather than counts” (Biber et al. 1998: 277). 2 x 2 contingency tables were created prior to the tests, and if the p-value was found to be < 0.05, the difference can be said to be so great as to be statistically significant. However, these tests have only been performed where possible, as “in order for the X² test to have satisfactory properties, all expected frequencies have to be sufficiently large (generally 5 or greater)” (Woods et al.
1986: 144). To meet this condition, it is sometimes necessary to group categories together, but as the present study considers informants which did not always live at the same time and as they have to be compared in relation to their contemporaries in order to address their linguistic behaviour properly, this step has not always been possible to follow. As will become clear, the test significant is not always necessary to carry out, however, and there are limits as to its descriptive power.

Connecting to the research questions of the present study, the purpose with the statistical models was to, first (1), gain clear pictures of how the informants ranked amongst themselves in terms of linguistic conservatism and progression and, second (2), to provide information as to how well they followed the general linguistic trends of their time. In order to satisfy this purpose, however, the statistical models were not only compelled to include language data concerning the referents under scrutiny, but also comparative data stemming from their contemporaries as this enables for a more precise positioning of the informants into the linguistic as well as social landscape in which they lived. However, it goes without saying that the size of the present study does not allow for the individual linguistic data to be compared in contrast to all the possible determinants of variation as laid out by Milroy (1980/1987) and Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2014: 32), for instance. Instead, and in the echo of limiting itself to three language processes of change for the same reason, the present project settled for three variables of comparison, as well, namely (1) the overall linguistic tendency, (2) biological sex and (3) social stratification.

The chosen variables call for some extra comment: The first of these, the general linguistic trend, refers to the overall adoption of the incoming forms, all groups of people counted as one. The second determinant, gender, is, for the purposes of the present study, more or less regarded as synonymous to biological sex. The author of the present study is aware of the fact that some researchers make a distinction between biological sex and gender (see e.g. Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2013), however, and is, normally, a subscriber of the same argument, but for reasons of convention and uniformity to previous studies in the field of historical sociolinguistics (see e.g. Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003), the word gender is still used in present essay to denote biological sex. Lastly, social class refers to the social strata to which the members of the house of Stewart pertain, but as historical sociolinguistics is still in its pioneering stage (Raumolin-Brunberg 1996: 59) and as there exists different models depicting the strictly hierarchical society of the Tudors and the Stuarts (Lockyer 2005) - which, in itself, also underwent a process of change (Nevalainen 1996: 57) – it is difficult to tell how many and which distinctions of social classification that should be employed. However, as Cannon and Hargreaves (2009) noted, the language producers scrutinised in the present study undoubtedly belonged to the very top social strata, as four of them were even kings and queens, and for this reason it is not necessary to pledge loyalty to any one fully-fledged model. For a brief, possible overview of the Tudor and Stuart society as a whole, however, see Table 1.1 (Raumolin-Brunberg 1996: 26).
The general linguistic trend, gender and social class were chosen as foundational pillars of analysis in order to, not only, better understand how the members of the house of Stewart ranked amongst themselves when it comes to linguistic conservatism vs. progression, but also, and in particular, to get extra clues as to how they related to their contemporaries in terms of three key linguistic determinants of variation. The reason why these particular variables were selected, then, as opposed to other well-known determinants, can be said to have its origin in the state of affairs present in the Tudor and Stuart periods: Gender differentiation in language variation and change has been set in stone as one the most solid findings in sociolinguistics today and women have often been referred to as the guardians of the standard language (Chambers 1995: 124-125; Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003), and as a subscriber of the uniformitarian epistemological stance, it naturally becomes interesting to test history in light of the discoveries that have been made in the present (Romaine 1982; Labov 2010). Obeying the orders of well-regarded and influential researchers in the field of historical sociolinguistics, it also follows that information about social class should not be excluded from the agenda as it is “one of the most central extralinguistic variables studied by modern sociolinguists” (Nevalainen 1996: 57). In all likelihood, medieval and early modern realities experienced even greater social differences than western civilisations do today, as well, and the absence of a normative era of grammar further allows for a sharper objective of exploration when it comes to language change in the mirror of social status (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003). Lastly, the general linguistic trend is interesting to consider in that it, with regards to the respective language changes, gives an indication of what the arithmetic mean of linguistic progressiveness was for the typical countryman at any given time (Woods et al. 1986: 29). Insights into this tripartite dimension are, therefore, of great value.

Something all the variables have in common is that they all have their roots in the linguistic proceedings that Nevalainen’s and Raumolin-Brunberg’ (2003) study uncovered. As has been elaborated earlier, it is important to keep in mind that the data for this study is based on the Corpus of Early English Correspondence (CEEC), which is a corpus informed largely by very specific (male) groups of upper class people. Despite this conundrum, the corpus as well as the study, to the best of the author of the present project’s knowledge, still serve as the most wide-reaching and accurate points of reference as regards language changes of Renaissance English. This view echoes that of Del Lungo Camiciotti (2014), as well.

Determining whether or not individuals classify as either more linguistically conservative or progressive, however, is not always an easy task. In fact, Nevalainen et al. (2011b) suggest that most individuals are actually somewhere in between the two and that when innovation is present, it is seldom with regards to more than one linguistic change. Queen Elizabeth I in late sixteenth-century England has been identified as one of the individuals belonging to the minority group which led several linguistic ongoing
changes, however (Evans 2013), and with the present study it will be tested if some of the Stewart members form part of this group, as well.

Important to note is that this research makes no claim of having succeeded in extracting exact levels of linguistic progression or conservatism from the letters, however, it rather claims to have addressed the transparent levels delivered by the data. Further, the categorisation processes of the individuals under scrutiny have not taken into account the ‘in-between’ possibility, it has only categorised the informants as either more or less conservative judging from their own linguistic use, the other informants’ language use and the general linguistic trend. The present study regards linguistic conservatism as a type of linguistic behaviour in a language user which favours older language forms over incoming forms, vis-à-vis linguistic progression which favours the incoming forms over the older ones. Worth of note is that in statistical terms, this means not only favouring one form over the other on an individual level, but also in relation to the social landscape surrounding the particular language process of change. Lagging behind the general linguistic trend is, therefore, regarded as linguistic conservatism, regardless of the individual frequency levels present. The question of whether or not this ranking system constitutes fairness is debatable, as well, as one could argue that since the informants under scrutiny prefer the incoming forms with different frequency levels, they are either more less innovative in their language use. However, similar methods have been employed in previous research (cf. Nevalainen 2013) and since the method yields robust probabilities of what the actual linguistic course of events were, the present study still chose to implement it as a way of finding out where the wind blew.
5 Results and Discussion

In this section, the results of the present study are presented hand-in-hand with accompanying analyses and discussions. The figures in the chapter have been designed with a diachronic perspective in mind, one which considers the lives and the linguistic practices of the informants in terms of five forty-year time periods. These particular time periods were chosen because of their ability to provide a comprehensive overview of the diachrony of the house of Stewart’s role as an agent of language change. The selected time periods have, further, been adopted in previous research (see e.g. Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003), rendering the possibility to directly incorporate the findings of these studies into those of the present an added and welcome bonus – one which the present study takes full advantage of. In relation to the given time periods, it is important to note that some of the language producers under scrutiny can be found in more than one time period, however, as their lives and operations as letter writers, naturally, stretched over several of these, at times. This aspect has been taken into consideration in the analyses and discussions carried out, as well.

The present section will also deliver the necessary ingredients required in order to rank the house and its members in relation to linguistic conservatism vis-à-vis progressiveness, a process which will take place in Section 6. These ingredients, or features of reflection, include information as to how the members of the house of Stewart fend in relation to (1) the general linguistic trend, (2) gender and (3) social class. (1) refers to the overall language tendencies of the changes under scrutiny across all boundaries, (2) concerns biological sex and (3) relates to the corresponding social category of the informants.

5.1 The Second-Person Subject Form ‘Ye’ vs. ‘You’

As an introduction, the present study’s investigation of the subject form has found that the incoming alternative found great favour with the members of the house of Stewart that can be found in the PCEE. Figure 5.1 showcases the results of this investigation at the same time as it integrates approximate information from Figures 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 60, 119, 142) for ease of analysis. Extra incorporated information concerns the general linguistic movement, gender and social class. In the case of social class, only the upper class has been considered, however, as it is to this social stratum the informants under scrutiny belong.
Dealing with the subjects under scrutiny in chronological order, Margaret Stewart (Tudor) appears to have been a strong advocate of the incoming form ‘you’ in relation to her contemporaries. At the time, men in general were the biggest promoters of this particular language change as they used the incoming form approximately 20 per cent of time. The frequency level for women, in turn, was 15 per cent, the upper class adopted the term eleven per cent of the time and the general linguistic trend relays that the newer form was used ten per cent of the time. Margaret Stewart (Tudor), however, chose to use the incoming variant a great deal more: 40 per cent of the second-person subject pronouns take the form of the replacing rival in her correspondence. This finding renders Margaret’s linguistic behaviour highly progressive with regards to the three respects the present study consider for analysis, namely the general linguistic movement, gender and social class.

However, owing to the limitations of the historical material that has been inherited from the Tudor and Stuart periods, the data is often as such that it does not allow one to draw any definite conclusions, to which end the present study has not been exempt. In more precise detail, the relative frequencies evident in Figure 5.1 are, in some cases, based on an imperfect foundation of absolute frequencies. To repeat the words of Labov (1994), however, all a historical linguist can do is make the best use of the data at hand. Subscribing to this spirit, the relative frequencies that have been calculated for the present study will be considered in light of their corresponding absolute frequencies, as well. Woods et al. (1986: 9) further explain that relative frequencies are seldom informative unless the total numbers of observations on which they are based are presented. As such,
the absolute frequencies of the rivalling forms used by the members of the house of Stewart that can be found in the PCEEC are presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1  Absolute frequencies of ‘ye’ vs. ‘you’ across the members of the house of Stewart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Producer</th>
<th>Frequency of ‘Ye’</th>
<th>Frequency of ‘You’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Stewart (Tudor)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabella Stuart</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Stuart</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Stuart I</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Cromwell</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Stuart II</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong> 12</td>
<td><strong>Total:</strong> 189</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of Margaret Stewart (Tudor), then, the competing forms occurred in only two letters (out of seven in total); ‘ye’ occurred three times in one letter and ‘you’ occurred twice in another. For this reason, it becomes difficult to address whether Margaret, in reality, was in the habit of adopting the incoming form or not, as her use of the subject form might have deviated from the pattern laid out in Figure 5.1 in other written, as well as spoken, material produced by her. This dilemma in pinpointing her linguistic behaviour is, further, haunted by the spelling ghost – as the period from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries belonged to the pre-normative era of grammar (Nevalainen 2013), it is not possible to exclude the possibility that it might simply be a question of spelling. However, as the present project vouched to address the data in terms of its available transparency, Margaret is still found to be categorically progressive in the PCEEC as regards the shift from ‘ye’ to ‘you’.

A century later one finds that both Arabella Stuart and Elizabeth Stuart display language progression, as well, as they, like their contemporaries, have adopted the incoming form completely. Charles Stuart I, however, exhibits stark conservative behaviour as he still prefers the older subject form ‘ye’ 64 per cent of the time in his letters. This is interesting in view of the general linguistic development, as well, as Nevalainen’s and Raumolin-Brunberg’s (2003) findings indicate that the change was completed already at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Charles Stuart I might have been a rare exception with regards to this language process of change, but if it has not been done already, it would be highly interesting to investigate what the general linguistic tendency looked like from the seventeenth century onwards, as well. Perhaps the change witnessed a (small) downward trend, as hinted by Charles Stuart I? It would, further, be interesting to do the same in relation to gender and social class, as these aspects seem to be (at least, partially) unexplored from the seventeenth century onwards. To sum up, Arabella Stuart and Elizabeth Stuart were found to display progressive linguistic
behaviour whereas Charles Stuart I’s usage of the subject form mirrors conservative behaviour from 1600-1639.

Turning to the period of time between 1640-1679, Charles Stuart I is beginning to catch up on the usage of the younger subject form as 89 per cent of his private letters boast this alternative compared to the other. His son, Charles Stuart II, has implemented the change completely in his correspondence by the course of the early and late mid-seventeenth century, as well. The nobleman Oliver Cromwell has done the same.

In terms of statistical significance, calculations were not possible to carry out for any of the participants of the study as the frequencies of the older forms, in particular, were not reasonably large enough (c.f. Woods et al. 1986: 151). In the case of Charles Stuart I, however, his linguistic data is technically compatible for comparison, but here the other end falls short. As can be seen from Figure 5.1 and Table 5.1, Charles Stuart I’s language behaviour can only be compared to the general public (in terms of available and suitable data). However, between 1600-1639, Nevalainen’s and Raumolin-Brunberg’s study only observed three instances of the older subject form (2003: 218). During the same period, the present study found that Charles Stuart I used ‘ye’ two times in a letter to the first duke of Buckingham, George Villiers, which, at the very least, seems to suggest that our two studies have interpreted the data in a similar fashion. This connects well with that the present study mentioned in Section 3.3, i.e. that it hoped to credit existing material and findings with extra robustness wherever possible.

As the main point of interest for the present study is to study the choice between the two rivalling forms, however, Figure 5.1 and Table 5.1 still provide a measurable amount of wood to build a fire, the nature of which will be summarised next: Judging from the observations made in the present section, the referents under scrutiny can be regarded as strong historic agents of language change as highly innovative and progressive linguistic behaviour is exuded. With regards to the second-person subject forms ‘ye’ vs. ‘you’, only Charles Stuart I displayed linguistic conservatism, but he also showcased how quickly an individual can change and adopt the incoming form, instead. In an effort to rank the informants according to linguistic innovation, the informants under scrutiny rank as follows: First place: Margaret Stewart (Tudor), progressive in all three respects (the general linguistic trend, gender and social class). Shared second place: Arabella Stuart, Elizabeth Stuart, Oliver Cromwell and Charles Stuart II, progressive in one respect. Third place: Charles Stuart I, conservative in one respect. Important to note is that this ranking effort only takes into consideration the available information from each given period, however, and excludes the in-between or ‘neutral’ possibility discussed in Nevalainen et al. (2011b).

Paying attention to the general facets of this change it is also interesting to see how men started off as the main promoters of the change, but then systematically started to lag behind throughout the course of the sixteenth century, falling behind not just women and the upper class, but the general movement, as well. From 1480-1519 to 1520-1559, women quadrupled their use of the incoming form, as well, making them the strongest
instigators of the change during the first half of the sixteenth century. Towards the end of the century, the social aspects begin to level out, however.

The aspect of regional variation poses interesting questions, as well, but as the present study has neither scrutinised the geographical movement of the informants’ lives nor categorised their linguistic correspondence geographically, for instance, speculations regarding this remain mute. Further exploring regional variation and differentiating between the linguistic practices of nobles and royals (if possible) could serve as interesting points of departures for future research, however. Delving into the gravity that personal biographies might exude in relation to linguistic practices would be of particular interest, as well, as the idiolectology of one language producer can prove to be very different from that of another, despite similar social backgrounds (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 1997/2014).

5.2 The Third-Person Singular Present Indicative Suffix ‘–th’ vs. ‘–s’

Amongst the members of the house of Stewart, the more innovative third-person singular present suffix ‘-s’ came to replace its predecessor in a less speedy manner than was the case with subject ‘you’. Progressiveness is shown also in this case, but there is a considerable amount of linguistic conservatism present, as well. The general public, men in general, women in general and the upper class are informed by Figures 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 68, 123, 144) in Figure 5.2, which relays the findings of the suffix investigation in terms of relative frequencies.

![Figure 5.2](image_url)  
**Figure 5.2** The replacement of the third-person singular suffix ‘-th’ by ‘-s’. Percentages of ‘-s’. The house of Stewart in relation to linguistic trends.
Paying attention to Figure 5.2, one finds that Margaret Stewart (Tudor), yet again, proves to have been linguistically innovative and progressive in all three respects. Arabella Stuart, in turn, seems to have lagged behind her contemporaries, whereas Charles Stuart I operated as a leading promoter of the change from 1580-1619. During the course of the years 1620-1659, his linguistic use remained much the same, however; it was neither more innovative nor conservative, which resulted in that he assumed a back seat in the change as the same cannot be said about his contemporaries. In the course of the same period, the linguistic practices of both Elizabeth Stewart and Oliver Cromwell exhibited high levels of conservatism, and although Charles Stuart II remained slightly more reluctant than his contemporaries to adopt the incoming form, both he and his father were still more progressive in their language use than the other informants under scrutiny were between 1620-1659. Furthermore, when turning to the last time period under scrutiny, one finds that Charles Stuart II has surpassed the general public, men and women in general and the upper class in terms of the replacement of the third-person singular suffix ‘-th’.

What has been elaborated in the previous paragraph seems to hold true if one considers the relative frequencies in Figure 5.2. However, these frequencies need, logically, to be considered in view of their equivalent absolute frequencies, as well.

Table 5.2  Absolute frequencies of the ‘-th’ vs. ‘-s’ suffix across the members of the house of Stewart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Producer</th>
<th>Frequency of ‘-th’</th>
<th>Frequency of ‘-s’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Stewart (Tudor)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabella Stuart</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Stuart</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Stuart I</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Cromwell</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Stuart II</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total: 212</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total: 186</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inspecting the adoption of the incoming form chronologically and in light of the absolute frequencies, one finds, yet again, that the accessible historical data is in short supply, and particularly in the case of Margaret Stewart (Tudor). The older form occurred in four out of seven letters of hers; four times in one letter and one time each in the remaining three. The incoming form, in turn, occurred in three letters; twice in one letter and one time each in two letters which also housed the suffix form ‘-th’. This process of mapping the competing forms to their respective letters could help in breaking down whether or not Margaret favoured one form over the other, and especially when delving into letters which boast both rivalling forms, but just like Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003: 67) noticed, the transition to the newer alternative happened gradually and with varying
amounts of resistance changeable from word to word. As mentioned in Section 2.1.2, the third-person present tense suffix shift ended in Late Modern English with the most resistant forms ‘hath’ and ‘doth’ (Holmqvist 1922), for instance, whereas other words were quicker to turn over a new leaf. Figure 5.3 depicts which words occurred with which competing form across the language producers in question.

Table 5.3  The distribution of words occurring with the ‘–th’ vs. ‘–s’ suffix. Top five words in order of absolute frequency. Number of occurrences in brackets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Margaret Stewart (Tudor)</th>
<th>Arabella Stuart</th>
<th>Elizabeth Stuart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘-th’ suffix</td>
<td>‘-th’ suffix</td>
<td>‘-th’ suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘-s’ suffix</td>
<td>‘-s’ suffix</td>
<td>‘-s’ suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘-th’ suffix</td>
<td>‘-th’ suffix</td>
<td>‘-th’ suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘-s’ suffix</td>
<td>‘-s’ suffix</td>
<td>‘-s’ suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hath (5)</td>
<td>Needs (9)</td>
<td>Hath (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knouth (1)</td>
<td>Makes (5)</td>
<td>Doth (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orderth (1)</td>
<td>Concernes (3)</td>
<td>Assures (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowes (2)</td>
<td>Maketh (4)</td>
<td>Goeth (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comes (1)</td>
<td>Requireth (4)</td>
<td>Commands (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nedes (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hath (66)</td>
<td>Needes (9)</td>
<td>Makes (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doth (13)</td>
<td>Concernes (3)</td>
<td>Assures (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleaseth (13)</td>
<td>Deserves (3)</td>
<td>Commands (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makedh (4)</td>
<td>Knowes (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requireth (4)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charles Stuart I</th>
<th>Oliver Cromwell</th>
<th>Charles Stuart II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘-th’ suffix</td>
<td>‘-th’ suffix</td>
<td>‘-th’ suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘-s’ suffix</td>
<td>‘-s’ suffix</td>
<td>‘-s’ suffix</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘-th’ suffix</td>
<td>‘-th’ suffix</td>
<td>‘-th’ suffix</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘-s’ suffix</td>
<td>‘-s’ suffix</td>
<td>‘-s’ suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hath (7)</td>
<td>Becomes (1)</td>
<td>Hath (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doth (1)</td>
<td>Belongs (1)</td>
<td>Has (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowes (3)</td>
<td>Desires (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has (2)</td>
<td>Followes (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begins (1)</td>
<td>Has (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comes (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hath (7)</td>
<td>Raiseth (1)</td>
<td>Doth (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comes (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lies (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of Margaret Stewart (Tudor), then, it becomes difficult to ascertain whether she truly favoured one form over the other in these letters as well as if the spelling ghost is still lurking in the shadows or not. Strictly speaking, the data at hand places Margaret in the category of being progressive in all three respects, however, as Figure 5.2 suggests that her contemporaries lagged behind quite dramatically and as no other counterforce has revealed itself. Additional data would, of course, be of necessity in order to accurately tell whether or not this is where the ship really sailed, however, and the same rule should also be applied to all the other informants under scrutiny - except for Arabella Stuart and Charles Stuart II, perhaps, as the data available for these two is much more substantial. Following Scott’s (2015) noteworthy suggestion that items that occur three times or more in corpus investigations have the potential to carry informative properties, the data analysed in the present study should not necessarily be underestimated, however.

Turning to the most resistant forms of the ‘–th’ suffix ‘hath’ and ‘doth’ (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 67), these appear to have had deep roots with the house of Stewart, as well. As portrayed by Table 5.3, ‘hath’ is the most frequently used word with the ‘–th’ suffix by all informants. ‘Doth’, in turn, comes in at a good second place with four out of six language producers. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003: 68) further report that the change gained speed particularly much between 1540-1680, but to this end the house of Stewart does not appear to have contributed significantly much.
In the cases of Charles Stuart I, his son and Oliver Cromwell, it is interesting to note the dual use of both ‘hath’ and ‘has’ as well as the use of both ‘doth’ and ‘does’ with Charles Stuart II. When they occur in the same letter - which happens quite frequently in the letters produced by these three participants - it makes one wonder whether or not the letters were checked for spelling or just for content, if at all. It further makes one curious as to the extent to which phonology was reflected in individual lexical items in texts. Additionally, Austin (2007) purports that there did, indeed, exist letter writing manuals that influenced the style of both official and family correspondence, and Eurich (2011) noticed that these manuals were prescriptive at heart and offered various templates for operating in a society which was characterised by complex and codified state of affairs and which, also, rewarded deference and obedience both within the family and beyond. Studies wishing to better understand the linguistic practices of the house Stewart (and others) in the future would be well-advised to consider the studies by Austin (2007) and Eurich (2011), for instance, as it would allow for a more complete analysis.

Bearing in mind who the language producers are for the present study, i.e. royals and nobles, it becomes imperative to reflect on Akribb’s (1984: 24-30) argument that it is important to consider the fact that the vast majority of royal letters produced in the Tudor and Stuart periods were drafted and composed by clerks and secretaries, and he adds that the monarchs in question did not, necessarily, take more than a glance at the texts themselves before they were sent. Considering this, it might actually be the case that there were more people involved in writing the letters that have been examined in this section. However, it has been noticed that Henry VIII was in the habit of checking the letters that were presented to him, with regards to spelling, before sending them (Akribb 1984: 24, c.f. Lerer 1997: 87), so perhaps the same holds true for the participants of the present study.

Table 5.4 provides a brief account of whether the observed differences between (some of) the informants under scrutiny and their contemporaries were statistically significant or not. A cut-off point of five observed frequencies minimum per rivalling form was decided following Woods (1986). This resulted in that the data relating to Margaret Stewart (Tudor), Charles Stuart I (1580-1619) and Charles Stuart II (1620-1659) was not included in any calculations. Further, Nevalainen’s and Raumolin-Brunberg’s (2003) study only provides numerical data for the general public bars, meaning it is only to this external category that additional testing has been possible to carry out.
Table 5.4  The observed absolute frequencies and their statistical significance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Observed frequencies</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘-th’</td>
<td>‘-s’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) 1580-1619</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabella Stuart</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The General Public</td>
<td>1487</td>
<td>1161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column total</td>
<td>1653</td>
<td>1207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-squared = 38.565, p &lt; 0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(b) 1620-1659 (1)</th>
<th>Observed frequencies</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘-th’</td>
<td>‘-s’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Stuart</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Stuart I</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-squared = 3.609, p = 0.057</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(c) 1620-1659 (2)</th>
<th>Observed frequencies</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘-th’</td>
<td>‘-s’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Stuart</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Cromwell</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-squared = 0.92, p = 0.337</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(d) 1620-1659 (3)</th>
<th>Observed frequencies</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘-th’</td>
<td>‘-s’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Stuart</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The General Public</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>3305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column total</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>3311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-squared = 29.682, p = 5e-8 ≈ 0.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(e) 1620-1659 (4)</th>
<th>Observed frequencies</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘-th’</td>
<td>‘-s’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Stuart I</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Cromwell</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-squared = 0.278, p = 0.598</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Judging from the categorically suitable and available data, the gist of Table 5.4 is eightfold. First, one finds that the incoming suffix form ‘-s’ was used significantly more frequently by the general public than by Arabella Stuart between 1580-1619 (chi-square = 38.565, d.f. 1, p < 0.001). Second, the test fails to reject the null hypothesis when comparing Elizabeth Stuart’s and Charles Stuart I’s use of the newer form 1620-1659, which means that there was no significant difference (chi-square = 3.609, d.f. 1, p = 0.057). Next, the test significant revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between Elizabeth Stuart and Oliver Cromwell, either, with regards to their use of the suffix ‘-s’ during the same period (chi-square = 0.92, d.f. 1, p = 0.337). Fourth, it would appear the general public adopted the third person ‘-s’ significantly more frequently than Elizabeth Stuart did 1620-1659 (chi-square = 29.682, d.f. 1, p = 5e^-8 ≈ 0.002). The fifth point Table 5.4 delivers is that it suggests that Oliver Cromwell did not use the incoming third person singular form significantly more frequently than Charles Stuart I did between the years of 1620-1659 (chi-square = 0.278, d.f. 1, p = 0.598). Sixth, the newer suffix form was also shown to have found no significantly greater favour
amongst the general public than it did with Charles Stuart I during the same years (chi-square = 2.503, d.f. 1, \( p = 0.114 \)). In the case of Oliver Cromwell, however, which encapsulates the seventh point made in Table 5.4, it seems the general public made use of the incoming form significantly more between the years of 1620-1659 (chi-square = 8.054, d.f. 1, \( p = 0.005 \)). Lastly, when comparing the linguistic behaviour of Charles Stuart II and the general public between the years of 1660-1699 as regards the adoption of suffix ‘-s’, the null hypothesis is not rejected in favour of an alternative hypothesis – which means there was no statistically significant difference present (chi-square = 0.318, d.f. 1, \( p = 0.573 \)).

Woods et al. (1986: 127) claim “[t]he value of statistical hypothesis testing as a scientific tool has been greatly exaggerated”, as it is merely another way of summarising data, and they maintain that it is a misguided strategy to abandon belief in a finding or argument simply because the data is not shown to be statistically significant, vis-à-vis to think an important discovery has been made when statistical significance is present. “A hypothesis test simply gives an indication of the strength of evidence […] for or against a working hypothesis” (1986: 127, emphasis added). This means that only commenting on whether the results were significant or not at the five percent (or one per cent) level is unsatisfactory, and that the discussion of the details of the data should be shaped largely by the problem that is being tackled – and in the present study, it is the choice between the two rivalling forms that is of interest. What the tests significant have contributed with, then, are indications concerning the extent to which the conclusions drawn may have been distorted by sampling variability. Practically, this means that the tests conducted in the present study seem to indicate that for three out of eight comparisons (i.e. between Arabella vs. the general public, Elizabeth vs. the general public and Oliver vs. the general public), there exists an extra element of validity - something that approaches the function and appearance of a seal of approval. The conclusions (or arguments) relating to these comparisons, then, were (1) that Arabella seems to have lagged behind her contemporaries, (2) that the linguistic practices of Elizabeth exhibited high levels of conservatism and (3) that the latter applied to Oliver, as well. As Woods et al. (1986) pointed out, however, this is not a call to disregard the other conclusions drawn.

In order to allow for additional comparison efforts, grouping categories together was considered in order to fulfil the criteria of reasonably large enough amounts of absolute frequencies, but as the adoption of the newer suffix form ‘-s’ increased dramatically from period to period, this idea was left out of account.

To wrap up the observations made in the present section, Margaret Stewart (Tudor) places ‘first’ again, as linguistic innovation and progression were displayed three times – i.e. Margaret’s favour of the incoming form was, categorically, shown to be greater than those of her contemporaries with regards to the average countryman, gender and social class. This holds true for Charles Stuart I (1580-1619) and his son (1660-1699), as well, but as they were also found to lag behind their contemporaries (between the years of 1620-1659) in the three respects considered, they are awarded a shared second place.
Arabella Stuart, Elizabeth Stuart and Oliver Cromwell, in turn, favoured the older rival more than their corresponding counterparts in all respects, as well, but unlike Charles Stuart II and his father, their conservative language use was exclusive, leaving them with a shared third place.

When considering the general social aspects of the language change to the ‘-s’ suffix, it is interesting to note how much the change has been instigated by women, as well. Throughout the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century, they were the clear frontrunners towards a newer English language. The general public, other men and the upper class, on the other hand, preferred the incoming form with roughly the same frequency levels until the change was completed.

5.3 The First-Person Possessive Dependent Determiner ‘Mine’ vs. ‘My’

With regards to the first-person possessive dependent determiner shift from ‘mine’ to ‘my’, the house of Stewart certainly appears to have abandoned the more conservative form. Out of 1031 occurrences of the dependent determiners, only three take the form of ‘mine’ – once (out of 721 times) together with Arabella Stuart and twice (out of 43 times) together with Margaret Stewart (Tudor). Figure 5.3 provides a summary of this account together with extra incorporated approximate information from Figures 2.7, 2.8 and 2.9 (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 62, 119, 143).

![Figure 5.3](image)

**Figure 5.3** ‘Mine’ vs. ‘my’. Percentages of ‘my’. The house of Stewart in relation to linguistic trends.

When considering Figure 5.3, it is important to note that the general public bar, as well as the ones representing gender and social class, only take into account the development of the possessive forms preceding vowels. These diachronic details are, further, based on
not just the change from ‘mine’ to ‘my’, but also the one concerning the shift from ‘thine’ to ‘thy’, which renders the possibility to directly compare the results of the present study with that of Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003), for instance, impossible. However, as their study still represents the closest point of reference from which inferences, however indefinite, can be made, data from this study is still included for discursive purposes. Given the different natures of previous investigations and the present, curiosities do spark, however. I.e., why was only one out of four (or possibly more) diachronic linguistic developments explored and elaborated in relation to gender and social class when, evidently, as hinted in example (5.1) (and as has been noted earlier in the present essay), the change to the N-less variant involved several linguistic environments? And why were the linguistic evolvements of the first-person possessive merged with those of the second-person possessive into one diachronic unfolding? Would it not have been of greater interest to consider them separately, especially in view of the echo that this very shift was considered in light of separate linguistic environments?

(5.1) *Myn lord Chanselere come not here sone I come to Lundun* (William Paston II 1454, PCEEC).

Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003), and others who have conducted research in the same area, probably have excellent justifications for their choices of methodology, but the present study would still find it of great significance to further delve into these questions in terms of the PCEEC and the full CEEC, as well as in other material, as richer comparison efforts with the results of the present study would, then, be possible to carry out. In Nevalainen’s and Raumolin-Brunberg’s (2003: 61) research, it is pointed out that the word ‘own’ is included in the investigation as this word favoured the N-variant even after the short form had replaced the longer one in most contexts, but Schendl (1993) also points out that this was the case with other lexemes, as well, such as ‘ear’ and ‘eye’. This discovery could also be a call for further research.

From Figure 5.3, a number of clarifications can still be reached, however. Despite the fact that the present study has considered the shift from ‘mine’ to ‘my’ (in exclusion from its partner shift ‘thine’ to ‘thy’) in terms of all (four) linguistic environments, and previous research has not for this particular period of time, one can still attest to a starkly low frequency level of the old rival ‘mine’ within the house of Stewart. In fact, apart from Margaret Stewart’s (Tudor) and Arabella Stuart’s linguistic usage of the form, the frequency level is zero per cent for the remaining four family members. The general linguistic trend, in contrast, as laid out by Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003: 62), was that the older form was still being used throughout the entire sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with some frequency and by all statistical groups of enquiry, as well, regardless of the linguistic environment in question. Nevalainen’s and Raumolin-Brunberg’s (2003) study does not take into consideration the consonant possibility from 1460-1499 onwards, however, but even if one submits to the ‘vowel-only-or-initial-<h>’ discussion, the very fact that the frequency level for the four latest informants of the present study is zero per cent suggest that they, in all likelihood, took an active part in
driving this change forward and, probably, as frontrunners as they did not employ the older form whatsoever at the same time as others did. In the cases of the first two informants, then, extra concordance searches revealed that the incoming form ‘my’ was preferred 50 per cent of the time by Margaret and 99 per cent of the time by Arabella before vowels, which means they both seem to have handed over the flags in a very progressive and innovative spirit to the following family members. Figure 5.3 has incorporated the information from these extra concordance searches.

Examples (5.2) - (5.7) embody parts of the data which composes the foundation for Figure 5.3, and they prove that the members of the house of Stewart under investigation used the incoming shorter form together with subsequent lexemes of different initial phonology than just that of consonants, as well.

(5.2) But I put my hool trust in you (Margaret Stewart (Tudor) 1516, PCEEC).
(5.3) I pray you advertise my Aunt hearof with all speede (Arabella Stuart 1603, PCEEC).
(5.4) the messenger of my humble duty (Elizabeth Stuart 1612, PCEEC).
(5.5) yet I deserve to be punniched for my ill fortune (Charles Stuart I 1610, PCEEC).
(5.6) I doubt whether my orders came to you (Oliver Cromwell 1651, PCEEC).
(5.7) and most of the vexation and trouble I have at present in my affaires I owe to him (Charles Stuart II 1668, PCEEC).

Empirical enquiry adapted to Nevalainen’s and Raumolin-Brunberg’s (2003) preference would, of course, be of necessity to establish a more precise positioning, however, but considering how undisputed the choice between the two rivalling forms was for the four latest members of the house of Stewart that can be found in the PCEEC, and taking into account the information available in Figure 5.3 and Table 5.5 (which relays the numbers of observed absolute frequencies), all informants are found, categorically, to be linguistically progressive in all three respects with regards to the language shift to the shorter possessive. In others words, it is evident that the house of Stewart completely abandoned the older term in favour of the newer term very early on, whereas their contemporaries, most probably, did not linguistically behave in an as progressive fashion of conduct.
Table 5.5  Absolute frequencies of ‘mine’ vs. ‘my’ across the members of the house of Stewart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Producer</th>
<th>Frequency of ‘mine’</th>
<th>Frequency of ‘my’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Stewart (Tudor)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>41 (2 before vowels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabella Stuart</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>720 (121 before vowels)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Stuart</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Stuart I</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Cromwell</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Stuart II</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total: 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total: 1028</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of ‘mine’ and ‘my’, it is also noteworthy that these possessive determiners often occur in formulaic expressions such as your Lordship my honorable good friend (Arabella Stuart 1603, PCEEC). This particular example showcases how many, if not most, of the letters from the upper class opened up. As Biber (1988: 104) argues, however, when the same words very frequently collocate with one another, lower variation and information density follow. When this happens, in turn, it becomes possible to argue that the meaning becomes bleached, which proposes that language producers, when using such formulaic expressions, produce the kind of language that is expected and needed of them, rather than the kind of language an active agent of language change might prefer, for instance. As such, empirical data needs to be viewed with a critical eye, as the nature behind the choice between two rivalling forms can embody a multiplicity of possible hidden motives. The linguistic use might be progressive, but as formulaic expressions can also be argued to be conservative, perhaps it is not as innovative a historical sociolinguist might think. Or, on the other side of the spectrum, it could be argued to be exactly that, i.e. very innovative, as the very fact that Arabella, for instance, chooses to incorporate a new incoming form into a (possibly) old and established opening phrase suggests advocacy for a new, reinvented pattern which works well in harmony with the proverb ‘out with the old, in with the new’. Empirically investigating the natures and frequencies of such formulaic expressions could serve as an interesting point of departure for future research, as well, if it has not been done already.

In terms of statistical significance, Yates’ chi-square test was not possible to carry out as the data does not meet the condition of reasonably large enough amounts of absolute frequencies. But then again, due to the methodological differences that have revealed themselves, the results would, probably, be misleading. It is also important to note that the extra information that was incorporated into Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3, concerning the general public, gender and social class, stems from data that has been treated differently than that which resulted from the present study. In more precise detail, Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003: 214) report that because of the “uneven input of corpus data by different people […] different methods of counting the linguistic occurrences” were
employed. This means that it is quite possible that the natures of the data are different even for the investigations carried out in Section 5.1 and 5.2, and as there is also the question of classification, particularly in the case of the subject form, it is also possible that even if the same approaches had been selected, the observed absolute frequencies might still have been recorded according to the respective researchers’ own qualitative analysis. This reasoning explains why the present project chose to use the word ‘approximate’ before (and sometimes after) presenting the figures, as these figures, in turn, were meant to serve as relatable points of reference, and not as definite ones. It is also noteworthy that the data behind the results in Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003) was recorded more mechanically, whereas the present project adopted a more manual approach.

As a reminder of the vow the present thesis swore, it wished to address the available data at hand in terms of its transparency, judging from pre-decided methodological and theoretical reflections. Subsequently, it aspired to classify the data as either progressive or conservative, as the in-between possibility was not considered, and it is this process that has taken place in Sections 5.1 – 5.3. In Section 6, this effort will be summarised and the conclusions of the study will be presented. As Björkman (2016) points out, however, research would not be research if neither critique nor discussion took place, and in light of these words of wisdom the author of the present study would look forward to taking part of additional takes of the issues explored and addressed in the present project as well as appreciate if these topics, and neighbouring ones, formed part of future research agendas.
6 Conclusions

“Language change is one of the most mystifying and fascinating phenomena that dialectologists and linguistic scientists encounter.” (Trudgill 1999: 8)

To briefly answer the research questions of the present study, Table 6.1 and 6.2 can be consulted. Table 6.1 reports the number of times the informants appeared either conservative or innovative in their linguistic use with respect to each change under scrutiny. Having been found innovative accues the language producer with +1 point, whereas having been found conservative deducts -1 point. As the present study considers historical language conservatism and progression in relation to the three aspects (a) the general linguistic trend, (b) gender and (c) social class, this means each language producer can be awarded three points maximum per language change.

Table 6.1 The members of the house of Stewart ranked individually according to linguistic progression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Producer</th>
<th>‘Ye’ vs. ‘You’</th>
<th>‘-th’ vs. ‘-s’</th>
<th>‘Mine’ vs. ‘My’</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabella</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles I</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>+3 &amp; -3</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles II</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-3 &amp; +3</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The present project set out to, (1) first, find out how the individuals rank amongst themselves in terms of linguistic conservatism and innovation and, (2) second, how the house of Stewart as one group ranked in the same way in relation to the general linguistic patterns of the period. As Table 6.1 makes transparent, one of Margaret Stewart’s (Tudor) metiers appears to have been as a front-running agent of language change as she took the lead towards a more standard English – categorically, her language use was found to be innovative nine times (out of nine). Behind her, one finds Charles Stuart II who, in turn, is followed by his father. Arabella Stuart, Elizabeth Stuart and Oliver Cromwell remained the most conservative individuals of the scrutinised informants, leaving them with a shared fourth place. The fact that all informants ended up with a positive total score indicates that the Stewart members, across all three changes, were more progressive in their language use than the general public, however.
Additionally, the present investigation also vowed to relay results concerning whether or not any of the subjects of analysis proved innovative in his or her linguistic usage with respect to more than one linguistic change, as well. As it happens, all Stewart members except for Charles Stuart I were innovative in their linguistic use more than once, allowing them to join Nevalainen et al.’s (2011b) rare list and Evans’ (2013) Queen Elizabeth I’s minority group of people who led several linguistic ongoing changes. Arabella Stuart, Elizabeth Stuart, Charles Stuart I and Oliver Cromwell each lagged behind in relation to one language change, however, and Charles Stuart I and his son might have formed part of the in between group Nevalainen et al. (2011b) discuss.

Table 6.2  The members of the house of Stewart ranked in relation to social variables and according to linguistic progression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Variable</th>
<th>‘Ye’ vs. ‘You’</th>
<th>‘-th’ vs. ‘-s’</th>
<th>‘Mine’ vs. ‘My’</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The house of Stewart</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>+18</td>
<td>+18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>+9</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>+9</td>
<td>+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobility</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royalty</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+12</td>
<td>+16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 6.2 provides a testimonial for, the house of Stewart, if counted as one group, is found to have behaved in a linguistically progressive manner in general. Considering each language change individually, the house was equally progressive with subject ‘you’ as it was conservative with suffix ‘-s’, however. As such, the house would have probably belonged to the in between group had it not been for its strong adaption to the N-less variant of the possessive. In terms of gender, the women proved slightly more innovative, and in the case of the battle between the nobles and the royals, the royals have a number advantage as there are four royals and only two nobles under scrutiny. Overall, however, if the numbers are considered in a more careful light, one will come to the conclusion that the royals were, in fact, more progressive in their language use.

An important aspect to consider is that the data passed on to historical linguists is often limited, though, to which end the present study is no exception. Judging from the Stewart letters that can be found in the PCEEC, what has been elaborated above seems to hold true, but there is no way of knowing if it would hold true if one were able to take into consideration the complete language output of the informants. Paying extra attention to information regarding the addressees might reveal particularly interesting relationships, as well. The line between royalty and nobility, in turn, can be said to be permeable, as well, and, supposedly, if there are vast language differences between the
two, the present study assumes they have more to do with idiolectal differences rather than anything else.

A number of language changes of the sixteenth-century also have northern origins, just like the house of Stewart itself. As such, a discussion concerning regional variation might be called for – but as the language producers under scrutiny also belonged to the top social strata of their time and since the Scottish court moved to London (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 174), it might also not be. Yet again, it might be a question of idiolectology.

The assumption that contemporary idiolects can differ widely finds support in Nevalainen’s and Raumolin-Brunberg’s (1997/2014) studies, as well, as these report that there can be considerable variation and divergence in the linguistic usage of contemporaries. The standard list of the determinants of variation, in turn, includes at least gender, socioeconomic class, status, region, age, migration history, register, style and gender (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2014: 32). Milroy (1980/1987) contributes with yet another factor which might help explain idiolectal differences, however, which is the language producers’ memberships in social networks. As a number of these variables are untouched in the present study, future studies in pursuit of addressing the idiolects of the house of Stewart should be recommended to explore them. The possibility of the ‘in-between’ group as well as further pinpointing the criteria for linguistic conservatism and innovation would benefit greatly from extra attention, as well, and perhaps not just in terms of quantitative measures.

Unfortunately, as the nature of this project is limited, all of the questions that presented themselves during the course of this research could not be entertained. However, the results of the present study are still highly encouraging and intriguing, and, hopefully, they can function as a promising point of departure for future research. With this project, it is also hoped that the arguments made in favour for the significance of the present work (see Section 3.3) still remain durable as it has delivered additional accounts of individual profiles relating to historic agents of language change. And although the study only examines the linguistic practices of six individuals, it is also important to consider that these individuals were shaped by the societies in which they lived, and so, according to logic, the individual linguistic descriptions that can be seen together with these individuals might also (although to varying degrees) be applicable to people in the informants’ immediate (and possibly non-immediate) surroundings.

In a more concrete manner of speech, the present study can be said to have addressed parts of the epistolography of a number of individuals that pertained to the house of Stewart, adding to the research body presented in Del Lungo Camicotti (2014), for instance. The significance of such endeavours, in turn, lies in the value of, and the correlation between, the fields of language and society - as Breton (1991) and Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2005) explain, language is constantly shaped and informed by society, and vice versa, making them both indispensable twin-pillars when it comes to understanding the social nature of human language, past as well as present, and everything
around it. Contributing with additional perspectives, or individual pieces of a much greater puzzle in the case of this study, should, therefore, be of some importance. As the proverb tells us, ‘mighty oaks from little acorns grow’. The very phenomenon that idiolects can diverge to considerable degrees (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 1997/2014), in itself, also calls for the attention of scientific research (Woods et al. 1986), and as a subscriber of the uniformitarian epistemological stance, every finding that concerns the past could also be used to explain the present as well as predict the future. Thus, further probing into the epistolary discourse in its entirety, not least in view of Eurich’s (2011) findings briefly mentioned in Section 5.2, for instance, could tell us a great deal.
7 References


