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Gender Differences in the Evolution of Standard English

Evidence from the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence*

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This article focuses on a sociolinguistic issue that is for the first time evidenced on a nationwide scale in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is the supralocalization of a number of regional features that in the course of time became part of the morphology of Standard English. I will argue that the social variable of gender had an important role to play in the diffusion of these supralocal features. This is of considerable interest, especially as overt prescriptivism and normative grammar had little or no influence on these processes before the late seventeenth century.

In present-day British English, processes of supralocalization are typically witnessed in phonology. These ongoing processes of dialect leveling include such well-known cases as the diffusion to Norwich and the rest of East Anglia of a number of London features. A case in point is the initial fricative merger in words such as *thing* and *thought*. The merger diffused rapidly: in Trudgill's (1986, 54) Norwich surveys, adolescents born in 1957 did not have it at all, whereas those born in 1967 used it extensively. Other processes of supralocalization may be slower. The loss of /h/, for instance, has been diffusing outward from London into East Anglia over the past 150 years and is now well established (Trudgill 1986, 44).

I shall concentrate on one particular aspect of supralocal linguistic processes—namely, the role played by gender. The role of women in the vanguard of language change in general has become something of truism in modern sociolinguistics (see, e.g., Eckert 1989; Labov 1990; Chambers 1995; Holmes 1997). More particularly, it is suggested by Milroy and Milroy (1993) and Docherty et al. (1997) that strictly localized linguistic forms tend to be preferred by males, while the high-frequency variants used by females typically gain a supralocal status. This generalization is

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This article is based on the paper I read at the 27th NWAV(E) Conference in Athens, Georgia, October 1-3, 1998. I would like to thank Professor Bill Kretzschmar for inviting me to give the paper and the participants of the conference for their comments and suggestions, which helped me develop the topic further. My thanks are also due to the editors of this issue for their comments on the prefinal version.

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based on phonological variables, such as the increased use of the glottal stop in British English. The conclusion that the Milroys draw on the basis of this gender-related dichotomy is not that females favor prestige forms but that they in fact create them (Milroy and Milroy 1993, 65).

My empirical research question, therefore, is to determine the extent to which this generalization holds for the past stages of the language, such as Early Modern English. As noted in Nevalainen (1996), the division of social roles in Early Modern England was quite different from what it is today. A woman's position was mostly derivative, based either on the status of her father or on that of her husband. The two sexes did not enjoy equal educational opportunities or access to the public domain. Even a high-ranking woman's social and economic freedom was generally limited, although marriage settlements and widowhood could guarantee women some economic independence (Ericson 1993). How these various social differences were reflected in language use is another matter.

In what follows, I shall first introduce the source of my data, the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (*CEEC*), compiled by the Sociolinguistics and Language History team at the University of Helsinki. My empirical investigation focuses on three processes of supralocalization: (1) the generalization of the object pronoun form *you* in the subject function, (2) the diffusion of the suffix *-(e)s* in the third-person singular present indicative, and (3) the replacement of multiple negation (negative concord) with single negation and nonassertive indefinites (*any*, *ever*, etc.).

I shall start with the basic assumption that wide-ranging supralocal developments did take place in Late Middle and Early Modern English and that both sexes were involved in their transmission. My findings justify this caution. They partly support those modern investigators who suggest that women are instrumental in setting new supralocal standards; this is the case with the first two of the three processes that I examine. However, my results further suggest that the role of women must also have changed in certain respects between the Early Modern English period and today: the general disappearance of multiple negation was not promoted by women. To be able to account for these findings, we need to look deeper into the gender distribution of social and educational opportunities in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The *Corpus of Early English Correspondence*

In 1993, Helena Raumolin-Brunberg and I set up a project in Helsinki to explore the extent to which the models of language change developed by modern sociolinguistics would apply to the past.[1] Register studies, both historical and modern, suggest that the key to understanding the social embedding of language change is to get as close as possible to authentic, everyday communication between people. Our

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TABLE 1
The *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (*CEEC*) (by the Sociolinguistics and Language History Project Team, University of Helsinki)

Writers by Rank (in percentages)	Writers by Domicile (in percentages)
Royalty: 2.4	Court: 7.8
Nobility: 14.7	London: 13.9
Gentry: 39.3	East Anglia: 17.1
Clergy: 13.6	North: 12.5
Professionals: 11.2	Other regions: 48.6
Merchants: 8.4	
Other nongentry: 9.4	

NOTE: Time span: 1417-1681 (2.7 million words; 777 writers; c. 6,000 letters).

work, therefore, began by creating an empirical basis for the project. What we needed was a machine-readable corpus that would enable the study in real time of such speaker variables as gender, social status, mobility, education, and domicile. The outcome was a corpus of personal letters, the *CEEC*. Its latest version (1998) consists of 2.7 million running words and contains letters written by 777 people. The corpus covers the time span from 1417 to 1681.[2]

To facilitate searches, the corpus is accompanied by a sender database, which provides information on each writer's date and place of birth, occupation, social rank, domicile and migration history, father's social status and occupation, and so on (see Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1996). The aim of the team was to achieve as balanced a social coverage as possible with the resources available. As shown in Table 1, most of the writers in the current version represent the gentry and the intermediate social groups of merchants and other professionals.

Historical sociolinguists working with authentic materials such as letters will also have to accept the social limits of their evidence. Early modern people's ability to write was confined to the higher social ranks and professional men. A majority of the English people at the time, approximately 70 percent of the male population in 1600, were semi- or completely illiterate (Cressy 1980, 177). The average rate of female literacy was even lower than that of men. In addition, there was a great deal of regional and social variation in literacy skills. We may, however, assume that in the course of the seventeenth century, the gentry, both men and women, became nearly 100 percent literate throughout the country (Heal and Holmes 1994, 252; Jewell 1998, 146-54).

Personal correspondence is the only genre to supply a wide range of authentic communication from the early fifteenth century to the present day. As a form of communication, letter writing is, of course, regulated by external constraints that are not necessarily imposed on true spoken interaction. The lack of face-to-face interaction and online processing are characteristic of writing but not of typical con-

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versation. Although letter writing is basically interactive—a reply is usually expected and received in personal correspondence—there may sometimes be a considerable time lag between the original message and the reply. Despite these limitations, diachronic multigenre comparisons indicate that personal letters and drama are the written genres that typically come closest to face-to-face conversations along several linguistically encoded dimensions, including involvement and nonabstract style (Biber 1995, 283-300).

Moreover, being able to study processes of language change in real time is one of the few advantages that historical sociolinguists have over their colleagues who work with present-day data and in apparent time. As pointed out by Chambers (1995, 193), real-time studies are rare in social sciences. Besides chronological and regional variation, the extralinguistic variables studied to date by the Sociolinguistics and Language History Project team include gender, social status, mobility (both social and geographic), and register variation, understood in terms of distance between the writer and the addressee (see further published studies by Nevalainen 1996, 1998, 1999, forthcoming; Nurmi 1999a, 1999b, forthcoming; Palander-Collin 1998, 1999; Raumolin-Brunberg and Nevalainen 1997).

Historical Background to Supralocalization

Modern sociolinguistic studies show that processes of supralocalization spread from cities and other urban centers to the surrounding rural areas. Supralocalizing forms typically first hop from one urban center to another and later spread to the countryside in between (see Trudgill 1986; Labov 1994). As early as the sixteenth century, a case can be made for London being the most influential urban center in England also in linguistic terms.

Although the era of linguistic prescriptivism did not properly begin until the eighteenth century, evaluative comments on linguistic variation can be found in Tudor and Stuart England. A number of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers refer to London and the Home Counties as areas where the most "usual speech" in the country can be heard. "Speech" does not refer to a national standard in accounts by writers such as Puttenham, Hart, or Gill but rather denotes the widely understood variety of the capital region and the South. It was distinct from the "termes of Northern-men, such as they vse in daily talke" and "far Westerne mans speach" (Puttenham [1589] 1968). Even in London it was, however, the usage of the middle and the upper ranks and that of the Court, in particular, that was to be imitated by the budding poets who constituted Puttenham's intended readership.

If we wish to understand how this "usual speech" of London might have come about, we should turn to processes of urbanization in the Early Modern period. Although a mere 10 to 12 percent of the English population lived in towns about 1500, there was significant in-migration in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. People

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moved from old farming regions to undeveloped land and from the countryside to urban centers, especially to London. The population of London grew from 100,000 in 1550 to half a million in 1700, then accounting for well more than 10 percent of the population of England. In 1750, London surpassed Constantinople as Europe's largest city. The role of migration to London becomes crucial when we think that in the Early Modern period, London's death rate often exceeded its birthrate because of epidemic and endemic diseases. It has been suggested that only 15 percent of Londoners were born in London in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Demographic studies further suggest that a large number of late fifteenth- and sixteenth-century immigrants to London came from the Northern counties, but there were fewer migrants from areas such as East Anglia. The population of London was boosted not only by migrants in search of livelihood and upwardly mobile people but also by members of the landed gentry and nobility. London's social season attracted the highest social ranks from all over England. Social historians estimate that large sections of the entire Early Modern English population came into contact with the capital at some time during their lives. We may conclude that the social and economic links between the capital region and its hinterland were strong throughout the Early Modern period. In fact, the growth of London vitally depended on it.[3]

Sociolinguistic Hypotheses

The linguistic implications of these urban contacts were considerable. Population movements of all kinds typically give rise to changes in the community's social network structures. We may therefore assume that the urbanization and phenomenal growth that took place in Early Modern London increased loose-knit and single-function social networks among the population. Following the Milroys' argument (Milroy and Milroy 1985), we may expect that social circumstances such as these were particularly apt to promote language variation and change, at the same time making London English more "usual" throughout the country, as suggested by Puttenham, Gill, and other contemporary observers. Linguistic homogenization also commonly takes place under similar circumstances today (Chambers 1995, 58-59).

When this basic assumption is accepted, others will follow. One of the most important among them is the role of gender in supralocalization. We may, therefore, ask whether localized linguistic variants were typically preferred by men in Early Modern England in the same way as they tend to be today. If this was the case, the important question follows whether high-frequency variants were favored by women and whether the forms typically became supralocal. To bring in the diachronic dimension, was it the case in London and elsewhere in England that

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the "usual" speech forms were promoted earlier by female speakers than male speakers?

The odds against this hypothesis are discussed in greater detail in Nevalainen (1996, 1999). They include the range of social roles and the level of education of women in late medieval and Early Modern England. Women's social roles in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were certainly more restricted than today (Mendelson and Crawford 1998, 301-44), but partly through marriages, their social and geographic mobility was probably greater than one would expect in a predominantly agrarian society (Clark and Souden 1988). In the Early Modern period, the prototypical social roles assigned to men were those of breadwinner and head of household, while women were assigned the roles of mother and housewife. However, not all women married, and women's working life was not always limited to domestic work but could extend to wage earning outside the domestic setting (see further Ericson 1993; Laurence 1994; Mendelson and Crawford 1998). At the same time, as stressed by Mendelson and Crawford (1998, 344), it was a woman's family position in the social hierarchy and not her own professional skills that gave her her social status.

The most far-reaching social differences between men and women in the Early Modern period derived from education; even high-ranking women did not have the same formal educational opportunities as men. As noted above, the average level of female literacy, and of writing in particular, was extremely low. Jewell (1998, 11) aptly points out that although some individual women may have reached remarkable levels of academic achievement, these high achievers came from unusual circumstances.

These gender differences in literacy levels are also reflected in the distribution of male and female writers in the *CEEC*: no more than 20 percent of the letter writers included in the corpus are women. A vast majority of them come from the higher social ranks, the nobility, and the gentry. This state of affairs may have interesting sociolinguistic consequences: while we would expect high-ranking women to have had access to processes of supralocalization and incipient standardization in Early Modern English, we cannot perhaps expect them to have led those linguistic processes that were associated with either professional or learned usages. It is therefore worth investigating the extent to which the agencies promoting supralocal processes at the time were similar to those operating in later periods.

The Empirical Investigation

The material for my empirical investigation is drawn from the *CEEC*. As shown in Table 1, the writers in the *CEEC* have been classified according to social rank and domicile. Four geographical regions receive particular attention in the corpus: Lon-

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don and the Court, East Anglia, and the North. Writers living in the counties north of the Chester-Humber line (i.e., north of Lincolnshire) count as Northerners and those resident in Norfolk and Suffolk as East Anglians. Those who lived in London (basically in the city of London, although Southwark is also included) are entered as Londoners. The Court refers to those people, mostly resident in Westminster, who were courtiers or belonged to the royal household and to those who worked as high-ranking government officials at the Court. Including the Court as a separate category makes it possible to examine the effect of overt prestige on language variation and change (cf. "Historical Background to Supralocalization" above).[4]

Using these data, I propose to examine the regional diffusion and gender distribution of three morphosyntactic features in Late Middle and Early Modern English.[5] They were all supralocalized in the sixteenth century and later codified as part of Standard English. The data will be analyzed in periods of twenty to forty years, which makes it possible to observe these processes in real time. The three phenomena investigated are (1) the generalization of the second-person object pronoun *you* in the subject function, (2) the diffusion of the suffix *-(e)s* in the third-person singular present indicative, and (3) the replacement of multiple negation by single negation with nonassertive indefinites. The three processes differ in their linguistic profiles in that (1) involves a loss of a grammatical distinction in the second-person pronouns, whereas (2) and (3) could both be treated as changes involving a morpheme replacement but no grammatical loss. Grammatically different, they provide a good testing ground for the role of gender in supralocalization.

Results

Generalization of *you*

The second-person pronoun *ye* was replaced by the oblique form *you* in the subject function in the supralocal varieties of Early Modern English. The *Survey of English Dialects* shows that *ye* was preserved locally only in parts of Northumberland until the twentieth century (Upton, Sanderson, and Widdowson 1987, 217). Although instances of *you* can be found in the subject position from the fourteenth century onwards, our corpus indicates that its breakthrough took place in the sixteenth century. The process is often attributed to phonological confusion or analogy with the second-person singular subject form *thou* (Mustanoja 1960, 125, 129-30). It is also seen as part of the tendency of oblique forms to be associated with the subject function, one of Sapir's ([1921] 1978, 164-68) drift phenomena. No specific regional origin is usually suggested for the process in the literature.

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The examples in (1) below illustrate variation between *ye* and *you* in the subject function. Accusative-with-infinitive constructions are excluded from the analysis because it is usually not possible to distinguish between the subject and object functions of the pronoun in these contexts. One of them (*I praie you*) is shown in (1c).

(1a) And, Sir, bot yf **ye** wyll be gud brodere to me & speke for me better then **ye** hayffe don yyt, I knaw no frenchype nor no frende to truste to (1518, Anne Clifton; 94).
(1b) to the intent **yow** may the longer endure to serve us; for allways payne can nott be induryd. Surly **yow** have so substancyally orderyd oure maters bothe off thys syde the See and byonde that in myne oppynyon lityll or nothyng can be addyd (1520s, King Henry VIII; 269).
(1c) Yf **ye** knowe they complayn with cawse, I praie <u>you</u> se it amendyd (1545, John Johnson; 250).
(1d) I pray you, forget not my suger, for if **you** do **you** ayer lyke to have but sowar sawese (1545, Sabine Johnson; 290).

The generalization of *you* was completed in the four areas studied in less than a century. An analysis of its progress in forty-year intervals reveals that the change was led by the capital region, where it reached the 50 percent mark before 1560. East Anglia and the North caught up with it only by the end of the century (Nevalainen forthcoming). The process had all the signs of being a change "from below," in the Labovian sense of one taking place below the level of social awareness (Labov 1994, 78). There is no clear distinction between London and the Court, but in individual cases, some evidence can be gathered for register differentiation in terms of sender-addressee relations (Raumolin-Brunberg and Nevalainen 1997). The process was rapid: in the first half of the sixteenth century, there were people who readily generalized *you* and those who rarely used it in their familiar letters. One thing is clear: the change was headed by the capital region.

Looking at the gender distribution of the process, we find that it was led by women throughout the country. Although women's overall token frequency of the *ye*/*you* variable in the *CEEC* is lower than men's due to women's lower overall level of literacy and fewer letters, clear tendencies can nevertheless be perceived (for details, see Appendix A). Distributing the data over twenty-year periods, Figure 1 indicates a radical increase in the general frequency of *you* between 1500 and 1580 from below 20 percent to nearly 100 percent. The 70 percent mark is reached by the female writers in the first half of the sixteenth century, but men's use of the form only reaches the frequency of 50 percent by the 1560s. Both sexes had as good as completed the process by 1580.

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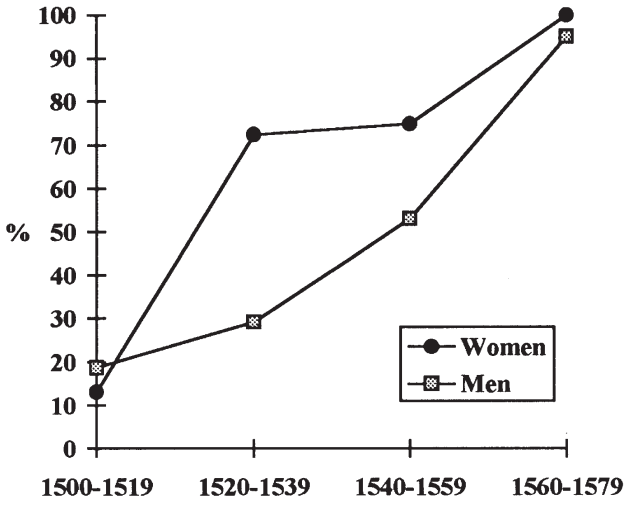

Figure 1: The Distribution of *you* as Opposed to *ye* in the Subject Function According to Gender (*Corpus of Early English Correspondence* 1998; means of individual writers' scores).

Generalization of *-(e)s*

The second process to be examined is the generalization of the third-person singular present indicative suffix *-(e)s*. Following the research tradition, I shall concentrate on *-(e)s* and *-(e)th*, although they do not cover the whole paradigm. The zero form occurs as a minor variant in all four areas that are being investigated here. Moreover, the organization of the entire present indicative paradigm would be of relevance, notably the Northern subject rule and its reflections in the Midlands and in the South (Nevalainen, Raumolin-Brunberg, and Trudgill forthcoming; Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg forthcoming-a).

As regards the two suffixes, the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (*LALME*) indicates that there was a regional divide in the distribution between *-(e)s* and *-(e)th* in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. North of the Chester-Wash line, we find almost exclusively *-(e)s*, while south of it, *-(e)th* dominates. Norfolk clearly aligns with the South in that it shows only a few instances of *-(e)s* (McIntosh, Samuels, and Benskin 1986, maps 645 and 646).

We know, however, from earlier research that the Northern form was generalized in most kinds of texts in the course of the seventeenth century. The dental fricative was preserved longest in two verbs, *have* and *do*, as both auxiliary and main verb. One of the significant characteristics in the history of the two suffixes is that they

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became associated with register differences in the evolving standard language, *-(e)th* with formal and literate styles and *-(e)s* with informal and oral. The dental fricative was retained in the Authorized Version of the Bible and in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, for instance. But it also continued as a regional form in Southwestern dialects and was recorded in Somerset and Devon in Wright's (1905) dialect dictionary.

The results obtained from the *CEEC* reflect the information in the *LALME* in that *-(e)s* was consistently retained in the North, although *-(e)th* also spread there in the sixteenth century. This spread of *-(e)th* is not surprising in view of the fact that the Southern form had been the norm in Chancery texts in the fifteenth century and was further selected by Caxton as the form to appear in print. Interestingly, however, the Northern form *-(e)s* also appeared in London in the fifteenth century, especially in the letters of wealthy merchants. The Court is not well represented in the late fifteenth century, but the data we have would indicate that *-(e)s* was not much used in the Court at the time. East Anglia, by contrast, is well represented in the fifteenth-century data and shows very few instances of the Northern form (see Appendix B and Table 2).

This discrepancy between East Anglia and London can be partly explained in demographic terms: the flow of immigrants from the North to the capital region in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. East Anglia, by contrast, remained relatively self-contained. Because Norwich was the largest provincial town in England at the time, Norfolk apprentices, for instance, preferred Norwich to London (Patten 1988). What brought the Northern feature to London was therefore more likely to be "dialect hopping" than steady diffusion from North to South.

However, despite the continuing flow of migrants to London from the North in the sixteenth century, the first half of the century shows a drop in the use of *-(e)s* in the capital area and confirms its nonuse in the Court. Moreover, it looks as though the position of *-(e)s* had not been stabilized in the merchant community either, as one might have expected on the basis of the fifteenth-century evidence. The form did occur but merely as a minority variant. The London merchants writing in the middle of the sixteenth century reveal a clear preference for *-(e)th* even when corresponding with their immediate family (Nevalainen forthcoming). Some illustrations from this and the subsequent periods are presented in (2). As can be seen, one and the same person could use either form—or all three alternatives, including the zero, as is done by the East Anglian Katherine Paston in (2d).

(2a) Your yong jentleman, Mr. Prat, **hathe** complayned by his lettre to his mother that he **lackythe** bothe meat and drycke, as well his brekefastes (1545, John Johnson; 250).

(2b) To apont the tyme, it **lyes** not in me, and whether it shal be befor Whetsontyd or after, Our Lord **knowth**, for I stand in doutt, wherefore I moest har-

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TABLE 2
VARBRUL Analysis of the Diffusion of *-(e)s* (*Corpus of Early English Correspondence* 1998)

Period	1460-1499	1500-1539	1540-1579	1580-1619	1620-1659
Input probability	.170	.076	.132	.474	.795
Factor weights					
Region					
London	.661	.410	.494	.863	.591
Court	(*)	.213	.396	.372	.705
North	.878	.841	.800	.609	.273
East Anglia	.067	(*)	.281	.146	.435
Gender					
Male	.505	.357	.434	.357	.493
Female	.495	.643	.566	.643	.507

NOTE: Knockout factors are marked by an asterisk.

tely desyre you to make all the sped hom that you can (1546, Sabine Johnson; 673).

(2c) he **knoweth** not the prise of my bloude, wiche shuld be spild by bloudy hande of a murtherar, wiche some of your nere-a-kin did graunt. A sore question, you may suppose, but no other act than suche as I am assured he **knowes**, and therfor I hope he wyl not dare deny you a truthe (1585, Queen Elizabeth I; 11).

(2d) thy father **remembers** his loue to the and **take** thy wrightinge to him very kindly: thy brother remember his louingest loue to the [. . .] I had thought to haue written to mr Roberts this time. but this sudene Iornye of this mesinger **affordethe** me not so much time (1626, Katherine Paston; 90).

The diffusion of *-(e)s* is also interesting from the point of view of gender difference. I analyzed the gender distribution of the variable in the four regions using the VARBRUL program (GOLDVARB 2.0 version).[6] The results are presented in Table 2 (see the numerical data in Appendix B). Knockout factors—in this case, those localities with no instances of *-(e)s*—are marked with an asterisk. With respect to the fifteenth century first, the analysis suggests that while the independent variable of region correlates significantly with the linguistic variable, gender does not. London and the North, in particular, favored *-(e)s*, and East Anglia strongly disfavored it. The Court proved a knockout factor with its zero instances of the form.

In the fifteenth century, the gender variable does not prove significant: the factor weight is .505 for men and .495 for women. There may, however, be another plausible interpretation for this finding. As pointed out above, the level of female literacy was extremely low in the late Middle Ages. Even the Paston women dictated their correspondence, and we do not know the extent to which their male scribes repro-

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duced their language verbatim. There is, in other words, no direct way of telling whether these early letters represent both male and female usage or male usage alone.

In the first four decades of the sixteenth century, the regional patterns of diffusion remain almost the same: the North continues to promote *-(e)s*, and the Court and East Anglia resist it. London's weight, however, drops below 0.5. Although women's overall frequency of the variable is low, a difference also begins to emerge between the sexes: women favoring *-(e)s*, men disfavoring it. The trend persists throughout the sixteenth century.

The regional differences remain unaltered in the following period, 1540-1579, with East Anglia, in particular, disfavoring the incoming form. In the next period, 1580-1619, the *-(e)s* breakthrough begins: the input probability of the variant reaches almost the 0.5 level. Women continue to prefer the use of *-(e)s*. London now definitely promotes the incoming form, while East Anglia continues to resist it. Finally, in the last period, 1620-1659, the gender difference evens out. Of the four regions, it is now, interestingly, the Court that most distinctly favors *-(e)s*. The diffusion of the incoming form thus reveals the snowball effect detected by Ogura and Wang (1996) under comparable circumstances: a change that begins late in a particular area is bound to catch up and even surpass those areas that were the first to promote the feature in question.

Disappearance of Multiple Negation

My last case study deals with the replacement of multiple negation, or negative concord, with single negation and nonassertive indefinites in Early Modern English. The first part *ne* of the double negator *ne-not* was practically lost in most varieties of English by the end of the fifteenth century, leaving *not* as the sole carrier of sentential negation. However, more than one negative form in one and the same clause continued to be used freely, especially to mark emphasis. This use of multiple negation started to lose ground supralocally in the early sixteenth century, giving way to a single negator followed by nonassertive indefinites (*any*, *ever*, etc.) (see Nevalainen 1998, forthcoming). The process was completed in the rising standard language by the end of the seventeenth century. In some varieties of English, multiple negation continues as the norm until the present day. In some others, it stratifies speech communities both socially and in terms of gender (Romaine 1994, 79-80).

My study focuses on the variation between multiple negatives and single negatives followed by nonassertive indefinites of the *any* type. The linguistic variable includes clauses with multiple negation and those with single negation where multiple would have been possible but where nonassertive indefinite pronouns are employed instead. The examples in (3) present some typical cases. Most writers alternated between multiple and single negation followed by nonassertive forms in

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the sixteenth century. The structural environment to preserve multiple negation later than others was the coordinate structure with *nor* shown in (3b).

(3a) And that sawe y **never** yn **no** place but ther (1466(?), John Yeme; I, 78).
(3b) that the dewke of Gelder send me **no** vord vat I sale do, **nor** heelpes me **nat** with **notheng**, as Petter sale chove yov (1505, Edmund de la Pole; I, 254).
(3c) and I schal **not** put you in **no** more troubul but I be sysch you hartly my Lorde that I may have it to morow at nyght at the farest (1516, Margaret Tudor; 130).
(3d) and wher as I accordinglye haue not in lyke wise remembrid and rescribid it hath bene for that I haue **not** hade **anything** to wryt of to your aduauncement (1523, Thomas Cromwell; I, 313).
(3e) that his offence ys growen **not** of **eny** malice or obstinate mynde, but of suche a longe contynued and depe rooted scrupple, as passethe his pow[{er}] to avoyde and put awey (1534, Alice More; 548).
(3f) I'l **never** be so lasie **no more** but rise by five a cloke rather then mise wrighting any more (1677(?), Mary Stuart; 68).

There is comparatively little evidence for the use of nonassertive forms in negative contexts in the late fifteenth century. In my data, the Court is poorly represented in this period. In the first half of the sixteenth century, a statistically significant difference can, however, be detected between the Court as opposed to London and the rest of the country, with the Court in the lead. The Court continued to lead in the latter half of the sixteenth century, but the differences evened out about 1600 (Nevalainen forthcoming).

If we compare male and female usage in the *CEEC* in this period, a consistent trend based on gender emerges. Figure 2 presents the overall distribution of the multiple negation variable, multiple NEG as opposed to single NEG with nonassertive forms, according to gender from the late fifteenth to the late seventeenth centuries (for details, see Appendix C). In all four periods, the disappearance of multiple negation is promoted by men. The chi-square test indicates that the gender difference is not statistically significant in the first subperiod, 1460-1490, when multiple negation still prevails, but it reaches the 1 percent level of significance in the remaining three periods. These findings, therefore, do not agree with what one would expect on the basis of present-day English, where women have been shown to favor standard language forms.

This gender difference may be accounted for by suggesting that the loss of multiple negation progressed "from above." Nonassertive forms with single negation occur in official documents such as the Statutes of the Realm as early as the late fifteenth century. What the people who promoted the use of nonassertive forms had in common was their familiarity with the legal language of the time. This suggestion is

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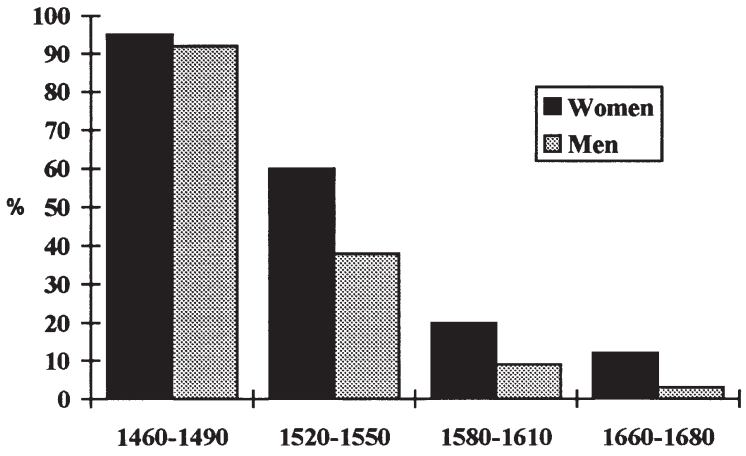

Figure 2: The Frequency of Multiple Negation According to Gender in Four Periods: 1460-1490, 1520-1550, 1580-1610, and 1660-1680 (*Corpus of Early English Correspondence* 1998 and supplement, means of period totals).

supported by the social distribution of the multiple-negation variable in the *CEEC* presented in Figure 3 (and Appendix D). The analysis is based on the social hierarchy reconstructed for Early Modern England by social historians (see further Nevalainen 1998).

Figure 3 makes the point that in the sixteenth century, the process away from multiple negation was particularly favored by men who were used to communicating in writing in their professional capacity. They include members of the legal profession, well-to-do merchants, and, in particular, upwardly mobile administrators in the Royal Court. These social movers were all born to a rank below the gentry or to the lower gentry but had had highly successful public careers and were promoted to the peerage, either temporal or spiritual. Another piece of evidence also suggesting a change from above in social terms is supplied by Figure 3, which shows that multiple negation remained more frequent in nonprofessional ranks below the gentry. Their membership is scarce in the data, but the tendency persists. The implication of these findings is that the process was diffused from above in the sense that it was promoted by professional usage.

Analyzing the gender figures more closely, it can be shown that the female writers in the corpus did not significantly differ from the highest status group, the nobility and the gentry, in the first two periods. The overwhelming majority of these women themselves came from those ranks. We may therefore conclude that although upper-rank women used multiple negation more than men in the same status

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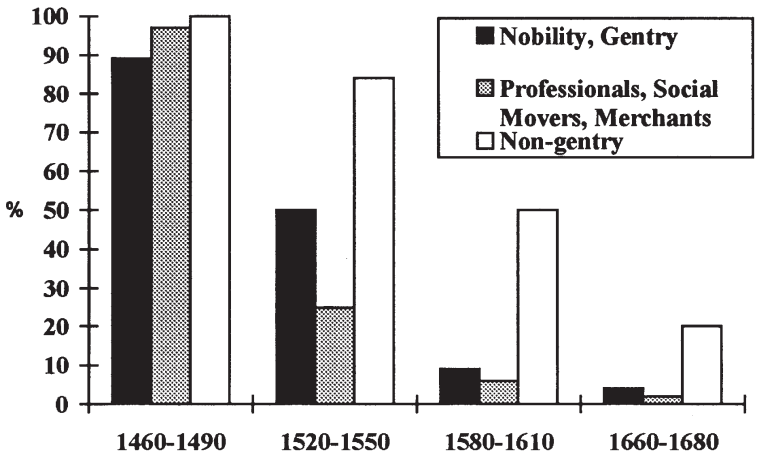

Figure 3: The Frequency of Multiple Negation According to Social Status in Four Periods: 1460-1490, 1520-1550, 1580-1610, and 1660-1680 (*Corpus of Early English Correspondence* 1998, male writers; means of period totals).

groups, the difference was not statistically significant at the time when the change was gaining momentum, the first half of the sixteenth century. The gender difference reaches the 5 percent level of significance in the upper ranks in the last two periods (Nevalainen 1999). At the tail end of the process in the latter half of the seventeenth century, it was accentuated by certain members of the royalty: princesses Anne and Mary Stuart and Queen Elizabeth of Bohemia all used multiple negation considerably more than their male peers, approximately 25 percent of the time (see example 3f).

Finally, as can be inferred from Figures 2 and 3, women as a group clearly differed from the middle-ranking men (i.e., professionals, social aspirers, and merchants), who led the change away from multiple negation. This difference proves statistically significant in the data throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Nevalainen 1999).

Conclusion

In conclusion, my three case studies indicate that linguistic changes were diffused from the capital city to the rest of England as far back as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This had not always been the prevailing pattern: many features

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percolated from the North to the South in the later Middle Ages. They include the third-person singular *-(e)s*. Its presence in London in the late fifteenth century was most likely a consequence of immigration from the Northern counties to the capital.

My results further suggest that the agencies promoting supralocal variants cannot be predicted on purely linguistic grounds. The diffusion of a change resulting in a loss of a grammatical distinction (*ye*/*you*) need not necessarily differ from a "mere" morpheme replacement process (*-th* replaced by *-s*). Processes of both kinds were led by female writers in my data. At the same time, a process of morpheme replacement (multiple NEG replaced by single NEG + nonassertive forms) was involved in a change that was promoted by male writers in the *CEEC*.

We currently do not know which of the morphological variants that eventually gained a supralocal status in English were first promoted by women. Other processes of supralocalization led by female writers in the *CEEC* include indefinite pronouns, the prop-word *one*, and the auxiliary *do* in affirmative and negative statements in the seventeenth century (Raumolin-Brunberg and Nurmi 1997). The historical evidence thus agrees with those sociolinguists who maintain that women are instrumental in setting new linguistic standards. Not unlike today, this might be related to women's openness to innovations, stylistic flexibility, contextual sensitivity, and variety of domestic roles—and with men's relative lack of these attributes (Eckert 1989; Holmes 1997; Milroy 1999). But as such qualities cannot be timeless truths, they remain issues for further study.

My empirical findings do, however, further suggest that the role of women in language change must also have changed in some important respects between the sixteenth and the twentieth centuries. Women were not in the forefront of the professionally led change away from multiple negation in Early Modern English. This gender difference may be best explained in terms of the two sexes' differential access to education in general and to professional specializations in particular. For this early period, one would, therefore, have to assume that supralocal developments first promoted by women did not include those changes "from above" that were diffused by professional coalitions. More historical research is needed to determine the period when incoming prestige forms began to be favored by women more than by men and how far back in time we can trace the modern view that "whatever the particular sources of the change, and whether they are regarded as vernacular or prestige innovations, women play an important role in establishing changes as components of the standard language" (Holmes 1997, 135).

Asking these questions has been made possible by the creation of corpora such as the *CEEC*. More varied and larger machine-readable corpora will no doubt facilitate historical sociolinguists' efforts to answer them more comprehensively in the future.

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APPENDIX A
Frequency Distribution of the *ye*/*you* Variable According to Gender

	Men		Women			
Period	*N*	*YOU*	*N*	*YOU*	χ^2 Test	Total
1500-1519	291	18.6	68	13.1	*ns*	359
1520-1539	1,265	29.2	29	72.4	.0001	1,294
1540-1559	2,549	53.1	251	75.0	.0001	2,800
1560-1579	1,353	95.0	39	100.0	*ns*	1,392

NOTE: Variable totals are (*N*) followed by the means of individual writers' scores for *you* per period (*YOU*), the statistical significance of the gender difference (χ^2 test), and the period total (*Corpus of Early English Correspondence* 1998, all writers).

APPENDIX B
Frequency Distribution of the *-(e)s*/*(e)th* Variable According to Domicile and Gender

	1460-1499		1500-1539		1540-1579		1580-1619		1620-1659	
Period	*N*	*-(e)s* (%)	*N*	*-(e)s* (%)	*N*	*-(e)s* (%)	*N*	*-(e)s* (%)	*N*	*-(e)s* (%)
Region										
London	508	29	51	4	516	10	759	76	265	85
Court	12	0	735	1	387	7	865	31	143	90
North	35	60	139	22	22	32	84	45	452	59
East Anglia	690	1	11	0	428	4	202	10	390	75
Gender										
Male	1,032	17	915	4	1,323	8	1,586	47	1,072	72
Female	213	1	21	29	30	10	324	49	180	78
Totals	1,245	14	936	4	1,353	8	1,910	47	1,250	73

NOTE: Variable totals (*N*) are followed by the relative frequency of *-(e)s* per period (*Corpus of Early English Correspondence* 1998, all writers).

APPENDIX C
Frequency Distribution of Multiple Negation versus Single Negation with Nonassertive Forms According to Gender

	Men		Women		
Period	MN + SN (*N*)	MN (%)	MN + SN (*N*)	MN (%)	Total
1460-1490	324	92	73	95	397
1520-1550	528	38	45	60	573
1580-1610	493	9	120	20	613
1660-1680	415	3	103	12	518

NOTE: Variable totals (MN + SN) are followed by the relative frequency of multiple negation (MN) per period (*Corpus of Early English Correspondence* 1998 and supplement, all writers).

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APPENDIX D
Frequency Distribution of Multiple Negation versus Single Negation with Nonassertive Forms According to Social Rank

	Nobility and Gentry		Merchants, Professionals, Social Movers		Nongentry		
Period	MN + SN (*N*)	MN (%)	MN + SN (*N*)	MN (%)	MN + SN (*N*)	MN (%)	Total
1460-1490	201	90	107	95	16	100	324
1520-1550	227	49	282	27	19	84	528
1580-1610	300	10	183	5	10	50	493
1660-1680	232	4	178	2	5	20	415

NOTE: Variable totals (MN + SN) are followed by the relative frequency of multiple negation (MN) per period (*Corpus of Early English Correspondence* 1998, male writers only).

Notes

1. The project was funded by the Academy of Finland in 1993-1995 and by the University of Helsinki in 1996-1998 with the following members: Jukka Keränen, Minna Nevala, Terttu Nevalainen (director), Arja Nurmi, Minna Palander-Collin, and Helena Raumolin-Brunberg (codirector). For more information, see the project's homepage at http://www.eng.helsinki.fi/doe/projects/ceec/.

2. A sampler version of the corpus, the *Corpus of Early Modern English Correspondence Sampler* (*CEECS*), c. 450,000 words, was published in 1999 on the second ICAME CD-ROM (see Nurmi 1999a). There will also be a supplement to the main corpus consisting of writers whose rank and/or gender is underrepresented in a given period. The *CEEC* supplement currently consists of some 40,000 words by women correspondents.

3. The material in this section is largely based on the following sources: Barry (1990), Beier and Finlay (1986), Clark and Souden (1988), Clay (1984), Coleman and Salt (1992), Rappaport (1989), Stone (1966), and Wrigley (1967). See also Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (forthcoming-a).

4. No basic distinction is made between those inhabitants of a locality who had migrated there from elsewhere and those who were born there. Looking at people whose place of birth is known to us, we can see that more than 80 percent of the Northerners were also born in the North, and nearly 80 percent of the East Anglians were native East Anglians. By contrast, of all those who lived or worked in London and in the Court on a permanent basis, only one-third are recorded as having been born in London.

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5. Pilot studies on some of these variables appear in Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1996). The regional profiles of the three processes are discussed with detailed references in Nevalainen (forthcoming). The discussion partly draws on the analyses that Helena Raumolin-Brunberg and I carried out on the Sociolinguistic and Language History project (see Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg forthcoming-b). I am particularly indebted to Helena for the frequency data on *ye* and *you* and on *-(e)s* and *-(e)th* in East Anglia and the North.

6. The results of the VARBRUL analysis presented here are based on a one-level binomial analysis, with the more accurate method of calculation and averaging by centering factors (Rand and Sankoff 1990). The average chi-square estimate for error per cell normally remained below 1, and only a few "bad" environments were detected in data. This was the case with such categories as London women in 1580-1619 and 1620-1659, in which the observed frequencies were low and hence subject to individual variation.

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