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The use of initial *h*- in the writing-tablets from Roman Britain

Abstract: This chapter is focused on the treatment of *h* in initial position in non-literary texts written on tablet from Roman Britain. The analysis highlights the variation concerning the treatment of *h*-. We consider the cases of *h*-insertion in initial position in the Vindolanda corpus, which targets specific areas of the lexicon: everyday language (Tab.Vindol. 622, *hostrea*) and, more importantly, personal names (Tab.Vindol. 184, *Huettius*). In contrast, the other non-literary corpora of *Londinium*-Bloomberg, Carlisle and curse tablets show a different outcome, as there are only cases of *h*-deletion in initial position, which follows a more widely attested non-standard Latin development, which is eventually seen in the formation of the Romance languages (Allen 1965: 53).

Keywords: Latin linguistics, Roman Britain, historical sociolinguistics, writing-tablets

1 Introduction and description of the corpora

Roman Britain represents an interesting area of study due to its geographical, socio-historical and linguistic perspectives. The Roman presence in this area coincides with the first historical period recorded for Britain and creates a mixture of different cultures which interacted over a time span of about four centuries. For this analysis, the following non-literary sources are considered:

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- *Londinium*-Bloomberg stylus tablets (50–80 CE)
- Carlisle ink-written wooden writing-tablets (79–105 CE)
- Vindolanda ink-written wooden writing-tablets (85–205 CE)
- Curse tablets incised on metal from diverse locations (175–400 CE)

The *Londinium*-Bloomberg tablets comprise the oldest corpus available and represent important evidence in reconstructing the first decades of the Roman conquest (Tomlin 2016). All the documents are written in the so-called ‘Old Roman Cursive’ script which was widely in use from the first century BCE to the third century CE. The bulk of these documents was written from 50 to 80 CE and they present a picture of the more formal, official, legal and economic aspects of life in Roman London, immediately before and after its destruction by Boudicca. However, not all of the 409 documents collected carry legible texts. Only 185 of them can currently be analysed. The authors of these documents are varied: according to the analysis led by Tomlin (2016: 51), the authorship – when traceable and only in a few cases – belongs to Vangiones, Nervi, Lingones and people coming from Noricum. Not only the provenance of the writers varies, but also their social status. There are merchants, brewers and slaves together with prefects and soldiers. The only edition available for this corpus is the one recently published by Tomlin in 2016.

It should be noted that the Vindolanda corpus remains unparalleled in its complexity of text types, and number of tablets (772 writing-tablets against the 405 tablets from *Londinium*-Bloomberg). The Carlisle corpus, despite its meagre size (77 ink-written tablets), is a good source of comparison to the Vindolanda corpus as both these *corpora* are composed of documents written in auxiliary forts alongside the Stanegate road. The Carlisle corpus is a mixture of accounts and letters which are unfortunately preserved in a highly fragmentary state. At the moment, there is only one edition available, published in the journal *Britannia* (Tomlin 1998). Most of the tablets can be dated to between the late first and mid-second centuries CE. Even if the number of the items collected at Carlisle is relatively low, this corpus shows some unique evidence (especially Tab.Luguv. 1 and 16), focusing on which it is possible to investigate the non-literary Latin used by the men of the *ala Gallorum Sebosiana*, garrisoned at Carlisle in the second century CE.

Conversely, the Vindolanda auxiliary fort has a long and rich history whose legacy derives both from its writing-tablets and from extensive archaeological investigations that underscore its historical and linguistic importance. The Vindolanda writing-tablets offer an unparalleled source of evidence of garrison life at the northernmost border of the Empire and of linguistic variation among its writers. This military fort has a long archaeological history starting from the mid-

70s CE, but the Vindolanda corpus is dated at a precise period because all the documents so far published are ascribable to the Batavian and Tungrian cohorts – together with their civilian associates – garrisoned at Vindolanda between the end of the first and third centuries CE. Specifically, the bulk of the Vindolanda corpus belongs to the period when the fort was occupied by the 9th *cohors Batavorum* (roughly from 95 to 103 CE). In this way, together with the Carlisle and, perhaps to an extent, the *Londinium-Bloomberg corpora*, it is a source of non-literary documents written on tablet from individuals from the provinces of Gallia Belgica and the Rhine frontier and does not (perhaps with one or two possible exceptions) represent the Latin spoken by the native population of Britain.

The text types of the Vindolanda corpus are the most multifaceted among the corpora considered; as a matter of fact, this is the only corpus in which documents written by both men and women are available, and the topics and types of texts range so broadly that it is easy to reconstruct aspects of the daily life of the garrison. It is possible to recognize a few major categories: personal correspondence, official correspondence, writing exercises, miscellaneous and *descripta*. The category of miscellaneous includes the documents that cannot be subsumed under the other labels since it encompasses those documents whose real text type cannot be identified.

In addition, the categories of personal and official correspondence can be subdivided in order to obtain finer-grained distinctions (Table 4). The Vindolanda writing-tablets have added a lot of information, not only according to the linguistic perspective but also regarding onomastics and the lifestyle of the Roman auxiliary. Indeed, many of the letters contain touching moments, such as greeting friends and ‘messmates’ (Tab.Vindol. 310, 346), New Year wishes (Tab.Vindol. 261), invitations to birthday parties (Tab.Vindol. 291), and regular requests to send more beer (Tab.Vindol. 628), socks and underwear because of the horrible weather (Tab.Vindol. 234, 346). This corpus has an *editio princeps* (Bowman and Thomas 1983), a re-edition and three further updates (Bowman and Thomas 1994, 2003; Bowman, Thomas and Tomlin 2010, 2011).

Finally, we have to mention the 300 curse tablets found all over Britain, among which 200 are published legible documents. These finds are spread over 39 different sites and grouped into 10 different UK counties with a particularly high number from Uley and Bath (*Aquae Sulis*), bearing witness to differential Latinization in this Province. The chronological range in which we can place the curse tablets is between 175 and 400 CE. They provide an invaluable source of non-literary Latin, written by inhabitants of Roman Britain from various social environments, including the local population, the auxiliaries and the legionaries garrisoned in the forts, and people from other provinces (Adams 1992: 24).

Compared to the other corpora analysed, these curse tablets represent a completely different type of non-literary document, first because they belong to a later period, but above all because they seem to be the product of the local population which merged its indigenous features with those of the Latin culture. These tablets provide an insight into the religion and the writing habits of the Romano-Britons. The language used is influenced by local cultural features, structured around an apparatus of magical terms and *formulae* originating in the Latin tradition, and echoing other linguistic domains such as legal, liturgical and commercial language. The curse tablets from Roman Britain are available in several publications (Tomlin 1988; Kropp 2008; and the annual publication of the journal *Britannia*).¹

2 *H-* in Roman Britain

This chapter will consider the use of initial *h-* as marker of two distinct phenomena which are not directly correlated but are both ascribable to the use of the aspirate in initial position. On the one hand, 26 cases of initial *h-* deletion have been collected among all the corpora considered. This phenomenon consists of dropping the aspirate sound and not replacing it in the written text. In general, there was already an incorrect use of the aspirate sound, since the aspirate started to be lost in sub-elite varieties at an early date, i.e. the third century BCE (Allen 1965: 53–54), giving rise to a period of transition in which hypercorrect forms were abundant, both in speech and writing, to compensate for this lack of pronunciation (Sturtevant 1947: 56; Leumann 1977: 144). Only 2 cases of *h-* deletion are attested at *Londinium*-Bloomberg (Tab.Lond. 37; 55), 16 cases at Carlisle, in just one document which is a non-formal account concerning the administration of the garrison (Tab.Luguv. 1), 6 cases at Vindolanda (Tab.Vindol. 649; 691) and 2 cases in the curse tablets (Ratcliffe-on-Soar and Hamble Estuary).

Another use of the aspirate, the insertion of *h-* in unexpected positions from a Classical Latin point of view, was also attested. Depending on the word targeted by this phenomenon, this can be interpreted as a hypercorrect form, based on the phenomenon of *h-* deletion, as noted above, or it can highlight another possible use of the aspirate, i.e. in personal names which appear to be of non-Latin origin. The examples of this initial *h-* number only 10, but,

¹ Roger Tomlin is currently working on a new publication of Uley's curse tablets.

interestingly, they appear in a localized area (Vindolanda) and target specific lexical items.²

2.1 *H*- deletion

We first draw attention to the phenomenon of *h*- deletion (Table 1). In this table, the occurrences with initial *h*- in which the words were correctly spelled can be compared with the cases of *h*- deletion. [-H] indicates the phenomenon of *h*- deletion whereas [H] indicates the correctly spelled words.

Table 1: Comparison between correctly spelled *h*- and *h*- deletion.

Londinium-Bloomberg		Carlisle		Vindolanda		Curse tablets	
4		21		76		39	
[-H]	[H]	[-H]	[H]	[-H]	[H]	[H]	[H]
2	2	16	5	6	70	2	37
50%	50%	76%	24%	8%	92%	5%	95%

For each corpus considered, there is not one single writer, since many different hands are recognizable (Cotugno 2015: 194–195). Moreover, in a group of texts such as the curse tablets, the documents are written by a large number of different authors, and the variety of hands and misspellings in a busy sanctuary such as Bath is a clue as to the potentially relatively limited use of the scribes (though it is possible that some texts may have been copied from templates: Mullen 2007: 42). For this reason, it is very helpful to consider the different cases one by one, as they can be signifiers of language variation which slip through the orthographic awareness of these writers (Adams 1995: 92).

In the *Londinium*-Bloomberg corpus, there are only 2 cases of *h*- deletion. Tab.Lond. 37 is a personal letter whose topic is the visit of a certain *Atigniomarus* on 25 December (61–65 CE), whereas Tab.Lond. 55 is a fragmentary loan-note

² Only the initial position has been considered because in the corpora analysed <h> is not common in internal position. In fact, considering the Vindolanda writing-tablets, *-h*- occurs only in the word *mihi* where it is deleted only 14 times against 49 correctly written cases. It is also available in the forms *chortis* (Tab.Vindol. 127), in the abbreviation *chor.* (Tab.Vindol. 396) and in *cohors* (26 occurrences, often abbreviated *coh.*, e.g. Tab.Vindol. 210, 245, 248). Besides these, there is also the form *exibe* in which it has been deleted (Tab.Vindol. 282).

addressed to *Narcissus*, the slave of *Rogatus* the Lingonian (60–75 CE). They were written approximately in the same period and in both documents the spelling that diverges from the classical norm is <h>*abere*. In this corpus <h> is correctly placed in initial position in only two other occurrences: *hanc* (Tab. Lond. 55) and *hominem* (Tab. Lond. 41).

Moving to the northern frontier, the fort of *Luguvalium* offers 16 cases of initial *h*-deletion that can be compared to 5 cases in which the initial *h*- is correctly placed. However, in the specific case of the Carlisle corpus, all the *h*-deletion belong to one single tablet which is also an account written by the *curator* of the *Ala Gallorum* garrison and involves one single word, i.e. *hordei*. The document is Tab. Luguv. 1 and, since it is an account, it is a relatively non-formal document concerning the administration of the fort itself.

Concerning *h*-deletion, in the Vindolanda writing-tablets there are 6 cases scattered among personal correspondence and miscellaneous texts (Table 2).

Table 2: *h*-deletion in the Vindolanda corpus.

N.	Tab. No.	Text type	Period	Word
1	649	Correspondence (Male)	92–97 CE	<i>abet</i>
2	649	Correspondence (Male)	92–97 CE	<i>abent</i>
3	691	Correspondence (Male)	104–120 CE	<i>abet</i>
4	707	Miscellaneous	110–130 CE	<i>abebis</i>
5	707	Miscellaneous	110–130 CE	<i>aud</i>
6	717	Correspondence (Male)	104–120 CE	<i>abeas</i>

It is noticeable that also in this corpus, 5 of the 6 cases involve the verb *habeo*. This was already noticed in the *Londinium*-Bloomberg documents. Taking into account the different text types in which *h*-deletion occur, it can be observed that this phenomenon, even if scarce, may also depend on the text type as 4 of them are in personal correspondence, whereas 2 occur in documents labelled as ‘miscellaneous’. The topic dealt with in Tab. Vindol. 707 suggests that it is probably a document pertaining to personal correspondence as well, but there is no certainty in this, because the text and writing support are too fragmentary. All the letters considered seem to belong to the non-formal end of the stylistic distribution of the documents: Tab. Vindol. 649 is probably a draft and also contains non-classical features such as a few cases of vowel syncope (e.g. *singla*, *singlos*). The other documents are unfortunately too fragmentary to offer more linguistic information.

In the curse tablets, it was only possible to find two cases of *h*-deletion. To be specific, these cases are found in one tablet from the Hampshire foreshore of the Hamble Estuary (Hassall and Tomlin 1997: 455–456), and one from Red Hill, Ratcliffe-on-Soar, in Nottinghamshire (Mullen 2013: 266). Both tablets – like the vast majority of the Romano-British tablets – are related to a request for justice after a theft, but this is the only feature that these two tablets share. The words involved are <*h*>*ominem* (Hamble) and <*h*>*ospitio* (Ratcliffe-on-Soar). Both words are from everyday language, but *h*-deletion does not seem especially common in the curse tablets. Moreover, the word *hominem* is correctly spelled in Uley 78 (*hominis*) whereas *hospitio* is correctly spelled with the initial *h*- three times: *hospitio* (Tab.Sulis 99), *hospitiolo* (Uley 3 and 72). In the other non-literary corpora, these words are never the target of *h*-deletion: at Vindolanda, *hospitium* is correctly spelled three times (Tab. Vindol. 157; 633; 880), whereas *homo* is correct nine times in seven tablets (*homo*, Tab.Vindol. 155; 157; 311; 344; 876; *homines*, Tab.Vindol. 155; 157). *Londinium*-Bloomberg features only *hominem*, correctly spelled in Tab.Lond. 41. In conclusion, in the curse tablets the evidence is meagre but it seems that the targeted words are not related to the verb *habeo* – as in the other corpora – and the everyday words involved usually appear with correct spellings in the other corpora.

To summarize, at *Londinium*-Bloomberg 2 of the 4 cases in which initial *h*- is supposed to occur show *h*-deletion. The same phenomenon is apparently more frequent at Carlisle with 16 cases out of a total of 21, corresponding to 68%, but this is entirely thanks to the evidence collected from Tab. Luguv. 1. At Vindolanda 6 (i.e. 8%) of the 76 words starting with *h*- were spelled without initial *h*-. The curse tablets show a low number of cases: only 2 (i.e. 5%) of the words in which initial *h*- is supposed to occur are actually written without initial *h*-.

2.2 *H*-insertion

As mentioned above, only in the Vindolanda writing-tablets is it possible to notice the phenomenon of *h*-insertion, 10 cases in total, which can be explained in different ways, as we shall see (see Table 3).

The data collected in Table 3 suggest that this phenomenon is not text-type-dependent as it does not occur in a specific text type but has a scattered distribution. As a matter of fact, the phenomenon of *h*-insertion is prevalent in the ‘account’ documents, which are notes and lists written without heightened

Table 3: *h*-insertion in the Vindolanda corpus.

N.	Tab. no.	Text type	Period	Word
1	184	Account	120–130 CE	<i>Huetti[us]</i> ³
2	187	Account	97–103 CE	<i>Huete[ris]</i>
3	193	Account	97–103 CE	<i>halicae</i>
4	291	Correspondence (female)	97–103 CE	<i>haue</i>
5	586	Account	97–103 CE	<i>halicae</i>
6	586	Account	97–103 CE	<i>hálicae</i>
7	586	Account	97–103 CE	<i>hálicae</i>
8	622	Correspondence (male)	97–103 CE	<i>hostrea</i>
9	670	Correspondence (male)	165–205 CE	<i>Hario</i>
10	862	Military report	95–100 CE	<i>Huennius</i>

concern for linguistic accuracy. The three items of personal correspondence featuring this phenomenon are Tab.Vindol. 292, 622, 670.⁴

This phenomenon of *h*-insertion might depend on multiple factors: on the one hand, some of these tokens can be interpreted as hypercorrect forms, which may possibly represent the pronunciation of the authors, or mistakes of scribes, and *h*-insertion is a well-documented response to the non-standard loss of initial *h*-. On the other hand, 4 of these occurrences are personal names whose origin is not necessarily Latin. We may not therefore be dealing with *h*-insertion as these names may originally have possessed an initial aspirate. Table 4 lists the occurrences of words with initial *h*- under examination. They have been arranged according to their type: words pertaining to everyday language, and personal names. In the following analysis, each type is

³ The reading *Huetti[us]* is available in the appendix of Bowman and Thomas (2003: 156). The original edition (Bowman and Thomas 1994) had a different reading.

⁴ Tab.Vindol. 670 is from a later period and was written in a variant form of Old Roman Cursive. It may also be interpreted as a transitional form leading to New Roman Cursive. It is the only Vindolanda document from this period (165–205 CE) written in such a style. The other two personal letters are both related to Flavius Cerialis of the 9th cohort of the Batavians: Tab. Vindol. 292 is the birthday invitation to Cerialis' wife, Sulpicia Lepidina, from her friend Claudia Severa, whereas the other letter (Tab.Vindol. 670) is from Brocchus, Claudia's husband and Flavius Cerialis' friend and fellow prefect.

Table 4: Occurrences of initial *h-* under examination.

Everyday language	Non-classical form		Classical form		Total
<i>halica</i>	4	80%	1	20%	5
<i>have</i>	1	100%	0	0%	1
<i>hostrea</i>	1	50%	1	50%	2
	6		2		8

Personal name	Non-classical form		Classical form		Total
<i>Hario</i>	1	100%	0	0%	1
<i>Huete[ris]</i>	1	100%	0	0%	1
<i>Huennius</i>	1	100%	0	0%	1
<i>Huetti[us]</i>	1	50%	1	50%	2
	4		1		5

compared with the cases in which the same word was correctly written in the Vindolanda corpus.

As seen in Table 4, most of the occurrences occur only once in the whole Vindolanda corpus. Moreover, the only token that also occurs in other corpora and in its alleged classical form is the name *Huennius*: it appears in Tab.Lond. 61 as the patronymic *Vannii*. Six of the 10 cases involving initial *h-* are everyday words, and the remaining 4 are personal names.

In Tables 4 and 5, it is noticeable how the word *alica* ‘gruel’ occurs in 2 tablets – a total of 4 tokens – with *h-* insertion, whereas there is a third tablet in which the word seems correctly spelled. Tab.Vindol. 233 is a letter draft from Cerialis to Brocchus, prefect of Briga. Unfortunately, the reading *alica* is only conjectural as the text is very faded (Bowman and Thomas 1983). If we accept the reading *alica*, it can be surmised that at least one writer from the household of Cerialis correctly wrote *alica*. Conversely, there are at least two writers who wrote the same word with *h-* (Tab.Vindol. 193 and 586). Both of them are accounts: the first is a note from the household administration, the second is a summary account that first records dispensations – either sales or loans – to various named individuals, while in the second part it records the supplies received. The incorrect use of *h-* may be interpreted as a case of hypercorrection adopted by the writers of Tab.Vindol. 193 and 586. The cause of this phenomenon cannot be

Table 5: Distribution of the occurrences of the classical and non-classical words with *h*- insertion.

Token	Translation	Occurrence
<i>alica</i>	‘gruel’	Tab.Vindol. 193: <i>halicae</i> Tab.Vindol. 586: <i>halicae, hālicae, hālicae</i> Tab.Vindol. 233: <i>alicas</i>
<i>ave</i>	‘hail’	Tab.Vindol. 291: <i>have</i>
<i>ostreum</i>	‘oysters’	Tab.Vindol. 622: <i>hos[t]rea</i> Tab.Vindol. 299: <i>ostria</i>
<i>Arius</i>	Personal name	Tab.Vindol. 670: <i>Hario</i>
<i>Vannius</i>	Personal name	Tab.Vindol. 862: <i>Huennius</i>
<i>Veteris</i>	Personal name	Tab.Vindol. 187: <i>Huete[ris]</i>
<i>Vettius</i>	Personal name	Tab.Vindol. 184: <i>Huetti[us]</i> Tab.Vindol. 214: <i>Vettius</i>

explained straightforwardly, but one interpretation is that they added the aspirate as it mirrored the word as it was heard/spoken by the writer.⁵

Similarly, Tab.Vindol. 291 is the only document in which there is the occurrence of the word *have* in the whole Vindolanda corpus. Specifically, this letter was written by Claudia Severa, wife of Brocchus, to invite Sulpicia Lepidina to her birthday party. Personal correspondence was often copied down by professional scribes, and the closing *formulae* were usually added by the sender (Halla-Aho 2009: 61). The word *have* belongs to the part added by Claudia Severa herself and may be interpreted as a hypercorrection.⁶

hos[t]rea (Tab.Vindol. 622) occurs in a letter written by Brocchus to Cerialis. In Tab.Vindol. 299, however, there is the variant form *ostria*, written without *h*-. All these occurrences may be interpreted as possible cases of hypercorrection. The problem is understanding which was the standard form used as a referent, since for these cases it is possible to refer to examples from literary texts (e.g. SEN. epist. 122, 16; SCRIB. LARG. 104 for *halica*; CAEL. Cic. fam. 8, 16, 4; MART. 5,

⁵ An example in this sense is in Tab.Vindol 225. Here there is an *et hiem* erased and replaced by *etiam*. This could be a dictation error but also it possibly shows that scribes were conditioned to look out of loss of *h*- and to reinsert it, sometimes getting it wrong.

⁶ Even if forms like *have* are attested in classical texts, they will be considered because they can give us information about the possible collocation of the writers across the social spectrum (Adams 2013: 126).

51, 7 for *have*, also *hostrea* was written with initial *h-* in a later period, see TLL vol. IX, 2, p. 1159, 2–1160, 47).

We now turn to a consideration of the personal names. Here there is no absolute certainty that the evidence collected are names of Latin origin. Onomastics can be tricky in relation to identifying the writers' origins and for this reason it must be supported with historical-archaeological and other linguistic data. Considering how the names are rendered in written form can be a clue to the writer's background, because there is not necessarily a classical norm governing them. The names in the Vindolanda corpus generally follow Latin phonology and morphology. Nonetheless, non-Latin features sometimes intrude. This is perhaps due to a gap in the classical guidelines, or appreciation of them, that means writers are not properly guided towards Latin renditions. In relation to personal names, an overview of the attested forms is therefore offered in the following paragraphs.

- *Hario* (Tab.Vindol. 670) was interpreted by Bowman and Thomas as the dative form of *Arius* (Bowman and Thomas 2003). If we accept this, *Hario* can be interpreted as the hypercorrect form of *Ar(r)ius*.⁷ Unfortunately, the text is fragmentary before and after this name, and it is not possible to state whether the name is the dative of *Harius* or the nominative of *Ario*, a different personal name. The name *Ario* can be recognized as both Celtic and Germanic in origin. On one hand, the form *Ario* has been reconstructed as a Celtic form by David Stifter, director of the *Nichtmediterrane Namen in Noricum* project (NNN). On their website,⁸ the proposed etymology for *Ario* is **ario-* 'noble/lord, freeman'. On the other hand, the argument for its Germanic origin, with possible initial *h-*, is based on Walde and Pokorný's (1927–1932: I 353, 462) and Lehman's (1962: 178) reconstruction: PIE **kor-yo-s*, Got. *harjis*, ON *herr*, OE *here* 'army', OHG as. *heri* 'army, multitude'. Whatever its origin, whether Germanic or Celtic, this name was widely used without initial *h-*. However, there are no attestations of this name in the other British corpora, whether *Harius* or *Ario*. We are also aware that the Latin sources are insufficient to give a satisfactory explanation of this name.
- *Vettius/Huettius* is found twice only in the Vindolanda corpus. The first form, *Vettius* (Tab.Vindol. 214), refers to the *aquilifer* of the Legio II Augusta. This tablet is a letter sent to the fort of Vindolanda and its writer is not from the same community as the 9th Batavian cohort. Conversely,

⁷ The name *Harius* is not attested with *h-* in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* as the *Onomasticon* of the TLL only goes as far as the letter *D*. However, it is possible to make reference to the *gentilicium* *Arrius* commonly written as *Arius* (TLL vol. II, p. 643, 76–644, 31).

⁸ www.univie.ac.at/austria-celtica/personalnames/details.php?id=100.

the form *Huettius* from Tab.Vindol. 184 has a different tone as it is from an account recording the expenses of the *different centuriae* garrisoned at Vindolanda. It may be that these two forms represent two different levels of Latinization of a same name: *Vettius*, which adheres entirely to Latin standards, and *Huettius* which shows a non-Latin aspiration before [w].⁹

- *Veteris/Hueteris* is a linguistic conundrum. On the one hand, it can be interpreted as a Latin name, whereas, on the other, it can be considered a Latinized form of a Germanic form related to Old Norse *hvítr* ‘white’.¹⁰ The instantiations in Old Norse, Old English and Old High German are based on a full grade form **hwīta*, but those in Old Frisian and Dutch (*wit*) – connected with the Batavians and the Tungrians – have a short vowel as they are based on the zero-grade variant **hwitta* (Kroonen 2003: 267). The fact that [i] was *ī* may explain the change towards [e] in forms like *Veteris* recorded by writers from Gallia Belgica, homeland of a large number of the Vindolanda writers and eventually also of the Frisians and Dutch. In this sense, *Hueteris* can be interpreted as a Germanic form with an initial aspirated element reflecting Germanic pronunciation. Forms with initial *h-* have also been found in areas near Vindolanda, at the minor forts of *Brocolitia* (Carrawburgh, *RIB* 1549, *Huiteribus*) and *Vercovicium* (Housesteads, *RIB* 1602 *Hueteri*). At both forts, the presence of Germanic auxiliaries has been recorded (*RIB* 882, 1576, 1580, 1586, 1594, 1618, 1619).
- *Huennius* (Tab.Vindol. 862), is found in an account with reference to a *faber*. It has been linked to the name *Vannius* which is considered to be of Germanic origin (Reichert 1987: 766), and attested in the genitive form in a loan-note from the *Londinium* writing-tablets where it appears as a *patronymic*. The form *Vannius* is probably a Latinized form of a Germanic name. Tacitus passes on details about the king of the Germanic tribe Quadi, *Vannius*, who came to power following the defeat of the Marcomannic king Catualda (ann. 2, 63, 6). Due to the possible interpretations of this name,¹¹ it is difficult to pinpoint the meaning for *Vannius*, and therefore its possible

⁹ There is a *cognomen* of Latin origin *Vettius* (CIL VI 3353, AE 1978, 564). In OPEL IV: 164 it is attested as a *gentilicium* elsewhere in the Roman Empire, especially in Italy. However, also in the Vindolanda writing-tablets *Vettius* from Tab.Vindol. 214 is a *gentilicium*.

¹⁰ From the PIE **h₂wi₂ta* - **h₂wi₂ta* (adj.) ‘white’ and therefore ON *hvítr*, OE *hwít*, OHG *wiz*, *hwiz*, but OFri. *wit* Du. *wit*.

¹¹ Ernst Förstemann (1856: 1257) lists the name *Vannius* under the name element ‘Vand’ that does not have a clear meaning but is believed to be etymologically related to Slavic and Germanic tribes, the Wends and Vandals. As already supposed by Förstemann himself, the meaning of that element is not wholly certain. He thinks that it is etymologically related to the names of two tribes, namely the Wends (Slavic) and the Vandals (Germanic). Nonetheless, it is

Germanic correspondent. However, the attestation of the personal name *Huennius*, in the light of the Germanic umlaut of palatal vowels before geminates and nasal,¹² can be seen as an alternative form of the same name: on the one hand, *Vannius*, attested in classical text, such as the *Annales* of Tacitus, is the Latinized and literary form, on the other hand, *Huennius* may be a more speech-related form.

The use of *h-* in personal names throws some light on its use in words which were not clearly regulated by classical norms. It seems that the writer used initial *h-* in order to maintain a feature of the original spoken form that, in the specific cases considered here, seems to be Germanic.

3 *H-* outside Britain

The texts from the garrisons of Vindolanda and Carlisle and those from London represent different realizations of sub-varieties whose roots are linked to Continental varieties of Latin. It is not possible to identify a clear-cut variety of British Latin, as it is composed of many different sub-varieties from the Continental provinces. For this reason, a comparison with the continental non-literary documents is fundamental.

If the *h-* deletion seems to be a very common feature in the Roman Empire at large, e.g. in words like *habeo*, this is not the same for the phenomenon of *h-*insertion. According to Clackson and Horrocks, the dropping of *h-* was also frequent in Pompeian graffiti for the word *habere* but *h-*insertion was rare (Clackson and Horrocks 2007: 241). Moreover, taking into consideration other non-literary documents written on tablet, the focus on the verb *habeo* as a cross-province feature is also confirmed by the letters of Claudius Terentianus: *h-* deletion here occurs four times (P. Mich. 8 468 *abes*, 8 470 *abet*, 8 471 *abuit*, *abere*). Nonetheless, there are no cases of *h-*insertion comparable to those found at Vindolanda.

For Vindolanda, the areas of reference are the Celto-Germanic provinces of Germania Inferior and Gallia Belgica, whereas for *Londinium*-Bloomberg it is possible to add, at least for a few of the tablets the Noricum and Gallic provinces, and the same goes for the writers at Carlisle. For this reason, the analysis can be extended to the alleged homelands of these writers, analysing the inscriptions

possible to relate this element to the name 'Van', also related to the Gothic *vêns* 'resources', and the Old High German *wân* 'hope' as well as *wan* 'deficient, imperfect' and *wâni* 'need'.

¹² See Saibene and Buzzoni (2006: 127–130).

from CIL XIII. The names of Germanic origins show the same use of *h-* in names for which a corresponding standard does not exist in Classical Latin or has been reworked so extensively that it is no longer recognizable in the writers' orthographic consciousness. In a certain sense the situation from Vindolanda mirrors that of these provinces. For the sake of clarity, a few examples will be quoted: in CIL XIII 7994, 8611, 8661, 8830, the name of the Germanic goddess *Hludana* and the name *Hrannon* are attested (Battaglia 2007: 193; AE 1988 n. 896). These, together with the alternation between *Arii* and *Charinii* in Tacitus and Pliny, indicate that strong aspiration occurred at the beginning of these Germanic names. For the writers from Vindolanda, where language contact was common, the Old Roman Cursive script was a unifying medium for written communication and reciprocal understanding. Nevertheless, these people might have tried variable spelling strategies in order to represent different phonetic habits that were linked to their identities (Cotugno 2015). Since local scribes adopted the Latin orthographic system in Roman cursive and capital letters, the difficulty of representing German sounds could easily cause spelling inconsistencies (König and Van der Auwera 1994: 90). With regard to *h-* in the Celto-Germanic linguistic environment, as highlighted by Battaglia (2007: 203), it is highly possible that such inconsistencies may be a precocious attempt to adapt the graphemic inventory to the phonological inventory of the writer, flavoured by a non-Latin language.

Concerning onomastics, the attestations found in Roman Britain and the Continental provinces show that there was not a clear norm to guide the writers towards the creation of well-formed words from a Latin perspective and because of this, there can be interference of non-Latin features.

4 Conclusions

In this chapter, it was possible to provide an analysis of the two different types of use of initial *h-* in non-literary documents written on tablet from Roman Britain. The overall frequency of these occurrences in respect of the whole number of words for each corpus is not quantitatively relevant, nonetheless, each corpus is able to provide relevant information about the linguistic situation from this province.

Concerning *h-* deletion, available in all the corpora considered, there are 26 cases in total (see Section 2.1). For *Londinium*-Bloomberg, this phenomenon targets the verb *habeo*, similarly to what happens in Vindolanda and other Roman provinces. It can be said that this *habeo h-* deletion is a pan-Roman feature, as it occurs not only in Gallia Belgica and Germania Inferior, but also

in the Latin letters of Claudius Terentianus and in Pompeian graffiti (Adams 1978; Adams 2013: 125).

In contrast, at Carlisle, *h*- deletion seems an idiolectal phenomenon as it is related to only one tablet and one writer (Tab.Luguv. 1). Nonetheless, the overall number of occurrences of words starting with *h*- is very low and this does not allow a definitive diagnosis. It should be noted that even if *hordei* occurs in non-standard forms 15 times, the form *habeo* (differently conjugated) is correctly spelled 3 times. It has been seen that the verb *habeo* is the most common word targeted by *h*- deletion in the corpora under consideration. However, this did not happen in Tab.Luguv. 13, 33, 63. This may be a further confirmation that the *h*- deletion is a feature characteristic of the *curator* author of Tab. Luguv. 1. Concerning the curse tablets, the cases with initial *h*- deleted do not seem to be related to any of the cases found in the other corpora. This may be related to the different provenance of the writers, but the evidence is too meagre. Conversely, the collected data from Vindolanda are in the same vein as the results from *Londinium*-Bloomberg and CIL XIII, as the large majority of the cases involve the verb *habeo*.

The initial aspirate is a sociolinguistically marked feature. This is particularly evident in the different form of the verb *habeo* written without *h*-. As already highlighted by Allen (1965: 53–54) and more recently by Clackson and Horrocks (2007: 240–241) the aspiration was a sociolinguistic marker. On the one hand, those with a higher level of education maintained the aspirate in the correct contexts as witnessed by St. Augustine (AVG. conf. 1, 18, 29); on the other, the presence of the aspirate was perceived as a feature of prestige, and thus was subject to hypercorrection by those less well educated (CATVLL. 84). This hypercorrection may explain the form of several of the lexemes discussed above.

However, some of the words with initial *h*- may not be a result of the same kind of process of hypercorrection (i.e. adding an aspirate where it does not etymologically exist). Rather, the initial *h*- in personal names may reflect a second language – namely the writer's mother tongue – which is influencing his spoken and written Latin, as the /h/ may have an etymologically sound phonetic value in the language of origin. Vindolanda is the only corpus from Roman Britain showing all three phenomena, *h*-deletion, hypercorrect *h*- insertion and contact-language initial *h*-. Maybe this could be linked to the presence of Batavian and Tungrian writers, who are not present in the other corpora. Moreover, the variety of text types of this corpus showed that the occurrence of these phenomena is not dependent on the text type as it occurs in personal correspondence, accounts and military reports. Nonetheless, a shared feature is the non-formal style, which can be linked to a lower concern with accuracy. The expedient of initial *h*- for representing an initial aspirated sound which was not typical of Latin is not

uncommon and shows alternate forms, like *Arii* and *Charinii* and occurs elsewhere in a Celto-Germanic environment (see the forms *Hludana* and *Hrannon* found CIL XIII, see Section 3). In this normative void, the spoken language presumably makes an appearance through the use of the aspiration, which was no longer commonly used in Latin, according to the contemporary testimony. On the one hand there is the feature of *h*-insertion which may represent a case of hypercorrection in Latin words which never had it and is not attested only in Roman Britain but in Latin language at large (Adams 2013). On the other hand, there is another phenomenon at Vindolanda, initial *h*- which involves mainly Latinized personal names, which is not directly linked to *h*-deletion since it may pertain to the Celtic or Germanic pronunciation of these names.

In conclusion, the corpora considered show different treatment of *h*- according to the alleged provenance of the writers themselves. In this way, it is possible to confirm that, in a certain sense, the corpora are ascribable to people from Gallia Belgica and Germania Inferior as they mirror the epigraphic behaviour of their homeland. Only the curse tablets have a different outcome as *hospitio(lo)* and *homo* occur only once in the non-classical cases of *h*-deletion.

If the overuse of *h*- in initial position was intended as a sociolinguistic marker in Catullus' epigram 84, in which the *rusticus* Arius uses *hinsidias* for *insidias*, it is also possible to emphasize that this feature does not pertain only to the diastratic variation, but it may possibly mark the difference provenance of the writers. Even if in Latin the use of the aspirate was not maintained, in Celtic and Germanic languages it still had a place in the phonological inventory. If this were not the case, the writers from Vindolanda, Germania Inferior and Gallia Belgica would not have adopted *h*- to write Latinized forms of their personal names. For this reason, it is appropriate to see the phenomenon of initial *h*- in personal names (and perhaps also to an extent the hypercorrect forms, though this is much less certain) as an effect of the transfer from the non-Latin languages of the writers. Moreover, it is important to stress that the collected data regarding this specific phenomenon cannot be seen as a casual coincidence and must be interpreted, even though the data set is quite limited, especially when all the cases occur in a single corpus.

Abbreviations

Du.	Dutch
Got.	Gothic
OE	Old English
OFri.	Old Frisian

OHG	Old High German
ON	Old Norse
PIE	Proto-Indo-European
Tab.Lond.	<i>Tabula Londinensis</i> (see Section 1)
Tab.Luguv.	<i>Tabula Luguvaliensis</i> (see Section 1)
Tab.Sul.	<i>Tabula Sulis</i> (see Section 1)
Tab.Vindol.	<i>Tabula Vindolandensis</i> (see Section 1)

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CIL = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (1862–). Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.

NNN = *Non-Mediterranean Names in Noricum*, www.univie.ac.at/austria-celtica/personalnames.

OPEL = Lórinč B. & Redó, F. (1994). *Onomasticon Provinciarum Europae Latinarum* (vols. I–IV).

RIB = Collingwood, R.G. & Wright, R. P. (1965), *The Roman inscriptions of Britain*.

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