Sociolinguistics and the History of English: A Survey

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ABSTRACT

The English language has a well-documented history which can be traced back over twelve hundred years. This paper discusses the history of English focussing on the evidence it offers for sociolinguistic inquiry and raising issues to do with the social, historical and empirical validity of the enterprise. As the documentation on the earliest stages of the language is fragmentary, little sociolinguistic variation can be reconstructed on the basis of it. However, the Anglo-Saxon period (c. 700-1100) does provide material for the study of the sociology of the multilingual language community. From c. 1400 onwards, the opportunities gradually improve to relate linguistic variation to speaker variables such as regional background, social status and gender. The wealth of data preserved from the Late Modern English period (1700-1900) enables even the reconstruction of the writers' social networks on an empirical basis.

KEYWORDS: historical sociolinguistics, history of English; sociology of language, diglossia, multilingualism; social dialectology, social networks; interactional sociolinguistics; literacy; standardization.

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1. BACKGROUND

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the variationist framework has now become one of the standard methods in historical linguistics. Recent years have witnessed a steady increase in scholarly articles in which linguistic changes are traced as they spread across linguistic and nonlinguistic space. It is typical of these studies that the linguistic conditions of the changes are carefully analysed, and their generic or textual embedding examined. The compilation of multigenre electronic corpora such as the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts* has made it easy to compare linguistic usage in various types of writing and investigate, for instance, whether an innovation first comes to light in the informal, speech-like varieties or the more formal genres. More recently, the social factors affecting linguistic variation have also become the focus of interest in their own right, despite the problems researchers encounter in reconstructing the social realities their informants lived in. This article will examine the role of social factors in the study of the twelve-hundred-year history of the English language.

The variationist approach is based on the assumption that language change does not take place without variation. The model does not advocate abrupt change through reanalysis in line with Lightfoot (1979) and other generativists, since empirical findings do not support this argument. The research carried out on Early Modem English in Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003) suggests that linguistic changes diffuse in societies at different rates but usually a few generations of speakers are needed for an innovation to become the majority variant. Our findings also indicate that adults may change their usage during their lifetimes. There is therefore no reason to believe, as has been claimed, that new linguistic elements can only be acquired in childhood. (For a discussion of child-based and utterance-based theories on language acquisition, see Croft 2000: 44-53.)

The application of the variationist methodology to historical data is based on the belief that fundamentally human nature, that is, human beings as biological, psychological and social creatures, has remained unchanged across the centuries in which linguistic data are available. Variationists have adopted the uniformitarian epistemological stance, according to which "the principles goveming the world (= the domain of enquiry) were the same in the past as they are now" (Lass 1997: 25).

To avoid misunderstanding, we would like to specify that historical sociolinguistic variation does not mean, for instance, that languages would have varied in the past according to the social divisions of present-day westem societies. We only argue that languages must have varied in the past, and this variation cannot have been more random than it is today. Linguistic variation has most likely always been constrained by some external factors, but these will have to be reconstructed on the basis of what we know about the past societies themselves. It is perhaps appropriate to draw a parallel with Comrie's discussion (2003: 256) of the origin of linguistic complexity, in which he recommends that we should regard the uniformitarian hypothesis as a process rather than a product.

II. RESEARCH PARADIGMS

II.1. Issues of validity

Sociolinguistics, whether historical or contemporary, always requires attention to both sides of the coin: language and society. As linguists, we focus on variation and change of linguistic phenomena, but our data need to be interpreted against the social analyses that have been made by historians, in particular social and cultural historians and historical sociologists.

The history of English has been documented for more than twelve centuries. However, the extent of documentation varies a great deal depending on the period, the times furthest away from us yielding far less material for study than, say, the last few centuries. The limits of our knowledge of history similarly restrict our ability to reconstruct past societies including the living conditions of families and individuals. The earlier the period under scrutiny, the less we know about its general, social and cultural history. These facts set the limits within which research into historical sociolinguistics can be carried out.

Although it may be interesting to observe isolated details about the linguistic usage of the past, the historical sociolinguist's aim is rather more ambitious: to uncover sociolinguistic patterns on a more general level. To be able to arrive at generalizations about the issues studied, the validity of the enterprise should be looked at from different angles (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 9-10). The work of historical sociolinguists first and foremost represents empirical research, which is not possible without sufficient data. We could call the need for a broad and systematic database in historical sociolinguistics the requirement of **empirical validity**. Empirical validity is an issue that will have to be evaluated both in general terms and for each period separately. Since the number of documents that have come down to us varies according to the historical period, it is clear that the level of empirical validity of linguistic investigations will also vary in a similar fashion.

Much of the research in historical sociolinguistics has been carried out to investigate the extent to which modern sociolinguistic methods and models can be applied to diachronic studies. This work includes tracing the relevant social divisions for sociolinguistic analysis. In correlational sociolinguistics, for instance, the **social validity** of research is improved by testing a range of speaker variables such as gender, occupation, age and domicile, or by adding migration and social mobility to the conditioning factors. However, in a field involving history the requirement of social validity is closely connected with that of **historical validity.** This requirement makes us turn to social historians and historical sociologists for relevant reconstructions of the societies and periods under study. Section 3 below will show that all these three types of validity increase when the periods considered come close to our own times.

11.2. Sociolinguistic paradigms

Neither modern nor historical sociolinguistics is of course monolithic. Table 1, adapted from Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003: 18), introduces three major paradigms in sociolinguistics, i.e., the sociology of language, social dialectology and interactional

sociolinguistics, including their objects of study and modes of inquiry.

Table 1: Three paradigms in sociolinguistics

Paradigm/Dimension	Sociology (nguag	Social dialectology	Interaction ll sociolinguistics
Object of study	• status and function of languagcs and language varictics in speech communities	• variation in grammar and phonology • linguistic variation in discoursc • spcaker attitudcs	• intcractivc construction and organization of discoursc
Mode of inquiry	• domain-specific use of languages and varictics of language	• corrclating linguistic and sociological catcgorics	▪ organization of discourse as social intcraction
Describing	• the norms and pattcrns of language use in domain-specific conditions	▪ thc linguistic systcm in rclation to cxtcrnal factors	▪ co-opcrativc rulcs for organization of discoursc
Explaining	• diffcrcnccs of and changcs in status and function of languages and language varictics	• social dynamics of languagc varictics in spccch communitics ▪ language changc	• communicativc compctcncc: vcrbal and nonvcrbal input in goal-oricntcd intcraction

Although research on past varieties does not in principle differ from present-day languages, the methods of acquiring data cannot be the same. There is no way of doing fieldwork in the past and instead researchers have to rely on the linguistic material that is available to them. Only written data is available from times before the relatively recent invention of tape-recording. Hence the mode of preservation of linguistic material restricts the research questions to some extent, excluding, for instance, issues directly involving spoken language. The rest of the dimensions in Table 1 can find their applications in historical research, if we keep in mind the limits imposed by the varying quantity and quality of data and the historical knowledge available.

lt could be argued that, viewed from a historical perspective, the three paradigms in Table 1 in fact form an implicational scale. For most societies that have left at least some documents for posterity, it is possible to carry out research into questions concerning the sociology of language. For instance, as regards the Old English period (c. 700-1100), it is certainly possible to study the status and functions of languages and varieties. Apart from English, Old Scandinavian and Latin naturally come to mind here. Later periods such as Late Middle English (c. 1300-1500) and Early Modern English (c. 1500-1700) also offer sufficient material for the study of linguistic variation in terms of genres and text types as well as speakers and speech cornmunities. Interactional sociolinguistics typically requires more information about individual usage and discourse patterns, which can be found in English texts especially from the 18th century onwards. But as the concept of implicational scale implies, research topics from the first two paradigms can also be covered for the latest period. The following sections will introduce studies which lend support to this argument.

III. SOCIOLINGUISTIC RESEARCH INTO THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH

As pointed out above, the sociolinguistic issues that can be explored for the Anglo-Saxon period are largely limited to the first paradigm in Table 1, the sociology of language. The complete corpus of Old English covers four centuries and consists of over 3,000 texts (3.5 million words), written and copied by professional scribes. All of it has been computerized for research purposes. By contrast, it is difficult to estimate the vast amount of public and private materials preserved from the Late Modern English period (1700-1900). Only a fraction of them have so far been made electronically available. With this skewed diachronic distribution of data sources, it is no wonder that while Old English information about social dialectology and interactional sociolinguistics either cannot be attained or remains conjectural, the work on later periods reaches a consistently higher overall degree of reliability and validity.

III.1. Old English (700-1100)

Tracing the history of English in sociolinguistic terms, we could follow Scott and Machan (1992: 19), and begin from the beginning:

> It is clear that the efficient cause of the beginning of what we call the English language was arguably a sociolinguistic phenomenon: the invasion of England in the fifth and sixth centuries by Germanic tribes who brought with them their own culture, customs and language. The society that these tribes initiated in England, influenced as it was by the remnants of the Roman occupation, by the scattered indigenous Celtic peoples, and by the geographic and political exigencies of the new environrnent, necessarily placed dernands on communication different from those experienced on the Continent. These exigencies concomitantly shaped the form and function of the dialects of Old English.

Much of the research on linguistic variability in Anglo-Saxon England comes under traditional Old English dialectology, which makes the best use of the fragmentary textual evidence available'. On a more general level, various aspects of multilingualism in Anglo-Saxon England have also attracted scholarly attention. One of them is diglossia, a situation in which two or more languages assume separate functions in the language community. Anglo-Saxon England was diglossic between English and Latin, and multiglossic if the indigenous Celtic languages of Britain and the Scandinavian varieties spoken by the Viking invaders and settlers are considered. Celtic substrate influence on English is explored, for instance, in a volume edited by Filppula *et al.* (2003) but any sociolinguistic details of the Celtic-English contacts are hard, if not impossible, to ascertain before the time of literary records[2].

More is known about the contacts between Old English and Old Scandinavian in the 9th and 10th centuries. Fisiak (1993: 53) maintains that some degree of bilingualism would have been a natural result from these long-term contacts in the Midland and northern parts of the country. Poussa (1982) goes so far as to argue that the contacts were close enough to result in a simplified form of spoken English in the contact area. She proposes a creolization hypothesis to account for the loss of grammatical gender, morphological simplification and Scandinavian

loans attested in Early Middle English texts. It would fit the facts better, she suggests, than a competing hypothesis which attributes the transformation undergone by English to effects of the Norman invasion in 1066, and hence to contacts between English and Anglo-Norman French. Many later writers on the topic have abandoned creolization and suggested a smoother transition from Old to Middle English (Gorlach 1990: 65-78, McMahon 1994: 267-270, Danchev 1997; but cf. 'Norsification' in Thomason & Kauffman 1988: 282-304).

Latin appears as the prestige (High) variety used throughout the Middle Ages even after the Old English period, whereas English was used locally as an informal (Low) variety. Latin was the international **linguafranca** of religion, education, scholarship, literature and law. As Toon (1992: 45) points out, however, the rise of vernacular English literacy from the 7th century onwards was a remarkable development. An uneven process across time, it culminated in the monastic circle of Winchester during the Benedictine revival in the late 10th century. The late West Saxon variety of Old English is often referred to as 'Standard Old English' because it appeared in manuscripts written and copied outside Wessex; vocabulary associated with the Winchester circle contributed to this supralocal usage (Gneuss 1972). We cannot, however, talk about **standardization** of Old English in any strict sense (Haugen ([1966] 1997). Although these Late West Saxon texts may have been nonlocalizable, they were linguistically quite variable.

Applying a **social-nehvork** approach to the Winchester circle, Lenker (2000) explores the extent to which it could be considered a **coalition,** and part of a larger Benedictine network, promoting shared linguistic norms. The network can be localized and its leader, Bishop Æthelwold (905/9?-984), identified. However, its membership cannot be detailed as far as individual monks are concerned, nor does the linguistic analysis go beyond the special vocabulary associated with Winchester. Lenker (2000: 235,238) also admits that it is impossible to identify single instigators of linguistic innovations, or the 'weak ties' between different parts of the monastic network[3].

Despite the missing ethnographic data, Lenker shows how variationist sociolinguistics may be used to account for local practices in general terms at this early date. She appeals to the higher-level notion of **cultural focusing,** defined by Lesley Milroy (1987: 182-183) as "the formation of a recognisable set of norms". In the Winchester circle cultural focusing resulted from the regularization of various aspects of monastic life and the liturgy, and extended to linguistic expression. The implementation and maintenance of norms was therefore facilitated by the institutional support of the close-knit network structure of the monastic community.

III.2. Middle English (1100-1500)

A basic requirement for doing historical sociolinguistics over and beyond the sociology of language is gaining access to past language communities through literate individuals. Clanchy (1987) provides an in-depth account of the extension in literate habits that took place in England between 1066 and the early 14th century. It involved a complex transition from an oral society to one based on written records in many aspects of everyday life. Clerks did most of the writing

throughout the Middle Ages, when written documents were normally taken down from dictation and read out loud. In this way laypeople of all social ranks, who were technically illiterate, participated in the making and use of documents. Although the lay ability to write became more widespread in the face of growing bureaucracy, what was required from most was this **'pragmatic' literacy** rather than the actual ability to produce written documents (Clanchy 1987: 38,219).

In Clanchy's view (1987: 184-185), one of the obstacles to the spread of literacy in the modem sense was the **multilingualism** of late medieval England. After the Norman Conquest in 1066, English continued as a Low variety in the **triglossic** language situation. Early Middle English scholarship suffers from the scarcity of texts from the late 11th and 12th centuries, as the Late Old English literary tradition largely gave way to Anglo-Norman in administrative, religious and literary use. Analysing post-Conquest England, Trotter (2000: 200-201) notes that, for the first hundred years, Anglo-Norman was a true vernacular of a small section of the population, but became a vehicular second language for many native English speakers as it developed into a High variety with functions partly overlapping with Latin. Anglo-Norman was acquired by social aspirers as well as professionals who needed to master the growing output of official records of various kinds in the 12th and 13th centuries.

Schendl's study (2000) of **code-switching** in Middle English illustrates the complex situation reflected in mixed-language ('macaronic') texts. They represent a wide range of both literary (poems, drama, prose) and non-literary texts (sermons, medical and business texts, letters) but do not exceed the number of contemporary monolingual texts. Mixed-language texts are unevenly distributed over text-types, genres and domains, and do not show a neat separation of the different language varieties involved, of Middle English and medieval French and of classical and medieval Latin. Schendl (2000: 71) proposes that code-switching in written texts may be "rather a specific mode of certain text types than a general phenomenon".

Trotter (2000: 203) takes a different view in suggesting that the medieval authors of nonliterary documents were not necessarily even aware of their code-switching or language-mixing. He argues that, although the role of written records in the process is of primary importance, **language-mixing** must also have taken place in speech from early on. In the course of time various processes of **hybridization** resulted in the practical incorporation of Anglo-Norman into Middle English, and the massive relexification of English, which cannot be understood in traditional terms of borrowing.

Considering the **attitudes** to multilingualism in late medieval England, Machan (2003) provides evidence for the growing status of English as a 'community-defining' language. However, as High languages French and Latin functioned as **sociolinguistic markers** sustaining the hierarchical social structure of late medieval England. As English only had a limited role compared to Latin and French in such socially powerful institutions as universities, education, church and law, it was not fully represented in the kinds of metalinguistic discourse which might have boosted its status as a national language (Machan 2003: 76-86).

The study of Middle English **dialectology** has greatly benefited from the publication of *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (Mclntosh, Samuels & Benskin 1986), and will benefit from the linguistic atlas of Early Middle English under compilation (Laing 2000). One of the ironies in the history of English is that most Old English texts represent the Late West Saxon variety, while much of the written history of Middle English comes from the Midland area, Central and East Midlands and London. Their dialects were also to provide the foundations for **supralocal** norms of the language. Smith (2000) notes that vernacular English traditions of text production persisted in the South-West Midlands for some time after the Norman Conquest. Some continuity with the 'standard' Old English can be traced in the AB language. As to its 'standardness', Smith (2000: 131), however, concludes that "AB language is simply a particular parochial usage belonging to a particular locality in the South-West Midlands".

Standardization is one of the most intensely studied issues in English historical linguistics, to the point of being labelled as a political agenda by some sociolinguists (Milroy 1992). The topics addressed in the Late Middle English period include the selection and diffusion of a reference dialect in the early 15th century associated with the royal writing offices, the Signet Office and Chancery, respectively (Samuels 1963, Fisher *et al.* 1984, Benskin 1992, Fisher 1996). The spread of these norms to private writing is also discussed (Hernández-Campoy & Conde Silvestre 1999). The degree of focusing of the emerging written norms in Late Middle English has similarly received attention (Smith 1996: 66-73), as have the processes of **vernacularization** and standardization of individual genres such as early statutes and scientific writing (Wright 2000).

Social dialectology provides new perspectives on most of the linguistic developments earlier discussed under 'standardization' in the Middle and Early Modern English periods. A prerequisite for new dialect formation and dialect levelling is **dialect contact.** From the Middle English period onwards, a key role in these processes is played by migration to London (Keene 2000). Ekvall (1956: lx-lxi) suggests that in the 13th century the origin of London immigrants was largely the Home Counties, but that the pattern changed in the 14th century, when a large number of immigrants to the City came from the Midlands, from the East Midlands in particular. On the basis of this data Kristensson (1994: 107), argues for a remarkable East Anglian presence in London that gave rise to one of the **sociolects** spoken in the capital in the 14th century; he assumes that, being spoken by wealthy merchants, it became a prestige dialect and even served as a model used in government offices.

Ekvall's material does not, unfortunately, cover the southern counties, which makes his account incomplete. However, the fact that a number of Chancery clerks came from the north in the Lancastrian era rnay account for the northernisms in Chancery documents (Fisher 1996: 51). There is also a large body of later evidence based on apprenticeship, citizenship and court records to suggest that a high proportion of late 15th and 16th century immigrants to London carne from the northern counties, and that there were few migrants from East Anglia. Demographic data and dialect contacts can therefore be used to account for the kind of **dialect**

levelling found in late 15th-century texts (e.g. Samuels 1981, MacIntosh, Samuels & Benskin 1986: 3, Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 162-164).

Machan (2003: 144-145) finds that the correlation between a social group and a given variety of English is only incipient in Middle English literary texts. He considers **courtly language** as manifested in poems such as *Gawain and the Green Knight* to be one of the first candidates for a **sociolect,** although it may be thought of as a literary device or a **register** rather than a dialect. The point however is, Machan argues, that although not all nobles in the poem speak like Gawain and the Lady, only nobles can speak that way. At the same time, **sociopragmatic studies** of nonliterary language indicate that a person's social standing is directly reflected in forms of address, the upper social ranks receiving the most complex titles in Late Middle English correspondence (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 1995, Nevala, forthcoming).

Few **social network** analyses have been carried out on Middle English, although coalitions, alliances contracted for specific purposes, can be identified. Bergs (2000) discusses two networks, the close-knit Lollard movement centred around John Wycliffe in the late 14th century, and the Paston family network in the 15th century. He notes that macro-level social network analyses look promising, whereas detailed micro-linguistic studies are problematic because the criteria developed for measuring social strength scales are not universal. On the other hand, as studies of the Pastons show, family networks can be reconstructed at the level of individuals (Davis 1954). Generational differences can also be detected, as shown by Raumolin-Brunberg and Nevalainen's study (1997) of ongoing changes in the pronouns of the 15th-century Cely family in London.

The role of **gender differentiation** in language change is one of the modern 'sociolinguistic universals' (Hudson 1996: 195). The historical study of women's language suffers from extensive female illiteracy even at the close of the 15th century (O'Mara 1996). Wood (2004) examines late medieval letter-writing practices by applying Fairclough's **critical discourse analysis** approach to 15th-century letters attributed to Lady Margaret Paston. She presents evidence suggesting that Lady Margaret herself must have been the composer of the letters. A similar conclusion is also reached by Truelove (2001), who analyses the 15th-century letters of the Stonor women: letter-writing existed as a verbal rather than a manual skill for these late medieval women. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003) discuss some systematic gender differences in ongoing linguistic changes in the 15th century. This is another piece of evidence for women having been responsible for the wording of their personal letters, which can hence provide valid material for historical sociolinguistic studies.

111.3. Early Modern English (1500-1700)

As expected, more extensive data sources and sociohistorical information on Early Modern English allow a broader coverage of the issues introduced in the above two sections. The invention of the printing press multiplied the number of books, and the growth of literacy

allowed more and more people to put pen to paper for the conveyance of their private thoughts. **Full literacy** was rare at the beginning of the period but improved as it wore on. According to Cressy (1980: 177), only 10 per cent of men and one per cent of women could read and write around 1500, but by 1700 the figures had grown to about 40 per cent for men and 25 for women.

Since the English language acquired a strong position as the national language of the realm in this period, **multilingualism** lost much of its former importance. The high status of Latin however continued in learning and science until the end of the 17th century, and its influence on the development of scientific genres was significant (Taavitsainen 2002: 205). Nurmi and Pahta (forthcoming) extend the research of **code-switching** to private letters and find that it was socially stratified.

The role and status of local **dialects** have been studied less than in the previous periods, apparently because of limited data. According to Samuels (1981), texts from this period no longer represented identifiable dialects. However, Wakelin (1982) presents evidence for spoken dialects from written documents, and Gorlach (1999a) provides a list of early modern dialect texts. Britton's careful analysis (2000) of the language of Henry Machyn traces him —formerly characterized as a typical middle-class Londoner— back to South West Yorkshire. The East Anglian third-person singular indicative zero suffix is discussed by Trudgill (2001) and Nevalainen *et al.* (2001), suggesting both contact with immigrants from the Low Countries and multiple sociolinguistic causation.

From the early 16th century onwards, the London region was the centre from which many linguistic innovations such as the subject pronoun you **supralocalized** and spread to the North and East Anglia. London English, in turn, was influenced by a steady influx of migrants (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2000, 2003: 157-184). Nurmi (1999: 163-185) even suggests that the arrival of the Stuart Court from Scotland in London around 1600 affected the linguistic prestige patterns in England.

At the same time, broader **regional variation** continued in written texts: Scottish English, for instance, has been studied as a distinct regional variety (e.g. Meurman-Solin 1993), and Arnerican English became the first **extraterritorial English** to be investigated (e.g. Kyto 1991). In this area, the new electronic corpus of *Salem Witchcraft Records* will provide material for historical sociolinguistics in early American English[4].

The process of **standardization,** which led to almost uniform spelling conventions and reduced variation in the structure of the written language towards the end of the early modern period, has been a popular topic and a source of diverging opinions for some time. Standardization is dealt with in most histories of English, and Blake (1996) raises it to a prominent position. As pointed out above, in recent publications such as Wright (2000), it is argued by Hope and others that, instead of a single ancestor dialect, the origin of Standard English can be found in a gradual combination of elements from several varieties (see also: Nevalainen 2000c)[5].

As regards research in **social dialectology**, the recent sociolinguistic studies of Early

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Modem English based on the ***Corpus of Early English Correspondence*** have discovered phenomena similar to findings on present-day languages. The aim of our research reported in Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003) was to see how a number of grarnmatical changes diffused among the population of England. We found considerable variation in the rate of change and could demonstrate that several linguistic processes correlated with gender, social status, region and register. Women tended to lead the changes that came from below, e.g. the subject pronoun *you* as opposed to *ye,* and the third-person singular *-s.* Men were the leaders of shifts such as the decline of multiple negation and inversion after initial negators. Most changes had their origin in interior social groups[6]. Moreover, real-time historical data have provided an opportunity for longitudinal studies of the language of **individuals,** something that apparent-time studies of present-day languages cannot do (Raurnolin-Brunberg, forthcoming a, b).

Linguistic attitudes have been studied on the basis of the choices made by social aspirers, that is, people who climbed several rungs on the social ladder. Present-day sociolinguists have shown that these people tend to be sensitive to the social values attached to linguistic choices. Nevalainen (1998) shows that implicit stigmatization developed for the use of multiple negation in the early modern period, and Nurmi (1999: 99-109) argues that social aspirers resorted to avoidance strategy in their relation to periphrastic *do,* a phenomenon marking linguistic insecurity according to sociolinguistic research. Nevala (1998) also finds that social mobility affected the use of forms of address[7]

The diffusion of linguistic changes has also been studied in terms of **social networks.** During the early modem period, it is not easy to have access to sufficient ethnographic data to reconstruct a person's social networks *in toto,* but variation in a speech community's general network system can be used in the analysis of linguistic changes. It is, for instance, clear that a large city like London with its constant turnover of inhabitants consisted of communities of loose-knit social networks facilitating the diffusion of linguistic changes (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2000)[8]. Raumolin-Brunberg (1998) has suggested that social turmoils caused by events like the Civil War in mid-seventeenth-century England can lead to increasing weak links in social networks, and consequently accelerate the diffusion of linguistic changes.

As noted above, politeness formulae in address forms belong to the **sociopragmatic** issues that have been studied for Middle English. The larger and more varied data sources, including correspondence and drama, in the early modem period improve the opportunities for research on politeness. A number of studies have shown that address forms both in Shakespeare's plays and personal correspondence reflected power relations and social distance (see: e.g. Brown & Gilman 1989, Nevala, forthcoming)[9]. lnvolvement and discourse style have been natural topics in interactional sociolinguistics (e.g. Palander-Collin 2002, Taavitsainen & Jucker, eds. 2003), and the annotated ***Corpus of English Dialogues*** will enhance research in this area (see: Culpeper & Kytö, forthcoming).

III.4. **Late Modern English (1700-1900)**

In the sociology of language paradigm, Late Modern English research has concentrated on two major new areas, **prescriptivism** and the rise of **new varieties** of English outside the British Isles. While comments on correct usage were rare in the early modern period, they began to occur from the 1660s onwards, and prescriptive ideology developed in the 18th century. A large number of studies, beginning with Leonard (1929), have been carried out on the numerous prescriptive grammars and contemporary comments on correct linguistic behaviour in the late modern 'polite' society. Klein (1994) argues that 'politeness' grew into a linguistic ideology in the 18th century. McIntosh (1998) explores this 'new politeness' and gentrification of English prose in a variety of writings, and Percy (2000) analyses its implementation in contemporary critical journals.

Wright (1994) compares the language of Joseph Addison with the recommendations of contemporary grammarians and characterizes him "as one of the agents of the authority which marks the pre-eminence of standard English". She returns to the topic later (Fitzmaurice 2000b) and presents a careful analysis of *The Spectator,* combining the study of social networks with **standardization.** Information has also accumulated on other aspects of standardization, which in the 18th and 19th centuries continued as a far more conscious process than in the previous centuries. Finegan (1992) shows how English increased its stylistic dimensions, but at the same time standardization suppressed local dialects. Individual studies have compared actual usage with the recomrnendations given by contemporary grammar books. Facchinetti (2000), for instance, demonstrates that the grammar books do not give a full picture of the use of the modal verb *shall* in the 19th century.

The study of Scottish and Irish English as well as **new varieties** in North America and the colonies is gaining ground (see: Burchfield 1994, Algeo 2001). Frank (1994) shows that, with nationalist tendencies, there was an interest in standardizing regional varieties such as Scottish English in the late modern period. In his study of language attitudes, McColl Millar (2000: 196) concludes that "the Scots tongue —or its local varieties— are a vital part of the identity of localities across the whole of non-Gaelic Scotland" throughout the period. Hickey (2002) documents historical variation in Irish English, and Carver (1992) traces regional variation in American English. Gunn (1992) explores the social contexts which have constrained the development of Australian English, and Fritz (forthcoming) considers data displaying early variation in this emerging variety.

In the field of **social dialectology,** a good deal of attention has been paid to the study of language change in the context of **social networks.** There has been interesting research on the methodology of this approach (e.g. Bax 2000, Fitzmaurice 2000a), and a number of networks, in particular literary circles, have become the object of detailed studies. Sufficient background information is available for many late modern networks and their members. Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1991, 1996, 2000a, 2000b) explores linguistic changes by examining the language of well-known individual informants in terms of their network contacts. Pratt and Denison (2000)

investigate the diffusion of a linguistic innovation, the progressive passive, in the close-knit social network of the Southey-Coleridge circle.

Correlational sociolinguistics in Late Modern English has not yet gained as firm a footing as in Early Modern English. Part of the data problem is likely to be remedied with the completion of the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence Extension* (CEECE) covering the years 1680-1800[10]. There are, however, a few book-length studies on Late Modern English relating speaker variables such as gender to language variation and change; they include Arnaud's work on the progressive (2002) and the study of gendered aspects of language use in New England by Kielkiewicz-Janoviak (2002).

In more general terms, the 19th century forms the basis for modern English **dialectology** with the introduction of a number of dialect-dictionary and grammar projects (Ihalainen 1994, Gorlach 1999b: 26-43). Access to the lower social ranks is enhanced with improved literacy and more authentic materials becoming available from the late 18th century on (Austin 1994, Bailey 1996: 263-317, Fairman 2003). The study of Late Modern English pronunciation, its variation and regulation, similarly benefits from the wealth of contemporary commentary and dictionaries available (Mugglestone 1995, Beal 2003).

The availability of source materials has also made it possible to study the linguistic behaviour of individuals to a greater extent than before. For instance, the language and ideas of the prescriptive grammarian Robert Lowth have been the topic in several studies by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1997, 2002, 2003, 2005). In the field of **interactional sociolinguistics,** correspondence continues to provide the most popular material. The research topics covered include politeness strategies and the sociopragmatics of epistolary exchanges (Fitzmaurice 2002, Nevala, forthcoming).

In conclusion, we still lack much of the baseline evidence on the social embedding of language variation and change in Late Modern English. Long-term descriptions will be needed, for instance, to contextualize the range of variation observed in local networks and communities of practice (see: Milroy & Gordon 2003: 116-118).

IV. CONCLUSION

Accepting Comrie's notion (2003) of uniformitarianism as a process, we ought to be able to identify general sociolinguistic processes in real time. One of the prerequisites for such generalizations is information from all domains of sociolinguistics —macro-level factors such as multilingualism are enacted in micro-level interactional dynamics. In this article we have provided a brief survey on what has so far been done in English historical sociolinguistics, and what remains to be done in the core domains of sociolinguistics that we have considered. The account is far from exhaustive but, we hope, it nevertheless shows the depth and versatility of historical sociolinguistics to date, and the promise it holds for the future.

NOTES

1. For a survey of the available evidence, see e.g. Fisiak (2001), and for the ideological problems involved, Hogg (1998).

2. Multilingualism in medieval England is discussed in most text- and reference books which account for the external history of the language; see e.g. Baugh & Cable (1993), Fisiak (1993). Fennell (2001). Brief histories of the languages spoken in the British Isles today and in the past are included in Price (2000).

3. A potential hypercorrecting innovator is discussed by Smith (1996: 27-29)

4. For Sconish English, see also Romaine (1982), Devitt (1989), Meurman-Solin (2000a, 2000b, 2001); for early American English, Kytö (forthcoming), Rissanen (2003), Wright (forthcoming).

5. See also Görlach (1988), Stein & Tieken-Boon van Ostade, eds. (1994), Wright (1996), Culpeper & Kytö (1999), Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg (2002), Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg (2003: chapter 10), Nevalainen & Tieken-Boon van Ostade (forthcoming).

6. The following studies have drawn their data from the *Corpus of Early English Correspondenre* (CEEC), specifically compiled for research in historcal sociolinguistics at the University of Helsinki: Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, eds. (1996), Nevalainen (1998, 1999, 2000a, 2000b), Raumolin-Brunberg (1998, 2003), Nurmi (1999), Palander-Collin (1999, 2000), Nevalainen & Raumolin-Bninberg (2003). Other studies in early modem sociolinguistics include, for instance, Leith (1984), Nevalainen & Raumolin-Bninberg (1989), Kytö (1993), Nevalainen (1994), Okulska (1999), Wright (2001, 2002).

7. See also Williams (1992).

8. See also Nevalainen & Raumolin-Bmnberg (1989, 1994), Nevalainen (2000b).

9. See also Breuer (1983), Hope (1993), Kopytko (1993), Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg (1995), Raumolin-Brunberg (1996), Busse (2002).

10. See http://www.eng.helsinki.fi/varieng/team2/index.htm

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