

# **Linguistic variation ‘from below’: Northern German in nineteenth-century North Frisia**

**Timothy C. Jacob-Owens**  
University of Bristol  
*tj1066@bristol.ac.uk*

This paper presents a linguistic analysis of a newly-compiled corpus of historical correspondence. The corpus comprises 18 private letters written in High German by North Frisians between 1839 and 1851. The investigation is thus conceived in the spirit of ‘language history from below’, a highly topical approach within the field of historical sociolinguistics. The paper seeks to identify commonalities between the variety of High German written by North Frisians in private correspondence and the varieties of High German spoken elsewhere in northern Germany. The letters are analysed for evidence of non-standard diatopically-marked linguistic variation in the realms of phonology and morpho-syntax. This analysis demonstrates that the letters exhibit a number of classic northern German phonological features, such as *g*-spirantisation and affricate reduction. Several northern German morpho-syntactic structures are also attested. The results thus suggest that the informal writing of North Frisians shared a number of common linguistic traits with regional varieties of High German used elsewhere in northern Germany.

*Keywords: historical sociolinguistics; diatopic variation; nineteenth century; North Frisia*

## **1 Introduction**

Traditional language histories are conceived (mono-)linguistically rather than geographically. Hence, a history of the German language is not a linguistic history of Germany. Moreover, such studies tend to focus solely on the standard language of a given era, such as Standard High German, i.e. the language of the educated *élite* (cf. Milroy, 2012). For these reasons, the role of regional (diatopic) and/or social (diastratic) factors in determining linguistic variation has, until recently, remained conspicuously absent from historical linguistics. Similarly, the traditional focus on formal, printed text sources has hindered research on the nature of the spoken language of the past. Over the past decade, historical sociolinguists have, however, made great progress in addressing these desiderata. For instance, Elspaß (2005) demonstrated through an analysis of nineteenth-century German emigrants’ letters that the range of diatopically- and diastratically-marked variation was far greater than suggested by the

contemporary standard print norm. In a similar vein, though considerably more modest in scope, the present paper explores non-standard diatopically-marked linguistic variation in a newly-compiled corpus of nineteenth-century letters written in High German by North Frisians. The recently published first volume of the *Norddeutscher Sprachatlas* (Elmentaler & Rosenberg, 2015) has shown that a wide range of diatopically-marked phonological variants are shared across a large area of northern Germany today. The extent to which this was the case historically is, however, still poorly understood. While diatopic variation elsewhere in nineteenth-century northern Germany has already been explored (cf. Elspaß, 2005; Langer, 2013), the High German written (and spoken) in nineteenth-century North Frisia has not yet been investigated. This paper aims to address this desideratum and, in particular, seeks to identify commonalities between the variety of High German written (and spoken) by North Frisians and the varieties of High German spoken elsewhere in northern Germany. The paper is structured as follows: the first section sketches the historical-sociolinguistic context of the investigation; the second section discusses the study's research method; the third section presents a linguistic analysis of the data in line with the paper's aims; and the final section provides some brief concluding remarks.

## 2 The historical-sociolinguistic context

North Frisia is the westernmost region within the German-Danish borderlands, comprising its western coastal region and the islands of Föhr, Amrum, Sylt, and the Halligen (see map, below). In common with the rest of the German-Danish border region, North Frisia has for centuries been characterised by multilingualism. In addition to the region's non-dominant autochthonous language (cf. Clyne, 1992), North Frisian, Low German was spoken in North Frisia as the dominant lingua franca and language of prestige from the fourteenth to the early eighteenth century (Faltings, 1992, pp. 54-55). With the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century, standardised 'national' languages were frequently politicised as markers of national identity. In this vein, the nineteenth-century German-Danish national conflicts saw the introduction of aggressive language policy measures targeting schools, the church, and public administration, which aimed either to Germanise or Danicise the inhabitants (cf. Langer, 2014). In the context of North Frisia, this meant the imposition of High German as the dominant language of schooling and religion (Jensen, 1961, p.

256). Anecdotal evidence indicates that North Frisian, and in some cases Low German, remained North Frisians' mother tongue(s), and that High German was limited to those domains in which it was imposed 'from above' (Kohl, 1846; Jensen, 1961). This raises the interesting question of how the High German written and spoken in North Frisia may have been influenced by the other languages present at the time, i.e. North Frisian, Low German and other regional varieties of High German. We may wonder to what extent the High German spoken by North Frisians shared linguistic features with the High German spoken elsewhere in northern Germany, if indeed their principal and perhaps only

contact with the language was through standardised High German sources such as schoolbooks and the Bible.

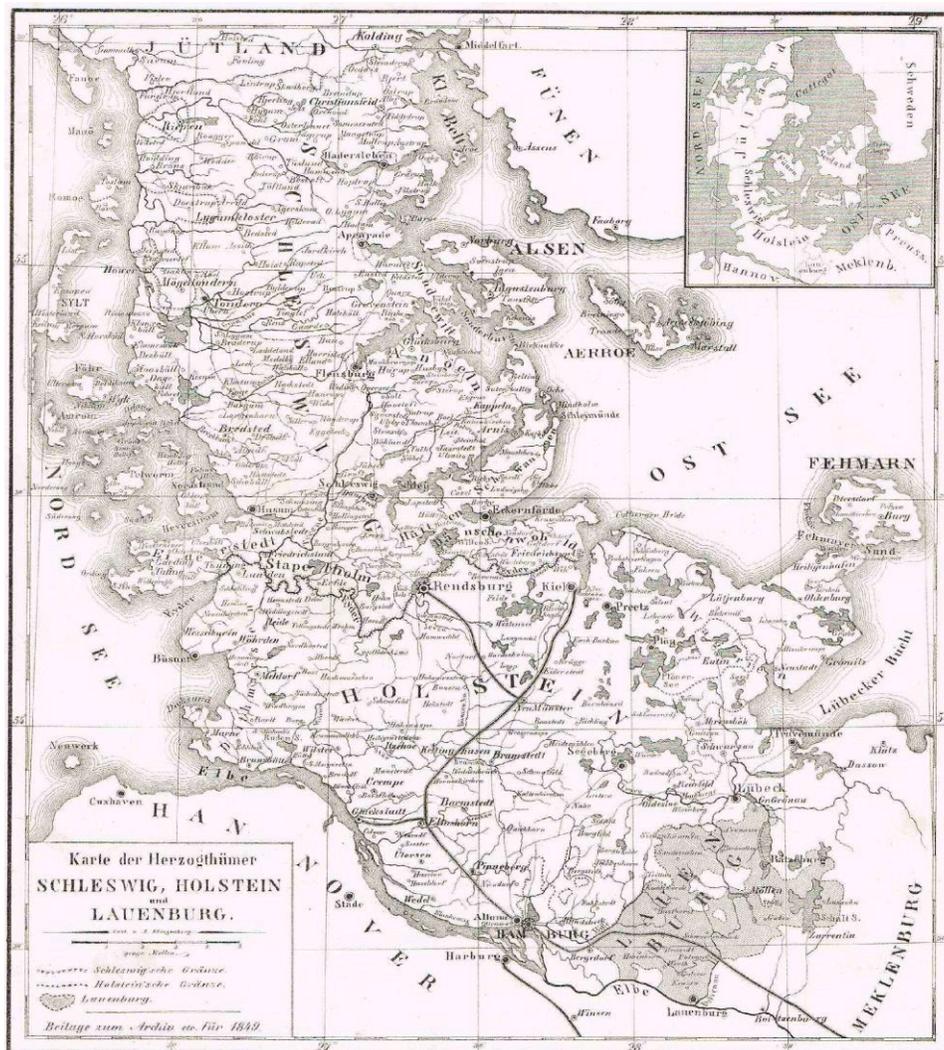


Figure 1. *Map of the German-Danish Border Region 1849.* Retrieved from <https://www.spsk.uni-kiel.de/>

### 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 Linguistic variation ‘from below’

The present paper is conceived within the methodological framework of ‘language history from below’, a highly topical approach within historical sociolinguistics. As Labov (1994, p. 11) famously observed, historical linguists must make do with ‘bad data’, i.e. incomplete records that survive by random

chance and that often do not accurately represent the spoken language of their authors. For historical *sociolinguists* this problem is even more acute, given the scarcity of historical written data which exhibit diatopically- and/or diastratically-marked variation. In recent years, historical sociolinguists have approached language history ‘from below’, sourcing data from so-called ego-documents (e.g. private letters and personal journals) written by less-educated and/or lower-class individuals as a means by which to glean insights into the linguistic situation ‘below’ (cf. Elspaß, 2005). This approach is not only useful because it provides insights into the language of the low- and middle classes, but also because it presents an unparalleled picture of the spoken language of the past. In discussing the range of possible sources of linguistic data, Koch & Oesterreicher (1990, p. 5) identify and differentiate two types of language *medium*, phonic and graphic, and two types of *conception*, namely written and oral. Within this framework, ego-documents are presumed to be graphic realisations of conceptual orality. Thus, the language of private letters and journals is widely taken to be ‘as close to speech as non-fictional historical texts can possibly be’ (Rutten & van der Wal, 2014, p. 4).

### 3.2 Corpus description

The present paper draws on a newly-compiled corpus (henceforth ÖA corpus) of nineteenth-century correspondence found in the North Frisian Öömrang Archiif (ÖA) at the Ferring Stiftung (Alkersum auf Föhr, Germany). The ÖA corpus comprises 18 private letters (approximately 10,000 tokens) written between 1839 and 1851 to Knudt Jungbohn Clement (henceforth KJC), a North Frisian historian, by members of his family, all of whom came from the North Frisian island of Amrum. Four of the letters were written by KJC’s brother Olde Jung Clement (OJC), four by his brother Boy Olde Clement (BOC), four by his brother-in-law Wellam Peters (WP), three by his mother Kerrin Hansen (KH), two by his sister Keike Wellams (KW), and one by his stepfather Hans Sponagel (HS). The following analysis draws on data from all six writers.

A key methodological consideration within the ‘language history from below’ approach is the so-called ‘writer-sender problem’, i.e. the question of whether the writer and the sender of a given letter are one and the same person (Nobels & van der Wal, 2012, p. 348). This is, of course, crucial to linking linguistic traits to particular biographical details, such as place of birth or level of education. In the context of the present study, the writer-sender problem has been resolved by following the Leiden Identification Procedure (LIP), which identifies a number of characteristics which indicate whether a given letter is a genuine autograph. The first of these are so-called ‘content clues’, i.e. metalinguistic comments within a letter that point to the named writer being the genuine author (Nobels & van der Wal, 2012, p. 349). The ÖA corpus contains a variety of content clues in a number of different letters. For instance, KH, who wrote her letters between the ages of 62 and 73 and who thus might reasonably be expected to have had someone write them on her behalf, writes in one letter ‘I wanted to

write more, but my thoughts are at an end' (*ich wolte noch wohl was mehr schreiben aber meinen Gedanken sind zu kortz*'), strongly suggesting that she herself is the author of the letter. Another LIP indicator of a letter's autograph status is a handwriting match between two letters signed by the same person (Nobels & van der Wal, 2012, p. 350). In the case of the ÖA corpus, each author has an individual handwriting style and signature, both of which remain consistent in all of their letters (for examples, see the project website <https://www.spsh.uni-kiel.de/archiv>). Hence, we may be reasonably certain that the letters are genuine autographs. The data thus represent an authentic sample of the High German written (and spoken) on Amrum between 1839 and 1851.

### 3.3 Analytical approach

The analysis in this paper focuses on northern German phonological variants and a series of non-standard grammatical constructions. The latter of these include non-standard case morphology, dative nominal possessive constructions, split pronominal adverbs, and non-standard use of *wie* and *wo*. These phenomena have all been attested in previous studies of nineteenth-century northern German private writings (e.g. Elspaß, 2005; Denkler & Elspaß, 2007; Langer, 2013). Close qualitative analysis is required in order to precisely characterise these features and, where relevant, to identify possible correspondences in Low German and/or North Frisian.

## 4 Analysis

### 4.1 Phonology

#### 4.1.1 *g-Spirantisation*

*g*-Spirantisation, i.e. the realisation of /g/ as a fricative, is a characteristic feature of northern High German: *Tag* ('day') is pronounced /taç/ in the North and /ta:k/ in the South. Today, while *g*-spirantisation in word- or morpheme-initial position is largely restricted to north-eastern Germany (e.g. Berlin and Brandenburg), it is commonly found in word- or morpheme-final position across the whole of northern Germany (Elmentaler & Rosenberg, 2015, pp. 237-239, 261-263). In written High German, the fricative /ç/ is typically represented orthographically as <ch> and one might thus expect to find examples in the ÖA corpus where <ch> appears in place of Standard German (SG) <g>, e.g. '*wechgekommen*' for SG *weggekommen* (Langer, 2013, p. 82). While no such examples appear in the ÖA corpus, the letters do contain a number of examples of hypercorrection, i.e. <g> in place of SG <ch>, demonstrating the writers' awareness of this particular northern feature. As expected, all the examples appear in either morpheme- (examples 1 and 2) or word-final (example 3) position. As Denkler & Elspaß (2007, p. 93) discuss, hypercorrection of this sort is 'typical of non-dialectal varieties with regional colouring' (*typisch für nicht-dialektale Varietäten mit*

*regionaler Färbung*'). Similar examples are also attested in Langer's (2013, p. 82) corpus of nineteenth-century northern German soldiers' letters.

- (1) BOC: *beträchtliches*  
 SG: *beträchtliches* /bətʁɛçtliçəs/  
 'considerable'
- (2) HS: *Quiting büger*  
 SG: *Quittungsbücher* /kvitʊŋsby:çɐ/  
 'receipt books'
- (3) HS: *reichlig*  
 SG: *reichlich* /raiçliç/  
 'amply'

#### 4.1.2 *t*-Apocope

Another common trait of northern High German is *t*-apocope, i.e. loss of word-final /t/, e.g. the realisation of *nicht* ('not') as /niç/ rather than SG /niçt/. Today, this feature is prevalent across northern Germany (Elmentaler & Rosenberg, 2015, p. 277). Examples of this diatopically-marked feature are attested in two different nineteenth-century letter corpora by Langer (2013, p. 83) and Elspaß (2005, p. 440), the latter of whom identifies the phenomenon as a 'characteristic of northern German texts' (*Merkmalsmerkmal norddeutscher Texte*, Elspaß, 2005, p. 456) from the nineteenth century. In the ÖA corpus, *t*-apocope does not occur in commonly-affected monosyllabic lexemes such as *nicht*, *jetzt* and *ist* (cf. Elspaß, 2005, p. 440). This points to a high level of awareness of the standard norms on the part of the writers. In fact, the ÖA corpus contains just one token of *t*-apocope, namely in the letter by HS (see example 4). No examples of the corresponding SG form occur in this letter.

- (4) HS: *abgesetzt* /apgəzɛts/  
 SG: *abgesetzt* /apgəzɛtst/  
 'discontinued'

#### 4.1.3 *Affricate reduction*

A further characteristic non-standard feature of northern High German is the realisation of the affricates /ts/ and /pf/ as the fricatives /s/ and /f/ respectively (Elmentaler & Rosenberg, 2015, p. 291). This can be explained as a kind of interference feature from Low German, which does not have the affricates /ts/ and /pf/ having not undergone the Second Sound Shift (Elmentaler & Rosenberg, 2015, p. 291). Today, the feature is found across the whole of northern Germany (Elmentaler & Rosenberg, 2015, p. 293, 297). The ÖA corpus contains a single example of the reduction of /ts/ to /s/, namely 'su' (see example 5). The

corresponding SG form *zu* occurs a total of 82 times. Similar examples are attested by Langer (2013, p. 83). The ÖA corpus also contains instances of hypercorrect <z>, the grapheme used to represent /ts/ orthographically, in place of <s> (see examples 6 and 7). One of these examples, namely ‘*zchlechte*’ (see example 6), was subsequently corrected by the author to SG *schlechte*, suggesting a strong metalinguistic awareness of this non-standard variant. The ÖA corpus features just one example of the reduction of the affricate /pf/ to the fricative /f/, which appears in a letter by KH (see example 8). No examples of the corresponding SG form *Strümpfe* occur in the letters of KH or in the rest of the ÖA corpus. This variant is not attested in Elspaß (2005) or Langer (2013).

- (5) KH: *su* /su:/  
 SG: *zu* /tsu:/  
 ‘to’
- (6) KH: *zchlechte*  
 SG: *schlechte* /ʃlɛçtə/  
 ‘bad’
- (7) WP: *Koxt*  
 SG: *Kost* /ko:st/  
 ‘cost’
- (8) KH: *Strümfē* /ʃtrympfə/  
 SG: *Strümpfe* /ʃtrympfə/  
 ‘stockings’

#### 4.1.4 Unvoiced /s/

A less common non-standard phonological feature of northern High German is the realisation of <s> as unvoiced /s/ rather than SG voiced /z/ (Elmentaler & Rosenberg, 2015, p. 334). Today, unvoiced /s/ in word-initial position is particularly prevalent in North Frisia (Elmentaler & Rosenberg, 2015, p. 331). Unvoiced /s/, represented orthographically as either <ss> or <ß>, occurs most frequently in the letters of KH, which contain four tokens of ‘*Hausse*’ (see example 9), two tokens of ‘*gewessen*’ (see example 10), and one each of ‘*wesßen*’ (see example 11) and ‘*unsser*’ (see example 12). There are also two tokens of ‘*Hauße*’ (see example 13) in a letter by BOC and one token of ‘*Abwessenheit*’ (see example 14) in a letter by WP. Neither KH’s nor WP’s letters contain examples of the corresponding SG form. However, two tokens of SG *Hause* occur in BOC’s letters. Contrary to the findings of Elmentaler & Rosenberg (2015, p. 331), unvoiced /s/ does not appear in the ÖA corpus in word-initial position. In written SG, the graphemes <ss> and <ß> do not occur in word-initial position. Hence, the apparent absence of word-initial unvoiced /s/ may simply be due to orthographic conventions, i.e. word-initial unvoiced /s/ may well have

been a feature of the spoken German, but not of the written German of North Frisia. Unvoiced /s/ is not attested in any position by Elspaß (2005) or Langer (2013).

- (9) KH: *Hausse* /hausə/  
 SG: *Hause* /hauszə/  
 ‘home’
- (10) KH: *gewessen* /gəve:sn/  
 SG: *gewesen* /gəve:zn/  
 ‘been’
- (11) KH: *weßten* /ve:sn/  
 SG: *weszen* /ve:zn/  
 ‘being’
- (12) KH: *unszer* /ʊnzə/  
 SG: *unser* /ʊnzə/  
 ‘our’
- (13) BOC: *Hauße* /hausə/  
 SG: *Hause* /hauszə/  
 ‘home’
- (14) WP: *Abwessenheit* /apve:snhart/  
 SG: *Abwesenheit* /apve:znhart/  
 ‘absence’

#### 4.1.5 *Caffe/Kaffee*

The German lexeme *Kaffee* (‘coffee’), a loanword from French (*café*), has two standard realisations, /'kafe/ and /ka'fe:/, and one diatopically-marked (northern) non-standard realisation, namely /'kafə/, i.e. first-syllable stress and word-final schwa in place of a full vowel (Elmentaler & Rosenberg, 2015, p. 179).<sup>1</sup> Today, this latter variant is found almost exclusively in the north and north-eastern regions of northern Germany, including North Frisia (Elmentaler & Rosenberg, 2015, p. 183). Langer (2013, p. 82) identifies a number of examples of the diatopically-marked variant in his corpus of soldiers’ letters, in which the spellings ‘*Kaffe*’ and ‘*Caffe*’ appear in place of SG *Kaffee*. The ÖA corpus contains one example of the form ‘*Caffe*’ in a letter by KH (see example 15). This spelling strongly suggests the non-standard northern pronunciation /'kafə/. SG *Kaffee* does not appear anywhere in the corpus.

---

<sup>1</sup> In northern German, /ka'fe:/ refers to ‘café’, whereas /'kafe/ is ‘coffee’.

- (15) KH: *Caffe* /'kafə/  
 SG: *Kaffee* /'kafe/ or /ka'fe:/  
 'coffee'

## 4.2 Morpho-syntax

### 4.2.1 Case Morphology

Examples of non-standard case morphology occur in the letters of all six writers and have a frequency of 13% in the ÖA corpus as a whole, i.e. 87% of instances case morphology appear in the standard form. While in all the letters the number of examples of standard case morphology outweighs the number of examples of non-standard case morphology, their relative proportions vary between writers. KH's letters contain the highest frequency of non-standard case morphology (30%), while BOC's contain the lowest (8%). Examples of non-standard case morphology are found in nouns (see example 16), pronouns (see example 17) and articles (see example 18). The majority of these examples concern the use of the accusative and dative cases. Usually, as in examples 16 and 18, the accusative is used in place of the dative, but in some cases, as in example 17, the dative is used in place of the accusative. This pattern broadly conforms to the findings presented by Langer (2013, p. 84). As Langer (2013, p. 85) notes, these 'uncertainties' (cf. Denkler & Elspaß, 2007, p. 97) with respect to case morphology may result from Low German (LG) interference, given that LG, unlike SG, has only two cases, nominative and not-nominative, and therefore does not distinguish between two objective cases, i.e. accusative and dative (Lindow, Möhn, Niebaum, Stellmacher, Taubken & Wirrer, 1998, p. 144). Equally, the 'uncertainties' may result from North Frisian (NF) interference, given that NF also does not distinguish between two objective cases (Walker & Wilts, 2001, p. 289).

- (16) KH: *vor* 14 *tage*<sub>ACC.PL.</sub>  
           *ago* 14 *days*  
 SG: *vor* 14 *Tagen*<sub>DAT.PL.</sub>  
       *ago* 14 *days*  
 '14 days ago'

- (17) OJB: *ihm*<sub>DAT.</sub> *kenne* *ich* *nicht*  
           *him* *know* *I* *not*  
 SG: *ihn*<sub>ACC.</sub> *kenne* *ich* *nicht*  
       *him* *know* *I* *not*  
 'I do not know him'

- (18) WP:    *mit*     *den*<sub>ACC.</sub>    *Steuermann*  
           with    the        helmsman  
       SG:    *mit*     *dem*<sub>DAT.</sub>    *Steuermann*  
           with    the        helmsman  
           ‘with the helmsman’

#### 4.2.2 Dative Nominal Possessive Constructions

Dative nominal possessive constructions are a non-standard feature of a number of regional German varieties, including northern High German. In its usual form (see example 19), this construction comprises a dative nominal phrase and a possessive pronominal phrase (Zifonun, 2003, p. 98).

- (19)            *dem*<sub>DAT.</sub>    *Mann*     *sein*<sub>POSS.PRON.</sub>    *Haus*  
           the        man        his            house  
           ‘the man’s house’

The ÖA corpus contains five examples of non-standard nominal possessive constructions, which appear in the letters of three different authors (KH, KW, BOC). Unlike the form outlined above, all five examples (see examples 20 to 24) feature a proper noun in place of the dative nominal phrase. This particular form of the nominal possessive construction is a diatopically-marked variant found in northern German (Denkler & Elspaß, 2007, p. 98). Similar examples are also attested by Elspaß (2005, p. 327) and Langer (2013, p. 85). The letters of KH, KW and BOC also contain nine examples of SG nominal possessive constructions (e.g. KW: *Riedels Frau*).

- (20) KH:    *Kresche*    *ihr*            *geld*  
           Kresche    her            money  
       SG:    *Kresches*    *Geld*  
           Kresche’s    money  
           ‘Kresche’s money’
- (21) KH:    *Boy*         *sein*         *Frau*  
           Boy         his            wife  
       SG:    *Boys*         *Frau*  
           Boy’s        wife  
           ‘Boy’s wife’
- (22) KH:    *Henrich*    *sein*         *Frau*  
           Henrich    his            wife  
       SG:    *Henrichs*    *Frau*  
           Henrich’s    wife  
           ‘Henrich’s wife’

- (23) KW: *Knudt seyn Brief*  
           Knudt his letter  
 SG: *Knudts Brief*  
       Knudt's letter  
 'Knudt's letter'
- (24) BOC: *Carsten seine Aufführung*  
           Carsten his behaviour  
 SG: *Carstens Aufführung*  
       Carsten's behaviour  
 'Carsten's behaviour'

#### 4.2.2 Split Pronominal Adverbs

Split pronominal adverbs are a characteristic non-standard trait of northern High German sentence structure (Denkler & Elspaß, 2007, p. 99). These constructions involve the separation of the pronominal and prepositional elements (see example 25) to form an adverbial bracket (Eroms, 2000, p. 136).

- (25) *von* > *da...* *von*  
       thereof > there... of  
       'thereof'

The ÖA corpus contains two examples of split pronominal adverbs, both of which occur in a letter by KH (see examples 26 and 27). This variant is also attested by Langer (2013: 86). Split pronominal adverbs are a common feature of LG sentence structure (Lindow et al., 1998, p. 281). Similarly, they are also a feature of NF syntax (Hoekstra, 2001, p. 782). Hence, their appearance in the ÖA corpus may be the result of either LG- or NF-interference. The ÖA corpus contains 27 examples of standard, i.e. non-split, pronominal adverbs, three of which occur in the letters of KH.

- (26) KH: *da wird wohl nicht mehr von*  
           there will surely not more of  
 SG: *es wird wohl nicht mehr davon geben*  
       there will surely not more thereof be  
 'there will surely not be any more of that'
- (27) KH: *da war kein Brief bey*  
           there was no letter with  
 SG: *es gab kein Brief dabei*  
       there was no letter therewith  
 'there was no letter therewith'

4.2.4 *Wie/als and wie/wo*

SG *wie* can have either an interrogative (= ‘how’) or comparative (= ‘as’, see example 28) function. SG comparative constructions are also formed with *als* (‘than’, see example 29).

(28) *Er ist so alt wie ich*  
 He is as old as me  
 'He is as old as me'

(29) *Er ist älter als ich*  
 He is older than me  
 'He is older than me'

LG has no equivalent of SG *wie*; instead, the interrogative function is performed by *wo* and the comparative function by *as* (Lindow et al., 1998, pp. 216, 300). For this reason, native LG-speakers may use the phonologically-similar SG *als* where LG *as* would be used but SG *wie* would not, and vice-versa (Langer, 2013, p. 87). Similarly, native LG-speakers may use SG *wo* (‘where’) in place of SG *wie* in places where the phonologically-identical *wo* would be used in LG. The ÖA corpus contains examples of both types of LG interference. WP’s letters contain three examples in which *wie* is used in place of SG *als* (see examples 30 to 32). These can be understood as instances of hypercorrection. WP’s letters also contain two corresponding examples of SG *als* used ‘correctly’ in reporting past events. Non-standard use of SG *als*, analogous to LG *as*, does not appear in the ÖA corpus. The letter by HS contains a single example of LG *wo* used in place of the SG interrogative *wie* (see example 33). HS’s letter contains no standard usage of interrogative *wie*.

(30) WP: *wie ich mit Riedel war*  
 how I with Riedel was  
 SG: *als ich mit Riedel war*  
 when I with Riedel was  
 ‘when I was with Riedel’

(31) WP: *wie er näher hinzu kam*  
 how he nearer to came  
 SG: *als er näher hinzu kam*  
 when he nearer to came  
 ‘when he came nearer’

(32) WP: *wie ich an Bord kam*  
 how I on board came  
 SG: *als ich an Bord kam*  
 when I on board came  
 ‘when I came on board’

- (33) HS:    *wo*        *weidt* *das*     *herkömt*  
           where    far     that     comes  
       SG:   *wie*        *weit* *das*     *kommt*  
           how     far     that     comes  
           ‘how far that comes’

## 5 Conclusion

The foregoing analysis demonstrates that the letters in the ÖA corpus exhibit a number of classic northern German linguistic features. In the realm of phonology these include *g*-spirantisation, *t*-apocope, affricate reduction and voiceless /s/. Non-standard case morphology and split pronominal adverbs are among the northern German morpho-syntactic features attested. The majority of these non-standard, diatopically-marked variants have been attested in other nineteenth-century northern German corpora and have also been shown to still exist today. Hence, the results suggest that the High German written (and presumably spoken) in nineteenth-century North Frisia shared a number of common linguistic traits with the High German written (and spoken) elsewhere in northern Germany. Several of these traits, such as non-standard case morphology, appear to have resulted from interference from Low German or North Frisian. Others may have arisen as a result of contact with other northern varieties of High German. While the range of non-standard diatopically-marked variants attested is reasonably wide, the number of examples of each variant is generally relatively small. This is presumably due to the fact that the authors would have had a high level of exposure to written standard High German through schoolbooks and religious texts and would thus have had a fairly clear idea of what they were aiming to recreate in their own writing. This is further supported by the presence, in many cases, of the co-occurring standard variants.

### Acknowledgements

The research for this paper received funding from the Bristol Institute for Research in the Humanities and Arts (BIRTHA), University of Bristol (UK) and the School of Modern Languages, University of Bristol (UK). I am very grateful to the Ferring Stiftung (Alkersum auf Föhr, Germany), in particular Volkert F. Faltings and Reinhard Jannen, for their generous hospitality and intellectual insights. I also gratefully acknowledge the comments and suggestions made by Nils Langer and two anonymous reviewers on an earlier draft of this paper. Any errors and misjudgements that remain are, of course, solely my responsibility.

## References

- Clyne, M. (1992). *Pluricentric languages: Differing norms in different nations*. Berlin, Germany: de Gruyter.
- Denkler, M. & Elspaß, S. (2007). Nähesprachlichkeit und Regionalsprachlichkeit in historischer Perspektive. *Niederdeutsches Jahrbuch*, 130, 79-108
- Elmentaler, M. & Rosenberg, P. (2015). *Norddeutscher Sprachatlas (NOSA). Band 1*. Hildesheim, Germany: Olms.
- Elspaß, S. (2005). *Sprachgeschichte von unten: Untersuchungen zum geschriebenen Alltagsdeutsch im 19. Jahrhundert*. Tübingen, Germany: Niemeyer.
- Eroms, H.-W. (2000). *Syntax der deutschen Sprache*. Berlin, Germany: de Gruyter.
- Faltings, V. F. (1992). Die mittelniederdeutsche Schreibtradition Nordfrieslands als Quelle der ältesten nordfriesischen Sprachüberlieferung. *Friesische Studien*, 1, 53-98.
- Hoekstra, J. F. (2001). Comparative aspects of Frisian morphology and syntax. In H. H. Munske (Ed.), *Handbuch des Friesischen/Handbook of Frisian Studies*, (pp. 775-785). Tübingen, Germany: Niemeyer.
- Jensen, J. (1961). *Nordfriesland in den geistigen und politischen Strömungen des 19. Jahrhunderts (1797-1864)*. Neumünster, Germany: Wachholtz.
- Koch, P. & Oesterreicher, W. (1990). *Gesprochene Sprache in der Romania: Französisch, Italienisch, Spanisch*. Tübingen, Germany: Niemeyer.
- Kohl, J. G. (1846). *Die Marschen und Inseln der Herzogthümer Schleswig und Holstein*. Dresden, Germany: Arnold.
- Labov, W. (1994). *Principles of linguistic change. Volume 1: Internal factors*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Langer, N. (2013). Norddeutsches in holsteinischen Soldatenbriefen von 1848-1850. *Niederdeutsches Jahrbuch*, 136, 73-96.
- Langer, N. (2014). Language policies in the Duchy of Schleswig under Denmark and Prussia. In R. Healy & E. Dal Lago (Eds.), *The shadow of colonialism on Europe's modern past* (pp. 73-91). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lindow, W., Möhn, D., Niebaum, H., Stellmacher, D., Taubken, H. & Wirrer, J. (1998). *Niederdeutsche Grammatik*. Leer, Germany: Schuster.
- Milroy, J. (2012). Sociolinguistics and ideologies in language history. In J. M. Hernández-Campoy & J. C. Conde-Silvestre (Eds.), *The Handbook of Historical Sociolinguistics* (pp. 571-584). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Nobels, J. & van der Wal, M. (2012). Linking words to writers: Building a reliable corpus for historical sociolinguistic research. In N. Langer, S. Davies & W. Vandenbussche (Eds.), *Language and history, linguistics and historiography: Interdisciplinary approaches*, (pp. 343-362). Bern, Switzerland: Lang.

- Rutten, G. & van der Wal, M. (2014). *Letters as loot: A sociolinguistic approach to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Benjamins.
- Walker, A. G. H. & Wilts, O. (2001). Die nordfriesischen Mundarten. In H. H. Munske (Ed.), *Handbuch des Friesischen/Handbook of Frisian studies*, (pp. 284-304). Tübingen, Germany: Niemeyer.
- Zifonun, G. (2003). *Dem Vater sein Hut*. Der Charme des Substandards und wie wir ihm gerecht werden. *Deutsche Sprache*, 2(3), 97-126.