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The Gender Role of Queen Elizabeth I as Reflected by her Language

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Abstract. This paper discusses the way language can be seen to reflect the social role of Queen Elizabeth I. As her role in society was inevitably masculine, it is important to ask whether her language use was more masculine than feminine. The study was conducted by comparing certain linguistic features in the Queen's correspondence with linguistic features in personal letters written by a selected group of informants. The results show that she resembled women more than men in total frequencies, but at times Elizabeth's use of individual lexical items seems to connect her language use with that of men rather than women. Idiosyncratic variation probably explains several such instances. Register variation was seen to be an important variable. Elizabeth I herself was of the opinion that her gender was an irrelevance; she believed that God had placed her on the throne, which made it possible for her to ignore male prejudice (Somerset 1991).

1. Introduction

In 1558, at the age of 25, Elizabeth Tudor assumed the life-long responsibilities of a monarch in a society which regarded women as lacking in intellect, virtue, and sound judgement compared to men. Early modern English society was highly patriarchal, and culture and institutions upheld the dominant position of men. At Elizabeth's accession her sex was looked on as a grievous disability, and she was a target of male prejudice even later on, although she proved to be an intelligent, successful, and extremely popular ruler. How might this change in social roles have affected Elizabeth's language? Did she undergo a drastic change in gender role as well that would have shown in her use of language? In the early 1600s, Robert Cecil wrote somewhat ambiguously in his letter to a courtier that the Queen was "more than a man and, in troth, sometime less than a woman" (quoted in Rowse 2000: 60). A single sentence contains a compliment on the abilities of an intelligent and learned ruler, and a negative evaluation of a woman who did not fulfil the task of marriage and childbearing assigned to her by nature.

According to Nurmi (1999: 35), the case of Queen Elizabeth presents a possible conflict between biological and social reality. Reigning as both king and queen, her role in society was unique. She is often referred to and she also refers to herself in masculine terms, such as 'prince', as the following example from her letters to King James VI in the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* indicates:

- (1) And, that you may knowe **I am that prince** that neuer can indure a menace at my ennemys hand, muche les of one so dearly traictid, I wyl giue you this bond, that affection and kind traicement shal euer preuaile, but feare or doute shal neuer procure aught from me[.] (A 1594 FO ELIZABETH1)

It is possible that after the accession Elizabeth adopted features of language typically associated with men in order to achieve credibility, or to adjust better to her role, consciously or not. In any case she succeeded in making herself a queen worth taking seriously.

This article is based on my MA thesis (Vuorinen 2001), which tackled the question of whether Queen Elizabeth I adopted male patterns of speech because of her strongly masculine social role. This was done by comparing particular linguistic features in Queen Elizabeth's personal autograph letters with linguistic features in personal letters written by educated men and women of the court from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The material was drawn from the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (referred to as the CEEC). The hypothesis was that such a drastic change of gender roles did not take place, and the Queen's linguistic features resemble those of women more than those of men. I believe that after her accession Elizabeth maintained her female identity, not as an ordinary woman but as a Queen (or a "prince") by the grace of God: the transcendental element of monarchy might have affected her gender identity, but I doubt that it would have eliminated its femininity. If anything, I think it would have added some sort of gender neutrality. This would explain why she referred to herself as a prince, since as a monarch she was not bound to conventional forms of speech, but could transcend them. However, *prince* is also used as a generic term for a ruler. *Princess* does not have its generic sense. (But one can also argue that the use of *prince* is a sign of masculine identity, and the element of monarchy in Elizabeth did weaken her feminine side, at least in certain official contexts where femininity was unnecessary or even undesirable.) Weir (1999: 222) says that she referred to herself as a prince in order to combat prejudice and underline her position; she might have taken advantage of the word's generic sense or have wanted people to associate her with a masculine title. Curiously, she never refers to herself as a *queen* in her correspondence with King James VI of Scotland (in the CEEC); there is sufficient ambiguity in all this to make this line of study valid and interesting.

Gender is partly based on sex difference, and is realized in the roles assigned to men and women. These roles depend on society's traditions and norms. It is impossible to separate a person's innate and learned characteristics, or even to define them; the debate about the chicken and egg is ongoing. It seems to me that social roles control our behaviour more than biology, even though biology plays a significant part in the assignment of our social roles. Gender roles silently impose norms of behaviour on men and women, and the existence of these norms surfaces only when they are being ignored. However, since it is so difficult to become aware of these imposed norms of behaviour, people tend to believe that they act according to their innate characteristics, especially because modern society encourages and emphasizes individuality in most aspects of life.

According to Chase (1988: 282-283), a professional woman would argue that gender plays no part in the quality of her professional work, because she does not want to be singled out as a woman professional. "She wants to dissociate herself from the negative connotations of "woman", but she does not want to be defeminized". I do not mean to contrast Elizabeth I directly with the 20th (and 21st) century career women Chase discusses, but I think that these insights can to a certain extent be applied to her gender identity. The 'noise' created by her gender certainly affected her credibility, but she was able to transcend it up to a point because of her undisputed position in society. Somerset (1991: 60) quotes her as having said "Princes...transact business in a certain way, with a princely intelligence, such as private persons cannot imitate", and goes on to say that she genuinely believed that her gender was not a handicap but an irrelevance because of the advantages her sovereign status gave her.

2. Selected linguistic features

The basis of the first part of the study is first-person evidential verbs as discussed in Palander-Collin (1999), who observed that women used first-person evidential verbs more than men in seventeenth century correspondence. This difference is explained by women's style being more involved and interactive. As the criteria for defining evidential verbs, I used Chafe's term evidentiality in its broadest sense of attitudes toward knowledge (1986: 262). Palander-Collin has used the same criteria (1999: 26, 230). Following Palander-Collin's principle, I have concentrated on the evidential senses 'find' and 'believe' and excluded senses which refer to the cognitive process of thinking. In other words, evidential verbs are understood here to express the speaker's or writer's point of view, opinion, or belief. The hypothesis was that Palander-Collin's results would be more or less repeated. The study included altogether 28 verbs.

The second part of the study took Peters (1994) as its starting point. The aim was to find out whether degree adverbs function as evidence of gender differences by counting the occurrences of Peters's selection of degree adverbs (maximizers and boosters). I selected these (29 altogether) from the following letter corpora used by Peters (1994: 274-280): the Paston letters (15th century), the Shillingford letters (15th century), the Wentworth Papers (1614-1629), and Mrs Basire's letters in the Basire Correspondence (1634-1675). I assumed that women would use degree adverbs more than men.

The third and final part of the study focused on pronouns. The purpose was to find out whether the functions of first- and second-person pronouns provide evidence of gender difference in language use. The hypothesis was that they reflect involvement, and that women use them more than men. Both first- and second-person pronouns are tied directly to the communicative situation, first-person pronouns being used to refer to an actively involved addressor, while second-person pronouns require a specific addressee in order to be appropriate (Biber 1995: 59). Wales states that the first- and second-person pronouns, the 'inter-personal' pronouns, are characteristically used in the situational context, and the referents are not fixed or stable like nouns but shift according to situation (1996: 3). The more the first-person pronoun is used, the more involved the text becomes.

I included the royal *we* in the study as well. In these forms the first-person plural pronoun is used to denote a single speaker in an egocentric manner. A monarch might use it to refer to himself or herself in formal contexts, probably in order to seem more powerful. This particular use of the pronoun *we* concerns only Elizabeth I in this study, and I assume that it generally occurs in formal letters or when the Queen has wanted to emphasize her superiority, as in (2):

- (2) **We** could never have imagined had **we** not seen it fall out in experience that a man raised up by **ourself** and extraordinarily favoured by **us** above any other subject of this land, would have in so contemptible a sort broken **our** commandment, in a cause that so greatly toucheth **us** in honour; (A 1586 TC ELIZABETH2)

I will apply Wales's prototypical pronoun paradigm (1996: 13). The items in question are the singular subjective and objective cases of first- and second-person personal pronouns (*I* and *me*, *you*), singular possessive pronouns (*my* and *mine*, *your* and *yours*), and reflexive pronouns (*myself*, *yourself*, *yourselves*). Since in some instances the letters are addressed to more than one person, I have included the second-person plural forms. The royal *we* forms are also included (*we*, *us*, *our*, *ours*, *ourselves*).

3. Data

The material was drawn from the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (CEEC), a socially representative electronic corpus which has been compiled by the Sociolinguistics and Language History team at the Research Unit for Variation and Change from 1993 onward for the study of social variables in the history of English. The timespan covered in the current 1998 version of the CEEC is from 1410 to 1681, and the size of the whole corpus is 2.7 million running words. The extralinguistic variables taken into account in the process of data selection include the writer's provenance, social and family status, sex, education, age, and relation to the recipient. (see <http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/CoRD/corpora/CEEC/index.html> for more information [link updated 10 March 2011]). Registers are differentiated in the CEEC coding on the basis of the relation between the writer and the addressee. FN stands for a nuclear family member, FO for other family member, TC for close friends, T for other acquaintances, and FS for family servants.

Social stratification and register are important factors that were taken into consideration. Ideally, the informants whose letters would serve as material would have consisted of educated noblemen and noblewomen of Elizabeth's age who resided at the court and whose letters, preferably written around 1580-1600, were addressed to people who were not members of their nuclear family, thus resembling Elizabeth as much as possible. Unfortunately this could not be fully achieved, mainly because of lack of material from ideal female informants. Compromises had to be made on the age and residence patterns of the women.

The material from Elizabeth is drawn primarily from the QELIZAB1 text file in the CEEC. She was 52-63 years old when she wrote these letters. The letters to James VI are coded as FO, and the letter to Lady Hoby as T.

QELIZAB1: 15,013 words, 29 letters.

Correspondence with King James VI of Scotland, 1585-1596. One letter to Lady Hoby in 1566.

Because the QELIZAB1 file is not very extensive, I compiled a small additional corpus of Elizabeth's letters to serve as supplementary material and to offer register variation. The letters in the DELIZAB2 text file are taken from G.B. Harrison's *The Letters of Queen Elizabeth I* (1981) and John Bruce's *Letters of Elizabeth and James VI* (1849). (Unfortunately the letters in the Harrison collection are modernized.) All holograph letters were included (unless they already existed in the Elizabeth1 text file), and a few copies of holograph letters were included if they were said to be copies written in the Queen's own hand. A large selection of good personal letters had to be left out because they turned out to be copies or were from potentially unreliable sources. The letters selected were for the most part very short, and some were postscripts; the DELIZAB2 file serves best as supplementary material. The registers in the DELIZAB2 file are FO, TC, and T.

DELIZAB2: 3,457 words, 15 letters.

Correspondence mostly with statesmen in the years 1563-1598.

Recipients: Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon; Sir Robert Cecil; William Cecil, Lord Burghley; Robert Devereaux, Earl of Essex; Walter Devereaux, Earl of Essex; Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick; Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester; John

Harington; Sir Thomas Heneage; King James VI of Scotland; Sir John Perrot, Lord Deputy of Ireland.

The term E1 is used to refer to the QELIZAB1 text file, and Elizabeth1 to Queen Elizabeth, who wrote the letters in E1. E2 refers to DELIZAB2 text file, and Elizabeth2 to the writer of the letters in E2.

The informant material is taken from the following files in the CEEC.

Men:

1. QCECILW: William Cecil, Lord Burghley.

48 letters, written 1566-1598.

Recipients: Nathaniel Bacon; Nathaniel Bacon & Martin Barney; Sir Nicholas Bacon; Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester; Thomas Edmondes; Sir Christopher Hatton; Sir Thomas Heneage; Dr. Matthew Hutton; Sir William Paston, Nathaniel Bacon & Thomas Farmer; Mr. Wood.

2. QDUDLEYR: Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.

48 letters, written 1576-1586.

Recipients: William Cecil, Lord Burghley; Mr. Davison; The Lord Treasurer, The Lord Chamberlain, the Vice Chamberlain & Mr. Secretary Walsingham; The Lords of the Council; Sir Francis Walsingham; Mr. Wood.

3. QWALSINF: Sir Francis Walsingham.

35 letters, written 1576-1589.

Recipients: Nathaniel Bacon; Sir Nicholas Bacon; Henry Lord Cromwell & Nathaniel Bacon; Sir Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.

The male informants of the study have only one type of register, T, but otherwise they pose no problems. All the men were well educated, resided at the Court, were approximately of Elizabeth's age, and corresponded during the latter part of the sixteenth century.

Women:

1. QSTUARTA: Lady Arabella Stuart.

65 letters, written 1588-1611.

Recipients: Queen Anna; Sir Henry Brounker; Sir Robert Cecil; Lady Jane Drummond; Queen Elizabeth I; Thomas Erskine; Mr. John Hacker; Prince Henry; King James I; Mr. William Seymour; Sir Andrew Sinclair; Sir John Stanhope & Sir Robert Cecil; Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury; Gilbert Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury; Mary Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury.

2. QRUSSELL: Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford.

34 letters, written 1614-1626.

Recipients: Jane, Lady Cornwallis; Mr. Bacon.

3. QBELIZA: Elizabeth of Bohemia, daughter of James VI of Scotland.

68 letters, written 1612?-1661.

Recipients: Lady Anne Apsley; Sir Julius Caesar; Sir Dudley Carleton; Charles I; Charles Louis, Elector Palatine; Prince Henry; Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel; King James I; Sir Edward Nicholas; Thomas Rowe; George Villiers; Sir Ralph Winwood.

The women provide a sufficient amount of material, they wrote in several registers, and their backgrounds fit the profile of a moderately good informant. Only their ages are problematic: Arabella was 42 years younger than Elizabeth, Lucy Russell was 49 years younger, and Elizabeth of Bohemia was as much as 63 years younger. Elizabeth of Bohemia also lived abroad for almost fifty years. Despite the limitations this period inevitably sets to the quality of material where women are concerned, I have had to cope with what is available. Table 1 shows the word counts of the letters, the registers in which the informants wrote, and their rank.

Table 1. The protagonist, female informants and male informants: word counts, register and rank.

Elizabeth	Word count	Register	Rank
Elizabeth1	15,013	FO, T	Royal
Elizabeth2	3,457	FO, TC, T	Royal
TOTAL	18,470		
Women			
Arabella Stuart	30,822	FO, T	Nobility
Lucy Russell	15,380	TC, T	Nobility
Elizabeth of Bohemia	32,259	T, FN	Royal
TOTAL	78,461		
Men			
Robert Dudley	40,188	T	Nobility
William Cecil	31,447	T	Nobility
Francis Walsingham	15,574	T	Gentry Upper
TOTAL	87,209		

4. Results

4.1. Evidential verbs

Two general impressions arose from these results: the use of evidential verbs did not show a significant gender difference, and the frequencies of verbs in E1 were disappointingly, yet interestingly low. As shown by Table 2, the female informants were the most frequent users of the evidential verbs, even though the normalized frequencies do not differ very much from the male informants or Elizabeth. The chi-square test shows that there are no significant differences (the level of significance being 5%) in the total number of evidential verbs, between male and female informants ($p < 0.10$), or between Elizabeth1 and the male and female informants ($p < 0.10$). Elizabeth resembles women more than men, but the overall difference is insignificant. Both present and past tense verb forms were included in the study. Past tense was not used as commonly as present tense in the letters of the informants; there were, for example, no past tense forms of *think* in E1.

Table 2. Total number of first-person evidential verbs in the letters of Elizabeth I and the male and female informants: normalized frequencies / 10,000 words and absolute frequencies (in brackets)

Informant	evidential verbs	
Elizabeth1+2	54.1	(100)
Men	49.6	(432)
Women	55.7	(437)

Interestingly, there is a difference between Elizabeth1 and Elizabeth2 in the normalized frequencies for evidential verbs. Elizabeth2 uses these verbs more often than any other informant, while Elizabeth1 is in the sixth place (see Table 3). However, the overall number of verbs in E2 is low.

Table 3. First-person evidential verbs in the letters of individual informants: normalized frequencies / 10,000 words and absolute frequencies (in brackets)

Informant	evidential verbs	
Elizabeth1	50.0	(75)
Elizabeth2	72.3	(25)
William Cecil	42.3	(133)
Robert Dudley	55.0	(221)
Francis Walsingham	50.1	(78)
Arabella Stuart	54.2	(167)
Lucy Russell	47.5	(73)
Elizabeth of Bohemia	61.1	(197)

When the results from the E1 and E2 text files are combined and compared to the informants, the Queen appears to use these verbs relatively often, and the difference between Elizabeth I and the other women is very small. If Elizabeth2 is ignored, however, and the focus is on Elizabeth1, the Queen's use of evidential verbs resembles men's more than women's. Register variation is probably the reason behind this, since there do not seem to be any other distinguishing variables between E1 and E2. The chi-square was counted for E1 and E2 in order to find out whether the variation in their respective normalized frequencies is significantly different, but the variation is probably random.

When the ten most commonly occurring evidential verbs were counted, Elizabeth (both E1 and E2) was closer to men than women in the use of five (*believe, know, trust, see, perceive*), and closer to women in the use of only two (*find, am sure*). This would indicate that there is indeed a connection with men's language use, although the differences between Elizabeth, men and women are not particularly marked. Interestingly, *think* and *doubt* proved to be verbs which Elizabeth used in a significantly different manner from both male and female informants. The chi-squares for these two verbs show that variation between Elizabeth, men and women is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$ for both verbs).

When E1 and E2 are compared with each other, differences are found in the use of the most frequent verbs. Elizabeth1 features *doubt* the most frequently (9.3), followed by *trust* (6.0), and then *think* and *am sure* both with 5.3. However, the Queen's use of verbs is very different in the E2 file. *Think* is the most commonly used verb in E2 with a frequency of 20.2, and

there is in fact a significant difference between the uses of *think* in E1 and E2 ($p < 0.01$). *Doubt* (8.7) is the second most common verb in E2; the frequencies of this particular verb in E1 and E2 do not differ greatly. *Am sure* and *see* share third place in the E2.

In contrast with Palander-Collin (1999), men used *I think* much more than women, and their use of this verb was also more consistent than among women informants. Another evidential verb which the men used more than the women and Elizabeth was *find*. The women favour the verbs *believe* and *know* more than the men and Elizabeth do. In general, the differences between men and women in the use of these verbs were not great.

I would have concluded from the overall frequencies that the Queen resembles men more than women had E1 been my only source of material. But the frequencies of verbs in E2 were so high (in fact, the highest of all informants) that the combined frequencies of E1 and E2 were suddenly closer to women than men. Elizabeth's use of evidential verbs should be differentiated according to register: if evidential verbs (e.g. *think*) appear in register TC a lot more than in other registers, the problem might be resolved since TC is the only register lacking in E1. However, I doubt that the answer is this simple.

I am reluctant to draw more than tentative conclusions concerning Elizabeth's overall use of verbs, but when all the results are considered, it seems that in certain contexts Elizabeth resembles men slightly more than women. However, E2 suggests that in different contexts and under the influence of different variables, her language use is probably closer to women's. All in all, the corpus must be expanded to cover various registers so that the question can be answered satisfactorily.

4.2. Degree adverbs

Gender difference was more striking in the use of degree adverbs. Elizabeth used them much more than both men and women, but more similarly to women than men. Women used degree adverbs significantly more than men ($p < 0.001$), but the use of individual items was not as clearly divided. Again there was variation between Elizabeth1 and Elizabeth2. This time Elizabeth1 used the items much more than Elizabeth2, but there is a ten percent possibility that the variation is random.

Table 4. Degree adverbs in the letters of Elizabeth I and the male and female informants: normalized frequencies / 10,000 words and absolute frequencies (in brackets)

Informant	degree adverbs	
Elizabeth1+2	169.5	(313)
Men	123.9	(1080)
Women	156.9	(1231)

In total numbers Elizabeth resembled women much more than men, but there were certain differences when individual items were examined. In the ten most frequently occurring degree adverbs, Elizabeth's usage seemed closer to women's in the case of two (*greatly*, *heartily*). She resembled men more in the use of two items as well (*well*, *much*). However, there were five words which she used in a markedly different way from both men and women (*so*, *very*, *most*, *too*, *right*): she is an infrequent user of *very*, but favours *so*, *too*, *most* and *right* much more than other informants do. I assume that when one word item is chosen much more often than the alternative, the less-favoured words are consistently less frequent than the

more favoured. But compared to the informants, Elizabeth's use of the other items is not diminished by the frequent use of her favourite degree adverbs. She is the most frequent user of degree adverbs in total frequencies, and there are no particular differences in her use of other word items compared to men and women. Elizabeth's use of individual items shows idiosyncratic variation and differs from both male and female informants. (However, the same kind of idiosyncratic variation would probably appear if one of the other informants were considered separately.)

Table 5. Degree adverbs in the letters of individual informants: normalized frequencies / 10,000 words and absolute frequencies (in brackets)

Informant	degree adverbs	
Elizabeth1	177.9	(267)
Elizabeth2	133.1	(46)
William Cecil	92.5	(291)
Robert Dudley	133.4	(536)
Francis Walsingham	162.5	(253)
Arabella Stuart	154.8	(477)
Lucy Russell	167.1	(257)
Elizabeth of Bohemia	154.1	(497)

The women informants used *very* and *much* more than men and Elizabeth. They wrote at a later period than men which may affect their use of *very*, but the difference between women and men is not very marked. Men used *well*, *greatly*, *heartily* and *earnestly* more than women and Elizabeth; the frequent use of (at least) *greatly* signals conservatism, which is often associated with male language use.

4.2.1. Maximizers and boosters

In the total frequencies of maximizers there was not much difference between Elizabeth1+2, men and women. The use of boosters, on the other hand, shows gender variation, the women informants using them much more than men, and Elizabeth, most of all. There is highly significant variation between Elizabeth, men and women in the use of boosters ($p < 0.001$). The chi-square was counted for Elizabeth and women because of the difference in their respective normalized frequencies, but the variation is probably random.

The hypothesis that women use more boosters than men was proved correct. Nevertheless, in order to prove that women are more innovative users of intensifiers, one would have to compare the frequencies of men and women in the use of new boosters.

Table 6. Maximizers and boosters in the letters of Elizabeth I and the male and female informants: normalized frequencies / 10,000 words and absolute frequencies (in brackets)

Informant	maximizers		boosters	
Elizabeth1+2	4.3	(8)	166.2	(307)
Men	3.8	(33)	120.1	(1047)
Women	3.6	(28)	148.4	(1164)

4.3. First- and second-person pronouns

First- and second-person pronouns were the obvious clear case of gender difference. Women used them significantly more than men ($p < 0.001$), and Elizabeth resembled women much more than men in total numbers. She also scored the highest frequencies in the use of the pronouns. Not surprisingly, the three most commonly used pronouns were *I*, *you*, and *my*, which imply intense involvement and interaction in the communication situation.

Table 7. First- and second-person pronouns in the letters of Elizabeth I and the male and female informants: normalized frequencies / 10,000 words and absolute frequencies (in brackets)

Informant	pronouns	
Elizabeth1+2	1084.5	(2003)
Men	622.0	(5420)
Women	1041.9	(8175)

Elizabeth used *my* and all the second-person pronouns more than the male and the female informants. There was hardly any difference in the total frequencies of E1 and E2, and their combined frequency was slightly higher than that of the women informants.

In Table 8, the women (Elizabeth included) group together as the most frequent users of personal pronouns with normalized frequencies ranging quite evenly from 1108.7 to 965.6. Men show the same kind of consistency in their use of personal pronouns, except that they are at the other end of the scale with frequencies from 657.7 to 586.9.

Table 8. First- and second-person pronouns in the letters of individual informants: normalized frequencies / 10,000 words and absolute frequencies (in brackets)

Informant	pronouns	
Elizabeth1	1103.0	(1656)
Elizabeth2	1003.8	(347)
William Cecil	587.0	(1846)
Robert Dudley	657.7	(2660)
Francis Walsingham	586.9	(914)
Arabella Stuart	1108.7	(3417)
Lucy Russell	1068.3	(1643)
Elizabeth of Bohemia	965.6	(3115)

As could be expected, the total frequencies of first- and second-person pronouns are much higher than those of degree adverbs or evidential verbs.

Elizabeth did not use the most involved pronouns as much as the women informants, who used *I*, *me*, *mine* and *myself* more often than the Queen or the men. There was in fact a highly significant difference between women, men and Elizabeth in the use of *I* ($p < 0.001$). Elizabeth resembled women in the use of four items (*my*, *myself*, *you* and *yours*), and men in the use of three items (*I*, *me* and *mine*). In the use of *your* and *yourself/-selves* she differed from the male and female informants more than she resembled either of them and, interestingly, she proved to use second-person pronouns more than first-person. This implies

close interaction with the recipient shown by the use of direct address forms and suggests that Elizabeth focuses more on the recipient than on herself in the contents of the letters. Elizabeth1 was also the only informant who used *you* more as an object than as a subject. None of the informants used *you* more than *I* except Elizabeth. This seems to suggest that in Elizabeth's letters the role of the recipient is the most active.

Table 9. The mean frequencies of first- and second-person pronouns in the letters of Elizabeth I and the male and female informants

Informant	1st person	2nd person
Elizabeth1+2	524.6	535.5
Men	400.8	220.7
Women	699.6	342.3

The letters to James VI are often advisory, an older, more experienced monarch instructing a young king, and were sometimes written under grave political circumstances which required active measures from James. Example (3) from a letter to James VI illustrates this.

- (3) A sore question, **you** may suppose, but no other act than suche as **I** am assured he knowes, and therfor **I** hope he wyl not dare deny **you** a truthe; but yet **I** besече **you** let it not seme to come from me, to whom **I** made no semblance but ignorance.
(A 1585 FO ELIZABETH1)

The first occurrence of *you* (a subjective case) can be interpreted as a device for showing consideration towards the recipient, in order to let him know that the writer can relate to his opinion, but can nevertheless suggest a better perspective on the issue. The second and third occurrences of *you* are objective cases. The third occurrence is a direct request which makes the addressee an active participant in the situation. In example (4) Elizabeth concentrates more on herself, since from "My dear Warwick", there are no direct address forms. This may result from the difference in social status between James VI and Warwick, i.e. from register variation. James VI is an equal, while Warwick is a subject. On the other hand, the subjects of these letters are different. The reasons for the letter written to James are serious, and it seems important that he be deeply involved in the situation. The example from a letter to Warwick is an expression of benevolence, the meaning of which seems to be to emphasize Elizabeth's warm feelings towards the recipient.

- (4) My dear Warwick, if your honour and my desire could accord with the loss of the needfulest finger **I** keep, God help me so in my most need as **I** would gladly lose that one joint for your safe abode with me; but since **I** cannot that **I** would, **I** will do that **I** may (A 1563 T ELIZABETH2)

Here the Queen is the only active party: there are no references to Warwick's thinking, acting or doing anything. In general, the Queen's style is not as involved as other women's, even though it is highly engaged especially in example (4). I am inclined to think that there is something in Elizabeth's position that draws her closer to men than women in the way she refers to herself. As was pointed out, Elizabeth resembles men much more than women in the use of *I*. Could these lower frequencies have something to do with holding a public position? Elizabeth and the men were all important figures actively involved with matters of the state, while the women, more or less involved though they were in life at court, could not directly participate in politics. In general, the women wrote more about their personal lives, and

Elizabeth's and the men's letters deal with politics, although often at a personal level. This might explain the lower frequencies of *I* in the letters of the Queen and the male informants.

4.3.1. The royal *we*

The royal *we* forms occurred markedly less than first-person pronouns, which could be expected since the aim has been to include only private letters in both letter corpora instead of official letters. The normalized frequency for all first-person pronouns in E1+2 is 524.6, while it is 23.8 for all instances of the royal *we* forms. Curiously, there appears to be a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.01$) between the two files in the use of royal *we*. It occurs much more frequently in Elizabeth2; one explanation may be register variation. The letters in E2 were addressed to several different people and were written in various circumstances, while Elizabeth's correspondence with James VI was regular and established. The royal *we* distances the writer from the addressee, which is useful when the writer wants to reproach the addressee as in (2). In (5), the royal *we* forms coincide with singular first-person pronouns.

- (5) euen by some suche as lately issued out of **our** lande, constraineth **me**, as wel for the care **we** have of your person as of the discharge of **our** owne honor and conscience, to send you immediatly this gentleman, one that appartaineth to **us** in bloud, bothe to offer you all assistance of helpe as al good indeuor of counceil, and to make hit plaine that **we** delt plainly. Thes lordes makeng great outcryes that **I** wold not or coulde helpe them to be restored; (A 1585 FO ELIZABETH1)

It seems that these letters to James VI were often written in a over-wrought state of mind because of the sometimes unstable political situations; *I* indicates that the writer commits herself personally to the situation, while *we* and other plural forms refer to the involvement of the state at the same time. In other words, Elizabeth was both personally and officially involved in the situation. There are also some contexts where the first-person form would seem inappropriate, for example if the expression *our lande* was replaced with *my lande*. An English monarch did not rule without the consent of the parliament, and the occurrence of certain plural forms may be interpreted as indication of the state's involvement. But in the phrase "one that appartaineth to *us* in bloud" the plural form seems to refer exclusively to Elizabeth. Perhaps the intention was to emphasize the importance of the man in question by associating him with the official figure of the Queen.

5. The language of Elizabeth I

A person's gender influences the way they are treated, but which role is stronger, the biological one a person is born with, which automatically imposes a particular social role on the individual, or an important acquired role? The connection between sex and identity appeared to be more significant. The overall results show that Elizabeth resembles women more than men, and that women are more involved in communication situations: in total frequencies they used evidential verbs, degree adverbs and first- and second-person pronouns more than men. Individual informants did not always act according to expectations, however. Clear gender patterns did not appear in the use of evidential verbs, and the male/female difference in the overall use of verbs was not significant. However, there were significant differences in the use of individual verbs.

Elizabeth resembles women more than men in her language use, although the use of evidential verbs could not be satisfactorily explained. An element of gender neutrality might be sensed there, both in Elizabeth's and other informants' letters. When Elizabeth's letters are looked at from the point of view of Holmes's sociolinguistic universals (1998), a model in which Holmes outlines possible universal tendencies in the way women use language, it seems that she focuses on content and information which are generally associated with male communication, instead of the affective purposes of communication generally associated with women. It is not likely that she focused on the affective functions of the interaction, since she mostly wrote in formal contexts. It should also be noted that Holmes's model is based on spoken interaction. Letter-writing does not convey this sort of information as easily as face-to-face conversation. However, Elizabeth's frequent use of pronouns can be seen as a device for producing a bond between participants, which Holmes characterizes as an affective function of language associated with women. This bond may or may not have an affective function; it was necessary that Elizabeth and James VI be on good terms with each other, but this had more to do with diplomatic than personal relations. In general, Elizabeth's language seems to combine features of female and male styles of communication according to Holmes's model, but in this context it also appears to be more feminine than masculine. The element of monarchy may have affected her feminine side, but she cherished the role of the queen bee as the centre of attention.

To be a member of a high-density network implies sharing certain linguistic forms with other members of the network (Milroy 1987). Elizabeth I, Cecil, Dudley, and Walsingham shared the membership of such a network, and it was indeed observed that Elizabeth resembled the men more than the women in her use of certain lexical items (especially evidential verbs). This is nevertheless difficult to explain. Is it an indication of belonging to a high-density network? How are gender roles involved, if they are? The language of other female members of the network should be observed so that the linguistic connections between network members can be identified without the distraction of the gender dimension. However, this would not be a simple solution to the problem, since other women of the court were not involved in the affairs of state, and did not share the membership of the inner network of the court which dealt with politics. In this sense Elizabeth I had more in common with the men than with the women of the court.

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