

Pragmatics in the History of English

How were *you* and *thou* used in Early Modern England? What were the typical ways of ordering others in Early Medieval England? How was the speech of others represented in the nineteenth-century novel? This volume answers these questions and more by providing an overview of the field of English historical pragmatics. Following introductory chapters which set out the scope of the field and address methods and challenges, core chapters focus on a range of topics, including pragmatic markers, speech and thought representation, politeness, speech acts, address terms, and register, genre, and style. Each chapter describes the object of study, defines essential terms and concepts, and discusses the methodologies used. Succinct and clear summaries of studies in the field are presented and are richly illustrated with corpus data. Presenting a comprehensive and accessible yet state-of-the-art introduction to the field, it is essential reading for both students and academic researchers.

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Preface

This volume is intended as an accessible and comprehensive overview of developments in one field of English historical linguistics, historical pragmatics. It presents the “state of the art” in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, describing the scope and nature of the field and bringing together a wide range of research in the area.

The text consists of two introductory chapters, six core chapters, and a concluding chapter. Each core chapter sets out to define the object of study (e.g., “What is a speech act?”, “What is a pragmatic marker?” “What is an address term?”, “What constitutes (im)politeness?”, etc.). It then discusses methodologies used to study these phenomena and presents an overview of current studies in the field, providing a summary of existing scholarship, along with rich corpus data for illustration. Chapters end with a section on “Further Reading” and a series of self-testing “Exercises.”

Chapter 1 introduces the field of historical pragmatics as an intersection between pragmatics and historical linguistics. Chapter 2 focuses on the sub-fields of historical pragmatics, on approaches within the field, on the levels studied, and on the challenges posed by the “bad data” problem. Chapter 3 examines the pathways of the development of pragmatic markers and processes of language change responsible for their development. Chapter 4 traces changes in the categories of speech and thought representation over time. Chapter 5 examines changes in politeness systems in English, such as the rise of deference politeness in Middle English and non-imposition politeness in Modern English. Chapter 6 discusses the difficulties of studying speech acts and presents a number of case studies of speech acts in the history of English. Chapter 7 is concerned with both pronominal and nominal terms of address, focusing on the honorific system of second-person pronouns in Medieval and Early Modern English. Chapter 8 provides a selective introduction to registers (news and religious discourse), genre (sermons, prayers, recipes, letters), and style (the shift from “oral” to “literate”). Chapter 9 summarizes the core chapters, focusing on challenges that have arisen in historical pragmatic study and successes that have been achieved. Present and future directions of future research in historical pragmatics are explored.

The volume is addressed to advanced level students (and teachers) who wish to gain an understanding of the concepts and topics of historical pragmatics and the nature of research undertaken in the field, including both methodology and data. But it will also prove useful to established scholars in allied areas who wish to have a comprehensive introduction to the field. For students, while general linguistic knowledge is assumed, no specialized knowledge of pragmatics is required.

I would like to express my gratitude to the reviewers of the book proposal and especially to the reviewer of the book manuscript for Cambridge University Press, whose meticulous reading of the text, with extensive, helpful, and insightful comments, led to improvements in both content and presentation. At Cambridge University Press, I would like to thank Andrew Winnard, who initially solicited the book, and Helen Barton, who carried through with the project; Isabel Collins provided invaluable assistance as did Laheba Alam. Sue Browning's expert eye in copy-editing caught many an inconsistency. Without the sabbatical year (2020–21) and pre-retirement research year (2022–23) provided by the University of British Columbia – not to mention forty-two years of a rich and rewarding work environment – this book could not have been completed. Thank you too to my graduate students in the fall of 2021, who read many chapters in draft form. I am grateful to Andreas H. Jucker, who supplied the data for Figures 6.3 and 6.4. Ralph Brands helped with many of the figures, and gave general computer and life support, as always.

Solutions to the self-testing exercises in Chapters 3–8 can be found online at www.cambridge.org/BrintonPragmatics.

Abbreviations

CED	<i>A Corpus of English Dialogues 1560–1760</i>
CEN	<i>The Corpus of English Novels</i>
CLMET3.0	<i>The Corpus of Late Modern English Texts, version 3.0</i>
CMEPV	<i>Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse</i>
COCA	<i>The Corpus of Contemporary American English</i>
CoER	<i>Corpus of Early English Recipes</i>
COERP	<i>Corpus of English Religious Prose</i>
COHA	<i>The Corpus of Historical American English</i>
DOEC	<i>Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus</i>
ED	<i>English Drama</i>
EEBO	<i>Early English Books Online</i>
EModE	Early Modern English
(F)DS	(free) direct speech
(F)DT	(free) direct thought
FID	free indirect discourse
FTA	face-threatening act
HC	<i>The Helsinki Corpus of English Texts</i>
IFID	illocutionary-force-indicating device
IS	indirect speech
IT	indirect thought
LModE	Late Modern English
ME	Middle English
MED	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
Movies	<i>The Movie Corpus</i>
NI	internal narration
NRSA	narrative representation of speech act
NRTA	narrative representation of thought act
NT	narrative representation of thought
NV	narrative representation of voice

xiv List of Abbreviations

OE	Old English
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
OSS	<i>Open Source Shakespeare</i>
PDE	Present-day English
<i>T/V</i>	<i>tu/vos</i>