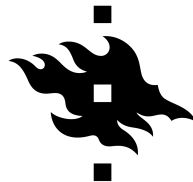


From *old-English grubbers* to *cheeky blighters*?

Variation in the productivity of *-er*
in the history of English

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We are interested in...

- The **historical sociolinguistics** of derivation and neologisms
 - Who are the innovators and why?
- **Syntheticity** in morphology
 - Hypothesis: cline between derivation and inflection, both contribute to syntheticity
 - Evidence for cline: similar variation & change

Nominal suffixes *-er* and *-or*

- Typically derive agentive or instrumental nouns from verbs: *driver, governor, filler*
 - Also: person ‘concerned with N’ / ‘living in N’
 - Here: division into **animate vs. inanimate**
- *-or*: Latinate variant of *-er*
 - Pronounced identically (*adviser/advisor*)
 - treated as a single suffix here
 - (Plag 2003: 89; Bauer 2001: 199–203)

Productivity of *-er* and *-or*

- **Sociolinguistic variation?**
 - “Default” suffix (Bauer et al. 2013: 232) → no?
 - Säily (2011): women use *-ity* less productively than men; lower-class women: also *-ness*
 - Gendered styles?
- Productivity \approx type frequency
 - Number of different words containing the suffix
 - Baayen (2009), Säily & Suomela (2009)

Material

- **BNC = British National Corpus**, early 1990s
 - Demographically sampled spoken component, both gender & social class known:
358 speakers, 2.6 Mw
- **CEEC = Corpora of Early English Correspondence**, C18 section (1680–1800)
 - Speech-like genre, social metadata
 - 315 writers, 2.2 Mw

Methods

- Types cross-checked with **MorphoQuantics** (Laws & Ryder 2014a, b)
- CEEC: **FiCa** interface for classifying data (developed by Eetu Mäkelä)
- Analysis of productivity: ***types2*** (Suomela 2015, 2016)

MorphoQuantics

*-er*³ (Forms Ns from Adjs, Vs & Ns) ; Language of Origin = Germanic / Latin ; Etymon = *-ārjoz* / *-ārius* ; Meaning = *an entity that performs the action specified by the verb* ; Type = *Suffix*

Export

Headword	PoS	Confirmed PoS	Tokens	Summed	Comment	Types
KEDUCERS	NNZ	n	2	2		1
REFRESHER	NN1	n	8	8		1
REINFORCER	NN1	n	2	3		1
REMINDER	NN1	n	54	62		1
RETAINER	NN1	n	5	5		1
REVIVER	NN1	n	1	1		1
REVOLVER	NN1	n	34	35		1
RINGER	NN1	n	3	3		1
ROASTER	NN1	n	1	2		1
ROCKER	NN1	n	4	4		1
ROLLER	NN1	n	88	112		1
ROLLER-COASTER	NN1	n	1	1		1
RUBBER	NN1	n	26	93		1
RULER	NN1	n	26	30		1
RUNNER	NN1	n	4	17		1
SANDER	NN1	n	8	10		1
SAVER	NN1	n	12	22		1
SCANNER	NN1	n	18	24		1
SCOOTER	NN1	n	29	33		1
SCORCHER	NN1	n	1	1		1
SCOURERS	NN2	n	1	1		1
SCRAPER	NN1	n	6	10		1
SCRAPPER	NN1	n	8	8		1
SCREWDRIVER	NN1	n	36	43		1
SCRUBBER	NN1	n	2	4		1
SEALER	NN1	n	7	8		1
SERVER	NN1	n	129	140		1
SERVERS	NN2	n	0	0		0
SHAKER	NN1	n	2	3		1
SHARPENER	NN1	n	12	17		1
SHAVER	NN1	n	5	7		1

FiCa

roller (3)					RLR (3)	RLR (3)
roller	rollers	yes		2	RLR	RLR
roller	roller	yes		3	RLR	RLR
roller	rollers	yes		6	RLR	RLR
ruler					RLR (3)	RLR (3)
ruler	ruler	unclear	er1; 1 in ed	5	RLR	RLR
rem-ber					RMBR	RMBR
rem-ber	rem-ber	no		2	RMBR	RMBR
					RMLR (2)	RMLR (2)
rambler (2)					RMLR (2)	RMLR (2)
rambler	rambler	unclear	some NP0	7	RMLR	RMLR
rambler	ramblers	no	NP0 (perioc	1	RMLR	RMLR
remem[[b]er	remem[[b]er	no		1	RMMB	RMMBR
					RMMR (8)	RMMR (7)
rememb=f=s					RMMR	RMMR
rememb=f=s	rememb=f=s	no		1	RMMR	RMMR
remember (2)					RMMR (2)	RMMR (2)
remember	rememb=f=	no		8	RMMR	RMMR
remember	remember	no		690	RMMR	RMMR
remember's	remember's	no		2	RMMR	RMMR
remembers	remembers	no		22	RMMR	RMMR
remembr	remembr	no		2	RMMR	RMMR
remember	remember	no		2	RMMR	RMMR
remembrancer	remembranc	yes	er1	1	RMMR	RMMRNSR
					RMNT (9)	RMNT (9)
remainder (9)					RMNT (9)	RMNTR (9)
remainder	remainder	no	MO	1	RMNT	RMNTR

of small diameter which the seed is to be subjected to before it is exposed to the pressure of the great stone **rollers:** this he says is a late invention; but as it requires more workmanship than is easy to be had here I think cast iron rol

odel he has brought with him from England there is an apparatus for bruising the seed by making it pass between two iron **rollers** of small diameter which the seed is to be subjected to before it is exposed to the pressure of the great stone

<Q A 1783 FN SBENTHAM> <X SAMUEL BENTHAM> <P III,209> [] [469 FROM SAMUEL BENTHAM]] [^TO JEREMY BENTHAM^] [ADDRESSED:] Jere=y=Bentham Esq=r= / Lincoln's Inn / London Petersburg Sepr. 13th O.S. 1783. I am at length taken into the service of this country. The rank given me is that of (Conseiller de la Cour) , which is only equal to that of Lieutenant Colonel in the army. Considering that I had had no Military rank in any other country to found my pretensions on, ...^ to bruise the seed in oil mills, and what objections he sees to such a substitute. In many places I imagine the rollers of stone may be cheaper; but that would not be the case here. Capper is returned and his having seen you all has attached me to him. It is probable we may be concerned together in the erection of an oil mill which gave rise to the above question. In a model he has brought with him from England there is an apparatus for bruising the seed by making it pass between two iron rollers of small diameter which the seed is to be subjected to before it is exposed to the pressure of the great stone

OED Oxford English Dictionary Quick search: Find word in dictionary GO

Lost for Words? | Advanced search | Help

Help on Search Results | Print | Email

Quick search results

Showing 1-5 of 5 results in 5 entries

Widen search? Find 'roller' in: [phrases \(186\)](#) [definitions \(290\)](#) [etymologies \(49\)](#) [quotations \(1600\)](#) [full text \(751\)](#)

View as: [List](#) | [Timeline](#) Sort by: [Entry](#) | [Frequency](#) | [Date](#)

- roller, n.¹** [View full entry](#) 1295
 ...One of a number of (usually large) cylinders of wood or other hard material, sometimes attached to a framework, over which a heavy object can be passed....
- roller, n.²** [View full entry](#) 1678
 ...A jay-like bird, *Coracias garrulus* (family *Coraciidae*), having mainly greenish-blue plumage with dark blue wings and a chestnut back, noted for its characteristic tumbling display flight and found...

Your current search (entries):
roller

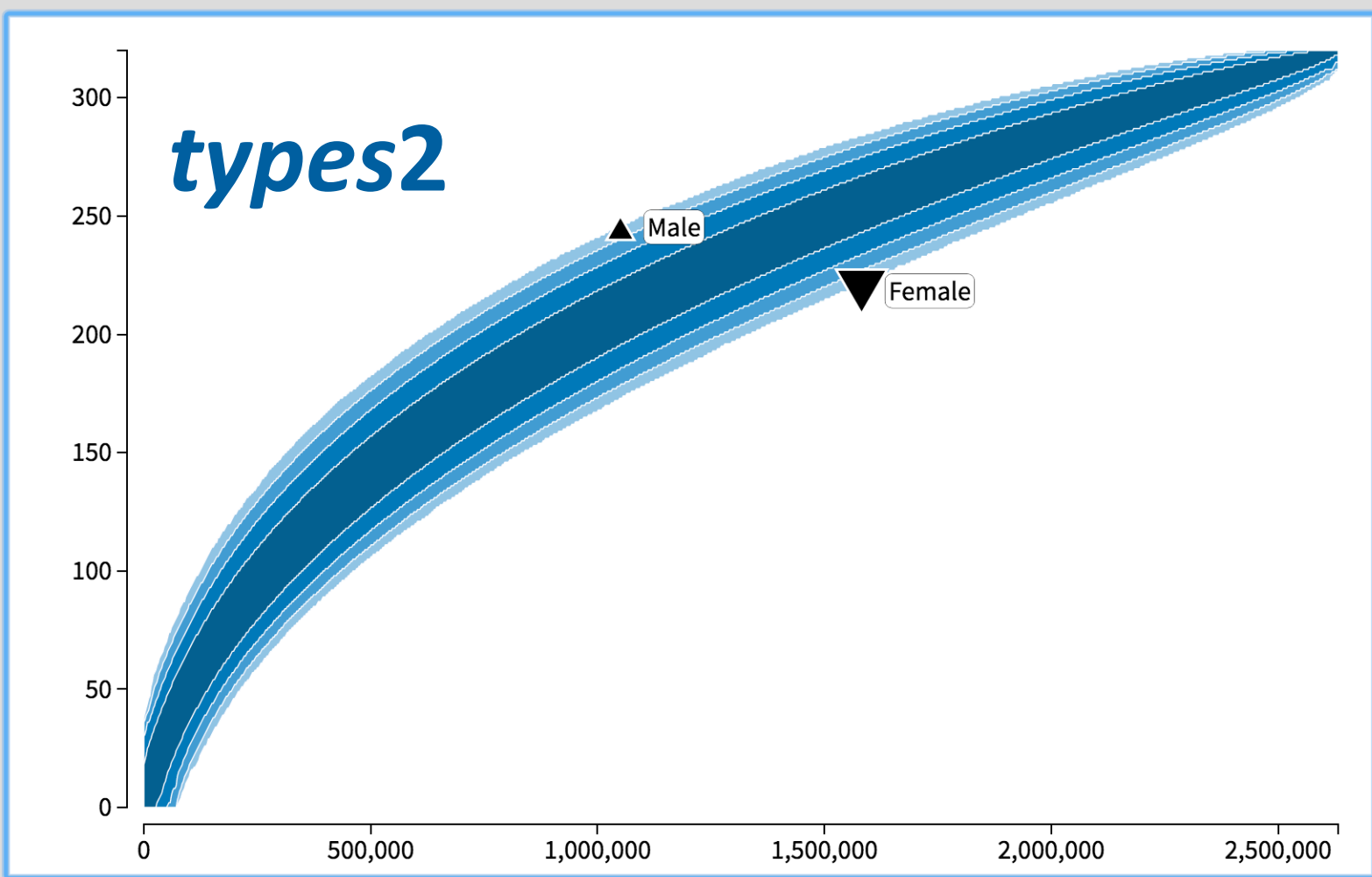
Save
Refine search

Refine your search

- Subject
- Language of Origin
- Region
- Usage
- Part of Speech
- Date of First Citation

Entry **subedar, n.**
 subduement, n.
 subduer, n.
 subduing, n.
 subduing, adj.
 subduple, adj.
 subduplicate, adj.
 subdural, adj.
 subdwarf, n.
 sub-echo, n.
subedar, n.
 subedari, n.
 sub-edit, v.
 sub-editor, n.
 sub-editorial, adj.

- types2
- Overview
- Plot**
- Types
- Samples
- Help
- Corpus
- bnc-spoken-demo**
- bnc-spoken-demo-home
- Dataset
- er+or
- er+or person
- er+or thing**
- Group
- all
- age
- age + gender
- gender**
- social class
- social class + gender
- none
- Collection
- none
- Female**
- Male
- Statistics
- types / running words**
- types / tokens



The corpus **bnc-spoken-demo** contains 358 samples and 2,632,512 running words.

The dataset **er+or thing** contains 111 hapaxes, 3,318 types, and 320 tokens.

The collection **Female** contains 1,582,116 running words and 218 types.

Only **0.0016%** of random collections with 1,582,116 running words contain at most 218 types.

This finding is probably interesting: the false discovery rate is **0.0063**.

Case 1: BNC

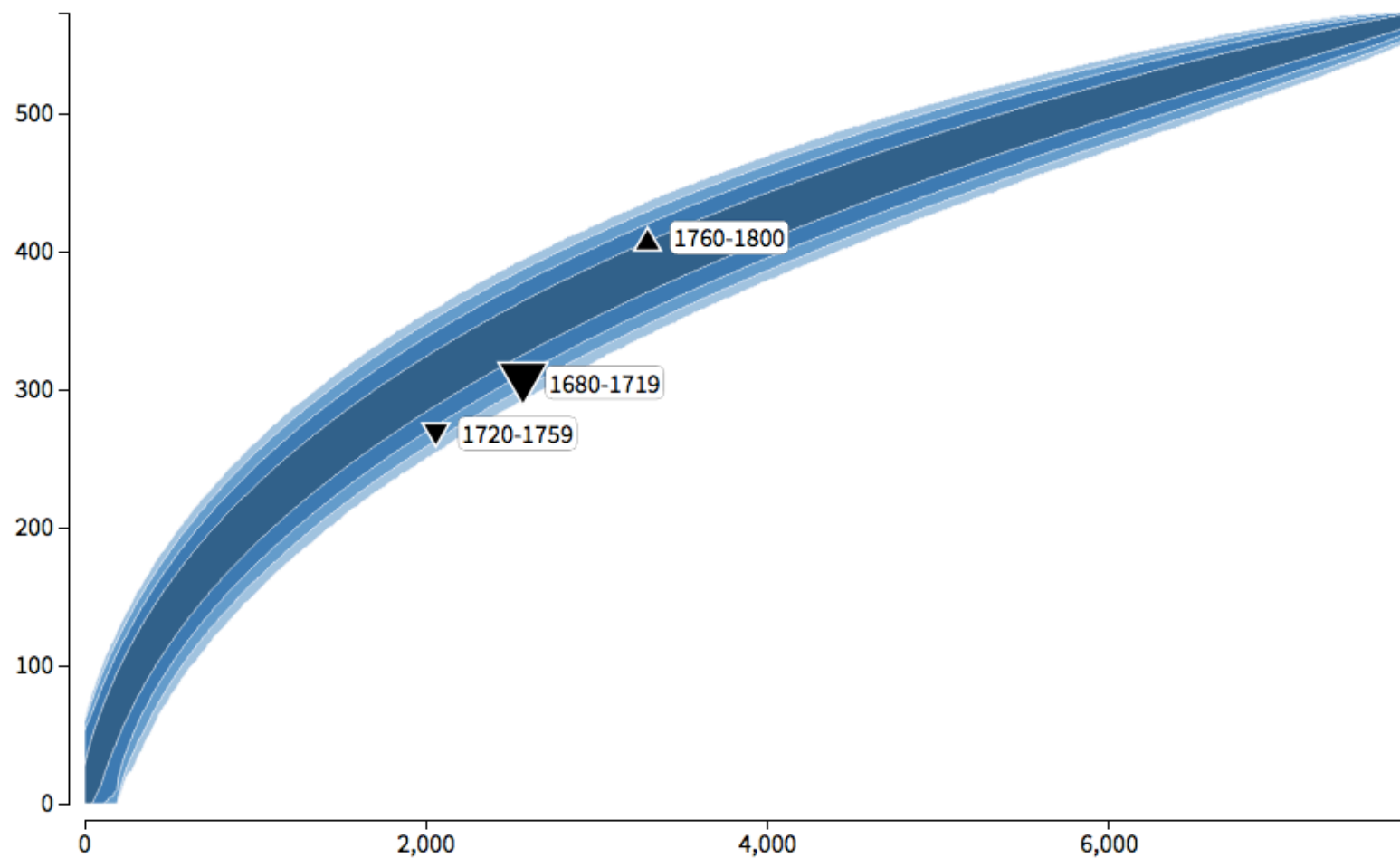
- Men use *-er* more productively than women
 - Focus on tools & occupations, playful name-calling: masculine identity-building?
- Especially older men, even at home
 - cf. Keune et al. (2006, 2012); Štekauer et al. (2005)

sample	description	before	word	after
PS09T	DE m 60- retired	poor old	blighter	
PS0HM	C1 m 35-44 draughtsman	Cheeky	blighter	.
PS14C	AB m 45-59 charge nurse	Well these poor	blighters	who g
PS4YX	AB m -14 student	had a history with his toe poor	blighter	.

Case 2: CEEC

*Corpora of Early English Correspondence,
1680–1800*

- types2
- Overview
- Plot**
- Types
- Samples
- Help
- Corpus
- CEEC**
- Dataset
- er+or
- er+or person**
- er+or thing
- Group
- all
- gender
- gender + relcode
- period**
- rank
- relcode
- none
- Collection
- none
- 1680-1719**
- 1720-1759
- 1760-1800
- Statistics
- types / running words
- types / tokens**



The corpus **CEEC** contains 579 samples and 2,216,119 running words.

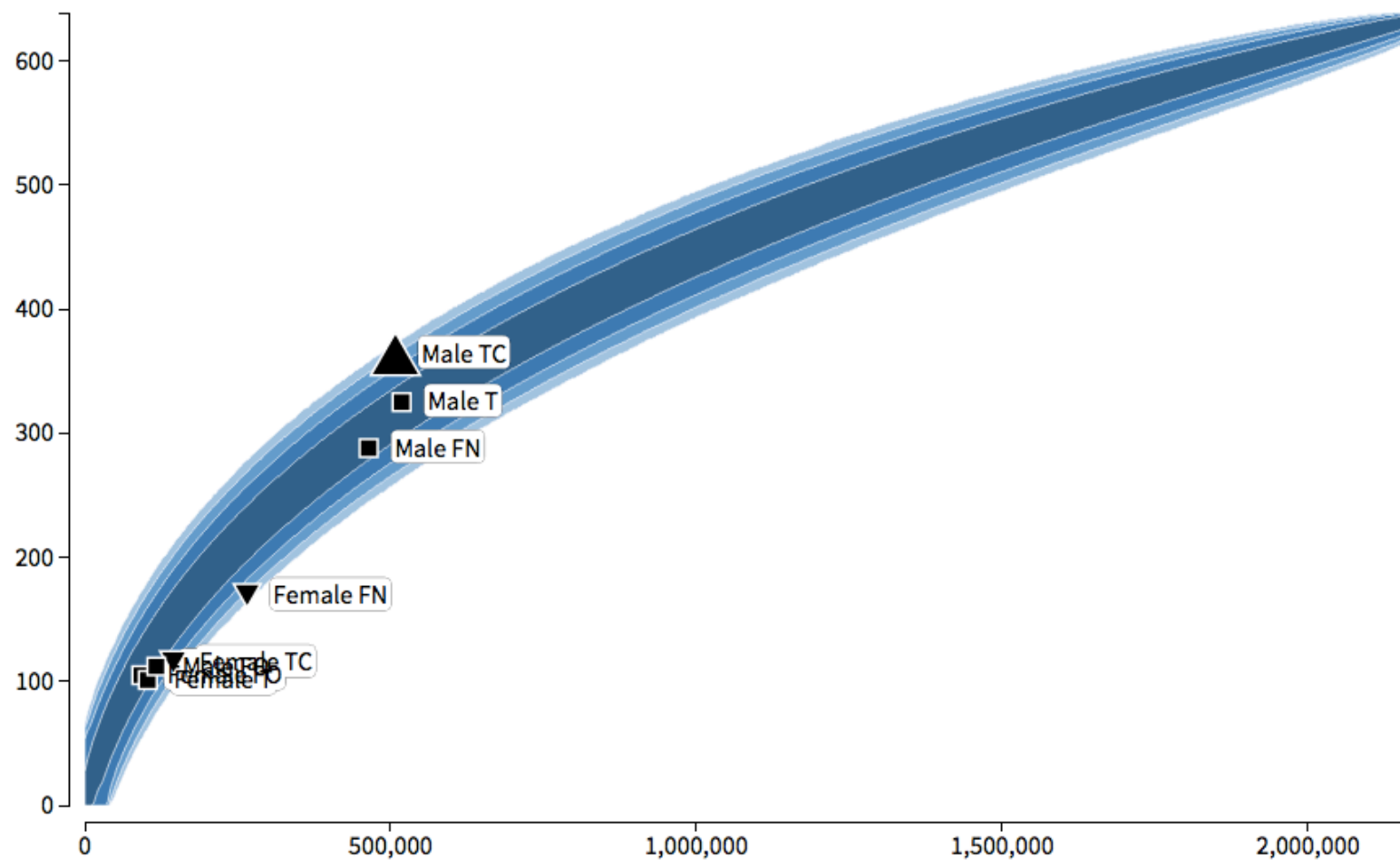
The dataset **er+or person** contains 218 hapaxes, 573 types, and 7,921 tokens.

The collection **1680-1719** contains 2,567 tokens and 304 types.

Only **0.22%** of random collections with 2,567 tokens contain at most 304 types.

This finding is probably interesting: the false discovery rate is **0.044**.

- types2
- Overview
- Plot**
- Types
- Samples
- Help
- Corpus
- CEEC**
- Dataset
- er+or**
- er+or person
- er+or thing
- Group
- all
- gender
- gender + relcode**
- period
- rank
- relcode
- none
- Collection
- none
- Female FN
- Female FO
- Female T
- Female TC
- Male FN
- Male FO
- Male T
- Male TC**
- Statistics



The corpus **CEEC** contains 579 samples and 2,216,119 running words.

The dataset **er+or** contains 250 hapaxes, 639 types, and 8,162 tokens.

The collection **Male TC** contains 507,958 running words and 364 types.

Only **0.088%** of random collections with 507,958 running words contain at least 364 types.

This finding is probably interesting: the false discovery rate is **0.025**.

Change and variation observed

- Productivity of *-er* increases over time
 - Stylistic change or continued semantic expansion? (Säily 2014, *-ity*; Dalton-Puffer 1994)
 - Inanimate *-er* very infrequent compared to BNC
 - Later technological developments?
- Men writing to their close friends overuse *-er*
 - Less stable relationship a trigger for productivity? (cf. Wolfson 1990; Säily 2014, *-ity*)
- Who are the overusers?

Most productive early users

- **Robert Southwell**, diplomat (1635–1702)

And consequently the State will be **owners**
and **disposers** of the Children begotten ...

(to William Petty, 1685; PETTY2_010)



- **John Evelyn**, writer & translator (1620–1706)

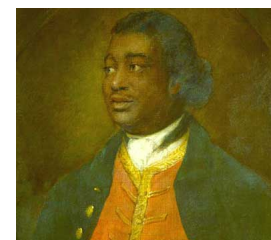
I make this Reflection on the **Reflector**, that:
he is now and then mistaken in his Politics ...

(to Samuel Pepys, 1687; EVELYN2_008)



Most productive male user (TC)

- **Ignatius Sancho**, author (1729?–1780)
 - 46 types, 58 tokens



Poor blundering M, I pity thee – Once more I tell thee, thou art a **bungler** in every thing – ask the girls else. – You know nothing of figures – you write a wretched hand – thou hast a non-sensical style – almost as disagreeable as thy heart ...

(to John Meheux, 1779; SANCHO_033)

What about neologisms?

- End of C18: *-er* highly productive – what kinds of neologisms by whom?
 - Säily (forthcoming), *-ity*: words describing people, created by male professionals
- Working **definition** of neologism: corpus attestation max 100 years after OED first attestation date (cf. Säily forthcoming)

25 neologisms found, 1760–1800

- **Describing people:** *absconder*, *blubberer* (1782<1786), *commemorator* (1784<1856), *completer*, *complimenter*, *dangler*, *outsider* (1800=OED), *schemer*, *seceder*, *spiter* (1790<1847), *swindler*
 - **Occupations:** (*shirt-*)*airer*, *gambler*, *hairstresser*, (*China-*)*piecer*, *smuggler*
- **Connected to places:** *Chiswicker*, *Madrasser*, *Norfolker*, *Turnham-Greener* (**none in OED**)
- **Things:** *cutter* ‘boat’, *ventilator*
- **Other:** *brightener*, *plumper* ‘lie’ (1776=OED), *winterer* (1784<1795)

Who are the innovators?

- **Thomas Twining**, clergyman, classical scholar (c.1734–1804)
 - *blubberer* 1782, *complimenter* 1788, *commemorator* 1784, *plumper* 1776
- **Hester Piozzi**, writer (1741–1821)
 - *seceder*, *spiter* 1790
- **Jane Austen**, novelist (1775–1817)
 - *outsider* 1800
- **George Culley**, agriculturist (c.1735–1813)
 - *Norfolker*, *winterer* 1784



How do they use the neologisms?

As to myself, *Cecilia* has done just what she pleas'd with me: I laughed, & cried (for I am one of the **blubbers**) when she bade me.

(Thomas Twining to Charles Burney, 1782; TWINING_033)

it makes me laugh when I think how the **Spiters** told us that *Siddons had lost all her Popularity ...*

(Hester Piozzi to Charlotte Lewis, 1790; PIOZZI_027)

CEEC: Summary of results

- **Most productive users** (type frequency):
men writing to close friends
 - e.g. Ignatius Sancho, author
- **Innovators**: men and women, mostly in their 40s–50s, professional / other non-gentry, writing to close friends or family
- Often **words describing people**, designed to amuse the recipient – linked to writing style
 - Playful abuse an element here as well (cf. BNC)

Conclusion

- Variation in the productivity of *-er*
 - Similar results obtained in 18th-century and Present-day English: masculine identity-building?
- **Neologisms**: goal to expand to the entire CEEC
- Similar variation and change observed within the productivity of both derivational and inflectional suffixes
 - *-ity*, *-ness* (Säily 2014), *-er* (this study), comparative *-er* (Säily et al. forthcoming)
 - Supports the hypothesis of a cline (see also Bauer 2004, Gaeta 2007) → derivation contributes to **syntheticity** alongside inflection (cf. Danchev 1992)

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