

SEX DIFFERENCES IN HISTORICAL SYNTAX:
EARLY MODERN ENGLISH TESTIMONIES IN THE MS
MINUTES OF THE COURT OF GOVERNORS OF THE ROYAL
HOSPITALS OF BRIDEWELL AND BETHLEM 1559-1599.
A PILOT STUDY.

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Introduction

Do men and women speak differently? Did they speak differently from each other in the past? The first question has provoked much work in recent decades, mostly within the domains of discourse analysis and phonology. Early studies concluded that women do speak differently: they approximate closer to the standard norm than men, they use more tags, and interrupt less than men (see, for example, Trudgill (1974) for the first finding, and Lakoff (1975) for the others). Tannen (1993) and Coates – Cameron (1988) provide overviews of subsequent studies, but both conclude that the assumptions that seemed reasonable in the seventies are probably premature. It is not yet safe to generalise, because findings that hold for one speech community can be overturned by a study of the next, as research techniques into the many linguistic variables that occur in a community become further refined. To illustrate: it is commonly asserted that research shows that men talk more than women. Yet Tannen (1993: 281-292) summarises that some studies show that American men speak more than American women in mixed-sex conversation; other studies show that in mixed-sex conversation American men and women talk about the same amount, and a few studies show that in mixed-sex conversation, American women speak more than American men. In single-sex conversation, American women speak more than they do in mixed-sex conversation. Yet how 'more' is quantified varies from study to study. It can be the amount of words produced, the amount

of sentences produced, the amount of turns taken, the amount of successful turns taken, or simple time duration. And what holds good for American culture (assuming it to be homogenous, which it isn't) will not necessarily hold for another culture. Coates and Cameron in particular stress that the variable 'sex' equates with the variable of socioeconomic dominance, and hence patternings that appear to pan out along the variable sex are not inherently due to sex at all, but to the variable of power. So whilst we can generalise that men and women do indeed show different linguistic habits, what these might consist of will vary from community to community, and there may not be so many differences between men and women in a given community as, say, between older men and younger men.

Thus the current state of knowledge about sex differences in language use would lead us to expect that there might be differences between Early Modern English male and female syntax, but that such differences would be likely to vary from group to group, and that the variable sex might not be the most salient variable.

What about the second question, did men and women speak differently from each other in the past? This cannot be answered in quite the same way as when the question is posed synchronically, as we cannot replicate, for example, turn-taking phenomena, interruption phenomena, take-up of topic rates, duration of silence, and so on. This paper, therefore, addresses the question via syntax, of which we do have written record – in the present case, a corpus of Early Modern English derived from oral testimony.

Should we expect the syntax of women's testimonies to differ from men's testimonies? Given the above synopsis of the current state of our understanding of sex differences in language use, the answer is yes (but with the caveat that the differences between the sexes may not be so great as the differences according to some other variable). Specifically with regard to syntax, there is some evidence that present-day male and female syntax does indeed differ. A recent study of Swedish writing seems to indicate that some men use longer sentences than women do. Strand (1995) investigated the written journalism of three different Swedish morning, evening and weekly newspapers at two different points in time, 1976 and 1992. He compared male and female sentence length (words per sentence) added to the percentage of words consisting of seven or more letters. He found that the men's sentences were longer, and contained longer words, than the women's sentences in all three papers, at both points in time, with only one exception. The exception was the one newspaper which had a female newsroom. In this one case there was no difference between male and female language use. (He speculated that this difference in sentence length might be because men and women belong to different subcultures, and although they perform the same language tasks, their language is filtered through their gendered subcultures.)

Thus there is some evidence that there might be such a thing as a syntactic difference between the sexes, but newspaper-writing is a learned skill, rather than a spontaneous linguistic act. It is therefore desirable to look at male and female unprepared speech for comparison. Again, there is present-day evidence that some men produce longer syntactic units than women (and other men), in spontaneous Norwegian speech. Jahr (1992) reports an investigation carried out between 1971 and 1976 by Hanssen, Hoel, Jahr, Rekdal and Wiggen into the syntax of Oslo residents. 48 residents were interviewed and taped, and classified according to sex, age, and the district they lived in (which indicated their social class). The interviewers were mostly male students, and they led the informants to believe that they were being interviewed about housing conditions in Oslo, so as to avoid linguistically self-conscious responses. When transcribed, the data was analysed into macrosyntagms (cf. Loman – Jørgensen (1971)). This is because speakers do not always employ complete sentences as we know them in writing, although they may, of course, use a mixture of complete and incomplete sentences. The defining criteria of macrosyntagms are:

- A macrosyntagm may not be a syntactic constituent of another macrosyntagm.
- A finite verb is crucial, but other elements may be omitted.

Jahr (1992) is concerned with the patterning of macrosyntagm structure and length as related to variables of sex, age and class. He found that the middle-aged, upper-middle-class male speakers used longer macrosyntagms than the other speakers:

The group of upper-middle-class, middle-aged male speakers is far more pre-occupied with syntactic form than the other groups. It turns out that they organize their syntax in a different way from other groups and strive towards producing sentences more in keeping with standardized written syntax than other social groups do. They plan their speech more carefully; they try to avoid omissions of syntactically relevant elements; and they make an effort to complete their sentences instead of cutting them off (Jahr 1992: 131).

Jahr (1992: 131-132) notes that this finding seems to go against the (then) prevailing sociolinguistic expectation that women approximate towards the standard norm more than men, and he speculates whether it might reflect the greater social ambition of middle-aged middle-class males – thus continuing the Trudgillian tradition of locating the reason for the variation in the (supposed) social function of the group.

Thus there seems to be reason to wonder whether Early Modern male and female syntax might have differed too, and on the evidence of Strand and Jahr's findings, we will look to see whether the men used longer syntagms than the women.

The present study: the Bridewell Corpus¹

The data for the present study consists of witnesses' narratives from the MS Minutes of the Court of Governors of the Royal Hospitals of Bridewell and Bethlem in the City of London, for the forty years 1559-1599. The Court Minute Books are not published, but are available for consultation on microfilm at the Guildhall Library, City of London. As men and women were apprehended of a crime in the City of London and brought for trial before the hospital court (the hospital court covered many of the functions that the magistrates' court covers today), various witnesses were called to testify to what they had seen. The narratives of some of the defendants and witnesses are used here as source material, and transcriptions follow. The narratives should not be taken as representative of spontaneous speech, in that any court narrative is crafted to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the skill or naivete of the speaker. Nor were the narratives uninterrupted flows of connected speech, but the result of a series of questions from the examiner of the court. These replies were then written down by the (presumably male) court recorders, so there is at least one level of possible syntactic interference, more of which later.

To what extent can the Bridewell court testimonies be taken as evidence of male and female syntax? The examiners' responses were not a spontaneous outpouring of raw data which was then perfectly recorded by the court recorder, but the prompted result of a question-and-answer session, in what must have been then (as it still is) a very formal social situation. Nonetheless, I believe that these narratives, made up of a stitching-together of the answers given in court, can provide evidence of Early Modern spoken syntax. It is possible, arguably, to distinguish some of the oral passages from the written ones, as certain syntactic features are not uniform throughout all the data. The syntactic features that bundle together with the case summary (when the clerk records the persons involved, the nature of the crime, and the verdict, if any) tend to differ from those that bundle with the testimonies of the witnesses, plaintiffs and defendants. For example, the pronoun count in subject position rises in the testimonies, and sinks in the case summaries (for further treatment of distinguishing between oral and written components of court records on syntactic grounds see Wright (1995)).

It should be borne in mind that the Oslo data was also the result of a question-and-answer session, and most of the interviewers in the Oslo survey were male. Subsequently Jahr was able to identify that his own macrosyntagms had decreased in length when he interviewed female residents (Jahr 1978, 1979).

¹ I would especially like to thank the organizers of the Second Nordic Conference on Language and Gender, University of Tromsø, 3-5 November 1994 for inspiring the present paper, and to Ernst Håkon Jahr and Jonathan Hope for their comments on earlier drafts. For a discussion of the history of the hospital court, and the relationship of the narratives to verbatim Early Modern speech, see Wright (1995).

So although it is likely that the court recorders were male, and hence were filtering what they heard from the witness-box through their own gendered syntax (cf. Strand above), Jahr's observation of his own syntactic strategies when talking to women shows that any interference from the court recorder was not necessarily unidirectional (that is, it is just as likely that a male questioner would modify his own syntax when trying to elicit a response from a female informant).

The Data²

Sixteen informants provide the narratives used as data in this study: the women are Jone Starkey (servant, 1559), Marie Daie (housewife, 1575), Katherine Cuffe (? , 1598), Susan Holland (servant, 1598), Agnes Ward (servant, 1599), Suzan Hill (servant, 1599), Johan Ward (wife, 1599); and the men are Richarde Denye (gentleman, 1562), William Tuckar (? , 1575), Richard Morley (servant or apprentice, 1575), Ralfe Atkinson (servant, 1575), John Harding (waterman, 1575), Arthur Thomlyns (servant, 1577), Henrye Broke (servant, 1577), Thomas Webster (married to a sempster, 1598) and Thomas Lucey (servant, 1598). In the transcripts, all spelling and punctuation is as in the manuscript. The abbreviation and suspension marks are indicated by the abbreviation and suspension font, and any illegible material is indicated by diamond brackets. As the testimonies consist of a first person narrative turned (or usually turned) into a third person reportage by the court recorder, the introductory clause 'the said (so-and-so) saith that ...' has been aligned left, and what they said has been aligned right. Only the right hand side has been included in the macrosyntagmatic analysis. Embedded direct speech has been aligned further right. Although a witness may report speech uttered by the opposite sex, their recollections are included in their macrosyntagm count. This is because the words of others are more likely to have been filtered through the rememberer's own syntax constraints, than to be a perfect verbatim recollection. Anyway, there is not enough reported speech to make a great deal of difference.

Sixteen informants, nine men and seven women, provide a total of 288 macrosyntagms: 145 male, 143 female. This sample may seem small, but there were several constraints: only those testimonies produced by a single witness were allowed (many testimonies start with the swearing-in of one witness, but go on to include other voices, and so these had to be avoided). Unlike Strand's newspaper study, it seems essential to include the data for the reader to agree/disagree with my macrosyntagmatic analysis, as Early Modern English is sufficiently unlike Present-Day English for there to be plenty of room for disagreement and in an effort to compare as identical a number as possible of

² Especial thanks to the Governors of the Royal Hospitals of Bridewell and Bethlem for permission to reproduce the source texts.

male and female macrosyntagms, I had to exclude several potential texts (it did not seem justifiable to curtail a text).

As the finite verb is the defining constituent of the macrosyntagm, the finite verb has been enboldened. Readers may want to disagree with my analysis, in particular, the treatment of syntagm-initial *the which, in the which, at which, which said* and other 'sentential' *which* constructions (for example see macrosyntagms 2-4 in Text 1) where the *which* constructions premodify a proper noun; and pronoun *who* (see for example macrosyntagms 5, 7 in Text 3) where *who* cannot refer to the immediate antecedent, but to one of the protagonists in the court case. Note that if these are included as subordinators, then the female [words per macrosyntagm] count will be even higher.

Text 1. 21 May 1559 Guildhall Library microfilm 510, 1/4v, 5

Macrosyntagmatic analysis: Jone Starkey

1. Jone starkey the daughter of John starkey skyn^l late inhabityng in Bogerow, brought into this house the xxj daye of maye 1559 whiche Jone lately did inhabite with one John hall & his wife inhabityng in cock lane in the parishe of S Sepulchres, and beyng here examyned, the sayd Jone sayth that
of late she inhabited w^t one Mr willoughby a gentlem^a inhabityng in the Barbican
2. in the whiche house ther had dwelled lest one Margaret who was of lewd disposic^on,
3. the whiche Margaret beyng acquaynted w^t theaforsayd John hall wrought the meanes to attempt and entise the sayd Jone vnto a tau^lne in the Barbican, wher was the sayd hall and a gentleman called Mr wol^lstone,
4. whiche wol^lstone so tempted this Jone w^t fayr words and great promesses that hall and he allured her from her sayd Mastres Willoughby and brought her to hall^e house, wher she remayned the space of xiiij dayes
5. And in that meane tyme resorted to the sayd house dy^lse lewd and naughty p^ons bothe men and wom^e who aswell had the vse of the say hall^e wife as of other.
6. And among other resorted one Spanyard vnto the sayd house
7. and ther espyeng this examⁿ Jone he first moued his mynde to hall him selfe & then to his wife
8. and p^omysed vnto them that if they would let him haue that wenche to carye to Countye de ffery, he would geue hall and his wife xl crowns.

9. The sayd hall and his wife dyd bothe of them moue it to this examⁿ,
10. and she was vnwillyng,
11. and bothe hall and his wife sayd to this examⁿ
- 11a. thou art a very foole,
- 11b. he is a goodly gentleman,
- 11c. & will geue the soche a reward as maye bothe do the & vs good,
12. And in them this examⁿ consented,
13. and the sayd hall^e wife and her housband at the daye apoynted brought the sayd wenche downe to the Black ffryers into the house of one harrys
14. and there striped her
15. and took from her all her old ger,
16. and p< > vpon her all freshe and gaye ger w^t a muffeler of veluet &c
17. And then conueyed this examⁿ to the white ffryers
18. and there dely^led her to the spanyard who put her in a boate
19. & caryed her to durrh^m place where countye ffery lyeth,
20. and the spanyard went a land to open a back dore to bryng her in,
21. and in the meane tyme the watermen so admonyshed her of the naughty(es) of the Spanyards, that she vtterly abhorred the(m)
22. & cryed out desyryng them for the passyon of Christ to cary her back agayne,
23. & the sayd waterm(e) > did so &c.

[average macrosyntagm length = 17.3 words]

Text 2. 6 May 1562 Guildhall Library microfilm 511, 1/213, 213v

Macrosyntagmatic analysis: Richarde Denny

1. Richarde Denny of Bawdesey in the countie of Suff gent broughte into this house of Bridwell the seconde of maye 1562 by the Mr of Christes hospitall for that he comitted whordome withe Anne Davye & Joane walker servauntes in the house of the signe of the bell in newegate markt and beinge examoned saithe that
he lienge in the said house by the space of one sevenighte laste past wher he hathe bene geste aboute xj or xij yeres hathe knowen Dyvers mayde servauntes Dwelling in the same house /
2. and in michaelmas terme last lienge in the same house he had to Do withe the abouenamed Joane walker in his owne bed chamber and also w^t one Anne Davye in like man^r?

3. whiche said Joane and Anne before that tyme he **founde** playenge
the whores w^t three welshmen in the chamber over the kitchen
4. as he **saithe**
whiche said Joane and Anne espienge that this exa^{ate} *p*ceaved
their Lewdnes **watched** him when he wente to bed
5. and for feare he shulde open their said evell vnto their misteres
offred them selves he goyng to bed vnto him
as he **saithe** /
6. whervvpon by the temptacion of the Deavell he **had** the vse of
them /
7. Also more he **saithe** that
since his last beinge in towne and beinge in the kitchen of the
same house Joane beinge in the said kitchen w^t him sayd
- 7a. Mr Denny will you go vppe to yor chamber
8. as he **saithe**
- 8a. what **shall** I Do ther said this exa^{ate} /
- 8b. marye **said** she
- 8c. yf you will go I **will** go w^t you and do what you will haue
me do /
9. whervvpon they bothe **wente** into his chamber
10. and ther **had** to do w^t her
11. and **gave** her ij grotes to buy a paier of showes
12. and w^t in a Daye or two after this exa^{ate} beinge in his chamber
aboute she **came** to him againe
13. at whiche tyme also he **had** to do w^t her
14. and **gave** her a grote
15. and at her Departinge from him **sayd**
- 15a. yf you will gyve me a grote I **will** come to bed sone to you /
16. and more he **cannot** saye
17. nor he never **had** to w^t any other
as he **saithe** /

[average macrosyntagm length = 16.9 words]

Text 3. 2 April 1575 Guildhall Library microfilm 511, 2/107

Macrosyntagmatic analysis: Marie Daie

1. Marie Daie **confesseth** that

- aboute Michelmas laste past she beinge in hir chamber & settinge
in hir windowe at worcke **was** beckned ou² by oⁿ Jamis fforman
dwellinge ou² againste hir in the *pshe* of whitchappell wth out Al-
gate who beckned to hir three tymes,
2. whervvpon she **wente** vnto him, thinckinge his wiffe had not bene
well, & knowe (<) no other cause,
3. And so she **wente** wth him into his howse,
4. & beinge in the hall he **saide** vnto hir,
- 4a. Marie, howe **doste** thoue,
- 4b. where is thy husbnde,
5. who **answered**
- 5a. he is goⁿ a shootinge,
6. whervvpon she **asked** howe Ms fforman did,
7. who **answered**
- 7a. she is well
- 7b. & is goⁿ into London,
8. And then she **asked** him
- 8a. Sr what is your pleasure,
9. & he **saide** he had called hir agood while,
10. & **asked** hir yf she sawe him not, who **saide** she sawe him not,
for yf she had she wolde haue come soner,
11. And then he **saide**
- 11a. Marie I **haue** had agood mynde to the agood while this
Twelmoneth & more,
- 11b. & I **colde** nei² speake wth thee till nowe,
12. and then she **asked** him where all his folkes were,
13. And he **saide** his wiffe was goⁿ into London, & his ffolkes were
in the garden dryinge of clothes,
14. And then he **drewe** hir into the *plou^r*,
15. & he **saide** he wolde haue his pleasure of hir before she wente,
whervvpon she **saide** she by fayre word^e entreted him & deferred
the same till a nother tyme,
17. And he **saide** to hir that if he mighte haue his pleasure of hir he
wolde be bounde in a C *ñ* to gett hir wth childe ether a boye or
a gerle

18. & so she **saithe**

she consented vnto him when tyme & place wolde serve /

[average macrosyntagm length = 16.0 words]

Text 4. 4 May 1575 Guildhall Library microfilm 511, 2/123v

Macrosyntagmatic analysis: William Tuckar

1. Will^r m Tuckar **saithe** that

he wth Oweñ Vaugħaī & one other comynge to Joħn Thorowgoode
howse in lente last they were drinckinge in the howse,

2. And theñ the tapster came to them

3. & saide yf they wolde they mighte haue a pece of Befē,

4. and theñ they were carryed oū the backsyde of the kitchin where
they had the befē,

5. And also the Tapster tolde them that

5a. yf yoū come in the mornyngē

5b. you shał haue a pece of Bacōn,

6. And also at that tyme the saide Thorowgoode tooke from them
a ringe of golde

7. & his Tapster chaunged certeyne peces of golde

8. whereof Will^r m Tuckar saide he had ixs for one Royall & that
añ other boye had but eighte shillingē

9. In thende he saide yf they wolde not geve him somewhate
he wolde sende for the constable

10. wherevppoñ one of the boyes gave him xijd

11. & theñ he badd theñ go out of the dores

12. & so they did,

13. And also Tukes **saithe** that

y^e saide Thorowgood stood once before him at billingsgate while
he did cutt a purse,

14. & that

he vsed so to Do before other boyes also. /

[average macrosyntagm length = 12.9 words]

Text 5. 12 October 1575 Guildhall Library microfilm 511, 2/183v

Macrosyntagmatic analysis: Richarde Morley

1. Richarde Morley **saieth** that

Tilley at the first came acquainted wth ffoulke Mounslowe at one
Mr Smithes where they wente to learne to write,

2. & that

there also he came acquainted wth ffowke Mounslowe,

3. & **saieth** that

Ralfe Atkinson was the first mover of the matter for their goinge
beyonde sea,

4. & he **saieth**

the saide Ralfe tolde him he had vij ĩ in a place,

5. & that

he wolde receave the same & Carrie it ou^r wth him,

6. And also **saieth** that

the saide Ralfe willed him to gett him a doblett,

7. wherevpon he wente to Mr Loftus

8. & fetched a pece of grogran,

9. but he wolde not lett the saide Ralfe nor anie other of them knowe
that he had gotten anie grogran,

10. & so put a doblet of it to make,

11. & after that wente to Mr loftus againe

12. & fetched two peces more, & iij quarters of a yarde of velvet,

13. And that he had a pece of grogran of John Mr demmans man,

14. And also **saieth** that

henrie Smithe after suche tyme as he had gotten the first pece,
willed him to gett as muche as he Colde of Credite,

15. & was A counsell of all their dealingē & of puttinge the same
to the Tailo^r /

[average macrosyntagm length = 12.5 words]

Text 6. October 1575 Guildhall Library microfilm 511, 2/184, 184v

Macrosyntagmatic analysis: Ralfe Atkinson

1. Ralfe Atkinsonñ servante wth Mr Prestwood **saieth** yt

a fortēnighte a gon, they began to conferr aboute there goinge
beyond sea, at Lambith,

2. And that the saide Richarde Morley first asked him whether he wolde go
beyonde sea or not

3. & offered him, yf he wolde go beyonde sea,
4. he saide his creditt was good,
5. & he wolde take vppe so mucche fustyan as wolde make them bothe doblett ϵ
6. & then he saide he wolde see whether Mounslowe wolde go wth them or not /
7. Richarde Morley saieth that
Ralfe first moved him to go beyonde sea,
8. The saide Richarde saieth
he was in the Companie of the saide Ralfe iij tymes,
9. & the saide Richarde denieth that
ei[?] the saide Ralfe saide vnto him, he wolde vndoe him yf he wente wth him beyonde sea,
10. Also the saide Richarde saieth
there was no woman in his companie but harding ϵ wife,
11. he saieth that
the widowe was not wth him,
12. but he was at hir howse about a dossen tymes & that he offered hir Marriadge. /
13. he saiethe
he neu[?] gave hir anie thinge but onelie a scarfe w^{ch} cost him two shilling ϵ ,
14. he saieth that
the cause whie she wente to dwell at Lamebith, was for that diu^s gentlemen resorted to hir, w^{ch} she was vnwillinge sholde Come to hir,
15. he denieth that
ei[?] he saide he had spente xx \bar{t} on hir,
16. The saide Ralfe saieth that
he knoweth not Mr Brandons sonne,
17. but saieth
he hathe sene him resorte to Henrie smithe,
18. he saieth
his Mrs howse was visited
19. & then he gott libertie to go to lambithe,
20. Also he Confesseth
he sholde haue had a paire of hose of grogrom garded wth velvet. /

[average macrosyntagm length = 11.7 words]

Text 7. 12 October 1575 Guildhall Library microfilm 511, 2/184v

Macrosyntagmatic analysis: John Hardinge

1. John Hardinge waterman broughte in by Mr Bull for harboringe of Richarde Morley, ffoulke Mounslowe, Ralfe Atkinson & others beinge menes p^{nt}ices & β vante & for sufferinge them there riotouslie to cons \langle ue \rangle ne, not onelie there M^f & ffrendes good ϵ but also other mens, The saide John Hardinge saithe, that

- the first tyme they came to his howse was the xjth daie of September last
2. at w^{ch} tyme they supped there
3. but they laie not ther that nighte,
4. but he saieth
on the xvth of september they came
& supped there,
6. & that night there laie ffwolke Mounslowe Henrie smithe, Ric^c Morley & Mr Bulls Brother,
7. And the xxvjth of september beinge a weddinge at the nexte dore to him, there lay Richarde Atkinson, foulk Mounslowe, henrie smithe, & Richarde Morley,
8. At the first tyme of ther being there they spente iiij s ,
9. but what they gave at the weddinge he knoweth not,
10. he saieth that
the seconde tyme of there comynge thither they came at iiij of the Clocke in the mornynge
11. & broughte a sett of vialls withe them,
12. & then spente there iiij d
13. & so appointe a suppar,
14. At w^{ch} tyme there sholde haue bene a widowe
15. & she havinge busines came not,
16. & they spente there at that tyme vj or vijs,
17. And also he saieth
on sondaie was sevenighte
18. there was certeyne of them wth a lute a gittorne & a Gittorne,
19. & that they were there, aboute iij quarters of an hower,
20. And also that they were there one tyme, when they broughte in a side and a hautch of venison,
21. And also saieth that
one in a buffe Jerkin wth a paire of Russet hose came thether sometymes wth them. /

[average macrosyntagm length = 10.6 words]

Text 8. 10 June 1577 Guildhall Library microfilm 511, 3/225v-226v

Macrosyntagmatic analysis: Arthur Thomlyns

1. Arthur Thomlyns *β*vante to Easte statione^r he sayeth that
one night he and his fellowes william Bartlet and Crede after *supp*
Aboute x A clocke were comaunded to goe to bedd
2. And beinge aboute some of his said fellowes Bartlet and Crede
mystrusted some ill rule
3. and watched
4. And sawe one Cowp A Dye^r and James Austen let into the house
at the backe dore /
5. As his fellowes tolde him
6. And about halfe an ower afte^r ther comynge in this exāiant sawe
one man goe out at the backe door /
7. And William Bartlet came downe
8. and drewe the lache at the hall dore /
9. but Millesent helde the dore
10. and woulde not let it open
11. this was aboute a q^{ter} of A yere sens. /
12. He sayeth that
Ellyn Hibbins sayed that Cowp Dier was a bedd wth her M^{rs}
13. And when the folkes came she shut him into the studye
14. And that his tagge of his hose hit against the waynskott w^{ch} caused
it to be harde
15. And the monye fell out of his hose into the flowe^r. /
16. He harde William Bartlet saye that Millsent Porte^r sent A l^re to
John Bentley compared him to the Jellyfloer and the bay tree and
her to the marygolde
17. And desyred that the seede of the bay tree might haue good suc-
cesse w^{ch} laye hid full close. /

[average macrosyntagm length = 12.4 words]

Text 9. 10 June 1577 Guildhall Library microfilm 511, 3/225v-226v

Macrosyntagmatic analysis: Henrye Broke

1. Henrye Broke sarvante wth Thomas East station^r at Powles wharff he sayeth
that this ij moneth Esawe Alome and John Bentley haue resorted to
his mastres house eu² sens his m^r dwelt at Powles wh^arfe
2. And aboute xij moneth sens Esawe and Bentley and Millesent
were taken in Millesent^e house and carryed to the compt^r. /

3. He hard Elizabeth Lowe reporte at m^r East^e kitchen in hereinge
of him and william Bartlet and others that East^e wiffe his m^{rs}
had betroughed her selfe to Esawe Alome to marrie him afte^r de-
cease of East her husbände
4. it was saied Aboute A yere and more sens. /
5. He sayeth that
about this tyme xij moneth his M^r East being out of towne that
night w^{ch} he went Richard Cowp and James Austen *supped* at
his M^{rs} house wth his M^{rs} and Millesent Porto^r
6. and they beinge gone he and his fellowes were comaunded to
goe to bedd About x a clock
7. And beinge A bedd this exāiant hard Cowp or Austen call at his
M^{rs} windowe,
8. And one of the maides let him and Austen in at the backe dore /
9. They tarried ther A good while, about an ower
10. William Bartlet and Crede came to the hall dore, the beinge in
the house still /
11. But Bartlet and his fellowes suspectinge came downe
12. and plucked the lache
13. but Millesent held it
14. therby they were afrade /
15. He hard Ellyn Hibbens saye that that night she plucked of Cowps
hose
16. and that he laye that night wth his M^{rs}
17. And his money fell out of his hose /
18. And, he was shut in the studdye Because Bartlet beinge vp ther
was a noyse in the house
19. and he was afrade /
20. He hard Millesent Porter confesse of the maryegold and the bay
tree sent to Bentley in A l^re As is aforesayd. /

[average macrosyntagm length = 14.4 words]

Text 10. 13 February 1598 Guildhall Library microfilm 512, 4/61, 61v

Macrosyntagmatic analysis: Katherine Cuffe

1. This daye Katherine Cuffe being exāied **saieth** that
Ambrose Jasper Cooke of the Inner Temple Londo^r **hath** had
thuse and carnall knowledge of her bodye A litle before Christmas
last in his Chamber
2. and that
it was since she was brought to bedd
3. and that
the sayd Jasper came home to her M^{ris} house
4. and **willed** her to come in boyes apparrell for that he would not
haue her come in her owne apparrell least that she should be
espyed
5. whervppon she **putt** on A boyes apparrell
6. and **went** into the Temple to the sayd Jaspers Chamber
7. and fynding him not there she **went** vpp to one Thomas Webster
dwelling at the Temple gate whose wyfe is A Sempster
8. and **desyred** him to go downe into the Kitchen in the Temple
and to desyre the sayd Jesper to come to this exāiat who did so
and thervppon he **went** into the Kitchen
9. and **caused** Thomas Lucey the sayd Jaspers man to come to her
10. whervppon this exāiat **did** giue the sayd Lucey A litle gold Ringe
11. and **willed** him to giue it to his Master
12. and so **depted** from the sayd Lucey
13. and **ph**tly after she **depted** from him she **mett** wth the sayd Jasper
in the Cloyster
14. and so **went** wth him into his Chamber
15. and **laye** wth him allnight
16. but she **sayeth** that
she is not now wth child by him. /

[average macrosyntagm length = 12.8 words]

Text 11. 13 February 1598 Guildhall Library microfilm 512, 4/61, 61v

Macrosyntagmatic analysis: Thomas Webster

1. This daye Thomas Webster dwelling at the Temple gate being **p**sent in Court
being exāied whether he knew the sayd Katherine Cuffe and whether he knew
her to haue woren boyes apparrell **sayeth** that
he **hath** knowen her this long tyme

2. & that she **came** to him in An evening in Michaelmas term last
in boyes apparrell
3. and **desyred** him to go into the Temple Kitchen and to desyre
Ambrose Jesper or his man to come to her for that she was loath
to go into the Kitchen for feare she should be espyed by her speche
4. w^{ch} this exāiat **did** at her request
5. and **caused** the sayd Jaspers man to come to her for that the sayd
Jasper was not wth in
6. and he further **saieth** that
he **did** see the sayd Katherine talke wth the sayd Jaspers man
and **deliuered** him A token (w^{ch} as he tooke it was A small gold
ringe) to deliuer to his Master saing that his Master knew from
whome it came when he did soe the same
7. whervppon she **depted**. /

[average macrosyntagm length = 17.2 words]

Text 12. 13 February 1598 Guildhall Library microfilm 512, 4/61, 61v

Macrosyntagmatic analysis: Thomas Lucey

1. This daye Thomas Lucey servant to Ambrose Jasper Cooke of the Inner
Temple being sent for by this Court and being exāied whether he doth not
know the sayd Katherine Cuffe and whether he did not know her were boyes
Apparrell or no **saieth** that
he **doth** know the sayd Katherine Cuffe
2. and that she **came** once in boyes Appell hauing A doblett & hose and A
cloke and A hatt
3. and that one Thomas Webster who dwelleth at the Temple gate **came** to
this exāiat in the Temple kitchen
4. and **told** him that there was one that would speake wth Ambrose
Jasper his Master
5. and **willed** this exāiat to come downe
6. and when he came downe he **saw** one in boyes Apparrell who
came to him
7. and **deliuered** him A token
8. and **willed** him to deliuer it vnto his Maister
9. and when he sawe the same he then **knew** from whence it came
10. and so she **depted** from this exāiat
11. and he **did** deliuer the sayd token to his Master being A gold
ringe

12. but his Maister said nothing
 13. and also this exaiat further saieth that
 he did vnderstand it was Katherine Cuffe in A boyes apparrell
 that gaue him that gold ringe. /

[average macrosyntagm length = 11.4 words]

Text 13. 15 Nov 1598 Guildhall Library microfilm 512, 4/47

Macrosyntagmatic analysis: Susan Holland

1. Susan Holland a/s Graues who dwelt sometyme wth one Neve^{ll} in Hogge Lane without Bishopsgate Londoⁿ brought into this house by being exa^ried saieth that

- about Michaelmas last past when she was dwelling wth the sayd Neve^{ll} there came to the sayd Nevells house on A Monday morninge Peter Turke and John ffrye Bricklayers (who were going (as they sayd) to Waltomstowe to worke) the sayd Turke eating of Aples
 2. and the sayd Nevells wyfe standing in the dore requested him to giue her an Aple
 3. he asked her vppon what acquaintance
 4. she sayd that yf he would giue her an Aple she would giue him A bottell of ale
 5. whervppon the sayd Turke gaue her an Aple
 6. and came in to the sayd Nevells house
 7. and went vp into A chamber where the sayd Nevells wyfe carryed him vpp A bottell of ale
 8. and this exaiat carryed him vpp cakes.
 9. whervppon the sayd Turke gaue this exaiat Sixe pence
 10. and requyred to haue thuse of her bodye
 11. and she was content
 12. And this exaiat further sayeth that
 whilest she was in the chamber wth the sayd Turke her M^{ris} was talking below wth ffrye in the plo^r
 13. and as this exaiat and the sayd Turke were com^{ing} downe into the plo^r the sayd ffrye left this exaiate M^{ris}
 14. and went vpp into the chamber wth this exaiat
 15. and Turke stayed below in the plo^r whilest this exaiate M^{ris} went for A payle of water
 16. and when this ex^{te} was aboue wth the sayd ffrye he gaue her Sixe pence

17. and had also thuse of her bodye in the Chamber
 18. whervppon this ex^{te} and the sayd ffrye came downe to the sayd Turke
 19. and there dranck altogether
 20. and as they were drinking one Thomas Walton Bricklayer and one Dick whome they calt A Spaniard for that he is black came by
 21. and through the window sawe them drinking together
 22. and so came in to them
 23. and dranck there wth them
 24. and there the sayd Turke and ffrye consented to make the sayd Walton drunck w^{ch} they effected accordingly
 25. and being pceyved by the sayd Spaniard that they went about to make the sayd Walton drunck he faigned himself in a swoone because he would not heare yt
 26. and after they had made him drunck they sent him vpp into the chamber
 27. and also sent this ex^{te} vpp to him
 28. and told her that they would now gett her A father for ther Child
 29. and willed her to cosen him of some money /
 30. Whervppon this ex^{te} went vpp to the sayd Walton
 31. and there he offered to vse her bodye
 32. and pulled vpp her clothes she being at the beds feet
 33. but by reason that he was drunck he could not effect his purpose /
 34. Wherefore the sayd Walton and this ex^{te} came downe to them agayne
 35. in w^{ch} tyme the sayd Neve^{ll} was come in
 36. and the sayd Walton hauing no money borrowed two shillinge of the sayd Turke
 37. & went all to the signe of the blew anker in Hogge lane
 38. & there they dranck together /
 39. And this ex^{te} further sayeth that
 when they were all gon this ex^{te} shewed her M^{ris} the Twelue pence w^{ch} she had of the sayd Turke and ffrye
 40. and she asked her this ex^{te} where she gott it
 41. and she sayd that they gaue it her /

[average macrosyntagm length = 13.1 words]

Text 14. 20 May 1599 Guildhall Library microfilm 512, 4/84-5

Macrosyntagmatic analysis: Agnes Ward

1. Agnes Ward late servant to Robert Holden Taylor and Victualer dwelling at the Spittle gate in Bishopsgate street neare the barres being examined **saieth** that

- Anne Cleere a/s Gressom **did** vsually resort to her M^{res} house
2. and that her sayd M^{res} **hath** often entised this exāiat to go to gentlemen whereby she might gett somewhat to help herself
3. and looke what money she yarned she **would** keepe it for her this exāiat
4. and this exāiat further **saieth** that she **hath** knowen Anne Gybbes and Anne Colmore naught wth diuers men in her said M^{res} house
5. but what there names were she **knoweth** not
6. and that Anne Gybbes **was** naught with An Italian A glassmaker whose name she knoweth not. /

[average macrosyntagm length = 14.0 words]

Text 15. 20 May 1599 Guildhall Library microfilm 512, 4/84-5

Macrosyntagmatic analysis: Suzan Hill (a.)

1. Suzan Hill servant to thabouenamed Robert Holden being likewise examined **saieth** that

- Anne Colmore and Anne Gybbes **haue** bine naught wth diuers men
2. and that one night she this exāiat coming vpp into the Chamber to make A fyre at seuerall tymes **saw** the said Colmore and Gybbes vppon the bedd wth two gentlemen being in one night but at two seuerall tymes when she came vpp to make A fyre
3. and this exāiat **saieth** that she **did** afterward_e tell the said Gybbes and Colmore of it
4. and they **answered**
- 4a. what **need** you care (meaning this exāiat) when yor M^r and M^{res} are contented wth it
5. and this exāiat further **saieth** that her sayd M^{res} **would** diuers tyme will this exāiat to go for women for gentlemen w^{ch} this exāiat refused
6. and therefore her M^{res} **did** beate her
7. and this exāiat further **saieth** that

- her said M^{res} **did** will her to go vpp to A gentlemen
8. and he **would** giue her three pence w^{ch} this exāiat refused to do
9. and she further **saieth** that her said M^{res} house is Comon for any man to haue whores for mony
10. and that her M^{res} **reported** that
- 10a. **come** Rogues, whores, Cutpurses, or any
- 10b. and **bring** money and welcome. /

Macrosyntagmatic analysis: Suzan Hill (b)

1. The sayd Suzan Hill **confesseth** that she **hath** scene very great resort of gent^r in the said Holdens house & of other men of euill behaiour as to vtter her mynd therin
2. being but A girle of Twelue yeares old she **thinketh** it not meet to vtter for very shame
3. and therefore **craueth** pardon
4. yet neuertheles she **saieth**
5. and **affirmeth** that she **hath** scene diuers bad disposed people that haue bine brought into her M^{res} beddchamber wth women of naughty lyfe and behaiour
6. and there **haue** spent their tyme for two nyghte together in the sayd beddchamber in the sayd Holdinge house
7. and in Lent last **had** sundry meates of flesh p^rpared for them by the said Holdens wyfe as beefe porke bacon fryed wth egge and gamōns of bakon veale and mutton and such like
8. allso the said Suzan **saieth** that one night at Tenn or Eleauen of the clock there **came** three gent^r w^{ch} were p^rtly brought into her M^{res} beddchamber
9. and her M^{res} **went** to the houses of Anne Colmore and Anne Gybbes
10. and **fetchd** them out of their bedde to come to those gent^r
11. at w^{ch} tyme one Margaret Askew **laye** in the said Holdens house who likewyse was called into their Company
12. w^{ch} three men & three women **spent** all that night there
13. and **had** veale pyes and pippen pyes and great store of wyne
14. w^{ch} said menn **putt** A great deale of money in A dish
15. and the women **did** eueryone snatch a pte therof
16. wherof this ex^{te} M^{res} **gott** xijd (w^{ch} was no pte of their reckoning)
17. allso this exte **saieth** that

she hath seene both her M^f and M^{tes} fetch the said women to diuers other menn of badd disposicōns as she hath p^rscribed by those menn and women when they haue bine together

18. and she also saieith that

her sayd M^f and M^{tes} haue often tymes sent this ex^{te} for the said women to keepe such men Company as resorted thither to the said Holdens house. /

[average macrosyntagm length = 17.6 words]

Text 16. 20 May 1599 Guildhall Library microfilm 512, 4/84-5

Macrosyntagmatic analysis: Johan Ward

1. Johan Ward wyfe of David Ward being exāied saieith that
in Lent last this exāiat lying in her owne Chamber adioyning to the beddchamber of the sayd Holden heard Anne Gybbes agree wth A man that came to her for ijs vjd and Hurstę wyfe to haue vjd for keeping the dore
2. and for that she brought him to the said Gybbes
3. but the man answered that it was to much for once
4. whervppon she answered
- 4a. come twice or thrice for it
5. but what they did this exāiat knoweth not
6. and she further saieith that
one daye Megg Askew being there A gentleman came vpp to her in the beddchamber of the sayd Holden
7. and she asked him yf he would not haue such A thinge (vnseemly to be spoken)
8. and he sayd yes
9. whervppon she answered
- 9a. come Sixe of you
- 9b. and daunce Sillengers round wth me
- 9c. and bring money inough in yr purses
10. and she further saieith that
it is A Comon naughty house
11. and that the sayd Holden and his wyfe must of necessity know it. /

[average macrosyntagm length = 14.0 words]

Findings

It was found that the number of words per macrosyntagm was in fact higher for the women than for the men. This is surprising: the two Scandinavian studies would suggest that men produce longer macrosyntagms than women, and the mediation of the (presumably male) court recorders might be expected to have had a somewhat levelling effect.

Table 1: Bridewell data

Number of macrosyntagms per informant			
Richarde Denny	17	Jone Starkey	28
William Tuckar	14	Marie Daie	18
Richarde Morley	15	Katherine Cuffe	17
Ralfe Atkinson	20	Susan Holland	41
John Hardinge	21	Agnes Ward	6
Arthur Thomlyns	17	Suzan Hill	27
Henrye Broke	20	Johan Ward	11
Thomas Webster	8		
Thomas Lucey	13		

total number of macrosyntagms: male 145 female 143

Table 2

Average number of words per macrosyntagm:			
Richarde Denny	16.9	Jone Starkey	17.3
William Tuckar	12.9	Marie Daie	16.0
Richarde Morley	12.5	Katherine Cuffe	12.8
Ralfe Atkinson	11.7	Susan Holland	13.1
John Hardinge	10.6	Agnes Ward	14.0
Arthur Thomlyns	12.4	Suzan Hill	17.6
Henrye Broke	14.4	Johan Ward	14.0
Thomas Webster	17.2		
Thomas Lucey	11.4		

male average: 13 words per macrosyntagm

female average: 15 words per macrosyntagm

Table 3

Comparison of male and female average macrosyntagm lengths

Words per macrosyntagm	Male	Female
		17.6
		17.3
	17.2	
	16.9	
15		16.0
	14.4	
		14.0 (x2)
		13.1
	12.9	
		12.8
	12.5	
	12.4	
	11.7	
	11.4	
	10.6	

Table 4

Range of macrosyntagm lengths	Male		Female		
	smallest	longest	smallest	longest	
Dennye	3	34	Starkey	4	37
Tuckar	4	21	Daie	5	40
Morley	6	23	Cuffe	5	26
Atkinson	5	25	Holland	4	45
Harding	3	25	A. Ward	8	20
Thomlyns	2	28	Hill	4	48
Broke	4	39	J. Ward	3	42
Webster	3	40			
Lucey	5	17			

Conclusions

In both Jahr and Strand's studies it was implicitly assumed that longer macrosyntagms equalled greater linguistic control and sophistication. Tannen (1993: 177) says "the association of volubility with dominance does not hold for all settings and all cultures", and I am not sure that we can make this assumption for the Bridewell informants. We do not know for certain what kinds of syntactic construction were felt to be felicitous by speakers in 1559-1599; today, short answers in court might be deemed preferable to long rambling ones. Nonetheless, the higher instance of subordination used by the women does not equal lack of linguistic control; their range of macrosyntagm length is just as varied as the men's. In Jahr's study, class was found to be a salient variable, whereas it is not easy to be certain about the precise social backgrounds of our Early Modern informants. The class variable is not held completely constant in our study: there is a gentleman, a waterman, nine servants, two otherwise-undesignated wives, and three unknowns.

Are there any reasons as to why the women produced longer macrosyntagms than the men, or is the exercise one of mindless quantification? Here are some possibilities:

1. They didn't – more data would change the picture: in particular, the men's narratives tend to be shorter than the women's (in my effort to compare as similar a number of male and female macrosyntagms as possible, I chose 7 women's narratives and 9 men's, the men's narratives necessarily being shorter). This may somehow influence the findings. However, checking the other Bridewell witnesses' narratives printed in Wright (in press), the average female

macrosyntagm length was also found to be longer than the average male macrosyntagm length.

2. The variables of social class and age are not held stable. Suzan Hill is only twelve, yet produces the longest syntagms of all. Agnes Ward (Text 14) produced several narratives, another of which is printed in Wright (in press). Ward's text was found to have an even greater average macrosyntagm length than Suzan Hill's, and Agnes Ward was almost certainly a young woman at the time of her deposition (old enough to have a father-in-law but young enough to be governed by her mother).

3. Not all witnesses' testimonies can be regarded as quite the same text-type: Marie Daie, in particular, reports a single conversation, whereas Richard Morley reports a series of actions (with few 'she said', 'he said' clauses). I have tried to circumnavigate this problem by including the testimonies of more than one witness in a case (see Richard Morley, Ralfe Atkinson and John Hardinge; Arthur Thomlyns and Henrye Broke; Katherine Cuffe, Thomas Webster and Thomas Lucey; Agnes Ward, Suzan Hill and Johan Ward), so that several witnesses report the same incident.

3. My macrosyntagmatic analysis is inaccurate/inconsistent.

4. It is inappropriate to perform macrosyntagmatic analysis on written, historical data, as the concept was invented to deal with present-day conversation (but see Wright (in press) for why I believe it is not only appropriate but helpful).

5. Women were/are conditioned to be helpful to the court; men are/were conditioned to be taciturn to authority. Certainly the women seem to have more to say (see Wright (1994) for another example of a prolix woman witness and a laconic male witness).

Positing women's greater respect for authority would be in line with Trudgill's (1974) conclusions with regard to present-day Norwich women's use of *-ing*, but suffers from the assumption that all women are likely to have the same social response. Katherine Cuffe, for instance, is not noticeably more helpful to the court than the two male witnesses in her case (or is she exceptional, because they were all asked precisely the same questions?). The length of an informant's narrative may be affected more by whether an accused is innocent or guilty, for example, or whether a witness is trying to secure a conviction, than by the sex of the speaker (but would macrosyntagm-length be thus affected?).

6. The aforementioned Scandinavian studies show syntax differences according to sex; the present Early Modern English study also seems to show syntax differences according to sex. However, the London witnesses' narratives do not seem to show a *wide* gender variation. More studies are needed in both cases.

At the beginning of this paper I suggested that the current state of knowledge about sex differences in language use would lead us to expect that there might be differences between Early Modern English male and female syntax, but that such differences would be likely to vary from group to group, and that the variable sex might not be the most salient variable. The present paper supports the expectation that the variable sex will be linguistically salient, and macrosyntagm length seems to vary according to sex in this pilot study. Whether sex is the only, or most salient variable here, remains to be discovered. And any such study will fall foul of the besetting problem inherent in using quantitative methods on historical data, as the corpus is finite: that which no longer survives might have been quite different.

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