

## **Historical Sociolinguistics revisited: Drawing further evidence from digital editions of historical correspondence**

Samuli Kaislaniemi  
University of Helsinki

The proliferation of digitised historical text collections is a mixed blessing for historical linguistics. While resources like EEBO allow us to look at e.g. rare lexical items, most digital resources have not been designed for linguistics, and their contents, structure, and descriptors may not make them suitable for linguistic studies. Thus, especially in the light of calls for stricter philological standards for corpora (Lass 2004), there is a need to embrace existing digital resources suitable for linguistics, and to engage with the wider community of academic digitisation (cf. Honkapohja et al 2009).

This paper is a historical sociolinguistic study of Early Modern English using two digital editions of historical correspondence to draw more evidence to compare against the findings in the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (CEEC) (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003). The aim is to illustrate the suitability of 'non-linguistic' digital resources for historical sociolinguistics, and to test the validity of results found in CEEC against further, comparable data.

The digital editions to be used are *The Letters of William Herle* (1559-1588) and *The Diplomatic Correspondence of Thomas Bodley, 1585-1597*, both containing the correspondence between a well-educated late Elizabethan man and the English Court. This study will look at some of the same linguistic variables studied by Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg (2003), and focus on the exchanges between William Herle and Thomas Bodley and key figures of the Elizabethan court, drawing comparable material from CEEC for the analysis. Since both Herle and Bodley were social aspirers, one of the aims of this study is to pay particular attention to linguistic variables that correlate with social mobility. Furthermore, Herle and Bodley were near-contemporaries and corresponded with many of the same recipients. This will allow a comparison of language use in their respective social networks.

This paper will start by describing the two digital editions used, and explain the process of extracting suitable texts from the digital editions and forming them into two corpora. Next, I will explain the chosen variables and describe the control corpus, before comparing the findings. The paper will finish with a discussion of the suitability of digital editions for historical corpus linguistics and historical sociolinguistics.

### **References**

- The Corpus of Early English Correspondence*. 1998. Compiled by T. Nevalainen, H. Raumolin-Brunberg, J. Keränen, M. Nevala, A. Nurmi and M. Palander-Collin at the Department of English, University of Helsinki. <<http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/CoRD/corpora/CEEC/index.html>>.
- The Diplomatic Correspondence of Thomas Bodley, 1585-1597*. 2011. Version 5. Ed. by R. Adams. Centre for Lives and Letters, Queen Mary, University of London. <<http://www.livesandletters.ac.uk/bodley/bodley.html>>.
- Early English Books Online*. <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/>>.
- Honkapohja, A., S. Kaislaniemi & V. Marttila. 2009. "Digital Editions for Corpus Linguistics: Representing manuscript reality in electronic corpora". *Corpora: Pragmatics and Discourse. Papers from ICAME 29*, ed. A. H. Jucker, D. Schreier & M. Hundt. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 451–476.
- Lass, R. 2004. "Ut custodiant litteras: Editions, Corpora and Witnesshood". *Methods and Data in English Historical Dialectology* [Linguistic Insights 16]. Ed. by M. Dossena & R. Lass. Bern: Peter Lang, 21-48.
- The Letters of William Herle*. 2006. 2nd edition. Ed. by R. Adams. Centre for Lives and Letters, Queen Mary, University of London. <<http://www.livesandletters.ac.uk/herle/index.html>>.
- Nevalainen, T. & H. Raumolin-Brunberg. 2003. *Historical Sociolinguistics: Language Change in Tudor and Stuart England* [Longman Linguistics Library]. London: Pearson Education.