1 Introduction

1.1 The broad aims

The history of English has often been viewed in the light of literary or scholarly masterpieces containing informationally dense, elaborate and stylised language. But consider examples (1) and (2):

(1)
Arch. Ay, ay, to be sure there are Secrets in all Families.
Scrub. Secrets, ay; – But I'll say no more. – Come, sit down, we'll make an end of our Tankard: Here –
Arch. With all my Heart; who knows but you and I may come to be better acquainted, eh – Here's your Ladies Healths; you have three, I think, and to be sure there must be Secrets among 'em.
Scrub. Secrets! Ay, Friend; I wish I had a Friend –
Arch. Am not I your Friend? come, you and I will be sworn Brothers.
Scrub. Shall we?
Arch. From this Minute. – Give me a kiss – And now Brother *Scrub* –
(Drama/Farquhar, *The Beaux Stratagem*, 1707: 30)

(2)
L. Pres. [. . .] I ask you then before the Magistrate here, who was present at that meeting?
Iaquel. *William Drake*. I am sure, and Major *Alford* was there, and Captain *Potter*, and severall others, as I remember, Master *Ienkyns*.
Att. Gen. This was in *Mr. Loves* house, was it not in his study?
Iaquel. I cannot tell that, I say, as I conceive, that Master *Ienkyns*, and Master *Case* were there, but positively I cannot say it, and *Mr. Iackson*, and *Mr. Nalton*, I think.
(Trial/*Triall of Mr Love*, 1651/1652: 40)

In example (1), from a Play-text, two friends chat, and in example (2), from a Trial proceeding, a witness struggles to collect his thoughts. The language contained within these examples does not easily fit traditional models of language often articulated in the history of English textbooks. For instance, the concept of the sentence does not straightforwardly accommodate some segments of text (e.g. *Secrets, ay*, *With all my heart*, *Shall we*), without much – and sometimes uncertain – reconstruction, and where a sentence construction begins and ends is not clear (see the final speech in example (2)); the ordering of sentence-related elements is not traditional (e.g. William Drake. *I am sure*), and the principles by which such elements are strung together are not what we might expect (consider the functions of *and*); some words seem to be less than words, though functional nevertheless (e.g. *ay*, *eh*), some words work in groups (e.g. *I think*, *ay, ay*); and meanings are not always transparent from the word in isolation (e.g. *come* has little to do with locomotion) and seem more generally to emerge across the interaction and in conjunction with the co-text and context. Of course the reason that traditional models struggle is because our examples in some way mimic or reflect spoken face-to-face interaction, whereas traditional models are biased towards writing. Chatting or collecting your thoughts are just two activities typical of spoken face-to-face interaction, but it is such speech that constitutes the bulk of language, including that of former times. Different principles and factors are at play in its construction, emphasising as they do the dynamic, on-line use of language in a social context. Speech-related written genres are also, at least partially, shaped by such principles and factors. These genres offer a way forward for understanding historical spoken interaction. The written speech-related genres our examples are taken from, Plays and Trial proceedings, are not obscure, but simply often overlooked in mainstream historical linguistic scholarship. In fact, as we will elaborate, there are other historical such genres – for example, Didactic handbooks in dialogue form or tales and other works of Prose fiction containing much speech presentation – though perhaps some of these are less well known. An important objective of our book is to bring spoken face-to-face interaction into focus in the historical context.

The programme of research we have been conducting over the last ten years has been oriented to the question: *what was the spoken face-to-face interaction of past periods like?* Of course, we are not the first to ponder what the forms and functions of linguistic features associated with earlier conversation were like (see, for example, Salmon 1987a [1965]; 1987b [1967]). However, providing solid answers is particularly difficult, since we only have *written* evidence of speech before the advent of speech recording technology. At best, then, we can only provide hypotheses about what the spoken face-to-face interaction of the past might have been like. However, it is important to note that this is not an alien enterprise for historical linguistics. Consider that historical discussions of pronunciation, the fields of historical phonetics

and phonology, are made up of hypotheses. More importantly, we are now in a position to provide much stronger hypotheses, given both developments in the field of Corpus Linguistics and that we have access to a unique corpus containing an array of speech-related written material from the Early Modern English period. We focus on the Early Modern English period for the very reason that it is only from this period onwards that a variety of texts containing specimens of speech-related language become available in such quantities that systematic research is made possible. In order to present hypotheses about the 'spoken' language of a past period, we can compare texts which stand at different distances from spoken interaction, judging from the discourse situation and other extralinguistic criteria (Rissanen 1999: 188). Thus, in fact, in order to begin to address the above question, we must answer this question: *what are written texts representing spoken face-to-face interaction like?* This is a question which is worth exploring in its own right, since some speech-related text-types have received relatively little attention from researchers. Perhaps this is precisely because they are speech-related, given that speech in general is traditionally and popularly seen as debased and unworthy of study, that its analytical tools (e.g. Conversation Analysis, Discourse Analysis) have only relatively recently been developed, and that amassing spoken data for analysis has attendant problems of recording and transcription. Furthermore, it is a question to which more substantive answers – in the shape of a basic linguistic description – are possible. However, it is also a question which begs a further question: *why are written texts representing spoken face-to-face interaction as they are?* To begin to answer this explanatory question requires consideration of the factors affecting language use, such as the purpose and context of the user. In other words, our study will also encompass the kind of work undertaken in the fields of pragmatics and sociolinguistics. Once we have addressed these latter two research questions about the specifics of written texts representing spoken face-to-face interaction we are in a strong position to return to our overarching question: *what was the spoken face-to-face interaction of past periods like?* Crucially, unlike previous research, we are utilising the corpus-based approach to study *several* speech-related genres. Each genre may be an approximation to spoken language of various kinds and in various degrees, but by use of a procedure somewhat like triangulation, but from multiple sources, we can claim to reconstruct with some confidence what real spoken dialogue was like.

As our opening paragraph indicates, our study represents a radical departure from traditional studies of the history of English, both in terms of what precisely is studied and how it is studied. A key aim of our book is to articulate the kind of historical research agenda that is necessary to account for how the language of spoken face-to-face interaction works in a historical context, and explore how it changes. We will point out the implications of our research for historical language studies in general, and aim to make a particular

contribution – descriptive, explanatory and theoretical – to the development of the relatively new paradigms, historical sociolinguistics and historical pragmatics, and also historical stylistics. Whilst our work is anchored in the tradition of corpus linguistics, we will develop and apply methodologies that are innovative even for present-day data and uniquely innovative for historical data. In fact, this book is only now possible because it can exploit a unique collection of data – the *Corpus of English Dialogues 1560–1760* – which was created with this book in mind, as well as to assist other scholars.

1.2 The status of speech and writing in linguistics and historical linguistics

As in many other disciplines, scholars working within linguistics have contributed to the many debates about speech and writing. We will not review all those contributions here (a succinct review can be found in Hughes 1996: chapter 5). Instead, our aim in this section will be to give a sense of how work in linguistics, particularly historical linguistics, orientates to speech and writing. This is not an easy task for the reason that many scholars have not taken an explicit position on this issue, or are sometimes ambivalent.

Contrary to today's popular beliefs about speech and writing, one significant strand of research in linguistics ascribes little value to writing. Ferdinand de Saussure (1966 [1914]: 23–4) writes, for example:

> Language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first. The linguistic object is not both the written and the spoken forms of words; the spoken forms alone constitute the object.

He dismisses the idea of studying writing by claiming that it is analogous to studying a photograph (p. 24):

> A similar mistake would be in thinking that more can be learned about someone by looking at his photograph than by viewing him directly.

Thus, speech is in some sense 'primary'. However, neither was Saussure particularly enamoured with the actual examples of speech used by real people, i.e. *parole*. Speech, he wrote, is 'accessory and more or less accidental'; it is 'an individual act' and 'wilful and intellectual' (p. 14). Saussure's main interest was *la langue* – the more abstract system of linguistic signs. We might note here that some present-day varieties of writing actually lack many of the problems (e.g. individuality) Saussure complains of and in many ways are closer to *langue* (see Hughes 1996: 130), but, by characterising writing as secondary, Saussure is able to avoid studying either 'real' speech or 'real' writing. Subsequent generations of structuralist linguists have followed in Saussure's footsteps. They aimed at describing the formal units

of language (e.g. phonemes, morphemes, lexemes) and developing rules for their combination. In particular, we should mention the influence of the transformational-generative paradigm, arising from the work of Chomsky (e.g. 1965). Chomsky's terms 'competence' and 'performance' appear to parallel Saussure's 'langue' and 'parole'. However, whereas for Saussure *langue* consists of the *sum* of conventions residing in the brain of each member of a speech community (cf. Saussure 1966 [1914]: 9, 19, *et passim*), Chomsky's competence refers to the ability of *individuals* to produce unique sentences, distinguish between a well-formed sentence and an ill-formed one, and so on. This mentalist focus – which helped spur the development of psycholinguistics – would be anathema to a pure structuralist. But this does not mean that transformational-generative scholars focus on speech and/or writing. The focus is still on a description of the abstract language system supported by the grammatical intuitions of speakers, not on the study of 'real' speech or 'real' writing. As Schafer (1981: 6) points out, the Chomskyans concentrate on idealised language:

> first, they regularized it – purged it of hesitations, slips of the tongue, and stammering; second, they standardized it – ignored all dialectal variation, taking as their task the description of the language system underlying the variation; third, they decontextualized it – eliminated all context-dependent features.

Given the focus of our book, it will come as no surprise to learn that the areas Schafer mentions will be covered. A further point to note about the transformational-generative paradigm is that the unit of analysis is the isolated sentence. This ignores the fact that: (a) in spoken interaction sentence fragments (e.g. single clauses, words, syllables) often occur and are meaningful, (b) in both speech and writing inter-sentential relations are important in constructing a meaningful text, and (c) in spoken interaction, and to a lesser extent in writing, the relations between the text and the extralinguistic context are important in constructing a meaningful text. In this book, we will attend to the issue of fragments, inter-sentential relations (e.g. a study of the conjunction *and*) and contextual relations (e.g. social relations between participants).

In historical linguistics, the leading paradigm has been, and to an extent still is, the structuralist one. The eminent historical linguist, Roger Lass, writes in what is one of the authoritative volumes dealing with our period, *The Cambridge History of the English Language, Volume III: 1476–1776*:

> In terms of the language proper, rather than its written representation, our period is marked by a series of major transformations that define the transition to 'modern' English. (1999a: 11)

As in Saussure, 'language proper' is separate from its 'written representation'. Lass describes himself as a 'shameless "structuralist" ' (1997: xviii): for him the 'language proper' is *la langue*. He outlines his position thus:

> My main interest, and I suggest this ought to be at least one prime focus of the discipline, is in systems, not their users; the latter simply have to make do with what's historically presented to them, and cope with it when it changes. I argue that the systems and their users can, and for the sake of methodological clarity ought to, be kept largely separate. This is not of course to say that the users aren't interesting; merely that they and their properties and actions belong to another subject-area, not historical (or perhaps any) linguistics proper. (Lass 1997: xviii)

Of course, such statements are part of the old debate about what 'linguistics' is. We will outline areas of linguistics (for so they are claimed to be by others) that take a very different view to that of Lass in the following section. For now, we draw attention to the quasi-paradox historical linguists such as Lass construct for themselves. Historical linguistics is based on written representations: scholars have neither direct access to spoken data, nor can they elicit the intuitions of speakers. In fact, Saussure (1966 [1914]: 25) did inadvertently suggest one positive feature about writing:

> the graphic form of words strikes us as being something permanent and stable, better suited than sound to account for the unity of language throughout time.

Whilst this is actually part of Saussure's argument *against* writing (i.e. do not be seduced by the tangibility of it), it is the fact that writing provides 'something permanent and stable' that makes historical linguistics possible. However, Lass, and indeed other linguists of that school, argues, as we pointed out, that writing is not the 'proper' language. Thus, in this view, the very thing that has the merit of making historical linguistics possible turns out to be the very thing to be condemned as 'improper'.

We would emphasise that a full account of historical language, by which we mean a comprehensive description and adequate explanation of the language of historical texts, is not possible within a narrowly conceived structuralist account. Lass (1999b: 148–55) himself is occasionally forced to depart from the structuralist paradigm, when he needs to do justice to a particular area or feature, as happens in his account of Early Modern English second person pronouns. Second person pronouns are of course a strong characteristic of interactive speech (Biber 1988). Similarly, it is difficult to see how the structuralist paradigm would adequately account for most of the specific linguistic features treated in this book. Matti Rissanen, writing in the same volume as Lass above, *The Cambridge History of the English Language, Volume III: 1476–1776*, agrees with Lass that 'language "itself" and its change should not be confused with language users' choices between the resources of

language and with the mechanics which lie behind the emergence and spread of changes' (Rissanen 1999: 188). But significantly he goes on to say that

> it is equally obvious that change in language cannot be adequately analysed or discussed without an awareness of the speakers' or writers' (conscious or unconscious) choices, or of the factors, linguistic or extralinguistic, affecting these choices. (pp. 188–9)

This statement is in tune with historical sociolinguistics, and it is to that field that we turn in section 1.3.

1.3 The status of spoken interaction in historical sociolinguistics, pragmatics and stylistics

Sociolinguistics is concerned with language use, users and contexts. The focus is typically on:

- Communities of speakers and their language use
- The sociological characteristics of speakers
- Variation in phonetic/phonological phenomena (cf. nineteenth-century development of phonetic science)
- Language contact (i.e. interaction)

Looking across these items, one can see that the canonical object of investigation in sociolinguistics is spoken face-to-face interaction (also, it is usually on-line and often informal). Thus it is no surprise that '[o]ne of the aims of historical sociolinguistics has been to find texts that mirror the informal spoken language of past times as closely as possible' (Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 28; see also Rydén 1979: 23). Thus, historical sociolinguists tend to use 'oral' or 'spoken' genres, such as Trial proceedings, Plays and (Personal) correspondence, as data. Note that, from the perspective of historical sociolinguistics, what is of importance in linguistic change is not just speech but language used in spoken interaction. There are a number of reasons why writing can be considered less important. Writing is relatively permanent, non-interactive and standardised, and, consequently, it minimises the possibility of innovation for the following reasons:

- It is not subject to on-line planning pressures (e.g. cognitive economy may motivate some innovations in speech).
- It is less subject to 'mis-reception', as it can be re-read.
- It tends to be focused on message-oriented discourse rather than listener-oriented functions (Milroy 1992: 75 argues for the importance of such functions in language change).
- It does not allow the negotiation of language between speakers (Milroy 1992: 75 argues for the importance of such negotiation in language change).

Furthermore, writing can preserve anachronistic forms (cf. King James Bible), and actively excludes innovative forms (standardisation means inhibiting change; innovations may well be stigmatised). Of course, the above factors do not affect all varieties of writing equally. In fact, this is a crucial point for our study. One of our aims is to investigate the role played by genres that are theoretically less affected by these factors (i.e. speech-related genres) in language change. Sociolinguistics, and historical sociolinguistics, also view 'users' as a central part of their account. Again, this is where writing is generally more problematic, as with the advent of standardisation the identities of particular users are less in evidence (for example, the standardisation of spelling has expunged evidence of regional accents). We will emphasise and demonstrate the importance of identities in social interaction in this book.

Like sociolinguistics, the field of pragmatics generally takes the view that language is a societal phenomenon, and also emphasises use, uses and contexts. The focus is typically on:

- The utterance
- The speaker's intentions
- The hearer's interpretation of the speaker's utterance and the intentions behind it
- The social interaction between the speaker and the hearer

From the use of the term 'utterance', one might infer that spoken language is of particular importance in pragmatics research too. However, this reasoning is spurious. What is meant by 'utterance' is a 'pairing of a sentence and a context, namely the context in which the sentence was uttered' (Levinson 1983: 18–19). The essential point here is the pairing of sentence and context, and written sentences can be contextualised just as spoken ones. However, pragmatics has embraced function much more than other areas of linguistics. As Leech (1995 [1983]: 47) points out, '[i]n so far as the principles of general pragmatics are motivated or goal-oriented, the theory which explains them will be functional'. Leech (1995 [1983]: chapter 3) sees grammar as essentially formalist and pragmatics as essentially functionalist, and argues that the two complement each other in providing a balanced account of the language. Other pragmaticists take a more fundamentally functionalist line, and would follow the Hallidayan view that function is to be

> interpreted not just as the use of language but as a fundamental property of language itself, something that is basic to the evolution of the semantic system. This amounts to saying that the organisation of every natural language is to be explained in terms of a functional theory. (Halliday and Hasan 1989 [1985]: 17)

Generally, we take a complementarian view, though we would add that the two sides do not have an equal contribution to make to all areas of the

language (an account of pragmatic markers, for example, leans more heavily on the functionalist side). Given the emphasis in pragmatics on function, it is thus not a surprise that the vast bulk of pragmatics research has Present-day spoken interaction as both its basis and object of analysis. As de Beaugrande argues, 'data closer to actual speech show more and more spontaneous functional aspects, whereas data closer to standardized written prose show fewer and more deliberate functional aspects' (1994: 43). However, this is not to deny that a pragmatics of writing is possible; indeed, some notable pragmatics research has investigated written texts in more recent years (e.g. Myers 1990; Stein 1992; Hyland 1998). Here in writing, the notion of 'utterance' is not only a written one, but also often a much broader unit, amounting to the whole stretch of text (see Levinson 1983: 19, footnote 16, for the broader notion of 'utterance'). The point, then, is that spoken interactive data is generally functionally richer than written data, not that it is the only kind of pragmatics possible. Historical pragmatics, as with historical sociolinguistics, faces an apparent obstacle in that our knowledge of the spoken interaction of the past is confined to what can be gleaned from written records (cf. Fritz 1995: 472; Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 3, 6). However, this is certainly not true of speech-related written data, such as that which we analyse in this book. Here, face-to-face spoken interactions are embedded within written texts. The result is even greater functional richness, as we have the functions of the original (or imaginary) interactions embedded in a text which in turn has its own interactive functions with readers, as we will explain and demonstrate.

A discussion of genres or text-types entails a discussion of styles; thus we must enter the field of stylistics. A number of written text-types or styles may be said to be speech-related. These include recordings of speech (e.g. Trial proceedings, Parliamentary proceedings, Witness depositions and Accounts), and constructions of speech (e.g. Drama, speech presentation in Prose fiction, Educational handbooks in dialogue form). Brown and Gilman (1989) claim that dramatic texts provide the best information on the colloquial speech of the period (cf. also Biber and Finegan 1992: 693; Kopytko 1995: 516; Taavitsainen 1995: 460).[1] Oddly, however, despite the eminence of Shakespeare, the language of Play-texts in general has received relatively little attention from scholars compared with the language of poetry or prose. Part of the problem may lie in the fact that spoken conversation has for many centuries been commonly seen as a debased and unstable form of language, and thus Plays, with all their affinities with speech, were liable to be

[1] Not all scholars, however, would agree. Evans (1950–1951: 401), for example, recommends 'verbatim' reports in Parliamentary debates and Trial proceedings. Horst (2006) makes a case for Didactic handbooks, or, more specifically, Foreign language teaching books. This kind of disagreement simply reflects the complex reality: texts can be speech-like in different respects (see Culpeper and Kytö 2000a, for a discussion of the issues relating to Play-texts and Trial proceedings).

under-valued. The development of stylistics since the 1960s has been spurred on by new developments in linguistics, and it is these developments which have allowed stylisticians to analyse and appreciate other genres. Most recently in the late 1970s and in the 1980s, developments in discourse analysis, conversation analysis and pragmatics (methods of analysis developed by linguists to deal with face-to-face interaction) have equipped stylisticians with tools to analyse the meanings of 'utterances' in fictional dialogue. However, in spite of the availability of suitable linguistic frameworks, stylisticians have been somewhat tardy in investigating Play-texts. Apart from a few articles and the odd book (e.g. Herman 1995; Culpeper *et al.* 1998) the stylistics of Drama remains relatively unexplored. By studying the nature of the genres in our corpus, we will contribute to our knowledge and understanding of literary and non-literary styles, specifically with respect to how they orientate to spoken interaction. For example, we will illuminate some of the differences between speech as it is represented in literary texts and speech as it is represented in non-literary texts.

1.4 Speech versus writing: can they be compared?

It is indeed theoretically possible to compare all language which is realised phonically with all language that is realised graphically. In other words, one can treat the difference in medium as a simple dichotomy. However, there are two significant problems attending this approach, the first of which we shall deal with here and the second in section 1.5.

The first is that the two sides of the dichotomy turn out to be complex and cross-cut by other parameters apart from medium. The labels 'speech' and 'writing' capture a wide variety of types. Under 'speech', would one include a formal indictment read out in court? Under writing, would one include a 'written-to-be-spoken' Play-text presenting an informal, private conversation? And how would one handle the intuition that an incontrovertibly written text such as an informal letter to a friend may sound more 'spoken' than, say, an incontrovertibly spoken text such as a judge's formal verdict and sentence in a trial? One way of tackling this problem is to acknowledge the variety of types that may fall under the headings 'speech' and 'writing', and to factor in cross-cutting parameters. As Biber's (e.g. 1988) work has shown, an approach to the description of genres must be multi-dimensional (further detail on Biber's approach can be found in section 4.5). Koch (1999; see also Koch and Oesterreicher 1985–1986; 1990), drawing upon Söll's (1985 [1974]: 17–25) discussion of orality and literacy, usefully argues for a distinction between the phonic and graphic medium and spoken and written 'conception'. Cross-cutting the phonic/graphic dichotomy is a conceptual continuum, at one end of which are features that are typical of the phonic medium – the language of 'communicative immediacy'; at the other end of which are features that are typical of the graphic