„Den Ernst sein Brief bestätiget noch immer dasselbe“. Variation in Dental Verbal Suffixes in Varying Text-types from the 19th Century Duchy of Schleswig

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This paper investigates variation in dental verbal suffixes (e)t and (e)st in 19th century High German written texts from the Duchy of Schleswig. The distribution of vocalic (-et, -est) and non- vocalic (-t, -st) allomorphs has over the course of several centuries shifted from being lexeme dependent to being dependent on the Auslaut of the verbal stem. Assuming this general development as baseline, this paper investigates the distribution of these allomorphs, as well as a third variant where the non-vocalic variant is marked with an apostrophe (-‘t, -‘st), in varying text- types that represent different degrees of formality, publicity and immediacy of communication: private letters, a semi-public guestbook and meeting minutes from the ‘Christiansgarde’, a civil guard society. Furthermore, these texts facilitate the investigation of variation on an individual as well as group level: on the one hand, these texts include various metadata about the authors, allowing for the creation of writer profiles and tracing intraindividual variation; on the other hand, these texts are closely connected to specific groups, allowing for research on in-group norms which may influence variation. The evidence collected from these texts suggests that variation for the largest part coincides with the contemporary, phonotactic rule of distribution (cf. Duden- Grammatik 2016: § 617). Where quantitative figures at first glance seem to suggest otherwise, a more detailed analysis suggests that these ‘deviant’ cases can generally be reduced to occurring in limited, well-definable circumstances relating to specific textual features and/or in-group norms, not allowing for broader generalization.

References

Duden-Grammatik = Dudenredaktion (2016) Duden - Die Grammatik: Struktur und Verwendung der deutschen Sprache. Sätze - Wortgruppen - Wörter. Dudenverlag, Berlin.