

# Historical perspectives on forms of English dialogue

Editors

Gabriella Mazzon, Luisanna Fodde

METODI E PROSPETTIVE

Studi di Linguistica Filologia Letteratura



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Volume pubblicato con il contributo della Fondazione Banco di Sardegna.

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# *Introduction*

by Gabriella Mazzon and Luisanna Fodde

## **English Historical Pragmatics and Dialogue Studies**

This volume is meant as a contribution towards the study of historical pragmatics, and of dialogue studies in particular, as both a testimony of the mature stage reached by such studies and, hopefully, as a prompt for future developments in this research field. A rich array of studies has already developed over the very few last years, in spite of the fact that, as late as at the end of last century, Jucker, Fritz and Lebsanft (1999a: 13) claimed that it was «doubtful» that dialogue studies would ever emerge as a coherent and fully-fledged field in English historical linguistics.

Authoritative and comprehensive works on (particularly English) Historical Pragmatics started to be published in the early 1990s (for instance, Arnovick 1990, Busse 1991, Ehlich 1992, Kopytko 1993, the fundamental collection of contributions in Jucker 1995; see also Brinton 1996; the *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* started in 2000; precursors were contributions such as Stein 1985) and are now being published at a growing rate (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2010, Bergs and Brinton 2012, Huang *fc.*, Nevalainen and Traugott *fc.*), and the interest in this subfield has spread quite rapidly within the Italian scholarly community too, as testified by collective publications such as Di Martino and Lima (2000). A considerable part of these studies concern dialogic texts, although the beginnings were indeed not systematically connected with dialogue studies as such.

While being one of the first interests chronologically, especially in micro-studies (e.g. Brown and Gilman 1989, Kopytko 1993, respectively applying and criticizing traditional Politeness Theory, and Fritz 1995, as well as Rudanko 1993 and Bergner 1998), the study of dialogue in historical English texts was later enriched by the contribution of stylistics (Burton

1980, Culpeper, Short and Verdonk 1998) and by further explorations. These especially concerned the nature of fictional dialogue as textual evidence (Herman 1991), thus focussing on one of the main methodological problems of this field, i.e. the fact that our data are mostly quite different from those originally used in many of the theoretical frameworks we adopt. For a general review of such issues see for instance Culpeper and Kytö (2010: 7-16). At the very end of the last century, one fundamental collection (Jucker, Fritz and Lebsanft 1999b) constituted the turning point that laid the theoretical and methodological foundations for subsequent studies.

At the same time, historical pragmatics was turning its attention to other text-types than drama; the creation of corpora and collections of correspondence and of scientific, didactic, or anyway non-literary, texts deepened our insight into the pragmatics of texts that have different conventions and rhetorical patterns, besides having fewer formal restrictions, e.g. those induced by metrical constraints, than literature (among the many studies available, see for instance Danet and Bogoch 1994, Taavitsainen 1999, Di Martino 2000, Fitzmaurice 2002, Valle 2004, contributions in Dossena and Fitzmaurice 2006, Nurmi, Nevala and Palander-Collin 2009); such text-types may not appear to be immediately relevant for dialogue studies, but on the contrary their investigation within historical sociolinguistics and pragmatics highlighted the elements of “interactivity” that are anyway present, whether the addressee is fictional or real, internal or external to the text, i.e. a reading public. In its turn, the analysis of trial records made it possible to look at dialogue exchanges that are not fictional, although variously edited and filtered, thus providing an ideal counterpart to the study of dramatic dialogue (for example, Fries 1998, Wright 2000, Archer 2005; 2006, Culpeper and Archer 2008, Kryk-Kastovsky 2009).

These developments have brought our research to a stage in which it is possible to integrate a wider perspective, through corpus studies, with the micro-perspective that looks at individual dialogue stretches. This has been fostered not only by the general development of historical corpora of English (on these see Claridge 2008, Rissanen 2008, Kytö 2010), but also by the creation of focussed corpora such as the *Corpus of English Dialogues* (CED 2006)<sup>1</sup>. In turn, the acquisition of this new type of insight has led to the formulation of new models of different text-types on the basis of their relation to what Taavitsainen (1999: 245-6) terms the “mimesis” of speech features.

1. On the various advantages and limitations of the intersection between corpus linguistics and discourse analysis, although mainly in connection with contemporary data, see Virtanen (2009), Kytö (2010).

The study of dramatic dialogue in a diachronic perspective, for instance, has highlighted that the degree of mimesis varies within drama itself through time and genres (Stucky 1994), while the availability of dialogic material belonging to the same time-span but to different text-types has made it possible to investigate similarities and differences in the transferring of dialogic features onto the written text.

The most recent and comprehensive model, developed by Culpeper and Kytö (2010), has established itself as a guide for several studies in this volume and in other, comparable contributions. The model represents an attempt at producing a systematic account of the relative distance from actual speech of several text-types and of whole genres, thus taking into account the double level of intra-textual dialogue, e.g. between characters, and of extra-textual addressing, i.e. the way in which the text is designed to be perceived by a reader/audience with a specific social and pragmatic competence.

One of the most important consequences of the growth of these studies is the realisation that dialogicity and “interactivity” are also present, although to different extents, in various text-types that are not immediately perceived as dialogic. In this sense, the contribution of interactional sociolinguistics (Palander-Collin 2002) and of discourse analysis (Aijmer and Stenström 2004) to our studies has been fundamental, and the ample section on non-fictional texts in the present volume testifies to that. At the same time, the new insight has cross-fertilized studies on fictional dialogue and drama; one of the most recent and promising perspectives, mainly advocated and promoted by Jucker (fc. and in this volume), is in the study of drama as evidence not so much of language use, but of language thought, or in other words, drama not as a token of pragmatic performance, but as referring to pragmatic competence, as an indication of what linguistic means are used, for instance, to convey the socially acceptable “politeness” code (Arnovick 2006: 11). Another direction is the analysis of speech acts as realised in dialogue exchanges; this type of study, which takes dialogue dynamics into account, has also developed recently (e.g. Arnovick 1999, Taavitsainen and Jucker 2007, contributions in Jucker and Taavitsainen 2008 and references therein contained), and is represented in the present collection not only with reference to dramatic dialogue, but also to other text-types.

Although it is increasingly felt that a deeper analysis of dialogue can be optimally carried out through considering also combinations of language indicators, and not just single items, as well as the specific sequencing of elements, intensive work has been carried out in recent years as concerns

pronouns and terms of address (Busse 2002, 2003, Stein 2003, Walker 2007, Mazzon 2000, 2003, 2009), modality markers (Arnovick 1990, Facchinetti 2000, Dossena 2003, 2006, Nakayasu 2009), discourse markers, interjections, and expressions of “pragmatic noise” (Taavitsainen 1995, Brinton 1996, 2007, Culpeper and Kytö 2010), as well as on specific strategies of interaction management and on adjacency pairs such as question-answer sequences (Archer 2005) and greetings (Grzega 2008, see also Mazzon 2009). The present collection of papers hopes to contribute and add to this rapidly expanding strand of research, by presenting studies in several text-types and on different linguistic features that have a bearing on various facets of dialogue dynamics.

## Outline of the volume

The present volume is divided into two parts. The first one examines dialogic elements in literary texts, i.e. drama and fiction, the second one is dedicated to non-literary text-types, and includes studies on scientific, didactic, technical and legal texts.

The first part opens with **Jonathan Culpeper**'s contribution on the changes occurred in the dialogue of play-texts, especially comedies, from Early Modern to present-day plays. The main argument in this contribution lies in the suggestion that such changes have been influenced, at least partially, by contextual developments taking place during the production of the playtexts under consideration. Such contextual changes were of three kinds: those occurring during the performance of the plays; those taking place within the theatre and therefore affecting the relationship between the stage and the physical setup of the theatre; and thirdly, the changes in the discursive context, that is to say in the relationships between the actors and the audience. Culpeper's analysis of the discourse changes concentrates in particular on three discourse features: turn-taking, adjacency pairs and pragmatic noise. In his view, the changes occurred over the years may have been influenced by, and could also be a consequence of, the contextual changes he describes.

Part I of the volume continues with **Andreas Jucker**'s article on politeness in Early Modern English dialogues. As Jucker states in his introductory paragraphs, his paper is not descriptive, but a theoretical proposal for «an alternative way of analysing issues of politeness in historical data». To this aim, he scrutinizes his Early Modern English fictional corpus through the

post-modern or discursive lenses, in order to concentrate on how politeness is perceived and performed in dialogues. This attempt also gives him the opportunity to concentrate on «the potential and the limitations of such an approach for historical data». The methodology he describes in part 3 of his contribution is successfully applied to his investigation on Ben Jonson's *Volpone* which, in Jucker's opinion, provides lots of examples of polite and impolite discourse.

Next, **Roberta Mullini's** article concentrates on the pragmatic strategies in the wooing of Lady Anne by Richard III in Shakespeare's play *Richard III*. The aim of her contribution is to show how the use of specific pragmatic features and of personal pronouns – *you* and *thou* – on the part of the two speakers complement the literal values of their words and enhance their intentions. On the one hand, Richard's wooing becomes appealing and seductive, on the other Lady Anne's resistance to Richard's courtship is a weak sign of her surrender. Her analysis represents a new and hopefully successful contribution to the understanding of Shakespeare's well-known scene.

**Ursula Lutzky's** paper deals with Early Modern English discourse markers; her analysis is based on the «sociopragmatically annotated *Drama Corpus*» and concentrates on exploring differences in the gender distribution of discourse markers in Early Modern English; the results show that different discourse markers are employed with different frequencies by male and female speakers when addressing hearers of different genders.

**Iolanda Plescia's** contribution concentrates on expressions of futurity, in particular of *shall* and *will* and their distal forms in Early Modern dramatic dialogues. Her analysis focuses on some selected scenes from Act 1 of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in order to illustrate a crucial phase in the historical development of modal verbs in English. Her in-depth analysis of the linguistic modality employed in these dramatic dialogues aims at contributing to stylistics and to the history of English modal systems.

The last article presented in Part 1 is a contribution by **Daniela Francesca Virdis** on one of the most well-known pieces of Victorian pornographic writing, i.e. *The Romance of Lust*. Her article aims first of all at identifying and describing the most frequently used and effective persuasive and “negotiation” strategies present in this pornographic text, and secondly to see whether previous analyses (Mazzon 2009; Culpeper and Kytö 2010), employed for earlier dramatic texts, could be equally successfully used for the Victorian novel under consideration. The author's present results will be then included in her on-going research on the discourse of sexuality, eroticism and desire.

As stated earlier, Part 2 of our volume is devoted to scientific, didactic, technical and legal texts. The first of these articles is a study of teaching dialogues in the natural sciences presented diachronically by **Irma Taavitsainen**. The scarcity of scholarly work on didactics in the form of dialogue lies at the basis of this pioneering article. From the early and rare representation of dialogues in Middle English, Taavitsainen goes on to describe the changes brought about in Early Modern English textbook dialogues, which were presented in various forms, scholastic, mimetic, fictional with literary borrowings, and social satires. Her interesting results show that old trends and styles persisted through the centuries, but some innovations were also introduced. Such diachronic investigation on the appropriation of knowledge provides a very viable contribution to the study of didactics in dialogue form.

With **Gabriella Del Lungo Camiciotti**'s contribution we move back in time to the Middle Ages. The focus of her paper is on the dialogic construction of the authorial voice in the *Remedies against Temptations* by William Flete, written in the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The work is a letter-treatise text giving practical and spiritual advice and addressed to a nun, but including more than a single recipient. Del Lungo Camiciotti's main concern in this article lies in her investigation on «the implicit presence of a fictitious partner» in such letter-treatise. On the one hand we have the sister directly receiving spiritual advice from the author, on the other hand, we see the involvement of the wider public through exhortations. Such duality is crucial in the construction of the author's textual identity.

The third contribution included in Part 2 is by **Elisabetta Lonati** and **Kim Grego**. The two researchers concentrated their attention on Galileo's *Mathematical Discourses*, published in 1638, but issued in England in two translations dated 1665 and 1730. In this work, Galileo uses the device of the dialogue in order to outline his scientific approach with clarity and to share his scholarly experience with a non-expert audience. Galileo's use of the conversational strategies described in their article, i.e. reformulation, repair, and conversational dominance are displayed together with the typical rhetorical features belonging to traditional dialogue: cohesive interplay, written-related vs. speech-related features.

**Geoffrey Gray**'s contribution investigates a particular form of written dialogue, i.e. controversy. In particular, because of their highly dialogical form, Gray examines the early contributions to a philosophical debate known as “Molyneux's Problem”, which arose in late seventeenth-century England and engaged several European scholars. Following a historical-pragmatic

approach, the author focuses his attention on the dynamics of interaction, on the pragmatic structure of utterances, and on the history of such form of networking, as Molyneux's Problem came to be understood.

With the next contribution, we move on to translation studies and to the presence of dialogues in scientific writings. **Elena Olivari** and **Paola Tornaghi**'s article focuses on Cyprian Lucar's translation of an Italian mathematician's work, Niccolò Tartaglia. The authors' investigation is centered on the use of *will* and *shall* on the part of the translator, who appears to display a very elegant and skillful mastery of modality «independently and in going beyond the limits of the referential function».

Proverbs as dialogical exchanges are the main focus of investigation in **Donatella Montini**'s article. In particular, she concentrates on the presence of proverbs in John Florio's handbooks for teaching Italian, *Firste Fruites* (1578) and *Second Frutes* (1591), which she ascribes to the category of didactic works in dialogue form. Her aim is to show how proverbs played a special role in teaching manners to pupils. In particular, Montini argues that their success in reaching such noble purpose was due primarily to the author's ability to use peculiar linguistic and pragmatic features «which contributed to the transmission of discursive dialogic forms».

**Laura Pinnavaia**, the next contributor, also investigates proverbs in conversation. Her article deals with another Italian author, Pietro Paravicino, who provided his own translation to his teaching manuals in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. Bilingual proverbial statements were considered to be a very efficient teaching tool in foreign language didactic manuals and they certainly “played a primary role in the teaching of Italian in both Tudor and Stuart England”. With her contribution, Pinnavaia aims to highlight how Paravicino, thanks to his skillful use of proverbs in conversation, was trying to persuade the English audience of the wisdom that derives from the Italian experience and to defend the value of the Italian culture which, at that particular time, had already started to decline in the Anglo-Saxon world.

Didactic dialogues in the 17<sup>th</sup> century are the focus of attention of the next contribution, too, although from a different perspective. **Elisabetta Cecconi**'s article is centered on Early Modern English constructed dialogues in order to highlight their interpersonal features and their discourse realization. To this end, she concentrates on the relationship between mitigated disagreement and authoritative discourse by characters in a group of seven constructed dialogues covering the period from 1601 to 1703.

The last two articles of Part 2 are both dedicated to legal texts. **Dawn Archer** deals with an analysis of William Garrow's cross-examinations. Garrow (1760-1840) is considered to be the first and certainly one of the greatest cross-examiner lawyers in the United Kingdom. Although his examinations have received great consideration, from both the legal and the historical point of view, little investigation has been carried out on the linguistic and pragmatic strategies of his questioning discourse style. Archer provides one of the first contributions to such analysis.

**Michela Giordano's** article also focuses on the dialogic strategies at play in legal discourse. Differently from Archer's, her study is centered on the quantitative and qualitative analysis of a dozen transcripts (1844-1887) of the trial proceedings of female prisoners selected from the *Proceedings of The Old Bailey Online*. The prisoners were all charged of birth concealing. Her findings reveal how powerful witnesses, i.e. the expert and male protagonists, use very different pragmatic and linguistic strategies and diverse stylistic patterns from the ones characterizing the discourse of powerless witnesses, i.e. the lay and female characters.

The analyses proposed in this volume bring us full circle back, via a variety of linguistic concerns, approaches and objects of study to the specific implications of dialogic discourse. From the diachronic contextual changes influencing the language of play-texts, to dialogic politeness and impoliteness; from the wooing and intellectual force in Shakespearean dialogues to the didactic effectiveness of scientific and non-scientific textbook dialogues; from the dialogical rhetoric of letter writing to the dialogical rhetoric of proverb use; from philosophical controversy and gender-specific features of dialogue forms, to legal cross-examinations and trial proceedings, the articles present in this volume all demonstrate the lively condition of dialogue studies considered in a historical perspective.

## **Acknowledgements**

The editors would like to extend heartfelt thanks to the organising committee of the conference that was the starting point for this volume (SLIN15, Cagliari, 26-28 May 2011); to the sponsors of the conference (ex-Dipartimento di Linguistica e Stilistica, Centro Linguistico di Ateneo, Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere of the Università di Cagliari, Fondazione Banco di Sardegna); to the invited speakers and to all presenters and audience members; to the external contributors to this volume and to all our



efficient reviewers. Grateful thanks are further due to all those who helped to produce this volume, especially Svenja Grabner for her scrupulous proof-reading and reference checks.

We would like to offer this contribution to research in English Historical Linguistics to the “founding parents” of such studies in Italy, as well as to the younger members of the SLIN group that have recently joined the community. Last but not least, this volume is also dedicated to the memory of our dear colleague, Laura Jottini, who worked for over forty years at the University of Cagliari as full professor of English language.

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**Part I**

*The Pragmatics of Dramatic  
and Fictional Dialogue*