

Diachronic Perspectives on Address Term Systems

Pragmatics & Beyond New Series

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Volume 107

Diachronic Perspectives on Address Term Systems

Edited by Irma Taavitsainen and Andreas H. Jucker

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Preface

The idea for this volume goes back to a seminar on historical pragmatics at the ESSE-5 Conference of the European Society for the Study of English held in August 2000 in Helsinki. Even though the call for papers for this seminar had been very general, inviting contributions in the vast category of historical pragmatics, it turned out that many papers dealt with the English address term system. In view of the high quality of these papers, we decided to devote a special issue of the *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* to the topic, but being aware of the many highly complex and interesting systems in other languages, we asked other scholars to contribute to this special issue as well. In the end the response to our call for papers was overwhelming and represented more than a double issue of a journal, and thus we decided that an independent volume would be more appropriate.

We thank all the contributors for their cooperation and patience and for their willingness to undertake revisions wherever anonymous reviewers or we felt this to be necessary. We would also like to express our gratitude to a number of anonymous reviewers who read and commented on individual papers and thereby improved the overall quality of the volume. Our thanks are due to Rosemary Bock and Carla Suhr for their careful editorial work.

Very sadly, while the work on this volume was in progress, David Burnley died after a long illness and his article appears posthumously. His contribution is characteristic of his sophisticated research on Middle English, based on a firm socio-historical grounding and expertise on a wide spectrum of issues. It is placed at the opening position in this volume, as it gives the common background to the European developments and sets the scene for several other articles in this volume.

Diachronic perspectives on address term systems

Introduction

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1. Preliminaries

Terms of address are words or linguistic expressions that speakers use to appeal directly to their addressees. In English, for instance, *Sir* is used in addressing only, but other words used in addressing like *you*, *Helen*, *daddy*, *darling*, or *Professor Brown* have other functions as well as they are used to talk about other persons rather than to talk to them, and *you* can be used generically. Address terms can take the form of pronouns, nouns, verb forms and other affixes (Braun 1998: 2; see also Braun, Kohz and Schubert 1986: xv-xvi).

Pronominal forms of address often distinguish between a familiar or intimate pronoun on the one hand and a distant or polite pronoun on the other. German, for instance, distinguishes between *du* and *Sie*; Spanish between *tu* and *Usted*; Dutch between *jij* and *U*; and Finnish uses *sinä* and *te* to refer to a single addressee. Brown and Gilman (1960: 254) introduced the convention of using the abbreviations T and V to talk about the choice between these two pronominal forms of address in many European languages. The abbreviation T refers to the second person singular pronoun (French *tu* or Latin *tu*) that in many languages is used as an informal and familiar term of address. The abbreviation V, on the other hand, refers to the more distant or polite pronoun for a single addressee, which is in many cases the second person plural pronoun (French *vous*, Latin *vos*). Scholars working on Middle English and Early Modern English sometimes employ the convention of using Y as an abbreviation for the second person plural pronoun *ye* or *you* and its different case forms, and T for the second person singular pronoun and its related case forms. These abbreviations are also used in some papers in this volume. However, in several languages, or stages of particular languages, there are more than two forms, e.g. in the German of the seventeenth, eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries and in the Spanish of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and in the Slavonic languages, and third person pronouns are also involved.

Nominal forms of address include a wide range of nouns. Typical examples are names (*Peter, Sally*); kinship terms (*mom, granny*); titles (*Sir, Your Excellence*); military ranks (*sergeant*) and occupational terms (*teacher*). Languages differ widely as to the inventory and use that they make of such terms, and politeness strategies may change considerably in the course of time. Early Modern English had a rich system of nominal forms of address with kinship terms, and a wide range of occupational terms and titles in addition to terms of endearment and terms of derogation (see, for instance, Breuer 1983 on nominal forms of address in Shakespeare; Nevalainen 1994 on nominal forms of address in Early Modern English; and Fischer 2002 on kinship terminology in the history of English). Present-day English, on the other hand, has a much reduced system. Occupational terms are rarely used, and kinship terms are restricted to just a few like *mom* or *dad*.

Terms of address may differ according to the formality of the situation, the social relationship between the speaker and the addressee, the politeness or deference that the speaker wants to extend to the addressee, to name a few of the most important underlying motivations for choosing an option. In addition, the influence of other systems, found in neighboring languages, may show in the changing paradigms. Language contact is an important factor in the formulation of address term systems. The choices of address terms reflect subtle nuances, and although speakers choose among the options with apparent ease, the analyst faces a difficult task to uncover the relevant criteria that govern the choice of one form over the other. The criteria differ from one language to the next, sometimes even within one language. They are culture dependent and change in the course of time as old criteria become obsolete and come to be replaced by new criteria, and other criteria may be added to create a new system. At any one time, variation is in evidence as several systems may overlap, some items or uses giving way and some others gaining in importance. All this may create a seemingly confusing picture. Yet the dynamics of change may be caught in synchronic descriptions like still pictures, and when several are taken at various times, the dynamics within the systems start to emerge.

The papers in this volume are devoted to systems of relevant criteria that govern the choices of specific terms of address in individual languages, synchronically at a given time focusing on a specific period in the history of a particular language or diachronically, tracing the development over a longer period of time. All the papers in this volume consider these pragmatic and sociolinguistic choices from a historical perspective. How do speakers decide in real situations? Which aspects of the situation play a role in the decision? Does a speaker always use the same term for any given interlocutor, or can they take on-the-spot decisions?

The focus of the papers is on the pronominal address term systems, and in particular on the choice between the opposition between – in broad terms – a more

familiar or intimate pronoun and a more distant or polite pronoun. But several contributors also note co-occurrence patterns of pronouns of address and nominal forms of address, e.g. Burnley and Busse both focus on this aspect. In some cases the distinction between pronominal and nominal forms of address is not clear-cut, as for instance in Polish, where the noun *pan* grammaticalized into a pronoun of address, or in Spanish, where *vuestra merced* 'Your honor' grammaticalized into *usted*. The notion of "address" is also connected with the self-image of the addresser, and Nevala includes both address and subscription formulae in her assessment of English family correspondence. Subscription formulae are not terms of address but self-presentations that explicate the position of the author in relation to the recipient, illuminating the other side of the coin.

The contributions cover a wide and interesting range of languages but, for practical reasons, the selection is restricted to European languages. On the one hand, European languages with different origins show parallel systems. On the other hand, the recent phases in various, even closely related languages, may be very divergent, as the examples below will show. Our selection of European languages is by no means complete or unbiased, as several are missing and some others overrepresented; some receive a historically focused analysis of one specific period, ignoring earlier or later developments. Nevertheless, the articles in this volume build a whole and display the spectrum of current approaches showing a multivariied picture of the evolutionary lines of address terms. But the aim of this volume is not just descriptive. The more important aim is methodological, and we hope that this volume is at least representative, if not entirely comprehensive, in presenting current approaches to the study of address terms.

In the following sections of the introduction we shall first outline the developments in some European languages to show how divergent the trends and language policies can be. We shall then raise some issues in the diachronic research of address terms. Different types of data and problems connected with various genres are dealt with. A range of theoretical approaches adopted in the past to studies on the use of address terms will also be summarized. By this we hope to locate the papers in this volume within the current research paradigm and to assess their innovative potential. In the second part of this introduction we are going to give a brief overview of the papers in this volume.

2. The European context

As pointed out above, many European languages have more than one pronominal form that can be used to refer to a single addressee. One pronominal form is generally used for more intimate and less formal situations, while another is used for more formal, more distant and more polite situations. Table 1 gives a simplified

summary of some European languages. Following Brown and Gilman, the informal pronoun is labeled T and the formal or polite pronoun V. These are convenient labels, but they should not be interpreted as an endorsement of the simple power and solidarity semantics proposed by Brown and Gilman (1964, 1989). In addition the etymological origin of the V pronoun is indicated in a simplified form.

Table 1. T and V pronominal forms in some European languages

Language	T	V	Origin of V
Spanish	<i>tu</i>	<i>Usted</i>	respectful title
Italian	<i>tu</i>	<i>Lei</i>	respectful title
Dutch	<i>jij</i>	<i>U</i>	respectful title
Polish	<i>ty</i>	<i>pan/pani</i>	respectful title
German	<i>du</i>	<i>Sie</i>	3 rd pers pl
French	<i>tu</i>	<i>vous</i>	2 nd pers pl
Russian	<i>ty</i>	<i>vy</i>	2 nd pers pl
Finnish	<i>sinä</i>	<i>te</i>	2 nd pers pl
Turkish	<i>Sen</i>	<i>Siz</i>	2 nd pers pl
Swedish	<i>du</i>	<i>ni</i>	2 nd pers pl

According to this scheme, the European languages fall more or less neatly into two groups. One group enlisted respectful titles, which were in the course of time grammaticalized into pronominal forms of respect. The other group recruited either the second or the third person plural pronoun to do service as the pronoun of distance and formality (see Mühlhäusler and Harré 1990: chapter 6). The use of a respectful title in formal situations and to high-status addressees and the subsequent grammaticalization of such forms seems intuitively plausible. The Spanish *Usted*, written as *Vd*, derives from *Vuestra Merced* ‘Your Honor’, the Italian *Lei* from *la vostra Signoria* (Mühlhäusler and Harré 1990: 136–7). The Dutch formal term of address *U* has its origin in the grammaticalized respectful title *Uwe Edelheit* or *U edele* ‘Your Nobility’, which was written as *Ue* in seventeenth to nineteenth century Dutch (Bax personal communication), and the Polish forms *pan* and *pani* can be translated as ‘you’ but also as ‘gentleman’ and ‘lady’ respectively.

It is less obvious how plural pronouns came to be used for single addressees. It is generally maintained that the use of the plural pronoun for a single addressee originated in Latin and French, from where it spread to other European languages, e.g. Middle English and later to Russian. One possible explanation is that

the plural is a metaphor in which size is taken to imply power and thus the use of a plural pronoun for a single addressee would ascribe power to this individual (see for instance Listen 1999). The royal *we*, as for instance in Queen Victoria's famous "We are not amused", would support this explanation. Another rather quaint anecdote, first proposed by Brown and Gilman (1960), has it that the plural pronoun originated as an address form to one of the two Roman Emperors at a time when one resided in Constantinople and the other in Rome. Addressing one always implied addressing both, and therefore the plural pronoun was the appropriate choice.

Other explanations have also been offered. Brown and Levinson (1987: 198–199) argue that the plural provides "a conventional 'out' for the hearer". The hearer is not singled out, even if the form is conventionalized to such an extent that the option of not feeling addressed does not really exist (cf. the politically correct plural third person usage of *they* in Present-day English in place of *he* or *she*). Thus the plural pronoun has a similar function to conventional indirectness, e.g. in applying the third person pronoun or titles. It fulfills the practical needs of clarity while it pays token tribute to the hearer's freedom not to be singled out individually (see below, section 3.3). Brown and Levinson support this argument by reference to a large number of languages which use a plural pronoun to indicate deference or distance, including not only French, German, Spanish, Italian and the Slavonic languages, but also languages such as Hindi, Quechua, Tamil and many African languages (Brown and Levinson 1987: 198). Brown and Levinson also offer an alternative explanation for the use of the plural pronoun for single addressees, in particular for kinship-based societies in which a person's social status is fundamentally based on his or her membership in this society. In this interpretation, the pronoun refers not only to the individual addressed, but by association to the group as a whole.

The present collection is clearly biased towards English, and its features and developments are assessed in several contributions in this volume. In the English language the choice between forms of address existed for more than four hundred years. Walker's data confirms 1700 as the date when *thou* had virtually disappeared from the English language. The late medieval period and Early Modern English provide plenty of fruitful material to study, as the system of address pronouns was in a state of flux and allowed a range of situational speaker meanings. The complexities of the pragmatic factors that have to be invoked in order to account for speakers' choices range from expressive needs to marking discourse with pronoun shifts (Brown and Gilman 1960, 1989; Wales 1983; Calvo 1992, Hope 1993, 1994; Jucker 2000a; Mazzon 2000, Pantaleo 2000). The modern system with only one pronoun for both singular and plural has led to a situation in which the system is being repaired in different dialects and varieties of English.

The non-standard present-day vernaculars of English make the difference between singular and plural again, and this repair system is in focus in one contribution (Hickey's first paper).

As Scandinavian languages are not represented in this volume, a brief outline of the development of the Swedish address term system is given here (see Widmark 2000). In Swedish, the second person singular *du* is the default form for addressing anybody, with the exception of the Royal family, who should be addressed in the third person, e.g. *Kungen* 'king', *Kronprinsessan* 'crown princess/Princess Royal' (Svenska skrivregler §94, 2000). Before this phase of universal *du* was reached some decades ago, there was a varied history, with complications posed by e.g. two second person plural pronoun forms in addressing single persons (*I* and *ni*). As elsewhere in Western Europe, the polite address with the plural came to be used in the Swedish court in the Middle Ages and spread among upper classes of society. According to evidence in drama, the pronominal use in the eighteenth century could allow for expressive shifts between *I*, *ni*, and *du* (cf. English of the earlier periods). The history of the V form of pronoun address is complicated in Swedish (see Ahlgren 1978). *Ni* had its origins in the vernaculars (e.g. *haven I > ni*), and came to convey connotations shown, for instance, in a retort to a form of address with *ni* "Do you think I have lice?"; i.e. 'I am one person, not many'. A way out was to collocate the third person with nominal address; this form developed into a standard of third person address, though the distinction between addressing and referring was then blurred (cf. Seppänen), e.g. *Önskar han komma?* 'Does he wish to come?' was a perfectly normal and polite way of posing a question. This way of addressing is still recognized, but the politeness value has changed. In the nineteenth century, titles and nominal address gained ground and became the standard; upgrading of titles was common, and females were addressed with titles modeled on their husband's status or occupation. Those who did not have titles were addressed with plain *herr*, *fru*, or *fröken*; in time *herr* became downgrading, impolite, or humorous, e.g. *herr Nilsson* is an ape's name in a popular children's book. *Ni* became officially "redeemed" by the Swedish Academy as a neutral term of address in 1906, but even after that, nominal forms and third person address with e.g. *faster/moster* 'aunt', were the norm in private life, and all kinds of expressions to avoid direct addressing were common. In 1968 an Academy member still thought that *ni* and *du* would be the regular forms of address in the future, but this changed very quickly in the 1970s: *du* became the universal pronoun of address by a spontaneous process without major problems. The reasons can perhaps be found in the ideology of an egalitarian society. The development has been very similar in Finland and in Finnish, though the use of the polite address with second person plural has never totally disappeared, and even in Sweden the use of *ni* has been reintroduced by some.

3. Research context

The contributions to this volume cover not only a range of different European languages but they also reflect a range of different approaches to address terms. In this section we sketch some of the key issues of address term research to give an adequate background and to situate the individual contributions in various research paradigms.

3.1 Historical pragmatics

Many papers in this volume rely on recent advances and new insights both into diachronic and synchronic linguistics, and the cross-fertilization of different methods is evident. On the one hand, diachronic approaches have learnt to ask pragmatic questions. They have come a long way from treating languages as abstract systems, and increasingly view them as means of communication by people who wish to interact with other people, who have communicative goals and try to reach them by using language strategically. On the other hand, synchronic linguistics, and in particular pragmatics, has learnt to appreciate a wider range of data by accepting material that earlier was shunned, and the data is no longer restricted to recordings of spontaneous conversations, if possible surreptitious recordings. The new field that has emerged as a result of these advances in the two fields is called historical pragmatics. Thus pragmaticists have extended the scope of acceptable data and historical linguists have extended the scope of their research questions to include pragmatic investigations. The cooperation of the two has led to the emergence of the new field of historical pragmatics (see Jucker 1995; but also Jucker, Fritz and Lebsanft 1999; and Fritz and Jucker 2000).

3.2 Data

Until recently any type of data other than spontaneous spoken interaction was rejected as unsuitable for pragmatic analyses. But opinions have changed in this respect. One of the common denominators of articles in the present volume is reliance on authentic linguistic material. Empirical research on address terms requires records of interactions between different people. For historical periods such records can only be found in written data, which immediately poses the question of how faithfully written historical records reproduce the reality of spoken interaction (Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 6-10; Koch 1999; Culpeper and Kytö 2000; Jucker 2000b). There are several types of data that provide reasonably good approximations to spoken language. It has also been realized that writing in itself constitutes a form of communication that is worthy of pragmatic analysis. The medium of transmission

has to be taken into account in the analysis, as we have to be aware of scribal practices and modes of transmission. Medieval manuscripts are often unreliable as guides to actual pronominal address forms as pronouns are among those features that show scribal variation due to copying processes. This poses a potential pitfall if we do not pay particular attention to what, or whose, usage we are studying.

Several authors point out this problem and solve it in different ways. Simon, for instance, looks at three different manuscript versions of the *Nibelungenlied*, Burnley acknowledges the problems with Middle English manuscripts, and Hunt explicitly relies on a manuscript version of the Anglo-Norman play *Seinte Resureccion* which is deemed to be closer to the author's original version than the only alternative surviving manuscript. Modern philology has been able to cast new light on scribal practices, and the present approaches take these advances into consideration (cf. below). Early modern texts pose related problems as e.g. the different editions of Shakespeare's plays have inspired a great deal of research. Mazzon believes that for her investigations the differences between the quarto edition and the folio edition of Shakespeare's plays are not crucial (fn 1). Walker also notes erroneous transcriptions of Y forms as T forms in her data of trial records (fn 5).

The contributions of this volume derive their data mostly from plays, fictional writing, letters and court records. Hunt uses the very early Anglo-Norman play *Seinte Resureccion*, while Busse, Stein and Mazzon use plays by William Shakespeare. Salmon (1965, 1967) argued a long time ago that at least certain portions of the dialogues in Shakespeare's dramas are "reasonable imitations of Elizabethan speech" (Salmon 1965: 106). Stein also argues that Shakespeare's use of pronominal address terms does not deviate from the sociolinguistic conventions of his time, except for the non-reciprocal use of address terms between spouses which was popularized by the Puritans. The problem with such claims is that we have no hard and fast evidence except the intuition of the analyst. We may "feel intuitively" that Shakespeare's language must be very close to Elizabethan colloquial speech, or we may be convinced that the representation of colloquial speech will be most accurate in the hands of the most skilful dramatists, but as pragmaticists we should be cautious with such claims. Brown and Gilman (1989: 170) justify their use of *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Othello* for a study of politeness in Early Modern English on the grounds that "there is nothing else". They reject letters as unsuitable because they do not give us access to "the colloquial spoken language". They justify their decision to use Shakespearean plays by referring to Salmon, who claimed that "the more skilful the dramatist, the more skilful he will be, if presenting the normal life of his time, in authenticating the action by an acceptable version of contemporary speech" (1965: 105).

If drama is a useful source for historical pragmatic research, it is not because it is a fairly good representation of the speech itself, but because it depicts interactions

between different speakers of different social classes and different role relationships towards each other, and because it is interesting to see how skilful dramatists choose to depict such interactions. That is to say dramatic texts can be analyzed as dramatic texts and not as more or less adequate approximations to the spoken language of the day.

Fictional writing often contains instances of reported speech. Honegger, for instance, analyzes Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*, in which direct reported speech is an integral feature. The choice of terms of address depends – among other things – on the social class of speaker and addressee. However, in the case of fictional data, we have to distinguish between the author and the depicted characters. The patterns of use of the address terms may depend partly on the conventions of the situation that is depicted, and it may depend on the conventions of the fictional genre in which the depiction appears. Genre is an important factor, and e.g. in romances there are distinct conventions already at the time of Chaucer (see Taavitsainen 1998).

Correspondence by letters represents a form of direct interaction between a writer and an addressee. The turns are extended over time and distanced, and unfortunately usually only one side of the correspondence has survived. On the one hand, the opening and closing sections of letters are mostly formulaic and follow the set conventions of *ars dictaminis*. Several guidebooks of letter writing were available e.g. in the Early Modern period. On the other hand, family letters have proved a fruitful source for studying interaction, and e.g. a growth in politeness can be detected (see section 3.3). The body of letters is subtler and allows more freedom to the writer to show even transient emotions by shifts of pronoun use, as Bentivoglio demonstrates (see also the papers by Betsch, Nevala, and Bentivoglio; as well as Friedrich 1986).

Court records reproduce the actual words that were used in a courtroom and often they report interactions that were the object of the proceedings. Power relations play an important role in trial records, and the use of T or V pronouns may be triggered by the genre and formulaic uses in accordance with its conventions (see Walker; Hope 1993, 1994; Kryk-Kastovsky 2000; Koch 1999; Ramge 1999; Collins 2001). Walker points out that in trial proceedings there are formulaic utterances in the opening and the closing stages of a trial.

Descriptions of linguistic data may also benefit from recent advances in corpus compilation. Walker draws her data from the computerized Corpus of English Dialogues 1570-1760, which is being compiled at the universities of Lancaster and Uppsala (Culpeper and Kytö 1999a, 1999b, 2000). This corpus consists of dialogues drawn from trials and witness depositions (authentic dialogues); and from comedy drama and handbooks (constructed dialogue). Thus it goes partially beyond the four types of data listed above. Hickey, in his first paper in this volume,

uses a multigenre Irish corpus in his study, and relies on other corpora on varieties and international Englishes. Seppänen starts from analyses gathered by dialectologists some one hundred years ago, and adds more recent data consisting of audio and even video recordings to provide material for comparison and to yield insights into interpretation problems. Hickey in his second paper uses his knowledge of linguistics and day-to-day observations to describe the details of the address system in Present-day German.

It is clear that none of these data gives us direct access to language as it was used in interaction in the earlier periods of language history. It would in any case be a mistake to expect a coherent set of sociolinguistic usage rules or pragmatic principles for any given speech community at any given time. Sociolinguistic research over the last four decades has taught us that usage is always susceptible to synchronic and diachronic variation. For any given speech community there are differences for different situations of everyday life, and generalizations across a society may be useful but at the same time they provide only approximations: the more general the statements about usage rules, the less precise they become. We should therefore content ourselves with investigations that describe and give part of the picture with a fairly high degree of precision. For instance, we learn how Chaucer chose to depict the usage of pronouns of address in a romance in the *Canterbury Tales*, or what pronouns were used by sixteenth-century Spanish emigrants to the New World who wrote back to their relatives in Spain. Even if these findings cannot be generalized easily beyond the data for which they were established, they give us insights into motivations and pragmatic strategies in communication. This is exactly what the contributions in this volume set out to do.

3.3 Politeness

Address term usage has often been described in terms of politeness. The available options of address terms are assessed in terms of how polite they are in any given situation. The connection between a situation and the choice of a particular form of address can be approached either from the perspective of the situational requirements or, alternatively, that a given form signals a certain level of politeness and therefore establishes the politeness or formality of the situation. Brown and Gilman (1960) in their first seminal paper describe pronoun usage in terms of power and solidarity. In this approach the situation as defined by the power relationship between the speaker and the addressee and the solidarity between them defines the type of pronoun that the speaker will use.

Brown and Levinson (1987) in their theory of politeness also deal with address terms. As noted above, they envisage the use of a plural pronoun for a single addressee as a means of giving the addressee options, in particular the option

of not feeling directly addressed or not feeling “singled out”. To give the addressee such an option is an instance of negative politeness because it pays token respect to the addressee’s negative face. By leaving an option, it acknowledges the addressee’s desire to be free from impositions, or at least pretends to leave him or her an option. In actual fact, of course, the plural form of address is highly conventionalized and there can be no doubt as to who is addressed. This is similar to other forms of indirect language use. Under normal circumstances, the utterance, *Can you pass the salt?* cannot be understood as a question. It is an indirect speech act that questions a felicity condition, i.e. the addressee’s ability to perform the requested action, but it is conventionalized to such an extent that it can only be understood as the request itself (see Brown and Levinson 1987: 133). Nominal terms of address, on the other hand, often constitute forms of positive politeness. Terms such as *dear*, *love*, *darling*, *cutie* and so on are directed at the addressee’s positive face, that is to say the desire to be liked and approved by others.

However, one of the weaknesses of Brown and Levinson’s approach is the fact that it can only distinguish between polite and impolite behavior. A speaker is either impolite because she does not smooth out her face-threatening acts, or she is polite and as such potentially insincere (see Bayyurt and Bayraktaroglu 2001: 212). This does not leave any room for an unmarked middle ground, for utterances that are conventionally appropriate to the current speech situation, that do not adopt any politeness strategies in order to alleviate a potential or real face-threat and that are not rude or impolite either.

Watts (1989: 135, 1992: 50) uses the term “politic behavior” for forms of behavior within this unmarked middle ground and defines it as “socio-culturally determined behavior directed towards the goal of establishing and/or maintaining in a state of equilibrium the personal relationships between the individuals of a social group, whether open or closed, during the ongoing process of interaction.” He starts from the observation that in eighteenth century England polite manners and good breeding were considered to enhance social standing and signal class membership. Politeness effectively separated members of the elitist social class as ingroupers from out-groupers, who did not know the rules of polite manners. Thus politeness was a mask and often a means of hiding not such good intentions. He contrasts this with the concern of a social being to keep personal relationships conflict-free and in a state of equilibrium, i.e. politic behavior. In his analysis of nominal forms of address in the introductory stages of a phone-in program he shows how in Present-day British English even very small deviations from the expected norm can have an effect in the interaction between the callers, the moderator and an expert. Bayyurt and Bayraktaroglu (2001) adopt a similar point of view in their analysis of address term usage in Turkish service encounters in a variety of settings. They, too, distinguish between polite and politic behavior in the sense of Watts.

Brown and Gilman (1989; see also Mazzon) argue that in Shakespearean English the choice between T and V was often an obligatory aspect of speech and was an automatic reflection of status rules. Therefore, the choice between T and V is “not very important in scoring speech for politeness”. This means that in normal circumstances the choice was, in the terms of Watts, a matter of politic behavior, which allowed for deviations to signal politeness or impoliteness.

It has often been claimed that the development of the English language from Early Modern English to Present-day English is marked by an increase of positive politeness (Kopytko 1993, 1995; Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 1995). In this volume Nevala demonstrates the increase in positive politeness on the basis of address and subscription formulae in English family correspondence from the late Middle English period to the end of the Early Modern English period.

3.4 Norm, deviation and markedness

The use of address terms has often been described in terms of norms or rules that speakers follow. But the situation is often so complex that the norms and rules postulated by the analyst do not cover all extant examples. Approaches differ as to how they deal with examples that do not follow the postulated norms and rules. They may marginalize them as irrelevant and unaccountable deviations or even mistakes, or they may treat them as marked usages that convey special meanings.

To take an example from the history of English, Skeat (1894: V, 175) has described the difference between *ye* and *thou* as follows: “*Thou* is the language of the lord to a servant, of an equal to an equal, and expresses also companionship, love, permission, defiance, scorn, threatening; whilst *ye* is the language of a servant to a lord, and of compliment, and further expresses honour, submission, or entreaty.” Nathan (1959) takes this description as the starting point for his paper. He summarizes the above quotation as follows: “*Thou* would be informal, while *ye* would be formal” (Nathan 1959: 193), and then determines for the 2281 uses of the pronouns of address in the singular in the *Canterbury Tales* whether they are used “correctly” or “incorrectly” according to this distinction. He finds that ninety-eight percent of all uses are “correct” and spends the rest of the paper analyzing the two percent which are not “correct”. He considers, for instance, the evidence of scribal variation in the different manuscripts. In most cases he finds little variation in the use of these pronouns, and in those where there is variation he finds Robinson’s reading, which he used as the basis for his investigation, corroborated. He also considers the possibility of an influence of a French source, but he can show that Chaucer treated pronouns of address with a free hand and did not stick to the choices indicated in source texts (Nathan 1959: 198). From a modern point of view and from a pragmatic point of view Nathan’s approach is dated, and his focus

exclusively on the “incorrect” uses of the singular pronouns leaves a great deal out. Some of his “correct” uses may have been only accidentally so, and it is possible and even likely that scribes changed Chaucer’s usage according to their own, more recent system. In addition it seems rather surprising that it was possible to distinguish so precisely between what Nathan calls “correct” and “incorrect” uses as any definition of the system leaves considerable room for interpretation. Details of the “correct” uses would be of interest as well.

Several authors deal with the problem of random variation or “inexplicable fluctuation between T and V” (Brown and Gilman 1960: 255), i.e. systems of pronoun usage in which not all choices of a T form or a V form can be accounted for. Some authors maintain that in the systems that they investigate there is some variation which is purely accidental and does not justify explanation. Brown and Gilman (1960: 255) claim that this is the case for Old French, Spanish, Portuguese and Middle English (see also Burnley). According to this view we just have to resign to the fact that not all the individual instances of pronoun usage can be explained in any systematic way, either as following the norm or deviating in any accountable way from it. In extreme cases, the amount of random variation may even obscure any “normal” usage. Other scholars argue that the right approach will explain virtually all choices at least in a given set of data, e.g. Hunt in his analysis of the late twelfth-century Anglo-Norman play *Seinte Resureccion* takes this stance.

Another approach to address term systems maintains that even if we cannot explain every single occurrence of one pronoun or another, we can account for the percentages of variants that stand in opposition to each other (cf. Busse). This is the sociolinguistic (Labovian) approach. Walker also established percentages of T versus V usages in the different genres covered by her data. She tries to account for ratios that deviate from the expected line of development rather than for deviations of individual choices. Another point in her study pays attention to potential gender differences. According to sociolinguistic research on modern languages, women are often leading in linguistic change, and she contends that a similar situation obtains for earlier periods. In particular she hypothesizes that women were leading in the use of V over T.

Stein also sets out to establish the social norm in a statistical way, and accounts for deviations from the norm. According to his study, either T forms or V forms can be deviations. Depending on the context, the connotations for using T instead of an expected V are scorn, disapproval, complicity, affection or intimacy, and in the opposite case the connotations for using V instead of T could also be scorn and disapproval, or formality, elevation and glorification. The common denominator for all marked forms, according to Stein (p. 44) is “some sort of emotional value (positive or negative)”. The norm in any address term system can also be viewed as

the unmarked usage pattern from which deviations have to be accounted for as marked usages that convey some special meaning. Stein (p. 252) argues that “there could be no meaningful variation if there was not constancy enough to establish what is normal.” He refers to Quirk (1966), who first presented this way of looking at pronoun variation: if *you* is taken as a default, the wide variety of functions given to *thou* can be interpreted in a number of ways and attributed expressive meanings.

3.5 Retractability and symmetry

Different languages show different degrees of stability in the use of address pronouns. It has often been noted that in some systems pronoun usage between any given dyad of interlocutors is relatively stable, while other systems are more flexible. Mazzon (2000: 135) defines retractability of pronoun use as “the possibility to switch from Y to T and back with the same interlocutor, even within the same exchange.” In Modern Standard German (see Simon and Hickey’s second paper), for instance, permanent switches in pronoun usage – from mutual V to mutual T – are possible. They occur at very specific moments in the lives of those involved and are often accompanied by a ritual. Momentary switches in such systems are rare. They may occur if a speaker uses V for somebody for whom she usually uses T because of a very formal situation such as a formal business meeting or an interview in a public situation (radio or television). In these systems, pronoun usage is largely non-retractable for any given dyad of interlocutors. The distinction between address term systems that are retractable and systems that are non-retractable is, of course, not clear-cut. What to one analyst may appear as a system that is basically non-retractable with some inexplicable deviations will appear as a retractable system to another analyst.

Non-retractable systems can be explained macro-pragmatically, that is to say by reference to more or less permanent features of the interlocutors, such as age, role-relationship, social status and so on. Norms for a particular address-term system will generally be postulated on such a macro-pragmatic basis. Retractable systems, on the other hand, must always be analyzed micro-pragmatically, because in such systems the minutiae of the interaction, which can change on a turn-by-turn basis, must be taken into account. Attention to the close context is important in order to detect the underlying principles of pronoun shifts.

In American Spanish speakers may switch between the T form and the V form with a given addressee, e.g. in formal situations. Parents may switch from T to V with their children when they order them to do something or when they reprimand them. In European Spanish, on the other hand, pronoun usage is no longer retractable. A momentary switch from the expected V to a T is clearly marked and can be understood as an insult (Berschin et al. 1987: 200).

Middle English and Early Modern English had retractable address pronoun systems. Temporary switches from T to V and back were possible. Two interlocutors could switch their pronoun usage depending on the current situation, on discourse status and on emotion. Brown and Gilman (1960: 273–276) talk of the power of address terms to express transient attitudes. In Early Modern English speakers could switch from *thou* to *you* or from *you* to *thou* to express their emotions. Such emotive shifts were particularly common in plays at points of high dramatic tension.

Hope (1993, 1994) also argues for an approach that accounts for the choice of *you* or *thou* in his data of Early Modern English court records micro-pragmatically. Hunt presents a system in Old French that has been described as random mixing. But he argues that there is nothing sporadic about the choice of pronouns of address. The changes are properly motivated. They correspond to dramatic and psychological requirements. Honegger argues for the retractability of pronoun usage in his Middle English data. Stein (p. 251–2) maintains that the two forms of singular pronominal address in Elizabethan English are “subtle linguistic indicators of social relations and the management of emotional states at a time.” Mazzon (p. 225) also notes that one of the major points of interest in the research of address terms is to account for pronoun switches with the same interlocutor. She argues that this is most frequent in literary data “because it contributes to portraying interaction between characters”. She quotes Salmon (1967: 59), who says that switches generally signal: “moments of strong emotion, pleasant or otherwise”.

In a symmetrical system two speakers address each other with the same pronoun of address, either mutual T or mutual V. In a non-reciprocal system, on the other hand, they use different pronouns, either on the basis of their respective social statuses or on the basis of their relative age. Holmes (1995: 144–147) draws attention to the asymmetrical usage of nominal forms of address between men and women in Australian and New Zealand Englishes. Terms of endearment, such as *dear*, are commonly used in shops to address women but not to address men.

The extreme development of a symmetrical system can be seen in present-day Swedish (see section 2). Very often both systems exist side by side in the same speech community, or there may be swings depending on e.g. ideological/pedagogical trends in bringing up children, whether they are taught to address older people with first name and T pronoun (as in Sweden and Finland now) or V form and e.g. nominal address terms (as in Sweden and Finland some decades ago). Some dyads of speakers, for instance the members of the same social class, may rely on a symmetrical system, while dyads of speakers that belong to different social classes may use a non-symmetrical system (Brown and Gilman 1960: 256).

4. Case studies

The papers in this volume are ordered more or less chronologically. The earlier papers are devoted to address term systems that are furthest removed in time, while the later papers come closer and closer to the present time. The last paper, by Raymond Hickey, studies a present-day address term system in German.

The volume opens with a paper by David Burnley on the address term system in Later Middle English literature, relating it to the common European background. He sets the scene for all the other papers in this volume by stressing the complexity and variability of the address term system under analysis. In fact the variability of address term usage makes it impossible to present a single coherent system: there is always diachronic, regional, stylistic and personal variation and the sources at our disposal are limited and often unreliable. He cites many cases in which different manuscript versions of the same text use different address terms, either because of conscious adaptations to other audiences or because of careless copying. He summarizes the choices in Chaucer's fictional writing in the form of a flow-chart: the plural pronoun *ye* as an address form for a singular addressee is reserved for courtly genres, whereas speakers used the singular pronoun to address a singular addressee in other types of writing, including learned, religious, and unsophisticated discourse. In the courtly genre the plural address form was further restricted to non-intimate addressees of higher age and/or higher status. However, switches between *ye* and *thou* are common and can be explained on the basis of affection, rhetoric and genre. He also points out that the pronominal forms of address tend to collocate with specific lexical items. The nominal forms of address *leve brother* or *dame*, for instance, and expressions, such as *vouchen sauf* or *your curteisie* are always accompanied by the V form in Chaucer's work. Burnley also cites interesting sources that bear witness to the awareness of Chaucer's contemporaries of the social significance of the choice between T and V forms. The choice was controversial in medieval society, and e.g. French and Italian humanists in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries promoted the use of the T pronoun for singular addressees because of the models of earlier writers and because it was felt to be more grammatical.

Tony Hunt offers a detailed account of the usage of T and V pronouns in the Anglo-Norman play *Seinte Resurreccion* dating from the second half of the twelfth century. He points out variation between Old and Middle French manuscripts, and concludes that there is nothing arbitrary in the choice of the pronouns. In contrast to earlier claims, close scrutiny reveals that the frequent shifts from T to V and back corresponds to the dramatic and psychological requirements of characterization.

Thomas Honegger deals with forms of address in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. This tale has long been seen as problematic for such an analysis because of the seemingly

arbitrary switches between T and V forms. Honegger argues for an approach that takes the situational status of the interactants into account. The characters may gain or lose status in an interaction with other characters, and address terms may vary on a local level. In addition, he analyzes the pronominal forms of address as part of the more comprehensive concept of “adversion”, which comprises all linguistic and non-linguistic elements of two interactants reacting to each other. This includes gaze, greetings, gestures, and posture in addition to address terms in the strict sense. Thus in *The Knight's Tale*, the Theban women who intercept Theseus on his triumphant return from his wars make manifest their low position (their husbands were killed in action) by presenting themselves in prostrate position. They further reinforce the situation by starting their address with the polite plural form *ye* to address Theseus and the respectful nominal form *lord*. “It is only within this firmly established framework of ‘respect’ that the speaker varies the pronoun, and addresses Theseus with the *thou* of solidarity” (p. 67-8). Honegger identifies five patterns of how the different elements of adversion combine to define the relationships between the characters in this tale.

Horst Simon sets out to trace the development of the German pronouns of address from Middle High German to Modern Standard German. He argues that the systems differ significantly. In Middle High German speakers had the option of using *du* or *ir* for a single addressee. Simon sets out from a close analysis of the use of these pronouns in three different manuscript versions of the heroic epic poem, the *Nibelungenlied*. It turns out that the scribes had considerable freedom in choosing one form or the other. According to Simon the situation in Middle High German involved the secondary use of a pronoun which was specified as second person plural. The diachronic development of the German polite pronouns of address manifests a high degree of complexity, and Simon argues that German has a grammatical category of “respect”. He distinguishes several stages that involve, at one time or another, all the pronouns in the pronominal paradigm except for the first person pronouns and shows that polite *Sie* behaves syntactically in many respects like first and second person pronouns rather than like third person pronouns. In Modern Standard German the highly complex system partially collapsed. The polite pronoun *Sie* occupies an additional – and grammaticalized – slot in the pronoun system. He also adduces data from a distinct dialect of German, i.e. Bavarian, which shows considerable morphological differences between the third person plural pronoun and the pronoun of respect.

Michael Betsch traces the development of the address term system in Czech from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century on evidence that is mainly drawn from private and official correspondence. Earlier there had only been one pronominal form of address, the second person singular *ty*. In the fourteenth and fifteenth century, new forms were introduced, in particular the nominal form *Tvá*

Milost 'Thy Grace'. This form emphasized the subordination of the speaker and was used almost exclusively to address the king or the queen. In the fifteenth century, *Tvá Milost* 'Thy Grace' came to be used for other members of the high nobility, and in addition the plural address forms *vy* 'you' and *Vaše Milost* 'Your Grace' came to be used. In the sixteenth century, the noun *pán* 'lord' was added to the choice of address forms and through pronominalization of *Vaše Milost* the form *Vašnost* was created. From the many examples adduced by Betsch a fascinating picture of an increasingly complex address term system emerges. Betsch also draws some parallels to the development in other Slavonic languages and in German. It is interesting to note that in Modern Czech the options have been reduced to the choice between the plural and the singular pronouns, *vy* and *ty*, as in Modern German, French and the other Slavonic languages except for Polish.

Minna Nevala investigates the use of address and subscription formulae in English, i.e. the salutation forms used at the beginning and the self-presentations at the end of a letter respectively. The address formulae are oriented towards the recipient, while the subscription formulae focus more on the writer of the letter and reveal his or her relationship with the recipient. She compares family letters written in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, both by families belonging to the gentry and by royals. Her material is drawn from the Corpus of Early English Correspondence. Her argument is based on a wealth of illustrative examples drawn from her data, which she places on a politeness scale ranging from positive politeness to negative politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987). It turns out that address and subscription formulae tend to become shorter, less formulaic and more based on positive politeness over the three centuries.

Paola Bentivoglio analyzes pronoun usage in a corpus of six hundred letters that were written in the sixteenth century by Andalusian immigrants in the New World. These letters are addressed to relatives in Spain and they generally try to persuade the addressees to also emigrate from Spain and undertake the journey to the New World. The analysis is based on Brown and Gilman's model. Writers had four forms at their disposal, i.e. the most formal *vuestra merced* and the increasingly less formal *él/ella*, *vos* and finally *tú*. The system of Spanish pronouns of address changed in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. In peninsular Spanish *vos* gave way to *tú* and *vuestra merced* (which later became *usted*). The majority of letters in Bentivoglio's corpus use either consistently the old form *vos* or the new form *vuestra merced*, but a minority of letters use a combination of forms; *vos*, *tú*, *él/ella* and *vuestra merced*. These letters are particularly interesting for a pragmatic analysis, and Bentivoglio shows in detail how pronoun switches are used strategically. She also points out that shifts from one form to another do not have a constant meaning but have to be assessed in each individual case.

Ulrich Busse analyzes the co-occurrence of nominal and pronominal forms of address in the plays by Shakespeare. He classifies the nominal address forms into

six different types; titles of courtesy, such as *Your Grace*, *my liege* or *mistress*; terms of address indicating occupation such as *doctor*, *justice* or *nurse*; terms of family relationship, such as *brother*, *coz* or *wife*; generic terms of address, such as *boy*, *friend* or *gentlewoman*; terms of endearment, such as *bully*, *chuck*, *joy*, or *wag*; and finally terms of abuse, such as *knave*, *rascal*, *varlet* or *villain*. In the analysis he presents the co-occurrence patterns of individual terms from each category with either T or Y pronouns. In a second step he calculates for each nominal term of address whether it is more likely to collocate with a T or a Y pronoun, in order to place them along a scale of what he calls “*you*-fullness” or “*thou*-fullness”. It turns out that there are clear differences between the individual terms and also between the individual categories of terms, even though most terms collocate – at least occasionally – with either pronoun. Not surprisingly it is the titles of courtesy which collocate most regularly with Y pronouns followed closely by the terms of address indicating occupation. The terms of abuse and to an even greater degree the terms of endearment collocate most regularly with T pronouns. What is perhaps more surprising is that it is not the comedies with their inventory of lower class characters that have the lowest score of Y pronouns but rather the tragedies.

Gabriella Mazzon studies address term patterns in Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, *Othello* and *Hamlet* and focuses in particular on the social relationships between individual characters. On the basis of statistical data she establishes usage patterns for specific types of relationships, such as husband and wife, father and daughter, or the relationship between social unequals. She looks at pronominal terms of address and how they interact with nominal address terms, and in each case she is particularly interested in pronoun switches or more generally in situations in which characters “deviate” from the expected pattern. She argues that such deviations mirror the complex and changing social attitudes of the characters towards each other as well as the changing levels of distance versus intimacy and power versus solidarity.

Dieter Stein uses a markedness-based approach to establish the social, pragmatic and emotional meanings of the occurrences of *you* and *thou* in Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and *As You Like It*. In a first step he identifies the unmarked use for each socially defined type of dyad (e.g. from daughters to fathers, from fathers to daughters, between lovers, from servants to aristocrats or from aristocrats to servants). In a second step he analyses the specific conversational functions of pronoun switches through an interpretation of the dramatic context in which they occur. The common denominator for all such deviations is the emotional involvement of the speaker. The emotions may be positive or negative, and they may lead to a switch from expected *you* to marked *thou* or from expected *thou* to marked *you*. Stein concludes that the language of the two plays fits in, although in a retarded way, with the general drift towards *you* as the default pronoun. Around thirty percent of the uses of *thou* are shown to be due to its marked use as a finely-tuned

instrument of the management of personal relationships. Shakespeare is seen, in this respect as in many others, to parasitize on linguistic change situations.

Terry Walker analyzes data from the computerized Corpus of English Dialogues 1560-1760 (CED) with samples of both authentic and constructed dialogue (i.e. trials and witness depositions, and comedy drama and handbooks respectively). In order to show the development of the address term system, she compares two subcorpora, one comprising data from 1560 to 1600 and the other from 1680 to 1720. During the first period *thou* still played a significant role in the English language, while after 1700 it only occurs in specialized contexts, e.g. in religious or archaic texts. Walker's method combines quantitative assessment with a qualitative study of sociohistorical contextual factors. In the first part of her paper, she focuses on the changing ratios of *you* and *thou* in the four different text types, while the second half shifts to a sociolinguistic perspective and focuses on gender differences. Walker distinguishes between three main motivations for the use of *thou*: to express emotion such as contempt; to show the speaker's superior status; or as a sign of solidarity among the lower ranks of society. It turns out that in the trials *thou* is generally used to express negative emotions or the social superiority of the speaker. It is also regularly used in formulaic expressions, such as *thou hast been found guilty*, which are set phrases that occur during the opening and closing stages of a trial (p. 317). In the deposition texts all three motivations for using *thou* are attested. In comedy dramas, too, all three types occur, but as emotional exchanges are more numerous in this text type, there are more instances of *thou* expressing affection and intimacy. Handbooks have a didactic purpose, and the speakers have the roles of instructor and instructed and usually reciprocal *you* is used. Gender also plays a role in the choice of pronoun, although perhaps not as much as expected. During the first period, both sexes used *thou* with about the same frequency of roughly 25 per cent of all pronouns to single addressees. In the second period, however, men show only a slight decrease (23 per cent), while women have almost stopped using *thou* (a mere 4 per cent). However, Walker shows that the interpretation of these figures is not straightforward. Cases of women using *you* to men and receiving *thou* in return are, perhaps contrary to expectation, very rare, but it seems that male speakers use *thou* more often to express contempt and as a sign of in-group membership or solidarity. The use of *thou* as a sign of superior social status, on the other hand, clearly declines.

Raymond Hickey, in his first paper in this volume, focuses on the loss of the number distinction for second person pronouns in English. This loss was accommodated without any therapeutic change in the standard variety of Modern English in which the only pronoun of address is *you*, except for very special cases. In many varieties of spoken English throughout the world the loss of the number distinction led to shifts, borrowings and internal developments to rectify the deficiency

and fill the gap in the pronoun paradigm. Hickey attempts to trace the changes which took place in non-standard English and, wherever possible, to establish historical links between the input varieties and those Anglophone locations overseas which distinguish formally between a second person singular and a second person plural pronoun. He starts his investigation in Early Modern English, because at this time south-eastern British English still distinguished between T forms and V forms, even though the distinction was on the decline. This was the period, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, just before the spread of English to areas of the world outside of the British Isles started. Hickey considers the situations in Ireland, the southern United States, the Caribbean, South Africa and Australia.

Eeva-Leena Seppänen studies a special type of address which is obviously part of a system but is difficult to interpret. In Finnish as in Swedish (see above) it was not uncommon to refer to the addressee by using the third person in the address, e.g. the addressee's name, a common noun, a title, or a combination of these. Seppänen focuses on cases with the demonstrative pronoun together with nominal address. This form of address has its special pragmatic conditions. In the first part of her paper, Seppänen assesses evidence on this form from early syntactic descriptions of Finnish dialects collected by nineteenth-century scholars. Third person addresses involving a demonstrative pronoun were considered non-standard with various functions and shades of meaning. In accordance with their time, the researchers were not so much interested in the pragmatics of this construction, and therefore they did not provide sufficient contextual information that would allow a retrospective analysis of the interactional details. These data beg several interesting questions that Seppänen sets out to answer on the basis of modern video-recorded data that can be analyzed using the now standard techniques of conversation analysis. In particular she investigates why the various scholars propose fundamentally different interpretations of the function of these constructions. It appears that all the examples in these early studies of Finnish dialects are quoted in interrogative sentences and in situations that could include various types of audience. The construction could also be identified as a referring expression rather than as an address term in other contexts and therefore escaped the attention of scholars. In the second part of her paper, Seppänen tackles these questions on the basis of a close analysis of conversational Finnish data that was collected in the 1950s and 1980s. In this material she detects interactional patterns and differences between the different constructions that provide plausible explanations for the older dialect research data.

The last paper in this volume, the second paper by Raymond Hickey, is devoted to the present-day German address system, in which speakers have the choice between the familiar T form *du* and the more formal V form *Sie*. In the first part of his paper he gives a brief outline of typical social relationships and the pronoun

choices that these relationships induce. In German as in most other modern European languages, the system is absolute, i.e. the choice of one form or the other is fairly stable for any given dyad of speakers. Permanent or temporary switches from one form to the other are rare, but they do occur, and Hickey discusses several typical situations of switches. In the second part of his paper, he considers a range of special cases, such as co-occurrence with first and last name or salutations and partings. This paper serves as a reminder of how complex the situation even in a seemingly straightforward case such as German actually is. If present-day situations are as complex as this, older situations will probably also have been very complex, even if the available data does not reveal the entire scope of the complexity.

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The T/V pronouns in later Middle English literature

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1. The background

Around 1384–5 Chaucer received a well-known letter from a French contemporary, Eustache Deschamps. It was a verse epistle congratulating him as a master of both practical and theoretical branches of learning, and as poet equivalent to Ovid, who has enlightened all Britain with his poetry (Brewer 1978: I, 39–42). He is welcomed as a fellow *auctour*; that is, one who writes with the intention of associating himself with the classic tradition of European literature. The style is rhetorical and elevated, and the poem expresses sincere respect for its addressee, but the second stanza begins with a direct address using the T-form of the pronoun: *Tu es d'amours mondains dieux en Albie* 'You are [an] earthly god of love in Albion', which echoes an earlier reference to *ta poetrie*, and forms part of a continuous chain of T-address in the poem.

Compare this with a story told in the journal of the founder of the Quaker movement, George Fox, in 1656 (Nickalls 1975: 242). "Professors and priests," we are told, are outraged by the behaviour of Quakers, who "*thee* and *thou* all people without respect, and will not doff their hats to one nor bow the knee to any man". Their opponents therefore look forward to retribution for this behaviour before a court where the dissidents will find themselves on trial for their lives.

There is an apparent conflict here. Respectable people are scandalised by the Quakers' insistence on the use of *thou*, yet Deschamps uses *tu* in elevated and respectful address. The assumption that hat-doffing should be accompanied by the use of the V-form in polite society, is what we might have expected both from our knowledge of modern custom and also from what we find in many later medieval texts, and although 250 years and distinct linguistic milieux separate the two events, this does not seem to explain the contrast. In fact, it will emerge that these two events are indeed related within the same value system and are not so remote as might at first appear.

Although Skeat paved the way for the study of Middle English T/V phenomena in his 1867 edition of *William of Palerne* (Skeat 1867: xli–xliii), major investigations begin with the surveys of Kennedy (1915) and Stidston (Stidston 1917), culminate in the synthesis of Finkenstaedt (1963), and are supported by a substantial number of shorter papers on the use of the pronouns in particular works (see References). The V-form of address commenced in Latin epistolary practice in the fifth century, but it is generally agreed that no trace of the V-form used to a single addressee is to be found in Old English. From the middle thirteenth century isolated examples emerge in English, but their distribution is unpredictable. The reports of early investigators tend to be purely descriptive and accumulative. Very often, they contain too overtly the fruits of their methodology in the form of relatively raw data: for example, we may be told that Troilus uses *ye* to Criseyde (except in moments of high emotion), or that Troilus demonstrates familiarity with or (superiority to) Pandarus by the use of *thou*. God is normally addressed by the T-form, although a pagan deity often attracts the V-form.

Versions of such explanations are often reproduced in the notes of literary editions when the editor seeks to explain the linguistic behaviour of characters, and fairly convincing interpretations of the personal relations attributable to characters can be arrived at in this way. From the point of view of linguistic analysis, this descriptive presentation can seem naïve and *ad hoc*, yet building on such data a certain abstraction is possible along the lines proposed for modern languages by Brown and Gilman (1960) or Ervin-Tripp (1969). Power, solidarity, superiority, inferiority, familiarity, remoteness and relative age are categories involved in the fictional confrontations, and can be invoked in order to characterise usage more generally.¹

In my own *Guide to Chaucer's Language* (1983) – which was meant to serve as a practical interpretative aid for readers of Chaucer – I produced a diagram (reproduced in slightly modified form as Fig. 1 below) which sought to illustrate the factors which might influence the choice of pronoun by Chaucer when he intended to lend verisimilitude to verbal exchanges between his characters. The hierarchical series of binary choices in the diagram represents the “institutionalised” expectations (or the “unmarked” choices) of speakers of late Middle English, inferred from the analysis of interpersonal relations in many contexts. The interpersonal relations depicted vary somewhat in their explicitness (for example, age differences or degrees of familiarity are less decisive in choice than evident social status might be), but this approach generally works quite well. However, choice does not depend exclusively on interpersonal relations, and it is clearly necessary to include not only the initial condition concerning the nature of the discourse or genre (see below), but also the possibility in certain circumstances for relative social status to outweigh other conditioning factors. Hence, in the diagram, it is necessary to draw

a thin line cutting across other conditioning factors from the familiarity node direct to the choice of *ye*. In addition, within any personal interaction, various contextually-determined kinds of switching are commonly found to occur in the same continuous discourse, overriding institutional expectations or temporarily re-categorising interpersonal relations in a manner analogous to “metaphorical code-switching” in multilingual communication (Fishman 1970: 44). The diagram makes provision for this by various types of switching, which cut across institutionalised expectations.²

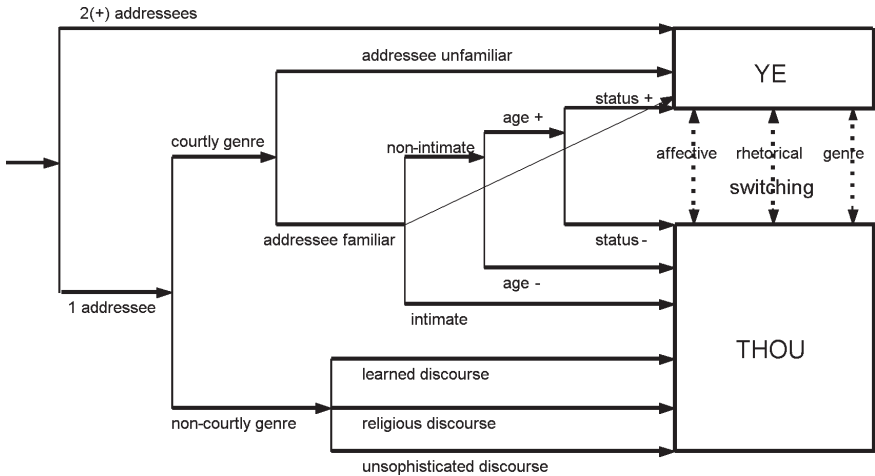


Figure 1. Chaucer's use of the second-person pronoun

2. Interpreting the sources

In arriving at a proper understanding of the use of T/V pronouns we can employ two distinct sources of evidence: literary texts and letters. The latter follow established formulae appropriate for a specific genre of written language, and may not reflect spoken usage for that reason. Data from letters is therefore the description of a restricted language from a specialised context. Fictional sources may seek to reproduce spoken language with greater or lesser verisimilitude, they may reflect the values and social milieu of author, audience or both, but also the fictional social milieu of the work, as for example when sophisticated authors write *fabliaux*. The few documentary sources which purport to quote the brief utterances of real individuals may be complicated by the multilingualism of medieval record-keeping, and may not be free from the effects of translation. The status of the fundamental sources of evidence may therefore be uncertain, and it is as well to be aware of this

at the beginning. Nor should we have too high expectations of the consistency of our evidence of the use of pronouns of address for another, related, reason. Since what we experience has been preserved in written form, at least in literary documents it has normally been subjected to the processes of scribal copying. This may be too easily overlooked in the eager pursuit of data, but medieval manuscripts all too often do not accurately represent what the author wrote (Brook 1972; Hudson 1966; Kristensson 1981; Smallwood 1986), let alone how he might have spoken. Comparison of different manuscripts of the same texts shows, moreover, that personal pronouns are among the word classes most susceptible to variation by scribal copying. Sometimes, as in the various manuscripts of Scogan's *Moral Balade* (Burnley 1999), the pronoun address forms are deliberately altered in the course of adaptation to a new audience, but changes are more frequently the result of careless copying: *Troilus and Criseyde* has at least half a dozen cases in which there is T/V variation between different manuscript versions (I, 776; II, 850; III, 203, 1512, 1807; IV, 318; V, 1008). Similar manuscript variation is evident in lines 241–2 of the Wife of Bath's Prologue in the *Canterbury Tales* (Robinson 1996) and is a feature of Anglo-French as much as of English texts (see the paper by Hunt in the present volume). Hence, even in the most assiduously copied literary manuscripts, unauthorised fluctuations in usage will occur.

Even if we can be certain that the pronoun choice belongs to the author's original text, it may be difficult to distinguish that internal variation which it is justifiable to try to explain from that which is purely accidental. The fictional addressee does not exist in the same sense as he/she would in modern field studies, and indeed not all choices of T- or V-form are directed at clearly identifiable addressees at all. In literary sources the addressee is the conceptual construct of the author, or of how the author sees the relationship between his characters, his narrator and his audience. The audience of the fictional narrator, like that of the actual preacher, may from moment to moment be conceptualised as multiple or as single individuals, affecting the choice of pronoun. Addressees in proverbial or fossilised expressions may be imprecise, and may represent idiomatic usage having little relevance to the relationship between the fictional speakers currently using such expressions. Indeed, as Koziol noted, the T-form could be used from Old English onwards as an indefinite pronoun, like *man* (Koziol 1942), and such usage can disrupt pre-suppositions about the interpersonal function of pronoun choice.³

Temporal distance has a foreshortening effect which can trap investigators into unwise generalisations about "medieval usage" as though this were some synchronic state. The situation with regard to T/V pronouns is not static in fourteenth and fifteenth-century English. We are witnessing changing linguistic behaviour, in which the T/V choice is becoming more complex and more extended through society. But, unlike the classic neogrammarian conception of linguistic change, this pragmatic

change is fairly rapid, very untidy, and above all prominent in the consciousness of the users of the language. Drawing an analogy with pronoun development in English, we are dealing with a phenomenon much more akin to the recent adoption of spellings such as <s/he> than with the development of the phonological form /she/ through the influence of Scandinavian on earlier English. Finally, it is perhaps preferable to admit, rather than seek to over-interpret, that we sometimes cannot interpret the significance of the text. The confidence which allowed Nathan to report to Finkenstaedt that he had counted 2234 “correct” and 47 “incorrect” uses of the pronoun of address in the *Canterbury Tales* (excluding the prose tales), seems seriously misplaced. Finkenstaedt notes, with apparent satisfaction, that Professor Funke’s Chaucer seminar had managed to improve on this by explaining away many of the apparent exceptions to be found in the Tale of Melibee (Finkenstaedt 1963: 75–6). This desire to “tidy up” is quite understandable, but probably misplaced.

3. The context of T/V usage

The choice between T/V-pronouns is not made in linguistic or behavioural isolation. By understanding context first as “co-text” it is demonstrable that certain patterns of lexical choices tend to occur with one or other of these pronouns, producing predictable phrasing (compare papers by Busse, Honegger and Nevala). Using corpus material, it can be shown for example that forms of address such as *leve brother* and *sone* are almost invariably accompanied by the T-form, whilst *fader* is accompanied by the V-form. This occurs regardless of whether the relationship depicted is literal or metaphorical, as in the exchanges between the dreamer and the priest Genius in Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*. Similarly, the forms *sire*, *dame* and *madame* are always accompanied by the V-form in Chaucer’s works, and certain other phrases nearly invariably invoke the V-form. Hence the expression *vouchen sauf* and the phrase *for youre curteisie* are never accompanied by anything other than the V-form in good Chaucer texts. However, there is not complete uniformity in usage either between individual authors or between the authors and their copyists: in some manuscripts of *Troilus and Criseyde*, *thou* collocates with *vouchesauf* at Book II 1691, and in *William of Palerne*, *sire* collocates with *thou*. These are not the grammatical rules of the language, but the socially-marked performance choices of a particular class, and it is not surprising that in wider usage there should be variation.

The choice of the V-form and its combination with other honorifics and phrasing is not only class-dependent, but undergoing development and extension during the fourteenth century. Certain phrasing, certain forms of address are preferred, standing as testimony to the respect (the words used in Middle English are *reverence*

or *worship*) in which the addressee is held. Willingness to show respect where it is due is considered to reflect well on the speaker, and it reinforces the self-esteem of the addressee, and this is part of those medieval ideals of refinement summed up in the word *curteisie*. *Curteis speche*, which we can interpret as the linguistic code of the *curteis*, includes awareness of approved forms of address, but is associated with far more than these alone. Less striking than the coherence between V-forms and the words and phrases mentioned above, it will also include such stylistic devices as selected vocabulary items, extended sentences, widespread use of conditionals, and the creative use of metaphor in speech (Burnley 1986; 1998: 99–121).

These features are general in Middle English *curteis speche*. However, Middle English also furnished the opportunity for individual creativity in polite address. An example might be the opportunity which existed for a more intimate absorption of honorifics into the grammar of the language. Some dialects of Middle English possessed distinct singular and plural forms of the imperative, and concord between the plural imperative and the V-form was already well established in *William of Palerne* (composed about 1335). The same concord can be found in Chaucer and Hoccleve: for example, the latter uses the V-form consistently in his appeal to Lady Money (*Three Roundels*), and begs her in the plural *conforteth ... me*. She replies consistently with the T-form and the singular imperative *go ... Hoccleve*. However, although both Chaucer and Hoccleve sometimes exploit this possibility further, no consistent pattern of concord with the plural imperative can be found in their language. A similar possibility arises in Chaucer's use of imperatives introduced by *as*. These imperatives are sparingly but widely used in late Middle English, often with a singular form of the imperative ("As keepe me fro thy vengeance and thyn ire" Knight's Tale 2302). However, Chaucer is highly unusual in employing what seems a distinctly unassertive kind of plural imperative introduced by *as*, and always in the context of the V-form: "And for the love of God, my lady fre,/ Whomso ye hate, as beth nat wroth with me" (*Troilus and Criseyde* V 144–5). There are only three other examples of this pattern in Chaucer's works (Franklin's Tale, 1059; Clerk's Prologue, 7, and Clerk's Tale, 885). All are in convincingly polite exchanges, but he did not exploit this possibility more widely, and it seems extremely rare elsewhere in Middle English. Later Middle English, therefore, offered opportunities for the elaboration of the simple choice of *ye* or *thou* in address, but it is significant that these are exploited differently and inconsistently by different authors. This aspect of courtly speech was not stereotyped during the fourteenth century, and permitted individual creativity. Hence, although the author of *William of Palerne* made careful use of T/V choice, and exploited the plural form of the imperative, he did not observe the strong affinity between *sire*, *madame*, and *ye*. By contrast, the Auchinleck manuscript, which was compiled about the same time as the composition of *William of Palerne*, takes little consistent account of

T/V pronoun choice at all, except in *Lai le Freine*, which observes the *madame-ye* connection⁴. Chaucer and his contemporaries observe the general pattern of T/V choice represented in Fig. 1, and expand it by certain fixed phrasing and collocations, but only patchily exploit the opportunities offered by the plural imperative.

Broadening the significance of “context” to include genre, it is apparent that there is great variety in T/V usage in the different tales gathered together in the Canterbury collection. Whereas the Pardoner’s and Physician’s tales use predominantly T-address, the tales of the Merchant, Clerk, Franklin, Shipman, Squire, and Man of Law prefer V-address, and may creatively switch to T-address for particular effects. The remainder of the tales use mixed address forms to a considerable extent. Since the Shipman’s Tale is a classic fabliau, and the Knight’s Tale with its mixture is a kind of heroic romance, this distribution cannot always be attributed to familiar literary genres. A reasonable case can be made for the T-forms of the Pardoner’s Tale echoing the practice of preachers, but the V-forms of the Shipman’s Tale belong not to the fabliau genre but to satirical characterisation, where the monk as seducer echoes the respectful address forms which medieval women found attractive, rather than the T-form more appropriate to his vocation. Similarly, although the genre and most of the contexts in *Piers Plowman* tend to determine the choice of T-forms, in the court scenes and in the pleas of flattering beggars seeking charity the V-form is selected. We might summarise that, because of the social standing of the protagonists and the content of the narrative, some literary genres may appear to promote the use of the V-form, yet in most cases the true motivating factor is the imagined status and relationships of the characters portrayed, which are intended to reflect the values and behaviour of real contemporary individuals.

4. The social context of T/V address

We know from a wide range of sources that what Brown and Levinson call “negative politeness” was much valued in the later medieval period (Brown and Levinson 1987: 129–210; Shimonomoto 2001). The ostentatious assertion of status had been a feature of aristocratic society for centuries, but seems to have been extending in the fourteenth century, and minor acknowledgements of *reverence* are particularly associated with wealthy townsfolk, who especially welcomed reassurance about their claim to respect. The Miller’s wife in Chaucer’s Reeve’s Tale insists on address as “dame”, a predilection shared by the guildsmen’s wives in the General Prologue (*It is ful fair to been ycleped ‘madame’/ And goon to vigilies al bifore* 376–377). In the earlier fourteenth century accomplishment in French and its cultural ideals extended widely into the social milieu of the urban well-to-do, and regard for the ideals, at least, persisted throughout the Middle Ages.⁵ Langland,

however, expresses a very different view, repeatedly condemning the *reverence* offered to wealth and status, and caricaturing himself in the opinion of others as an insane beggar incapable of observing the proprieties of social behaviour:

- (1) And some lakkede my lif – allowed it fewe –
 And leten me for a lorel and looth to reverencen
 Lordes or ladies or any lif ellis –
 As persons in pelure with pendaunts of silver;
 To sergeaunts ne to swiche seide noght ones,
 “God loke yow, lordes!” – ne loutede faire,
 That folk helden me a fool; and in that folie I raved.
 (Schmidt 1995, B-text, Passus 15: 4–10)

‘And some blamed my life – few approved of it- and held me a rascal and unwilling to give reverence to lords and ladies or any other human being, such as persons in fur with pendants of silver. To sergeants-at-law and such others I never said “You look good, lordes!” or bowed graciously. People held me a fool, and in that folly I raved.’ (Translation by the editors.)

The hunger for *reverence*, which drove the adoption of V-form address during the fourteenth century, placed Langland beyond the pale of polite society, but he was far from being in isolation. Indeed, a generation before he wrote, Robert Mannyng of Bourne was already attacking the secular predilection for elaborated forms of address:

- (2) 3yf þou haue grete desyre
 To be clepyd lorde or syre,
 For to glose þe, and slyppe,
 And to haue þe wurdys of wurschyp;
 Or 3e wymmen also, comunly,
 wulde be kallede “madame” or “lady”;
 Al þys comþ of grete pryde;
 yn þy shryfte þou noght hyt hyde.
 he ys ryȝt lorde, þe kyng of heuene;
 wrong hyt ys þat men any oþer neuene.
 (Furnivall 1901: 118, *Handling Synne*, 3407–16)⁶

‘If you have great desire to be called ‘lord’ or ‘sir’, with the purpose of flattering you, and to have the words of worship, or you women also, commonly, would like to be called ‘madam’ or ‘lady’; all this comes from great pride. In your confession do not hide it. He is the true Lord, the King of Heaven, it is wrong to put any others in that place.’ (Translation by the editors.)

It might be objected at this point that the argument has strayed too far from T/V pronoun address, but such an objection would miss an essential purpose of this paper. I have been concerned to recreate here something of the social values which promoted respectful forms of address in the fourteenth century, and to indicate that the use of the V-form is part of the value system which medieval people called *curtesie*. T/V choice is embedded in a broader behavioural matrix, and is simply an optional extension to other linguistic and behavioural resources available for maintaining a more general social semiotic. Similar motives encouraged the use of the V-form to those which promoted honorific address such as *lord*, *lady*, *sire*, (*ma*)*dame*, or the physical gesture of doffing a hat or hood. Caxton's translation of the *Book of the Knight of the Tower* (24–5) relates how a lady's action in removing her hood to a tailor was questioned by other gentry standing by. Her answer that she had rather doff her hood to a tailor than leave it on before a gentleman is highly commended, and exactly duplicates the motivation among courtly people for choosing the V-form of address as the starting-point of conversational exchange.

If wealthy townspeople coveted such indications of respect, it might be expected that kings could claim them by right, and indeed formal letters addressed to kings use the V-form, which formed an explicit part of the training of scribes in *dictamen*⁷. However, in the B-text of *Piers Plowman* (Prologue, 123) a “lunatic” kneels before the king and addresses him *clergially* with the T-form. The author of the early fifteenth-century *The Crowned King* imitates this scene, turning the lunatic into a clerk. This time there is explicit reference to grammatical number, but the clerk's attitude is less uncompromising than that of Langland, since he feels it necessary first to ask permission to use the singular form in this situation. Nevertheless, his use of the words *peynte* and *pike a thonk* retain the implied clerkish criticism of flattery and pride which Robert Mannyng had already condemned.

- (3) With that a clerk kneled adoun & carped these wordes:
 “Liege lord, yif it you like to listen a while,
 Sum sawes of Salomon y shall you shew sone,
 Besechyng you of your souerainte that y myght be suffred
 To shewe you my sentence in singuler noumbre –
 To peynte it with pluralites my prose wolde faile;
 To pike a thonke with plesaunce my profit were but simple.”
 Than the kyng of his curtesie comaunded hym to ryse,
 To stonde and sey what hym semed and knele no lenger.

Than he seid. “Sir, crowned kyng, thou knowest well þyself.”
 (Robbins 1959: 227–32, *Crowned King*: 42–51)

‘With that a clerk kneeled down and said these words: “Dear Lord, if it pleases you to listen for a while, some sayings of Salomon I shall show to you soon, beseeching your sovereignty that I might be suffered to show you my sentence in the singular. My prose would fail to paint it in the plural, to gain credit with eloquent speech, my profit would be low.” Then the king in his courtesy commanded him to rise, to stand and say what he thought and kneel no longer.

Then he said: “Sir, crowned king, you know yourself well”

(Translation by the editors.)

It is clear from such passages not only that the choice between T- and V-pronouns was a highly conscious one at this time, but that it was also potentially controversial. Medieval society was not monolithic in its values: that is, that among those who cared, there was a conscious desire to merit the use of the V-form on the one hand, but potentially strong opposition to its use on the other. The tradition of objection to the use of a plural pronoun to address an individual, rooted in accusations of pride, belongs to clerks whose attitude is based on religious disapproval of worldly self-aggrandisement, and it forms part of a persistent religious critique of *curtesie*. This tradition is attested over several centuries, and the earliest statement of it in England in linguistic terms predates our evidence for the use of the V-form in English or French, occurring in an unpublished thirteenth-century Latin sermon by Alexander Neckham:

- (4) Hodie ergo volunt prelati ecclesie ut vobiscetur cum eis, cum numquam Petrus vel aliquis discipulorum dixit Domino, “vos”. Ait enim Petrus, “Tu scis, Domine, quia amo te”; non dixit, “vos scitis, Domine, quia amo vos.” (Bodl. Wood empt. 13, fol. 361r. Cited Ullman 1973: 258n.)

‘Today, then, prelates of the Church desire that one should address them with *vos*, when neither Peter nor any of the disciples said *vos* to the Lord. Indeed Peter said, “Thou knowest, O Lord, that I love thee”; he did not say “You know, O Lord, that I love you.”

This is the attitude which provokes the opposition to V-address in the fifteenth-century life of St Elizabeth of Spallbeck, who also condemned the practice of standing up to show respect (Finkenstaedt 1963: 89), and which persists into the seventeenth century in the journal of George Fox, with which this paper began. It corresponds to what in Figure 1 is represented as a discourse choice: consciously religious discourse, which is associated with dissent from worldly values predisposes the choice of the T-form and conscientious resistance to the use of the V-form.⁸

Figure 1 offers two other pathways associated with the discourse-based choice of T-forms. One is the literary representation of the speech and behaviour of social groups who had no knowledge of or interest in pronoun choice. For them, the pronouns may be in free variation. The other relates closely to the letter which Chaucer

received from Eustache Deschamps. The latter's choice of the T-form in this letter contravenes established precept and practice in the forms of epistolary address between cultivated individuals: correspondence between members of the aristocracy at this time normally uses the V-pronoun, following a well-established formula of salutation. Yet it is not associated here with the renunciation of worldly values. So, what is the implication of Deschamps' use of *tu*? There is no direct evidence to prove that Chaucer understood Deschamps' choice of pronoun here, but an intriguing piece of indirect evidence that he associated T-address with the learned can be found in his Franklin's Tale. In that tale, the predominant form of polite address is by the V-pronoun, with occasional affective switching in the exchanges between the husband and wife, Arveragus and Dorigen, and in apostrophes and prayers⁹. When the amorous young squire, Aurelius, seeks magical help from an anonymous Orleans clerk, he naturally addresses him with the respectful V-form, but receives a uniform T-form in return. This learned man certainly undertakes to instruct his young client in moral values, but unlike Langland or Mannyng, is not concerned with a religious critique of courtly behaviour. Nevertheless, it is very tempting to believe that his consistent choice of the T-form is influenced by considerations of characterisation in which the learned as a social type were associated with this particular style.

There is, fortunately, a wealth of evidence in contemporary French to support this last assumption: a kind of metacriticism of the use of the T-form. Around 1403, Christine de Pizan wrote a verse epistle to the ageing Deschamps, which in some respects echoes his own earlier letter to Chaucer. It is unique among her verse epistles in that it employs the T-form of address. In it she declares her admiration for his work and seeks his friendship and patronage. First, however, she includes a digression on her choice of address-form.

- (5) . . . le saige
 Enseigne aux disciples a prendre
 Amistié aux saiges, se apprendre
 Desirent; et pour tant en voye
 M'a mis ton scens que je l'envoye.
 Sy soit premisses a humble chiere,
 Recommandacion très chiere,
 Te suppliant que a desplaisance
 Ne te tourt se adès plaisance
 Ay qu'em singulier nom je parle
 A toy, car je l'ay appris par le
 Stille clergial de quoy ceulx usent
 Qui en science leur temps usent.

(Roy 1886-96: 295-6, *Epistre a Eustace Mourel*, 10-22.)

‘The wise instructs his disciples to take friendship from the wise, if they wish to learn; and indeed your advice has so set me on the way that I am sending it [i.e. the letter]. So it may be a preamble, a very cordial recommendation, humbly begging you that you are not displeased if now I am pleased to speak to you with singular reference, for I have learned it through the learned style of the kind used by those who spend their time in the pursuit of knowledge.’

The reference to the style of address of those who concern themselves with the pursuit of knowledge as *le stille clerical* verbally echoes the manner of speech attributed to Langland’s lunatic, who addresses a king in the singular. But, despite this verbal echo, the spirit and associations of this passage are utterly different from that in Langland. The choice of the T-form is not here a rejection of worldly pride, but a mark of solidarity between the learned. Although, of course, in the medieval period, learning cannot be completely separated from its traditional function of helping to lead humankind to salvation, there is at the turn of the fifteenth century a growing esteem for secular learning for its own sake, and this is sufficient to justify the third choice (learned discourse) represented in Figure 1 above.

The explanation for the choice offered by Christine is repeated in dedicatory letters to some of her works, but may not have been an intellectual position with which she had long been familiar. In late summer 1402 she had received a letter from the royal secretary Pierre Col in which he writes:

- (6) Et me pardonne se je parle par “tu”, car je le fais pour monstrier que ceste mienne response vient par bonne amour, c’est assavoir pour toy ramener a droit voye; et auxi pour parler plus proprement selonc que nos anciens maistres ont parley.
(Hicks 1977: 90)

‘And pardon me if I speak using *tu*, because I do it to show you that my reply comes from my concern for you, that is to gather you to the true way, and also to speak more correctly according to the way our ancient teachers have spoken.’

In what seems to be a reply to this letter, Christine wrote on the 2nd October:

- (7) Et comme verité pure me contraingne a toy respondre ce que plus voulantiers tayroie (pour ce que la matiere n’est a ma plaisance), le feray selonc mon rude stile. Mais si come tu m’escrips que je te pardonne se tu parles a moy par “tu”, samblablement te pri, come ce soit le plus propre selonc nos anciens, – come tu mesmes dis.
(Hicks 1977: 116)