The Pragmatics of Sir Thomas Bodley's Diplomatic Correspondence

Gabriella Mazzon

University of Innsbruck (<Gabriella.Mazzon@uibk.ac.at>)

Abstract

The publication of the diplomatic correspondence of Sir Thomas Bodley online (Diplomatic Correspondence of Thomas Bodley, 1585-1597) offers a fine opportunity to study a text-type that is partly different from either business letters or personal correspondence. These texts lend themselves to be analysed from a sociopragmatic and discourse-analytic point of view, and this will be attempted in the article by taking a closer look at the management of conflict, the degree of strength and directness of speech acts, and the ways in which social hierarchy is expressed. Several linguistic markers will be considered, in order to ascertain which elements can be seen as typically sensitive indicators in this particular text type, and how they relate to those found in other types of correspondence from the same period, which has been widely studied. In particular, the interplay between 'diplomatic' indirectness (also in the modern sense) and direct reinforcement of personal bonds will be investigated; given the need to continuously express the element of personal trust, this type of correspondence seems particularly promising to analyse from this specific angle. Interesting insight can be gained by looking at the performing of specific acts or 'moves', for instance at the different levels of strength in directives, or at the linguistic means used to convey degrees of certainty in the reporting of information, both types of acts that figure prominently in these letters.

Keywords: Address, Correspondence, Epistemic Values, Face-Work, Pragmatics

1. *Introduction*

The present article is a pilot study on a collection of texts that has recently been made available online, i.e. the archive of diplomatic correspondence of Sir Thomas Bodley;[1] the study employs a historical sociopragmatic perspective (Culpeper 2010), as has already been done for other types of correspondence (see 1.1 below). Specific linguistic elements such as terms of address and verbs of reporting are analysed here with special attention to two lines of investigation: 1) the construction of the relations between correspondents; 2) the negotiation of roles and the expression of epistemic and deontic values in the main content area of the letters, i.e. the passing on of instructions and sensitive pieces of information.

1.1 *Methodological Foundations*

Research combining pragmatic and sociolinguistic approaches to texts from the past increasingly looks at networks and small groups, or even at individual text-producers, to trace patterns of expression and linguistic recurrences that may be indicative of their communicative styles and strategies. It is also increasingly frequent to look at the sociopragmatic make up of text types, in order to highlight conventions and patterns that were employed within a community of practice or a specific social group (see reviews of relevant studies in Culpeper 2010; Conde Silvestre 2012). This article combines the two approaches by looking at a specific text-type produced by a small number of individuals who were in close correspondence with each other, and whose relations are based on personal trust, but also on a hierarchy of socio-political roles.

Sociopragmatic studies on English letters have developed in the last fifteen years, especially with the compilation of several specialised corpora and with the publication of collections of correspondence,[2] which enabled both macro-sociohistorical studies (e.g. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2003) and the application to letters of network analysis (Bergs 2000; Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2000; Fitzmaurice 2002). In spite of their being a heterogeneous text-type, letters are perceived as interesting for the pragmatician and for the historical sociolinguist precisely because they often contain a mixture of personal topics and other elements (Palander-Collin 2010, 652-653).

Diplomatic correspondence can be considered in itself a sub-text-type, as argued by Okulska (2006), who studied the development of this type of document in Late Middle English and Early Modern English within a Functional Sentence Perspective framework, especially with regard to what she terms the 'narrative report letter'. In that article, which does not include or mention Bodley's correspondence, the thematic progression and the linguistic devices used in diplomatic letters to convey knowledge and subjective stance are analysed; therefore, the article will be repeatedly quoted in what follows. The present article's approach, however, draws also from similar contributions on later materials (Del Lungo Camiciotti 2006; Fitzmaurice 2006), in that markers of stance and politeness will be looked at more closely than narrative schemata (see below, section 3).

1.2 *The Historical Context and Background of the Corpus*

The diplomatic correspondence corpus used for this article mainly consists of two types of letters: 1) those exchanged between Bodley and the representative of the Court of the Company of Merchant Adventurers; 2) those exchanged between Bodley and Queen Elizabeth I or her chief advisors: William Cecil, Baron Burghley, Secretary of State and then Lord High Treasurer, and Francis Walsingham, Chief Secretary and head of Elizabeth's 'intelligence service'.

The Company of Merchant Adventurers of London was founded in the late Middle Ages, and was for a long time chartered by the English monarchy to trade abroad, especially in Antwerp. In the late sixteenth century, they were in conflict with the Hanseatic League, and were therefore directly involved in Bodley's diplomatic work in the Low Countries, where they wanted to keep their privileges as cloth sellers. Letters were exchanged on diplomatic negotiations and on the status of the Company, particularly between Bodley and some of the deputy governors of the Company, notably Thomas Ferrers, Edward Norrys, George Setherson, and John Wheler.[3]

The roles of Burghley and Walsingham were of course of higher relevance, as both were directly connected with the Queen and involved in the negotiations with the Low Countries to support the Protestant revolt against Spain, and were also protective of the Merchants' interests. Walsingham was more direct in advocating his political position, while Burghley was more 'diplomatic' in the modern sense. This led to differences in the ways they wrote their diplomatic letters, in their expression of stance, and of course also in Bodley's responses.

Bodley was sent by Elizabeth on various missions, first to the kings of Denmark and France, and later to the Low Countries, to negotiate the Queen's support to the Protestant revolts. His diplomatic career was however not totally successful or devoid of conflict, and therefore he later resigned. The States General, i.e. the union of the Protestant provinces that demanded higher religious freedom of the Spanish crown, often ignored Bodley's requests, and the long debates were frequently unproductive, also due to the fact that Elizabeth required a naval embargo, which threatened to disrupt mercantile interests. Caught in a very difficult position, Bodley grew increasingly frustrated with his mission, while his interlocutors were demanding results he could not produce. All this makes of his diplomatic correspondence a particularly interesting object of study.

1.3 *The Sample*

For the purpose of the present article, which constitutes a first exploration of the material, only 100 letters were analysed, all from the Bodleian Library Archive. They are almost equally divided into letters from and letters to Bodley. The majority are exchanges between Bodley and his superiors, i.e. Burghley and Walsingham, and cover the years 1588 to 1595, thus giving a wide perspective on the progression of the missions. They cluster around specific dates, so that there is some content continuity – in some cases, more than one letter written (or received) on the same day was selected, so as to get some impression of the initiating-response dynamics, or to see how the same topic was presented in different letters.

2. *The Sociopragmatics of Sir Thomas Bodley*

In a way, the collection of letters is very content-oriented, in that its main purpose is to keep the flow of information active from Queen Elizabeth I to Sir William Burghley to Bodley and vice-versa, and between the representatives of the Council of Merchants and Bodley, as mentioned in the previous section. In this sense, the letters reveal detailed information about the diplomatic processes and exchanges he was involved in. The transmission of information is however only one level of discourse, which is highly relevant also to historical studies and to cultural history. Another important aspect of this correspondence is the maintenance and reinforcing of relationships, which is explored in the next sub-section.

2.1 *Opening in Style: Salutations and Terms of Address*

The first linguistic element that was studied for the present article is the category of salutations and terms of address, which were thought to give insight into the way in which the relationships between correspondents are conveyed, relationships that are usually asymmetric as for status. In former times, letter writing was still partly a 'technical' or semi-professional skill, which was mostly acquired through manuals. Some forms of expression in correspondence are therefore highly conventionalised, but show nevertheless enough variation as to be interesting for our studies (Palander-Collin 2010, 660).

Salutations and other forms of direct address[4] are among the most 'interactive' parts of the letter, since they are instrumental to conveying the relationship existing between the correspondents, and can also be the locus for *captatio benevolentiae*, conveyed through honorifics and deferential expressions. Since the main objective of diplomatic relations is that of keeping face needs satisfied, so that further negotiation is not hindered and allegiance not questioned, those expressions that aim at preserving personal relations, beside and beyond the professional or hierarchical relations, are bound to be particularly frequent and pragmatically sensitive.

The openings of diplomatic letters (including salutations and some initial clauses) seem to become less elaborate and less formal from Late Middle English to Early Modern English, while still including highly formulaic phrases; they increasingly seem to establish some elements of common ground, through pronouns and items emphasising interactivity and reciprocity – in other words, they seem to become increasingly phatic, while maintaining their hierarchy-preserving function (Okulska 2006, 54-56).

For this part of the study, 90 letters were included, as the remaining ten are addressed to multiple or unknown recipients or came to Bodley from multiple senders. Among the letters that Bodley received, there are five by Queen Elizabeth herself; two of these (1307, 1310)[5] have no opening at all, while the remaining

three (0799, 0824, 0832) open with the formula *Trusty and well-beloved we greet you well*. The first two are from 1588, respectively entitled 'instructions' and 'memorial', and do in fact contain directives, with a strongly deontic stance (see section 3 below). The other three date from the following year, and are much 'softer' in tone and more 'interactive', which correlates with the presence of the opening greeting formula stressing the trust and benevolence of the Queen towards Bodley.

The most consistent form of address used by Bodley in openings is *It may / May it please your (good) L[ordship]/H[onour]*, used to address his immediate superiors, i.e. Burghley and Walsingham. Normally this is just a formula that is syntactically isolated, although in a couple of cases it is put in construction: *It may please your L. to aduerty sehir Majestie that…* (0812, 0814, 1352).

One exception to this pattern of address is (0807), where Bodley addresses Burghley through the term *Ryght Honourable my veary good Lord*. This is a reply to (0806) from Burghley to Bodley; here, Burghley does not employ any addressing formula, but the letter contains instructions and reassurance, since this is a phase in the negotiation in which Bodley is signalling insecurity and uncertainty about how to behave. This exceptional address form could therefore be a way for Bodley to exercise a form of *captatio benevolentiae* while also redressing the 'disturbance' he may be causing through his insecurity and his delayed results, and also confirming the hierarchical relation between them.

Although closing formulae and addressing (external to the letter proper, on the fold or 'envelope' part) usually include the term *frend,* accompanied by emotionally coloured adjectives such as *true, loving, good*, etc., the signalling of hierarchies is still very important in the letters. Address is thus very asymmetrical, in that, for instance, Burghley and Walsingham address Bodley with plain *Sir*[6] and never use any openings containing the elaborate honorifics that he employs for them. Walsingham is often addressed as *Master Secretary* (e.g. 0808), thus through his professional title, yet the reply always employs *Sir* or *Master Bodley*.

The situation is quite different in letters exchanged between Bodley and members of the Company of Merchant Adventurers. In the very few letters in our pilot study that are addressed to such people, Bodley normally uses *Sir*, and is sometimes reciprocated, but the most common term of address in openings of letters to him is *Right worshipfull* (e.g. 1123, 1132, 1370), which indicates a higher level of deference. This is to be expected, since the Merchants are hoping to profit from the outcome of the negotiations. Hence, the *captatio benevolentiae* is reversed here. The content of their letters is very often made up of pleas to take their interests into consideration, and thus it comes as no surprise that they use honorifics indicating a subordinate hierarchical status.

2.2 *Stance-Taking in the Conveying of Knowledge*

The 'factual' part of diplomatic letters is interspersed with linguistic elements signalling communicative intention and topic progression, but also with stance

markers and signals of evidentiality and epistemicity. The evaluation of the knowledge conveyed is often represented by frequent use of verbs of perception and cognition and by performative verbs (Okulska 2006, 53-54), but also by nominal and adjectival attributes (Okulska 2006, 65-67). While the strictly intersubjective aspect of this will be mentioned in section 3 below, in this section we will examine these portions of the letters rather with an eye to the involvement-distancing axis; the forms examined are therefore: inclusive vs. exclusive pronouns, evidential verbs and expressions, and impersonal constructions. The relevance of the former element is largely self-explanatory; impersonal forms contribute to expressing stance by 'de-personalising' or distancing claims or statements, while evidentials signal the degree of commitment of the speaker to the knowledge reported.[7]

As for pronouns, Bodley's letters usually display exclusiveness: the *I* and the *you* are clearly distinguished, he does however occasionally employ a plural that seems to include other officials or counsellors (only rarely mentioned by name) in the reporting of common knowledge or expectation,[8] as in exx. [1-3]:

[1] Howbeyt by his lettre of the 19 he replyed unto them, that things were now in an other estate... How this lettre is accepted *we doe not understand*: but everie man supposeth, and their manner of proceeding doth in- sinuat no lesse, but that they purpose to surrender. (1371)[9]

[2] And *we hope* in lyke manner to heare every hower, of some speciall attempt to be given besydes. *For our approches*, Galleryes other mynes and workes are brought soe neere unto the Rampers in 5 or 6 places, as they were ready, it is thought about 4 dayes paste, to give upon the Towne in all those places at one instant... *Ernestus we heare doth assemble* all his forces for some speciall purpose, which is unknowne yet here, but only by conjecture, having sent already to the castell of Wo... (1374)

[3] *Our* lettres out of Brabant tell of divers discontentements in the Enemies government partly against the owld old count Mansfeld, who is hated for his rigour, and partialitie in dealing, and partly among themselves, through their factions and wantes, which *we* are in good hope, will advance *our* designes. (1113)

Letters by the Queen make of course use of the royal *we*, even though this is sometimes de-personalised through formulas such as *it is thought convenient that...* (1309). Letters by Burghley to Bodley vary much more, in that he occasionally uses *we* but in an exclusive way (probably referring to himself and the Queen, Walsingham and/or the Privy Council), in contrast with *you* referring to Bodley – this stresses the directive tone of the letters, contributing to emphasising the hierarchical distance of the relationship:

[4] although not longe before the same in other your lettres yowe gave us knowledge of the Counte Maurice gathering of divers Companies of soldiers to meete at Williamstonde, and than it was thought his purpose should be to surprise either Stenberghen,

Gertrudenberg, or Har- togenboys, soe as nowe it is fallen directlie owt to the worse sense. And because uppon the arrivall of the L. Willowghbie, and upon your lettres of the ixth of marche wee weare fullie certified of the Attempt of this siege: hir Majestie did theareupponn direct her lettres both to the States, and to yowe, to procure all good meanes to have the siege forborne… And for that convenientlie wee cowld not heare from yowe what hathe been done in that matter… (0809)

A reference to *we* is of course not uncommon in the letters addressed to Bodley by the deputy governors of the Company of Merchants, as in this case the sender does in fact represent a group – there are no marked instances in our pilot sample.

The use of impersonal and passive constructions conveys distance and also, secondarily, uncertainty about the strength of a claim, its source, and/ or its adherence to the truth. Such forms are therefore employed in a variety of text-types as a stylistic choice which may also be interpreted as a form of hedging (the typical case, to the point of being nearly a cliché, is academic writing). This pragmatic strategy was also used in the past in rather subtle ways, aided no doubt by the fact that some cognitive and stance verbs such as *think* and *like* entered impersonal constructions and showed a different structure. The only survivor of this in Early Modern English is *methinks/me-thinketh*, which was on its way to be lexicalised as an epistemic marker when it was relatively quickly lost (López-Couso 1996; Palander-Collin 1999). This expression is rather marginal in our sub-sample, since *me thinkes* is used only once by Bodley (0831) and *me thinketh* is used twice by Burghley in letters to Bodley (1120, 1382) – thus, it is never spelt as one word (one of the signs of lexicalisation), and it is not prominent as an epistemic and stance marker in this part of the correspondence. Moreover, in one of the examples it seems to be used more as a hedge or face-work element (in order to soften a negative, rebuking remark) rather than as a marker of actual uncertainty:

[5] I did wryte unto you as particularlie as I mighte of the succors which hir Majestie required of the States, and yet me thincketh you still stande in dowbt what is the determination of the Quene. (1382)

It-structures and passive constructions producing distance in the reporting of knowledge are also very frequent; among the most common are *It is (gener-ally)*[10] *thought* [that X will happen] (0802, 0812, 1351 and others); *As is/was thought/so it is thought* (1095, 1371);[11] *It is (generally) feared* (0820, 1353); *It is bruted abroade* (1124);[12] *It is certified* (0840); *It should appear* (0836); *It is conceaved* (1115); *It is to be presumed* (1097).

Notice the contrast between general opinion and personal belief in [6], and the distance-taking effect in [7], followed by an admission of ignorance:

[6] *It is every mans opinion*, that some speciall good will come of yt, & the common people will be greatly hartened when [the] shall see hir Majestyes care of theyr welfare

so gratiously continewed. Moreover *I am fully parswaded* that the deputyes gon for England ar so weakly authorised… (0831; Bodley to Burghley)

[7] For /whether/ it be her Majesties meaning, *as it seemeth* sometimes, not to leave these contreis unpro- tected, howsoever in their rudenes they deale un- worthely with her: or whether she be resolved, if they will not come to reason, to seeke her securitie, by some other kinde of course, because *I knowe it not*, and because I see some actions sometimes bende one way, and others at an other time repugnant. (0842; Bodley to Walsingham)

It can be noticed that these expressions have different strength in reporting knowledge, with several degrees of certainty or reliability being incorporated not only in the verbs (compare the difference in the meanings of *presumed* vs. *certified*, for instance) but also in surrounding elements, e.g. the adverb *generally* and/or the accompanying modals, conveying the epistemic values and also the width of this knowledge. One effect all these forms have in common is the de-personalisation of the reporting of information, although occasionally some elements of personalisation are included as Indirect Objects or complements, as in [8] and [9], where the subjectivity or partiality of knowledge are highlighted. Similar expressions are: *it was not sygnefyed to me* (1381), *It was doubted (by some others)* (1095, 1118), *It is told me for certeyn by Count Maurice…* (0837)

[8] … that thereby *yt may appear unto you*, what hathe been in use heretofore, and what yt is we desire at this instant: namely: that the Tare may be made in one Towne. (1370; Ferrers to Bodley)

[9] … *as I doe suspecte* that it is but geven awaye out to towle them faster forward which parhaps they thinke the Rather bycause *Nothinge is writtene of thos shipes unto me*… (1381; Bodley to Burghley)

In these and similar cases, there is a combination between the distancing signalled by the *it*-structure and a personalisation indicated by the direct involvement of the recipient of the information and/or the pinpointing of the source of the information. These cases are however a minority, since the majority of such occurrences in the pilot sample are of the type [6], i.e. without personal reference.

Evidentials are very frequent in the sample, in co-occurrence with representative speech acts (transmission of knowledge) and, in general, with contexts where there is stance-taking with regards to knowledge. To these we can add cognitive verbs and other elements that contribute to conveying degree of certainty.[13] In many cases, this involves forms that are similar to those used in passive or impersonal structures, only used personally; of course, given the nature of these letters, the majority of instances are in the first person. Again,

they seem to stand at different levels on an epistemic scale; the most common are *for ought I can perceive* (0821, 1351, and others); *I suppose* (1377); *I think* (0064, 0812, and others);[14] *I trust* (0836, 1135); *I am/was in some doubt* (1381); *I do not doubt / I do not doubt but* (1379/0831, 0835); *as I am informed* (1379, 1381); (*as far as*) I (*can/may*) *conjecture* (0791/1095, 1381); *as I suspect* (0797). As can be seen, this area also presents considerable variation, not least in the way in which the predicates are hedged and qualified; some recurring modified forms are *I am always uncertene* (1372); *I am certainely/ fully/thorowly persuaded* (0812, 1379/0814/1116); I doe wonder verye much (1381);[15] I do rayther presume (1382); I do very much suspect (0812). This hedging mostly seems to be inserted for politeness considerations (e.g. in [10], where it occurs within a complaint) or to signal epistemic dowtoning (i.e. increasing uncertainty margins, as in [11]).

[10] which I am urged the more to complayne of, for that *I stand in a manner assured*, had hir Majesties lettres have bin delivered in tyme at the firste I might have bin able to have diverted this course that hath bin taken… (1351; Bodley to Burghley)

[11] *I doe not perceave* that they goe about to make answear, and *I am half persuaded*, that they will passe it over in silence. (0840; Bodley to Walsingham)

Here, again, Bodley is conveying a number of shades in transmitting knowledge, but also in interpreting his role. He is careful in giving the right impression about how reliable his information is,[16] and in expressing his perplexities about the instructions he receives. In fact, the number of tentative expressions is far higher than that of expressions indicating assurance, and this is a clear symptom of (or may even have concurred to cause) the unsuccessfulness of some stages of Bodley's mission, and the dissatisfaction of his superiors with him. The linguistic expressions involved in this dynamics are explored in the next section.

3. *Epistemic and Deontic Values in Face-Work*

A large part of the content of the correspondence under analysis is made up of two different types of 'communicative moves': instructions, that are given, taken, discussed or negotiated, and the reporting of knowledge, with information (including dialogues) passed on, reported, interpreted, and assessed, as mentioned in the previous section. There is however also a strong emphasis on 'face-work' in conveying the maintenance of a hierarchy between the interlocutors, and a strong deontic focus in the passing of directions and in emphasising needs and obligations, though within a relatively formalised structure and with the intervention of politeness considerations (already referred to in 2.1 above). Only a few examples can be qualitatively analysed

within this article, but they are pretty indicative of the type of dynamics that the diplomatic letters enact.

The first group of letters in the subsample in temporal order come from Elizabeth herself, Walsingham and Burghley, who in turn send instructions to Bodley. The tone is relatively imposing, stressing the deontic dimension: this is conveyed through heavy use of the modal *shall*, which at the time still carried a shade of its original meaning indicating obligation, but was quickly transforming into a marker of futurity[17] [12]; *should*, which still retains that shade today, is also prominent [13]:

[12] *Our pleasure* therfore is that you *shall* deale… (1307)

[13] *wee thinck* it therefore verye convenient that you *should* at your arrival there enforme your selfe… (1307)

Of the three interlocutors, Walsingham is the one using the highest level of politeness [14], through using a less deontically strong element, i.e. the request predicate *pray*; in his replies, Bodley employs the even more deferential *beseech* (e.g. 0797).

[14] And therefore I *pray* yow to presse the sayd Count… (1313)

In the letters immediately following (0802, 0804, Feb 1589), Bodley expresses his first doubts and failures to Burghley, and gets some reassurance from Walsingham [15-16] – levels of deference are increased on both sides:

[15] … as *I neede not be troblesome* in that behalf, but only *signifie*, that it was *confuse*, when he departed from hens, /and/ so it doth continew... For the hindraunce wherof, *I can not readely propose any one better meanes...* and *yet it is generally thought...* And *yet it may be imagined...* (0802; Bodley to Burghley)

[16] ... thoughe *nothing doubting but as you have hitherto shewed your self most carefull* to further that service, so *you will continue the same to the uttermost of your power*. And for the propositions and aunsweares you sent hether from thence thoughe my Lords have yet no lea- sure by reason of the Parlament to consider thereof *yet may you be sure they are not forgotten* but that upon the next fytt occasion *you shall receave some resolution from them touching those matters*. And so for the present I committ you to god. (0804; Walsingham to Bodley)

The next ca. 40 letters in our pilot sample cover March to June 1589 and represent, again, intensive exchanges between Bodley and his superiors. This is a phase of crisis in the mission, with Bodley increasingly complaining that he is not receiving clear directions [17-18], and his interlocutors 'calling him to order', rejecting the accusations of giving unclear directions, while at the same time encouraging Bodley to continue in his efforts [19]. Therefore, this

section of the subsample includes intense face-work in terms of hedging and in terms of a balance between directives and solidarity markers, in order to reaffirm the hierarchy without disrupting relationships – the sheer density of the italicised (i.e. sensitive) passages in the examples gives an idea of this tightly-knit texture:

[17] *I am forced* by reason of Master Secretaries indisposition, *to trouble yowr L. more* with my lettres, then is fitte, or then I *woulde*, *hopinge that for the better cariage of mysealfe in this ticklishe state, your L. will vouchesafe me so much of your honourable favoure, as to procure me some kinde of direction and answear* to suche matters of mommente as I have delivered in my former letters & writings whearwith always *recommendinge my humble searvice and dutie* to your L. *I cease to trouble you further.* (0807; Bodley to Burghley)

[18] In which respect *I doe expect nothinge more, then to knowe hir Majesties intention*: the want whereof I *must needs confesse to your L.* doth Some what *discourage* me, as it is also a lett That *I can not negotiat So effectually nor extend my service. to so many good purposes, as other wyse I might.* Whereuppon I *beseche your L.* againe as in my last, That Some Speedy order *maye* be taken for good correspondence, referringe The rela- tyon of these occurrences to hir highenes and to my LL the of the counsell, *to your wisdome, and good pleasure: wherewith I Take my humble leave.* (0810; Bodley to Burghley)

[19] And for that convenientlie *wee cowld not heare from yowe* what hathe been done in that matter… *I have nevertheless thowght good at this time without expecting farther from yowe, to let yowe knowe,* that of late the Counte Maurice hath written... *I wishe yow weare hable to attaine to the knowledge* of such matters as yowe *thinke* theie *shall* both *desyre* and refuse, and theareof to certifie us with your opinion upon the same... And *yowe shall doe well to move them* to name som others of like quallety on their part: And in the meane time I *praie* yowe advertise my L Browgh heareof, and Consider betwixt yowe two, whither wheare the meating for that purpose shall be, at the Haghe, the Brill or elsewheare: And *for your Instructions theare shall be asmuche done heare as wee cann to gather togeather the matters for our demaundes*, and as many reasons as wee *can* to awnsweare theirs... (0809; Burghley to Bodley)

4. *Conclusion*

Examples of the types given above could be multiplied and, as can be seen, the range of linguistic means employed to enact relationships and strategies is quite vast. This is not unexpected in the text-type analysed, where the education level and the social level of the correspondents and the general tone and communicative intention of the correspondence point to stylistically elaborate language use and high level of awareness of social conventions, including politeness cultural requirements. The methodology used, a rather eclectic mixture of insight from sociopragmatics, historical network analysis and historical stylistics, seems the most promising approach for studies on this type of sample.

The integrated study of several different markers can help us glean a more precise idea of these discourse conventions, and of the extent to which they are text-specific, but also of the stance peculiar to each letter writer. As mentioned, the sheer density of these elements in numerous parts of each letter (as exemplified in [17-19], for instance) shows that pragmatically modulated expressions form the very fabric of diplomatic letters, and act synergistically to set the tone of the exchange. At the same time, the association of elements with different pragmatic strength can be analysed profitably to investigate face-work and the dynamic development of the relationship between correspondents – see e.g. the co-occurrence of *must nedes* and *beseche* in [18], and that of *wish*, *be able* and *shall in* [19].

It is hoped that an extension of the analysis to a wider portion of the database, with special attention to letters that are direct replies to previous ones, can bring further insight into the sociopragmatics of this unique collection of texts and of Early Modern English official correspondence.

[1] The project is hosted by the Centre for Editing Lives and Letters, in cooperation with the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The database includes nearly 1,400 letters, retrieved from different archives. A link to the relevant website is given in the reference list under Primary Source. Thanks are due to Svenja Grabner for help with subsample selection and systematisation.

[2] Among the earlier corpora are the *Innsbruck Letter Corpus*, the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (*CEEC*) and relative *Sampler* (*CEECS*), the *Paston Letters*, the *Corpus of Scottish Correspondence 1500-1715* (CSC). For a more complete list of resources see Palander-Collin (2010, 667).

[3] Proper names are given in the spelling form that is used in the letters themselves. Burghley is often spelt 'Burleigh'.

[4] There is no space here to review the abundant literature on the sociopragmatic value of pronouns and terms of address; for Early Modern English in particular see Mazzon (2003), and for correspondence Fanego (1996).

[5] References to letters are to their ID number in the online corpus, in progressive sequence according to this number, regardless of dates or other variables, unless otherwise specified.

[6] The sociopragmatic values that this term of address acquired during late Middle English and Early Modern English are investigated in Williams (1992) and Mazzon (2000; 2010).

[7] Evidentiality can be considered a special form of epistemicity, which, as Chafe (1986, 271) defined it, refers to 'any linguistic expression of attitudes towards knowledge', thus including items belonging to several formal categories (not just verbs of reporting); its separation from other forms of epistemicity is however debatable (see e.g. Ziegeler 2003, 45-46 for a short review of the discussion).

[8] On inclusive/exclusive pronouns in Early Modern English (albeit on different text-types than letters) see Marttila (2011, 142 ff.).

[9] Unless otherwise specified, italics in the examples are mine throughout.

[10] In these and the following examples, brackets indicate elements that are variably present.

[11] These cases are listed separately because they are (semi-)parentheticals. The comment clause (Brinton 2008), a parenthetical structure often indicating stance, and hence often developing into a discourse marker (e.g. *you know, you see, I mean, I think*), appears to have developed in some cases from main clauses (*I think that Ann is tall → Ann is tall, I think*) and

in other cases from dependent clauses (*Ann is tall, as I think → Ann is tall, I think*); the time of the production of the Bodley correspondence is a time that was crucial for the transition towards parenthetical status of some of these structures (see also Mazzon 2012 for a study on the partly similar case *I'm afraid*).

[12] The verb *bruit* is clearly of French origin (cf. the earlier noun *bruit/brut* 'noise' hence 'rumour') and appears in English in the sixteenth century with the meaning 'report'. *Abroad* has in this context the original meaning of 'at large, widely'.

[13] On the importance of these elements in letter writing to convey stance see e.g. Palander-Collin (2012, 418).

[14] This is the most frequent form in this type of predicates, also with variation in emphasis: *I doe thinke* (0821), *I doe rather thynke* (0821), *I do not think* (0807, 1353).

[15] It cannot be argued univocally that *do*-support in affirmative clauses, which is variably present in the sample, has an overtone of emphasis already at this stage. See e.g. Rissanen (1991) on the rise of *do* as prestige variant, and Warner (2012) for a review of studies on Early Modern English in particular.

[16] Other predicates referring directly to the reporting of knowledge such as *say, allege, assure* (in the construction 'assure somebody of something'), and the highly frequent *signify*, are currently being investigated and will be analysed in a separate article.

[17] On this development, see for instance Gotti (2002).

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