# STANDARDISATION IN EARLY MODERN NORWICH: A CASE-STUDY OF THE THIRD-PERSON SINGULAR INDICATIVE PRESENT TENSE MARKERS

by

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## Abstract

Standardisation is often explained as a linear process in which Standard English is said to have emerged from one ancestor dialect, namely the *Chancery Dialect*. This concept based on the *SAD* hypothesis has recently been challenged by various scholars who discovered linguistic features from language varieties outside of London in modern-day Standard English. However, the exact impact that other dialect areas had on shaping the standard is still relatively unclear. As a result, contemporary investigations have adopted a view that examines language change 'from below', as Standard English seems to be the result of a hybrid of features which originate from different locations. In order to shed more light on the rise of supralocal varieties and how their features diffused, the *EMST* project focuses on urban vernaculars of major regional centres separately in the period between 1400-1700.

Nonetheless, in terms of urban vernaculars, Norwich, the urban centre of East Anglia has remained fairly unexplored. Consequently, the current dissertation will conduct a corpus study of sixteenth and seventeenth-century letter-type texts on how linguistic features in Norwich changed during the rise of supralocal varieties focusing on the third-person singular present tense indicative specifically. This specific marker is chosen due to it being one of the most notable linguistic features of the Norwich dialect and consisted of three possible markings during the Middle English period: *-th*, *-s* and *zero*. The findings show that the presence of the zero from, along with the earlier adopted *-th* suffix, accounted for slower adoption of the standardised *-s* in the Norwich dialect. Eventually, the *-s* variant is taken up in the Norwich variety, but the zero form remains in use among lower-class citizens, which is still the case in the modern Norwich dialect.

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## List of abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| CEEC | Corpora of Early English Correspondence |
| DNB | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography |
| EmodE | Early Modern English |
| EMST | Emerging Standards Urbanisation and the Development of Standard English, c. 1400-1700 |
| PCEEC | Parsed Corpus of Early English Correspondence |
| PE | Present-day English |
| SAD (hypothesis) | Single Ancestor Dialect (hypothesis) |

**Statement of Original Authorship**

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: 

Date: 17-06-2020

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

> Linguistic historians of English like to claim that they have the nature and origin of Standard English nailed. The standard, *as any fule kno*, is a non-regional, multifunctional, written variety, historically based on the educated English used within a triangle drawn with its apexes at London, Cambridge and Oxford. Even more specifically, the propagation of this 'incipient' standard can be linked to a particular branch of the late medieval bureaucracy: the court of the Chancery. (Hope, 2000, p. 49)

It is generally believed that the standardisation process started around the Middle English Period, with a written Standard English emerging during the fifteenth century (Crystal, 2018). The quote above explains this standardisation process of the English language as one of the views that has been previously adopted by various scholars. Evidence in favour of this view suggests that the standard language of today is a direct result of written Chancery texts, also known as the *single ancestor dialect hypothesis* (*SAD* hypothesis). Strang (2015) describes this process as "the evolution of a sequence of competing types, of which one (the direct ancestor of PE [Present-day English] standard) dominated from about 1430" (p. 161). In this case, the direct ancestor of PE is believed to be the Middle English dialect, referring to the East Midlands and specifically London (Algeo & Butcher, 2013). Since this view operates on the level of dialects rather than linguistic features, it provides an attractive and easy explanation for the standardisation process (Hope, 2000).

Nevertheless, this concept has recently been challenged by Hope (2000), who has provided preliminary arguments against this view. Furthermore, as of late, other research has also been critical about the SAD hypothesis. One of the flaws of the hypothesis that Hope (2000) points out, is that various linguistic features can be traced back to a variety of dialects, which suggests that multiple dialects other than the London dialect have possibly played a role in shaping the standard and its features. Subsequently, recent investigations have tried to adopt a different perspective on

standardisation processes. Nonetheless, it remains relatively indistinct under which specific circumstances the standard eventually emerged (Gordon, 2017).

In order to provide a clear distinction between the previously implemented theories and the theory that this dissertation builds on, two contrasting views established by Elspaß (2007) will be discussed, namely *language history from above* and *language history from below*. In light of the SAD hypothesis, the former view would apply, since this view focuses on standard language starting its development with the literate elite, located in the capital, who provide the language norms to define the standard (Milroy, 1999; Trudgill & Watts, 2002). Opposed to this view, Elspaß (2007) proposed a language history from below view. This view analyses the history of the standardisation process, while taking various factors into account, namely (a) other language varieties deviating from the uniform standard, (b) more authentic texts untouched by editors and proof-readers, and (c) language produced by non-elite (Auer, 2018). Although London has been of great influence in shaping Standard English, this theory also considers the role of supralocal dialects, since linguistic features from various dialects geographically far from London have also been found in written Standard English (Auer, 2018). Subsequently, it has become a more acceptable theory that Standard English is a hybrid of features that find their origin in various dialects. Considering the influence various dialects had on Standard English, an investigation of the rise of these varieties could provide more information on how supralocal varieties impacted the language use of the country and could eventually present new evidence on how supralocal features helped to shape Standard English. In this dissertation, the term *supralocalisation* refers to a linguistic feature spreading from its original region of origin to neighbouring areas (Nevalainen, 2000)

The project *Emerging Standards Urbanisation and the Development of Standard English, c. 1400-1700* aims to shed more light on which linguistic processes were involved in the emergence of supralocal varieties (including Standard English). The objective of this project is to investigate

the development of standard language and the covert factors (national/international trade, work migration and book trade) that might have influenced its process. As mentioned, London is mostly seen as the main force behind the standardisation process. However, much less is known about how supralocal forms diffused from and to London (Gordon, Oudesluijs, & Auer: in press). To address this gap, the EMST project focuses on urban vernaculars of major regional centres separately. York (North), Coventry (West Midlands) and Bristol (South West) have been explored by Auer, Oudesluijs and Gordon, respectively. However, Norwich (East Anglia) has remained relatively untouched. Characterisation of the linguistic processes that took place during the standardisation period is important to increase the understanding of the influences that were at play in shaping supralocal varieties. Therefore, this study aims to make an original contribution to the investigation of the rise of supralocal forms, including Standard English. In the fourteenth century, Norwich, the second largest city of England at that time, already had some interaction with London functioning as one of its main food-supply zones (Keene, 2000). With the increasing economic dominance of London in 1570, most of the provincial industries that were economically flourishing before started to decrease in their commercial role with the exception of Exeter and East Anglia (Wright, 2013). Consequently, apprentices remained in East Anglia, creating a self-sufficient area without much influence of London (Kitch, 1986). As a result, some scholars have argued that the direction of change in the London population moved from East Anglia to the Central Midlands, resulting in the capital's dialect moving towards a more Central Midland type (Benskin, 1992; Blake, 1996).

Based on the previous information, this dissertation seeks to investigate the urban written vernacular of Norwich, since information on this variety is still rather sparse. The time that will be focused on is the period between the second half of the sixteenth century and the seventeenth century. This period is fundamental because many changes in usage regarding the linguistic feature investigated in this research seem to have taken place during these two centuries. Furthermore,

East Anglia held an important role in the development of Standard English (Trudgill, 2008). Larger urban cities, such as Norwich play a big part in the adoption and spread of supralocal forms, as they hold essential social and economic functions, thus being susceptible to communication and contact with other cities (Gordon, 2017), making these types of cities rather interesting to investigate.

Moreover, Norwich has been subject to a variety of language and dialect contact, providing opportunities for changes to occur within the Norwich variety (Trudgill, 2008). The change of the written variety in Norwich and how this variety was subject to changes over time will be analysed, specifically regarding the third-person singular present tense indicative zero marking (∅), since this is currently the most marked sociolinguistic dialect feature of the East Anglian dialect (Trudgill, 2001a). This feature still exists in modern dialects and occurs in traditional dialects of Suffolk, northern Essex and Norfolk, only lacking in the westernmost Fenland locality of Outwell (Trudgill, 2001a). Interestingly, percentages of its usage are correlated with social class, but the zero form predominates in all informal, colloquial speech (Trudgill, 1974). Additionally, many English language varieties include the zero form as a marker for the third-person singular. However, the East Anglian dialect is the only variety within the British Isles that is making use of the zero form (Trudgill, 1974). Generally, texts originating from the Late Modern English period and Early Modern English period show a wide variety of third-person singular and plural inflections, namely -(V)*s*, -(V)*th* and -(V)∅ (Gordon, 2017; Kytö, 1993; Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2003). Ultimately, -(V)∅ dominated over -(V)*th*, -(V)*s* and (V)-*(e)n* in the plural, whereas -(V)*s* prevailed over -(V)*th* in the singular inflection in *Early Modern English* (*EModE*) texts (Lass, 1992; Schendl, 1996). The findings of this study specifically will be compared to those of previous studies looking at the development of third-person singular present tense markers in other urban centres, such as London, York, Bristol and Coventry. These urban centres are located

in major dialect areas and were places of high literacy rates and significant for dialect and language contact.

Consequently, many opportunities arose for the development of supralocal written varieties. To show this development, the current investigation will look at letters ranging from 1569 to 1666, as this period is said to be of significant importance regarding the evolution of the third-person singular present tense indicative marker. Finally, this thesis aims to find an answer to the following research question: How did the usage of the third-person indicative present tense markers in Norwich change with the rise of a supra-local norm and to what extent did this change the local usage in written language?

This dissertation is structured as follows: Chapter 2 discusses relevant previous studies on supralocalisation processes and the history of third-person present tense markers. Chapter 3 outlines the methods and procedures that were employed. Chapter 4 presents the results that were obtained during the analysis of the written data. Finally, the results will be discussed, and suggestions for further research will be given together with the final concluding remarks in chapters 5 and 6.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will introduce relevant previous studies on the third-person singular present tense marker and its development in the English language. In order to establish a framework indicating why this dissertation could contribute to the standardisation debate, section 2.1 will discuss previous views on the origins of Standard English, highlighting why these views are arguably not sufficient to explain the development of Standard English fully. Afterwards, section 2.2 will discuss the development of third-person singular present tense markers during the *Middle English* (*ME*) and EModE periods to indicate how this marker spread from and to various areas. The primary purpose of this section is to have comparable results from previous studies of different regions that could help explain the way that the third-person singular marker developed in Norwich. Finally, the socio-historical background of the third-person singular marker in Norwich will be explicitly discussed in section 2.3 to obtain a more detailed view on this marker and its functions concerning the city this dissertation investigates.

### 2.1: Perspectives on the origins of Standard English

As indicated earlier, the current study aims to contribute to a different and more contemporary approach of analysing standardisation processes. Firstly, the language from above view adopted in past investigations will be discussed together with its limitations in order to highlight the importance of this dissertation and the field the current investigation addresses. Afterwards, an overview of more recently conducted studies on the influence of dialect contact will be given to provide support for the approach of this dissertation.

Trudgill (1999) defines Standard English by explaining that it is not a language per se, but merely one of many varieties of the English language. However, Standard English is accepted as the most important variety, as it is the variety typically used in writing, associated with the education system of English-speaking countries and often used by the educated people along with

being the variety that is taught to English second language learners (Trudgill, 1999). Many used to believe that Standard English emerged as a linear process from the court of the Chancery, a form of fifteenth century London English (Benskin, 1992). The Chancery is described as the country's administrative office and finds its precursor in a form of English used by Henry V's Signet Office (Nevalainen & Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2006). This office consisted of the king's private secretariat and accompanied him during his foreign campaigns (Nevalainen & Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2006). This theory entails that Standard English evolved from one specific dialect, in which linguistic features were adopted based on decisions made by a particular group of people, excluding the influence of competing dialects (Hope, 2000). Supposedly, institutional support from a distinct group of influential people is essential for the success of any standard variety (Nevalainen & Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 2006). The Chancery Standard experienced institutional support from speakers of the highest social statuses, namely the king and parliament, creating a large support base for the idea that Standard English evolved from the court of the Chancery (Bodine, 1975). Evidence in favour of this theory was presented in studies undertaken by Samuels (1963), who argues that the Chancery Standard must be the basis of modern written English. He suggests that spellings found in the Chancery Standard predominated in modern-day Standard English. However, Samuels later refined this statement by claiming that modern written English stems from the Central Midlands dialect (Wright, 2013). One of the reasons which led to Samuels refining his claims was caused by research carried out after 1963, showing unsuccessful attempts by other scholars to track the process in which the Chancery spellings influence the Standard English of today (Wright, 2013). Consequently, these new findings gave way for more investigations to be carried out, as is done by, for example, Wright.

As previously mentioned, the SAD hypothesis has recently received more criticism as it seems that standard language has emerged from more than one source. This raises the following question: what influences were involved in the emergence of Standard English? Milroy and Milroy

(1991) have observed that “the various stages that are usually involved in the development of a standard language may be described as the consequence of the need for uniformity that is felt by influential portions of society at a given time" (p. 27), implying that the standardisation process suppresses the optional variability in language (Hope, 2000). In order to refer to the stages of development, many use Haugen's (1966) model. The stages of this model are presented as follows: A variety is *selected* as a standard (competing varieties can be *selected* by various parts of the community, but only one will prevail), the variety will then be *accepted* by influential people (who also most likely were in need of uniformity most) and finally will be *diffused* geographically and socially (Milroy & Milroy, 1999). Once a standard has been established, it has to be *maintained*. This can be achieved in a variety of ways, in which *elaboration of function* and *prestige* play a role (Milroy & Milroy, 1999). In this model, a standard language is defined as consisting of the minimal variation in form and a maximal variation in function (Leith, 1983), in which a particular language variety becomes the standard and will be subjected to its subsequent *codification* (Nevalainen, 2000).

Additionally, this model classifies selection and acceptance as social issues, whereas codification and elaboration tend to be more of a linguistic process (Nevalainen, 2000). Nevalainen (2000) indicates that there is sufficient evidence that hints in the direction of the London dialect being selected as a national standard in printed form in the fifteenth century. However, by the seventeenth century, there were still inconsistencies in, for example, spelling. Nevalainen (2000) adds that during the acceptance of the London dialect, features from regions outside of the East Midlands were also selected and eventually became accepted as part of a nationwide sociolect as well. From the 1550s onwards these features diffused and potentially found their place in Standard English and other varieties at the end of the Early Modern English period (Nevalainen, 2000). Haugen’s model, among others, is mostly employed to view unification and standardisation processes from above (Milroy, 1999, 2005; Trudgill & Watts, 2002). However, in doing so,

scholars established a “tunnel vision view” by omitting the rich varieties of English in their discussion as to how and why Standard English achieved its present form (Trudgill & Watts, 2002, p. 1).

Wright (2013) argues that what is accepted as the standard today is more likely to have resulted from extensive dialect contact. One of the examples supporting this argument is the case of the third-person singular present tense indicative. The *-s* marking that has found its place in modern Standard English originates in the north. On the contrary, the *-th* suffix was initially used in the London dialect, influenced by Essex, Westminster and Middlesex dialects, where the standard arguably began its development (Crystal, 2018). What follows is that if dialect contact had not taken place, it would have been more logical that, instead of *-s*, *-th* would have appeared in today's Standard English as the London dialect is presumed to have been the precursor of the standard. Likewise, Trudgill (1986) points out that if we look closely to Standard English texts, most of its properties seem to be the result of simplification processes, such as dialect levelling and regularisation, which hints at extensive dialect contact.

A prime example of this is also provided by Wright (2013), who mentions the third-person plural present tense indicative. This form was originally regionally marked with endings such as *-th*, *-n* and *-s*. However, due to dialect contact, levelling took place, resulting in a zero form being adopted by various dialects to eventually become regularised as the primary suffix used to indicate all third-person present tense plural indicative forms. Similar processes are explained as mechanisms resulting in the loss of localised features in urban areas (Kerswill, 2003). Regularisation, in this case, could be the result of diffusion, where features from a prosperous speech community are spreading like a wave over other parts of the country, starting with the more urban areas (Britain, 2002).

In addition, social factors can play a role in regularisation processes when it comes to speakers adopting a feature from a conversational partner who already uses this new feature

(Kerswill, 2003). Levelling, in terms of social factors, accounts for "the reduction or attrition of *marked* variants" (Trudgill, 1986, p. 98). A marker can be explained as a variable that speakers are not necessarily aware of but is consistent in style and is principally stratified between groups (Meyerhoff, 2014). When communicating with speakers from a different (social) group, speakers tend to weaken these markers for the sake of mutual intelligibility. This process could potentially lead to the rise of a new variety by losing specific markers (Kerswill, 2003). Subsequently, both levelling and diffusion could be catalysators for the loss of markers within a variety, depending on which dialect is analysed. Be that as it may, the concept of levelling and regularisation, in this case, does create some difficulty when comparing modern day dialects with modern-day Standard English (Wright, 2013). East Anglia is one of the dialect areas that exemplifies this issue by their regularisation of the zero ending of the third-person singular present tense indicative. This marker is indicated to have been the outcome of simplification processes as a result of dialect and/or language contact, indeed adhering to a "universal norm" that applies to all dialects subjected to simplification (Wright, 2013, p. 72). Contrarily, modern Standard English itself contains a non-regularised marker for the third-person singular present tense, namely *-s*.

Consequently, some argue that this indicates that the standardisation process was unsuccessful, as regional varieties do seem to have succeeded in adopting regularised markings, whereas Standard English stopped mid-process (Wright, 2013). Trudgill (2009) solves this apparent flaw in the standardisation process of Standard English by arguing that the standardisation process of Standard English has not reached its final stages yet. He explains that non-standard dialects are simply further in the regularisation process than the standard, due to the conservative nature of Standard English.

As the previous sections show, Standard English is conceivably the result of extensive dialect contact instead of the evolution of one particular prestigious ancestor dialect. As a consequence, the standardisation process needs to be approached from a different angle as well,

namely the perspective of language change occurring from below (Elspaß, 2007). This view will also be the primary approach behind this investigation, as it is expected to shed a different light on the influences that helped shape standard language. In order to create a solid framework for this view, this section will first highlight the view from above that has been previously utilised and show why only adopting this view has been proven to be problematic. Until relatively recently, most scholars have been focused on the language from the above concept. This view commonly entails that speakers from a lower class adopt linguistic features from speakers of a higher social hierarchy (Grund, 2017). Another possibility within this view is that a feature generally becomes more widespread, due to a conscious process with speakers explicitly commenting on this feature (Grund, 2017).

As a consequence of the language view from above, formal text types would be considered more likely to diffuse language features than their informal counterparts, as formal language is more consciously monitored. As a part of this, the nation's best writers were seen as role models of the language's norms and therefore valued as the "true representatives of the language at that time" (Elspaß, 2007, p. 1). Subsequently, their language use was acknowledged as the standard that eventually became adopted by the lower classes. Though, due to this approach, many pieces of writing were ignored for merely not adhering to the standard that had been established, blaming their deviations on bad language (Davies & Langer, 2006). This resulted in a significant part of the language community not being represented in previous research.

Nevertheless, as of recent the language view from below has received more attention as it appears that many changes in the language and variation go unnoticed when language materials consisting of vernacular language are not included in the findings (Elspaß, 2007). With a language from below approach, writing of lower and lower-middle-class communities is taken into account in order to present a more complete picture of the development of the English language resulting in a better interpretation on how the language could potentially further develop in years to come.

This means that, apart from the elite, the remaining 95% of the population, who have been excluded before, will finally be included in research regarding language historiography (Elspaß, 2007). Furthermore, adopting this view would also generate more opportunities to look at language change that occurs from below the level of consciousness as vernacular varieties are now also under evaluation.

Obtaining text materials from lower-class speakers of a variety has been proven difficult as most of these texts are still unavailable, let alone transcribed and digitalised (Elspaß, 2007). This investigation will focus on letters as its main data source. Though not necessarily written by lower-class citizens, this text type represents more informal writing styles, resulting in a language use revealing less standardised features as found in edited books by the aforementioned model writers. Additionally, most existing research has been focused on the standard emerging from the Chancery variety in London, due to it being a prestigious variety used by the government, thus having a high social status. The current research aim is to analyse the emergence of standard features in Norwich and the influences that might have played a part in this process. In doing so, the current investigation could be explained as being part of the language from below approach as it takes a variety into account that has been excluded in the language from the above view, which only focused on texts originating from the Chancery and London. Furthermore, this dissertation examines to what extent regional language use outside of London could have influenced the Norwich variety.

Norwich, the city this investigation concentrates on, has since the Early Modern English period been one of the largest urban cities of England (King, 2011). Literacy rates in urban areas were significantly higher than those in small towns and rural areas, which is most likely the result of all the different roles these areas fulfilled (Clark, Daunton, & Palliser, 2000). Consequently, more opportunities for dialect or language contact could have taken place, since this increases the number of people who were able to engage with (informal) textual sources from other dialects.

Nevertheless, the literacy levels in urban societies also differed significantly, as there were many different options regarding schooling before the Education Act in 1870 (Auer, 2018). As a result, most of the text available from the period before the Education Act consists of writing from the literate people, thus not providing a full representation of the urban community. Still, it can provide a great deal of information on the language used in these communities.

On the contrary, texts originating after the Education act have become almost entirely standardised. Milroy (1992) explains that in these more recent texts it is difficult to localise most individual texts, as the spelling has been mostly standardised in texts from these periods and subsequently do not provide insights on the language situation before dialect contact took place. Due to texts containing supralocal forms before the eighteenth century, texts from before the Education Act become more interesting to analyse, since the origin of their regional forms and how these diffused can already offer a great deal of information on how the standard developed regionally (Nevalainen, 2000).

East Anglia and, more specifically, Norwich have not yet been analysed in terms of how the processes of levelling and diffusion could have influenced specific markers within their dialect to change, providing an interesting case study. The third-person singular present tense marker has previously received much attention in light of standardisation processes, whereas its development in Norwich has yet to be investigated. Consequently, the current study will focus on the third-person singular present tense indicative as a specific marker within the Norwich variety. Additionally, one of the focal points will be the influence of other varieties which could have influenced the usage of the third-person singular in the Norwich variety. With this in mind, the following section will provide an overview of how this marker regionally developed from the fourteenth to the start of the eighteenth century roughly.

**2.2: General development of third-person present tense markers**

The third-person singular present tense indicative has been a specific point of focus within the research on supralocal varieties (Evans, 2015; Gries & Hilpert, 2010; Kytö, 1993; Lass, 1992; Nevalainen, 2000; Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2003; Stein, 1987). Previous studies have targeted the change of its suffix ending specifically. The third-person singular present tense indicative consisted of three possible endings during the Middle English period, namely *-th* (þ), *-s* and the uninflected zero form (∅) (Kytö, 1993). In practice, this could be illustrated as follows (Auer, 2018):

(a) -th: *She walketh*

(b) -s: *She walk(e)s*

(c) zero: *She walk*

*CEEC* data shows that the *-s* variant originated in the north, whereas the *-th* variant was found in the south (Auer, 2018; Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2016). Furthermore, it is often assumed that language change first occurs in spoken language. After a certain amount of time, informal texts types closely resembling spoken modes of communication will also start showing these changes. Finally, language changes will start to appear in formal text types (Grund, 2017). What follows from this view is that language change most likely first emerges in informal speech or text types. This is in contradiction with previously established literature and could indicate that language change is actually more likely to occur from below the level of consciousness. According to Holmqvist (1922), the *-s* ending was indeed used in colloquial speech first, to later be used in written texts based on phonetic spelling. The first instances where the *-s* suffix occurs outside of the northern regions and in written language, is during the fourteenth century in rhyme poems written in London (Kytö, 1993). As a result of applying phonetic spelling in texts, the *-s* variant became a widespread phenomenon in written language (Kytö, 1993). Subsequently, the *-s* suffix started diffusing progressively during the second half of the fifteenth century as it was found in

one-third of the texts from London. However, it did not occur in East Anglian or Chancery Court data yet (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2016), which again could confirm the language theory from below the level of consciousness as this form apparently diffused from dialect areas other than London.

Furthermore, as an explanation for the *-s* variant not being present in East Anglia around this time, Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2016) mention that the spread of *-s* from the north to London could be the result of dialect skipping since many northern migrants moved towards the London merchant community (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2000). This indicates that the spread of the *-s* suffix diffused "gradually outwards from a centre", supposedly a northern urban centre, to London, but skipped East Anglia in this *wave model* (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2000, p. 165). As mentioned earlier, East Anglia remained to have a fairly self-sufficient flourishing industry and area, making it plausible that not many of its citizens migrated to London. Consequently, there might not have been an opportunity for features to diffuse between East Anglia and the capital.

While the *-s* form became more standardised, the *-th* suffix prevailed until the end of the fifteenth century as well, especially in formal text types (Holmqvist, 1922; Kytö, 1993). Once more, this provides potential evidence that formal language indeed follows informal language when it comes to language change and argues in favour of a language view from below. Interestingly, various data show that the use of the *-s* variant drops significantly during the first half of the sixteenth century (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2003, 2016). Simultaneously, there appeared to have been an increase in *-th* usage, which might have been the cause of the decrease in usage of the *-s* variant. This situation has been analysed by Kytö (1993), who suggests that the favouring of *-th* by Caxton and printing has played a significant role in the drop of *-s* usage. Moreover, sufficient source material has been available for this period, proposing that the drop in *-s* usage cannot be accounted for with the bad data problem (Labov, 1994). This could conceivably

mean that the decrease in *-s* usage is a result of diffusion of the southern *-th* variant (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2016). Furthermore, it can be explained as a change from above socially, as *-th* was found among the upper ranks in the northern Plumpton family circle, specifically among the highest-ranking men (Moore, 2002; Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2016).

When analysing this feature throughout the standardisation of the English language, it appears that the *-s* ending eventually won out over the *-th* ending. An increase in *-s* usage can be identified again from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards. The first appearances of the *-s* variant can be found in 1539 in letters from the north, London, the Court and East Anglia (Auer, 2018). Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2016) propose that this comeback could be phonologically motivated in relation to a preference for the syncopated *-s* ending as opposed to an unsyncopated *-(e)th* ending, which was more likely to occur in sibilant-final contexts. Sibilants are sounds with a significantly higher pitch, including a more obvious hiss, such as [s] [z] [ʃ] [ʒ] (Ladefoged & Johnson, 2010). This means that a verb such as *kiss* would adopt a *-th* ending, resulting in *kisseth* in the third-person singular present tense indicative. Nevalainen (1996) found that the auxiliary verbs *have* and *do* are not frequently used in combination with *-th* and proposes this also to strengthen the syncopation hypothesis. Phonological motivation would suggest a change from below in terms of social awareness but was nevertheless promoted by social aspirers at this point too, as these speakers are usually sensitive to marked variants (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2016). However, this time when the *-s* makes its comeback in the last two decades of the 1500s, the spread seems to originate from London instead of the north (Auer, 2018). This is striking since the *-s* variant originates in the north and diffused from there in the fourteenth century but was now diffusing the other way around (Moore, 2002).

In the final decade of the 1500s the *-s* and *-th* variants co-occur, but from the 1600s onwards the *-s* marking tends to be the norm (Holmqvist, 1922). However, there still appears to be much inconsistency in different text types, even in different texts written by the same author (Kytö,

1993). Finally, around the 1700s, the *-th* ending was reduced to usage only in biblical, liturgical and other highly formal written texts (Kytö, 1993). Another supporting argument for the aforementioned change from below socially of the *-s* variant at the end of the sixteenth century is the slow adoption of the variant by the Royal Court (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2016). Only by the time the *-s* suffix was close to being standardised did the Royal Court start to adopt this specific variant with a faster rate. This resembles one of the steps in the process of standardisation mentioned earlier, namely *acceptance*. At this point, a significant and influential group of speakers has adopted the *-s* variant, which causes this form to be accepted across the upper layers of society causing it to diffuse to other layers and regions. Still, East Anglia was even slower when it comes to adopting the *-s* ending and held on to the *-th* ending far into the seventeenth century (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2016).

As mentioned briefly in the introduction, the urban centres of York (North), Coventry (West Midlands) and Bristol (South West) have been previously investigated regarding the third-person present tense (Gordon, Oudesluijs, & Auer: in press). This study found that *-s* was mostly attested in York and more personal writings during the EModE period, which is in line with previous findings that informal (colloquial) language adopts newer forms first and that the diffusion of *-s* originated in the north. Administrative texts, on the other hand, were still predominantly using *-th* during the seventeenth century, as these text types were more conservative in their language use (Gordon, Oudesluijs, & Auer: in press). Additionally, they found that auxiliary *have* remained inflected with *-th* for a more extended period compared to lexical verbs. Subsequently, these results indicate that *-s* was to some extent in competition with *-th* before eventually becoming the standardised form (Moore, 2002; Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2003).

Furthermore, Gordon, Oudesluijs and Auer (in press) established that verb type and text type are the most relevant underlying factors when it comes to the development of the third-person

singular inflection during the EModE period (Gordon, Oudesluijs, & Auer: in press). At the same time, the region seems to become less important as time progresses (Gordon, Oudesluijs, & Auer: in press). This dissertation aims to add to these findings by adding to the urban centre of Norwich. In order to provide more information on this area, the following section (2.3) will discuss the progress of the third-person singular present tense indicative in Norwich specifically.

### 2.3: Socio-historical background of third-person present tense markers in Norwich

Norwich is a city situated in the county of Norfolk, which has been labelled typically East Anglian, together with the county of Suffolk (Fisiak & Trudgill, 2001). Additionally, East Anglia was a relatively isolated and fairly self-sufficient economy (Trudgill, 2001a). However, East Anglia is a quite borderless area, creating much speculation on which counties should be included. Most scholars would leave out the Fens for example as these were uninhabited until its draining in the seventeenth century and thus might not share the same cultural history as other East Anglian areas (Britain, 2002). On the other hand, East Anglia could be defined in terms of the original East Anglian Kingdom, meaning that it would cover Norfolk, Suffolk and eastern Cambridgeshire (Seymour, 1988). In addition, some researchers, for example Wilson (1977), also include Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire in this definition. Linguistically speaking, Norfolk and Suffolk, excluding the Fens and much of Essex, would fit the definition of East Anglia as the dialects spoken there are still typically East Anglian (Trudgill, 2001a). Consequently, it would almost be an understatement to say that the possible definitions for the counties and cities East Anglia consists of are endless. Nevertheless, Norwich fits well in most, if not all of the existing definitions hence its crucial role in analysing the East Anglian dialect.

As discussed in the introduction, the third-person singular zero is probably the most well-known dialect feature of East Anglian English (Trudgill, 2001a). The East Anglian dialect consists of third-person present-tense singular zero-marking for all persons, exemplified below:

(d) *I walk*

(e) *She/He/It walk*

(f) *We/They walk*

In the Late Middle English period, the southern *-th* form was most frequently used in East Anglia (McIntosh et al., 1986). Additionally, the zero form was found in East Anglia in the fifteenth century, similarly to London (Bailey et al., 1989). In the end, the singular zero ending was not included in standard language, but can still be found in local dialects, such as East Anglian dialects (Holmqvist, 1922). Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2016) explain that it is difficult to assess the influence the zero-form had on shaping the standard, other than slowing down the adoption of *-s*. Nonetheless, Auer (2018) discusses that it could be of interest to analyse how long specific dialect features can be found in local texts. Moreover, establishing the periods in which supralocalisation processes and other language changes can be discovered could possibly offer a great deal of information on which areas had the most influence when it comes to diffusing linguistic features. In light of the current investigation, it is expected that Norwich had a significant influence on the diffusion of in this case the third-person present tense marker, as it is the urban centre of East Anglia.

Nowadays, the usage of the zero form is found in all colloquial speech in the city of Norwich, but the percentage of usage is correlated with speakers' social background in the modern dialect (Trudgill, 1974). Trudgill mentions that the working class-speakers use the zero form more than other speakers from Norwich to illustrate how social background influences the usage of this variant. However, these speakers do not seem to hypercorrect with an *-s* ending for verbs other than third-person singular (Trudgill, 1974). Additionally, the *-s* ending, or any other marking, is fairly unusual for the third-person singular present tense indicative, making Standard English stand out (Croft, 1990). It is then also not surprising that many English dialects have incorporated the zero form for the third-person singular present-tense, although these dialects are all found outside

of the British Isles (Trudgill, 2001b). This then means that East Anglian dialect areas are the only areas where this occurs in England, making it interesting to investigate how the zero marking has survived in this area specifically.

Simplification and regularisation most often occur as a result of language contact, raising the question whether the zero feature could also be a contact feature of East Anglian English (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988; Trudgill, 1992, 2001b). In order to investigate whether this is indeed the case, Trudgill (2001b) suggests that research has to look at a time frame between roughly 1510 and 1610 and account for two possible scenarios. He proposes that either Norwich could have adopted the *-(e)s* form before eventually arriving at the zero form, but it could also be likely that the *-(e)s* form did not enter the dialect at all. In his analysis, Trudgill concludes that the *-s* variant from the north arrived in Norwich at the same time that many immigrants from the Low Countries arrived due to the Spanish persecution. He argues that a battle ensued between the three possible variants (also including *-th*), due to the use of the zero marking in the English language being more natural for the non-native speakers both when conversing with other non-natives as with the natives. He proposes that the zero marking eventually prevailed in Norwich as the most natural marking is always most likely to be adopted more easily (Trudgill, 1986).

## 2.4: Summary and implications

The established literature discussed above shows that recently the focus of the standardisation process has shifted to a view which focuses on language change from below. This, because multiple investigations have found supralocal forms in various varieties, including Standard English. As a result, many studies have shed light on varieties other than the London dialect. However, Norwich, or more generally East Anglia, has remained fairly unexplored. As the third-person singular present tense marker is considered the most notable feature of the modern-day Norwich dialect, it would be interesting to investigate how this marker changed over time in the

Norwich dialect during the standardisation processes that were taking effect in England. Since the literature shows that this marker was mostly affected during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the current dissertation will focus on this time specifically. The information gathered from the studies mentioned above lead to the following research question: How did the usage of the third-person indicative present tense markers in Norwich change with the rise of a supra-local form and to what extent did this change the local usage? Based on previous literature on both the functions of this marker in Norwich and England in general, it might be a possibility that Norwich never adopted the third-person singular *-s* marking during the standardisation period, as East Anglia is the only modern-day dialect within the British Isles that has regularised the zero form. This dissertation aims to show whether this is a correct assumption, or if the Norwich dialect did adopt the *-s* suffix at some point decrease its usage again. If the latter is the case, other possibilities of how the zero ending eventually ended up in this dialect have to be evaluated.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

The previous sections touched upon reasons as to why this study focused on Norwich (East Anglia) in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Chapter 3 will first discuss the method that has been adopted for this investigation. The objectives will be explained together with justifications for the approach that has been adopted. Afterwards, the data sources selected for this dissertation will be discussed separately to indicate why they are of relevance for this study.

### 3.1: Method

As pointed out earlier, traditionally East Anglian dialects share the third-person singular present tense zero form in writing (Trudgill, 1974). Evidence shows that East Anglia shared the fully inflected present-tense systems of other Middle English dialects from the eleventh to the fifteenth century (Trudgill, 1974). However, Kytö (1993) found that the *-s* form became more dominant between the 1640s and 1710s, experiencing a drop where the *-th* form became more frequently used, even in the north, which might show supralocal diffusion from the south (Gordon, 2017; Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2003). During the latter half of the sixteenth century, the *-s* form became more standardised in London, but it seems as if this adoption process proceeded more slowly in East Anglia (Nevalainen, Raumolin-Brunberg, & Trudgill, 2001).

In order to determine how the third-person singular present tense indicative changed over time in the supralocal written variety of Norwich, datasets were retrieved from the *Parsed Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (*PCEEC*). As this study focuses on the second half of the sixteenth century and the seventeenth century, the selection criteria of the datasets were based on the period in which the letters were written. The sixteenth and seventeenth century were chosen since most language changes seem to have occurred during this period. Previous literature showed that from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards, the *-s* ending made its comeback however it is still fairly indistinct as to what extent the *-th* variant was still used during this period,

especially regarding the various geographical locations in England. As a result, the focal point of the analysis was the zero inflection and the *-th* and *-s* inflections, specifically in the indicative mood. This means that subjunctive cases were discarded, as these forms are naturally written without *-s* ending and therefore would not provide conclusive results on the marking of the third-person singular present tense indicative. In addition, some of the forms that were found required contextual evidence in order to estimate whether they were indeed third-person singular present tense indicative forms. The sixteenth century dataset, for example, uses *your Lordship* as a term of address for the recipient. These instances, where the recipient is addressed in the third-person, have also been included in the results for this investigation. Ultimately, the results were evaluated and compared to the findings of previous studies.

Furthermore, one of the other criteria for the datasets was that they consisted of enough words in order to yield satisfactory results. Due to the relatively small size of the datasets, a close-reading approach has been applied. Walker (2016) argues that region, time, genre and type of verb all play an important role when analysing third-person singular verb inflection. Letters have been used as data since these are closest to vernacular speech and are thus more susceptible to show signs of language variation and change than more formal text-types. Nevertheless, when looking at personal correspondence, various considerations have to be taken into account, since letters are generally less restricted to space (Gordon, Oudesluijs, & Auer: in press). This means that letters could have been written from various locations and do not necessarily have to correspond with the author's original residence, nor do they always have to be relevant to the local community. As a result, the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (*DNB*) was employed to determine the location of the author at the time of writing, along with their previous whereabouts and their relations to their recipients.

The datasets were already transcribed by the PCEEC, and the original manuscripts were not accessible. This also means that when the transcription files indicated that a word was

uncertain, it was not included in the results. Original manuscripts were not necessary for the current investigation, as this study focuses on the linguistic content of the language, which is why the layout of the letters could be discarded. In terms of extracting the third-person singular indicative present tense variants, a previously used approach was applied (Gordon, Oudesluijs, & Auer: in press). Lexical verbs consisting of a *-s*, *-th* or zero ending were extracted, along with the auxiliary verb *have*. Both of these types of verbs have been incorporated in the study since *have* has been shown to be slower in adopting the *-s* variant than lexical verbs (Walker, 2016).

Furthermore, this auxiliary might yield interesting results on the syncopation theory mentioned in chapter 2.2. Finally, the findings were documented in tables in order to compare the two periods investigated in this paper and compared to findings of previous studies on the supralocalisation processes regarding the third-person singular indicative present tense. Taking region, time, genre and different types of verbs into account means that this study takes on a variationist approach (Walker, 2016).

## 3.2: Data sources

### 3.2.1: Sixteenth-century data

For the sixteenth-century dataset, a set of 79 letters written by Sir Nathaniel Bacon (1546?-1622) containing roughly 34,695 words were retrieved from the PCEEC. The letters in the dataset range between 1569 and 1594, when Bacon acted as a politician in Stiffkey, Norfolk. The letters were addressed to various recipients, namely, Nicholas Bacon (father), Anne Bacon (mother), Edward Bacon (brother), Robert Blackman (cousin), Thomas Gresham (father-in-law), Anne Gresham (mother-in-law), Ralph Sadler (chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster), Edmund Freke (Bishop of Norwich), Roger North (steward of the duchy of Lancaster in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire), John Brograve (attorney of the duchy of Lancaster), William Smythe (customer of Yarmouth), George Gardiner (dean of Norwich), William Cecil (Lord Burghley/Lord treasurer),

Christopher Hatton (Lord Chancellor), John Townshend (landowner/local politician of Norfolk), Lady Jane Townshend, Edward Coke (solicitor general), Mr Aldred, Edward, Clement and William Paston, Richard Cressey, Thomas Sidney, Lady Anne Heydon, Lady Elizabeth Neville and Anthony Stringer. These letters can be best classified as business letters, as they mostly display Nathaniel Bacon's marriage (the formal aspects hereof) and his attempts to establish himself as a Norfolk landowner (Baker, Hassell Smith, & Kenny, 1979). Eventually, the letters show Bacon's increasing involvement in local politics, which finally results in a discussion on how the county's government should handle a series of controversies (Baker & Hassell Smith, 1983, 1990). Interestingly, Nathaniel Bacon is seen as one of the most progressive people when it comes to linguistic change alongside his brother Edward, with both brothers having been schooled in Cambridge and London (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2016). Despite their progressive character, previous research showed that both brothers appeared to be fairly restrictive in their use of the *-s* ending as a third-person singular present tense indicative marker (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg, 2016).

According to the DNB, Nathaniel Bacon's family provided him with good connections at court and Bacon himself even frequented Westminster to share his views on social, economic and religious issues (Smith, 2005). Nevertheless, he often refrained from exploiting these patronage networks and was more involved with quarter sessions, the assises and parliament, which were all situated within Norfolk. Nonetheless, he still had instances where he exchanged information with people from the capital, which could account for a significant amount of dialect contact to have taken place. Furthermore, Nathanial Bacon mainly served as a local politician but had various other functions throughout his life as well. He performed as sheriff of Norfolk (1586-7 and 1599-1600), commissioner for musters (1596-1605) and deputy lieutenant (1605-22) (Smith, 2005). In addition, he served as a commissioner for the export of grain, piracy, sewers, recusancy, subsidies,

loans and the impressment of mariners (Smith, 2005). As a result, many opportunities for dialect or language contact could again arise.

### 3.2.2: Seventeenth-century data

In order to analyse seventeenth-century data, thirteen letters written by Thomas Corie were retrieved from the PCEEC, which consist of roughly 4,980 words. The time-span of the letters in the dataset ranges between 1666 and 1671. During this period, Corie's occupation was that of a town clerk in the city of Norwich. These letters were sent to two recipients, namely Joseph Williamson (government official) and John Crofts. Additionally, one letter has been sent to an unknown recipient. The topics of these letters range from the visit of Charles II to Norwich to a crisis in funding poor relief and can be best described as official/business letters to officials (Hill & Holley, 1956). In addition, the DNB shows that Joseph Williamson was born in Cumberland and also went to grammar school there to eventually move to London (Marshall, 2018). Consequently, Thomas Corie experienced dialect contact when exchanging letters with Joseph Williamson, even though his social status might not indicate this. Unfortunately, there were no records found which could provide more information on John Crofts' social background.

Since the Corie dataset is fairly limited in terms of text that can be analysed, this dissertation will also make use of the correspondence of Lady Katherine (*née* Knyvett) Paston. This correspondence is retrieved from the PCEEC as well and includes 47 letters covering the period 1603-1627. The dataset contains c.18,555 words. The letters originate from an earlier period than the Corie dataset, but can be of importance since the *-s* suffix supposedly became the preferred inflection of the third-person singular present tense indicative from the 1600s onwards. Katherine Paston was born in north Norfolk and is known as an estate manager and letter writer (Mahlberg, 2005). Most of these letters were sent to Katherine's son William who at the time was studying at Corpus Christi College in Cambridge. In these letters, she discusses his studies briefly and

mentions food and clothing she sends him. Moreover, she also often expresses her concern with his well-being throughout the dataset. Furthermore, Katherine Paston exchanges letters with Lady Mary Heveningham, Sir John Heveningham, Edward Paston, Lady Muriel Bell, Sir Thomas Holland, Samuel Matchett and William Brende (family servant). These letters mostly discuss disputations and legal actions concerning a portion of the Paston estate (Hudson, 1943). All letters represent Lady Katherine Paston's conservatism as a result of her class and character in English life, which shows in her use of linguistic features as well (Hudson, 1943). It could be argued that Katherine Paston's language could have been influenced by a variety of factors. Paston letters have often been investigated during earlier periods, and the family presumably belonged to the upper class of society as younger men within the family were often sent to Oxford or Cambridge where they would be educated by private tutors for example (Turner, 1897).

Nonetheless, Katherine also corresponds with the family's servant, which could potentially subject her to the language use of a lower-class speaker. Simultaneously, she also corresponds with people who are from the societal layer as the Pastons as well as with her son who at the time was studying in Cambridge, a different city. Unfortunately, there was no information available on the recipients other than William Paston to determine their location or social background in more detail.

## Chapter 4: Results

This chapter will present the results of the analysis of the third-person singular present tense indicative per period, namely the sixteenth century (4.1.1) and seventeenth century (4.1.2 and 4.1.3). For the sake of chronologically, the results of the Paston dataset will be shown first (table 4.1.2), followed by the Corie dataset, which originates from a later period (4.1.3).

### 4.1: Third-person inflections in sixteenth-century Norwich

The sixteenth-century dataset contained 79 letters, covering the period c. 1569-1594 including c.34,695 words. Table 4.1.1 below shows an overview of the third-person singular present tense inflections that were found in the dataset. The *-th* form is used almost exclusively; however, a notable amount of the zero inflection is also found. Yet, the *-s* form that is nowadays used in Standard English does not occur at all, aside from one instance where it appears in the auxiliary verb *have*.

| Verb | *-th* | *-s* | *zero* |
|---|---|---|---|
| aux. HAVE | 129 (94,2%) | 1 (0,7%) | 7 (5,1%) |
| Lexical | 153 (86,9%) | 0 (0%) | 23 (13,1%) |

Table 4.1.1 *Third-person singular present tense indicative forms in the 16th century Norwich dialect (1569-1694)*

### 4.2: Third-person inflections in seventeenth-century Norwich

Table 4.1.2 contains the results retrieved from the Paston dataset covering c.18,555 words from between 1603 and 1627. The results show a fairly equal distribution of the lexical verbs containing either *-th* or *-s*. Nevertheless, the zero form is being used significantly more compared to the suffixes as mentioned earlier and accounts for almost half of the instances in which the third-person singular present tense indicative is found. This becomes even more apparent when looking

at the auxiliary verb *have*, where the *-s* inflection is not found and the zero from accounts for nearly 78% of the uses of the third-person singular, whereas *-th* is only used in 22% of the cases.

| Verb | *-th* | *-s* | *zero* |
|---|---|---|---|
| aux. HAVE | 9 (22,0%) | 0 (0%) | 32 (78,0%) |
| Lexical | 20 (29,4%) | 17 (25,0%) | 31 (45,6%) |

Table 4.1.2 *Third-person singular present tense indicative forms in the 17th century Norwich dialect (1603-1627)*

Table 4.1.3 shows the results for the seventeenth century data in a similar fashion. What can be retrieved from table 4.1.3 is that *-th* usage has decreased during this time. Simultaneously, *-s* usage has increased, which causes these two forms to almost exist 50/50 at this point in the auxiliary verb *have*. However, when assessing the lexical verbs, *-s* is substantially used more than *-th*. Strikingly, the zero form completely disappeared in the seventeenth century letters. Still, the dataset the results in table 4.1.3 are retrieved from is relatively small. Knowing that the zero form is generally low in frequency, it could also be that this inflection does not show up in a relatively small dataset.

| Verb | *-th* | *-s* | *zero* |
|---|---|---|---|
| aux. HAVE | 7 (53,8%) | 6 (46,2%) | 0 (0%) |
| Lexical | 5 (22,7%) | 17 (77,3%) | 0 (0%) |

Table 4.1.3 *Third-person singular present tense indicative forms in the 17th century Norwich dialect (1666-1671)*

## Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter will reflect on the previous studies discussed in chapter 2 in order to interpret and evaluate the results gathered in chapter 4. Section 5.1 will first compare the findings of the current study to how the third-person singular present tense indicative is said to have spread throughout Middle English and Early Modern English periods. It will then be evaluated whether the current results deviate from this timeline and, if so, what could have possibly influenced this deviation. Furthermore, this chapter will also include a section which will consider the limitations of this study together with possibilities for future studies.

### 5.1: Discussion of findings

As discussed in chapter 2.2, the Middle English period made use of three variants of the third-person singular present tense indicative marker, namely *-th*, *-s* and the zero marking. The results presented in table 4.1 show that these three variants were all present in the sixteenth-century data. However, the *-s* form is only found in 0,7% of all instances and only occurs in the auxiliary sense. As a result, these findings cannot conclusively say that the *-s* form was generally adopted in sixteenth century Norwich writing. Oppositely, the extensive usage of *-th* is in line with previous investigations mentioning that during the Late Middle English period *-th* was indeed the most frequently used form in East Anglia in general. Additionally, it makes sense that various instances of the zero form are found as well, as this form had also been present in East Anglia since the fifteenth century (Bailey et al., 1989).

As established earlier, the *-s* suffix began to diffuse from the north around the second half of the fifteenth century but skipped the Court data and East Anglia, where the *-th* ending prevailed. Additionally, during the first half of the sixteenth century, the *-s* suffix experienced a decrease in usage, which potentially could have been the result of the diffusion of the southern *-th*. More interestingly, an increase in usage of the *-s* marker can be found again from the second half of the

sixteenth century onwards, which is also the period of the letters that have been analysed for this dissertation. Auer (2018) mentions that instances of the *-s* suffix were at this time also found in East Anglian data, however, the data in table 4.1.1 does not reflect this entirely. Moreover, Walker (2016) mentions that auxiliary verbs such as *have* were slower in adopting the *-s* suffix, which is also in contradiction with the results found, however as only one instance of *has* has been found, no conclusive statements can be made on this. As a result of these findings, it can be argued that while most of the English dialects experienced a significant increase in *-s* usage during the latter half of the sixteenth century, Norwich did not. What follows is that this might indeed be the result of Norwich having three competing variants, as the zero form was employed alongside *-th* to a significant extent during this period.

The data retrieved from the Paston letters from the early seventeenth century (table 4.1.2) does not show many instances of the *-s* inflection in the auxiliary verb *have*, which is in line with Walker's (2016) statement of this type of verb adopting *-s* at a slower rate. However, this could be the result of Lady Katherine Paston being somewhat conservative in her language use. Following her conservative attitude, she might not have fully incorporated this newer ending in her auxiliary verbs yet. Still, the usage of *-s* in the lexical verb is almost similar to the amount of *-th* usage. The seventeenth century data from Corie (table 4.1.3) does show more instances of the *-s* ending, with this ending even being more present than the *-th* in lexical verbs and also being adopted more slowly in the auxiliary verb *have* (Walker, 2016).

Interestingly, the evidence of the slower adoption of *-s* in the auxiliary *have* weakens the syncopation theory discussed in chapter 2. Moving on, the data provide evidence that *-th* usage seems to decrease during the seventeenth century, which is in line with the literature saying that during this century *-s* tends to be the norm, but that many inconsistencies in usage can be found in written documents by the same author as well (Holmqvist, 1922; Kytö, 1993). Strikingly, the zero inflection seems to disappear during this period. This could potentially favour Nevalainen and

Raumolin-Brunberg's (2016) hypothesis that the zero form most likely did not have much influence on the standard, other than slowing down the adoption of the standardised *-s* ending in Norwich. Furthermore, this also provides evidence that at this point the *-s* ending was accepted in upper layers of society, resulting in this form eventually also being taken up in the Norwich dialect. However, the letters written earlier in the seventeenth century by Katherine Paston do show a substantial amount of the zero inflection. Therefore, it cannot be said with certainty that the zero inflection eventually disappeared, because the Corie dataset is not extensive enough to make conclusive statements on this occurrence.

Additionally, Katherine Paston was part of the upper layers of society, but she still uses the zero inflection during the early 1600s. Furthermore, Paston is the only female included in this investigation, which could also influence the linguistic features she uses in her writing. Previous claims have been made that women tend to use forms of language that are closer to the prestige standard than the forms that are used by men (Talbot, 2019). However, recent findings have established that sex differences in language are also highly culture-specific (Talbot, 2019). This means that other social factors have to be taken into account as well, such as gender constructs and how masculinity and femininity are viewed within a society (Talbot, 2019).

Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, her language use was quite conservative, and she communicated with lower-class speakers, so she might also have been behind on language innovations. On the other hand, it could also be due to her being female, which could hint towards the idea of the zero form being the prestige standard during the early 1600s. That being said, it seems to be apparent that the zero form was still around among various layers of society and did not entirely disappear during the seventeenth century.

Another explanation of the results could be found in Trudgill's (2001b) work. He concludes that the zero form in the modern Norwich dialect is the result of language contact. He argues that the zero form was present in the Norwich dialect since speakers of the Low Countries arrived and

that the *-s* ending from the north entered the Norwich variety at more or less the same time. This would lead to the late sixteenth century having a competition between all three forms (Trudgill, 2001b). When taking the data from the early seventeenth century into account, this could be a serious possibility. Table 4.1.2 indeed shows that *-th*, *-s* and the zero inflection all coincide with regard to lexical verbs. However, the Corie dataset creates some issues with this theory, as the zero form is not present in his letters. This could create two possibilities, one in which the zero form indeed disappears to reappear somewhere after the seventeenth century and one in which the zero form prevails throughout the seventeenth century. According to the former possibility in combination with the Corie dataset, it might be plausible that during the beginning of their arrival, non-native speakers from the Low Countries did cause the zero form to be adopted in the Norwich dialect, but that it eventually also lost out against the *-s* form that was by then diffusing from the south. Nevertheless, due to the small size of the Corie dataset, it cannot be said for certain that the zero disappeared entirely during the latter half of the seventeenth century. Hence it could likely also be a possibility that the zero form indeed prevailed in some layers of society in Norwich.

What can be evaluated from the data is that the arrival of non-native speakers did cause a delay in the adoption of the *-s* variant in the Norwich dialect. Nevertheless, the evidence shows that at some point, when the *-s* became more standardised and started diffusing from the southern regions, Norwich also started to include this specific ending more progressively. Finally, at some point, the zero-form could have disappeared in the Norwich data, which perhaps means that there is a possibility that this form re-emerged due to other factors after the seventeenth century.

Chapter 3.2 discusses the social background of the authors used for this thesis, together with a brief overview of their social connections. Nathaniel Bacon, who accounts for the sixteenth century dataset, served mainly as a politician. Nonetheless, he also had other professions throughout the investigated period, such as acting as a commissioner for the export of grain. Due to his professions, he had many opportunities to engage with spoken and written text from other

cities across England. Ralph Sadler, one of his recipients, for example, established himself in London after being raised in Middlesex (East-Midlands).

Consequently, Nathaniel Bacon might also include features that are not so much typical of the Norwich dialect but could have potentially been included as a result of his exchange with authors of letters from cities outside of Norwich or even East Anglia. However, none of his recipients was located in the north, which also could explain the slow adoption of the *-s* variant by Nathaniel Bacon at this time. Interestingly, Katherine Paston corresponded with both upper- and lower-class speakers from Norwich. Simultaneously, she also exchanged letters with her son, for example, who at the time was studying in Cambridge. This gives Katherine Paston many opportunities to encounter other language features that could have influenced her language. Since Trudgill (2001a) mentions that nowadays the zero form is mostly used by working-class citizens of Norwich, it could be that Paston incorporated this feature in her language as a result of her correspondence with the family's servant for example.

On the other hand, she could have adopted the *-s* as a result of her contact with her son in Cambridge or other upper-class speakers. The *-th* form could then have to do with her conservatism, which causes this older form to prevail in her speech. As for Thomas Corie, it would be expected that as a result of his occupation as a Norwich town clerk, he would not have many connections with people outside of the city. However, as section 3.2.2 shows, Corie also wrote to a recipient in London, namely Joseph Williamson, who was raised in Cumberland before moving to the capital. Subsequently, Corie, albeit less, also exchanged letters with a recipient from a city outside of Norwich. As a result, he could have also adopted non-local features in his writing, although these features might not be adopted to a great extent as Corie only has one recipient known to be from another city.

Interestingly, during the period Corie's letters were written, the *-s* marking was accepted as the standard form in London. Therefore, he might have adopted the *-s* marking instead of the zero

marking in his writing, as he mainly exchanged letters with a recipient from the capital. As a result, it could be a possibility that all three authors were influenced by their recipients in relation to the markings they used themselves for the third-person singular present tense indicative.

Lastly, the results of this dissertation will be compared to the findings by Gordon, Oudesluijs and Auer's (in press) study on the urban centres of Bristol, Coventry and York. The current study found similar results in terms of the *-th* variant still being prevalent during the seventeenth century during the rise of *-s* in urban centres other than York. This could have been predicted as the *-s* variant is said to have originated in the north, which is why this form was already established to a greater extent in York during the seventeenth century. Furthermore, the findings of the current study also correspond in terms of the difference between lexical verbs and the auxiliary *have*. All urban centres have shown that auxiliary *have* was behind on the adoption of *-s* compared to the lexical verbs.

Interestingly, Gordon, Oudesluijs and Auer's (in press) study found no instances of the zero form in York, whereas the other urban areas do show at least some instances of the *zero*. This could potentially indicate that during the EModE period *-s* already became standardised for the most part, not leaving any room for the zero form to enter the northern variety. This idea is also supported by the results, which show that York already adopted the *-s* variant as early as the fourteenth century and that *-s* was found almost exclusively in datasets from the centuries that follow up until the seventeenth century (Gordon, Oudesluijs, & Auer: in press). During the same periods, the other urban centres still have a significant percentage of *-th* usage as well. As a result, the zero form could have had more opportunities to diffuse to urban areas where the *-s* and *-th* variants were still both in competition with one another, unlike York for example where the *-s* variant was already close to being the standard form during the fifteenth century.

## 5.2: Limitations and future research

One of the limitations of this dissertation was the lack of more data sources for the latter half of the seventeenth century. In order to provide more conclusive evidence, more results should have been yielded. However, more datasets, including letters from this period specifically were simply not available. Having more data could give a better overview of the presence of the zero form during this specific period. Additionally, more data could be gathered from different authors in order to create a more general picture of the society and its citizen's language use during a specific period. This would account for more layers of society to be represented.

Moreover, this would mean that the results are based on more than one author, which would, in turn, provide a firmer framework for the analysis of the results. More data produced by women could be included, for example, in order to create a stronger foundation for the differences in language use between men and women during a specific period. This could, in turn, provide more insights in the interplay between gender and how gender constructs were viewed in Norwich during the EModE period as it can then be established whether feminine figures indeed employ more prestigious standardised features than masculine figures.

Another limitation is that spoken language is not available for the period under investigation. As a result, actual spoken language cannot be evaluated, which could shed a different light on the adoption of specific markers, as spoken language is said to incorporate any language changes before written language. The unavailability of spoken language still causes a lot of Norwich citizens of the sixteenth and seventeenth century not to be included. Subsequently, the results yielded are not able to provide evidence which includes all layers of society, as some speakers were simply not able to write at this time. Additionally, it might also be interesting to evaluate a wider variety of text-types of different formality levels. This could provide more insights regarding third-person present tense markers as well.

Finally, other linguistic features in the Norwich dialect could also be included in a similar investigation. Evaluating the third-person plural present tense indicative could, for example, also yield interesting results that might provide more evidence with regard to the influences that helped shape the Norwich dialect. Moreover, the auxiliary verb *have* seems to be trailing behind with the adoption of the *-s* inflection. It would be an interesting case-study to investigate if this is the case with the adoption of this inflection in other dialect areas as well and, if so, what the cause of this could be. These suggestions for future research are all in line with Walker's (2016) comment that region, time, genre and type of verb all influence studies similar to this dissertation. Future studies could, as a result, vary in these four elements in order to provide a different perspective on the urban centre of Norwich or other areas.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter will discuss the conclusions that can be made based on the results and the evaluation of these results. As established earlier, this thesis aims to contribute to existing investigations which focus on the rise of supralocal varieties (including Standard English) to determine which influences played a role in shaping these varieties. Since Norwich is the least explored urban area, the current investigation focused on this area specifically. This eventually resulted in the following research question: How did the usage of the third-person indicative present tense markers in Norwich change with the rise of a supra-local form and to what extent did this change the local usage?

What can be gathered from the results is that Norwich did not necessarily follow a similar timeline as other dialect areas when it comes to the third-person singular present tense indicative. The adoption of *-s* in the Norwich dialect seems to occur only after the sixteenth century when this form had already been accepted by other language varieties including the Royal Court and had already been diffused across the country during previous centuries. As a result, it could be argued that the competing zero form could have influenced the slow adoption of *-s* in Norwich, but that eventually *-s* became extremely dominant as a supralocal form once it was adopted by the capital, causing Norwich to follow shortly after. Nevertheless, it does seem possible that the zero form during the investigated period diffused to other urban centres, namely Bristol and Coventry. A previous study showed that these centres show instances of the zero inflection, which could be a result of the *zero* being a supralocal variety within the Norwich dialect during sixteenth and seventeenth century. The fact that this inflection was not present in York, whereas the *-s* variant was used almost exclusively, could in turn account for evidence hinting that the *-s* inflection was close to being standardised in northern urban centres during the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Potentially, this could be the result of *-th* and *-s* being in competition in most urban centres except

for the north, thus not leaving any room for an additional zero inflection to diffuse into northern varieties.

Trudgill's (2001b) proposal that the *-s* form might have never been adopted by East Anglia due to immigrants from the Low Countries not being able to adopt the *-s* inflection could also be of significance for these results. It could now be excluded that the *-s* marking for the third-person singular never entered the Norwich dialect as it shows up in both seventeenth-century datasets. However, during the sixteenth century *-th* and *zero* were the only competing forms in Norwich, whereas *-s* had already entered other dialects in England. Subsequently, it could be a possibility that due to these speakers of the Low Countries, the adoption of *-s* took longer than other dialects, as the results show that from the 1600s onwards the *-s* inflection starts gaining more ground. Due to native Norwich inhabitants using *-th* and non-native inhabitants using the zero form, there might simply not have been enough room for *-s* to enter the dialect at this point.

Nevertheless, during the seventeenth century, the *-s* suffix was generally used by most upper layers of the English society, which most likely caused Norwich to accept this inflection as well. This finally resulted in *-s* to become the norm in Norwich as well, with its only usage being among lower-class citizens. This is also in line with the notion that the zero form is said to be used mostly in combination with the social background of speakers in modern-day Norwich (section 2.3), entailing that the zero form is mostly used by working-class speakers in informal, colloquial speech. Subsequently, it could be a possibility that even during the seventeenth century, the zero-form prevailed but perhaps not among all layers of society. Furthermore, it could be possible that the zero inflection during the investigated period acted as a supralocal feature, since it is found in other urban centres besides York. An explanation for this phenomenon could be that the zero inflection had opportunities to diffuse to, in this case, Bristol and Coventry, as *-th* and *-s* were still in competition in these urban centres, whereas *-s* during this period was already closed to being standardised in the north.

In summary of this section, it can be concluded that due to *-s* being eventually accepted as the standard form by most English varieties including the language of the Royal Court, Norwich also adopted this marking for the third-person singular present tense indicative. However, this process did occur according to a different timeline in Norwich, which could potentially be the result of language contact with non-native inhabitants. The non-native speakers could have caused the zero inflection to have a more prominent role in the Norwich dialect. As a result, there was less room within the dialect for the *-s* to be adopted at a similar rate as other cities outside of East Anglia did. Also, it seems likely that the zero form did prevail during the standardisation processes, but that not all citizens used it as extensively. Subsequently, Norwich did not adopt the *-s* inflection during its first spread when it diffused from the north and adopted it only after it was generally accepted as the standard in the seventeenth century. Furthermore, these findings seem to be in line with modern-day Norwich, as when the *-s* was finally inserted in the Norwich dialect, it seems likely that the *zero* only remained in use among the lower-class citizens, which is also more or less the case today.

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