

The age variable in the rise of periphrastic ‘do’ in English

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Abstract. This study models the spread of periphrastic *do* in the sixteenth century. We look at the Lisle Correspondence written between 1533 and 1540. By taking precise account of the ages of some of the correspondents in the Lisle Letters, we attempt to locate the transmitters of the change. The speaker’s age has emerged as one of the most important social factors in the quantitative study of language variation. Several studies are reviewed in order to answer the question: “Did younger speakers use *do*-support more frequently than their elders?” These studies suggest that adolescents and pre-adolescents are more likely to use new linguistic forms in their speech, while adult speakers show patterns of stabilization. Adolescents, it is suggested, may be the most influential transmitters of change. Based on an apparent-time method approach, we suggest that *do*-periphrasis was undergoing a process of change which was led by the younger generation represented by the Basset children. We found that successive generations show incremental frequencies in the use of periphrastic *do*. On analyzing data, we also suggest that the age variable may not be the only intervening factor in the difference observed between the two generations in respect of the use of *do*-periphrasis. Gender may also be of significant importance. Accordingly, we take precise account of the ages of male and female speakers. Some studies suggest that there is an increment over time for women in a linguistic change led by women, and that men show the reverse pattern, i.e. movement to the youngest group. Though our data is quite limited, the obtained results are significant in the sense that they match these sociolinguistic findings.

1. Introduction

The study of social variation in language is one of many aspects of the study of variant linguistic structures. One motivation for the linguist to study such structures is that they provide empirical evidence to resolve alternate structural analyses at the functional level. Secondly, variant structures are defined by the quantitative methods that allow the detailed studies of linguistic changes in progress. The central theoretical problem with which the present study is concerned is the mechanism of linguistic change, in which the dynamics of social factors appear to play an important part.

Closer studies of the social context in which language is used show that many elements of linguistic structures are involved in systematic variation, which reflects both temporal change and extra-linguistic social processes. Kerswill (1996) said, “Exploring the social origins of language change has been a concern of quantitative sociolinguistics.” Age, it has been suggested, is one of the major independent variables in language change. Young people, or adolescents, it is argued, are more likely to implement linguistic changes than are their elders; they are sometimes referred to as the ‘innovators’.

We will study the spread of periphrastic *do* in Early Modern English, in an attempt to locate the social group ‘responsible’ for the propagation of this structure. This would involve studying the dynamics of certain social factors and their interaction with the linguistic variable, or variables. Variation, as we know, involves the use of new forms, which may spread and compete with the older forms. Ultimately, one of the competing forms triumphs.

The key word in our study is *age*. The present study aims at establishing links between the spread of periphrastic *do* in Early Modern English and a certain age group. For this purpose, we look at some data, The Lisle Private Correspondence, written between 1533 and 1540. Basing ourselves on sociolinguistic research findings, we will try to confirm the role played by younger age groups in the spread of periphrastic *do* in two target constructions, namely affirmative and negative declarative sentences. In this study, we also set out to validate the existence of an apparent-time change in progress.

2. Sociolinguistic foundations

Sociolinguists’ main concern, ever since Labov’s (1963) article on vowel shifts, has been to explore the social origins of language change. This implies identifying the social groups who are ‘responsible’ for the spread of linguistic innovations. The search for the social location of the leaders of linguistic change is one approach to an understanding of the causes and motivations of that change. The leaders of linguistic change are seen as those responsible for the diffusion of linguistic change throughout their speech community. The investigation is not a search for individuals, but rather for social locations and social types. The leaders of linguistic change are not inventors of a certain form, but rather those who will advance the ongoing change most strongly.

2.1 Linguistic variation and its significance

Variability in language often indicates instability where variables appear to be stages in the movement from one linguistic state to another. Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968: 188) say, "All change involves variability and heterogeneity". Where a change is taking place, a certain variant will occur in the speech of children, though it is rare, or absent, in the speech of their parents. A variant in the parents' speech will occur in the speech of their children with greater frequency, and in the speech of their grandchildren with even greater frequency. In the community at large, successive generations will show incremental frequencies in the use of the innovative variant. The ultimate consequence of this will be the categorical use of that new variant and the elimination of older variants.

Sapir (1921:147) wrote, "Everyone knows that language is variable." Though the linguistic variation may be obvious, no linguists analysed it systematically until the inception of sociolinguistics in the 1960s. Variants were generally regarded either as belonging to different coexistent linguistic systems or as free substitutes. The notion of coexistent systems held that speakers maintained separate grammars that gave them access to more than one code, thus allowing them to switch from one to the other. The notion of free variation was, however, never considered critically.

There are numerous variables in which large groups of people united according to their class, gender, or age, maintain similar proportions of variant-mixing in similar circumstances. Rather than the coexistence of linguistic systems, Chambers (1995) argues that their behaviour appears to provide evidence for a single system in which variants coexist. Fischer (1958:47-8) notes: "free variation is of course a label, not an explanation. It does not tell us where the variants came from nor why the speakers use them in different proportions, but is rather a way of excluding such questions from the scope of immediate inquiry."

2.2 The role of age in variation

Whenever we speak we reveal not only some personal characteristics but also a whole set of features that we share with everyone who resembles us socially. Usually, without any conscious effort on our part, we embody in our speech the hallmarks of our social identities. Apart from the social class to which we belong and which imposes some norms of behaviour on us, some other major social factors exert a tacit effect on our behaviour

including the way we speak and write. These are age and sex. The first social factor is of most interest for us in this study.

Individuals pass through at least three stages that have significant linguistic consequences, from the formation of a local peer group in childhood through the dense networks of adolescence to settling into a style of life in early adulthood. Linguistic differences between groups of people that differ from one another only in age are likely to signal a linguistic change in progress in the community.

It is when we look at the situations in which the parents belong to a different speech community from the one in which the children are being raised that the primacy of age-mates over elders becomes very obvious. Sociolinguists know that school children speak more like their peers than their elders. Classmates and close friends are linguistically more influential than teachers and parents. Although the family circle normally provides the first speech models for infants, within a few years a more significant one, the circle of friends, replaces it. The children then have two models of dialect transmission, but one of those models, the parents, is never adopted under normal circumstances.

Children learn to talk differently from their parents, a process that will continue over many generations. The empirical studies in Philadelphia, King of Prussia, Detroit, and Milton Keynes point to a “re-organization of the vernacular in pre-adolescent and adolescent years” (Labov 2001), something that will continue until stabilization in late adolescence.

2.3 The leaders of the change

This study models the spread of the *do*-periphrasis by taking account of the age of the transmitters of that linguistic change. The age of the correspondents is critical and reveals much about the path of change that the *do*-auxiliary had undergone in the 15c and 16c. The picture, however, as Kerswill (1996:178) suggests, is complex as it turns out that “people of all ages can (and do) modify and restructure their language, though exactly what they can change is to some extent age-related.”

Taking into consideration the age variable, much attention was paid to the role of different ages in linguistic change, and the question that remains is this: how young is the youngest stratum of speakers that will give evidence on the state and direction of a linguistic change in progress? From a language acquisition perspective, the spread of change in many cases entails the ‘resetting’ of parameters by the individual. The question

then, as Kerswill (1996) puts it, is whether there are age restrictions on parameter resetting.

Though it is not excluded that speakers continue to develop linguistic changes in young adulthood, and influence those around them, the hypothesis is that most linguistic influence is exerted in early and middle adolescence, before the system stabilizes (Labov 2001). In New York City, Labov (1966) found that the raising of (eh) in 'man' and (oh) in 'lost' was most advanced in the youngest group of speakers, from 8 to 19. In Norwich, Trudgill (1974) found that the backing of (el) in 'belt' was most extreme in his youngest age stratum, from 10 to 19. Cedergren (1973) found that the lenition of (ch) in Panama City was most extreme in Spanish speakers from 14 to 20. All of these results indicate that adolescents, and pre-adolescents, are the leading edge in the progress of sound change. A variant's elimination, reduction, or rise in the speech of adolescents normally takes place without conscious effort on their part.

A study of apparent-time must extend downward in the age range to include pre-adolescent as well as adolescent speakers. Evidence indicates that we must take into account data from speakers as young as eight years old in tracing a variable through apparent time. Romaine (1984:113) lowered the age for the development of socially sensitive linguistic variation when she found some evidence for sex differentiation in the use of certain variables by children as young as six years old.

2.4 Nevalainen's sociolinguistic approach

In a recent paper, '*Like father, (un) like son*', Nevalainen applied the apparent time approach to historical data. He investigated the varying rates of diffusion of Late Middle English pronominal changes in the language of two generations of the Celys, a London merchant family. He found that the use of *ye* and *you* reflects age differences within the Cely family and yields a Labovian type of apparent-time pattern. Richard Cely the elder represents the old system, whereas all the three sons mix the forms, but not necessarily in the same way. In most instances the earlier system prevails, but as far as the younger Celys are concerned, the data seem to suggest an early stage of an on-going change, in which the brothers participate in different ways. Both the older and the younger generation mostly make the distinction between the subject and object forms of the second-person pronouns, but all instances of confusion occur in the letters of the younger. He concluded that the Celys display a dynamic pattern of change in progress, where age differences between the father and his sons are reflected in their linguistic choices.

3. *Early Modern English situation*

Late Middle English and Early Modern English allow the auxiliary *do* to appear so frequently in ordinary affirmative declarative sentences that it is difficult to give a small number of representative examples:

- (1) a. ‘Where your ladyship *doth think* that I can write English, ...’ (Vol. 5: 71)
- b. ‘Ye could make anything that his Grace *did like*.’ (Vol. 6: 33)
- c. ‘Whereof most humbly I *do thank* your...’ (Vol. 5: 294)

In Modern English, the use of auxiliary *do* in un-inverted affirmative declaratives is limited to emphatic contexts like (2), where I have underlined them to show their emphatic character:

- (2) a. Emma says she doesn’t like Thomas, but she *does* like him.
- b. I haven’t seen you for so long, so *do* come and visit.

It is evident, however, both from the frequency of examples like (1) and from the discourse context of many of them (Ellegard, 1953) that unemphatic affirmative declarative *do* was in common use in the middle of the 16th century, after which its use declined until the modern situation was reached.

Negatives, on the other hand, were formed by placing the negative marker *not* immediately after the tensed verb, as in:

- (3) a. ‘I am very sorry that I *saw not* my Lord.’ (Vol. 5: 681)
- b. ‘I *know not* how...’ (Vol. 3: 143)
- c. ‘...for the which I *lieth not*...’ (Vol. 5: 71)

However, beginning some time in the 14th century, as some scholars have claimed, the pattern began to change, with *do* appearing as a dummy auxiliary, as in:

- (4) a. ‘...that she *doth not write* to you at this time...’ (Vol. 3: 196)
- b. ‘I *do not send* you the bill...’ (Vol. 3: 210)
- c. ‘...because she *does not write* to you...’ (Vol. 6: 33)
- d. ‘...the which is very sorry that he *did not see* you...’ (Vol. 4: 523)

Interestingly, until mid 16th century, the use of periphrastic *do* in contexts like (1) and (4) saw a remarkable increase; this makes the Lisle data very important to investigate, as the correspondence started in 1533 and ended in 1540, a time when the rise of periphrastic *do* is at a high point in the S-curve change it was undergoing. At this period, Early Modern English, speakers had the choice of using one form of the language or the other.

4. Research questions and hypotheses

In the light of sociolinguistic research findings advocating the idea that it is young people who are more likely to adopt new forms and move away from stigmatized forms of language, we build the following hypotheses. First, the Basset children, representing the younger generation of their time, will display a much more frequent use of *do*-periphrasis in their speech. We assume that their use of the auxiliary structure in two different contexts, namely affirmative declarative sentences and negative declarative sentences, is more widespread than that of their elders, represented by Lord Lisle and Lady Lisle. We also hypothesize that the younger the speakers are, the more likely they are to use the new periphrastic structure *do*.

We are also hypothesizing that these differences reflect a change in real time. Hence, my research questions are the following: Did younger speakers use the auxiliary *do* significantly more than did older speakers? Can we claim that the linguistic choices made by the younger speakers in the two contexts reflect the future developments that the new periphrastic structure would undergo in both affirmative and negative constructions?

5. Methodology

In this study I will consider the change of the syntax of the English verb, reflected, among other things, in the rise of periphrastic *do*, in an attempt to identify the innovating group. For this purpose, we choose a collection of private letters as a source of data. The correspondents are representatives of their society. I will consider letters written by both older and younger people in order to test my hypotheses. My original plan was to consider the use of *do*-periphrasis in three different contexts, namely positive declaratives, negatives, and interrogatives. However, one limitation of this methodology is that interrogatives hardly occurred in

private letters. So, my investigation will be limited to the first two target constructions.

5.1 Genre: private correspondence

A study based on written texts alone would give an unsatisfactory and incomplete picture of the functions of *do*-periphrasis, a structure that has a much richer and more varied range of uses at the level of speech than in written language. It is typically in day-to-day situational contexts that structural changes take place. In practical terms, the only way to get information on the expressions typical of the spoken language of past centuries is through observations based on the types of writing that can be assumed to be least distant from the oral mode of expression. For this reason, I have chosen private letters as the source for my data on the grounds that they represent the written form which is the closest to the spoken vernacular of the time, texts which unintentionally resemble speech in their intimate character.

5.2 The 16th century

What makes the 16th century a particularly interesting period for sociolinguistic study is the linguistic changes that were taking place at different levels: syntactic, lexical, morphological, etc. *Do*-periphrasis was in the process of acquiring new characteristics. The letters, thus, represent a crucial stage on this axis of change. *Do*-periphrasis was used in certain contexts and not in others; it was used more frequently by certain groups of people and not by others. In fact, the Lisle language was very unstable with regards to the use of the *do*-auxiliary, and we are very likely to come across forms like ‘*sendeth*’, ‘*doth send*’, ‘*do send*’, ‘*did send*’, ‘*send not*’, ‘*sendeth not*’, or ‘*doth not send*’ in the same letter and by the same writer. This variation indicates the on-going change that *do*-periphrasis was undergoing at the time.

This period is a ‘*delicate*’ stage in the history of periphrastic *do*, as it carries with it the future characteristics, or Present-day English grammatical qualities, that the auxiliary was in the process of acquiring at the time. However, what is of most interest for us here is not the process of change for its own sake; what we will be considering is the social meaning of that change: who are the promoters of the change, or may be the ‘*innovators*’, to put it differently.

5.3 *The Lises*

The Family. The nucleus of the Lises, a prominent family, consisted of Arthur Plantagenet, or Lord Lisle, and his second wife Honor, Lady Lisle. Lady Lisle's seven children from her first marriage also play an important role in the Lisle world. The Basset children, Philippa, Katharine, Anne, Mary, John, George and James are interesting in the sense that they are the only representatives of the younger generation of their time, together with Frances Basset, Lady Lisle's daughter-in-law. Their letters are the only source of data for anyone interested in looking at change in progress at that period. The editor of these letters, Muriel St. Clare, has published a thorough study of their background. Unfortunately, it was impossible for her to trace the exact dates of birth of all the family members. Although, in some cases, it was difficult to reconstruct the social background of some individual writers because of the temporal distance, Muriel St. Clare was quite successful in providing a fairly rounded picture of the Lisle family. The lives and background of the Lises are satisfactorily documented. In fact, she was able to reconstruct certain basic sociolinguistic variables for the majority of the core members of our letter-writing 16th century family.

Although establishing the exact age of some of the writers of the letters might pose problems, it was possible to determine their relative ages. Nevertheless, instead of creating age-scales in terms of ten- or twenty-year periods, we shall talk in terms of generations. This means that, at the family level, much of the Early Modern English material is better suited for apparent- than real-time (see below) sociolinguistic examination.

Biographical Details. Although in this study we are dealing with generations, we still need to find out about the age of the correspondents in order to be able to classify them into two different groups representing two different generations. In the case of Lord Lisle, official records confirm that he was born in 1462. Lady Lisle is said to be around the age of forty in 1533 and would therefore have been born some time between 1493 and 1495. We are faced with the same problems when considering the biographical information of some of the Basset children. Philippa is the oldest and is supposed to have been born in 1516, which means that she was 17 years old when the correspondence started. In the case of Katharine, it is unclear whether she was born in 1517 or some time in 1519 or 1520. Anne Basset was born in 1521. Mary, the youngest daughter, was born in 1522 or 1523. Considering the Basset sons, records say that the eldest son, John, was born in 1518. His brother George is another ambiguous case as he is supposed to have been born some time in 1522 or

1525. James, the youngest Basset child, was born in 1526, i.e. he was just seven years old in 1533, i.e. when the correspondence started. Frances Basset was supposed to be 17 years old at the time.

The Letters. The only complete edition of the Lisle letters is *The Lisle Letters* (1981), including 1,900 letters written between 1533 and 1540. Apart from the correspondence of the family members, the collection contains letters written by friends and other prominent political figures of the period. As regards content, the letters are a combination of business and private affairs.

The present study is based on letters exchanged between Lord and Lady Lisle and the latter's children from her first marriage. As I have mentioned above I have added Frances Basset to my corpus. Although we only have forty-nine letters written by younger people (this might be considered another methodological limitation), the Bassets are still representatives of the younger generation of their time. The real correspondents amongst this group are Anne, Mary and James, i.e. the youngest children. The eldest Basset daughter, Philippa, wrote no letters. A random sample of 35 letters written by Lord Lisle was taken from the correspondence. The total number of the letters written by Lady Lisle was 32 and they are all included in my corpus.

*The corpus**The older generation*

Sender	Recipient	Number of letters	Total by author	Volume	
Lord Lisle	Cromwell	11	35	5	
	Lady Lisle	16			
	Earl of Southampton	2			
	Jehan du Bies	1			
	Earl of Rutland	1			
	John Hussee	1			
	Henry Palmer	1			
	Constable of France	1			
	Adrian Revel	1			
Lady Lisle	Lord Lisle	16	32	5	
	Madame de Bours	5			3, 5, 6
	Madame de Riou	2			
	John Hussee	1			2
	Mary Basset	1			3
	The Countess of Sussex	1			4
	Thomas Culpeper	1			
	Guillaume Le Gras	1			
	Anthoinette de Saveuses	1			5
	Archdeacon Thomas Thirlby	1			
	The Earl of Hertford	1			
	John Bekynsaw	1			

The younger generation

Katharine Basset	Lady Lisle	3	3	5, 6
Anne Basset	Lady Lisle	10	10	5, 6
Mary Basset	Lady Lisle	11	13	3
	Philippa	2		
John Basset	Lady Lisle	3	3	3, 4
George Basset	Lady Lisle	1	2	3
	Lord & Lady Lisle	1		
James Basset	Lady Lisle	15	16	4, 5
	Lord Lisle	1		
Frances Basset	Lady Lisle	2	2	5

5.4 Apparent-time methodology

When time is the independent variable, it is difficult to carry out investigations, as time cannot be observed directly. Time is perpetually in motion and we can only draw inferences about the effect of time by looking at what it leaves behind. By this we mean generations of speakers who sometimes share certain norms, variants and styles with one another much more than the generations that precede and follow them.

Until the advent of sociolinguistics, historians of language inferred that linguistic changes had taken place by comparing the data at two widely separated historical points. What happened in the interval between those historic moments was ignored. However, the observation of change in progress integrally involves variability, social correlates, stylistic contexts and quantification. When different age groups are observed simultaneously and changes are extrapolated from them, the result is an 'apparent-time' study. As my data covers a period of seven years, it is best to deal with it through an apparent-time approach. The apparent-time hypothesis has the advantage of making information about temporal developments available in a shorter time than the developments themselves take.

Looking at the interval between the two structural states shows features in contention with one another as the new features gradually supplant the old. The situation is dynamic and the proportions of the variants in the speech of the community alter as time passes. At any moment in that passage of time, the proportions will differ among the innovating group and the conservative group. Describing these situations in qualitative terms means ignoring the dynamic character of the situation as well as important issues such as how these options were distributed in the speech community, what they signify socially, and how minor options emerge as major ones. It is perhaps important to note at this point that this methodological choice makes a limited test of the apparent-time hypothesis because it looks only at the extent to which the younger generation perpetuates the trends observable in the community at that time. Bloomfield (1933:347) argues, "The process of linguistic change has never been directly observed". The first and most straightforward approach to studying linguistic change in progress is to trace change in apparent time, that is, the distribution of linguistic variables across age levels. If we discover a significant correlation between age and the linguistic variable, we are very likely to be dealing with a true change in progress.

The variable as a structural unit represents a momentous innovation in linguistics. It is quantitative in the sense that its significance is not

determined simply by the presence or absence of its variants but by their relative frequency. Social groups typically differ by the proportions of particular variants they use in particular circumstances. Hence, it is necessary to look closely at a matrix of numbers in order to discover its trends.

6. Results: tables and figures

In what follows, we set out to investigate the direction of change by examining the contexts where the auxiliary *do* could be used, and counting the cases where the auxiliary structure was actually used in both target constructions.

Correspondents	Letters	Number of contexts	Number of <i>do</i> -support cases	Total	<i>Expected</i> number of <i>do</i> -support cases
Older Generation	67	818	51 5.8%	869	66.43
Younger Generation	49	366	47 11.3%	413	31.57

Table 1 Frequency of do-support in affirmative and negative constructions

Table 1 introduces the general number of contexts and cases of *do*-support in both groups and in both target constructions. The figures in this table represent the results of a chi-square test indicating the relative rates of use of our advanced variant by the two categories of speakers. Notice that out of a total of 869 contexts, older people actually used the *do*-periphrasis 51 times, while the children used it 47 times out of a total number of 413 contexts. The chi-square test applied to our data shows that the expected figures are different from the observed ones. While the expected figures for the parents indicate that they 'should' have used the auxiliary *do* around sixteen times more than they actually did, they show that their children are expected to have used it around sixteen times less than they did. The chi-square value is, in fact, quite high, 12.045, and yields a very significant p-value of 0.001.

These figures indicate that differences between these two age groups exist. However, as a necessary step in our investigation, and in searching for more information about the two contexts, we separated affirmative and

negative contexts to find out if differences between groups are of equal significance, or if one context favoured the use of the *do*-periphrasis more than the other.

Correspondents	Number of contexts	Number of <i>do</i> -support cases	Total	Expected number of <i>do</i> -support cases
Older Generation	743	45 5.7%	788	54.63
Younger Generation	331	35 9.5%	366	25.37

Table 2 Frequency of do-support in affirmative declaratives

Because affirmative declaratives are the more frequent kind of sentences, the number of contexts and potential instances of *do* is bigger in that context than in the other. Looking at Table 2, we notice that there are discrepancies between the observed figures and the expected ones, and that the two age groups are remarkably different. As we can notice, the difference indicates that the parents used *do* in affirmatives 45 times where they ‘should’ have used it 54.63 times; and that the younger group used it much more than expected, 35 times instead of 25.37. The resulting chi-square value (5.748) is significant in this respect, and yields a significant p-value of 0.017.

Now we turn to the negative target constructions, Table 3. By just looking at the number of contexts and cases of *do*-support in both groups, we deduce that the discrepancies between the observed and the expected figures are much more obvious. Notice that the older group used *do*-periphrasis in negatives almost 50% less than they were expected to do, while the younger group used it almost 50% more than they were expected to do. In this context, the chi-square value is quite high, 8.085, and the resulting p-value, 0.004, is very significant. We are now in a position to conclude that, although there is a difference between both groups in both contexts, it is with the negatives that the difference is more obvious and significant, and that it is the negatives that are the discriminating factor.

Correspondents	Number of contexts	Number of <i>do</i> -support cases	Total	Expected number of <i>do</i> -support cases
Older Generation	75	6 7.4%	81	11.39
Younger Generation	35	12 25.5%	47	6.61

Table 3 Frequency of do-support in negative declaratives

Table 3 shows that differentiation by age is a sizeable feature of the sociolinguistic structure displayed by the Lisles. The figures in Table 3 indicate that older speakers used *do* in that context much less than younger speakers. The relative high frequency of *do*-auxiliary in the speech of the younger group indicates that it is relatively preferred to contexts where the *do* does not exist. Using the chi-square test we noticed major discrepancies, a strong shift toward the use of *do* in negations in the younger age group. A strong advantage appears for the younger group, with a very significant p-value of 0.004. This difference between both age groups indicates a clear social contrast in the progressively higher proportion of *do*-auxiliary, and that each one of these two groups occupies its own stratum.

We assume that there is a difference in the use of *do*-periphrasis in both the affirmative and negative contexts between both groups. However, the discriminating factor appears to be the use of *do* in negatives.

7. Data analysis

Beyond the primary empirical task of observing and collecting data, lies the problem of interpretation. Social factors are thought to play a major role in the process of change that *do* was undergoing. These are key factors and can promote a new linguistic form just as they can suppress it. While the role of the age variable is made evident throughout our data, the function of that discrepancy between older and younger speakers in respect to the use of periphrastic *do* needs some explanation and elaboration depending on the type of construction in which the periphrastic structure occurred. What is the relative significance of age in the variation we have just observed? How do linguistic factors and social factors interact? What is the social significance of the linguistic variation? These questions and queries need to be addressed in the light of the different sociolinguistic findings reported in the literature review.

The general history of *do*-periphrasis has been discussed by many linguistic historians and will not be repeated here. However, the quantitative analysis we presented in the previous section investigates the role of age in the rise of periphrastic *do*, which has not to my knowledge been previously studied. The situation, as we have already mentioned, changes markedly in the 16th century, when the relative frequency of *do*-periphrasis rises sharply. This change, as we have seen, reflects a reorganization of the paradigm along younger versus older speakers. The results of the chi-square tests show that our two groups of informants represent two different populations in respect to their use of the auxiliary *do*. While the data and the analyses speak for themselves, an explanation of what they represent is less evident.

Kerswill argues that older speakers adopt some types of change, while others appear to be adoptable only by children. However, “neither children nor adults can be seen as the sole originators of change” (1996:178-9). It is argued that by the age of 6 or 7 children begin to assert themselves outside the home. Sociolinguistic findings (Labov 1970, Chambers 1995, Kerswill 1994) suggest that pre-adolescents focus on a different norm from that of their elders.

Kerswill (1996) argues that pre-adolescents begin to move from parent-oriented to peer-oriented network. At this stage, people perform what Chambers calls ‘declarations of adolescence’ (1995:169). Kerswill, in fact, asserts that “Adolescents are clearly significant bearers of change; their networks allow them to have wider contacts than younger children, and their desire for a distinct social identity means that they are willing to modify their speech” (1996:192).

7.1 Affirmative constructions

Our results indicate that there is an obvious significant difference between both groups of speakers. Younger speakers used the auxiliary *do* in affirmatives remarkably more than their elders. However, when we consider the future developments that *do* underwent in that context, we find out that, unlike in negatives and interrogatives, it was not codified as mood and tense carrier in Present-day English. This means that although *do* was used in that context and was freely inserted by both groups, though in different proportions, it did not undergo a radical change. According to Ellegard’s figures, from 1560, *do* dropped in frequency in certain contexts and in one of them, affirmatives, it never recovered from the drop; and by the 18c, the modern restriction against the use of *do* in this context is established (Lightfoot, 1993:151).

The variation in the use of affirmative *do*-periphrasis could have been the product of some qualitative change; we can characterize our younger informants as “certain writers of elegant taste,” to use Hatcher’s (1948) phrase. However, the stylistic value of linguistic features cannot be assumed to remain constant over time, something that explains the sharp fall that *do* had experienced and from which it had never recovered. The unequal use of affirmative *do*-periphrasis in the speech of our two informant groups could also be the result of some kind of stylistic variation, depending on certain elements like genre and medium. For reasons of space, I will not consider these factors here; I will focus on negative constructions in which differences between both age groups appears to be more significant.

7.2 *Negative constructions*

The frequency of the use of *do*-periphrasis in negative declaratives is strongly affected by age. Younger speakers use periphrastic *do* proportionately more than their elders in that context. Although the chi-square test applied to the affirmative context shows some differences between these two age groups, the discrepancies in the negative context are much more significant. One explanation might be due to the fact that *do* in negatives experienced a different process of grammaticalisation from the one affirmative *do* had experienced, although people are often unaware of the change when it is taking place.

Kroch (1989) argues that when surface forms change, the new usage reflects a change in the underlying grammar, and incremental linguistic change seems to reflect competition among alternative licensing principles. This summarizes the situation in Early Modern English, in which two grammars were competing, one with the auxiliary *do* and the other without, and eventually one of them won over the other. Like affirmative *do*, in negative constructions *do*-periphrasis underwent a process of regularization; but unlike the former, in the negative context *do* was codified as tense and mood carrier in the 18c. This implied its obligatory insertion as an element in *not*-negations.

8. *Distributions within the younger generation*

Linguistic change in progress might involve the re-organization of the vernacular first acquired. This process is said to begin when children first emerge from the linguistic domination of their parents (4-5) to the time

when they reach some kind of linguistic stability (17-20). Although many scholars suggest different thresholds for acquiring and adopting new linguistic forms, most of them agree that the younger you are, the more likely you are to make use of new forms in language. This vernacular reorganization would, ultimately, lead to linguistic change. Chambers (1995) argues that children between 7 and 9, or under, will almost certainly acquire a new dialect perfectly. In between the ages 7 and 14, people differ in their ability to acquire. People over the age of 14 almost certainly will not acquire new forms. The reason for this is their age: they have crossed a certain threshold that has been documented in several studies (Trudgill 1986:31-8, Payne 1980:155-6).

Now, we need to analyse data from the younger group to identify the age at which restructuring took place. Table 4 presents the general number of cases of *do*-support in both contexts, as distributed within that group of speakers.¹

Correspondents	Correspondents' age	Cases of affirmative <i>do</i>	Cases of negative <i>do</i>
Philippa	17	0	0
Katharine	14-16(?)	2	0
Anne	12	20	2
Mary	10-11(?)	4	3
Frances	17	9	0
John	15	0	0
George	8-11(?)	0	0
James	7	0	7

Table 4 The distribution of do-support in the younger group

More interesting are the results for the younger group, where *do*-periphrasis was mainly displayed in the speech of three young persons, namely Anne, Frances, and James, who have respectively ten, two, and sixteen letters to their credit. Two things in Table 4 strike us as

¹ Because of the small number of correspondents that represents that group, and accordingly the limited number of the letters, the following section is not based on quantitative research methods. Instead, I will point the reader to some remarks and suggestions that are qualitative in nature. Although quite revealing about the linguistic changes that were taking place at the time, and very much in accordance with many sociolinguistic research findings, these suggestions are open to further investigation and research; they will need to be proved through other sources of data, which would include a larger sample by a variety of age and gender participants.

unexpected. The first is that our youngest subject, James, used no *do*-periphrasis in affirmative contexts where we would have expected him to score a major number of *do*-support cases, namely that he is the youngest and thus the most liable to display new forms in his language. However, when considering the negative context, we find that he displayed the biggest proportion of *do*, 7 out of 12 possible cases in his letters. The second major issue here is that the most important number of *do*-auxiliary in affirmative contexts is displayed by Anne, who is, on the one hand not as young as James, and, on the other hand, a female speaker. She used the auxiliary 20 times out of a total number of 35 cases. Notice, however, that Anne used *do* only twice in negative contexts. Frances is also quite ahead of other speakers as she used the *do*-auxiliary in affirmatives 9 times, though none in negatives. These remarks are significant in the light of sociolinguistic research findings. In the following section, we shall try to analyze the implications of such remarks based on sociolinguistic foundations.

8.1 Analysis and discussion

While the age differentiation in earlier analyses is overwhelming and clear, it is also clear that the variable here is not simply the age marker. Particularly within this group, there is an apparent relation between age and gender. The overwhelming majority of *do*-auxiliary uses displayed by the young girls in the affirmative context, are of considerable significance. We argued that the use of affirmative *do* might be a case of stylistic variation, as it was not later codified as an obligatory grammatical element in Modern English. Gender, in fact, plays a crucial role in the argument of this section. The differentiation of the sexes appears to play an important role in the results; it follows that sexual differentiation, as a social factor, must enter into the explanation of ongoing linguistic change as a continuous process.

8.2 The logistic incrementation model

Some scholars have suggested that most variables show a peak in apparent time in female age groups between 13-16, which is an indication of an increment over time for women in a linguistic change led by women. Men, however, show the reverse pattern, i.e. movement to the youngest group; change would continue in the same direction as the age group became younger and younger (Labov, 2001:454), as is the case in our study. This is in accordance with our results. Anne, who was born in 1521, i.e. she was

12 when the correspondence started, and over 12 during the correspondence, displayed the largest proportion of the auxiliary *do* in the affirmative context; while James, our youngest subject, and the one who used the largest proportion of *do* in the negative context, was only 7 at the time the correspondence started.

The results of many sociolinguistic studies suggest a rising pattern to the youngest age group with no adolescent peak. One explanation is that boys' participation in the change is due to the increment inherited from their female caregivers. Children whose mothers are at a discretely higher level of change than the generation that preceded them might introduce waves of innovation. Their higher use of a certain variable is then explained through this generational influence of female caregivers. In a study of children's and adults' speech in the New Town of Milton Keynes by Kerswill (1994), clear links were established between the adult and child features. It is reported that the youngest children have a distribution closer to that of their caregivers, and that the youngest children have scores closer to their mothers. This leads us to investigate our data in more depth in an attempt to find how far this can be said to be valid in our study.

8.3 The influence of caregivers

At this point, I would like to recall some biographical details that might be of interest for us here. When collecting data, I included all the letters written by the younger generation because of their scarcity. However, when it came to letters written by the older generation, and because of the huge amount of data, I decided to include the parents, Lord and Lady Lisle, to avoid confusion and to make the generational difference between both groups quite obvious to the reader. However, looking at the dates of birth of the parents themselves, we notice that they are a generation apart, as Lord Lisle was born in 1462, which means that he was almost seventy years old in 1533, the time when the correspondence started, while his wife, Lady Lisle, was born some time between 1493-5, which means that she was around forty in 1533. This seemingly tiny detail might be of some significance in the argument we have just given above, namely that the youngest boys' participation in the change is due to the influence of their female caregivers who are at a higher level of change than the generation that preceded it. However, we would like to draw the reader's attention to the fact that in Tudor England, mothers in aristocratic families did not have the habit of looking after their children; instead, they would have some people responsible for this. We are, hence, left with little information about

the Basset children’s caregivers, and the extent to which these caregivers can influence the children’s linguistic choices.

Correspondents	Number of contexts	Number of <i>do</i> -support cases	Total	Expected number of <i>do</i> -support cases
Lord Lisle	33	1 2.9%	34	2.52
Lady Lisle	42	5 10.6%	47	3.48

Table 5 The distribution of negative do-support in the older group

Table 5 indicates that Lady Lisle used the auxiliary *do* in the negative context, the context where James displayed the major proportion of cases, more often than Lord Lisle. This difference, though tiny in absolute terms, is statistically significant for this sample. We have, thus, established a link between James’ speech patterns and his mother’s. With some reservations, we can claim that similarities between the two indicate the effect of the caregiver on her child, while the differences in the number of cases of *do*-support indicate an on-going change in progress. Kerswill (1996:190) asserts, “We simply do not yet know the relative effect that the first caregiver(s)...may have on the child’s language development.”

Our aim now is to find out more about Lady Lisle and where we can classify her according to the number of uses of the auxiliary *do* she displayed in her letters. To know at which point the change originated, we need to compare the speech of caregiver and child and look for similarities between the two; differences would indicate a change taking place between the generations. Table 8 presents the different numbers of contexts and uses of *do*-support in the negative constructions as they occurred in the letters written by Lord Lisle, Lady Lisle, and their children.

Correspondents	Number of contexts	Number of <i>do</i> -support cases	Total	Expected number of <i>do</i> -support cases
Lord Lisle	33	1 2.9%	34	4.78
Lady Lisle	42	5 10.6%	47	6.61
Younger Generation	35	12 25.5%	47	6.61

Table 6 The distribution of negative do-support in Lord Lisle, Lady Lisle, and the younger generation

The chi-square test applied here gives a relatively high chi-square value (9.052) and a p-value of 0.011. The chi-square test we have applied here yielded different chi-square values for each group. These values indicate that the biggest difference is in the younger group, followed by Lord Lisle. However, the difference between both is in opposite directions. Where young people were expected to use only 6.61 of *do*-periphrasis in negation, they used it 12 times; and where Lord Lisle was expected to use 4.78 of the cases, he only used it once. So both age groups are wide apart in terms of their uses of the *do* in negation. Turning now to Lady Lisle, we notice that the difference between the observed values (5) and the expected values (6.61) is not very big, and the values, in fact, set her on an axis, somewhere between her children and her husband, although closer to the latter. This, in respect to the age difference between her and Lord Lisle, indicates that she displays a somewhat different speech pattern from that of the preceding generation.

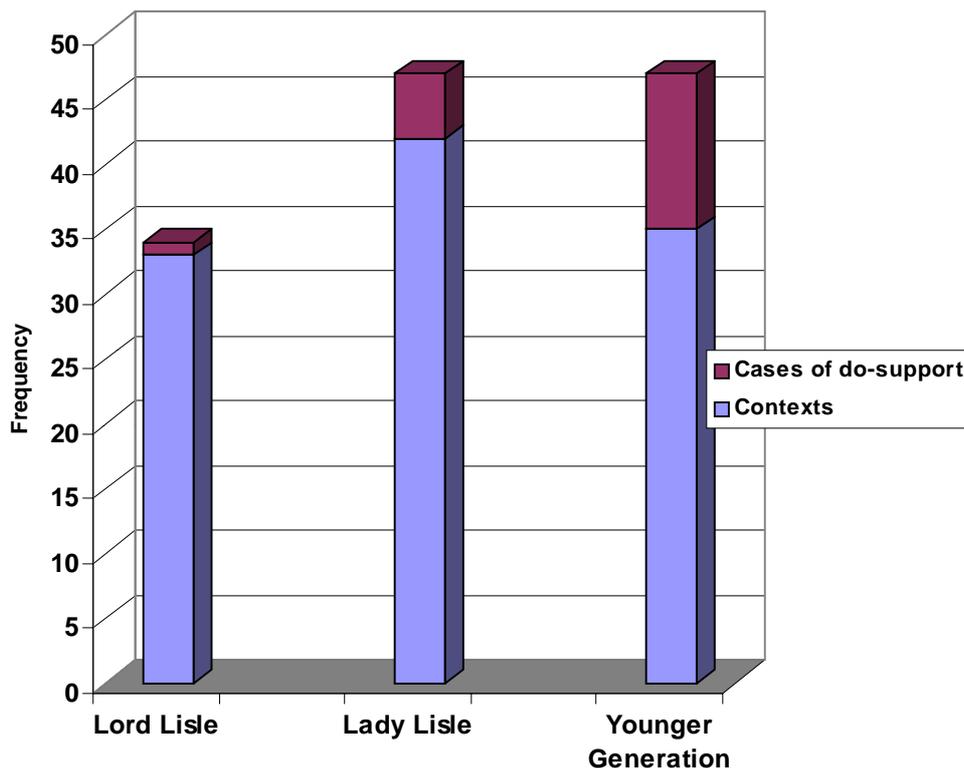


Fig.1 Frequency of Do-support in the three generations

It seems then that we are, in fact, dealing with three generations, not just two, where each generation displays a certain amount of *do*-periphrasis use that differs from the other two in terms of frequency.

Figure 1 indicates that the three generations use the *do*-auxiliary at different rates, and that the use of *do* is increasing in each successive generation. This reveals the on-going generational linguistic change that was taking place at that time. These results, thus, typify the pattern of a change in progress.

We conclude, then, that there is a wave-like motion of change led by the children, and our results are typical of many other empirical findings, which confirm the view that younger speakers are more likely to adopt new linguistic form and to display them in their speech than are older people. The use of *do* typifies a unidirectional linear progression across age groups, with a dramatic advance in the youngest group, mainly in the negative constructions. Our results shed light on the apparent time hypothesis in interesting ways. The distribution of the auxiliary *do* in apparent time then clearly indicates change in progress.

9. Conclusion

In our study, the use of a single quantitative age dimension informed us about the actual distribution of the sociolinguistic variable in apparent time. It portrays the effect of age on the use or the avoidance of the auxiliary *do* in affirmatives and negatives in Early Modern English. In an attempt to apply the apparent time approach to historical data, we focused on the varying rates of diffusion of Early Modern English *do*-auxiliary changes in the language of two generations of the Lisle family. For this purpose, we observed language variation in writers representing different generations, Lord and Lady Lisle and the Basset children.

Our study aimed at illuminating the important problem of establishing the mechanism of linguistic change, as driven by social factors. Based on sociolinguistic research findings, we were able to establish a correlation between the age variable and language variation and change. We have argued, based on quantitative research methods, that younger age groups used a certain linguistic variant, namely *do*-periphrasis, more often than their elders. Differences in age between the parents and their children are reflected in their linguistic choices. The parents and the children mix both the old and the new forms, but the children show an obvious preference for the use of the auxiliary *do*. This, as we have already argued, is in accordance with sociolinguistic findings advocating the importance of age as an independent variable in the spread of a linguistic change.

The results of this examination of the role of the age variable in the rise of periphrastic *do* in Early Modern English have provided a base line against which we can measure the evidence for change in progress. Quantitative data reflected the influence of some independent variables, namely age and gender, in interesting and revealing ways. We suggested that gender might be a significant factor in our study, with the expectation that further empirical studies may confirm or refute this possibility. It is necessary to explore more deeply the role of gender in such linguistic variation. As our data were quite limited and would not allow us to draw firm conclusions on that issue, our remarks concerning the gender issue are, at the moment, no better than speculations.

This study has been brief and, as is often the case, has raised many questions for further research. In fact, after factoring out some sources of variation, there is still considerable variation left to be explained.

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