Weaving strands together: towards assembling Norwich's historical urban vernacular

Auer, A.; Gordon, M.S.; Hendriks, J.; Page, R.B.

Weaving data strands together

Towards assembling Norwich's historical urban vernacular

Anita Auer and Moragh S. Gordon
University of Lausanne | Leiden University

The important role of historical cities as centers of higher literacy and text production in the standardization processes of written languages has been recognized some time ago by scholars working on different languages. The current article, which is couched in the study of urban vernaculars in the field of historical sociolinguistics, focuses on written language use in Norwich during the period 1422–1760. Within the context of the city's socio-economic history, the article investigates two linguistic variables, notably the third person present tense forms and periphrastic DO, in the manuscript-based *Corpus of Middle English Local Documents* (MELD) and *An Electronic Text Edition of Depositions 1560–1760* (ETED) and compares them to findings from other urban centers. Despite the restricted data set, the study shows that the supralocalization processes and the speed of change differ from one linguistic feature to another in the different urban datasets. The Norwich data confirms previous findings of other urban datasets that the supralocalization of the morphological feature precedes that of the syntactic feature.

Keywords: Norwich, historical urban vernaculars, supralocalization, third person present tense forms, periphrastic DO

1. Introduction

The study of historical urban vernaculars can make important contributions to a better understanding of standardization processes in different languages, including dialect levelling, koineization, and supralocalization processes. Selected relevant studies that have inspired subsequent projects in different languages are for instance Howell (2006), as well as Willemyns & Vandenbussche (2000), and Hendriks et al. (2018) on Dutch, Cherubim (1987), Mattheier (see for instance

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1981; 1999), and Mihm (see for instance 1994; 2007) on German,[1] and Wright (see for instance 2010; 2012) for English. An investigation of historical urban vernaculars requires an interdisciplinary approach where the socio-economic history of the respective city, literacy developments, text production and therefore textual history are relevant to determine and interpret the data in its appropriate context. The approach taken is therefore often primarily descriptive and philological in nature, but the findings contribute to the creation of theories on supralocalization and standardization histories (cf. Deumert & Vandenbussche 2003).

The current article is couched in one of the projects that was inspired by the aforementioned scholars' work, in particular Howell (2006). The project *Emerging standards: Urbanization and the development of Standard English, c. 1400–1700* (henceforth EMST) has aimed at shedding new light on the complex processes that were involved in the development of written Standard English. In order to better understand the supralocalization processes that were going on during the aforementioned period, the project has focused on urban vernaculars of major regional centers that had high levels of literacy and therefore text production, notably manuscripts. The method applied in the project aims at gaining a good understanding of the socio-economic and textual histories of selected regional centers in the first instance, to then collect manuscript sources from local archives that were produced in the relevant cities, e.g., civic records, letters, diaries, mystery plays, etc.), and to transcribe and convert them into a searchable corpus. These urban corpora serve as the basis for the individual and comparative linguistic studies. As for the cities and their vernaculars that provide the basis for the project, these are York (North), Bristol (South West), Coventry (West Midlands), and Norwich (East Anglia), i.e., the four provincial capitals in the late Middle Ages. While the urban vernaculars of York, Bristol, and Coventry have already been investigated to a certain extent (see for instance also Gordon 2017; Auer 2019a; 2019b; Oudesluijs 2019; Oudesluijs & Auer 2019; Gordon 2020; Gordon et al. 2020; Oudesluijs et al. 2022), a city whose urban vernacular has not received as much attention yet is Norwich (East Anglia). From Medieval times to the seventeenth century, Norwich, alongside Bristol, Coventry, York, as well as the metropolis London, constituted one of the largest regional communities (cf. Kermode 2000:442; Trudgill 2010:53). In fact, Norwich was the second largest town after London. Norwich took advantage of its position to develop domestic manufacturing skills into larger industries that became regionally sig-

1. For an extensive list of relevant studies for German and selected other languages, see *Bibliographie des Internationalen Arbeitskreises Historische Stadtsprachenforschung*, edited by Rainer Hünecke: https://tu-dresden.de/gsw/slk/germanistik/gls/iak_hssf/ressourcen/dateien/biblio_syst?lang=en, accessed on 17 January 2022.

nificant, particularly textile and leather production. Given the city's geographical location, it belonged to the migration field of London (Keene 2000: 106). Within the context of standardization and especially supralocalization processes, the question may be raised whether the vernacular of Norwich was more prone to be influenced by types of London English or whether other dialectal, or language, influences can also be found. More generally, the language of Norwich has already received attention in a range of linguistic studies, most notably Trudgill's sociolinguistic study of Norwich (1974, 1978), and broader studies on East Anglian English such as Fisiak & Trudgill (2001), Britain et al. (2020), and Trudgill (2021), as well as Joby's studies on the role of Dutch in the development of East Anglian English (2014; 2015). The current study, which is empirically informed, aims to contribute to existing research on Norwich by shedding new light on the written language in Norwich during the period 1422–1760 in order to establish its role in the development of supralocal written English. More precisely, two case studies of linguistic features undergoing change during the period are investigated, notably (a) the 3rd person present tense forms (in the singular and plural) and (b) DO-periphrasis. These case studies will be discussed in the context of other relevant studies on supralocalization that focus on different places and cover the same period.

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 provides the theoretical context of supralocalization processes and the role of urbanization (§ 2.1), followed by a brief socio-economic history of Norwich during the Late Medieval and Early Modern periods (§ 2.2). In Section 3, which is dedicated to the linguistic case studies, the data under investigation are first presented (§ 3.1). Both case studies (§ 3.2 on the 3rd person present tense forms and § 3.3 on DO-periphrasis) present relevant previous literature, the method applied in the current study, the results, and interpretations. In Section 4, the results are viewed within the context of standardization processes. Some attention is also given to the merits and challenges of the available data. Finally, in Section 5, some concluding remarks are presented.

2. Background information

2.1 Supralocalization processes and urbanization

The standardization of written English has already drawn much scholarly attention and has been viewed from different perspectives such as its multilingual beginnings, the role of text types, social class of the writers, and geographical origin and supralocalization processes, as well as codification and prescription (see for instance Nevalainen 2000; Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008; Wright 2000; 2017;

2020). As Benskin (1992: 71) notes, local and regional dialects, which were used in written texts in the Middle English period, had largely vanished in writing by the early sixteenth century. Supralocal forms must have therefore developed around the later Middle English period. The supralocalization processes continued during the Early Modern English period when the codification of spelling and grammar, and therefore the standardization of a more uniform written variety, gradually started. As the later Middle English period and the beginning of supralocalization processes is also associated with the shift from the Medieval feudal system to a money-based market system, the increased urbanization that strengthened the new economic system and the increased trade and migration will have affected the language use at the time. In fact, the socio-economic developments had an effect on occupational specialization and the social order in cities, as well as the provision of education. Generally, literacy levels and text production were higher in cities of regional significance (see for instance also Gordon et al. 2020). Within this context, a way to gain a better understanding of the supralocalization processes during the Middle English and Early Modern English periods is to focus on different text types produced in regionally significant centers and to compare the results of linguistic studies within the context of relevant socio-economic and textual histories. This will shed light on what text type or group of writers in a particular city led the change at different linguistic levels. All in all, this approach helps disentangle the supralocalization processes involved in the emergence of a written standard of English.

2.2 A brief socio-economic history of Norwich

Under the assumption that population size reflected the economic vitality of towns, Norwich was considered one of the greater towns during the period 1300–1540. Norwich's population was placed at c. 25,000 inhabitants in the 1330s (Liddy 2017: 18). Even though the population size fluctuated due to the Black Death and subsequent epidemics in the fourteenth century, Norwich's population size remained rather stable (Kermode 2000: 443–444). According to Kermode (2000: 444), the shift from wool to cloth production in England affected all the greater towns and placed some of them very well on an economic level, notably Norwich (alongside Bristol, Coventry, and York): These greater towns fulfilled different roles related to the textile industry like manufacturing and marketing, trade (domestic and international), as well as administrative and institutional functions. Norwich invested in the development of manufacturing skills like textile and leather production, which became significant industries on a regional level. Like other greater towns, Norwich was economically advantaged by its early achievements. Despite changes in trade routes, the overseas markets and the

increasing influence of London, which led to economic recession in many great towns in the later fourteenth century, Norwich was able to retain its major position as an important textile manufacturing town until the mid sixteenth century (Kermode 2000: 447, 453). The city was not a primary port, i.e., Norwich cloth was sent via Yarmouth port until 1465, and thereafter it was transported overland to London. As regards occupation and employment, according to Kermode (2000: 450), over 39 per cent of workers were employed in the textiles and clothing industry in Norwich. The regional importance and urban vitality of a town led to ecclesiastical foundations that had an impact on town life in turn. In line with this, Norwich had the Cathedral and 61 parishes by 1300. The occupational focus of a town would often result in the foundation of craft guilds, e.g., the Guild of St. George (1389) and the Barber-surgeons (1439) in the case of Norwich. The city had developed a number of central functions such as being "a county and diocesan capital, a major regional market and home to several large and wealthy religious houses" (Kermode 2000: 453). As regards regulation within the city, Norwich had for instance four leet juries until 1404 (Kermode 2000: 457). According to Liddy (2017: 21), the concept of citizenship, which was not automatic, "was the major fault line within urban society: between foreigners and strangers, on the one hand, and [...] burgesses and citizens, on the other," i.e., it was based on urban residence and related to privileges and obligations. Norwich, and York, had extant books of citizens and were among the earliest to have citizenship rolls. Norwich had a written constitution, the so-called *compositio nova* of 1415, that was drawn up deliberately by and for the citizens and created the structures of government in the city (Liddy 2017: 195, 200). The prosperity of Norwich also invited migrants from England and abroad. Kermode (2000: 459) notes for instance that most of the Norwich migrants came from within a radius of 32 km, i.e., 20 miles. In addition, religious persecution in the Low Countries led to the arrival of many immigrants, so-called 'strangers', in Norwich. Particularly during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a lot of Protestant weavers from the Low countries lived in Norwich. Many of them arrived around the 1580s and made up a third of Norwich's population. These immigrants made significant contributions to the English cloth industry (Ormond et al. 2019: 150).

As far as the existence of written records produced in Norwich is concerned, the Norfolk Record Office provides a detailed overview on their website.[2] Similarly, the Records of Early English Drama edition of Norwich (Galloway 1984) gives some information on sources for the period 1540–1642, e.g., civic records like assembly minute books and assembly proceedings, chamberlains' accounts,

2. https://www.archives.norfolk.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/using-the-archives/city-and-borough-archives/pre-1835-city-of-norwich-records, accessed on 17 January 2022.

mayors' court books, register of freemen, apprenticeship indentures; guild records; ecclesiastical records like the Norwich Cathedral dean and chapter records, dean and chapter minute books; as well as miscellaneous documents like consistory court wills. The selection of Norwich sources listed here does not only reflect the socio-political structure of the city, but also the availability and development of different text types.

3. Linguistic case studies

This section presents case studies of linguistic features that can help us shed light on supralocalization processes and have therefore already drawn some scholarly attention. More precisely, the focus is on (a) the third person present tense forms (in the singular and plural) and (b) DO-periphrasis. Both case studies include a brief overview of relevant studies, an explanation of the method provided, and the findings and interpretation. Before presenting the first case study, the data sources on which the studies are based are presented.

3.1 Data sources

As the study of the Norwich urban vernacular within the context of the EMST project is still at the corpus creation stage, the current study will be based on readily existing, manuscript-based and philologically accurate sources that have been produced in Norwich. The first and earlier source has been retrieved from the *Corpus of Middle English Local Documents* (MELD) which contains 13 texts covering the period 1442–1522. These texts can be categorized into different superfunctions and sub-functions, notably draft letter, account inventory, conveyance agreement or appointment, oaths (statement), memorandum note or notary record, settlement award or deposition (statement). All of these document types may be broadly categorized as civic records. The following example illustrates a conveyance appointment from the MELD corpus (Code: D0858#11):

> [nota] Jt is agreed that Geffrey Spirlyng shal be dischargid of the feste of seint Georgys Gilde for the good s*er*uice that he hath*e* doon in comptees makyng And vpon' this condicon' that he shall*e* yeerly make the A-countees t*er*me of his lyff whil he is of abillite to make a-countees And more-our'he to be Clerk of the same gilde And to attende at assemblys set be the Alderman by himsilf or by his depute . / he takyng y*er*ly for his salarye . of the seid Gilde vj s . viij d . / and no more . /

The second source containing material from Norwich is *An Electronic Text Edition of Depositions 1560–1760* (ETED) (Kytö et al. 2011). Like MELD, ETED pro-

vides information on when and where the depositions were written down. Grund & Walker (2011: 15) describe depositions as "oral testimonies taken down in writing by a scribe in connection with a legal case. They detail a person's experiences or actions in a particular context pertaining to the case". It concerns oral statements that were made by witnesses, plaintiffs, or defendants in relation to criminal and ecclesiastical court cases and written down by a scribe. Given the legal nature of the documents, the language used is very precise, as exemplified in fixed formulae at the start and end of a deposition. The following deposition (ETED F_1EC_NorwichA_027) illustrates the rather fixed structure of the text type, as well as the additional information given in the header:

> Name of collection: Norwich 1560–1566
> Period: 1 (1560–1599)
> Decade: 1560–1569
> Region: east
> Type of court: criminal
> Deposition date: 15 November 1563 (C)
> Deponent sex: male
> Deponent age: 29
> Deponent occupation: miller
> Manuscript reference: Norfolk Record Office, Norwich. Quarter Sessions (Interrogations and Depositions), MS NCR Case 12a/1c, f. 47r
> Collection ID: F_1EC_NorwichA
> Deposition ID: F_1EC_NorwichA_027
> <f. 47r> <Hand 1> Symonde Bell of the Cittie of Norwich myller
> of the Age of xxix yeares Sworne and examined
> the daye and yeare aforesayde confessith all
> that the sayde Roger Peseman before haue
> confessed and declaryd / And further sayeth
> the Strype that she gave vpon John flude
> horse {hed} was only the cawse that the horse haue
> loste hys Sight of the same yo Jo one of
> hys eyes /

The example starts with the common formula *NAME PLACE OCCUPATION AGE sworn and examined DATE confesses* OR says etc., i.e., "Symonde Bell of the Cittie of Norwich myller of the Age of xxix yeares Sworne and examined the daye and yeare aforesayde confessith all that the sayde Roger Peseman before haue confessed and declaryd [...]," and is then followed by reported speech. In the latter example, a fixed phrase at the closing of the deposition is not given, which could indicate that the deposition is incomplete. The deposition, as reflected in the header, contains meta-linguistic information about the deponent, e.g., sex,

age, and occupation. Moreover, information is given on the period and decade when the deposition was written, as well as the type of court involved.

As regards the depositions produced in Norwich, 56 of them are from the period 1560–1599, while 42 depositions are from the period 1700–1760. There is thus roughly a hundred-year gap for which we do not have any data.

The manuscript-based data at our disposal for this study therefore covers the periods 1442–1522, 1560–1599, and 1700–1760. While the gap of circa one hundred years is not ideal,[3] we will be able to make claims about language use pre- and post-seventeenth century.

3.2 Third person indicative present tense (singular and plural)

3.2.1 *Previous literature and method*

Variation in third person indicative markers, and most notably the replacement of the southern third person singular *-th* by the northern *-s*, have long been a topic of investigation in studies on supralocalization and standardization in Late Middle and Early Modern English (cf. Kytö 1993; Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003; Nevalainen 2018; Gordon et al. 2020).

Third person indicative present singular markers existed in the following forms, the occurrence of which was largely regionally constrained in the Middle English period:

(1) a. Rob walk**s**
b. Rob walk**eth**
c. Rob walk

The *-th* suffix was typically associated with non-northern texts, whereas the *-s* suffix was first found in northern texts from about the tenth century and only started to make its first occasional appearance in London texts by the fourteenth century (Lass 1999: 163). By about 1700, northern *-s* had become the supralocal written variant in the third person singular. Before third person singular *-s* fully supplanted *-th* in the south and other regions, however, *-th* appears to have competed with *-s* in the North in the first half of the sixteenth century, as evidenced in studies on Early Modern English correspondence. Notably, studies by Moore (2002), Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg (2003), and Gordon et al. (2020) find that letter writers from the north adopted the *-th* form rather than the northern *-s* in the latter part of the fifteenth century and until well into the first half of the sixteenth

3. As part of the on-going Norwich EMST-sub-project, we are filling this gap with new manuscript material from the Norwich Archives. Due to the time-consuming nature of this undertaking, we can unfortunately not yet include the data that are currently being transcribed.

century. Then, in the second half of the sixteenth century, the *-s* form quite rapidly found its way into texts of all localities. Remarkably, Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2003) observe that London initially took the lead in the adoption of *-s* at the expense of earlier *-th*. It therefore appears that innovative *-s* did not spread to other areas directly from the North, but instead first seems to have taken root in the capital, from which it spread outwards to other areas. To this must be added that the rate of the change from *-s* to *-th* was dependent on both text type and verb type. Most notably, administrative records (Gordon et al. 2020) and more formal text types like sermons (Kytö 1993) tended to be more conservative, whereas personal writings such as correspondence and diaries showed higher rates of innovative *-s* early on. With regard to verb type, studies consistently find that the high frequency auxiliaries *have* and *do* retained *-th* inflections much longer than most lexical verbs (Kytö 1993; Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003; Gries & Hilpert 2010; Gordon et al. 2020).

Throughout the Late Middle and Early Modern English periods, the zero form was also marginally attested in texts from various regions, including York, Bristol, and Coventry (Gordon et al. 2020) and has often been identified as a symptom of instability in the inflectional paradigm due to the general loss of inflections in Middle and Early Modern English (cf. Kytö 1993; Lass 1999; Nevalainen et al. 2001). What is more, the overlap with the subjunctive, which took zero by this time, gave rise to ambiguous cases that can make it hard to tell if a given construction was intended to be in the subjunctive or indicative mood. Verb type also seemed to have played a role in that auxiliaries *have* and *do* more frequently took zero in both singular and plural contexts (cf. Joby 2016; Gordon 2017). Much less is known as to how and why zero only gained ground in some varieties, such as in East Anglia and Norfolk (Nevalainen et al. 2001), whereas overt third person singular present tense marking came to be preferred in the supralocal written variety. Norwich is a particularly interesting case in point because it is situated in an area where zero marking eventually became a markedly local feature and still is today. Trudgill (2013) has suggested that the prevalence of the zero form in the Norfolk area may have been due to extensive language contact between locals and Dutch and French immigrants who came in large numbers in the first half of the sixteenth century; inflectional morphemes are frequently found to be fragile and conducive to analogical levelling in language contact situations. Although this may not explain the attestation of zero forms in the Late Middle English period in several areas before the period of immigration, it may well be that the pre-existing general tendency to elide inflections may have been reinforced by extensive contact (cf. Joby 2014; 2016), but some caution is needed here. Joby (2016), in a study of sixteenth-century civic records from Norwich, finds that the Poor book of 1570 has a majority of indicative zero markers in all

indicative verbs. This may at first sight confirm Trudgill's hypothesis, but as Joby (2016) rightfully points out, the high incidence of zero might be too early to be the result of language contact. Furthermore, the high use of zero can only be attributed to one author. It is of course possible that the form was already quite common in spoken language, but simply repressed by most civic scribes, with one notable exception in this case.

As concerns the development of third person plural markers, the same variants, *-s*, *-th*, zero and additionally *-n* were used, yielding the following options for plural indicative verbal inflections:

(2) a. Rob and Barbara walketh
b. Rob and Barbara walks
c. Rob and Barbara walk
d. Rob and Barbara walken

Interestingly, the third person plural markers are rarely considered in conjunction with the supralocalization of the third singular markers (but see Schendl 1994; Wright 2002; Gordon 2017), even though their origins and variants largely overlap. The plural *-th* suffix is likely a retention of Old English *-(i)aþ* that became indistinguishable from the Old English third singular inflection *-eþ* through vowel reduction in unstressed syllables (Lass 1992: 134–138). Northern *-s* was used as both a singular and plural marker by the Middle English period, but often alternated with zero in both contexts depending on the subject type, i.e., zero was preferred with directly adjacent pronominal subjects, whereas an inflectional morpheme was used with other subjects or non-adjacent verbs (Cole 2014). Similar but less catergorical alternations with *-th* and zero were quite common in late Middle English texts from Norfolk, the South West and London (McIntosh 1983; Schendl 1994; Joby 2016; Gordon 2017). The *-en* form has been described as a "distinctively Midland plural" (Lass 1992: 137) and alternated with zero in the plural. From the fifteenth century onwards, the Midland form occasionally made an appearance in southern texts, but it never really competed with plural *-th* (Lass 1992; Gordon 2017). By the sixteenth century, zero came to prevail in the supralocal written variety. A linguistic-internal explanation for the dominance of zero overt number marking is the general reduction of inflectional unstressed syllables, but very little is known about how this process played out in different urban centers and what role supralocalization processes may have played in it. Previous research (Gordon et al. 2020) on civic records and correspondence from Bristol, Coventry, and York confirm that zero was the majority in the plural by the sixteenth century, although some individual scribes showed preferences for local forms, i.e., *-en* in Coventry and *-eth* in Bristol. Again, auxiliary *have* and to some

extent *do* behaved slightly differently in that zero tended to be more prevalent with these auxiliaries than with lexical verbs (see also Gordon 2017).

All developments considered, it becomes clear that we are dealing with an intricate set of variants and variation patterns. Third person present indicative markers *-th*, *-s* and zero started out as variants that could mark both the third person plural and singular, but eventually, in the supralocal written standard, third person *-s* remained as the only overt present tense marker in the singular, whereas zero is the norm in all other persons. With regard to the Norwich data investigated for this article, it will be interesting to see when local inflectional patterns were replaced by supralocal ones and how the findings compare to those found for the other urban centers that have been studied so far, in particular if the replacement of singular *-th* by *-s* was at a similar or different rate, as well as the replacement of plural *-eth* by plural zero. Furthermore, it might also be interesting to consider the occurrence of the zero morpheme in the singular, since there is evidence to suggest that this form was a common local form from at least the second half of the sixteenth century.

In short, for the current article, both singular and plural forms are considered as found in the Norwich data over the periods 1442–1522, 1560–1599, and 1700–1760. The third person singular data covering the sixteenth and seventeenth century have been taken from an earlier study by Auer (2018) who studied third person singular markers as used in ETED material from different urban centers, including Norwich. Since zero forms are not easily extracted from an unparsed corpus, third person singular and plural examples were extracted manually by reading the corpus. As auxiliaries *have* and *do* considerably lag behind in the adoption of *-s*, and also tend to favor zero over overt inflection in some cases, they were considered separately. Furthermore, the data largely consist of witness depositions that contain formulaic expressions with the verb ***sayeth***. Following earlier studies on Early Modern witness depositions (Kytö 1993; Auer 2018), verbs also tend to behave differently in fixed phrases, hence this verb will also be considered separately.

3.2.2 *Results and discussion*

Table 1 below presents the instances of third person singular in the Norwich data from the MELD and ETED respectively. To allow for comparison with previous studies within the EMST project, the data have been divided up into fifty-year time periods when possible.

As expected, the southern *-th* is the most dominant form in the third person singular in the fifteenth century. There is only one zero example with *have*, which is in line with the patterns found in Coventry and Bristol (Gordon et al. 2020) where the form also appears in low frequencies and particularly with auxiliary

Table 1. Third person indicative present tense markers in Norwich (normalized by 10,000 words)[4]

Period	Verb	Singular			Plural			
		th	s	zero	th	s	zero	n
1442–1506 (MELD, 2,693 words)	*say*	7.43 (2)	0	0	0	0	0	0
	have	7.43 (2)	0	3.71 (1)	0	0	0	0
	do	0	0	0	0	0	3.71 (1)	0
	other	37.13 (10)	0	0	0	0	7.43 (2)	7.43 (2)
1560–1599 (ETED, 13,821 words)	*say*	60.78 (84)	0	0	0	0	0	0
	have	7.24 (10)	0	5.79 (8)	0	0	0	0
	do	0	0	0.72 (1)	0	0	0	0
	other	24.60 (34)	0	0.72 (1)	0	0	0	0
1700–1760 (ETED, 8,705 words)	*say*	43.65 (38)	2.3 (2)	1.15 (1)	0	0	5.74 (5)	0
	have	0	14.93 (13)	0	0	0	0	0
	do	0	0	8.04 (7)	0	0	0	0
	other	9.19 (8)	10.34 (9)	2.3 (2)	0	0	6.89 (6)	0

have in Bristol (Gordon 2017). As concerns the plural forms for this period, it is noteworthy that *-th* does not appear in the plural. Even though the data set is too small to make any strong claims, this may suggest that Norwich was quicker in adopting the supralocal zero suffix than Bristol, where plural *-th* was still the norm in civic records in this period (Gordon 2017). The only two *-n* plurals come from a single text where they are the only instances of third person present plural, which suggests individual systems could still vary among scribes.

When looking at the sixteenth-century data from ETED, it becomes apparent that *-th* is by far the most dominant variant in the third person singular. There are some examples of zero, but the majority occur with *have*, which, as mentioned in §3.2.1, had a tendency to trigger zero inflection in various regions. If the zero morpheme had already become an established spoken local form by this time (see §3.2.1, above), this is not reflected in the depositions, which provide direct reported speech as well. That being said, by far most examples of the indicative third person singular present tense forms can be found with *say* and *know* in formulaic expressions that introduce indirect reported speech in the past tense in the following way: *the examynate sayeth/confesseth that he asked her…, whether the*

4. The third person singular examples have been taken from a previous study by Auer (2018: 25–26).

said person was hurt the examynate knoweth not. These kinds of formulaic phrases might invite the use of more conventionalized expressions and inflections. For future studies, it might be interesting to analyse the use of zero examples in direct reported speech.

As concerns the third person plural in this period, it becomes evident that there are no instances at all. This is due to the nature of the depositions as found in ETED. Typically, testimonies were delivered by one witness at a time, so any references to the witnesses in a given deposition yield third person singular forms. Furthermore, the witness accounts are almost invariably rendered in the past tense, quite naturally because they recount a past event.

As for the eighteenth-century data, innovative *-s* started to make its appearance but was clearly still in competition with older *-th*. When considering the lexical verbs, there is an almost fifty-fifty distribution of both forms, apart from two instances of zero, one of which occurs directly adjacent to a pronominal subject and the other has existential *there* as its subject. Furthermore, almost all examples of lexical *-th* occur in the formulaic phrase *[name witness] maketh oath* (Auer 2018: 28). The verb *say* appears to lag behind for similar reasons; it can often be found in the formulaic expressions that were also quite prevalent in the depositions of the sixteenth century. Interestingly, *-s* no longer lagged behind in auxiliary *have* and was in fact the only third person singular suffix. Given that most other *-th* forms occur in formulaic expressions, it can be hypothesized that by this time it was no longer the verb type that was a major constraining factor for *-s*, but fixed phrases associated with the text type in question. This is further confirmed by findings in correspondence (see §2.3.2 above), where *-s* was the most dominant form in most areas by the end of the seventeenth century. The high number of *zero* is interesting here in that five of the seven cases appear directly adjacent to a pronominal subject. A comparison with similar text types in different urban centers can shed light on whether this was a unique Norwich feature, or whether it was a more widespread phenomenon (cf. Wright 2015 for a discussion on the nineteenth-century occurrence of zero DO, as well as Gordon 2017 for zero forms in sixteenth-century Bristol correspondence). All third person plural instances take zero, which is not surprising as this was the dominant form as early as the fifteenth century.

3.3 Periphrastic DO

3.3.1 *Previous literature and method*

Periphrastic DO is one of the linguistic features that underwent change during the period 1500–1800. More precisely, it has become regulated during that time, i.e., it

was used in different constructions and then became part of the standard variety in the nineteenth century in the distribution that we know today (cf. Ellegård 1953; Garrett 1998; Rissanen 1999). The four constructions of DO-support are known as NICE properties, i.e., Negation, Inversion, Code, and Emphasis, all of which existed during the Modern English period. To illustrate them, here are relevant examples:

Negation:	Rob **did** not visit the Netherlands.
Inversion:	**Did** Rob visit the Netherlands?
Code:	Barbara visited the Netherlands and Rob **did** too.
Emphasis:	Rob **did** visit the Netherlands.

The development of periphrastic DO, particularly in the different constructions, has already received much attention, both regarding external factors like text type, region, mode (written vs. spoken), and social class (see for instance Rissanen 1991; 1999; Nurmi 1999; Söderlund 2017), as well as with respect to supralocalization (cf. Oudesluijs 2019; Oudesluijs et al. 2022). Unambiguous periphrastic DO was found in writing from the thirteenth century onwards and began to spread in affirmative declaratives in the fifteenth century (Rissanen 1991: 332, based on the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts*). In the latter corpus, it was primarily found in sermons and mystery plays, but Nurmi (1999: 87) also observed a decrease in the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (CEEC) during the fifteenth century. Periphrastic DO continued to increase in the sixteenth century, where it was found in negative declaratives and inversions alongside affirmative declaratives. At the same time, the disappearance of causative DO can be observed (Nurmi 1999: 23). During the sixteenth century, periphrastic DO was particularly found in trials, diaries, educational writing, and scientific works (Rissanen 1991: 325, *Helsinki Corpus*; see also Oudesluijs et al. 2022). The regulation of periphrastic DO in negative sentences, questions and affirmative declaratives for emphasis took place during the seventeenth century (Nurmi 1999; Rissanen 1999). Rissanen (1991: 325), based on the Helsinki Corpus, observed that periphrastic DO had increased in most text types during the periods 1570–1640 and 1640–1710, while remaining stable in trials, laws and diaries. A recent study of periphrastic DO couched in the *Emerging Standards* project (Oudesluijs et al. 2022), investigated civic records and ego-documents from Bristol, Coventry, and York. The study confirms previous findings that text type plays an important role in the occurrence of the linguistic feature. A comparison of the datasets from the three urban centers found periphrastic DO primarily "in affirmative declaratives and to a lesser extent in negative sentences in all investigated text types over the

period 1500–1700" (Oudesluijs et al. 2022: 21), but the distribution and development patterns differ from city to city. Only two examples of inversions have been found in the urban corpora, notably in York and Bristol. The authors point out that the results have to be viewed carefully as the sampling, the small datasets, as well as practices and preferences by local scribes, could have influenced the findings. The results of the comparative study do not suggest that one of the cities was leading the change when it comes to the development of periphrastic DO in different constructions. While none of the cities appear to lead the change, a comparison to previous findings from the *Helsinki Corpus* and *CEEC* has revealed that Bristol, Coventry, and York do not lag behind other places either, i.e., especially considering that London and the South East are over-represented in the standard corpora. Considering the south-eastern location of Norwich, it will be interesting to see how the findings compare to the existing studies.

For comparative purposes, the current article adopts the method applied by Oudesluijs (2019) and Oudesluijs et al. (2022), i.e., to extract all possible variants of DO in the different constructions from the relevant corpora. The following variants have been found: *do, doo, doe, doth, dooth, dothe, doithe, doest, don't/dont, did, dide, didden, ded, dyd, dyde, dud* and *dudde*. It is noteworthy that Söderlund (2017) has also based his study of periphrastic DO on ETED. He has taken a quantitative perspective and has considered the entire corpus, while our focus is merely on the use of periphrastic DO in the Norwich depositions.

3.3.2 *Results and discussion*

Table 2 below illustrates the findings from the MELD and ETED corpora. The data, which is normalized by 1000 words, is presented chronologically as well as according to construction type.

Table 2. Periphrastic DO in Norwich (normalized by 1,000 words)

Period	Affirmative	Negative	Interrogative
1442–1506 (MELD, 2,693 words)	0	0	0
1560–1599 (ETED, 13,821 words)	6.44 (89)	0.29 (4)	0.14 (2)
1700–1760 (ETED, 8,705 words)	1.84 (16)	2.07 (18)	0.69 (6)

A first glance at the results of the fifteenth century seems to suggest that periphrastic DO was not an established feature then. However, considering that the feature was generally only beginning to gain ground around this period, it is not surprising that the form made no appearance in a relatively small corpus. Furthermore, as mentioned in §3.3 above, the spread of periphrastic DO was mostly noticeable in sermons and mystery plays around this time, so civic records may

have been more conservative in this respect. Previous studies on fifteenth-century civic records from Bristol and Coventry found some incidental examples, but the data sets were also considerably larger (Oudesluijs 2019; Oudesluijs et al. 2022). There was thus more evidence to suggest that civic records were on the conservative side when it came to the adoption of periphrastic DO.

Moving on to the sixteenth-century data from ETED, it becomes clear that affirmative DO was more common, and occasionally negative and interrogative DO can be found. Although the rates of negative and interrogative DO are on a par with what has been found for the other urban corpora of the *Emerging Standards project* (Oudesluijs et al. 2022), the rates for affirmative DO are considerably higher than those found for the other urban corpora, which at this time had rates that rarely went above three tokens per 1,000 words. This may again partially be explained by differences in text type and the different stylistic functions that periphrastic DO may have fulfilled by this time. Several studies (cf. Denison 1985; Rissanen 1985, 1991) note that texts that were closer to formal written modes of communication tended to employ periphrastic DO to provide structural cohesion, e.g., to head a long string of coordinated main verbs and economize the number of inflections (Denison 1985: 57). Texts that were closer to oral modes of expression, on the other hand, showed a use of affirmative DO in combination with emotive statements to "to emphasize particular actions or strengthen arguments" (Oudesluijs 2019: 294). The corpora for the other urban centers largely hold civic records and a small amount of correspondence for this period, whereas the current study deals with trial witness depositions. Since witness depositions contain a great deal of reported speech as well as testimonies dealing with emotionally charged matters, it may therefore not be surprising that the occurrence of affirmative DO is relatively high. It is quite striking that a large number of affirmative DO examples in the ETED Norwich data are introduced after a reported speech clause, as can be seen in examples (3) and (4) below:

(3) and he further sayeth, before he *dyd* strycke the man he *dyd* see Bentley thrust at hym twice with his naked raper (ETED, F_1EC_NorwichA_003, 1583).

(4) And I asked him what he *dyd se* (ETED, F_1EC_NorwichA_023m 1563)

What is more, many of the DO examples precede evidential verbs like *see, hear, think, perceive*, which further seems to suggest that DO was a common feature in emotive language. It is noteworthy that the only two examples of inversion occur in reported speech and in the same deposition (Examples 5 and 6), which could suggest this witness was an early adopter of this feature. Interestingly, the deponent still uses second person singular pronouns and inflections, which seems rather conservative by this time:

(5) *Doest thou* not know that thou art forbydden by the worde of god to take the membars of Jhu riste and to make them the membars of an harlott
(ETED, F_1EC_NorwichA_024, 1563)

(6) What *ded* you meane thus to do souche a vile acte
(ETED, F_1EC_NorwichA_024, 1563)

Concerning the eighteenth-century data, it can be observed that affirmative DO was on its way out by this time, whereas negative and interrogative DO slightly increased. This is in line with previous studies that find that the modern NICE properties started to come in place at the expense of affirmative DO (see §3.3.1 above). The examples of affirmative DO are all very similar to the ones from the sixteenth century in that they often introduce reported speech, or some action that appears to bear some importance to the testimony at hand:

(7) This Informant *Doe* Say that Yesterday Morning about Three of the Clock he was Called out of his Bed by One Elizabeth Watts
(ETED, F_4EC_Norwich_014, 1715)

(8) This Informant being duely sworn, saith that on Sunday morning […]& that she this Informant *did* then & there see Robert Jay the younger of St. Clement in the aforesaid City (ETED, F_4EC_Norwich_039,1752)

The other urban corpora from the *Emerging Standards* project largely cover data up until the end of the seventeenth century, so it is not possible to say how conservative or innovative Norwich is with respect to the supralocalization of the NICE properties at this stage. Future studies could perhaps investigate and compare periphrastic DO to ETED data from other cities to shed light on this question. Furthermore, due to the nature of this text type it will be interesting to consider other text types, which might be more innovative in their use of DO.

4. A first step towards assembling Norwich's historical urban vernacular

This study set out to shed light on Norwich's role in the emergence of written supralocal English. More precisely, the question was if and when the urban vernacular of Norwich showed supralocal features and to what extent local features more specific to Norwich could be discerned. As concerns third person plural indicative present tense markers, it is interesting to note that supralocal zero had become the norm from the fifteenth century onwards, but there were also some examples of *-n*, which suggests that the typical West Midland form found its way to Norwich, as it also had in Bristol and London around this time (see §3.2.1 above). In contrast to Bristol, the older local *-th* plural was no longer present,

although it is hard to draw any solid conclusions based on the non-existence of present plural instances in the later ETED data. Studies that include a larger set of civic records that also cover the sixteenth century could reveal if Norwich was indeed more innovative than Bristol and Coventry in adopting supralocal zero, both of which had zero as their main form in civic records, while at the same time allowing *-n* and *-th* as minority variants.

The results for the third person singular markers present us with a rather complex picture in which multiple factors appear to play a role. First of all, as tentatively found in this study and previous studies within the EMST project on other urban centers, it becomes clear that the competition between different supralocal and local forms seems to have taken a lot longer for the singular markers than for the plural markers. To begin with zero, throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, this form occurred marginally in all cities, including Norwich, and text types investigated within the EMST project. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to point out all possibilities, one internal linguistic factor that probably held back the supralocalization of zero was the high functional load that this allomorph had already gained in the inflectional system at large, e.g., infinitive marker, subjunctive, and plural (cf. Kytö 1993: 118). Another interesting development that can be gleaned from the Norwich data is that the rate of zero was more or less on a par with other urban centers over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as was the structural distribution in that subject type (adjacent and pronominal) and verb type (auxiliary *do/have*) tended to trigger zero. The relatively high incidence of zero allomorphs with DO in the eighteenth century might point to a more local usage, as zero was almost non-existent in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth data of the other urban centers of the EMST project (Gordon 2017; Gordon et al. 2020). Caution is needed, however, because text type differences may also play a role here, as many of the zero examples appeared in fixed expressions. It is noteworthy that Söderlund (2017), who, as mentioned in §3.3.1, looked at all ETED data taken together, does not single these examples out as a general pattern, which could point to a Norwich origin of this fixed expression.

Second, when considering the development of *-s* versus *-th*, it becomes once again apparent that text type is a major constraining or promoting factor when it comes to the adoption of more innovative forms; the formulaic expressions that are characteristic of the depositions may give the appearance that Norwich was generally slower at adopting *-s* than all the other urban centers, but when leaving the formulaic expressions out of consideration, it could be argued that *-s* had become the norm by the second half of the eighteenth century, even with auxiliary *have*. Unfortunately, we do not have any data for the seventeenth century, but a small case study (Gordijn 2020) on a selection of Norwich letters from the CEEC corpus reveals that *-s* was marginally present in lexical verbs by the first half of

the seventeenth century and the majority form in lexical verbs by the second half. Though these data need to be treated with care, as it concerns a study of letters from edited volumes (cf. Sairio et al. 2018), this seems to suggest that Norwich participated with the other non-northern cities in the adoption of *-s*, but that text type was indeed a constraining factor.

As to the development of periphrastic DO, the factor text type comes into play again. Even though the fifteenth-century dataset is too small to draw any firm conclusions, the lack of periphrastic DO seems to corroborate previous findings that civic records were more conservative at the time, while other text types showed higher rates of periphrastic DO. The sixteenth-century ETED data, on the other hand, revealed a pattern that is typically associated with text types closer to oral modes of communication; so even though the rates of affirmative DO were much higher compared to the other urban centers, this might well have been the norm in trial records and witness depositions in particular. A cross-comparison of trial records from the different cities could provide further insights on this matter. It is striking that cases of inversion were rare in general, but the few that did appear, did so in direct reported speech in the Norwich data investigated. The rare sixteenth-century examples from the other urban centers of the EMST project, notably York and Bristol, were found in letters, which can generally be considered to be closer to oral modes of communication than civic records.

As regards the results of eighteenth-century DO, the observed decline of affirmative DO and the subsequent increase of negative and interrogative DO confirm previous studies indicating that this pattern was found in all text types up until at least the nineteenth century. To fully understand the final stages of DO and the development of NICE properties, it might prove fruitful to expand the corpora of the respective cities within the EMST project and include data from the nineteenth century as well. At this stage, we can only make general observations based on previous studies that primarily took a quantitative approach and do not consider specific urban vernaculars beside London.

5. Concluding remarks

It was the aim of this article to view the urban vernacular of Norwich during the period 1422–1760 from the perspective of contemporary supralocalization and standardization processes. Couched within the socio-economic and textual history of the city, two linguistic features undergoing change at the time, notably the third person indicative present tense forms and DO-periphrasis, were looked at more closely in manuscript-based corpora. The linguistic case studies and the comparison to findings from other EMST studies provided some insight into the

speed of change of the different linguistic variants in the different urban vernaculars. As observed for both case studies in this article, the rates in the adoption of newly emerging supralocal norms are to a great extent determined by text type and the language practices associated with them. As concerns the period under investigation, it may be more appropriate to speak of a set of supra-local norms and related text types. Furthermore, scribal practices as well internal linguistic factors such as verb type play an important role in the linguistic developments and therefore need to be taken into consideration when interpreting the data.

In a next step, to corroborate our findings, new manuscript sources from Norwich will be transcribed and investigated to fill some data gaps, particularly civic texts from the seventeenth century. Moreover, other text types like letters help shed light on the variation and change of selected linguistic features in different urban textual resources. While it takes time to weave data strands together and assemble a city's historical urban vernacular, the findings, including the details concerning social and linguistic factors, allow us to reconstruct the supralocalization processes of different linguistic variables and to therefore better understand how the written norm gradually developed.

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