

Persona Management and Identity Projection in English Medieval Society: Evidence from John Paston II¹

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Abstract

Historical Sociolinguistics has favoured the interest in tracing heterogeneity and vernacularity in the history of language, reconstructing the sociolinguistic contexts and directions of language change as well as socially-based variation patterns in remote speech communities. But this treatment of language variation and change macroscopically, longitudinally, unidimensionally and focused on the speech community as a macro-cosmos can be revealingly complemented with other views microscopically, cross-sectionally, multidimensionally and privileging individual and their community of practice as a micro-cosmos. This conveys a shift from the study of collectivity and inter-speaker variation to that of individuality, intra-speaker variation and authenticity.

The aim of this paper is to show results on the microscopic investigation of the mechanisms and motivations for style-shifting within the micro-cosmos of late Medieval England applying current multidimensional models of intra-speaker variation as persona management to historical corpora of written correspondence. The study is carried out through the analysis of the behaviour of the orthographic variable (TH) in members of the Paston family from the Paston Letters. The data obtained show that letters may shed light onto the motivation(s) for variability in individuals and their stylistic choices for the construction of identity, in addition to tracing language change. This would therefore provide us with the possibility of reconstructing the sociolinguistic values in medieval times, and of accounting for the social meaning of *inter*- and *intra*- speaker variation in the sociolinguistic behaviour of speakers at the individual level as a resource for identity construction, representation, and even social positioning in interpersonal communication.

Keywords: style-shifting, speaker design, agentivity, proactiveness, persona management, identity projection, uniformitarian principle, historical corpora

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I. PERSONA MANAGEMENT AND HISTORICAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Traditional approaches to both inter- and intra-speaker variation revealed that the most prominent patterns of language use are deterministically conditioned by the social categories to which speakers belong and/or by the context of situation, register, or a present/absent audience. However, the likelihood that there could be intentional ‘choice’ rather than structurally determined ‘use’ was always neglected, in the sense that speakers might design their language production instrumentally to change subtly but constantly their personal image and their social world as an individual communicative strategy: whenever speakers have made a linguistic choice at the level of pronunciation, grammar or lexicon, they are projecting some specific identity and their social world by selecting one of the linguistic options over the other(s) (see Podesva 2012; Hernández-Campoy 2016a). The third-wave approach to intra-speaker variation (Eckert 2012) is providing us with a better understanding of how the sociolinguistic practices usually ascribed to a social group work both collectively and individually within the community, and consequently with the possibility of detecting the linguistic variables which are most salient for the projection of a speaker’s identity and social positioning.

With the assumption that the stylisation of a given linguistic variable enables speakers to perform a particular identity, current sociolinguistic studies –such as the Speaker Design model– are viewing diaphasic variation as a sociolinguistic resource where to investigate speakers’ style management, its deliberately effective use, and how it reflects and transmits social meaning in social interaction (see Coupland 1985, 2001a, 2001b, 2007; Traugott & Romaine 1985; Johnstone 1996, 2000, 2001, 2009; Schilling-Estes 2002; Moore 2004; Jaffe 2009; Hernández-Campoy & Cutillas-Espinosa 2010, 2012; or Hernández-Campoy 2016a, among others). Styles thus, as Bell (2007b: 95) states, embody our sociolinguistic ability to adopt different social positions, because styling is a highly potent device for linguistic performance, rhetorical stance-taking and identity projection. In the same way as any other social stereotypes, the individual’s different ways of speaking may constitute paradigmatic categories within a much wider semiotic frame that encompasses not only ideological constituents, but also markers from apparently different and distant dimensions, such as speech, physical appearance, dressing, dance, music, etc. (Kristiansen 2008: 72-73).

As stated in Hernández-Campoy & Cutillas-Espinosa (2010, 2012), recent multidimensional as well as multifaceted socio-constructionist approaches to stylistic variation emphasise the socially constructive potential of style-shifting for the construction and transmission of meaning in interpersonal discourse: people make personal and strategic stylistic choices in order to hint at a precise social categorisation and transmit a particular social positioning in society. This correspondingly has implied a shift from the early deterministic and system-oriented assumptions to the recent socio-constructionist and speaker-oriented approaches to inter- and intra-speaker variation (see Figure 1). These new approaches are highly aware of the fact that language acts *are* inevitably acts of identity, conceiving sociolinguistic variation as agentic, interactive and socially meaningful. Therefore, the use of language variation is now seen not simply as reflecting but also, and crucially, as creating social meaning, and the construction of *personae* constitutes now the focus –instead of speaker structural categories and configurations: not only does sociolinguistic variation echo the multifaceted shaping of human interpersonal relationships for the transmission of social meaning, but it is also a powerful rhetorical resource for identity construction and representation in public, where accents, dialects and their styling are explicit markers of this intended social meaning (see also Podesva 2006; Auer 2007). These approaches now direct their energies into style-shifting and the proactive individuality of speakers, where self-identity requires creativity

and agency (Giddens 1991: 82-85), and where the individual voice appears as an active agent for the transmission of sociolinguistic meaning (Johnstone 2000: 417).

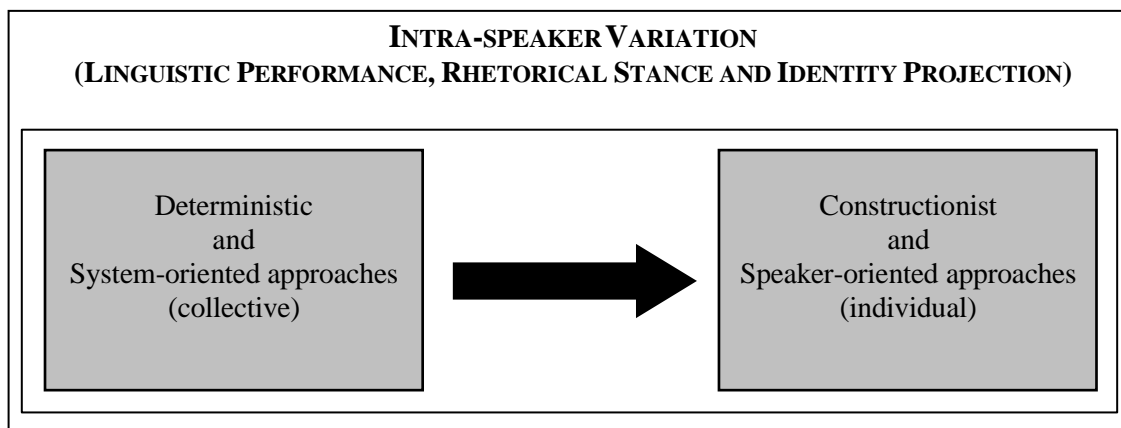


Figure 1: Shift from deterministic and system-oriented to social constructionist and speaker-oriented approaches to intra-speaker variation (adapted from Hernández-Campoy & Cutillas-Espinosa 2012: 7, Figure 3).

Similarly, Historical Sociolinguistics, inasmuch as the diachronic research franchise of variationist studies, has been applying the theoretical assumptions and findings of current sociolinguistic research to the interpretation of linguistic material from the past, but unfortunately without giving to intra-speaker variation the same relevance as to other aspects (see also Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 1989, 1996, 1998, 2003, 2012; Ammon, Mattheier & Nelde 1999; Jahr 1999; Kastovsky & Mettinger 2000; Bergs 2005; Conde-Silvestre 2007; or Hernández-Campoy & Conde-Silvestre 2012, amongst others). This hybrid subfield has afforded a new interest in tracing heterogeneity and the vernaculars in the history of languages, identifying changes developed longitudinally and socially based variation patterns (social, generational, interpersonal, and spatial diffusion of linguistic phenomena). As stated in Conde-Silvestre & Hernández-Campoy (2013, 2015), research based on corpora of historical correspondence has not only confirmed the relevance of letters to reconstruct the sociolinguistic contexts of linguistic changes in the past, it has also legitimated the historical validity of some current ‘sociolinguistic universals’ –the curvilinear hypothesis, overt-covert prestige patterns, life-span-change, generational change, age-grading, or ‘changes from above’ and ‘changes from below’– following the Uniformitarian principle, and has fruitfully allowed us to trace the diffusion of historically attested changes over the social, geographical and temporal dimensions. Letters written by members of several generations from the same family or community of practice are enormously useful to explore the sociolinguistic behaviour of individual speakers over prolonged time periods. Therefore, the proved validity of private written correspondence now becomes of paramount importance not just to detect the nature and direction of language change at a macro-level but also to find out how a change in progress spreads both cross-sectionally and longitudinally along a group of homogeneous speakers at a micro-level (see Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992; Kopaczky & Jucker 2013).

But only very recently is historical sociolinguistics focusing on styles, highlighting the role of new genres and text-types (travel accounts, court records, recipes, diaries, letters, etc.) as materials worth studying for intra-speaker variation (see Kytö 1991; Auer 2015; Alexandropoulos 2015; Hernández-Campoy & Conde-Silvestre 2015; or Hernández-Campoy, Conde-Silvestre & García-Vidal 2018). As Auer (2015: 134)

states, “[t]he question thus arises as to how stylistic variation is reflected in written documents, i.e. in particular in written records from earlier stages of a language”. According to Romaine (1998: 18), “personal letters are among the most involved and therefore oral of written genres”. As letters were not intended for publication, private correspondence provides a rich source of information on less carefully monitored styles (see also Biber & Finegan 1989). To a certain extent, letters are intended as dialogic exchanges, reflecting the personal communicative style of an author who maintains and negotiates a particular social relationship with their addressees in the situation and purpose of the letter and often as part of a local community of practice (see Conde-Silvestre 2016): whether the relationship is closer (e.g. kinship, friendship) or distant (professional, business-like). Historical private correspondence, therefore, has been understood as better suited than other genres for research on the variety of styles that could have affected changes in the history of languages, if only because, typologically, letters may contain as many styles of writing as the relationship between their participants permits: “family correspondence [...] tends to be more informal and involved than letters written to more distant acquaintances, which often concern business, administrative or legal matters” (Palander-Collin, Nevala & Nurmi 2009: 12; see also Auer 2015).

II. OBJECTIVES

Historical Sociolinguistics has favoured the interest in tracing heterogeneity and vernacularity in the history of languages, reconstructing the sociolinguistic contexts and direction of language changes longitudinally as well as socially based variation patterns in remote speech communities – legitimating the historical validity of some ‘sociolinguistic universals’. But this treatment of language variation and change macroscopically, longitudinally, uni-dimensionally and focused on the speech community as a macro-cosmos so far can sometimes be revealingly complemented with other views microscopically, cross-sectionally, multidimensionally and privileging the community of practice as a micro-cosmos. This conveys a shift from the sociolinguistic study of collectivity and inter-speaker variation to that of individuality, intra-speaker variation and authenticity. Based on the recent socio-constructionist approaches that underline the speaker’s individual agency, as seen above, Speaker Design views stylistic variation as a sociolinguistic resource for self-monitoring the performance of speaker’s personal and interpersonal social identity through speech by creating as well as projecting one’s persona.

In medieval England there was not a national standard, but rather a mosaic of English dialectal varieties (Northern, East-Midland, West-Midland, South-Eastern and South-Western) competing with Anglo-Norman French and Medieval Latin in a multilingual and multidialectal situation. It was not until the late 14th century that the standard ideology and the development of linguistic prejudices made their appearance even in an embryonic way (see Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Reeve’s Tale*, The Second Shepherds’ Play, or John of Trevisa’s translation of Hydrigen’s *Polychronicon*, for example). As Wright (2013) points out, the multilingual situation changed with the development of a kind of proto-Standard English variety during the 15th and the 16th centuries to the detriment of French and Latin. This emergent Standard English was developed as a contact and compromise dialect out of the amalgam of medieval varieties through levelling, prestige norm focusing and supralocalisation (see Mackenzie 1928; Samuels 1963, 1981; Fischer 1977, 1979, 1996; Richardson 1980; Wright 2000, 2001, 2013; Nevalainen & Tiekens-Boon van Ostade 2006, among others).

In any process of linguistic standardisation, the promotion of a given variety to the status of standard has inevitably led to the devaluation of the other linguistic varieties. This means that the development of the standard usually imposes norm-enforcing

practices, which may eventually lead to the authoritative extension of a class-based use of language as an example of correctness, and induce native speakers to believe that their (dialectal) usage is incorrect (see Milroy & Milroy 1985). The attempts to define the incipient standard variety imply that the concept had already been accepted by 16th-century language managers (mostly teachers and literary critics). These descriptions tended to equate the selected variety with correct speech, and consequently causing the disparagement of dialects, which began to be associated with uneducated and incorrect usage (see Bartsch 1987). Some texts of contemporary playwrights, such as Shakespeare (in different extracts from *King Lear*), also evidence the existence of the awareness of a standard being established with the ridiculisation of regional speakers by characterising boors and buffoons with their local dialects. As shown in Hernández-Campoy (2008), in the *Paston Letters*, William Paston II (1436-1496) also illustrated the social manifestation of a national standard awareness being developed with his ‘Memorandum on French Grammar’, written between 1450 and 1455. Linguistically, this document exceptionally describes the English language basic grammar of the late Middle English period by a non-standard user. Sociolinguistically, it constitutes a crucial piece of evidence of the *norm-usage* dichotomy and the *overt/covert* prestige motivations as part of the social psychology of that late medieval speech community and society of a changing period and evolving language. The early expansion of the concept of a national standard variety and a standard ideology resulted, therefore, in the substitution of the linguistic marks of the speakers’ regional origins (dialects) by indicators of their social background (sociolects). This process of standardisation, according to Wright (2000c: 6), “is shown not to be a linear, unidirectional or ‘natural’ development, but a set of processes which occur in a set of social spaces, developing at different rates indifferent registers in different idiolects”. That is, it did not affect all individuals at the same time and was not extended to all linguistic features with the same intensity.

The aim of this paper is to show results and draw conclusions on the investigation of the linguistic and extralinguistic mechanisms and motivations for style-shifting within the micro-cosmos of late medieval England by applying and thus testing the validity of current multidimensional models of intra-speaker variation as persona management to historical corpora of written correspondence. The extension and extrapolation of conclusions obtained from sociolinguistic studies on patterns of diaphasic variation of current English situations to Late Middle English and Early Modern English communities also allow us to test the validity of current theoretical models of stylistic variation assuming: (i) the socio-historically conditioned evolution of social and linguistic systems, (ii) the use of the past to understand and explain the present, and (iii) the universal validity of the Uniformitarian Principle. The study is carried out through the analysis of the behaviour of the orthographic variable (TH) in members of the Paston family from the archival source of *The Paston Letters*. Previous studies, such as Hernández-Campoy & Conde-Silvestre (1999, 2015), Conde-Silvestre & Hernández-Campoy (2004, 2013), Bergs (2005), or Hernández-Campoy (2008), have shown that the different members of the Paston family had an unequal adoption of the proto-standard English written norm depending on their personal circumstances: the individual rate of adoption of this written incipient standard was associated with their social and geographical mobility, as some of them quickly rose in the social scale and/or had travelling experience. The value of these epistolary documents has been demonstrated to be two-fold: (i) they show the evolution of the embryonic standard language, and (ii) they provide us with a measure of the vernacular reality present both in their writers and their periods (Conde-Silvestre & Hernández-Campoy 2013).

III. METHODOLOGY

III.1. Linguistic Data Source and Informants

The archival source used for the present study is *The Paston Letters*, a collection of 422 authored documents with roughly 246,353 words, written from 1425 to 1504 by 15 members belonging to three different generations of a Norfolk family. The socio-historical and linguistic importance of these documents is absolutely extraordinary, as they provide us with invaluable data on the political and domestic history of 15th-century England: historically, a period of great turbulence and anarchy with the War of the Roses (1455-1487), and, sociolinguistically, crucial for the development of the English language – with the implementation and diffusion of the incipient standard norm.

The Pastons were *nouveau riche* landowners that rose from the peasantry to the aristocracy within just a couple of generations. The family belonged to a kind of minor gentry, owners of rural estates, ambitious and highly mobile. They were a family of importance, both in their native Norfolk and with royal court circles as well as law courts. Clement Paston was the founder of the dynasty with a humble origin, as a peasant. Their fortunes improved with William Paston I (1378-1444), who, after having been trained as a lawyer in the Inns of Court in London, acted as counsel for the city of Norwich from 1412, and in 1415 became steward to the Duke of Norfolk, beginning a successful career at the royal courts and gaining a good local reputation. William began accumulating property both through purchases and through the acquisition of his wife's inheritance, Agnes Berry, of her father's state as sole heir. After William's death, the family became involved in lawsuits, conspiracies, and even violent conflicts about land possessions and legal rights, as we will see below. Regarding social status the members of this family evolved from the middle-high position of the professional lawyer William Paston I to the higher one attained by Sir John Paston II, who had become a member of the royal court nobility when knighted in the 1460s, and later by John III (see Davis 1971; Maddern 1988; Richmond 1990, 1996, 2004; Barber 1986; Watt 1993; Bennett 1995; Gies & Gies 1998; Castor 2004; Bergs 2005; or Wood 2007).

John Paston I (1421-1466) was the eldest son of William and Agnes and was educated at Trinity Hall and Peterhouse in Cambridge and the Inner Temple in London. In 1440 he married Margaret Mautby. He inherited the family estates and wealth and tried to follow his father's steps, becoming JP for Norfolk (1447, 1456-1457 and 1460-1466), knight of the shire (1455), and MP for Norfolk (1460-1462).

Sir John Paston II (1442-1479), the main informant for the present study, was the eldest son of John I and, from the internal evidence of his correspondence, he has been described as a 'gentleman of leisure', or *bon vivant*, interested in books, tournaments and love affairs (Barber 1986: 20; Bergs 2005: 66). Sometimes he failed to defend the family interests adequately and he is often accused in his mother's letters of overspending. His political career makes of him a highly social and geographically mobile character. In 1461 he had joined King Edward IV's court and was knighted two years later. He was also MP for Norfolk between 1467 and 1468, when he remained in London, and later accompanied Princess Margaret to Bruges for her marriage. In the 1470s he became a soldier and participated in different battles of the War of Roses, both in Britain (Barnet in 1471) and the continent (Calais, Bruges and Neuss 1472, 1473).

III.2. Linguistic Variable: (TH)

In order to explore the use of a linguistic resource to project a particular identity image in late medieval English society, our focus was on an innovation in the spelling practices of the period: the progressive adoption of the new orthographic variant <th> at the expense of the old runic <p> (see Scragg 1974: 10; Benskin 1977: 506-507; 1982: 18-19; Lass

1992: 36; Hogg 1992: 76-77; Stenroos 2006; Bergs 2007a, 2007b; or Conde-Silvestre & Hernández-Campoy 2013). Following Trudgill's (1974: 80) requirements, the selection of this linguistic variable was initially justified by (i) the amount of apparent social significance in the graphemes involved, and (ii) the amount of orthographic differentiation involved:

$$(TH) \begin{cases} < p > \\ < th > \end{cases}$$

Similarly, despite being orthographic, this variable fulfills Labov's (1972a: 7-8) general principles or guidelines on "what are the most useful properties of a linguistic variable to serve as the focus for the study of a speech community": (i) the variables have to occur *frequently*, so that enough tokens of variants for each variable can be collected for subsequent analysis; (ii) the variables have to be *structural*, in the sense that they must be an integral part of the wider linguistic system and as much central to the system as possible; and (iii) the social distribution of the variables has to show a *high stratification* when correlated with socio-demographic parameters or other linguistic variables, as observed in previous studies (Hernández-Campoy & Conde-Silvestre 1999, 2015; Conde-Silvestre & Hernández-Campoy 2004, 2013; or Bergs 2005, 2007a).

The use of the modern digraph <th> had already been attested in the Anglo-Saxon period, particularly in the spelling of vernacular names in Latin texts (Benskin 1982: 19), but it was reintroduced through Latin influence on Anglo-Norman scribes in the 12th century. As found in Stenroos (2004, 2006), Jensen (2012) and Conde-Silvestre & Hernández-Campoy (2013), the presence of the digraph <th> in both Latin and Biblical texts acted as an influential external prestigious norm that triggered the *actuation* of this orthographic change, so that the Roman-based form became overtly popular during the 15th century as a historical change operating above the level of social awareness. This process inevitably took place in connection with social and stylistic factors, diffusing along the social space in the careful and conscious styles, acquiring overt prestige and becoming part of the accepted linguistic norm, as a typical Labovian 'change from above'. The generalisation of this prestigious foreign orthographic form developed in a period of dramatic changes in the multidialectal ecology of the country: through the – a t t h a t t i m e – s t i l l e m b r y o n i c standard English variety¹, when the supralocalisation processes and the imposition of 'norm-enforcing' practices were taking place, with individual writers responding to the different sociolinguistic norms.

Therefore, between 1425 and 1503 –the period of Pastons' private letters preserved–, a fluctuation between both forms was still taking place, as intermediate stages of variability between the categorical use of the conservative form (<p>) and the categorical use of the innovative variant (<th>) in the proto-standard:

$$X \rightarrow X/Y \rightarrow Y/X \rightarrow Y$$

In a period when correspondence was the most frequent means of written communication, orthographic variation must have been a source of social meaning. The variable TH was not in free variation in late medieval England. TH was a sociolinguistic variable at that time with indexical meaning, where both the <p> and

¹ Particularly through the prestigious Chancery variety and scientific spelling texts (see Taavitsainen 2000).

<th> spelling variants constituted different ways of saying the same thing, although with different social significance, being recipients crucial. The use of one variant or another was highly conditioned by the addressee and their status:

... and **therfor** be ye avysed whate grauntes ye make, for ye hafe made to manye.
John Paston I (To Sir John Fastolf, 1458, 05, 2)

...**perfor** I lete yow wete I wold know hym or he know mynente[n]t, ...
John Paston I (To Margaret Paston, John Daubeney, and Richard Calle, 1465, 06, 27)

... my **brother** is redyn to Yarmowth for to lette brybours that wold a robbed ship vndyr colour of my lord of Warwyk, ...
John Paston III (Perhaps to Thomas Playter: Draft 1461, 03)

... he shall send my **broper** vp or not, for he wold have his owne men abowte hym...
John Paston III (Perhaps to Thomas Playter: Draft 1461, 03)

III.3. Audienceship and Context Types

Audienceship has been demonstrated to be fundamental in stylistic variation (see Bell 1984, 2001), prioritising addressivity, reciprocity and relationality (Coupland 2011: 146). As stated in Hernández-Campoy (2016a: 109-110), the emphasis now focuses on the impact exerted on sociolinguistic style by the audience as well as by the speaker's orientation and attitude to addressees, exactly as reflected in the accommodation processes of social interaction: "... the context of style is a *speaker* –a first person, an I, an ego, an identity or identities– together with the *situation* she or he is in –however we may believe that situation subsists or is identified, either theoretically or specifically" (Bell 2007a: 139). In fact, as Meyerhoff (2006: 42) points out, the term 'audience design' "both classifies the behaviour (the speaker is seen as proactively designing their speech to the needs of a particular audience) and encapsulates the presumed motive for the behaviour (who is the speaker's audience)". In this study, the classification of context types and audienceship was based on seven profiles of addressees and ranks consistently found in the corpus of letters (see Raumolin-Brunberg 1996: 26):

1. Royalty (king, queen, prince, princess),
2. Nobility (Duke, Marquess, Earl, Viscount),
3. Clergy (Archbishop, Bishop),
4. Gentry (Knight, Esquire, Gentleman)
5. Relatives (brother, sister, mother, father, etc.),
6. Partner (wife, husband), and
7. Legal Professionals (Army Officer, Government Official, Lawyer, Medical Doctor, etc.).

These profiles of addressees and their interaction provide us with an objective metrics of the multiplexity and density of our informants' social networks and interpersonal relations within the structure of the speech community, with a clear impact on their language choice and use (see Milroy & Milroy 1985). Dense networks are usually found in small, stable (conservative) communities with few external contacts and having a high degree of social cohesion. Contrarily, loose-knit social networks are more likely to be found in larger, unstable (innovating) communities that have many external contacts and exhibiting a relative lack of social cohesion (see Meyerhoff 2006: 281).

However, some stratifications were difficult to make out in some cases, as the medieval system of three ranks and orders was disappearing at the end of the 15th century

with the emergence of the middle classes (*bourgeoisie*). Additionally, as Bergs (2005: 81) points out, for example, the figure of ‘mother’ might distort ranks sometimes, since it could be even more important than a high social position in practical terms. This was the case of Margaret when addressing her sons John II and John III, who were technically superior (knights), although their verbal treatment was not affected –as their respective sociolinguistic behaviour with other relatives shows.

IV. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

The analysis of the sociolinguistic behaviour and social positioning of Sir John Paston II would require a comparison with other members of the family first in order to draw a contrast of tendencies. The male members of the Pastons exhibit different sociolinguistic practices as for the use of the innovating variant <th> (see Conde-Silvestre & Hernández-Campoy 2013, 2015) and social network’s multiplexity and density in correlation with context types and addressees (see Hernández-Campoy & García-Vidal *fc*). Individually, as shown in Conde-Silvestre & Hernández-Campoy (2013), the family members yield different levels of adoption of the innovating form <th> both synchronically and diachronically, with John Paston II (78%) being one of the most advanced users together with John III (89%), William III (87%), Walter (86%), John I (83%), and Edmond II (79%) (see Figure 2). Also, as Figures 3-4 show for father and son, both John I and John II’s life-span sociolinguistic behaviours in their letters preserved exhibit an almost consistent non-monotonic use of the innovating form.

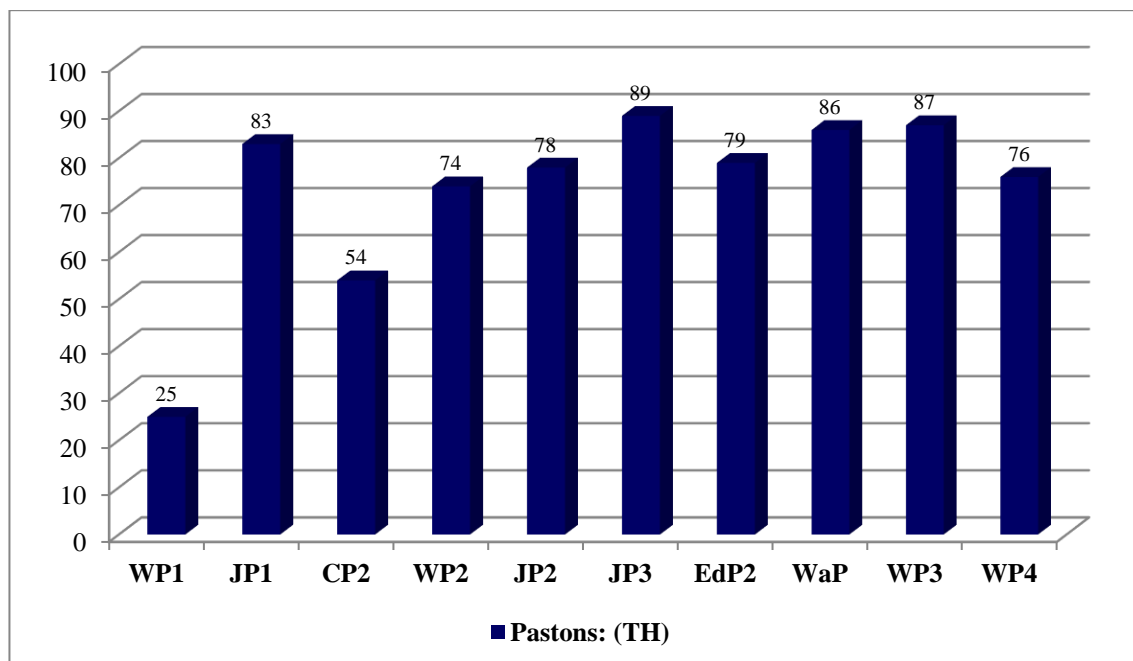


Figure 2: Percentages of use of the the innovating form <th> along the male members of the Paston family

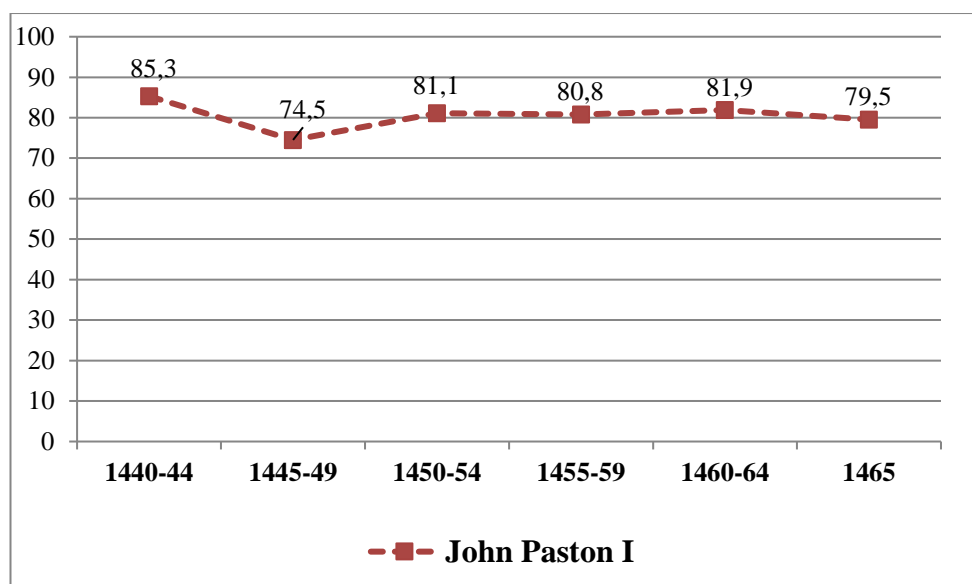


Figure 3: Percentages of use of the innovating orthographic variant <th> in the preserved letters written by John Paston I between 1440 and 1465

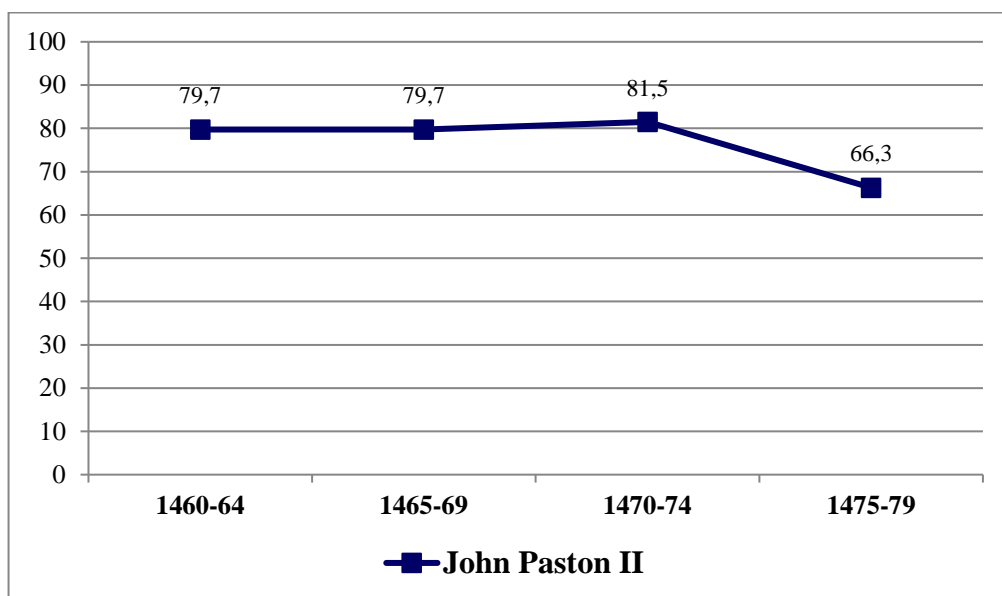


Figure 4: Percentages of use of the innovating orthographic variant <th> in the preserved letters written by John Paston II between 1460 and 1479

In agreement with the *Principle of Graded Style-shifting*, as shown by Hernández-Campoy & García-Vidal (fc) the Paston members' verbal repertoire as well as their audienceship and responsiveness monitoring are clearly reflected in their letters. Their written correspondence reveals their diaphasic versatility and awareness of sociolinguistic conventions on the indexical nature of variable (TH) at that time of the late Middle English period, enabling them to vary and adapt their style according to the addressee and subsequent context type. In fact, as seen above, this was a change from above that took place in connection with social and stylistic factors, diffusing along the social space in the careful and conscious styles, acquiring overt prestige and becoming part of the incipient accepted linguistic norm (see also Stenroos 2004, 2006; Jensen 2012; and Conde-Silvestre & Hernández-Campoy 2013). Sociolinguistically, the special nature of this variable is due to its status of marker (subject to both social and stylistic variation),

denoting some specific prestige patterns within the speech community and the community of practice of the period and also exhibiting a specific indexical meaning. John Paston I in the 15th century might be viewed as a prototypical example of graded style-shifting based on audienceship, with a monotonic function in his intra-speaker variation in agreement with the 21st-century patterns of intra-speaker variation found in the industrialised Western world: the higher the social rank, the higher the use of the innovating and prestigious form <th>, and, conversely, the lower the social rank, the higher the use of the conservative spelling <p>. With an average of 82% in standardness (or proto-standardness) for variable TH, the sociolinguistic behaviour of John Paston I exhibits unambiguous attunements as multiple voices in the use of the prestige innovating variant <th> in correlation with the social rank of addressees: as Table 1 and Figure 5 show, 98% when addressing royalty, 92% with nobility, 82% with his wife (Margaret Paston), 69% with other minor gentry interlocutors, and 86% when addressing legal professionals.

Table 1: Scores for Variable (TH) in John Paston I (letters and drafts)					
Context		Proto-standard variant <th>		Non-standard variant <p>	
Power Relationship	Addressee	#	%	#	%
High	Royalty: #3	262/268	98%	6/268	2%
	Nobility: #6	438/477	92%	39/477	8%
	Clergy: #0	-	-	-	-
Equal	Relatives: #0	-	-	-	-
	Wife: #8	670/813	82%	143/813	18%
	Minor gentry: #12	805/1164	69%	359/1164	31%
Low	Legal Professions: #14	1700/1968	86%	268/1968	14%
Total (#43 letters)		3875/4690	83%	815/4690	17%

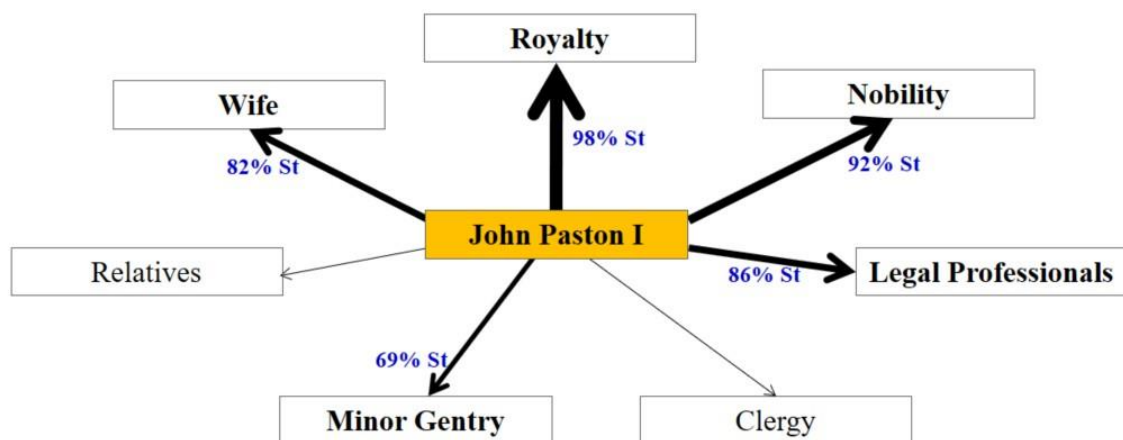


Figure 5: Percentages of standard forms for variable (TH) in John Paston I and audienceship (letters)

Table 2: Scores for Variable (TH) in John Paston II (letters and drafts)					
Context		Proto-standard variant <th>		Non-standard variant <p>	
Power Relationship	Addressee	#	%	#	%
High	Royalty: #1	37/111	33%	74/111	67%
	Nobility: #1	20/20	100%	0/20	0%
	Clergy: #1	50/63	79%	13/63	21%
Equal	Relatives: #64	3425/4601	74%	1176/4601	26%
	Wife: #0	-	-	-	-
	Minor gentry: #4	309/338	91%	29/338	9%
Low	Legal Professions: #15	1322/1484	89%	162/1484	11%
Total (#86 letters)		5163/6617	78%	1454/6617	22%

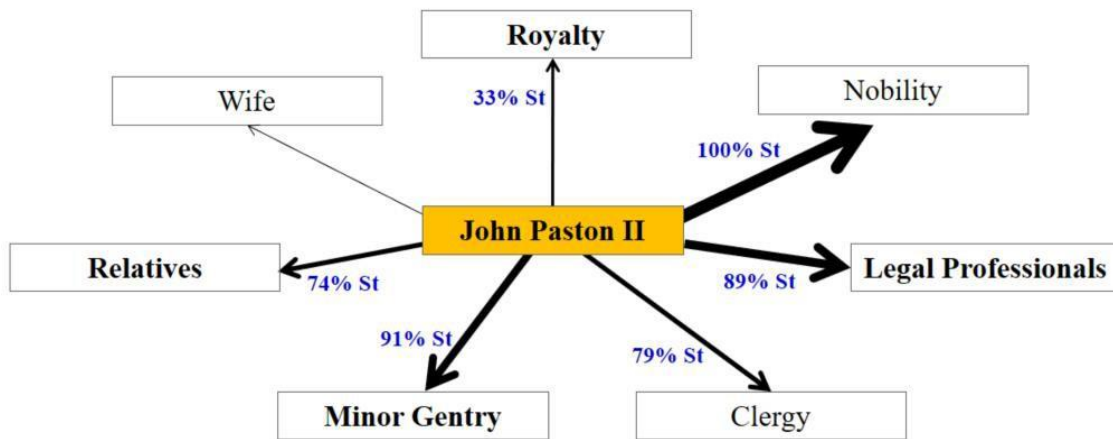


Figure 6: Percentages of standard forms for variable (TH) in John Paston II and audienceship (letters)

Similarly, his son John II, the object of our study, also exhibits graded style-shifting with a different linguistic attunement based on audienceship. As Table 2 and Figure 6 show, 33% when addressing royalty, 100% with nobility, 91% with other minor gentry interlocutors, 74% with relatives, and 89% when addressing legal professionals. In the context of Tajfel's (1978) *Social Identity Theory* and Bourdieu & Boltanski's (1975) *Linguistic Marketplace* in individuals' interpersonal and intergroup behaviour within societal systems, with the multiplicity and complexity of their social networks and communicative and relational interactions through written correspondence conditioning their graded style-shifting, John I and John II show a polyhedral public image with a creative and multifaceted sociolinguistic behaviour (multiple voices: see Bakhtin 1935). In this spirit, as pointed out in Hernández-Campoy & Cutillas-Espinosa (2010, 2012), the Speaker Design model understands intra-speaker variation as a sociolinguistic resource in the self-monitored performing (active creation, presentation and even recreation) of speaker personal and interpersonal social identity through speech: a resource for creating and projecting one's persona (see also Coupland 2007). Style-shifting is thus now seen as a proactive (initiative) rather than reactive (responsive) phenomenon. This implies that identity is totally dynamic and that all speech is pure performance; i.e. versatility in rhetorical stance as an ability to project different social identities for different purposes in also different moments, places and relational and interactional social contexts, which means that social and linguistic behaviours vary along a continuum between interpersonal and intergroup behaviours (see Johnstone 1996 and Jaffe 2009). Some of these individual's identities are usually more personal and idiosyncratic –but highly subject to variability for adaptability reasons to move from one group to another–, whereas others are group specific –accentuating uniformity within groups and differences between them (see Hernández-Campoy 2016a: 99). Whereas interpersonal behaviour would be that behaviour determined solely by the individual characteristics and idiosyncratic aspects of the individual's personality, conversely, intergroup behaviour would be that which is established exclusively by the social category memberships. But individuals may unilaterally reset and readapt in-group language loyalties and practices in consonance with changing power dynamics of the linguistic market in intergroup contexts (Mesthrie 2001: 492), highlighting the multifaceted imaging of speakers through the use of multiple and accommodative voices. Given that individuals make the necessary attunements in their language production depending on the market conditions, then any linguistic utterance is the result of the relation between the linguistic habitus and the linguistic market. In the market theory, linguistic competence refers to the linguistic capacity to handle diversity and “generate an infinite number of discourses as the

social capacity to use this competency adequately in specific situations” (Gogolin 2001: 613).

Yet, although both father and son exhibit versatility in rhetorical stance through graded style-shifting, producing multiple voices, nevertheless, their sociolinguistic behaviour when interacting with the royalty group is totally opposite: John I was 98% standard (<th> form) in his letters sent to King Henry VI in 1449 (Letter #36 written by James Gloys; and draft Letter #57) and to King Edward IV in 1464 (Letter #70); contrarily, his son John II was unpredictably only 33% using the innovating <th> form when addressing King Edward IV in 1475 in Letter #295, and expectedly doing upward accommodation with nobility (100% usage of <th>) in Letter #256, a draft addressed to Lord Beauchamp in 1470 (with 180 words and 20 instances). A most illustrating contrast between father and son’s sociolinguistic behaviour is the use of variable TH in their respective letters addressed to the same King, Edward IV, as Table 3 shows, with 100% instances of <th> in John I and only 33% in John II, and both with the same purpose (petitions to the King).

Table 3: comparison of usage of variable TH in John Paston I and John Paston II				
Addresser	Addressee	year	Proto-Standard form <th>	Runic form <p>
John Paston I	Henry VI Letter #36 (1058 words) Written by James Gloys Petition	1449	151/151 100%	0/151 0%
	Henry VI Letter #57 (91 words) Petition; draft	1460	3/9 33%	6/9 67%
	Edward IV Letter #70 (900 words) Petition	1464	108/108 100%	0/108 0%
John Paston II	Edward IV Letter #295 (762 words) Petition	1475	37/111 33%	74/111 67%

Admittedly, scribes (secretaries, family clerks, chaplains, etc.) were probably crucial for social interaction through written interpersonal communication and also for the development of the language in late medieval England –which had also made them more aware of the widely spread continental graphological innovation and what it sociolinguistically meant. The use of secretaries was not uncommon for people, particularly females, and especially in the case of private correspondence due to extensive illiteracy. Verbatim dictation or just instructions to the scribe for the draft composition is still an open question (see Bergs 2005, 2015; and Hernández-Campoy 2016b), which would also definitely affect the representativeness of informants and thus the reliability of results from a socio-demographic perspective –especially when we are trying to make the best use of bad data (Labov 1972b: 98).

Did John II personally write his petition to King Edward IV in 1475 as an autographed letter or did he use a scribe as a dictated one? It seems that John Wykes wrote several letters for John II in 1469, such as Letter #242 and Letter #243 addressed to Walter Writtle (see Davis 1954, 1965, 1971). But Wykes’ observed frequencies as for variable TH is by no means dissimilar to John II’s, suggesting the same tendencies (100% usage of innovating <th> in Letter #242 and 99% in Letter #243), and far from that unexpected choice of 33% in Letter #295 addressed to King Edward IV (see Table 4).

Table 4: comparison of usage of variable TH in John Paston II and the scribe John Wykes				
Addresser	Addressee	year	Proto-Standard form <th>	Runic form <p>
John Paston II	average	1462-1479	5163/6617 78%	1454/6617 22%
	Edward IV (Petition) Letter #295 (762 words)	1475	37/111 33%	74/111 67%
John Wykes	Walter Writtle Letter #242 (340 words)	1469	47/47 100%	0/47 0%
	Walter Writtle (Letter #243 (1302 words (draft))	1469	179/180 99%	1/180 1%

The next issue here would be whether dictated letters represent the authors' language preferences and practices or those of the scribes, or even both with some intertextuality. According to Bergs (2015: 131), as experts in language, appropriate language use and conscious of both the contemporary discursive and social practices for written correspondence, scribes seemingly used the language they thought was more appropriate for a certain kind of author; and the criteria for what the scribe thought the author should sound like must represent the socio-cultural image or ideal that society held at that time regarding certain people and authors (see also Davis 1967; Okulska 2006; Wood 2007; or Hernández-Campoy 2016b). But if we assume, as we do (see Hernández-Campoy 2016b) following Bergs (2005:80 and 2015) and Davis (1954: 49), that dictation just affects phonological or graphological variables, and not morpho-syntactic or lexical forms of language production in epistolary documents, John Wykes is definitely not the scribe for John II's Letter #295 addressed to the King, given their similar spelling practices in the use of variable TH. In addition to this, a look at some grammatical variables, such as the use of *y-/th*-forms for 2nd person pronouns, *h-/th*-forms for 3rd person pronouns, and relativisation, also shows linguistic habits alike in both authors (see Bergs 2015).

Unless there is another scribe improbably involved so unusually conservative, the letter to King Edward IV was written by John II himself, which is even most plausible considering the private nature of the letter –with a crucial petitionary purpose (the defense of their castle)– and their personal relationship. And even if we admitted that this letter might have been written by a scribe, its frequency in the use of the old runic form <p> would have not been so plausible given the advanced stage of diffusion of the innovating form <th> in the mid 1470s and given the context of situation as well as the recipient rank. In our opinion, therefore, this underuse of the proto-standard form by Sir John II with the royalty group by exceeding the use of the non-standard variant <p> –a deviation from the expected sociolinguistic structure on both social and stylistic dimensions and against the prototypical tendency found in other members of the family– may be understood as a conscious and deliberate case of *hyper-vernacularisation*. According to Cutillas-Espinosa, Hernández-Campoy & Schilling-Estes (2010), *hyper-vernacularisation* –unlike *hyper-dialectism*²– refers to an inappropriate performance: the use of non-standard forms correctly (without faulty analysis) though inappropriately according to socio-demographic and/or stylistic parameters, and whose counterpart would be *hyper-standardisation* (also known as hypercorrection). Obviously, John II was

² Hyper-dialectisms refer to the use of over-generalised but incorrect forms in non-standard varieties due to some kind of misanalysis –insufficient knowledge about a given linguistic feature– or to disproportionate efforts at projecting vernacular identity (see Trudgill 2003: 60; and Cutillas-Espinosa, Hernández-Campoy & Schilling-Estes (2010).

pursuing a communicative effect and some kind of stylistic colouring through the instrumentalisation of vernacularity. As pointed out above, identity is thus always dynamic and all language production is performance somehow –with speakers projecting different roles in also different circumstances–, as we are constantly displaying some particular type of identity, which definitely contradicts the belief that the vernacular is the most ‘natural’ variety and that it does not require speakers to put on roles (see Schilling-Estes 2002: 388-389).

Historically, as stated above, the context of the Paston family was the England of the War of the Roses, a series of civil wars fought in England from 1455 to 1487 between the House of York and the House of Lancaster. The Pastons found themselves embroiled in different struggles, such as the royalist allegiance during the Civil War –which severely penalised the family descendants–, and also the Siege of Caister –triggered by the disputes with the Duke of Norfolk and the Duke of Suffolk about the ownership, at that time held by John Paston III. The Caister incident demonstrates the restless and lawlessness of the period, when the great lords used the chaos of the war between royal houses to increase their personal assets through violent dispossession. But, in turn, “it is a tale of David taking on Goliath with the slingshot of the law, and eventually proving through sheer legal tenacity that the pen of the gentry squire had become mightier than the noble’s sword” (Ibeji 2011). John Paston I became one of the main legal advisers of Sir John Fastolf, who acquired great wealth and estates. When Fastolf died in 1459 John Paston I inherited Caister Castle and other Norfolk manors. But executors led by William Yelverton, a justice of the King’s Bench, contested Fastolf’s will “claiming that Paston had falsified it while Fastolf was too ill to manage his affairs” (Davis 1971: xvi). Most of his wife’s (Margaret) letter collections, as well as John II’s, belong to this troubled period, reflecting the urgency of their preoccupations, personal hopes and anxieties: business matters (such as defending property, lawsuits, or making alliances) as well as domestic life (such as managing their estates, conducting their courtships, education, etc.), which constitute a wealth of information on the period (see Barber 1993).

Taking advantage of this time of war, the Duke of Norfolk seized Caister Castle in 1469, besieging it with 3,000 warriors. The Castle was surrendered to the Duke, who took the rents of the manor until 1476 approximately. This 33%-standard letter by John II is a petition to King Edward IV in 1475 to intervene and help his family according to right in this serious matter affecting their possessions:

... *they* of great malice, confedered *with* oon or ij of *þe* counsell of my lord *þe* Duc of Norffolk, caused *the* same Duc to clayme tytle vnto *þe* manoir of Caster and *other* landes of your said suppliant, wherinne *þe* said Yeluerton and his cooffeffees were infeffed, contrary to *þ*’entent and wille *þat* *þei* were enfeffed fore; vpon whiche title *the* said Duc *with* great force assegid and entred *þe* said manoir of Castre and *other* landes of your said suppliant, putting hym from *þe* lawful possession and estate *þat* he had in *þe* same [...] And *forthermore*, whanne your said besecher *hath* sued to *þe* counsel of my said lord and desired *þem* to moue his lordship *þerinne*, and to ansuere him resonably and according to right, *they* ansuered *þat* *þei* haue shewed my said lord his request, and *þat* he was, and is alwey, so moved and displesid *with* *þem* *þat* *þei* dar nomore move him *þerinne*. And *þus* your said suppliant *hath* loste alle his coste and laboure, to his charge, by his fey*th*, *this* iiij yere in his sute *þe* somme of vc marc, and now is owt of remedye *without* youre habundant grace be shewed in *þat* behalwe, in somoche as he is not of power t’attempte youre lawes ayenst so mighty and noble estate, nor t’abide *þe* displeser of him. Wherfore please it your moost noble grace, at *þe* reuerence of God, to move my said lord to *withdrawe* *þe* affeccion whiche he so *hath* to *þe* said manoir and landes, and to suffre your said besecher to haue and enioye *þe* possession of *þe* same according to right; and he at youre commandment shal relese vnto my said lord alle *þe* dammages aboue wretyn, whiche amounte to *þe* somme of ml ccc liij li. vj s. viij d., and in time to comme, *with* Goddes grace, be *þe* more hable to do you seruice, and also specially preyre to God for *þe* conseruacion of youre moost noble persone and estate royall.

John Paston II (1475, extract from his *Petition to Edward IV*)

Although the Duke of Norfolk had already died in 1476, the letter had its effect, since the King granted the patent of Caister Castle to the Pastons and the Duke's wife gave up her husband's claim, with the incident being finally, and unusually, resolved by law rather than by force.

Despite being averagely anchored in a supra-local sociolinguistic practice in his body of letters (78% standard for TH), his verbal behaviour with the King (only 33% standard) suggests that he was somehow being performative and overtly embracing some kind of authenticity with his shifting to a more casual style through the use of the conservative form <p>. There is an unexpected violation of the norm or convention (a recognised/received incipient standard), which is generated through deviation produced at any level of the language: phonetic, graphical, morphological, syntactic, or lexical (Znamenskaya 2004: 88). As the normal arrangement of a message both in form and content is based on its *predictability*, the violation of the norm (or des-automatisation) generates a *defeated expectancy* –which is the basic principle of stylistic function for ‘foregrounding’ in 20th-century stylistics (see Arnold 1981), and even for the ‘markedness model’ in sociolinguistic theory for choice in code-switching (see Myers-Scotton 1993, 1998). The ‘authentic’ speaker has been a methodological condition of sociolinguistic research design for many decades in Labov's (1972a) model of deterministic-based linguistic variation when observing the unselfconscious, everyday speech –naturalistic, real language– produced by spontaneous speakers of pure vernacular (see also Bucholtz 2003: 398; and Hernández-Campoy 2016a: 175-176). This fieldwork requirement for data gathering was inherited from 19th-century dialectological and anthropological assumptions based on romantic philology and folklore. For their research on the pure, genuine, real dialects they had to use NORMs living in small isolated villages as informants in their fieldwork: *nonmobile older rural male* speakers (see Chambers & Trudgill 1980: 33-35). Authenticity was thus understood as a synonym for ‘prototypical’. But the ‘authentic’ speaker has currently become a phenomenological and theoretically paradigmatic model in socio-constructionist-based linguistic variation that refers to a differentiating dialectic positioning in society imbued with social meaning within an implicit theory of identity (see Bucholtz 2003; Eckert 2003; Coupland 2003, 2007, 2010b; Guy & Cutler 2011; or Johnstone 2014). If Labovian sociolinguistics used to focus on the average linguistic behaviour of the more or less homogeneous social group (the statistical mean), conversely, the interest of constructionist sociolinguistics now is the singularity or peculiarity of a particular speaker (the statistical deviation from the mean), with its own sociolinguistic indexicality as an *authenticity indexing* in action. Then, authentic speaker appears now as an unexpected (non-idiosyncratic) identity assumed in verbal practice creatively. Unlike his father, who was conventional with no hesitation whatsoever when addressing royalty, John II wanted to be different, original, authentic, but also consciously taking advantage of his personal relationship and previous shared experience with the monarch. King Edward IV (1442-1483) and John Paston II (1442-1479) were the same age (both born in 1442); John started at his court when Edward IV got the throne in 1461, travelling with him for more than two years (see Bergs 2005: 66). They knew each other perfectly well and shared similar generational interests and experiences. With his hyper-vernacular behaviour John II's was being authentic and proactive rather than conventional, prototypical and reactive, and was quite deliberately using the non-standard feature <p> to achieve a specific effect: it was a deliberate and effective use of the old runic feature, an autochthonous form, like his Caister Castle possession, contrasting with the Latin-based continental digraph <th>. The unexpected use of a vernacular form, with downward rather than upward accommodation, by this

‘better-sort’ speaker (Sir John Paston II, a knighted member of the family, M.P. and J.P. Norfolk, M.P. Yarmouth, ambitious and highly mobile) with high-ranked addressees in formal contexts appears to be a strategy to search for pragmatic and affective effects involving nearness, comradeship, and informality rather than distance, politeness, respect and formality. In fact, in studies on attitudes to linguistic varieties, social psychologists such as Giles (1971a,b) pioneeringly found that prestige-accented speakers are perceived as having more competence –in the sense of being more intelligent, more reliable and more educated– but less social integrity and less attractiveness –sincerity and kindheartedness (less friendly, less sociable, and more arrogant)– than regionally-accented speakers (see Giles 1971a, b; Trudgill 1975; Ryan & Giles 1982; Ajzen 1988; Baker 1992; Garrett, Coupland, & Williams 2003, among others). The hypervernacular use of the conservative form indicates that John II was not shifting his epistolary language production in reaction to formality and audienceship. Rather, he used a dialectal feature to project a low-profile, ordinary persona, a weak image and downward social mobility (reminding their humble origins) in pursuit of his petition: to protest about the defencelessness situation of his family against the power and strength of the Duke of Norfolk. Consequently, the use of the vernacular is strategically deployed to suggest who the Paston family used to be, regardless of their evident social promotion in Norfolk. This performance reinforces the idea that speaker motivations are often multi-layered and have to be analysed carefully.

But no less importantly, this rhetorical stance was also in harmony with John II’s multiplexity of social networks and regular mobility, which led to the weakening of ties to local communities and promotes the development of a polyhedral image in individuals, shaping a multi-faceted creative behaviour, exhibiting and aligning with different social identities for different purposes at different times and places and in different contexts of social relations and interaction (see Hernández-Campoy 2016a). From an egocentric and socio-centric perspective, the networks of the individual family members based on letters written and received (in terms of internal and external links) show that John II was a highly mobile person with loose-knit social ties –after 1466 he spent most of his life in London and travelling abroad extensively–, favouring his socially transgressor, rebel, undisciplined, fun-loving, sometimes troublemaker, but a special and authentic character and sociolinguistically fascinating informant among the Paston family members, as also confirmed by his historical biography:

Although never married (a deliberate choice, see Bennett 1995: 36), but once engaged, he left a daughter by Constance Reynforth. The relationship between John II and the family was always somewhat strained. He was constantly short of money and kept asking his relatives for help; he was not able to defend the family wealth (in fact, he sold large portions for want of money); there were rumors of affairs, involvement in high-level politics, etc. In short, he was a careless *bon vivant* without interests in Norfolk affairs and a serious concern for the family.

Bergs (2005: 66)

Obviously, the reconstruction of this sociolinguistic information comes from the internal evidence afforded by the preserved letters themselves, which allows us to speculate on possible reasons why these members of the family had their written practices in the way they had; and all this is based on the fact that, admittedly, as Bergs (2005: 71) underlines, this is an exercise of socio-historical reconstruction where the non-existence of evidence does not allow for conclusions about the non-existence of individual facts.

CONCLUSION

The data obtained in this study show that the traditional treatment of language variation and change macroscopically, longitudinally, uni-dimensionally and focused on the speech community as a macro-cosmos can sometimes be complemented with other views microscopically, cross-sectionally, multidimensionally and privileging the community of practice as a micro-cosmos. This conveys a shift from the sociolinguistic study of collectivity and inter-speaker variation to that of individuality, intra-speaker variation and authenticity. The observation of how a single speaker may be drawing on different resources when the audience changes allows us to gain a better insight into intra-speaker variation, because speaker's motivations are often multi-layered and must be analysed carefully.

The speakers' sociolinguistic behaviours found by studying historical corpora of correspondence and other written preserved sources also permit the detection and reconstruction of ancient social networks and communities of practice in terms of characteristics, contexts, degree of participation and integration, and level of adherence to linguistic and non-linguistic styles by the different members –depending on factors such as attitudes, ideologies and identities, as well as their intended construction of social meaning. This kind of research would also shed light on the determination of the styles and style-shifting processes shared among the members of these remote communities in relation to the degree of participation and integration within their networks, as well as to other individual's conditioning factors (situational context, audio-monitorisation of speech, audience design, speaker design).

Additionally, following third-wave Sociolinguistics (Eckert 2012), this kind of research also allows the exploration of ancient community values as reflected in the local communicative competence developed for language choice and use in style-shifting and the transmission of linguistic as well as social meaning in interactional communication. The historical, biographical and socio-linguistic results examined here show that letters also enlighten the motivation(s) for variability in individuals and their stylistic choices for the construction of identity, in addition to tracing language change. The generalisation of a prestigious foreign orthographic form adopted by the proto-standard English variety through learned registers occurred when the supralocalisation processes were imposing some 'norm-enforcing' practices and with individual writers responding to the different sociolinguistic norms of multidialectal medieval England. By being socially aware of the prestige of a Latin-based continental innovation adopted by the proto-Standard in post-multilingual England in a change from above, individual writers, such as John Paston II, played with this new linguistic form as a resource for the production of multiple voices, reflecting the personal communicative style and intra-speaker variation of an author who maintains and negotiates a particular social relationship with their addressees in the situation and purpose of the letter and often as part of a local community of practice. This kind of socio-constructionist approach would allow us to reconstruct the contemporary sociolinguistic values –attitudes, ideologies and identities, for social interaction– and explain the social meaning of inter- and intra- speaker variation (as instrumentalisation of language production) in the sociolinguistic behaviour of speakers at the individual level when used as a resource for identity construction, representation, and even social positioning in interpersonal communication.

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