Much like the Cely letters, the collection of letters written to and by Lord Lisle, his family, friends, and staff, provide valuable linguistic information. Lord Lisle was Governor of Calais for Henry VIII from 1533 to 1540. The French town was at that time an English possession. The first text below is by the 14-year old George Bassett, Lady Lisle's son by her first marriage who was being educated in the household of Sir Francis Bryan. The letter of 1539 is purely formal: the boy has nothing to say and he says it in the approved Tudor manner.

George Bassett to his parents Lord and Lady Lisle, 1 July 1539

my Mart in las my.B ain Bult roobnort

Ryht honorable and my most dere and singler goode lorde and ladye / in my most humble man[ner] I recomaunde me unto yow besechynge to have yo<sup>r</sup> dailye blessynge / and to here of yo<sup>r</sup> goode and prospus helth / fore the conservatione of which / I praye dailye unto almyghty godde. I certifye youe by theys my rude l[ett]res that my Maister and my Ladye be in goode helthe / to whome I am myche bounde. ffurthe<sup>r</sup>more I beseche yo<sup>r</sup> lordshipe and ladieshipe eve<sup>r</sup> in goode / longe / and prosperus helthe w<sup>t</sup> hono<sup>r</sup>. ffrom Woburn the first daye of Julye

> By yor humble and owne Son George Bassette

The next letter of 1533 is from Sir William Kingston, who was a member of the King's Privy Council and Constable of the Tower of London at the time. It is an example of an educated man's style of writing which, at first glance, would be unacceptable today in its presentation because there is no punctuation. Several names of birds used in hawking or falconry are mentioned.

Sir William Kingston to Lord Lisle, 26 September 1533

my lord to advertyse you of newes here be nonne 3it or now that be abowt the pesse (= peace) in the marches of scotland & with goddes grace all shalbe well & as 3it the kynges grace hathe hard now word from my lord of Wynchester & so the kyng hawkes evry day with goshawkes\* & other hawkes that ys to say layners,\* sparhawkes\* and merlions\* both affore none & after yf the wether serve I pray you my lord yf ther be hony gerfawken<sup>\*</sup> or yerkyn<sup>\*</sup> to help  $^{\Lambda me}$  to both yf it may be & for lak of bothe to have wun & to send me worde of the charges ther of & then your lordshyp dose meche for me I & my wyfe both ryght hartely recomaunde hus unto my gud lady & we thanke my lady for my token for it cam to me in the church of the blake freres (= friars) & my wyf was desposed to have offerd it to saynt loy (= St Eligius) (th)at hyr horse shuld not halt & he never went up ryght syne (= since) I be(see)che your lordshyp to have me in your reymembrance to master porter & my lady & to master mershall & my lady ...

\* Goshawks, lanners (southern European falcons), sparrowhawks, merlins (small falcons), gyrfalcons (large falcons), and jerkins (male gyrfalcons), respectively.

### Exercise

Using the two passages, describe the 'approved Tudor manner'. Is the spelling significantly irregular or inconsistent? How many words have more than one spelling? What do the phrases to advertise you of newes and yf the wether serve mean?

An example of formal written language contemporary with the Lisle Letters is Sir Thomas Elyot's *The boke named the Gouernor*, printed in London in 1531 and dedicated to Henry VIII. Elyot's purpose was 'to describe in our vulgare tunge/the fourme of a iuste publike weale (= *welfare* or *prosperity*)'. He wrote in English but regarded Latin as the essential language of education and learning. In the second and third passages, Elyot sets out a programme for young noblemen in which learning Latin begins before the age of seven.

Sir Thomas Elyot's The Gouernor, 1531 (i)



#### Sir Thomas Elyot's The Gouernor, 1531 (ii)

The ordre of lernyng that a noble man shulde be trayned in before he come

to thaige of seuen yeres. Cap. v. (= Chapter 5)

But there can be notbyng more convenient/than by litle and litle to trayhe and chercife them in spekyng of latyne : infourmyng them to knowe first the names in latine of all thynges that cost meth in syghter and to name all the partes of they's bodies : Sir Thomas Elyot's The Gouernor, 1531 (iii)

bit s ball be erpedient / that a noble mannes sonne in bis infancie baue with bym continually/onely sucheras may accuftome bym by litle and litle to speake pure and elegant latin. Semblably the nourises to ther women aboute bym / if it be possible/to bo the same: or at the lefte way/that they speke none engliss be but that/whiche is cleane/polite/perfectly/ and articulately pronounced/omittinge no lettre or sillable/ as foliss be women often times bo of a wantonness chyldren (as J bo at this baye knowe) have attained corrupte and soule pronuntiation.

## Exercise

- 1. Explain the few alternative spellings in the texts: hit/it, latin/latine/latyne, onely/only, shal/shall, significations/signification, ther/there, thinge/thyng, which/whiche.
- 2. What was the meaning of the following words in the 1530s: common, vulgare, astates, equite, diuers, betoken, abused, discrepance, sensualite?
- 3. Do any verb inflexions differ from those of Standard English today?

During the sixteenth century, writers were responding to a growing sense that the language needed an agreed form of spelling, grammar, and vocabulary, just as Latin had. People saw that the letters of the alphabet were too few to match the sounds of English, and that the spelling of many words did not match their pronunciation. A common description was that it was 'corrupted'.

One of the earliest books which advocated a reform of English spelling was John Hart's *An Orthographie*, published in 1569. In the following extract, he is justifying the need for his new spelling system, 'the new maner'. An example of the system he devised is given below.

John Hart's An Orthographie, 1569 (i)

Withich is oppon the confideration of the feuerall voices of the fpeach, and the vie of their leverall markes for them, which we calletters. But in the moderne & pres fent maner of writing (alwell of certaine other languages as of our English) there is fuch confution and bilozder, as it may be accounted rather a kinde of ciphing. of fuch a darke kinde of writing, as the belt and readiest wit that cuer hath bene, could, or that is or thalbe, can or map, by the only offe of reason, attaine to the reas by and perfite reading thereof, without a long and tedious labour, for that it is bn= fit and wrong thapen for the proportion of the voice. Whereas the new maner heres after ( thoughe it fæme at the first very straunge, hard and onprofitable) by the reading only therof, will proue it felfe fit. ealie and delegable, and that for inhatfor euer Englich map be waitte in that ozder.

An exersiz or dat buiG iz sed : buer-in iz declard, bon de rest or de confonants ar mad bei dinstruments or de montisbuiG usz omited in de premitez, for dat ui did nn muG abinz dem.Cap.ry.

and leik unds , have de sound av de voel en-

li, me bi as nel dloned in war spile, as dat ov de diphiong inte ov de rind: and so far ei alon

observasion for derivasions. co/ hierbri in me

perser, dat our sings sounding and ins of les-

ters,me in proses ov teim, bring our bol masion

sn on serten , perfet and general speking .co /huer-in 65 mmSt birinled bei de lernd from

scim susteim. co / and es kan not blam asi man

to tink dismaner or nin servicing Strang, for

ei du konfes it iz Flrang tu mei self, dob befor



diz buts is drut not bed in and es Sal tunk our laburs wel bestock. ~ / and rot-wid-standing dat eibar devize du nin maner ov sareiting for our /inglis, ei mien not dat /latin Suld bi-serien in Sez leters , no mor den de /griker /lxbriu, nester uld ei wreit t'ani manov ani Strang nasion in des leters, but buen azei-uld ureit /inglis. and az ei-uld gladli konterfs biz Spile uid mei tungs so-uld ei biz weiting wid mei band. os / iet huo kuld let mi t'inz mei pen de best ei kuld, der bei t'dsen de sumer in de perfet pronunsiasion, ov ani Strang SpiG : but wreiting /inglis, wi me (az is sed) inz for evei firmy and , de sam marks or leters or de voises buils ui du feind in SpiG, suidout ani-uder regard tu Sio bei-ureiting buens de-urd iz boroed ; den az ui du-in Speking. 00/ for sug kuriezite in superfluz leters, for derivasion or diferens, and so furfs, iz de disordring and konfounding, ov ani-serciting : kontraritu de lan or de perfeccion der of send agenst aul rezon : buer-beisit Suid bi ebedient waten de prenunsiasion, az tu bir ladiand miftres : and so, id or diminif a: fi faul in subses ov teim komanud. co /

ei bar ended de ureinne, and in de riding or

#### Version with Modern English Spelling

An exercise of that which is said: wherein is declared, how the rest of the consonants are made by th'instruments of the mouth: which was omitted in the premisses, for that we did not much abuse them. Chapter vii.

> In this title above-written, I consider of the <i> in exercise, & of the <u>, in instruments: the like of the <i>, in title, which the common man, and many learned, do sound in the diphthongs <ei>, and <iu>: yet I

would not think it meet to write them, in those and like words, where the sound of the vowel only, may be as well allowed in our speech, as that of the diphthong used of the rude: and so far I allow observation for derivations. - / Whereby you may perceive, that our single sounding and use of letters, may in process of time, bring our whole nation to one certain, perfet and general speaking. -/ Wherein she must be ruled by the learned from time to time. - / And I can not blame any man to think this manner of new writing stange, for I do confess it is strange to my self, though before I have ended the writing, and you the reading of this book, I doubt not but you and I shall think our labours well bestowed. ~ / And not-with-standing that I have devised this new manner of writing for our /English, I mean not that /Latin should be written in these lettes, no more then the /Greek or /Hebrew, neither would I write t'any man of strange nation in these letters, but when as I would write /English. ~ / And as I would gladly counterfeit his speech with my tongue, so would I in his writing with my hand. ~ / Yet who could let me t'use my pen the best I could, thereby t' attain the sooner to the perfect pronunciation, of any strange speech: but writing /English, we may (as is said) use for every strange word, the same marks or letters of voices which we do not find in speech, without any other regard to show by writing whence the word is borrowed, then as we do in speaking. ~ / For such curiosity in superfluous letters, for derivation of difference, and so forth, is the disordering and confounding, of any writing: contrary to the law of the perfection thereof, and against all reason: whereby, it should be obedient unto the pronunciation, as to her lady and mistress: and so, add or diminish as she shall in success of time command. ~ /

# Exercise

Discuss what an ideal alphabetic system of spelling should be like and give some examples of what Hart calls 'confusion and disorder' in our present system. How many letters are there in the Roman alphabet and how many contrastive sounds (phonemes) are there in English today? What are some of the ways in which the mismatch between phonemes (Hart's *voices*) and letters (Hart's *markes*) has been dealt with in our spelling system. Which of them developed in ME before the sixteenth century?

Sir Thomas Elyot expressed a scholar's view on the superiority of the resources of Latin, from which hundreds of words were 'Englished'. These words were disparagingly referred to as 'inkhorn terms' – words coming from the scholar's horn of ink and therefore pedantic – and there was a lot of controversy over this. This is illustrated in the following passages, all from the 16th century.

### 1. Thomas Lupset, A Treatise of Charitie (1533)

...whan we be driuen to speake of thynges that lacke the names in oure tonge, we be also driuen to borowe the wordes that we haue not, sometyme out of Latin, sometyme out of Greke, euen as the Latin tonge doth in like necessitie borowe and take of other. And though now at fyrst hearyng this word stondethe straungelye with you, yet by vse it shall waxe familiar, specially when you haue it in this maner expressed vnto you.

### 2. Sir Thomas Elyot, The Book named the Gouernor (1531)

His Highnesse [Henry VIII] benignely receyuynge my boke, whiche I named *The Gouernor*, in the redynge therof sone perceyued that I intended to augment our Englyshe tongue, wherby men shulde as well expresse more abundantly the thynge that they conceyued in theyr hartis – wherfore language was ordeyned – hauyng wordes apte for the pourpose, as also interprete out of Greke, Latyn, or any other tonge into Englysshe as sufficiently as out of any one of the said tongues into another. His Grace also perceyued that throughout the boke there was no terme new made by me of a Latine or Frenche worde but it is there declared so playnly by one mene or other to a diligent reder that no sentence is therby made derke or harde to vnderstande.

### 3. Thomas Wilson, The Art of Rhetorique (1533)

Among all other lessons this should first be learned, that wee neuer affect any straunge ynkhorne termes, but to speake as is commonly receiued, neither seeking to be ouer-fine nor yet liuing ouer-carelesse, vsing our speeche as most men doe and ordering our wittes as the fewest haue done. Some seeke so far for outlandish English that they forget altogether their mothers language. And I dare sweare this, if some of their mothers were aliue thei were not able to tell what they say; and yet these fine English clerkes will say they speake in their mother tongue, if a man should charge them for counterfeiting the Kings English. Some farre-iourneyed gentlemen at their returne home, like as they loue to goe in forraine aparell, so thei wil pouder their talke with oversea language. He that commeth lately out of Fraunce will talke French English and neuer blush at the matter. Another chops in with English Italienated, and applieth the Italian phrase to our English speaking, which is as if an oratour that professeth to vtter his mind in plaine Latine would needs speake poetrie, and farre-fetched colours of straunge antiquitie.

### 4. Sir John Cheke, letter (1557)

I am of this opinion, that our own tung shold be written cleane and pure, vnmixt and vnmangled with borowing of other tunges; wherein if we take not heed bi tijm, euer borowing and neuer payeing, she shall be fain to keep her house as bankrupt. For then doth our tung naturallie and praisablie vtter her meaning, whan she boroweth no conterfeitness of other tunges to attire herself withall, but vseth plainlie her own with such shift as nature, craft, experiens, and folowing of other excellent doth lead her vnto.

### 5. William Turner, comments on a religious treatise (1543)

This translatour hath applied himselfe as much as he can to find out the most plain and vsed wordes that be in England, that men of all shyres of England maye the more easly perceiue the meaneing of the boke. Summe noweadayes, more sekynge their owne glorye then the profite of the readers, writ so French Englishe and so Latine that no man, except he be both a Latin man, a French man, and also an Englishe man, shal be able to vnderstande their writinge – whose example I would disswade all men to folowe. For the people, if they should haue any profite by such mennes laboures, had nede of two dictionaries euer by them, one in French and another in Englishe; which thing, because it is so tedious, it would pluck back all men from the redynge of such good and Christen bokes as they do translate.

### 6. Arthur Golding, The Trewnesse of the Christian Religion (1587)

[The work was begun by Sir Philip Sidney and completed by Golding.]

In his [Sidney's] name, therefore, and as executor of his will in that behalf, I humbly offer this excellent worke vnto your good Lordship, as his and not myne. Wherein if any words or phrases shall seem straunge (as in some places perchaunce they may) I doubt not but your good Lordship will impute it to the rareness and profoundnesse of the matters there handled, not accustomed heretofore to bee treated in our language. For the auoiding of which inconuenience as much as might be, great care hath been taken, by forming and deryuing of fit names and termes out of the fountaynes of our own tongue (though not altogether most vsual, yet alwais conveyuable and easie to be understood), rather than by vsurping the Latin termes or by borrowing the words of any foreine language, least the matters which in some cases are misticall enough of themselues by reason of their owne profoundnesse might haue bene made more obscure to the vnlearned by setting them downe in terms vtterly vnknowne vnto them.

### 7. George Puttenham, The Arte of English Poesie (1589)

but now I muft recant and confelle that our Normane English which hath growen fince *Williams* the Conquerour doth admit any of the auncient feete, by reafon of the many *polyfillables* even to fixe and feaven in one word, which we at this day vie in our most ordinarie language : and which corruption hath beneoccasioned chiefly by the pecuilh affectation not of the Normans them felues, but of clerks and fcholers or fecretaries long fince, who not content with the vfual Normane or Saxon word, would convert the very Latine and Greeke word into vulgar French, as to fay innumerable for innombrable, reuocable, irreuocable, irradiation, depopulatio & fuch like, which are not naturall Normans nor yet French, but altered Latines, and without any imitation at all : which therefore were long time defpifed for inkehorne termes, and now be reputed the bell & most delicat of any other.

auncient feete means the verse rhythms of the classical Latin and Greek poets. A foot is a unit of rhythm.

*peeuisb* here indicates distaste: 'expressing rather the speaker's feeling than any quality of the object referred to' (*OED*).

## 8. Ralph Lever, The Arte of Reason, rightly termed Witcraft (1573)

- a. Nowe whereas a number of men doe suppose that our language hath no words fitte to expresse the rules of this arte [rhetoric], and whereas some men do argue that it must needes be so, bycause they that speake or write thereof at large vse termes and wordes that no mere English man can vnderstonde, it is playn that neyther their supposition is true nor yet their reason good. For as time doth inuent a newe forme of building, a straunge fashion of apparell, and a newe kinde of artillerie and munitions, so doe men by consent of speache frame and deuise new names, fit to make knowen their strange deuises.
- b. As for deuising of newe termes, and compounding of wordes, our tongue hath a speciall grace, wherein it excelleth many other, and is comparable with the best. The cause is, for that the moste parte of Englyshe wordes are shorte, and stand on one sillable apeece, so that two or three of them are ofte-times fitly ioyned in one. Of these kinde of wordes I haue deuysed many.

## 9. E.K., preface to Spenser's Shepheardes Calender (1579)

...in my opinion it is one special prayse, of many whych are dew to this poete, that he hath laboured to restore, as to their rightfull heritage, such good and naturall words as haue ben long time out of vse and almost cleare disherited. Which is the onely cause that our mother tonge, which truely of itself is both ful enough for prose and stately enough for verse, hath long time ben counted most bare and barrein of both.

# Elements in the Vocabulary of Early Modern English

Although the vocabulary we use most frequently in every-day conversation can be traced back to OE and ME, the vast majority of the words to be found in dictionaries date from after 1500. The following list gives different types of additions to the lexicon between 1500 and 1700.

# 1. Words current in Early Modern English but now obsolete

contemn 'despise', fantastical 'existing only in imagination, fanciful', festinate 'hasty', mislike 'dislike', revengement 'retribution, punishment'

### 2. New vocabulary of short duration in Early Modern English

armipotent 'mighty in arms', eximious 'excellent, eminent', fatuate 'to become silly, act foolishly', lapidifical 'concerned with the making of stones', lubrical 'smooth, slippery', perflatile 'exposed to the wind, airy', suppeditate 'to overthrow, subdue', temulent 'drunken, intoxicated'

# 3. Loanwords acquired after 1500 and still used

analysis (16c), cabinet (16c), deflect (17c), detail (17c), develop (17c), dictionary (16c), judicious (16c), major (16c), method (16c), polymath (17c), refuge (17c), research (16c), selection (17c), society (16c)

### 4. Ways in which new words were formed

Compounding:	daybreak (16c), home-spun (16c)
Suffixation:	scholarship (16c)

Conversion:	contest (17c noun, from verb)
Verbs from nouns:	16c – grade, mask, sample, shipwreck, whitewash; 17c – blanket, lacquer, model, puncture
Verbs from adjectives:	16c – empty, equal, idle, mellow, obscure; 17c – lower, muddy, numb
Nouns from verbs:	16c – blemish, push, shine; 17c – hitch, shudder, struggle
Back-formation:	
Verbs from agent-nouns:	16c – peddle; 17c – scavenge
Verbs from compound nouns or adjectives:	16c – backslide, rough-hew; 17c – browbeat, eavesdrop, spoonfeed
Shortening:	coz (16c, from cousin), chap (16c, from chapman), gent (16c, from gentleman), van (17c, from vanguard), wig (17c, from periwig)
Phonetic symbolism:	bang (16c), clang (16c), purr (17c), quack (17c)

We have seen that loanwords formed an important component of English vocabulary in OE and ME. In Modern English loanwords have been adopted at an incredible rate. A list of examples from different languages and centuries is given below:

Latin

16<sup>th</sup> century: abrupt, abscond, accurate, adjunct, adumbrate, aggravate, allude, ambiguous, anarchy, aqueduct, area, audible, belligerent, bucolic, captivate, catastrophe, censor, century, diagonal, dictionary, ebullient, encomium, estuary, exterior, fluent, futile, genial, gerund, gladiator, gradation, imprecation, inchoate, inveterate, inarticulate, meticulous, metropolis, munificent, myriad, nefarious, negotiate, notion, numeral, obsolete, obtrude, omen, ovation, pallid, parabola, pecuniary, peninsula, plausible, proficient, pungent, recant, recuperate, salient, sector, segregate, species, thesis, turbulent, vertigo

17<sup>th</sup> century: abduction, abstemious, acclaim, accretion, acquiesce, adept, adventitious, ancillary, apparatus, apposite, armament, atmosphere, atrocious, calculus, capillary, carnivorous, castigate, cathartic, chrysalis, decimal, delinquent, derelict, diploma, discriminate, dogma, elastic, emissary, emollient, farrago, fatuous, fluctuate, formula, fulcrum, garrulous, graphic, hallucination, hesitate, hieratic, innuendo, mereticious, miscellaneous, nascent, noxious, ornithology, parahernalia, phenomenon, philanthropy, primogeniture, recondite, stagnant, tendency, torpor, turgid

### Greek

16th century: topic; 17th century: autonomy, demagogue, dichotomy, euthanasia, pathos, protagonist, strophe, threnody

### Literary terms adopted from Latin and Greek

alliteration, anaphora, antithesis, apostrophe, hemistich, hendiadys, hexameter, hyperbole, iambus, irony, litotes, metonymy, onomatopoeia, oxymoron, pentameter, periphrasis, trochee, trope, zeugma

### New Formations from Latin or Greek elements

17th century: barometer, microphone ('an instrument by which small sounds can be intensified')

### French

16<sup>th</sup> century: abeyance, abscess, adage, affable, artisan, bastion, baton, battalion, bourgeois, buffoon, buffet, bullet, cabinet, cannon, colonel, decadence, demolish, entrance, gauze, grotesque, machine, minion, moustache, musket, piquant, pioneer, populace, rendezvous, sally, surpass, terrace, trenchant, trophy, vogue, volley

17<sup>th</sup> century: accolade, adjust, adroit, aggrandise, alert, ammunition, altitude, avenue, balustrade, barricade, bayonet, bizarre, brigade, brilliant, brusque, buccaneer, bulletin, bureau, cajole, campaign, cascade, chandelier, charlatan, dragoon, effete, façade, grimace, marauder, nonchalance, omelette, parade, rapport, tableau

### Italian

16<sup>th</sup> century: argosy, artichoke, ballot, biretta, canto, carnival, cupola, gondola, macaroni, madrigal, motto, mountebank, squadron, stucco

17<sup>th</sup> century: balcony, baritone, broccoli, chiaroscuro, gambit, incognito, lagoon, opera, portico, regatta, sonata, virtuoso

### Spanish

16<sup>th</sup> century: anchovy, armada, armadillo, banana, bravado, cannibal, potato, renegade, sherry, tornado

17th century: alligator, avocado, barbecue, cargo, matador, siesta, vanilla

### Dutch or Low German

16<sup>th</sup> century: cambric, freebooter, landscape, muff, splice, yacht

17th century: brandy, easel, knapsack, slim, smuggle

## High German 17<sup>th</sup> century: hamster, plunder, sauerkraut

Indian languages 17<sup>th</sup> century: bungalow, chintz, juggernaut, pundit

Portuguese buffalo (16c), flamingo (16c), macaw (17c)