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EMMA PASQUALI

EARLY MODERN ENGLISH TRIALS

Pragmatic influences on thou *and* you

PAOLO LOFFREDO

Proprietà letteraria riservata

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Introduction

Aims and outline of the study

The present research is aimed at the building of a highly-specialized historical corpus of play-like trial proceedings, which could shed light on the spoken language of the years between 1650 and 1700. The *Corpus of Early Modern English Trials (1650-1700)* was specifically built to investigate the pragmatic influences on the second person singular pronoun, which coexisted in the two forms *thou* and *you* (the research has been expanded to any form used in the Restoration: *thou*, *thee*, *prithee*, *prethee*, *prethy*, *pray thee*, *thy*, *thy self*, *thyself*, *thine*, *you*, *ye*, *your*, *your self*, *yourself*, *yours* and *pray you*). While the quantitative analysis (*i.e.*, macro analysis) is focused on any form, the qualitative one (*i.e.*, micro analysis) is focused only on non-formulaic T-forms, since Y-forms in the *EMET* are around 38,000 and formulaic T-forms could falsify the results.

According to previous studies, the period between 1650 and 1700 is particularly interesting since these decades witnessed the decline and disappearance of T-forms from the standard language (Barber 1976; Walker 2003; van Dorst 2019). Furthermore, previous research has already highlighted the importance of extra-linguistic factors in the choice of the pronoun; however, no quantitative studies of this breadth have ever been carried out; indeed, most studies focus only on small corpora, collecting and analyzing a limited amount of data.

The overarching hypothesis is that both (im)politeness and sociolinguistic factors can play a role in the choice of the pronoun; more specifically, the four social variables delineated by Brown and Levinson (1987: 74), and implemented by Culpeper (1996; 2011) and Del Villano (2018) [social distance (D), relative power (P), ranking of imposition (R) and reflexivity (RF)], will be considered as well as sociolinguistic factors (sex, age, rank, kinship and place of birth). Such an hypothesis was formulated starting from the results of previous research, which focused mainly on (Shakespearian) plays, letters, trials, depositions and historical grammars; such studies distinguish between marked and unmarked pronoun usage, find evidence of the influence of sociolinguistic factors and/or (im)politeness on pronoun choice, highlight the influence of the linguistic context, see the pronoun forms almost as interchangeable, or find evidence of two, or more, of the above-mentioned influence factors. Thus, it can be affirmed that scholars

still have not completely shed light on the matter (see Chapter 2, which discusses the state of the art).

After presenting the study, an introduction to Early Modern English society is made in order to give more context to the research (Chapter 1). Here, the importance of social mobility and the role of books aimed at indicating how to be the perfect courtier are discussed. Chapter 2 presents previous research in order of publication and then discusses it critically. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the building of the corpus. Firstly, the phase of archive selection and consultation is discussed; then, the first phase of editing is presented. Subsequently, the need to normalize the documents is explained, and the whole normalization process and the second phase of editing are shown. Later, the possibility of adding linguistic and sociopragmatic annotation is considered. Furthermore, the publication of trials is discussed: their role as entertainment is explored, the influence of the scribe on the language is considered, the reliability of Early Modern (written) trials as examples of spoken language is questioned, and, particularly, similar corpora and studies are presented (Culpeper and Kytö 2005; Culpeper and Kytö 2014; Walker 2007).

In Chapter 4 both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis of the data is offered. The latter considers the following groups of T-forms: 1) *thou* and *thee*, 2) *pray thee*, *prethee*, *prithy* and *prithee*, 3) *thy* (excluding *thy self*), and 4) *thy self*.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to conclusions and suggestions for further research. More specifically, it discusses the results of the research and provides and examines quantitative data concerning the factors of influence in the selection of the T-forms. Detailed tables about the quantitative data presented in the closing remarks can be found in the appendix.

Research fields

The present research embraces many fields: historical pragmatics, corpus linguistics, corpus pragmatics and, more specifically, (diachronic) corpus pragmatics. As this section will underline, such fields overlap and merge.

Historical pragmatics is aimed at discovering the communicative patterns of the past; basically, it is a discipline that merges pragmatics and historical linguistics, relying also on the collection of ethnographic data (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 1-15). While pragmatics studies the language use, focusing on the intentions and the goal of the interactants in a specific

context, and is a rather young research field (it originated around the 1970s and 1980s), historical linguistics focuses on languages of the past and it is a well-established discipline (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 2). Perhaps, pragmatics is strictly bound with sociolinguistics or, maybe, sociolinguistics is also part of pragmatics: indeed, according to sociolinguists, linguistics research should always consider the social context of the interactants (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 6).

Historical pragmatics clearly benefits from corpus technology and "considerable progress has been made in the compilation, in the search technologies and in particular in the annotation of corpora" (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 8). These advances are having a major impact on research in pragmatics, and especially diachronic research. Studies in historical pragmatics have highlighted that scholars should make "the best use of bad data" (Labov 1994: 11): indeed, problems concerning the authenticity of data, noisy texts and lack of information about the interactants[1] are only a few of the major issues that historical research encounters.

Corpus linguistics, after a phase of unpopularity between the 1960s and 1970s, has become one of the most interesting linguistic methodologies since it involves only empirical data that scholars can interpret (McEnery and Wilson 2005: 2-3). It can be defined as "a whole system of methods and principles" (McEnery, Xiao and Tono 2006: 7f) since any research based on such methodology needs to deal with corpus design, corpus searching/processing and statistical analysis (Paquot and Gries 2020). Thus, scholars, in order to master corpus linguistics, need to develop expertise in many areas which are not commonly associated with humanities research. Corpus linguistics has gained more and more popularity since it allows researchers to study extremely large datasets, which could not be searched through manually since a human analyst (or a group of human analysts) would need too much time to do it (McEnery and Hardie 2012: 2).

Corpus pragmatics can be defined as the combination of pragmatics and corpus linguistics; usually, it analyses lexical words or constructions that other studies have shown to have a pragmatic function. One of the main

[1] The lack of information about the interactants was the major issue encountered during the drafting of the present book. Fortunately, the roles within the trials (judge, witness and defendant) were helpful for the interpretation of T-forms. Indeed, despite sometimes being interactants of the same social class, for instance in the case of Sir Slingsby and the Lord President, it is clear that the Lord President has more power within the court because of his institutional role.

tools used in corpus pragmatics is KWIC (Key Word In Context), which displays the form object of study in concordances. Thanks to such a tool, the researcher can analyse the form in its context and exclude "unwanted uses". Then, they can infer "the range of functions performed by the forms (form-to-function)"[2] (Aijmer and Rühlemann 2015: 9).

Diachronic corpus pragmatics, as the name suggests, is the combination of the three disciplines already discussed: historical linguistics, corpus linguistics and pragmatics. The discipline is rather young and can be defined as the "application of corpus-linguistics methods to research questions in pragmatics applied to historical data" (Taavitsainen, Jucker and Tuominen 2014: 3). In other words, the present research can be defined as a study in diachronic corpus pragmatics.

[2] The inverse approach (function-to-form) is also possible (Aijmer and Rühlemann 2015: 9).