Historical (Im)Politeness Research panel

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panel organised by

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Our paper is concerned with socio-pragmatic aspects of politeness, in that we shall focus on the issue of how, in a corpus of letters written by the illustrious 17th-century Dutch poet, playwright, and historiographer P.C. Hooft, different styles of linguistic politeness hang together with the dissimilar social relationships between the correspondents. On the assumption that, insofar as early modern (Dutch) letter-writing is concerned, Hooft can be taken as a model of politeness, it will be argued that (epistolary) politeness was among the principal “semiotic resources” of that period to reflect, demarcate, or establish (a)symmetrical relations, and that this particular linguistic device bears a close resemblance to, and may even originate from, pre-modern forms of ritual display behaviour.

Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft, who held the important public offices of bailliff of Muiden castle and sheriff of the Goijland, belonged to the upper crust of Dutch society and was part of an elitist social network connecting kindred spirits such as the celebrated poet Constantijn Huygens and the renowned scholar Caspar Barlaeus. Given that Muiden castle was located in the country, whereas the focus of social and cultural life was in major cities like Amsterdam and The Hague, a copious exchange of letters took place between Hooft and a great many correspondents. Over the years, Hooft’s ardent letter-writing activities resulted in a vast accumulation of epistolary texts of which as many as 1336 letters from and to Hooft have been preserved.

In our paper, we cannot but limit ourselves to a mere fraction of Hooft’s epistolary legacy. Even so, concentrating on politeness phenomena in about forty letters dating from the 1630s and 1640s, we will try to ascertain that this typical early modern bourgeois-gentleman disposed of notably distinctive epistolary styles, which he consistently employed in keeping with particular socio-pragmatic “parameters,” most especially the nature of his relationship with the addressee. Such contextual variables range from the public to the private domain, and encompass professional contacts, business relations, social contacts of a general nature (mostly peer group acquaintanceships), cordial connections with members of a select “inner circle,” as well as family and domestic affairs. It does seem, in effect, that Hooft’s various “socio-discoursal roles” played a prominent part as to the selection of the appropriate style of politeness.

Building on our earlier joint research on early modern Dutch politesse (Bax & Streekstra 2002, 2003), we will examine the formal characteristics of Hooft’s varying styles of politeness, such as the wording of typical epistolary elements (the address, the salutation, the complimentary close), the employed terms of address, and the phrasing of face-threatening acts (primarily requests). Hooft’s different styles of epistolary civility will be discussed against a general background of “standard” theories about linguistic politeness (Goffman 1967; Brown & Levinson 1987), along with more recent approaches to (im)politeness such as Culpeper (1996), Burke (2000), Watts (2003), and Bousfield (2007).

Although the point stands that, given its sentence-oriented scope, the standard model is rather lacking in explaining textual aspects of politeness, particularly the “paradigmatic” dimension of polite style-forms, the notions and methods of the current language-and-politeness paradigm are generally well-suited tools for exploring Hooft’s distinct uses of politeness strategies, whereas the concepts of positive and negative face can usefully serve to characterize the overall relational stances marked by his divergent letter-writing styles.

To exemplify, Hooft’s letters to the Dutch Republic’s truly high and mighty are – quite predictably – perfect examples of negatively polite histrionics featuring “the humiliative mode” (Brown & Levinson 1987), whereas in his more practical and professional letters we find comparatively modest forms of negative politeness, but certainly no negatively polite overstatement or
uses according to “the hyperbolic mode” (Burke 2000); Hooft’s letters to relatives, on the other hand, are in the main positively polite.

In his letters to intimate friends, then again, Hooft tends to intermix apparently incompatible negative and positive politeness strategies. As to the “hybrid” character of such letters – that is, the somewhat paradoxical, outwardly unbalanced co-occurrence of negative and positive politeness –, we suspect that negatively polite ostentation comes down to ritual make-believe, in that subservient phrases and other forms of self-abasement amount to a kind of genial play-acting, rather than to seriously giving deference.

Respecting the presumed ritual quality of the latter variety of epistolary politeness, two antipodal conceptions will be reviewed. The generally acknowledged idea is that over time, and within particular socio-cultural contexts, polite (language) behaviour became “ritualized”; an alternative view is that ritual display was initially the default format of civility, and that, during the early modern period, ritual politeness evolved into a more “rationalized” mode – in the Weberian sense – of relational communication. Referring to medieval examples of (im)politeness, we will argue that pre-modern ritual display and (early) modern civility are contiguous, and historically continuous, semiotic resources for defining interrelations and for marking out the “proxemic space” between interactants.
This paper investigates the use of politeness strategies in business letters in late 18th century America and England. Drawing on politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978), the paper analyzes the business letters paying attention to the linguistic realizations of positive and negative politeness strategies. As Fitzmaurice (2002) argues, the letter is “more like a conversation in its affect than one might suppose”, and it consists not only “of conventional or formulaic utterance in order to meet basic expectations of politeness in the course of exchange” but also “of particular locutions expressed and phrases in order to carry out specific tasks that the letter is intended to perform” (23). If the letter is conversational-like in that it responds to the previous letter, and anticipates or sets up the dialogue for another letter, then it means that on some occasions there are possibilities that the writer has to make Face Threatening Acts in his or her letters, just as a speaker may do so during a conversation. Business letters, in particular, features many types of Brown and Levinson’s Face Threatening Acts, including suggestions, requests, order, complaints, etc.

The study first investigates “real” and at the same time “ideal” business letters that were supposed to be the “norm” in late 18th century Britain and America. I draw my data from the American edition (1797) of “The Complete Letter-Writer Containing Familiar Letter. . . .” (which was published concurrently in England at the time). This 245-page document is in fact a letter writing manual, written for “almost every individual, from the boy at school to the secretary of state” (Preface, 4), containing inter alia instructions on how to write letters in general and several specific examples of letters for every day occasions including business letters, love letters, courtship letters, to name but a few. While these examples are meant to be models or patterns which the reader can resort to and rely upon, they are also real letters in the sense that they are composed by “eminent authors” (Preface, 4). Thus, while the letters found therein are ideal linguistic realizations of politeness, they are also realistic realizations too. In addition, to make my corpus of business letters larger, the study examines some business correspondence of John McLoughlin (1784-1857), whose later life was spent taking care of his store that sold food and tools to settlers in Oregon. As a result, he had to make business correspondence with other businessmen. Including McLoughlin’s business letters in my corpus allows us to see whether or not and to what extent, if at all, the “norm” or the “model” prescribed by the authority on the subject is followed in practice.

This study aims to gain a greater understanding of politeness not only in this historical period but also the politeness theory in general, and in particular, in what ways politeness affects and has bearing on the linguistic and rhetoric forms within the letters. In terms of methodology, the study distinguishes two linguistic and pragmatic levels: the formulaic level and content level, both of which establish a particular relationship between the sender and a receiver of the letter in different ways. The former includes the salutation, the opening, the pre-close, the close, and the signature, while the latter includes expressions that can be further categorized as requests, offers, apologies, etc. I distinguish these two levels because while the formulaic level often includes fix phrases, they may also convey “conventional meanings” as a result of repeated uses, as Fitzmaurice (2002: 12) puts it, “the remark, ‘Your servant’ placed at the end of a letter is taken neither as the writer’s acknowledgment of his inferior rank relative to the addressee, nor as a sincere assurance of the writer’s willingness to perform a service to the addressee. Instead, it functions as a conventional signal that the letter is at a close.” On the other hand, the informational content sets up the purpose of, the response to, and/or the stage for the “conversation” that will ensue or that comes before. These two levels will be examined for evidence of mitigation by the sender with respect to which politeness strategies, positive and negative, are chosen. Finally I account for the reason why one is chosen over the other by looking at the relationship of the letter and the sender with the receiver.
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Politeness, Politic Behaviour and Humiliative Discourse in Eighteenth Century English

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The panel affords a superb opportunity to explore the extent to which (im)politeness theory as developed and applied in present-day pragmatics and sociolinguistics might be drawn on in the study of the notions of civility and politeness as reflected in humiliative discourse in eighteenth century English.

Much of my work over the past ten years has involved the in-depth study of the linguistic practices and literacy habits of a coalition of eighteenth-century writers centred on the authors of the Spectator periodical, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. I have explored the roles and influences of the social connections forged in the coalition on the language of the individuals involved. I have also more recently turned my attention to considering how social networks differ from discourse communities in the period by focusing on the language of the periodical essay. One common theme of these research projects has been the centrality of the notion of politeness. Crucially, the notion of politeness in the early eighteenth century commands a highly contextually conditioned, historically specific set of meanings; for example, Lawrence Klein’s (1996) work on the coffeehouse culture and the conduct of politeness in the period reflects historians’ concerns with politeness as a mode of social coordination. Scott Black’s (1999) work reflects the literary historian’s interest in the extent to which the genre of the periodical essay serves as a discursive medium for the development of sociability in the period. In earlier work, I discussed the emergence of politeness as an identifiable set of attributes that are commercialized and commodified via the identification of good grammar as the way to polite conversation (Fitzmaurice, 1998). Turning to a more linguistically focused stuff of politeness, I have examined the ways in which writers of the period operationalise politeness through the medium of humiliative discourse (Fitzmaurice, 2002a, b, c).

In the paper for the panel, I plan to take these historically specific explorations of the ideology of politeness, and examine the discourses that are argued to represent politeness in light of politeness theory and the notion of face (Brown & Levinson, 1987, etc.). I also want to assess the relevance of politeness theory in accounting for the conduct of eighteenth century ‘politeness’ in terms of Richard Watts’ (2003) exploration of politic behaviour.

To this end, I will examine two textual domains in which (the now highly complex notion of) politeness dominates, namely in the periodical press and in the sociable letter. I plan to explore politeness in the exponents of these domains as represented in the Network of early Eighteenth-century English Texts (NEET), the database that informs most of my work in eighteenth century English language. The key here is that the practice of letter writing and the idea of epistolarity are crucial to the performance of politeness in the period. The periodical as represented by the Spectator is composed of essays presented as letters, a practice that persists in the editorial and in letters to the editor in present-day periodical publications. The epistolary format invites the assumption of interaction—the presence of an addressee to whom the writer pays constant attention. It is in this context that the contemporary pragmatician’s understanding of politeness (via face) interacts with the notions of humiliative discourse and civil language (Burke, 2000). The question for investigation is how a historical pragmatic account of these discourses can profit from or be usefully informed by a social historical perspective, and how a historical assessment of the cultural weight of politeness might be informed by a linguistic perspective. Thus I am interested in complicating and historicising our understanding of politeness in earlier periods of English so that we take adequate account of the conventions that are agreed constitute politic behaviour as performed in the early eighteenth century.
References
This paper focuses on the practice of petitioning as an important part of official medieval writing culture. One purpose is to define the text genre in the political, cultural and religious context of early modern societies – mainly those of Northern France and Italy – and to identify its particular character at the intersection of universality vs. specificity and stability vs. change. The other objective is to challenge some of the main hypotheses from the socio-pragmatic theory of politeness.

Being a formalized requesting act Supplication, or officially begging a favour from the authorities, is a formalized request and thus can be understood as a hard face-threatening act, which has ever since been deliberately toned down by a range of ritualized redressive actions. These are strongly determined by the rights and duties of a hierarchical society order and the hence imposed social ranks.

The corpus consists of four edited and commented volumes of petitiones of the period between the late 13th and the early 15th century, namely, two collections of the Anglo-Norman era (Tanquerey, F.J. ed.: Recueil de lettres Anglo-françaises (1265 – 1399), Paris 1916 and Legge, D. ed.: Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions from All-Souls Ms. (1390 – 1412), Oxford 1941) and two from the era of the Della Scala and Gonzaga in Northern Italy (Bertoletti, N., Testi veronesi dell’età scaligera. Padova 2005; Tomasin, L., Testi padovani del Trecento. Padova 2004). Italy being the birthplace of the ars dictandi the comparative study of ca. 500 petitions is associated with the tightly structured petition-models of Guido Faba’s rhetoric handbook from 1250 and will, therefore, be conducted from the pedagogical viewpoint.

First, a comparative analysis of the data is undertaken within Fairclough’s three dimensional framework which allows the texts to be interpreted as complex, context-shaped activities with particular structures, contents and style cues. Petitions are therefore likely to be:

a) A social practice displaying the most significant socio-political and ideological factors, such as social status, the relationship between imperial and ecclesiastical influence and its consequences to the concept of power and submission, the situation of law and order, for one. For another the practice is conditioned by behaviour constraints like spirit of deference and sense of courtesy, or the mutual knowledge of consideration forms, etc. Both are mostly understood and explained as universals of medieval society.

b) A discursive practice concerning text production, distribution and consumption which, in my case, involves the definition of the genre on the threshold between orality and literacy; the description of the act of supplication as an ancient metaphorical gesture of prostration consisting in the two ritual parts to be put on semiotically: the petitioner’s humility and the benefactor’s graciousness. The practice also demonstrates the rise in literacy as an effect of ars dictandi and the rhetoric of early letter writing; the relation to charters and diplomas and – last but not least – the description of mediation forms and their influences on textual structure and the different writing styles.

c) A textual practice as the result of the social and cultural constraints on continuous self-humbling and raising of others, which is reflected in a wide range of visible instruments such as materialization, iconicity and verbalisation, viz. text composition and rhetorical and argumentation structure (f.e.x. salutatio – exordium – narration – petition – conclusion), the complex proliptic syntax due to the continuous constraints on justification, grounding and submissive recipient design, the striking directness, the high use of formulaic expressions and the widely formalized language of entreaty (like address and kinship terms and other forms of ‘social semantics’) nevertheless deliberately distributed in the different text parts required. Selected areas like salutation, the use of verba dicendi and the range of petition-formulas will be especially scrutinized.
Second, the resulting tendencies are linked to and evaluated with the dominant research paradigm of linguistic politeness established by Brown & Levinson (1978/87) and its continuing reception. My study confirms their main hypothesis: i.e.

   a) the identification of the face-notion as a result of social constraints;
   b) the ritual face wants and the implied balance between self and other;
   c) the necessary conflict avoidance strategies for the classical face-threatening area of request in accordance to ancient rhetorical rules;
   d) the importance of verbal cues as one aspect of polite markedness, which needs however to be completed by textual and semantic underpinnings.

The realisation of supplications also shows up a deliberate variation between (formulaic) uniformity and emerging free style conventions according either to the different writing cultures and their institutions or to the different subjects and their social position. These findings provide an appropriate basis to challenge some of the theory’s deficits which have ever since been the cause of critical discussion. Among those critical points are:

   a) the deficiencies of either historical or written politeness studies implying an epistemic turn from interaction to text and text genres;
   b) the cultural notions of face and the coverage of universality in terms of diachronic verticality vs. cross-cultural synchronicity, on the one hand, and
   c) the review of the conceptualisations of politeness and its extension and markedness, on the other.

From the beginning of politeness research in the late 70s this latter point has always been subject to different interpretations. They range from everyday meaning (first-order politeness) and meta-theoretical implication (second-order politeness) in the complete lack of its natural historical inferences thus giving way to dicotomic conceptions like social politeness vs. tact (Arndt/Janney 1992 ff.) over wakimae vs. volition (wiz. Ide representing the Japanese research 1990ff.) to conventional or social politeness vs. reflected behaviour (Haferland/Paul 1996) and the resulting discussion around the fuzzy problem of politeness vs. impoliteness vs. non-politeness, which some tried to resolve by introducing the concept of politic behaviour (by Watts 1992 to 2003).

Considering the tight and dynamic relationship between the three dimensions in Fairclough’s framework, the study of medieval supplications will not only shed light on the historicity of speech acts in terms of stability and change of the compositional, ideational and interactional meaning but also on the modulation of human interaction depending on context and time. The findings prove the importance of rhetoric to modern pragmatics. They reveal highly persistent behavioural patterns which, however, materialize in varying forms. The study is thus a revisitation of politeness theory which highlights functional continuity over time and formal diversity.
Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, written at the end of the fourteenth century, offer a rich array of tales and characters with numerous conversations both in the individual tales and in the narrative frame depicting a group of pilgrims travelling to Canterbury. The characters come from all walks of medieval life in England, and the conversations are as varied as the characters, ranging from the civil and polite to the impolite and downright rude. They are, therefore, the ideal testing ground for the application of politeness theory to historical data.

Chaucer has often been praised for the realism of his narrative descriptions. However, no claims are made here that Chaucer’s depiction of characters and their language is in any way directly representative of the actual language use in late fourteenth-century England. The richness of Chaucer’s fictional world deserves a pragmatic analysis in its own right.

Earlier politeness-related research on Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* has focused on address terms (Mazzon 2000; Honegger 2003; Jucker 2006) and on speech acts such as promises (e.g. Arnovick 1994) and insults (e.g. Jucker 2000). In this paper I would like to draw on these previous descriptions and combine them into a larger picture of politeness and impoliteness in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*.

From a larger perspective, the *Canterbury Tales* can be seen as the dawn of English politeness culture. Kohnen (2008) has shown that on the basis of his evidence, politeness in the sense of face work does not seem to have played a significant role in Anglos-Saxon England. By the time of Geoffrey Chaucer, French has had a major influence on English. One clear reflection of this is the use of two pronouns of address, *thou* and *ye* for single addressees. In Anglo-Saxon England kin loyalty and mutual obligation as well as the Christian values of humilitas and caritas were of prime importance. In Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, under the influence of French, it is the term *curteisie* ‘courtliness, good manners’ which takes centre stage and which opens the way for the English politeness culture that we know today.

(Title quote: ‘Her greatest pleasure was in good manners’ The Riverside Chaucer, I.132)

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A Situated Model of the Historical Chinese Deferential Denigration/Elevation Phenomenon

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The aim of this study is to inquire into the features of the historical Chinese phenomenon of self-denigration and addressee-elevation.

The pragmatic examination of the modern Chinese polite elevation/denigration (henceforth E/D) phenomenon began with Gu Yueguo’s (1990) renowned paper and it has been studied by both East Asian experts (e.g. Ide 1989) and Western theorists (cf. Eelen 2001). Furthermore, historical Chinese E/D has been thoroughly examined by Peng (1998, 2000) and Kádár (2005, 2007). Examining E/D in a historical context has particular significance because in traditional Chinese, E/D had a much more elaborate system, and an incomparably larger lexicon, than E/D in modern China. However, in spite of its relatively long research history, the interactional working of E/D has not yet been mapped in-depth: scholars tend to take it for granted that E/D is realised through a vast inventory of honorifics and certain socially negotiated forms of linguistic behaviour.

The present study explores the linguistic means by which the inhabitants of old China elevated their addressees and denigrated themselves. As becomes evident from the analysis, E/D is arguably more complex than it is suggested by the technical literature:

- Firstly, although it is often claimed that in old China E/D was basically realised through an extensive honorific lexicon and certain forms of prescribed deferential behaviour (see Kádár 2007), in fact, as illustrated by several historical examples, E/D could be practised by a more varied set of linguistic tools. These tools include, amongst others, proverbs, allusions, literary citations, onomatopoeic words, as well as seemingly ‘neutral’ expressions that gain E/D connotation in a given situated context. For instance, proverbs, such as bi-xue-furen 婢學夫人 (‘the servant girl learns to behave in a ladylike manner’), could become addressee-elevating and self-denigrating expressions in certain historical contexts, and in certain interpersonal relationships, even if in other contexts they did not fulfil such function.

- Secondly, the E/D phenomenon could be practiced through forms of varied lexical meaning, including expressions of linguistic rudeness, humour, and emotions. For instance, utterances such as “Sir, I wonder whether you have a depraved taste?” (Qi zuxia you shijia-zhi-pi yu 豈足下有嗜痂之癖歟) could be utilised to deferentially refuse the addressee’s appraisal and thus denigrate oneself. This, similarly to the previous point, illustrate that the E/D phenomenon was often realised in situated contexts.

- Thirdly, the textual analysis of the studied corpus illustrates that E/D was often realised in historical Chinese communication beyond word and sentence units. For instance, writers of historical Chinese letters often utilised long parabolas in order to convey the message of E/D to the addressee. In such instances E/D could be simultaneously practiced on a ‘surface’ lexical and a ‘deeper’ discourse level. This, again, illustrates that E/D could become a situated interactional phenomenon.

This study, relying on the analysis of the aforementioned points, argues that historical Chinese deferential – elevating and denigrating – communication provided a more complex linguistic inventory than the application of the extensive historical Chinese E/D lexicon and socially predetermined behavioural norms discussed by previous studies. In fact, this is in line with the claim that the E/D phenomenon had particular significance in historical Chinese communication. In order to be able to capture the historical Chinese E/D phenomenon in its full complexity, it has to be studied in particular interactions as a situated phenomenon, or, in other words, a situated model is needed to capture several aspects of the E/D phenomenon.
In order to be able to examine E/D as a situated phenomenon, the present work adopts the so-called pragmaphilological approach to study a historical corpus, that is, it focuses on the “contextual aspects of historical texts” (see Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 11). The present study examines a corpus of sixty letters, drawn from the famous Qing dynasty (1644–1911) collection of historical Chinese private letters, *Letters from the Study of Snowy Wild Geese* (*Xuehong-xuan chidu* 雪鴻軒尺牘), written by Gong Weizhai 龔未齋 (1738–1811). This corpus, which has also been translated to English (see Kádár 2008), contains letters that belong to fifteen different subgenres (such as, letters of celebrations and letters accompanying gifts; each subgenre is represented by four letters); this generic variedness makes this corpus suitable for the study of the situated aspect of the E/D phenomenon. It should be noted that private letters, written in Classical Chinese (*wenyan* 文言), were chosen in general because they are particularly apt to reconstruct historical language use (see Nevelainen 2007). Furthermore, in historical Chinese letter writing, which served the practical goal of interpersonal communication, the E/D phenomenon played a more important role than in other, more literary genres.

**References**


The address system of Spanish has evolved and developed significantly over the past millennium, and most productively during the 16th and 17th centuries. This period, known as the Golden Age (GA), witnessed numerous significant changes to a number of pronominal address forms, the effects of which can still be seen in modern dialects of the language. The consideration of the strategies for the selection of address pronouns that evince varying levels of deference and formality in GA Spanish constitutes an issue that holds the potential to explain much of the upheaval of the language’s address system, yet the academic literature attests to the dearth of critical studies on this issue.

One of the most salient sociolinguistic facts that has been noted regarding the GA is the realization on the part of Spain’s citizens that, due to the restructuring of their society, the personal pronouns tu and vos that had been used to express and define interpersonal relationships since the Roman Empire were no longer effective for communicating specific social cues, particularly distinct levels of formality and social distance. Philological analysts generally agree about the pragmalinguistic ramifications of the address system of the GA: tu was used with an interlocutor with whom one held great confidence and intimacy; Vuestra Merced was used in situations requiring high levels of formality; and vos was used to speak to those of much lower social status than oneself, such as servants and children (Castillo Mathieu 1982; de Luna 1619; Lapesa 1981). Although this description and classification of GA pronominal address forms has met with increased criticism in diachronic studies (King 2006; Moreno 2002; St. Clair Sloan 1922), the very existence of this tripartite pronominal address system casts doubt on existing theoretical models of interpersonal address and politeness patterns in European languages.

Brown and Gilman’s (1960) theoretical framework constitutes the first, and most frequently cited, attempt to categorize patterns of pronominal address. Their approach argues that the bipartite formal (V pronoun) / informal (T pronoun) address systems characteristic of European languages share common patterns of usage. The authors also assert that speakers of these languages establish social patterns of address with interlocutors based on two dimensions: power and solidarity. Thus, the form(s) of pronominal address one chooses in conversation is hypothesized to be based on one’s perception of the presence of either a power differential or shared characteristics with one’s interlocutor. According to Brown and Gilman, the power semantic dominated in all of Europe until well into the nineteenth century, and thus non-reciprocal T-V address patterns (as opposed to reciprocal T-T or V-V patterns) were the norm cross-linguistically. Brown and Gilman’s discussion of pronominal address formed the basis for a significant subset of strategies of explanation for the expression of negative politeness in the model of Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987); the class of so-called V pronouns, in particular, are exemplified as a type of referent honorific which serves to show deference to one’s interlocutor (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 180).

My research purpose in this paper is threefold: First, I consider the societal and interpersonal circumstances in which the three primary forms of pronominal address were used in 16th and 17th century Spanish through an in-depth analysis of two genres of literary primary sources, the comedia and the entremés. In particular, I focus on the popular claim that the vos of the GA served to express contempt or disdain for one’s interlocutor (Castillo Mathieu 1982; Lapesa 1981; Monreal 1878). Second, I take issue with the implication that the GA V form Vuestra Merced represents an honorific; I argue that the use of this form more closely resembles a type of politic behavior (Watts 2003, 2005) intended to maintain balance in interpersonal social relationships rather than to strictly show deference. Finally, I examine the power and solidarity model of Brown and Gilman (1960) and argue that their framework can account for neither the tripartite address system characteristic of GA Spanish, nor the systems present in several modern dialects of the language. I conclude by suggesting a new theoretical
framework that will reconcile the traditional bipartite model with existing tripartite systems. This framework will make specific reference to the notion of public façade (King 2006), specifically, that in dramatic texts, the social sphere tends to serve as a catalyst for more formal registers of speech than are typically utilized in private settings, even among the same interlocutors. Additionally, I address the seldom-discussed issue of neutral address forms (Moreno 2002; St. Clair Sloan 1922), which is a key concept to a precise understanding of GA Spanish address patterns.

This study represents a crucial phase in the reformulation of models of interpersonal address and has theoretical implications for various aspects of politeness theories, particularly the status of address pronouns in diachronic investigations of linguistic politeness.

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The aim of the proposed paper is to examine the spectrum of socio-communicative functions of verbal duelling in ancient Roman comedy (Plautus, Terentius) in terms of relational work.

Since the seminal work of Labov (1972 a, b) on New York black teenagers’ ‘sounding’, similar communicative behaviour consisting of mutual insults, which are apparently untrue or at least strongly exaggerated, was observed and described by many other scholars dealing with many other societies. Usually, verbal duelling follows a certain set of ‘rules’ and is often considerably formalised, which may even render highly sophisticated systems of ‘ritual insults’ (Labov 1972 a, b, Kochman 1983, Dundes et al. 1972) etc. As demonstrated by Labov, such communicative behaviour is prototypically employed in order to create a relaxed atmosphere, to reaffirm close relationships or to enhance group solidarity. However, some scholars (e.g. Kochman, 1983) indicated that besides ritual insults, personal insults as well may function as part of the verbal duelling game.

The paper will try to demonstrate that friendly cooperative banter is only one margin of a much broader spectrum of possible uses of verbal duelling, which may be utilised also for quite a wide range of other functions, some of them amounting to a seriously aggressive behaviour. In accordance with many recent works on (im)politeness (e.g. Culpeper 2003, Locher 2005) I will argue that also this specific language behaviour pattern of witty verbal duelling cannot be considered to be inherently polite or impolite, cooperative or aggressive, but that its interpretation always ultimately depends on expectations of the interlocutors as well as on the sets of social norms they have adopted.

In the first part of the proposed paper, I will give a brief description of the use of verbal duelling in ancient Roman comedy as well as of its ‘rules’ and its connection with some real-life language behaviour patterns attested for ancient Rome (versus Fescennini). In Roman comedy, verbal duelling is one of typical and highly frequent linguistic behaviour types of the personae. The interlocutors engaged in it try to adequately counter - or even better to ‘overtrump’ - the previous contribution of their communicative partner with a sharp repartee, which reinterprets the previous turn in a witty and unexpected way, so that it ‘hits’ the communicative partner in return. Quite often, the repartee even forms close structural parallel to the original utterance. Such language behaviour is especially characteristic of slaves (sometimes used a ‘weapon’ against other people). This is for the one thing in keeping with the observation that verbal duelling often belongs to the behaviour patterns of marginal or marginalised groups such as young males, black people etc., for another with the fact that a typical slave of Roman comedy is talkative, witty, cunning and quite disrespectful; often, it is a slave who organises and supervises all trickery and intrigues.

The second part of the paper will provide an overview of possible socio-communicative functions and uses of verbal duelling as well as an analysis of individual factors, which may influence the expectations and social norms of the interlocutors, which in turn determine the relational work impact of verbal duelling. In particular, following factors will be taken into account (i) relation between the interlocutors (ii) whether both/all interlocutors are willing and able to engage in verbal duelling (iii) whether they both/all are members of a social group verbal duelling is especially characteristic of (i.e. how much they are likely to asses it generally positively and whether they are likely to be used to it) (iv) whether they have the same or at least comparable experience and background knowledge shaping their expectations.

Special attention will be paid to the role of power relations between the interlocutors and the way verbal duelling might be utilised to gain or redistribute power. The material taken from Latin comedy allows quite an easy assessment of the relative power of the communicators as well as of its changes - in the fictional world of Latin comedy the characters usually behave rather as typical representatives of their prototypical social roles (such as slave, young master, his father, pimp etc.) than as realistic personae. This underlying, socially determined source of the power of comic personae (‘latent network’ Watts, 2003) can safely be regarded easily accessible to all recipients of a comedy.
including its modern interpreters. In addition to this, the power relations of the personae of course may - and in fact do - change in course of their socio-communicative interaction (‘emergent network’, Watts 2003), which the recipients are able to follow in its entirety.

As verbal duelling is intrinsically a discourse phenomenon, it will be analysed - and exemplified - on extended dialogues. Its relational work properties and impacts will be assessed on the basis of both local and global heuristic clues, such as (i) responses to particular turns (ii) explicit metacommunicative comments evaluating behaviour either of the communicative partner or of the speaker himself, and (iii) general development of the interaction.

References


The scope and material of the study

Referential terms and expressions involve several participant roles, and as a form of description, reference can be used to define the relationships between the writer, the addressee and the referent. Face preservation plays an important role: the writer must take the face wants of others into consideration when choosing a referential term (Murphy 1988). Reference to the writer him/herself or to the addressee can thus be used to alter the writer’s situational status. When using third-person reference of the addressee, the speaker may wish indirectly to express superiority (e.g. over a child or a servant), to avoid conflict (e.g. disagreement with the addressee) or to show criticism (e.g. sarcasm, irony). It is not certain, however, that the addressee interprets the writer’s attempt to claim a certain status the way the speaker has originally meant it. The addressee may even see the speaker’s attempt to avoid conflict as face-threatening and understand the use of third-person reference as an act of hostility (Nevala Forthcoming).

Cecchetto and Stroińska (1996) also see the building of discoursive self-image as relating to the concept of face, as it contributes to the definition of the contextual identity of the participants. In some situations, the direct self-reference, i.e. using first-person pronouns, may be considered an imposition of one’s subjective view on the addressee/audience. In order to avoid coming through as too authoritative or assertive, the writer may refer to him/herself in the third person and thus may manage to make his/her presence known but still appearing modest and inferior.

The aim of this paper is to study how interpersonal relations and underlying discourse functions are shown in the form and use of person-referential terms in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century letters. I will particularly focus on third-person nominal and pronominal reference oriented towards the addressee and the writer him/herself. The material for the study comes from the Corpus of Early English Correspondence (CEEC) and its Extension (CEECE) which consist of personal correspondence from four centuries (1400–1800).

The functions of reference in the material

The concepts of in-group convergence and out-group divergence agree with the strategicness of language use and the speaker’s ability to perform acts which either save or threaten face. In the material, the use of reference terms is related to attending to the face of any of the three interactants, i.e. the writer, the recipient and the referent.

Doing face work comprises altering distance, whether social or contextual, between the participants of a communicative situation. Nicknames, for example, are often used to indicate that the referent belongs to the writer’s in-group, whereas titles may occur when the writer places the referent in the out-group. In her letters, governess Agnes Porter uses a nickname, the form Po by which her pupils called her, to refer to herself. In Example (1), she refers both to herself and to the recipient in the third person.

(1) Lord Stavordale is gone with Cavenagh on a fishing expedition, and Po is established at the writing table to chat with one who is often in her memory, and always in her heart. [PORTER: Agnes Porter to Lady Mary Talbot (Fox Strangways), 1794, 146]

The material shows that the writer’s third-person reference to the addressee or to him/herself can strategically be used to achieve certain communicative goals or, for example, to offer the writer a tool for expressing mood towards the addressee. The use of third-person reference of both the writer and the recipient involves the need to save face of either one or both of the participants. Showing respect towards a more distant addressee is a function often performed by using third-person reference of both
correspondents. In Example (2), Josiah Wedgwood’s business partner Thomas Bentley refers to himself and the recipient, Erasmus Darwin, in the third person. Bentley is more distant to Darwin than Wedgwood himself, and here he wants to promote Darwin’s authority and expertise as a published author.

(2) Dr. Sir, Mr. Bentley never had the Pleasure of seeing Dr. Darwin, but shall think himself much honoured by his Friendship, & future Correspondence. I am extremely concerned that your Remarks did not come sooner […] & if Dr. Darwin, Mr. Wedgwood, & your humble Servant, cou’d have been altogether, I fancy they could have done it as well as anybody else.

[WEDGWOOD: Thomas Bentley to Erasmus Darwin, 1765, III,253–255]

In the material, we can find three main groups of social and contextual aspects which determine the use of addressee- and self-oriented reference: appearance, attitude and authority. Appearance is a mainly social aspect and concerns the writer’s or the addressee’s status or role as an inferior or superior participant in the interaction. Status also relates to the contextual aspect of the discussion topic. For example, a writer who is socially inferior to the addressee may feel the need to refer to both him/herself and the addressee in the third person when asking for a favour or expressing gratitude.

The second aspect, attitude, can be either positive or negative. It relates to the contextual mood of the writer which may or may not be influenced by the addressee’s initiative or previous response. Both attitude and appearance are interchangeably related to each other and the third aspect, authority, which can also mean impersonalising and distancing. It is probable that the factor underlying the three aspects is the concept of face. All instances of third-person reference to the writer or the addressee are somehow related to either saving, enhancing or attacking one’s own or the other participant’s face. In these cases, attending to one’s face overrides establishing the mutual distance.

References


In this research I consider the evidence provided by a corpus of Late Modern English grammars for our understanding of the development of the modals as politeness markers. With such a resource (that is, the grammar book) being written by authorities, it is possible to see how the modals and their accompanied senses are explained in an official (and often either prescriptive or proscriptive) perspective. This is another aspect which cannot be ascertained from the usage based corpora which seem to be popular as sources of evidence in historical pragmatics. In this sense, this research brings some novel perspective to this aspect of academic study.

The period of Late Modern English was the time when the publication of the grammar books of English both emerged and flourished (Michael 1970). It is reasonable to suggest that the books were popular and influential among certain socially mobile groups given their popularity in the education hungry society (Beal 2004, Görnacht 1999, 2001, Michael 1970). In addition, it seems that ‘politeness’ of a particular kind was something which people wanted to acquire as a marker of their social behaviour and attitude (Morgan 1994, Watts 2002). On the other hand, ‘mood’ was normally regarded in the grammar book as an aspect of linguistic expression which represented a state of mind. In such descriptions of mood, certain relationships between the modal auxiliary verb and the accompanied significations are introduced. It is possible to notice that the significations involves concept or senses which extend across a semantic – pragmatic domain which includes politeness. We can see that certain softening senses are key elements to mark polite usage. The research looks at some historical (diachronic) grammaticalisation processes which are pointed out as semantic – pragmatic or concrete – abstract sequences (Traugott 1989, Heine 1993, Ziegeler 2003), and at a synchronic analysis of the network processes involved in the conceptualisation of modality.

The main data used come from the descriptions of the modal auxiliary verb in a corpus of grammar books from the period. Usage and manner books are also consulted as a secondary resource. The manner book in particular is quite helpful for our understanding of how linguistic politeness was regarded at the time. Such texts also help us to find a certain network of senses which are related to polite expressions. Moreover, some general observations of politeness and eighteenth/nineteenth century British society are looked at to locate the linguistic phenomena within a wider context.

References
Politeness and Style in *The Betrothed* (*I promessi sposi*, 1840):
An Italian Novel by Alessandro Manzoni

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In a most recent publication on *Methods in Historical Pragmatics* (Fitzmaurice - Taavitsainen, 2007) there is a strong consensus for the need to relate past language use to text type (genre). Language use changes between genres as, within the genre, natural use appears to be conventionalised into a fairly stereotypical use. The main idea is that corpus-based research should check findings against qualitative analysis of genre-contextual factors as cross genre analysis might distort the distribution of a specific use.

Now what about the writer? Hardly a handful of contributions in this volume ask attention for microanalysis because of the creative individuality of the author. The author might override genre conventions or mix genres to innovate. Del Lungo Camiciotti and Fitzmaurice therefore advocate a closer look at intertextuality. The most exciting contribution (from my point of view) is by Lynne Magnusson who shows how intertextuality with a well read didactic text by Erasmus can offer a socially specific explanation - through the notion of ‘dialogue script’ - for the use of 2nd person pronouns in a set of Shakespearean sonnets that in the past has been dismissed as anomalous and merely ‘poetic’. I would like to join Magnusson in underlining that the notion of genre should be seen against the background of a plurality of literary contexts. It seems to me that at this moment in historical pragmatics the notion of genre, as an explanatory category, is somewhat overstretched. Intertextuality could soften the edges. Intertextuality must consider the genre at stake, but it is broad enough to include the wider literary background of a specific text.

How use intertextuality in historical politeness research? Gino Eelen’s and Richard Watt’s plea for a paradigm shift that should start out with lay perception of politeness, called (im-)politeness1, has made them pay attention to the history of politeness manuals and to the question of how these interfere with usage through notions like sharedness and competence. It seems methodologically correct to make more use of the canonical behavioural and rhetorical literature of a given period as a strong intertext for the study of politeness features in constructed dialogues of that period (but not exclusively, since many rhetorical texts were schoolbooks and might have influenced non-literary kinds of speech-like writing).

In line with Magnusson, I would refer to the intertextuality of ‘dialogue scripts’ to conduct a micro-analysis of politeness features in the dialogues of a very influential Italian 19th Century novel: I would like to exploit the renewed attention for the history of (im-)politeness1 – in this case the Italian tradition of behavioural treatises - using it as intertext for the construction of dialogues in this novel. After a socio-cultural situation of the genre, looking at the external circumstances of production and intended public (strongly marked by the rise of the middle class), I would focus on the complicated internal context of the work, a historical novel reporting events that took place at the beginning of the 17th Century through the popular device of the accidental discovery of a manuscript. There is a 17th Century anonymous narrator (author of the manuscript) and a supposedly faithful scribe, Manzoni, who adds his own comments to the pretend transcription, and then there are the characters, spread out over all levels of society from high nobility to peasants and simple labourers, who have conversations within, but very often across, class boundaries. Among literary critics, the novel is known for the beauty of its dialogues, although there is only one major study dealing with the subject from the point of view of stylistic variety (Petrocchi, 1965).

The style of the direct speech varies obviously according to the social level of the characters. Different characters master different levels of verbal skill, which in the end boil down to the skill of the author to play with style registers. The novelty of this ‘novel’ is exactly the fact that the plot is based on characters extracted from the lowest social ranks. How do Renzo, a young weaver, and Lucia, a peasant girl, speak? Which style features does Manzoni use to recreate a socially low ranked dialogue? How much is he influenced by traditional dialogue scripts as dictated by
behavioural/rhetorical models and genre models, in the knowledge that Manzoni wants to move the Italian novel away from the libertine entertainment of 17th Century novel and embrace a religious educative function, which seems very much present as a Marian intertext for Lucia’s modesty? In this methodological endeavour I would like to refer to the notions of discursive struggle and hearer evaluation introduced by Eelen and Watts, making ample use of characters’/narrator’s/scribe’s comments on (im-)politeness to determine its function in Manzoni’s work in a way that makes sense to his (many) middle class 19th Century readers.

In the end my purpose is to ask attention for style in literary dialogue as a socio-cultural filter between the scholar and past natural language use, keeping in mind that the founder of literary stylistics, Leo Spitzer, always has stressed the intimate link between language stylistics and literary stylistics: Stilsprache and Sprachstile mirror each other.

**References**


Hierarchy and Attitude
Using T/V Forms in 16-17th Century Hungarian

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It was the period of Middle Hungarian (16-18th century) when the polite V form was developed. The transition from 2nd person singular T form to 3rd person singular V was marked by mixed forms (address term in 2nd person but the verb after it in 3rd person singular) and also by changing from V to T (or vice versa) in the same coherent text.

In my paper I intend to use two different sources – personal letters and witness depositions of witchcraft trials – to demonstrate how the language users of two different classes (the nobility and the commoners) represent their (and the recipient’s) real or presumed social status and personal attitude by the help of the old T form and the just forming new V form and the address terms belonging to them. How they express e.g. power and solidarity, distance and closeness, face and face threatening, politeness and impoliteness.

Since it has no tradition of applying the sociopragmatic viewpoint of the “pragmatic turn” in Hungarian historical linguistics (though many studies referred and refer more or less to the non-linguistic reasons of the linguistic changes), this paper focuses on the questions and problems of this new way of examining old Hungarian texts.

Sources

References
The purpose of this paper is to observe characteristics of linguistic behaviour in the late Early Modern English period in terms of politeness by investigating the use of vocatives in gentry comedies written in that period. I use a corpus-based approach to analyse about 2500 vocatives found in my original corpus called the ‘Vocative-focussed Socio-Pragmatic Corpus’. This corpus consists of about 120,000 words and includes 12 extracts of gentry comedies published between 1640 and 1760. This is an annotated corpus, in which all the texts are tagged according to two systems: one focussing on the sociolinguistic and pragmatic features of utterances and the other focussing on linguistic features of vocatives used in each utterance. The socio-pragmatic tagging system includes the number of the interlocutor(s) as well as their sex, role(s), status and age. The vocative tagging system includes several linguistic features of vocatives such as the number of words, the grammatical construction and positioning of the vocative in each utterance and co-occurrence of vocatives with the pronominal address terms, to name a few.

As a theoretical foundation, this study draws on Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory (1987).

Example (1) [Sir Paul is talking to his wife, Lady Plyant.]
[Sir Paul] Pray your Ladyship give me leave to be Angry – I'll rattle him up I Warrant you, I'll firk him with a certiorari.
[Lady Plyant] You firk him, I'll firk him my self; pray Sir Paul hold you Contented. (my emphasis)

Here the husband uses an honorific term, your Ladyship, to address his wife, whilst the wife uses an honorific title and the first name, Sir Paul, to address her husband. Consequently, from the perspective of the twenty-first century, this dialogue sounds rather formal and deferential as a conversation between spouses because using first name vocatives is the norm in present-day English (cf. Leech 1999). Does this mean that people in the past were linguistically more polite than now? In order to answer this question, knowledge of the historico-cultural background is indispensable.

In my data, about 60% of the vocatives are of the deferential type oriented to negative face, 30% are of the familiar type oriented to positive face, and 10% of the neutral type oriented to neither. Therefore, the example above might be a case where characters are exchanging only conventional vocatives without any intention of being particularly polite. In other words, their exchange of vocatives can be classified as ‘politic’ behaviour, to use Watts’ (1992, 2003) terms.

Example (2) [Mr. Strictland suspects his wife of being unfaithful. Now he is accusing her of betrayal. Jacintha is Mrs. Strictland’s ward.]
[Mr. Strictland] Speak, Wretch. Speak.-
[Jacintha] I could not have suspected this. [Aside.]
[Mr. Strictland] Why dost thou not speak? [Mrs. Strictland] Sir - (my emphasis)
In this example, the abusive vocative, which is sandwiched by two imperatives, strengthens the illocutionary force of the command. The speaker’s negative feelings towards the addressee seem reinforced by this linguistic combination. If one takes the sociolinguistic conventions of the period into consideration, this vocative utterance is marked and should be interpreted as even more impolite than now.

In this paper, I will try to draw some general rules of the period concerning the use of vocatives by quantitative analysis, and then focus on several exceptional examples with regard to qualitative analysis. As my corpus includes a number of abusive vocatives, I would also like to look at several vocatives which can be regarded as impolite in one way or another. There are certain significant characteristics of abusive vocatives. First, the range of vocabulary for abusive vocatives is wider and more creative than that of other vocatives. Second, the frequency of vocatives matters when the interlocutors use them abusively. Third, the micro-pragmatic context of each abusive vocative is so unique that it seems impossible to make any generalisation regarding the use of abusive vocatives except that whatever does not accord with the addressee’s expectations or social conventions could be regarded as impolite.

It may be justifiable to say that vocatives help construct the meaning of the utterance by conveying the characters’ interpersonal relationship as well as the contextual background of the dialogue in question. Although they are only short noun phrases, vocatives can vividly illustrate the delicate emotions and attitudes of the interlocutors, whether positive or negative. I assume that with regard to how people in the past used the language in terms of politeness, dramatic texts can offer some hints which cannot be otherwise retrieved.

References