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11 Intra-writer variation and linguistic accommodation in the letters of the Milanese merchant Giovanni da Pessano to the Datini network (1397–1402)

ABSTRACT

This chapter considers intra-writer variation in the letters (1397–1402) of the Milanese merchant Giovanni da Pessano to members of the Datini network, a large Tuscan trading company. Three variables are investigated: (1) voicing of devoiced intervocalic consonants; (2) rhotacism of intervocalic -L- and; (3) past participle endings of verbs deriving from Latin -ĀTU(M). The aim of the chapter is to investigate to what extent intra-writer variation can be seen to be a strategy in merchant writing. Linguistic accommodation is shown to be a significant factor in Giovanni's letters, owing to the unequal balance of power between his status and that of the Datini network.

1 Introduction[1]

Historical sociolinguistics has seen a revived interest in the question of intra-writer variation, particularly in the field of English historical (socio-) linguistics.[2] Conversely, studies that consider intra-writer variation and linguistic accommodation are relatively rare in the research literature (but see Auer 2015; Schiegg 2018; Ulbrich & Werth 2021). Only recently have scholars begun to investigate the factors which may lead to such variation. Much work has been carried out since Bell (1984) first launched a serious

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1   The author is grateful to the editors for feedback on an early draft of this chapter.
2   Cf. Auer (2018), Gardner (2018), Hernández-Campoy and García-Vidal (2018), Kerswill and Williams (2000), Anita Auer et al.'s project on *Emerging Standards*.

programme for the study of intra-speaker variation, in part taking inspiration from Giles et al.'s (1973) theory of accommodation. In contemporary studies, style is 'at the centre of sociolinguistic theorization and method' (Bell 2014: 297).[3] The question of investigating intra-writer variation in historical texts, however, has thrown up a new series of methodological problems. Some of these relate to questions of reported speech, audience design, speaker design, and how best to apply the tools and concepts of modern sociolinguistics to historical data. Schiegg (2018: 102) has pointed to the need for 'the development of a detailed sociolinguistic framework for the analysis of stylistic variation in written and historical data'.

Studies on intra-writer variation which focus on Italian data are rare, and a brief review of the literature shows that most studies are still carried out in the domain of speech (e.g. Castellana et al. 2017). Similar comments are echoed by Anipa (2018) also with respect to French. More generally, the topic seems to have been overlooked in Romance linguistics as a whole. The term 'intra-writer' does not appear to be present in the major reference works on Romance sociolinguistics or histories,[4] even though certain studies of historical variation at the societal or group level have been carried out in most varieties of standard Romance languages.

This chapter examines three variables (two phonological and one morphological), providing evidence of intra-writer variation (or the absence thereof) in the sixty-eight letters written by the Milanese merchant Giovanni da Pessano between 1397 and 1402. All letters are addressed to members of the large trading company based in Tuscany controlled by Francesco di Marco Datini and referenced throughout the literature as the 'Datini network'. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, the aim of this chapter is to show empirically how stylistic choices can function as a linguistic resource for pragmatic purposes (cf. Hernández-Campoy & García-Vidal 2018; see Antenhofer 2005 for a qualitative, historical approach). I argue that a process of written accommodation was evolving in a situation where the balance of power between interlocutors was uneven,

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3   Cf. Hazen (2007) for some overview of variationist methodology in historical perspective.
4   For example, Ayres-Bennett and Carruthers (2018), Jones et al. (2016: 618f.) on 'Historical sociolinguistic variation'; Lubello (2016), Maiden et al. (2011, 2013).

and show how this difference is played out across several variables in writing with variants from distinct dialects. Section 2 introduces the context and corpus of the study, first describing the linguistic landscape of late medieval Milan to present the linguistic repertoire with which Giovanni and other merchants would have been familiar. This section then describes the biographical information available on Giovanni, before defining the corpus. Section 3 provides an overview of the methodology. Results and discussion are presented in Section 4. Section 5 discusses select phenomena in particular letters worthy of attention in the corpus. A brief conclusion is provided in Section 6.

2　Context and corpus: The letters (1397–1402) of Giovanni da Pessano

Renaissance Italy was characterized by a situation of multilingualism. Like all northern writers, Giovanni would have been in contact with, and had knowledge of, at least three linguistic varieties: his native Milanese vernacular, Latin, and also Tuscan, which had begun to circulate throughout the peninsula (Brown 2017a). The main tendency characterizing the evolution of the vernacular in northern Italy during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is the formation of a koiné, or supra-local variety. At the same time, histories of the vernacular in northern Italy have identified texts that have maintained a strong adherence to local forms of language whilst koineization was in progress (Morgana 2015; Sanga 1997; Stella 1994). Scholars have pointed to the 'learnèd' nature of the northern koiné, which found its most elaborate expression in the chanceries and the courts (Bongrani & Morgana 1992; Morgana 2012). This northern koiné is the main written variety which non-literary writers used, including merchants, for their everyday correspondence (Brown 2013). Although the vast majority of writing was still conducted in Latin at this time, most merchants were not in a position to use Latin with confidence. Indeed, there are very few letters available in Latin from Milan housed in the Datini Archive (only 4 out of 810), and the overwhelming preference was to

write in vernacular (Brown 2017b). During this same time period, Tuscan forms of language (typologically distinct from Gallo-Italic varieties, to which Milanese belongs) began to circulate throughout Italy. Gallo-Italic, or what Maiden and Parry (1997: 3) call 'Gallo-Italian' (spoken in the regions of Piedmont, Lombardy, Liguria, Emilia-Romagna) are the main subvarieties of Romance found in north Italy. Gallo-Italic varieties are typologically distinct from Tuscan, and are divided from Tuscan by the La Spezia-Rimini isogloss as shown in Figure 11.1.[5]

Figure 11.1. The distribution of Gallo-Italic in Italy.[6]

5   The La Spezia-Rimini line is, in reality, a bundle of phonetic and lexical isoglosses
      running from Carrara to Fano, which traditionally delineates northern dialects from
      those grouped together under the Rome-Ancona isogloss. Dialects to the south of
      the line display a measure of linguistic cohesion, such as the conservation of long con-
      sonants of Latin. Dialects to the north of the line share many structural properties,
      such as the shortening of Latin long consonants, with other Romance varieties such
      as French, Occitan, Spanish and Portuguese (Maiden & Parry 1997: 3; Savoia 1997).
6   Taken and adapted from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallo-Italic_langua
      ges#/media/File:Gallo-Italic_languages.svg> accessed 22 February 2022.

From this, it follows that Giovanni must have had a range of codes available to him and was in contact with different types of writing (commercial letters, tax invoices, inventories, etc.). His written language exhibited a mix of the Milanese, Latin, and Tuscan varieties to different degrees and in different ways. The varieties available to Giovanni mean that he was able to choose freely which variants to adopt in his writing. The extant correspondence from him, therefore, constitutes an excellent case-study for investigating intra-writer variation in a historical framework in the traditional sense of Bell (2007: 90), that is, 'the range of variation produced by individual speakers within their own speech'.

There is little information available about Giovanni da Pessano's life. He may be related to the *Pescina* family and to the three brothers (Damiano, Basciano and Francesco) mentioned in his correspondence and who also sent letters to the Datini network. Melis (1990) records his name in the index as 'Giovanni da Pessano (Giovanni da Pescina)', giving both variants. There is no clear reference to him that emerges from any study on the Datini Archive at this time, despite Barbieri (1961: 62–71) believing that he is the brother of Basciano and Damiano da Pescina. He uses a merchant symbol [*segno mercantile*] which is very different from other members of the Pescina family, as noted by Frangioni (1994: 71). She has described Giovanni's position as 'una eventuale parentela tutta da definire' [a possible relation still to be defined], and mentions that 'a lui non è riconducibile una stretta origine milanese' [a clear Milanese origin cannot be ascribed to him] (p. 71).[7] All we know with certainty is that he was a 'caro amico' [dear friend] of another Milanese merchant, Giovanni da Dugnano, and that he was involved in the fustian trade.[8] Frangioni's doubt about Giovanni da Pessano's provenance derives from one of his letters sent from Milan to Genoa in 1397, in which he writes:

(1) in cassa mia fu fatto fustani molti boni di ghuado, in sì boni chome fussa fatti in Millano (letter 682)
[many good fustians were made out of woad in my house, so good as if they had been made in Milan]

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7   All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.
8   Fustian is a variety of heavy cloth, woven from cotton.

Based on this assertion, Frangioni (1994: 73) describes Giovanni's provenance as being 'non proprio milanese' [not strictly Milanese]. However, his Milanese origin seems to be confirmed in a later letter in which he writes:

> (2) Similli i' ò avixatto al ditto Bindo chomo dè essere una mia prochura in caxa di Zanobio di Tadeo chomo sono melanexe […] E che, anchora, è in Vinegia più merchadanti milanexe che me cognosono: se serà di bisognio dirano chomo sono milanexe e al ditto Bindo l'ò avixato de le nome di loro. (letter 774)
> [Similarly, I have advised aforementioned Bindo how there should be a proxy document at the house of Zanobio di Tadeo that I am Milanese […] And that, further, there are several Milanese merchants who know me: if it is necessary, they will say that I am Milanese and I have advised Bindo of their names.]

It is worth mentioning some details about Giovanni's main addressee and the relationship between these two merchants. Francesco di Marco Datini (c. 1335–1410), the 'merchant of Prato', moved to Avignon in the south of France at age 15 and soon after began trading in arms and armour, eventually founding trading warehouses (*fondachi*) in Prato, Avignon, Florence, Pisa, Genoa, Barcelona, Valencia, and the Balearic Islands. On his return to Prato from Avignon in 1382, he stopped for a week in Milan to gather supplies for his onward journey and to establish trade agreements with fellow merchants. The main trading partner Datini gained was the Pescina family, but Datini and his associates would eventually carry on direct correspondence with at least four other merchants from Milan itself or nearby, as well as from the main trading areas all over Lombardy (Brown 2017b). It was likely during this stay in Milan and in this context that the relationship between Giovanni da Pessano and Francesco di Marco Datini first began. Although there is no evidence that Giovanni and Francesco ever met in person again, employees from the Datini network made several trips to Milan to meet with fellow traders there, such as Tieri di Benci (in at least 1383, 1394 and 1386) as well as Tommaso di ser Giovanni from 1394 onwards (Brown 2017a: 50–52). In this sense, the corpus presented here mirrors Hendriks' study by adopting a speaker-based perspective, from which 'the potential for idiolectal change as a result of contact with speakers from outside an individual's dialect network is explored' (2018: 130).

The commercial letters sent by Giovanni da Pessano were written between 30 August 1397 and 17 December 1402. They are all sent from Milan. These letters have been published previously by Frangioni (1994), and a philological edition is available in Brown (2017b), on which this study is based. The analysis which follows below takes as its corpus a sample of sixty-eight letters by Giovanni out of the seventy-two letters included in Frangioni's corpus. In aiming to create the most homogeneous corpus possible, I have excluded four items from the analysis. These are two items denominated *estratti conto* (receipts) and two items which are not in Giovanni's hand.[9]

3   Methodology

The methodology chosen to investigate intra-writer variation in this chapter focuses on specific graphemic and phonological variables, which show contrasting features between Milanese and Tuscan. Given the lack of available documentation from Milan during the fourteenth century, I have had to use texts that fall outside this period for contrastive analysis. For verb morphology, I have made particular use of the thorough descriptions available of Bonvesin dra Riva's literature from the late 1200s (Domokos 2007). The varieties of language being considered here are in flux and so it would be erroneous to impose water-tight categories of either 'Tuscan' or 'Milanese'. Nevertheless, the language histories of both Tuscany and Milan ascribe unique, non-mutual features to both Tuscan and Milanese which I have used to verify whether Giovanni has used a Tuscan(ized) variant, or not.

Since certain linguistic phenomena appear common to both Tuscan and Milanese, I have focused on three variables which *do* contrast between

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9   The two items not in Giovanni's hand but which appear in Frangioni's corpus are letter 697 (Frangioni 1994: 500f.) and letter 758 (p. 531). Letter 697 is written by one of Giovanni's cousins. Letter 758 is 'lettera non firmata di mano di Giovanni da Pessano' [not a letter signed in the hand of Giovanni da Pessano].

these two vernaculars.[10] These variables therefore provide an excellent testing-bed to investigate whether Giovanni is being strategic in his use of intra-writer variation, and whether he is accommodating to his Tuscan interlocutors.[11] The three variables investigated here are:

(a) voicing of devoiced intervocalic consonants (e.g. Milanese *amig(o)* vs Tuscan *amico* < Latin AMĪCUS)
(b) rhotacism of intervocalic -L- (e.g. Milanese *coror(e)* vs Tuscan *colore* < Latin COLŌREM)
(c) past participle endings of 1st conjugation verbs deriving from Latin -ĀTU(M) (e.g. Milanese *-ado* vs Tuscan *-ato*)

In the case of (c), hyper-correct occurrences in Giovanni's letters of the desinence provide evidence of imperfect acquisition of a second language variety. For example, in attempting to imitate a Tuscan ending, Giovanni reproduces instances with double consonants such as *receutto* for *ricevuto* [received]. This hyper-correction is likely due to the fact that single and double consonants are characteristic only of Tuscany, while varieties above the La Spezia-Rimini isogloss only have single consonants. For each of the variables listed above, I quantitatively assess the presence of the individual phenomena in the sixty-eight letters authored by Giovanni da Pessano. I then provide some qualitative comments on whether the item can be said to show evidence of a strategic decision to accommodate to his interlocutor.

10   For example, 1sg. *-o* desinences appear common to the earliest documents in Tuscan (Rohlfs 1966: §527) and Milanese (Domokos 2007: 263) and are therefore not contrastive.
11   Further research will be able to contrast the results presented here with the letters written by Giovanni to his non-Tuscan addressees.

4   Results and discussion

4.1   *Voicing of devoiced intervocalic consonants*

Voicing of intervocalic consonants is one of the nine features character-
istic of all Gallo-Italic vernaculars, to which Milanese belongs. This goes
for all intervocalic plosives in Milanese. In early language from Milan that
is from the late thirteenth century consonants can be lenited to the point
of disappearance. By the early sixteenth century, voicing was limited to
only a few select lexemes, and intervocalic consonants were found to be
one of the 'easiest' to be replaced by the unvoiced, Tuscan variant (Scotti
Morgana 1983: 339). In general, one sees that the northern tendency to-
wards voicing is weak in non-literary Milanese during the early sixteenth
century, and 'forms with a voiced consonant in place of the unvoiced are
very rare and are certainly due to the influence which the Latinizing ten-
dency had on them as well as the adaptation to literary Tuscan' (Bonomi
1983: 258f.). In the corpus presented here, the following variants and
tokens are present (see Table 11.1).[12]

  This voicing occurs in seventeen different letters across the entirety
of the corpus (1397–1402). While all letters in this subset were sent from
Milan, those letters which contain voiced consonants were sent to a variety
of geographical locations around north Italy (5 to Genoa, 4 to Prato,
4 to Florence, and 4 to Bologna). In other words, place is not a significant
factor when it comes to this particular variable. Considering the particular
lexemes in which such voicing occurs, a wide variety of forms are present,
including technical terms (*charegato* [loaded]), verbs of saying (*digho* [I
say]), and lexemes such as *merchadante* [merchant]. It is also present in
forms of negation which are native to Milanese, such as *migha* [not]. An
alternative way of viewing these data is that variants unique to Milanese,

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12   I have excluded cases where /t/ and /d/ occur in past participles here (e.g. *nomerado*
      [numbered]), since these data are discussed in Section 4.3. The percentages in-
      cluded in Table 11.1 only refer to lexemes or to instances of voicing in the verb stem
      (e.g. *charegato* discussed above).

Table 11.1. Voiced vs unvoiced intervocalic consonants

Variable	Variants	Example from corpus	Tokens
1	/k/	*amicho* [friend]	92 (42.0 %)
	/g/	*digho* [I say]	9 (4.1 %)
2	/p/	*aperto* [open]	19 (8.7 %)
	/b/	–	0 (0 %)
3	/t/	*frati* [brothers]	96 (43.8 %)
	/d/	*perdida* [loss]	3 (1.4 %)
		Total unvoiced	*207 (94.5 %)*
		Total voiced	*12 (5.5 %)*
		Total tokens	*219 (100 %)*

such as *migha*, seem more resistant to change than others. Technical terms such as *merchadante* are also seen as part of the merchant's identity and are thus more likely to be voiced.

A patterning of voiced intervocalic consonants can be seen in Giovanni's writing more generally. For example, one also sees instances of voicing and a more relaxed register in other text types, specifically the so-called *carteggio specializzato*, that is, lists of merchandise sent and received and which are typologically distinct, therefore, from commercial letters. A case in point from Giovanni's writing can be seen in the four documents excluded from the corpus of seventy-two letters described above and which are part of the *carteggio specializzato*. These include item 755 in Frangioni (1994: 529), which contains *Gomo* 'Como' [Como, place] as well as *hendego* 'indaco' [indigo], *perdida* 'perdita' [loss]; item 804 has one occurrence of *fondego* 'fondaco' [warehouse] on p. 569 and three on p. 570, as well as *caregono* 'caricano' [(they) load, 3pl. verb] and *discharegono* 'discaricano' [(they) unload, 3pl. verb].

4.2 *Rhotacism of intervocalic -l-*

Rhotacism of intervocalic *-l-* is another distinguishing feature of western Lombard, to which the Milanese dialect belongs (e.g. *coror(e)* < Latin *colōrem* [colour], see Sanga 1997: 255, point 20). In the corpus, both Tuscan and Milanese variants are present in an uneven distribution. Bongrani and Morgana note that rhotacism 'has been described as uniquely Milanese' and that some have spoken of 'Milanese rhotacism'. They go on to say that rhotacism 'has never gone beyond the boundary of the Adda river, and it has represented an important and distinctive trait of western Lombard dialects' (1992: 91). Degli Innocenti remarks that cases of rhotacism are still 'notable' in Milanese during the fifteenth century, and that they 'often alternate with *l* that has been maintained' (1984: 50f.). In his study of documents from the Milanese chancery of the fifteenth century, Vitale notes 'only a few cases of intervocalic rhotacism, which is mainly limited to toponomy – a sign of an old diffusion of this phenomenon' and a 'more recent literary restitution of *l*' (1953: 72). The cases presented below thus foreshadow Vitale's results, and can be seen to be early evidence for tuscanization in non-literary documents, since Vitale's corpus fixes the *terminus post quem* for this phenomenon to the early fifteenth century. For ease of cross-referencing, I have included the Roman numeral in round brackets which refers to the number of the letter, while the Arabic numeral refers to the line number, as found in the critical edition in Brown (2017a).

In this corpus, there is one case of rhotacism, in *peroxe* 'pelose' [hairy]. Cases with intervocalic *-l-* number 34. In other words, the main variant shows the Tuscan outcome *-l-*, and can be seen as evidence of Giovanni's attempt to accommodate his language to his Tuscan interlocutors.[13] When

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13   These occurrences are: *cholore* (LX: 9, 10) (LXV: 22); *colore* (LVIIV: 2); *colory* (LVIIV: 1); *conseilio* (XXII: 9, 15); *dichonsolato* (XVII: 22); *diligentia* (XXIV: 29); *generale* (XXV: 14); *malanchonia* (XVII: 13) (LXIII: 11); *malanchonioxo* (LXI: 22); *palese* (XXIV: 19); *pelanda* (XVI: 8); *pelegrina* (LXXIV: 10); *pelegrino* (LXVIIIV: 43); *pericholo* (XIV: 4) (LXIX: 41) (LXX: 20); *saluti* (II: 7) (III: 5); *salutti* (I: 23); *soliva* (LXIII: 5); *valente* (XXIV: 21); *volentà* (XIX: 14) (XXX: 5) (XLII: 16) (XLIII: 10) (XLVII: 7, 25) (XLVIII: 6); *volere* (I: 10); *voleva* (VI: 25).

considered over the chronological period of the corpus, we find an unpat-
terned distribution.

The case of *peroxe* is significant, as it occurs right in the middle of
Giovanni's correspondence and in a list of items for which he is providing
the local prices of goods in Milan. Such lists often follow a formulaic pat-
tern. In this case, we can observe the native Milanese language of Giovanni
breaking through in his attempt to tuscanize his writing.[14] Indeed, this oc-
currence of rhotacism occurs in letter 64, written in 1401, in which we see
several attempts by Giovanni to introduce Tuscan variants other than the
ones treated in this chapter. In doing so, he often produces hyper-correct
forms in attempting to write a variety with which he is less familiar. For
example, in the same lines of this letter, we see cases of *lanna* 'lana' [wool],
cottono 'cotone' [cotton], and *cosse* 'cose' [things], characteristic of Lombard
vernaculars, hence also of Milanese.[15] Other instances in this letter show
his northern provenance, such as *zò* for Tuscan *ciò* [that]; *chomo* for Tuscan
come [how]; *serebeno* for Tuscan *sarebbero* [they would be] and others (see
Brown 2013 for further examples).

4.3 *Past participle endings of 1st conjugation verbs deriving from Latin -ĀTU(M)*

As mentioned above, the voicing of intervocalic consonants is character-
istic of Milanese. In Tuscan, the unmarked outcome for past participle
endings of 1st conjugation verbs deriving from Latin -ĀTU(M) is *-ato*

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14   By contrast, there are three occurrences of *pelosi* in the letters sent from Milan of
      the Tuscan writer Tommaso di ser Giovanni.

15   Bongrani and Morgana (1992) list lenition of double consonants (e.g. CATTA >
      gata [cat]; BUCCA > *boca* [mouth]) as one of the features characteristic of Lombard
      vernaculars. Conversely, Tuscan has both single and geminate consonants. For ex-
      ample, geminates from Latin can be maintained (e.g. the outcomes are *gatto* and
      bocca respectively), and sometimes maintain the single consonant (e.g. LĀNA(M)
      > *lana*). Giovanni's unfamiliarity with Tuscan leads him to produce lexemes with
      instances of hyper-correct geminates in outcomes which maintain the single con-
      sonant in Tuscan.

(e.g. *parlare* [to speak] > *parlato* [spoken]). For Milanese, in contrast, Domokos (2007) has identified three past participle endings from the late 1200s for *-are* verbs: *-ado, -adho, -ao*. Rohlfs (1966: §203) notes that, at an early stage, Latin -ĀTU(M) > *-ado* and then > *-aδo* (where *δ* has the phonetic value of a voiced interdental fricative). From this latter development, *-aδ* > *-a* 'in large areas in the north'. In eastern Lombardy, there was a return to a preceding form *-ado*. For other areas of Lombardy, including Milan, *δ* 'disappeared before the weaking of the final vowel: the result of such a development has been *-aδo* > *au* (*ao*)' (Rohlfs 1966: §203) which then turned into both *ou* and *o*. For fifteenth-century Milanese chancery documents, Vitale records *-ato* as the dominant ending which is only sometimes reduced to *ado* > *ao* > *à*. In non-literary Milanese documents from the early sixteenth century, Scotti Morgana's corpus (1983: 359) found only *-ato* to be present, which is 'never voiced or reduced'. Given that lenition of intervocalic obstruents is a fundamental characteristic of Gallo-Italic vernaculars (Bongrani & Morgana 1992: 86), the almost total lack of voicing in past participles in Scotti Morgana's corpus is surprising. In short, past participle outcomes previously recorded in the literature and uniquely ascribable to Milanese include *-ado, -adho, -agho, -ao*. Table 11.2 presents the different variants of past participle endings present in the corpus, the variety to which the variant belongs, and the number of tokens.

As can be seen in Table 11.2, the variants present in the corpus show an overwhelming preference for Tuscan *-ato* over voiced variants. Despite the one occurrence of *-agho*, native to Milanese, no other Gallo-Italic forms are present. Geminate consonants are not a feature of Gallo-Italic varieties.

Table 11.2. Past participle endings of 1st conjugation verbs < -ĀTU(M)

Variant in the corpus	Variety	Tokens
-ato	Tuscan	*127* (66.5 %)
-atto	hyper-correct (Tuscan)	*57* (29.8 %)
-ado / -adi / -agho	Milanese	*7* (3.7 %)
Total		*191 (100 %)*

Tuscany is the only region in Italy where single and double consonants are phonemic. Giovanni appears unsure about when to use geminate consonants when writing to his Tuscan interlocutor. This over-correction can be seen in his practice of doubling the consonant in past participles deriving from Latin -ĀTU(M). Given that the outcome from the Latin participle in Tuscany for masculine singular participle is *-ato*, Giovanni's use of a geminate can be seen as a form of hyper-correction.[16]

What is surprising from these results is the hyper-correct doubling of the consonant *-t-* in forms such as *parlatto* [spoken], *possutto* [was able to], *giontta* [reached], etc., also in other participles other than < -ĀTU(M). The presence of Tuscan forms can be seen as evidence of Giovanni's desire to accommodate to his interlocutors by incorporating Tuscan forms that were spreading throughout the north (a similar process in English letters was found by Hernández-Campoy & Conde-Silvestre 2015). Giovanni's use of Tuscan may reflect the broader imbalance in power dynamics between himself and the large Datini network. At the same time, the presence of native Milanese endings with the voiced consonant suggests his incomplete, evolving knowledge of Tuscan and inability to reproduce Tuscan forms correctly. The frequency of all past participle variants can be visualized more easily in Figure 11.2.

These data reveal several interesting patterns throughout the ongoing relationship between Giovanni da Pessano and the Tuscan merchants with whom he corresponded. The immediate and continued presence of Tuscan *-ato* shows his ability and willingness to adopt forms that are not native to him. Given this attempt to accommodate his language to his economic superiors, the low number of tokens of Milanese variants is not surprising. A less obvious, but no less striking feature of the data, is his progressive use of hyper-correct forms. These are only present in a minimal way for the first few years of his correspondence, during 1397–99, but the last three years seem to show an increased confidence to adopt Tuscan forms and an increase in frequency. This confidence is so robust that the hyper-correct

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16   I point out that hyper-correction is not limited to past participles, but also to place names (in letter 60, *Pratto* is recorded for *Prato*) and in letter 68 one finds at least one instance of *merchatto* (for *mercato*).
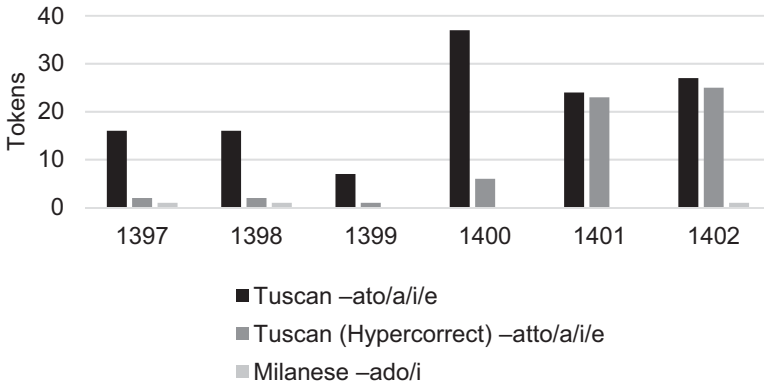
Figure 11.2. Tuscan vs Milanese vs 'hyper-correct' past participle endings.

occurrences -*atto* increase dramatically from 1400 to 1402, and for the latter two years are almost in equal competition with Tuscan forms in terms of frequency.

These hyper-correct occurrences appear in a subset of twenty commonly used verbs throughout Giovanni's letters. In one sense, the semantic range of these verbs is unsurprising, since they are all verbs of some frequency and common to mercantile language, trade, and the exchange of goods and services.[17] It *is* striking that the range of verbs used coincides with the period in which one also sees the greatest incidence of hyper-correct participles. That is, in the first fifty-four letters written by Giovanni (from 1397 to 1400), this range is limited to just six different verbs (*aparegiatto* [prepared], *datto* [gave], *adovratto* [employed], *avixatto* [advised], '*rivatto*

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17   In terms of token frequency, there are twenty-four cases of *avixatto* [advised, informed] (with minor orthographical variation: one case of *avisatto*, and one of '*vixatto*). Verb participles which have five tokens include: *trovatto* [found], *ghuadegniatto* [earned], *statto* [was], *passatto* [spent]. Participles with two tokens include: *valichatto* [crossed], *usatto* [used], *schuxatto* [pardoned], *penatto* [struggled], *datto* [given], and '*rivatto* [arrived]. The remaining verbs only occur once: *achonziatto* [placed], *adovratto* [employed], *aparegiatto* [prepared], *chompratto* [bought], '*larghatto* [widened], *mandatto* [sent], *ordinatto* [ordered], *paghatto* [paid], *schorazatto* [discouraged].

[arrived], *trovatto* [found]). The occurrences of the other eighteen verbs occur in his later letters (letters 55–71; from 1401 to 1402). In short, the coincidence between an increased use of hypercorrect forms and an increased lexical range of verbs may be evidence for Giovanni's confidence in writing, but also for an increased attempt to reach correct Tuscan forms. Overall, the data reveal this writer's imperfect knowledge of a vernacular that was foreign to him, as well as his effort to reproduce Tuscan forms to the best of his ability.

5 Other Tuscan phenomena

Certain letters in the corpus contain other phenomena worthy of brief discussion. I note here the use of some forms of locative adverbs, which require particular knowledge about the spatio-temporal location of participants in the communicative act (Vanelli & Renzi 1997: 112f.). Specifically, Tuscan *costì* [there by you] and *costà* [there by you, further away] (Rohlfs 1966: §895) appear never to have developed as grammatical categories in the north (Ledgeway 2015; Prandi 2015).[18] The ternary deictic system is a feature of Tuscany, central-southern vernaculars, and Piedmontese (Vanelli & Renzi 1997: 112; Da Milano 2015: 61), while Giovanni's native Milanese deictic system maintains a binary distinction. Nevertheless, these adverbs do appear in Giovanni's writing. Occurrences include *costà* (81 tokens), *costì* (43) and *chostì* (1). There is also one instance of demonstrative adjective *choteste* 'this'. Vanelli & Renzi explain that Tuscan and literary Italian *codesta* indicate a referent 'pertaining' to the addressee, as in Tuscan and literary Italian *codesta tua idea mi piace* [I like that idea of yours]. Giovanni's adoption of these forms is significant, and drives home

18   Both these terms can be translated into English as 'there by you', and generally speaking, do not differ in usage. *Costì* can indicate a place or person closer in proximity to the speaker when more than two people are present, while *costà* is used for the person who is further away in distance from the other two. For further information, see Treccani Vocabolario online.

even more his willingness to accommodate to his interlocutors. In other words, not only has he adopted a Tuscan lexeme, but he has also introduced a grammatical category which is foreign to his native variety. This variation could be interpreted as a strategic decision by him to appear more Tuscan in his linguistic behaviour.

6 Conclusion

The variation present in these letters can be seen as part of the broader power dynamic evolving between Giovanni and the Datini network, but also between Tuscany and Milan more generally. While studies of style, audience design, and stylistic variation have been popular ever since Bell (1984), the main focus of this research trajectory has been on spoken corpora, with little attention paid to writing or how this approach can be applied in historical perspective.

In some cases, the use of a particular variant in Giovanni's writing appears to be almost categorical. There is only one case of rhotacism, for instance, thus showing a process of 'upward' accommodation to his fellow merchants, and mirroring the results in Hernández-Campoy and García-Vidal (2018: 49), who found 100 % use of a particular graphic variable in a letter of 1475 to King Edward IV. The case of rhotacism in *peroxe*, appearing as it does in the middle of a list of items and their prices, offers further evidence of the way in which Giovanni mixes both Milanese and Tuscan variants freely throughout his writing. In simply listing a series of commodities to be traded, it is likely he pays less attention to the rhetorical and linguistic choices of the variants he uses, thus allowing for this case of rhotacism to emerge. In the other two variables discussed here, greater variation is present. In some cases, this variation is relatively constant over the period 1397–1402 such as for voicing of devoiced intervocalic consonants, while in others the patterning can be explained by the typological nature of Giovanni's writing. I have argued that hyper-correct occurrences can be seen as indicators of imperfect acquisition of a second language variety. Assessing hyper-corrections of past participle endings over the six years for

which data are available show these to be distributed in a heterogeneous way, increasing in both type and token frequency later in the period, as Giovanni becomes more confident (indeed, overconfident) in his use of a vernacular which was foreign to him such as Tuscan. These letters provide evidence, therefore, of intra-writer variation and the linguistic outcomes of an author who freely mixes both Tuscan and Milanese variants.

Vitale's study of the Milanese chancery showed that Tuscan was already being used outside the sphere of literature in northern Italy during the fifteenth century. He noted that the first document in vernacular in the Milanese chancery appeared in 1426, and that use of Latin in chancery documents continued to decrease during the entire fifteenth century (Vitale 1953: 16f.). Before this, Tuscan was not a model for non-literary writing. Tuscan influence in orthography and morphology is little evident. The linguistic accommodation shown by Giovanni towards his Tuscan interlocutors opens up the question of language choice in merchant writing and whether what Maraschio has called the 'vertical' expansion of Tuscan in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries might have begun earlier (1976: 37; Brown 2020). In other words, Tuscan's presence is felt not only in the highest strata of Milanese society but it was also, at the other end of the spectrum, known and used for successful communication between the less educated merchant class (Brown 2020). Giovanni's letters can be seen as a useful case-study of the way in which authors from northern Italy began to adapt and adopt Florentine forms into their writing, as a Tuscan variety began to spread throughout the peninsula. It was precisely this variety which ultimately formed the base for a national standard.

When taken together, these variables can be seen to show how intra-writer variation played out in a strategic way in order to obtain particular objectives by a merchant who was economically 'inferior' to his Tuscan counterparts. I have argued that Giovanni's efforts to reproduce Tuscan forms can be seen as a strategic decision to accommodate to his fellow merchants. This behaviour is likely carried out in order to ingratiate himself to members of the Datini network, in the hope of obtaining more favourable economic circumstances for the various trades and deals in which he was engaged. This chapter has quantitatively assessed the presence, frequency, and distribution of three variables in the sixty-eight letters written by Giovanni

da Pessano. The variation inherent in these letters, in turn, can be seen as part of the broader power dynamic evolving between Tuscany and Milan in Renaissance Italy.

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