

Linguistic Variation in the Shakespeare Corpus

Pragmatics & Beyond New Series

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Volume 106

Linguistic Variation in the Shakespeare Corpus: Morpho-syntactic variability
of second person pronouns

by Ulrich Busse

Linguistic Variation in the Shakespeare Corpus

Morpho-syntactic variability
of second person pronouns

Ulrich Busse

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For Daniela and my parents

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Preface and acknowledgements

The present study is a revised and updated version of my *Habilitationsschrift*, which was accepted by the faculty of languages and literature of Osnabrück University in the winter term 2000/01. The main bulk of the manuscript was written between 1996 and 2000 and revised for publication in 2001. Last additions to the bibliography were made at the stage of proof-reading in the summer of 2002. Norman Blake's Shakespeare Grammar, which had appeared earlier this year, came too late for inclusion in the book. For this reason it is only mentioned very briefly and does not get the attention that it truly deserves.

After this rather matter-of-fact report it is my duty and pleasure to say a few words of thanks to various people who in some form or other have helped me in getting this work done.

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Halle (Saale) July 2002

Ulrich Busse

Abbreviations

1. Sigils used for reference to Shakespeare's works (following the conventions of citation in Marvin Spevack's concordances 1968–1980)

ADO	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	LUC	<i>The Rape of Lucrece</i>
ANT	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>	MAC	<i>Macbeth</i>
AWW	<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>	MM	<i>Measure for Measure</i>
AYL	<i>As You Like It</i>	MND	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
COR	<i>Coriolanus</i>	MV	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>
CYM	<i>Cymbeline</i>	OTH	<i>Othello</i>
ERR	<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>	PER	<i>Pericles</i>
1H4	<i>The First Part of King Henry The Fourth</i>	PHT	<i>The Phoenix and Turtle</i>
2H4	<i>The Second Part of King Henry The Fourth</i>	PP	<i>The Passionate Pilgrim</i>
H5	<i>King Henry The Fifth</i>	R2	<i>King Richard The Second</i>
1H6	<i>The First Part of King Henry The Sixth</i>	R3	<i>King Richard The Third</i>
2H6	<i>The Second Part of King Henry The Sixth</i>	ROM	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
3H6	<i>The Third Part of King Henry The Sixth</i>	SHR	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>
H8	<i>King Henry The Eighth</i>	SON	<i>The Sonnets</i>
HAM	<i>Hamlet</i>	STM	<i>Sir Thomas More</i>
JC	<i>Julius Caesar</i>	TGV	<i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>
JN	<i>King John</i>	TIM	<i>Timon of Athens</i>
LC	<i>A Lover's Complaint</i>	TIT	<i>Titus Andronicus</i>
LLL	<i>Love's Labor's Lost</i>	TMP	<i>The Tempest</i>
LR	<i>King Lear</i>	TN	<i>Twelfth Night</i>
		TNK	<i>The Two Noble Kinsmen</i>
		TRO	<i>Troilus and Cressida</i>
		VEN	<i>Venus and Adonis</i>
		WIV	<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>
		WT	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>

2. General abbreviations

Parts of speech, cases, tenses and other “traditional grammatical terms” are referred to by their usual abbreviations.

CEEC Helsinki Corpus of Early English Correspondence

EModE Early Modern English

FTA Face Threatening Act

ME Middle English

ModE Modern English

OE Old English

T *thou, thee, thy, thine*, etc.; also: from Latin *tu*, familiar pronoun in any language

V from Latin *vos*, polite pronoun in any language

Y *you, ye, your*, etc.

3. Symbols

> becomes ... (etymology); larger than ... (statistics)

< derived from ... (etymology); smaller than ... (statistics)

* ungrammatical

? usage questionable

<> grapheme

[] pronunciation

// phoneme

{ } morpheme

Ø zero

‘...’ meaning

/ end of a verse line in citations from Shakespeare’s works

CHAPTER 1

General introduction

1.1 Scope and objectives of the study

In view of recent work on diachronic historical corpora of the English language such as the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts*,¹ the *Helsinki Corpus of Early English Correspondence*,² the *Lampeter Corpus*,³ the *Archer Corpus*,⁴ or the most recent one, the *Corpus of English Dialogues*, one might ask why write yet another study on the well-ploughed field of address forms in drama, and, on top of that, on the basis of Shakespeare?

However, in accord with many textbooks, Crystal (1988) maintains that for the final decades of the Renaissance the works of William Shakespeare (1564–1616) and the King James Bible (the *Authorized Version*) of 1611 are the dominating influences:

Dominate, that is, from a linguistic point of view. The question of their literary brilliance and significance is not an issue for this book. Our question is much simpler yet more far-reaching: what was their effect on the language?
(Crystal 1988: 196)

As far as Shakespeare is concerned, the present study pursues basically the same objectives. Spevack (1972) also supports this claim when he states that

indeed, our picture of English as a whole will be improved by a detailed study of all of Shakespeare's language not only because Shakespeare, we will agree, may be the greatest practitioner of English but certainly because he accounts for about 40 per cent of the recorded English of his time. (Spevack 1972: 108)

Depending upon one's definition of *word*, different results concerning the total size of the Shakespeare Corpus may be obtained. If the word count of the Spevack concordances (1968–1980) is taken as a reliable basis, the sum total of words used in the 38 Shakespeare plays amounts to 835,419 (see Table 1).

When, for example, the Shakespeare Corpus is compared to the Early Modern English section of the Helsinki Corpus, which largely excludes drama as a text type,⁵ this enormous output more than matches the entire subcorpus. In the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts* the period of Early Modern English (1500–1710) is subdivided into three subperiods of 70 years each. According to Kytö (1996: 2) the words in the first subperiod EModE I (1500–1570) amount to 190,160. EModE II

Table 1. The overall size of the Shakespeare Corpus

Complete works	884,647	words
	118,406	lines
38 plays	835,419	words
	112,230	lines

(1570–1640), into which falls Shakespearean drama, comprises 189,800 words, and the final subperiod EModE III (1640–1710) accounts for 171,040 words, so that the entire EModE part of the corpus with its 551,000 words is far smaller than the Shakespeare Corpus.

The *Corpus of English Dialogues* (1560–1760), which is being jointly compiled at Uppsala and Lancaster Universities, includes comedies in corpus design, but it is not yet complete. The word count is currently approaching 700,000 words of running text. Once finished, the corpus will contain about 1,300,000 words from two major categories: authentic dialogues (trials and witness depositions) and constructed dialogues (comedy drama and handbooks), for the entire 200 year time-span.⁶

Despite, or rather because of these corpora, there are several convincing reasons for carrying out a completely new, corpus-based study on the factors that (can) influence the selection of second person pronouns in Shakespearean drama:

Even though the above-mentioned electronic corpora do not concentrate primarily on dramatic texts they provide invaluable databases that allow for comparisons with the Shakespeare Corpus. The advances in corpus linguistics over the past decade now make it possible to investigate synchronic and diachronic linguistic variation on a larger scale. In this way stylistic variation can be studied and sociolinguistic questions can be addressed. In the past, it was impossible to do so systematically.

As regards the Shakespeare Corpus, there are a number of mostly shorter works that deal with various aspects of Shakespeare’s use of language, yet many of these studies are mainly oriented towards literary criticism rather than towards modern linguistics. The extant works on forms of address are scattered, and partly atomistic in scope, as they usually consider aspects of pronoun use in individual plays.

Many of the older works are based on the Brown and Gilman (1960) model of power and solidarity, which tries to elucidate the selection of the pronouns in a sociological approach. On the other hand, studies within the tradition of structuralist linguistics treat the choice and fluctuation of address pronouns primarily in terms of markedness.⁷

More recently, pragmatically-oriented approaches on the basis of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory have come to the fore, which, however, regard

the choice of address pronouns as irrelevant, because within the framework of their theory pronoun usage is viewed as being socially predictable and thus does not add to the politeness of an utterance.

For these reasons a study that tries to incorporate the different approaches of earlier research into a comprehensive, empirically grounded description and explanation of usage on the basis of a large corpus is still wanting: only an approach such as this will allow us to draw the more general conclusions that are still needed.

1.2 Morpho-syntactic variation of second person pronouns — A working definition

Although linguistic change is a continual process, for reasons of accountability boundaries between periods have been somewhat arbitrarily established. Conventionally, the EModE period is dated from roughly 1500 to 1700.⁸ Thus, Shakespeare's writing career (1589–1613) falls approximately in the middle of this period. Table 2 below shows the inventory of forms for the personal pronouns and pronoun-determiners in EModE.⁹ At the beginning of the period in 1500 there is an overlap in function between second person singular and plural forms but also between individual T forms (*thy* and *thine*) and Y forms (*ye* and *you*). At the end of the period, about 1700, the only forms left over in Standard English are *you* and *your*.¹⁰ Görlach gives a concise summary of the various processes:

The loss of *thou/thee* and the rise of *ye/you* which left ModE with the single form *you* to express case and number is partly a syntactic phenomenon, but mainly a matter of pragmatics. [...] While the motivation of the change [to *you*] was mainly social, the choice of *thou* involved, in the decisive period between 1550 and 1620, various stylistic aspects, all of which survived only in peripheral form after 1620. (Görlach 1999a: 10f.)

Schematically, the development of the pronoun system in EModE can be represented by three isolectal stages as shown in Table 2. The personal pronouns make distinctions for gender, number and case (subjective, objective, possessive). The table presents an idealised picture, because it omits the various spellings that coexisted. Recessive variants have been put in brackets.

The table illustrates the fact that there is synchronic and diachronic morpho-syntactic variation¹¹ between *thou* and *you*, *ye* and *you* and between *thy* and *thine*. The variant forms are conditioned by various intra- and extra-linguistic factors. Thus, sociolinguistically *thou* and *you* can, in a loose sense of the term, be seen as being in complementary distribution in the first two stages of the period. However, a glance at the OED immediately proves that this is a gross simplification, because for Shakespeare's time a number of senses are documented that defy this neat

Table 2. Second person pronouns, absolute possessives and pronoun-determiners in EModE from 1500 to 1700

	Sg.	Pl.
1500		
Subjective	<i>thou</i>	<i>ye</i>
Objective	<i>thee</i>	<i>you</i>
Possessive	<i>thine</i>	<i>yours</i>
Determiner	<i>thy, thine</i>	<i>your</i>
1600		
Subjective	<i>thou</i>	<i>you (ye)</i>
Objective	<i>thee</i>	<i>you (ye)</i>
Possessive	<i>thine</i>	<i>yours</i>
Determiner	<i>thy (thine)</i>	<i>your</i>
1700		
Subjective		<i>you</i>
Objective		<i>you</i>
Possessive		<i>yours</i>
Determiner		<i>your</i>

(Table mine, based on Barber 1997: 148, 152, 157)

dichotomy and prove that *you* could perform a number of syntactic and social functions. Its role as polite second-person singular address pronoun is perhaps the most conspicuous in comparison to the rarer ones attested in the OED:

5. a. *Nominative*, replacing *thou*. Always constructed with plural verb, except in the collocation *you was*, prevalent in 17th and 18th centuries.¹²

1588 *Shakes. L. L.L. i. i.* 53 You swore to that Berowne, and to the rest.

a 1596 *Sir T. More i. ii.* 194 Well, Maister Moore, you are a merie man.

b. As *vocative*, chiefly in apposition with a noun following; in reproach or contempt often repeated after the noun (cf. *thou* 1 b).

1590 *Shakes. Mids. N. iii. ii.* 288 Fie, fie, you counterfeit, you puppet, you.

c. Phrase *you and your* —: a contemptuous, impatient, or good-natured dismissal of the thing or person mentioned. *colloquial*.

1607 *Shakes. Coriolanus iv. vi.* 97 You haue made good worke, You and your Apron men.

6. Denoting any hearer or reader; hence as an indefinite personal pronoun: One, any one.

1577 *Googe Heresbach's Husb. ii.* (1586) 87 You shall sometime have one branch more gallant than his fellowes.

7. Used with no definite meaning as indirect object ('ethical dative'). Cf. me 2 c. *archaic*.

1590 Shakes. Mids. N. i. ii. 84, I will roare you as gently as any Sucking Doue; I will roare and 'twere any Nightingale.

1602 — Ham. v. i. 183 If he be not rotten before he die..., he will last you some eight yeare, or nine yeare. A Tanner will last you nine yeare.

As regards the second person plural forms *you* and *ye*, there is a huge discrepancy in frequency between them in Shakespeare's time, because earlier on, *you* had already largely encroached on the former territory of *ye* as a subjective pronoun. Hence, *ye* is only marginally attested in the Shakespeare Corpus and occurs mostly in postverbal position, which can be explained by a combination of syntactic and pragmatic factors:

When *you* had usurped the place of *ye* as a nominative, *ye* came to be used (in the 15th century), vice versa, as an objective singular and plural (= 'thee' and 'you').

Now (in all uses) only *dialectal*, *archaic*, or *poetic*; in ordinary use replaced by you (OED).

In contrast to this, the choice between *thy* and *thine* is often explained in terms of a phonological constraint, in that by 1600 *thy* occurs before consonants, while before vowels both can be used:

Thy: [Early ME. *þī* reduced form of *þīn* thine, used in ME. before consonants except *h*, but occurring before vowels in 15th century, and ultimately universal in prose use as the possessive adjective preceding its noun, = German *dein*, *deine*, French *ton*, *ta*, *tes*.] (OED).

Thine: 2. *Attributively* (= German *dein*, French *ton*). Now *archaic* or *poetic* before a vowel or *h*, or when following the noun: otherwise superseded by thy (OED).¹³

It should be added that in analogy to *you* (cf. OED sense 6 above) the pronoun *your* also had two different functions in Shakespeare's time. So that one could establish two pronouns *your*¹ ('direct address' to one or more persons) and *your*² ('generic reference'):

[2] a. as possessive plural, referring to a number of persons addressed.

1591 Shakes. 1 Hen. VI. ii. iv. 26 In dumbe significants proclayme your thoughts.

b. as possessive singular, referring to one person addressed (originally as a mark of respect, later generally: cf. you II.): replacing thy.

1613 Shakes. Hen. VIII. v. i. 167 Sir, your Queen Desires your Visitation.

[5] b. Used with no definite meaning, or vaguely implying ‘that you know of’, corresponding to the ‘ethical dative’ *you* (*you* 7): often expressing contempt.

1590 *Shakes. Mids. N.* iii. i. 33 There is not a more fearefull wilde foule then your Lyon living.

1602 — *Ham.* v. i. 188 Your water is a sore Decayer of your horson dead body (OED).

Since Wales has repeatedly (1985, 1995)¹⁴ reported on the two different functions of *your* in detail, it will be left out from the present study. In summary she has found that the generalising-possessive, or generic-deictic *your*², as in the examples cited above from the OED [sense 5.b], originated in the 1550s and that it has continued in use until the present day. The indefinite use of *your*² rose by means of extension from the possessive sense, combining “features relevant both to its referential (generic) and discourse (deictic) meaning, features which are themselves interdependent” (1995:310).

This use enjoyed particular popularity in 17th century drama and showed a significant increase between the years 1603 and 1608. But only certain playwrights and certain types of play prominently feature this usage:

(I) 1598–1605: the satirical comedies of chiefly Jonson and also Chapman: mostly witty academic plays arising out of the so-called ‘War of the Theatres’

(II) 1603–1608: the satirical city comedies and tragicomedies chiefly written in collaboration and popular with the rising middle class. (Wales 1995:319)

In the Shakespeare Corpus it is also those plays which were written between 1603 and 1608 that testify to this dramatic fashion (cf. MND, ANT, AWW, MM and HAM). The instances of *your*² can be related to “fashionable and satirical dramatic speech acts” (ibid.). As an instructive case in point HAM (4, 3) can be mentioned. In this scene Claudius asks Hamlet where Polonius is. In his answer Hamlet gives a sententious and cynical comment on Polonius’s death. He reiterates *your*² no less than four times in quick succession. *Your* is used to reinforce the self-assumed superiority of the speaker in particular areas of competence.

(1) King: Now, Hamlet, where’s Polonius?

Hamlet: At supper.

King: At supper? where?

Hamlet: Not where he eats, but where ’a is eaten; a certain convocation of politic worms are e’en at him. *Your* worm is *your* only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots; *your* fat king and *your* lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes, but to one table — that’s the end. (HAM 4, 3, 16–25, my emphasis)¹⁵

The ambivalence makes the pronoun very useful for the dramatist, as it simultaneously supports the illusion of the dramatic world by the speaker-addressee-bond,

but also goes beyond it by incorporating the audience and by appealing to their knowledge (cf. Wales 1985: 21 f.).

1.2.1 Variation vs. choice

Change in language is caused by a deep psychological need to conform, i.e. to identify with the norms of the power elements in a social complex. There are literally thousands of possible reasons for the initial impetus for what *may* develop into an accepted change. The present study subscribes to the variationist approach as developed by the “Helsinki School”:

The variationist approach focuses on existing variation in the linguistic usage at any given time and sets out to explore the factors conditioning alternative ways of expressing (near-)synonymy. Both linguistic and external factors are commonly assessed. Studies based on this methodology are empirically highly demanding and therefore tend to operate at the level of individual changes and their textual embedding rather than social variation at large.
(Nevalainen 1996a: 4)

Rissanen mentions that “according to Samuels [1972], change in language is caused, firstly, by variation due to inertia and differences in style, secondly, by systemic regulation, and, thirdly, by contact and extralinguistic factors” (1986: 97). In this context he introduces the term *variant field* that can also be put to use for the variability of second person pronouns:¹⁶

A variant field is the pattern formed by the variants expressing one and the same meaning or relationship, and it should be defined not only by enumerating the variants and giving information on their proportion of occurrence, but also by discussing the factors, both internal and external, which affect the choice of the variant. (Rissanen 1986: 97)

Applied to the choice of second person pronouns in EModE, the variant field can quite easily be delimited by taking into account the dyads of *thou* vs. *you*, *ye* vs. *you*, and *thy* vs. *thine* as simple two-member fields. The individual changes will be dealt with in a synchronic and diachronic form-to-function mapping by outlining the variants in the Shakespeare Corpus and by then tracing their historical development (cf. Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 13 ff.).

In this respect, *variation* in the present study shall be defined in the following way: in the course of linguistic performance a meaningful choice between two (or more) discrete alternatives has been made. Synchronically, this choice may have been influenced by a number of factors “such as features in the phonological environment, the syntactic context, discursive function of the utterance, topic, style, interactional situation or personal or sociodemographic characteristics of the

speaker or other participants” (Sankoff 1988:984).¹⁷ In the diachronic perspective, these choices may affect the shape of the variant field; i.e. the field members may change their status by becoming marked, obsolescent, etc. leading, in the case of the English system of pronominal address, to a restructuring of the paradigm.

If two linguistic forms in a specific language co-occur at a given time it is from the point of view of economy in language very likely that they are not semantically identical — at least in their connotations, or since we deal with a set of closed-class elements that acquire meaning through their capacity of anaphoric reference or their pragmatic value we may assume that they are neither in free variation nor in complementary distribution — to borrow two terms from structural phonology — but that there is a certain overlap in function in that they should not be viewed as if in a clear-cut binary division, but as if on a sliding-scale.

Schulze (1998:7ff.) states that there is a considerable overlap between the concepts of *variation* and that of *choice*. He argues that to use a language expressively and communicatively involves cognitive processes which take place in a social world with a variety of linguistic or extralinguistic constraints. For the mechanisms and motivations behind the choices he draws on the four basic distinct properties of language as put forward by Verschueren (1995:14ff.), viz.: intersubjectivity, variability, negotiability and adaptability, of which the last two deserve special emphasis in the framework of the present study, because the pronoun choices are by no means totally mechanical and thus predictable, but flexible, which allows language users to make meaningful choices.

1.3 Theoretical foundations and methodology of the study

Wales has pointed out that the topic of address pronouns is “one of the most interesting of the grammatical changes that have taken place in English over the centuries” (1983:107). Despite the fact that its major developments have been outlined in a number of classical accounts she is of the opinion that there is still space for new research. More recently, she has reaffirmed her claim that “even material that is well known from this period (e.g. Shakespeare’s plays) has not itself been probed in sufficient depth from the kind of broader perspectives and contextualisations” (1995:310) of discourse analysis, sociolinguistics and pragmatics and their bearing on linguistics and English grammar.

Thus, the present study will try to bring some of these aspects to fruition by being multifarious, i.e. it will try to integrate different research methods, in particular those of:

1. corpus linguistics,¹⁸
2. socio-historical linguistics and
3. historical pragmatics.

1. The study is strictly empirical and corpus-based. In contrast to earlier research which concentrated on individual plays, the whole of Shakespearean drama will be investigated by making use of Spevack's concordances and new electronic media such as the *Oxford Electronic Shakespeare*.¹⁹ By means of investigating a corpus with its total accountability rather than a selection of texts according to hermeneutic principles, the results can be put on a basis that is statistically representative. Earlier research on Shakespeare was clearly marred by the non-availability of a complete corpus and modern (electronic) retrieval facilities:

Twentieth-century studies tended to think small, and in small pieces. Selected phenomena were analyzed on the basis of small and representative samples, although, lacking the yardstick of completeness and an easy access to the complete Shakespeare, we could never really say just how small or large, representative or unrepresentative, the samples or for that matter the phenomena were. (Spevack 1972: 107)

With the completion of the concordances, Spevack could indeed study single phenomena or combinations "against the background of Shakespeare's total usage" (1972: 108). Thirty years later, with the publication of the above-mentioned diachronic corpora it is not only possible to account completely for the distribution of items in the Shakespeare Corpus and come to linguistically relevant conclusions (cf. Stein 1974: 2) but also to extend and project the findings by comparing them with data from other recently assembled corpora or other related studies in order to answer, for example, questions such as whether pronoun usage in drama resembled that of contemporary society or was rather conventionalised.²⁰

In the past there have been objections to corpus studies, especially from theoretically minded scholars working within the field of generative transformational grammar.²¹ First and foremost, the limitations of a corpus, especially its selectiveness and its accidental nature, were objected to, as they will only allow for the analysis of those forms or features that are present in the corpus, and that it cannot be verified which of the data should be ascribed to performance, but not to competence.

This is of course not true for historical linguistics. Svartvik (1992: 8–10) points out ten reasons in support of corpus linguistics, among which, for the present investigation, the aspects of verifiability and the absence of native speakers in historical studies are the most important ones.

Adding to this, the Shakespeare Corpus is a special case of a closed and complete set of data allowing "the possibility of total accountability of linguistic features" (Svartvik 1992: 9). Stein in his analysis of inflections in the Shakespeare Corpus also draws attention to the special nature of the corpus. In his opinion the Shakespeare Corpus poses two major problems which are closely connected. Firstly, it is a literary corpus, and, secondly, there are a number of uncertainties in its

textual transmission. Both features give rise to a dialectics of grammatical description and literary interpretation (cf. Stein 1974:7).

2. It has often been noted that in the period of EModE apart from the pronoun system a number of other important morpho-syntactic changes were underway, as e.g. the inflections of the third person singular *-th/-s*, the auxiliaries *will/shall*, the relative pronouns *which/the which* etc., use or non-use of *do*, etc. In Shakespeare's time all of these were viable alternatives, however, they could quite purposefully be used as means for social, stylistic, rhetorical, etc. variation, and we can positively assume that Shakespeare was keenly aware of the effects of this variability.

Despite the varied history of transmission for individual plays, many of these variants are textually stable and cannot simply be attributed to the hands of different scribes or compositors.²² For this reason, they can be accounted for in the framework of socio-historical linguistics. Romaine (1982), Milroy (1992) and others have provided the theoretical basis to transpose modern techniques employed in sociolinguistics for explaining language variation and change into the domain of historical linguistics.²³

On the one hand, this implies of course that modern methods of sociolinguistics (e.g. Labov 1994) based on socio-economic factors cannot immediately be transferred to Early Modern England, with its rank system representing an intermediate stage between medieval society with its three estates and the modern class society (cf. Laslett 1983, Wrightson 1991, Burke 1992, Leith 1997).

On the other hand, such approaches to explain linguistic variation by establishing correlations between intra- and extralinguistic factors presuppose that stable relations obtain between factors like regional background, socio-economic status of speakers, situation, text type etc. with linguistic features. For the Late Medieval and Early Modern society in England, which was still hierarchically structured and only at the brink of the modern upwardly mobile society, such a relationship may with some confidence be assumed.²⁴

The substitution of *thou* by *you* in the course of some 500 years is an interesting case in point. The S-curve model of linguistic change (cf. Aitcheson 1991:83 ff., Labov 1994:65 ff., Ogura and Wang 1996) accounts for the frequencies of incoming and recessive variants during language change. The replacement of *thou* by *you* starts very slowly in the 13th century, reaches its peak in the 16th and 17th centuries, and then slowly recedes from the 18th century onwards, except in special genres and registers. Hope notes that

the important point here is that during the exponential phase, an early Modern English speaker's frequency of use of 'thou' will be determined by a number of factors. We know that in-coming prestige variants like 'you' are used more frequently by younger, more educated, more urban members of the speech community. (Hope 1994b:7)

Applied to the context of Shakespeare's plays, socio-historical linguistic tools will, on the level of macro analysis, allow for the objective measurement of usage frequencies that might be attributed to language change as Shakespeare was progressing through his writing career, and on the other hand, on the micro level, discourse (dyads) of the fictional characters can reveal patterns in the socially and pragmatically motivated choices that speakers make in communication.

3. As mentioned above, historical pragmatics is to serve as a third theoretical foothold of the present study. In their conceptual outline of the discipline, Jacobs and Jucker concede that "it might be argued that historical pragmatics is just a new label for a range of research efforts that have existed for a long time" (1995:4) but, nonetheless, they deem the new label justified because it "will give these research efforts a focus that has been lacking so far". In their state-of-the-art report they distinguish between two different approaches within this broad framework, i.e. synchronic/diachronic pragmatics and pragmaphilology. The two domains of historically oriented pragmatics are characterised as follows:

1. the description and the understanding of conventions of language use in communities that once existed and that are no longer accessible for direct observation, and
2. the description and the explanation of the development of speech conventions in the course of time. [...] However, historical pragmatics can also be used as a philological tool to explain literary artefacts from the past.
(Jacobs and Jucker 1995:6)

In his description of the Shakespeare hypertext, Neuhaus (1990:81) gives an outline of the contributions of linguistics to Shakespeare studies and deplores that it has hitherto played only a marginal role and that many of its efforts still belong to the older conception of linguistics. On the basis of the hypertext, he sees possibilities in the immediate future for applied informatics and linguistics in the fields of quantitative stylistics and the study of linguistic variation.

Stein (1987) and Rissanen (1990) also comment "on the happy reunion of English philology and historical linguistics" after a period of benign neglect in the 1960s. Among the factors that have helped to end "this unfortunate breakdown in communication between historical linguists and philologists" (354) Rissanen mentions:

- the rapid increase of sociolinguistic studies
- growing interest in language variation
- focused interest on performance, i.e. the communication situation, and the members of the speech community linked especially to the works of Labov (1966, 1994), Samuels (1972), Bailey (1973), Romaine (1982) and Milroy and Milroy (1985).

In a graph, he explains the relationship between philology and linguistics in historical studies of the English language as follows: for the periods of OE and ME, philology takes up a large part in studies which demand “a great deal of solid philological knowledge on the background of texts” (361). This focus shifts rapidly with the emergence of EModE texts, about which a lot of background information is known. For these texts (socio-)linguistic studies become possible.

For Rissanen the new approach to historical language studies, to which I would like to subscribe whole-heartedly, should combine the following strong points of both disciplines:

From philology it should inherit an “ear for the language of the past”, based on extensive reading of texts, an interest in the finest nuances of expression, a solid textual basis for research, and a focus on cultural, historical, educational, and personal aspects in analysing the language of a text. The contribution of linguistics should be a solid theoretical background to encourage disciplined generalizations, a vision of language as a simultaneously individual and social phenomenon, an interest in not only written but also spoken expression, and more powerful methodological and technological tools for collecting and handling linguistic data. (Rissanen 1990: 366)

Methodologically, the study will be inductive and data-driven by incorporating quantitative and qualitative features. McEnery and Wilson summarise the difference between these two ways of analysis as follows: “in qualitative research no attempt is made to assign frequencies to the linguistic features which are identified in the data. Whereas in quantitative research we classify features, count them, and even construct more complex statistical models in an attempt to explain what is observed [...]” (1996: 62f).

The intention to combine the three different strands of linguistic research as outlined above and their methodologies is twofold:

on the one hand, to bridge the gap between empirical and theoretical linguistics by evaluating the data in the light of recent advances in theoretical linguistics in terms of language change, grammaticalization, etc. and, especially to shed light on some of the sociolinguistic patterns governing variation as postulated by Weinreich et al. (1968), namely constraints, transition, embedding, evaluation and actuation by linking the results of the corpus study to research on other diachronic corpora, and thus contribute to a better understanding of a crucial period of language change in the English system of pronominal address, from 1500 to 1700, that has led to a complete restructuring of the pronoun paradigm, and,

on the other hand, to contribute to Shakespeare studies, which for a long time have been preoccupied with the interpretation of individual plays, characters, or the explanation of difficult text passages in the sense of “crux-busting” by drawing attention to phenomena of corpus-internal developments that are, putatively, also

of importance for the literary appreciation and interpretation of characters, plays, genres, dates of composition, authorship studies etc.

1.4 Outline of the study

While there is an overall structure to the arrangement of chapters in the book leading from primarily quantitative to qualitative corpus investigations of related aspects, the individual chapters are self-contained entities.

The chapters of the book usually begin with a working hypothesis on the items of variation under scrutiny, followed by a critical discussion of seminal previous work in the field that will then serve as a backdrop for the empirical corpus studies. The data are categorised and analysed by applying the basic methods as outlined in Chapter 1.3. The findings of each chapter are summarised in a short conclusion.

For this reason, readers are not forced to stick to the pre-arranged order of chapters but can feel free to create an order of their own choice. Very impatient readers may find it desirable to start at the far end and take the final summary and conclusion as an introduction to the topic that puts everything that has gone before into a clearer, more concise perspective.

CHAPTER 2

Previous research on the use of personal pronouns in Early Modern English with special reference to Shakespeare's plays

2.1 Introduction

Rudanko says that “to write on Shakespeare today poses many challenges, including that of familiarity. Whatever one may want to say may have been said before and not only said before, but rebutted twice over” (1993: 1). His solution to the problem is “to avoid rehearsing old arguments” and to employ new tools for inquiry. However, to do this in the field of the second person pronouns implies basically two things: firstly, to prepare a comprehensive study to review the vast amount of work which has already been done, and, secondly, once the critical literature has been brought up to date, to decide what still needs to be done and how it should be carried out.

Critical surveys of the works published on forms of address in the Shakespeare Corpus show that the complex problem of personal pronouns has attracted a great number of scholars from the late nineteenth century onwards. For the reason that these works have been outlined before (cf. Wales 1983, Busse 1998a and Stein forthc.) only those texts that can be considered as cornerstones for our topic shall be presented here in this overview chapter. This is not to say that the texts not mentioned are considered to be of less value or importance. There are a number of mostly shorter works that cover the topic of address forms in Shakespeare, but these usually investigate the use of personal pronouns in individual plays or deal with specific issues connected to pronoun use. These works will be discussed in the following chapters in the light of specific research questions.

2.2 Classics in the field

In the late nineteenth century we find general reference works and dictionaries that list and describe linguistic peculiarities of Shakespeare's language use, including the personal pronouns. The first comprehensive, and in many respects, classical account of the function of the address pronouns in Shakespeare's works is to be found in Abbott's *Shakespearian Grammar* ([1870] 1972). The book may be old-fashioned,

but it contains useful material (cf. Barber 1997:182). In §§231–235, pp. 153–159, Abbott deals with “Thou and You”. Despite this heading he mostly concentrates on *thou*. In §231 (p. 154) he describes the four basic functions of *thou* as follows:

1. affection towards friends,
2. good-humoured superiority to servants,
3. contempt or anger to strangers,
4. in the higher poetic style and in the language of solemn prayer.

Due to the fact that *thou* had largely fallen into disuse in Shakespeare’s time, it was usually regarded as archaic and thus often readily adopted in usages as listed under (4). To these functions he adds “that this use is modified sometimes by euphony [...] and sometimes by fluctuations of feeling” (154). The various uses are illustrated by numerous examples. Unfortunately, he does not provide a similar outline for *you*. Thus, we have to infer its use *ex negativo* from the functions of *thou* as listed above.

In form of an alphabetically organised dictionary, Schmidt and Sarrazin ([1874/75] 1962) also give a short outline of the major (social) functions of the two pronouns:

Thou [...] being the customary address from superiors to inferiors, and expressive, besides, of any excitement of sensibility; of familiar tenderness as well as of anger; of reverence as well as of contempt.
(Schmidt and Sarrazin [1875] 1962:1214)

You [...] the usual address to one as well as to several persons [...]. Used indefinitely, = one, they: *in these times you stand on distance*, Wiv. II, 1, 233.
(Schmidt and Sarrazin [1875] 1962:1407f.)

In addition to further information on the use after imperatives, the exchange of *thou* for *thee* and *you* as ethical dative, they also point to the frequent fluctuation of the pronouns. All of these uses are amply illustrated by quotations.

Franz (1898/99) follows in this tradition. In the fourth edition of his book ([1939] 1986) in §§289–306 (pp. 257–278) he gives an even more detailed description of the social and emotive functions of the two address pronouns, again by providing quotations and philological interpretations of specific pronoun usages. The (proto-)typical functions of the pronouns as outlined by these three classics in the field still hold until the present day, although, despite their pioneering character and philological precision, these early treatments can be criticised for paying too much attention to detail and of not allowing comparisons in distribution. For instance, Stein (1974:2f.) deplores that the older studies, including Franz, did not try to account for total distributions of variant forms and that in this way they do not make statements that are linguistically relevant.

For reasons of fairness and historical justice it needs to be mentioned that these scholars were excellent and widely-read philologists. However, this older strand of

research had to rely on gathering data by extensive reading and collecting them by means of citation slips. But the drawer-cum-slip-method hardly allows for quantitative comparisons between authors, epochs, etc.

Byrne ([1936] 1970) provides a detailed treatment of the use and functions of the address pronouns in Shakespeare's works. After a historical outline of the development of pronoun use from the 13th century onwards, she discusses the significance of pronoun usage as a means for characterisation. She subdivides Shakespeare's work chronologically into four periods and treats all plays with the exception of TNK. She concludes her thesis by providing a summary of pronoun usage by the chief character types in the plays and by giving evidence on the motivation of pronoun choices. For instance, in her summary of *you/thou*-usage in LR, she gives the following usage patterns for the two pronouns:

thou is used by father to daughters; in respect; in appeal; in anger; in love; in apostrophe; in confidence; to self; to an inferior, servant or messenger; to a fool in privileged language; in affection; in sympathy; to the absent; in appeal; in companionship; in excitement; in contempt; by lower class equals; in reverence; in intimacy; in tenderness; in surprise; in contempt; in threat; in gratitude; to a spirit; to the dead.

you is used in courtly intercourse; by sisters ordinarily; to a steward as a gentleman servant; to a superior or master; to a parent; by a parent to children of rank. (Byrne [1936] 1970: 114)

2.3 Brown and Gilman's concept of power and solidarity semantics

In the more recent past the (inter-)social functions of the second-person pronouns have often been discussed within the framework of the model introduced by Gilman and Brown (1958), Brown and Gilman (1960) and Brown and Ford (1961),¹ who wrote three consecutive articles on the development of the forms of pronominal and nominal address in European languages. In their first paper, Gilman and Brown (1958) trace the difference of pronominal address back to the Roman Empire of the 4th century, when the pronoun *vos* appears as a reflex of the *nos pluralis majestatis* of the emperor. From then on, they show the spread of the plural form and the development on two planes: a vertical dimension of status which yields the polite plural pronoun as a deferential address to superiors, and the singular pronoun as an address form for social inferiors, and on the horizontal level a reciprocal exchange of plural pronouns among social equals when not intimate or well acquainted, and the singular pronoun as a sign of intimacy. In their 1960 article they introduce the term *power semantics*, which is characterised by a non-reciprocity of the forms of address between members of different social strata. Wales

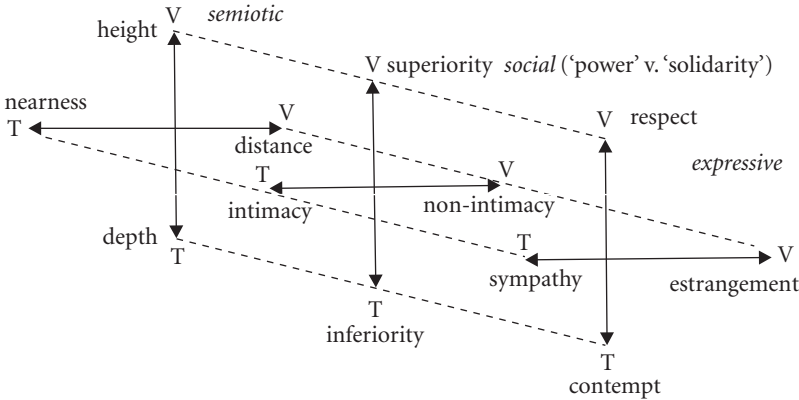


Figure 1. The planes of Brown and Gilman's power and solidarity semantics.

(1983: 110) neatly summarises the dichotomies of power and solidarity in form of a figure.

In Figure 1 T and V stand as generic language independent designators for the simple or intimate second person singular pronoun of address (T) and the polite and more distant second person plural pronoun (V). The symbols have been introduced by Brown and Gilman (1960) and the abbreviations refer to the putative origin in Latin *tu* and *vos*.

Brown and Gilman relate this scheme to static and hierarchical societies in Europe from the Middle Ages well into the 19th century. Although not precisely dated, but allegedly operational in EModE society, Brown and Gilman see the development of a new scheme which they term *solidarity semantics* and which does not operate on hierarchical class distinctions but on notions of intimacy and like-mindedness, and which results in a reciprocal exchange of pronouns; the choice of singular or plural forms depending on whether the addressee is regarded as closely related to the speaker or not. Brown and Gilman attribute the emergence of this category to a change in the social structure of European societies that led to “social mobility and an equalitarian ideology” ([1960] 1972: 117).

In so doing they construct a close link between changes in society and those in language, or to put it more directly — the choice of the pronouns of address would then be the immediate corollary of social change. I would subscribe to the criticism put forward by Wales, where she refutes the “direct connection between social structure, group ideology, and linguistic features, i.e. pronouns” (1983:123) in favour of a mere relatability.

By providing typical relational pairs, Hope (1994b) has formalised the reciprocal and non-reciprocal exchange of T/V pronouns in form of a table.

He has applied this model to the gender variable finding that “there is a general tendency towards the predicted weighting of V forms from women to men, and that

Table 1. T/V choice and social relationship

1.	<i>T forms</i> non-reciprocal (unequal power relationship) used by superior to inferior, e.g.: husband to wife; parent to child master or mistress to servant monarch to subject male to female
2.	reciprocal (equal power relationship/solidarity) used to signal equality of social power (lower class) or shared concern/interest, e.g.: between lower class members between siblings between lovers between close friends
3.	<i>V forms</i> non-reciprocal (unequal power relationship) used by inferior to superior, e.g.: wife to husband child to parent servant to master or mistress subject to monarch female to male
4.	reciprocal (equal power relationship, neutral or uncertain power relationship), e.g.: between upper class members as a neutral form to strangers and increasingly as the general second person singular pronoun

(Table from Hope 1994b:57, slightly edited)

this is more marked in Fletcher than in Shakespeare” (1994b:60), but he also admits that due to a general lack of female characters in the plays a particular “thouful” male speech can skew the statistics. Mazzon confirms that in HAM, LR and OTH “men do tend to use more *thou* than women” (1992:133).²

For the usefulness of the Brown and Gilman model to explain pronominal variation in EModE, Wales comes to the conclusion that

BG’s model is ‘powerful’ and therefore attractive, because it formulates sociolinguistic universals. But the danger is with such models that the potentiality for individual variation and development on the part of specific speech communities is under-estimated, or backgrounded; and that other potential universals are not considered. (Wales 1983:122)

The main difficulties within the Brown and Gilman approach to the English language, and to EModE in particular, lie in the facts that the overlay of social and affective usages of *thou* are often difficult or impossible to distinguish, and, furthermore, in Shakespearean English there is often momentary fluctuation in

Table 2. The stages of the development of T and V in Europe

	Stage 1		Stage 2		Stage 3		Stage 4	
	S	NS	S	NS	S	NS	S	NS
a. + P → + P	T	T	V	V	T	V	T	V
b. − P → − P	T	T	T	T	T	V	T	V
c. + P → − P	T	T	T	T	T	<i>T</i>	T	V
d. − P → + P	T	T	V	V	<i>V</i>	V	T	V

Stage 1: original situation, only singular and plural distinguished
Stage 2: introduction of the power factor, non-reciprocal usage between c) and d)
Stage 3: introduction of the solidarity factor, points of conflict of the two factors italicized
Stage 4: resolution today of the conflict in favour of the solidarity factor

(Table from Wales 1983: 112)
Abbreviations: P = Power; S = Solidarity; NS = no solidarity

pronoun usage among two interlocutors which cannot be explained by a model assuming rather static social hierarchies.

Brown and Gilman’s model is further flawed for some linguists by the fact that the solidarity factor and the power factor come into conflict, especially when in in-group situations e.g. among relatives or friends of unequal social status the socially inferior speaker can choose between the *thou* of in-group solidarity or the deferential *you* of power semantics.

With reference to Trudgill (1974: 107) Wales has tabulated the various stages of the introduction of power and solidarity semantics in Europe. In Table 2 the areas of conflict in stage 3 have been highlighted.

Many European languages other than English have resolved this problem by resorting to the T pronoun for solidarity and the V pronoun for non-solidarity. This is, however, somewhat oversimplified. There is in fact a definite hierarchy of factors, so that someone may use V to an older person although there is a strong element of solidarity in the relationship. For instance, in German *Sie* is frequently used to soften or avoid a conflict situation. In English, however, this did not happen, as *you* eventually (except in dialectal use) pushed *thou* out of the system.

In this respect, Lutz argues that the “Modern English paradigm is exceptional not only in comparison with that of the immediately preceding stages of the language and with that of the other Germanic and Indo-European languages [...], but also compared to many entirely unrelated languages” (1998: 190). Table 3 illustrates that the person systems of the world’s languages consist of four, five or six members.

The OE, ME and EModE 6-person system is the most frequent among the world languages. It occurs in 19 of the 60 languages investigated by Ingram (1978: 216). “By contrast, the system distinguishing only five forms, as exemplified

Table 3. Person systems in the languages of the world

6-person system e.g.: OE, ME, EModE		5-person system e.g.: ModE		4-person system e.g.: Korean, Kamanugu	
Sing.	Plur.	Sing.	Plur.	Sing.	Plur.
<i>I</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>we</i>
<i>thou</i>	<i>you</i>		<i>you</i>	<i>thou</i>	
<i>he</i>	<i>they</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>they</i>	<i>he</i>	

(Combination of Tables from Lutz 1998: 191 and Yong-Lin 1988: 159f.; slightly edited)

by Modern English [...] is not recorded by Ingram for any other language of his sample" (Lutz 1998: 191).

Yong-Lin (1988: 159) states that there are 150 languages exhibiting at least two separate forms to indicate number variation in second person pronouns. He points out that in addition to English, Korean and Kamanugu lack the singular–non-singular distinction for the second person. In fact, these two languages do not have a plural form for the third person either.

Apart from these two languages, the notion of markedness may be evoked here, saying that according to Greenberg's (1966) "universal implication law" a language that has the item A, necessarily also has the item B, but not vice versa. In this dyad A is regarded as the marked element and B the unmarked one. This can also be applied to the two pronouns *thou* and *you*. Head has shown that any language that has a second person singular pronoun also possesses a second person plural pronoun, but not the other way around. In his study 90 languages make use of number variation "with second person pronouns as a means for showing degrees of respect or social distance" (1978: 157).

Given basically the same social background as France and Germany, why did the English pronominal system develop so differently? Following Wales (1983), Mühlhäusler and Harré and also Leith think that unlike Brown and Gilman's assumption there was not an "equalitarian ideology" or "an egalitarian ethic" operating in 16/17th century England. Leith believes that, quite to the contrary, the pronominal change is "a reflex of middle-class insecurity" (1997: 107), particularly in the London urban society, which would also explain the "Elizabethan obsession" with titles. Mühlhäusler and Harré also subscribe to this point of view in that they interpret *you* as an urban status marker which was "simply bound to become more and more widely used" (1990: 153).³ However, Mausch (1993) suggests that the pronominal system collapsed for morphological rather than sociological reasons.

These questions are not dealt with satisfactorily in the concept of Brown and Gilman. Owing to this, it has been criticised as being too rigid and too deterministic, as

it does not readily lend itself to account for variation as a rule rather than an exception, although — from the present-day point of view — the intricate nature of pronoun variation makes it difficult to include it in any theoretical concept. Our knowledge of 16th and 17th century society is still very incomplete. For example, Hope (1994b) finds the factors governing EModE pronoun usage quite confusing, “with at least three competing systems — a social system, an emotional/politeness-based system, and a system in which ‘you’ is the only available form — all open to use by speakers” (1994b:58). From these he only expects the last subsystem to show “socio-historical linguistic patterning consistently”, because the social and emotional subsystems “would be expected to disrupt it” (ibid.). With respect to the demise of the T forms during the EModE period it must be added that “*you* is polite only as long as it is opposed to *thou*. When *thou* loses frequency, the polite connotation of *you* is worn out to the same extent” (Braun 1988:59).

In a third influential paper, Brown and Ford (1961) examine the nominal forms of “Address in American English”. They contrast usages of first names/last names and (honorific) titles with the result that in the vast majority of cases first names are exchanged reciprocally and last names and titles occur only at the beginning of an acquaintanceship. The relationship is symmetrical and the choice is governed by factors of intimacy and distance. Non-reciprocal exchange is put down to differences in age or professional status. The progression from formal to less formal forms of nominal address in the course of a relationship is usually initiated by the older and/or socially superior speaker.

Despite the dictum of Brown and Ford that Modern English nominal forms of address are reasonably well described by the binary contrast of First Name vs. Title and Last Name, it should have become clear that in a hierarchically structured society as in Early Modern England the forms of nominal and pronominal address do not work as separate systems but in unison, and they should hence not be reduced to a dichotomy. Blake, for instance, has pointed out that the incorporation of “all forms of address used in a play [could] help to provide some guidance for the correct interpretation of the social and emotional context of a given scene so that its pragmatics can be properly assessed” (1990:68). Thus, a study on pronoun choices in Shakespeare’s plays, especially those where pronoun switching is difficult to assess or seems to be unmotivated, could possibly be made firmer by analysing all forms of address together with the register of the whole utterance in respect of ordinary or ornate vocabulary and/or syntax, etc.

2.4 Politeness theory applied to Shakespearean drama

After this criticism of their earlier theories it is interesting to discuss the Brown and Gilman (1989) approach to Shakespearean drama in the concept of politeness