

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

The BT Correspondence Corpus 1853-1982 the development and analysis of archival language resources

Morton, Ralph

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The BT Correspondence Corpus 1853-1982: The development and analysis of archival language resources

RALPH MORTON

Thesis presented to the Graduate School of Coventry University in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

CORPUS AND HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS



COVENTRY UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis reports on the construction and analysis of the *British Telecom Correspondence Corpus* (BTCC), a searchable database of business letters taken from the archives of British Telecom. The letters in the corpus cover the years 1853-1982. This is a crucial period in the development of business correspondence but is so far underrepresented in available historical corpora.

This research contributes knowledge in two main areas. Firstly, a number of methodological issues are highlighted with regard to working with public archives to produce linguistic resources. The way in which archives are typically organised, particularly the lack of item-level metadata, presents a number of challenges in terms of locating relevant material and extracting the sort of metadata that is necessary for linguistic analysis. In this thesis I outline the approach that was taken in identifying and digitising the letters for the *BTCC*, the issues encountered, and the implications for future projects that make use of public archives as a source of linguistic material.

Secondly this study contributes new insights into the development of English business correspondence from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. The results show a notable decline in overtly deferential language and an increase in familiar forms. However, these more familiar forms also appear in fixed-phrases and conventional patterns. This suggests that there was a move from formalised distance to formalised friendliness in the language of business correspondence in this period. We also see a shift away from the performance of institutional identity through phrases such as 'I am directed by...' towards an increased use of the pronoun 'we' to represent corporate positions. This shift in corporate identity seems to coincide with the decline in deferential language.

Finally an analysis of moves and strategies used in requests suggests that, as the twentieth century progressed, authors began to use a wider range of moves to contextualise and justify their requests. Furthermore, though the same request strategy types remain popular over the timeline of the *BTCC*, there is a degree of diversification in terms of how the most popular request strategies are expressed and indirect strategies that rely more on implicature become somewhat more prevalent.

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LIST OF ABBEVIATIONS

(19)CSC – (Nineteenth Century) Corpus of Scottish Correspondence

ARCHER – A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers

BT – British Telecom

BTCC – British Telecom Correspondence Corpus

BTPO – British Telecom/Post Office corpus

CEEC – Corpus of Early English Correspondence

CELL – Centre for Editing Lives and Letters

CLMET – Corpus of Later Modern English Texts

COHA – Corpus of Historical American English

CONCE – Corpus of Nineteenth Century English

CoRD – Corpus Resource Database

CV – Coefficient of Variance

DAMSL - Dialog Act Markup in Several Layers

DCPSE – Diachronic Corpus of Present-day Spoken English

(G)PO – (General) Post Office

ICAMET - Innsbruck Computer Archive of Machine-Readable English Texts

JISC – Joint Information Systems Committee

LIWC – Linguistic Enquiry Word Count

LOB / FLOB - Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen Corpus, Freiberg LOB corpus

NEET – Network of Eighteenth century English Texts

NF – Normalised Frequency

OCR – Optical Character Recognition

OTA – Oxford Text Archive

TEI – Text Encoding Initiative

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1. Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1. Project background

1.1.1. The BT Archives

British Telecom (BT) is the world's oldest communications company, tracing its history back to the formation of the Electric Telegraph Company in 1846. The Post Office held a monopoly over telecommunications in the United Kingdom from 1912 through much of the twentieth century. In 1969 Post Office Telecommunications became a separate government department. Following the British Telecommunications Act of 1981 *British Telecommunications* became a public corporation, and British Telecom was ultimately privatised in 1984. The BT Archives were established in 1986 in order to store and preserve the company's historical documents, and records. These archives contain a vast array of material from the founding of the Electric Telegraph Company through to the present day including, contracts, correspondence, photographs, marketing material, product designs, and even one-off items such as dinner menus for events organised by the Post Office. The archives, which are currently situated in Holborn London, are open to the public however access to the archive offices is limited six hours a day, two days a week.

1.1.2. New Connections

The *New Connections* project was set up in 2011 to address the limited accessibility of the archives, by cataloguing, digitising and developing a searchable online archive of almost half a million photographs, images, documents and correspondence assembled by BT over 165 years and making them available online. The project was a Jisc Company (formerly *Joint Information Systems Committee*)-funded collaboration between Coventry University, The National Archives and BT Heritage. Broadly speaking the roles of the partner institutions were that BT provided the material, The National Archives digitized the material, and Coventry University undertook research projects using the digitised material. The research potential of the archive had already been demonstrated in the publications *Telling Tales: Revealing Histories in the BT Archives* and *Fieldstudy 13* (2012) which used material from the archive to look at topics such as the K6 telephone kiosk, the GPO logo design and truncated telegram language. The importance of the archives had also recognised by UNESCO when they included the collections

in their *UK Memory of the World Register* in 2011 as ‘a unique record of over a century of British scientific endeavour and innovation’ (Hay, 2014:2).

The era covered by the BT Archives also makes it a potentially fascinating source to trace the recent historical development of business correspondence. The mid-nineteenth century saw a huge increase in letter writing, facilitated by the introduction of the Penny Post in 1840 (Dossena and Ostade, 2008: 7-8). There was also specifically an increase in business correspondence brought about by the new commercial climate following the Industrial Revolution (Beal, 2004: 116, Del Lungo Camiciotti, 2006a:153). As Camiciotti notes,

“business discourse did of course exist earlier than the nineteenth century. However it is in this period that commercial transactions between England and other countries intensified creating the need for the skill of writing effective letters in English for business purposes” (Camiciotti 2006a: 154)

As the pre-privatisation material in the BT Archives covers the period up to 1984, it has the potential to enable research into the development of business correspondence from this nineteenth century boom right through to the advent of electronic forms of correspondence. Despite its potential as a research area, very little has been written about the development of business correspondence from the nineteenth through to the twentieth century. One of the reasons for this lack of research is the lack of publicly available business correspondence data. BT’s historical status as a British government department and public corporation means the pre-privatisation material in the archive is public record, and as such BT is obliged to promote access to it, and the *New Connections* project is just one of the ways in which they have done this.

1.2. The current study

Prior to starting the current study I had been working as a research assistant in the field of corpus linguistics for around three years. A corpus is a searchable language database which is built to represent a particular language variety and is stored electronically for the purposes of linguistic analysis (Sinclair 1991, 2005; Hunston 2002, see Chapter 2 of this thesis for more on corpora). The research project that I undertook with the material digitised as part of *New Connections* was the construction and analysis of the *British Telecom Correspondence Corpus* (BTCC) using letters from the BT Archives.

As I started work on the project very little was known about the exact nature of the documents, except that sufficient correspondence would be provided to meet our initial requests for corpus data. The *New Connections* project ran from November 2011 until July 2013, when the Digital Archive was launched. During this time I liaised with project partners to update them on the progress of the research projects and helped produce content for the BT Digital Archives. In building the *British Telecom Correspondence Corpus* (or *BTCC*) I aimed to start to address the gap in existing resources, and provide new insights into how business correspondence developed from the mid-nineteenth to late-twentieth century.

This study contributes to knowledge in the area of corpus construction, in particular the challenges of working with a vast public archives, both physical and digital to produce language resources. I address questions of corpus design (in particular the challenges of identifying relevant material and selecting a representative sample given the way in which historical archives are catalogued and organised), transcription, the functional classification of the letters, and the extraction and encoding of metadata. I also conduct a range of analyses of the data. Firstly I focus on the formal features of the letters, looking at advice offered in letter writing manuals contemporary to the period covered by the corpus, analysing the formal features in the letters of the BTCC in relation to this, and examining how and why letter writing conventions such as opening and closing formulas (e.g. 'Dear Sir') changed over this period.

Secondly I take a more exploratory corpus-driven approach to analysis, examining frequent words and phrases, and seeing how these frequent items change in form and frequency across the timeline of the BTCC. This approach was taken so that notable features of the language could emerge from the data. Though there is potential for much more corpus-driven analysis to be done on the data, the results presented in this thesis begin to shed light on some of the changes in the ways that corporate identity and corporate action were expressed in English business correspondence of this period. Finally I take a qualitative look at how requests are expressed in the corpus, and how this has changed over time. Requests in particular were chosen as a number of previous studies have identified their importance in the study of both historical (e.g. Sönmez 2001, Nurmi and Pallander-Collin 2008, Del Lungo Camiciotti 2008) and contemporary (e.g. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris 1996, Pilegaard 1997, Nickerson 1999, Flöck and Geluykens 2015) business correspondence. This varied approach to analysis provided a number of key new insights into the development of business correspondence over this period, albeit within the restricted context of the *BT Archives*

2. Chapter 2 - Literature review

2.1. Aims and Structure of the Chapter

In this chapter I will discuss some of the digital resources that have made correspondence available for academic study prior to the construction of the *British Telecom Correspondence Corpus*. I outline the material these resources contain, the periods they cover, and some of the questions they have been used to answer. I will also identify periods and areas of research for which there is still relatively little or no correspondence data, and which would benefit from more publicly available material. Following this, I discuss what has been written about general patterns of language change in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, before going on to review the literature that deals specifically with the formal and linguistic features of correspondence in this period. Finally, as this study also includes an analysis of three twentieth century letter writing manuals, I review the literature regarding the nature of letter writing guides and how they have developed since the eighteenth century.

2.2. The development and content of historical and letter corpora

2.2.1. Digital Letter Collections

Before going on to consider linguistic resources it is worth noting that there has been a general increased interest in correspondence taken from historical archives in recent years. The *Darwin Correspondence Project* has made more than 7,500 of Charles Darwin's letters available online as scans and transcribed texts. The project's website includes a range of resources including letter commentaries and information about the key correspondents in his social network. Similar projects have been undertaken by the *Centre for Editing Lives and Letters* (CELL), who have produced chronological accounts and digital editions of the correspondence of historically prominent figures such as Thomas Bodley (founder of the Bodleian Library in Oxford) and English philosopher and politician Francis Bacon. Similarly materials from the Marconi Archive in Oxford have been digitised and uploaded to the *Marconi Calling* website in an attempt to provide a definitive account of Marconi's business. The website *Letters of Note* has a more general focus, providing access to a range of material, from the final letter written by novelist Charlotte Brontë in 1848 to a memo produced by Paramount Studios regarding the casting of the Star Trek television series in 1987. The ongoing popularity of such resources shows that there is an interest in the historical insights offered by correspondence. In addition

to this, in recent years correspondence has proved a valuable source of linguistic data for historical corpora.

2.2.2. Historical corpora

Corpora have been defined as collections of authentic language data which are sampled to be representative of a language variety, stored electronically and used for linguistic analysis (Sinclair 1991, 2005; Hunston 2002; McEnery, Xiao and Tono 2006; Taavitsainen, Pahta and Mäkinen 2006). By searching these language databases it is possible to identify frequent words and phrases, and examine the patterns in which they occur. Many different types of corpora exist. A 'diachronic' or 'historical' corpus is made up of texts in the same language gathered from different time periods. The analysis of such corpora enables researchers to observe elements of language change (Xiao, 2008). The last twenty years or so has seen a large expansion in the amount of historical material that is available through corpora. Lüdeling and Kytö (2008:53) suggested that this expansion in corpus resources has been 'a matter of life or death for the future of evidence-based historical linguistics', arguing that the improved access and new insights that such resources offer have sparked the interest of a whole new generation of linguists. Letters generally appear either in dedicated letter corpora or in one component part of a multi-genre corpus.

2.2.2.1. Letters as one component of a multi-genre corpus

The VARIENG Research Unit (for the Study of Variation, Contacts and Change in English) at the University of Helsinki has been at the forefront of the diachronic study of English for the last twenty years. The Helsinki Corpus of English Texts contains around 1.5 million words of prose and verse samples dating from 730 A.D. to 1710 A.D. A range of text types both literary and non-literary texts are represented in the Helsinki corpus including correspondence, sermons, trials, scientific texts, philosophy, history, drama, and fiction. As it was also built to encourage sociolinguistic research, the corpus contains material from authors of various genders, ages, and social statuses. In the correspondence element, information about the relationship between author and recipient is also encoded. The texts in the Old and Middle English sections of the corpus are classified according to dialect, and there are supplementary sub-corpora representing the Older Scots and Early American regional varieties of English (Kytö and Rissanen, 1993; Kytö 1996). The range of material in this corpus has facilitated the study of aspects of general language change in the periods represented. For example, Johan Elsness

(1994) used Helsinki data to track the increasing use of progressive constructions (e.g. 'to be' [verb]-ing') from equivalent forms in Old English equivalent forms through to the eighteenth century. Furthermore Elina Sorva (2006) examined occurrences of the concessive form 'albeit' from the Middle English period through to the present day (with present day comparison data taken from the British National Corpus).

The Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose (ICAMET) makes use of much of the same source material as the Helsinki corpus, however it preserves full texts rather than samples of texts and only contains prose works. It is a central problem of historical linguistics that the material that typically survives in large quantities, such as literature or religious texts, is not necessarily representative of everyday language use (though such texts are clearly important in providing register-specific evidence). Prose texts were selected for the ICAMET corpus on the basis that they were 'less stylised than verse and was, thus, relatively close to the language really used by people' (Universität Innsbruck, 2010)¹. Of the roughly eight million words of prose contained in the ICAMET corpus, around 182,000 words are from letters written between the years 1386 and 1698. While both of these corpora provide valuable access to a range of historical English sources and have different emphases to suit different research needs, they only include material up to the beginning of the eighteenth century.

In 2005 De Smet argued that the final cut-off point of the Helsinki Corpus of 1710 was 'symptomatic of a certain neglect of anything beyond the 17th century' (2005: 69). A number of corpora have subsequently been constructed to try and address this gap in resources. The ARCHER corpus (A Representative Corpus of English Historical Registers) as the name suggests represents a variety of historical English registers covering the period 1699-1999. The corpus includes British and American English samples. One of the key aims was to represent both written and speech-related registers (Yáñez-Bouza, 2011:207). The twelve genres represented in version 3.2 of ARCHER are letters, advertising, drama, fiction, sermons, journals, legal, medicine, news, early prose, science, and diaries. Around 2000 words per genre were sampled for each fifty year period in the corpus, from bibliographies of (mostly) edited collections. This sort of representative sampling ensures a degree comparability of different periods, genres

¹ Although interestingly in the corpus of *Middle English Medical Texts* (MEMT), texts written in verse are included precisely because they are examples of practical rather than stylised language, with Taavitsainen, Pahta and Mäkinen writing that, 'prose was a more sophisticated and elegant means of conveying ideas. Verse was employed for more practical purposes as the meter and rhyme scheme provided a mnemonic aid' (2006: 89).

and regional varieties, and has facilitated research into the synchronic characteristics and diachronic development of speech-related and written genres.

Another corpus built to address the lack of more recent historical data was the Corpus of Nineteenth Century English (CONCE). The corpus contains around one million words and focusses specifically on nineteenth century English to enable studies of short term diachronic change within the nineteenth century and to provide a recent historical reference point for studies of present-day English (Kytö et al, 2000:85). As with ARCHER, the corpus includes material from both speech-related and written registers (Kytö and Smitterberg, 2006:201, see also Kytö et al 2000) with texts divided into seven genres: debates, drama, fiction, history, letters, science, and trials. This corpus has been used to study elements of general language change, such as the use of *not*-contractions (Smitterberg 2012), cross-genre comparisons of linguistic features such as phrasal verbs and multal quantifiers (Kytö and Smitterberg, 2006), and examinations of particular text types (e.g. Geisler's examination of gender-based variation in the letter sub-corpus of CONCE).

Some corpus compilers have made the most of the availability of ebooks, in particular those digitized as part of Project Gutenberg. Two such corpora are the Corpus of Late Modern English Texts (CMLET) and the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) (Davis, 2010). The CMLET combines material from Project Gutenberg with other freely available material from the Oxford Text Archive and covers the years 1710-1920. In the initial construction of the corpus De Smet tried to maintain a balance of literary and non-literary genres and in the range of authors represented, though admitted the nature of the texts in the online sources meant that the corpus was 'biased to literary texts written by higher class male adults' (2005:72). The corpus has since been updated and CLMET3.0 contains around thirty-four million words, across five main categories: narrative fiction, narrative non-fiction, drama, letters and treatise, including nearly two million words of correspondence data, though the nature of the source texts means that demographic imbalances have persisted through subsequent expansions. COHA meanwhile is the 'largest structured historical corpus in existence' and features a balanced sample of fiction and non-fiction books, magazines and newspapers taken from each decade from the 1810s to the 2000s. It makes use of Project Gutenberg material as well as the Making of America digital library and the Corpus of Contemporary American English which, in addition to the registers represented in COHA, also contains over 100 million words of spoken American English.

Perhaps the most influential corpus in the study of recent change in English, the Brown corpus was originally conceived in the early 1960s as a resource for the study of modern American written English. It has subsequently gained a diachronic dimension as corpus compilers have taken the Brown sampling model and applied it to different historical and regional varieties of English. The original Brown corpus contains 500 samples of 2,000 words from the year 1961. The compilers focussed on prose and selected randomly across fifteen text categories from the Brown University Library and Providence Athenaeum (Francis and Kucera, 1964). The categories in question were *Press (Reportage)*, *Press (Editorial)*, *Press (Reviews)*, *Religion*, *Skill and Hobbies*, *Popular Lore*, *Belles Lettres*, *Miscellaneous: Government and House Organs*, *Learned*, *Fiction (General)*, *Fiction (Mystery)*, *Fiction (Science)*, *Fiction (Adventure)*, *Fiction (Romance)*, *Humour*. Letters do feature in the Brown corpus but only in the restricted context of 'Letters to the Editor', a sub-category of *Press (Editorial)*. As a result letters make up a relatively minor part of the corpus overall.

The Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen corpus (LOB) (Johansson, Leech and Goodluck, 1978) was constructed according to the Brown sampling frame and contains British written English published in 1961. This allows for comparisons of English and American varieties of this period. Subsequently the Freiberg-Brown corpus of American English (Frown) and the Freiberg-LOB corpus of British English (FLOB) (Mair, 1999/2007) were sampled along the same lines using material published in 1991, and facilitate studies of short term diachronic changes in these two varieties of written English between 1961 and 1991. This family of corpora was further expanded with the compilation of the BLOB-1931 corpus (Leech, Rayson, Smith forthcoming) which sampled British English from and around the year 1931 along the same lines as the Brown corpus. Another corpus of British English (BLOB-1901) is at 'an advanced stage of completion' (Leech, CoRD entry, 2010). The BE06 corpus (Baker 2011) brought the family of corpora relatively up to date, containing British English material from around 2006, again selected using the Brown sampling frame.

While the sampling frame used for the family of Brown corpus has enabled diachronic study of a variety of prose categories, it also means that the relative absence of letters from the original Brown corpus is shared by all of its offshoots.

2.2.2.2. Dedicated Letter Corpora

The largest corpora dedicated solely to historical English correspondence are the Corpus of Early English Correspondence (CEEC) which contains around 2.6 million words from the years 1410-1681 and the extension corpus (CEECE) which contains around 2.2 million words from the years 1653-1800. Taken together the *CEEC* plus *Extension* make use of 188 edited letter collections. As with the Helsinki corpus the data was collected with a view to sociolinguistic research and so represents a variety of authors from different strata of English speaking society. Around 1,200 authors are represented in the corpus overall. Like the Helsinki Corpus, the Corpus of Early English Correspondence has massively increased the amount of available historical corpus data however (also like the Helsinki Corpus) it takes the early nineteenth century as its cut-off point.

Oftentimes letters only survive in the large quantities required for corpus studies in the personal archives of famous figures like Charles Darwin, or British politician Joseph Addison. The letters of Addison and his social circle are preserved in the NEET (Network of Eighteenth-Century English Texts) corpus, which contains three million words from the years 1670-1760. NEET represents a range of document types including letters, essays, prose, comedy, memoirs and dialogues (Fitzmaurice 2003: 116). Fourteen authors are represented in the NEET letter sub-corpus, which has been used, for example, to examine the grammar of stance (Fitzmaurice, 2003) and to look at power and persuasion in diplomatic correspondence with reference to historical circumstance, politeness markers and stance marking (Fitzmaurice, 2006:84). Working with some of the material digitised as part of Project Gutenberg, Someya (2000) made the personal correspondence of five prominent historical figures (Thomas Jefferson, George Henry Borrow, General Robert E. Lee, Charles Darwin, Robert Louis-Stevenson) available in corpus form through an online concordance tool. Such collections provide large amounts of invaluable authentic data to explore the language of particular social circles, but lack the claims of generalizability that corpora with a wider population of authors would have.

David Denison created two letter corpora which focus on the Late Modern period (described by Marianne Hundt (2014: 1) as ‘the period roughly between 1700 and 1900’, see also Tiekens-Boon van Ostade (2009:1). The Corpus of Late Eighteenth Century Prose was designed to facilitate study of non-literary English of the period (CoRD 2009) and contains 300,000 words of correspondence data produced within a thirty year period (1761-90). All of the letters in

question were addressed to Richard Orford, a steward of Peter Legh the Younger at Lyme Hall in Cheshire (Van Bergen and Denison, 2007). The letters were largely of a business nature and originated from a wide variety of authors and cover a range of topics. While this provided an opportunity to represent a range of different types of correspondent it also proved problematic in terms of selecting a balanced sample. As a result the corpus compilers 'erred on the side of inclusiveness' and included nearly all available material (ibid: 324). The Corpus of Late Modern English Prose, also created by Denison, contains around 100,000 words of informal personal correspondence divided into six periods covering the years 1861-1919 sampled in 20,000 word blocks from five edited collections of letters². It was built specifically with the study of syntax in mind (1994:7) and like ARCHER and CONCE the corpus also aimed to provide more data in the post-Helsinki pre-present-day English period. As with NEET and the letter component of CONCE the Corpus of Late Modern English Prose only contains personal letters.

In addition to the largely English or American varieties represented in the corpora mentioned so far, there are currently two corpora of historical Scottish correspondence: The Corpus of Scottish Correspondence (CSC) (Meurman-Solin, 2007b) and the Nineteenth Century Corpus of Scottish Correspondence (19CSC) (Dossena and Dury, forthcoming). Both corpora were created by manually transcribing manuscripts contained in the National Archives of Scotland, the National Library of Scotland and the British Library, with some additional material obtained from private collections in the case of the CSC. The original CSC constructed at Helsinki has a particular focus on Scottish dialects, and follows the original Helsinki corpus aim of include authors of a variety of ages, genders and social backgrounds to enable historical sociolinguistic study. The corpus contains just over 250,000 words from 719 letters covering the years 1500-1715. The CSC contains a relatively large number of authors, 169 male and 56 female, with potential to add more material as the corpus contains only a small proportion of the available archive collections (Meurman-Solin, 2007a:2.2). As with other Helsinki corpora the CSC's cut-off point is the early eighteenth century.

Marina Dossena extended the time span of this 'geo-historical variety' by creating The Nineteenth Century Corpus of Scottish Correspondence (19CSC), which in 2006 contained 100,000 words from 450 letters (Dossena 2006:175) although the ultimate aim is to increase

² More specifically: *The Letters and Diaries of Lord and Lady Amberley Vol.1* (1937); *The Letters of Gertrude Bell Vol.1* (1927); *The Letters of Ernest Dowson* (1967); *The Letters of John Richard Green* (1901); *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb Vol.1* (1978)

this to 250,000 words of private correspondence and 250,000 words of business correspondence. As part of her corpus design Dossena decided to use only original manuscripts, ruling out correspondence from published editions. This approach involves more work in terms of locating and selecting correspondence for the corpus, however it also ensures the preservation of features of the language, such as spelling variation, which editorial interventions may otherwise have 'silently ironed out' (Dossena, 2012:27). Having access to the original archive of material in the National Archives of Scotland or in the National Library of Scotland also allowed Dossena to control the selection of materials. Dossena chose to select letters randomly from the available material and supplement this with letters written in response to these letters in order to preserve both sides of some interactions (2004:198).

2.2.3. Contemporary Letter Corpora

The amount of corpus material for the study of correspondence declines as we move into the twentieth century. Currently the latest date covered by a dedicated historical letter corpus is 1919 in Denison's Corpus of Late Modern English Prose. The letter component of ARCHER corpus (version 3.2) contains c. 24,000 words of British English correspondence and 36,000 words of American English correspondence from the twentieth century. This data has been used in multi-genre multi-dimensional analyses of changes in English language but to-date has not been used for detailed quantitative examinations of the letter genre specifically. The written element of the British National Corpus (BNC), a corpus which was designed to provide a general account of modern British English in the 1990s, contains 5-10% personal material such as letters, diaries, essays and memoranda. Normalised frequencies of linguistic features in the BNC have been used in comparisons with frequencies from historical corpora, for example by Krug (2000) in his examination of emerging modals, however taken on its own the corpus does not facilitate diachronic study.

The lack of modern correspondence data seems to be partly an issue of access. Pilegaard (1997) carried out an analysis of 793 contemporary business letters collected by Cambridge University but noted that this material was, 'usually not [publicly] available for linguistic analysis' (ibid:225). A number of other genre studies of letters in the 1980s and 1990s were conducted using letters collected by the researcher themselves from their own work environment or those of friends or acquaintances (e.g. Biber 1988, Ghaddessy 1993, Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris 1996, Nickerson 1999). However such letter collections are not usually made available to other researchers. One such study did produce a publicly available corpus of

business correspondence. Someya (2000) collected correspondence data from a range of model letter books, and combined it with his own letters and anonymised letters from two corporations. The resulting Business Letter Corpus (BLC) contains just over a million words and has been used to inform teaching materials and data-driven learning tasks.

Indeed most present-day correspondence data has been collected to inform ESP (English for Specific Purposes) teaching materials. The Cambridge Business English Corpus consists of 200 million words of spoken and written data. It includes various text types including letters and emails. This corpus is not publicly available, but findings from analysis of the corpus inform commercially available text books. On a smaller scale, Mike Nelson's *Business English Corpus* (2000) contains just over one million words of contemporary business English, around 100,000 words of which is made up of letters, emails and faxes. The corpus includes spoken and written materials and was constructed with a view to providing teachers and students with information regarding significantly frequent words within the business English domain. Nelson made an effort to balance gender, regional variety, professional status of the employees and business sectors, as well as representing a range of texts both from and about the business world. Nelson's analysis of this corpus also forms the basis of teaching materials which are available online.

Newer digital forms of communication such as email seem to have renewed interest in correspondence genres. One of the largest business corpora currently available is the ENRON email dataset, containing around 600,000 emails from the American energy company ENRON which were made available when the company was investigated for accounting irregularities. The emails have been used in various kinds of linguistic research. Gilbert (2012) looked at lexical bundles as indicators of institutional hierarchy, Wright (2013) used the ENRON emails from an authorship attribution angle, while De Felice et al. (2013) used the data for pragmatic study, tagging utterances according to the function they serve within the message.

2.2.4. Historical-contemporary gap

The last twenty years has seen a massive increase in the amount of historical correspondence data available for academic study. Thanks to the work carried out in Helsinki to represent historical varieties of English and the subsequent additions of other late modern correspondence collections much more is now known about the historical development of English correspondence. However a number of areas are still under-represented. Business

correspondence is still scarce in studies of historical correspondence. Dossena's Corpus of Nineteenth Century Scottish Correspondence is a notable exception though its regional focus may limit the wider applicability of findings. Some studies of historical business correspondence researchers have had to rely on collections of model letters as examples of authentic use despite the fact such letters were often standardised for pedagogical purposes, which is to say altered to fit prescriptive norms and, therefore, serve as a good example to students.

There is also very little corpus material for the study of historical development of correspondence in the twentieth century. There may be the perception (as there was previously with the nineteenth century) that there were few significant developments in English during the twentieth century. However, as we shall see, studies into data held in the Brown, CONCE and ARCHER corpora have shown significant general and genre-specific developments in twentieth century English. Future studies of historical correspondence would benefit from a corpus that bridged the gap between the nineteenth and twentieth century, particularly in relation to the business letter, which is a genre that has received a lot of attention in studies of modern professional discourse, but the recent historical development of which is still relatively unexplored.

2.3. Studies of patterns in general language change since the 19th century

2.3.1. Nineteenth Century Language Change

The study of language change in the nineteenth century had been neglected until recently. Kytö and Smitherberg argued that this neglect seemed to stem from the fact that many present-day grammar conventions have their origin in grammars of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, leading some to believe that few qualitative changes in English take place in this period (2006:199). The availability of the multi-genre corpora such as ARCHER and CONCE (discussed in Section 2.2.) in more recent years has facilitated an increasing number of studies of English in the nineteenth century, and these studies have identified a number of noteworthy areas of change.

Changes in nineteenth century English are most frequently discussed in terms of colloquialization, which is to say the tendency for features that are more typical of spoken, particularly conversational, language becoming more prevalent in written language (Kytö and Smitterberg, 2006:219). Douglas Biber's multi-dimensional³ analysis of the various genres represented in the the Helsinki and ARCHER corpora identified a shift in written registers from the eighteenth century onwards, from a more literate style to a more oral, conversational style. However it was also found that this trend does not apply to some specialist genres such as legal, medical and science prose which have become more specialised and more literate (Biber and Conrad, 2001: 81).

It should be noted that the very terms 'genre' and 'register' are the subject of considerable debate and confusion. Some researchers pick one term or the other, while others use both more or less interchangeably (Biber and Conrad, 2009:21, offer a comprehensive summary on this point). In trying to unpick the distinction between these two terms Lee (2001:46) describes 'register' and 'genre' as essentially two different points of view covering the same ground'. Both are related to the situational context, but while 'register' is the consideration of text as language, genre is the consideration of text as belonging to a category with recognised conventions. 'Register' refers more generally to linguistic patterns typical of a given context, while 'genre' has to do with the way in which a text is organised, and its purposes and effects. By this definition, business English would be considered a register, whereas the business letter, with its formal conventions such as opening and closing salutations, would be a genre (with the potential to distinguish sub-genres within this). The distinction as outlined by Lee (2001) is very similar to distinctions made by, for example, Biber and Conrad (2009:21) and Bloor and Bloor (1995:4), and is how I have understood the terms for the purposes of this study. Where such terms are used interchangeably in this chapter it is because they are used as such in the original literature.

Merja Kytö and Erik Smitterberg (2006) looked at a variety of features across genres and genders in the CONCE corpus, including three and four-word lexical bundles, multal quantifiers (e.g. *much*, *many*, *lots*), progressives (i.e. a BE verb followed by an 'ing' participle, e.g. 'I am going out'), and phrasal verbs for evidence of stability or variation in the nineteenth century (see also Smitterberg 2008). The results paint a complex picture, with elements of both

³ In which texts are measured regarding how far they are: 1. Involved vs. Informational, 2. Narrative vs. Non-Narrative, 3. Explicit vs. Situation Dependent, 4. Overtly Persuasive, 5. Abstract vs. Non-Abstract (Biber, 1988) (Biber and Conrad, 2001)

stability and change. They found that genre was an important consideration noting, for instance, that progressive verb forms and phrasal verbs, which are more common in conversational present-day English, increased in letters but not in science writing during the nineteenth century. Smitterberg's (2005) analysis of progressive forms in the CONCE corpus found that while there was a general increase in the number of progressive forms used, there were very different rates of increase across different genres, with marked differences between what he calls expository (debates, history, science) and non-expository (drama, fiction, letters and trials) genres. Hundt (2004b) also found there to be an increase in the frequency of progressive forms in the nineteenth (and eighteenth) century looking at data from the ARCHER corpus.

Similar generic exceptions were found in other studies such as Smitterberg's (2012) examination of *not*-contractions (again in CONCE), where he finds that though they do increase in drama and fiction of the period, they do not increase in trials, suggesting that contraction of forms was 'not equally acceptable in all genres' (2012:201, cf. Kytö and Smitterberg, 2015). Nevertheless while such exceptions exist, Smitterberg argues that they are 'compatible' with the overall picture of colloquialization (2012:201), as we might expect genres such as trials to maintain more formal language. It is also a pattern echoed in the wider research. For example, Stefan Dollinger in his (2008: 280) examination of British, American and Australian professional correspondence of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries found an increasing use of the more colloquial abbreviated verb forms such as "'ll" (for *will*) "'ve" (for *have*) and even "shd" and "wd" (for *should* and *would*) in British correspondence.

In relation to the nineteenth century, Smitterberg (2012:204) writes that the notion of colloquialization is complicated by Görlach's observation (1999:27) that written language was seen as the model for spoken language at this time, meaning that the influence of one variety over another was not necessarily one-way. The lingering effects of the 'grand age of prescriptivism', as the eighteenth century was dubbed by Dossena (2004: 196), may have slowed the spread of colloquial features in written English, particularly among lower and middle-class writers looking to make a good impression. However, as Beal (2004), Smitterberg (2012), and Görlach (1999:27) have observed, the political process, education and the commercial world were increasingly accessible to people from different backgrounds, and therefore, there is at least a degree of democratization of access.

2.3.2. Twentieth Century Language Change

As we move into the twentieth century, the Brown family of corpora have formed the basis for a range of studies into more recent changes in English, including two large scale investigations by Mair (2006) and Leech et al. (2009), both of which take a corpus-based approach to compare American and British data from 1961 and 1991. Mair argues that the corpus approach is particularly suited to the study of language change as it can help free researchers from the background influence of prescriptive attitudes which can 'introduce a hidden bias into the study of ongoing change by setting the agenda of topics worth the researcher's attention' (2006: 3). Leech et al. (2009: 18) list a number of such topics based on material from Barber's (1964) *Linguistic Change in Present-Day English* (e.g. the use of 'less' instead of 'fewer' with countable nouns), and use them as a starting point for a wide ranging analysis of the corpus aiming to 'to flesh out, to refine and, where necessary, to correct the picture' (2009:18).

In fleshing out this picture they examine elements of language change including the subjunctive mood, modal auxiliaries, semi-modals, progressives, the passive voice, expanded predicates in American and British English, non-finite clauses and noun phrases. A number of the findings support, or are supported by, the wider literature. As explanatory factors, Leech et al. (2009:237) and Leech and Smith (2009) discuss their results in relation to *colloquialization*, *grammaticalization*⁴ and, as the Brown family of corpora contains comparable British and American material, the influence of one regional variety over another, typically Americanization over British.

Leech et al. (2009) identified a decline in the frequency of core modals such as '*shall*', '*must*' and '*may*' and an increase in the semi- and 'emerging' modals such as '*have to*' and '*need to*' (also observed in Smith and Leech, 2013). This is in keeping with the patterns identified in Krug's (2000) examination of emerging modals across speech-related genres in the Helsinki corpus, ARCHER, and Brown corpora (with additional material from the works of Shakespeare, and the BNC). Baker's (2011) data-driven study also showed a significant decline in the core modals *must* and *shall*, and an increase in the 'emerging modal' *need*. Leech et al. (2009:78) recommend caution in interpreting this as a displacement of core modals by newer forms, as 'semi-modals' are on the whole much less frequent than 'core modals'. Furthermore some core modal forms such as *should* (obligation) saw a dramatic increase between the 1960s and

⁴ 'the increase of the range of a morpheme advancing from a lexical to grammatical or from a less grammatical to a more grammatical status' (Kurylowicz, 1975:52)

1990s (Leech et al., 2009:89), and prior to its later decline, *must* actually showed a small increase in frequency in the British Press and Fiction sub-corpora between 1931 and 1961 (Leech and Smith, 2009:190). However Leech and Smith (2013:12) conclude that,

‘it seems likely that the growth in the use of emergent modals in speech has proceeded through at least most of the twentieth century, and that this has had an indirect effect on the written language through colloquialization’

The increase in the frequency of different types of progressive forms identified in the nineteenth century continues through the Twentieth Century and has received attention from Leech et al. (2009), Mair and Leech (2006), Aarts, Close and Wallis (2010) and Kranich (2010). Again development is found to vary according to form and extra-linguistic factors. Leech et al. (2009) make the distinction between the *present progressive active*, *progressive passive*, and *progressive + modal auxiliary*, finding that different forms follow different patterns of change, with the progressive active increasing in both British and American English, and the other two forms only increasing in British English. Aarts, Close and Wallis (2010:158) also observe an increase in progressive forms in spoken material in the Diachronic Corpus of Present-Day Spoken English and cite Smith’s (2005:2) explanations for this of increased contact with American English and the fact that the progressives evolved ‘to convey a rather complex meaning or set of meanings.’ In support of the case for colloquialization Leech et al (2009: 142) note that ‘the overall frequencies of the progressive in printed prose genres appear to be moving in the direction of speech-based or speech-like genres’.

Smith and Rayson (2007) examined the progressive passive in the Brown family of corpora and concluded that it does not seem to be part of the wider pattern of colloquialization as it typically appears in semi-formal texts (ibid:149). Rather Leech et al. (2009:142) argue that the increase in the progressive passive in English is at least in part due to the general expansion of progressives, while the decline in progressive passives in American English is influenced by American prescriptions against passive forms. Mair (2004), Leech et al. (2009), and Leech and Smith (2013) provide evidence of the decline of *be*-passives and the increase in *get*-passives, although, as Leech et al. (2009:164) argue, not in anywhere near sufficient quantities to halt the overall decline in passive forms.

There are a number of findings which lend support to the general picture of increasing colloquialization, or as Baker puts it, ‘decreasing verbosity’ (2011: 76) in twentieth century English. Baker’s study highlighted the steady decrease in the terms of address *Mr*, *Mrs*, and *Sir*,

which was also observed by Leech et al. (2009:261). Both Leech and Baker argue that this decline in titular nouns may be reflective of the democratization of discourse as discussed in Fairclough (1992), with titles giving way to the use of more names in a society with a less strict social hierarchy and fewer rules about terms of address. Following on from Smitherberg's observations of the increase in *not*-contractions in the nineteenth century, Leech et al. found contracted-*not* with verb forms (e.g. 'don't') to increase 'enormously' in the Brown family of corpora (2009:240). In addition to this, two of the forms identified as increasing significantly in Baker's data-driven study were the contracted *it's* and *didn't*. The decline of the preposition *upon* ('a more formal literary version of on', Leech and Smith 2009: 184) is also noted in multiple sources (see also Baker 2011). Patterns in relativization are also cited in Leech et al (2009:234) as indicating a move towards a more colloquial style; *wh*- forms decreased significantly in the twentieth century, while *that* and zero relative forms have increased.

Smith and Leech (2009:169) note the three trends, grammaticalization, colloquialization, and Americanisation, 'can often be seen as co-operating', and many of the findings in the literature offer some degree of evidence for all three. However, Leech et al. (2009) identify another trend which seemingly goes against the general move towards a more oral style: "densification" defined by Leech et al. (ibid: 249) as 'compacting meaning into a smaller number of words'. This trend is 'if anything "anti-colloquial"' (Leech and Smith, 2009: 196). Mair also observes an increase in 'those noun phrase structures which help the compression of information' (2006:192) and are symptomatic of densification. Leech and Smith illustrate this trend by plotting the frequency of three factors: the decrease in the use of *of*, a steep rise in *s*-genitives, and a steep rise in noun + noun sequences (2009: 192). Leech et al. (2009:250) meanwhile cite the increase in both British and American English of abstract nominalization. As one would expect this trend is most marked in 'Learned' prose, but interestingly they also find that the 'General Prose' corpus is following the same trend to some extent.

In summary, corpus research into language change in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has identified a range of features which seem to indicate a move towards a more oral style in written English. However there is also evidence that some genres are, in Hundt and Mair's (1999) terms, more 'uptight' and 'conservative' in terms of language change, while others are more 'agile', with changes adopted more readily. Furthermore some specialised genres appear to be evolving to become more dense and more abstract. All of these findings are in keeping

with the wider multi-dimensional picture outlined by Biber and Conrad (2001) and have helped improve understanding of how English in general has developed in recent centuries.

2.4. Previous Studies of language change in letter writing practice.

2.4.1. Historical Personal correspondence

Manfred Görlach (1999: 14) summed up the appeal of letters as a source of linguistic research data saying, 'letters form a particularly interesting text type since they reflect the social and functional relations between sender and receiver to a very high degree – only spoken texts can equal the range'. Biber and Finnegan (1989: 507) found that the language exhibited in letters has become more oral in style over the past four centuries, with more language indicative of involvement, less elaboration and less abstraction. Geisler's study (2003) of the letters in the *Corpus of Nineteenth Century English* also showed this trend, but looked at it in terms of gender difference. He found that while the correspondence of both genders moved to a more personal, less persuasive style, with less elaborated reference (2003:87), female correspondence changed more quickly and in more dimensions, and that overall 'men tend to be more information oriented and abstract, whereas women tend to use more involved and situated language' (2003: 104). Nevalainen (2000:53) also used CEEC data to examine instances of language innovation by female writers. She found some evidence that women led the change from the use of the second person pronoun 'ye' in the subject function to 'you', and the favouring of the '-es' third person present indicative suffix over '-eth' (2000:49) (though region is also found to play a large role in this second change).

To identify linguistic variables that were most relevant to the historical study of letters Nurmi and Palander-Collin (2008) carried out a corpus-based study into letters as a text type, selecting a representative sample of eighteenth century personal correspondence from the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* and carrying out keyword comparisons with three other historical corpora (*Zen English Newspaper Corpus*, the *Century of Prose* corpus, and the *Corpus of English Dialogues*), which is to say they compared the frequencies of words in the CEEC to their frequencies in the comparison corpora in order to identify words that occurred more frequently in the correspondence corpus. They found first and second person pronouns, modal verbs and private verbs (e.g. *hope* and *think*) to be significantly more frequent in the letter corpus (2008:33). Biber and Conrad (2001:98-9) had also found these features to be frequent in correspondence. Nurmi and Palander-Collin discovered significant differences

demonstrated between male and female authors and authors of different social status. Female authors used more personal references, and 'private' verbs (such as *think*, *know*) were found to be more frequent in letters to family rather than acquaintances (2008:39). It was also found that social status had some effect on modal use with the negotiation of power imbalances taking place most in letters to recipients of lower social status. *Could* and *would* were the only modals used between equals, while epistemic modality was found to be used more by the gentry (ibid: 43). However in general they find more significant variation in terms of social differences between interlocutors in relation to pronoun and private verb use.

Although their study only focuses on letters from one period, Nurmi and Palander-Collin argue that the features they identified are typical of personal letters of any time period. This assertion is generally backed up by the wider literature on the key features of historical and contemporary correspondence. However they also note that 'a diachronic study of the text type would shed more light on the core linguistic features and their varying importance in different social contexts' (2008:44).

2.4.1.1. Formal features

Terms of address, particularly opening and closing salutations, are among the more distinctive features of correspondence, and are one of key ways in which relationships between interlocutors are expressed. In terms of diachronic developments they are also a relatively easy element to isolate and trace through time. In studying the ways in which authors interact and represent themselves and others in texts, many studies of letters interpret their findings with reference to models of politeness. The model most frequently referred to is Brown and Levinson's (1987). According to Brown and Levinson every person has a public self-image ("face") and is a rational agent. Self-image has two aspects: *negative face* which consists of an individual's 'freedom of action and freedom from imposition', and *positive face* which is the 'positive self-image claimed by interactants...crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of' (1987: 61).

Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1995) sum up the appeal of politeness as a relevant theory for the study of correspondence:

"In Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness, redressing a potential face-threat to the addressee is the main motivation for the use of different politeness strategies. A letter may perform a variety of functions, most of them potentially threatening either to the positive or the negative face of the addressee." (ibid:547)

Theories of politeness enable us to explain some of the ways in which the maintenance of social, and indeed professional, relationships are realised linguistically across space and time (Nurmi and Pallander-Collin, 2008:21).

The main criticism that has been made of Brown and Levinson's model is that it is not, as it claims to be, universal. Matsumoto (1988, 1989) argued that the model is not applicable to Japanese language, where honorifics and other negative politeness strategies are employed in situations where there is no face-threatening action, while Mao (1994) argued that the dynamics of Chinese face are fundamentally different to those outlined in Brown and Levinson's Anglo-centric model. Later studies such as Leech (2007) have attempted to address this question of universality by accommodating both Eastern and Western perspectives, while others have questioned whether universals of politeness can even be defined. For instance Flowerdew pointed to more recent studies (e.g. Terkourafi 2005) that have made the case that politeness is not universal, that it is culture specific, negotiated between interlocutors, and 'cannot be predicted by a fixed model or found within individual utterances' (Flowerdew, 2012:111). Nevertheless Brown and Levinson's (1987) model has been shown to be a useful framework with which to examine interpersonal features of the language in previous studies of historical correspondence. Furthermore, the concerns about global universality are not of great concern with relation to the *BTCC* as the data is very much a product of the Anglo-Saxon culture towards which Brown and Levinson's model is purportedly geared.

General historical patterns in the development of salutations, with reference to positive and negative politeness strategies, have been traced in the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* in studies by Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1995), and Nevala (2003, 2007).

Summarising the way in which salutation forms relate to the concepts of positive and negative politeness, Nevala writes:

'address forms towards the addressee's positive face usually take the form of informal and intimate terms such as first names or nicknames. Negative politeness manifests itself in such formulae as titles and honorifics' (2007:96)

The increase in the use of positive politeness in correspondence is demonstrated in Nevala's (2003) examination of family correspondence in the CEEC in which she compared correspondence from the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. Letters between spouses showed the largest increase, while authors in the highest ranks of society seem to have been slowest to adopt more positive polite formula (ibid:160). Examining terms of

address in the CEEC Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg found that ‘two trends characterise the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: a simplification of negative politeness terms and an increased use of positive ones’ (1995:569). They also note that,

‘the negative strategy of giving deference is simplified not only structurally but also socially. The spread of Sir neutralises power distinctions among the ranks below the nobility, and Madam throughout the rank hierarchy’ (ibid: 588)

This was a trend also identified by Nevala (2007) in her comparison of terms of address on the inside and outside of personal letters in the seventeenth and eighteenth century CEEC data (N.B. the ‘outside’ of the letter here means the envelope or outward facing part of the letter which is visible when sealed). However in addition to a decline in the most negatively polite forms, Nevala also notes something of a simplification of positive politeness in the professional letters of the middle classes and lower classes. While in the seventeenth century she observes considerable variation in address forms used by writers from the middle and lower ranks, with social proximity indicated through the use of more familiar terms of address, by the eighteenth century terms of address had become more standardised. She argued ‘it seems that [by the eighteenth century] a professional of any magnitude may be addressed with the Mr + [first name] + [last name] + [occupational form]’ (2007:104). Nevala (ibid) also found that terms of address on the outside of the letter, which always displayed fewer familiar and kinship terms than direct address forms inside the letter, became more conventional and negatively polite in the eighteenth century.

Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg argued that these standardisations of address forms may in part be motivated by writer-oriented considerations of politeness, arguing that ‘routine formulae, such as sir and madam, certainly reduce the complexity of social interaction and minimise the risk of face loss on the part of the writer.’ (1995: 588)

The general trend towards more positively polite formula is complicated by the process of standardisation to some extent. As Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg noted, there is a cyclical nature to the development of forms of address whereby forms such as *dear*, which originated as a positive politeness marker, become routine in forms such as *Dear Sir* and *Dear [title]+[surname]*. This leads to a loss of the semantic meaning of *dear*, which in turn becomes a somewhat negatively polite form. Kytö and Romaine demonstrated how *Dearest* evolved as a ‘sensitive marker of involved style’ in personal letters (2008:352) as *dear* became more

conventionalised. This was an issue recognised by Barrett Wendell, an American academic of the late-nineteenth/early twentieth century, who commented,

‘when we write letters, we begin with the adjective *dear*. Now on the occasions when we mean by this word to express even the smallest degree of personal affection we must change the word to *dearest, my dear* or *darling*’. (1911:25)

This idea of conventionalisation of formula and breaking those conventions as a way to signal social proximity also formed part of Fitzmaurice’s examination of the eighteenth century Clifton family correspondence. She found salutations to be largely conventional, and, ‘as with the matter of address, closing salutations appear to deviate from the usual template where the relationship being indexed in the letter is one of uncommon intimacy’ (2008:91).

The origin and development of the positively polite formula ‘*yours sincerely*’ has been the subject of at least two studies: Tiekens Boon van Ostade’s (1999) examination of the letters of John Gay, and Annemieke Bijkerk’s (2004) analysis of *yours sincerely* and *yours affectionately* in the CEEC(E), Chadwyck-Healey database, *Correspondence of Jonathan Swift* and *Letters of Alexander Pope*. Tiekens Boon van Ostade introduced the distinction between Type 1 formulas (e.g. *your most humble servant*) and Type 2 formulas (e.g. *yours sincerely*) and argues that Gay’s use of the latter in letters to close friends was a positively polite innovation employed to signal social proximity (1999:107). She also noted that when it comes to Type 1 formulae, the more elaborate the form the greater the social distance between interlocutors.

Annemieke Bijkerk’s (2004) study challenged the claim that *yours sincerely* was an innovation of Gay’s, finding evidence in the Chadwyck-Healey database that variations of Type 2 formulas *yours sincerely/sincerely yours* and *yours affectionately/affectionately yours* first appear in the seventeenth century. Furthermore she finds that while both forms originate as positively polite formulas, *yours sincerely* was increasingly used in a variety of contexts as an expression of both positive and negative politeness,

‘[formulas using] ‘*affectionately* are more often used to family members, lovers and friends, while [*sincerely* is] more often used to addressees who can be identified as acquaintances, and even enemies’ (2004 :126)

She argued that this divergence in use ultimately led to *yours sincerely* becoming the ‘rather formal, negatively polite and old-fashioned closing’ (ibid: 127) that it is today. There seem, then, to be two forces pushing against each other in the development of opening and closing

salutations, a general move towards more positively polite forms, mixed with the 'pragmatization' (Raumolin-Brunberg 1996: 167) of friendly forms.

2.4.1.2. Stance and personal reference

While terms of address are perhaps the most conspicuous way in which authors represent themselves and others in letters, the relationship between author, recipient (and/or other interested parties) is also expressed in a number of ways in the main body of the letter. Stance, which is to say features of the language which 'position the writer and express his or her point of view', (Palander-Collin, 2011:84) has been found to be of interest in the discussion of the language of historical letters. In terms of quantitative evidence, Biber (2004) observed that the frequency of stance markers increases in the letters element of the ARCHER corpus. Kytö and Smitterberg's examination of three and four word bundles in the CONCE corpus also hints at the importance of stance markers, as nearly all of the most frequent bundles contain personal pronouns, and many of these express the author's attitude, e.g. '*I am very sorry*', '*I am glad*', '*I hope you will*' (2006:206).

Fitzmaurice (2003) (analysed markers of stance in personal correspondence in the NEET corpus. She looked at how different modal auxiliaries forms (e.g. *shall*, *will*) and stance complement constructions (e.g. '*I believe that*') are used to convey stance. She found that implicit stance is expressed 'quite frequently' through modal auxiliaries, but the main way that authors marked stance was through more explicit forms such as first person subjects with complement clauses or comment clauses made up of first person pronoun and stance verbs like *hope*, *think* and *believe*. (2003: 129). Fitzmaurice also noted that some expressions of stance appear to be more routine, and can be found as part of conventionally polite epistolary expressions, suggesting that 'the grammar of stance allows writers to adopt more as well as less conventionalised language in their personal discourse' (ibid).

Nevala (2010) looked at facework, defined as 'altering distance between participants of a communicative situation' (ibid:152), and how it affects self- and addressee reference in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of the CEEC(E). She finds that personal reference is used to negotiate social proximity/distance, with first and second person pronouns used to indicate involvement and responsibility, while third person references are generally used to distance the referent from actions. There is a diachronic element to the study in that 'the use of self

and addressee-oriented reference in compliments' is seen to increase between the seventeenth and eighteenth century (ibid: 169).

Also with reference to eighteenth century personal correspondence (from the CEECE), Palander-Collin and Nevala (2010) looked at how authors report on the speech or thought of others and how this practice reflects the author's role in relation to the reported content. They found a general preference for indirect reporting. There was also some indication that reporting practices reflected the relationship between interlocutors, with more examples of reporting between socially proximate interlocutors and a tendency for direct reports to highlight 'emotionally laden topics' (2010: 131).

2.4.2. Historical Business correspondence

2.4.2.1. Forms of address

The interpersonal aspects of letters have also received the most attention in considerations of business correspondence. Dossena made reference to terms of address in a wider discussion of stance, writing that different degrees of formality are used in opening and closing formula depending on the degree of proximity the author wishes to signal (2006:177). Del Lungo Camiciotti (2006a) examined the salutations used in three late nineteenth century letter writing manuals, finding them to be 'highly conventionalised, indeed almost formulaic', and reflecting 'a conservative and formal attitude rooted in the discourse of humility characterising the patron/client relation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' (ibid:160). The forms mentioned (*Sir, Gentlemen, Mr, Mssrs and Esq. obedient, humble, faithful, servant, servants*) are more consistently negatively polite than those found in personal correspondence.

There is some indication in Dollinger's (2008) examination of late nineteenth century colonial correspondence that the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw a diversification of closing formulas at the expense of Type 1 'obedient servant' formulas (ibid: 282). More generally, though admittedly using a small sample of letters, Dollinger observes stagnation or decline in negative politeness moves, and an increase in positive politeness moves across all three varieties of English correspondence examined (British, Canadian and Australian) (ibid: 277).

2.4.2.2. Stance and Personal Reference

Both Dossena (2006) and Del Lungo Camiciotti (2006a) have written about stance features in business correspondence of the nineteenth century. Dossena focused on the Scottish bank correspondence contained in the *Corpus of Nineteenth Century Scottish Correspondence* and took a number of factors into consideration, including the use of terms of address, the use of imperatives, and modality as expressed through verbs, adverbs and evaluative phrases. She finds that the various modal verbs typically perform particular functions, and convey different levels of authority. For example the use of *must* 'typically indicates requirements dictated by the bank' while *will* is used in requests originating from the author (2006: 180). More senior employees were found to be more direct in terms of address. The study also concluded that the writer's beliefs about the social status of the recipient have a greater influence on the linguistic strategies used than age, gender or actual status (2006: 190). Clients, for instance, are 'assumed to be superior by definition' (ibid) and they are addressed with a heightened level of politeness.

Various other aspects of the *Corpus of Nineteenth Century Scottish Correspondence* have been investigated by Marina Dossena. She examined ways in which authors build trust through self-appraisal in bank correspondence, focussing on lexical choice, the expression of personal opinions employing epistemic modality, the use of passive forms to convey objectivity, and pragmatic moves that reinforce positive politeness (2010a: 195). As in Del Lungo Camiciotti's (2006) examination of stance, Dossena stressed the importance of positive politeness, arguing that it is, 'extremely important for the maintenance of business relationships in which the sense of sharing interests and goals is the basis upon which the link is formed' (2010a: 201). She also investigated strategies for the attribution of responsibility in bank correspondence (2008). This analysis took a number of factors into account, such as terms of address, the use of the passive voice as a depersonalised way of admitting fault (e.g. "an error has been committed"), and the use of different forms depending on the nature of an apology (e.g., "I regret") is used in more distant apologies, while "I am sorry" occurs in apologies in which authors express more willingness to co-operate (2008:242).

Dossena (2010b) also looked at how features of legal English are introduced to business correspondence of the nineteenth century, looking at personal reference, modal auxiliaries, legal vocabulary, and comparing strategies used in letters from experts (in the legal field) to non-experts, and in letters between experts. She finds that 'attention is paid not to pose a

threat to the recipient's positive face and any hints of ignorance of terms or concepts are scrupulously avoided' (2010b: 62) and that 'the expression of advice, explanations and illustrations of recommended procedures are also carefully encoded, so that the recipient's negative face is not threatened either' (ibid). So again the concepts of face and politeness frame the discussion.

Del Lungo Camiciotti (2006) also observed a heightened ('extravagant') level of politeness in nineteenth century business correspondence. She examined letters taken from late nineteenth century model letter collections which all serve the function of initiating business relations. The letters were essentially peer-to-peer interactions, where business propositions are presented as mutually beneficial. Del Lungo Camiciotti used Leech's definition of politeness, as behaviour aimed at the establishment and maintenance of comity (1983: 194), to analyse the way in which the letters are structured and the linguistic realisation of interpersonal rhetoric. To add a diachronic element these findings are then compared with data found in a modern model letter collection (Geffner's *Business Letters The Easy Way* from 1991). She found that authors of nineteenth century business letters employ a variety of politeness strategies to redress the power imbalance inherent in correspondence (i.e. the author controls the content), and argues that modern business correspondence, in contrast, is more impersonal and stresses the benefit to the recipient rather than stressing shared interests and goals the way nineteenth century writers did (2006:171). As both the historical and present-day data are models of use rather than authentic examples it is difficult to know how far these trends reflect actual language use in the business context.

These studies of stance and self-reference tend to offer very detailed insight into small groups of letters. The specialised focus of these studies means that they tend to deal with the specific circumstances of a particular setting or social circle rather than addressing wider trends in language change.

2.4.2.3. Influence of Prescription

Dollinger's (2008) study did attempt to address wider issues in language change in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Combining data from a range of corpora he looked at regional variation in British, Canadian and Australian business and official correspondence relating the results to notions of politeness and prescriptive norms. He examined a range of linguistic features including opening and closing address formulas and variation therein,

politeness markers such as *'please'*, *'beg to'* and *'pray'* as indicators of level of formality, the use of *'shall'* and *'will'*, abbreviations, and the use of positive and negative politeness moves. In terms of opening and closing formulas he found that there was a simplification of some of the more elaborate closing formulas, reflected in a decline in superlative forms (e.g. your *most* obedient servant). Positive politeness moves were found to increase in all three regional varieties while negative moves decline or remain stagnant (2008:277). He also finds that colonial varieties adhere more closely to the prescriptive norms than British correspondence in relation to the use of *'shall'* and *'will'*. Finally contractions and abbreviations were found to be significantly more frequent British correspondence. This also lends weight to the notion that prescriptive norms were followed more closely in colonial correspondence.

2.4.3. Historical Personal-Business correspondence comparison

Studies into both personal and professional historical correspondence have highlighted the importance of terms of address, self-reference, attitude markers and modality as linguistic elements used to negotiate interpersonal relations. While we might assume that some of these features are more typical of one type of correspondence or the other, very few studies address the differences between personal and professional correspondence. One notable exception is Palander-Collin's (2011) examination of three-word *I*-clusters in sixteenth and eighteenth century 'gentlemen's letters' selected from the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* and its *Extension*. He compared normalised frequencies of these clusters across family and non-family components. Though the categories 'family' and 'non-family' did not correspond exactly to 'personal' and 'professional', the matters dealt with in family correspondence were somewhat more personal, while the non-family correspondence was more likely to refer to business matters (2011:90).

The cluster results were grouped together according to the functional categories, *opening/closing*, *humiliative phrase*, *contextual*, *grammatical* and the verb-type categories *mental*, *communicative*, *existential/relational*, and *activity* (2011:97). In keeping with Biber's multi-dimensional findings, the letters examined by Palander-Collin became more subjective and involved from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century as demonstrated by the increased and more varied use of attitude markers and an increase in the frequency of mental verbs like *'think'*, *'know'*, *'wish'* and *'hope'* (ibid:103). Such markers of personal attitude were consistently more frequent in family than non-family correspondence. Other clusters such as 'I

will not' typically followed by 'forget'/'fail' as a way of promising appeared in the family letters but not non-family letters.

Palander-Collin's study also shed some light on matters relating to either family or non-family correspondence. For instance on the seeming decline in deferential language in professional correspondence Palander-Collin finds that 'the sixteenth century clusters in non-family letters emphasise the writer's modesty and humility towards the addressee, particularly if the addressee is socially superior to the writer' (ibid:98) whereas in the eighteenth century letters, 'humiliative phrases are often use conventionally rather than to show real social inferiority' (2011: 98). This was partly demonstrated by the increase in the frequency of the clusters 'I am sir'/'I am dear' which form part of conventional closing formulae. The eighteenth century also saw the appearance of the 'beg' request marker which was not present in the sixteenth century data but would come to be a frequent feature of conventional requests in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

Del Lungo Camiciotti (2008) also looked at historical request formulas in her largely qualitative investigation of business correspondence taken from a nineteenth century letter writing manual. Through close reading of 151 letters in the manual she described a range of strategies used to perform each speech act. For requests the most popular expressions of requests are through conventional request markers such as 'please' and 'be pleased to' and 'be so good as to', while commitments were most frequently expressed as 'I shall'. Performative utterances (in which the verb form identifies the action e.g. 'I request', or 'I undertake to') and very indirect strategies such as hinting are found to be rare in both speech acts (2008:123-4).

In terms of historical scope, studies of the development of English correspondence do not currently extend much past the end of the nineteenth century. This may be in part due to a perception (as there was previously with the nineteenth century) that there were few grammatical developments of note in the twentieth century. However the main obstacle to such studies remains the lack of availability of data on the scale required for corpus study. Though the development of business correspondence across the twentieth century has not been addressed, there have been a number of more synchronic studies of modern professional discourse.

2.4.4. Contemporary correspondence

As we have seen in Section 2.2, with the exception of letter component of ARCHER, there is something of a gap in corpus data when it comes to twentieth century correspondence. As a result studies of correspondence have typically been conducted on small collections of letters obtained through the personal or professional contacts of the researcher. Douglas Biber's discussion of the differences between professional and personal correspondence in his study of variation across speech and writing relied on a small selection of letters collected from an academic context (1988:66). Interestingly he found significant differences between personal and professional correspondence. More variation was found within the professional letters than the personal letters. Biber noted,

‘the personal letters studied here have strictly interactional, affective purposes, and therefore tolerate little variation in linguistic form. Professional letters on the other hand, have both interactional and informational purposes, and apparently these two concerns can be weighted quite differently from one professional letter to the next’. (1988: 179)

This is quite surprising particularly given claims in e.g. Del Lungo Camiciotti (2006) that business correspondence becomes more routine and impersonal in the twentieth century. This disparity between the perception of modern business correspondence as routine and impersonal, and the interactional variety shown in Biber's, albeit small scale, study is one that has not yet been addressed.

Studies of recent business correspondence have tended to look at letters as something of a fixed genre⁵, the structural and functional characteristics of which are identified for pedagogical purposes or cross cultural comparisons. For example Kong (1998) used move structure analysis (Swales 1990) and rhetorical structure analysis (Mann and Thompson 1988) to analyse a set of routine business requests, comparing English letters, Chinese letters and English letters written by native Chinese speakers. He found that justification of the request is an obligatory move in Chinese requests but optional in English requests, and that overall the maintenance of interpersonal relations was more of a feature of Chinese business letters (1998:125). Furthermore Kong found the requests to be relatively ‘buried’ in Chinese letters, which is to say, they typically appear later in the letters following (sometimes extensive) justification (ibid: 128). He argues that these differences come about because the face system

⁵ That is, a kind of text that is well defined and established enough within the modern context for typical features and structures to be identified.

employed in English routine request letters based on “symmetrical solidarity” whereas Chinese requests use “symmetrical difference” (ibid: 138).

Also using Swales’s move structure analysis as a starting point, Vergaro (2005) compared moves in English and Italian “FYI” (for your information) business letters as well as the use of modality and metadiscoursal features (i.e. features that reference the text or ongoing exchange). She found that,

“the English writers tend to construct the text with the addressee in mind. The information is more thorough and detailed and ancillary components of the subject matter (thanks, references to previous communication, secondary information, details) are mentioned.” (2005:123)

Italian authors, in contrast, ‘tend to go straight to the point and rely much more on the reader’s cooperation for interpretation’ (ibid). An overall sense is given of the letters in the English sub-corpus being much more writer-responsible.

Jalilifar and Betisayyah (2011) compared the generic structure of English and Persian Business letters of enquiry using Pinto Dos Santos’s (2002) model for move analysis. A number of differences were observed in ways in which different moves were realised linguistically. For example more familiar terms such as *dear* were only used in opening moves in the English component. Persian opening moves were characterised by formality and titles, the overuse of which Jalilifar and Betisayyah describe as ‘a Persian cultural disposition’ (2011:320). They also look at the way in which authors express their company’s responsibility. In Persian letters this is typically through third person singular pronouns, while the singular plural form *we* form is used in English. They also find differences in the form requests take, noting that imperative forms are preferred in Persian correspondence over the more indirect *could* and *would* forms used in English.

In addition to cross-cultural comparisons, requests have been examined in specific institutional contexts. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1996) looked at how requests were realised in a collection of letters sent to or from the Managing Director of an international company. The form that requests moves took and the politeness strategies employed were analysed with reference to the power and status of interlocutors, their relative professional distance/proximity, and the level of imposition. They note that the majority (59.5%) of requests were declarative, 27.6% were modal-initial (e.g. ‘would you...’), and 10.6% were imperative (i.e. orders). Routine texts from authors with higher status to recipients of lower

status seem to display less mitigation as this is the only context in which minimal pre-request forms and aggravating post-request forms are used. This is keeping with Dossena's (2006) observations regarding nineteenth century correspondence, in which she found that Directors, perhaps because of their relatively elevated position, make much more direct requests in their correspondence.

Nickerson (1999) worked with Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model to analyse a collection of 82 business letters. She looked at two categories of move, those which help maintain the Sender/Receiver relationship (*salutation, close, signature, context, pre-close*) and those which 'convey the informational content of the letter' (*confirmation, enclose, request, inform, suggestion, apology*) (1999:130). She found that terms of address generally reflected the social proximity between authors, except in cases where the institutional nature of the discourse, e.g. legal negotiation, overrides the personal relation. Requests were mitigated in 93.5 % of cases, mostly using forms such as 'I should be grateful if you would...' which Brown and Levinson cite as examples of the negative politeness strategy of 'going on record as incurring a debt' (1987: 210). On the other hand, Nickerson found that the less face-threatening Informative moves were very rarely mitigated. As with Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1996) the rare cases of unmitigated requests occurred in letters from authors of higher status to recipients of relatively lower status (ibid: 137).

Pilegaard (1997) also used Brown and Levinson's model as the basis for an analysis of the sequential employment of politeness strategies in a corpus of 323 business letters which were collected by the University of Cambridge. He looked at three types of letters: 1. Contact letters 2. Negotiation letters, and 3. 'In conflict' letters. In doing so he identified differences in the typical position of positive and negative politeness strategies in the letter. Positive politeness moves were more typical of opening and closing sections of letters, whereas negative politeness appeared more in the sentences in which requests were made (ibid: 233). Furthermore he found that in initiating contact letters a roughly equal number of positive and negative politeness strategies were used, but as the exchange develops in subsequent letters away from initial contact towards negotiation and conflict, negative politeness strategies become more prominent.

2.4.5. Post-Business Letter Era

In more recent studies, the business letter is generally thought to have been superseded by newer forms of communication, such as email and promotional websites (Gunnarson, 2009:221). Bargiella-Chiappini argued that many of the features of business letter genre survive in 'highly interactive and informal promotional messages embedded in the hypertextual web' (2008: 101). Both Gunnarson's and Bargiella-Chiappini's studies looked at promotional/sales letters and websites. It seems likely that the degree to which emails and websites have taken over from letters depends on the nature of the communication. Certain forms of communication such as promotional letters or casual workplace exchanges lend themselves to the relatively faster and cheaper email communication. More official and/or legally binding correspondence (such as letters outlining contract terms) still tends to be conducted using physical mail, perhaps in part due to considerations of confidentiality as well as other practical issues such as the need for signatures. However, while physical business letters persist in certain contexts, it is safe to say that a significant amount of business communication is now conducted via email.

The influence of the business letter can be seen to some extent in the opening and closing formulas employed in email correspondence. Elizabeth Scheyder (2003) looked at complimentary closings in a corpus of 532 emails from 175 native speakers of American English. Scheyder cited a study by Lan (2000) in which she examined 138 emails written to her in Hong Kong with 62 emails sent to the United Kingdom. Lan found that the majority of emails contained no complimentary closer. Where they did, the UK emails favoured (*Best*) *regards/wishes* (26.4%) and *thank you* (11.8%), while the Hong Kong emailers favoured *thank you* (40%). The results of Scheyder's study reflected similar patterns of use for complimentary closers, with 51% using no closer at all, 22% *thanks*, 6% *thank you*, 6% *regards*, 5% *best/all the best*. *Sincerely* appeared in a small set of other closers that were used only 1% of the time. She found that senders were more likely to use a complimentary closer when addressing someone that they did not know, and that the relative social status of the participants did not seem to affect the level of politeness employed in the closer. Scheyder's focus was primarily pedagogical. She cited students' anxiety over their use of the "correct" form of address as a main reason for carrying out the study (2003:39), suggesting that there is a perception that these modes of address are still important, even if in practice they are used less and less.

The availability of the ENRON email dataset has also allowed for the studies of the business email genre. For example, just as Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1996) looked at the effect of status on the linguistic realisation of requests, Gilbert (2012) explored the notion of hierarchy in the ENRON dataset, identifying a range of clusters and words that signal the status of the interlocutors, with some words and clusters appearing more often in emails which are directed to more senior colleagues, while others are more typical in emails sent to equal or lower status recipients.

2.5. Previous studies of letter writing guidance

Another area which is relevant to the historical development of terms of address and deferential language is the study of letter writing manuals, and how the guidance they offer has developed across time. In the eighteenth century there was a general rise in prescriptions regarding English language use, perhaps most famously in the form of Robert Lowth's *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762) which was originally conceived as a guide book for his children, to assist their social advancement. Lyda Fens de Zeeuw (2008: 164) argued that in this period 'a person's language use presented a significant indication as to their membership of polite society' (see also Watts, 2003:44). This social aspiration was also reflected in letter writing manuals. As Dierks argued,

"The expansion of letter writing reflected an unprecedented unleashing of aspiration of upward mobility in the eighteenth century, and it also reflected the attendant need for measures of social respectability that might be readily legible to others" (Dierks, 1999:33)

The eighteenth century also saw the increase in conventional phrases of deference (i.e. phrases that demonstrate respect). For instance the first example of politeness markers such as 'beg leave' in the Oxford English Dictionary occurs in a letter from the Earl of Chatham to his nephew in 1754 in which he advises him that on any occasion where feels the need to contradict his social superiors he should 'beg leave to doubt' (1804:22). O'Locker in her study of letter writing manuals also notes 'deferential phrases in the body of the letter become conventional only after 1750.' (1987:39)

The eighteenth century also saw an increase in personal letter writing manuals. Dierks argues their importance in terms of a wider democratisation of discourse by providing access to conventions such as the proper terms of address, noting that,

‘By demystifying the rules and conventions of letter writing, a social practice traditionally symbolic of power, authors of familiar letter manuals helped middling families pursue their claims to social refinement and upward mobility’ (1999:31).

The expansion of the service economy into the nineteenth century led to more demand for ‘accessible guidebooks, aimed especially at the lower and middle classes’ (Beal, 2004:11, see also Del Lungo Camiciotti 2006:157). In Linda Mitchell’s (2012) wide ranging historical study of English letter writing manuals, she found that there is a shift towards more practically focussed letter writing manuals. She argues that

‘As the eighteenth century draws to a close, letter writing instruction focuses on plain style and succinct language composition. The lessons are especially geared to teaching the principles of effective business correspondence’ (2012: 246)

This trend towards the inclusion of more business letter instruction in writing manuals was also reflected in Fens de Zeeuw’s examination of three nineteenth century manuals: *The Fashionable American Letter Writer: or the Art of Polite Correspondence* (Anon, 1828), *The Fashionable Letter Writer: or Art of Polite Correspondence* (Turner, ca. 1860) and *Saxon’s Everybody’s Letter Writer, being a Complete Guide to Letter Writing* (Penholder ca. 1896). She found that the business letter instruction component which had been non-existent in eighteenth century manuals had become ‘prominent’ in the nineteenth century manuals (2008: 189). The grammar instruction component on the other hand was massively reduced. Gone too were the references to Latin grammar, though model letters, advice on layout and parts of the letter and guidance on terms of address remain.

Perhaps partly in recognition of the expanded potential audience for the manual *The Fashionable American Letter Writer* also contained notes of caution. For example it warns against using proverbial expressions as they were considered ‘the rhetoric of the low-bred man’ (2008:176). Rather than ‘low-bred’ colloquial phrases such manuals offered examples of appropriate conventional phrases. Overall Fens de Zeeuw argued that letter writing guidance became less concerned with politeness and more focussed on the practicalities of producing correspondence. There was a shift ‘away from providing tools that might assist in creating a person’s own epistolary style to giving insight into subject matter and related purpose’ (2008:188) and as such model letters developed from being ‘models of conduct into models of practice’ (ibid)

John T. Gage (2007) also found that advice on business letter writing increased in the nineteenth century. He surveyed 193 composition textbooks in English covering the years 1850 to 1914 and looked at the extent to which letter writing was taught in the textbooks, the genres of letter taught, the relationship between letter writing and pedagogical approaches, and the sorts of letter writing skills taught. He found business letter writing guidance appeared in 78% of the manuals with letter writing guidance. Although, he also argues that letter composition seems to be taught more as a formal exercise than a practical real-world skill, with a strong emphasis on formal features of the letter and conventional forms of address. It would seem that the conventions which were established in the eighteenth century by the end of the nineteenth century had become established and standardised to the point where they formed practical advice for letter writing manual users and even part of the academic curriculum.

Seemingly in part as a reaction to these conventions, at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century there was an increase in the criticism of jargon and stereotyped language in letter writing manuals. Of Richard Parker's *Aids to English Composition* (1844) and his teaching of these formal features Gage argued, 'the only "business" being taught or served by such instruction is the business of subservience to convention' (2007:208). Kitty O'Locker surveyed fifty-eight letter writing manuals and 171 volumes of the correspondence of the British East India Company and the archives of Joseph T Ryerson and Son (an American steel company), which overall covers the years 1589-1955, to look at the frequency of jargon in business correspondence, and complaints about jargon in letter writing manuals. The first criticism to use the word 'jargon' in O'Locker's study appears in 1876, but she notes that it becomes commonplace after 1900 (1987:36). This apparent rise in the use of stereotyped phrases in the business context is reflected in the coinage of two terms around this time for jargon-type language: "officialise" (the first OED example of which is from 1884), and a little later "commercialise" (the first OED example of which is from 1910). O'Locker's study finds the terms '*in receipt of*', '*beg*', '*favour*' (meaning letter), '*yours*' (meaning letter), '*herewith*' and '*oblige*' to be among the most complained about items in letter writing manuals. She notes that 'many criticisms of jargon were based on common-sense and literal reading of the words' and that critics often attempted to 'shame authors into abandoning jargon by labelling the terms 'old fashioned', 'hackneyed', 'futile' or 'defunct'' (1987:37).

This rejection of stereotyped forms was part of a wider emphasis on the importance of 'plain' language in letter writing manuals. Most famously George Hotchkiss's *Handbook of Business English* outlined the 'Five Cs' that should characterise business correspondence, 'Clearness, Courtesy, Conciseness, Correctness, and Character' (1914:7). Other manuals of this period took a similar attitude. For example, in J.B Fletcher and George Carpenter's *Introduction to Theme-Writing* (1893), as referenced in Gage's (2007) study, they recommend 'extreme clearness and conciseness,' in the writing of business correspondence.

Some studies have disputed whether this 'new' emphasis on plain language was in fact an innovation of the twentieth century. Hagge (1989:33) was particularly critical of this notion, writing,

'the claim that early twentieth-century business communication textbook writers like Hotchkiss invented the concept of simple, natural, conversational language for practical correspondence is largely, I believe, a self-promoting myth.'

This argument is somewhat borne out by observations made in much earlier letter writing manuals. For example George Snell's (1649) *Right Teaching of Useful Knowledge to Fit Scholars For Som Honest Profession* advised correspondents to 'shun inflated, stilted and pompous prose' (Mitchell, 2007:180). Similarly in the context of personal correspondence, Crowder's *The Compleat Letter Writing* (1756) advises 'this sort of writing should be like conversation' and should reject 'all Pomp of words'. To make this point, Hagge traced the emphasis on plain language back to classical rhetorical instruction. Most relevant for the purpose of this study is that this increased emphasis on plain language seems to go hand in hand with the increased criticism of jargon. Among the most criticised forms of jargon are formal and deferential terms (such as 'beg') which seem to have entered the letter writing context as a way for authors, particularly middle class authors, to demonstrate respect and minimise imposition, but ultimately through widespread reproduction in letter writing manuals, such forms became conventional and largely meaningless.

The detailed studies of individual manuals examined in this section give us an idea of the variety of advice offered within a given period and serve as useful points of comparison of studies of manuals from other periods. One problem with this kind of study is it is not possible to know how influential prescribed forms were on actual use. Sairo and Nevala (2013) looked at the advice offered in eighteenth century letter writing guides, particularly focussing on *The Art of Letter Writing* (1762), and compared this to four manuscripts from the Montagu family

papers and she found quite a number of instances of divergence from the prescribed norms of the time, suggesting that these divergences might be due to a perception that certain rules were outdated, or simply that 'a close relationship between letter-writers overrules certain norms of correspondence.' (2013:1).

Jane Thomas discussed the potential influence of the eleventh century rhetorical guides to letter writing *ars dictaminis* on the authors of the Cely Letters. She argued that the contents of the letters 'suggest that the writers familiar with at least some aspects, particularly openings and closing and an awareness of when they should be formal and when they could skip the politeness' (1999:51) but also that the authors 'clearly do not consider following the rules necessary to communicate effectively' (ibid:52). O'Locker's study addressed this problem by including surveys of manuals and genuine business correspondence. The resulting study provides an excellent overview of the changes in frequency of some of the most common terms in business correspondence of the period however it lacks the detail of the closer qualitative detail of studies such as Fens de-Zeeuw's (2008).

A study of the letters in the BT Archive would benefit from a detailed examination of some of the general and specific advice offered to writers of business correspondence in manuals of this period. As well as offering a point of comparison for the use of formal features in the letters, it would provide a more detailed picture of recommended and criticised forms during this period and even offer a basis for tentative explanatory conclusions as to why some forms might be favoured over others.

2.6. Research Questions

The existing literature points to the nineteenth century as being crucial in the development of business correspondence. The introduction of the Penny Post, changes in the educational and commercial environment saw a massive increase in the number of people writing. However despite this increase, there is very little business correspondence data for this period in available corpora. Marina Dossena's *Corpus of Nineteenth Century Scottish Correspondence* has proved a valuable source for historical study but the scarcity of data has meant that the main focus of research so far has been the qualitative study of relatively small numbers of letters, or model letters from manuals.

The literature surrounding questions of general language change suggests that the twentieth century saw an increase in written language of features more typical of spoken language. This

general trend towards colloquialisation also seems to have been reflected in the decline of deferential language and titular nouns. While there have been studies into terms of address in historical varieties of personal English correspondence, research into the terms of address used in historical business correspondence remains scarce. O'Locker's (1987) survey of letters and letter writing manuals demonstrated that the nineteenth and twentieth century saw an increase in both jargon use and criticism of jargon. The specific focus of the study, however, meant that features of correspondence other than jargon were not dealt with.

More generally, very little has been written about how English business correspondence developed from the mid-nineteenth century through to the late twentieth-century. Historical studies of business correspondence tend to address only the period up to the end of the nineteenth century, and studies of present-day business English start again in the late 1970s. Where studies of modern business letters have been carried out they tend to treat business correspondence as a stable genre and have not addressed questions of diachronic development. In the current thesis, I start to address the gap in knowledge that exists regarding the development of English business correspondence from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century answering the following questions:

1. What can be added to our knowledge of letter writing conventions by analysing three letter writing manuals contemporary with the period represented in the *BTCC*?
2. How are formal features of correspondence expressed in the *BTCC*, and how does practice in the *BTCC* correspond to advice given in letter writing manuals of the relevant period?
3. What are some of the linguistic features of the correspondence in the *BTCC* that can be identified using corpus analysis, and in what respects do these change over time?
4. How are requests characterised in the corpus?

3. Chapter 3 – Methodology and Data

3.1. Aims and structure of the chapter

Having looked at some of the available resources and previous findings in relation to the historical development of English correspondence in the previous chapter, in this chapter I provide a general overview of methods of corpus creation and analysis, before outlining the particular methods I employed in the analysis of the British Telecom Correspondence Corpus to answer the research questions posed in Section 2.5. Following this, there is a detailed description of the creation of the *BTCC*, from the pre-selection of material by BT through to the functional classification of the letters at Coventry University. This section outlines the particular challenges of working with archive material to create a somewhat balanced historical corpus, and contributes to a wider discussion of how best to digitise archive material in order to maximise its research potential.

The chapter ends with a description of the corpus, including information about the number of letters per decade, letter functions, letter formats, the companies involved, the professions, genders and ages of the authors and some keyword results relating to topic. A key aim in creating the *BTCC* was to represent material from a range of decades, authors, and contexts. While this approach ensured a varied dataset it also meant that a wide range of contextual information was required in order to interpret linguistic findings. To help with this contextualisation, the first of the keyword results are included at the end of this chapter specifically those that relate to the topics discussed in each decade, rather than letter style.

The analysis was dictated as far as possible by the data, and quantitative approaches such as n-gram and keyword analyses served as the starting point for the investigation. This approach was particularly revealing for the main body of the letters and provided insights into the nature of the correspondence in the BT Archive, both in terms of content and, more importantly for the purposes of this study, ways in which language was used and how this developed over the period represented. The analysis was also dictated to an extent by the form that letters take. Letters as defined in this study consist of the main body of the letter, a date, a location, opening and closing salutations, and a signature. While quantitative analyses could identify some of the more frequent salutation forms, these only provided a partial picture of the range of forms in use. One of the things that makes opening and closing salutations appealing in terms of studies of language variation is that they are discrete features

for which it is possible to define the range of forms used in a given time period. Given this and the relative lack of studies into formal features in historical business correspondence to date, I also carried out a full manual analysis of opening and closing salutations in the *BTCC*.

Finally, having looked at wider trends in the data, I concluded this study with a more detailed, qualitative analysis of one letter type, requests.

3.2. Overview of corpora

Different types of corpora are suited to different kinds of research questions. A general corpus is designed to be representative of a language variety by including a large amount of data taken from a wide range of sources and balancing factors such as the 'genres and domains that typically represent the language under consideration' (McEnery, Xiao and Tono, 2006: 59). Some corpora seek to be representative of different modes of language i.e. include both spoken and written language (as in large scale corpora such as the *British National Corpus* and *The Bank of English*), or compilers may wish to focus on, for example, varieties of written English as in the original Brown Corpus (1961). As Hunston notes, a general corpus should 'include as wide a spread of texts as possible' even if 'it will be unlikely to be representative of any particular "whole"'. (2002: 14-15). General corpora allow researchers to make more general statements about language use as it is possible to observe to what extent linguistic features occur across different contexts.

Teubert (2007: 79) argued that 'the discourse at large is beyond our reach...we have to break down the discourse into smaller more manageable lumps'. Specialised corpora typically contain one type of text and are used to investigate a particular type or aspect of language (Hunston, 2002: 14). Sardinha and Barbara make the case for specialised corpora saying that 'textual varieties must be studied on their own because of the wide variation that exists between them' (2009: 106-7). However there are limitations to specialised corpora. When the corpus data is the result of a very specific context, researchers need to be wary of drawing any conclusions about the applicability of their findings beyond that context. This is an issue noted by Curzan and Palmer in their discussion of historical corpora, in which they warn against the 'temptation to over generalise from small numbers' (2006: 17) and the potential for 'outliers in the data' to skew corpus results (ibid: 42). However as long as the limitations of this type of corpus are understood, such outliers in the data can be accounted for in quantitative findings.

Specialised corpora have the advantage of allowing researchers to pursue their interests to whatever degree of specificity they wish.

Ultimately different corpora are 'representative' to different degrees and of different varieties of language. Of the general corpora discussed in Section 2.2, both ARCHER and CONCE corpus have a stated aim to include texts from speech-related and written registers and represent twelve and seven different genres of text respectively. However it is also the case that the wider the scope of the corpus, the less well represented any one subdivision of it is likely to be. Kytö and Rissanen make this point in relation to the Corpus of Nineteenth Century English (CONCE) noting that, 'the amount of linguistic evidence dwindles rapidly if the material is broken down according to various linguistic and extra-linguistic parameters' (1993: 3). In the corpus documentation for the Helsinki corpus it is suggested that findings from this more general corpus could be used as a starting point for further investigations in specialised corpora. This process is helped if the specialised corpora are sampled along the same lines. The Corpus of Early English Correspondence takes similar demographic factors into consideration but focusses solely on correspondence. Clearly this is less representative of the language as a whole but features a wider representation of the available historical correspondence texts.

Historical corpora have the additional consideration of periodization. To be able to observe language some distinction needs to be between periods, so that comparisons can be made between them. The historical range of the Helsinki corpus is such that it is primarily organised by historical periods in English: Old English, Middle English, and Early Modern. Within this it is arranged according to 100 year subdivisions to begin with and 70 year subdivisions in later years as material becomes more abundant. The CONCE corpus on the other hand is divided into three relatively short sub-periods 1800-1830, 1850-1870, 1870-1900 as the purpose of the corpus to enable the study of short-term diachronic change in the nineteenth century. Ideally to be comparable each period should contain a similar amount of data and similar kinds of material. For instance in the ARCHER corpus, which is divided over eight fifty year periods from 1600-1999 contains around 2,000 words per period per genre. On this point the compilers of the Corpus of Historical American English noted that maintaining genre balance allows researchers to be 'reasonably certain that the data reflects actual changes in the "real world" rather than just being artefacts of a changing genre balance' (COHA, 2011).

The compilers of most of the corpora explored in Section 2.2. attempted to balance factors such as age, gender and social background to a degree. For the Helsinki Corpus (and many of

the related corpora such as the Corpus of Early English Correspondence, and Corpus of Scottish Correspondence) maintaining this kind of balance to enable socio-historical linguistic study was the main aim designing the corpus. Other corpora such as ARCHER and the Corpus of Late Modern English Texts also made an effort to include both female and male writers to allow for gender comparison. However historical corpora still tend to reflect a problem with historical sources in general which is that texts from older upper-class men do survive in greater abundance. Even in corpora where there is a stated aim to include an equal number of male and female authors a balance frequently still remains. In the Corpus of Scottish Correspondence, for instance, there are three times as many male authors as female authors and of the texts included around 80% are written by men. Similarly in the Corpus of Early English Correspondence (plus Extension) female authors account for between 22% and 32% of the overall authors, and contribute between 17% and 28% of the words (Kaislaniemi 2007). Some corpus compilers manage more of a gender balance for individual text types. The CONCE corpus, for instance, though it is not balanced in terms of gender overall contains similar amounts of correspondence data from women and men (Kytö et al, 2000:90), the letter component having been 'compiled with the gender parameter in mind' (ibid).

Another issue particularly relevant to historical corpora is the question of to what extent individual authors should be represented. In the Helsinki Corpus the maximum word limit for any individual author was set at 10,000 words in order to make sure no one author exerts too much of an influence on the findings. However such limits are dictated to a degree by the availability of material. In an early version of the Corpus of Late Modern English Texts no limit was set on the number of texts that an individual author could have in the corpus but an overall word limit was set at 200,000 words. As more sources became available for subsequent versions of the corpus a limit of three texts per author was put in place.

In the case of the corpus of Late Eighteenth Century prose, a corpus of letters written to eighteenth century steward Richard Orford (see Section 2.2), Denison and Van Bergen were faced with the task of selecting material from an archive which contained letters from a wide population of authors some of whom produced large amounts of correspondence while others produced very little. This made it very difficult to produce a balanced sample. The corpus compilers also wanted the resource to be used by historians and linguists alike, so it was felt that excluding material from over-represented authors would restrict its potential as a historical resource. In the interest of including as much material as possible the corpus does

not contain a balanced sample of the available authors and topics. In compiling the corpus of Late Modern English Prose, however, Denison worked with five edited collections of correspondence, sampling equal amounts of texts from each.

For the construction of historical corpora edited letter collections do have the distinct advantage of being relatively accessible and easy to use. As Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg note in relation to the construction of the Corpus of Early English Correspondence, ‘we had no resources to edit manuscript material, but hundreds of edited letter collections can be found in libraries’ (1996: 40). Edited collections also have a clearly definable population of authors, and number of texts, making it possible to select a representative sample of the available material. However edited letter collections do present problems of their own. As Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg go on to point out,

“the actual editorial quality of the collections available varies considerably. Some have been made for historians by historians without any philological training, while others combine outstanding historical and linguistic expertise”. (ibid: 46)

Editorial decisions are out of the researchers’ hands to some extent. Letter collection editors may have chosen to standardise spelling or even truncate letters (as with the English translation of *News from the Land of Freedom* (Kamphoefner et al. 1991). In Smitterberg’s (2012) examination of *not*-contractions, letters were left out of the analysis as it was felt that the potential for editorial decisions to skew the data would be too great. In the CEEC the compilers tried to address such problems by ‘whenever possible looking for editions which not only produce original spelling, but also explain their editorial principles as explicitly as possible’ (Nurmi, 1999:55). In the case of the CEEC edited editions were also checked against original manuscripts where possible, as otherwise it is difficult to tell how true to the original letter a text in an edited collection might be. Other researchers such as Marina Dossena (2004) worked exclusively with original manuscripts in order to guarantee an authentic representation of correspondence data. However this approach can also have its limitations, from practical issues of archive and record access, to sampling issues such as defining the population of authors and text from which you are sampling.

Decisions regarding the design of a corpus are ultimately dependent on the research aims of the corpus compilers. They are also dictated by the practical limitations of trying to achieve those aims, whether that be the availability of material, time or, resources to digitise and prepare material to be used for corpus analysis. The particular challenges involved in working

with the BT material are explored in Section 3.6. Before detailing these I will provide a quick overview of corpus analysis methods, and how they have been used generally, and how they have been applied in the analysis of the *British Telecom Correspondence Corpus*.

3.3. Overview of corpus analysis

Making use of electronic corpora for language study is a relatively recent phenomenon. John Sinclair's earliest work in the field dates back to the 1960s but only in the past few decades have developments in computer processing power made it possible to store and manipulate large databases of language. The idea that 'repeated events are significant' is fundamental to corpus analysis. (Stubbs, 2007: 130). Using corpus tools such as AntConc (Anthony 2014), Sketch Engine (Adam Kilgarriff, Pavel Rychly, Pavel Smrz, David Tugwell, 2004) and Wordsmith Tools (Scott 2012) it is possible to identify frequent words and multiword units. As Stubbs (2007: 128) writes 'technological advances now provide access to large collections and allow linguists to record and observe things whose existence was rarely imagined because they could never be directly observed'. Rather than relying on 'expert' intuitions about how the language is or should be used, corpus analysis allows linguists to view multiple examples of authentic language use. As Hunston (2002: 43) argues 'although speakers have intuitions about typicality, these intuitions do not always accord with the evidence of frequency'.

In addition to displaying frequency, corpus tools such as those mentioned above allow users to view multiple examples of a word or phrase in context through concordance lines (see Figure 1). Some corpus tools such as Sketch Engine also enable users to create random samples of concordances where there are too many examples to analyse each one.

1	British + Irish Mag Tel. Co. which I should feel obliged by your shc	1857_09_16
2	Carmichael and any Directors in Town, and should be glad if you would wii	1857_09_16
3	first "on the most favourable "terms". I should propose that this corres	1862_03_04
4	the secretary. And I think our Chairman should bring this matter before	1862_03_04

Figure 1 - Concordance line example

It is also possible to search for less predefined items such as n-grams. An n-gram is any 'recurrent uninterrupted string of orthographic word-forms' (Stubbs, 2007:166), the search parameters for which are defined by the corpus user. So for instance it would be possible to identify every three word n-gram in a corpus, or every n-gram of between two and five words

that occurs more than sixty times. The benefit of searching for n-grams rather than pre-selected features is that it allows for linguistic investigations guided simply by

One of the key theoretical underpinnings of the corpus approach is the idiom principle, the understanding that language is made up of 'semi pre-constructed phrases that constitute single choices' (Sinclair 1991: 110). This means that part of the meaning of individual words is tied-up in how they co-occur with other words. This characteristic co-occurrence of words (Xiao and McEnery, 2006:105) is generally known as collocation. Beyond this there are the notions of semantic preference, i.e. semantic context within which a collocation typically occurs, and semantic prosody defined by Bill Louw as a 'consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates' (1993:30).

As well as the examination of phraseology, corpus tools also enable the identification of keywords, which is to say words that occur unusually frequently in a text (or collection of texts) when compared with a (usually larger) reference corpus. Keyword analysis was first offered by Mike Scott's Wordsmith Tools software but now features in a number of other corpus programs including AntConc and SketchEngine.⁶ As with n-gram analysis, keyword analysis is a data-driven way to approach texts, but in addition to providing information about the frequency of a word, a keyword analysis gives a sense of the significance of that frequency. For instance certain words, such as "the", are likely to be very frequent in any English corpus, and so absolute frequency alone might not be that revealing. However in comparing the relative frequency of an item with its frequency in a reference corpus it is possible to see whether its frequency is in keeping with the 'norm' set by the reference corpus or whether the frequency is unusual and warrants further investigation. The type of reference corpus determines the types of words that appear key. Typically researches use reference corpora that represent the language variety under investigation more generally, for example Mahlberg and MacIntyre (2011) looked at the top 150 keywords in Ian Fleming's *Casino Royale*, using the fiction component of the *British National Corpus* (a corpus of modern British English) as a reference corpus.

In 2009 Mike Scott 'went in search of a bad reference corpus', comparing one short spoken text and one longer written text both from the *BNC* with (i) mixed-genre reference corpora of

⁶ Confusingly the term 'keyword' is used to refer to a number of different entities even within linguistics (e.g. in the display in Figure 1 the highlighted word is called a Keyword in Context, Stubbs 1996 also makes reference to 'cultural keywords'). However for the purposes of this study, a keyword is a word that appears unusually frequently in comparison to a reference corpus.

various sizes randomly sampled from the *BNC* (ii) a ‘deliberately strange’ reference corpus containing all of Shakespeare’s plays, and (iii) nine genre-specific reference corpora. He found that even the keywords identified in comparison with the ‘obviously absurd’ Shakespeare reference corpus were plausible indicators of aboutness (2009:11), i.e. reflected the salient topics of the sample texts. However he also found that different keywords were produced for the same texts depending on the genre of the reference corpus, suggesting that genre is an important consideration when choosing a reference corpus.

As a way of contextualising keywords some researchers have grouped and examined keywords according to semantic categories. This approach has been used to group keywords in, for example, analysis of British Election Manifesto data (Rayson, 2008) and McEnery’s study of moral panic the works of Mary Whitehouse (2009). Alison Duguid’s (2010) also adopted this approach for her analysis of keywords in British broadsheet newspapers in 1993 and 2005, which had a (recent) diachronic element.

3.4. Methods of measuring language change

Measuring language change across time in the most basic terms involves comparing frequencies from one period to the next. The simplest method of comparing a particular feature across corpora is through normalised frequencies, i.e. expressing the frequency of a feature according to how many times it occurs per ten-thousand, one-hundred-thousand, or per-million words. Leech et al (2009) and Smith and Leech (2013) use this approach in their wide ranging examinations of language change in the Brown family of corpora and Pallander-Colin (2011) gave normalised frequencies per 1,000 words for three-word *I*-clusters in sixteenth and eighteenth century personal letters. This approach has also been used to measure difference between sub-corpora. Susan Fitzmaurice (2002:116) compared normalized frequencies of stance features across author sub-corpora of the NEET corpus; Kytö and Smitherberg (2006) provided normalized frequencies of three and four-word lexical bundles in CONCE to enable comparisons of different genres within CONCE. While these studies did not have a diachronic dimension as such, their provision of normalised frequencies enables comparison frequencies in other historical studies, such as the current study of the *BTCC*.

While normalising frequency enables a degree of comparability between corpora, there is also the issue of what constitutes *relevant* change. Buerki defines a relevant instance of change as,

‘an observable instance of change in the data which is not due to noise or accidental variation, but rather reflects what could reasonably be thought to indicate diachronic change in the language of which the corpus is a sample’ (2013:42)

Aarts et al argue that normalised frequencies do not account for whether a given feature has the opportunity to arise, and that changes in frequency of a feature should be measured in relation to the possibility of its being used (2010:152): a variationist approach. Taking the lead from Smitterberg (2005), Arts el al use the ‘S-coefficient’ formula to calculate the number of finite progressives in the DCPSE as a proportion of finite verb phrases (2010:152). The benefits of this sort of *proportionate* approach are also discussed in Leech and Smith (2009, 2013) although they point out that measuring frequency as a proportion of possible occurrences requires a ‘clearly definable list of alternatives’ (2009: 178), something that is not always available. Given this they follow the normalised frequency approach as ‘the most convenient and often the only viable [method]’ of comparison across corpora (ibid).

For many of the frequent items identified by this study, particularly in the n-gram analysis, there was not a clearly definable list of alternatives, and so quantitative results have been presented as normalised frequencies. However for features such as opening and closing salutations it was possible to define a list of alternatives. In such cases both normalised frequencies and frequencies as a proportion of the overall number of forms used are presented. Normalised frequencies have been given as occurrences per 10,000 words to enable comparison with Kytö and Smitterberg’s (2006) examination of 3-4 word clusters in nineteenth century personal correspondence.

Rather than investigate the frequency of particular language features, some studies have used statistical measures as a starting point to identify elements of the language that show significant change over time. Paul Baker (2011) in his investigation of language change in the British English Brown family of corpora only looked at words that occurred more than 1,000 times across the four corpora and used Standard Deviation to measure the degree to which the frequency of those words changed or remained stable over the four periods. He used the coefficient of variance (CV) to make sure words that appeared with a high Standard Deviation were not simply high frequency words (2010: 72). Only words that consistently increased or decreased in frequency were selected for consideration, and that demonstrated a high degree of change (using the CV score). Once the words had been identified they were examined in relation to developing usage.

Building on Baker's work and previous quantitative calculations of language change by Belica (1996) and Hilpert and Gries (2009), Buerki (2013) tested four statistical measures for their ability to identify relevant change in multi-word expressions in the Swiss Text Corpus. Of the four measures tested (coefficient of variance, coefficient of difference, rank order correlation using Spearman's rho, and chi-square) he found that the 'the chi-square-based approach served as the most useful method for identifying change among a vast number of potential changes' (2013:43).

Whichever the preferred method of identifying change, diachronic studies typically set out to identify one or all of the types of change outlined in Buerki,

1. the appearance of (new types),
2. the disappearance of (old) types,
3. semantic shifts (stable form),
4. change in form (stable semantics),
5. notable in- and/or decreases in frequency (2013:42)

To try and identify examples of these kinds of change and answer the research questions posed in Section 2.6. I took a number of approaches to analysis. In the remainder of this chapter I will outline these approaches.

3.5. Methods of analysis

3.5.1. Letter Writing Manuals (to answer RQ1 - What can be added to our knowledge of letter writing conventions by analysing three letter writing manuals contemporary with the period represented in the *BTCC*?)

In Section 2.5 we saw how the study of letter writing manuals can help give an insight into the form and function of letter writing guidance. In the case of the *BTCC* I wanted to examine letter writing manuals of the period represented as a model against which to compare the use of formal features in the *BTCC* and as a potential source of explanation for changes in the forms that are used.

Furthermore, the literature regarding letter writing manuals of this time points to their authors being both critical of jargon and stereotyped language (O'Locker, 1987) and a *source* of jargon and stereotyped language (Gage 2007). In examining letter writing manual recommendations we get a clearer picture of which forms are recommended, which forms are criticised, and whether any general themes emerge in the advice given. The large scale studies produced by O'Locker (1987) and Gage's (2007) are very useful in defining the wider context of letter

writing manual advice of the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries. However to provide a closer analysis of specific manuals, along the lines of Mitchell's (2012) and Fens De Zeeuw's (2008) analyses of seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century manuals, I chose three letter writing manuals from the twentieth century for close analysis.

The manuals examined in Section 4.1. are John Nesfield's *Junior Course of Composition* from 1917, Thomas Lewis's Caxton guide to *Business Correspondence* from 1956, and K. Graham Thomson's *How to Write and What to Write* from 1972. The analysis of the manuals took into account: the intended audience, the amount of space dedicated to different features, the general advice given, and finally, the forms recommended (and criticised) by each manual author. This examination of letter writing manual recommendations formed the basis for the analysis of formal features in the letters in the *BTCC*.

3.5.2. Formal Features (to answer RQ2 - How does practice in the *BTCC* correspond to advice given in letter writing manuals of the relevant period?)

To examine the use of formal features, such as opening and closing salutations, in the *BTCC* I use a combination of corpus techniques and close qualitative examinations of the formulas. Due to the formulaic nature of the opening and closing formulae it was expected that some trends would be visible through n-gram and keyword analysis. However the parameters of the n-gram analysis meant that many of the most common terms of address such as 'Sir' and 'Dear Sir' may not be identified. Furthermore, as they focus primarily on frequent forms, n-gram and keyword analyses were unlikely to identify the range of address forms employed in the corpus.

Opening and closing formulas tend to be discrete elements of a letter which appear in a limited number of forms. This makes them particularly well suited to a variationist approach to the study of language change. To get a detailed picture of how terms of address and other exchange-managing formal features are used in the *BTCC* I examined each of the <opener> and <closer> elements. For the purposes of this study the <opener> element contains the opening salutation, and the <closer> element contains concluding phrases, the closing salutation, the signature, and postscripts.

The use of formal features has been considered in the relation to the advice given in the letter writing manuals analysed in Chapter 4. Where sufficient contextual information is available these results have also been considered in terms of what they tell us about individual relationships between interlocutors.

3.5.3. Corpus techniques (to answer RQ3 - What are some of the linguistic features of the correspondence in the *BTCC* that can be identified using corpus analysis, and in what respects do these change over time?)

3.5.3.1. N-gram analysis

As we have seen in Section 2.2, the wider context of language change is increasingly well defined in relation to general corpora thanks to studies based on the Brown and ARCHER corpora. In providing more historical data from the business letter genre, the *BTCC* will make it possible to further examine these previously identified trends within professional discourse. However, it seemed in keeping both with the fundamentals of the corpus analysis approach and the exploratory nature of the current study to approach the initial analysis of the *BTCC* from a data-driven perspective, trusting the text, as John Sinclair (2004) put it, and using frequent lexical items, clusters and keywords as a starting point. In fact Plappert (2012) argued that ‘such an approach is required to discover linguistic aspects of epistemic encoding that have as yet not been identified’.

As we have seen, corpus analyses are conducted on the basis that repeated events are significant. The benefit of searching for n-grams is that it allows us to identify frequent, and therefore potentially significant, patterns in the language of a dataset. Significant features of the language emerge from the data, rather than being pre-determined by the researcher. Of course it is always possible that searches for frequent n-grams will identify features that have been identified in previous studies as significant, but by using n-grams as a starting point the focus is not limited to searches of words or patterns that are already known to be significant in other datasets. It was also felt that this approach would be well suited to an analysis of business correspondence in this period, as O’Locker (1987) suggested that this period saw the rise of jargon, by which she meant fixed phrases used more frequently in business language than other contexts, for instance ‘I am in receipt of’. An analysis of n-grams is well suited to picking up on such patterns.

N-grams were extracted using corpus software AntConc version 3.4.4. The search parameters were set to search for n-grams that were between three and six words long. The lower limit of three-word n-grams was set in part so that results could be compared with Kytö and Smitterberg’s (2006) cross-genre comparison of lexical bundles in CONCE. It was also set partly to limit repeated results. To use the example of ‘I am in receipt of’ mentioned above, if this four word n-gram were found to be frequent, setting the lower limit at 2 would mean that the

two-word 'I am', 'am in', 'in receipt', and 'receipt of' n-grams would all appear as frequent too. It was hoped that this lower limit would limit repeated results, while the upper limit would allow for the identification of longer strings of formulaic language.

In setting the cut-off point for cluster frequency I have taken a similar approach to that adopted by Mahlberg in her examination of clusters in the fiction of Charles Dickens. She looked at clusters of five words that appeared at least five times, assuming that 'a certain number of repetitions are needed before a literary relevant pattern emerges' (2013: 63) although noting that this cut-off is 'somewhat arbitrary' and essentially a practical decision as it 'ensures there is a reasonable number of examples for a qualitative textual analysis' (ibid). Given the practical limitations of this study I have examined only clusters which appear more than 25 times. This cut-off means that each cluster appears more than 1.95 times per 10,000 words. It should also be noted that all data was treated as lower case and line breaks and punctuation were ignored.

Each n-gram result was examined in detail to ascertain the kinds of patterns they appear in. Using the concordance plot tool in AntConc, I also examined the distributions of n-grams across the timeline of the corpus. The concordance plot displays the distribution of a word or cluster within a file. By converting all of the text files of the corpus into a single text file, I was able to view the distribution of clusters across the entire corpus. For example Figure 2 shows the distribution for the word "telegraph" in the *BTCC*.

The decades are not evenly distributed along these concordance plots due to the uneven number of words in each decade. The lines that protrude from the concordance plot mark the decade boundaries (see Figure 2)

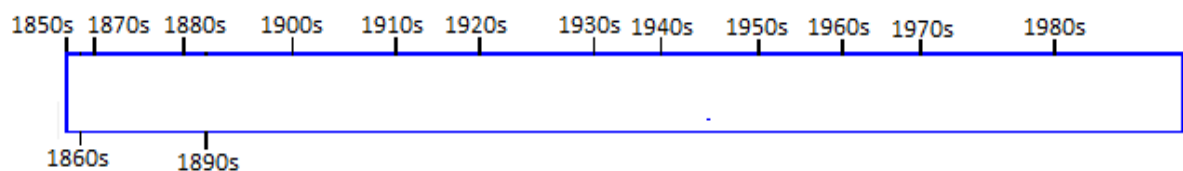


Figure 2 - Concordance plot with decades labelled

A variety of approaches were tried for representing decade information on these plots. While ideally decade labels would be included for each decade, the close spacing of the decade boundaries and to the size of figure needed to make the decade labels large enough to read made this impractical. Ultimately, it was decided for the sake of neatness and clarity that the

plots should appear with decade boundaries marked but without numbered decade labels (see Figure 3)

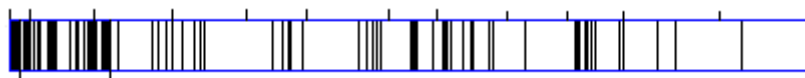


Figure 3 - 'telegraph' distribution in the BTCC

This display provided a general picture of change (or consistency) of the frequency of words and n-grams over time. The greater the density of lines, the more frequently used an item is in a given period.

Wherever an n-gram result has been quoted in this study the n-gram's rank within the top 3-6 word n-grams is displayed along with its raw frequency in the BTCC, and a normalised frequency in words per 10,000 words.

3.5.3.2. Keyword Analysis

Keywords have been shown to be useful for identifying correspondence-specific features of English (Nurmi and Pallander-Collin 2011). However as Baron et al (2009:7) note 'there are relatively few studies of historical data that make use of the key words approach' and that many of those that do exist focus on literary subjects. Culpepper for instance examined the speech of six characters in *Romeo and Juliet* and used as the reference corpus 'the speech of the six characters minus the one being investigated' (2009:35) in order to identify key features of individual characters' speech. Michaela Mahlberg (2013) compared the works of Charles Dickens to a reference corpus of Nineteenth Century English literature to identify clusters of words that occurred unusually frequently in Dickens's work.

A couple of studies have used keywords to look at historical correspondence. Levorato (2010) examined a sub-corpus of 276 letters taken from the *Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquess of Londonderry* (Vane 1848) who was Chief Secretary in Ireland in the late Eighteenth/Early Nineteenth Century. He looked for keywords that expressed evaluative meaning, particularly in reference to the 1798 Irish Rebellion and the passing of the Act of Union (of the United Kingdom and Ireland). In their examination of correspondence in the CONCE corpus Kytö and Romaine (2008) also made use of keyword analysis, comparing the correspondence element of CONCE with the wider CONCE corpus in order to examine the keyness of address terms across three periods in the Nineteenth century. This final study is

perhaps closest in spirit to the *BTCC* keywords analysis as it foregrounds diachronic language change rather than exploring individual texts or comparing related contemporary texts.

In approaching the keyword analysis of the *BTCC* I faced the problem that very little corpus material is available for this period, particularly business correspondence material. In order to generate keywords I used the whole *BTCC* as a reference corpus and used each decade as a sub-corpus to compare against it. These keywords were then organised according to the three typical types of keywords as identified by Mike Scott,

- 1) Proper nouns
- 2) Words that 'give a good indication of "aboutness"
- 3) High frequency words like *because*, *shall* or *already*, which 'may be key indicators more of style than of "aboutness"'. (Scott 2012)

In the current study, the 'proper nouns' and 'aboutness' keywords have been primarily used in the description of the wide variety of topics covered in the *BTCC* (see Section, 3.6). As 'style' as defined by Scott seems to relate more to grammatical items, the potential style-markers in the *BTCC* were examined for indications of lexicogrammatical change within the corpus.

As part of the construction of the corpus each letter was classified according to overarching function (see Section 3.5.4). These letter function classifications formed the basis of the second part of the keywords analysis. Sub-corpora were created according to letter function and used to generate keywords using the whole of the *BTCC* as the reference corpus. Keyness scores were expressed in terms of log-likelihood. Log-likelihood expresses the likelihood that the difference in relative frequency between the corpus and reference corpus came about by chance. The higher the log-likelihood score, the less likely the variation has occurred by chance. The levels of significance were checked in relation to the figures outlined on the *Log-Likelihood and Effect Size Calculator* hosted on the Lancaster University website (<http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html> [accessed August 2016]). In order to focus the study on the results least likely to have occurred by chance, it was decided that only keywords that appeared in the 99.99th percentile of significance for log-likelihood for each decade and function would be examined in this first round of investigation. This was also, to some extent, a practical consideration, limiting the results in number so that there was space, and time, within the scope of this thesis to investigate each result.

Keyness was not used as definitive proof of significance or evidence of language change, rather each keyword was used as a starting point for investigations of patterns of use in the wider corpus. Every n-gram and keyword result was examined for patterns of use and the functions they served. The results were then collected together under the following themes that emerged in the data:

1. Interpersonal Relations
2. Corporate Identity
3. Corporate Action

The results chapters have been organised along these thematic lines.

These n-gram and keyword analyses were primarily corpus-driven rather than corpus-based, which is to say that, as Tognini-Bonelli (2001:85) put it, the corpus was the main informant. Keywords and frequent n-grams were extracted purely on the basis of their frequency in the *BTCC* and the understanding that 'repeated events are significant' (Stubbs, 2007:130). These frequent features were then investigated in terms of the patterns in which they appeared, and whether there were any noticeable changes in frequency. This is a somewhat different approach to that of corpus-based studies, which tend to take pre-selected words or linguistic features as their starting point and use the corpus as a tool for investigating them. Arguably, however, the current study does not sit squarely within the corpus-driven field in that statistical tests such as those carried out in studies of language change (for example Buerki (2013) or Hilpert and Gries (2009)) would be problematic given the relatively inclusive sampling frame and variety in datasets from decade to decade in the *BTCC*. Furthermore, in terms of approach, the generation of functional keywords, which followed a full functional classification of each letter in the corpus, is closer to Rayson's (2008:521) conception of 'data-driven' analysis, in that the text was used as the starting point for linguistic investigation but the analysis also involved initial annotation of the data. Overall the analysis of the *BTCC* borrowed something from all three approaches, but the intention with the n-gram and keyword analyses in particular was that they should be guided by the data.

3.5.4. Qualitative analysis of individual request letters (to answer RQ4 -How are requests characterised in the corpus?)

While it was expected that the quantitative analysis would provide a number of insights into the main functions performed by letters in the *BTCC*, the focus was necessarily on the most

frequent forms rather than the wider range of forms that perform each letter function. As we have seen in Section 2.4, requests have been investigated both in a historical context and present-day professional discourse context but their development through the twentieth century has not been traced. In approaching the request analysis of the letters in the *BTCC*, firstly I wanted to look at the macro-structure of the requests i.e. the moves that make up the request letters, and how they are organised. Secondly I wanted to look in more detail at the nature of the request moves in terms of the strategies employed.

3.5.4.1. Request move analysis

The model I have used as the basis for the analysis of overall request letter structure is the Pinto dos Santos's (2002) model. Pinto Dos Santos's work built on that of Ghaddessy (1993) who examined a collection of sixty request/enquiry/complaint response letters in order to identify obligatory elements common to different types of transaction. He found three elements, *Reference (R)*, *Addressing the Issue (AI)* and *Closing (C)* to be the elements which express the generic structure potential (ibid: 162).

Pinto dos Santos's (2002) model was derived from the examination of 117 business letters of negotiation sent to and from a Brazilian pharmaceutical company to two European companies (ibid: 170). He felt that the letters in his study could be categorised as either, providing information requesting favours/action, or providing information and requesting favours and action. (2002:176) On this basis he developed a model for describing four basic moves, which are further divided into sub-types as follows (ibid:177),

Move 1 – Establishing the negotiation chain

(i) Defining Participants (ii) Attention to – line (e.g. FAO) (iii) Attention to the message – line (e.g. URGENT) (iv) Reference – line (v) Addressing and greeting the addressee

Move 2 – Providing Information/Answers

(i) Information – (a) Introducing and providing information (b) Continuing/adding (c) Up-dating (d) Agreeing (e) Showing Opposition (ii) Advising about message – (a) that a message has been sent (b) about enclosed message

Move 3 – Requesting – Action/Information/Favours

(i) Information (requesting) (a) Explanation/Clarification (b) Opinion/Comment/Guidance/Suggestions (c) Confirmation of Information (d)

Acknowledgement of receipt of a message **(ii)** Exchange of ideas/discussion **(iii)**
Actions/favours – (a) Material/Document Mailing (b) Service/action/help

Moves 2+3 – *Negotiating*

(iv) Apologising, **(v)** Offering something in return/incentive, **(vi)** Evaluating – (a) giving personal opinion (e.g. “I think...”) (b) making comments (e.g. “the committee consider” (c) indicating – i – availability – ii- wishes/plans/intentions/engagement **(vii)** Drawing attention to something **(viii)** Applying pressure tactics (in different degrees)

Move 4 – *Ending* – **(i)** Signing-off **(ii)** Signature – line **(iii)** Job status in the company **(iv)** Company credentials **(v)** Note and PS – line **(vi)** Copy to – line (vii) File data

Though the model was developed for modern business correspondence it seemed sufficiently comprehensive that it would be applicable to the *BTCC* requests. The model also has a degree of flexibility in terms of how the structure of moves is described. In other studies certain moves are defined as pre- or post-request moves. Pinto Dos Santos’s model allows for a functional description of moves first of all, prior to their consideration in terms of pre- or post-request positioning.

Three additions were made to the options for the description of *Negotiating* moves. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris’s (1996) study of thirty-two modern business letters identified the ‘post-request’ moves ‘justification’ , ‘expansion’ and ‘thanks’ (ibid: 647). After a preliminary examination of the *BTCC* request data it was decided that the moves **(ix)** *Justification* and **(x)** *Expansion*, and **(xi)** *Thanks* should be included in the description of Move 2+3 – *Negotiating*.

3.5.4.2. Request Strategy Analysis

As part of the request analysis, I also examined the form that the requests take. One of my initial impressions was that the earlier letters were more direct. To investigate the forms that requests take and relate this to the notion of directness I analysed each request according to the model devised by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). This model measures requests on a continuum of directness, taking into account of the dimensions: request strategy, request perspective, upgraders, and downgraders. The strategies as identified by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain are as follows,

1. *Mood derivable* – i.e. Imperatives,
2. *Explicit Performatives* - such as ‘I am to inform you...’,
3. *Hedged Performatives* - defined by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain as ‘utterances embedding the naming of the illocutionary act, e.g. ‘I would like you to...’ (1984:202),
4. *Locution Derivable* - in which ‘the illocutionary point is directly derivable from the semantic meaning of the locution’ (ibid) e.g. ‘The cheque should be made payable to...’,
5. *Scope Stating* - relating speaker’s attitude or feelings regarding the request being carried out e.g., ‘I would be glad...’,
6. *Suggestory* - a rather vague category covering any sort of suggestory formula such as ‘why don’t you...?’ or ‘how about...?’,
7. *Preparatory* – in which reference is made to the possibility of the act being performed, typically through modals, e.g. ‘could you...?’ or ‘I should be obliged *if you will...*’
8. *Hints*

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain’s model also describes upgrading and downgrading features, i.e. elements which increase or mitigate the force of the request respectively. For the consideration of upgrader elements I have drawn on Flock and Geluykens (2015:17) adaptation of the Blum-Kulka model which distinguishes between three types of upgrader: *consequences*, *modifier* (e.g. ‘surely’), and *time modifier* (e.g. ‘as soon as you can’). The last of these three proved particularly relevant. I have also used Flock and Geluykens’s downgrader categories *politeness marker* (e.g. ‘please’ ‘be good enough to’), *downtoner* (a form that modulates the impact of the request e.g. ‘possibly’) and *condition* (wherein the speaker ‘limits the validity of the directive to a specific condition to be met’ e.g. ‘if you are in agreement with...’ (2015:17))

An initial examination of the requests in the *BTCC* suggested that request perspective as outlined by Blum-Kulka would be somewhat problematic. In Blum-Kulka’s model, the distinction is made between request moves that emphasise the role of the speaker (e.g. ‘could I borrow...’), the hearer (e.g. ‘would you help...’), both speaker and hearer (‘could we clean up...’) and requests that are impersonal. However, rather than particularly emphasise the action of speaker or hearer, many of the request letters in the *BTCC* seemed to maintain a balance between sender and recipient action. For this reason, rather than describe the perspective of the request move as a whole, in my analysis I separated out author and recipient references (e.g. “I”, “you”, N/A), and author and recipient action (e.g. ‘I would be glad’/‘if you would’). Request strategies were assigned to both sender and recipient-related action (e.g. “I **would be glad** [author strategy - *scope stating*] if you **would now get ahead with**

doing this [recipient-related strategy - *preparatory*]”). Where there is an absence of strategy related to either sender or recipient this tends to point to an impersonal request.

In approaching the request analysis in this way I provide a detailed account of how requests are realised in the *BTCC*. As well as looking for diachronic trends, I also look at how authors employ different strategies and structure their requests for particular circumstances and consider the role that directness plays in this.

3.6. Methods of corpus creation

3.6.1. The British Telecom Correspondence Corpus

In this section I discuss the construction of the *BT Correspondence Corpus* and outline the particular challenges that this presented. As we have seen, of the previously available corpora, Marina Dossena’s Nineteenth Century of Scottish Correspondence, extends to the end of the nineteenth century, while the earliest texts represented in Someya’s Business Letter Corpus date from 1979 (1999:176). The aim in constructing the *BTCC* was to address the gap in available historical corpus data for the study of historical business correspondence. The BT Archive contains publicly available material from the mid-nineteenth century through to 1984 when British Telecom was privatised, and so is an excellent potential source of historical data to start addressing this gap.

Documents contained in the BT Archives are well suited to corpus study as ‘natural data not produced for linguistic analysis’ (Stubbs, 2007: 130). Widdowson (2003) and Corrigan (2013) have both advocated using archival resources for linguistic research. Structurally archives and corpora play a similar role in that as Hunston says they are ‘a store of used language’ (2002: 3). Corpus tools offer a way to engage with these stores, and constructing specialised corpora for linguistic analysis is one way of making this otherwise ‘hidden and inaccessible’ (Widdowson, 2003: 81) data publicly available. As Stubbs (1996:232) argued, ‘when new quantitative methods are applied to very large amounts of data, they always do more than provide a summary. By transforming the data they can generate insight.’

The texts in the BT Archive are a product of a very specific context and so may not represent the language of correspondence in other business settings. However BT played a central role in the wider development of telecommunications during this period and the scope of the correspondence found in the archives spreads far beyond BT. The archive includes letters from

a range of other telecommunications companies, government departments, unions, press organisations, inventors, engineers and agents, as well as letters from members of the public regarding experiments, service issues and even environmental concerns.

It should also be noted that the purpose of the *New Connections* project was to increase access to the BT Archive. To help achieve this goal it is important that the material is publicly available. This is an aim that is methodologically compatible with corpus linguistics. Indeed Stubbs (1996: 232) describes making linguistic data publicly available through corpora as ‘one of the most important implications of corpus study’. Public availability of corpus data means that any findings can be checked and verified or challenged by other linguists. In keeping with this, it is intended that the corpus will eventually be made publicly available through the Oxford Text Archive.

3.6.2. BT’s Pre-Selection of material for the Digital Archive

BT’s initial selection of material for their Digital Archive involved consultation with an external Advisory Group, but was ultimately based on the BT Archive team’s ‘knowledge of existing and potential research value in the collection’ (Hay, 2014:8). It was decided that whole files should be scanned rather than specific documents, so that ‘higher levels of credibility and lower levels of personal subjectivity would be achieved’ (ibid). The chosen files, considered to have the most ‘research value’, contained material representing:

- Technology milestones
- National events
- International reach
- Government policy
- Industrial relations
- Diversity
- Iconic products & services

By the time I started constructing the corpus at Coventry University, the digitization process was already underway: the files had been selected and the National Archives had started preparing and scanning them.

The proposal for the British Telecom Correspondence Corpus was that it should contain around 500 letters. This was thought to be a realistic target for the number of texts that could be digitized given the limited time and resources. BT agreed to provide Coventry University with scans of the contents of around 1,000 subject/registry folders (the category in which

letters are included). The material from BT was provided solely on the basis of being 'sufficient for the linguistics part of the project' i.e. 1,000 folders should contain at least 500 letters from various points across BT's history. The scanning of the contents of these folders took place at The National Archives in Kew Gardens. Each file was captured by a camera facing down onto a hydraulic scanning bed. The process of photography was handled by pairs of archivists, one of whom captured the image, while the other checked, cropped and rotated the image where necessary.

Thirteen thousand scans of individual pages of these subject/registry files were delivered to Coventry University on a hard-drive in May 2012, named and organised according to the BT Archive folder/file 'finding numbers'. At this point the only available metadata for the documents (folder contents, participants, year and topic) was recorded on the first scanned page of each folder (or "file" to use archive terminology). The amount of information recorded in these descriptions varied greatly from file to file. Some had detailed contents lists while others had descriptions such as "miscellaneous papers". Due to the patchy nature of the existing metadata there was no easy way to identify which files contained letters, and if so how many; the only feasible way to extract the documents we wanted was to manually examine all 13,000 scans

3.6.3. Selection of materials for the *British Telecom Correspondence Corpus*

3.6.3.1. *Varieties of English in the BT Archives*

Although BT conducted business internationally as well as domestically, it was expected that the corpus would contain mostly British English simply because the majority of its business was done within the UK. As no author metadata existed prior to the construction of the *BTCC* it was not feasible to use regional variety as a sampling variable, though information regarding location of the author and, where available, biographical details have been included in the corpus. In order to represent the breadth of material in the sample we received from the BT Archives, quite a broad definition of business English was adopted for the *BTCC*. Some studies make specific varieties of Business English the subject of their study. For instance, Del Lungo Camiciotti (2008), Bargiella-Chiappini (2008), and Gunnarson (2009) all focussed on sales letters, that is, letter that solicit business. By contrast, all of the correspondence that we received from the BT Archive was treated as business correspondence because, even though the letters performed a wide variety of tasks, each letter carried out one of the many facets of BT's business.

3.6.3.2. Letter identification

The criteria employed for identifying “letters” were based on the typical formal features of a letter as recommended in writing guides for official correspondence (e.g. Nesfield, 1917, Thomson 1972). For the purposes of the *BTCC* it was decided that a ‘letter’ should contain:

1. an address (full or partial)
2. a date
3. an opening salutation
4. a closing salutation
5. a signature

Additionally, only finished letters were selected, as opposed to drafts, memos or other text-types that are also categorised by BT as ‘subject/registry’ files.

It should be noted that due to a gap in knowledge when starting this research, letters finishing with the forms “yours &c.” and “yours etc.” were ruled out as these were incorrectly judged to be draft closing salutations rather than contracted salutations. There were only a few letters which ended with these forms but had this mistake not been made this salutation may not be completely absent from the corpus.

From this manual examination of c.13,000 documents, 991 letters meeting the formal conditions listed above were identified. These letters were then grouped by year and decade. The earliest letter identified was from 1853 and the latest was from 1982. So the corpus had potential to span 129 of the 137 years of public records contained in the archives to some degree. However, the 991 formally identified letters were very unevenly spread across the decades (see Figure 4).

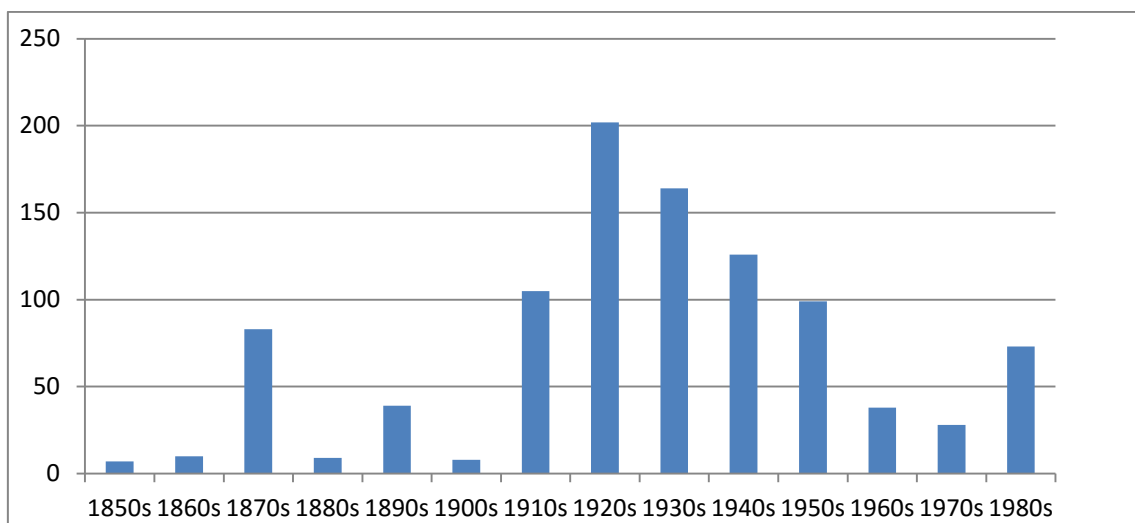


Figure 4 - Number of letters per decade – 991 letters

As William Labov noted, ‘historical documents survive by chance, not by design, and the selection that is available is the product of an unpredictable series of historical accidents’ (2001:11). Even given the relatively recent nature of the historical data in the BT archive, there were far fewer surviving documents from some decades and the distribution across decades of the available 991 letters was not ideal. For example in the material provided by BT there were 202 letters from the 1920s, but only 8 letters from the 1900s. However the letter selection process had identified nearly twice as many letters as I originally planned to include in the data. By sampling 500 letters from the 991 available, it was possible to produce a more balanced sample.

3.6.3.3. Corpus vs. Archive: a note on representativeness

Leech (1991:11) argued that ‘ultimately, the difference between an archive and a corpus must be that the latter is designed or required for a particular ‘representative’ function’ (see also Sinclair, 2004), that is, it should reflect, at least to some degree, the different dimensions of a language variety. As we have seen in Section 3.2, corpora can be representative of different varieties of language. For instance the Brown corpus attempted to be representative of written American English of 1961 by sampling randomly from bibliographies of a range written text types (e.g. press, religion, fiction). A corpus compiler may also wish to reflect demographic variables such as age, gender, and region of the language variety in question. However as Hunston (2003: 28) points out, ‘the problem is that ‘being representative’ inevitably involves knowing what the character of the whole is’ (see also Biber, 1993: 243). As a historical archive the ‘character of the whole’ of the BT Archive is well defined in reference to dates and the

events in its history that documents are stored in relation to. However as a source of linguistic data the way in which the BT Archive is organised is more problematic. It is not currently known how many letters are contained within the BT archive, let alone the number of authors. Sian Wynn-Jones from the BT Archives advised me that at the time of the last audit in 2009 one thousand seven hundred and sixty one meters of shelf space was taken up by folders which contain 'registry/subject files' (the category of file that most correspondence would be found in). Folders contents are grouped and catalogued in terms of 'the context and the function of the folder in relation to the history of BT and its predecessors' (Sian Wynn Jones, personal communication, 5th March 2013). As we have seen the pre-selection of material was guided by a desire to represent important themes and developments in the history of BT. However without manually sorting through a little over one mile in folders, we cannot know the exact character of 'the whole'.

Part of the stated purpose of the *New Connections* project was to help improve the cataloguing of the BT collections, and although archive-wide metadata is still lacking, the *BTCC* has begun to give us an idea of the sorts of correspondence that the Archive contains. Correspondence has the advantage of being particularly rich in potential metadata; for example almost all the letters in the *BTCC* provide names, dates and geographical locations in the form of postal addresses, making it possible to piece together contexts for both the texts and their authors. In this sense the corpus construction is exploratory and demonstrates the mutually beneficial nature of projects like this, where a research institution is given access to archive resources, and in turn can improve the archive's understanding of its own content. The massive scale of the archive also means that the corpus could potentially be supplemented with additional material at a later date, although the problems outlined above regarding letter identification and extraction would continue to apply.

In sampling from the available material, the priority, at least for this first phase of *BTCC* construction, was to create, as far as possible with the resources available, a balanced historical corpus. It is hoped and expected that the corpus will be of interest to historians too. However the aim of creating a database that would function as a historical corpus was privileged over historical priorities, such as preserving documents with more obvious historical interest. Ultimately, as I will explore in Section 8.5., I hope to expand the corpus to include letters from the Post Office and make all of the letters available in both historical corpus and

digital historical archive form. Until the status of this planned expansion is known, however, the *BTCC* letters will only be available as a corpus.

3.6.3.4. Sampling: a purposive approach

As the nature of the whole of the archive is unknown, in sampling material for the *British Telecom Correspondence Corpus* I took an approach normally reserved for spoken language which ‘exists in unknowable quantities and in an unknowable range of varieties’ (Hunston, 2002: 29). Letters were sampled for the *BTCC* using the following criteria to preserve (in order of priority):

1. A roughly equal number of letters from each decade (1850s-1980s) so that diachronic comparisons could be made across these periods,
2. As wide a variety of authors as possible, to try and ensure that results were, at least to some extent, indicative of general trends in language use in the archive material, rather than of the language use of a handful of authors,
3. A variety of topics and types of letter, again to try and represent some of the range of material in the archive, from routine requests for document mailing to letters regarding historic technological breakthroughs.
4. Finally, there was an attempt to include both handwritten and type-written letters. While this was a less pressing priority, I felt that part of preserving variety was preserving different formats of letter, and that, as this was an era which saw a decline in handwriting in favour of type-written documents, there may even be notable changes in the ways in which hand and type-written documents were used this period.

Initial Data Selection

Due to the lack of existing item-level metadata and the time pressures of the project, the metadata used for the initial selection of the letters was very basic. A note was made of the year and the author and recipient names. In addition to this, in our project the topic of the letter was also briefly described (see Figure 5)

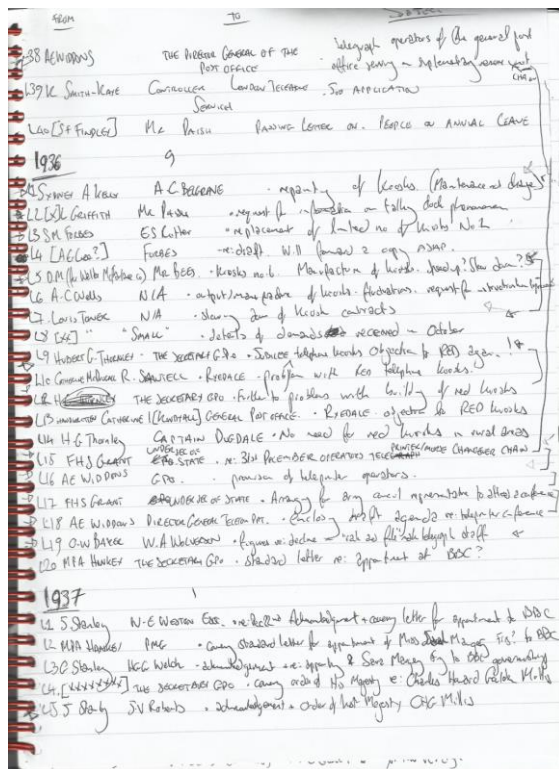


Figure 5 - Manual meta-data collection sheet

This was enough information to make an initial selection according to my research aims. Much more detailed metadata was collected from the letters and external sources once this initial selection had been made.

Decade

Periodization has been identified as the primary consideration in the construction of diachronic corpora (e.g. Kytö and Rissanen, 1993, Hilpert and Gries, 2016: 36). Ideally, to create an 'internally contrastive' (Sinclair, 2004: 3.1) historical corpus, an even distribution of data across the period is preferred. As we have seen in Section 2.2., some corpus compilers also sample set amounts of data from particular genres across periods in order to make comparisons statistically reliable. In the case of the *BTCC* the nature of the data is different

from decade to decade, making it impossible to select directly equivalent texts from each period. This means that, to an extent, the results will reflect the peculiarities of the language in individual decades as well as providing evidence for elements of ongoing diachronic language change. However choosing decade as the baseline for periodization (rather than, say, quarters) made it easier to distinguish linguistic features which were characteristic of particular periods and which might be attributable to individual authors or exchanges rather than being indicative of wider patterns of change.

In an attempt to create a better balance between decades I decided to include every letter from under-represented decades and then select more-or-less evenly from the remaining decades to make the corpus up to 500 letters (the number of letters that I originally felt it would be feasible to select, transcribe, extract meta-data from, and analyse given the available time and resources).

To get an equal balance of 500 letters across fourteen decades we would want thirty six letters from each. For some decades there were far from that many letters. The 1850s, 1860s, 1880s and 1900s each contained ten or fewer letters, and there were just twenty eight letters from the 1970s. To try and get the closest to an equal balance possible with the available data, every letter from these under-represented decades was included. To represent the remaining decades equally and make the numbers up to the originally intended 500 letters, around fifty letters were taken from each of the remaining decades.

Despite the tendency towards incoming mail, which is to say letters received by the BT rather than sent from the BT, the letter sample also contained chains of correspondence. These chains were identified in the initial letter selection of letters simply by noting references within the letters to previous (recent) correspondence, and checking whether that correspondence was contained in the 991 letters I had identified. As many chains as possible were included in the hope that they could be studied for interactive elements (as in Dossena 2004: 198), though even where there is a series of letters between two authors, we cannot be sure that we have the whole chain.

Author

One of the appeals of the BT archive is the potential range of authors and topics covered over nearly one hundred and thirty years of correspondence. While we cannot know exactly how many authors are represented in the archive as a whole, including as many authors as possible

from the available material means that we get the maximum amount of evidence of the range of linguistic behaviour contained therein. Where linguistic phenomena occur frequently across a range of authors it is more likely to represent a general trend in the wider business context rather than a peculiarity of an individual author or the style of their social/professional group. As far as possible I also wanted to represent both male and female authors, although given the period represented by the corpus and the troubles other corpus compilers (e.g. Dossena 2004) had encountered in balancing numbers of male and female authors it seemed unlikely that an equal balance would be attained.

There is also the question of how we define an author in this context. To be included in the corpus it was a requirement that letters had a named author. However as Coulthard says ‘the physical production of a text may be separated from the creation of its content, as anyone who has dictated a letter then had to correct the spelling mistakes knows only too well’ (2005: 5). A text may have a variety of authorial contributors depending on the context in which it was created, such as editors for newspaper articles or lecturers in academic papers. Some of the first sample material I looked at from the BT archive suggested that some of the letters are in some sense collaborative, as they were marked with signatures of approval or amendments. In fact a few such examples made it into the corpus, such as the letter 1872_10_12_GL_FIS which is marked as “approved and attested by Jonat Braff, Secretary + Treasurer”. This information has been preserved where it appears. However where this information is not available it will not be possible know if the letter is the product of one primary author or if there are secondary influences.

In compiling the *BTCC* the ‘author’ was considered to be the person whose name appears at the bottom of the letter, in Biber’s terms ‘the addressor’. Unless specific mention is made in the letter a further distinction has not been made regarding *senders* (Hymes 1974) or editors. A recipient is an ‘addressee’ in Biber’s terms, that is to say ‘the intended recipient(s) of the message’ (1988: 29). A further distinction has not been made for the *audience* (‘participants who hear or overhear the message but are not usually the intended recipients’ (ibid: 29)). In some cases the presumed recipient will not have been the actual recipient. In Harry D Rughoo’s letter of March 24th 1957 he uses the salutation ‘dear Sirs’ despite replying to a letter from Miss S.M. Simpson. In this case the use of ‘sirs’ may be an oversight, or in response to the fact Miss Simpson replies on behalf of the Post Office using the ‘we’ form. Either way, an

author will typically take the identity and status of the intended recipient(s) or addressee(s) into account; this will have some influence the composition of a letter.

Letters to and from named participants have been included in the corpus as well as letters that are addressed to the office rather than the person (e.g. 'The Secretary') as some letters include instructions for replies to be addressed to 'The Secretary'. The BT material also included note-like correspondence addressed to the office in one word, e.g. 'Secretary'. These texts also had no/minimal sign off and were not included because they were classified as memos rather than letters (though a sub-corpus of memos could be a useful future addition to the corpus)

By content: 'Historically significant' vs. day-to-day letters

Due partly to the nature of archive document preservation and partly due to the pre-selection of material by BT, the letters digitized as part of the *New Connections* project cover a number of interesting episodes and developments in BT's history. For instance there are letters about the development of wireless telegraphy, the invention of the telephone, the 999 service and the recording of the speaking clock. There are also letters about licensing, employment procedures and company privatisation. Some of the letters included in the sample are of more obvious historical interest such as the letter from Alexander Graham Bell's agent to the Post Office wherein he draws the Post Office's attention to his client's new invention - the 'telephone'.

This is a slightly troublesome area both in terms of corpus construction and the construction of digital archive resources generally. Andrew Prescott in his plenary lecture from the 2012 Digital Humanities Conference in Oxford, drawing on Raymond Williams assertion that 'culture is ordinary' (1958), argued that,

'Libraries and museums have frequently seen digital technologies as a means of giving access to their so-called 'treasures', so that it is the elite objects rather than the everyday to which we get access'.

The pre-selection of data by BT meant that we would be dealing with the 'treasures' of the BT Archives to some extent, although the inclusion of whole folders of contents has limited the hand-picking of individual documents. It is important that everyday language from the BT archive is represented and I have made efforts to preserve letters relating to routine business matters as well as significant historical developments. It should be noted, however, that the language of the 'treasure' letters is not necessarily qualitatively different to that of more

everyday correspondence. The point of taking 'treasure' and 'non-treasure' status into consideration was primarily to ensure that letters were not ignored simply because they dealt with topics of less obvious historical significance.

Using topic as a selection criterion is arguably another area where the hybrid nature of the project becomes apparent. Sinclair defines topic as an internal criterion, that is, it 'reflects details of the language of the text' (2005: 1). Ideally material for a corpus should not be selected on the basis of features of the language but in terms of its communicative function. In the case of the *BTCC*, material had already been preselected according to topic. The selection of material for the corpus was made on the basis of representing variety and creating a somewhat balanced sample within this pre-selection. As we shall see, though imbalances remain in the corpus it does represent a range of authors and topics from across the institutional history of BT and has potential for studying general linguistic phenomena as well as the language of individual authors.

Format

The letters came in the form of handwritten and typed letters, as well as typed/carbon copies created to keep a record of outward communications or occasionally for other preservation reasons (Sian Wynn Jones, personal communication 14th February 2013). Both handwritten and typewritten letters were included in the corpus; handwritten letters predominated in the first four decades (1850-1890) but some letters continued to be handwritten even up to the 1980s.

British Telecom Correspondence Corpus mk. 1

Following the procedures outlined above, a corpus of 512 letters was created. While there were still gaps in the data particularly in the earlier decades of the corpus (see Figure 6) the corpus was significantly more balanced than the initial sample provided by BT.

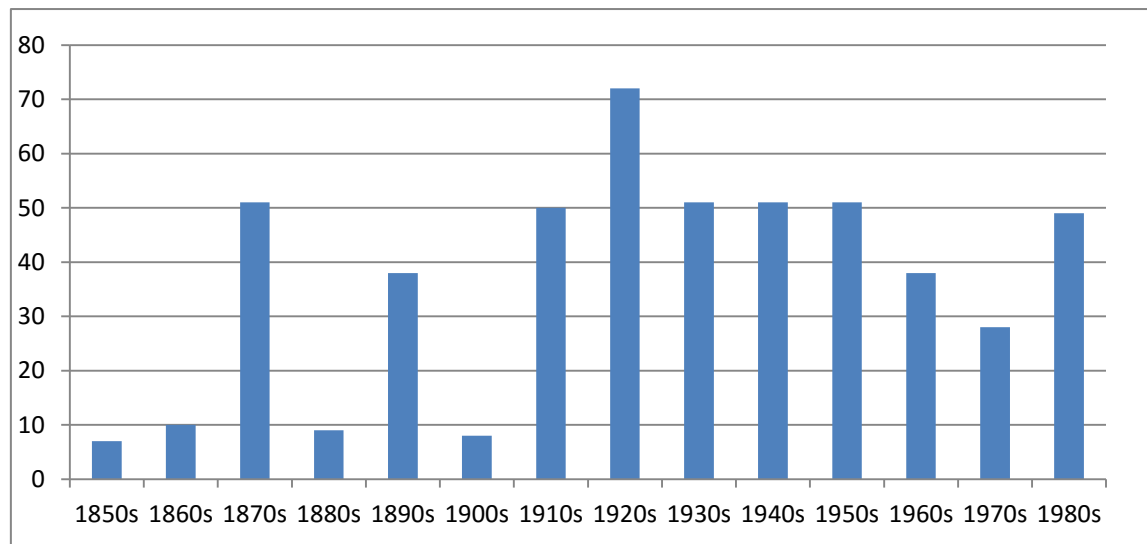


Figure 6 - Number of letters per decade in the BTCC mk.1 (512 letters)

3.6.3.5. Working with the BT Digital Archive: Additional Text Selection

The BT Digital Archives website (<http://www.digitalarchives.bt.com/web/arena>) went live in July 2013 and contained a large proportion of the material scanned by the National Archives. As the digital archive contained not only catalogue entries but scans of individual documents this presented the possibility of searching for additional letters to transcribe in order to balance the remaining under-represented decades.

“Serendipitous searching”

On entry to the BT Digital Archive website users are presented with a mosaic made up of thousands of photographs and scanned documents which come together to form an image from the archive (see Figure 7). As you click on the mosaic you zoom in to the image (see Figure 8) until you reach a single record page accompanied by (where available) a title, finding number and a date. As such it allows for “serendipitous searching” (Hay, 2014:13) of the digital archive.

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Figure 7 – The BT Archives mosaic image wide zoom perspective

This item has been removed due to 3rd Party Copyright. The unabridged version of the thesis can be found in the Lancaster Library, Coventry University.

Figure 8 – The BT Digital Archives mosaic image close zoom perspective

This does offer a quick way into the collections and an easy starting point for casual users to browse material, but it is of no use in terms of conducting targeted searches. Targeted searches are more problematic, as the digital archive preserves some of the limitations of the physical archive.

BT Archive Text Searches

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Figure 9 – The BT Digital Archive search interface

In addition to the ‘serendipitous searching’ option, BT Digital Archive users have the option of carrying out text searches using the interface shown in Figure 9. However these are searches of folder descriptions rather than item-level information. There is considerable variation in the amount of detail these descriptions contain. For example a search for record items using the search term “correspondence” directs users to, among other things, the folder,

Correspondence on Marconi's experiments into wireless telegraphy and the establishment of the Marconi Company

The folder contains 69 pages of information, some but not all of which is correspondence. The only way to find individual scans of pages of letters is by scrolling through each page of the folder. While it is not such an arduous task to sift through this one folder, a search for “letter” returns 273 pages of results of folders the names or descriptions of which contain the word “letter”, and a search for “correspondence” returns 508 pages of search results of folders which may (or may not) contain relevant material.

Searching the records by date can also be difficult. For example, the *Correspondence on Marconi's experiments...* folder cited above is dated 1896-1909. To create a more even spread of letters across the corpus we required additional letters from the 1900s but not from the 1890s, so the search results were both too specific and insufficiently detailed.

Archive structure

The current limitations of the BT digital archive reflect a common problem of large public archives in that they are not generally well described at an item level. In the National Archives for instance (which uses a similar system to the BT Archive) material is organised at the following levels (for more detail see <http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/citing-documents.htm>)

1. Department - 'the government department, agency or body that created the records.')
2. Series - 'a main grouping of records with a common origin and function or subject matter'),
3. Piece - 'not a single piece of paper; it may be a box, volume, file, roll and so on') and
4. Item – 'a part of a piece. It can be a bundle, a single document, a file, a sub-file, a pouch, a range of folios and so on.'

The only difference between this and the structure used by BT is that at the top level, rather than by department, the BT material is organised by 'broad groups (called 'fonds') that reflect the main chronological periods of the organisation' (David Hay, personal correspondence, 10th April 2014). In organising the records in this top-down manner, the aim is to 'reflect the nature and structure of the organisation that created them' (ibid). This is standard practice in the archive world and from a top-down perspective is maximally descriptive as it ensures that each document can be contextualised in relation to the wider archive even if just at the level of originating department. However this approach also means that item-level of description is a low priority, making the identification of individual documents problematic. As I was advised in an email from Chris Barnes at the National Archives (personal communication March 2014):

'Our records are arranged by the originating government department such as the Treasury or the Board of Trade and then further subdivided by a common grouping. Most record series are not easily identifiable on our catalogue due to their chronological arrangement or lack of description at item level. Some records, such as those of the treasury are impenetrable from outside The National Archives as you must consult a series of indexes only available in the reading room itself.'

As the BT Digital Archive is organised along the same lines as the physical archive, some of the inherent impenetrability is preserved. This is likely to be an ongoing concern in the digitisation of large physical archives. Born-digital resources are typically very easy to access at the item

level. The difficulty of identifying relevant materials within the traditional archive structure may be a significant barrier to the wider use of archive material for linguistic research, which would be a shame because archives like that of BT and the record house at the National Archives are potentially very interesting sources of linguistic data.

Using finding numbers to describe the corpus

One form of item-level document search made possible through the BT Digital Archives is search by finding number. Finding numbers contain information regarding the fond, series and file that an item belongs to.

To take the example, *TCB_273_2_27*, from the *BTCC* data, “TCB” locates the record as part of the Fond *Post Office Telegraph and Telephone Service, 1868-1969*, within this “273” is the series *Correspondence regarding wireless telegraphy*, and within this series files “2” and “3” relate to *Correspondence on Marconi's experiments into wireless telegraphy and the establishment of the Marconi Company*.

As I had already received 13,000 items of material from BT, each named according to its finding number, once the BT Archive launched I was able to use the file names to search the BT Digital Archives and identify the topic of each letter, as defined by BT. This was a great help in describing the nature of the documents in the *BTCC*. The letters relate to a wide variety of topics and I would not have had the time to develop my own taxonomy.

In producing the text files for the British Telecom Correspondence Corpus the BT archive finding numbers have been preserved, but I have also created individual file names which contain basic information about the date, author and recipient of a letter. For example the text *1962_05_25_HMB_JRH* was sent on the 25th of May 1962, and was written by Harold M Botkin (whose identifier in the corpus is HMB) to Sir J.R.P. Harvey (JRH). Corpus users will be able to use these author identifiers to access additional contextual information.

It is hoped that these file names will be somewhat more transparent to researchers than the archive finding numbers.

Additional letters

Despite the imprecise nature of the search process, it did point towards a number of folders that contained letters. A series of queries based around the terms 'letter' and 'correspondence' enabled me to identify the following quantities of letters in the ten most recent decades in the Archive

1870s – 1, 1880s – 14, 1890s – 11, 1900s – 34, *1910s – 35*, *1920s – 13*, *1940s – 4*, 1960s – 20, 1970s – 30, *1980s – 1*

Some of these decades (indicated in italics) were already sufficiently well represented in the BTCC. However it was possible to resolve some of the imbalances across decades. After the addition of the material from the BT Digital Archive the total number of letters increased to 612. The distribution of these letters across the fourteen decades can be seen in Figure 10.

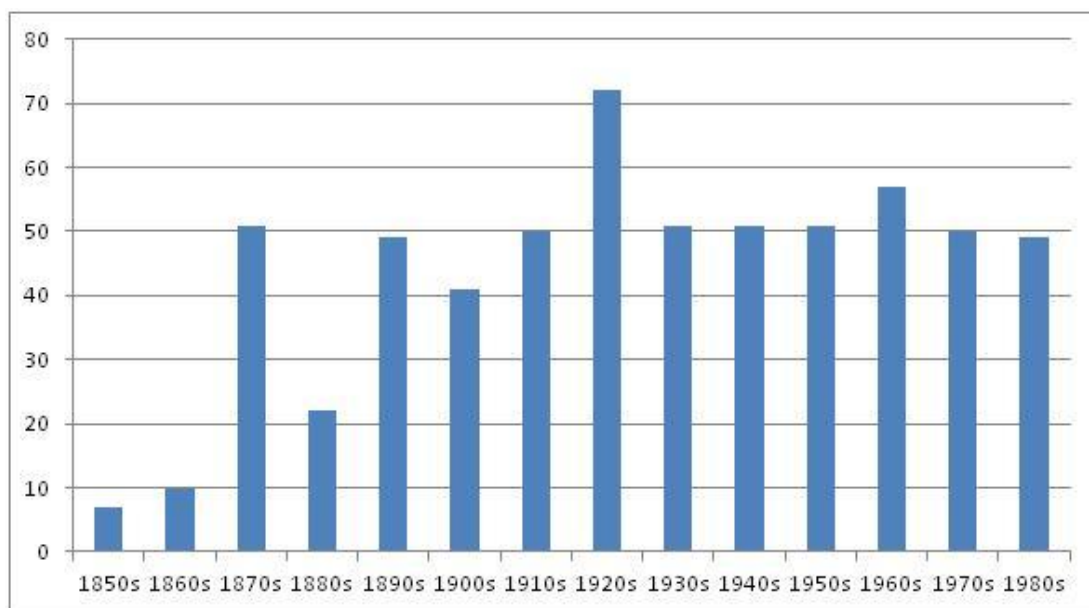


Figure 10 – Number of letters in the BTCC per decade final version – 612 letters

Enhancing item level archive description through collaboration

Though searching the BT Archive at an item level is currently quite difficult, the increasing number of digitization projects such as *New Connections* should make access to individual files easier as department or institution levels of file descriptions are supplemented by improved item descriptions. As the National Archives advise on their website

“Traditionally, citation of our records was done at piece level (generally the unit of production at Kew). As itemisation has become common, in order to enhance the

descriptions of our records and to enable digitisation, researchers may wish to cite an individual item within a piece.” <http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/citing-documents.htm>

Depending on the size of the archive, archive-wide production of metadata on an individual item level might be an overwhelming task for an institution or research project. In fact the current trend in archive description is to make sure as much material as possible is described at the fond and series level rather than including more item-level description (David Hay, personal correspondence, 17th March 2015). However one of the benefits of making archive material available for research is that researchers can improve the description/metadata for individual files while working with those documents. The BT Digital Archive also includes a function whereby users can tag individual documents, for example, in effect creating item-level metadata. This sort of crowd-sourcing has proved a very valuable source of data in recent years with projects such as Zooniverse making it possible for anyone with an interest to get involved with research through a wide variety of activities, from transcribing documents to observing star patterns.

Although finding individual documents remains an imprecise process, the BT Digital Archives undeniably improve accessibility to the BT material, allowing users to see documents that could only previously have been viewed at the BT Archives in Holborn.

3.6.3.6. Transcription

The transcription of the letters involved two types of task, manual transcription by researchers and transcription by Optical Character Recognition (OCR) at the National Archives. Initially around half of our material was going to be transcribed using OCR scanning. However due to funding complications and time constraints this was reduced to around a quarter of the transcription with the remainder being done manually.

Where possible the original letter manuscript was used for the transcription process. Where only copied versions of documents were available I had to rely on these, even though some elements of the original letter such as paragraphing may have been lost. It is also not clear in these cases whether errors in the documents come from the original source or were simply mistakes in the copy. Occasionally both handwritten letters and their typed copies were available. In these cases transcriptions were created from the handwritten letters, though typed copies were consulted on a couple of occasions where the handwriting was unclear.

Manual Transcription

Overall, 462 of the 612 texts were transcribed manually by two researchers. This manual transcription was completed over two periods: from June to September 2012, and in August 2013 following the official launch of the BT Digital Archives and the identification of the additional letters. I carried out the majority of the transcriptions. Additionally Lloyd Bowen, a researcher hired at Coventry University, transcribed 140 letters in 40 hours on a part-time basis over three weeks.

How far texts should be diplomatically transcribed, i.e. preserving elements of the original formatting such as address lines, self-corrections and line-breaks (Dury, 2006), is a consideration for anyone working with original manuscripts (see also Marquilhaes, 2012). All of the texts in the *BTCC* were transcribed preserving the basic formatting in the letters including original line breaks, paragraph breaks, spelling errors, upper/lower case, and alternative orthographic elements (e.g. a dash in place of a full stop). One of the appealing aspects of working with archive material rather than edited collections is precisely that you can ensure that original features of the language are preserved, and strengthen a corpus's claim to authenticity in terms of the language it contains.

It should be noted that, while the formatting of the available version of each letter was preserved, this was not always the original formatting. So the roughly 500 letters that make up this corpus may not always preserve the extra textual features of the original documents, but attempt to preserve the features of the material we had, in the form in which it was available. Some features such as line breaks are irrelevant to the linguistic analysis but were preserved for the sake of the proposed letter interface, see Chapter 8, which will make manuscript scans and transcriptions available side by side, and so would benefit from similar formatting.

Some historical corpora feature texts from periods before standardised spelling and where regional variation is more prevalent (Archer et al. 2007). Corpus searches for non-standard forms (such as alternate spellings) require a knowledge of potential variants. The letters in the BT Archive were not as problematic as many older historical texts as the language and the scripts were relatively standardised by the time of even the earliest letters. Some non-standard forms such as spelling mistakes were preserved as part of the corpus design. These do not, however, appear in sufficient quantities in the *BTCC* to have much effect on the quantitative results (only seven of the 612 letters in the corpus contain spelling errors,

although, in addition to this, a very small number letters contain alternative spellings which were acceptable relatively recently but have since fallen out of favour such as 'instal' and 'inclose'). The majority of the texts are either typed or survive as typed copies and so did not present as many legibility problems as some historical correspondence. The fact that the letters were final drafts/finished letters also meant that features such as handwritten notes and crossings out were very rare.

One element that was 'cleaned up' was words that ran over line breaks. For our research aims we could see no benefit in preserving that formatting, as it was of little interest and it would interfere with corpus searches.

Optical Character Recognition (OCR)

To help speed up the transcription process a number of the typed documents were scanned using 'OCR' or Optical Character Recognition software. OCR is the process whereby software 'attempts to replicate the combined functions of the human eye and brain' (Holley, 2009:2) to create a text file from an image of typed text. Holley (ibid: 2) describes this process as follows,

'[OCR software] divides the page into elements such as blocks of text (columns), tables, images, etc. The lines are divided into words and then into characters. Once the characters have been singled out, the program compares them with a set of pattern images stored in its database'.

One or two people from The National Archives worked on the OCR scanning for the first batch of the BT data. OCR technology has improved a lot in recent years but with the exception of Holley's account of the digitization of the Australian Newspaper Archive not a great deal has been written about the use of OCR for large scale digitization projects. OCR can be carried out on any computer with adequate processing power and enough memory to store high quality scans of the documents. The scans were required to be of 300dpi or higher. As The National Archives were responsible for the capture of the letter images as well as the OCR scanning they were able to arrange for this minimum resolution requirement to be met. The National Archives could also run the OCR software off a server in order to process lots of information in parallel.

The OCR scanning was conceived as an attempt to speed up the transcription process, and as a pilot for the digitization of the rest of the typed *New Connections* material. There are a number of factors such as print quality and text alignment which can affect the accuracy of OCR.

However, as Chris Mumby from the National Archives pointed out, ‘even a 50% success rate will provide more searchable data than a 2 line catalogue entry’ (personal correspondence).

The OCR achieved around an 84% success rate. That is to say 150 of 179 letter scans could be used with only minor or manageable corrections. (For clarity, here by ‘corrections’ I mean mistakes made by the OCR software in recognising characters, not mistakes made by the original authors). Twenty-nine letters contained a large number of errors and needed to be transcribed manually. A common mistake was that characters would be represented by incorrect characters with similar shapes. For example in (PO reference) *POST_30_2641_12_34*, “Mr R.C. Galletti” was represented as “hlr R.C. Galletti. Another problem had to do with the formatting; for some letters the OCR scans contained additional spacing between characters, e.g. “S i r”. Errors like this were often a consequence of the peculiarities of particular documents such as the colour of the paper or the use of a slightly unusual font. It is sometimes possible to train OCR software to recognise these peculiarities and make adjustments so that characters are correctly recognised. However the variety of documents in the BT archives meant that it was not possible to implement this kind of training. Instead mistakes were identified and corrected manually.

The only documents for which OCR scanning consistently returned no information were carbon copies. This was because the ink on carbon copies tends to bleed quite considerably into the paper and OCR software ‘analyses the stroke edge, the line of discontinuity between the text characters and the background’ (Holley, 2009:2), so without this defined edge the scan returns little or no information. Our experiences are in keeping with the findings from Christy Henshaw’s study, commissioned to test OCR output. She found that ‘carbon copies, with fuzzy ink can result in virtually 0% accuracy in any OCR software’ (Wellcome Digital Library 2012).

However, overall the OCR software coped well with the typed material, even recognising faint characters and some less common fonts. The OCR scanning was a significant contribution to the transcription phase of the project, and it was valuable to have the benefit of The National Archives’ expertise regarding the OCR technology.

3.6.3.7. Detailed Metadata Collection

The criteria that qualified a text as a letter meant that at very least an address, a date and a signature were available for each document in the corpus. The opening salutations also sometimes contained recipient information. The selection criterion ‘signature’ did not always

mean that we were able to extract a name, as some were illegible. However only 10 out of 385 names were completely illegible, and it was still possible to give these authors identifiers, and extract other relevant information about them from the letters. In addition to names and locations, the job titles of authors and recipients and the names of the companies that they worked for were recorded. In terms of the linguistics analysis, this provides crucial information about the status of and relationship between correspondents. On a more general level this also helps us to get an idea of who was corresponding and to build a picture of the wider business network of which BT was a part. Author gender was also recorded, as was the format of the letter (e.g. handwritten, typed).

Ideally it would be possible to provide corpus users with detailed information about each of the authors and recipients represented in the *British Telecom Correspondence Corpus*. Unfortunately there are still gaps in the metadata. As I will outline in the concluding chapter, it is hoped that the Post Office's public archive may be able to provide additional contextual information as work on the corpus continues. For now, the fact that many of the authors have some sort of public profile makes it possible to obtain additional information about them via simple internet searches for author names or a combination of names with job positions, dates and companies.

3.6.3.8. Text Encoding

Text Encoding Initiative (TEI)

Text Encoding Initiative (TEI)–compliant XML was used to record the corpus metadata. The TEI is a consortium which collectively develops and maintains a standard for the representation of texts in digital form. It provides a framework for annotation of bibliographic and contextual information in the document “header” along with textual and structural annotation in the body of the text. At the time of the construction of the *BTCC*, the TEI special interest group for correspondence was developing a schema for the encoding of correspondence-specific features. A number of issues regarding the encoding of the BT metadata were raised with the TEI SIG during the period when the corpus was being created, and discussion of these contributed to the development of the guidelines, which were approved by the TEI council in November 2014.

All of the metadata detailed above was recorded in the header along with a description of the project, information about the file repository (BT Archives), original file references, transcription practice, format, functional classification, and availability information. Below is an example of the structure of the correspondence-specific header information for one of the letters in the *BTCC*, followed by an explanation of its structure.

Current corpus TEI header format

```
<profileDesc>
<correspDesc>
  <correspAction type="sent">
    <persName xml:id="">
      <forename></forename>
      <surname></surname>
      <sex></sex>
      <affiliation>
        <occupation></occupation>
        <orgName type="Department"></orgName>
        <orgName type="Company"></orgName>
      </affiliation>
    </persName>
    <address>
      <street></street>
      <district></district>
      <settlement></settlement>
      <region></region>
      <country></country>
      <postCode></postCode>
    </address>
    <date when="" n=""></date>
  </correspAction>
  <correspAction type="received">
    <persName xml:id="">
      <forename></forename>
      <surname></surname>
      <sex></sex>
      <affiliation>
        <occupation></occupation>
        <orgName type="Department"></orgName>
        <orgName type="Company"></orgName>
      </affiliation>
    </persName>
    <address>
      <street></street>
      <district></district>
      <settlement></settlement>
      <region></region>
      <country></country>
      <postCode></postCode>
    </address>
  </correspAction>
</correspDesc>
<textClass>
  <keywords>
```

```

<term type="Function_1"> </term>
<term type="Function_2"> </term>
<term type="Function_3"> </term>
<term type="BT_Folder_Description"> </term>
</keywords>
</textClass>
</profileDesc>

```

This header follows a relatively simple tree structure. In keeping with the TEI guidelines for correspondence, information is provided regarding the circumstances of the *sending* action, and the *receiving* action, including names, dates, addresses, and professional affiliations of those involved. In addition to this, information regarding the overall function of each letter is included using the <text class><keywords> elements (see Section 3.6.4 for a detailed description of the functional classification).

It should be noted that the TEI element <keyword> is used to define the topic or nature of a text. This is different to Mike Scott's (2012) idea of a 'keyword', which is a word that occurs unusually more (or less) frequently in a text (or group of texts) when compared against a reference corpus.

Text Internal Coding

Text internal coding records the structure of the text, making it possible to mark formal features such as paragraph breaks and features of the format such as font details or quoted sections. These features have not yet been incorporated into the official TEI correspondence schema, although they are the next area to be examined, specifically with regard to correspondence-related structural elements such as <postscript>, <opener> and <closer>. Although formal guidelines have not been agreed for these elements at the time of writing, I have employed a number of the text-internal elements in the mark-up of the BTCC including openers (<opener>) all of which contain a salutation (<salute>) and some of which contain a title (<title>) and reference (<ref>) lines. Paragraphs are indicated wherever the letter author has indented the line (<p>). Page breaks (<pb>) have also been marked. Closers (<closer>) have been included in the mark-up, which also contains <salute> elements, and <signature> information. Finally postScripts have also been annotated. Marking these formal features helps preserve them in a digital form, but also helps with corpus analysis, for example by identifying letter openings and closings as distinct structural elements, thus precluding the need to rely on searches surrounding typical words such as 'dear' and 'yours'.

The <closer> is a block level element within TEI. It functions on the same level as a <p> paragraph and so also contains phrases which run into the closing salutation and signature line, as in the following example:

```
<closer>Hoping to have the  
pleasure of being present  
in your lecture  
<salute>I remain in great haste  
Yours very truly.</salute>  
<signed>G. Marconi</signed></closer>  
(1899_05_01_GM_WHP)
```

The identification of this element allows researchers to examine the ways in which authors manage the exchange and their relationships with their recipients through letter closings.

3.6.4. Functional Classification

A key challenge in approaching the analysis of the BT corpus is in how to make meaningful comparisons between letters of different periods given the range of topics they cover and functions they perform. One strategy for addressing this was to categorise and mark up the letters according to function, making it possible to relate quantitative findings to this categorisation, and to trace the development of functions diachronically.

3.6.4.1. *Speech acts*

Discussions of language function typically take the seminal studies by J.L. Austin (1962) and John Searle (1969, 1975, 1976) as their starting point. The key idea that underpins Austin's treatment of language is that language is not merely descriptive, it also perform actions. He made the distinction between 'locutionary' acts (what is said), 'illocutionary force' (what is meant by what is said), and 'perlocutionary acts' (the effect or consequence of what is said). On this basis he proposed a model containing five types of speech act (*verdictives, exertives, commissives, behavatives, expositives*) though he himself was 'far from equally happy with all of them' (1962: 15). Searle later developed this model, still working with the notion of illocutionary speech acts and the idea that 'there are a rather limited number of basic things that we can do with language' (1976:22). Searle's taxonomy defined five main speech acts (*representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, declaratives*) and twelve dimensions by which illocutionary acts vary from each other. These basic categories, particularly *commissives* (commitments by the speaker to a course of action), and *directives* (attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something) have continued to prove useful concepts in the discussion of

language functions and language change (e.g. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris 1996, Del Lungo Camiciotti 2008:118, Kohnen 2009).

Subsequent studies have added additional categories according to their research needs. For example Leech (1983: 206) added the additional category *rogatives* 'to encompass acts like ask, enquire, query, and question, which previously had been subsumed by 'directives' (Archer, 2008: 617). Later in a substantial update of this model Leech included a case study of the various facets of the apology speech act (2014:15).

Typically in pragmatic analysis, 'the utterance is regarded as the key unit of analysis' (Archer, 2008: 633). De Felice et al. (2008:72) set out to categorise individual utterances in the ENRON dataset, to 'create a description of the pragmatics of business English, in particular email communication'. Their categories were *direct request, question request, open question, first person commitment, first person expression of feeling, first person other, and other statements*. The level and degree of delicacy in pragmatic classification is dictated by the research aims of the individual project. In this case the variety of ways in which questions and requests are formulated seem of particular interest to the researchers, perhaps given the importance of directives in the business context.

The computational cue-based DAMSL (Dialogue Act Markup in Several Layers) tagset (as outlined in Allen and Core, 1997 and described in Jurafsky 2006:12) distinguished between thirteen forward-looking and fourteen backward-looking speech acts, the former being the 'something like the Searle/Austin speech act' and the latter describing 'the relationship of an utterance to previous utterances by the other speaker' (Jurafsky, 2006:13). This original tagset was developed for the SBWB-DAMSL tagset which contained around 50 basic tags and was used to label each of the 200,000 individual utterances in a corpus of 1,200 switchboard conversations (see also Jurafsky et al. 1997).

Nickerson (1999) on the other hand used a simple set of functions (*confirmation, enclose, request, inform, suggestion, apology*) to describe the moves within business letters, examining the moves for uses of politeness strategies. Other studies have classified function at the text-level. For example in Alex Bergs's (2007) study of the *Paston Letters* he used speech act theory to classify the text-type letters into the 'socio-pragmatic' sub-types *report, request, orders, counsel, and phatic*, with a further distinction made between letter requests and petition requests. Again the type of classification is dictated by the research aims of the project. Leech

made the case for relatively simple scheme arguing 'the simpler the scheme, the easier it is to maintain and check consistency of practice and the easier it is to check for errors' (1993: 279) a point also taken into account by DeFelice et al. who chose their relatively simple scheme in part to make it easier for the research team involved in the classification to learn and apply it to the data. They also noted that 'it would be desirable to have a richly annotated corpus, identifying a wide range of actions...on the other hand, a very detailed classification scheme can lead to data sparseness' (2013: 79).

There are a number of problems with this sort of speech act classification. Leech (1983: 174) criticised Searle (and Austin before him) of succumbing to the 'illocutionary verb fallacy', which is to say assuming that there is a one-to-one relationship between verbs used to describe speech acts and the speech acts themselves. Leech also criticises the way in which Searle's approach 'divides pragmatic space into distinct compartmentalised categories' arguing that speech acts exist on more of a cline (2014:62, see also 1983:176). On a related point Flowerdew notes that there is a contrast between specific and diffuse speech acts, that some speech acts such as *promising* are relatively well-defined in terms of the conditions that need to be met to perform the act, whereas others such as *stating* are much more general and so cannot be defined in the same way (Flowerdew 2012: 90, de Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981:117). Another major issue raised by Flowerdew (1990, 2012) was the difficulty in defining the size of the speech act form. Some speech acts are realised by a single word, others an utterance, while some may be realised over the course of a paragraph. Given this, it can be challenging to identify the form for analysis.

While these are all valid concerns, with the exception of the 'illocutionary verb phallacy', they are not unique to speech act classification. Most, if not all, systems of language classification suffer to an extent from the fact that linguistic phenomena do tend to operate on some form of cline rather than in neat categories, particularly when authentic data are used. What Searle's categories do provide is a suitably general framework which can be used as a starting point for exploring common and prototypical ways in which speech acts are realised, as well as areas where functions may be less well defined and/or overlap. The issue of the size of the speech act form was less of a concern for the current study as the functional classification was done at the text-level, so the letter as a whole was the speech act form with which I was concerned.

3.6.4.2. Approach to the BTCC classification

For the BTCC the ultimate aim was to classify the letters at text-level according to a limited number of general functions. The main reason for wanting a limited set of general functions was that the classification, as with the rest of the current study, was partly exploratory. No functional information about the texts was available prior to this study. The classification would provide an overview of the sorts of functions performed by the BT letters. Defining the letters at text-level was also partly a practical consideration, as annotating the letters for functions at an utterance-level would not have been possible given the available time and resources. It was also felt that to understand utterance level functions, they have to be related back to the function of the letter as a whole. Del Lungo Camiciotti in her examination of *commissives* and *directives* in nineteenth century sales letters (2008:128) found that ‘the analysis of speech acts cannot be conducted at the sentence level because the core command and offer are embedded in the argumentative and persuasive context’. The hope was that once overall functions had been defined each function could be analysed in terms of how micro-functional moves occur within them.

One of the main challenges in defining a given speech act is that ‘many of the verbs that we call illocutionary verbs are not the markers of illocutionary point’ (Searle, 1976: 21), a problem described by DeFelice et al. (2013:89) as the ‘form-function disjuncture’. While an author may use the verb *inform* the illocutionary point of the utterance is not necessarily to inform. Discussing the question of whether to privilege the form or function, DeFelice et al. wrote,

“One might argue that function should be privileged in this case because we are interested in learning about speech act functional categories, not forms...On the other hand, it is not always easy to assess where the illocutionary meanings (for example the hedging functions of the first person statements) begin and their locutionary, literal, expressive meaning ends” (2013: 89)

One way to address this could be to adopt an approach similar to that used by Stiles (1992) in his Verbal Response Mode taxonomy where utterances are given two tags, one for literal meaning and another for illocutionary meaning. However as De Felice et al. point out this kind of classification requires additional annotation work and it is quite possible that text might perform multiple illocutionary functions. Ultimately the PRoBe project addressed the problem of locutionary/illocutionary mismatches by creating annotation guidelines which ‘tend to steer annotators towards relying on surface cues in assigning speech act categories’ (2013:87). This approach was also adopted for the classification of the BT data.

Searle's speech acts were the main starting point for the *BTCC* classification scheme as they are suitably general to describe most texts and have been repeatedly shown to be useful in describing the essential functions of speech. I also wanted to follow the example of researchers who had devised their own scheme for the purposes of their particular material and research questions. It seemed unlikely, for instance, that *expressives* would play a large role in the classification of the *BTCC*, while distinctions between different types of *directives* may prove more interesting. To allow for the possibility that functions other than the five outlined by Searle might emerge from the data, the list of functions used to classify the data was derived from my initial experience of reading and transcribing the *BTCC* letters.

The applicability of the function list generated for the classification of letters in the *BTCC* was tested at Coventry University through a series of inter-rater reliability tests, the results of which informed the refinement of the functional categories. In this sense the overall classification/analysis model followed here draws upon Sean Wallis's (2007: 2.4) cyclical approach whereby the corpus informs the scheme which in turn informs the analysis, with the annotation providing 'a theoretical grip on a lexical corpus'. I have made the final decisions for the *BTCC* functions following examinations of similar letters and, where possible, group/supervisory discussions.

Even though the categories were developed through consultation with raters, there is an element of subjectivity involved in this sort of classification. Leech argues that 'we should see annotations as lacking the claim of authenticity which belongs to the corpus itself' (1993:277). Despite these limitations, the functional information provided by the classification offers another way of analysing the corpus and a frame through which to interpret quantitative results.

3.6.4.3. Classification of the BT Letters

Initial Classification

As a starting point, each letter was examined and a brief abstract of the letter contents was noted along with a description of its perceived primary function and, where applicable, secondary functions. The detailed list of functions generated from this initial examination was far too long to be practical:

Primary Functions – *Advice, Suggestion, (Instruction?), Request, Application, Offer, Confirmation, Agreement, Acceptance, Rejection, Outlining, Detailing, Setting Out,*

Report, Notification, Expressive, Query, Clarification, Reiteration, Correction, Explanation, Complaints, Reminder, Thanking, Enclosing, Forwarding, Copying, Acknowledging, Arguing, Disputing, Arranging, Planning, Instructing, Personal Update, Proposal, Expenditure Review, Commissive, Promise

Secondary Functions – Thanking, Apology, Acknowledgement, Expressing, Query, Request, Offer, Advice, Suggestion, Direction, Instruction, Recommendation, Discussion, Informing, Stating, Agreeing, Conceding, Noting Change, Restating, Explanation, Invitation, Report, Notification, Enclosure, Approval

To reduce the number, functions were grouped together, eliminating apparent overlaps between them. By repeating this process and refining the list, it was narrowed down to twenty functions by which the letters could be categorised.

Advise – <i>offering guidance/benefit of opinion</i>
Application – <i>for jobs, telephone licences...</i>
Apology
Commissive – <i>commitment to action</i>
Complaint
Confirmation – <i>approving, accepting, restating for the record</i>
Declination – <i>declining suggestions, invitations, proposals</i>
Directive – <i>request/instruction for action to be taken</i>
Explanation – <i>giving reasons for a position, clarifications, reassurances</i>
Expressive – <i>emotions, involved personal comments e.g. 'I hope your health has improved'</i>
Informing – <i>notifications, updates</i>
Meeting Arrangement
Meta-text – <i>enclosing, forwarding, acknowledging, thanking (for letter), copying...</i>
Offer – <i>of services, assistance</i>
Phatic – <i>less involved personal comments e.g. How's it going?</i>
Proposal – <i>declarative, putting forward a course of action</i>
Report – <i>an account of an event, meeting...etc</i>

Request – <i>for information</i>
Suggestion – <i>suggesting course of action or alterations to a current course of action</i>
Thanking

Table 3-1 - Overarching function list Version 1 (used for the first round of classification)

This list was still felt to be too long. With twenty categories there would still have been issues of data sparseness (De Felice et al., 2013:79), particularly when analysing the data decade by decade.

Workshop Preparation

I held a workshop of the English Language in Professional and Higher education (ELPHE) research group at Coventry University, so that members could try using the functions identified to categorise a sample of letters from the *BTCC*. The hope was also to encourage a discussion of any issues arising, such as how to deal with problematic cases and whether some categories should be collapsed. Raters were provided with the list of functions and definitions outlined in Table 3-1 and were asked to categorise each letter. The categorisation results were collected and examined for inter-rater reliability and as the starting point for a revision of the functional categories. As the categories were still work in progress it was expected that the initial inter-rater reliability would not be that high, but that the discussion would be useful in refining the categories further. As De Felice et al. argue ‘from the point of view of pragmatics research...the instances where annotators disagree or express uncertainty prove highly informative’ (2013: 85)

In order to achieve a degree of objectivity in the selection of material for the workshop, the letters were selected using the random generator function in Excel. However I also wanted to ensure that each decade was represented, so the random sampling was used to pick five letters from each decade, essentially a quota sampling approach (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2011: 156). As there were so few letters in the 1850s and 1860s, these two decades were combined for this selection. If, for example, there were 51 letters in a decade, five numbers would be generated randomly between 1 and 51. If those numbers were 7, 10, 21, 22 and 42, the 7th, 10th, 21st, 22nd, and 42nd letters chronologically were selected for the categorisation workshop. This process was repeated for each decade until sixty five letters had been selected from the archive at random.

To quantify and trace the level of consensus between workshop participants for each classification, inter-rater agreement was measured using the ReCal tool on the <http://dfreelon.org/> website which enables the calculation of agreement of two or more sets of results using pair-wise percentage agreement, Fleiss' Kappa, average pair-wise Cohen's Kappa, and Krippendorff's Alpha. In the current study only the average pair-wise percentage agreement was used. A numerical value has to be assigned to each result. In the case of the BTCC this simply consisted of assigning a numerical value to each function name. Being able to identify the level of agreement and, indeed, areas of disagreement was crucial in refining the functions, particularly as ultimately I would be carrying out the classification of the majority of the letters on my own without the benefit of group discussion.

First test: Classification Workshop

The first test of the applicability of the functions took place at a classification workshop held at Coventry University on October 23rd 2013. It was attended by six participants who were members of staff or research students in the English and Languages Department (though two participants had to leave before the discussion). Each participant was given a printout of sixty-five letters and a list of twenty functions with accompanying definitions (see Table 3-1). They were instructed to assign each letter one primary function from the list, and to make a note of any other functions from the list that they considered the letter performed as a 'secondary function'. They were also asked to suggest any additional functions that they felt were conspicuously absent from the existing list of functions.

The workshop was only one hour long. To make the most of the time and ensure that letters from different eras were examined, participants were given twenty minutes to classify letters starting in 1853, after which they were instructed to jump forward to 1930 and continue classifying letters for a further twenty minutes from the letter 1930_11_26_BEW_##. The final twenty minutes of the workshop were left for discussion.

Inter-rater reliability

Between the six workshop raters the overall pair-wise agreement was 41%. The highest degree of agreement between raters was 53% and the lowest was 24%. This result does not take into account all of the results. The different coders worked at different rates, rating between 17 and 31 letters in the forty minutes available. As the Recal software requires a numerical value in every Excel tab to calculate agreement, these results reflected only the 17 cases that all of the

6 raters were able to rate. However it was clear that the functions required further refining before a full-scale classification of the corpus could be carried out.

Part of the point of the workshop was also to note secondary functions, which is to say any other functions the letter performs in addition to the overarching 'primary' function. The degree to which participants agreed or disagreed on secondary functions is also absent from these reliability results though those issues informed the discussions in the workshop and in subsequent rounds in inter-rater testing. The salient points from these discussions are detailed following each round of inter-rater results.

Issues arising

Function Name Consistency

One problem with the categorisation system which was pointed out by participants was the lack of consistency in the category names. Some were verbs (e.g. *advise*) some nouns (e.g. *application*), while others such as *thanking* and *informing* were expressed as present participles. An attempt was made for increased consistency in subsequent rounds.

Lack of Context

Archer notes that 'meanings are induced from the utterance in its context' (2008: 617). One of the problems in defining the functions of the BT letters in general (and particularly in the limited workshop setting) is that the context surrounding the letter is at best only partially available. As De Felice et al. found when classifying functions in the PRoBE email corpus, it is very difficult to classify functions without key information about the relationship between the sender and the addressee (2013:89). Similarly the plain transcriptions used in this workshop came with minimal contextual information with which to interpret the content of the letters.

'Primary' function

A related recurring issue was how to decide which letter function was the primary function rather than a secondary function. For example, a letter in for which the primary function is 'request' might start with an acknowledgement of a previous letter, and provide background information. Equally, informative texts quite often conclude with a request for the recipients' views on a given matter. It was felt that to an extent primary functions could be distinguished

from secondary functions by considering to what degree the function is self-contained, or whether it provides context for the main function of the letter.

Surface form vs. function

There were a number of cases in which there was an implication of something going on beyond the surface form. For example in 1871_07_27_DHC_FIS (See Appendix 1 for all letters referenced in this section) the majority of the letter is dedicated to providing information on a technical development. The implication is, however, that the technical development is of some interest to the addressee, and they may want to act on the information in the same way one might choose to take up a proposed course of action. However without the full chain of correspondence it was not clear whether the technical development was requested by the addressee, or whether the addressee responded to the letter as if it was an offer/proposal. The only option in cases like this was to examine the available contextual information. In cases in which the function was unclear from the context, as in DeFelice et al's classification (2003:88) the classification relied more on the surface form.

Revisions

Category Collapsing

In the discussion that followed the classification exercise *advice* and *suggestion* were judged to be types of *directive* as they are 'attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something' (Searle, 1976:11). It was also suggested that *proposal* should fall under the *offer* function, with the case being made that all proposals are offers but not all offers are proposals.

Purely relationship-maintaining elements are relatively rare and almost always secondary to a reporting or transactional function where they do appear. It should be noted this is in keeping with Biber's (1988:179) findings regarding the differences between personal and professional correspondence, namely that personal correspondence tends to be primarily concerned with the maintenance of relationships while professional correspondence performs a greater range of interactional and informational functions. With this in mind *Phatic* was removed from the primary function list as it never appears in that way in the BT letters. It is very unlikely that it would ever appear as the primary function of business correspondence.

Though they are important text types in other disciplines, such as journalism and academic writing, *reports* were felt to be too similar to *informing* to warrant a separate category in the

context of the *BTCC*. Every example of *explanation* overlapped with *informing* to a large degree. *Explanations* contained more clarifications, conditions and precautions than the purely *informative* texts encountered. However it was felt that the majority of *explanation* letters were essentially *informative*, while letters which primarily contained conditions might be considered *offers*.

Meeting arrangement was under-defined in the function list. It was meant as a catch all for invitations and negotiations to meet. However invitations could be said to fall under the *request/directive* categories as they are frequently requests for information regarding the recipient's availability, or a request for an action (meeting) so *meeting arrangement* was removed as a category. Also *confirmation* was collapsed into *commissive* as a type of commitment to future action.

Clarifications

Two workshop participants had labelled letter 1853_12_28_CTB_RC (See Appendix 1) as *declination*, as it advises the addressee not to make an investment. However the rest of the group felt this was not a *declination* as it was the addressee of the letter who had been offered the opportunity to invest, not the author. As a result of this discussion it was felt that it should be stipulated in the definitions that *declinations* can only be made in direct response to an offer, invitation...etc.

Request for information was changed to *Query* to distinguish it from *Directives* which confusingly contained the word *request* in its definition ('request for action').

Revised List of Overarching Functions

Taking the above considerations into account, a revised list of functions was produced.

Application – <i>for jobs, telephone licenses...</i>
Commissive – commitments to action: <i>planning, confirmations. This can be a commitment to personal action, or a show of commitment to an action proposed by others.</i>
Declination – <i>turning down invitations, offers. Withdrawing application, services. This must be in direct response to the offer or invitation, i.e. advice given by one party to another to decline an offer does not count.</i>
Directive – <i>instructions, suggestions for action (or lack of), invitations</i>
Expressive – <i>Thanks, complaints, apologies, opinions</i>
Informative – <i>updates, reports, explanations. Information should have extra-textual reference, otherwise it is Meta-Textual. Acknowledgements/thanks/confirmations of information received.</i>
Offer – <i>of services or information benefit the reader – the offer may or may not also benefit the writer</i>
Query – A request/demand for information.
Meta-text – referring primarily to attachments e.g. ‘find here enclosed...’

Table 3-2 - Overarching function list Version 2

Second Test

Two-rater test

To test the applicability of the revised set of functions twenty eight letters which had been randomly selected for the first classification workshop but had not been examined at the workshop were classified by two of the workshop participants.

Inter-rater reliability

There was a marked improvement in the level of agreement in the second round, with raters agreeing on the primary function of 24 out of 28 letters (86%). This was perhaps to be expected, due to the smaller number of both functions and raters.

Issues arising

While the four remaining disagreements were settled by further discussion, some issues did remain. *Acknowledgement* remained a difficult feature to classify, with disagreement as to whether it was a meta-textual feature or a kind of *informative* (informing the recipient that a letter has been received). It was decided that *Acknowledgements* should fall under the category *Meta-text* as they solely refer to the receiving of letters, they do not provide any other sort of information.

The classification of 1979_07_16_AOH_PFB as a *directive* by Rater 1 and a *meta-text* by Rater 2 pointed to the ongoing problem of defining the primary function of a letter. The defining characteristic of *metatexts* is that they point to the medium rather than the message, that is, they only refer to the sending and receiving of letters, not a letter's content. While 1979_07_16_AOH_PFB points to a previous letter it also requests an opinion on that letter, so in a sense the meta-textual function of the text supports the primary function which is to request a response.

Similarly, for the letters 1979_07_16_AOH_PFB, 1962_11_06_JRB_SRH and 1926_08_06_BG_## raters agreed on the functions but disagreed as to which was the primary function. This suggests that the modified list of functions is suitable for describing the function of the letters even if the multi-functionality problem remains. The refined list of functions (see Table 3-2) was more manageable and suitable for describing a relatively small number of general functions but also allowed for letter-specific functions. The inter-rater reliability was also greatly improved. To test that this improved agreement was not merely a one-off occurrence the inter-rater testing was repeated with an additional rater.

Second Revised List of Overarching Functions

For the third round of classifications most of the same basic categories were retained, however the definitions were made more detailed. 'Meta-texts' were renamed as 'Notifications' as Rater 2 felt that 'Meta-text' was something of an obscure name. Also, as the only primarily *Expressive* letters we had encountered up to this point were *Complaint* letters and *Thanking* letters. It was felt that these letter types were too different to be grouped together, and so the more general category *Expressive* was removed, to be replaced by the new categories *Complaint* and *Thanking*.

The revised list of Function used in Round 3 was as follows:

1. Application – *for jobs, telephone licenses, services, permission, pay increases. Expenditure requests*

This includes application renewals and cases where an approach has already been made but the author wishes to make a formal application by letter.

2. Commissive – *commitments to action: acceptances (of invitations, offers, terms), granting permission, approval (of a course of a plan or expenditure).*

This can be a commitment to personal action, or a show of commitment to an action proposed by others. When the *Commissive* takes the form of an acceptance sometimes it is accompanied by conditions ('we would be happy to do x if you will do y') as quite often accepting/committing to a course of action raises further questions. As with *Applications*, *Commissive* letters sometimes formally restate a commitment which has already been communicated in person or over the phone.

3. Complaint - *communicates an author's dissatisfaction with something.*

Some complaints may make use of queries, e.g. 'do you think that's fair?', but the implication in such cases is 'that's not fair'. While there are not a large number of *complaints* in the BT Correspondence Corpus, the category has been included as it was felt that it would be an interesting category for comparative study across time in different correspondence collections. It may even be possible to locate additional complaint letters for the BT Correspondence Corpus at a later date.

4. Declination – *turning down invitations, offers or suggestions. Refusing permission, declining to act, withdrawing applications*

This must be in direct response to the offer, invitation...etc, i.e. advice given by one party to another to decline an offer does not count. Similarly, reporting that someone has declined an offer would be an informative, and asking someone to report that an offer has been declined would be a directive, as neither rare direct responses.

5. Directive – *instructions, advice, suggestions for action (or lack of), invitations, requests for meetings, reminders*

6. Informative – *updates, progress reports, clarifications, explanations, summaries of events/meetings, response to previous queries. Opinions (where no further action to be taken by the recipient is implied).*

Informative texts are frequently responses to queries and may have a clarifying, explanatory or reassuring element. Other common forms are updates and summaries of recent events. There is some overlap between this category and every other category as every letter conveys information. However *Informative* texts *primarily* deliver information, rather than using information to contextualise queries, applications, complaints...etc.

Some *informative* texts include sign offs such as 'let us know if there's anything else you need to know...' While this looks somewhat like a query the implication is that the requested information has been delivered, and the sign off indicates openness to potential future queries rather than directly requesting them. Finally, the information should have extra-textual reference. If it refers purely to the physical contents of the letter (e.g. 'find here enclosed') it is a *Notification*.

7. Notification (formerly 'Meta-text') - includes acknowledgements and delivery confirmations

Notification letters refer to enclosures or the physical letter itself rather than to propositional content e.g. 'find here enclosed...', 'I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter...'

8. Offer – of goods and/or services, terms & conditions, demonstrations. Price quotations/estimates.

Offers are made in the hope that the recipient will take them up, so they are normally phrased in such a way as to imply the services or information will be of benefit to the recipient, but the offer may also benefit the author. *Offer* also includes the quotation of prices and proposed reductions of price.

9. Query – A request/demand for information.

Queries may seek additional details or clarification on a previous exchange. Otherwise they are likely to contain an update/informative section out of which the *query* arises.

10. Thanking

Thanking the recipient (usually for their letter) is a common formal feature of letter writing and so appears throughout the BT Correspondence Corpus.

However the category *thanking* is reserved for instances where the primary function of the letter as a whole is thanking the recipient (e.g. for advice or an enjoyable lunch).

Third Test

Three-rater test

For the third round of the inter-rater testing an additional rater from the English and Languages Department at Coventry University was enlisted to join the two raters from the previous two rounds. Again the letters were selected randomly and raters were asked to classify the primary function of the letter, note if they felt that the letter had more than one overall function. As with the previous rounds, the agreement in round three was calculated using pair-wise percentage agreement

Inter-rater reliability

Average Pairwise Percent Agreement			
Average pairwise percent agr.	Pairwise pct. agr. cols 1 & 3	Pairwise pct. agr. cols 1 & 2	Pairwise pct. agr. cols 2 & 3
59.829%	51.282%	76.923%	51.282%

Figure 11 – ReCal Inter-rater agreement percentages Round 3 (pre-discussion)

It was expected that Raters 1 and 2 might have a greater degree of agreement over the primary function of letters as they had already carried out two classifications of BT data and had discussed the function definitions at length. Their identical percentage pair-wise agreement with Rater 3 also suggested that they might be disagreeing with the third rater in a consistent way as a result of more familiarity with some of the minor details of the function definitions. However it was disappointing and surprising that the pair-wise agreement of Raters 1 and 2 was slightly lower than in round 2, and that agreement with the new rater just barely reached 50%, despite multiple revisions to make the definitions as clear as possible.

Every case where a disagreement over the primary function of the letter had occurred was discussed. There were nine disagreements where the rater(s) had simply overlooked a detail in the letter or an element of the function definitions. In these cases it was possible to come to an agreement about the overall function without having to alter function definitions or add new categories. Those letters are discussed in detail below.

Issues arising

Resolved through consultation of definitions

1862_03_12_LC_EB – Notification

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Notification</i>	<i>Notification</i>	<i>Informative</i>

Table 3-3 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1862_03_12_LC_EB

*“Dear Sir,
In reply to your favor of yesterday
I hasten to forward you
the full particulars connected
with the matter between us and
the International Commissioners
and Copy of the Correspondence
which took place on the subject.
In haste,
Yours faithfully
L. Walter Courtenay”*

As a covering letter for enclosed documents this letter is an archetypal example of a *Notification*. The classification disagreement arose from the fact that *Notification* has a specific meaning in the context of this corpus, i.e. ‘referring to enclosures or the physical letter itself rather than to propositional content’. Once we had consulted the function definitions again we all agreed that this was a *Notification*.

1981_06_29_KB_GJ – Informative (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Informative</i>	<i>Informative</i>	<i>Notification Thanking</i>

Table 3-4 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1981_06_29_KB_GJ

As with 1862_03_12_LC_EB, the misunderstanding in this case resulted from a misunderstanding of the special meaning of *Notification* in this context. The letter is a notification in the sense that the author notifies the recipient of their intention to contact colleagues, but nowhere in the letter does the author make reference to enclosures or the physical letter itself. It was agreed in the post-rating discussion that this letter was an *Informative*.

Resolved through further examination of the letter

1924_12_10_LG_## - Directive (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Commissive planning. Informative</i>	<i>Directive</i>	<i>Directive</i>

Table 3-5 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1924_12_10_LG_##

Rater 1 had classified this letter as a *Commissive* as they felt that

“The members of the Sub-Committee hope to reach Studd Street between 3.30 and 3.45 p.m. on Monday...”

was a commitment to action. However, on re-examination Rater 1 agreed that the primary function of the letter is not to accept an invitation, but rather an acknowledgement by the author of the current location of the telephone kiosks under discussion, and an indication of when the sub-committee will be there. So the sentence highlighted above is an *informative* which contextualises the following *directive*

“no doubt you will be good enough to arrange for a representative to be in attendance.”

This form is a close relation of ‘be so good as to’ which as we have seen in Section 2.4.3. was one of the most frequent request formulas noted in Del Lungo Camiciotti’s (2008) study of nineteenth century business correspondence.

Although in discussion all three raters agreed to this classification, the letter did raise the question, how do we make a distinction between reporting intention and committing to a future action? Though these are two distinct functions they might reasonably be realised using the same form. In the case of 1924_12_10_LG_## , the author seems to be communicating on behalf of a party that has the authority to determine the terms of the visit. The recipient is only referred to as having provided details of the location of the kiosks. For this letter to be clearly *commissive* some reference would have to be made to a previous suggestion by the recipient that the Sub-Committee should visit at a particular time.

1935_07_04_RB2_SST - Thanking

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Thanking (fm. Expressive)</i>	<i>Informative</i>	<i>Thanking</i>

Table 3-6 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1935_07_04_RB2_SST

*"Dear Sir Stephen,
Thank you very much for your letter of 3rd July, the contents of which I will pass on to all concerned. The work of searching for the Golden Voice and the Perfect Subscriber was most interesting and to know it has been so successful is very gratifying. Your letter of thanks will be much appreciated by us all.
Yours sincerely,
Randal Bell"*

The disagreement here stemmed from Rater 2's reluctance to use *thanking* as a primary function, as it is relatively rare in this collection for a letter to convey thanks and no other information. However in the discussion there was unanimous agreement that the only function of this letter was to thank the recipient for their letter and the opportunity of being involved in the "Golden Voice" competition.

1942_08_10_WRS_WAW – Directive (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Directive</i>	<i>Directive</i>	<i>Offer</i>

Table 3-7 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1942_08_10_WRS_WAW

In this case there was an issue of the surface form interfering with classification. The sentence

"We propose to include the alternation in the next N.S.130 amendments..."

was taken to be an *Offer* by Rater 3 as 'proposals' formed part of the definition of *Offers* in the function definitions. 'Propose' can of course act as a performative verb in Austin and Searle's terms. However in this case the author does not propose anything new. The main function is expressed in the following sentence:

"We should therefore be glad to have your formal agreement to the proposal in Hooper's letter"

The remainder of the letter serves as a reminder that the recipient has removed his '*former objections*' to the proposal, and explains the need for the recipient's agreement. So in essence every other element of the letter provides context or justification for the request.

1951_03_05_DJC_### - *Directive* (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Query Meeting arrangement dr?</i>	<i>Directive notes</i>	<i>Directive</i>

Table 3-8 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1951_03_05_DJC_###

The final sentence was the source of confusion in this case. It reads

"I shall be glad if you will let me know exactly what is proposed, and afford the Union an opportunity of discussing the question with you."*

There is a query element and there was some initial disagreement as to whether it was the *query* or the request for a meeting which was the primary function. Having discussed the letter all three raters agreed that the purpose of the letter is to arrange a meeting for the Union representatives, the query is necessary so that these representatives would be fully informed of the Post Office's position going into the meeting. Therefore *directive* is the primary function here.

N.B. Rater 2 also noted that it was difficult to tell the exact purpose of the letter without information about the author, specifically whether he was a Union representative (or was writing on behalf of the Union representatives).

1960_09_13_JCP_TUM – *Informative* (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Commissive</i>	<i>Informative</i>	<i>Informative</i>

Table 3-9 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1960_09_13_JCP_TUM

Rater 1 had thought that the sentence

"In view of Estacode B 1 25 we do not object to this man's establishment..."

and in particular the use of 'we do not object', indicated approval. However the main point of the letter seems to be to cite regulations, and as such this is *informative* rather than a direct approval. It could be argued that this letter fits the 'a show of commitment to an action

proposed by others' element of the *commissive* definition. Without the other side of this exchange, however, it is difficult to know for certain. In these circumstances the decision was made to refer to the surface form and go with the majority classification of this letter as *informative*.

1979_05_09_GR2_RP – *Directive* (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Directive</i>	<i>Directive Notification</i>	<i>Offer</i>

Table 3-10 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1979_05_09_GR2_RP

While, as Rater 3 noted, the letter does include an offer of more information

“The information contained in the enclosure is only a tiny fraction of the whole which I could make available to you Sir...”

this *Offer* is secondary to the provision of information and the *Directive* to bring it to the attention of the Ministry of Industry. It was quickly agreed that the primary function of this letter was *Directive*.

1981_11_30_MM3_JLB – *Notification* (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Notification Informative update?</i>	<i>Notification Directive</i>	<i>Offer</i>

Table 3-11 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1981_11_30_MM3_JLB

The sentence

“...it seems best to us that we should proceed by sending you a definitive statement summarising BT's position...”

was taken by Rater 3 to be an *Offer* for the future provision of a statement. In re-examining the letter it was unanimously agreed that this is a cover letter for that definitive statement, and so a *Notification*.

Resolved with reference to contextual information

Beyond these ten letters there was one further letter which could only be categorised after close consideration of the context.

1879_11_28_RRL_## - *Declination* (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Declination</i>	<i>Declination</i>	<i>Directive</i>

Table 3-12 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1879_11_28_RRL_##

Rater 3 felt that the sentence starting

'My Lords are now asked to undo this process of absorption...'

identified this letter as a *directive*. However referring to the contextual information we could see that it was written on behalf of the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury. The letter regards a request that had been made to continue with promotions that had been blocked by the Treasury. The sentence quoted above is a summary of the recipient's request from the previous letter. The request is turned down here with the sentence,

'This my Lords must decline to do.'

It was agreed that the letter is a *declination* to continue with the promotions.

Post-discussion inter-rater agreement

The post-discussion agreement percentages were very much improved from the initial percentages (see Figure 12)

Average Pairwise Percent Agreement			
Average pairwise percent agr.	Pairwise pct. agr. cols 1 & 3	Pairwise pct. agr. cols 1 & 2	Pairwise pct. agr. cols 2 & 3
76.923%	71.795%	87.179%	71.795%

Figure 12 – ReCal Inter-rater agreement percentages Round 3 (post-discussion)

However ten of the thirty-nine letters used in this round of classification required further attention with regard to clarifying and expanding function definitions.

Issues remaining

Definition clarification

1935_06_19_SH_SST – *Notification* (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Notification (fm. Metatext) look forward is psnl</i>	<i>Commissive</i>	<i>Thanking acknowledgement</i>

Table 3-13 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1935_06_19_SH_SST

The discussion surrounding this letter highlighted a lack of clarity regarding acknowledgements and meeting confirmations (which were counted as *commissives*). Acknowledgements had been part of the *informative* and *metatext* definitions in previous rounds but were not included in the function definitions for this round. As a result of the confusion in this case ‘delivery confirmation’ and ‘acknowledgement’ were included in the *Notification* definition, while the rather vague term ‘confirmation’ was removed from the *commissive* definition.

Ultimately it was decided that this letter is primarily a delivery confirmation and that the line

‘I shall look forward to seeing you just before 11 o'clock on Friday morning’

is a polite sign-off.

1913_06_15_AL_## - *Declination* (**definition changed**, see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Directive, info contextualising directive?</i>	<i>Informative, Notification (secondary)</i>	<i>Declination</i>

Table 3-14 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1913_06_15_AL_##

The indirect reporting in 1913_06_15_AL_## made this letter difficult to classify. The letter conveys the information that the Municipal Council of Paris had declined permission to the Universal Radio Syndicate to use the Eiffel Tower, which is quite a simple message. However the information is conveyed from and through a host of parties. The author is writing as directed by Secretary Sir E. Gray, and encloses a “despatch from His Majesty's Chargé d’Affaires” which reports that the Municipal Council of Paris have declined permission. The recipient, in turn, is directed to pass the news on to the Radio Syndicate.

While ‘refusal of permission’ did fall within the definition of *declination*, as Rater 2 pointed out, it was also stipulated that a *declination* ‘must be in direct response to the offer,

invitation...etc’. This distinction was introduced to separate actual *declinations* from letters like 1862_07_22_CTB_## in which Charles T. Bright advises the recipient not to invest in an inventor who had requested financial assistance, but does not decline an offer himself.

What complicates the case of 1913_06_15_AL_## is that in informing the recipient that permission has been declined, the author essentially hands down the decision and asks that the despatch (which may be the direct declination) be passed on. This letter caused us to reconsider the notion that *declinations* had to be delivered directly by the individual on whose authority the decision is made, because, as can be seen by the complicated network of reporting, the method of delivery of such decisions is not always direct.

Resolved with reference to the wider exchange

1908_09_17_GF3_## - *Declination* (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Declination, clarification Informative?</i>	<i>Declination</i>	<i>Complaint</i>

Table 3-15 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1908_09_17_GF3_##

The letter did not fit the definition for *complaint* as the author is not specifically expressing dissatisfaction about anything. It is a slightly unusual *declination* as the author is informing the recipient of their inability to act rather than their disinclination to act. Nevertheless,

“I regret, therefore that the Company have not the information which in your view might assist the Postmaster-General”

is in direct response to the Postmaster General’s request from the previous letter, restated here, that

“it would assist him if it were explained in more detail how the policy indicated in the Company's letter would work out in certain places therein referred to.”

So although the *declination* takes a more *informative* form than usual, this letter does appear to function more along the lines of *declinations* like 1879_11_28_RRL_## where the author declines to act and refers the recipient to a previous letter.

1881_02_10_RC2_DS – Query (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Query</i>	<i>Query</i>	<i>Application</i>

Table 3-16 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1881_02_10_RC2_DS

This is the first of two instances of the bigram ‘can you’ within the *BTCC*. Both instances have been problematic in terms of pragmatic categorisation. The crucial passage of the letter reads,

‘can you tell me whether Telephone Communication can now be established and maintained between this Office and the [Nuxxxx] [xxad] - if so please say when the necessary instruments could be substituted for those now in use.’

There is certainly a case to be made for Rater 3’s classification of this letter as an *application* to have the telephone instruments substituted. The letter does bear some similarities to the applications from the press to make the first trans-Atlantic telephone call (e.g. 1926_11_06_TRY_EHD).

In view of this all of the letters which had been classified as *applications* and *queries* in previous rounds were re-examined. It was found that formal *applications*, at least within the *BTCC*, are typically made after an initial approach/discussion has occurred. Sometimes this approach takes the form of a *query*, an archetypal example of which is 1926_03_11_HS_##. This letter is reproduced in full below.

*“Dear Sir,
We notice by the public press that the Wireless Telephone is at a practical stage.
Could you inform us when commercial service will be instituted and if it will be possible to obtain unlimited use by paying a certain fixed sum monthly or annually.
Also let us know if you are accepting applications for this class of service.
Thanking you in advance,
Yours very truly,
Herbert [Snyes]”*

While there is an implied interest in applying for the Wireless Telephone service in this letter, the author is making preliminary queries rather than a formal application. Initial discussions such as this are often referred to subsequently, in formal applications. For example 1926_12_30_ELK_HGT begins

“Confirming our telephone conversation, we should like herewith formally to apply for a three minute commercial wireless telephone call...”

Another example of this appears in 1957_06_24_HDR_##,

"I have been advised by Personnel Department G.P.O London (their letter 76775/54(24) of 8.5.57) that there are vacancies for Garage Assistants in the Manchester Region. I therefore beg to submit this, my application for a post in your department."

Taking this into account, 1881_02_10_RC2_DS reads primarily as a query into the status of telephone communication between the locations mentioned. Establishing telephone communication is still quite a remote action as the author is unsure if and when this might be possible.

In that sense 1926_11_06_TRY_EHD is actually an unusual application as it is for a service which does not officially exist yet:

*"I wish to make formal application for the first commercial wireless telephone call to New York **if and when** you open a commercial transatlantic telephone service."*
[Emphasis added]

It may well be that Thomas Russell Ybarra had information that this service would be available in the near future. As London Correspondent to the New York Times he would have had a particular interest in securing the first transatlantic telephone call.

Part of the distinction between *applications* and *queries* relates to the fixedness of the terms. The terms under which an application is made are typically understood in advance. Queries which look like applications merely seek to understand the terms according to which an application could be made. The definitions for the final round of classification were altered to highlight these ambiguous cases and make the distinction clearer.

Offers, Terms and Conditions (the 'conditional Commissive')

Offer is another category to consider in relation to fixedness of terms. During this round of inter-rater testing some of these 'conditional commissives' were identified as *offers*. Rater 3 also recorded 'negotiation' as a suggested secondary function for 1978_04_27_KMY_PDW. Following discussion and further consideration of these cases it was decided to categorise 'conditional commissives' as *offers*. This alteration was made because the crucial element of these conditional commissives is that terms must be met in order for action to be taken. The terms might then be accepted (*commissive*), declined, or countered, which would be a further *offer*.

The definitions of *commissives* and *offers* were altered in the final round of categorisation to reflect these discussions.

Separating Offers from Applications

As discussed above it was decided that conditional commissives would be reclassified as *Offers*, but there was also the question of how to separate *Offers* from *Applications*.

1927_01_05_DAW_## - *Offer* (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Offer directive 2ndry part of it</i>	<i>Offer</i>	<i>Offer? Application?</i>

Table 3-17 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1927_01_05_DAW_##

This letter requests a meeting to ‘place before’ the recipient a solution to the problem of secrecy on the wireless telephone service. The letter is very much in keeping with the category *Offer* as described in the Round 3 definitions, ‘phrased in such a way as to imply the services or information will be of benefit to the recipient’. The author has an invention which he believes will benefit the recipient. However the author also requests an interview, which is more in keeping with the power dynamic normally present in job applications.

If we relate this back to the discussion of *queries* and fixed terms, we can make the distinction that *applications* are typically made according to existing terms (set by the recipient, or recipient’s institution) whereas *offers* are part of an ongoing negotiation and may propose courses of action or expand on existing terms. In this letter the author is proposing a course of action, and while the power imbalance between author and recipient may make it seem more like an application, the author is offering to help on his own terms (even if there is an implication that if this transaction were to continue, it would do so on the Post Office’s terms).

1903_03_02_GM_AC – *Offer*

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Offer</i>	<i>Commissive</i>	<i>Application.</i>

Table 3-18 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1903_03_02_GM_AC

1903_03_02_GM_AC is a statement of the terms under which the author’s company would make additions to a telegraph station. Even though the letter implies a certain amount of momentum behind the plan, the author (Guglielmo Marconi) requires the Postmaster

General's agreement in this matter. The Postmaster's agreement had not been secured at this point so, as Rater 2 pointed out, this letter has an element of applying for permission. However returning to the *application/offer* distinction discussed above, the author of this letter is outlining the terms that they would

"...regard as a satisfactory basis for an agreement to be entered into..."

Therefore it is an *offer* of terms.

1957_03_07_GHI_GR(2) - *Offer* (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Offer proposal or suggestion?</i>	<i>Application</i>	<i>Offer Proposal</i>

Table 3-19 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1957_03_07_GHI_GR(2)

This letter raises similar issues to 1903_03_02_GM_AC. In it Godfrey Ince, the Chairman of Cable & Wireless, writes to the Director General of the Post Office requesting the help of an engineer by the name of Halsey in laying the Cantat transatlantic cable.

The letter does fit Rater 2's categorisation of the letter as an *application* to some extent, as it is essentially a request (for permission) to borrow an engineer. However the author describes the letter as a "personal and confidential note". Such a note would not be an appropriate method of making a formal application. Furthermore, we have seen in this round of classification that applicants do not dictate the terms of their application.

In this case, not only does the author outline the proposed terms of this agreement, but there is also an air of inevitability that the Post Office will have to accept in this offer or something similar. The author states,

"[Halsey] will I have no doubt, be the main engineer on the "Cantat" cable whether he is with you or with us."

It would appear that there must be something to this or else it would be very presumptuous to assume the Post Office's "full co-operation" and to say that Cable & Wireless expect to "bear heavily" on the Post Office for help. The cumulative effect of the above factors identifies this letter as an *offer*, potentially to be countered, rather than a request/application for permission. As with the previous letter, the sign-off focuses on the idea of moving towards an agreement.

"I hope the conception of using the Company as the instrument for owning and laying the "Cantat" cable is acceptable to you and that the idea of lending us some of your experts for a limited period also appeals to you."

"I trust that your reply to this letter may provide a satisfactory basis of accord between us" (1903_03_02_GM_AC)

The three letters in this section raise interesting questions regarding the way in which offers are made. All three require the recipient's co-operation, but the status of the author and the stage of advancement of the plans to which the offers relate significantly affect the way in which they are expressed.

Offers from a position of power

1870_05_16_FIS_DHC (*Offer*) reads as somewhere between a *Declination* and a counter-proposal/*Offer*. The author states that the Engineer in Chief of the Post Office does not think that George Little's system of telegraphy offers any improvement on the current Wheatstone method, writing

"Though the System as a whole offers no advantage to this Department, the perforating apparatus appears to be good and the Engineer in Chief would be glad to see if the patentees are willing to supply one at a moderate price."

Looking further into the events surrounding this letter, the caginess on the part of the author may be a result of two factors. Firstly technical innovations in general (e.g. telephones) are met with guarded enthusiasm, at most, in the *BTCC* letters. The adoption of new technology requires time, effort, and financial investment. Such a change is not undertaken without clear evidence that *not* to do so would prove more costly in the long run. As is suggested by the author of this letter, it makes sense from the Post Office's perspective to see whether,

"the principle might be adapted if on trial it turns out to be better than that of the perforator now in use..."

The other possible factor influencing the way in which this letter is written is that the Post Office had historical precedent in dealing with George Little. The Electric Telegraph Company (which was the forerunner of the Post Office) had acquired the patent of George Little's 'Electro-Telegraphic Converser' nineteen years previously in order to limit his work in the area.

Furthermore the next letter in this exchange (1870_05_31_DHC_FIS) reveals that the Little method cannot perforate

“anything like that number of words [per minute]”.

Thus it appears that the Post Office was in possession of superior technology and, in terms of negotiation, a superior bargaining position.

The author of this letter dismisses to some extent the technology being offered, but there is a counter offer that the Post Office might incorporate some aspect of it. As one party has more power (or as the degree to which the deal is mutual beneficial becomes unclear) *offers* start to look more like *directives*.

1936_04_21_AEW_## - *Directive* (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Directive</i>	<i>Directive</i>	<i>Offer</i>

Table 3-20 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1936_04_21_AEW_##

In 1936_04_21_AEW_## a representative of the War Office writes advising that the Army Council

‘...state that they consider that the most suitable procedure for considering this question would be by means of an interdepartmental conference.’

The author goes on to say

‘If the Postmaster-General would nominate his representative a date could then be arranged for meeting and an agenda forwarded to him.’

Again in the post-classification discussion the word ‘negotiation’ was used. In some ways this letter resembles both the offers to demonstrate inventions and the conditional commissives whereby terms for potential agreement are laid out.

However two raters had categorised this as a *directive* and in re-examining the letter I had felt that *directive* had been the correct classification. This is not so much an offer of a meeting as a report that a decision has been made that a meeting would be *“the most suitable procedure”*. This is followed up by a second directive for the Postmaster General to nominate a representative. Furthermore, the author has been *‘commanded to state’* this position by the Army Council, giving this ‘consideration’ considerable authoritative weight.

Multi-functionality

The issue of multi-functionality persisted in this round of classification. Three kinds of multi-functionality were encountered.

Independent functions relating to separate matters

1917 05 19 WM ## (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

This letter serves two separate functions, firstly to update the recipient regarding the deployment of a telegraph operator, and secondly to request that forms be forwarded for countersignature. Again the raters were split two-to-one in favour of *informative* as the primary function (the other rater choosing *directive*). As these appear to be two separate matters of business given roughly the same amount of space, with neither dependent on the other, is it difficult to claim one or the other as the primary function of the letter.

This distinction of letters which refer to multiple subjects could be useful in forming a 'multi-function' definition.

1908 11 10 EB3 ## (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Informative query?</i>	<i>Informative Query Notification</i>	<i>Directive</i>

Table 3-21 - Round 3 Rater Classification of 1908_11_10_EB3_##

This is another example of a letter which performs two independent functions relating to two separate topics. The first part of this letter is *informative*. The directive

'[Mr Gladstone] will be glad to know whether Mr. Buxton has any observations to offer thereon.'

is a characteristic component of an *informative* rather than a separate primary function. However the final paragraph deals with a separate matter,

'I am also to enclose a draft of a Regulation... and to ask whether a Regulation in this form will meet Mr. Buxton's views.'

Again there is no sense in which one matter contextualises the other. The letter refers to two separate matters and performs a function for each. This letter is classified as *Informative* and *Notification*.

Multiple functions relating to the same matter

1881_02_10_DS_#B (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

This letter contains an update about the state of the accounts and a number of queries about how the company are willing to proceed. Under normal circumstances this would count as a *Query*, with a contextualising informative section, and two of the raters had classified the letter as such. However the sentence

'Can you provide a switch for Telephones + continue the present A.B.C. intercom [please?]'

complicates this, as the word 'please' (itself rather unusual in a sentence-final position within this corpus) seems to be a direct request for action, in which case this letter has a directive element. Without this it would make sense to classify this letter as a *query*, as with the only other instance of 'can you' in the corpus which appears in 1881_02_10_RC2_DS.

Unlike the two letters discussed above, this letter relates to one issue but the author is attempting to cover a lot of ground, providing an update, requesting an update from the recipient's position and issuing specific instructions. Letters like this could either be classified as multifunctional or a case could be made that they have one overriding function. For this particular letter I would follow the second option and pick *query* as the primary function, with the directive seemingly occurring due to the urgency of the matter at hand.

Author-identified function vs. rater perceived function

1962_07_20_JRB_SRH (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

The corpus contains instances in which the author identifies the function of the letter, often in the form of a performative statement. However the author-identified description may only partially describe the overall function of the letter. For example in 1962_07_20_JRB_SRH the author starts the letter with a lengthy informative section then writes that,

'I am sending this personal note to you, however, to express my appreciation for your own letter.'

Given the amount of material that precedes this sentence it is problematic to describe this letter as a purely *thanking* letter; it is clearly intended to inform the recipient regarding a report on discussions between the British and American Governments. The two functions that

the letter performs are not dependent on each other even if in this case they relate to the same topic.

Revisions

'Directives' renamed as Requests

During this and previous rounds classification raters had been using the term 'Request' to refer to *Directives*. Given that 'Request' seemed to be the clearer preferred term of those involved in the discussions of function, and indeed the term used by a number of the researchers who have examined historical and modern analyses of the function, the category *Directive* was renamed *Request* for the final round of classification and the final classification of the corpus, though no alterations were made to the detail of the function definition.

Inclusion of multi-function for some cases

Where letters perform multiple similarly weighted independent functions relating to different matters the option was included to categorise letters as multi-functional in instructions for the final round of classification. Similarly in the relatively few cases where the author's stated function differs from the apparent function of the letter, raters were advised to note both the author's stated function and the function that they perceived the letter to have. In such cases the two (or more) primary functions were noted as 'component' functions. This is not to be confused with 'secondary' functions which are functions that appear in letters with a single overarching function, but that do not perform the main function of the letter, such as a 'thanking' utterance within a *commissive* letter.

Though this option to classify letters as multi-functional was included in the final round, the option was included with the proviso that it should only be used as a last resort when it was not possible to assign a single function to the letter. Examination of the letters suggested that this should be possible in the majority of cases.

Negotiating Functions

Some of the problematic examples from the third round of classification suggest that a number of the functions exist on something of a cline of negotiation. *Applications* are made in accordance with pre-existing terms not fixed by the applicant. With *offers* the terms are more open to negotiation and they can be accepted, declined or countered, whereas in *requests* the terms are fixed by the author, though they might also be accepted, declined or countered. The

likelihood that the author is able to control the terms seems to increase as their individual or institutional power increases, which gives rise to ambiguous cases where *offers* made from a position of relatively less power look like *applications*, and *offers* made where the recipient has little choice but to accept seem more like *requests*.

The degree to which an *offer* is mutually beneficial also seems to have an effect on the acceptable level of directness with which the *offer* is made. Both Guglielmo Marconi and Godfrey Ince in the letters discussed above are able to impose more explicitly upon the recipient as the mutual benefit is very apparent (the repair to the Poldhu telegraph station and the establishment of the Cantat cable respectively). To help raters in the final round to categorise these more ambiguous cases, the following cline was provided along with the function list (see Figure 13)

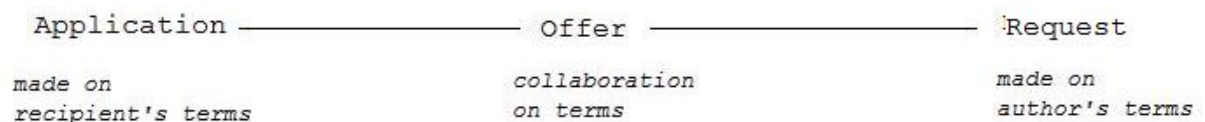


Figure 13 - Negotiation cline for letters in the BTCC

This cline also helps in clarifying *meeting arrangements*, some of which seem closer to offers, whereas others appear to be non-negotiable instructions to meet.

Positioning functions in time

Another factor that proved useful in discussions of the function of letters in ambiguous cases was the positioning of the primary function of the letter in time, i.e. considering whether the letter refers to future or past events. In general we found that the functions could be grouped in the following way (See Table 3-22). This table was also included in the final round of classification for the guidance of the raters.

Forward Looking	Forward or Backward Looking	Backward Looking
Application	Complaint	Informative
Commissive	Query	Thanking
Declination	Notification	
Offer		
Request		

Table 3-22 – Positioning functions in time

Fourth test

Final three-rater test

It had been disappointing to achieve pre-discussion individual rater agreement of only around 50% in Round 3, and collective agreement of just under 60%. The post-discussion figures were more encouraging but it was important that the function definitions should stand alone as ultimately I would be carrying out the classification on my own without the benefit of group discussion. Furthermore corpus users should be able to understand and work with the definition as they appear in the corpus documentation. Therefore it was preferable that this initial pre-discussion figure should be improved.

The fourth and final round of inter-rater testing followed the same pattern as round three, with thirty-nine letters selected randomly from across the decades. Raters 1 and 2 from previous rounds remained the same. Rater 3 in the final round was another trained linguist from the English and Languages Department at Coventry University who had not been involved in previous rounds. It was hoped that the involvement of a new rater would better test improvements in the definitions, as familiarity with the ratings had also seemed to be a factor in the previous round.

Inter-rater reliability

Average Pairwise Percent Agreement			
Average pairwise percent agr.	Pairwise pct. agr. cols 1 & 3	Pairwise pct. agr. cols 1 & 2	Pairwise pct. agr. cols 2 & 3
70.085%	64.103%	82.051%	64.103%

Figure 14 ReCal Inter-rater agreement percentages Round 4 (pre-discussion)

As with the previous round, the results were analysed using the *ReCal 0.1 Alpha for 3+ coders* tool and found the pre-discussion agreement to be as illustrated in Figure 14

It was anticipated that adding 'multi-functional' as a category would introduce problems as well as solving them as many of the letters perform multiple functions to some degree. However it was encouraging to see that the pre-discussion agreement had improved in all pairwise comparisons. Whereas in the third round of inter-rater testing there had been four letters where there was total disagreement as to the primary function of the letter, in this final

round there were no across-the-board disagreements. At least two raters agreed on the primary function of every letter.

Despite the improvements some issues still remained.

Issue arising

Resolved through further examination of Definitions

1862_03_18_WD_JP – Notification

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Notification</i>	<i>Notification</i>	<i>Request</i>

Table 3-23 - Round 4 Rater Classification of 1862_03_18_WD_JP

“Dear Sir,
 Mr Laughton desires me to
 enclose you the particulars of
 some correspondence and negotiations
 between the Submarine
 Coy. and the Exhibition Commissioners,
 for your perusal,
 and to ask you to be good
 enough to return them.
 I am Dear Sir
 Yours faithfully
 For Secretary
 W. Dowling”

As with a couple of cases in the third round of classification, the disagreement here seems to arise from the specific meaning in this context of *Notification* as referring primarily to the sending and receiving of documents. There is a request element in that the author asks the recipient to return the enclosures but the primary function of this letter is to enclose documents.

1881_03_18_RRL_## - Commissive (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Commissive</i>	<i>Commissive</i>	<i>Informative</i>

Table 3-24 - Round 4 Rater Classification of 1881_03_18_RRL_##

This letter is an expenditure approval. For the purposes of the *BTCC* classification expenditure approvals have been categorised as a form of *commissive* as they express the author’s

approval of/commitment to a proposed course of financial action. In the first half of the letter the author merely restates the recipient's request from a previous letter. The primary function is performed in the phrase,

"I am directed to convey to you the authority of this Board for incurring an expenditure of one hundred and ninety pounds in carrying out the work in question".

The letter was classified as a *commissive*.

1982 07 16 DAE REB – Offer (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Offer</i>	<i>Offer</i>	<i>Informative (progress report + request)</i>

Table 3-25 - Round 4 Rater Classification of 1982_07_16_DAE_REB

This letter outlines in numbered points the terms on which an agreement can be reached. While this is informative to some degree, following the revisions made after the previous round, this letter falls into the category of *Commissive* as it is an offer of terms.

Resolved through further examination of the Letter

1897 04 09 JCG WHP - Offer (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Informative</i>	<i>Informative</i>	<i>Offer</i>

Table 3-26 - Round 4 Rater Classification of 1897_04_09_JCG_WHP

This letter relates details of a financial offer made to Marconi, reported to William Preece by J.C. Graham, Marconi's Solicitor. It is thus an *informative* report of an offer rather than the offer itself.

1906 07 10 JHH ## - Query (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Multiple: Informative/Query</i>	<i>Query</i>	<i>Query</i>

Table 3-27 - Round 4 Rater Classification of 1906_07_10_JHH_##

This author of this letter queries figures that have been sent to him and asks for a fuller statement. The informative sections contextualise the queries and so the letter is primarily a *query*.

1979_05_30_RM2_WRW – Request (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Request</i>	<i>Request</i>	<i>Informative (clarification)</i>

Table 3-28 - Round 4 Rater Classification of 1979_05_30_RM2_WRW

1979_05_30_RM2_WRW is a *request* for wording to be amended. One factor that complicated the classification of this letter is the inclusion of ‘clarification’ under the definition of *Informative*. While this letter does seek to clarify a position, the clarification is a contextualising or justifying element for the *request*,

“I would be grateful if you could amend them to read "self-certification by the manufacturer that it is not harmful."

‘Primary’ function disagreement

As in previous rounds there were some disagreements as to the primary function of letters.

1953_06_08_RSB_TAD – Notification (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Notification</i>	<i>Notification</i>	<i>Informative (with a bit of a notification)</i>

Table 3-29 - Round 4 Rater Classification of 1953_06_08_RSB_TAD

1953_06_08_RSB_TAD does start with an *informative* section. However the author assumes that the recipient is 'no doubt aware of' of the information provided. The primary purpose of the letter is to enclose a document,

“2. In amplification of these I enclose for your information the Annex to an Admiralty letter sent to the Commonwealth naval authorities regarding the provisional naval communication arrangements for Gothic.”

1970_01_22_CHM_## - Informative (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Informative</i>	<i>Informative</i>	<i>Request (and Informative)</i>

Table 3-30 - Round 4 Rater Classification of 1970_01_22_CHM_##

In this letter, the author clarifies the situation with the recipient's telephone licence, encloses a licence and advises when the fee is payable. All three raters felt that the purpose of the letter was to inform the recipient about the state of their licence, the only debate stemmed from whether it was primarily *informative* re: the licence, or a *request* for payment/receipt of the licence while informing the recipient of the new licence conditions.

Query forms expressing Request meanings

1869_09_17_FIS_EB – Request (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Request</i>	<i>Request</i>	<i>Query (preceded by info)</i>

Table 3-31 - Round 4 Rater Classification of 1869_09_17_FIS_EB

1869_09_17_FIS_EB is problematic in that there is a case to be made for it being a *query* with an *informative* section, as Rater 3 says. In the letter in question the author asks the recipient for a list of female staff members who could be employed in the new Post Office/Telegraph branch offices. The request is made twice within the letter, firstly it is formulated more like a query, particularly in the sentence,

"I should be glad if you would let me know whether you could recommend any of the Females in the service of your Company for these duties."

'Let me know' is a prototypical query form. However he then goes on to restate this directive as a *request* for action,

"In the first instance I would ask you to recommend 5 Persons."

This is a direct instruction rather than a query as to whether the recipient *could* recommend five female workers. So while the letter contains both *Query* and *Request* forms the letter overall has been classified as a *Request*.

1951_06_22_HHB_## - Request

Similarly the letter 1951_06_22_HHB_## was classified by two raters as a *Request* and by one rater as a *Query*. In this instance, much of the discussion as to whether the letter was a *request* for action or a *query* came down to the word "available" in the phrase,

"We have noted that coloured people are now employed by the Post Office, as mail-van drivers, and we wonder whether you have

available a photograph, and possibly a background story of one of these drivers.”

It was felt that, though the way in which it is formulated somewhat indirect, the inclusion of ‘available’ shifted the focus of the request from whether such material existed to whether the recipient would provide the author with this material. As a result the letter was deemed to be a *Request*.

Other form-function disjunctures

1872 10 11 DHC FIS – Offer (in a *commissive* pattern) (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Offer</i>	<i>Commissive</i>	<i>Offer</i>

Table 3-32 - Round 4 Rater Classification of 1872_10_11_DHC_FIS

This letter is in a sense a commitment to action. It is also difficult to categorise, as the definition for *commissive* stipulates that ‘the action or terms that the author accepts should be agreed upon’. In this case there is some indication that the recipient has previously requested a demonstration of telegraphy apparatus, so it could be argued that this letter commits to that previously requested action. However there is also an indication that the recipient had expressed an interest in this system of wireless telegraphy “A long time since”. In this context the letter seems to be a renewal of an offer to demonstrate the equipment,

“I shall take the liberty to give to a friend, who will accompany the machines, a note to you, and when he gets the machines set up, I hope you may find it convenient to examine them and witness their performances”

While there might have been a previous approach by the author, the action and terms have not been agreed upon in any firm sense. It was felt that this letter bore more resemblance to an *offer*.

1878 11 28 WHM ## - *Commissive* (in an *informative* pattern) (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Commissive (Informative?)</i>	<i>Commissive (forward looking!)</i>	<i>Informative</i>

Table 3-33 - Round 4 Rater Classification of 1878_11_28_WHM_##

Again the classification problem stems from the difficulty in distinguishing between an informative report of support/approval and a *commissive* approval through which authority to

perform the action is conveyed. The letter in question is from the Secretary of the Telephone Company Limited to the Secretary of the Post Office, responding to a previous request

“to know whether this Company are disposed to agree to the Post Office supplying single telephones at a charge of one half of the rental paid where two telephones are used”

The Secretary from the Telephone Company writes,

“I am instructed to inform you that this Company are agreeable to you letting single telephones at the above rate”

To “be agreeable” implies consent being communicated, however the surface form used by the author is “inform”, which is more typical of an informative response to a *query*. To complicate matters further the letter is forward-looking in terms of its positioning in time. Ultimately this was judged to be a *commissive* approval though it is difficult to know for sure without the other side of this exchange.

1880_03_01_JCM_CHP – Complaint (with query similarities) (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Complaint</i>	<i>Complaint</i>	<i>Query</i>

Table 3-34 - Round 4 Rater Classification of 1880_03_01_JCM_CHP

In 1880_03_01_JCM_CHP the author complains about the opposition of the Post Office to the establishment of a private telephone wire. The key passage reads,

“I am quite at a loss to understand on what reasonable ground this opposition is based + at least to give you the opportunity of withdrawing from a position which has perhaps been taken up without due consideration.”

The author gives the recipient ‘the opportunity of withdrawing’ from their position, rather than an opportunity to explain their position, which might have been classified as a query. This is a statement of dissatisfaction and request to change course which is the archetypal *complaint* pattern.

1982_03_25_GJ_PJ – Informative (with complaint similarities) (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Informative</i>	<i>Informative</i>	<i>Complaint (in an informative pattern)</i>

Table 3-35 - Round 4 Rater Classification of 1982_03_25_GJ_PJ

In this letter the author seeks to clarify their position. They also express dissatisfaction with the way the position has been characterised so it is a complaint of sorts, but the letter itself seeks to clarify rather than requesting the recipient to take action.

Multiple functions or contextualising elements?

1969_04_02_JFT_JDC – Multiple: Informative/Request (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Multiple: Informative/Request</i>	<i>Informative/Request</i>	<i>Request</i>

Table 3-36 - Round 4 Rater Classification of 1969_04_02_JFT_JDC

This is a difficult case in that the *informative* section does relate to the *request*. However the advice/suggestion is offered because of the recipient's situation, rather than the author's situation (which is detailed in the *informative* part of the letter). The letter was judged to be multi-functional.

1909_10_14_WJH2_## - Request (see Appendix 1 for full letter)

Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3
<i>Multiple: Notification/Request</i>	<i>Request</i>	<i>Request</i>

Table 3-37 - Round 4 Rater Classification of 1909_10_14_WJH2_##

Though this letter does refer to the enclosing of documents, the documents themselves merely support the *request* for a call bell to be provided.

Final Categorisation

Given the improved level of agreement in the fourth round of inter-rater testing, these function definitions were used for the final classification of the letters. This kind of categorisation will never be perfect, but the process of devising and refining function definitions clarified my ideas as to the typical form and function of each type of letter. The

classification, then, should have a degree of internal consistency even if some of the issues regarding multiple functions and form/function mismatch persist.

Following on from the fourth and final round of inter-rater testing each of the 612 letters in the corpus was classified according to pragmatic function. It had been made clear to raters in the final round that *multi-functional* should be used only as a last resort, so every effort was made to ensure that *multi-functional* letters truly addressed separate concerns or performed multiple functions in relation to a single topic. Though the amount of material in each function category is different, the classification will allow for some examination of the typical features of individual functions, the development of functions across time, and enable comparison of features across functions.

The final definitions for the mark-up of the corpus were as follows:

Function List – Inter-rater Round 4 (Version 3)

1. Application

Applications are letters in which authors apply for jobs, telephone licenses, permission, pay increases or approval for expenditures.

Applications are typically made on terms that have been determined by the recipient. In cases such as job applications the letter may read as an offer of services, but the offer is made with reference to requirements or conditions previously set out by the recipient. Also included in the *application* category are application renewals and cases where an approach has already been made but the author wishes to make a formal application by letter.

N.B. where an author writes to understand the terms under which an application could be made or to enquire about the current status of a service that they may wish to apply for in the future, the letter counts as a *query*.

2. Commissive

Commissives are letters which commit to future action: promises, confirmations, acceptances (of invitations, offers, terms and conditions), and grantings of permission or approval (of a plan or expenditure).

Commissives can be commitments to action by the author, or a show of commitment to an action proposed by others. This includes commitments to future action that are made through third parties, or any letter where the recipient would be likely to recognise that there has been a commitment to future action by the author, or reported by the author on someone else's behalf..

N.B. the action or terms that the author accepts should be agreed upon. If there is still an element of negotiation, e.g. an author accepts a course of action but proposes conditions, the letter would count as an *offer* (of terms).

As with *Applications*, *Commissive* letters sometimes formally restate a commitment which has already been communicated in person or over the phone.

3. Complaint

Complaints are letters that communicate an author's dissatisfaction with something.

While there are not a large number of *complaints* in the BT Correspondence Corpus, the category has been included as it was felt that it would be an interesting category for comparative study across time in different correspondence collections. It may even be possible to locate additional complaint letters for the BT Correspondence Corpus at a later date.

N.B. some complaints may make use of queries, e.g. 'do you think that's fair?', but the implication in such cases is that it is not fair. There is also often a *request* element to *complaints* because the author may wish the recipient to take action if the recipient is in a position to do so.

4. Declination

Declinations are letters which decline future action, e.g. by turning down invitations, offers or suggestions, refusing permission, or withdrawing applications.

Declinations may be made directly by the party to whom the offer, invitation etc was addressed, or may report on a decision made by others to decline a course of action where the recipient would be likely to recognise that a proposed future action had been rejected.

N.B. the action or terms should be declined outright. If there is still an element of negotiation, e.g. in cases where an author declines a course of action or terms but proposes an alternative, the letter counts as an *offer*.

5. Request

Requests as defined here are requests for action made on the author's terms, e.g. instructions, advice, suggestions for action (or lack of), requests for meetings or reminders. The terms might be accepted, declined or countered.

Requests are often phrased in such a way as to imply that the services or information will be of benefit to the author, but the *request* may also benefit the recipient.

N.B. Request elements also appear in letters where *Request* is not the primary function (see *informative, application and complaint*).

6. Informative

Informative letters include updates, progress reports, clarifications, explanations, summaries of events/meetings and responses to previous queries.

Informatives are frequently responses to queries and may have a clarifying, explanatory or reassuring element. Other common forms are updates and summaries of recent events.

There is some overlap between this category and every other category, as every letter conveys information. However *Informative* texts *primarily* deliver information, rather than using information to contextualise queries, applications, complaints etc.

N.B. some *informative* texts include sign offs such as 'let us know if there's anything else you need to know...'. While such examples have a secondary *request* function, the letter is classified as primarily *informative*, as the implication is that the requested information has been delivered, and the sign off indicates openness to potential future queries rather than directly requesting them.

It should be noted that the information in *informative* letters has extra-textual reference. If it refers solely to the physical contents of the letter (e.g. 'find here enclosed') it is a *Notification*.

7. Notification

Notification refers solely to enclosing letters, receipts, and acknowledgements of the sending or receiving of letters and documents.

- e.g. 'find here enclosed...', 'I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter...'

8. Offer

Offers are letters in which the author offers goods, services, demonstrations or expertise to the recipient, or proposes terms or a course of future action that is open to negotiation.

Offers are made in the hope that the recipient will take them up, and so are often phrased in such a way as to imply that the services or information will be of benefit to the recipient,.

These offers may also benefit the author, however.

This category includes invitations, price quotations and proposed reductions of price.

N.B. sometimes an *offer* will contain a *commissive* element whereby the author agrees to a course of action if certain conditions are met. This counts as an *offer* of terms.

9. Query

A *query* is a request/demand for information. *Queries* may seek additional details or clarification of a previous exchange. Otherwise they are likely to contain an *informative* section out of which the *query* arises (e.g. 1864_10_26_HSW_EB).

10. Thanking

Thanking the recipient (usually for their letter) is a common formal feature of letter writing and so appears throughout the BT Correspondence Corpus. However the category *thanking* is reserved for instances where the primary function of the letter as a whole is that of thanking the recipient (e.g. for advice or an enjoyable lunch).

11. Multiple

Most letters are multi-functional to some degree. For instance job *applications* are almost certain to contain information about the applicant's job history; however this *informative* section serves to support the primary function of the letter which is to apply for a position. Similarly *queries* frequently contain an *informative* section which contextualises the query.

Despite these degrees of multi-functionality, most of the letters in the British Telecom Correspondence Corpus can be classified as having one overarching function. However where authors address multiple independent concerns which carry equal claim to being the primary function of the letter, the different component functions should be noted and the letter should be classified as having ‘multiple’ functions

3.7. Corpus Description

3.7.1. Overview of texts

The *British Telecom Correspondence* contains 612 letters written by 385 authors and at least 255 (perhaps as many as 266) recipients. The corpus contains 133,030 words. The letters are balanced across decades in the following way (See Figure 15).

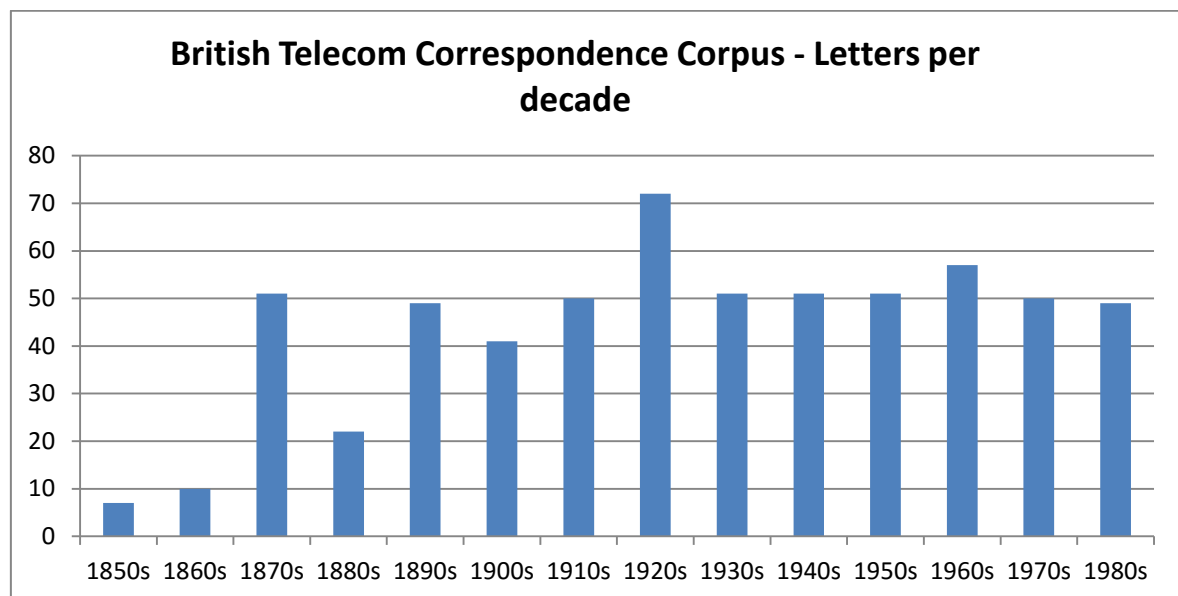


Figure 15 – British Telecom Correspondence Corpus – Letters per decade

Three of the decades in the nineteenth century part of the BT corpus are still significantly under-represented. However the balance across decades is certainly much improved from the original selection of data provided by BT. The lack of data from the earliest years means that quantitative findings will be limited. However the data from these decades has been retained for the quantitative analyses in the current study as, so long as these limitations are made clear, it was felt that some limited analyses would be preferable to none.

In some decades the aim to create a varied corpus has overridden the aim to create a balanced corpus. For instance the range of years, authors, topics and chains of correspondence

from the 1920s led to it being rather better represented than other decades in terms of letter numbers. However the amount of data is not just dependent on the quantity of letters. The length of individual texts is another contributing factor, as can be seen in Table 3-38.

Decade	Letters per decade	Words Per Decade	Shortest letter (tokens)	Average # Tokens Per Letter	Longest letter (tokens)
1850s	8	1673	53	209.1	598
1860s	10	1587	45	158.7	365
1870s	51	10684	40	209.5	1056
1880s	22	2887	24	131.2	526
1890s	49	10363	40	211.5	977
1900s	41	12476	29	304.3	1960
1910s	50	9860	45	197.2	590
1920s	72	13885	26	192.9	1610
1930s	51	8129	38	159.4	427
1940s	51	11418	58	223.9	916
1950s	51	10032	44	196.7	895
1960s	57	9425	30	165.4	686
1970s	50	15643	50	312.9	1659
1980s	49	14866	34	303.4	823

Table 3-38 – BTCC text length overview

Table 3-38 reveals that the letters display a great deal of variation in length. In some cases this compounds the problem of cross-decade representativeness, for instance in the 1880s, in addition to there being relatively few texts, many of the texts that are available are very short. On the other hand, the 1900s contains nearly as many words as the 1920s, and the 1970s and 1980s contain more words than the 1920s despite containing fewer individual texts. The 1900s, 1970s and 1980s were times of great institutional upheaval and negotiation (namely the negotiation of the takeover of the National Telephone Company in the 1900s, and the negotiation of network competition and privatisation in the 1970s-80s), and the relatively

longer letters may be reflective of this. Some of the longer texts in the *BTCC* are more personal in nature but more often they appear as part of negotiations, detailing positions or terms and conditions.

The average letter lengths displayed here are much lower than those of the nineteenth century personal letters from CONCE examined by Christer Geisler (2003:89). The CONCE letters had an average length of around 1700 words which is the upper end of the word count for letters in the *BTCC*.

3.7.2. Letter Functions

The number of letters that perform each function per decade is indicated in Table 3-39. In the majority of cases letters have been classified as having a single overarching letter function. Some letters, however, were classified as having multiple ('component') functions. The totals in brackets in Table 3-39 indicate the number of letters that perform each function per decade including these component functions, while the unbracketed figures refer only to single function letters.

	APP	COM	CPT	DEC	INF	NOT	OFF	QUE	REQ	THA
1850s	0	0	0	0	2	1	4	0	1	0
1860s	0	0	1	0	0 (1)	5	0	2 (3)	1	0
1870s	3	5 (6)	1	2 (5)	14 (20)	0 (2)	2 (6)	3 (6)	9 (14)	0
1880s	0	4 (5)	1	8	1 (3)	0 (1)	0	3 (5)	2	0
1890s	0 (1)	2 (5)	2	1 (2)	15 (19)	5 (6)	2	5 (6)	8 (11)	1 (4)
1900s	1	9 (11)	3	3	6 (12)	2 (5)	3	2 (4)	4 (8)	0
1910s	0	2	0	8 (10)	11 (16)	6	3 (5)	3	11 (14)	0
1920s	9 (1)	5 (6)	2	3	14 (16)	5 (7)	8	4 (5)	14 (18)	1 (3)
1930s	0	3 (5)	4	7	10 (14)	3 (4)	4 (5)	4 (5)	7 (9)	2 (4)
1940s	2	6 (7)	3	2	18 (21)	1	2	4 (6)	9 (11)	0
1950s	2	2 (3)	4	2	13 (17)	5 (7)	2	4 (5)	10 (11)	3
1960s	0	11	0	0	20 (25)	7 (9)	5	1 (2)	3 (6)	3 (6)
1970s	0	1 (2)	4	2 (3)	14 (22)	5 (11)	4 (5)	2	8 (12)	0
1980s	0	1 (3)	2 (3)	3	19 (26)	5 (14)	2 (3)	2 (4)	1 (7)	0 (1)
Total	17 (19)	51 (66)	27 (28)	41 (48)	157 (215)	50 (79)	30 (50)	39 (56)	88 (124)	10 (21)

Table 3-39 Distribution of functions across decades (bracketed figures include component functions in multi-functional letters).

Key: APP – Application, COM – Commissive, CPT – Complaint, DEC – Declination, INF – Informative, NOT – Notification, OFF – Offer, QUE – Query, REQ – Request, THA – Thanking.

The functional classification of the letters showed *Informative* texts to be the most frequent text type, followed by *Requests*, *Commissives* and *Queries*. This seems consistent with Del Lungo Camiciotti's assertion that 'directives and commissives are particularly relevant to business communication' (2008:117-8). The uneven distribution of functions across decades makes cross-decade comparisons of function problematic. Having said this there are *Informative* and *Request* letters in every decade and *Commissive*, and *Query* texts in most decades; these could be used for qualitative diachronic study.

It seems that *Thanking* and *Informative* functions are most likely to appear in combination with a range of other functions in letters, whereas *Applications*, *Complaints* and *Declinations* are more like self-contained sub-types of letter which typically serve a single function rather than being one element of a multifaceted letter.

The distribution of function types is reflective of some of the events surrounding the correspondence. This is particularly noticeable where there is a cluster letters for a normally infrequent function-type. For example, in the 1920s we see a flurry of *Application* letters. This is because a range of press organisations sent in applications to have the first transatlantic telephone call. Similarly *Declinations* are unusually frequent in the 1870s due to a number of authors turning down an invitation to a dinner celebrating the work of Professor Morse. They are frequent again in the 1910s largely due to Oliver Lodge's repeated *Declinations* regarding the issue of striking a deal with the Marconi Company.

3.7.3. Letter format

The corpus contains 457 typed letters and 155 handwritten letters. Within this there are a number of format subtypes.

Format	Count
Handwritten	154
Handwritten Copy	1
Typed	383
Typed Copy	74

Table 3-40 - Letter format in the BTCC

The majority of letters were transcribed from the original manuscripts. As can see from Table 3-40 seventy-five of the letters are copy documents. Ideally we would have entirely original manuscripts. However the copy documents will have been produced to be an accurate record of correspondence so while small errors or efforts at standardisation may have occurred when

the documents were copied, it is unlikely that they will have been significantly modified in the way that some edited editions or model letters produced for pedagogical purposes are. The format of the document is preserved in the corpus metadata so any researchers who felt that copied material lacked the authenticity of original manuscripts could always exclude this material from their analysis.

3.7.4. Correspondent Metadata

It was possible to obtain information about individual authors and recipients in the majority of cases. In this section I provide a general overview of the number of authors and recipients represented, as well information regarding their professional standing, age and gender.

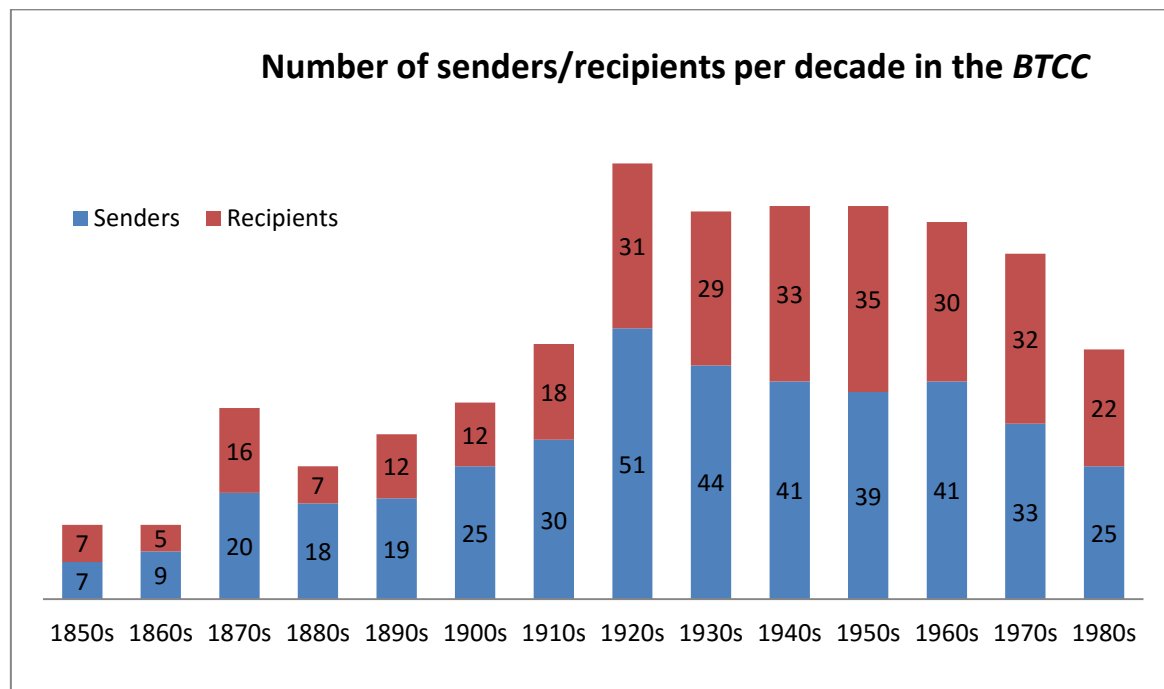


Figure 16 - Number of senders/recipients in the BTCC

As can be seen in Figure 16 it was possible to represent a variety of authors in each decade. It should be noted that some authors such as Oliver Lodge are represented in multiple decades. The influence of the Lodge-Marconi disputes mean that Lodge and Marconi are the best represented in the corpus, sending fourteen and twenty six letters respectively, and making William Preece, Engineer-in-Chief and the recipient of most of these letters, the most written to person in the corpus. However the corpus does contain a wide range of authors, and contains an average figure of 1.6 letters per author.

3.7.4.1. Companies

The correspondence originates from around 150 separate companies, though due to the changing institutional nature of the Post Office and related communications companies at this time it can be difficult to pinpoint individual companies. For example, the Post Office Telecommunications was a government department and part of the General Post Office which became a national corporation separate from the Post Office and ultimately a private company in the form of British Telecom. Prior to the establishment of the Post Office's monopoly on telecommunications it was managed by a number of smaller companies, such as the Electric Telegraph Company, which were ultimately subsumed by the Post Office⁷. The name of the company at the time of writing has been preserved in the metadata.

Aside from the General Post Office and its offshoots, the letters predominantly come from communications companies such as Cable and Wireless, Western Union Telegraph Company, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, and Marconi's Wireless Telegraph and Signal Company, the latter two of which are best represented in the corpus. Predictably, given the Post Office's original status as a government department with close links to the Treasury, many of the letters are from government departments. The Treasury, the War Office, the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Works and Industry are among the best represented. Though government departments and communications companies make up the majority of the correspondents, a wide variety of other companies are represented too, including press organisations, law firms, charities, universities, district councils and miscellaneous one-off letters from organisations like the National Rifle Association (UK) and the Belgian Citizen Band Association, giving us some indication of the wider corporate network BT operated in over this period.

The companies represented in the corpus were largely based in Britain and the vast majority of letters are sent from British addresses. This suggests that the corpus mostly contains British English. This supposition is supported by the available metadata on individual authors, though detailed biographical information is only available for authors for around a third of the letters in the corpus. Furthermore what detailed metadata there is was not available prior to the construction of the corpus and so regional variety would not have been a feasible sampling variable. American English, the majority of which appears in correspondence directly prior to

⁷ The institutional history *BT* is too complicated to detail in full here but an interactive family tree is available at <http://btplc.com/Thegroup/BTsHistory/TheBTfamilytree/>

the first transatlantic telephone call in the 1920s and, later, during negotiations with NASA in the 1960s, is the only other variety with any significant presence in the corpus. Other varieties, such as Belgian English in the letter, mentioned in the previous paragraph, from the Belgian Citizen Band Association, only tend to appear in individual letters. Overall it is fair to say that the *BTCC* contains mostly British English.

Having collected detailed metadata we can also see that the initial suspicion that the corpus would contain more incoming than outgoing mail has been confirmed. Overall ninety-six of the letters were sent from the General Post Office or BT, and 402 of the letters are addressed to the General Post Office with a further twenty-five addressed to BT. This is somewhat in keeping with Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg's observation that in terms of historical letters,

‘a typical instance is a collection compiled around the individual who was the recipient of the autographed letters but as far as his or her own writing is concerned, the only material that remains is a collection of drafts or a letter book of copies’ (1996:44)

The bias towards incoming mail means that the variety in recipient companies is much less. After Post Office related companies, the vast majority of the recipients for the letters in the *BTCC* work for British government organisations and other communications companies.

3.7.4.2. Occupation

The authors in the *BTCC* have 171 known occupations. Predictably the best represented occupation of authors in the corpus is *Secretary*, with thirty-eight letters written by authors whose stated job is ‘Secretary’ and a further forty-nine letters from variations on this role (*assistant secretary, second secretary, third secretary, honourable secretary, under-secretary, deputy secretary...*). This variation points to the fact a range of posts at various different levels of institutional seniority fall under the banner of ‘Secretary’. For example, the position of main Secretary to the Post Office is a fairly senior role, while ‘Film Distribution Secretary’ at AT&T (a job held by one of the authors in the *BTCC*) is a role perhaps closer to the sense of ‘Secretary’ as it is most widely used in the present-day, i.e. relatively low-level administrator.

We see a similar variety in the role of the next most common occupation, *Director*; there are twenty-one letters from Directors and eighteen letters from variations on this (e.g. *deputy managing director*). ‘Chairman’ (and variations thereof) is the next most common, followed by President and Town Clerk. Other occupations represented include administrators, surveyors,

news editors, managers and, as with company, a scattering letters from professions, such as poet laureate and wholesale fish merchant, less obviously connected with the telecommunications business.

There are eighty-eight known recipient occupations. On the whole the recipients have similar jobs to the authors with 125 letters being addressed to the Secretary or variations thereof. Directors (fifty-nine letters) and Chairmen (thirty-two letters) feature prominently again. The two occupations which feature noticeably more prominently on the recipient list are *Postmaster General* and *Engineer-in-Chief*. This is in part due to the large number of letters sent by Guglielmo Marconi to William Preece who was Engineer-in-Chief at the Post Office. Again the remaining recipients have a variety of professions, from public relations officers and factory managers to town clerks and professors. Broadly speaking then in terms of the scheme used to stratify the CEEC data we are dealing with the 'middling sort' or 'professional class', though some authors are members of the gentry.

Collecting professional metadata it also became apparent that the concept of 'occupation' is something of a moving target. One of the documents consulted while collecting metadata was the British Postal Museum and Archive list of company secretaries. In addition to information regarding the name of each Secretary to the Post Office and the period for which they held the position, the document advises that,

'In 1934 as a result of structural changes within the Post Office the position of Secretary was renamed Director General...In October 1966 when the Post Office was working towards becoming a Corporation the position of Director General was renamed Deputy Chairman of the Post Office' (2010:2).

The job positions 'Secretary' and 'Director General' instinctively seem like very different positions. 'Deputy Chairman' seems at a comparable level of seniority to 'Director General' but still quite different from 'Secretary', particularly given the modern understanding of that job as primarily a subordinate rather than leadership position. So it is worth noting that jobs and occupations evolve over time as well as companies.

Though a range of authors are represented in the corpus, some authors are over-represented, Guglielmo Marconi being the obvious example. Typically these over-representations occurred in cases where the aim to represent each decade equally in terms of letter numbers overrode the aim to produce a balanced sample of authors. While such imbalances in the corpus are not ideal, they can be taken into account when interpreting linguistic findings.

3.7.4.3. Gaps in the professional metadata

There are some gaps in the metadata. There are 127 letters for which the company of the author is not known. In some cases this is because the author is not affiliated with a company or information is only available at the department or occupation level. There are only thirty-seven letters for which no metadata is available regarding the author's professional status. The gap in knowledge regarding recipients is very similar. There are eighty-four recipients for whom we have no information regarding company affiliation, and for forty-three of these there is no professional information at all. While these gaps in the metadata are not ideal and may limit the degree to which we can contextualise linguistic findings, still there is some form of professional metadata for just over 90% of authors, and around 84% of recipients.

3.7.4.4. Gender <sex>

Perhaps less expected is the large gender imbalance in the corpus. Only fifteen women are represented in the corpus and of the 612 letters only twenty-two are identified as being written by women. This is somewhat surprising given British Telecom's reputation as an early employer of women. Duncan Campbell-Smith (2012: 240) in his history of the Post-Office writes that

‘in addition to the Telegraph Office, women comprised within a few years the majority of the staff in clerical departments like the Returned Letter Office (in 1873) and the Savings Bank (in 1875). Before the decade was over thousands of women had been taken on’

Furthermore Henry Fawcett who was Postmaster General from 1880-1884 was a champion of women in the workplace. It is also somewhat disappointing from a linguistic perspective as a number of studies (Nevalainen 2000, Geisler 2003, Kytö and Smitterberg 2006, Raumolin-Brunberg 2006) have found that women have led the way in many instances of language change.

One initial hypothesis was that this gender imbalance in the corpus could be caused by the over-representation of incoming mail. If the majority of the letters in the *BTCC* are written by non-Post Office employees, BT's relatively egalitarian employment policies are less likely to be reflected. However, while this may be a contributing factor it seems likely that even if we had more correspondence originating from the Post Office we might still not have a significantly higher number of female authors; the reason being the type of roles in which women were employed.

In his discussion of the changing professional roles of women around the time of World War One Campbell-Smith writes that '[women] were eventually deemed capable of replacing men in labour intensive activities like sorting. But more intellectually demanding positions such as clerical posts in the Chief Engineer's Department remained firmly closed to them' (2012:246). Furthermore, in specific relation to correspondence, he goes on to say that for women working in the Returned Letter Office 'the rules insisted that letters and packages should only be opened by women who were married...and who were being supervised by men at very close quarters' (ibid). From an examination of forms of address we can see that the actual or presumed recipient of all but six of the *BTCC* letters is male.

It thus seems to be that women were not employed in positions at BT where they wrote letters. They may have been involved in the letter writing process at a transcribing, typing or drafting stage, but in the absence of more information regarding the exact context of creation for each letter we have to take the signee as the 'author' (/<sender>). We have seen that the majority of the correspondence was generated by Secretaries and Directors. While a survey of the employment records of all of the companies involved is beyond the scope of this research, it is worth pointing out that none of the posts Secretary to the Post Office, General Secretary, Director General or Chairman of the Board were held by a woman in the period 1853-1982.

3.7.4.5. Age

Information about the age of the authors in the corpus is limited. Only 178 of the 612 letters were written by authors for whom I have a date of birth. However using this information the percentage of letters from six ten-year age groups (20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s) was calculated (see Figure 17)

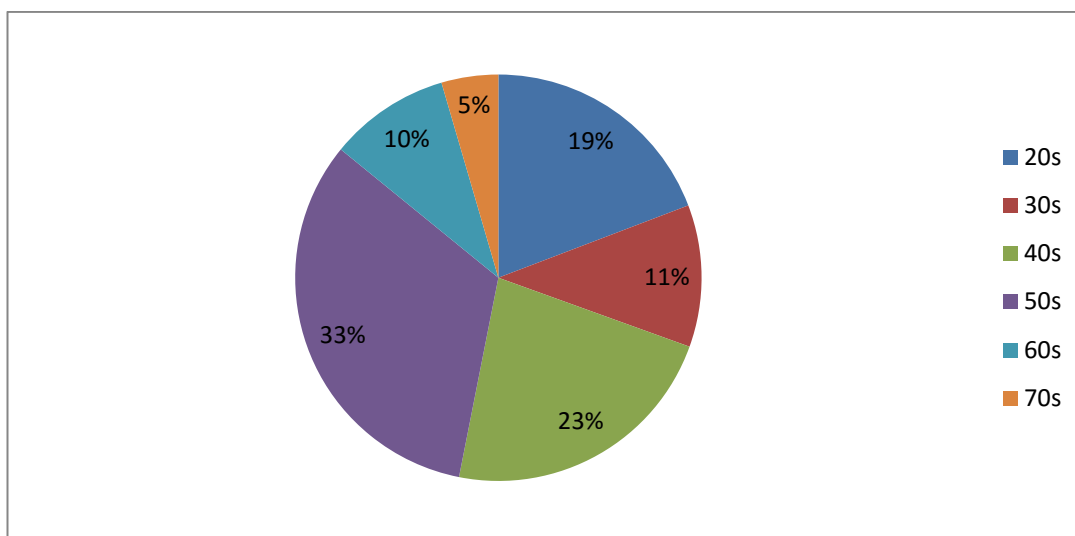


Figure 17 – Percentage of authors within six ten-year age groups in the BTCC

Perhaps predictably given the professional context and general tendency for historical documents written by more senior men to survive in the greatest quantities, the two age groups best represented are authors in their 40s and 50s. It should be noted that ages could only be calculated where information regarding date of birth was available in the public domain. This is also likely to have skewed the results somewhat towards historically prominent individuals.

The figures regarding the percentage of letters written by authors in their 20s are a little misleading. The percentage was calculated per letter, and one of the authors for whom I have a date of birth is Guglielmo Marconi; he authored twenty-six letters in the corpus at the time when he was in his early twenties.

3.7.5. Topic

3.7.5.1. BT Folder Descriptions – indications of theme

The BT Folder descriptions give us some indication of topic, though as we saw in Section 3.6.3 they vary in their level of description with some providing a very detailed description of the topic covered, for example *Arrangement for continuance of construction works by the National Telephone Company and the Post Office for a plant purchased by the Post Office from the National Telephone Company*, while others having more conceptual titles such as *Monopoly* and *Industrial Democracy*. Some folder descriptions even seem to reflect shifts in wider social attitudes, for example the earlier folder description *Employment of blind persons as technicians* was later changed to the more politically correct *Adaptations for the visually*

impaired. Despite their variable and incomplete nature the folder descriptions do give a reasonable idea of the sort of topics covered in the corpus material. A full description of the topics covered in these folders is provided in Appendix 2. However the general themes covered include,

- Employment Issues
- Institutional Issues
- Service Issues
- Technological Developments
- Environmental Issues

3.7.5.2. BTCC Topic Keywords by Decade

As outlined in Section 3.5 one of the main approaches I took in analysing the *BTCC* was a keywords analysis, which is to say I compared sub-corpora of each decade and each function with the *BTCC* as a whole, in order to identify words that were unusually frequent in each decade and function. Mike Scott (2012) advised that keywords tend to be of three main types: proper nouns, other indicators of ‘aboutness’, and potential style-markers. Once I had obtained keywords for each decade and function, the concordance lines of every keyword were examined in order to try and explain reasons for the high frequency of these words, and identify the kinds of patterns in which the words typically occurred.

In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I will draw on these results, in particular the style-markers, for possible indications of linguistic change. Before we get to this, however, I have provided a summary of topic-related keywords by decade. While these are strictly speaking ‘results’, the keywords included here do not offer any clues as to potential areas of lexicogrammatical change in the corpus, rather they give an indication of the topics covered in each decade, and as such they have been included here to enhance the description of the contents of the corpus and help contextualise the results in the following chapters.

All of these keywords reached a level of significance in the 99.99th percentile, meaning that while they might not have high token frequency they are significantly frequent in comparison to their frequency in the wider corpus.

1850s and 1860s

Topic Keywords: *Morse (Professor), Carmichael, telegraph, electric, towns, submarine, females, companies, principal, persons, messages, country, wires, prospectus, directors, receiver*

The keywords point to a couple of individuals important to telecommunications in this period. As well as working for the Submarine Telegraph Company and British and Irish Telegraph Company, J.R. *Carmichael*' authors a number of letters in this period to help organise a dinner to celebrate the contributions to telegraphy of *Professor Morse*. This dinner is also the reason for the keyness of the word *directors*.

The development of *telegraph* networks for sending *messages* between *principal towns* in the United Kingdom and internationally is the main topic of discussion and the keywords reflect this. *Prospectus* is an interesting keyword in this regard. It is not extremely frequent, occurring just three times with a log-likelihood keyness score of 13.035, however it points us to an interesting letter in which Charles T. Bright, an engineer at the English and Irish Telegraph Co., offers his opinion to Robert Crosbie, Director of the Atlantic Telegraph Company, on a prospectus to establish a company to develop a national telegraph network. He concludes that:

"In most of the small places proposed to be connected, it would be difficult for any inhabitant to find a subject to telegraph about...the proposed Company, if carried out, will prove a most unfortunate investment" (1853_12_28_CTB_RC)

This sense of social superiority is not only reserved for rural districts. Of working-class individuals in industrial areas he writes,

'In colliery districts, & where the population is chiefly composed of labourers of the lowest and roughest order, such as in the Wigan coal district, the country round Low Moor, and South to Barnsley and Sheffield, the parts about Dudley, Walsall, and Birmingham, and many other places, no dependence could be placed on over-ground wire, and I have therefore appointed 200 miles out of the system as necessarily underground, in addition to the streetwork-.'

The keyword *Companies* also points to a thing worth remembering about telecommunications in this period, which is that the Post Office had yet to establish a monopoly over the network, so several companies were working on telegraphy and network development. One of these

was the *Submarine* Company, the mention of which is one reason for the keyness of *submarine* in this period. There are also references more generally to *submarine* telegraphy.

This period also sees discussions of the employment of *females* in new Post Office branches. *Persons* is key in this period mostly because Frank Ives Scudamore requests recommendations for female employees in the letter 1869_09_17_FIS_EB. He starts the letter by specifying that he is looking for female employees. Once he moves onto the person specification for the job he switches from referring to the potential employees as “*women*” and “*females*” to “*persons*”.

Another historical detail highlighted by the keywords is that in this period, *receivers* of messages paid for telegraph messages on delivery rather than payment being demanded at the time of transmission.

1870s

Topic Keywords: *Reynolds, Craig, Bell, Harrington, words, system, minute, per, automatic, machines, wire, instruments, miles, machinery, line, telephones, speed, class, machine, sample, rate, telegraphing, promotion*

The majority of keywords in this period relate to the various *systems* of telegraphy competing for dominance in this period; the *wires, lines* and *instruments* involved and the *speed* and *rates* with which messages could be sent over various distances. George Little developed a system of automatic telegraphy and D.H. *Craig* owned the European patents to Little’s system. George *Harrington* was the president of the Automatic Telegraph Company and visited Europe from the United States during this period to demonstrate the system.

Telephones and the man most widely credited with their invention, Alexander Graham *Bell*, also appear as key in this period. The term “telephone” was first used in the 1870s to refer to this particular form of communication. The coinage was novel enough for *Bell*’s agent W.H. *Reynolds* to refer to the “Telephone” in quotation marks in his earliest letter in the corpus (1877_09_29_WHR_JT). The plural form *telephones* appears as a keyword here as a number of letters from this period concern the supply and installation of *telephones* to businesses.

The keywords in this period also point to a dispute between the Post Office and the Treasury regarding the *promotion* of female telegraph clerks in order to fill vacancies at a higher level. *Promotion* also appears in the context of a single female telegraph worker who was, in her

words, “dependent on my own exertions” (1879_03_21_LEB_HF) and had joined the telegraph service on “the understanding of promotion to a higher salary”, and so writes to request a pay increase.

1880s

Topic Keywords: (*Sons Co.*), *Swansea*, *Vivian*, *Lords*, *Grenfell*, *Bath*, *Cooke*, *clerks*, *telephones*, *division*, *lower*, *dinner*, *telegraph*, *switch*, *Jubilee*

The arrangements made by the companies *Vivian and Sons* and *Grenfel and Sons*, and *Bath and Sons*, along with the *Swansea* Telephone Company and *Swansea* Zinc Ore Company regarding telephone arrangements account for nearly all of these keywords in this decade. *Telephones* and *Telegraphs*, and more specifically the installation of telephones in lieu of telegraph apparatus, dominate the discussions. *Switch* also occurs as part of this discussion as some companies wanted a *switch* installed to be able change between the existing system and the new telephones.

They keywords *clerks*, *lower*, *division* and *civil (service)* refer to an employment dispute, in this case the pay scale for Telegraphists.

Jubilee and *Cooke* are frequent in this decade because of invitations to a *dinner* to celebrate the Jubilee of the Telegraph (of which William Fothergill *Cooke* was the co-inventor).

1890s

Topic Keywords: *Dover*, *Salisbury*, *Preece*, *Marconi*, *G.*, *Mr*, *Italy*, *Italian*, *experiments*, *distance*, *results*, *carried*, *signals*, *agreements*, *wire*, *apparatus*, *obtained*, *out*, *wires*, *corporation*, *height*, *lecture*, *show*, *feet*, *balloons*, *kites*, *transmitter*, *miles*, *coil*

The keywords in this period are dominated by Guglielmo *Marconi*’s dealings with the Post Office (William *Preece* in particular) and the wireless telegraph *experiments* at *Dover* and *Salisbury*. The vast majority of the letters in this period relate to these *experiments*, the *apparatus* used, and the *results obtained*. *Wire* appears as a keyword both due to its role in wireless telegraphy experiments and references to long lengths of wire in earlier letters which pre-date the development of wireless techniques.

Carried appears in all but two instances in the bi-gram “*carried out*” (also making *out* key). Nearly all of these relate to experiments being *carried out* and most of these instances are in

letters from Marconi. The two examples that do not refer to experiments both occur in the same letter; one references a draft agreement sanctioned by parliament to be “*carried out*” (1895_01_23_JCL_##) and the other refers to an agreement being “*carried into execution*”.

Agreements and *corporation* relate to the application by the *Corporation* of Glasgow to the Post Office to establish a telephone exchange, and the implications of previous agreements on the subject.

1900s

Topic Keywords: *(the) company, Postmaster General, Edinburgh, Lloyds, Admiralty, Franklin, Falkirk, plant, license, officers, underground, certifying, maintenance, medical, compensation, ship, agreement, section, cramp, surgeons, shore, position, substitution, works*

The keywords of this decade are heavily influenced by two authors and two letters in particular: one by Guglielmo Marconi to Austen Chamberlain (1903_03_02_GM_AC) in which he makes 19 references to “*my Company*”, and one from George *Franklin*, President of the National Telephone Company (1909_03_15_GF3_##) in which he makes reference to “*the Company*” 54 times.

Agreement in this period is exclusively used as a count noun (i.e. an agreement rather than the state of agreement) and refers mostly to the agreements between the Marconi Company and the *Lloyds* Corporation, and the 1905 agreement between the Post Office and The National Telephone Company which set out many of the conditions of the proposed 1911 takeover of the National Telephone Company by the Post Office. George *Franklin* makes frequent reference to the *Postmaster-General*, writing in response to his position and addressing the NTC’s concerns to him.

Lloyds appears as a keyword as the *Lloyds* Corporation had granted a *license* to the Marconi Company to operate commercial telegraphy from their signal stations. Oliver Lodge was trying to prevent what he saw as a monopoly on maritime telegraphy by Marconi. *Admiralty* is key in this period as they were one of the parties involved in this dispute. The *agreement* with the *Lloyds* Corporation related to “*ship-to-shore*” telegraphy and the connection of Marconi’s shore stations with the Post Office’s general telegraphic system inland.

Edinburgh and *Falkirk* are key in this period due to the correspondence concerning the provision of an underground telegraph wire which would originate at Edinburgh. *Underground* is a key 'aboutness' word in the period for this reason.

Medical, *officers*, *certifying*, and *compensation* are all used in discussions surrounding the substitution of Post Office *Medical Officers* for *Certifying Surgeons*. This discussion makes frequent reference to *Section 8* of the *Workmen's Compensation Act 1906*. The provisions of this act were extended in this period to cover 'telegraphist's *cramp*', a condition which was described by a Post Office departmental investigation of the time as resulting from the 'nervous instability of the operator and the occurrence of repeated fatigue during the complicated muscular movements required for Morse sending'.

1910s

Topic Keywords: *Lodge*, *Rayner*, *Isaacs*, *Marconi (Co.)*, *Oliver*, *Hamilton*, *Lyngby*, *committee*, *telegraphists*, *army*, *men*, *signal*, *wireless*, *syndicate*, *enlistment*, *advisory*, *units*, *telegraphy*, *coupling*, *linemen*, *evidence*, *expert*, *laboratory*, *patent*

The disputes between the Post Office and the Marconi Company continue to be reflected in this period. In addition to *Oliver Lodge* and *Marconi*, this period's keywords include (Godfrey) *Isaacs*, who at this time was the co-Managing Director of the Marconi Company. *Hamilton* meanwhile seems to have been consulting with William and Llewellyn Preece and Oliver Lodge over the matter.

Syndicate is key in this period partly because of Oliver Lodge and Alexander Muirhead's 'Lodge-Muirhead Syndicate', and partly due to a series of letters regarding a failed application from the 'Universal Radio Syndicate' to use the Eiffel Tower for wireless telegraph experiments.

The *committee* referred to so often in this decade is the *Advisory Committee on Wireless Telegraphy*, which was assembled to review the merits of the existing wireless telegraphy methods. E.H. *Rayner* was the Secretary to the Advisory Committee on Wireless Telegraphy. *Lyngby* was one of the locations (the other being Cullercoats) involved in a wireless telegraphy experiment.

Signal, *army*, *men*, *telegraphists*, and *enlistment* are all key in this period due to a letter relating to the enlistment of Post Office Telegraphists for the signal service during the First World War.

1920s

Topic Keywords: *York, New, Majesty, London, Purves, Giles, Kiosks, design, telephone, governments, clause, call, service, telephony, page, demonstration, model, boroughs, British, discounts*

New and *York* are both key in this period due to the establishment in 1926 of the first commercial transatlantic telephone service between *London* and *New York*. There are a number of applications from press organisations to be the first to use the service. *Call, service, telephone, demonstration, and discounts* are all used with reference to the transatlantic telephone service. *Discounts*, perhaps the least obvious of these examples, appears as key because of a discussion in one letter over how/whether evening and weekend discounts would apply where a time difference exists between the location of the caller and receiver.

Colonel Thomas Fortune *Purves* was Engineer-in-Chief at the Post Office at the time. His surname appears as a keyword as six letters are addressed to him, three others make reference to him and one is authored by *Purves* himself. This correspondence relates both to transatlantic telephony and the telephone kiosks.

Giles Gilbert-Scott was the architect whose design was ultimately used for the first telephone kiosk. *Design, telephone, boroughs* and *model* also relate to kiosk design. All of these are fairly self-explanatory, except perhaps *boroughs*, which occurs in the phrase Metropolitan Boroughs Joint Standing Committee: one of the parties involved in approving the design of the kiosk. *London* as key may be in part due to the early placement of kiosks in London locations.

1930s

Topic Keywords: *Cain, Wannock, Kiosk, council, teleprinter, green, students, voice, district, operators, villages, student, red, reserved, age, beautiful, village, schools, erection, trained, o, golden, stone*

Cain is key in this period due to the 'Golden Voice' competition, which set out to find the first voice of the speaking clock. In addition to *Miss Ethel Cain* who eventually won the competition, references are made to contestants *Miss Claydon* and *Miss Humber*. *Voice* and *beautiful* both primarily refer to the 'Golden Voice' competition to find the voice of the speaking clock.

Beautiful is used multiple times by John Masefield, poet-laureate at the time, when describing the qualities that the 'golden' voice should possess. *Beautiful* is also key in this decade partly

from discussions of the *beautiful* villages in which the ‘eye-sore’ kiosks were proposed to be located.

The preoccupation with *kiosks* in this decade, particularly their bright *red* colouring, is reflected in some of the aboutness keywords. *Wannock*, a small village in the South East of the UK, is a keyword due to proposals to install a telephone kiosk in the village, and the opposition that these proposals encountered. *Wannock* was not the only *village* to resist the new bright *red kiosks*. Concerns are also raised in Weybridge, Craignure, Whitby, Roybridge and Shipley, sometimes with involvement from the local County/District *Council*. Nearly all requested that the red colour be dropped in favour of dark green or any other colour that would fit better with the surroundings.

Council is also key in part due to the involvement of the Army Council and Air Council in discussions over the enlistment of telegraph *operators* for supplementary reserve signal units. Some of the correspondence in this period relates to the Schedule of *Reserved Occupations*, which exempted some skilled workers from enlistment in the armed forces. An amendment to the *age* at which wireless *operators* and *students* at telegraphy *schools* are *reserved* is discussed.

1940s

Topic Keywords: *Mackay, Wilshaw, Edward, Gross, transmitters, traffic, cable, switchboard, cables, painted, men, British, available, institution, c, skilled, interrupted, emergency, b*

The correspondence of this decade is mostly concerned with the capacity of telecommunications companies to continue to send messages (referred to as *traffic*) in the event of transatlantic *cables* being *interrupted* during the war and the possible establishment of *emergency* wireless stations. *Available* occurs in discussions of which equipment was available, particularly *transmitters* and receivers.

As was the case with the correspondence around the First World War, the majority of the *men* referred to in this correspondence are soldiers or Post Office workers facing military conscription. *Switchboard* is used to discuss the conscription of *switchboard* operators. After the end of the war the discussion moves to the adaptation of *switchboards* so that recently disabled (particularly blind) employees could operate them. Similarly in the latter years of this decade, *men* is used to refer to potential disabled and ‘coloured’ employees; the keyword

skilled comes into these discussions. *Mackay* Radio was an American telecommunications company in this period and is mentioned in relation to the maintenance of transatlantic communication during the Second World War. *Gross* is referred to only by surname and is mentioned in only one letter 1942_04_06_HGB_AHM, which concerns wartime wireless service arrangements.

Edward Wilshaw was the Chairman of Cable & Wireless at this time. *Wilshaw* wrote five letters in this period and is referred to by other authors on a couple of occasions. His involvement relates to the question of sustaining transatlantic communication in wartime and the possibility of establishing emergency wireless stations.

Once the war was over we also see the return of correspondence complaining about the colour of telephone kiosks, requesting that they be *painted* dark green rather than red. One kiosk discussed was situated close to the *Institution* of Electrical Engineers.

1950s

Topic Keywords: *London, CANTAT, blind, employment, coloured, calls, films, depot, team, emergency, workers, governors, television, tower, piece, terminal, P, private, subscriber*

The most discussed topic is that of *employment*, more specifically the employment of *blind workers* (many of whom had been blinded during the Second World War), and the employment of people from former British colonies, who are generally referred to here as *coloured workers*. *Governors* is key due to a dispute regarding what seems like a new ruling that *Governors* of the British Broadcasting Company were not allowed to stand as Members of Parliament. The relocation of the *Piece Part Depot* is discussed in relation to blind workers. *London's* keyness points to two areas of discussion in this period: the employment of disabled people and citizens of former British colonies, and the proposed erection of a radio *tower* in the centre of *London*. *Television, tower* and *terminal* are all used with reference to the proposed erection of a radio *tower* in the centre of *London*.

This period does contain an unusually large number of letters to, from or about women. Authors and recipients include *Miss L.P. Reid*, a telephonist from Jamaica seeking work in the United Kingdom, *Miss S.M. Simpson* who was dealing with L.P. Reid's application, *Miss M.G.E. Newman* and *Miss Robinson* who were involved in the discussions regarding the employment of blind workers, *Miss Jeanne M. Butler* who worked at the Board of Trade, *Miss Hampton* who

travelled to the United States as part of a delegation to study mechanised telephone services, and *Miss Nan Whitelaw*, Assistant Secretary of the Union of Post Office Workers.

The laying and maintenance of the *CANTAT* (Canadian TransAtlantic Telephone) cable is also written about. The *teams* referred to are involved in discussions over the Cantat cable mechanised telephone services. *Emergency calls* are another much discussed topic in this decade, particularly the fact that *private subscribers* had to pay to make emergency calls, while emergency calls made from public telephone boxes were free.

Finally, *films* is key in this period as the Post Office tried to import a number of instructional telephone-themed films from Frank Capra Productions in America, namely "Dial the Miles," "Now You Can Dial," "Dialling the Nation," "Of Many Voices," and "Adventures in Telezonia" screenshots of which can be seen in (Figure 18) . These films provided guidance to customers on how to use the telephone. The correspondence itself relates to a dispute over whether duty should be paid on the imported films.

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Figure 18 – Screenshots of ‘Adventures in Telezonia’ (left) and ‘Now You Can Dial’ (right) © AT & T

1960s

Topic Keywords: *Telstar, NASA, BBC, ITA, Mr, Baldry, Cotton, (Captain) Booth, McMillan, Tests, satellite, experimental, via, program, satellites, American, recording, relay, clasp, t, speaking, August, demonstrations, communications, expansion*

The main subject of letters in this decade was satellite testing. The Post Office communicated with *NASA* in this period on tests of the *Telstar* satellite.

Experimental satellite(s) tests via the satellite Telstar were carried out in this period, with the involvement of the *American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T)*. These tests came

about after a decision was made in 1961 to massively expand the American national space *program*. Projects *Relay* and *Rebound* which involved collaboration between *NASA* and the UK are also mentioned.

Television licenses are also discussed. Two of the main parties in those discussions are the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Independent Television Authority (ITA) which had been set up in the 1950s to manage commercial television.

This decade also sees discussions of the re-*recording* of the speaking clock, a technical discussion of “L-Type ATEs in CLASP”.

1970s

Topic Keywords: *Post, Office, Richards, COPOU, PO, Warwick, GPO, Telecommunications, report, research, landlord, costs, board, industrial, monitoring, PABX, democracy, tenant, unit, pensioners, tactile, experiment, confidentiality, indicators*

The keyness of *Telecommunications* in this period reflects an important structural change in the Post Office. Following the Post Office Act of 1969 the government department the “General Post Office” became a public corporation called the “Post Office”. As part of this change, the Post Office (which handled written communication) and *Post Office Telecommunications* were separated. The majority of references to *telecommunications* in this period are either to the newly established corporation or to the wider implications for the field of *telecommunications* of the new organisational structure.

Industrial Democracy was a two year experiment whereby, as Duncan Campbell Smith, authorized historian of the Post Office puts it 1011:533, the Post Office was jointly controlled by managers and workers (who were represented on the *board* by union officials). *Report* and *research* are key in this period because of the correspondence between Ken Young, the Board Member for Personnel and Industrial Relations at the Post Office, and Professor Dorothy Wedderburn from Imperial College. In this exchange Young and Wedderburn discuss the terms under which SSRC Industrial Relations Research *Unit* at the University of Warwick, and the Industrial Sociology Unit Imperial College London would carry out an independent *report* on the Industrial Democracy experiment. The aims of this study are identified as “*monitoring* and *evaluation*” (1978_04_05_PDW_KMY) and the form that this *monitoring* will take is the subject of discussion in this decade.

The acronym *PABX* stands for Private Automatic Branch Exchange which was an automatic telephone system for businesses through which to manage internal and external telephone calls. *PABXs* are referred to on multiple occasions in three letters. Two of these letters refer to annual levels of investment and installation of such equipment. The third contains every instance in this decade of the keywords *tactile* and *indicators*. “*Tactile indicators*” were parts which could be added to a switchboard in place of a lamp so that blind operators could operate them. *Unit* is key in this decade due to mention of the control *units* to which the tactile indicators would attach, and the SSRC Industrial Relations Research *Unit* at Warwick.

The remaining keywords *landlord*, *costs*, *tenant* and *pensioners* relate to disputes regarding the provision of and payment for telephone services. G. *Richards* led a campaign during this period, arguing that the Post Office’s telephone installation *costs*, which were paid for through local taxation, were excessive and unfair, particularly to *pensioners* who often did not use a telephone as they were unable to pay for calls or line rental.

1980s

Topic Keywords: *BT, Mercury, Telecom, Kenneth, BTI, UK, George, Baker, EUTELSAT, International, licence, telegram, interconnect, consortium, network, inland, government, discussions, telegrams, telemessage, market, officials, implications, project, commercial, customers, issues, British, presentation, plans, interconnection, appropriate, carrier, losses, financial, significant*

This period saw the Post Office Telecommunications part of the Post Office become a new separate entity called British *Telecom* (*BT*). The monopoly that the Post Office had had over telephone networks was also abolished and *Mercury* Communications were awarded a licence to operate a phone *network* in the *UK*. The discussions surrounding this also touch upon international traffic, which at the time was handled by *BTI* (*British Telecom International*).

The keyness of *Kenneth* and *George* points to the two authors best represented in this decade. *Kenneth* Baker was Minister of State for Industry and Information Technology at this time, and Sir *George* Jefferson was the Chairman of *British Telecom*. The strong tendency for authors to use first names both in the opening salutation and signature in this period also contributes to the keyness of these names.

Officials is used as something of an anonymous term to describe the people involved in various negotiations during this period, e.g.

*“As you may know, **officials** of this Department and the Treasury have been in touch with your people about the future of the telegram service.”*
(1980_12_22_AB_GJ)

*“Discussions were necessary between BT and **officials** to examine suitable ways of dealing with these two stages of liberalisation.”* (1981_07_28_GJ_KJ)

*“I have asked **officials** to open formal negotiations with the Consortium on the details of the licence”* (1981_10_09_KB_ES3)

Telegram, Telegrams, Inland and *Telemessage* are all key in this decade due to correspondence regarding the cessation of *inland telegram* services, and their proposed replacement with a *telemessage* service. *Market* appears in these keywords due to frequent references to *market* surveys in relation to a proposed ‘Phonepoint’ service. Phonepoint was to become, in the words of BT, “the world’s first telepoint (mobile communications system similar to Cellnet) operator”.

3.8. Summary of Methodology and Data

In this chapter I have provided a general overview of previous approaches to corpus construction and some of the fundamental principles and methods of corpus analysis. I have also considered some of the ways in which previous studies have quantified language change and outlined the methods of analysis that have been used in the current study. Given the essentially exploratory nature of the analysis in the current study I have chosen a multi-method approach so as to be able to identify general idea of some of the trends within the data, as well as looking in more detail at specific features of language change within particular letter types, with a particular focus on requests. The classification of letter functions proved to be challenging and a higher level of inter-rater agreement between those involved in testing the definitions would have been preferable. Nevertheless we did end up with a list of well-defined functions which had been refined through four inter-rater tests, and with which it was possible to assign a functional classification to each letter. These classifications will provide both a starting point for keyword and quantitative analyses, and a framework through which to interpret the n-gram results.

This chapter has also provided one of the first major contributions of the thesis in that I have outlined the approach taken in constructing the *BTCC* and the challenges I have faced working

with the archive material. While some archives may have more in the way of item-level metadata than BT do, the questions that this chapter has raised in relation to how to identify material within an archive, and how that material should be digitised to maximise its research potential, are questions that any research looking to work with archive material to create digital resources will need to consider. Finally, I have produced a description of the corpus, including overviews of the corpus contents and the description of topic provided by the 'aboutness' keyword results. Having provided this overview, in the next Chapter I proceed to the first of the official analysis chapters, looking at interpersonal aspects of the language employed in the BT letters.

4. Chapter 4 – Analyses of Interpersonal Relations in the *BTCC*

4.1. Aims and Structure of the Chapter

In this chapter I present the analysis of the language used to manage interpersonal relations, most notably through opening and closing salutations. As the use of these salutations is guided to a large degree by convention, I start by examining three twentieth century letter writing manuals in order to see what sort of letter writing advice is offered and whether the nature of this advice changes between time of the first manual, which was published in 1917, and the third manual, published in 1972. I look in particular at recommendations for terms of address and so-called 'hackneyed' forms, that is, language which is or has been widely used but has come to be seen as old-fashioned, clichéd, or insincere. This analysis of the advice in letter writing manuals serves as an introduction to the conventions used in the twentieth century, and as a point of reference for the opening and closing salutations used in the *BTCC*.

After the examination of letter writing manuals there follows a brief overview of the quantitative results from the n-gram and keyword analyses. These results are included at this point as the analyses that follow in Section 4.4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 all draw on these results.

In Section 4.4., the first analysis to draw on the quantitative results, I examine the frequency of the various opening and closing formulas employed in the *BTCC* data. In each case I start from an examination of the relevant keyword and n-gram results, then carry out a full examination of the frequency of every opening and closing salutation in each decade, looking at how these forms and frequencies change over the timeline of the *BTCC*. I also compare these findings to the recommendations regarding opening and closing formulas in the letter writing manuals examined in 4.2. In addition to salutations in Section 4.4(.3) I also look at the language which is used to manage the chain of correspondence, and how that changes over time.

4.2. Analysis One - What can be added to our knowledge of letter writing conventions by analysing three letter writing manuals contemporary with the period represented in the *BTCC*?

4.2.1. Manuals and rationale

Following on from the review of previous studies of letter writing manuals (Section 2.5) and in preparation for my analysis of formal features in (Section 4.4) which will make use of prescribed norms as a point of comparison, in this section I examine three letter writing manuals contemporary to the period studied in order to get some sense of the sort of advice offered to letter writers in this period. Previous studies that have bridged the nineteenth-twentieth century gap have done so with large scale surveys (e.g. Gage 2007, O'Locker 1987). In carrying out the kind of close analysis offered by Fens de Zeeuw of eighteenth and nineteenth century I wanted to focus on the detail of the advice offered and set this within the broader trends identified by Gage and O'Locker.

This examination of letter writing advice that is contemporary with the period is intended to provide context as to why letter writing practices may have changed. Some previous studies such as Del Lungo Camiciotti (2006a) and Dossena (2008) have limited the amount of attention paid to salutations on the basis that they are less interesting than other features of the language. Dossena argued that the study of the frequency and distribution of formulas 'may be of interest from the descriptive point of view, but does not provide sufficient ground or the interpretation of the phenomena' (2008:153). By examining the advice that was given in twentieth century manuals and the reasoning given for the advice, I provide some grounds for the interpretation of changes in the frequency of particular features. Of course we cannot know how far these individual manuals affected the use of particular formulas and conventions, but it will be possible to see how far the *BTCC* data reflect advice given in the manuals, for instance whether recommended forms increase in frequency and/or criticised forms decrease. These recommendations may also offer some explanation as to why these changes in frequency might have occurred.

The manuals I have looked at are John Nesfield's *Junior Course of Composition* from 1917, Thomas Lewis's Caxton guide to *Business Correspondence* from 1956, and K. Graham Thomson's *How to Write and What to Write* from 1972. These manuals were chosen primarily as they were published during the period covered by the corpus. It was also desirable that the

manuals in question should have been widely read as this would indicate at least some degree of influence and relevance to general business letter practice. The number of copies sold of each of the manuals examined in this section is not available. However as Francis Austin-Johnson argued,

‘Evidence for the use of letter-writers is not easy to find but the very proliferation of manuals of this type through the centuries and even into the present day indicates that there was and is a market for them’. (2007:18)

Tebeaux (1992:87) also noted the potential for measuring the popularity of manuals according to the number of editions printed, arguing that ‘printers had no intention of printing what would not sell’.

All three manuals enjoyed a number of editions. Nesfield’s grammar had had twelve editions in sixteen years by the time of the 1917 edition. K Graham Thomson’s guide had been printed nine times in eleven years as of 1972. The Caxton guide to *Business Correspondence* had noticeably fewer editions than the other two titles (six editions in fifty-three years). This may be partly due to the relatively specialist nature of the text compared to the other manuals.

It should also be noted that some books go through multiple editions due to revisions of the content, which in the case of these manuals might reflect changes in letter writing conventions. There is no indication that either Nesfield’s guide or Lewis’s guide were revised despite the multiple editions. Thomson’s manual, however, which was first published in 1961, had undergone two revisions by the time of the 1972 edition used here. This suggests that there may have been an attempt to reflect changing letter writing conventions, though without access to earlier editions I cannot know exactly what the nature of the revisions were.

The final factor that makes these manuals suitable for consideration here is that they are all partially, or entirely, dedicated professional letter writing guidance. It may be that more general usage guides such as Fowler’s *The Kings English* (1906) and Gower’s *Complete Plain Words* (1902) also had an influence on the language used in the *BTCC* but for the purposes of this study I wanted to examine manuals with a specific business English focus. Both Nesfield’s guide and Thomson’s guide do offer some advice on personal correspondence too which may prove of some relevance, particularly in reference to terms of address which, as we have seen, became more familiar in this period. I will start by examining general features of the manuals before going on to consider their treatment of specific features.

4.2.2. Contents and intended audience

Author	<u>John Nesfield</u>	
Book	<u><i>Junior Course of English Composition</i></u>	
Year	1917	
Edition	12 th Edition in 16 years	
		<u>Number of pages</u>
Contents	<i>Reproduction of Extracts</i>	42
	<i>General Hints on Written Composition</i>	39
	<i>Punctuation, Capitals, Syllabic Division, Underlining</i>	26
	<i>Expansion of Outlines: Essay Writing</i>	48
	<i>Letter-writing, Private, Commercial and Official</i>	52
	<i>Appendix – Trade terms in more or less common use</i>	12

Table 4-1 – John Nesfield manual table of contents

Nesfield's manual (1917), is primarily aimed at young adults pursuing some form of education. It includes composition guidance for the production of a variety of documents, through precept, models and expansion of outlines. The chapters (see Table 4-1) are organised in what Nesfield perceives as an increasing level of difficulty, starting from the reproduction of extracts, through to a considerations of clear and effective writing, common grammatical errors, punctuation, and the expansion of essay outlines. Guidance on letter writing composition, the fifth and final chapter, has the most pages dedicated to it. In introducing this chapter he identifies both an academic audience and a business audience for his advice,

'In Chapter V, the last, we have dealt with the subject of Letter-writing, private, official, and commercial: and to the kind of letter last named we have appended a list of trade terms in common use. We have given this list, partly because we thought it might be useful to lads who are leaving school and about to take up employment in some business office, and partly because "Letter-writing and Use of Commercial Terms" is prescribed in the Oxford Syllabus for the Junior Examination as an alternative to the composition of an essay.' (1917: v)

It is notable that letter writing is enshrined in the syllabus at this as a practical alternative to the more expansive academic options.

The amount of space dedicated to letter writing instruction is relatively high compared with findings from previous historical studies of composition grammars. Gage (2007) found that the average percentage of space dedicated to letter writing in composition guides of the nineteenth century was six per-cent. However twenty-four percent of Nesfield's guide is dedicated to letter writing. The only composition book that Gage found to have a higher percentage of letter writing instruction was W. Monkhouse's *The Precise Book* from 1897, which he advises 'has a decidedly practical orientation, serving primarily to prepare students for civil service examination' (ibid:204), a purpose closely related to that of Nesfield's book.

<u>Author</u>	Thomas Lewis	
<u>Book</u>	<i>Business Correspondence</i>	
<u>Year</u>	1956	
<u>Edition</u>	6 th Edition in 53 years	
		<u>Number of pages</u>
<u>Contents</u>	<i>General Hints on Business Correspondence</i>	29
	<i>Correspondence Between Business Houses and Customers</i>	95
	<i>Mail Order Letters</i>	15
	<i>Inquiring and Introductory Letters</i>	21
	<i>Letters Collecting Accounts</i>	13
	<i>Letters Dealing With Travellers</i>	9
	<i>Legal Letters</i>	129
	<i>Miscellaneous letters</i>	5

Table 4-2 – Thomas Lewis manual table of contents

Lewis's guide focuses particularly on Business Correspondence. He identifies the intended readership noting that the manuals is,

‘for the guidance of letter-writers who are concerned in or with business, whether as heads of organisations, as executives or correspondents, or as juniors desirous of expressing themselves to best effect’ (1956:iii)

More generally, he notes that the manual is for ‘the majority of writers who cannot rattle off their correspondence without difficulty (1956: 3). This seems in keeping with the relatively broad framing of the advice in manuals such as the late nineteenth century *Saxon’s Everybody’s Letter Writer, being a Complete Guide to Letter Writing* which was aimed at those who ‘in certain circumstances and from various unavoidable causes [have] a difficulty in expressing themselves in writing’ (1896:9)

Lewis’s guide follows much more in the tradition of the model letter book. The majority of the book taken up with example letters organised by seven broad letter types (*Correspondence Between Business Houses, Mail Order Letters, Inquiring and Introductory Letters, Letters Collecting Accounts, Letters Dealing With Travellers*⁸, *Legal Letters*, and *Miscellaneous Letters*) which are then broken down into a range of scenarios (e.g. ‘offer to exchange unsatisfactory goods’), some which are prefaced by short explanatory sections. However even for the category *Legal Letters* which contains 129 pages of model letters, only one page of guidance is provided.

In addition to this Lewis dedicates three pages (rather longer than the other manuals) to the layout of the letter, saying that ‘stress has been placed on the vital importance, not only of the actual *wording* of form letters, but on their mode of presentation’. (1956:iii)

⁸ ‘Travellers’ in this case seems to be used in the sense of traveling salesmen

<u>Author</u>	K. Graham Thomson	
<u>Book</u>	<u>How to write what to write</u>	
<u>Year</u>	1972	
<u>Edition</u>	9 th Edition in 11 years	
		<u>Number of pages</u>
<u>Contents</u>	<i>How to write a letter</i>	28
	<i>Your Job</i>	22
	<i>Matters of form</i>	30
	<i>Letters for various occasions</i>	15
	<i>Common grammatical errors</i>	5
	<i>Revising your grammar</i>	12
	<i>Proper prepositions</i>	6
	<i>Punctuation and special plurals</i>	5
	<i>Identifying countries</i>	4
	<i>Signatures of Bishops</i>	2
	<i>Officer's equivalent ranks</i>	1
	<i>Precedence</i>	1
	Reference Books	1
	<i>Abbreviations</i>	4

Table 4-3 – K Graham Thomson manual table of contents

K Graham Thomson introduces his writing guide by saying that it is intended to

‘provide help for those who are not accustomed to writing letters; information and guidance for those who wish to write letters well; and a useful office or home reference book’ (1972: 8).

Interestingly the summary on the back cover of the book reads slightly differently,

‘model letters are provided for those not accustomed to writing letters together with guidance for those who wish to write well’ (emphasis added).

There seems to be an implication in the cover description that less experienced writers are more likely to copy or at least follow the example of the model letters, whereas more experienced writers will use the book for more general rhetorical and style advice.

A large amount of the advice that he offers relates to forms of address. The majority of the first chapter 'How to Write a Letter' is dedicated to the appropriate forms of address to use in personal and informal letters. The following chapter, 'Matters of Form' is solely dedicated to addressing people whose position calls for some special style (1972:7). Thomson advises that the use of the correct forms of address is a crucial matter of good manners, writing 'where there are established forms of addressing certain people, it is rude and churlish to ignore them, or to use the wrong form' (1972:71). The 'Matters of Form' chapter outlines the proper terms of address for a variety of people in descending order of social elevation, from royalty, through hereditary titles, non-hereditary titles, politicians, decorated individuals and orders of chivalry.

4.2.3. General advice

In describing personal correspondence, Nesfield stresses the importance of, 'the rules of neatness, accuracy, legibility, good composition, and, above all, good grammar' (1917: 170). Likewise in Lewis's grammar the importance of good grammar is emphasised with reference to an example of a split infinitive advising that 'even when correct grammar is out-dated by modern usage, one can never go wrong by being right!' (1956:13)

Nesfield makes the distinction between personal and business communication, writing that,

'The composition of a business letter is different from that of a private one: (a) it is more formal and more carefully worded; (b) it limits itself strictly to the business in hand, and deals with it in the fewest and plainest terms.' (1917:191)

He also makes the distinction between public and private business letters.

(a) 'A private business-letter is one written to or by some man in his business capacity, and not as a private friend;; and the letter may be addressed either to an individual or to a company...'

(b) 'A public business-letter (more commonly known as an "official" letter) is one written to or by any one in his official capacity. Such a person may be either holding some public office, or representing some important public association.'(1917:190)

In contrast to his guidance on personal correspondence, general guidance regarding business letter composition is scarce. The appropriate terms of address are dealt with, and an example

structure of a business letter is provided along with model letters. The one other piece of advice he gives is that, 'sometimes, to save time, the use of the first and second persons is avoided altogether, and only the third person is used' (1917:192). Nesfield does not specify how such an approach saves time though the implication is that such an approach simplifies the question of how authors refer to themselves and others. This is not a matter that Nesfield deals with in relation to business letters. However, some of these issues are addressed in relation to personal correspondence. For example Nesfield notes,

'The frequent use of "I" has a bad effect and looks egotistical. This can often be avoided by giving a fresh turn to the sentence or by dispensing with the pronoun altogether in some sentences.'

Thus, for "I think," etc., you can say "It strikes me" (me being a more modest form of the pronoun than I)' (1917:169)

Lewis makes use of the preface of his book to stress the importance of clarity and brevity. This is in keeping with the wider twentieth century letter instruction climate as explored in Section 2.5 wherein the need for a plain style was emphasised. He also directly addresses criticisms of this 'modern' style writing,

"Letter writing has been described as a "lost art"...lost, we are told since the close of the nineteenth century. If by this is meant that grandiose and stately phraseology has been replaced by the clarity and brevity of modern diction, we are prepared to accept the statement, whilst assuring ourselves that the old order of letter-writing would be very much out of place in the hurry and bustle of life to-day" (1956:iii)

While acknowledging that it is difficult to provide one-size-fits-all guidance for all types of letters, Lewis discusses the appropriateness of different lengths of letter then stresses the importance of a logically organised argument. He advises that it should,

'increase with intensity with each succeeding sentence in much the way as a symphony gains strength and is concluded in one triumphant burst of applause provoking harmonious sound' (1956: 12-13).

Generally, though, this sort of rhetorical advice is kept to a minimum. Lewis also makes reference to the need to produce 'suitable' as opposed to 'stereotyped' replies, which he argues are 'all too common in those business houses whose quest for speeding-up their correspondence outweighs their preparedness to deal with each letter on its own merits' (1956:3). There is an implication that these sort of pre-prepared responses fail to take seriously the concerns of the other person involved in correspondence. Perhaps then remembering that his guide is primarily made up of model letters he goes on to say

‘that is not to say that the letter-writing is under the necessity of using new phraseology in each case, for there is only one *best* way of conveying a message, and there is no reason why well-chosen phrases or paragraphs (or even whole letters) should not be used over and over again’ (1956:4)

Another principle outlined by Lewis is ‘The Importance of Tact’. He goes so far as to say that in composing a business letter

‘the watchword should be tact-and still more tact-and the best way to write a tactful letter is to disguise the fact that the writer is endeavouring to be tactful; for, where tact is “laid on with a trowel”, the letter simply defeats its own object, and leaves the bad impression that its writer is merely endeavouring to curry favour, or cover up his shortcomings, by the use of honeyed words’ (1956:4)

Lewis indicates that the production of business correspondence, particularly the sales and circular letters he is primarily concerned with, involves quite a complex and perhaps not entirely honest negotiation of personal relations. This is reflected in the eight principles of business letter writing outlined by Lewis in the ‘the Phraseology of the Business Letter’ section of his guide,

- “1. Don’t use the first person (“I”) when it is possible to use the second person (“You”)
2. Don’t be familiar but avoid being too formal
3. Don’t use hackneyed forms of wording
4. Don’t use bad grammar if it can be avoided without seeming pedantic
5. Don’t use a long word when a short one conveys the same meaning
6. Don’t use slang or be “freakish,” but try to be original as far as good taste and dignity allow
7. Don’t use technical or trade terms unless it is known that the person being written to is fully conversant with their meaning
8. Don’t make the letter too long to be read throughout, or too short to convey the full message.” (1956:9)

Neither of the other two letter writing manual authors outlines the principles of writing in this way. Many of these features are in keeping with the idea that business correspondence should be expressed in a plain style. Some, such as the avoidance of first person, we have seen previously in Nesfield’s recommendations for personal letters as a way of not seeming egotistical and simplifying the interpersonal dimension of correspondence. Though this list is very prescriptive, particularly in the way in which it is phrased as a series of prohibitive statements, it is interesting that it also warns against certain more conservative forms (being ‘too formal’ and ‘pedantic’) as well as allowing for some degree of originality. This is in contrast to Nesfield’s grammar and the nineteenth century manuals discussed in Section 2.5 which have tended to err on the side of conservatism.

Thomson distinguishes three different types of correspondence, *personal*, *business* ('between a business man or company and another'), and *official* ('between any private person and an official body'). He argues that all types of correspondence share four main characteristics, 'the first of these is the observance of the ordinary rules of good conduct: truth and honest, courtesy and tact' (1972:11). Secondly he stresses the importance of 'sincerity and simplicity', and argues that 'any kind of pomposity is entirely out of place' (ibid). Finally he argues for the importance of using the appropriate style, style in this case being linked to situational propriety, the example he cites is that you would not send a love letter to a managing director.

As with Lewis's guide there is something of an emphasis on plain language, courtesy and tact. 'Sincerity' is an interesting quality in this context. The only time it has been flagged up elsewhere in the literature surrounding letter writing manuals is in Dierk's (1999) examination of the rise of eighteenth century familiar letter guides. He argued that guides for familiar writing stressed 'heartfelt sincerity' over the 'strict formality' of business letter manuals (ibid:34). It is hard to know if this 'sincerity's appearance in Thomson's manual is due to the influence of familiar letter writing guidance on business letter writing guidance, or simply a product of Thomson dealing with general advice for both types of correspondence together.

Model letters are provided in Thomson's manual though he does discourage wholesale copying, saying that the models are included 'to illustrate the guidance given', and that 'a letter is essentially a personal production, and mere copying deprives it of its reality as an expression of the writer's personality' (1972:8). He also argues that authenticity should take precedence over artificial practiced phrases. In keeping with this, Thomson's grammar dedicates relatively little space to model letters. Overall his general advice combines the typical early twentieth century focus on a plain style with other elements which seem more in keeping with the sort of advice historically given for personal letter writing.

4.2.4. Terms of Address

4.2.4.1. Opening formulas

Nesfield's (1917) advice regarding opening formulas is divided into separate sections for personal and professional correspondence. In terms of personal correspondence he provides extensive guidance, with the appropriate terms of address determined by the degree of intimacy between author and recipient. He describes this cline in descending order from most ('using the Christian name only') to least intimate ('*Dear*' followed by a title and surname e.g.

'*Dear Mr Dalton*'), with an option to use '*My*' as a way to indicate a level of intimacy beyond that indicated by the conventional form '*Dear*' (1917:168)

For business correspondence the rules are rather simpler. He recommends the following,

"If the business letter is of the class (a) (private), the form used in addressing an individual is Sir or Dear Sir, or (if the addressee is a clergyman) the form can be expanded, (though this is hardly necessary), to Rev. and Dear Sir, or simply Rev. Sir. The form used in addressing a firm or company is Sirs, or Gentlemen, or Dear Sirs (never Dear Gentlemen). If the business letter is of the class (b) (public), the form of salutation is invariably Sir; and the body of the letter commences with, "I have the honour to/" etc., or "I beg to," etc. (1917:190)

Recommending the invariable use of '*Sir*' for public business correspondence (as opposed to '*Sir*' or '*Dear Sir*' for private correspondence) suggests a need to present a strictly formal and official business relationship when the potential readers of the letter include those other than the specific recipient of the letter.

The use of surnames is sanctioned in the following note,

'Note - If the correspondents happen to be well acquainted with each other, the writer instead of saying Dear Sir may (if he prefers it) address the other person by his surname, as Dear Jones or My Dear Jones... In official correspondence such a letter is called "demi-official"' (1917:191)

So a degree of intimacy is accounted for in the guidelines, but even in allowing for these less official forms Nesfield draws on the distinction between personal and official, advising that using a recipient's name situates the correspondence somewhere between the two. It should perhaps also be noted that Nesfield does not sanction the use of the recipient's first name in any circumstances in official correspondence.

Nesfield's guide also contains a footnote which is interesting in terms of the general trend towards a decline in deferential language and honorific terms of address. The footnote is aimed at 'subordinates writing for some private purpose to an official superior'. He advises that,

'there is no occasion to write Honoured Sir or Respected Sir. Whatever honour or respect is due to the addressee can be expressed by the tone in which the body of the letter is written.' (1917:169)

It seems that by this point certain deferential terms of address are not considered appropriate even for a scenario entirely characterised by the social distance between author and recipient.

Lewis introduces his discussion of terms of address by advising 'Fortunately, it is not very easy to go wrong in this matter when one is in England, and writing to English people' (1956:9). As a general rule he recommends the use of *Dear Sir*.

"General usage has sanctioned "Dear Sir," or "Sir," and "Dear Madam," or "Madam," as the recognised forms of address for business communications of any sort, except where the correspondents are on a more personal footing than characterises the ordinary business men and those to whom they write on business matters". (ibid)

He relates the use of *Sir/Dear Sir* to the hierarchical dimension between author and recipient, advising that the simple, more distant terms '*Sir*' or '*Madam*' should be used 'only where the persons addressed are of a somewhat higher standing than the writer'. He goes on to say 'although it is usually wise to err on the side of conservatism, care must be taken not to use the plain "Sir" heedlessly, as it rather formal and inclined to sound curt' (1956:10). Lewis also discourages the use of overly familiar forms, advising authors to avoid the 'largely American' practice of addressing customers 'Dear Friend', and likewise he advises against using recipients' surnames. He argues that these forms are, 'not justified unless a certain amount of business intimacy has been established; but here the letter-writer must be perfectly sure of his ground before addressing customers in the manner described' (1956:10)

Some consideration is given to addressing titled people and holders of offices. For Lewis, such recipients' relatively elevated status affords them additional consideration in the conventionally prescribed forms of address used. These established conventions are described in detail over four pages a little later in the book. Introducing these four pages Lewis writes 'the tendency in correspondence to-day is to avoid as far as possible the stilted and grandiloquent style of address of a past generation. Nevertheless, there are certain conventional courtesies which must be observed' (1956:21). So while there seems to be a move towards recommending just one or two official forms of address, there is still a need to recognise the elevated status of some addressees.

As Lewis's advice develops it seems *increasingly* 'easy to go wrong' when using terms of address. Authors should not be presumptuous or assume a level of intimacy with the receiver but should also balance this by not appearing too curt or distant. Even when considering as few as three forms of address, *Sir/Madam*, *Dear Sir/Madam* and *Dear Mr/Mrs*, each additional form brings with it a set of considerations regarding social distance that they express. It then

perhaps makes sense that his general advice is to use '*Dear Sir/Madam*', as it communicates some of the propriety and friendliness required in forming a business relationship.

Thomson also recommends the use of '*Dear Sir*' or '*Dear Madam*' in writing business and official correspondence, though unlike the others he comments on its conventional nature in the context of letter writing,

“Most forms of salutation begin with Dear, no matter whether you have affection, hatred, indifference, or contempt for the person you are addressing. It is a long established convention that everyone to whom you write is “Dear” to you” (1972:19)

In contrast to the other two manual authors he advises that a recipient's surname can be used in business correspondence, 'if the person to whom you are writing is someone with whom you wish to establish the 'personal touch' in business relations' (1972:20). It is notable that Thomson recommends the use of surnames as a tool for *establishing* a personal business connection, whereas Lewis who advised that surnames could only be used once, 'a certain amount of business intimacy has been established'.

However despite the recommendation of some forms which indicate social proximity, Thomson also advises against others. For example, regarding the use of '*My*' (as in *My Dear...*), he writes 'you need to be careful with the *My* forms because the *My* may be through to be patronising or even insulting' (1972:20). So it would seem that while there is a move towards the use of more familiar forms, there is also a simplification of some of these conventions.

4.2.4.2. Closing formulas

As with opening formulas, Nesfield pays much more attention to the rules governing closing formulas in personal correspondence than in business correspondence. For personal correspondence he notes that the terms used in a closing salutation are 'expressive of the degree of friendship or relationship existing between himself and his correspondent' and that 'the form of ending should always be in keeping with that of the salutation' (1917:172) He outlines the appropriate form that these salutations should take moving from most to least intimate, starting 'if he wishes to be very cordial, he can end his letter with yours ever, yours always, yours affectionately, yours very sincerely, ever yours sincerely.' He also notes that

‘The words *yours sincerely* (sometimes in inverted order, as sincerely yours), though less effusive, are suitable for any degree of friendship that is well established.’ (1917: 173).

This seems to back up Bijkerk's (2004) study which found that *sincerely* while originally a mark of social proximity came to be used in letters between authors with any sort of existing acquaintance). In terms of more distant forms suitable for personal correspondence Nesfield recommends,

'If the salutation has the more distant form of *Dear Mr. A.* or *My dear Mr. A.*, the corresponding ending should be *Yours truly*, or at most *Yours very truly*. After such a salutation as *Dear Sir*, the ending might be *yours respectfully*, or whatever will best express the feelings of the writer without making him appear to be too familiar.' (1917: 173)

Notably the air of caution here relates to being too familiar in personal correspondence rather than seeming too distant and formal (as we see in the later manuals). There seems to be an acknowledgement that some of the more elaborate forms of closing salutation, such as the repetition of the opening salutation, can be employed as a matter of taste in personal letters,

'If the salutation is repeated, as above, in the ending, it must be introduced by *I am*, or *I remain*, or *Believe me*, *my dear* ____, *to be*, etc. But there is no necessity to repeat the salutation' (1917: 173)

The conventions outlined for business correspondence are more limited and formal and are delivered as precept rather than suggestion,

'If the business letter is of a private character, the form of ending is *yours faithfully*, or in the case of a tradesman writing to a customer, *yours obediently*: such adverbs as *truly*, *sincerely*, etc., are not used.' (1917: 191)

The only other option offered is the form ending for official letters, which is:

*'I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant'*

The treatments of closing formulas by both Lewis and Thomson are rather more in keeping with present-day recommendations for the use of opening and closing formulas, i.e. that '*yours faithfully*' should be used for unnamed recipients and '*yours sincerely*' should be used for named recipients. On this point Lewis notes,

'the question as to whether "*Yours faithfully*" or "*Yours sincerely*" should precede the signature depends entirely upon circumstances, but in most instances "*Yours faithfully*" should be used in writing to complete strangers or to those with whom one is on merely formal business terms. It sometimes happens, however that a firm or person arrives at such a state of business relationship with a correspondent that the less formal "*Yours sincerely*" can be substituted' (1956:14)

As with the opening formulas Lewis recommends less formal terms only when the interlocutors have established a degree of social proximity.

The rules as outlined in Thomson are the least prescriptive, though he still notes the importance of matching the level of formality in the opening and closing salutations and outlines the various levels of formality attached to closing formulas, saying, 'the most general subscription is "Yours faithfully". Somewhat warmer than that is "yours truly". Still more cordial and friendly is "yours sincerely"'. (1972:25). There is an acknowledgement of the most deferential form recommended in the Nesfield manual (i.e. '*your obedient servant*'), though it is described as, 'a traditional ending which has nearly died out'. (ibid). In fact Thomson specifically advises against the use of this form in the job application context, noting that,

'For job applications there is no need to end your letter "your obedient servant" or "yours obediently". Until you are engaged, you are not the obedient servant of the person or company concerned' (ibid)

As with criticisms of jargon identified in O'Locker's study, the criticism of this closing is 'based on common-sense and literal reading of the words'. (1987:37)

4.2.4.3. Signatures

Nesfield offers no advice on signatures other than one should be written 'in a line by itself' (1917: 172). In the Caxton letter writing guide it is advised,

'it is always advisable that [the signature] be that of an actual person, signing in his own name or on behalf of another person. Just the words "The Manager" or "The Secretary" whether written in ink or typed, are "cold," and do not tend to bring the recipient closer to the writer' (1956:14).

This suggests the reason why we might expect signatures to remain largely the same while other formal features of business correspondence become more familiar, i.e. signatures are already very personal.

Thomson offers rather more guidance on the form that a signature should take, describing it as a situation-specific feature of letters. He advises that (1972:26) 'a personal letter will be signed in the manner in which you are normally known to the recipient', whereas 'the signature on a more formal personal letter will generally be more like the personal signature on a business letter i.e. your initials and surname, or the form of signature which you have chosen for a

business signature' (ibid:27) While this feature is in a sense of limited interest, Thomson suggests that it plays a role in how authors construct their letter writing identity.

4.2.5. Criticisms of 'hackneyed' forms

Lewis is perhaps the most vocal about 'hackneyed' forms. In his discussion of the various parts of the letter he characterises the opening sentence as 'probably the most important part of the whole letter' 1956:10). There is some suggestion that a letter should be attention-grabbing, but the main point emphasised here is that letter writers should avoid 'a hackneyed or stereotyped introduction'. He takes particular exception to the word 'beg', advising,

"above all things, avoid such hackneyed openings as "We beg to submit for your kind consideration" or "We are in receipt of your esteemed commands," for "begging" smacks of Uriah Heap-like servility, and "commands" are more applicable to the barrack square!" (Lewis, 1956:10)

The reference here to the Charles Dickens character Uriah Heep again sets up humble expressions as an insincere form.

Thomson gives similar advice with reference to the start of the letter. He advises that the most appropriate and frequently used opening sentences for letters are "In reply to your letter...", or "thank you for your letter...", or "further to my letter..." (1972:23). Just as Lewis had, Thomson highlights expressions that letter writers should avoid. For example,

"A word to avoid is *beg*, especially in such phrases as "I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter..." or "I beg to apply for the position advertised...". Nobody is a *beggar* nowadays and there is no need to put yourself in the position of appearing to be a very humble suppliant for favours" (1972: 24)

As we saw with Thomson's treatment of 'obedient servant' formulas, the criticism is based on a literal reading of the, by this point, conventional phrase. He goes on to identify other 'flowery artificial phrases that used to adorn business and professional letters and make them appear (to our eyes) insincere and unrealistic' (ibid:24). The particular examples that he provides are

1. "your esteemed favour to hand"
2. "thanking you in anticipation for future favours"
3. "Our Mr Jones will be at the disposal of your goodself on Wednesday next"
4. "Enclosed please find our letter of prices current"
5. "We are in receipt of your communication of even date and beg to thank you for the same"

The objections that Johnson raises regarding these phrases seem to relate again to a dishonest representation of the relationships of those involved. Of the use of the word 'favour' meaning letter (a form frequently criticised by manuals in O'Locker's 1987 study), he writes that 'such exaggeration in language does credit neither to its writer nor the recipient' (1972:24). Similarly of Example 3 of Thomson writes that the inclusion of the word *our* 'unnecessarily patronises Mr Jones' and that the use of "your goodself" is 'sheer nonsense...once intended to be either courtesy or flattery' (ibid).⁹

The second Example in the phrases listed above ('thanking you in anticipation for future favours') is criticised by Thomson on the basis that 'the craving for more orders is unworthy' (ibid). In addition to this, the form that this kind of closing takes (i.e. a participial phrase) is criticised by Lewis. He argues that, 'the final sentence in a sales letter should always contain some incentive to action' (1956:14) Going on to say,

"The use of a question will often be found successful, but the effect must not be spoilt by that atrocious finish which has been used for too long, "Awaiting the favour of your kind enquiry, when the matter will have our prompt attention" – ending with a comma...No experienced letter-writer today runs participial phrases into their signature' (ibid)

This characterisation of forms as defunct as way of criticising them is a popular one. However, as O'Locker notes in regard to criticised phrases in the manuals she surveyed, 'if the phrases were really defunct writers would not have to be warned against them' (1987:37).

Finally, another formal feature of letter writing, recommended in the Nesfield but heavily criticised in the manuals identified by O'Locker (1987), and again in Lewis and Thomson's manuals, is the use of Latin forms to indicate the date, i.e. "ultimo," "instant," and "promixo," meaning "last month", "this month" and "next month" respectively. Lewis argues that their presence in business correspondence '[though] founded on long usage, should be relegated to the past' (1956:14). These forms are also criticised in Thomson as being not only 'old fashioned' but also, in arguably something of a lapse of tone for a letter writing manual, 'stupid' (1972:22).

⁹ Thomson consulted two businesses when writing his book and they too express distaste for deferential language, advising that, 'we are put off by (1) all forms of flattery (2) all expressions of servility' (1972: 47)

4.2.6. Summary of letter writing manual analysis

The recommendations in the letter writing manuals examined here do seem to reflect the patterns noted by O'Locker (1987) and suggest that there was a general move away from deferential language in business correspondence in the twentieth century. The content of the manuals adds some interesting potentially explanatory detail to the consideration of these trends. In addition to the promotion of a plain style we see an emphasis on tact. There seems to be a feeling that deferent phrases are at least outdated, perhaps even dishonest. It may be that deferential language ultimately came to be thought of as a form of undisguised tact; that shows of respect and deference are undermined by their being seen to be performed. Where in Nesfield's book deferential phrases are taught as precept, in the two later manuals they are recommended only in very restricted circumstances if at all. It is also notable that some forms which only appear in advice regarding personal letters in Nesfield's manual are recommended for business correspondence in the later manuals. There is something of a move away from recommendations that err on the side of conservatism (for example only offering '*Sir*' or '*Dear Sir*' as options for business terms of address) towards advice in later manuals where familiar terms of address between interlocutors may be eventually earned, or even used to cultivate business relationships. However this familiarity is also simplified, with elements such as '*my*' in opening formulas, which had previously been used to add a degree of intimacy to opening formulas, falling out of favour.

Despite the move away from deferential language each manual still dedicates a sizable amount of space to listing the correct forms of address. However where Nesfield's grammar discusses in detail the appropriate forms for a range of social situations in terms of personal letters, in the latter two manuals, the range of forms recommended is relatively small. Lewis and Thomson still place emphasis on the use of the appropriate terms as form of good manners, but generally the discussion is limited to the forms appropriate for titled people and is presented more as a list of conventions.

4.3. Overview of Quantitative Results

In the remainder of Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 I move on to consider the quantitative corpus findings, incorporating both the n-gram and keyword results. Before doing so I provide a quick summary of the quantitative results and how they were grouped.

4.3.1. N-grams

One hundred and twenty-seven n-grams occurring over 25 times in the *BTCC* were identified, using the Antconc corpus tool. These results were reviewed individually and sorted into groups of related n-grams. Of the 127 n-grams identified,

1. 17 n-grams relate to correspondence participants
2. 10 n-grams serve as an indication of topic
3. 25 n-grams relate to the chain of correspondence (e.g. “thank you for your letter”)
4. 15 n-grams are found in opening or closing salutations
5. 60 remaining n-grams do not neatly fit into the above categories and so were examined further as potential “style-markers”.

The n-grams which relate to opening and closing salutations and managing the chain of correspondence were used in the analysis of formal features in the *BTCC*. The 60 n-grams which were potential indicators of style were grouped according to the function they performed. This analysis has formed part of Chapter 6 – Corporate Actions. As the 27 clusters which were primarily indicators of topic did not appear to offer any insights into language change they have not been referenced in the following chapters.

4.3.2. By-decade keywords

Keywords, which is to say words that occur unusually frequently in a text (or collection of texts) when their relative frequencies are compared with a reference corpus, were generated using individual decade sub-corpora as the texts under investigation and the entire *BTCC* as the reference corpus (i.e. the point of comparison for the relative frequencies in the sub-corpora.) As a second step, the process was repeated using individual letter function categories as sub-corpora (See Section 4.3.3)

It would also have been possible to leave the sub-corpus under investigation out of the reference corpus, which would have given sharper results however the sub-corpora were kept in for a number of reasons. Firstly this was done as a matter of consistency. By leaving the sub-corpus in to generate keywords, each set of results reflect that sub-corpus’s relation to the

same reference corpus. If it were excluded the nature of the reference corpus would change for each set of results. Furthermore, this approach further focussed the analysis on only the most significant keywords as the results that were investigated were unusually frequent even taking into account their frequency in the reference corpus. There was a stronger case for excluding each sub-corpus from the reference corpus for the functional keyword analysis as, for instance, *Informative* (one of the ten functional categories used in the classification, See Section 3.6.4.) was by far the largest category of letter and so, as a sub-corpus, is more similar to the corpus as a whole than a smaller more specialised sub-corpus. However there was a practical issue in that a small but significant proportion of the letters were multifunctional. It would not be possible to exclude all *Informative* letters from the reference corpus without also excluding fifty-three letters of which *Informative* was a component function. Given the already relatively small amounts of data involved in this quantitative analysis, and in the interests of consistency and focusing on the most significant results as a starting point, it was decided that all of the functional sub-corpora should be included in the reference corpus.

As can be seen in Table 4-4 the keywords by-decade comparison provided a variety of keywords in the 99.99th percentile for log-likelihood significance.

Decade	# Keywords p < 0.0001	# Keywords p < 0.001	Total # Keywords	Total # Words
1850s-60s	12	24	343	3255
1870s	32	51	311	10684
1880s	19	30	241	2887
1890s	44	66	298	10363
1900s	33	53	303	12476
1910s	32	53	482	9860
1920s	19	41	367	13885
1930s	25	43	508	8129
1940s	11	28	603	11418
1950s	20	41	564	10032
1960s	28	54	295	9425
1970s	26	47	464	15643
1980s	40	70	371	14866
All Decades	341	601	5150	132923

Table 4-4 – Keywords by-decade in the 99.99th and 99.9th percentile for log-likelihood significance

It should be noted that in the few decades for which fewer than 20 keywords were identified at the top level of significance, the top 20 most key words were examined so that each decade

received the same base-line amount of analysis. These keywords were organised according to the categories outlined by Scott (2012). The distribution of these categories of keywords across decades is outlined in Table 4-5.

<i>Decade</i>	<i># Proper Nouns</i>	<i>% Proper Nouns</i>	<i>#“Aboutness”</i>	<i>% “Aboutness”</i>	<i># Style</i>	<i>% Style</i>
1850s/60s	4	19%	14	67%	3	14%
1870s	9	29%	20	65%	2	6%
1880s	9	47%	8	42%	2	11%
1890s	8	18%	23	52%	13	30%
1900s	9	27%	17	52%	7	21%
1910s	8	25%	17	53%	7	22%
1920s	6	29%	14	67%	1	5%
1930s	3	13%	20	83%	1	4%
1940s	4	20%	15	75%	1	5%
1950s	2	10%	18	90%	0	0%
1960s	2	10%	16	76%	3	14%
1970s	7	27%	17	65%	2	8%
1980s	9	23%	27	68%	4	10%
Overall	80	23%	226	66%	30	12%

Table 4-5 Keywords in the 99.99th percentile by decade

The majority of the keywords were indicators of ‘aboutness’. Many of these results were interesting in terms of topic but of limited linguistic interest and so (as we have seen in Section 3.7.5.2.) they formed part of the description of topic within the *BTCC*. The potential style-marker keywords have been examined in the discussions of the development of formal features in Chapter 4.3., and in discussions of corporate identity in Chapter 5.

4.3.3. By-function keywords

The by-function results were more problematic as relatively few results appeared significant in the 99.99th percentile (see Table 4-6). For some functions only two or three keywords were identified at this level.

Function	# Keywords p < 0.0001	# Keywords p < 0.001	Total # Keywords	Total # Words
Application	14	31	329	3887
Commissive	11	19	558	7876
Complaint	10	21	471	8518
Declination	9	18	460	9113
Directive	3	15	1037	25426
Informative	2	3	1051	61082
Notification	13	22	520	1700
Offer	2	11	783	16527
Query	8	18	608	10840
Thanking	2	13	304	2603
All Functions	74	171	6121	132923

Table 4-6 - Keywords by-function in the 99.99th and 99.9th percentile for log-likelihood significance

This highlights one of the problems in taking this approach to analysis in that, as noted above, *Informative* texts make up large proportion of the overall corpus and so in comparison to the wider corpus the general level of keyness is low. However this does not mean that there are not interesting trends in the corpus in terms of the ways in which information is conveyed. Conversely, a relatively large number of significant keywords were generated by the *Notification* sub-corpus, however the majority of these merely highlight the obvious features of the text i.e. that they are typically short and refer to the sending and enclosing of documents.

In order to explore the functional keywords further, the examination of the keywords by-function was extended to results which appeared significant in the 99.9th percentile. Furthermore, as with the by-decade analysis, at least twenty keywords were examined per letter function. The distribution of the resulting keywords by function can be seen in Table 4-7

<i>Function</i>	<i># Proper Nouns</i>	<i>% Proper Nouns</i>	<i># Aboutness</i>	<i>% Aboutness</i>	<i># Style</i>	<i>% Style</i>
Application	5	25%	9	45%	6	30%
Commissive	4	20%	4	20%	12	60%
Complaint	4	20%	10	50%	6	30%
Declination	5	25%	9	45%	6	30%
Directive	6	30%	7	35%	7	35%
Informative	4	20%	14	70%	2	10%
Notification	0	0%	11	55%	9	45%
Offer	2	10%	14	70%	4	20%
Query	7	33%	8	38%	6	29%
Thanking	1	5%	11	55%	8	40%
Overall	38	19%	97	48%	66	33%

Table 4-7 Keywords in the 99.9th percentile by function

While the keyword results by-decade appear at a lower level of significance, this approach does generate a higher proportion of potential style-markers. These results have been used in my examination of corporate actions in Chapter 6. All keyword results have been presented with information regarding the keywords rank and keyness level.

4.4. Analysis Two: How are formal features of correspondence expressed in the *BTCC*, and how does practice in the *BTCC* correspond to advice given in letter writing manuals of the relevant period?

4.4.1. Introduction

To answer the question of how formal features are expressed in the *BTCC*, and how practice in the *BTCC* corresponds to the advice given in letter writing manuals, I used n-gram and keyword by-decade results as a starting point, examining each quantitative result that related to opening and closing formulas or managing of the chain of correspondence. I then went on to carry out an examination of the <opener> and <closer> elements of every letter in the corpus. Results were considered in relation to the advice offered in the three letter writing manuals examined in Section 4.2., and findings from the letter writing manuals literature explored in Section 2.5.

The results here provide evidence of some of the wider trends noted in previous studies, namely the general move away from elaborate and deferent terms of address in professional correspondence, as identified in Palander-Collin (2011:98) and Dollinger (2008:282), and a simplification of negative politeness formulas (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg, 1995:569). Furthermore we also see some evidence of the cyclical nature of positive politeness in terms of address whereby new address forms emerge as expressions of social proximity but become routinized, and in doing so take on a degree of formality (as noted in Kytö and Romaine 2008, Bijkerk 2004).

Every n-gram quoted in these results is between three and six words long and appears more than 25 times in the corpus. Punctuation and line breaks were ignored. As outlined in Section 3.6 of this thesis, the length of n-gram (three to six) was picked to limit the effect of frequent bi-grams at the lower end while allowing for the possibility that there were frequent longer fixed phrases. Meanwhile the cut-off point of 25 occurrences was chosen following Michaela Mahlberg's (2013: 63) example, in that it ensured that there was a reasonable amount of data for the qualitative analysis while also limiting the number of results to a manageable level. Normalised frequencies are also provided to enable comparison with results from other corpora.

Every keyword analysed in this section has a keyness score (expressed in log-likelihood) in the 99.99th percentile for significance.

4.4.2. Openings formulas

Quantitative results that pertain to opening formulas

N-grams

Rank	Frequency	NF (/10,000 words)	N-gram
50	38	2.9	dear sir i
76	34	2.6	sir i am
117	26	2.0	dear mr preece

Table 4-8 - Opening formula n-gram frequencies in the BTCC

The n-gram results are not particularly revealing in terms of trends in opening formula use as only three forms are identified, although contrary to my initial concerns, the standardised nature of ‘*Sir*’ and ‘*Dear Sir*’ and the tendency for letters to start with first person pronouns means that ‘*Dear Sir*’ and ‘*Sir*’ are in fact picked up by an examination of three to six-word n-grams. If we look at the distribution of ‘*Dear Sir I*’ and ‘*Sir I am*’ across the whole corpus we see a something of decline in both (see Figures 19 and 20), suggesting that there might be a move away from these forms. However the n-gram results alone paint only a very partial picture.

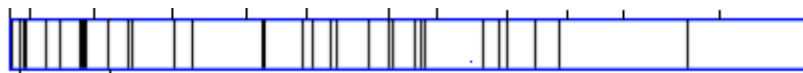


Figure 19 - 'dear sir I' distribution in the BTCC

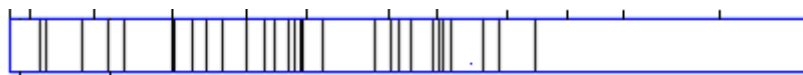


Figure 20 - 'sir I am' distribution in the BTCC

The influence of Marconi is also apparent in the frequency of ‘*Dear Mr Preece*’. William Preece was the Engineer-in-Chief of the Post Office in the 1890s and the person with whom Marconi most frequently corresponded. This n-gram’s frequency also points to the consistency with which Marconi addressed Preece. His opening terms of address do not become more familiar as time goes on, neither do they become more distant as the institutional distance between Marconi’s Company and the Post Office grows. While this may be of note in relation to Marconi’s dealings with the Post Office, it is not indicative of wider trends.



Figure 21 – ‘dear mr preece’ distribution in the BTCC

Keywords (keyness score indicated in brackets)

1870s – *My, Lord* (17.381)

1890s – *Mr* (18.250)

1960s – *Mr* (22.199)

The keywords that appear in the 99.99th percentile for log-likelihood significance are not hugely revealing in relation to opening terms of address. *My Lord* appears key largely due letters addressed to *Lord* John Manners who was the Postmaster General in the 1870s and also a member of the British gentry. The keyness of *Mr* in the 1890s points to the frequent use of the opening salutation ‘Dear Mr Preece’ by Marconi as noted in the n-gram results. Its keyness in the 1960s suggests that named recipients in opening formulas may have become more frequent by that decade. However, overall the corpus-based results for opening formulas seem to point more to the correspondence of particular recipients than wider trends.

Examination of <opener> elements

General Trends

To get a wider sense of the opening formulas used in the BTCC I examined each <opening> element and compared their frequency over the fourteen decades of the corpus. A summary of the frequency of the most popular forms can be seen in Figure 22 (for a detailed account of opening formulas see Appendix 6)

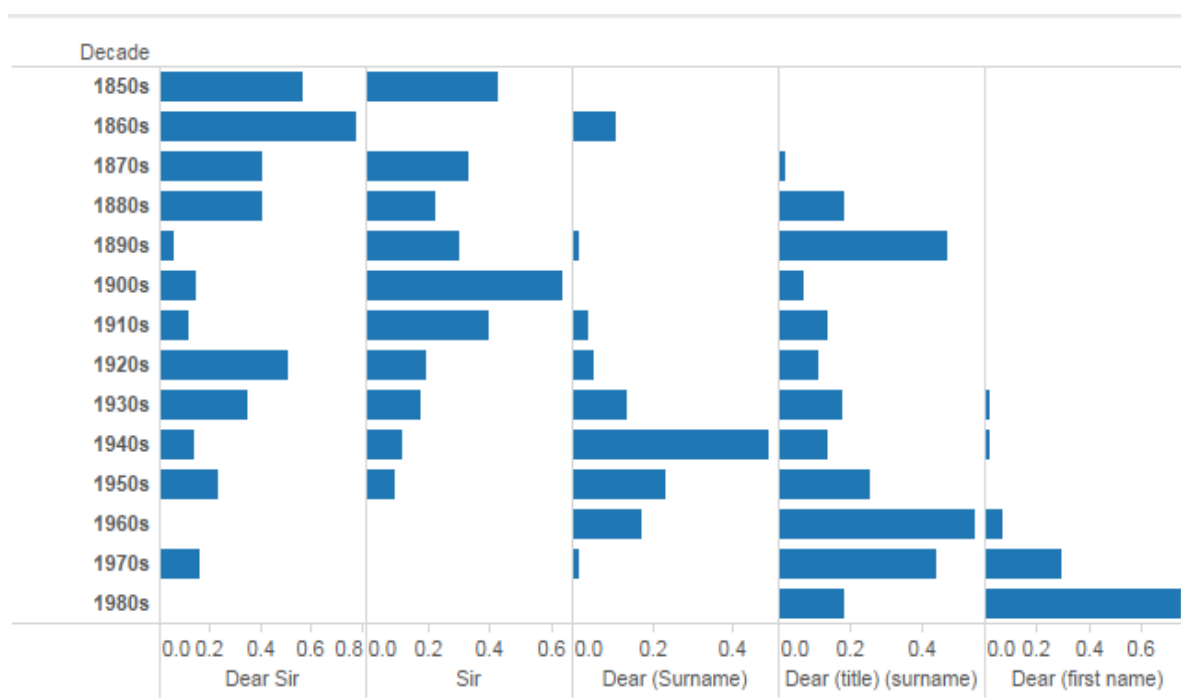


Figure 22 – The most frequent opening salutations in the BTCC per decade (as a percentage of all opening salutations used in that decade)

In the corpus overall, ‘*Sir*’, ‘*Dear Sir*’, and ‘*Dear [Title] + [Surname]*’ are by far the most popular terms of address, used 122 times, 135 times and 132 times respectively. Over the period represented by the corpus there is a clear shift away from the use of *Sir* and (to a lesser extent) ‘*Dear Sir*’ in favour of terms that make use of the recipient’s name, firstly ‘*Dear + [Title] + [Surname]*’ (a form that peaks in popularity the 1960s as indicated by the keyword results), then ‘*Dear + [First Name]*’ which is the most frequent term of address in the 1980s by some distance. This trend is not entirely consistent however. As we have already seen Marconi’s use of ‘*Dear Mr Preece*’ makes the form ‘*Dear + [Title] + [Surname]*’ the most frequently used opening formula in the 1890s. Perhaps more interestingly, the most distant form ‘*Sir*’ is more popular than ‘*Dear Sir*’ during the 1890s, 1900s and 1910s. Given the overall direction of travel towards more familiar terms I examined these decades further to see if social distance between interlocutors or the nature of the correspondence might have influenced the choice of ‘*Sir*’ over the increasingly standard ‘*Dear Sir*’.

Formality and Social Distance

Social distance in the corpus can be quite difficult to measure because of the number of individuals and companies involved. However using the available metadata I examined the professional status of all of the authors and recipients for letters in the BTCC where the

opening salutations *Sir* or *Dear Sir* were used and I could not see a particular correlation between the institutional rank of the authors and their choice between *Sir* and *Dear Sir*. Both forms are used by apparently institutionally superior authors to inferior authors and vice versa, and both are used in letters from within and from outside of the General Post Office. However there are circumstances surrounding particular sets of correspondence that do seem to affect terms of address.

One potential contributing factor is the difference between 'public' and 'private' correspondence. According to Nesfield's distinction, a 'private' letter is any letter written by someone in their business capacity (i.e. not as a friend) to another individual or company, whereas a 'public' letter is written by the author in their official capacity as representative of an important public office or association (1917:190). While this might not be the clearest of distinctions, the essential difference between 'private' and 'public' correspondence as outlined in Nesfield seems to be the representation (in 'public correspondence') of an official position of an institution rather than an individual. In terms of how this distinction affects the forms used, Nesfield advises that '*Dear Sir*' and '*Sir*' are both appropriate for public or private letters, but that public letters must start with the form of address '*Sir*' (1917:190). Unfortunately it is rarely made explicit in the text of the letters in the *BTCC* whether the correspondence is public or private. There is, however, an interesting chain of correspondence which seemingly contains both private and public correspondence and for which this distinction has a clear impact on the terms used.

In an exchange in the 1900s George Franklin, President of the National Telephone Company, corresponded with Sir Henry Babington Smith, Secretary to the Post Office, regarding the terms of the Post Office's takeover of his company. The legal and negotiatory nature of this correspondence is reflected in his use of the more distant form '*Sir*'. However, Franklin also addresses a number of letters in the same exchange using the formula '*Dear + Sir + [First Name] + [Surname]*' ('*Dear Sir Henry Babington Smith*' and '*Dear Sir Henry*'). The letters in which Babington-Smith is referred to by name are more direct in terms of expressing dissatisfaction with negotiations. It seems likely that these more direct letters with a named recipient were private, while the more formal letters beginning '*Sir*' were public. The difficulty in maintaining these dual professional personalities is commented on by Franklin within the exchange when he writes,

'It does not seem to me to be possible to continue working two policies - one the strictly official attitude by which both the Department and the Company in view of the arbitration must stand on their legal rights, and the other the policy of friendly conference with a view to seeing what can be done to meet difficulties which will surely arise under the transfer. These two lines of action are I think inconsistent with each other, and sooner or later may result in a rupture, which would be regrettable.'
(1909_03_18_GF3_HBS)

There is another letter in this period in which the author strikes an awkward balance between professional and personal forms of address. In 1903_01_12_OL_AC, Oliver Lodge uses the form '*Dear Mr Austen Chamberlain*'. This is the only time that the form '*Dear + [Title] + [First Name] + [Surname]*' appears in the corpus. In this letter Oliver Lodge, who had an ongoing patent dispute with Marconi regarding a tuning device, wrote to Austen Chamberlain, the Postmaster General and a personal friend of Lodge's (Hills, 2002:98), to warn him against the Marconi Company's attempts to secure an exclusive wireless telegraphy licence with the Post Office. Lodge's use of Chamberlain's title and full name and '*Believe me, Yours Faithfully*' is more formal than we might expect for a communication between friends. However, as the letter relates to a legal matter in which Lodge has a personal stake, the use of more formal terms could be an attempt to maintain the official air of the 'scientific statement of the position for your information' Lodge claims this letter to be.

Another possible reason for a higher level of *Sir* in the 1890s, 1900s and 1910s is the large number of letters from branches of the British military, who seem to favour this form. We might expect correspondence from military institutions, for which institutional hierarchy and proper procedure are of paramount importance, to retain more conventional forms of address for longer. There is an interesting example in terms of this discussion written by Winston Churchill when he was First Lord of the Admiralty in 1913 (1913_02_15_WSC_HS2). He addresses his letter to '*My dear Postmaster General*'. This is an unusual form in the BTCC, appearing only twice, both times from military authors. Their use of '*Postmaster General*' as an address term suggests a certain mindfulness of rank even when corresponding with recipients with whom they are closely acquainted (as is suggested by the familiar '*My*' in the opening formula and signing off with the familiar closing '*Yours sincerely*', which in Churchill's case is intensified with '*very*').

There is of course an increase in correspondence with military institutions again in the 1930s and 1940s preceding and during the Second World War. However by that time the preferred

terms of address in opening formulas in letters from military authors in the *BTCC* seems to be *Dear+[Surname]*.

Familiar forms and social proximity

As can be seen in Figure 22 there is a definite trend towards the increased use of names in opening salutations. ‘*Dear [First Name]*’ is not offered as an option by any of the letter writing manuals examined in Section 4.2. However it appears in the *BTCC* from the 1960s, initially accounting for 4% of the overall salutations used and then increasing to 30% in the 1970s and 76% in the 1980s. This seems like an unusually sharp rise, particularly as the 1970s data is heavily skewed towards the end of the decade and the 1980s data only covers the years 1980-2. The rapid nature of the rise may in part be due to two authors, Kenneth Baker and Sir George Jefferson, who are the best represented authors of the decade writing seventeen letters between them, mostly to each other. However, even if you were to remove these two authors’ letters from the analysis, ‘*Dear [First Name]*’ would still account for 59% of the opening salutations in the 1980s. So this does seem to be a genuine rise in popularity in the general population of the corpus during this decade.

‘*Dear [First Name]*’ sits in a strange place in terms of formality as it is more familiar than any of the opening salutations recommended for business use earlier in the century, however dropping ‘*My*’, which disappears from the corpus in 1962 and was characterised by Thomson as providing an incremental degree of informality (1972:20), from the formula makes it more formal than most of the greetings recommended by Nesfield for personal letters (see Table 4-9). As we have seen Thomson warns that the use of ‘*My*’ ‘may be thought to be patronising or even insulting’ (1972:20). *Dear [First Name]* expresses familiarity without identifying degrees of personal relationship.

Suitable for personal letters					Suitable for professional letters				
Informal -----Formal									
most intimate	Intimate	Military	more formal	<i>Dear [First Name]</i>	most formal	“Demi-official”	Private		Public
My dear [First Name]	My dear [Surname]	My dear [Title]	My Dear [Title_ Surname]		Dear [Title_ Surname]	Dear [Surname]	Dear Sir	Sir	

Table 4-9 - Positioning *Dear [First Name]* in relation to Nesfield's guidelines

This relative simplicity may be a reason for its popularity. Just as Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg argued that the routinized forms '*Sir*' and '*Madam*' became popular partly as they 'reduce the complexity of social interaction and minimise the risk of face loss on the part of the writer.' (1995: 588), so does referring to a recipient using simply the standard greeting '*Dear*' and their first name.

Consistent/Developing Use of Openers

As well as considering the occurrence of individual forms in the wider context of the corpus I examined, where possible, instances where there are multiple letters from one author to see whether authors are consistent in the way that they address recipients or whether they employ different terms of address to different authors. I also wanted to see whether terms of address become more familiar as correspondence chains develop.

There are eighty-five known authors who write more than one letter in the corpus. Among these authors there are fourteen who display some sign address terms becoming more familiar over a correspondence chain. However in the majority of cases (51 out of 85) authors maintain the same opening formula, both in multiple letters to the same person, and in letters to different addressees. This suggests that these authors have preferred terms of address for business correspondence. Some of the consistently used terms are a mark of close individual relationships, e.g. Llewellyn Preece's use of '*My dear Father*' in two letters to William Preece. However the most popular consistently used terms among these eighty-five authors mirror to a large extent the trends identified in the wider corpus, with '*Sir*', '*Dear Sir*', '*Dear + [Surname]*', then later '*Dear + [Title] + [Surname]*' and finally '*Dear + [First Name]*' the most frequently used.

Twenty out of eighty-five authors use different terms of address in their opening formulas depending on the recipient, such as Christian Berridge, a Clerk at Essex County Council who addresses the Postmaster General as '*Sir*' in the letter 1959_12_16_CB2_## but a local Member of Parliament as '*Dear Sir*' in 1959_12_16_CB2_ABH. There are other instances where purely practical elements affect this variety in address, such as addressing a 'titled person' or multiple addressees, as did J.C. Hooper from the Ministry of Labour when addressing 'The Cable Company', using the term *Gentlemen*. It is notable however that very few letters are addressed to or from multiple persons.

4.4.3. Managing the Chain of Correspondence

Letter openings

Another area of interest highlighted by the n-gram results is the way in which authors manage the chain of correspondence, i.e. referring to previous correspondence and positioning the current letter within the chain. Twenty-five of the n-gram results relate to this aspect of letter writing, though due to the formulaic nature of the phrases that perform this function there is quite a lot of overlap in these results. Nevertheless they do offer some insights into the changing way in which authors refer to their own and their correspondent's letters.

Rank	Frequency	NF (/10,000)	n-gram
2	162	12.2	your letter of
4	122	9.2	of the th
5	114	8.6	letter of the
12	90	6.8	letter of the th
18	81	6.1	thank you for
19	81	6.1	your letter of the
20	78	5.9	for your letter
21	78	5.9	you for your
22	66	5	thank you for your
23	64	4.8	for your letter of
24	64	4.8	your letter of the th
25	61	4.6	a copy of
27	57	4.3	you for your letter
28	56	4.2	with reference to
29	53	4	thank you for your letter
31	51	3.8	to your letter
36	47	3.5	you for your letter of
38	45	3.4	Thank you for your letter of
46	41	3.1	to your letter of
59	36	2.7	In reply to
64	35	2.6	copy of the
87	31	2.3	letter of th
88	31	2.3	on the th
92	30	2.3	reply to your
97	29	2.2	of your letter
106	28	2.1	reference to the
118	26	2	in reply to your
125	26	2	to your letter of the

Table 4-10 - Managing the chain of correspondence n-gram frequencies in the *BTCC*

Most generically we find ‘your letter of’ to be the most frequent cluster relating to the chain of correspondence, further down the list we start to see other n-grams which combine with ‘your letter of’ to form letter openings, such as ‘*thank you for*’, ‘*with reference to*’, ‘*in reply to*’ and so on. Each of the results in Table 4-10 was examined for notable increases or decreases in frequency. Looking at the concordance plots for ‘*thank you for your*’ and ‘*with reference to*’ in Antconc it is possible to see a degree of diachronic change in their distribution in the corpus, with a decline in frequency ‘*reference*’ n-grams, and an increase ‘*thank you*’ n-grams (see Figures 23 and 24)



Figure 23 - ‘Thank you for your’ distribution in the BTCC

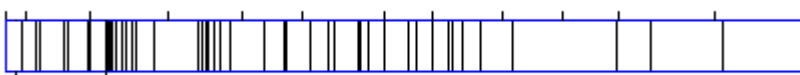


Figure 24 - ‘with reference to’ distribution in the BTCC

These n-grams suggest an increasingly positively polite manner of addressing the recipient regarding previous correspondence. As we move through the timeline of the corpus the opening move is more likely to be ‘*thank you for your letter*’, even when the author is expressing some element of dissatisfaction with that letter as in 1982_03_25_GJ_PJ in which Sir George Jefferson, the then Chairman of British Telecom, clarifies a number of points that he feels Patrick Jenkin, the Secretary of State for Industry, had failed to address properly in his previous letter.

The ‘*thank you*’ opening is also responsible for one of only two 6-word n-grams to appear more than twenty-five times ‘*thank you for your letter of*’ which accounts for forty-five of eighty-one overall occurrences of ‘*thank you for*’. The fixedness of the phrase suggests that this becomes a rather formulaic way of opening a letter.

Of the other openings recommended by Thomson, i.e. ‘*in reply to*’ and ‘*further to your letter*’ (1972:23), ‘*in reply to*’ becomes much less frequent as time goes on, appearing for the last time in 1969. Perhaps surprisingly, and in slight contradiction of the general trend towards more positively polite formulae, the more formal ‘*further to your letter*’, while much less frequent than ‘*in reply to*’ and ‘*thank you for*’ overall, appears with increasing frequency in the final three decades. It seems to primarily be used when attaching documents, e.g.

‘Further to our recent exchange of messages, I enclose two meeting reports...’
(1982_10_27_SR_P#)

So this may be a relatively rare form that survived to serve a particular purpose (just as ‘please find attached’ survives in email discourse).

Ultimo. Instant. Proximo.

Rank	Frequency	NF (/10,000)	n-gram
89	31	2.3	the th instant
114	27	2	of the th instant

Table 4-11 - ‘instant’ n-gram frequencies in the BTCC

Among the forms that received most criticism both in the manuals examined in Section 4.2. and O’Locker’s large scale survey of letter writing manuals (1987:30) were the Latin terms ‘*Ultimo*’, ‘*Instant*’ and ‘*Proximo*’ (meaning ‘last month’, ‘this month’ and ‘next month’ respectively (Lewis, 1956: 13-14)).

‘*Ultimo*’ appears in the BTCC twenty-four times. With only one exception it is used to refer to a previous letter or document. The abbreviated form ‘*ult.*’ is also used, though less frequently. Again, all but one example refer to a previous letter. The final examples of ‘*ultimo*’ and ‘*ult.*’ occur in 1931 and 1930 respectively. The last example of an ‘*ultimo*’ form appears in a letter from Cable & Wireless employee Edward Wilshaw urging the organisation of an annual general meeting. The final example of the abbreviated form appears in a letter from a county council clerk, declining permission to install a sign advertising a telephone box.

‘*Instant*’ is the longest surviving of these three forms within the corpus, with the final example of ‘*inst.*’ occurring in 1946 in a letter sent by a staff engineer who worked with Marconi informing the recipient of his involvement in experiments and offering to provide further information, and the full form ‘*instant*’ surviving as late as 1979 from an author campaigning for a tax exemption for poor elderly customers. The language employed in this final author’s letters tends to have a distant and official tone which might partially explain his use of this older convention. ‘*Instant*’ occurs fifty-three times, and always refers to letters. ‘*Inst.*’ occurs thirty-eight times and (with one exception) is used to refer to previous letters.

‘*Proximo*’ does not appear in the corpus at all. Given that ‘*ultimo*’ and ‘*instant*’, are so strongly tied to the notion of previous letters within the corpus, it is not surprising that a form that refers to future events should have died out earlier. It is perhaps notable that the full versions of these forms survive longer than the abbreviated versions. There are other instances in the

corpus where the final instances of formal conventions are “correctly” realised, as we shall see in the next section in relation to repeated salutations in multi-part closing formulas (p.180).

Managing the close

Participial Phrases

The most common <closer> that occurs prior to the closing salutation is the participial phrase (e.g. *‘hoping for a favourable reply’*, 1879_03_21_LEB_HF). This is a form that is criticised in Lewis’s (1956) guide to business correspondence. It is also listed by O’Locker (1987:30) as having been in common use in business letters since 1836 and frequently criticised in writing manuals from 1908-1948. In the 1870s, 1880s, 1900s all of the <closer> elements take the form of participial phrases (see Table 4-12). There are no examples of these formulas in the first two decades but there is considerably less data for these decades.

Decade	% of letters containing extended <closer>	% of <closers> containing participial phrases
1850s	0%	n/a
1860s	0%	n/a
1870s	12%	100%
1880s	9%	100%
1890s	30%	71%
1900s	5%	100%
1910s	0%	n/a
1920s	11%	66%
1930s	10%	60%
1940s	6%	0%
1950s	12%	66%
1960s	12%	0%
1970s	16%	0%
1980s	18%	0%

Table 4-12 - Participial phrases in the BTCC

Participial phrases seem to become less common in the BTCC, bearing out to some extent Lewis’s claim that ‘no experienced letter-writer today runs participial phrases into their signature’ (1956:14). However there is also evidence that, albeit twenty years before Lewis’s criticism of the phrase, participial phrases certainly had been used by experienced writers. John Masefield, the poet laureate at the time wrote to the Postmaster General Sir Kingsley Wood in 1935 with the closing phrase,

*"With many thanks, and **hoping** that you will forgive my sending this unsigned,"*
(1935_06_05_JM3_KW)

This is somewhat complicated by the fact that elsewhere in the letter the author references having to 'leave home before [the letter] can be finished', and the signature is marked with 'pp' ("per procurationem" meaning 'by the agency of'/'on behalf of'), so it would appear that the act of writing the letter in this case was carried out by a scribe of some sort, be it a secretary or family member. Even taking this into account, however, the letter outlines Masefield's personal opinions on how best to judge the qualities of a person's voice (as guidance for competition to find the voice of the first Speaking Clock service) and so the content of the letter will presumably have been dictated to a large degree by Masefield. Furthermore it is unlikely that the scribe of the letter would have been inexperienced in writing, and so this is still an example of an experienced writer using participial endings.

The last examples of participial closers appear in the 1950s, with three uses of '*thanking you*' and one author writing '*Hoping that my application will be favourably considered*'. All four of these examples occur in job applications from authors from former British colonies. This may be an example of 'colonial lag', a term first coined by Marckwardt (1958) to describe the survival of more conservative forms and conventions in colonial varieties of English. As Hundt (2004a) explores, this is far from a straightforward concept. She argues that in some cases the use of conservative forms might represent an innovative post-colonial revival of a form rather than a lag. Furthermore as demonstrated in Krug's (2000) study of emerging modals in British and American English, colonial varieties may initially be more conservative with regard to the use of a given feature then become less conservative than British English as time goes on.

In the analysis of Corporate Actions it was found that closing phrases that put pressure on the recipient to act, such as participial phrases, are particularly typical of *applications* and *queries* (See Chapter 6). In the case of these final examples of the use of participial phrases in the *BTCC* it does seem to be a conservative use of language (rather than a post-colonial innovation), particularly as the same authors use other forms of conservative and deferential language in their letters. It is hard to know, however, whether these more conservative forms are used due to the effects of a colonial lag, or because the letters in question are job applications, a type of letter that typically requires a more formal tone.

Looking forward

In addition to the move towards positive politeness strategies suggested by the move from the *'in reference to your letter'* to the *'thank you for your letter'* openings, in the 1980s the word **'look'** is significantly key (22.179). *'Look'* is key in this decade because it is used by a variety of authors in variations on the phrase *'I look forward to hearing from you'*. Of the fifteen instances of *'look forward'* in the BTCC, eleven occur in the 1980s.

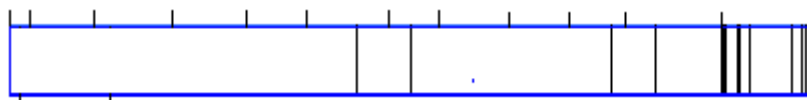


Figure 25 – ‘look forward’ distribution in the BTCC

Of the two occasions *'look forward'* appears prior to the 1960s one involves the author looking forward to the transatlantic telephone service and in the other the author looks forward to seeing the recipient. It is not until the 1960s that we see authors *'look forward'* to the recipient's response.

This form was previously found as occurring in 35% of the pre-close acts in a small corpus of modern business correspondence analysed by Nickerson (1999:132). With reference to Brown and Levinson's (1987) positive politeness strategies Nickerson classifies this move as 'being optimistic', though it might equally be deemed 'exaggerated interest' (ibid: 106) (which is also a positive politeness strategy). In either case the function of this strategy is a sort of indirect coercion to elicit a response from the recipient.

This is also an interesting politeness marker in terms of the discussion of familiar and distant forms, as the content of the utterance fits with the general move towards more positively polite and familiar forms of expression, however, the present simple form *'I look forward'* seems to me to be rather stilted. It is possible that the more colloquial progressive form *'I am looking forward'* does not appear at all in the BTCC due to earlier prescriptions regarding participial phrases in letter closers. Having said this, the one example of *'looking forward'* (minus 'I am') that does appear in the corpus is a participial phrase preceding a closing formula,

*"Looking forward to your early advices in this matter,
I beg to remain,
Yours very truly..."* (1926_12_29_RD2_##)

As with many of the features in the *BTCC*, more data is needed to get a clearer picture of how this strategy is used.

4.4.4. Closing formulas

4.4.4.1. Examination of <closer> element

A more complicated picture emerges of the letter closings, in part because closers are made up for more component parts. Each of these elements is considered below.

Multi-part closing salutations

Rank	Frequency	NF (/10,000 words)	n-gram
7	96	7.2	i am sir
10	90	6.8	am sir your
11	90	6.8	i am sir your
65	35	2.6	dear sir yours

Table 4-13 - Multi-part closer n-gram frequencies in the *BTCC*

Four of the twelve closing salutation n-gram results relate to multi-part closing formulas such as '*I am sir, your obedient servant*'. '*I am Sir*' is the seventh most frequent three-to-six-word n-gram in the *BTCC* overall but declines in frequency in the early-mid twentieth century (see Figure 26) and occurs for the last time in 1959.

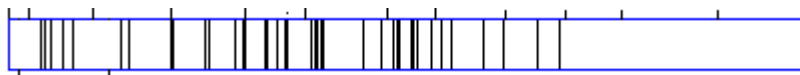


Figure 26 - 'I am Sir' distribution in the *BTCC*

In fact, there is a general decline in the use of multi-part closing formulas over the course of fourteen decades represented.

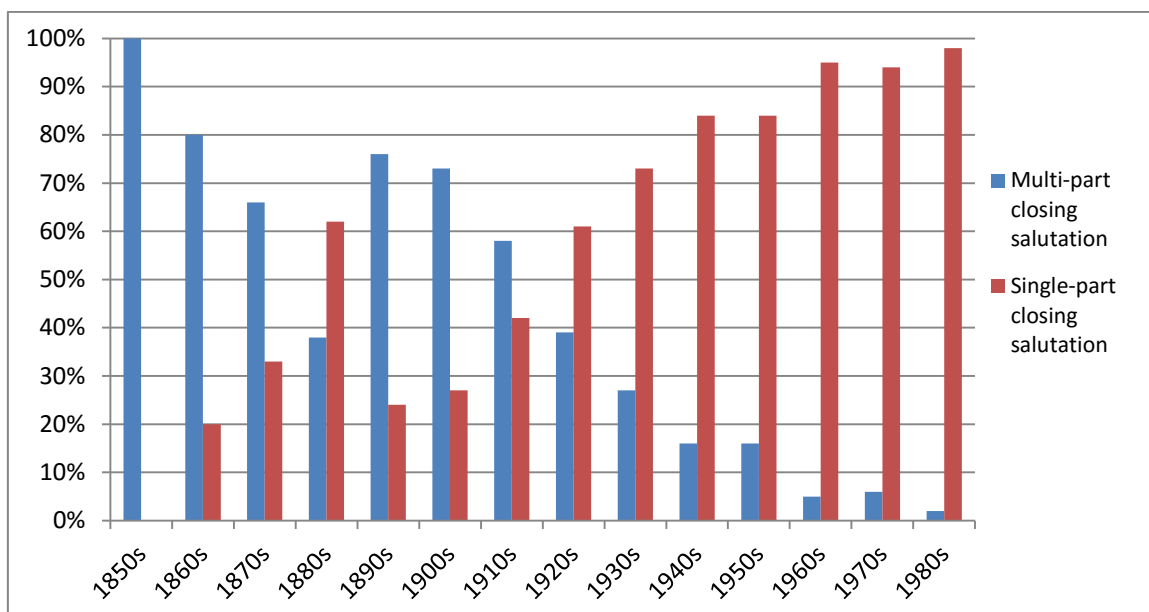


Figure 27 –Multi-part and single-part closing salutation percentages in the BTCC

It should be remembered that the 1850s and 1860s only contain eight and ten letters respectively so it might be a bit of a stretch to see this as a decline from 100% use of multi-part formulas to a 2% use. Even so, there is certainly an overall decline in the frequency of in multi-part closers and a corresponding increase in single-part formulas.

On a related point, the optional repetition of the opening salutation in the closing salutation (e.g. *'Dear Sir, I am...I remain, Dear Sir, Yours very truly...'*) also declines over the timeline of the corpus (see Figure 27). It last occurs in the corpus in 1959. A high proportion of the authors who use the multi-part formulas also seem to retain the repeated salutation even as overall use declines. Perhaps because this is a slightly more conservative form, those who make the effort to retain the convention are likely to retain it in its most technically “correct” and complete form.

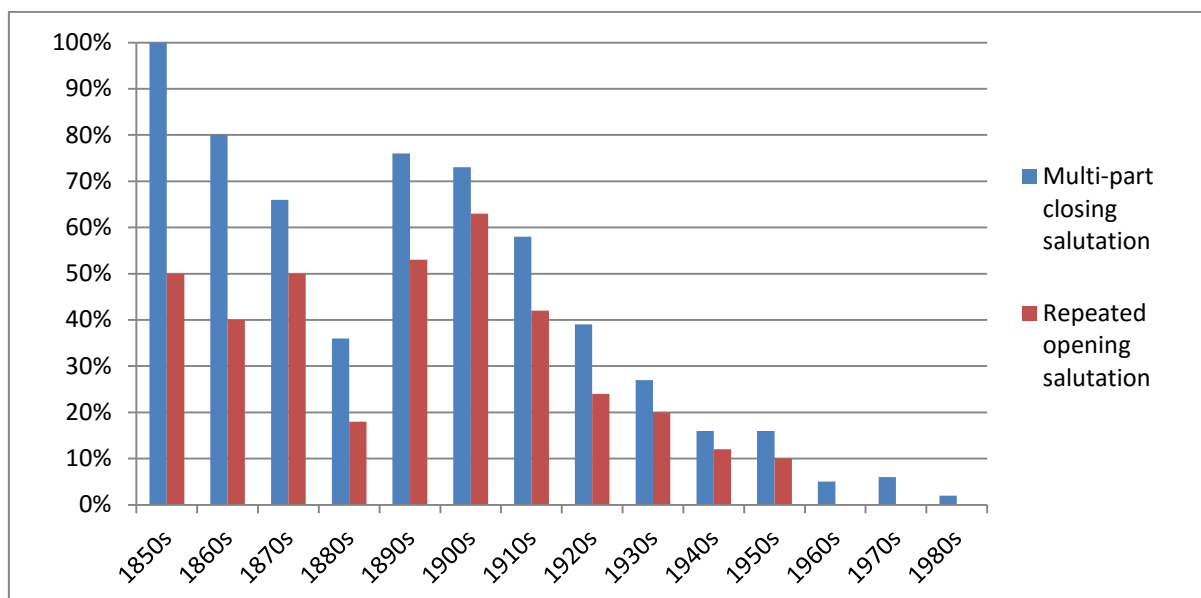


Figure 28 - Multi-part closer and repeated salutation percentages in the BTCC

Best wishes and kind regards

One of the main trends to have been identified in previous studies of historical terms of address is that positively polite forms which emerge as a way to indicate social proximity can become routinized and, as a result, more negatively polite (Bijkerk 2004). We see hints of this in the patterns in which *kind regards* and *best wishes* occur in the BTCC. ‘*Regards*’ formulas first appear in the corpus as part of Marconi’s familiar closing formulas, though his distinction between ‘*kind regards*’ as a cordial closing and ‘*best regards*’ as a very cordial closing suggests that ‘*kind regards*’ may already have already started to become a standardised as a familiar form by the late nineteenth century.

‘*Wishes*’ appears in the corpus a little later, and occurs more frequently in combination with other positively polite formulas. For example in 1957_10_14_SWS_KT a letter that starts with the rare familiar greeting *My dear Ken* the author raises a complaint about the cost of calling the emergency service then signs off the letter,

“*Best wishes,*
Yours sincerely,
Bill”

In this potentially very face-threatening letter it seems that the author includes these additional positively polite elements in the opening and closing formulas to maintain a friendly tone with a recipient with whom he is acquainted. In 1962 Leonard Jaffe from NASA employs a string of

positively polite formulas including *'good wishes'* and *'kind regards'* to close a letter arranging a meeting with the Post Office's Deputy Engineer-in-Chief,

'Please convey my good wishes to all of your colleagues.

With kind regards,

Sincerely...' (1961_03_29_LJ_CFB)

This is in keeping with the tone of the letters between the Post Office and NASA which are generally very cordial. *'Best wishes'* was also identified by Nickerson (1999:134) as indicating social proximity in a small corpus of late twentieth-century business correspondence. However by 1982 we see that *'Best wishes'* had also begun to be used as a more formal standardised form, as in two letters by Jonathan Soloman of the Department of Industry to the Heads of British Telecom, Cable and Wireless and Mercury, which are both public and negotiatory and yet use the formerly familiar *'Best wishes'* as a stand-alone closing formula.

The lack of data precludes any further conclusions on these forms but it would be interesting given a future expansion of the corpus to examine them in more detail, as they do appear to be in the ascendancy in the final decades of the corpus and have survived as closing forms through to present-day email communication.

Single part <closer> elements

Quantitative results that pertain to closing formulas

N-grams

The n-gram and keyword analyses provide more clues regarding patterns of use in closing salutations than they did with opening formulas, although, as with the chain managing n-grams, the formulaic nature of these closing elements leads to a degree of overlap in the results. Seven of the twelve results point to the formulaic closing, *'your obedient servant'*. The familiar formula *'yours very truly'* is also identified (See Table 4-14)

Rank	Frequency	NF (/10,000 words)	n-gram
6	104	7.8	your obedient servant
8	92	6.9	sir your obedient
9	91	6.8	sir your obedient servant
13	83	6.2	am sir your obedient
14	83	6.2	am sir your obedient servant
15	83	6.2	i am sir your obedient
16	83	6.2	i am sir your obedient servant
37	47	3.5	yours very truly

Table 4-14 - Frequent closing formula n-gram frequencies in the BTCC

As we have seen in the advice offered by Lewis (1956) and Thomson (1972) in their letter writing manuals, the '*obedient servant*' closer was increasingly seen as old fashioned in this period, and this seems to be reflected in a declining use of this formula observable in Figure 29.



Figure 29 - 'Your obedient Servant' distribution in the BTCC

While acknowledging this decline, we should also note that use of the '*obedient servant*' formulas was widespread enough in the earlier years of the corpus to make '*your obedient servant*' the sixth most frequent 3-6 word n-gram in the corpus overall.

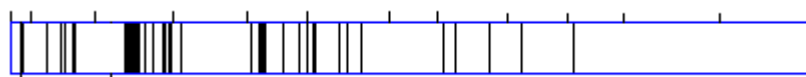


Figure 30 - 'yours very truly' distribution in the BTCC

The n-gram results also point to the decline in the familiar form '*yours [very] truly*' as increasingly '*sincerely*' formulas became the most popular (although the popularity of '*yours very truly*' in the 1890s may be exaggerated by its frequent use in Marconi's letters).

Keywords (keyness score indicated in brackets)

1880s – **Yrs** (17.606)

1890s – **truly** (15.575)

1960s – **Sincerely** (32.869)

As with opening formulas the keyword results only provide hints at wider patterns of change. However, they do identify more marginal forms which appear frequently in particular decades. The slightly abbreviated '*Yrs*' form, for instance, is used with '*faithfully*' in letter closings by

four separate authors in the 1880s. This is a relatively rare form and only appears in two further letters in the entire corpus, once in 1897 and once in 1926.

It is also notable just how key '*sincerely*' is in the 1960s. A significant proportion of correspondence in the 1960s took place between the Post Office and American institutions such as NASA and AT&T. The majority of the American authors in the 1960s favour the simpler closing form '*sincerely*' (as opposed to '*yours sincerely*' which is more frequent in the corpus in general).

4.4.4.2. Examination of the <closer> <salutation>

The frequencies of the five most popular closing formulas are arranged in Table 4-15 from least-to-most formal according to the advice offered in Nesfield (1917) regarding closing formulas (a full description can be found in Appendix 7). The most frequent form in each decade represented in the table is highlighted for clarity. It should be noted that these are standardised forms of the closing elements. Typically *Sincerely*, *Truly*, *Respectfully* and *Faithfully* are preceded by '*yours*', while Obedient Servant most often occurs in the formula, '*I am Sir, your obedient servant...*'

	less formal ----- more formal				
Decade	Sincerely	Truly	Respectfully	Faithfully	Obedient Servant
1850s	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (43%)	4 (43%)
1860s	0 (0%)	4 (40%)	0 (0%)	5 (50%)	1 (10%)
1870s	0 (0%)	14 (27%)	6 (12%)	13 (25%)	18 (35%)
1880s	2 (9%)	6 (27%)	0 (0%)	9 (41%)	5 (23%)
1890s	6 (12%)	19 (39%)	0 (0%)	7 (14%)	16 (33%)
1900s	1 (2%)	2 (5%)	0 (0%)	14 (34%)	23 (56%)
1910s	7 (14%)	11 (22%)	1 (2%)	7 (14%)	22 (44%)
1920s	10 (14%)	10 (14%)	3 (4%)	29 (40%)	16 (22%)
1930s	19 (37%)	4 (8%)	0 (0%)	19 (37%)	9 (18%)
1940s	35 (69%)	6 (12%)	0 (0%)	5 (10%)	5 (10%)
1950s	33 (65%)	3 (6%)	0 (0%)	11 (22%)	1 (2%)
1960s	49 (86%)	3 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
1970s	49 (98%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
1980s	33 (67%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Table 4-15 – Closing formulas distribution in the BTCC

Overall the patterns of use follow similar trends those we have seen in the opening formulas. There is a move away from the deferential '*obedient servant*' and negatively polite '*faithfully*'

forms towards the historically more informal '*yours sincerely*'. This move appears earlier than with opening formulas and authors seem to favour '*sincerely*' more conclusively.

Dollinger (2008:268) looked at words that occurred with servant in closing formulas. Of the three that he found (*humble*, *obedient* and *obliged*), '*humble*' was consistently the most frequent in his nineteenth century corpora. In the case of the BTCC '*obedient*' is the most common of the three, appearing in every *servant* formulation. '*Humble*' only occurs three times, each of these in combination with the superlative *most*. '*Obliged*' does not appear at all in this context. Only nine out of 116 instances of the '*servant*' formulas show any variation from the form '*I am, Sir, your obedient servant*'. In fact variation is rare within all closing formulas in the BTCC, perhaps reflecting a continuation of the simplification of negative politeness noted in Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1995:569). '*Servant*' forms disappear from the corpus in 1959. Incidentally the last five letters in which '*servant*' is used also contain the final five examples of the formal opening *Sir* and repeated salutation in the complimentary closer (e.g. '*I am, Sir...*').

Despite not appearing at all in the first three decades, '*yours sincerely*' is by far the most frequent closing formula in the BTCC as a whole, accounting for around forty percent of the total closing formulas used. The forms most frequently recommended for business communication, '*your obedient servant*' and '*yours faithfully*' each account for around twenty percent of formulas overall but are completely absent from the final three decades of the BTCC.

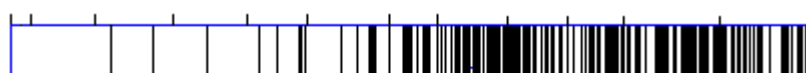


Figure 31 - '*yours sincerely*' distribution in the BTCC



Figure 32 - '*yours faithfully*' distribution in the BTCC

For the most part authors use closing formulas that complement the opening formulas so as opening formulas move towards named recipients, closing formulas change accordingly. However even where there is a slight increase in polite openers in the form of '*Dear Sir*' in the 1970s, the standard form of closing remains '*yours sincerely*', suggesting that it was an increasingly standard form across a range of professional contexts.

Consistent/Developing Use of Closers

Returning to the eighty-five authors for whom we have multiple letters and so can trace their use of closing formulas across multiple letters, we see a similar pattern to that identified in the opening formulas. Of the 85 authors, 56 use the same closing term in every letter whether writing multiple letters to the same recipient or letters to various different recipients. Sixteen authors employ different closing formulas depending on the recipient, and 13 authors use different closing formulas as a correspondence chain develops. Authors tend to use more familiar closing terms as they become better acquainted with the recipient, but we also see instances where the author chooses more distant terms when they are seeking to distance themselves from the recipient in some way.

For example, and turning again to the correspondence of Marconi there are two instances in which he uses more distant closing formulas in letters communicating his displeasure with a situation. In the letter (1897_09_01_GM_WHP) Marconi asks William Preece about the details of upcoming wireless telegraphy experiments at Salisbury Downs, concluding with a combination of deferent (*'I am, Sir'*) and cordial forms (*'yours very sincerely'*),

*'Pray let me know what
I better do about the experiments.
I remain, dear Sir,
Yours very sincerely
G. Marconi'*

By the time of the follow up letter Marconi has been excluded from these experiments uses the plainer and more distant *'Yours faithfully'*,

*'I hope this new attitude will not be continued, as otherwise very serious injury may be
done to my Company in the event of the non-success of the Dover experiments.
Yours faithfully,
G. Marconi' (1897_09_09_GM_WHP)*

Similarly two years later, preceding a public lecture to be given by William Preece, Marconi signs off a letter as follows,

*'Hoping to have the pleasure of being present in your lecture
I remain in great haste
Yours very truly,
G. Marconi' (1899_05_01_GM_WHP)*

However the lecture seems to have contained some contentious material as Marconi concludes the follow-up letter,

'With regard to your Society of Arts lecture, there are statements in it, with which I entirely disagree. I do not however, desire to raise a personal question, but will leave my Board to make any public explanation on your remarks they think fit at any time and place.

Yours faithfully.

G. Marconi' (1899_05_10_GM_WHP)

Marconi is perhaps an extreme example as this degree of expressive variation is not typical in the corpus. However some authors do adjust their address terms according to the circumstances.

Overall, as with opening formulas, there is a general move towards the familiar form '*yours sincerely*', and a rejection of both more distant and deferent forms, and degrees of modulation within familiar forms (e.g. expressing '*sincerely*' as '*very sincerely*'). The end result is that the majority of authors use a form that is nominally familiar but actually very standardised.

4.4.4.3. Signatures

Finally, I looked at the form that signatures took in the BTCC. The percentage of each form used is displayed in Table 4-16. Again the most frequent forms are highlighted in each decade for clarity.

	<i>F</i>	<i>F_F_S</i>	<i>F_I</i>	<i>F_I_S</i>	<i>F_S</i>	<i>I_I</i>	<i>I_I_S</i>	<i>I_S</i>	<i>T_F_S</i>	<i>T_I_S</i>	<i>Co</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N/A</i>
1850s	0%	0%	0%	38%	12%	0%	38%	12%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
1860s	0%	10%	0%	10%	30%	0%	30%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
1870s	0%	4%	0%	15%	20%	0%	51%	6%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%
1880s	0%	0%	0%	23%	18%	0%	18%	14%	0%	0%	9%	4%	14%
1890s	0%	0%	0%	3%	24%	0%	16%	49%	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%
1900s	0%	2%	0%	2%	49%	0%	22%	24%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
1910s	0%	0%	0%	6%	28%	0%	44%	22%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
1920s	0%	3%	0%	17%	19%	0%	44%	7%	0%	1%	6%	1%	1%
1930s	0%	0%	0%	8%	18%	2%	61%	10%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%
1940s	0%	2%	0%	4%	20%	0%	59%	8%	2%	0%	0%	0%	6%
1950s	8%	2%	0%	12%	12%	0%	49%	12%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%
1960s	11%	0%	2%	11%	14%	0%	51%	7%	0%	3%	0%	0%	2%
1970s	14%	0%	0%	4%	30%	0%	28%	14%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
1980s	41%	0%	0%	0%	16%	0%	31%	6%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 4-16 - Signature Percentages in the BTCC

Key - F – First Name, I – Initial, S – Surname T – Title, Co – Company, N/A – illegible

The data does not give a clear picture of development of signature use across time. We can see that the signature *I_I_S* seems to be the most popular form of signature, with

Firstname_Surname the next most consistently popular, and Firstname_Initial_Surname and Initial_Surname a little less popular. These 4 forms make up the vast majority of the signatures in the *BTCC* until the 1950s when we start to an increasing percentage of authors signing letters with their first name only. This increase continues until it accounts for 41% of signatures in the 1980s. Relatively few letters are signed from the company and no letters are signed only from the position (e.g. 'the Secretary').

Consistent/Developing Use of Signatures

As we have touched upon, these questions of forms of address may also change according to developments in the relationship between author and recipient. Fitzmaurice noted that authors in her corpus began by signing a full name then used 'some abbreviated form or his first initial and surname in subsequent correspondence' (2008:91)

Of the 85 authors for whom we have multiple letters, the majority (67) signed every letter the same way. There are 18 authors where the author's name is signed in different ways in different letters. In eleven of these cases there is evidence that authors' signatures change from initials and titles to names as the interlocutors become better acquainted. This increased familiarity is typically reflected in other formal features of the letters too. We also see cases in which authors change back from a more familiar form to a less familiar form, either when writing public letters which are copied to other recipients or when explicitly writing in an official capacity. For example, in four of the 1980s letters between George Jefferson (Chairman of British Telecom) and Kenneth Baker (Minister of State for Industry and Information Technology) Jefferson signs his letters simple 'George'. However when declining Kenneth Baker's suggestions to continue the emergency telegram service, the letters are signed 'Sir George Jefferson'. This suggests that while signatures are generally fixed forms, they can be altered according to the circumstances of the letter.

4.4.5. Summary of Analysis Two

Taken together, then, these results do seem to back up previous studies that have demonstrated a decline in honorific forms and a move towards more familiar terms of address. There is also a move towards positive politeness moves in the way in which the correspondence chain is handled. However, the positively polite moves that do emerge tend to be (or become) rather formulaic. Furthermore, while the terms of address that emerge as most popular '*Dear+[first name]*' and '*yours sincerely*' are historically familiar, other indicators

of social proximity such as *'My'* in opening formulas and the modulation of the closing salutation disappear from the *BTCC*, again leaving familiar but standardised forms. Similarly in the way the chain of correspondence is managed we see an increase in positively polite forms such as *'thank you for your letter'* and *'I look forward to hearing from you'*, however these too appear in very fixed patterns.

The terms of address in the *BTCC* do correspond to the forms recommended in the letter writing manuals to an extent. Certainly in earlier years, authors employ the sorts of opening and closing salutations recommended in Nesfield's composition guide, seemingly making similar distinctions between propriety of different terms of address for public and private correspondence. In the later years of the corpus we see a much wider use of names in the terms of the address in the *BTCC* than is recommended in any of the manuals. This is perhaps to be predicted as letter writing manuals are in essence a conservative form. Part of their appeal is precisely that they do offer prescriptions for authors to follow. It is also notable that many of the forms criticised in the later letter writing manuals, such as *'obedient servant'* *'instant'* (meaning 'this month') and *'favour'* (meaning letter) do decline in frequency and disappear in the later years of the corpus. This suggests that the advice given in those manuals did reflect some of the general attitudes towards such forms, and may have even helped shape them.

5. Chapter 5 – Analysis Three: Corporate Identity

5.1. Introduction

In the current chapter I will discuss the linguistic features of correspondence in the *BTCC* with particular reference to self-reference, personal pronouns, performative and pre-performative lexical bundles, in what respects these change over time, and what this tells us about how corporate identity is expressed in correspondence of this period. Some of these features such as self-reference and personal pronouns had been identified as being particularly prominent features of correspondence (in for example Nurmi and Palander-Collin 2008, Nevala 2010, Palander-Collin 2011), however the primary reason for investigating these features here is that each of them demonstrated high (and or significant) frequency within the *BTCC*, either in the n-gram analysis, the keyword analysis, or both.

5.2. Institutional Identity

While the topic-based keywords did not form the main basis of my study they do indicate some changes in the ways in which corporate identity is represented. I will outline these briefly below.

In the proper nouns identified by the keyword analysis we see a definite move from the identification of names of individuals in the earlier years (e.g. ‘Reynolds’ in the 1870s, and ‘Rayner’ in the 1910s) towards names of companies and unions in later years (e.g. ‘NASA’ in the 1960s, ‘COPOU’ in the 1970s, and ‘Mercury’ in the 1980s). Where company names do appear key in earlier decades, e.g., ‘Vivian and Sons’ and ‘Grenfell and Sons’ in the 1880s and the ‘Marconi Company’ and ‘Lloyds’ in the 1900s, they preserve the personal names of the individuals involved. Furthermore the keyword analysis highlights many more organisational acronyms (*PO*, *AT&T*, *ITA*, *RCA*, *BEF*...etc) from the 1940s onward. This increase in acronyms is also in keeping with Leech et al’s findings in the Brown family corpora (2009: 212). They identified an increase in acronyms of 235.3% in British English and 178.5% in American English from the 1960s to the 1990s. The increasing appearance of institutional acronyms in the BT data may point to a shift in scale on which telecommunications business was conducted over this period, although with a corpus so small no firm conclusions can be drawn.

5.3. (Personal) Professional Identity

5.3.1. Quantitative results

Gabriella Del Lungo Camiciotti, looking at sales letters from the 19th Century, noted that there is a shift as we head into the 20th Century ‘from the individual to the corporate dimension of letter-writing’ (2006:171). If there were a rise in the corporate dimension of letter writing we might expect a decrease in first person singular pronouns and an increase in the first person plural pronoun ‘we’ during this period. Such moves towards a more corporate dimension of letter writing might also be characterised by an increased use of impersonal pronouns such as ‘it’.

If we look at the keyword results by decade there are a couple of results which hint that this might be the case: ‘I’ is key in the 1890s and 1910s, ‘we’ appears as key in the 1960s and 1970s, and ‘its’ is key in the 1980s (keyness scores indicated in brackets).

- 1890s – *I* (83.837), ***me*** (47.831), ***he*** (23.823), ***my*** (21.571)
- 1910s – *I* (35.319), ***them*** (29.967), ***they*** (22.483)
- 1930s – ***She*** (20.581)
- 1960s – ***We*** (61.033), ***Our*** (23.216)
- 1970s – ***We*** (24.774)
- 1980s – ***its*** (24.494)

Similarly if we look at the letters by decade, using the Linguistic Enquiry Wordcount software (LIWC; Pennebaker, Booth, & Francis, 2007) which calculates the frequency of linguistic features as a percentage of the overall text, we can detect a slight decline in ‘I’ and an increase in ‘we’ and impersonal pronouns over time.

Decade	I	We	You	Impersonal Pronouns
1850s-60s	3.18	0.58	3.12	3.63
1870s	4.09	1.26	3.68	4.23
1880s	3.63	1.94	2.57	2.94
1890s	4.82	0.43	3.16	4.15
1900s	2.85	0.29	2.77	3.57
1910s	3.63	0.55	2.59	4.41
1920s	2.82	1.56	3.38	4.19
1930s	2.53	1.07	3.22	4.14
1940s	1.98	1.64	2.67	4.97
1950s	2.81	1.3	3.47	4.76
1960s	2.12	2.59	3.72	4.13
1970s	1.95	1.59	2.84	5
1980s	2.15	2.16	2.85	4.54

Table 5-1 LIWC count of pronouns in the BTCC

Furthermore, in keeping with the advice offered in letter writing manuals by Nesfield (1917: 169) and Lewis (1956: 9) that authors should use second person references rather than first person references where possible, from the 1920s onwards authors in the *BTCC* consistently use second person pronouns more than they use first person singular pronouns (though ‘you’ does not appear key in any decade). There is something of a trend, albeit an inconsistent one, towards increased use of impersonal pronouns. Their relatively high percentage throughout the corpus suggests that business correspondence is a somewhat impersonal genre in general.

5.3.2. Marconi’s dispute with the Post Office

When we look closer at the decades in which ‘I’ is key, it can largely be put down to the influence of Marconi. The unusually high degree of self-reference through the use of ‘I’, ‘me’ and ‘my’ in this period is due to the many self-references in his letters, perhaps pointing to a more personal tone in his letters to William Preece. In this context it is worth mentioning that only one other author refers to ‘my Company’, and that ‘we’ and ‘our’ are very significantly negatively key in the 1890s (with log likelihood negative keyness scores of 43.118 and 57.719 respectively). Marconi’s letters are also the source of just under half of the uses of *he* in this period. His letters to Preece often take the form of updates regarding his experiments and the formation of his company, both of which involve the actions of other men. Even when not writing himself, Marconi has an influence on the number of instances of ‘*he*’ in this period, as 14 of the 42 uses refer to Marconi.

Similarly in the 1910s, ‘I’ is key (35.319) primarily due to a large number of private verbs and evaluative phrases used in the correspondence between Oliver Lodge, William Preece, Llewellyn Preece and Alexander Muirhead in which they discuss Lodge’s legal disputes with Marconi, e.g.

“I have no belief in the efficacy of any private negotiations with that Company.”
(1911_06_15_OL_WHP)

“I can see from the present position of affairs that the first attack or opening move should come from the Marconi people and I feel sure that I can force them to do it but I do not want to appear as belonging to either side” (1911_06_17_WHP_OL)

This dispute also seems to be the main influencing factor for the keyness of ‘them’ (29.967) and ‘they’ (22.483) in the 1910s. The Post-Office contingent all refer to the Marconi Company as ‘them’, e.g.

*“...as we were told by the judge, we ought to have attacked **them** long ago.”*
(1911_06_30_OL_WHP)

So the keyness of pronouns in these earlier decades may not be that illuminating in terms of general trends, although a number of the other quantitative results do hint at a shifting corporate personality.

5.3.3. The decline of (pre-) performatives

Among the style markers identified by the n-gram analysis were a number of results that point to a performance of professional status by the author. Six of the n-grams were variation on the phrase ‘I am directed’. Other n-grams that perform similar tasks include ‘I am to’ and ‘I have to’. All of these n-grams tend to be followed by performative verbs (e.g. ‘I am directed to inform you...’ 1933_05_06_RWF_##) and so are referred to in this study as pre-performatives.

5.3.3.1. ‘I am directed’

Rank	Frequency	NF (/10,000 words)	n-gram
32	48	3.6	I am directed
47	40	3	am directed by
48	40	3	I am directed by
69	34	2.6	am directed by the
71	34	2.6	directed by the
73	34	2.6	I am directed by the

Table 5-2 – ‘directed’ n-gram frequencies in the BTCC

The n-grams around the word ‘*directed*’ occur most commonly in letters written on behalf of the Lord’s Commissioners to the Treasury, though they occur in letters originating from a variety of companies and government departments. Typically this n-gram only occurs once per letter and appears directly after the opening salutation, e.g.

“Sir,
I am directed by the Postmaster General to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th ultimo...” (1870_04_02_FIS_DHC)

though it sometimes occurs following a longer introductory phrase

“With reference to your letter of the 2nd instant and previous correspondence, **I am directed** by the Secretary of State to say, for the information of the Postmaster General that...” (1908_11_10_EB3_##)

One of my early hypotheses had been that the ‘*directed*’ n-grams might be used as a way to invoke institutional authority in letters that perform face-threatening acts such as directives and *declinations*. However this does not really seem to be the case. ‘*Directed*’ is used in letters that complain, decline and direct, but it is also used frequently in *commissive* and *informative* letters. These pre-performative n-grams then seem to be simply a feature of secretarial language. They invoke the authority of the party on whose behalf the letter is written, but also perform the institutional role of the author (i.e. the person writing the letter) in a conventionalised way.



Figure 33 - Concordance plot of ‘I am directed...’ in the BTCC

As we can see in Figure 33, ‘directed’ formulas decline in frequency over the timeline of the corpus, disappearing in 1959.

5.3.3.2. ‘I am to’

Rank	Frequency	NF (/10,000 words)	N-gram
78	33	2.5	I am to

Table 5-3 - ‘I am to’ n-gram frequency in the BTCC

Leech et al. (2009:97) noted a general decline in the semi-modal ‘BE to’ in the late twentieth century in the written English represented in the Brown family of corpora. In the specific context of the BTCC, **I am to** performs a similar function to ‘I am directed to’ (of which it may be a shortened form), that is to say, it is used to speak on someone else’s behalf, although

where *'I am directed'* most typically occurs at the beginning of the letter *'I am to'* is more flexible in terms of where it can appear within the text. As with *directed* forms, *'I am to'* can be used for merely informing (e.g. *'I am to explain...'* 1931_01_28_JWM_WT) or for actions such as queries and directives which create some sort of imposition for the recipient (e.g. *'I am to suggest that the Syndicate might now be informed...'* 1913_06_15_AL_##).

The n-gram is used repeatedly in six of the twenty-two letters in which it appears. For example there are three occurrences in 1935_12_21_AEW_##:

'I am to inform you that it was brought to the notice of the Council in 1934 that... I am to say that this re-equipment is now nearly complete... I am to point out the importance of avoiding any hiatus between the disappearance of the morse key operators and the recruitment of fully trained teleprinter operators...'

In the wider corpus *'I am to'* first appears in the 1890s and is used sporadically until 1962 when it disappears from the corpus altogether.

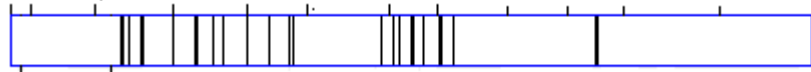


Figure 34 – Distribution of *'I am to'* in the BTCC

As we have seen *'I am directed'* also becomes less frequent in the first half of the twentieth century, with the last example occurring in 1959. It is notable that the final five letters in which *'I am directed'* occurs are also the final five letters to use the formulaic and deferential *'I am, sir, your obedient servant'* closer, the form recommended in Nesfield's composition guide (1917) for all official business. It seems then that the decline in pre-performative n-grams, through which secretaries or other representatives perform their role as conveyor of the message, may be linked to the wider simplification of performances of deference and negative politeness in general.

5.3.3.3. *'I beg to'*

Rank	Frequency	NF (/10,000 words)	n-gram
74	34	2.6	I beg to

Table 5-4 - *'I beg to'* n-gram frequency in the BTCC



Figure 35 - Concordance plot of *'I beg to...'* in the BTCC

Another n-gram that points to this decline in deferential language is also a pre-performative n-gram, although unlike *'I am directed to'* and *'I am to'* it is a performance of personal rather

than institutional obligation. *I beg to*, the most complained-about phrase both in Kitty O Locker's (1987) survey of letter writing manuals, and in my examination of three letter writing manuals of this period, does appear frequently in the *BTCC* but all but disappears by the end of the 1920s.

Though 'I beg to' originally seems to have been a request formula (Palander-Collin 2011:97) In around two thirds of the examples in the *BTCC* it appears as part of formulaic opening moves, such as,

'I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 3rd inst. No.432999/08'
(1909_04_26_GF3_##)

There are examples of *beg* in the *BTCC* where the formula retains some of its original indication of deference. In an attempt to sell his patents to the Post Office George Little writes

'*I beg most respectfully to* submit for your Lordships consideration that, the patents here referred to involve features essential to the practical success, of Electro-Chemical Automatic Telegraphy.' (1876_07_24_GL_JM)

There are also examples of *beg* being used to lessen the imposition of a particularly face threatening act, as in (1878_08_21_GC_WHR), a payment reminder from Geo Chetwynd:

'*I BEG to* remind you that the sum of £2, 5, 2 is due to the Postmaster-General for work executed by the Engineering Dept' (original emphasis)

However by the early twentieth century the form appears to have been largely formalised into opening and closing elements such as "I beg to submit" (opening) and "I beg to remain" (closing).

The final four examples of 'I beg to' in the corpus come from job applications submitted by former residents of former British colonies. While it would make sense that a highly deferential phrase would survive for the longest in a category of letter where the author is very much at the mercy of the recipient, it is also worth remembering Dollinger's (2008) findings that suggest prescriptive norms survived for longer in business correspondence from former British colonies than in correspondence that originated from Britain.

These more elaborate performative elements of business correspondence seem to disappear by the early 1960s. There are still some letters in the final three decades where the author

conveys a message that has been handed down the institutional hierarchy, but the hierarchy is just less conspicuous in the way in which the message is conveyed.

5.3.4. The secretarial “we”

Returning to the keyness of ‘we’ in the 1960s and 1970s it is possible to see how the secretarial persona has shifted.

A number of factors contribute to ‘we’ being key in the 1960s. Firstly we have discussions between various communications companies regarding the Telstar satellite tests. Representatives from NASA, the Post Office, the UK Government, RCA, AT&T and Western Union all express the positions of their companies using *we*, e.g.

“We would like to extend to your company an invitation to make experimental tests of communication via the TELSTAR satellite as and when this becomes feasible...We would appreciate your letting us know whether you might be interested in making such tests.” (1962_05_21_JED_DKN)

Interest in these tests is also expressed by outside parties such as Press Wireless Inc., whose views are expressed using the corporate ‘we’.

However, of more interest to this discussion of secretarial language are discussions of television licenses in the correspondence between the UK Government and the Independent Television Authority (ITA). In these discussions a company’s official position is stated using the pronoun ‘we’, but we also find that some authors express the company’s position using ‘we’, while also performing their own role as conveyor of the message by using the singular pronoun ‘I’. For example, Laurence G. Parker, Secretary of the Independent Television Companies Association, writes

‘I confirm that we would have no objections if future vision circuit agreements were to be signed under hand’ (1969_08_29_ALM_JA)

As with earlier examples, the verb used to communicate the message (‘confirm’) is performative, however the author (‘I’) speaks for the organisation (‘we’) without having to explicitly invoke their authority. This pattern, in which *we* is used following a projecting ‘I’-phrase, is also one of the more common *we*-patterns in the 1970s, occurring in around 13% of the total uses of *we*. In such cases the author of the letter uses this structure to present the view of a group or individual, and moves from the first or second person singular (‘I’ or ‘he’) to the first personal plural form (‘we’), e.g.

*"I do fully agree that **we** should monitor the expected real costs..."*
(1979_01_30_FHW_RW)

*"he is firmly convinced that **we** should not re-open the galleries"*
(1979_01_10_KF_RM2)

*"I am sorry that **we** have had to keep you waiting for this reply"*
(1979_04_20_JEC_GR2)

*"I am afraid that **we** are not in a position at this time to..."*
(1979_04_20_JEC_GR2)

There is also letter from the Treasury, the government department from which the majority of the 'I am directed' letters came, written by Miss J.C. Petrie which displays the non-directed secretarial persona to some extent,

*"Dear Mr. Meyer,
Will you please refer to your letter
of 1st September to Mr. Bennett about
Mr. R. P. Parker?
In view of Estacode B 1 25 **we** do not
object to this man's establishment,
although his establishment before age 60 was overlooked.
You already know that Estacode M h 27
covers his superannuation position.
I have copied this letter to Mr. Fry
at the Civil Service Commission.
Yours sincerely,
Miss J. C. Petrie (1960_09_13_JCP_TUM)"*

This letter also displays a number of the other more familiar forms used in the later years such as a named recipient, and a *sincerely* closer, even though the nature of the letter is public as it has been copied to the Civil Service Commission.

So it seems that, as the use of deferential forms of address decline, so do forms that explicitly indicate the author's professional role as delegated conveyer of the message.

5.3.5. Personal interjections and the corporate position

The distinction between the institutional 'we' and the individual 'I' is also apparent in the 1970s, though 'we' has a much lower keyness score (24.774) than it had in the 1960s (61.033). As with the previous decade, some of the uses of 'we' seem to be down to communication between relatively less proximate institutions. There are discussions between the Post Office and the Royal National Institute of Blind People, and St. Dunstan's, a charity for blind veterans.

There are also letters between the Post Office and Government departments, such as 1979_03_26_RA2_WB, in which Robert Armstrong, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State, wrote to William Barlow the Chairman of the Post Office regarding the Radio Interference Service's work with the Home Office.

The correspondence between Professor Dorothy Wedderburn from Imperial College London and Ken Young from the Post Office also has a large impact on the keyness of 'we'. One letter (1978_05_10_PDW_KMY) contains 55 of the overall 202 instances of 'we' in this decade (around 27%). Dorothy Wedderburn was rather more senior than the authors cited from the 1960s and so her correspondence does not necessarily fit into the discussion of the secretarial 'we', however in her use of 'we' and 'I' Wedderburn does communicate both the organisation's position, and her position in relation to this. In 1978_05_10_PDW_KMY, Wedderburn writes on behalf of the research at Imperial College London, answering each one of the reservations that Ken Young has expressed in response to their research proposal. There seems to be a degree of officially restating the case in writing, as the few instances where the author does use 'I' refer back to a previous conversation, e.g.

*'As I said to you on the 'phone, I think that if you look at any of our publications you will see that **we** act in a responsible way in this matter'*

*'As I explained to you, in **our** past research projects **we** have gained extensive experience...'*

In a letter from Dorothy Wedderburn from the following year (1979_12_12_PDW_KMY), again she states the position of her research team, but also makes much greater use of 'I' to interject personal opinions, e.g.:

*'I feel that **we** have an obligation to send a brief summary to all those who co-operated in the undertaking'*

5.4. Summary of Corporate Identity findings

In considering the decline in deferential language it is worth noting the way in which authors, particularly at the clerical level, performed their roles as conveyors of the message.

Throughout the period represented by this corpus more senior employees spoke on behalf of the company using the corporate 'we'. What we see in the twentieth century is the inclusion of authors at the clerical level in this practice, and a shift away from performances of institutional roles. This does represent at least a surface democratisation of the discourse, though clearly

the corporate hierarchy is still very much in place. In the available evidence there seems to be something of a correlation between the decline of n-grams containing *directed* and the decline of *obedient servant* closers. Likewise the increase in first person secretarial pronouns is matched by an increase in more familiar terms of address. As with all findings in the *BTCC* data these should be regarded as starting points for further investigation rather than firm conclusions. Nevertheless they seem in keeping with previous studies that have identified a simplification of negative politeness strategies and a move towards more familiar terms of address.

6. Chapter 6 – Analysis Four: Corporate Actions: A corpus linguistic analysis of letter functions

6.1. Introduction

The following analysis explores the ways in which the main functions in the *BTCC* are realised linguistically, drawing upon the keyword results by function (as summarised in Table 4-6 and Table 4-7) and the sixty n-grams of between three and six words that occurred more than twenty-five times in the *BTCC* and were investigated as potential style-markers. This is not meant as an exhaustive analysis of the ten letter categories (*Application, Commissive, Complaint, Declination, Informative, Notification, Offer, Query, Request, Thanking*), rather the results offer insights into the most frequent ways in which the various functions are performed in the *BTCC*, and act as a starting point for further analysis of these functions both within the *BTCC* and in comparison with other corpora. (See Chapter 7 for an in-depth analysis of *Request* letters). Each keyword and n-gram was examined in context, using concordance lines and concordance plots, in order to determine what kinds of patterns each linguistic item appeared in, and whether these patterns changed in terms of function (i.e. how the keyword or n-gram is used) and/or frequency (how frequently it is used) over the timeline of the *BTCC*.

6.2. Application letters

Applications are letters in which authors apply for jobs, telephone licenses, permission, pay increases or approval for expenditures. They are a relatively rare letter type in the *BTCC* though there is a flurry of *Applications* in the 1920s from press organisations hoping to secure the first transatlantic telephone call. *Applications* are typically single-function letters (in 17 out of 20 cases) in the *BTCC*.

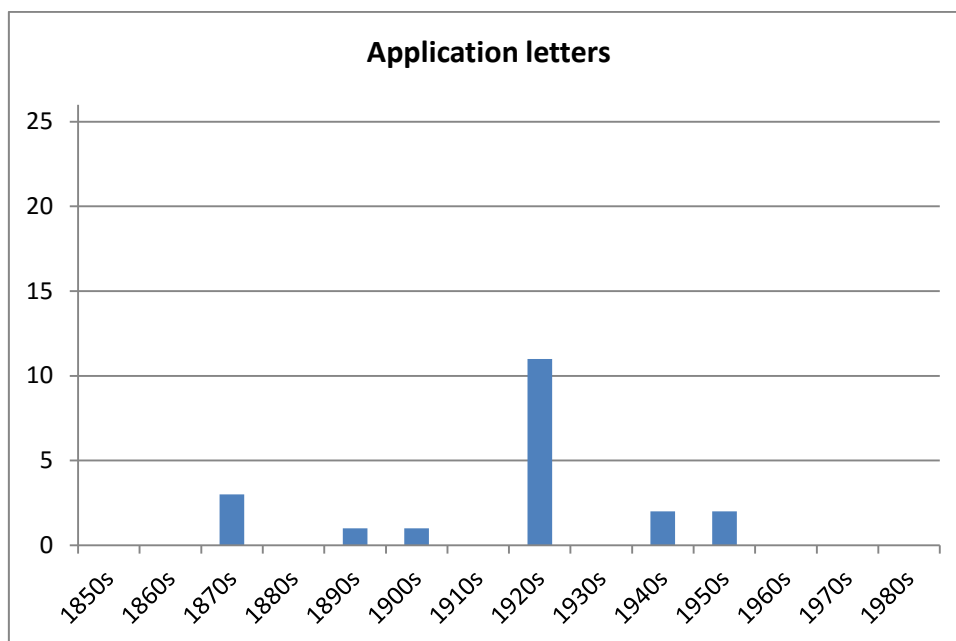


Figure 36 – Number of Application letters in the BTCC per decade (including multi-functional letters)

The keyword analysis of the *Application* sub-corpus identified five style-marker keywords with log-likelihood keyness scores in the 99.99th percentile for significance (see Table 6-1)

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keyword
3	35	25.200	my
6	10	19.433	application
9	10	18.036	beg
13	6	15.794	hoping
14	5	15.704	convenience

Table 6-1 – Style-marker keywords for Application letters

The words that are key in *Applications* point to it being a self-referential and performative letter type. Around a third of the occurrences of ‘my’ refer to the application itself, e.g.

*“I am writing you to-day to renew **my** formal application”* (1926_12_29_TRY_EHD)

There are also references to aspects of the author’s situation which necessitate or support the application. In particular Harry Rughoo’s two work applications contribute nearly half (fifteen of thirty-five) of the instances of *my* in this letter type. He makes reference to “*my application*”, “*my studies*”, “*my country*”, “*My reason for seeking employment in Manchester*”, “*the discharge of my duties*” and so on.

‘The word ‘application’ is listed as style rather than a topic keyword in this context as it is most often used in phrases that act something like Searle’s ‘declarative’ speech acts i.e. when the speaker states that they are making an application, the application is made. Thus ‘a successful

performance guarantees that the propositional content corresponds to the world' (Searle 1976:13), as in the following example:

*"I wish to make formal **application** for the first commercial wireless telephone call to New York..."* (1926_11_06_TRY_EHD)

As we have seen in Chapter 5 the more performative aspects of the secretarial persona seem to decline around the same time as the more deferential closing formulas. As part of this, '**beg**' falls out of favour in the lifetime of the corpus. However it survives longest in the *Application* category and is significantly key. This is seemingly because the level of heightened politeness is appropriate for the typical power dynamic between those making and receiving applications. Unfortunately we do not have *Application* data after the 1950s so it is not currently possible to investigate whether this heightened level of negative politeness survived in some form past the decline of the deferential *directed* and *obedient servant* forms.

'*Hoping*' is key in *applications* due to its use in closing participial phrases (another feature of business correspondence which declines in frequency in this period), e.g.

*"**Hoping** to hear from you soon"* (1926_11_06_TRY_EHD)

*"**Hoping** to have soon the pleasure of receiving your reply"*
(1897_08_21_GM_WHP)

The keyword '*convenience*' also appears in closing formulas which put pressure on the recipient to respond, e.g.

*"Awaiting your reply at your **convenience**"* (1907_10_25_SLD_SB)

In Brown and Levinson's terms such phrases would be considered 'minimizing the imposition' (1987: 176). However it should also be noted that in seven of the twelve occurrences of '*convenience*' in the *BTCC* it appears in combination with the intensifiers 'early'/'earliest', which also add to the urgency of the utterance, as in the following,

*"...let me know at your earliest **convenience** regarding the granting of my request"*
(1926_11_06_TRY_EHD)

*"we shall be pleased to receive your further communication in respect to the subject matter of our letter at your early **convenience**"* (1926_05_03_WM2_##)

Nearly all instances of the word 'request' are used as part of similar closing moves which apply pressure through anaphoric reference to the main application move earlier in the letter, e.g.

*“Thanking you in anticipation of your favourable reply to our **request**”*
(1926_05_03_WM2_##)

Less frequently ‘*application*’ is also used in this way, e.g.

*“we sincerely trust our **application** will receive favourable and early consideration”*
(1940_08_13_##_FWP)

As we saw in Section 3.6.4 one of the main distinctions made between *Requests* and *Applications* for the purposes of this study was that *Requests* are made according to terms set by the author while *Applications* are made on the terms of the recipient. It is perhaps surprising then that, in the *BTCC*, moves in which the author applies pressure for an early response from the recipient are most frequent in letters where the recipient is in a relative position of power.

6.3. Commissive letters

Commissives are letters which commit to future action. There are 51 single-function *Commissive* letters in the *BTCC* and 11 further letters in which *Commissive* is a primary function, which are included in the analysis.

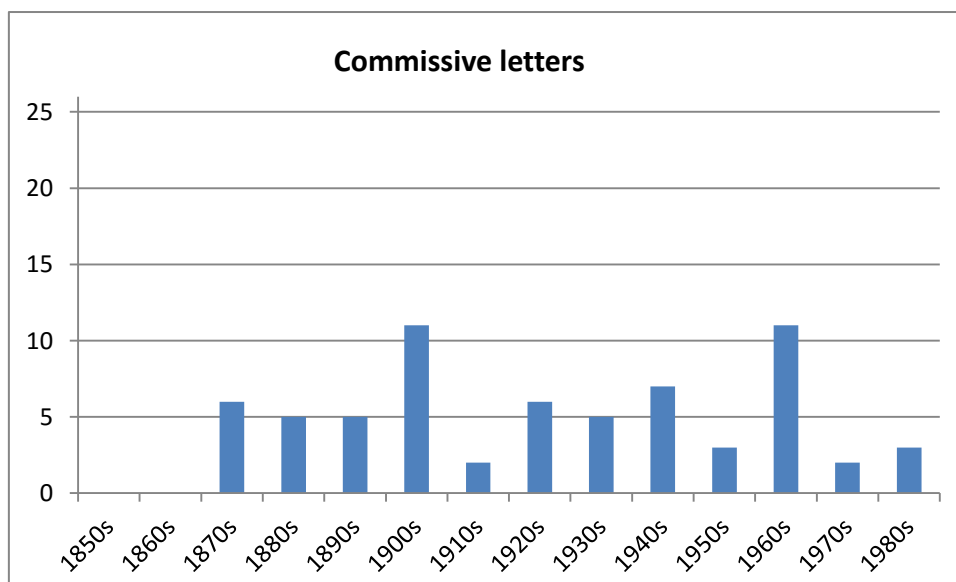


Figure 37 – Number of Commissive letters in the *BTCC* per decade (including multi-functional letters)

Six highly significant style-marker keywords were identified in the *Commissive* sub-corpus (see Table 6-2)

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	125	52.965	your
2	59	50.219	th
3	20	35.715	instant
4	11	23.279	confirm
6	147	21.604	for
8	22	20.590	thank

Table 6-2 – Style-marker keywords for Commissive letters

Five of the six highly significant keywords for this letter type are found in letter openings and refer back to previous correspondence. This is to be expected as quite often *commissives* accept the terms proposed in a previous letter. N.B. ‘th’ is included in this group as it nearly always refers to the date of previous letters e.g. ‘Thank you for your letter of 13th August’ (1964_08_27_HHH_BF), or, much less often, the details outlined in a previous letter, e.g. ‘I observe that he fixes 19th instant at 12.30 p.m.’ (1907_02_01_TH_##).

Confirm is the keyword most clearly linked to the *commissive* function of these letters. To perform this function it appears followed by an object noun phrase/clause that echoes an earlier commitment, either made by the author, or suggested by the recipient in a previous letter (as in the example from 1962_08_24_NW_JTB quoted below). In nine of the eleven instances of *confirm* the author is expressing agreement or support of a course of action, such as in the following example where the author agrees not release publicity material until a particular time set out in a previous letter,

*“I can formally **confirm** our agreement to the details set out in the Confidential Circular”* (1962_08_24_NW_JTB)

In four of these nine instances the author uses a negative form, confirming they do *not* perceive any problem with a given plan,

*“we **confirm** having advised you that we do not anticipate any difficulty in acquiring the necessary material”* (1941_04_28_JHM_#P3)

*“I **confirm** that we would have no objections if...”* (1969_08_29_ALM_JA)

In the remaining two examples, confirm is used to express an opinion, *“I think our friend, Cyrus Mr. Field, could **confirm** his general bad character”* (1872_10_11_DHC_FIS), and a query *“Perhaps you would **confirm** this”* (1982_08_25_DAE_MM3).

6.3.1. 'shall be'

Rank	Frequency	NF (/10,000 words)	N-gram
33	48	3.6	I shall be
90	31	2.3	we shall be

Table 6-3 – 'shall be' n-gram frequencies in the BTCC

The prescriptive historical distinction between *will* and *shall* as explored by Aronvick (1997) (particularly in relation to its use by English people) was that '*will*' should be used to promise in the first person and predict in the second and third person, while '*shall*' should be used to predict in the first person and indicate a promise in the second and third person. Though as Aronvick argues, this distinction is ultimately lost as 'Modern English *shall* loses its sense of obligation, neutral *will* replaces it in the majority of future constructions' (ibid: 146), '*shall*' survives as a 'formal variant' (Perkins, 1982: 264).

In the BTCC '*I shall be*' is used most frequently (in twenty-one of forty-eight occurrences) in phrases which commit to or offer action, e.g.

"*I shall be* very happy to undertake the training of men..."
(1916_07_25_WS_AMO)

"*I shall be* very happy to assist if desired..." (1878_08_09_JM2_WHA)

The next most frequent use (in seventeen out of forty-eight occurrences) is for the expression of the author's perspective in directive elements such as

"*I shall be* most obliged for your reply" (1948_08_20_RA_##)

"*I shall be* glad if you will let me know exactly what is proposed"
(1951_03_05_DJC_##)

This n-gram is also used in some informative constructions, and a handful of more unusual constructions such as threats ("*I shall be obliged to state publicly what I have here mentioned in reference to the apparatus*" 1897_09_12_GM_WHP). '*I shall be*' becomes less frequent over the timeline of the corpus (see Figure 38). This pattern is in keeping with the decline of *shall* observed in Leech et al (2009:81) and Denison (1998:167).

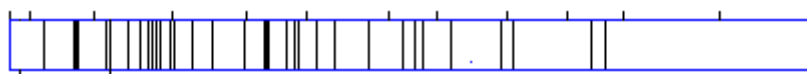


Figure 38 - 'I shall be' distribution in the BTCC

Despite the overall decline of *'I shall be'*, *'I shall'* survives in commissive phrases right through into the 1980s, increasingly occurring without the attitude markers 'happy' and 'glad'. This makes for rather plainer commitments to future action (e.g. *"I shall arrange the necessary discussions with BT and yourselves in order to achieve an appropriate solution..."* 1981_10_09_KB_ES3). The final example of 'happy' occurs in 1981 and expresses commitment to action but takes the present rather than future form. In response to a suggestion that the author meet with the recipient, the author writes, "I am very happy to do so" (1981_12_14_WKS_GJ). Furthermore, 11 of 13 instances of the word 'happy' that appear in the BTCC appear in variations on the phrase *'I shall be happy to'*, though 'glad' appears nearly ten times more often in the corpus than *happy*.

Of the thirty-one instances of *'we shall be'*, eleven are commissive (e.g. *"We shall be pleased to show and explain our new machines..."* 1870_03_07_DHC_##), twelve are directive (e.g. *"We understand we shall be notified early tomorrow..."* 1927_02_05_WFS_FHG), six are informative/predictive (e.g. *"we shall be convening a Consultative Conference..."* 1979_12_06_JR2_KYM) and two express attitudes (e.g. *"We shall be very seriously inconvenienced by the withdrawal..."* 1941_08_07_JL_WAW).

'We shall' also continues into the later years of the corpus without 'be', collocating increasingly frequently with the word "need", one of the emerging modals identified in the literature regarding twentieth century language change (see Section 2.3). In these later examples, the *'shall'* clusters are not *Commissive*, instead they express the need for action on the part of the author (*"**we shall need to** consider these very carefully before coming to any conclusions"* 1978_12_05_LBG_JC), the recipient (e.g. *"**we shall need to** have a report from you..."* 1978_04_27_KMY_PDW), or to express a general necessity (*"**we shall need** an understanding, and a procedure for ensuring, that facts will be checked..."* 1978_04_27_KMY_PDW).

It should be noted that although *'I will be'* is a relatively infrequent n-gram in the BTCC, it behaves in very similar ways to *I shall be*. Six out of sixteen occurrences commit the author to action, six are directive, and four predict future action.

6.4. Complaint letters

Complaints are letters that communicate an author's dissatisfaction with something. As can be seen in Figure 39 *Complaint* letters do not occur very frequently but do appear throughout the period covered by the corpus. All but one of the 28 *Complaint* letters in the *BTCC* are single-function complaints.

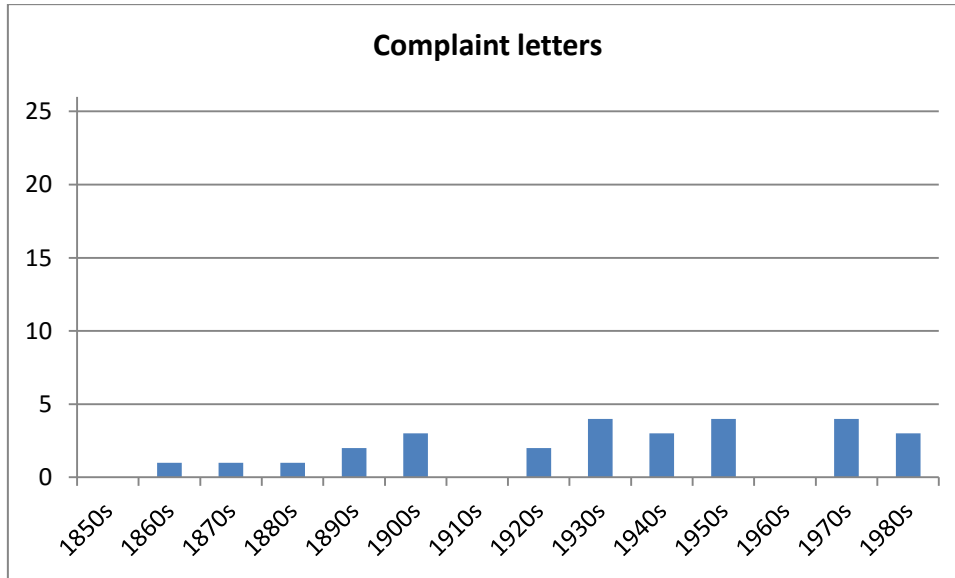


Figure 39 - Number of Complaint letters in the *BTCC* per decade (including multi-functional letters)

Only 2 style-marker keywords with a highly significant level of keyness were identified in the Complaint sub-corpus. The 4 style-marker keywords in the 99.9th percentile for significance were also examined. These words in the lower percentile are marked with brackets.

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
3	731	26.655	the
10	29	17.347	its
(13)	98	13.737	it)
(15)	181	12.873	that)
(18)	111	12.590	is)
(19)	15	12.269	cannot)

Table 6-4 - Style-marker keywords for Complaint letters

A number of the keywords that one might hope would be an indicator of style for this letter-type originate from a single letter from George Franklin, President of the National Telephone Company to the Secretary of the Post Office (1909_03_15_GF3_##) and are in fact more like indicators of topic as they point to the various parties involved. '*The*' most frequently refers to *The* (National Telephone) *Company*. Franklin also makes multiple references to *The* Post Office

and *The Postmaster General*. 'It' and 'its' are most frequently endophoric references to *The Company*.

If we expand the keyness score threshold to keywords in the 99.9th percentile for log-likelihood we also see that 'cannot' is key in this letter-type (as is 'that' which will be discussed with other projection features in the last section of this chapter, and 'is' which is most often used to describe the action of the significantly key 'it').

'Cannot' in collocation with a cognitive verb is used to express the author's dissatisfaction with a situation, indicating that the matter at hand is untenable in its current form and a change must be made for there to be further progress. e.g.

*"I **cannot** understand on what principle the limitation you propose in your clause is based"* (1878_07_24_JM2_WHA)

*"I am afraid I **cannot** regard it as entirely satisfactory"* (1953_05_12_AAB_GD)

*"...we **cannot** accept that these outstanding claims should continue to impede progress along the lines of our agreement."* (1979_12_06_JR2_KMY)

'Do not' plus cognitive verb patterns also occur in the corpus, but '**cannot**' is used much more frequently to characterise author action in Complaints specifically. While the more literal 'do not' form could be used in any of the examples above, 'cannot' frames the author's dissatisfaction or disinclination to act in terms of ability rather than volition, and as such strengthens the pragmatic force of the utterance.

6.5. Declination letters

Declinations are letters in which the author declines future action. The corpus contains 48 Declination letters, 41 of which are single-function.

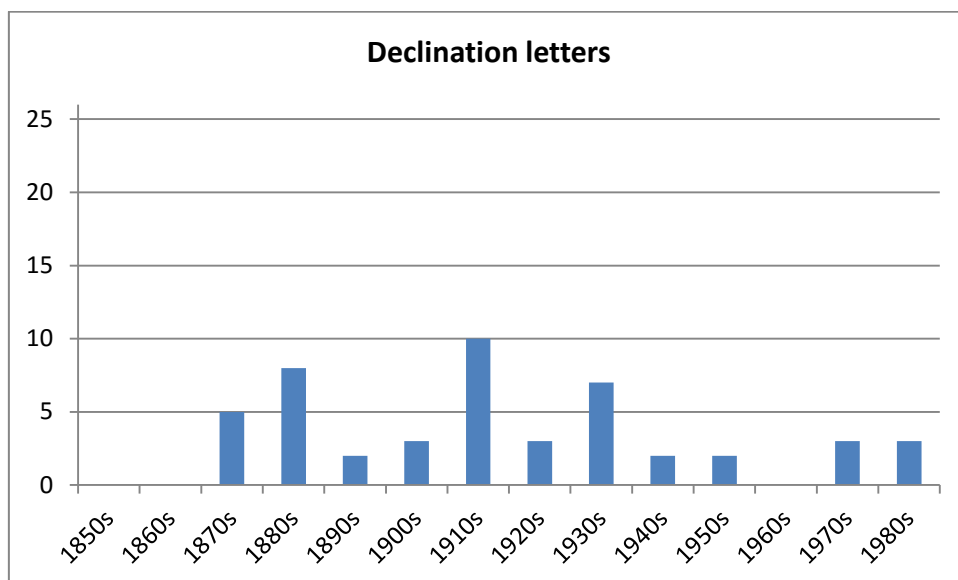


Figure 40 - Number of Declination letters in the BTCC per decade (including multi-functional letters)

Two keywords with very significant keyness scores were identified in the *Declination* sub-corpus. Two further words that were key at lower levels of significance ('unable' and 'accede') were also considered in the analysis as they too pointed to frequent *declination* forms (see Table 6-6).

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
4	11	23.511	regret
5	7	17.713	decline
(18)	8	11.136	unable)
(20)	4	10.269	accede)

Table 6-5 - Style-marker keywords for Declination letters

Dossena (2008:242) notes the frequent use of 'regret' in the impersonal and distant apologies identified in nineteenth century Scottish business correspondence. In the BTCC 'regret' is used by a variety of authors to introduce the main declination move, e.g.

*"I **regret** very much that I cannot accept for the present..."* (1887_07_09_#H_CHP)

*"With **regret** therefore I do not feel that I can accept your kind offer"*
(1911_06_30_OL_WHP)

*"I **regret** that, owing to conditions necessary for my studies, I would not be able to avail myself of this opportunity."* (1957_08_04_HDR_##)

The forms that take remain fairly similar throughout the timeline of the corpus, however these more apologetic introductory phrases employing 'regret' last appear in 1959. Though they are unusually frequent in *declination* letters, apology formulas using *regret* are found in *informative*, *notification*, and *offer* letters in the BTCC.

Of the seven examples of '*decline*' that appear in *Declination* letters, six make use of deontic modality, five of these in the form of '*must*', e.g.

*"This my Lords must **decline** to do."* (1879_11_28_RRL_##)

*"I must **decline** to be placed in the position assigned..."* (1887_07_22_CTB_WHP)

*"My Lords must **decline** to be parties to enlarging the terms of it."*
(1881_07_08_FC2_##)

'*Must*' is one of the modals that has been found to have declined in frequency over the course of the twentieth century (Leech et al, 2009:83). Myhill (1995) also found a decline in the use of 'must' in his examination of modals in American English plays written between 1824 and 1947. There is no notable decline in its frequency in the BTCC, where it survives into the 1980s, most often within interjections (e.g. "*I **must** however add...*" that 1979_12_14_KMY_JR2) wherein 'must' is used to justify or contextualise an utterance, indicating that the author is in some way compelled by circumstances to comment. However all of the examples of the specific declination form '*must decline*' appear in the late nineteenth century.

'*Unable*' and '*accede*' point to another form of *declination* which appears frequently in the late nineteenth-early twentieth century, in the phrase, 'unable to accede' and variations on this. For example,

*"His Majesty's Government are **unable** to **accede** to the Company's request."*
(1913_02_06_AFK_##)

*"they cannot **accede** to the request"* (1913_05_29_EHR_##)

*"she is **unable** to agree to the standard scheme of colour"*
(1934_06_13_DMM_##)

All variations of this phrase occur in the *declination* sup-corpus between 1897 and 1934. So although, as with '*regret*', the '*accede*' form seems to be limited to a particular time period, *declinations* throughout the *BTCC* are framed in terms of the author's inability to act.

6.6. Informative letters

Informative letters are the most frequent type of letter in the corpus. There are 157 purely *Informative* letters in the *BTCC* and 58 further letters in which there is a primary *Informative* function.

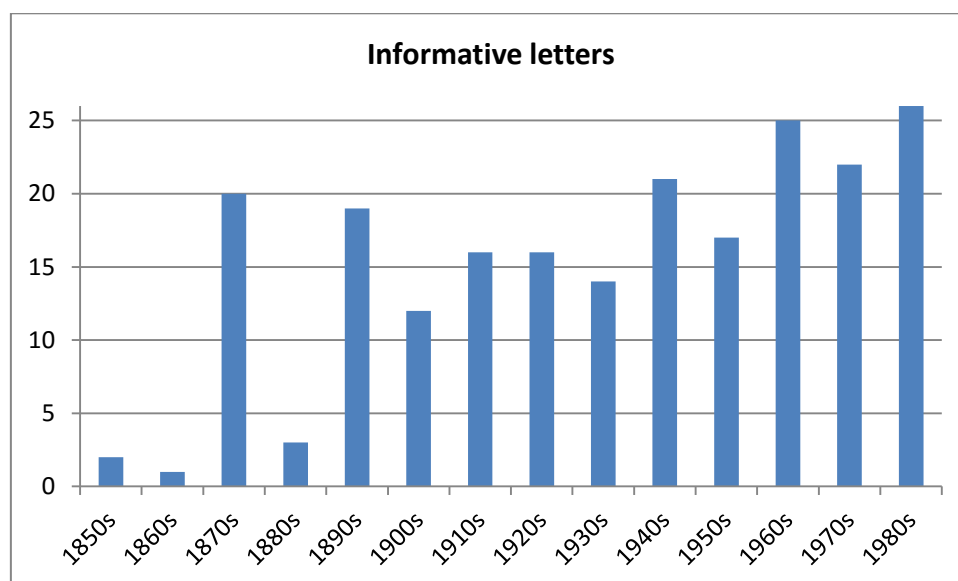


Figure 41 – Number of Informative letters in the *BTCC* per decade (including multi-functional letters)

In the case of *Informative* keywords, no style-markers appeared key in the 99th percentile for significance. This is perhaps because *Informatives* form the largest component of the corpus, both in terms of letter numbers and in the sense that every letter has some level of informative function. When compared against the wider corpus of texts, then, we are unlikely to identify words that perform informative functions exclusively in letters with the *Informative* category.

There were, however, a number of n-grams that highlighted ways in which authors introduce topics and weigh up competing concerns. It should be noted that these n-grams were not generally identified as being more frequent in *Informative* letters than other letter categories, but nevertheless they do seem to be used as a means of introducing and/or focussing on information content.

6.6.1. Addressing the Issue

Rank	Frequency	NF (/10,000 words)	n-gram
49	40	3.0	the question of
53	37	2.8	in order to
54	37	2.8	regard to the
55	37	2.8	with regard to
57	36	2.7	as to the
75	34	2.6	in connection with
79	33	2.5	on the subject
81	32	2.4	in view of
83	32	2.4	the fact that
115	27	2.0	view of the

Table 6-6 – ‘Addressing the issue’ n-gram frequencies in the BTCC

These n-grams are all metadiscoursal, and what Hyland (2005), writing about academic discourse, described as interactional markers in that they situate the reader’s argument within the wider discourse and anticipate the reader’s reaction (ibid: 176). All of these n-grams help establish some sort of shared knowledge and, to different degrees, commit the author to a position regarding that topic. The n-grams ‘in view of’ and ‘the fact that’ are perhaps the clearest examples of this in that, used in combination (i.e. ‘in view of the fact that’), they commit the author strongly to the truth of the statement and in doing so require the reader to ‘recognise something as familiar or accepted’ (Hyland, 2005: 184). These functions of establishing shared knowledge and managing recipient response may be the reason that these n-grams seem to appear in letters with some sort of negotiating function.

Regard to phrases appear in conversations where there is some form of negotiation of terms.

This phrase introduces a topic or issue, as in

“With regard to the question of alternative methods of overcoming the generator ringing difficulty...” (1944_12_19_WDS2_WDS)

There are no clear diachronic patterns in the use of ‘*regard to*’ patterns, though there appear to be fewer instances in the later years of the corpus.



Figure 42 - ‘Regard to’ distribution in the BTCC

There is a particularly dense clustering of ‘*regard to*’ n-grams in the 1900s. George Franklin, President of the National Telephone Company contributes over half of the instances in this period. It should be noted that the one word alternative ‘regarding’, which generally fulfils a similar role as ‘with regard to’ (i.e. introducing the main topic of discussion), does seem to become more popular in the early-mid twentieth century. This may be part of the reason for the decline of the longer ‘with regard to’ form, however ‘regarding’ also appears less often in later years of the corpus (see Figure 43)



Figure 43 - 'Regarding' distribution in the BTCC

The shortest form of ‘regarding’, that is the abbreviated, ‘re:’, only occurs three times in the BTCC, each of these times in the title/reference line rather than the main body of the letter.

Neither ‘*the question of*’ nor ‘*as to the*’ do not occur with significantly greater frequency in any one letter category and, as with ‘regard to’ patterns, seem part of general negotiating language, typical of letters where authors make their case in some way, whether *Offer*, *Request*, *Query*, or *Informative*. This versatility in terms of function explains the relatively high frequency of these n-grams. Neither n-gram shows clear diachronic development, though the highest densities of ‘*the question of*’ appear in the mid-late 20th Century.



Figure 44 - 'As to the' distribution in the BTCC



Figure 45 - 'The question of' distribution in the BTCC

Similarly, ‘*in connection with*’ is used in letters with a variety of letter functions, though it occurs slightly more often in *Informative* and *Offer* letters, and relatively less in *Request* letters. In two thirds of cases (twenty out of thirty occurrences) ‘*in connection with*’ is followed by the definite article ‘the’ and tends to place an action within the context of a topic, e.g.

“We, here, look forward with the greatest pleasure to the work *in connection with* the establishment of this service” (1926_08_06_BG_##)

'In view of' is a way of introducing given information to provide reasoning for what follows, e.g.

"In view of the short time which the Committee have at their disposal, it is suggested that..." (1913_02_18_EHR_##)

"in view of the vulnerability of the repeater stations and cable terminations on the coasts of the Straits of Dover...immediate consideration should be given to..." (1939_10_16_CE_##)



Figure 46 - Distribution of 'in view of' in the BTCC

'In view of' appears to be particularly frequent in the first half of the twentieth century. The function of the n-gram remains stable from the earliest to the latest examples.

'The fact that' sometimes occurs with *'in view of'* and similarly is most frequently used to establish or restate assumptions as justification for a request or suggestion, in patterns such as,

"...having regard to the fact that..." (1903_03_02_GM_AC)

"In view of the fact that..." (1926_12_29_TRY_EHD, 1932_02_24_JEH_##)

"I also think one must not overlook the fact that..." (1973_12_17_GTW_AW2)

"In recognition of the fact that..." (1982_07_16_DAE_REB)

Similarly *'in order to'* is used to give reasons for a request or action (a "grounders" in Blum-Kulka's terms, 1984:205). Neither *'the fact that'* nor *'in order to'* show any obvious patterns of diachronic change across the corpus as a whole, though there are periods when they occur more frequently. *'The fact that'*, for instance, seems to appear slightly more frequently in the 1940s in disputes about the colouring and positioning of telephone kiosks, when each party attempts to establish the basis on which kiosks were installed and painted, e.g.

"The council of the Institute, however, emphasized the fact that permission was granted on the definite understanding that green would be the colour used." (1946_09_06_WCG_FIR)

Likewise the n-gram *'in order to'* occurs most frequently around the 1910s and 20s. Much more data would be required, however, to draw any conclusions about general frequency trends for these n-grams.

6.6.2. 'be able to'

Rank	Frequency	NF(/10,000 words)	N-gram
35	47	3.5	be able to
124	26	2.0	to be able

Table 6-7 – 'be able' n-gram frequencies in the BTCC

Another versatile and sometimes negotiatory n-gram within the BTCC is '*be able to*'. It appears most often in *Informative* and *Offer* letters, though there are no letter categories in which it does not appear. In the majority of the occurrences, '*be able to*' characterises the action of the author. As it indicates the author's ability (or otherwise) to act the n-gram is essentially used to commit the author to (or decline) a given action. However this essential function can be used in a variety of ways. There are relatively more straightforward predictive commitments to action, such as,

"I believe that in a week or ten days of conference we should be able to work out a satisfactory basis for initiating this new service." (1926_08_06_BG_##)

We also see '*be able to*' used in more conditional statements, where the ability to act is dependent on certain conditions being met, as in,

"if in like manner we are able speedily to complete the Agreement with the Post Office, we shall be able to go ahead..." (1903_03_02_GM_AC)

Though these commissive/declining functions are the most frequent ways in which '*be able to*' is used, it is also used, for example, in combination with attitude markers personal comments,

"I am glad to be able to say that..." (1871_07_27_DHC_FIS)

"I am now pleased to be able to tell you that ..." (1982_02_15_KB_GJ)

And in invitations,

"We hope to be able to welcome you..." (1977_12_01_DD_##)

Just eight of the forty-seven occurrences of this n-gram refer to recipient actions. One of these occurrences is an invitation ("I do hope you will be able to dine with us" 1979_06_25_DF_PFB) and another forms part of a query ("I am particularly anxious to know what arrangements you will be able to make" 1881_02_10_DS_#B2). The remaining examples of recipient oriented '*be able to*' are directives, for example,

"I am hoping therefore that you will be able to agree to include this study in the R.D.G. programme." (1964_12_21_CEC_KHC)

'Be able to' becomes more frequent in the later years of the corpus (see Figure 39). Instances of the directive use of 'be able to' only occur from 1953. It may be that this diversification of the use of 'be able to' to include reader-oriented directive functions accounts, at least in part, for this increase.



Figure 47 - 'be able to' distribution in the BTCC

6.6.3. Contingency

Rank	Frequency	NF (/10,000 words)	n-gram
111	28	2.0	in the event

Table 6-8 - 'in the event' n-gram frequency in the BTCC

'In the event' occurs most frequently in *Informative* texts (19 out of 28 occurrences), although also occurs in *Complaints*, *Requests*, and *Queries*.

There are no particular diachronic trends in the use of this n-gram although as can be seen in the concordance plot (Figure 47) there is a concentration of occurrences in the 1940s.



Figure 48 - 'in the event' distribution in the BTCC

This n-gram falls under the heading 'contingency' here as the n-gram occurs in discussions of alternative and back-up plans, what ought to be done if something were to go wrong. For example, in the 1940s, 'in the event' occurs in discussions of what to do in the event that transatlantic telegraph cables are severed and the service interrupted. There is also a less concentrated cluster of results in the late 1970s-early 1980s where plans are made 'in the event' that BT and Mercury fail to agree to network privatisation arrangements.

6.6.4. Weighing up professional concerns

Rank	Frequency	NF (/10,000 words)	n-gram
70	34	2.6	as well as

Table 6-9 – ‘as well as’ n-gram frequency in *BTCC*

‘*As well as*’ is one of the most frequent multi-word bundles identified by Kytö and Smitterberg in their study of nineteenth-century English (but within their sub-corpus of history texts rather than their letter sub-corpus). They note that it ‘provides an efficient way of packing information’ and is ‘well suited to the purposes of descriptive narration’ (2006:206). The specific function of the n-gram within the business correspondence in the *BTCC* seems to be to weigh up simultaneous and/or competing needs and interests (hence the title of this section), e.g.,

*“the Directors approach the question with every desire to meet his wishes, **as well as** to preserve the normal development of the telephone business as a going concern...”* (1909_03_15_GF3_##)

*“the Telegraph Acts generally require the Post Office to obtain the permission of the owner **as well as** that of the occupier before placing a line in, over, or through the land or building in question”* (1979_03_23_GK_NA)

This function remains fairly stable in the available examples across the timeline of the corpus. It also tends to appear in longer more detailed letters. The mean length of a letter in the corpus is 217 words. Of the twenty-seven letters that contain the phrase *as well as* only four are shorter than 300 words long and two exceed 1,000 words.

There is no obvious increase or decrease in frequency of this n-gram over time (see Figure 48)



Figure 49 - ‘As well as’ distribution in the *BTCC*

6.7. Notification letters

Notification letters refer solely to enclosing letters, receipts, and acknowledgements of the sending or receiving of letters and documents. There are 50 single-function *Notification* letters in the *BTCC* and 29 further letters in which *Notification* is a primary function.

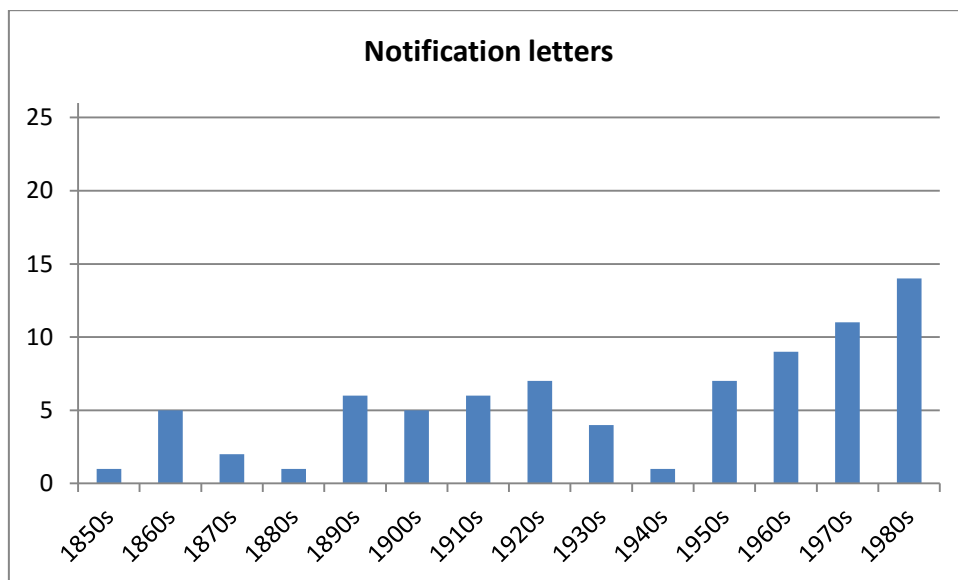


Figure 50 - Number of Notification letters in the *BTCC* per decade (including multi-functional letters)

Six keywords with high levels of keyness were identified in the *Notification* sub-corpora (see Table 6-10)

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
5	64	31.179	dear
6	136	28.815	you
7	38	27.555	sincerely
8	60	26.037	sir
10	11	22.177	herewith
11	53	21.180	yours

Table 6-10 - Style-marker keywords for Notification letters

Notifications are typically short texts so the keywords from opening and closing formulas (*Dear*, *Sincerely*, *Sir*, *Honour*, *Yours*) most likely appear as key as they make up a larger percentage of the words in this sub-corpus.

The keyword results are not particularly illuminating in terms of content or style, although they do point to the survival of '*herewith*', a form that indicates enclosures. The earliest reference for *herewith* in the Oxford English Dictionary is from 1017 AD, and it was found by O'Locker (1987: 30) to have been in occasional use in the correspondence data used in her study since

1655. It was also widely condemned as jargon from 1908 to 1948 in the letter writing manuals that she analysed. Despite this, '*herewith*' was still in use at the time of O'Locker's survey, and it survives in the *BTCC* data as late as 1979, despite its somewhat archaic character, seemingly because of its continued usefulness as a means of indicating enclosures.

6.8. Offer letters

Offers are letters in which the author offers goods, services, demonstrations or expertise to the recipient, or proposes terms or a course of future action that is open to negotiation. There are 30 single-function requests in the *BTCC* and 20 multi-functional letters in which *Offer* is a primary function.

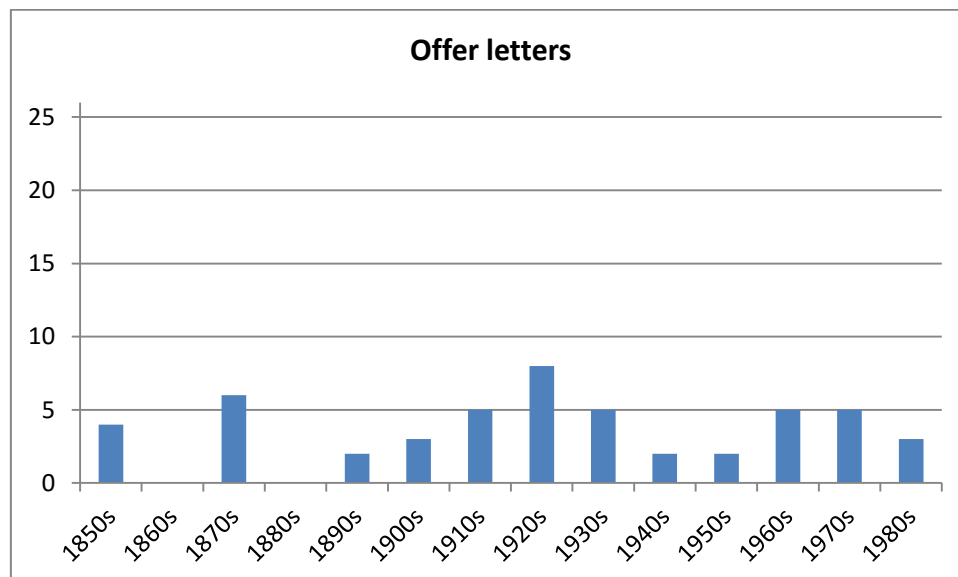


Figure 51 – Number of Offer letters in the *BTCC* per decade (including multi-functional letters)

We is the only significantly key style-marker word in the Offer category.

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	220	30.716	we

Table 6-11 - Style-marker keyword for Offer letters

Although there are some exceptions in the earlier periods of individual inventors approaching the Post Office with proposals, more typically business offers and proposals are made on behalf of a business or department rather than an individual. This is perhaps underlined by the fact *we* becomes much more key (39.656) when we remove the offer letter contained in this sub-corpus from Marconi, who as we have seen (Chapter 5) is unusual in the corpus in the degree of self-reference he employs.

Again if we broaden out the search beyond the keywords in the 99.99th percentile, we find that ‘be’ is among the keywords for *Offer* letters in the 99th percentile. The most frequent *be*-n-grams in Offers are the same as the most frequent *be*-n-grams in the wider corpus (‘to be’, ‘would be’, ‘will be’, ‘should be’, ‘shall be’). However ‘will be’ is slightly more prevalent in *Offers* than in the wider corpus and is used in a variety of contexts e.g. to make claims,

*“We find that we will **be** able to do many things”* (1962_06_18_JWB_CDM)

To state the advantage of an offer to the recipient,

*“this is one in which I feel sure you will **be** interested”* (1948_01_28_CR_TD)

And (a repeated feature of Offers) to express hope that the offer will be taken up,

*“I hope this approach will **be** acceptable to you.”* (1979_01_30_FHW_RW)

It may be that, just as ‘was’ is somewhat key in *Informative* letters as it can be used to report past action, *be* is key in Offers as [*predictive modal verb*] + *be* is a standard way of proposing future action.

6.9. Query letters

In the context of the *BTCC* a *Query* is a request/demand for information. There are 39 single-function Queries in the *BTCC* and 17 multi-functional letters in which *Query* is a primary function.

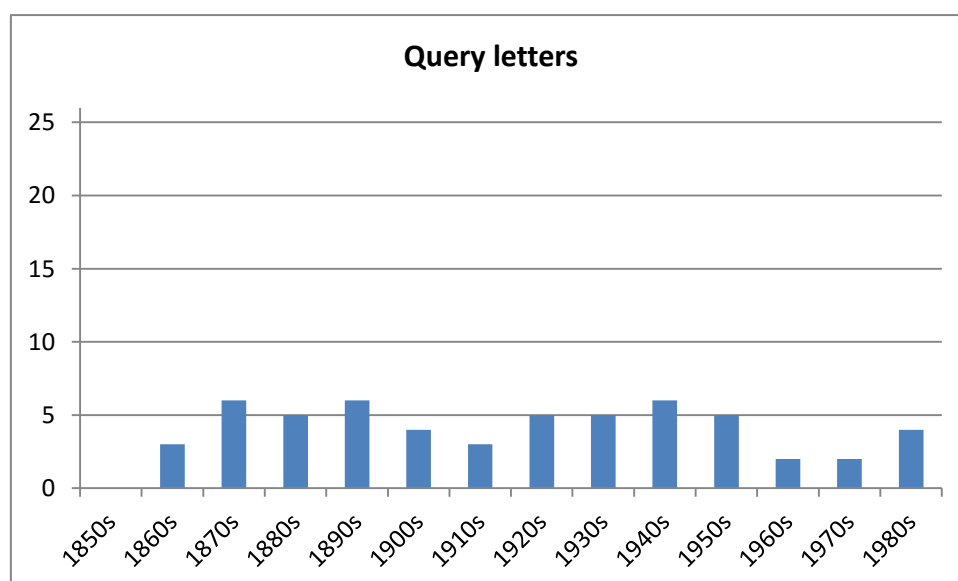


Figure 52 - Number of Query letters in the *BTCC* per decade (including multi-functional letters)

6.9.1. 'Let me know'

Both the keyword and n-gram results point to the prominence of the imperative query n-gram 'let me know'. In queries '*let me know*' tends to express the primary query function, whereas in request texts '*let me know*' tends to be used as a secondary closing request, putting pressure on the recipient to respond to the main request. Less often it is used in requests to expand the initial request, eliciting additional information, for example, regarding potential employees (as in 1869_09_17_FIS_EB) or potential meeting attendees (as in 1979_03_26_RA2_WB).

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
3	32	19.238	what
4	34	18.600	know
7	73	15.545	if
(9	20	15.013	let)
(15	23	12.583	whether)
(18	161	11.263	you)

Table 6-12 - Style-marker keywords for Query letters

The keyword analysis for this function produced three words that appeared in the 99.99th percentile, and three

Rank	Frequency	NF (/10,000 words)	n-gram
67	35	2.6	let me know

Table 6-13 – 'let me know' n-gram frequencies in the BTCC

In 14 out of 35 instances in the BTCC the *let me know* n-gram is preceded by a "benefiter" phrase, which is to say a directive framed in terms of the benefit to the speaker, e.g.

"I shall be obliged if you will *let me know* whether you can meet our requirements"

Nine instances of *let me know* are preceded by a request marker such as *please, pray, beg, kindly*. In five cases *let me know* is preceded by the tentativeness marker 'perhaps', e.g.

"Perhaps you would *let me know* if you would like me to do this."
(1981_10_02_AMF_KRT)

Two instances of *let me know* are expressed as interrogatives, e.g.

"Will you *let me know* who we should contact here?" (1958_12_03_AES_JMH)

Know also appears in less frequent types of queries such as,

*“They would be glad to **know** whether...” (1906_07_10_JHH_##)*

*“we should particularly like to **know** how...” (1926_11_23_#K_##)*

6.9.2. Wh- forms

In 20 out of 35 instances ‘*what*’ immediately follows the words that convey the illocutionary force of the query (e.g. ‘*let me know+[-wh]*’, ‘*I am to ask +[-wh]*’). These patterns appear in the BTCC from the 1870s through to the 1970s, e.g.

*“They would be glad to learn **what** principles are to be laid down for the guidance of Surveyors” (1908_07_29_WB2_##)*

*“we should appreciate it if you will let us know **what** you have in mind on a consultation basis” (1962_07_12_NW_JTB)*

‘*Whether*’ is used in a similar way, e.g.

*“I am to ask **whether** the 30 circuits that it is said might be erected on the canal route would be 30 new circuits” (1906_07_10_JHH_##)*

*“I really wonder **whether** there could not be a role for sub post offices in the delivery of emergency messages.” (1982_07_13_KB_GJ)*

6.10. Request letters

Requests are the second most frequent letter type in the BTCC (behind *Informative*). There are 88 single-function request letters and 36 multi-functional letters in which *Request* is a primary function.

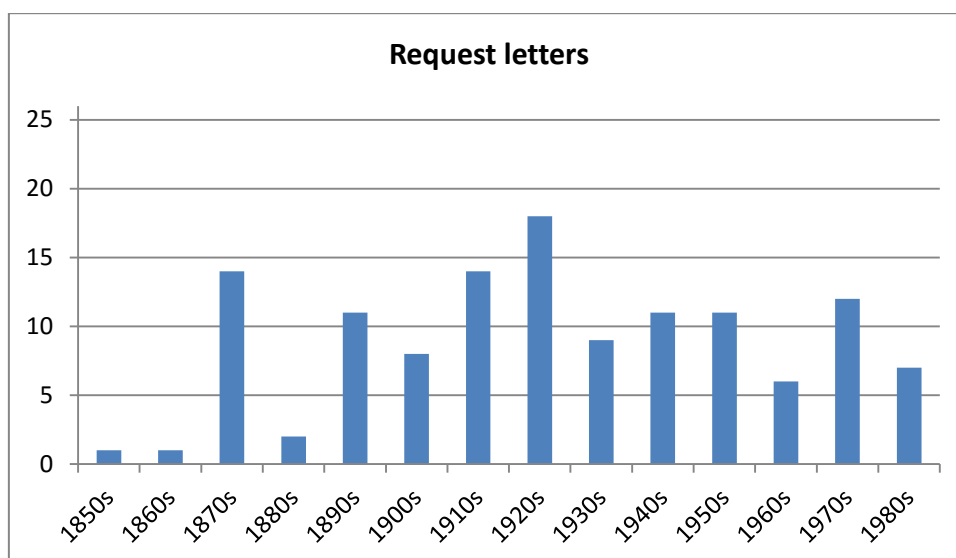


Figure 53 - Number of Request letters in the BTCC per decade (including multi-functional letters)

6.10.1. Benefitters

While only one keyword 'if' is highly significantly key in this *request* sub-corpus, that word does point to some of the most frequent request formulas.

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
3	150	16.785	if
(7	130	12.478	should)
(12	452	11.768	be)
(17	44	10.153	glad)
(19	21	10.007	obliged)

Table 6-14 Style-marker keywords for *Request* letters

Rank	Frequency	NF(/10,000 words)	N-gram
31	51	3.9	be glad to
41	42	3.2	I should be
58	36	2.7	if you would
60	29	2.2	be glad if
86	31	2.3	if you will
98	29	2.2	shall be glad
102	28	2.1	glad if you
110	27	2.0	be glad if you
126	26	2.0	would be glad

Table 6-15 "Benefiter" formula n-gram frequencies in the BTCC

The keywords *I*, *should*, *be*, *glad*, *obliged* and *if*, and nine of the most frequent patterns identified by the n-gram analysis all point to the most popular request formula in the corpus: variations on the phrase '*I should be glad if you would...*'. For example,

*"I **should be glad if** you would let me know whether you could..."*
(1869_09_17_FIS_EB)

*"I shall **be glad if** you will supply me with £60 (sixty pounds)"*
(1913_02_14_EHR_##)

*"I **should be** deeply grateful **if** you would put this request in the right quarter"*
(1926_12_28_GEB_##)

*"I **should be** much obliged **if** the Postmaster-General would be pleased to..."*
(1940_01_25_EW_DCA)

*"we **should** appreciate it **if** you will..."* (1962_07_12_NW_JTB)

*"I would **be glad if** you would now get ahead with doing this."*
(1979_11_28_WB3_PJM)

These are further examples of the “benefiter” formula that we encountered in the *Query* keyword discussion. There is a degree of variation within this formula. In the earlier years of the corpus in particular there is more frequent use of the keyword ‘*obliged*’, which is almost always used in phrases where the recipient action is nominalized (a strategy noted by Brown and Levinson 1987:207 as a negative politeness move), e.g.,

“I shall be **obliged** by your sending me a Memorandum...”
(1878_04_27_WHR_##)

In the *BTCC* this form of nominalization largely disappears by the end of the nineteenth century though there is one example from 1930 in a letter sent by a representative of a member of the British gentry, providing conditional approval for the building of a kiosk. Both the official nature of this correspondence and the aristocratic provenance of the letter seem plausible explanations for this relatively late employment of negative politeness. As Nevala (2003:160) noted, the upper strata of society have historically retained negative politeness forms for longer than other groups.

‘*Glad*’ is the most popular (9.6 per 10,000 words) of the small set of adjectives that occur in the pattern ‘I (should/shall/would/will) be (glad/pleased/obliged/grateful) if...’ ‘*Glad*’ is also mentioned by Kytö and Smitterberg as occurring in the most frequent three and four-word bundles in nineteenth century personal correspondence (2006:204-206). The two most frequent n-grams to contain ‘glad’ in the *BTCC* are *be glad to* and *be glad if*, both of which are typically used to make a request.

‘*Be glad to*’ is most often a request for information (sometimes action) in which the author is positioned as a passive recipient, e.g.,

“I shall *be glad to* be informed of the date on which your men will require to occupy the hut...” (1902_12_08_JG_FLM)

“I should *be glad to* have this approved” (1913_01_28_RTG_##)

‘*Be glad to*’ appears to become less popular as the twentieth century develops, though there is a small flurry of examples in the 1930s and 1940s, particularly in military documents. For example, in 1942_08_10_WRS_WAW W.R. Spikesman asks for the recipient to agree to new terms under which Post Office workers might be enlisted as Navy Telegraph workers,

“We should therefore *be glad to* have your formal agreement to the proposal in Hooper's letter of the 22nd December...”

Similarly in Charles Evans's proposal that a new multi-circuit cable be laid between Great Britain and France he writes,

"The Air Council would *be glad to* learn the Army Council's views regarding this proposal at a very early date." (1939_10_16_CE_##)



Figure 54 - 'be glad to' distribution in the BTCC

'*Be glad to*' is used as request formula for the last time in 1957 in a letter to an individual from a former British colony who had previously expressed an interest in working for the Post Office. The author writes,

"we should *be glad to* know if you are still interested in employment in the Post Office" (1957_03_15_SMS_HDR)

The final appearance of the n-gram in the BTCC is from 1982 but rather than being used as a request the phrase introduces information. The 'being glad to receive information' is projected onto the recipient,

"You will I think *be glad to know* that with the end of the inland telegram now clearly in sight we have decided not to increase inland telegram charges" (1982_03_26_AMF_JM4)

'*Be glad if*' is used mostly in Request letters and where it appears in other letter types it serves as a directive element within that text. As such in the BTCC, '*be glad if*' could be considered an archetypal request formula. In terms of diachronic development it seems to be most frequent in the 1920s and 1930s and uses become more sporadic in the later twentieth-century.

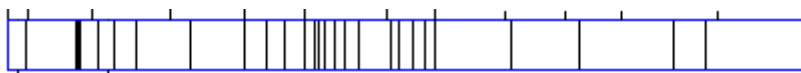


Figure 55 - 'be glad if' distribution in the BTCC

This form will be discussed in more detail in Section 7.3.

'*If you will*' appears most often (in 26 of 31 instances) immediately following the "benefiter" patterns that also occur with '*if you would*', for example, "I shall be obliged *if you will* let me know whether..." (1914_09_30_JHS2_##), and "I shall be glad *if you will* give instructions..." (1936_06_07_SGK_ACB).

Just as ‘if you would’ clusters are typically preceded by ‘(I/we) (should/would)’ clusters, so ‘if you will’ clusters are nearly always preceded by ‘(I/we) (shall/will)’ clusters in the BTCC. So the hypothetical modality describing author and predictive recipient action tends to be matched.

The sense of *should* that is used in these benefiter formulas was categorised by Leech et al as ‘the past tense or hypothetical reflex of *shall*’ (2009:86), which, as they noted, can be, and increasingly is, replaced by *would*. We do not get much of a sense that *would* replaces *should* in the benefiter n-grams ‘*would be glad*’ and ‘*should be glad*’ as both decline in frequency as a result of the overall decline in requests that feature the word *glad*. (In fact there is a general decline in benefiter formulas that are phrased in terms of benefit to the recipient, although as we shall see, impersonal benefiter formulas, such as ‘*it would be helpful*’, do take their place in later decades, at least to an extent.)

If we look, however, at the concordance plots for ‘*I should be*’ and ‘*I would be*’ (see Figures 55 and 56) there does seem to be something of a move away from the hypothetical sense of *should* in favour of *would*.



Figure 56 - ‘I should be’ distribution in the BTCC

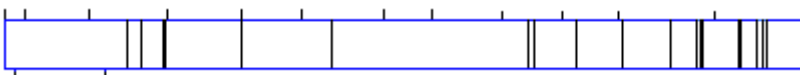


Figure 57 - ‘I would be’ distribution in the BTCC

Finally, It is worth noting that the most frequent request forms, i.e. benefitters, are more conventionally indirect than the most frequent query form identified by the corpus analysis in Section 6.9., that is ‘let me know’. This may be as the level of imposition put upon the recipient in a request for action is higher than that in a request for information, and so requires a more polite, indirect approach.

6.10.2. Explicit and covert commands

The forms ‘*be pleased to + [verb]*’ and ‘*be so good as to + [verb]*’ were found to be among the most frequent request markers in Del Lungo Camiciotti’s (2008:123) study of nineteenth century letter writing manuals. ‘*Be pleased to*’ appears only once in the BTCC. ‘*Be so good as to*’ appears just four times. The latter of these two seems to have been replaced to some

extent by *'good enough to'*, which is quite frequent in the corpus, appearing 28 times between 1862 and 1979.

Rank	Frequency	NF(/10,000 words)	N-gram
100	30	2.2	you will be
103	28	2.1	good enough to

Table 6-16 Explicit and covert command n-gram frequencies in the BTCC

'You will be', which appears in both requests and queries follows *'be good enough to'* in 12 out of 30 occurrences. In 11 of these instances *'you will be good enough'* is preceded by an expression of epistemic modality, which is to say an indication of the degree of speaker certainty (or indeed uncertainty) regarding the statement that follows. For example,

"perhaps you will be good enough to write me your views as soon as possible,"
(1946_09_12_HB_##)

"No doubt you will be good enough to arrange for a representative to be in attendance" (1924_12_10_LG_##)

Expressions of tentativeness accompany *'you will be'* eight times while only three markers of certainty are used. In the later instances of this n-gram in the corpus *'you will be'* appears much more filtered through the author's expectations in projected forms such as *'I hope that you will be able to...'* (1974_10_31_JHHM_DD2)

'Good enough to' can be found in every type of letter except *Thanking*, but occurs more often in letters with a directive element (*Requests*, *Queries*, and *Complaints*). In 7 of the 28 occurrences in the BTCC *'good enough to'* expresses appreciation for an action already taken by the recipient, for example

"On November 25th, 1924, you were good enough to inform us..."
(1925_01_29_WH_##)

In the remaining 21 examples, *'good enough to'* is preceded by *'be'* and forms part of a request move, for example,

"perhaps you will be good enough to write me your views as soon as possible..."
(1946_09_12_HB_##)

As we shall see in Section 7.3., according to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's model for request analysis (1984) *'be good enough'* is considered a politeness marker, fulfilling a similar role to *'please'*. In Brown and Levinson's (1987) terms *'be good enough'* probably mostly closely

resembles the positive politeness strategy ‘being optimistic’, though this is also sometimes balanced with negatively polite hedges such as ‘perhaps’, and even intensifiers such as ‘as soon as possible’ (see 1946_09_12_HB_## example).

This n-gram does not show any particular diachronic pattern in terms of frequency (see Figure 57) however the unmitigated form ‘be good enough to’ only appears in 19th Century letters

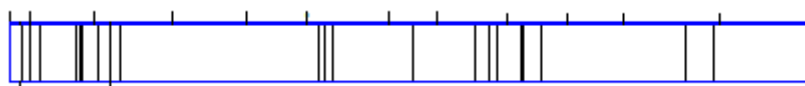


Figure 58 – ‘good enough to’ distribution in the BTCC

6.10.3. Diachronic shift from Performatives to Projections

Rank	Frequency	NF(/10,000 words)	n-gram
77	34	2.6	that you will

Table 6-17 ‘that you will’ n-gram frequency in the BTCC

Earlier examples of ‘**that you will**’ tend to be more explicit requests, expressed using *I am to*, a pre-performative formula (see Chapter 5). For example

“...I am also to request *that you will* move the Postmaster General to nominate a representative...” (1901_02_12_EM4_##),

“I am to ask *that you will* be good enough to invite the attention of the Corporation of the Sub-Section (2) (b)...” (1895_01_23_JCL_##)

As we move into the twentieth century this n-gram appears to be used more to express the writer’s expectation of the recipient. The most frequent pattern is the use of “hope” in phrases such as,

“I hope *that you will* do everything possible to expedite the issue...” (1979_12_20_AC2_KMY),

The authors’ expectations can be modulated to affect the forcefulness of the request, even to the point where the recipient’s action is taken for granted, as in the following request from the Secretary of the Institution of Electrical Engineers to the Engineer in Chief of the Post Office at the time Colonel Purves,

“I am assuming *that you will* let him know that the Council want the colour to be that of the railings...” (1927_04_08_PFR_TFP).

which in this case is mitigated by the positive, albeit still somewhat coercive, politeness strategy of 'Offer' when the author goes on to say,

"...but if you prefer it I shall write direct to him."

Occasionally these 'hope' projections express a potential benefit for the recipient,

"We hope *that you will* find the comments of some value" (1973_10_09_GO_AW2)

But these patterns are much less frequent in the data. As with requests using '*be glad if*', '*hope*' constructions are more likely to be framed in terms of the benefit to the author.

6.11. Thanking letters

Thanking letters are the single smallest letter type included in the corpus. There are 10 single-function *Thanking* letters and 11 further letters in which *Thanking* is a primary function. The *Thanking* letters that do occur are spread sporadically across the (mostly later) decades (see Figure 58)

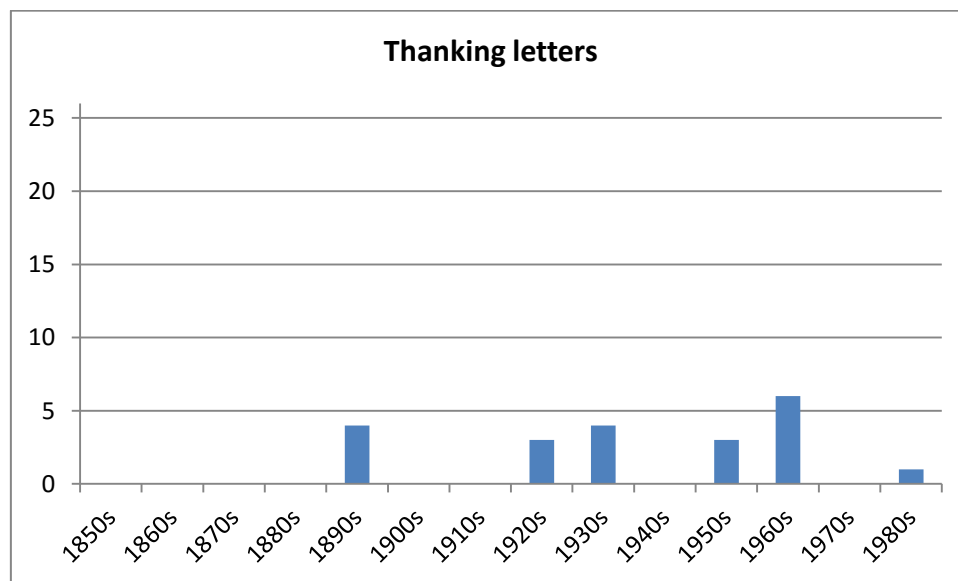


Figure 59 - Number of Thanking letters in the BTCC per decade (including multi-functional letters)

Just two style marker words appeared key in the 99.99th percentile of significance for *Thanking* letters (see Table 6-18). Three further keywords appeared in the 99.9th percentile and occurred in typical *Thanking* patterns.

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	14	23.207	much
2	21	18.416	very
(3	6	14.650	thanks)
(11	9	11.636	thank)
(12	49	11.216	you)

Table 6-18 - Style-marker keywords for Thanking letters

‘*Much*’ is key largely down to the phrase ‘*thank you very much*’. However there is quite a lot of variation in terms of the patterns in which ‘*much*’ appears in thanking letters. It appears in phrases which express appreciation, either as the main thanking move,

*“I wish to tell you how **much** we have appreciated all that the General Post Office have done for us during the Western Isles tour.”* (1956_08_19_MW_CG)

Or following the initial expression of gratitude,

*“Thank you for your letter...I know the Governors will appreciate very **much** the Postmaster-General's agreement to their proposal.”* (1952_01_22_WJH_GI)

‘*Very*’ too is primarily used in thanking phrases such as ‘*thank you very much*’ or ‘*very many thanks...*’, but it is also used when detailing the things that the author is thankful for, e.g.,

*“[the work] was most interesting and to know it has been so successful is **very** gratifying.”* (1935_07_04_RB2_SST)

*“the organisation for both the radio-telephone and the land lines worked **very** smoothly”* (1955_08_19_CAS_AL2)

*“I was **very** impressed with the work your folks have done at Goonhilly”* (1962_07_03_HMB_SRH)

6.12. Attitude Markers

One area identified by the n-gram analysis which is not particularly associated with any of the overarching functions is Attitude Markers.

6.12.1. ‘I do not’

‘*I do not*’ was identified by Kytö and Smitterberg in 26,000 words of personal letters taken from the Corpus of Nineteenth Century English (CONCE) as being the most frequent three word lexical bundle for both female and male authors, appearing 5.6 and 6.3 times per 10,000

words respectively (2006:204). Palander-Colin also noted the popularity of this cluster in eighteenth century English correspondence (2011:98) observing that it occurred more frequently in eighteenth century family letters than non-family letters and that it occurred with attitude markers and mental verbs.

Rank	Frequency	NF(/10,000 words)	n-gram
39	43	3.2	I do not

Table 6-19 – ‘I do not’ n-gram frequency in the BTCC

‘I do not’ occurs 43 times in the BTCC and in 39 of those occurrences the n-gram forms an attitude marker, e.g. “I do not agree with him...” (1897_12_26_GM_WHP) or a mental verb phrase such as,

“But even then I do not see what we can do without a separate room...”
(1881_02_15_DS_#B2)

The n-gram is almost exclusively used to offer a comment, typically on a proposed action. In four of the 39 cases this negative assessment performs the function of declining a proposed action, e.g.

“With regret therefore I do not feel that I can accept your kind offer under present circumstances.” (1911_06_30_OL_WHP)

‘I do not’ appears in the BTCC about half as often as in the letters Kytö and Smitteberg studied in the CONCE corpus. It appears that in business correspondence the relatively impersonal *it would be* is preferred when discussing the desirability of a course of action.

6.12.2. Impersonal n-grams

Rank	Frequency	NF(/10,000 words)	n-gram
17	82	6.2	it would be
43	42	3.2	that it is
60	36	2.7	it will be
93	30	2.3	that it would
120	26	2	it is not

Table 6-20 – Impersonal n-gram frequencies in the BTCC

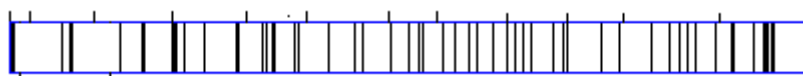


Figure 60 – Distribution of ‘it would be’ in the BTCC

Nearly all of the examples of *it would be* are followed by words that express possibility/impossibility, helpfulness, or positive and negative value judgements, such as 'it would be best' (e.g. 1981_08_27_RHC_GJ).

Only the 5 out of the 82 occurrences in the corpus do not follow one of these patterns.

In 34 instances, '*it would be*' is preceded by 'that' (or an omitted 'that'). This is reflected in the relatively high frequency of the cluster 'that *it would*'. 'That *it would be*' is typically used to report speech or thought either of the author or of a third party, e.g.

"Further My Lords consider that *it would be* very desirable that no installations either by Trinity House, by Lloyds or any other commercial body, should be permitted..." (1900_12_29_H#2_##)

"the Foreign and Commonwealth Office feel that *it would be* helpful if..." (1982_02_15_KB_GJ)

Similarly '**that it is**' nearly always reports speech or thought, more often of a third party, but sometimes of the author (as in "I consider, however, *that it is* more than sufficient..." 1938_10_20_AGL_ETC2). In the absence of 'that' or any other projecting element the value judgement is expressed without the performative verb, as in "*It would be hard work to get through the whole programme...*" (1916_07_25_WS_AMO).

The positive value judgements that follow '*it would be*' are used to carry out a number of functions, such as posing queries,

"*It would be* well to hear for instance from Captain Lockson and the Admiralty what the position of affairs is:" (1903_01_12_OL_AC)

Expressing a position (which might itself suggest action, or lack thereof)

"Further My Lords consider that *it would be* very desirable that no installations either by Trinity House, by Lloyds or any other commercial body, should be permitted until..." (1900_12_29_H#2)

Or making a request,

"...*it would be* appreciated if they were returned" (1979_05_09_GR2_TF2)

Negative value judgements are used either in declining to carry out an action or dissuading the recipient from taking action. For example, when Oliver Lodge warns Austen Chamberlain of the prospect of Marconi establishing a monopoly on Wireless Telegraphy, he writes,

"It would be a terrible mistake for the world to recognise monopoly in a method of signalling" (1903_01_12_OL_AC)

As can be seen in Figure 59 '*it would be*' occurs fairly consistently throughout the corpus. It is predominantly used as a comment cluster (In 41 out of the 82 instances), and in 24 cases it is part of a directive move. These two uses account for the majority of examples, though there are three examples in which it is used to decline and even one instance of '*it would be*' appearing as part of a commissive utterance.

There are hints of a diachronic shift in the way in which the cluster is most frequently used. In the earlier years of the corpus '*it would be*' is mostly used to express opinions, however as time goes on it becomes more popular in request formulas such as '*it would be helpful*' and '*it would be appreciated*'.

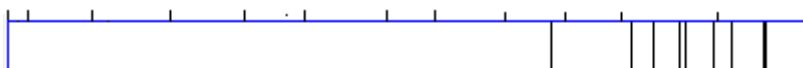


Figure 61 - '*it would be helpful*' distribution in the BTCC

For example,

"It would be helpful if someone from the Post Office could undertake a similar commitment as I am sure that there will be a deal of detailed work to be done and reported to our respective sides." (1979_12_20_AC2_KMY)

"It would be helpful to know if it is your intention to publish the Licence when it is issued." (1982_02_18_GJ_KB)

'It would be' as a directive first appears in the BTCC in the 1910s, increases in frequency in the 1950s and is most frequently used in the 1970s and 1980s. Like the '*glad*' request formulas '*it would be helpful*' and '*it would be appreciated*' present recipient action as something of a favour to the author, albeit in these instances expressed in a more impersonal way. Impersonal request moves are discussed more fully in Chapter 7.

'It will be' appears less often in request formulas and more often in comments and predictions, e.g.,

"I am told it will be out in a day or two now." (1911_06_15_OL_WHP)

'It will be' has a predictive function in 13 of the 36 occurrences in the corpus. Of the remaining occurrences, 14 make or report a personal opinion, and 9 are used in directive phrases.

Around a third of the examples of ‘*it will be*’ are preceded by ‘that’ and report speech or thought.

6.12.3. ‘I am sure’

Rank	Frequency	NF(/10,000 words)	n-gram
91	30	2.3	I am sure

Table 6-21 – ‘I am sure’ n-gram frequency in the BTCC

‘*I am sure*’ occurs in a variety of letter categories, though the majority of the examples occur in *Informative* letters. The majority of the 30 occurrences of ‘*I am sure*’ are part of projecting structures (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004), that is to say that they ‘project the authors expectations, desires or beliefs onto the recipient’ (Moreton, 2015:278).

Nearly half (fourteen out of 30) project onto the recipient, either in the form of a proposition, e.g.

“I realise I am asking rather much, but *I am sure* you will readily see the importance of our getting an idea of the sort of difficulties we may meet in future years” (1952_08_05_DRA_##)

or a “proposal”, e.g.,

“*I am sure* that you will also be taking the necessary steps...” (1981_10_09_KB_ES3)

Most of these projections (11 out of 14) project thought rather than action. There are also six instances where the projecting structure reports or comments on the thought or action of a third party (e.g. “*I am sure* they will view it sympathetically” 1979_03_23_GK_NA), and seven instances where the structure simply expresses an opinion from the writer’s perspective (e.g. “*I am sure* it may take rather longer than September...” 1982_07_02_KB_GJ).

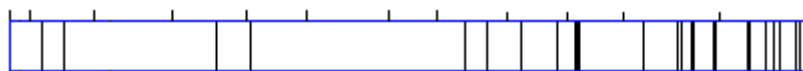


Figure 62 – ‘I am sure’ distribution in the BTCC

‘*I am sure*’ appears more frequently in later decades of the corpus, its essential function of seems to stay relatively stable throughout. From the earliest examples in the 1870s to the latest examples in the 1980s ‘*I am sure*’ is used to project the author’s expectations regarding the recipient’s reaction.

6.12.4. 'I understand that'

Rank	Frequency	NF(/10,000 words)	n-gram
94	29	2.2	i understand that

Table 6-22 – 'I understand that' n-gram frequency in the BTCC

'I understand that' shows notable diachronic change, becoming much more frequent later years (see Figure 62). Where projecting phrases have occurred in earlier years they have tended to point to reported speech or personal comments in more expressive letter types such as complaints, (e.g. "*I am disappointed **that...***" 1926_03_08_PWH_##, "*I am afraid **that...***" 1933_05_06_RWF_##, "*I feel **that...***" 1940_09_03_CS_WSM).

'I understand that' does not seem to work in this way, rather it is most often (in 24 out of 29 occurrences) used as a way to establish known information, and present the author's understanding of a situation as it stands. This seems to be the equivalent of the more impersonal earlier form 'it is understood', e.g.,

"I understand that the Department and BT officials have begun discussions about the detailed arrangements for these two stages" (1981_09_03_KJ_GJ)

In the remaining five examples, the n-gram is used to concede a point before countering it, e.g.,

"I understand that interconnect may pose some new questions but, given a positive attitude, I would expect Mercury and BT to be able to draw on the experience of established practices in the United States..." (1982_04_13_PJ_GJ)

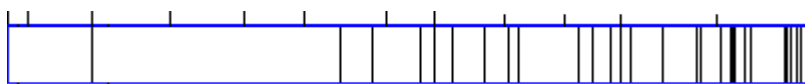


Figure 63 – 'I understand that' distribution in the BTCC

The rise in 'I am sure' and 'I understand that' in particular are in keeping with Biber's examination of stance markers in the ARCHER corpus where he found an increase in epistemic markers of stance across a range of registers in twentieth century British English (2004:131). The same study found verb + *that* complement clauses to be more frequent in conversation than in news, fiction, and academic varieties of English in the Longman Spoken and Written English (LSWE) Corpus, so the increase within the BTCC of these constructions may signal something of a colloquialisation of the language.

6.13. Summary of Analysis Four

This chapter has explored some of the most frequent ways in which the various letter functions are performed in the BTCC. Though the keyword results by function were less significantly key overall, they did provide starting points to explore each letter category. In the case of *Applications* the keywords highlighted their self-referential nature, the deferential term 'beg' pointed to the power imbalance that typically exists in *Applications*, and the keyness of 'hoping' and 'convenience' suggested the importance of pressure moves in obtaining a response. Not all functions provided this range of keywords. The keywords for *Commissive* letters for instance merely highlighted the fact that they are typically written in response to a previous letter. However some of the keyword results reflected relatively fine-grained distinctions between functions. For instance 'If' was key in both *Queries* and *Requests* as there is a degree of overlap in how these functions are realised. The remaining results for these two functions also showed that imperative forms (e.g. 'let me know if...') are more frequent in *Queries*, whereas *Requests* are more often conventionally indirect (e.g. 'I should be glad if you would...'). Such results are obviously only a starting point for more detailed investigations of letter types however they did highlight some characteristics of letter functions which had not been picked up through four rounds of purely qualitative examination of the letters (see Section 3.6.4).

At an utterance level, the n-gram analysis was effective in highlighting forms that frequently performed particular functions. However n-grams which were, say, *Informative* at the utterance level were not necessarily more frequent in *Informative* letters, and so were of limited usefulness in exploring letter functions. That is not to say that n-grams have to be clearly linked to a single letter function to be of interest. One of the more intriguing trends in the corpus is the seeming rise in frequency in *Attitude Marker* n-grams such as 'I understand that' and 'I am sure' in the latter years of the corpus. Rather than express personal attitudes, these n-grams seem to be a way for authors to negotiate their (and the recipient's) role in the discourse and even coerce the recipient into action. Again more in depth analysis of related forms is needed to explore these and related forms more fully. However overall both keyword and n-gram results have provided some preliminary insights into the most frequent forms within the various letter types and the corpus in general. In the following Chapter I will focus particularly on the linguistic characteristics of the *Request* category.

7. Chapter 7 – Analysis Five: One Corporate Action: How are requests characterised in the corpus?

7.1. Aims and Structure of the Chapter

In this chapter I look at some of the ways in which identity is expressed in the language of the *BTCC*. As in Section 4.4 I use quantitative results as my starting point. Firstly I look very briefly at the notion of institutional identity, specifically the use of company names and acronyms, before moving on to look at how authors construct their identity in letters. Personal references have been found to be a prominent feature in correspondence in previous studies (see for example Biber and Conrad 2001, Nurmi and Palander-Collin 2008). In this chapter I look at how personal pronouns are employed by authors in the *BTCC*. I also examine the decline of pre-performatives, which is to say, n-grams such as ‘I am directed to’ ‘I am to’ and ‘I beg to’ through which authors perform their role as conveyors of the message. I also examine how this decline relates to the overall decline in deferential language and a move towards a more, at least nominally, democratized corporate identity.

7.2. Request Move Analysis

7.2.1. Periodisation

This analysis of request letters has been broken into seven time periods, determined by the distribution of requests and gaps in the data. Where there is a gap of more than four years, a diachronic boundary has been marked. This has led to a rather uneven number of requests in each period but allows for clearer distinction between time periods and, as a result, some degree of diachronic consideration of the development of request structure and request moves.

The Periods are as follows: Period 1 (1857-1881) – 13 Letters; Period 2 (1893-1897) – 8 letters; Period 3 (1907-1916) 15 letters; Period 4 (1923-1932) – 17 letters; Period 5 (1936-1952) – 17 letters; Period 6 (1957-1964) 8 letters; Period 7 (1979-1982) – 9 letters.

7.2.2. Structural analysis

Firstly I will look at how request moves are organised using an adapted version of Pinto Dos Santos’s (2002) model. The full model is outlined in Section 3.5.4. The basic distinction made by Pinto Dos Santos is between five main structural moves: **Move 1** – *Establishing the negotiation chain*, **Move 2** – *Providing Information/Answers*, **Move 3** – *Requesting* –

Action/Information/Favours, **Moves 2+3 – Negotiating**, and **Move 4 – Ending**. There is a further distinction between sub-types within these moves. For instance *Move 2* can contain any of the following sub-types

- (i) *Information – (a) Introducing and providing information (b) Continuing/adding (c) Up-dating (d) Agreeing (e) Showing Opposition*
- (ii) *Advising about message – (a) that a message has been sent (b) about enclosed message*

This model was chosen partly because of the range of sub-types it offered for describing each move, and partly as it allows for flexibility in terms of describing the positioning of moves. By this I mean that other models (e.g. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1996) classify some individual move types as pre-request moves or post-request moves. In Pinto Dos Santos's (2002) model, moves can be described in terms of their function first, before their position within the request is considered. Despite these strengths, as has been seen in Section 3.5.4., this model did lack three moves in particular which, from an initial examination of the data, seemed to be frequently used in the *BTCC*, that is (ix) *Justification*, (x) *Expansion*, and (xi) *Thanks*. These moves were added to the model as *Negotiating* sub-types.

In the following analysis I examine each move in turn, examining the frequency of each sub-type and how Moves *M2 – Providing Information* and *M2+3 – Negotiating* are positioned in relation to the Request move (*M3*).

7.2.2.1. Move 1 – Establishing the negotiation chain

Every letter had to contain a term of address and a greeting in order to qualify for inclusion on the *BTCC*. For this reason every letter contains Move 1 sub-type (v) *Addressing and greeting the addressee* (see Table 7-1)

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
(iv) Reference – line	3	8	7	20	8	5	12
(v) Addressing and greeting the addressee	13	8	15	17	17	8	9

Table 7-1 *M1 Move – Establishing the negotiation chain* sub-type frequency by Period

Reference lines (iv) are the only other opening move used in the *BTCC*. They are not obligatory but do appear in nearly half of the request letters in the corpus (40 of 88), and take the form of either a single subject line, e.g.

{M1 v} “Dear Roy
 {M1 iv} INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES”
 (1982_06_18_JH3_RHC)

Or a reference to previous correspondence,

{M1 v} Dear Holmes,
 {M1 iv} You will remember that on the 16th March, 1959, I sent to
 you a letter which I had received from Summers of the Ministry
 of Housing and Local Government on the subject of...” (1959_04_14_AHM_KSH)

Or a combination of both

{M1 v} “Dear Mr Reed
 {M1 iv} RADIO INTERFERENCE SERVICE
 {M1 iv} On 18 April Sir William Barlow wrote to Sir Robert Armstrong welcoming
 the
 suggestion that the Post Office and the Home Office might get together...”
 (1979_05_03_JLB_MJR)

Reference lines are used across the seven Periods represented here (see Table 7-1). There do not appear to be any particular trends in how they are used or how frequently they occur. Their employment may just be a matter of personal (or institutional) preference.

For a detailed discussion of the forms used in the (v) *Addressing and greeting the addressee* move, see the analysis of letter openings in Section 4.4.

7.2.2.2. Move 2 – Providing Information/Answers

Move 2 – Providing Information occurs in the majority of requests (63 out of 88). Where informative moves do not occur it tends to be in shorter routine *Requests*, or in instances where the *reference line* provides the contextual information that would otherwise be provided by M2.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
(i-a) Introducing and providing information	2	5	10	5	10	5	3
(i-b) Continuing/adding	3	2	10	4	10	7	7
(i-c) Up-dating	2	1	1	1	4	1	4
(i-d) Agreeing	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
(i-e) Showing opposition	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
(ii-a) Advising that a message has been sent	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
(ii-b) Advising about enclosed message	1	1	2	3	3	2	2

Table 7-2 - M2 Move - Providing Information sub-type frequency by Period

As in Pinto Dos Santos's study, *Informative* moves tend to precede the main request move. Where post-request informative moves occur they almost always relate to enclosures. The few occasions where non-enclosure-based post-request *informative* moves are used they provide additional rather than essential information.

Period	# Pre-Request Informatives	% Pre-Request Informatives	# Post Request Informatives	% Post-Request Informatives	Informatives p/l
1	9	100%	0	0%	0.7
2	9	100%	0	0%	1.1
3	21	95%	1	5%	1.5
4	14	100%	0	0%	0.8
5	26	90%	3	10%	1.7
6	14	82%	3	18%	2.1
7	14	88%	2	12%	1.8

Table 7-3 – *Providing Information* moves summary

There are no clear diachronic trends to speak of in the *Providing Information* move results. There is a drop in frequency in occurrences of this move in Period 4, however this seems to be a fluctuation caused by the abundance of *reference lines*, which provide the context normally provided in *Move 2*. Period 5 sees a return to similar numbers and patterns of *Providing Information* move as in Period 3.

7.2.2.3. Move 3 – Requesting – Action/Information/Favours

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
(i-a) Explanation/clarification	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
(i-b) Opinion/comment/guidance/suggestions	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
(i-c) Confirmation of information	1	0	0	2	0	1	0
(i-d) Acknowledgement of receipt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(ii) Discussion/exchange of ideas	0	0	0	0	2	1	2
(iii-a) Material/document mailing	10	5	4	5	5	1	0
(iii-b) Service/action	8	5	26	12	14	8	20

Table 7-4 *Move 3 Request for...* sub-type frequency by Period

In the functional classification of letters the *BTCC* as outlined in Section 3.6.4, *Request* letters were defined as 'requests for action made on the author's terms'. Predictably, then, the majority of requests analysed here are requests for action.

Period	# Request letters	Average Word Length	Total # Request Moves	Request Moves p/l
1	13	129	21	1.6
2	8	156	10	1.3
3	15	218	32	2.1
4	17	186	19	1.1
5	17	184	21	1.2
6	8	358	11	1.4
7	9	379	22	2.4

Table 7-5 – Request move summary

As we can see in Table 7-5 Periods 3 and 7 have the largest number of requests per letter. It may be that the increased level of institutional and departmental collaboration which occurred during these periods necessitated multiple requests to address the needs of the various parties involved.

A detailed account of the forms that these various request moves take is provided in Section 7.3.

7.2.2.4. Moves 2+3 – Negotiating

The analysis of the content and position of *Negotiating* moves was by far the most revealing aspect of the move analysis.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
(iv) Apologizing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(v) Offering incentives	0	0	2	0	1	1	2
(vi-a) Evaluating - giving personal opinion	1	1	0	1	1	4	4
(vi-b) Evaluating - making comments	0	2	10	3	11	7	8
(vi-c-i) Evaluating - indicating availability	1	1	5	1	0	1	1
(vi-c-ii) Evaluating - indicating wishes/plans/intentions	3	2	5	4	3	2	9
(vii) Drawing attention to something	2	0	1	1	1	0	1
(viii) Applying pressure tactics (in different degrees)	2	2	3	0	0	1	2
(ix) Justification	6	2	5	6	5	0	2
(x) Expansion	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
(xi) Thanks	0	0	0	1	0	1	2

Table 7-6 - Move 2+3 *Negotiating* sub-type frequency by Period

As we can see in Table 7-6 *Justification* and *Evaluating - Making Comments*, and *Evaluating - indicating wishes/plans/intentions* are the most frequently used *Negotiating* moves. Both moves serve a variety of functions depending on where they appear in relation to the request. For instance, 6 of the 13 requests in Period 1 contain *justifications*. Five come after the request

move and cite the need to deal with a matter with some urgency as the motivation behind the request. The *justification* that comes before the request move (in 1878_04_27_WHR_##) serves to bridge the informing update (M2 i-c) and the request, which in this case is for a detailed memo of telephone apparatus rentals and to settle an account.

{justification} *"As I wish to
close up my business
previous to that date,
<M3_iii_a> I shall be obliged by
your sending me a
Memorandum"* (1878_04_27_WHR_##)

We see similar patterns of distribution and use of *Negotiating* moves in Period 2, in which they continue to appear more often after the request move, but when they appear before (as in in 1896_09_12_##_##) they are used to bridge the opening *Providing Information* move and the request.

Period 3 sees an increase in the variety of negotiation moves. It is also the first period in which *comment* moves M2+3-vi-b, *offering returns and incentives* M2+3-v, and *drawing attention to something* M2+3-vii are used before the request move. M2+3 vi-b - *Comments* in this period are used in a similar way to *justifications* in the pre-request context, that is, as a sort of bridging device between *informative* moves and the main request. For example in 1907_04_11_EC_JS2, Edward Cohen the Town Clerk for the Council of Broughty Ferry writes to John Sinclair,

**"{M2-i-b}...The Parties interested...have resolved
to continue the effort to have the Underground Cables carried
northward to Aberdeen with the least possible delay. {M2+3 - vi b - comments}
My Council is interested, <M3_iii_b> and on their instructions I am writing you to
ask if
you could use your influence with the Postmaster General..."**

Likewise in 1913_03_31_HW_## H. Wright from Siemens Brothers & Co. Limited wrote to the Secretary of the Post Office stating,

**{M2-i-b} "...This is required for the purposes of a demonstration
to be given to the members of the Advisory Committee
of the House of Commons dealing with the Marconi contract.
{vi b - comments} We understand from our telephone conversation
that there will be no objection to this, <M3_iii_b> and shall be much
obliged if you will confirm this. </>"**

Period 4 is notable in terms of the position of negotiation as it sees a shift towards the majority of *negotiating* moves appearing before rather than after the main request move. Twelve of the negotiation moves (71%) appear before the request move, while only five (29%) appear after it. (N.B. This trend continues for the remaining Periods examined here).

The two *personal opinion* (M2+3-vi-a) moves in Period 4 serve a similar linking function between initial informative moves and the main request move, as do the M2+3-vi-c-ii *indicating intentions* moves used in three letters from this period,. For instance in 1927_11_23_EF_WTL the author states,

{M2 ib} *"During my last visit in London, I saw in the streets the new tasteful and practical telephone kiosks of the British Post Office, {vi c ii - indicating intentions} which I should like to show as model at our present discussions. <M3_iii_a> Therefore, I should be very much obliged to you if you would be kind enough as to forward me as soon as possible a simple sketch or a photograph of these kiosks with measures."* </>

One letter from this period (1927_01_03_WFS_##) contains six negotiation moves, all of which attempt to establish the Associated Merchandising Corporation's claim on the first commercial transatlantic wireless telephone call to New York. The *comment* moves are used to establish the author's understanding of the Post Office's situation,

{vi b - comments} *"We understand that the arrangements of the bookings for these radio telephone messages have been transferred"*

The *justifications* make clear the link between their understanding and the request move,

{pre-justification} *"As we were assured at the time that we were the first,"*

{post-justification} *"as we are about to finish off details of an arrangement we have made"*

and a further M2+3-vii *drawing attention* move brings attention to the author's request for a confirmation of their arrangement as the author understands it,

{pre-justification} *"For fear we should lose our position, and the whole value of the arrangements we have so far made would be lost, {vii - drawing attention} we are addressing this for your attention,"*

While this letter is unusual in this Period in terms of the volume of *Negotiating* moves, it does reflect a wider trend for more position-establishing negotiation moves prior to the main request.

In Period 5 the trend whereby the majority of *negotiating* moves to appear prior to the request move continues (though in only 59% of cases rather than 71% as in Period 4). Again the most frequently used negotiation move is (M2+3-vi-b) *comment*, though it is used to perform a wider variety of purposes. Two of the pre-request comments appear in the patterns have seen in previous periods of bridging the informative and the request move. In four of the requests, the *comment* move is used to communicate some element of concession to the recipient's position. For example, when requesting the modification of a switchboard so that it could be used by a recently blinded woman, C.B. Cockburn wrote:

{comment} *"We realise, of course, that there are many claims on the services of your District Engineers these days, and that of necessity priority has to be given to the more important work. <M3_iii_b> We should, however, be grateful for anything you could do to speed up the work of Messrs. Willcox's switchboard"* (1945_01_15_CBC_WDS)

Similarly in the following letter, which relates to a ruling that BBC Governors wishing to become a Members of Parliament would have to resign from their posts, we see the *comment* move used to concede:

{comment} *"The Governors do not dispute this ruling nor do they question its expediency."* (1952_01_03_WJH_GI)

but also counter the recipient's argument,

{comment} *"Some of them have, however, pointed out that this prohibition against standing for Parliament whilst still a Governor was not made clear to them when they were originally invited to become Governors."*

Justifications are also used in a greater variety of ways in Period 5. The *justifications* that occur before request moves in this period pass on the responsibility for carrying out an action to the recipient. For example in 1940_06_19_WS2_SFS it is explained:

{justification} *"But we have no material on which to base an answer to Lord Lothian's present enquiries and <M3_iii_b> we should be very grateful if you could arrange to refer them to the appropriate committee..."*

The *justifications* which occur after the request move in this period set the request in the wider situational context, as in

{justification} *"I am raising this question again as I have heard of recent cases of men in other Arms who are skilled switchboard operators and who would prefer to be with us."*

A variety of moves continue to be used in Period 6, again largely prior to the request move. In 1958_05_07_GHI_GR the author, Sir Godfrey Ince writes to the Director General of the Post Office at this time suggesting that he should reword a letter. In doing so Ince makes use of M2+3-vi-c-ii *announcing intentions* and M2+3-vi-b *personal opinion* and M2+3-vi-b *comment* moves before the request move to indicate his support of the recipient's position,

{M1 iv} *"As I told you on the telephone this afternoon, I have been thinking for a day or two over your draft letter to Bowie {vi c ii - intentions} - from the point of view, may I say, of tactics and not of substance, {vi-a opinion} as I am in fundamental agreement with what you say."*

So as with *negotiating* moves in general the author positions himself in relation to the message, but due to the face threatening nature of asking the recipient to change their wording, and potentially the seniority of the recipient, the author displays a high degree of caution in just how he positions himself.

Period 7 contains by far the highest average number of negotiation moves per letter (3.7). The most commonly used negotiation moves are M2 2+3 vi-b *Making comments* and M2+3 vi-c-ii *indicating wishes*. *Comments* fulfil a number of functions in this period. In 1979_01_29_JC_NA, 1979_12_20_AC2_KMY and 1982_06_18_JH3_RHC the authors put forward detailed arguments regarding Tenants Rights to Telephones, 'Industrial Democracy' and Industrial Telecommunications Services respectively. The *comment* move allows authors to highlight their main points. For example,

{vii - drawing attention} *"There are, I believe, two background aspects of very great significance. {vi - comments} The first is our strong belief, in British Telecom, that the national interest - not simply BT's interests - are demonstrably best served by continuing to have a single, efficient, market-oriented and internationally-respected international carrier..."* (1982_06_18_JH3_RHC)

There is also one example of a comment bridging the *informative* section with the request; a function it has performed in a number of periods prior to this, e.g.

{vi b - comments} *"The Board were very keen that the announcement about this decision should be made by you in Northern Ireland*
<M3_iii_b> *and I would be glad if you would now get ahead with doing this. </>* (1979_11_28_WB3_PJM)

This letter, which concerns the regional division of telephone services in Northern Ireland, also contains post-request comments from the Post Office Board,

<M3_iii_b> *"We would also like it to be made clear to staff that the fact we are able to split Northern Ireland is in no small measure due to their success in helping with the growth of postal and telecommunications business in the Province. </>*
{vi-b comment} *This is a matter for congratulations and something of which they can be proud."* (1979_11_28_WB3_PJM)

This is an interesting use of the comment move, as the letter essentially hands down a decision made at Board level, but in conveying this message to the staff and commenting that they should be proud it gives the appearance of a decision made as a result of collective effort, even though, as it appears from the rest of the letter, this was a matter of ongoing concern for the staff, particularly in regards to whether they would keep their jobs.

Offering incentives is perhaps surprisingly rarely used in the requests examined here. Where they are used they seem to perform a sort of friendly coercion. For instance the letter 1909_03_16_HBS_## is part of an ongoing exchange relating to the takeover by the Post Office of a plant owned by the National Telephone Company in which Henry Babington-Smith writes on behalf on the Postmaster general asking that The National Telephone Company produce certain records for the Post Office to inspect, writing

"{vi c ii - intention} *He desires, however, to avoid putting the Company to any unnecessary trouble in this matter, {v - offering/incentive}* *and he will be glad to instruct his officers to attend at the head Office of the Company for the purpose of making the necessary inspection of books and accounts."* (1909_03_16_HBS_##)

The employment of these negotiation moves prior to the request seems to be an attempt to mitigate what is quite a large imposition on the recipient by offering Post Office assistance in the completion of this task, however there is something of a disconnect between the promise to "avoid putting the Company to any unnecessary trouble" and quoting the Company's legal obligation to produce "such books and accounts &c., as the officers detailed for the duty of

inspection may require”. Similarly in 1982_06_18_JH3_RHC from Period 7 the *offer/incentive* move seem to be a general way of applying pressure rather a genuine offer. The author writes,

{v - offer} “In short, my BTI colleagues and I wish to give you all the help we can to reach early, well-informed conclusions to your international competition study.”

The nature of the ‘help’ offered here is rather vague. However the pressing need for the author to be supplied with the conclusions of the study is stressed repeatedly throughout the letter. *Offering incentive* moves, then, seem to emphasise the role the author is willing to play in enabling the recipient to carry out the request, rather than any benefit to the recipient.

Period	# Pre-Request Negotiation	% Pre-Request Negotiation	# Post-Request Negotiation	% Post-Request Negotiation	Negotiation Moves p/l
1	4	27%	11	73%	1.2
2	4	40%	6	60%	1.3
3	10	32%	21	68%	2
4	12	71%	5	29%	1
5	13	59%	9	41%	1.3
6	10	59%	7	41%	2.1
7	22	66%	11	33%	3.7

Table 7-7 – Move 2+3 Negotiating Summary

The wide ranging nature of the requests means that there are no very clear diachronic trends in terms of move frequency. Many of the results seem to point to the nature of particular requests rather than wider trends. However one change that does seem to occur across a variety of requests from Period 4 onwards is that there are consistently more *Negotiating* moves before the request move. As we have seen these *negotiating* moves tend to indicate the author’s position in relation to the request made. We also see instances of author comments which seem to try and frame the recipient’s response to the request. This may be linked to the increase in attitude marker n-grams noted in the previous chapter through which authors seem to increasingly project their expectations on to recipients through phrases such as ‘I am sure that you will....’

7.2.2.5. Move 4 – Ending

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
(i) Signing off	13	6	15	17	17	8	9
(ii) Signature – line	13	6	15	17	17	8	10
(iii) Job status	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(iv) Company credentials	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
(v) Note and PS – line	2	2	0	0	0	0	0

Table 7-8 - Move 4 – Ending sub-type frequency by Period

All requests in the corpus contain a closing formula and a signature as they were formal requirements for the letters to be included in the corpus. For a detailed analysis of the form that letter closings take see Section 4.4.

In addition to the obligatory moves, we see 1 display of company credentials, and 4 postscripts. In John Nesfield's composition grammar, one of the manuals examined in Section 4.2., regarding postscripts he advises,

“Say all that you have to say before you finish the letter. If you collect and arrange your thoughts well before you begin to write, no postscript will be necessary”
(1917:160)

Postscripts in the *BTCC* do seem to be used because the author has forgotten to mention something in the body of the letter. For instance in 1878_08_09_JM2_WHA in relation to a question of whether some Members of Parliament will vote against the Telegraph bill the author writes,

*P.S. I don't see
what they can do
without a ["whip"]*

In all remaining periods (3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) only the obligatory moves M4 (i) *signing off* and M4 (ii) *signature line* were used.

7.2.3. Summary of Request Move Analysis findings

As Section 4.4 of this thesis was dedicated to a detailed analysis opening and closing address forms, and *requests* had been pre-defined in the functional classification of the *BTCC* as ‘requests for action’, the analysis of *Moves 1, 3 and 4* was of limited interest here. This phase of the analysis was intended to address how requests in the corpus are structured, and how this relates to the nature of the request. The analysis of *Move 2 – ‘Providing Information’* and

Move 2+3 – ‘Negotiating’ proved revealing for this purpose. As in Pinto Dos Santos’s (2002) model, *Move 2* was generally found to occur prior to requests. It was notable that it is not an obligatory move in the *BTCC* requests, particularly in the first four Periods.

The most interesting move in terms of request structure was *M2+3 – Negotiating*. This move seems particularly important in terms allowing authors to position themselves in relation to the requests they make, and even frame the way in which the recipient will understand the request. *Negotiating* moves do also display two diachronic trends in the *BTCC*. Firstly, as time goes on a greater variety of *Negotiating* moves are employed, and secondly from Period 4 onwards we see more *Negotiating* moves occurring before the request move than after. This suggests an increasingly writer-responsible approach to request formulation wherein the authors make clear how the request follows from the information they provide. It may also have to do with authors making greater efforts to manage the recipient’s response to the request. To some extent this would be in keeping with the rise in *attitude markers* identified in Chapter 6, which were employed to situate the author in relation to the content of their letter, but also (in the case of e.g. ‘I am sure’) project author expectations onto the recipient.

Although the model of analysis proved particularly useful for analysing the wide range of negotiation strategies employed in the corpus, it is also worth noting that the *Justification* category, which does not appear in the original model, was the third most frequent category in terms of negotiating moves displayed in the *BTCC* data. This suggests that the justification of requests is an important part of business correspondence and any application of this model to business discourse would benefit from the inclusion of this category. It may be that this model could also benefit from further distinctions between request move categories, particularly with reference to requests for action. The model addresses a range of types of requests for information (opinions, comments, explanations, clarifications, confirmations...) some of which arguably display a degree of overlap, but all requests for action come under the category *Service/Action*. This is presumably because this level of delicacy was appropriate for the emails from which the model was derived. However had I used this model for the analysis of the request moves themselves I would have required further distinctions between further sub-types. Having said this, in terms of describing how the request was structured and the ways in which informing and negotiating moves were positioned in terms of the main request, this model helped provide a number of insights.

Following on from this examination of the move structure of the request letters in the *BTCC*, in Section 7.3 I will look in more detail at the ways in which the request moves specifically are realised. Using Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) model I examine request strategy, directness, and upgrading/downgrading elements.

7.3. Request Strategy Analysis

This second part of the request analysis takes into account request strategy and how the request is modulated through the use of upgraders and downgraders. In order to give a general overview of the results, summary tables of the strategies used are provided at the beginning of each Period.

Each request has been assigned a strategy from the model outlined in Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). The strategies that they identified are:

- *MD* – Mood derivable – i.e. Imperatives,
- *EP* – Explicit Performatives - such as 'I am to inform you...',
- *HP* – Hedged Performatives - defined by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain as 'utterances embedding the naming of the illocutionary act, e.g. 'I would like you to...' (1984:202),
- *LD* – Locution Derivable - in which 'the illocutionary point is directly derivable from the semantic meaning of the locution' (ibid) e.g. 'The cheque should be made payable to...',
- *SS* – Scope Stating - relating speaker's attitude or feelings regarding the request being carried out e.g., 'I would be glad...',
- *S* – Suggestory - a rather vague category covering any sort of suggestory formula such as 'why don't you...?' or 'how about...?',
- *P* – Preparatory – in which reference is made to the possibility of the act being performed, typically through modals, e.g. 'could you...?' or 'I should be obliged if you will...'

The summary tables are colour-coded in light grey to indicate more 'direct' request strategies (at the top and left side of the table) and light blue to indicate 'conventionally indirect' request strategies (at the bottom and right side of the table).

The Period division is the same as that used in Section 7.2.

7.3.1. Period 1 (1857-1881) – 13 letters

Period 1		Recipient-Related Strategy							
		MD	EP	HP	LD	SS	S	P	N/A
Author Strategy	MD								
	EP							I	III
	HP							I	
	LD								
	SS							III	III
	S								
	P								
	N/A	II			I			III	

Table 7-9 – Request strategy summary for Period 1

The most popular strategy in this Period is the *scope stating*, that is to say the strategy that expresses the author's feeling or attitude about the request being carried out, e.g.

"I should be very glad if you could give me a call..." (1879_01_28_WHW_FRO)

In four of the *scope stating* requests in this Period the recipient-related strategy is *preparatory*. In such requests the recipient's action is typically realised in modals in phrases such as 'if you could...' Where *preparatory* recipient-related strategies are used without the authorial *scope stating* strategy the request is phrased in the interrogative form e.g. 'Will you please send me a list of the names of people...' (1878_07_22_JHM_##)

In the remaining four *scope stating* requests, the recipient's action is either nominalized, a move identified by Brown and Levinson (1987:207) as a negative politeness strategy, for example,

"I shall be obliged by your sending me a Memorandum" (1878_04_27_WHR_##)

or minimised and the author is characterised as the passive recipient of the action, for example,

"we shall be glad to have [telephones] substituted for [telegraph equipment] in this office..." (1881_02_09_##_DS)

After *scope stating* the most frequently used request strategy is *explicit performative*. A range of modulating upgrader and downgrader elements are used. Where *explicit performatives* are used to suggest a course of action they contain downgrading strategies. For example, in 1878_08_09_JM2_WHA the author makes use of the tentative performative verb 'suggest' and negation in both request moves, as well as using impersonal and passive forms for the proposed action,

"I suggest whether it is not better to assume that.../I suggest whether a concise statement may not be prepared, and circulated" (1878_08_09_JM2_WHA)

This letter refers to ongoing and complicated negotiations surrounding a parliamentary bill which it appears some Members of Parliament are trying to block, so this tentativeness may point to the careful diplomacy required in negotiating legislation.

The two *performatives* relate to money, one as a payment reminder and the other as a request from Thomas Edison's agent for further details of specific expenses to be covered by the Post Office. In this second request, the author uses the *time intensifier* upgrader 'now',

*"I **now** remind you of your offer to make more explicit that clause..."*
(1873_03_05_GEG_FIS)

But goes on to mitigate this through a lengthy explanation (or 'grounders') as to why the request is being made, which shifts the responsibility for the request onto a third party,

*"it is from no apprehension
that you would construe the clause referred to except as
we understand it, but simply, that my friends in America
may not think me insufficiently warranted in the statement
I sent them by cable."* (1873_03_05_GEG_FIS)

In including a relatively direct request move and lengthy justification the author attempts to balance the twin concerns noted by Blum-Kulka (1987:131), i.e. pragmatic clarity on the one hand and the avoidance of coerciveness on the other. The other payment request in this period is a *hedged performative* and incorporates the downgrading elements into the request move, making use of the politeness marker 'be good enough to' and framing the request in terms of deontic modality,,

“I have to request that you will be good enough to cause that amount to be paid”
(1878_08_21_GC_WHR)

It is not entirely clear from the context whether the rather indirect “...cause that amount to be paid” is employed because the recipient is responsible for authorising rather than making the payment, or whether this is an additional face saving strategy intended to soften the impact of the payment reminder.

Two of the thirteen requests are *mood derivable*, one mitigated with the politeness marker ‘*be good enough to*’ (1879_01_24_FRO_WHW), the other using ‘*please*’ (1881_02_09_FCS_DS). Interestingly both of these imperatives make use of ‘oblige’ as a sort of request tag at the end of two letters. In 1879_01_24_FRO_WHW Fred Ormiston, Manager of the Telephone Company Limited, writes,

*“Be good enough to write us signifying
your acceptance of this arrangement and oblige.”*

Similarly, in 1881_02_09_FCS_DS Frank Struck writes,

*“Please place in our
office a Telephone in lieu of
telegraph as early as possible
and oblige.”*

These are the only two occurrences of this form in the corpus. The only specific explanation of this form I encountered in my wider research was in a business letter writing guide from 1911 written by Josephine Baker. She advises that,

‘when it is impossible to use an interrogation point, as in the conclusion of a letter, then the interrogative form should be changed to the declarative; thus: instead of saying “Will you kindly be present and oblige?” etc one should say “Kindly be present, and oblige!”’
(1911:87)

‘Oblige’ is a word identified by O’Locker (1987:30) as being used frequently in business English in the period 1836-1950 though she does not indicate whether this is as an imperative tag, or whether she also includes forms such as ‘should be obliged if...’. It may be that the imperative ‘oblige’ fell away as ‘please’ became a more frequent request form.

This Period also contains a more unusual request-type in which the author makes their request by announcing their intentions,

'I intend shortly to do myself the honour of calling upon you on behalf of Mr D H Craig, with the view of showing you the new system of Automatic Telegraphy.'

And following this up with what Pinto Dos Santos (2002) would call an indication of flexibility,

"If you wish to see me at any particular time or place, and will address your letter to 60 Portland Place London I will endeavour to meet your wishes."
(1872_10_22_EWJ_FIS)

This request is simultaneously very indirect, as a request for a meeting is never explicitly made, and very coercive as the recipient's compliance is taken for granted. As such it goes against the essential requirements for a request as identified by Blum-Kulka (1987:131). Only two other examples of this form exist in the corpus and in each case the author is trying to impose a course of action on the recipient.

There are 4 requests which make use of temporal upgraders in this Period. Three of these requests employ upgraders 'now' (1873_03_05_GEG_FIS), 'at once' (1878_08_15_JM2_WHA) and 'as early as possible' (1881_02_09_FCS_DS) to stress need for immediate action. The fourth upgrader 'when you are in a position to' (1881_02_09_##_DS) also adds to the compelling force of the request but is more flexible in relation to timescale.

7.3.2. Period 2 (1893-1897) – 8 letters

Period 2		Recipient-Related Strategy							
		MD	EP	HP	LD	SS	S	P	N/A
Author Strategy	MD								
	EP	I						II	
	HP								I
	LD								
	SS							III	II
	S								
	P								
	N/A	I							

Table 7-10 - Request strategy summary for Period 2

As in Period 1, the two most popular request strategies are *scope stating* and *explicit performatives*.

In the three examples of *scope stating* requests we see the same range of requests as those in Period 1. There is one *scope stating/preparatory request*,

"...he will be glad if you can fix a time which will enable him to [view planned telegraph experiments]" (1897_08_03_CB_JCL)

One request in which the requester's role is passivized,

"Lord Lansdowne will be glad to be furnished later with a report..."
(1896_09_12_##_##)

And one example where the recipient's action is nominalized and upgraded with a *time intensifier*,

"I will be obliged by your letting me have as early as possible a copy of the Agreement..." (1893_11_04_JDM_JCL)

As in Period 1 the three requests which make use of *explicit performative* strategies are reminders, or requests for further action. In 1897_03_02_##_## the author requests an update on Marconi's telegraphy experiments on behalf of the War Office,

"I am directed by the Secretary of State for War to enquire if the Post Master General can now favour him with a reply..."

The other two *explicit performatives* are more forceful and contain the temporal upgraders 'at once' and 'now',

"I am desired by the Committee...to urge you now to deal with the application..."
(1893_10_30_JG#_##)

"They have accordingly to beg that their application may be at once dealt with..."
(1894_08_15_RR_##)

The letters in question relate to an application made by the Corporation of Glasgow to the Post Office for permission to establish a telephone exchange service in Glasgow. This private service did eventually open in 1900 (only to be nationalised a few years later). Given this and the fact that the two letters in which these performatives appear were written ten months apart, the degree of urgency in these requests is perhaps an understandable reaction to the lack of progress in establishing this telephone exchange.

In this Period we also see another example of an author announcing their intentions as a request move, this time courtesy of Guglielmo Marconi, writing to request a meeting with William Preece,

"I shall call at the G.P.O tomorrow Wednesday at 12.30 and if quite convenient to you would like to talk...If any other hour would suit you better, please let me know" (1897_11_16_GM_WHP)

As with 1872_10_22_EWJ_FIS from Period 1, the occurrence of the meeting is taken for granted, though this request arguably contains a touch more pragmatic clarity than its counterpart in Period 1 as it contains the *hedged performative* request '[I] would like to talk'.

The most indirect, or at least the most hedged, request in this period is made by A.A. Campbell Swinton, an electrical engineer who was man who first put Marconi in touch with the Post Office, recommending that William Preece, Engineer-in-Chief at the Post Office, meet the young inventor. In the letter in question Campbell-Swinton uses a variety of downgrader elements including downtoners ('*might possibly*') and a politeness marker ('*be kind enough*') and writes,

"It has occurred to me that you might possibly be kind enough to see him and hear what he has to say..." (1896_03_30_AAS_WHP)

Following this, he goes on to justify the request and apologise for any imposition. Given the seemingly small imposition involved in the mere suggestion that Preece could meet with Marconi, the heightened level of politeness in this letter seems more likely to be a result of Preece's relative seniority in the field of engineering. It is also notable that the author closes the letter with the salutation '*yours very truly*' which we have seen in Section 4.2., would have been a fairly familiar salutation according to recommended use at this time. It may have been that the two had some level of personal friendship and his tentativeness arose from not wanting to be seen to be taking advantage of this.

7.3.3. Period 3 (1907-1916) – 15 letters

Period 3		Recipient-Related Strategy							
		MD	EP	HP	LD	SS	S	P	N/A
Author Strategy	MD								
	EP							IIII	II
	HP							I	
	LD								
	SS							IIII IIII I	III
	S								
	P								
	N/A				II		I	IIII I	I

Table 7-11 - Request strategy summary for Period 3

The most popular request strategy in this period is *scope stating* and this is almost always used with *preparatory* recipient forms (e.g. ‘if you would’). Unlike the data from earlier periods, ‘obliged’ is most often used in this context, i.e. with an *embedded if* downtoner rather than a nominalised recipient act, as in.

“The committee will be very much obliged if you can arrange for a representative to be present...” (1913_04_19_EHR_RS)

The *scope stating* requests that do not involve recipient strategies in this period make use of passive rather than nominalised forms (e.g. ‘I should be obliged if instructions could be given...’ 1913_02_18_EHR_##_(2))

In 1913_02_18_EHR_##, E.H. Rayner, Secretary, Advisory Committee on Wireless Telegraphy, writes to Alexander King, Secretary of the Post Office, asking for him to relay the committee’s wishes to the US Government. In doing so he uses the impersonal *scope stating* form ‘it would be’,

“...the committee consider it would be of the greatest assistance if the Government of the United States would lay before them some account of the methods and achievements of their Radio service”

As we have seen in Chapter 6, *'it would be'* is one of the highest frequency clusters in the corpus. Towards the end of the twentieth century phrases such as *'it would be helpful if'* become more frequent, but they were still rare as request forms at this point.

We also see six interrogative *preparatory* forms in this Period (e.g. 'Will you be so kind as to look over the rough draft...?' 1913_02_24_EHR_#L) all of which use downtoner elements, either with variations on the politeness markers noted in previous decades (e.g. 'be so good as to') or *'kindly*, a 'modal adjunct of entreaty' (Halliday 1994: 49). Interrogative requests appear most often as the second or third of multiple requests within the same letter.

The *explicit performative* request strategy is the second most used in this period. Six of the fifteen letters make use of this strategy. In four out of six *explicit performatives* the author also uses the *preparatory* request strategy, e.g.

*"I am writing you to ask **if you could** use your influence with the Postmaster General..."* (1907_04_11_EC_JS2)

Of the two *explicit performatives* that do not make use of the *preparatory* strategy, the first (1914_09_30_JHS2_##) is a 'headline' request, which is to say the broad outline of the request is the author's first move, before he goes on to expand on the details of the request. This author also invokes the authority of the War Office to request that the Director of Army Signals at the Post Office help him in enlisting telegraphists for the army.

The final request in this period (in 1916_08_09_DDC_##) is impersonal and also concerns the military enlistment of Post Office workers. The request move is expressed in the following way,

*"**It is suggested**, that...men whom it is intended to send from the Post Office for service should present themselves for a medical examination..."*

The pattern "it is *-ed" is used throughout the corpus but generally fulfils one of four roles. It is used in expressions of hope, as a hedging device when outlining plans (e.g. 'it is expected that...'), to establish the author's position (e.g. 'it is assumed that' see also 'I understand that' in Chapter 6), or restate some part of previous correspondence (e.g. 'it is stated that...'). It is not normally used in this sort of impersonal request.

D.D. Culite of the War Office, the author of this letter, uses this request form a number of times over the course of two letters. In 1914_09_09_DDC_## he writes,

*“I am commanded by the Army Council to inform you that **it is proposed** to enlist office and line telegraphists, who are Post Office employees...”*

*“The following special conditions should, **it is suggested**, apply to the enlistment of these men.”*

*“The establishment of office and line telegraphists required under these conditions will vary with the wastage of men of this trade, but **it is proposed** to obtain 60 office and 60 line telegraphists as soon as possible”*

As we have seen in Section 4.4., there is a certain formal distance in military correspondence. This seems to be reflected again here, both in vocabulary such as “wastage” to refer to the deaths of recruits, and in the impersonal nature of the request forms.

7.3.4. Period 4 (1923-1932) – 17 letters

Period 4		Recipient-Related Strategy							
		MD	EP	HP	LD	SS	S	P	N/A
Author Strategy	MD								
	EP							I	II
	HP								
	LD							I	
	SS							IIII I	IIII II
	S								
	P								
	N/A							III	

Table 7-12 - Request strategy summary for Period 4

The *scope stating* request strategy is again the most popular in this period, though it is not so consistently used with the *preparatory* strategy. Of the thirteen *scope stating* strategies employed, only six also employ the preparatory strategy. Of the remaining seven *scope stating requests*, four are nominalised, two using the passive ‘obliged’ form observed in previous decades, e.g.

"I should be obliged by your returning me the duplicate..."

and two in 1927_01_03_WFS_## appear in a more active form,

"we should like your confirmation of this fact.../and [we] would much appreciate your acknowledgement in confirmation of our arrangement."

(1930_01_21_CGA_##)

There are also two further *scope stating* requests in which the author's action is characterised as passive receiver of information, e.g.,

*"we shall be glad **to receive** early intimation of the Advisory Committee's approval thereof"* (1932_08_09_NJL_NL)

There are three *explicit performative* requests in this period all of which are delegated, (e.g. 'I have been requested by my Council to ask...' 1925_01_29_WH_##), and all of which avoid recipient reference, e.g.

"I have been requested by my Council to ask whether this payment is likely to be made in the near future"

In fact around half of the requests in this Period minimise the role of the Hearer, a move associated with negative politeness in Brown and Levinson's model.

Perhaps partly because of the relatively impersonal nature of the requests in this period there are few upgraders. There is one *mood derivable* request in this period which contains the only upgrader (the intensifier 'no doubt') and one of the few downgraders in the form of the politeness marker 'be good enough',

"...no doubt you will be good enough to arrange for a representative to be in attendance."

On three occasions the author-related *scope stating* strategy is intensified with 'very, 'much' or 'deeply' as in

"I should be deeply grateful if you would put this request in the right quarter for me" (1926_12_28_GEB_##)

This modulation of the author-related strategy does not seem to correspond well to the nature of the request, in terms of the degree of imposition and power distance between interlocutors, but it adds a degree of cordiality, particularly in requests made from outside

companies. In this period three of the requests that employ modulation of the *scope stating* strategy relate to the securing of the first transatlantic telephone call.

7.3.5. Period 5 (1936-1952) – 17 letters

Period 5		Recipient-Related Strategy							
		MD	EP	HP	LD	SS	S	P	N/A
Author Strategy	MD								
	EP				I			I	
	HP								
	LD							III	II
	SS							IIII IIII	I
	S								
	P							I	
	N/A	I			II			I	

Table 7-13 - Request strategy summary for Period 5

The combination of *scope stating* and *preparatory* request strategies remains popular in this period, accounting for nine of the twenty-two total request moves. We continue to see greater variety in the form that this strategy takes. The formula typically used in earlier letters along the lines of,

“I shall be glad if you will give instructions for them to be done in a similar shade of green as before.” (1936_06_07_SGK_ACB)

appears in four *scope stating/preparatory* requests, three times with ‘glad’ used to express the author’s attitude and one time ‘obliged’. In addition to this, we see ‘grateful’ entering that formula, joining the company of ‘appreciate’ which first appeared in Period 4, e.g.

“we should be very grateful if you could arrange to refer them to the appropriate committee...” (1940_06_19_WS2_SFS)

“it would be appreciated if the further employment of London disabled persons handicapped by loss of vision could be investigated” (1950_05_26_EB2_##)

This second example is also notable in that *scope stating* requests that take the impersonal form 'it' are still rare at this point in the timeline of the corpus, though they become more popular in the last two Periods represented here.

There are two instances of modulation of author action in *scope stating* requests, e.g. '*I should be much obliged...*' This Period also contains a request that makes simultaneous use of a cost-minimiser downtoner and the time-intensifier upgrader 'in the near future',

"We would be glad therefore if your people could at a convenient opportunity in the near future remove this kiosk to an alternative site..." (1946_11_##_FIR_WCG)

This letter came at a time when the Post Office was involved in an ongoing argument with representatives of rural areas who felt that the standard red colour of telephone kiosks was not appropriate for their rural surroundings. They wanted the kiosks to be painted dark green instead. The Post Office responded that they could not deviate from the standard red colour. However the kiosk referenced in this letter had been painted green and was conspicuously located in London. As such it rather undermined the Post Office's case. The employment of these up and downgrading elements seems to be an attempt to balance the pressing nature of the request with recognition that the imposition on the recipient is rather significant.

Of the two purely *preparatory* request moves in this period, one (1942_06_06_BCS_SDS) follows Blum-Kulka's interrogative archetype,

*"**Would you**, therefore, ascertain whether your Minister would be good enough to sign the necessary certificate?"*

The other expresses the recipient action in a conditional 'if' clause,

"If the Postmaster-General would nominate his representative a date could then be arranged for meeting and an agenda forwarded to him"
(1936_04_21_AEW_##)

This period also sees a relatively large proportion of *Locution Derivable* requests (five out of the twenty two request moves).

"I am commanded by the Army Council to state that they consider that the most suitable procedure for considering this question would be by means of an interdepartmental conference" (1936_04_21_AEW_##)

"I think it will be best if Sir Ian Fraser's term of office runs for five full years from the date of the Order" (1941_04_18_WAD_MLB)

"I think that the fair copy of the document should go to Bevir at No. 10."
(1942_06_06_BCS_SDS)

This formulation of requests using evaluative phrases is a strategy noted by Dossena (2006:185) in her examination of stance in nineteenth century business correspondence. In her study this strategy is typically used in letters from Directors and there is a sense that they can use this form of request due to their senior position, i.e. their assessment that an action 'would be best' is sufficient grounds for a request to be made. The examples in this period of the *BTCC* come from varied group of authors including a representative of the War Office, an Assistant Solicitor to the Treasury, and a representative of the Ministry of Information. Despite the form the requests take, the notion that something should be done seems more based on procedure than the author's personal opinion.

There are two further *Locution Derivable* request moves in which the strategy is more objectively expressed. The first of these moves contains the impersonal 'it' request pattern discussed above in relation to 1950_05_26_EB2_##. In this case (1941_05_15_WOW_FRA) the author makes use of deontic modality rather than stressing the helpfulness of the action or the appreciation of the author.

"It will, therefore, be necessary to trouble you to put up stop notices by the 7th June.../

The second request in this letter makes use of deontic modality though in a more direct way through the auxiliary verb,

"When you have examined the forms N.S.100 you should forward them in the usual way..."

As with the impersonal request forms encountered in Period 3, this letter refers to the enlistment of Post Office workers in the Army. This military context may well explain the impersonal form as well as the use of a strategy which seems to be used most often in this corpus to communicate notions of procedure.

The two *hedged performatives* in this Period take very different forms. The first embeds the performative in an interrogative phrase,

"Would it be asking too much of you to circularise the switchboard operators you will be releasing, suggesting to them that..." (1942_10_14_BL_ASA)

“we wonder whether you have available a photograph, and possibly a background story of one of these drivers...” (1951_06_22_HHB_##)

The second example had been identified as a borderline *query* in the functional classification but it was decided that the word “available” made this a request for action (i.e. to make these documents available) rather than information.

7.3.6. Period 6 (1957-1964) – 8 letters

Period 6		Recipient-Related Strategy							
		<i>MD</i>	<i>EP</i>	<i>HP</i>	<i>LD</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>N/A</i>
Author Strategy	MD								
	EP							I	I
	HP								II
	LD								III
	SS							III	
	S								
	P								
	N/A							I	

Table 7-14 - Request strategy summary for Period 6

A variety of request strategies are used in this period. In the *scope stating/preparatory* requests in keeping with the previous Period authors express their attitude to the request being carried out as ‘grateful’ and ‘appreciative’, e.g.,

“We would appreciate it if you would indicate your concurrence in writing.”
(1957_03_18_WGT_CDM)

*“if you find yourself in agreement with their views **the Committee would much appreciate it if you would** take such action as you consider appropriate and open to you to take...”* (1959_12_16_CB2_ABH)

“I would be so grateful if you could see the application is approved.”
(1962_03_28_EHL_RB3)

In two cases the author emotion is upgraded using intensifiers. No other upgrading strategies are used in this period.

Two of the *locution derivable* requests take the evaluative forms noted in Period 4. The first of these is from Leonard Jaffe, Chief of Communications Satellites at NASA and, like much of the correspondence from NASA, it has a very cordial tone. The request itself however takes an impersonal form,

“It is therefore desirable to meet jointly with General Post Office representatives and representatives from CNET at our Goddard Space Flight Center in Washington, D.C on April 24 and April 25, 1961...” (1961_03_29_LJ_CFB)

It would appear this negative politeness strategy is used here to mitigate the imposition, which in this case is reasonably large as transatlantic travel is required for the sake of one meeting. The request is also followed by assurances that subsequent meetings will be held closer to home, in England and France.

The other evaluative *locution derivable* request is more subjective in its phrasing,

‘I think we shall need a short paper for JDG’ (1964_12_22_KHC_CM)

The author also shifts to the first person plural to express the collective need for the request to be fulfilled. The form *‘we shall need’* appears with increasing frequency in the later decades of the corpus though not always as a request form, as we have seen in Chapter 6. Later in the same letter the author makes another *locution derivable* request, phrased as an assumption,

“I am expecting you to make arrangements with Miss Hunter to do this at least a week before the meeting.” (1964_12_22_KHC_CM)

And employs the hedged performative *‘I would like to have half an hour with the new Secretary’*.

The other most frequent request move in this period is the *explicit performative*. As with the *locution derivable* requests the three examples in this Period take slightly different forms. In 1957_03_18_WGT_CDM the letter itself is thematised in the performative strategy,

“This letter is to confirm this agreement...”

This is not uncommon for legal documents such as contracts which both detail and enact the terms that they contain. Similarly this letter seeks to confirm on paper the terms of an agreement, which perhaps explains the impersonal nature of the request.

The other two *explicit performatives* make use of *preparatory* strategies and, as with similar requests in Period 1 display a degree of tentativeness in expressing the main request move. Both requests are suggestions to reconsider the wording of letters. The suggestion in 1958_05_07_GHI_GR concerns the recipient's general emphasis and tone, while in 1959_04_14_AHM_KSH the author simply presents the letter the way he thinks it should be written,

"I would like to suggest that it would lose nothing and might be less likely to offend Canadian susceptibilities, which seems to be extremely tender, if you were to consider placing greater emphasis on..." (1958_05_07_GHI_GR)

"I suggest that you might write to Summers along the lines of the following..."
(1959_04_14_AHM_KSH)

A request to reword a document is a rather face threatening action. Both authors mitigate the force of their request with the tentative verb 'suggest'. Recipient action in these requests is also characterised in a hedged fashion with the use of the modal 'might' and, in the first request, the subjunctive form 'if you were to'. The request in the second letter here seems more direct, perhaps because the author suggests their own wording rather than offering advice on the recipient's.

One of the two purely *preparatory* requests in this Period follows the Blum-Kulka prototype, taking an interrogative form and making use of the request marker 'please' which is surprisingly infrequent in the corpus as a whole,

"Should you wish to receive the films pending result of such an application will you please confirm (1) that application for a Treasury Direction has been made. (2) that in the event of a refusal the full duty of £9.7s.6d., will be paid on demand..."
(1959_03_26_PVW_JMH)

7.3.7. Period 7 (1979-1982) – 9 letters

Period 7		Recipient-Related Strategy							
		MD	EP	HP	LD	SS	S	P	N/A
Author Strategy	MD								
	EP							I	
	HP								III
	LD								I
	SS							IIII IIII II	I
	S								
	P								
	N/A						I	II	

Table 7-15 - Request strategy summary for Period 7

By far the most frequent request strategy in this Period is *scope stating/preparatory* which makes up over half of the request moves (twelve of twenty-one) and we continue to see a variety in the forms this strategy takes. Seven of these requests express the main move using personal pronouns, e.g.

“I do hope that you will consider the issues raised in them are worthy of putting to the Minister of Industry...” (1979_05_09_GR2_RP)

“I would be grateful if you could amend them to read “self-certification by the manufacturer that it is not harmful”.” (1979_05_30_RM2_WRW)

“Finally, we would be glad if you would assure staff about their own futures”
(1979_11_28_WB3_PJM)

The other five *scope stating/preparatory* request moves use impersonal constructions such as,

“It would be helpful if someone from the Post Office could undertake a similar commitment” (1979_12_20_AC2_KMY)

‘Early conclusions - if at all possible, by the end of September - would however be a great help and reassurance’ (1982_06_18_JH3_RHC)

There does seem to be some correlation between the use of impersonal requests and higher levels of imposition though the requests are of such a varied nature this is a difficult factor to measure. The only purely *scope stating* request in this period also frames the strategy in terms of helpfulness and combines both personal impersonal pronouns in the evaluative request phrase,

“...I think it would be helpful if the Post Office and the Home Office got together”
(1979_03_26_RA2_WB3)

The one *explicit performative* request in this period takes the form of a ‘headline’ request wherein the overarching general request is made at the start of the letter, and detail is added through expansion and follow up requests,

“I am writing to ask for your help in reviewing the work done for the Home Office by the Radio Interference Service...” (1979_03_26_RA2_WB3)

This is approach generally occurs in the *BTCC* in the context of urgent or multifaceted requests. The request in question is an example of the latter.

Two of the three *hedged performatives* used in this period are in keeping Blum-Kulka’s prototypes for this strategy in that the author ‘embeds the naming of the illocutionary force’ (1984:202),

“We would also like it to be made clear to staff that .../We would also like you to emphasise that...” (1979_11_28_WB3_PJM)

The final *hedged performative* is more along the lines of the examples of this strategy cited in Brown and Levinson (1987:145) wherein the form of the performative verb modifies the force of the speech act (Lakoff, 1972:213), most often taking the form of mental verbs such as such as ‘I suppose’ and ‘I guess’. In this final example from the *BTCC* ‘wonder’ is used to convey the illocutionary act of asking,

“I wonder if I and some of my colleagues might come and see you to talk this over?” (1979_05_03_JLB_MJR)

As in the previous Period, very few upgrading strategies are used, the only exception being an intensifying (‘much’) in one of the *scope stating* requests. Four downgrader elements are used across three letters in this period. Three of these are the downtoner element ‘perhaps’. One is used to mitigate a *locution derivable* request,

"perhaps the GPO should be encouraged to try its hand a little more and/or seek some kind of statutory change" (1979_01_29_JC_NA)

While the other two mitigate the purely *preparatory* requests,,

"perhaps you will be good enough to ask your secretary to arrange with mine a convenient day and time for our visit." (1979_05_03_JLB_MJR)

"If you think this might be helpful, perhaps you would let me know who might take part." (1979_03_26_RA2_WB3)

It should be noted that these last two requests were problematic in terms of classification. I have treated them as *preparatory* requests as they refer to the ability/willingness of the recipient to act (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984:202). However in letters where more forceful modals such as 'will' are used to describe recipient action, the requests start to resemble *mood derivable* imperatives. In some cases as in 1979_03_26_RA2_WB3 (see above) imperative and preparatory forms are used in combination. The use of 'perhaps' also suggests that these requests have *mood derivable* characteristics as, as we have seen in Chapter 6, around half of the instances of imperative clusters identified in the BTCC are downgraded with downtoner elements. However for the sake of this analysis only forms that are unambiguously imperative have been classified as *mood derivable*.

There is one final more unusual request which I have classified as a *suggestory* formula but could equally be classified as a negated *locution derivable* request, in which a representative of the Council of Post Office Union asks Ken Young, a board member for Personnel and Industrial Relations at the Post Office for a copy of minutes saying,

"...should not these minutes be made available to the unions also?"
(1979_12_20_AC2_KMY)

The slightly jarring nature of this requests seems to stem from the combination of the typically more colloquial suggesting request strategy and a somewhat more formal avoidance of contraction of the 'not' form. In the corpus as a whole suggestory and hinting request formulas are very rare. It may be that, though such strategies avoid coerciveness, the lack of pragmatic clarity (the other essential factor identified by (Blum-Kulka, 1987:131) makes them inefficient as a form of carrying out business requests. *Performative* and *scope stating* requests on the other hand seem to be well suited to maintaining this balance.

7.4. Summary of Request Strategy Analysis

This chapter has explored the key strategies employed by authors in formulating request letters in the *BTCC*. To some extent the findings back up the initial impression that requests in the earlier Periods were more direct. As can be seen in Table 7-16 the first two Periods contain roughly similar numbers of direct and conventionally indirect requests while later Periods contain a larger proportion of conventionally indirect requests.

	Direct	Conventionally Indirect
Period 1	42%	58%
Period 2	50%	50%
Period 3	22%	78%
Period 4	20%	80%
Period 5	14%	86%
Period 6	36%	64%
Period 7	19%	81%

Table 7-16 – Percentage of Direct and Conventionally Indirect requests in each period of the *BTCC*

Scope stating/preparatory requests, identified in previous chapters as ‘benefiters’, such as ‘*I should be glad if you would...*’ are most frequent over the seven Periods. The form that *scope stating* strategies take develops somewhat over the timeline of the corpus. In earlier requests authors are ‘obliged by’ the recipient’s action, then ‘glad’. In later periods, more adjectives of appreciation and gratitude are employed. Finally, as we have seen in Chapter 6, we see more examples of the impersonal request formula ‘it would be helpful’. However it is not really a case of moving from one form of benefiter to another, rather we see a sort of diversification of this strategy.

As in the structural analysis, the varied nature of the requests also complicates the identification of diachronic trends. For instance there is some evidence of an overall move towards a more impersonal request style, however probably the most impersonal era examined here is Period 3. This is largely due to a number of requests from the military which employ an impersonal tone.

However, generally speaking from Period 5 onwards a greater range of indirect request strategies are used. Where in earlier Periods the majority of requests are *Explicit Performative* requests or ‘benefiters’, in later periods, while *Scope Stating* strategies remain the most popular, there are also more *Hedged Performatives* and *Locution Derivable* requests which

rely more on implicature. One final factor that may make the earlier requests seem more direct is the prevalence of 'time intensifier' upgraders such as 'now' and 'at once' which are a relatively regular fixture of the first two Periods but become more sporadic in later years.

8. Chapter 8 - Conclusion

8.1. Summary of findings

In this thesis I have started to address the gap that exists in knowledge regarding the historical development of business correspondence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and have provided a range of preliminary insights into the material held in the *British Telecom Correspondence Corpus*. Overall a complicated picture of language change in business correspondence emerges from the results. We see a decline in deferential language and a rise in more familiar address terms and positively polite ways of managing the chain of correspondence. However these new familiar forms appear in standardised patterns. We also see a rise in the frequency of comment moves and *attitude marker* n-grams, with authors making clearer their position in relation to the events they discuss or the requests they make. However there is also something of a tendency towards a use of more impersonal pronouns in these comments and requests moves (e.g. 'it would be').

To return to the first research question of what can be added to our knowledge of letter writing conventions by analysing three letter-writing manuals contemporary with the period represented in the *BTCC*, the analysis in Section 4.2 helped supplement our knowledge of the wider trends identified by O'Locker (1987) and Gage (2007) by providing explanatory detail as to why certain features were recommended or criticised. Both Lewis and Thomson stressed the importance of 'tact' in letter writing, particularly in the business context, but as Lewis noted 'the best way to write a tactful letter is to disguise the fact that the writer is endeavouring to be tactful' (1956:4). It seems that deferential language came to be regarded as a form of undisguised tact. Where in Nesfield's (1917) manual only the most formal terms are recommended for business correspondence, in Lewis's (1956) manual more familiar terms of address are permitted if the interlocutors have already established a degree of friendship, and by the time of Thomson's (1972) manual familiar terms of address are recommended as a way of pursuing closer business relations. With any letter writing manual it is difficult to know how far its recommendations affected real world use. However my research has revealed trends in the use of formal features in the *BTCC* which suggest that the manuals examined do reflect letter writing practice of the time.

In keeping with the advice offered in the manuals, there is a general decline in deferential forms of address, such as the '*your obedient servant*' closing salutation in the *BTCC*. The 1950s

sees a number of features which are criticised in the latter two manuals, such as Latin terms to manage the discourse (e.g. *ultimo*), and 'beg' phrases, disappear from the corpus. There is a move away from the most formal terms of address such as '*Sir*' towards the use of names. However elements of the opening formulas which indicate additional social proximity such as '*my*' and superlative forms (e.g. '*My Dearest...*') disappear over the timeline of the corpus. So while the '*Dear [First name]*' form which comes to dominate the *BTCC* in the last three decades is more familiar than any term of address recommended for business correspondence in the three letter writing manuals, it is also relatively standardised. Comparing sixteenth and seventeenth century data in the CEEC(E) Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg suggested that the neutral '*Sir*' became popular in the seventeenth century partly because its simple form 'reduced the complexity of social interaction' (1995:588). It may be that we see a similar phenomenon with the popularity of the familiar but plain form '*Dear [First name]*'. My analysis has shown a similar pattern in the use of closing salutations, wherein the historically familiar '*yours sincerely*' comes to dominate across all contexts.

The corpus analyses revealed a range of frequent linguistic features of the *BTCC*, some of which remained fairly stable in frequency and function, while others demonstrated diachronic developments. One example of the latter is the decline in pre-performative phrases such as '*I am directed to*', which are used in the earlier years of the corpus as a way of delivering a message on behalf of a more senior party. In later years secretarial authors simply use the pronoun '*I*' to indicate their role as conveyor of the message and '*we*' to communicate corporate positions. This decline in pre-performative phrases also coincides with the wider decline in deferential language in the *BTCC*; the last examples occur around the same time as the last examples of multi-part closers and '*obedient servant*' formulas. This decline of pre-performatives is a sort of stylistic democratisation of form in that authors draw less attention to their having been instructed by a more senior party, however their role of conveyor-of-the-message remains the same. The corpus analyses also revealed an increasing use of first person plural and impersonal pronouns, as well as evidence of shifting corporate identities at company-level, with a decline of company names that preserve the names of individuals involved and an increase in corporate acronyms, all of which suggests something of a shift towards expression of corporate identity in more collective terms.

Keywords and n-gram results were also revealing in terms of how corporate actions are performed linguistically in the *BTCC*. As we saw in Section 4.3., generating keywords according

to letter function produced results which were less significantly key, however a greater proportion of the results generated were potential style-markers. A range of functional features were highlighted, including clues to the most frequent form requests take (demonstrated in the keyness of *if, should, be glad, obliged*) and the fact that while *Queries* are sometimes expressed in similar ways as *Requests* they are also more likely to take more direct imperative forms such as '*let me know*'. The keyword approach seemed best suited to letter types such as *applications*, which are relatively narrowly defined and perform a limited set of functions. The keyword analysis for *applications* returned multiple results that were both very significantly key and clearly linked to the overall function of that letter category. The more general *Informative* letter type, by contrast, generated no very significantly key words seemingly because *informative* functions play an important role across letter types. This can also be seen in the n-gram analysis which identified a number of n-grams that are used to present and balance information across a variety of contexts.

An obvious limitation of identifying the key features of particular letter functions is that it does not take into account the full range of features of a given text type. However it should also be noted that it also identified characteristics of particular letter types, such as the importance of applying pressure at the end of *application* letters and the prevalence of the pronoun '*we*' in *offer* letters, which were not picked up across four rounds of close manual examination of the letters. This shows that even when keyword results are limited in number they can still provide insights that are not otherwise available if we apply intuition alone.

So as to not only focus on the most frequent features of letter types, the analysis in Chapter 7 took into account the full range of forms that *Requests* in the *BTCC* take. The move structure analysis based on Pintos Dos Santos's (2002) model demonstrated an increasing variety of negotiating moves used in requests. Furthermore these negotiating moves were found to occur more in a pre-request position in the final four request Periods, suggesting that authors in later periods may have taken a more writer-responsible approach to requesting, making clear the link between the information providing sections of their letters and the request. There are also some letters in which negotiating moves serve the same function as the *attitude marker* clusters identified in Chapter 6 (such as '*I am sure*'), in that they position the author in relation to the request and/or seemingly attempt to manage the reader's response.

Finally, Section 7.3 focussed specifically on request strategy, considering each request in terms of directness and modulation to get a better idea of the full range of request forms used in the

corpus and to test an initial impression that earlier requests were more direct. To some degree this impression was confirmed by the analysis. Generally speaking, in keeping with Blum-Kulka's findings, authors throughout the corpus use a range of strategies to balance pragmatic clarity on the one hand and the avoidance of coerciveness on the other (1987:131). The first two *Request* Periods see higher proportion of performative requests and more frequent use of upgrading strategies such as time intensifiers (e.g. 'now'). However these Periods also contain a wider use of politeness markers (e.g. 'be so good as to') suggesting that authors were mindful of balancing more direct requests with mitigating elements. In the last four Periods this balance is most frequently kept using the *Scope stating* strategies in which author action ('I should be glad') and recipient action ('if you would') are characterised through the use of modals. The forms used for this strategy alter over time to include more adjectives of appreciation, and impersonal forms such as 'it would be helpful'. The later Periods also see a wider range of request strategies such as *Locution Derivable* which rely more on implicature. This may be part of the reason for my initial impression that earlier requests took a more direct form. It may also explain why in the functional classification of the letters (See Section 3.6.4.) Raters found it increasingly difficult to define requests in letters from later years.

In addition to the linguistic findings, my work using the *BT Archives* and later the *BT Digital Archives* in the construction of the *BTCC* has contributed to the discussion of how best to work with archive material to provide digital research resources (see Morton and Nesi, 2015). As someone involved in the *New Connections* project I got to see first-hand, and indeed contribute to, the work that goes in to creating a digital archive. Subsequently as a user of the BT Digital Archive I experienced some of the limitations of this new digital resource, in particular the lack of item-level metadata which, while typical of physical archives, makes the location of individual records problematic. Even with these limitations, however, the *BT Digital Archives* was a valuable source of additional data. Furthermore, in creating of the *BTCC*, I have generated and made available to the *BT Digital Archives* item-level metadata and transcriptions that they would not normally have the time or resources to generate. This sort of institutional collaboration is just one way in which we can increase research potential of digital archives.

8.2. Further studies within the corpus

Though I approached to this preliminary analysis of the *BTCC* in a range of ways so as to explore as many aspects of the data as possible, there is a lot of scope for further study. I have only examined one letter type (*Requests*) in detail. The uneven distribution of some letter types across decades will limit the degree to which this can be repeated for other functions. However at the very least *Queries* and *Commissives* are sufficiently distributed across the decades to attempt diachronic analysis. There are also a number of features that were flagged up by the quantitative analyses that could form the basis of further study, such as *attitude marker* n-grams, which have previously been identified as a frequent feature of personal correspondence (e.g. Fitzmaurice 2003, Palander-Colin 2011:103), see a sharp increase in frequency in the later years of the corpus, and seem to be one of the key ways in which authors negotiate their (and the recipient's) role in the discourse. The quantitative analysis also identified a number of n-grams which served specific *informative* functions at utterance level but were not linked to any particular letter function. To try and investigate these forms further one potential avenue for future work on the corpus would be additional annotation at the utterance level.

The current phase of the analysis has been relatively corpus-driven as I wanted to approach the analysis with as few preconceptions as possible about what might be interesting about this particular data set. I feel that this approach has proven fruitful and identified a number of interesting areas of diachronic change. However there are still a range of features raised in the literature review which have not been addressed in detail in this thesis. For instance the way in which modal verbs mark stance could well prove an interesting area of investigation. A handful of modal verbs were identified by the n-gram and keyword analysis: '*should*' appears in the most frequent request formulas, '*shall*' n-grams were found to performs a range of Commissive functions, and '*need*' emerged as key in the 1970s, typically occurring with the first person plural pronoun 'we' in coercive phrases such as 'we shall need to...'.

This later higher frequency of 'need' is in keeping with Smith's (2003) examination of modals and semi-modals of obligation and epistemic necessity in the LOB and FLOB corpora, where he found a rise across a range of genres of British English of the semi-modal 'need to', particularly in combination with first person plural and third person passive subjects, noting that '[NEED TO] has the potential to be used as an indirect means of laying down obligations' (2003:264). Likewise Taeymans looking at the modals/semi-modals 'dare'/'need' and 'dare to'/'need to' in

present-day English varieties represented in the BNC noted that ‘need to’ has ‘become more frequent in all types of syntactic environment...and has acquired a sense of external necessity’ (2004:108). While the keyness of ‘need’ in the 1970s and the patterns surrounding the Commissive keyword ‘shall’ suggest similar patterns in the *BTCC*, we get only a partial picture from the initial quantitative results. A full survey would allow a diachronic examination of a range of forms.

Finally, the use of more familiar terms of address and chain managing elements in the *BTCC* also corresponds to trend identified in general language change in the twentieth century towards an increasing use of colloquial language (Leech et al, 2009). There are a number of other forms identified in the context of general language change, such as the increased use of progressive forms and phrasal verbs, which were not highlighted by the quantitative analyses but could be investigated in the specific context of the *BTCC*.

8.3. Theoretical Implications

In addition to the linguistic findings this study has highlighted a number of issues concerning archive material, in particular how best to create a digital archive. It has become apparent as this research has taken me further into the digital humanities world that very often the people with the task of creating a digital archive would like to have input from the likely users of that resource, so that they can get a better idea of what information should be included to make it maximally useful and, therefore, maximally used.

The question that was raised most often at the Digital Humanities Congress 2014, one of the conferences I attended while conducting this research, was whether we should digitise more, or digitise better. At the most basic level it is possible to create a digital file repository containing image scans of pages of information with no or little metadata. Generating metadata makes such material instantly more searchable and easy to access and navigate. Once transcriptions are included it becomes possible to search within files at the text level. Using TEI-complaint XML or similar additional annotation can be added to digital files/texts. Each additional level of text preparation has the potential to increase a document’s research potential, but each requires additional time.

The important question is how much information is needed by the user of the digital resource. In creating the BT Digital Archive, BT largely recreated in digital form the metadata that was available in the physical archive, along with the relevant scanned pages of information. The

resulting resource can be difficult to navigate precisely, as the material is still primarily organised by historical theme and there is little to no item-level metadata. The basic assumption of the TEI encoding standards for digital letter collections is that digital versions of letters should have encoded information about who is sending (/receiving) the letter, their location(s), and the date. In the case of the *BTCC* we also required the presence of certain formal features and ideally additional information regarding the interlocutors' professional status, age, and gender. Detailed linguistic analysis would not have been possible without this item-level metadata.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to this issue. Each user of a digital resource may have different requirements. However this needs to be a primary consideration of any researcher or archivist creating a digital resource.

8.4. Limitations

The main limitation of all of the findings so far is that the *British Telecom Correspondence Corpus* is *relatively* small and only contains material relating to telecommunications. The specialised scope of the corpus may reduce the generalisability of the findings to correspondence relating to business conducted in other fields. In addition to this, as we have seen, it is not currently known how much correspondence the BT Archive contains, or the nature of that correspondence. Without this information it is impossible to know how representative the data in the *BTCC* are of the correspondence in the rest of the BT Archive, let alone the wider context of British business English correspondence in this period.

In its current form the corpus also has only a limited number of chains of correspondence, and the available metadata, while greatly improved, is still limited in some cases. An effort has been made throughout this study to draw upon contextual information to help account for variation, particularly when it goes against the wider trends in the corpus. However it may still be that some of the elements of language change identified are a product of a relatively small group of exchanges rather than wider trends. Furthermore despite efforts to balance the corpus, there is very little data in the earliest periods represented in the corpus.

Despite these limitations, the *BTCC* in its current form is still a fairly balanced historical corpus, containing publicly available data for a variety of English that is underrepresented in existing corpora. The creation of the corpus has generated a large amount of item-level metadata, the framework for which can be used to collect further contextual information as research on this

and other letter collections continues. As we shall see in Section 8.5 a planned expansion of the corpus should help widen its scope, provide additional contextual information, chains of correspondence, and, crucially, more data with which to test some of the preliminary analyses of the *BTCC*.

The analysis has allowed for a detailed exploration of the range of forms used in opening and closing salutations and in request letters. Beyond this, although the corpus analysis has identified a number of promising areas for further investigation, relying primarily on high frequency n-grams and keywords has necessarily highlighted frequent forms rather than the full range of forms. It should also be noted that the functional keyword analysis proved much more suitable for the well-defined letter functions, while the analysis of more ‘diffuse’ functions (de Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981), such as Informative, provided few notable results. However as research continues on the corpus it will be possible to examine the preliminary findings in more detail taking a wider range of forms into account, just as there has been scope within the current study to examine salutations and requests.

8.5. Expansion of the corpus (BTPO)

One of the limitations of all of the findings so far is that the *British Telecom Correspondence Corpus* is relatively small and only contains material relating to telecommunications. This relatively specialised scope of the corpus limits the generalisability of findings. Furthermore despite efforts to balance the corpus, there is very little data in the earliest periods represented in the corpus.

To try and address these issues and extend the work that started with the *New Connections* project, I am working with a research team at Coventry, putting the finishing touches to project bid to expand the *British Telecom Correspondence Corpus* with additional material from the BT archives and the Postal Heritage Museum and Archive, home to the British Post Office’s archive collections. As British Telecom was once part of the Post Office, both companies’ archival records were stored together at one time. These records were broken up into separate archives 1991, with the Post Office retaining all documents that relate to Post and British Telecom retaining records relating to telecommunications. The proposed expansion would reunite some of these records and roughly double the size of the corpus. The project, which has the backing of the Post Office and BT, would also involve creating a publicly

available website which would provide access to the corpus and the original letter scans to facilitate linguistic and historical research.

I have already made visits to the Postal Heritage Museum and Archive to test the feasibility of digitising the desired amount of material. As the Post Office archive is organised along similar lines to the BT Archive, it presents some of the same challenges in terms of specifically locating correspondence. However one of their major collections is the Treasury Letters series, the vast majority of which is correspondence written between the Post Office and the Treasury. This correspondence relates to similar issues (largely employment and expenses) across a long period of time and so is potentially well suited to diachronic study.

The construction and analysis of the *British Telecom Correspondence Corpus* detailed in this thesis has already provided a range of preliminary insights into this so far under-researched era in the development of business correspondence. Through the continued analysis and expansion of the corpus I will add further detail to this somewhat complicated picture of how business correspondence developed in the UK over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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10. Appendices

10.1. APPENDIX 1 – Letters referred to in the *Functional Classification* Section

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10.2. APPENDIX 2 – Folder Descriptions

Employment issues

Adaptations for the visually impaired

Arrangements for Post Office staff during the Second World War

BBC: appointment of governors

Claims for improved pay and conditions for telegraphists

Employment of blind persons as technicians

Employment of coloured people

Employment of disabled ex-servicemen

Further substitution of male for female telegraphists at the central telegraph office

Qualifications for enlistment in the Army signal service

The selection of a new voice for the speaking clock

Training of candidates for operatorship at large telephone exchanges

Telegraphists' cramp part 1

Telephones: 'Tim' speaking clock, Golden Voice competition 1935, Miss Cain selected, 100 Guinea fee.

Institutional issues

Arrangement for continuance of construction works by the National Telephone Company and the Post Office for a plant purchased by the Post Office from the National Telephone Company

Cooperation with NASA

Corporation of Glasgow application for a telephone exchange service

Imperial Cable and Wireless merger: correspondence with dominions and colonies

Industrial democracy

Monopoly

National Economic Development Office

National Electronics Council, papers and correspondence

Network competition

Post Office Reorganisation

Protection of the Postmaster General's rights regarding the introduction of the telephone

Relations with television broadcasters after reorganisation of Post Office.

Service issues

Coast communication for Orkney and Shetland Islands

Cost of Telegraph Service: Analysis of Telegraph Commercial Accounts 1925 – 1937

Emergency arrangements for maintenance of telegraph communications between the United Kingdom and the United States, part 1

Emergency arrangements for maintenance of telegraph communications between the United Kingdom and the United States, part 2

Emergency call service

Extension of continental and overseas telephone services to the Channel Islands

Interruptions by storms to telegraphic communication and representations in favour of underground wires

The Post Office Engineering Union's five year plan for telephone services

Rental of Professor Graham Bell's instruments by the Post Office

Intercommunication telegraph system and the conversion of certain private wires in Swansea

Telecommunication arrangements for royal tours

Telegrams

Technological developments

Cable and Wireless Ltd: CANTAT project

Correspondence on Marconi's experiments into wireless telegraphy and the establishment of the Marconi Company

Discussions with the United States on satellite communications

Experiments into electrical communication without wires by William Preece, Guglielmo Marconi's relationship with William Preece and experiments with wireless telegraphy

Imperial Wireless Advisory Committee part 1;

Imperial Wireless Advisory Committee part 2;

Interdepartmental conference on wireless telegraphy;

Jubilee of the electric telegraph; Minutes of the Joint Post Office and Ministry of Works Research and Development Group;

Mnemonic telephone numbers for advertising purposes;

National Committee on Computing Networks - Barron/Curnow report;

Transatlantic Wireless Telegraphy;

Trials of Thomas Edison's modification of George Little's automatic telegraph system;

Reports upon the Lodge-Muirhead system of wireless telegraphy;

Reports on the trial and comparison of the Marconi and Lodge-Muirhead systems of wireless telegraphy;

Telephone mechanisation and a study of the American telephone service part 1.

Environmental issues

Planning clearance for the Post Office Tower;

Public telephone kiosks; competition for improved design Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's model adopted;

Telephone kiosks: new 'Jubilee Type', supply, general papers, telephone development in rural areas.

10.3. APPENDIX 3 - Keywords by Decade

Keywords are all in the 99.99th percentile for log-likelihood keyness score. The top twenty keywords are included for decades in which twenty words did not occur at this level of keyness.

1850s and 1860s

3255 words – 343 keywords

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	26	58.018	telegraph
2	9	36.179	electric
3	8	23.898	professor
4	6	22.471	towns
5	5	22.470	submarine
6	4	18.973	carmichael
7	4	18.973	females
8	8	18.110	companies
9	6	17.682	morse
10	6	17.682	principal
11	6	15.553	persons
12	8	15.135	messages
13	3	14.230	affords
14	8	14.223	country
15	28	13.970	sir
16	6	13.506	wires
17	3	13.035	prospectus
18	4	13.005	directors
19	4	12.456	receiver
20	3	12.060	expressing

1870s

10,684 words, 311 keywords

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	49	98.144	Words
2	58	88.595	System
3	39	84.524	Minute
4	48	74.733	Per
5	25	54.761	Automatic
6	17	42.635	Machines
7	81	39.660	My
8	26	39.556	Wire
9	24	35.640	Lords
10	18	35.467	Instruments
11	21	32.919	Miles

12	22	29.681	Beg
13	11	28.366	Reynolds
14	12	27.583	Lordship
15	10	25.787	Machinery
16	24	25.100	Line
17	24	23.998	Telephones
18	12	23.917	Respectfully
19	9	23.208	Craig
20	13	22.598	Speed
21	12	20.242	Class
22	124	19.749	Your
23	8	19.457	Machine
24	8	19.457	Sample
25	17	19.336	Rate
26	7	18.051	telegraphing
27	13	17.381	Lord
28	40	16.579	One
29	9	16.573	Bell
30	8	16.508	Lordships
31	8	16.508	Promotion
32	6	15.472	Harrington

1880s

2,887 words, 241 keywords

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	20	95.629	Sons
2	20	55.065	Co
3	10	47.220	Clerks
4	16	39.528	Telephones
5	7	34.807	Swansea
6	7	34.807	Vivian
7	8	31.752	Division
8	12	31.456	Lords
9	7	29.422	lower
10	7	27.783	dinner
11	30	27.284	my
12	16	26.783	telegraph
13	5	24.862	grenfell
14	5	23.610	bath
15	5	20.648	decline
16	4	19.890	switch
17	4	17.606	yrs
18	4	16.689	cooke
19	4	15.876	jubilee

1890s

10,363 words, 298 keywords

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	66	142.133	experiments
2	333	83.837	I
3	21	54.033	dover
4	20	51.403	salisbury
5	71	47.831	me
6	25	43.360	preece
7	22	41.663	distance
8	23	40.559	results
9	30	39.738	marconi
10	68	39.131	very
11	21	38.479	X
12	20	30.435	carried
13	17	30.156	signals
14	16	29.115	agreements
15	20	24.529	wire
16	42	23.823	he
17	19	23.763	apparatus
18	14	23.633	obtained
19	141	23.142	have
20	66	21.571	my
21	30	21.150	g
22	37	20.841	out
23	13	19.533	wires
24	14	19.156	going
25	15	18.948	corporation
26	8	18.796	height
27	8	18.796	lecture
28	7	18.415	family
29	60	18.250	mr
30	10	17.344	hoping
31	7	17.246	Italy
32	11	17.223	show
33	11	16.656	interesting
34	7	16.194	feet
35	129	15.832	with
36	12	15.801	kindly
37	6	15.785	balloons
38	6	15.785	kites
39	6	15.785	noticed
40	9	15.610	transmitter
41	20	15.575	truly
42	14	15.259	miles
43	7	15.239	coil
44	7	15.239	italian

1900s

12,476 words, 303 keywords

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	155	211.530	company
2	81	118.811	postmaster
3	42	87.374	plant
4	86	82.577	general
5	1148	71.383	the
6	26	47.201	license
7	22	39.109	officers
8	45	36.901	under
9	18	36.304	underground
10	12	26.651	edinburgh
11	12	25.558	lloyds
12	11	25.500	certifying
13	15	24.485	maintenance
14	14	23.804	medical
15	89	23.775	s
16	11	23.253	compensation
17	582	22.014	of
18	16	21.412	admiralty
19	26	21.063	upon
20	9	20.864	franklin
21	9	20.864	ship
22	38	19.571	agreement
23	15	18.864	section
24	8	18.545	cramp
25	8	18.545	surgeons
26	24	18.527	regard
27	8	17.397	shore
28	28	17.235	position
29	41	17.225	such
30	9	16.768	substitution
31	7	16.227	falkirk
32	12	16.203	works
33	128	15.929	which

1910s

9860 words, 482 keywords

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	82	133.707	committee
2	27	60.613	lodge
3	15	40.743	rayner
4	267	35.319	l
5	18	31.331	telegraphists
6	16	31.107	army
7	27	30.053	men
8	43	29.967	them
9	14	29.874	signal
10	10	27.162	isaacs
11	24	26.631	marconi
12	34	24.090	wireless
13	50	22.483	they
14	13	22.280	signed
15	11	22.092	oliver
16	8	21.730	syndicate
17	22	20.726	co
18	8	20.545	hamilton
19	7	19.013	lyngby
20	7	17.837	enlistment
21	10	17.477	advisory
22	9	17.002	units
23	71	16.653	am
24	18	16.454	telegraphy
25	6	16.297	coupling
26	6	16.297	linemen
27	8	15.928	evidence
28	8	15.928	expert
29	8	15.928	suppose
30	7	15.816	laboratory
31	10	15.697	patent
32	51	15.425	but

1920s

13885 words, 367 keywords

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	46	75.884	kiosks
2	43	68.128	york
3	38	66.095	design
4	98	63.492	telephone
5	36	44.242	majesty

6	62	40.897	new
7	21	39.593	governments
8	24	32.981	clause
9	42	30.277	london
10	33	29.630	call
11	66	29.050	service
12	13	25.624	telephony
13	14	24.821	page
14	15	21.367	demonstration
15	9	19.285	purves
16	11	16.229	model
17	8	16.013	boroughs
18	8	16.013	presumably
19	29	15.735	british
(20	7	14.999	discounts)
(21	7	14.999	giles)

1930s

8,129 words, 508 keywords

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	34	73.679	kiosk
2	25	34.081	council
3	11	33.589	teleprinter
4	12	26.215	green
5	10	26.135	students
6	10	26.135	voice
7	12	24.177	district
8	13	22.800	operators
9	7	21.375	cain
10	7	21.375	villages
11	7	21.375	wannock
12	10	20.581	she
13	7	20.174	student
14	10	19.936	red
15	8	19.292	reserved
16	12	19.242	age
17	6	18.321	beautiful
18	6	18.321	village
19	11	17.678	miss
20	6	17.130	schools
21	7	16.368	erection
22	8	16.334	trained
23	18	15.852	o
24	5	15.268	golden
25	5	15.268	stone

1940s

11,418 words, 601 keywords

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	16	37.134	transmitters
2	22	31.807	traffic
3	31	28.951	cable
4	14	26.548	switchboard
5	16	26.009	cables
6	10	18.730	painted
7	24	18.661	men
8	7	17.263	mackay
9	26	16.826	british
10	7	16.109	wilshaw
11	17	15.888	available
12	7	15.071	institution
13	28	15.000	c
14	8	14.824	skilled
15	6	14.797	interrupted
16	12	14.598	emergency
17	9	14.261	edward
18	57	14.006	was
19	6	13.653	gross
20	20	13.237	b

1950s

10,032 words, 564 keywords

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	23	45.339	blind
2	25	43.332	employment
3	19	41.609	coloured
4	21	41.034	calls
5	13	34.924	films
6	14	33.148	depot
7	12	26.001	team
8	15	25.494	emergency
9	9	22.990	workers
10	14	22.511	miss
11	8	19.233	cantat
12	8	19.233	governors
13	9	18.249	television
14	10	17.205	tower
15	27	16.694	london

16	7	16.574	piece
17	7	16.574	terminal
18	27	16.481	P
19	13	15.844	private
20	8	15.704	subscriber

1960s

9,425 words, 295 keywords

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	46	100.984	tests
2	32	89.416	telstar
3	26	62.739	satellite
4	166	61.033	we
5	20	55.885	nasa
6	19	45.439	experimental
7	20	44.534	via
8	48	32.869	sincerely
9	11	30.737	program
10	11	28.405	satellites
11	10	26.741	bbc
12	9	25.148	ita
13	16	24.822	american
14	11	23.698	recording
15	72	23.216	our
16	9	22.850	relay
17	59	22.199	mr
18	7	19.560	baldry
19	7	19.560	clasp
20	7	19.560	cotton
21	21	19.250	t
22	9	18.390	speaking
23	13	17.448	august
24	7	17.312	booth
25	8	17.309	demonstrations
26	12	16.106	communications
27	6	15.593	expansion
28	6	15.593	mcmillan

1970s

15,643 words, 464 keywords

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	41	59.116	telecommunications
2	103	58.898	post

3	112	48.853	office
4	42	36.110	report
5	22	34.868	research
6	16	31.231	richards
7	15	29.279	copou
8	15	29.279	landlord
9	18	29.012	costs
10	29	26.868	board
11	202	24.774	we
12	16	24.348	industrial
13	13	24.249	monitoring
14	13	24.249	pabx
15	12	23.423	democracy
16	12	23.423	tenant
17	13	23.191	po
18	28	21.014	need
19	13	20.366	unit
20	9	17.567	pensioners
21	9	17.567	tactile
22	13	15.894	experiment
23	8	15.616	confidentiality
24	8	15.616	indicators
25	8	15.616	warwick
26	9	15.440	gpo

1980s

14,866 words, 371 keywords

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	124	252.075	bt
2	110	223.615	mercury
3	77	132.519	international
4	54	76.597	licence
5	37	64.666	telegram
6	30	59.828	telecom
7	29	58.953	interconnect
8	25	49.667	consortium
9	23	46.756	kenneth
10	24	39.647	network
11	21	39.367	inland
12	18	36.591	bti
13	20	36.324	uk
14	56	34.527	government
15	25	33.131	discussions
16	21	32.073	telegrams
17	23	28.791	george

18	14	28.460	telemesssage
19	14	27.320	market
20	17	26.698	officials
21	48	24.494	its
22	24	22.455	agreed
23	12	22.200	implications
24	19	22.179	look
25	17	20.982	project
26	12	20.271	baker
27	24	19.851	commercial
28	13	19.704	customers
29	13	18.199	issues
30	32	18.181	british
31	10	18.162	presentation
32	16	18.017	plans
33	9	17.174	interconnection
34	164	16.964	on
35	15	16.821	appropriate
36	8	16.263	carrier
37	8	16.263	eutelsat
38	8	16.263	losses
39	10	15.464	financial
40	8	15.147	significant

10.4. APPENDIX 4: Keywords by Function

Keywords are all in the 99.9th percentile for log-likelihood keyness score. The top twenty keywords are included for functions in which twenty words did not occur at this level of keyness.

Application

17 Application letters, 3 letters with component Application functions

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keyword
1	19	47.910	york
2	25	30.216	new
3	35	25.200	my
4	14	22.264	call
5	7	20.103	times
6	10	19.433	application
7	5	18.747	salary
8	13	18.449	experiments
9	10	18.036	beg
10	10	16.530	years
11	4	16.411	grove
12	5	16.369	opening
13	6	15.794	hoping
14	5	15.704	convenience
15	9	15.044	request
16	3	13.221	booking
17	3	13.221	conductors
18	3	13.221	driver
19	3	13.221	mauritius
20	4	12.313	social
21	5	12.141	respectfully
22	3	12.036	bamberger
23	5	11.742	thanking
24	30	11.561	sir
25	8	11.368	early
26	4	11.185	particulars
27	3	11.069	correspondent
28	3	11.069	favourably
29	3	11.069	journal
30	3	11.069	newark
31	3	11.069	vertical

Commissive

7,876 words, 558 keywords – 51 Commissive letters, 15 letters with Commissive component functions

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	125	52.965	your
2	59	50.219	th
3	20	35.715	instant
4	11	23.279	confirm
5	7	21.767	clasp
6	147	21.604	for
7	57	20.892	letter
8	22	20.590	thank
9	11	17.298	commissioners
10	6	15.448	vision
11	13	15.258	l
12	13	14.640	lords
13	6	14.583	murray
14	6	13.794	deputation
15	190	13.549	i
16	53	13.377	sir
17	5	13.340	cotton
18	123	11.918	you
19	16	11.851	date
20	11	11.344	directed

Complaint

8,518 words, 471 keywords – 27 Complaint letters, 1 letter with component Complaint function

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	70	62.852	company
2	21	37.419	plant
3	731	26.655	the
4	12	23.265	works
5	8	22.565	restructuring
6	29	20.817	postmaster
7	15	19.114	design
8	15	18.744	proposals
9	9	17.770	loss
10	29	17.347	its
11	5	14.855	cpsa
12	6	13.789	grades
13	98	13.737	it
14	42	13.597	post
15	181	12.873	that
16	14	12.674	kiosk
17	13	12.657	pay
18	111	12.590	is
19	15	12.269	cannot

20	33	11.948	general
21	4	11.884	manor

Declination

9113 words, 460 keywords - 48 letters, 7 multi-functional

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	21	42.827	×
2	23	38.460	Lords
3	62	24.218	My
4	11	23.511	Regret
5	7	17.713	Decline
6	10	16.916	Class
7	28	16.773	Postmaster
8	16	15.692	Kiosk
9	18	15.204	Terms
10	6	14.896	Municipal
11	7	13.572	Dinner
12	6	13.113	Tried
13	10	12.272	Lord
14	18	11.741	Reference
15	6	11.633	Promotion
16	4	11.411	Inflation
17	9	11.278	Agreements
18	8	11.136	Unable
19	5	10.408	Purchase
20	4	10.269	Accede
21	4	10.269	Gray

Request

25,426 words, 1,037 keywords - 125 letters, 37 multi-functional

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	80	31.714	Committee
2	15	18.533	Landlord
3	150	16.785	If
4	12	14.826	Tenant
5	11	13.591	Bbc
6	34	12.741	Telephones
7	130	12.478	Should
8	20	12.243	Calls
9	14	12.144	Ireland
10	12	12.052	Rayner
11	12	12.052	Television
12	452	11.768	Be

13	11	11.685	Northern
14	31	11.198	Majesty
15	9	11.120	Ita
16	134	10.509	Sir
17	44	10.153	Glad
18	17	10.127	Emergency
19	21	10.007	Obliged
20	12	9.167	Page

Informative

61,082 words, 1,051 keywords - 214 letters, 58 multi-functional

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	103	19.096	bt
2	90	15.950	mercury
3	71	11.219	licence
4	218	7.450	was
5	57	7.208	words
6	42	7.154	rate
7	43	7.003	minute
8	38	6.931	miles
9	25	6.764	consortium
10	26	5.943	interconnect
11	18	5.310	transmitter
12	27	5.238	side
13	93	5.226	however
14	225	4.982	mr
15	65	4.602	international
16	15	4.425	po
17	17	4.413	transmitters
18	67	4.058	per
19	33	4.027	discussions
20	33	4.027	results

Notification

1,700 words, 520 keywords - 79 letters, 29 multi-functional

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	31	49.708	copy
2	19	38.097	enclosed
3	18	35.823	enclose
4	26	32.725	meeting
5	64	31.179	dear
6	136	28.815	you
7	38	27.555	sincerely

8	60	26.037	sir
9	10	23.055	honour
10	11	22.177	herewith
11	53	21.180	yours
12	54	21.007	letter
13	8	17.760	enclosing
14	6	14.566	campaign
15	11	14.017	forward
16	12	13.825	send
17	177	13.105	I
18	6	12.527	aspects
19	6	12.527	document
20	11	11.953	draft
21	4	11.812	prints
22	6	11.393	richards

Offer

16,527 words, 783 keywords - 50 letters, 20 multi-functional

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	220	30.716	we
2	16	20.737	professor
3	13	14.904	costs
4	31	14.848	per
5	10	14.719	lloyds
6	35	13.838	system
7	8	13.833	ship
8	8	13.833	shore
9	26	12.707	upon
10	7	11.975	ratio
11	9	11.396	telegraphic
12	65	10.106	company
13	14	9.982	proposal
14	14	9.596	license
15	7	9.349	agents
16	5	9.329	levels
17	6	9.177	cent
18	8	9.027	expected
19	296	8.850	be
20	7	8.632	broad

Query

10,840 words, 608 keywords – 56 Files, 17 multi-functional

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	30	35.966	co
2	15	30.172	sons
3	32	19.238	what
4	34	18.600	know
5	7	17.878	falkirk
6	17	16.345	wire
7	73	15.545	if
8	20	15.291	telephones
9	20	15.013	let
10	9	14.979	recording
11	11	14.858	coloured
12	6	14.172	vivian
13	8	13.315	round
14	13	12.896	suitable
15	23	12.583	whether
16	7	12.329	edinburgh
17	8	11.522	hour
18	161	11.263	you
(19	6	10.669	weather)
(20	5	10.646	giles)
(21	5	10.646	swansea)

Thanking

2,603 words, 304 keywords - 21 files, 10 multi-functional

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keywords
1	14	23.207	much
2	21	18.416	very
3	6	14.650	thanks
4	5	14.503	charges
5	5	14.503	formal
6	5	13.794	inland
7	15	13.381	sincerely
8	3	13.324	golden
9	6	12.230	opportunity
10	6	11.817	telegram
11	9	11.636	thank
12	49	11.216	you
13	3	11.134	talks
14	3	10.568	booth
15	3	10.568	hoped
16	2	10.342	enjoy

17	2	10.342	finalist
18	2	10.342	folks
19	2	10.342	skill
20	2	10.342	yacht

10.5. APPENDIX 5: N-grams occurring more than 25 times in the *British Telecom Correspondence Corpus*

Rank	Frequency	n-gram
1	210	the post office
2	162	your letter of
3	144	the postmaster general
4	122	of the th
5	114	letter of the
6	104	your obedient servant
7	96	i am sir
8	92	sir your obedient
9	91	sir your obedient servant
10	90	am sir your
11	90	i am sir your
12	90	letter of the th
13	83	am sir your obedient
14	83	am sir your obedient servant
15	83	i am sir your obedient
16	83	i am sir your obedient servant
17	82	it would be
18	81	thank you for
19	81	your letter of the
20	78	for your letter
21	78	you for your
22	66	thank you for your
23	64	for your letter of
24	64	your letter of the th
25	61	a copy of
26	59	his majesty s
27	57	you for your letter
28	56	with reference to
29	53	thank you for your letter
30	51	be glad to
31	51	to your letter
32	48	i am directed
33	48	i shall be
34	48	the secretary of
35	47	be able to

36	47	you for your letter of
37	47	yours very truly
38	45	thank you for your letter of
39	43	i do not
40	43	post office and
41	42	i should be
42	42	of the post
43	42	that it is
44	41	of the post office
45	41	to say that
46	41	to your letter of
47	40	am directed by
48	40	i am directed by
49	40	the question of
50	38	dear sir i
51	38	secretary of state
52	38	the secretary of state
53	37	in order to
54	37	regard to the
55	37	with regard to
56	37	words per minute
57	36	as to the
58	36	if you would
59	36	in reply to
60	36	it will be
61	36	the post office and
62	36	the united states
63	35	be glad if
64	35	copy of the
65	35	dear sir yours
66	35	i have been
67	35	let me know
68	35	the united kingdom
69	34	am directed by the
70	34	as well as
71	34	directed by the
72	34	g p o
73	34	i am directed by the
74	34	i beg to
75	34	in connection with
76	34	sir i am
77	34	that you will
78	33	i am to
79	33	on the subject
80	32	in the united
81	32	in view of
82	32	majesty s government
83	32	the fact that

84	31	as soon as
85	31	his majesty s government
86	31	if you will
87	31	letter of th
88	31	on the th
89	31	the th instant
90	31	we shall be
91	30	i am sure
92	30	reply to your
93	30	that it would
94	29	i understand that
95	29	inform you that
96	29	of the telephone
97	29	of your letter
98	29	shall be glad
99	29	to inform you
100	29	you will be
101	28	cable and wireless
102	28	glad if you
103	28	good enough to
104	28	one of the
105	28	part of the
106	28	reference to the
107	28	the use of
108	28	to inform you that
109	27	and i am
110	27	be glad if you
111	27	in the event
112	27	members of the
113	27	of the company
114	27	of the th instant
115	27	view of the
116	26	a number of
117	26	dear mr preece
118	26	in reply to your
119	26	in the united kingdom
120	26	it is not
121	26	of his majesty
122	26	of the committee
123	26	the end of
124	26	to be able
125	26	to your letter of the
126	26	would be glad
127	26	would like to

10.6. APPENDIX 6: Opening salutations in the British Telecom Correspondence Corpus

Salutation	1850s	1860s	1870s	1880s	1890s	1900s	1910s	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	Grand Total
Dear F												2	15	37	53
Dear Mr F_S						1									1
Dear S		1			1		2	4	8	25	12	15	1		69
Dear Sir	4	7	21	9	3	6	6	36	17	7	11		8		135
Dear Sir F							3		3	1	3	5	2	3	20
Dear Sir F_S						2		2	3						7
Dear Sir_F						3									3
Dear Sirs								1	1		1				3
Dear T							1					1	1		3
Dear T_S			1	3	21	3	6	8	9	8	13	30	22	9	133
Excellency								1					1		2
Gentlemen							1	1	1			1			4
My Dear F								1			4	2			7
My dear Father							2								2
My Dear S			1	3	3		8	3		2	3				23
My Dear Sir		1	3		4										8
My Dear T							1			1					2
My Dear T_S				1	1			1		1		1			5
My Lord		1	7	1											9
Sir	4		18	5	16	26	20	14	9	6	4				122
Grand Total	8	10	51	22	49	41	50	72	51	51	51	57	50	49	612

Key F – First Name, S – Surname, T – Title

10.7. APPENDIX 7: Closing salutations in the British Telecom Correspondence Corpus

	Best wishes	Ever	Faithfully	Kind regards	Obedient servant	Other	Respectfully	Sincerely	Truly	Truly and Sincerely	Yours	Grand Total
1850s			3		4	1						8
1860s			5		1				4			10
1870s			13		18		6		14			51
1880s			9		5			2	6			22
1890s			7		16			6	19	1		49
1900s			14		23	1		1	2			41
1910s			7		22	2	1	7	11			50
1920s		2	29		16	2	3	10	10			72
1930s			19		9			19	4			51
1940s			5		5			35	6			51
1950s		2	11		1			33	3		1	51
1960s		3				2		49	3			57
1970s								49			1	50
1980s	2	3		1		5		33	1		4	49
Grand Total	2	10	122	1	120	13	10	244	83	1	6	612

10.8. APPENDIX 8: Requests in the BTCC

Period	Letter ID	Request
P1	1857_09_16_EB_# A	I should feel obliged by your showing [it] to/and should be glad if you would wire me <u>tomorrow</u> if it is approved by them
P1	1869_09_17_FIS_E B	I should be glad if you would let me know whether you could/If... will you be so good as to send me their names/In the first instance I would ask you to... /Perhaps you will be good enough not to lead the Persons [to think...]
P1	1872_10_22_EWJ_ FIS	If you wish to see me at any particular time or place, and will address your letter... I will endeavour to meet your wishes
P1	1873_03_05_GEG_ FIS	I <u>now</u> remind you of your offer to make more explicit that clause...
P1	1878_04_27_WHR _##	I shall be obliged by your sending me a Memorandum/and further by your remitting me the proportion thereof as agreed upon
P1	1878_07_22_JHM_ ##	Will you please send me a list of the names of people...
P1	1878_08_09_JM2_ WHA	I suggest whether it is not better to assume that.../I suggest whether a concise statement may not be prepared, and circulated
P1	1878_08_15_JM2_ WHA	in that case I shall be glad if you will let me hear from you <u>at once</u> how you wish it to be worded...
P1	1878_08_21_GC_ WHR	I have to request that you will be good enough to cause that amount to be paid/The cheque should be made payable to
P1	1879_01_24_FRO_	We beg to confirm the arrangement.../Be good enough to write us signifying your acceptance of this arrangement and

	WHW	oblige.
P1	1879_01_28_WH W_FRO	I should be <u>very</u> glad if you could give me a call...
P1	1881_02_09_##_D S	<u>When you are in a position to...</u> we shall be glad to have them substituted for ours in this office...
P1	1881_02_09_FCS_ DS	Please place in our office a Telephone in lieu of telegraph <u>as early as possible</u> and [oblige]
P2	1893_10_30_JG#_ ##	I am desired by the Committee...to urge you <u>now</u> to deal with the application
P2	1893_11_04_JDM_ JCL	I will be obliged by your letting me have <u>as early as possible</u> a copy of the Agreement...
P2	1894_08_15_RR_ #	They have accordingly to beg that their application may be <u>at once</u> dealt with and a license issued to the Corporation.../they will be obliged if you can let me hear from you before then...
P2	1896_03_30_AAS_ WHP	It has occurred to me that you might possibly be kind enough to see him and hear what he has to say...
P2	1896_09_12_##_# #	Lord Lansdowne will be glad to be furnished <u>later</u> with a report on the results obtained.
P2	1897_03_02_##_# #	I am directed by the Secretary of State for War to enquire if the Post Master General can <u>now</u> favour him with a reply...

P2	1897_08_03_CB_J CL	he will be glad if you can fix a time which will enable him to do so. [to see experiments]
P2	1897_11_16_GM_ WHP	I shall call at the G.P.O <u>tomorrow</u> Wednesday at 12.30 and if quite convenient to you would like to talk... If any other hour would suit you better, please let me know
P3	1907_04_11_EC_JS 2	I am writing you to ask if you could use your influence with the Postmaster General...
P3	1909_03_16_HBS_ ##	He will be obliged , therefore, if you will instruct the Company officers to produce [books]...The Postmaster General will also be obliged if you will kindly say on what date...
P3	1909_10_14_WJH2 _##	I am to state that the Board of Trade will be glad if the Postmaster General will be so good as to cause such communication to be provided
P3	1909_11_29_GM_ SB	I would be <u>most</u> obliged if you could see your way to allow me to have a copy of the report.....
P3	1911_08_23_OL_ WHP	I want to ask whether (always supposing that you are not the Arbitrator) whether you could be willing kindly to give evidence on such a point
P3	1913_01_24_RJP_ HS2	I think on the whole it will be better that you should appoint the Secretary.../It also appears to me that the parties chiefly interested may desire to state their views.../Perhaps when convening the Committee you might also take measures to secure the attendance of...
P3	1913_02_14_EHR_ ##	I shall be glad if you will supply me with £60 (sixty pounds).../and shall be glad if the amount may be paid to that account.

P3	1913_02_18_EHR_##	I am directed by the Committee to state that they would be obliged if the Postmaster General would communicate with...and inform them that it would be of the greatest assistance to the Committee if.../I am also directed to state that the Committee consider it would be of the greatest assistance if the Government of the United States of America would lay before them...and would especially welcome...
P3	1913_02_18_EHR_##_(2)	I am desired to ask that the Postmaster General will instruct Mr. J. E. Taylor to give evidence.../I should be obliged if instructions could be given to Mr. Taylor to communicate directly with me
P3	1913_02_24_EHR_#L	Will you be so kind as to look over the rough draft.../so do not be afraid of suggesting more searching tests/ Will you kindly send me your comments.../If you cannot manage to deliver <u>by about 1pm</u> will you send to...
P3	1913_03_31_HW_##	We...[and] shall be <u>much</u> obliged if you will confirm this...
P3	1913_04_19_EHR_RS	The Committee will be <u>very much</u> obliged if you can arrange for.../Will you kindly see that the original manuscript of these and the paper strip are obtained by the Committee's representative and sent back to me?/If not, will you kindly send them in, the following order/ All the messages should be returned to me..../The Committee would be glad to have a report of the operations...
P3	1914_09_09_DDC_##	I am therefore to request that you will obtain the necessary Treasury approval.../I am also to request that , as soon as this authority has been obtained, the Director of Army Signals, Home Defence, may be instructed to communicate direct with the Officer in charge...
P3	1914_09_30_JHS2_##	I am authorized by the War Office to apply to you to assist me in enlistment of Line and Office Telegraphists.../and his requirements should be met <u>first</u>, please./I shall be obliged if you will let me know whether you can meet our requirements.
P3	1916_08_09_DDC_	It is suggested, that , in order to avoid this happening, men whom it is intended to send from the Post Office for service

	##	should present themselves for a medical examination...
P4	1923_08_10_LJV_#	I should be glad if I could get into touch with the Department concerned, in order to discuss the subject.
P4	1924_02_12_PL_#	May we therefore press for some further consideration to be given to the design for the Kiosks? / If a small premium could be offered by your department, a really suitable and artistic structure might be evolved.
P4	1924_03_03_IM_#	The recently increased interest in matters of public taste has led my Council to hope that the Postmaster-General...may decide , before proceeding with the building of these Kiosks, to seek the advice of the newly appointed Fine Arts Commission
P4	1924_09_12_JH2_##	I shall be glad if you will inform me that the permission granted to members of the Metropolitan Boroughs' Standing Joint Committee... will be extended to Borough Engineers of London.
P4	1924_12_10_LG_#	...no doubt you will be good enough to arrange for a representative to be in attendance.
P4	1924_12_16_LG_#	I am also to say that the Sub-Committee would be obliged if you would notify them when a final decision has been reached by the Post Office.../and also if you would let them have tracing or print of the proposed kiosk.
P4	1925_01_29_WH_##	I have been requested by my Council to ask whether this payment is likely to be made <u>in the near future</u>
P4	1926_10_22_RLC_HGC	I should be glad accordingly if you would acquaint them with the stage that the negotiations have now reached...
P4	1926_12_28_GEB_##	{vi c ii - wishes - substance of the request} I should be deeply grateful if you would put this request in the right quarter for me

P4	1927_01_03_WFS_##	we should like your confirmation of this fact.../and [we] would <u>much</u> appreciate your acknowledgement in confirmation of our arrangement.
P4	1927_04_08_PFR_TFP	I am assuming that you will let him know that...
P4	1927_04_21_RLC_##	I am, however, to suggest that "His Britannic Majesty" might be substituted for "His Majesty"
P4	1927_11_23_EF_WTL	I should be <u>very much</u> obliged to you if you would be kind enough as to forward me <u>as soon as possible</u> a simple sketch or a photograph...
P4	1930_01_21_CGA_##	I should be obliged by your returning me the duplicate signed on behalf of P.O. Telegraphs.
P4	1930_03_02_RVV_##	...and to request that , if Mr. Lees-Smith sees no objection, this Department may be supplied with 20 [copies of a licence agreement]
P4	1932_04_27_RWF_##	I should be glad to receive a copy of your proposal to erect a telephone kiosk at Wannock...
P4	1932_08_09_NJL_NL	we shall be glad to receive early intimation of the Advisory Committee's approval thereof
P5	1936_04_21_AEW_##	I am commanded by the Army Council to state that they consider that the most suitable procedure for considering this question would be by means of an interdepartmental conference. /If the Postmaster-General would nominate his representative a date could then be arranged for meeting and an agenda forwarded to him.

P5	1936_06_07_SGK_ACB	I shall be glad if you will give instructions for them to be done in a similar shade of green as before.
P5	1938_11_03_HGW_SWW	...in the circumstances, I hope that it may be possible for Miss Cain to be employed for this work.
P5	1940_01_25_EW_DCA	I should be <u>much</u> obliged if the Postmaster-General would be pleased to support the representations which I have made to the Ministry of Labour...
P5	1940_06_19_WS2_SFS	we should be <u>very</u> grateful if you could arrange to refer them to the appropriate committee or alternatively let us know how you would advise us to set about obtaining the desired information
P5	1941_04_18_WAD_MLB	and I think it will be best if Sir Ian Fraser's term of office runs for five full years from the date of the Order
P5	1941_05_15_WO_W_FRA	It will, therefore, be necessary to trouble you to put up stop notices <u>by the 7th June...</u> /When you have examined the forms N.S.100 you should forward them in the usual way...
P5	1942_06_06_BCS_SDS	Would you, therefore, ascertain whether your Minister would be good enough to sign the necessary certificate?/[I think that the fair copy of the document should go to Bevir at No. 10.]
P5	1942_08_10_WRS_WAW	We should therefore be glad to have your formal agreement to the proposal in Hooper's letter of the 22nd December...
P5	1942_10_14_BL_A_SA	Would it be asking too much of you to circularise the switchboard operators you will be releasing, suggesting to them that...
P5	1945_01_15_CBC_	We should, however, be grateful for <u>anything you could do</u> to speed up the work of Messrs. Willcox's switchboard

	WDS	
P5	1946_11_##_FIR_ WCG	We would be glad therefore if your people could at a convenient opportunity in the near future remove this kiosk to an alternative site...
P5	1950_01_03_LPR_ ##	If my application as a telephonist is not considered, I should be grateful if you would send, if possible, by return mail, the testimonial from the Postmaster General
P5	1950_05_26_EB2_ ##	it would be appreciated if the further employment of London disabled persons handicapped by loss of vision could be investigated.
P5	1951_03_05_DJC_ ##	I shall be glad if you will let me know exactly what is proposed/and afford the Union an opportunity of discussing the question with you.
P5	1951_06_22_HHB_ ##	we wonder whether you have available a photograph, and possibly a background story of one of these drivers...
P5	1952_01_03_WJH_ GI	They have, therefore, asked me to propose for the Postmaster-General's consideration that his letters of invitation to prospective Governors in future should mention the fact that...
P6	1957_03_18_WGT_ _CDM	This letter is to confirm this agreement.../We would appreciate it if you would indicate your concurrence in writing.
P6	1958_05_07_GHI_ GR	I would like to suggest that it would lose nothing and might be less likely to offend Canadian susceptibilities, which seems to be extremely tender, if you were to consider placing greater emphasis on...
P6	1959_03_26_PVW_ _JMH	Should you wish to receive the films pending result of such an application will you please confirm:...

P6	1959_04_14_AHM_KSH	I suggest that you might write to Summers along the lines of the following...
P6	1959_12_16_CB2_ABH	if you find yourself in agreement with their views the Committee would <u>much</u> appreciate it if you would take such action as you consider appropriate and open to you to take with the object of securing that all emergency calls, whether made from public or private telephones, shall be free of charge.
P6	1961_03_29_LJ_CF B	It is therefore desirable to meet jointly with General Post Office representatives and representatives from CNET...
P6	1962_03_28_EHL_RB3	I would be <u>so</u> grateful if you could see the application is approved.
P6	1964_12_22_KHC_CM	I think we shall need a short paper for JDG/ I am expecting you to make arrangements with Miss Hunter to <u>do this at least a week before the meeting...</u> /and <u>as soon as</u> most of the papers are available, I would like to have half an hour with the new Secretary.
P7	1979_01_29_JC_N A	In respect of 2 above, it is considered that the GPO could... /In respect of 3 and 4 above, perhaps the GPO should be encouraged to try its hand a little more and/or seek some kind of statutory change
P7	1979_02_02_NA_G K	I would be glad if you could let me know whether you have had any further thoughts about it since your last reply to me.
P7	1979_03_26_RA2_WB3	I am writing to ask for your help in reviewing the work done for the Home Office by the Radio Interference Service.../but I think it would be helpful if the Post Office and the Home Office got together to discuss.../If you think this might be helpful, perhaps you would let me know who might take part.
P7	1979_05_03_JLB_	I wonder if I and some of my colleagues might come and see you to talk this over?/If you are content, perhaps you will be

	MJR	good enough to ask your secretary to arrange with mine a convenient day and time for our visit.
P7	1979_05_09_GR2_ RP	I do hope that you will consider the issues raised in them are worthy of putting to the Minister of Industry...
P7	1979_05_30_RM2_ _WRW	I would be grateful if you could amend them to read "self-certification by the manufacturer that it is not harmful".
P7	1979_11_28_WB3_ _PJM	I would be glad if you would <u>now</u> get ahead with doing this./ We would also like it to be made clear to staff that .../ We would also like you to emphasise that.../Finally, we would be glad if you would assure staff about their own futures
P7	1979_12_20_AC2_ KMY	It would be helpful if someone from the Post Office could undertake a similar commitment/ I hope that you will do <u>everything possible to expedite the issue of the interim report.</u> / I should be grateful if you could make it clear to management that.../This being the case, should not these minutes be made available to the unions also?
P7	1982_06_18_JH3_ RHC	Early conclusions - if at all possible, by the end of September - would however be a great help and reassurance. /If we succeed it would, I believe, be much appreciated if I could be given an opportunity to introduce SITA's Director General