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Horace Walpole and his correspondents : social network analysis in a historical context

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Against all odds: Walpole and his correspondents as objects of linguistic interest

The current study focuses on the language of the eighteenth-century “author, politician, and patron of the arts” Horace Walpole (1717–1797)¹ and his correspondents (*ODNB* s.v. Horace Walpole). It deals mostly with what Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003: 27) describe as “upper- and middle-ranking male informants” – classical subjects of linguistic research. It therefore does not at first sight fit into the current vogue of research on language history and language change from below (e.g. Auer 2008; Elspaß *et al.* 2007; Fairman 2000, 2007a, and 2007b; Sokoll 2001; Van der Wal 2006; and the research project Letters as Loot) . However, as Elspaß (2007) points out,

“[I]anguage history from below” ... is not only a plea for a long overdue emancipation of more than 95% of the population in language historiography. Secondly and more importantly, the concept of “from below” pleads for a different starting point of the description and explanation of language history (2007:5).

This, he continues, includes “an acknowledgement of language registers which are basic to human interaction and which are prototypically represented by speech in face-to-face interaction” (2007: 5). Elspaß argues that studying language from below may be accomplished by using “material as close to actual speech as possible, only in written form” (Elspaß *et al.* 2007: 5) and that “[s]uch material is maybe best represented in ego-documents,² be they written

¹ Unless otherwise specified, dates of birth and death here and elsewhere have been taken from the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online (*ODNB*).

² The term “ego-documents” is in widespread current use outside the field of English historical sociolinguistics to refer to private documents such as personal letters and diaries.

by paupers ... or by members of the nobility" (Elspaß *et al.* 2007:5). What is more, Mesthrie *et al.* (2009) observe when reviewing present-day sociolinguistic research that though sociolinguists may "have been preoccupied with documenting vernacular language use: rather less is known about variable language use of high-status speakers" (2009: 442). If this is the case in present-day studies, it is even more so for studies of earlier varieties of the language, and in particular of English.

In this study, I challenge the view that upper-class usage is necessarily standard and uniform, and that our current knowledge of the history of Standard English forms a closed chapter in linguistic research. By using the private and informal correspondence of Horace Walpole and his correspondents I will take a look at the language of the upper classes. I am doing so at the same time in order to take up the plea for a different starting point for linguistic research. Since "[u]nmarked communication, as represented in informal everyday language in recent history, is at the core of change from below" (Elspaß *et al.* 2007: 6), letters offer important possibilities for sociohistorical linguistic research (see also Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2005a). The material in the Walpole correspondence is extremely promising for the purpose of taking a closer look at language variation within the upper classes: Horace Walpole and his correspondents are subjects of linguistic interest, against all odds.

1.2. Walpole's letters as a source for linguistic analysis

Horace Walpole was an extremely productive letter writer: according to Baker (1980: 13) he was "England's greatest letter-writer ... with something over four thousand letters to about two hundred correspondents". Many of his letters as well as those of his correspondents have been preserved; they have been

published together in what is considered to be a complete edition, called *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence* (ed. Lewis et al. 1937–83, henceforth referred to as HWC), which comprises forty-eight volumes altogether, forty-two of which consist of letters. The other six volumes contain additions, corrections and lists of images and correspondents (HWC 43) and a very extensive index of all names and subjects occurring in the correspondence (HWC 44–48). The edition of the correspondence is an extremely valuable source for research into all kinds of fields and subjects, especially because of the existence of the indices, but it is mostly used by historians, art-historians and literary scholars: I was the first linguist to visit the *Yale Lewis Walpole Library* – where the printed edition of the correspondence, along with the collections of source and related manuscripts, are housed – for research in February 2009. Moreover, the (published) correspondence has not yet been used to any great depth or in a systematic and comprehensive way for linguistic research; the only studies I know of that include Walpole's language as found in the correspondence are Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1987a and 1994) and Oldireva-Gustafsson (1999, 2002a, 2002b), though neither author focuses on Walpole and his correspondence in great detail. The current study is in that sense unique.

The “familiar letter” as described by Anderson and Ehrenpreis (1966) is an important genre for studying eighteenth-century English, since during that period letters became an important medium of communication (cf. Fitzmaurice 2002a). According to Sherburn and Bond, the eighteenth century was “a century devoted to communication ... letter-writing [being] a natural means of conversing with absent friends” (1967: 1063) and Görlach calls the private letter “a major text type in the 18th century” (2001: 211). Moreover, according to Beal during this period “advances in transport allowed letters ... to be

carried from place to place more easily" (Beal 2004: 9). This led to an increase in the number of letters that were sent and delivered. Nevala and Palander-Collin argue similarly that in the eighteenth century letters and letter writing "became a means of public entertainment" (2005a: 3), as is evident, for example, in the development of epistolary fiction. This includes novels such as Richardson's *Pamela* (1740-41) and *Clarissa* (1747-48). Since the kind of "genuine communication" that is attested in letters can "tell us how and with whom people interact" (Nevala and Palander-Collin 2005: 3), the familiar letter seems a useful source for research into the question of how patterns of social behaviour may be linked to patterns in language use. Horace Walpole's correspondence provides the sociohistorical linguist with a wealth of material in this respect.

1.2.1. The familiar letter in the study of vernacular language

Besides arguing that letters are an important means of communication, several scholars believe that they also provide a glimpse into the vernacular language of the eighteenth century. However, there is no real agreement on what this vernacular entails exactly. Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2005a), for example, says that "[a] good place to look for evidence of the eighteenth-century – written – vernacular is in the letters of the period", since "[e]ven in the written medium there is evidence that the language of many of the informal letters produced in the eighteenth century is characterised by rules different from and independent of the language of more standard written styles" (2005a: 118–119). This is connected to Labov's definition that "the vernacular includes inherent variation, but the rules governing that variation appear to be more regular than those operating in the more formal 'superposed' styles that are acquired later in life" (Labov 1981: 3, as quoted by Tieken-Boon van Ostade

2005a: 118). In her discussion of what she calls the “written vernacular”, the variety found in private and familiar letters, Tieken-Boon van Ostade argues that

consciously composed letters are ... unlikely to contain much evidence of vernacular language, as the amount of attention paid to their form would have resulted in a more formal, more standardised language. They illustrate ... the historical equivalent of a phenomenon known from modern sociolinguistics, the observer’s paradox (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2005a:128).

(For a fuller discussion of the form the observer’s paradox takes in the context of sociohistorical linguistic research, see Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2000a.) Montgomery says that in a historical variationist approach to language change “[t]exts should be as close to speech, and especially vernacular styles, as possible” (Montgomery 1997a: 227), and Schneider argues that “this condition largely excludes formal and literary writing – such texts may be of marginal interest, but, being shaped by prescriptive traditions and conventions, they normally display categorical, invariant usage and fail to reflect natural speech behaviour and associated processes” (Schneider 2002: 71). As noted in section 1.1. above, I challenge the assumption that knowledge of prescriptions and conventions generally rules out variation in upper-class or educated (informal) writing.

Tieken-Boon van Ostade argues for the use of the least consciously written material, namely

those letters that are most likely to have been produced spontaneously. In the absence of any overt evidence of spontaneity, indirect evidence can be found in the form of epistolary formulas adopted. In addition to a close relationship between the correspondents, the relative importance of the subject is likely to correlate with

greater or less formality in the language used (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2005a: 132).

Schneider takes this argument one step further: whereas Tieken-Boon van Ostade argues that if “heavily edited letters such as Pope’s published letters or Swift’s *Drapier Letters* ..., or letters written for publication in the widest sense of the word, such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s Turkish Embassy Letters” are excluded, “we can identify much of the language of informal eighteenth-century letters as a written vernacular” (2005a: 119). Schneider, however, wants to confine the term “vernacular” to the spoken language only. He consequently excludes what would in fact be most of the existing eighteenth-century material as examples of vernacular usage on the grounds that

... letters do not represent spoken utterances; but when persons who have had but limited experience in writing and exposure to the norms of written expression are forced to write nevertheless, their writing reflects many features of their speech fairly accurately: what they do is put their own ‘imagined’ words onto paper, if only with difficulty (2002: 75–76).

He refers to the work of Montgomery (1995, 1997a, 1997b, 1999, and Montgomery *et al.* 1993) who has “discovered, analyzed and evaluated most authoritatively” that “what we are most interested in are letters by semi-literate writers” (Schneider 2002: 76). Horace Walpole’s correspondence, however, falls into the category of “members of the higher social classes” (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2005a: 124), and his letters according to Tieken-Boon van Ostade should be considered a much needed addition to the currently available and studied material, which thus far has very much focused one-sidedly on the language of the middle-classes.

I will not go as far as Schneider's perception of what the vernacular entails to, which would exclude the private writings of educated or upper-class writers. The terms educated and upper-class are of course not interchangeable but will more often than not coincide, as during the period I am concerned with here, education was still very much a prerogative of the more highly placed in society. Vernacular language, moreover, does not have to equal speech: Tieken-Boon van Ostade, for example, notes that "Milroy (1987: 12) defines a vernacular as 'a speaker's least overtly careful style'" (2005a: 118). In studying the letters of an upper-class social network, it will suffice to assume that the language in their familiar, private, informal correspondence is the "least overtly careful" language that we will be able to find. In this study I will therefore take as my starting point the familiar correspondence of the Walpole circle as an example of an upper-class network as representative of their most vernacular register in writing, and therefore most promising for the study of language change in progress and language variation between speakers and writers.

1.2.2. The familiar letter as a text-type

In the previous sections I have argued that the language in letters of educated upper-class writers may be considered the most vernacular style available to the modern linguist for members of that social class. This language, however, does not necessarily represent speech. Speech is of course the holy grail of sociohistorical linguistic research, but it is also naturally not available for historical analysis. In the present section I will provide a brief discussion of the place the familiar letter takes in the continuum of oral and literate styles, following Elspaß *et al.* (2007) in defining it as "material as close to actual speech as possible, only in written form" (2007: 5). Text-types may be defined

as “specific linguistic pattern[s] in which formal/structural characteristics have been conventionalised in a specific culture for certain well-defined and standardized uses of language” (Görlach 1992: 728). Individual text types, Görlach argues elsewhere (2001: 196), are characterised by “specific conventions ..., that is, textual formulae accepted as appropriate to thematically defined texts for specific purposes”. In other words: a text-type shares a set of linguistic, stylistic and formal characteristics which, together, make texts belonging to the text-type recognisable because of their specific language use. Some text-types are closer to typical speech while others are closer to typical writing in their characteristics. Schneider (2002) puts it as follows: “essentially texts come in text types, determined by their respective discourse parameters, which, in turn, condition their proximity to speech” (2002: 71–72). A similar idea is analysed in detail in the work of Biber (1991), who provides a multi-dimensional linguistic analysis of different genres of speech and writing. The result is a complex pattern of correlation between style, text-type and medium (speech or writing). On the basis of his analysis Biber shows, for example, that “personal letters are quite similar to conversation, being involved, situation-dependent, and non-abstract, and not having markedly high or low scores on other dimensions” (1991: 167). Personal letters thus have many linguistic characteristics in common with typical speech, face-to-face interaction being the “unmarked genre” (Biber 1991: 37). Familiar letters are therefore not the same as speech, but their linguistic make-up shows important similarities with face-to-face conversation.

Fitzmaurice (2002a) discusses “conventional comparisons of letter-writing with easy conversation” (2002a: 1) and offers an analysis of the familiar letter which “is more solidly rooted in the methodology of linguistic pragmatics than in the methodology of sociohistorical or variationist linguistics” (2002a: 3).

Her study “address[es] the familiar letter, both fictional and real, as a pragmatic act that is embodied in a text that responds to a previous text, whether spoken or written, and at the same time anticipates new texts ... thus represent[ing] an exchange between actors” (Fitzmaurice 2002a: 1). This pragmatic approach comes close to the stylistic view on language and orality presented by Traugott and Romaine (1985), who argue that style may be “view[ed] ... primarily as a relationship between participants in speech events who, as individuals, negotiate speech acts and thereby create ‘styles’ strategically, but who also are exemplars of social roles” (1985: 29). We could then say that the style of language in the familiar letter shares certain features with oral language and others with written language, being neither prototypically literate nor oral in its characteristics. Fitzmaurice finds, moreover, that

[a]lthough the letter is patently not conversation on paper, epistolary discourse does imitate some of conversation’s characteristics. The letter may seem most like conversation because conversation routinely engenders what linguists would consider miscommunication, misunderstanding, and conflict, failures of communication that require immediate on-line pragmatic repair work to resolve (Fitzmaurice 2002a: 233).

Hence, writing in letters is not to be considered the same as spoken word, but it has many of the same text-specific characteristics, more so than any other kind of writing. Finally then, considering Schneider’s view of “the written record [which] functions as a filter” for all too spontaneous utterances and which “provides us with a representation of a speech act that we would have liked to have listened to and recorded acoustically and that without the written record would have been lost altogether” (Schneider 2002: 67), it may be concluded that the idea of using familiar letters as a means to study the least

careful language use of our research subjects is the next best available option for historical sociolinguists. Schneider notes, however, that “at the same time the rendering of the speech event is only indirect and imperfect, affected by the nature of the recording context in certain ways”, and that “a primary task will be to ‘remove the filter’ as far as possible” (Schneider 2002: 67–68). It is therefore important always to realise that the language we are analysing through sources such as private correspondences is not the same as the language that would have been spoken by the writers of those letters. It is, however, the closest we can get to their less careful and more vernacular styles.

1.3. Horace Walpole and his correspondents: writers of the standard language?

At first glance, Horace Walpole and his correspondents, including people such as Sir Horace Mann (1706–1786), Lady Mary Coke (1727–1811) and Henry Seymour Conway (1719–1795), may seem to confirm the image of a standard and uniform language use by the upper classes. In *A Dictionary of English Normative Grammar 1700–1800*, which provides a detailed inventory of criticism of a wide array of usage problems presented in eighteenth-century grammars, Walpole is listed as being quoted only once by eighteenth-century grammarians as an example of a person making a grammatical mistake (Sundby *et al.* 1991: 37). On the face of it, several of his correspondents fared considerably worse, and as many as thirteen of them are listed in Sundby *et al.* (1991) to a total number of 285 examples of incorrect usage. The names of the correspondents in question may be found in Table 1.1.

As the overview in Table 1.1. suggests, however, this figure needs to be interpreted with care. To begin with, it includes as many as 214 instances from the philosopher and historian David Hume (1711–1776), whose

grammatical errors thus make up three-quarters of the total figure altogether.

Straaijer notes that

Priestley is responsible for more than half the critical comments on Hume's language in Sundby *et al.* (1991: 35). He indicates that he did not seek to specifically criticize Hume but referred to him so often because he happened to be reading Hume's work at the time (Priestley 1768: xiii). However, I suspect that Priestley read Hume quite critically to begin with, probably due to Hume's (atheist) philosophy (Straaijer 2011: 225, *footnote*).

A quick count in Sundby *et al.* tells us that of the 213³ instances 109 indeed come from Priestley's work. The one comment listed for Walpole is incidentally also from Priestley (1768). However, it is not taken from his correspondence with Hume.

Correspondent	Birthdate	Date of death	Number of quotations
David Hume	1711	1776	214
Richard Bentley	1662	1742	33
George Lord Lyttelton	1709	1773	8
William Robertson	1721	1793	6
Robert Dodsley	1703	1764	5
George Colman the elder	1732	1794	4
Philip Dormer Stanhope	1694	1773	3
Joseph Warton	1722	1800	3
Edmund Burke	1729	1797	2
David Dalrymple	1726	1792	2
Thomas Gray	1716	1771	2
Conyers Middleton	1683	1750	2
William Mason	1724	1797	1
total			285

Table 1.1. Overview of Walpole Correspondents criticised in eighteenth-century grammars, following Sundby *et al.* (1991: 27–37).

³ Sundby *et al.* (1991: 35) list 214 as the total number of instances for Hume but I could only find 213 when searching the digital manuscript of *DENG* which was kindly made available by Kari Haugland.

Moreover, Percy (1997: 134) discovered that the most authoritative and frequently reprinted grammar by Robert Lowth (1710–1787), *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762), only includes examples from the language of deceased authors to illustrate what he considered incorrect usage, and this may be true for other grammarians as well. Straaijer, for instance, notes that “Johnson wrote that he would refer only to dead authors in his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) in order to retain an objective review of the material he used” (Straaijer 2011: 226). Since Walpole died in 1797, it may be the case that his language was not even considered as a source by most of the grammars printed before 1800 and included in the analysis by Sundby *et al.* However, Robert Baker, author of the first English usage guide called *Reflections on the English Language* (1770), did quote from living authors, such as William Melmoth (1710–1799) (Vorlat 2001; Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008a: 14) and so did Priestley (1761 and 1768) (Straaijer 2011: 227).

Looking at the lifespan of the authors whose language was criticised in the grammars analysed in Sundby *et al.* it is revealed that out of the total of 209 authors criticised in eighteenth-century grammars (and works for which the author is not mentioned), as many as 155 were actually still alive in that century, while 103 were still alive during the period after 1750 (Sundby *et al.* 1991: 27–37). Baker was thus not alone in quoting from living authors, and indeed quoting from living authors appears to have been relatively standard practice at the time. The fact that Walpole was alive when most of the grammars listed in Sundby *et al.* were published does not seem to be an influencing factor in the extremely low incidence of examples taken from his language by contemporary grammarians. His personal usage may therefore indeed seem to be uniformly standard according to current opinion at the time, but this is certainly not the case for all of his correspondents, as the figures

presented in Table 1.1. suggest. Claims about uniformity of the language of the upper classes and its conformity to the standard – see for example sections 1.1 and 1.2 above – can in any case not be maintained without actually looking at the language itself.

Besides having provided us with a rather large sample of eighteenth-century usage in the form of letters, Walpole is also an interesting candidate for sociolinguistic analysis because he himself seems to have been very much linguistically conscious. In several of his letters he comments, without scruple, on his own and other people's linguistic competence. Walpole expresses his opinions on the (mis)use of the English language in no uncertain terms. His criticism is, amongst other things, directed at the command of English of a well-known contemporary (who was, however, not a native speaker of English),⁴ i.e. the writer and philosopher Voltaire (1694–1778):

1. Voltaire's English would be good English for any other foreigner – but a man who gave himself the air of criticizing our – and I will say, the world's, greatest author, ought to have been a better master of our language, though both his letter and his commentary prove that **he could neither write it nor read it accurately and intelligently** (Walpole to the Rev. Joseph Warton, 12 September 1784, HWC 42: 121. Emphasis here and in all further cases is mine).

In examples (2) and (3) below Walpole ridicules the accents of 'commoners': country people living near the Walpole estate in Norfolk (although the language criticised in the example may lead one to believe it was written from a remote corner of the earth) and the language of the local parson, respectively.

⁴ In this light it is interesting to see that he does occur in the *ODNB* (s.v. "Arouet, François-Marie").

2. Indeed writing letters is of great service to me; I do it to keep up my English; I should forget it else **at this distance from all language** – I try indeed to learn the **noises** by which the people about me convey their minds to one another – but I do not make great progress; and am constantly forced to use the **country interpreter, the bottle**, when I have a mind to converse with any of my neighbours (Walpole to Lord Lincoln, 18 September 1742, HWC 30: 34).

3. one of the first sentences that **blundered** out of the mouth of the parson, was, how then can we take *complacency* in a vicious life – I that have been abroad for two years and a half can talk **better English** than that – I take no *complacency* in sermons (Walpole to Lord Lincoln, 18 September 1741 OS, HWC 30: 25).

Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2000b: 27), moreover, comments on the fact that Walpole corrected the language of a poem published by Robert Dodsley (1704–1764) in a letter addressed to him in November 1753: “Line 449, and line 452, should I think be corrected, as **ending with prepositions**, disjoined from the cases they govern” (Tierney 1988:161). This comment is of particular interest, as the placement of prepositions would become a topical issue with the normative grammarians at the time (Yáñez-Bouza 2006 and 2008). Walpole is also critical of another such grammatical issue, i.e. the use of *between you and I* (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 1994). What is more, he filled a full page in his *Book of Materials* on several linguistic issues, most in the form of prescriptive linguistic comments. Examples 4 – 12 below were all taken from Walpole’s *Book of Materials*, a manuscript source in possession of the Yale Lewis Walpole Library (Walpole 1759: 17). In examples 4 to 6 below he used famous authors as examples of ‘bad language use’, as Lowth was to do in his grammar published three years later:

4. They who spreaded – **Lely’s Philip. 2? 164.**
5. **The authors of the Parl. Hist.** Often use *cassate* ; it is a bad word, I believe [sic]?? of their own making.⁵
6. **Bishop Loyds** was admired by Burnet as the most correct style of that time – yet it was very mean – see proofs of it in his life of Pythagoras. Biogr. Brit. vol.5.2989.⁶

Walpole’s comments furthermore make use of proscriptive and prescriptive language, which is also comparable to the practice in normative grammars of the time (see for example Straaijer 2011: 215–227 and 413–421 on proscriptive and prescriptive comments in Joseph Priestley’s grammar published in 1761), as illustrated by examples 7 – 12, also from the *Book of Materials* (Walpole 1759: 17).

7. *Ic* in general is a **better** termination than *ical*. as tragic, historic. Yet it **cannot always be used**: whimsic never for whimsical. Comical & comic have different senses. So, politic, & political.
8. *Ence*, **better** termination than *ency*. **We no longer say**, impenitency, but *Impenitence* &c. Yet *Decency*, not, *Decence*.
9. **bad expression**, yet how to avoid it? *go a hunting*. &c

⁵ The work Walpole most likely refers to here is *The Parliamentary or Constitutional History of England; from the Earliest Times, to the Restoration of King Charles II. ... By Several Hands.*, Volume 1, The second edition, in twenty-four volumes. London, 1761–1763 (source: ECCO). The word *cassate* only turns up once in a full-text search of the work. Note, however, that the full-text search function of ECCO is not always completely reliable.

⁶ Walpole most likely refers to William Lloyd (1627–1717), bishop of Worcester, author of *A Chronological Account of the Life of Pythagoras, and of Other Famous Men His Contemporaries with an Epistle to the Rd. Dr. Bently, about Porphyry’s and Jamblicus’s Lives of Pythagoras*. London, 1699 (source: EEBO).

10. In the *Dialogue-way*, **idle express.** for in the way of Dialogue.
11. **Instead of** saying, best qualified for *the* making Laws, **say**, for making Laws. The Synopsis to Plato's works.
12. It is the *nearest way by far*. **a sombrous rankness of expression.**

Finally, Walpole's comments also reveal that he was aware of the possibility of linguistic influence of one person on another person, which also becomes clear from example 3 above, in which he expressed how even he himself, who had "been abroad for two years and a half can talk better English" (HWC 30: 25). In another letter he mentions how, when abroad, he needed to write his letters in order to "keep up [his] English" (HWC 30: 34), thereby implicitly acknowledging the possibility of other languages and dialects influencing his own English. The following remark from yet another letter makes the same point:

13. As I am still desirous of being in fashion with your Ladyship, and am over and above, very grateful, I keep no company but my Lady Denbigh and Lady Blandford, and learn every evening for two hours to **mash my English**. Already I am tolerably fluent in **saying she for he** (Walpole to Lady Ailesbury, 20 July 1761, HWC 38: 102).

In a footnote made by his literary executrix and correspondent Mary Berry (1763–1852), the editor notes that this was "[a] mistake which these ladies, who were both Dutch women, constantly made" (HWC 38: 102). Apparently Walpole did not find it unthinkable that linguistic influence could take place even in a situation like the one he described here (though he jokingly overstated most of these claims).

Walpole's seemingly black-and-white view of the rights and wrongs of language use and his apparent rejection of non-standard varieties of English fits in with the current normative attitude towards language in eighteenth-century England. Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2008b) notes that the "important increase in the output of English grammars ... can be related to the need for the codification of the language in the absence of an Academy that would have taken this in hand" and also to "increased social mobility, particularly during the second half of the century, and the concomitant need for grammars to provide linguistic guidance in this" (2008b: 10). The increased production of grammars in the second half of the eighteenth century is described in Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2008b) and (2008c) as well as illustrated by other articles in the same volume (see, for example, Auer 2008 and Percy 2008 for work on the reception and popularity of eighteenth-century English grammars). This normative climate of linguistic correctness does not necessarily mean, however, that actual usage within a network of upper-class correspondents such as Horace Walpole's is standard and uniform.

Walpole himself sometimes questions his own linguistic abilities and instincts, for instance: "Thank heaven it is complete, and did not remain imperfect like a *waterglass* I do not know **if I spell well**" (HWC 32: 158), and the comment in example 9 above: "bad expression, **yet how to avoid it?** *go a hunting. &c*" (Walpole 1759: 17). Especially his sensitivity to spelling is of interest in view of the existence at the time of two standards of spelling, a public one, as found in printed texts, and a private one attested in personal letters (Osselton 1984). Despite his low position on the list of most frequently criticised authors in eighteenth-century grammars, with just one instance to his

name,⁷ Walpole was not wholly free from criticism on his language use either during his lifetime. The following quotation suggests that he was aware of this: “The chief points in dispute lie in a very narrow compass; they think I do not understand English, and I am sure they do not; yet they will not be convinced, for I shall certainly not take the pains to set them right” (Walpole to John Chute, 2 February 1759, HWC 35: 107). In the editors’ footnote to this passage it is disclosed that Walpole refers to *The Monthly Review* of December 1758 here, in which his work *A Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors with a List of their Works* (1758) was reviewed. It is said in the review Walpole referred to that “[h]is manner of writing, **though sometimes incorrect**, is in general easy and elegant”. It is interesting to see that Walpole’s language is criticised in the *Monthly Review*, especially in light of Percy’s (2008) idea that language criticism in magazines and periodicals preceded the period of great expansion in the printing of normative grammars. Percy notes that “[i]n some cases, grammatical shibboleths may even have been cited in reviews before they appeared in grammar books” (Percy 2008: 138), and she argues furthermore that

the role of the reviews themselves shaping Late Modern English and ideas about Late Modern English should be acknowledged. Before the middle of the eighteenth century, contemporary opinions about language had been disseminated and consolidated very effectively in books, pamphlets, newspapers and periodicals ... The reviews disseminated and very likely affected trends in the

⁷ As mentioned above, the one instance listed in Sundby *et al.* (1991: 435) is taken from Priestley (1768). Walpole is criticized for splitting “of” from its headword, in the sentence “His **picture**, in distemper, **of** calumny, borrowed from the description of one painted by Apelles, was supposed to be a satyr on that cardinal. Walpole’s *Anecdotes*” (Priestley 1768: 172–173, emphasis mine). Interestingly, Hume, one of his correspondents, is criticized for the same type of mistake on the same page (Priestley 1768: 172).

development of both the English language and of its codifying texts (Percy 2008: 142).

In Henstra and Tieken–Boon van Ostade (2009) we provided an analysis of linguistic creativity found in Walpole’s language in his letters concerning productive morphology in *-ess* for the creation of female forms. An English translation of this article has been included as Appendix A. Indeed, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* Walpole is the first cited author for the words *adventuress*, *agentess*, *artistess*, *chancelloress*, *conspiratress*, *incumbentess* and *Methusalemess*, and many other words are attributed to him (Henstra and Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2009: 61). We conclude that, although Walpole puts emphasis on correct language use where grammar is concerned (as was illustrated above by examples from his letters and from the *Book of Materials* (Walpole 1759)), in his informal letters his use of language is in fact innovative and creative. This is something that was already noted by Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1987a), who describes Walpole as being ahead of his contemporaries in his use of periphrastic *do*, and also by Beal (2004), who writes that Walpole’s language, especially his vocabulary, was innovative. In this respect Walpole can be considered a relatively unusual language user, even though his language is expected to be standard and grammatically correct on the whole. Horace Walpole and his correspondents are thus interesting subjects for linguistic analysis, despite their advanced level of education and the relatively standard or correct language use that should correlate with this.

1.4. Research questions and outline

In this study I present an analysis of certain features in the language of an upper-class network of people in the context of the rise of normative grammar. I will do so by studying their (familiar) correspondence and by using a social

network approach based on Lesley Milroy's study *Language and Social Networks* (1987). James Milroy argues that "[a]s language use ... cannot take place *except* in social and situational contexts ... our analysis – if it is to be adequate – *must* take account of society, situation and the speaker/listener" (1992: 5–6). One of the sociolinguistic models that have been developed since the 1980s is that of social network analysis (see Milroy 1987), which was adapted for a historical context with varying degrees of success by Bax (2000), Bergs (2000, 2005) and Sairio (2005, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). In the present study I seek to explore further the usefulness and validity of the social network model for historical data by applying it to the results of an analysis of linguistic variation in relation to the developing linguistic norms at the time. To this end, I will focus on selected sets of letters of Horace Walpole and his correspondents, in order to see to what extent language use and variation may be successfully explained in a social network context.

The types of variation which will be studied are: alternation between use of *you was* and *you were* for the second person singular form of the verb *BE*, the distribution of the verbs *BE* and *HAVE* with mutative intransitive verbs in the perfect, and variation in the use of preterite forms for the past participle in perfective and passive constructions in the irregular verb paradigm. The variability of all three of these constructions were topical issues with the normative grammarians of the period (see e.g. Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2002a, Rydén and Brorström 1987 and Oldireva-Gustafsson 1999, 2002a, 2002b). I will also venture into the relationship between the language produced by the upper classes during Walpole's lifetime and the language as codified in the grammars, with special reference to Lowth's grammar, which was one of the most popular grammars in the eighteenth century (see for instance Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2011 as well as Auer 2008). As Walpole was a representative

of the upper classes , even though Lowth does not seem to have been acquainted with him personally, it is of considerable interest to test the extent to which Walpole's usage of the above mentioned constructions does indeed agree with the rules in Lowth's grammar.

My study therefore consists of three parts: firstly, I will compare the language of Horace Walpole and his correspondent Horace Mann to the norm as codified in the precept of eighteenth-century grammar in order to see if the language of these upper-class users is as uniformly standard as expected. Secondly, I will test the applicability and validity of the social network model as a means of explaining and predicting variation in language use between correspondents by studying language variation in two network clusters within Horace Walpole's network of correspondents. Thirdly, I will seek to improve the existing models for social network analysis for use in a historical context. In doing so I will show that the models currently available for the analysis of historical networks do not always match the available data. This compromises the reliability and moreover the applicability of the results in the greater context of the research. My main research questions may be summarised as follows:

1. Can the claim that upper-class language use is uniformly standard be maintained?
2. How can variation between the language use of the correspondents within the Walpole collection be explained in a social network context?
3. How useful is social network analysis as a model for historical linguistic research, and how can the model be improved?

For the purpose of my analysis I have compiled a corpus of the correspondence of Horace Walpole and his correspondents, called the *Corpus of Horace*

Walpole's Correspondence (henceforth CHWC), by digitizing much of the text from the *Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence* (ed. Lewis 1937–1983). For an overview of the volumes used for the compilation of this corpus, see Appendix B. In chapter 2 the nature of the corpus as a source of analysis will be evaluated (in the light of the data it has produced with respect to my searches for the variation in usage of the constructions mentioned above. In chapter 3, I will explore the language of two upper-class language users in order to ascertain how their usage relates to the codified norm, and also to investigate the claim that upper-class language is uniformly standard.

In chapter 4, I will provide an account of the methodology of social network analysis (Milroy 1987) and the ways in which this research model has been used thus far in sociohistorical linguistic research. My own application of the model to the Horace Walpole network, as presented in the subsequent chapters, will highlight some of the problems encountered in the course of applying it (even) to as vast a corpus as that comprising the Walpole correspondence. My discussion of the results of the analysis below will present arguments for revising the model for historical social network analysis. Such a revised model will enable us to do research on data from earlier stages in the history of English that are almost by default incomplete, even in the case of the present corpus, which may be considered as the most extensive correspondence of a single network that is available for analysis, consisting of almost 4 million words (see also chapter 2 and Appendix B).

Redford (1986) argues that the style and content of Walpole's letters are largely influenced by the recipients of those letters. What is more, he claims, "so deft and complete are his transformations ... that Walpole can be said to remake his identity from correspondence to correspondence" (1986: 134). Through a change of style, as Redford puts it, Walpole "vanishes

chameleon-like into his audience” (Redford 1986: 14). Whereas Redford discusses the appearance of a different Walpole for each correspondent largely from a literary perspective, his comments are also interesting from a linguistic point of view. If Walpole consciously or subconsciously adapted his style of writing to suit his reader, will other aspects of his language use, such as spelling and grammar, also have been influenced by his partner in discourse (cf. Traugott and Romaine 1985: 16ff)? In social network terms: do we expect the social network position of the correspondents to cause conscious or subconscious linguistic accommodation? This was found, for example, by Bax (2002) for Hester Lynch Thrale (1741–1821) and Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), who accommodated to each other in style and the adoption of literary allusions as a reflection of their closeness and mutual need for approval. These issues will be dealt with in chapters 5 and 6, in which I will focus on two network clusters in the greater Walpole network, based on specific parts of the correspondence; in these chapters, several of his most important correspondents will be dealt with in biographical detail.

In chapter 6, again on the basis of my analysis of the above-mentioned linguistic features, I will also discuss the main methodological issues in working with small numbers in sociohistorical linguistic research. In particular, I will focus on the question of the nature of the data for this type of research. In the eyes of Labov (1994) they can only be considered as *bad data* because the informants are no longer available for analysis on a personalised basis, but this view is increasingly being challenged by e.g. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003) and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2011). In this chapter I will, moreover, present suggestions for further refinement of the social network analysis model for the purposes of application in a sociohistorical context.

chapter 7 will present the conclusions of my study of the functionality of social network analysis in a historical context and my thoughts on the presupposed uniformity of upper-class language use in Walpole's network.