

POLITENESS CROSSING TIMES AND SPACES

*Edited by
Linda Gennies and Horst J. Simon*

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Politeness Crossing Times and Spaces

Episteme in Bewegung

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Die Reihe „Episteme in Bewegung“ umfasst wissenschaftliche Forschungen mit einem systematischen oder historischen Schwerpunkt in der europäischen und nicht-europäischen Vormoderne. Sie fördert transdisziplinäre Beiträge, die sich mit Fragen der Genese und Dynamik von Wissensbeständen befassen, und trägt dadurch zur Etablierung vormoderner Wissensforschung als einer eigenständigen Forschungsperspektive bei.

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Preface

Andrew James Johnston and Gyburg Uhlmann

Since its inception in July 2012, the Collaborative Research Centre (CRC) 980 “Episteme in Motion. Transfer of Knowledge from the Ancient World to the Early Modern Period”, based at the Freie Universität Berlin, has been engaging with processes of knowledge change in premodern European and non-European cultures.

The project aims at a fundamentally new approach to the historiography of knowledge in premodern cultures. Modern scholars have frequently described premodern knowledge as static and stable, bound by tradition and highly dependent on authority, and this is a view that was often held within premodern cultures themselves.

More often than not, modern approaches to the history of premodern knowledge have been informed by historiographical notions such as ‘rupture’ or ‘revolution’, as well as by concepts of periodization explicitly or implicitly linked to a master narrative of progress.

Frequently, only a limited capacity for epistemic change and, what is more, only a limited ability to reflect on shifts in knowledge were attributed to premodern cultures, just as they were denied most forms of historical consciousness, and especially so with respect to knowledge change. In contrast, the CRC 980 seeks to demonstrate that premodern processes of knowledge change were characterised by constant flux, as well as by constant self-reflexion. These epistemic shifts and reflexions were subject to their very own dynamics, and played out in patterns that were much more complex than traditional accounts of knowledge change would have us believe.

In order to describe and conceptualise these processes of epistemic change, the CRC 980 has developed a notion of ‘episteme’ which encompasses ‘knowledge’ as well as ‘scholarship’ and ‘science’, defining knowledge as the ‘knowledge of something’, and thus as knowledge which stakes a claim to validity. Such claims to validity are not necessarily expressed in terms of explicit reflexion, however – rather, they constitute themselves, and are reflected, in particular practices, institutions and modes of representation, as well as in specific aesthetic and performative strategies.

In addition to this, the CRC 980 deploys a specially adapted notion of ‘transfer’ centred on the re-contextualisation of knowledge. Here, transfer is not understood as a mere movement from A to B, but rather in terms of intricately entangled processes of exchange that stay in motion through iteration even if, at first

glance, they appear to remain in a state of stasis. In fact, actions ostensibly geared towards the transmission, fixation, canonisation and codification of a certain level of knowledge prove particularly conducive to constant epistemic change.

In collaboration with the publishing house Harrassowitz the CRC has initiated the series "Episteme in Motion. Contributions to a Transdisciplinary History of Knowledge" with a view to showcase the project's research results and to render them accessible to a wider scholarly audience. The volumes published in this series represent the full scope of collaborating academic disciplines, ranging from ancient oriental studies to medieval studies, and from Korean studies to Arabistics. While some of the volumes are the product of interdisciplinary cooperation, other monographs and discipline-specific edited collections document the findings of individual sub-projects.

What all volumes in the series have in common is the fact that they conceive of the history of premodern knowledge as a research area capable of providing insights that are of fundamental interest to scholars of modernity as well.

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Politeness, Contextual Factors and Address Forms in Italian Comedies: Developments from the 16th to the 20th Century

Chiara Ghezzi (Università degli studi di Bergamo)

1 Introduction¹

Address forms play a relevant role in conveying verbal politeness. They are socially deictic elements that anchor various contextual dimensions of the speech event to an utterance and provide an indexing of the speaker's evaluation of social relations (see also Fleming (this volume) on how honorific systems index social dimensions). This happens as norms for the appropriate use of address terms indexically associate linguistic forms with multiple configurations of contextual factors that emerge in actual use (Agha 1994: 280). These can be social variables, as age or socioeconomic status of interactants, but also more temporary situational variables, as the setting of the conversation (Jucker 2020: 54).

These contextual factors also govern evaluations of speakers on the use of address forms (e. g. T vs. V) and prove central for the development of ideologies associated with different forms in the speech community, i. e. rules on what is considered appropriate and/or polite in a situation (Ghezzi 2021; Molinelli 2015a, 2019). In turn, both these indexical values and ideologies are embedded in systems of politeness that dynamically recontextualise in history.

This study focuses on the recontextualisation of rules for polite behaviour in history and on their role in changes in the balance (and in the relevance) of different contextual variables for the use of Italian address forms (see also Dickey and Gennies in this volume for broader cross-linguistic diachronic patterns of address and politeness).

The diachrony of Italian address forms is extremely well documented (see, among others, Niculescu 1974 and Molinelli 2015a, 2018, 2019 for detailed overviews). The Old Italian system of address pronouns includes a T-form (*tu* 'you.2SG') and a V-form (*voi* 'you.2PL'). However, progressively a second V-form begins to be used (*ella/lei* 'she.NOM/ACC'). The introduction of a new V-form, which syntacti-

1 This paper stems from the research carried out within the LIS-Cort project "Politeness and formality in the relationship between languages and society: from Latin to Italian and Spanish" funded by the University of Bergamo and coordinated by Piera Molinelli, University of Bergamo, in conjunction with the Autonomous University of Madrid. I profoundly thank Linda Gennies and my reviewers for their invaluable comments and suggestions. Usual disclaimers apply.

cally requires a third-person verb agreement, is triggered by the use of honorific titles, typically noun phrases with a feminine abstract noun as head and a second plural possessive adjective as modifier (e. g. *Vostra Signoria* 'Your.F Lordship.F') (Molinelli 2019: 59–60).

In texts of the 13th and 14th centuries only the feminine nominal form is used with second-person plural or third-person singular verb agreement. However, from the second half of the 15th century, the nominal form can already be found in co-occurrence with an anaphoric third-person feminine pronoun (*ella* 'she. NOM' or *lei* 'she.ACC', *quella* 'that.F.SG', *questa* 'this.F.SG'). Starting from texts of the 17th century, two pronominal V-forms coexist, i. e. second plural *voi* and/or third-person feminine *ella/lei*, which can be used without an explicit reference to a previous feminine noun phrase (Niculescu 1974: 97–99; Molinelli 2018: 63–65). At the beginning of the 20th century, the 'standard' system of address pronouns includes the T-form *tu* and the V-form *lei*, while *voi* remains as a substandard V-form in Central and Southern varieties (Serianni 1997: 187–188).²

The development of Italian address pronouns intertwines with that of nominal forms, especially of honorific titles such as *Vostra Signoria* 'Your Lordship'. Molinelli (2018: 58–62) shows that the use of honorific titles dates back to the use of Latin language in the third century AD, when the habit established of no longer addressing a prestigious interlocutor with a *tu* 'you.2SG', or with the recent *vos* 'you.2PL', but with a title that corresponds to his rank (e. g. *Vestra Excellentia* 'Your Excellency', *Maiestas* 'Your Majesty', etc.) (see also Molinelli 2015b: 83–84; Norberg 1968: 14). In the 13th century, normative treatises in Latin and model letters in vernacular Italian codify the rules for the use of titles such as *Vostra Eccellenza* 'Your Highness', *Vostra Benignità* 'Your Goodness' and *Vostra Signoria* 'Your Lordship'; in the 14th and 15th centuries the semantic field of titles broadens to include others such as (*Vostra*) *Prestanza* 'Prowess', *Magnitudine* 'Magnitude', *Mansuetudine* 'Mildness', *Generosità* 'Generosity', etc. (Brunet 2003: 26). The semantic extension of the repertoire of titles reaches its maximum in the 18th century and then it progressively decreases (Molinelli 2019: 58–63). In present-day Italian (PDI) the nominal address system includes very few honorifics (mostly *signore/signora* 'Sir/Madam'), professional terms (*dottore* 'doctor'), kinship and endearment terms (*mamma* 'mum', *caro* 'dear') (Molinelli 2019: 64–66).

On one hand, the co-presence for some time of two pronominal V-forms, one with second-person plural agreement (*voi*) and one with third-person feminine agreement (*lei*) creates an instability of the linguistic system of address.³ For in-

2 However, a recent study shows that this distribution is far from being uniform. The status as well as the vitality of *voi* varies greatly from city to city, even within the same administrative region (see Bresin 2021).

3 As Helmbrecht (2003) notes, although binary politeness distinctions, i. e. the linguistic codification of only one V- and one T-pronoun of address, represent the dominant type in Europe (e. g. It. *tu-lei*, Fr. *tu-vous*, Ger. *du-Sie*), the transition through a more elaborate system is not uncommon, as is attested for languages such as German, Spanish and the Slavonic languages.

stance, for a long period a third-person feminine reference is more and more used in combination with a second-person plural verbal agreement. This happens because the address of someone through an honorific title becomes progressively more common and frequent within the society.

On the other hand, the functional domains of the T-form (*tu*) or of the V-forms (*voi, lei*) shrink or expand depending on the relevance of specific contextual variables (e. g. reciprocal status of characters, etc.) and eventually on extant rules for polite behaviour with a precise historical conceptualisation of politeness.

These dynamics are partly language-internal in nature, as they represent linguistic tendencies of the Italian language that are already at work in the earliest written records in the 13th century (cf. Molinelli 2019: 59). However, they were propelled by language-external changes in politeness rules taking place especially from the 16th century onwards. In Europe in general, the 16th century sees rules for polite behaviour being modified due to major changes in societies and material lives (cf. Jucker 2020: 78–99). Moreover, in Italy the 16th century is also characterised by the Spanish domination in parts of the peninsula and by the prestige exerted by Spanish culture and social modes of behaviour.

Moving from these premises, through the analysis of six Italian comedies written between the 16th and the 20th century, this study primarily focuses on the relevance of contextual variables indexed by address forms. Secondly, it considers how the balance between these contextual factors changed over time and how these changes can be related to the dynamic nature of verbal politeness and to its socio-historical conceptualisation.

This paper is organised as follows: Section 2 presents an overview of the contextual variables indexed by address forms in contemporary Italian. Section 3 looks at the changes that characterise the Italian society and the conceptualisation of politeness from the Late Middle Ages to modern times. Section 4 describes the corpus of data and the methodology used for their analyses, while section 5 discusses the patterns of address in connection with contextual variables as they emerge in the comedies considered. Section 6 presents some conclusions.

2 Contextual variables in the contemporary Italian address system

The motivations for choosing one address form are complex and liable to change. There are multiple dimensions of the social context that can be indexed by address forms, which enable speakers to position themselves, their interlocutors and relationships, and to define the setting of interaction. These dimensions are not independent from each other and in many cases interact.⁴

4 There is no general agreement on terminological or classificatory issues in relation to the different contextual variables that are relevant to the choice of address forms and, more specifically, of pronouns. The theoretical model used here is based on Spencer-Oatey (1996), for the definition of general variables, and on Molinelli (2002; 2019), for variables more relevant to the Italian address system.

These include macro-sociological variables such as the relative age, gender, authority, social or socioeconomic status, kinship status and group membership of the interlocutors. They also include interactional variables, namely, the nature of the setting, the topic of discourse and the emotional tone (Morford 1997: 14ff.). One form can index multiple dimensions of the context which, in turn, are themselves indexical of complex, overlapping “structures of values” (Silverstein 2003: 194).

The first of these dimensions relates to power, a communicative power, which is grounded on ‘social’ power (cf. Brown & Gilman 1960: 255). The power semantics is commonly acknowledged as a dimension that signifies vertical⁵ and ordinal social rank distinctions between actors in a power and prestige order in society. In this sense, power indexes non-reciprocal relations, as it is not possible for both interactants to have power in the same area of behaviour. There are many bases of power: “physical strength, wealth, age, sex, institutionalised role in the church, the state, the army or within the family” (Brown & Gilman 1960: 255). This semantic translates into deferential linguistic behaviour which, in Brown and Levinson’s understanding of politeness, is a specific type of negative strategy (Strategy 5: Give deference) (Brown & Levinson 1987: 178–187). On a social level, the use of deferential styles implies the speakers’ refinement, through an ability to efface emotion, sensitivity to the stability of others and pragmatic delicacy (Irvine 1992: 256).

The second dimension is associated with horizontal ‘nominal’ distinctions rooted in perceived similarities between interlocutors and can be conceptualised as distance. The bases of distance can relate to degree and/or length of contacts. The first translates into intimate/affectionate situations, where interactants are open to reducing distance by showing affection and self-disclosure, touching, kissing, etc., or into formal relations, where people tend to do what is required by social conventions; the second indexes the frequency of contacts, which translates into unfamiliar vs. familiar contacts, which may also – but not necessarily – develop into intimate relations. Distance can also characterise interactions in terms of associative or dissociative attitudes as speakers can be willing to admire, support, etc., thus somehow increasing distance in terms of respect, or they can be more aggressive and hostile through an inappropriate reduction of distance (Spencer-Oatey 1996: 17–18).

If intimacy and familiarity are today characterised by reciprocal *tu* address, in the linguistic encoding of formality and/or unfamiliarity the dimensions of distance and power interact. As regards length of contact for instance both reciprocal *tu* (two young people meeting for the first time on the bus) or *lei* (two older people meeting on the bus) can be used by strangers depending on their age, as well as non-reciprocal *tu-lei* by speakers of different ages (compare also the dis-

5 On the vertical and horizontal conceptualisation of contextual variables of the Italian address system, see Ghezzi (2021).

inction between generalised vs. restricted honorification and their institutional anchoring in Fleming (this volume)).

The interaction of the dimensions of power and distance translates into a 'polite' use of address forms based on deference and respect. However, deference and respect themselves can be differently conceptualised, also on a cultural basis. Goffman (1956: 479) broadly conceptualises deference as non-reciprocal, along the vertical dimension, when a subordinate directs it towards a superior, or as reciprocal, along the horizontal dimension, when interlocutors express trust, capacity-esteem, affection and belongingness. On the contrary, Brown and Levinson (1987: 178–187) consider it a more circumscribed notion tied to attributions of superiority or inferiority. Similarly, the conceptualisations of respect can be glossed as non-reciprocal 'respect', when actors claim, attribute, or dispute their "place" in interactions (Haugh 2010: 280–281), or as reciprocal, when actors reciprocally "leave space" to one another (Goffman 1956: 481) and acknowledge the other person's "value", although crucially "without making salient their respective positions in a social hierarchy" (Colwell 2007: 443; see also Molinelli 2002 on the parameter of respect in the Italian address system).

The dimensions of power and distance ground politeness systems themselves (Pérez Hernández 1999). Brown and Levinson (1987: 74) list three sociological variables that speakers employ in choosing the degree of politeness to use: the social distance among actors; the relative power of the speaker over the addressee; the absolute ranking of impositions in a culture. Therefore, the greater the social distance, the more politeness is expected. The greater the relative power of addressees, the more politeness is recommended. On a general level, polite conduct is aimed at increasing distance as it tends to be stylised, depersonalised and "flat affect" (Irvine 1992: 256). The heavier the imposition, the more politeness will have to be used (for norms of conversational management as codified in Italian *galatei* see Alfonzetti (this volume)).

Within this framework, solidarity strategies such as the use of nicknames, endearment and in-group terms, T-forms, associated with the interlocutors' appreciation and consideration, can be used to reduce distance. On the contrary, deference strategies that today reflect the desire to avoid imposing on the addressee are used to maintain distance as in the case of honorifics and titles, V-forms, etc.

3 The dynamics of politeness conventions in the history of Italy

Address systems are Saussurian systems, in that they include linguistic and non-linguistic means to create linguistic and social meanings. As a matter of fact, the value of address systems does not lie in the individual forms (gestures, postures and, on a linguistic level, pronouns, nouns, verbal agreement), but in the fact that together these means anchor an interaction to the social norms for polite behaviour of a specific socio-historical context, making its values evident (Molinelli 2019: 54). In other words, address systems mirror politeness systems that dynamically reconfigure in time.

Some changes in the politeness systems that characterise the Italian peninsula between the 16th and the 20th centuries are in common with the rest of Europe, others characterise the history of Italy.

As for Europe, a number of studies stress that politeness – i. e., from a modern perspective, face work – does not seem to play an important role in the Early Middle Ages. However, during the Late Middle Ages, when the French notion of *courtoisie* begins to gain influence in other European countries, it blends Christian moral values with more worldly ones (see, among others, Jucker 2010, 2011, 2020; Bax & Kádár 2011). It is a kind of “discernment politeness”⁶ where linguistic forms are chosen in response to the social context but are not used as a strategy to avert a face threat (Jucker 2020: 96; cf. also Kohnen 2008 on Anglo-Saxon England). Such developments imply that people’s behaviour is meant more and more to reflect their status, rank and authority within society, and therefore that the contextual variable of (social) power becomes progressively more significant (see also O’Driscoll 2010: 275–279). From this perspective, linguistic deference is used to give a correct self-representation: By submitting to extant social rules, a person can acquire respectability.

In Italy, however, the court becomes the undisputed model only later. As a matter of fact, during the Middle Ages the political organisation of the peninsula in many *città-stato* lit. ‘cities-states’, where people of different social standing need to share their geographical and social space with the bourgeoisie and the lower classes, favour an urban ‘civil’ conduct model until the beginning of the 16th century.

Moreover, in Italy the courtly behavioural ideal develops in peculiar ways as it revolves around the notion of *sprezzatura* ‘effortless mastery’ (Jucker 2020:15). Jucker (2020: 79–80) underlines that the term is first used by Castiglione in his *Il Cortegiano* (1528) and that it implies (a) the ability to perform acts with a careless mastery; (b) the aspect of modesty which implies a greater reality behind the images conveyed through the behaviour; (c) an attitude of slightly superior disdain, as the courtier who knows how to behave with *sprezzatura* demonstrates his superiority to those who are unable to decipher the code; (d) the ability to disguise and deceit, or the suggestion to deceit, as the *sprezzatura* may mask unpleasant truths.

Castiglione’s courtier must be able to juggle a complex social context with a rigidly established system of *precedenze* lit. ‘precedences’ that reflect the smallest differences in social rank. The *precedenze*, in turn, are expressed through a series of *cerimonie* ‘ceremonies’ that imply a fixed and mandatory protocol for any situation of social life. Ceremonial language, through immediately perceptible

6 Culpeper and Kádár (2010) compare power deference to the contemporary politeness systems in East Asian societies, where polite behaviour is not optional, as manifestations of rank, sex or age differences are codified by morphology itself. Power deference constitutes a system of *discernment*, which pertains to the “socially dominant norms of relationally constructive conventional and ritualistic behaviour” (Kádár & Mills 2013: 143; see also Ide 1989). I use ‘discernment’ with a historicity caveat: Italian metadiscourse frames it in period-specific ways (Kádár & Paternoster 2015).

forms and symbols, signals the rank of each person within society, nourishes the experience of one's own status and legitimises one's social identity. Clothes, deportment, words, the way one presents oneself, the type of bow used, its degree of inclination, the formalities of visits, titles, commensality, even distance in steps between people are among the elements necessary to affirm one's own social position and to perceive that of others (Ago 1990: 45). As Valleriani (2004: 17) notes, ceremonial language and its psychological syntax are nothing more than the translation of hierarchical language. People need to know how to present themselves, through nuances of behaviour, greetings, choice of language, but also how to precisely qualify their relationships with everyone, upwards and downwards (see also Scharinger and Gennies in this volume on the transnational spread and adaptation of Italian models of verbal politeness in early modern Europe).

Therefore, during the Italian Renaissance and later, the prominence of the dimension of power – and of social rank – as a contextual factor increases. This implies on one hand that linguistic deference devices (e. g. honorifics and/or V-forms) become more frequent, as they are considered appropriate in a higher number of social settings, but also that the codification of deference devices becomes richer and more varied as it needs to reflect the complexity of differences in rank in society. In the 16th century, the Italian system of titles and honorifics is interested by a series of changes. On one hand the semantic domain of honorifics expands to the point that it includes forms as *Vostra Reverenza* 'Your Reverence', *Vostra Padronità* 'Your Mastership', *Vostra Magnanimità* 'Your Magnanimity', *Vostra Prestanza* 'Your Eminence', *Vostra Mansuetudine* 'Your Mildness', etc. On the other hand, the title *Vostra Signoria* 'Your Lordship', originally meant to address people with power (i. e. a *Signore* 'Lord'), is used with anyone regardless of their social position (cf. Brunet 2003: 26).

Moreover, as Held (2005: 294) notes, in Italy this type of behavioural ideal is supported and propelled by the Spanish behavioural code, which penetrated deeply into the Italian peninsula due to the Spanish domination starting from the second half of the 15th century.⁷ Although Spain exerts its dominion only in some areas of the Italian territory, Croce (1917: 175ff.) notes how Spanish culture is considered prestigious in the entire peninsula. The Spanish dominators are regarded as refined, gallant and delicate, full of pomp and gravity, ceremonious and complimentary, masters of courtesy and they are highly appreciated at court, especially in Rome. During the 16th century the words 'Spanish' and 'courtier' are considered almost synonymous. Many literates of the time openly blame the Spanish domination for this surfeit of titles and ceremonies. Brunet (2003) cites, among many others, Grisignano who in his comedy *Il Vafro* (1585) mocks two servants who try to get into the good graces of their masters by means of many

7 From the second half of the 15th century Spain exerted its domination over Naples, Sicily, Sardinia and later part of the Northern territories including Lombardy.

riverenze spagnolissime ‘Spanish bows’, or the writer Ludovico Ariosto who denounces in his *Satire* (1517):

-- Signor, -- dirò (non s'usa più fratello,
poi che la vile adulazion spagnola
messe la signoria fin in bordello) (Ariosto, *Satire* I, 76–78)

‘I will say ‘Sir’ as brother is no longer used
as the vile Spanish adulation
put the Lordship even in brothel’

Therefore, thanks to the Spanish domination and to the prestige exerted by Spanish behavioural models, in Italy the Spanish inclination towards ceremonious formality is taken to extremes and causes a progressive stiffness in politeness rules, which become a rich inventory of fixed forms strictly dependent on social rank and situations. By the end of the 17th century, the number of interactional contexts in which deference and deference devices need to be used reaches its maximum extension (cf. Molinelli 2018 for an overview).

However, as Paternoster (2015: 173–175) notes, with the beginning of the 18th century, new political and economic ideologies revolutionise the system of social classes, breaking the centuries-old monopoly of the aristocracy. Criticisms to the system of politeness, which is perceived as false and cold, becomes more frequent. In the Lombard newspaper *Il caffè*, the brothers Verri attack the idle aristocracy whose titles and *precedenze*, as they say, no longer correspond to any actual social usefulness.

From the 18th century onwards, an alternative path to the behavioural code of the *Ancien Régime* begins to be explored, when the code of the aristocracy is felt to be old-fashioned and inappropriate for interactions in a society that is undergoing radical change. The Italian politeness system, which is felt as an unbearably complex labyrinth of countless rules that codify all aspects of public and private life, becomes the target of many critics, including playwrights such as Goldoni, who in his comedies celebrates the cunning middle class and ridicules the idle aristocratic world (cf. section 4).

Between the 18th and 19th centuries, the politeness system embarks on major changes and new ways of greeting and making pleasantries are developed. One example, more than any other, gives a clear image of the changes that are taking place, as the vertical hierarchical *riverenza* ‘bow’, which is finally perceived as an unbearable sign of servility, is substituted by the horizontal democratic handshake (see Paternoster 2015: 221) (see Alfonzetti in this volume for conversation norms across *galatei*).

It is therefore possible to imagine that these changes had a relevant role in the balance between the power and the distance dimensions of contextual variables. Paternoster (2015: 219–262) confirms this hypothesis, as in her analysis of Manzoni’s *I Promessi Sposi* she shows how in the 19th century a whole social class, the

bourgeoisie, is challenging the values of the *Ancien Régime*, that dominated up until then, and is promoting new values which include a new type of politeness based on reducing the exaggerated distances of the previous centuries. This implies that the modernisation of the conduct code in Italy stresses the importance of positive politeness involved in meeting the needs of others.

Later, towards the end of the 19th century, two types of politeness seem to be at speakers' disposal. The first is associated with socially institutionalised *buone maniere* 'good manners' and more generally with negative politeness strategies, which imply putting a distance between interlocutors. The second is associated with *cortesía* 'courtesy, kindness' and more generally with positive politeness strategies, which imply attention to others' needs (Paternoster 2015: 305–306).

Kádár and Haugh (2013: 142) note that changes in politeness conventions can be favoured by different mechanisms. On one hand they occur when specific relational networks challenge existing social norms. When this happens, the new norms introduced by these relational networks will be instantiated through socialisation and education. On the other hand, major social changes have an important role in the transformation of conventions, as they modify the way in which members of a society perceive their social relations. Social conventions in Italy are probably the result of a combination of these two mechanisms. On one hand, between the 16th and the 20th centuries social changes are connected to the economic and cultural promotion of the bourgeoisie. When the latter accumulates prestige (economic, social and/or cultural), its conventions become a new social model and gradually replace those of aristocracy. On the other hand, the political unification of the Italian peninsula in the second half of the 19th century played an important role in the transformation of Italians from subjects to citizens and in the subsequent modification of their perception of social relations (see also Paternoster 2015: 263–267 on the flourishing of conduct books after the political unification).

4 Data and methodology

The corpus comprises six comedy plays written in the 16th, the 18th and the early 20th centuries, respectively. The choice of the texts to analyse was determined by two orders of factors which are relevant for this study that considers how the use of language is forged by cultural and social practices and the reverse.

Firstly, the choice of the textual genre of comedies was based on the fact that they (a) represent a very close replica of spoken language, although highly stereotyped; (b) belong to the same textual genre and can be more comparable across centuries; (c) as theatrical texts, they are characterised by repeated use of address terms which give actors information as to who is talking to whom (Culpeper 2012: 30); (d) the types of exchanges are varied, as characters generally belong to different social classes and have different types of relations.

Secondly, the choice of plays to be included in the corpus was determined by the themes dealt with in the plays and by the type of language used by the author. As for the themes, they were chosen among those more socio-historically

representative in the history of Italian politeness as they, in some ways, embody relevant ideologies on social and cultural conventions of the century when the comedy is written (cf. section 3).

As for the language, the choice of texts was based on the type of variety of Italian used by the playwright. In this regard, some methodological caution is necessary. The Italian language, like Italian society, has never been a monolithic entity, as it formed in the absence of a central political state.⁸ Initially, Italian, which originally derives from the Tuscan vernacular, develops as an almost exclusive tool of a community of scholars and literati. It becomes the national language only from the second half of the 19th century, after the political unification, and, up until the early years of the 20th century, is mostly a language belonging to the written literary tradition, rather than a spoken variety (cf. Vitale 1978).

Building on these methodological cautions, each playwright was chosen on the basis of his ideologies on what constitutes a suitable Italian variety for theatrical representation. This was harder for 16th century comedies, when literary tradition was more narrow, easier for later centuries. The six comedy plays analysed are Machiavelli's *La mandragola* (1524), Aretino's *La cortigiana* (1525), Goldoni's *La famiglia dell'antiquario* (1749) and *La locandiera* (1753), Pirandello's *Così è se vi pare* (1917) and *Il giuoco delle parti* (1918).

As regards the two comedies of the 16th century, they were chosen because on one hand both authors are of Tuscan origin, but on the other hand they describe two very different societies of the time and have opposite ideas on what a theatrical language should look like.

La mandragola 'The Mandrake (potion)' is set in republican Florence where people of different social standing share the same social environment. Florentines were mostly "merchants and simple gentlemen, without princes, marquis or barons among them" (Della Casa, *Il Galateo*, 16). As the language of his comedy, Machiavelli adopts an "organic monolingualism", the so-called "naturalistic Florentine" (Folena 1991: 132). It is a grammatically homogeneous language based on the literary tradition of the 14th century. This homogeneous language, nevertheless, is combined with a "functional pluri-stylism" which is used for the social and psychological rendering of the characters (Trifone 2000: 33; cf. also Mengaldo 2008: 64). It is one of the first comedies in the history of Italian theatre plays where each character presents themselves through their language (Patota 2019: 304). For instance, Nicia, an old man of law, misuses popular expressions and mottos, while young Callimaco's language is less diastatically connotated and adheres to the so-called *fiorentino argenteo* 'silver Florentine'.⁹

8 A long debate, known as the *Questione della lingua*, has taken shape in the treatises from Dante onwards. With alternating fortunes through the centuries, the debate revolves around the norm and identity of Italian, the relations between Italian and Tuscan, and between literary and current use (cf. Marazzini 2009).

9 Castellani (1967) distinguishes between a *fiorentino argenteo* lit. 'silver florentine', i. e. the Flo-

La cortigiana 'The Courtesan [comedy]' is itself a parody of Roman court people and life, as Rome at that time was a cosmopolitan centre which Aretino himself defines as the "new Babylon" (Paternoster 2019: 32). The setting is reflected in a full-bodied multilingualism with contextual use of different registers and expressive forms, as each character is defined by a specific variety of language with diastatic as well as diatopic variations (cf. Pacagnella 2019: 26). In the play, the author's Tuscan-Romanesque usage prevails, with a Northern patina attributable to the copyist of the manuscript (cf. Trovato 2013). At several points, a series of linguistic mixtures becomes evident: The Sieneese Maco is distinctly recognisable by his Sieneese traits, while the servant Rosso, a character Aretino creates after the real court jester of Pope Leo X, uses a Roman variety with Southern traits rich in Spanish loans.

The 18th century comedies are both written by Carlo Goldoni. He was chosen as he is the most representative Italian playwright of the 18th century. His plays insert in a climate of profound revision of social relations of which Goldoni is a witness and interpreter. Although the two comedies are set in Sicily and in Florence, respectively, in both Goldoni portraits the decadence of the Venetian aristocracy, while celebrating the reason and common sense of the bourgeoisie, through the characters of Pantalone, in *La famiglia dell'antiquario* 'The Antiquarian's Family', and of the innkeeper Mirandolina, in *La locandiera* 'The Mistress of the Inn'. Concerning the language, in Goldoni's comedies there is a shift from the language of the masks of the *Commedia dell'arte* 'comedy of art' to the language of the bourgeoisie and the commoners. The lack of a common standard 'Italian' language, that could be understood by the audience throughout the peninsula, made Goldoni's comedies the perfect locus for an expressive experimentalism (cf. D'Onghia 2014: 160–163). The writer creates a theatrical 'spoken' *koiné* that has the liveliness of the spoken Florentine. This *koiné* is also nourished with the language spoken by educated people in the Northern regions and it is enriched with Venetian and French tones as well as literary written uses, such as courtly stylisations of the language of novels and melodrama: It is a "persuasive hypothesis" of reality founded on a presupposition of common intelligibility (Folena 1958: 25). Different codes, namely Italian and Venetian in the two comedies analysed, are exploited in the depiction of characters and operate as stylistic planes to which characters enregister accordingly. Code-switching gives voice to language ideologies of the time. At one extreme is Venetian, the language of nature, impulsivity and expressivity, but also cosy affectivity. At the other is Italian, the language of social convention and interaction (Folena 1993: 194).

The early 20th-century comedies analysed (*Così è se vi pare* 'So It Is (If You Think So)' and *Il giuoco delle parti* 'The Rules of the Game') are both written by Luigi Pirandello. At the beginning of the 20th century, the need to identify a common

rentine after Boccaccio (after the 14th century), and the *fiorentino aureo* lit. 'golden florentine', i. e. the Florentine of the 14th century.

national Italian language is felt with difficulty. Pirandello identifies this variety “in the language spoken (or that wants to be spoken) in schools and that is found in books” (Pirandello 1965: 879). The language he uses in his comedies follows his thought, as he consciously adopts a medium formal Italian register, as regards both the lexicon and the morphosyntax, but he avoids more marked traits both of the high literary register and of regional and popular varieties (Trifone 2000: 96). In the comedies, this choice is reflected in the lack of a specific setting as in both texts the scene is identified by an impersonal and general ‘town today’. The themes of the comedies can help in explaining these choices, as Pirandello opposes the schemes of bourgeois theatre of the previous century and gives voice, for the first time, to the existential anguish of individuals, by plumbing the recesses and the difficulties of the modern man.

As regards the methods of analysis, the data were examined taking into consideration every address form, i. e. nouns and pronouns, as well as verb agreements. Each dyad of exchange was tagged according to the parameters identified in section 2 as schematised in Table 1, i. e. the macro-sociological variables that characterise the status of characters (social status, kinship relation, gender), but also the situational variables connected to the nature of the exchange (the degree of familiarity, formality and the characters’ associative or dissociative attitude) (conduct-politeness evidence is privileged here; etiquette-politeness sources (conduct books) are used only for contextualisation; cf. Jucker 2024).

Table 1: Tagging scheme

Macro-sociological variables	Situational variables
Social status: high, middle, low	Length of contact: familiar vs. unfamiliar
Kinship status: e. g. husband/wife, mother/daughter	Degree of contact: formal vs. intimate
Gender: male, female	Attitude: associative vs. dissociative
Age (young, middle aged, old) ¹⁰	--

Different interactions were then analysed, taking into consideration the power and the distance dimensions as in Figure 1.

Subsequently, the interactions were positioned on a bidimensional space delimited along (a) the vertical dimension by hierarchical (non-reciprocal) or equal (reciprocal) patterns; (b) the horizontal dimension, which intersects with the reciprocal or non-reciprocal vertical dimension, by distant (civil) relations or close (intimate) ones. Occasionally, closeness may be unilateral and originate in an aggressive attitude.

¹⁰ The age variable was not considered as it was not possible in all comedies to identify with certainty the age of characters.

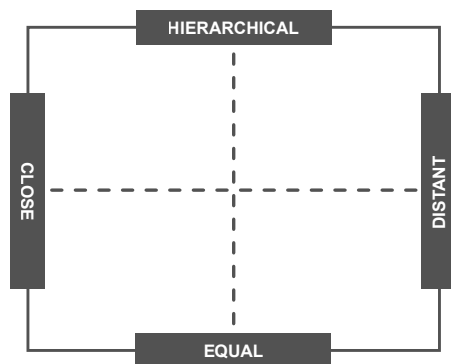


Figure 1: Situational dimensions

5 Forms of address in the comedy plays¹¹

For each century, the analysis considers the use of forms of address in relation to the vertical hierarchical dimension of power and that of horizontal reciprocal distance (see section 2).

5.1 16th-century comedies: *tu*, *voi* and *Vostra Signoria*

Voi and concomitant forms are typically used as pronominal V-forms of address, *tu* is the T-form, and *Vostra Signoria* emerges as a nominal address form only in specific contexts. Different pictures characterise the power or the distance dimensions.

5.1.1 Power

Non-reciprocal hierarchical relations are characterised by use of pronouns *tu-voi*. Characters with a 'higher' degree of power address those with a lower degree with *tu* and receive *voi*. This is the rule for the variable of social status (e. g. master-servant). For instance, in (1) Callimaco, the lover of Lucrezia in Machiavelli's *La mandragola*, addresses his familiar Siro with *tu* and receives *voi*.

- (1) *Callimaco: Io credo che tu ti maravigliassi assai della mia subita partita da Parigi; ed ora ti maravigli, sendo io stato qui già un mese senza fare alcuna cosa.*

'I know **you.2G were.2SG** probably wondering why I left Paris so suddenly and now **you.2SG are.2SG** wondering why I spent a whole month here without doing anything.'

¹¹ Generalisations on the use of specific address forms can only be limited to the language used in the comedies analysed and cannot be extended to the language spoken in the whole peninsula.

Sirio: Voi dite el vero. (MANDR, I, 1)¹²
 ‘You.2PL are.2PL right.’

This is also true for the variable of kinship status among higher classes, as Lucrezia addresses her husband Nicia and her mother Sostrata with *voi* and receives *tu*.

The non-reciprocal nature of the interaction is also underlined by nominal forms as characters higher in social hierarchy address their interlocutors by their first name (*Rosso, Lucrezia*, etc.) or similar and are addressed with their title (*Messere, Signore* ‘Gentleman’).

It is within the power dimension that the use of titles, typically *Vostra Signoria* ‘Your Lordship’, emerges. This type of address is always non-reciprocal, either *Vostra Signoria-voi* (2PL) or *Vostra Signoria-tu* (2SG). In the comedies, *Vostra Signoria* is used as a V-form to address somebody one is meeting for the first time, who is perceived as superior in status (formality), or whom one is flattering for some reason. This pattern of address is not fully entrenched in the language, as fluctuations between third-person singular or second plural verb agreement are frequent. Moreover, third-person singular agreement always co-occurs with the title *Vostra Signoria/Signoria Vostra*, but never with a pronoun such as *ella/lei*.

In (2) a fisherman addresses the servant Rosso, disguised in his master’s clothes, with *Vostra Signoria* and the third-person singular verb *pensi*, but then he proceeds to address him using the second-person plural clitic pronoun *vi*.

(2) *ROSSO Ben, da qui inanzi tieni a mia stanza tutte quelle che tu pigli, e io son per servirmi da te, [...].*

‘Well (then). From now on keep.2SG all those you.2SG catch.2SG for me and I am going to buy them from you.2SG’

PESCATORE Signor, Vostra Signoria, non pensi, ch’in fatti, tant’è ... Io vi son servitore! (CORT, I, 16)

‘[My] Lord, Your Lordship be.3SG assured that I am [at your service]. I am your.2PL servant’

In (3) Master Andrea flatters and mocks the Sienese Maco, his apprentice courtier, who is in Rome to become cardinal. In the extract Maco sees his image reflected in the mirror after Andrea has encouraged him to change his physical appearance to resemble a courtier. In this context the flattering use of the *Vostra Signoria* turns it into a ‘mock-polite’ device.¹³

12 In the examples each comedy is identified by an abbreviation: Machiavelli’s *La mandragola* = MANDR, Aretino’s *La cortigiana* = CORT; Goldoni’s *La famiglia dell’antiquario* = ANT, *La locandiera* = LOC, Pirandello’s *Così è se vi pare* = COS, *Il giuoco delle parti* = GIUOC.

13 Mock-polite forms have an impoliteness understanding that does not match the surface form or semantics of the utterance. See Ghezzi & Molinelli (2019).

- (3) M. ANDREA *Gli è cento anni, o meno, che mai fu visto el piú bello di Vostra Signoria. [...].*

'A more beautiful figure than **Your Lordship's** has not been seen in the last one hundred years.'

MESS. MACO *Ah, ah! **Mostratemi** lo specchio, ch'io mi sento diventato un altro! O che pena ho io patito! Ma io sono cortigiano e guarito.* (CORT, IV, 19)
'**Give.2PL** me a mirror, as I feel transformed! Oh what a pain! But I am courtier and recovered.'

It is possible to find a correlation in the comedies between the use of the title *Vostra Signoria* and the setting of the comedy. It is a characteristic trait of Aretino's *La cortigiana*, set in courtly Rome, but not of Machiavelli's *La mandragola*, set in republican Florence. Aretino himself, through his comedy, confirms this fact. Maco, one of the main characters of the play, is a country bumpkin from Siena, who, while in Rome, shows all his naivety towards court life. For instance, he appears to have never heard the title *Vostra Signoria* before. In (4) Andrea introduces himself to Maco. After telling him that being a good courtier is a prerequisite to becoming a cardinal, Andrea promises to help Maco and greets him with *Signoria Vostra*, to which Maco reacts naively with an expression of surprise.

- (4) *Messer Maco: Come avete voi nome?*
'What **is.2PL your.2PL** name?'

Maestro Andrea: Andrea, al piacere della Signoria Vostra
'Andrea, at **Your Lordship's** service'

Messer Maco: De chi? (CORT, I, 2)
'At whose service?'

In the following scene in (5) Maco and his relative Sanese rehearse how to behave as a perfect courtier. Sanese suggests using *Signoria Vostra*, dressing and walking accordingly.

- (5) *Messer Maco: che dici tu?*
'What do **you.2SG say.2SG?**'

Sanese: Dite: la Signoria Vostra. Non sentisti voi Maestro Andrea che disse: la Signoria Vostra?
'**Say.2PL: Your Lordship.** Didn't **you.2PL hear.2PL** Master Andrea saying: **Your Lordship?**'

Messer Maco: Mi raccomando alla Signoria Vostra.
'I recommend myself to **Your Lordship**'

Sanese: Bene; mandate su la veste!
'Very good; **lift.2PL** up your vest'

Messer Maco: Così, la Signoria Vostra?
 'Like this, **Your Lordship?**'

Sanese: Messer sì; acconciate la berretta così, andate largo di qua, di là; ben, benissimo. (CORT, I, 3)
 'Yes **Sir, put.2PL** the hat like this, **walk.2PL** this way, that way; good, very good.'

In this extract, in which Aretino is satirising courtly behaviour, the quintessential characteristics of the perfect courtier are described. These include specific ways of dressing, walking and speaking. The most distinctive feature when speaking is the use of the title *Vostra Signoria*.

5.1.2 Distance

Characters use reciprocal *voi* to show unfamiliarity, formality and an associative respect. Conversely, they use reciprocal *tu* to express intimacy, frequency of contact or a dissociative attitude.

As for unfamiliar and formal relations, characters belonging to higher classes exchange a reciprocal civil *voi*. For instance, in (6) Andrea and Maco conclude their very first conversation addressing each other with *voi*.

(6) *Messer Maco: Andate, di grazia!*
 'Please (do) **go.2PL** [and buy your book]!'

Maestro Andrea: Adesso adesso ritorno, e trovaròvi in casa Ceccotto (CORT, I, 2)
 'I am coming back soon and I will **see.2PL you.2PL** at Ceccotto's'

The same address pattern is used among the lower classes especially when male characters address women. In (7) an old servant addresses a baker's wife, whom he has just met, with *voi*.

(7) *Valerio: E voi, moglie di messer Ercolano, entrate con Aloigia. (CORT, V, 22)*
 '**You.2PL**, wife of Sir Ercolano, **enter.2PL** with Aloigia'

In contrast, lower class men exchange a reciprocal *voi* only when they are unfamiliar with each other, while they exchange a reciprocal *tu* when they are well acquainted.

Distance, however, is often manipulated and negotiated during the interaction depending on the character's objectives in conversation and address switches are quite frequent.

(8) *Ligurio: Volgete il parlare a me, padre, [...]*
 '**Father, listen.2PL** to me'

Timoteo: *Che volete voi da me ? [...] Seguita pure, e lasciagli dire ciò che vuole. [...] datemi la pozione, e, se vi pare, cotesti danari, da poter cominciare a fare qualche bene.* (MANDR, III, 4)

'What do **you.2PL** want.2PL from me?' [...] Please **continue.2SG** and **let.2SG** him say what he wants. [...] **Give.2PL** me the potion, and, if **you.2PL** will, this money, in order for me to be able to do some good.'

In (8) the parasite Ligurio is visiting Friar Timoteo. Ligurio is with Messer Nicia, who is pretending to be deaf. They both want the Friar to help them in their plan to give Lucrezia, Nicia's wife, the mandrake potion in exchange for some money. When they meet for the first time, Ligurio and the Friar exchange a reciprocal *voi*, but then Friar Timoteo switches to *tu* to reduce his distance from Ligurio. This happens as Timoteo encourages Ligurio to go on with his talk after the conversation was interrupted by Messer Nicia swearing and by Ligurio apologising for his disrespectful behaviour. Ligurio continues with *voi* as a sign of deference and the Friar switches again to *voi*, as a sign of respect towards Ligurio, when the latter promises to give the Friar some money as a reward for his help.

Civil formality also characterises frequent relations as in the case of kins, although this is a peculiar trait of higher classes. For instance, Nicia and his mother-in-law Sostrata exchange a reciprocal *voi* in *La mandragola* (ex. 9).

- (9) *Sostrata: Andate a trovare el frate. Ma e' non bisogna, egli è fuori di chiesa.*
'**Go.2PL** and find the friar. But it is not necessary (for you to enter the church), he will be outside.'

Nicia: Voi dite el vero. (MANDR, V, 5)
'**You.2PL** are.2PL right'

Nominal forms reflect the use of pronouns in relation to the situational variable of formality. When reciprocal *voi* is used, characters tend to address each other with reciprocal honorifics. The use of honorifics is peculiar for each play. In *La mandragola* they are limited to *Messere* 'Milord', *Madonna* 'Milady', while in *La cortigiana* also *Signore* 'Sir' and *Signoria Vostra* 'Your Lordship' are extremely common. Professional terms such as *dottore* 'doctor', *padre* 'father' are also used.

Reciprocal *tu* is indexical of intimate situations or of frequent contacts, although it is the norm among lower classes, while it is episodic among higher classes. For instance, in Aretino's *La cortigiana* reciprocal *tu* characterises interactions among lower classes. In (10) the servants Cappa and Rosso exchange reciprocal *tu*.

- (10) *CAPPA Tu sei molto alegre, Rosso; tu vai ridendo da te stesso: che vuol dire?*
'**You.SG** are.2SG very happy, Rosso. Why **are.2SG** **you.2SG** smiling to yourself?'

ROSSO *Io mi rido d'una giuntaria ch'è stata fatta [...], e te la conterò piú per agio.* (CORT, I, 20)

'I am smiling because of a cheat that has been done and I will tell **you.2SG** that calmly.'

In these contexts, the variable of a high degree of contact prevails over the macro-sociological variable of gender. In (11) the accomplices Rosso, Sir Parabolano's male relative and the female pimp Aloigia exchange reciprocal *tu*. Similarly, intimacy prevails over kinship status among the baker Ercolano and his wife Togna, who exchange reciprocal *tu*.

(11) Aloigia: **Credi tu** ch'io no 'l facessi, se bisognassi? *La poveretta!*

'(Do) **you.2SG think.2SG** I would not have done it, if there had been a need? Poor her!'

Rosso: *Per piangere non la riarai tu!* (CORT, II, 6)

'Even if you cry, **you.2SG** will not **have.2SG** her back!'

In contrast, among higher classes the use of reciprocal *tu* is episodic and it is characteristic of moments of emotional transport. For instance, in Machiavelli's *La mandragola* only Callimaco and the parasite Ligurio, who are accomplices, exchange reciprocal *tu*. In (12) Ligurio promises to help Callimaco sleep with Lucrezia and the latter expresses to Ligurio his happiness and gratitude for having promised to help him. However, this pattern is not the norm in the dialogues between the two characters who normally exchange a more 'civil' *voi*.

(12) Callimaco: **Tu mi risusciti.** *Questa è troppa gran promessa, e pascimi di troppa gran speranza. Come farai?*

'**You.2SG resurrect.2SG** me. This is too big a promise and [you] **give.2SG** me too much hope. How will [you] **do.2SG** it?'

Ligurio: **Tu el saprai,** *quando e' fia tempo; [...].* (MANDR, I, 3)

'**You.2SG** will **know.2SG** it, when the time comes.'

Nominal forms also have a relevant role in modulating the reduction of distance. For instance, the use of the first name is commonly preceded, or followed, by a possessive adjective (*Rosso mio* 'my Rosso') or by the adjective *caro* 'dear' (*Rosso carissimo* 'dearest Rosso'), the word *fratello* 'brother', or the expression *amico mio caro* 'my dear friend'.

Tu is also used to index a dissociative attitude. This is exemplified in (13) where Maco, disguised as a porter, is mocked by everyone, even by his own servants, who address him with *tu* and with nominal forms that have a negative connotation.

(13) Maestro Andrea: *Deh, vanne alle forche!*

'**Go.2SG** to hell!'

Grillo: *Che tu trovi quel che tu cerchi, boiaccia.*

'I hope **you.2SG find.2SG** what **you.2SG deserve.2SG**, **stupid!**

Messer Maco: *Deh, Grillaccio ladro, tu mi dileggi! Or da' qua e' mia panni, malandrino, traditore!*

'Oh, **evil Grillo, you.2SG are.2SG** making fun of me!

Give.2SG me my clothes back, [you] **rascal, traitor!**

Maestro Andrea: *Fatti indietro, becco, pesadeos, vigliacco, che chiero matarti!* (CORT, II, 26)

'**Go.2SG** back, **silly, churl, coward**, I want to kill you!'

The use of such nominal forms is extremely frequent, given the text genre. They include nouns such as *ribald* 'villain', *balorda* 'loser', *gaglioffo* 'rogue', *porco* 'swine', *puttana* 'whore', all belonging either to the semantic spheres of criminality or prostitution.

In the 16th century comedies, the non-reciprocal power dimension (*tu-voi*) indexes primarily the parameter of social status and, secondarily, among class equals, other parameters such as gender (among lower classes) or kinship status (among higher classes). The V-form *Vostra Signoria* (and corresponding third-person verb agreement) is used in first encounters or to mock flattering courtly linguistic behaviour. However, this address pattern, which is a characteristic trait of Aretino's *La cortigiana*, does not seem to be fully entrenched in the language, as it is characterised by the co-occurrence in the same line with non-consistent verbal agreement (third-person singular or second plural) and with an anaphoric reference to the nominal form with the pronoun *voi*.

In the distance dimension reciprocal *voi* indexes unfamiliarity and/or formality in all social classes, but also a 'civil' respect between members of the higher classes. Instead, reciprocal *tu* indexes closeness among the lower classes and a dissociative attitude also among higher classes. Switches between forms are rather common (for how different social scales/institutions condition the breadth of V-form usage (and its later generalisation), see Fleming (this volume)).

5.2 18th-century comedies: *tu, voi* and *lei*

In the 18th-century comedies *voi* and *lei* coexist as V-forms of address, while *tu* is used as a T-form.

5.2.1 Power

Hierarchical relations are characterised by non-reciprocal patterns of address. However, in contrast to comedies of the 16th century, where also the variables of gender or kinship status played a relevant role, in Goldoni social status is the only variable indexed. The power dimension is regularly indexed by address patterns based on the social status of characters: *tu-lei* for the lower class-nobility dyad and *voi-lei* for the bourgeoisie-nobility dyad. For instance, in (14) the servant

Brighella addresses his master Count Anselmo with *lei* and receives *tu*, whereas in (15) Anselmo addresses his father-in-law, the merchant Pantalone, with *voi* and receives *lei*.

(14) BRIGHELLA *La me perdona; ma buttar via tanti bezzi in ste cosse ...*¹⁴

'Please (**you.3SG.F**) **forgive.3SG** me, but to throw away so much money in these things ...'

ANSELMO *Buttar via? Buttar via? [...] Senti se vuoi avere la mia protezione, non mi parlar mai contro il buon gusto delle antichità* (ANT, I, 1)

'Throw away? Throw away? **Listen.2SG**, if [you] **want.2SG** to stay at my service, do not speak against the good taste of antiquities'

(15) ANSELMO *Ridete, perchè non ve n'intendete.*

'(You) **laugh.2PL** because **you.2PL** do not **know.2PL** (these things)'

PANTALONE *Benissimo, mì son ignorante, ella xe vertuoso, e non voicatar bega su questo.* (ANT, I, 18)

'Well then. I am ignorant and **you.3SG.F are.3SG clever.3SG.M**, and I do not want to discuss it'

If compared with 16th-century comedies, third-person address is used as a V-form to address all aristocrats, with nominal as well as with pronominal forms. The third-person pronoun *ella/lei*, and variants, can be found alone, without co-occurring titles, most frequently in the forms *ella* (subject) as in (15), *lei* (object or oblique cases), or in the Venetian regional form *la* (the clitic feminine singular subject pronoun) as in (14); verb agreement is regularly in the third-person singular, with or without a co-occurring title, while adjectives agreement, when the referent is masculine, can be found not consistently in the feminine or in the masculine as in (15).

The repertoire of titles used is varied and rich. The most frequent title is *Vostra Signoria* 'Your Lordship', with or without the adjective *Illustrissima* or *Illustrissimo* 'most illustrious.F/M', modifying the head noun *Signoria* or *Signore*, respectively.¹⁵ Other titles codify the social position of the interlocutor, e.g. *Vostra Eccellenza* 'Your Excellency', or forms such as *signor Conte* lit. 'Sir Count', *signor Cavaliere* lit. 'Sir Cavalier', *signor Marchese* lit. 'Sir Marquis'. The neutral *Signore/la* 'Sir/Madam' is particularly interesting in relation to practices of address between strangers. *Vossignoria* or *Signore* are considered 'appropriate' for first encounters, while characters switch to the appropriate title required by conventions once they are in-

14 In the examples code-switching to Venetian is underlined. In the comedies analysed Venetian is a characteristic trait of the lower classes and the bourgeoisie (see section 4).

15 As Molinelli (2015a) notes, the frequency of *Vostra Signoria* in the language created frozen and conventionalised variants such as *Vussioria* (< *Vostra Signoria* 'Your Lordship'), *Vossustrissima* (< *Vostra Signoria Illustrissima* 'Your most illustrious Lordship') or *Lustrissimo* (< a Venetian variant of *Illustrissimo* 'most illustrious'), derived from *Illustrissimo Signore* 'Illustrious Sir'. Similar variants also characterise Genoese or Sicilian.

roduced. Using neutral *Signore/Vossignoria* at first encounters and upgrading to the appropriate title mirrors etiquette prescriptions (Paternoster 2022). Thus, the situational variable of unfamiliarity operates within the power dimension as patterns of address are indexical of social status.

The frequency of use of titles, together with the widening of their repertoire, can be considered as a sign of their social importance in the 18th-century society depicted by Goldoni, where the correct social positioning is a central part of politeness. This importance is ridiculed by Goldoni in the first scenes of *La locandiera* in (16). In the extract the Marquis and the clever servant of the inn Fabrizio engage in a conversation on the appropriateness of titles. The Marquis and the Cavalier are guests at Mirandolina's inn and both are in love with Mirandolina. In the extract the Marquis accuses Fabrizio of not respecting the correct levels of deference and suggests there is some difference between him and the Cavalier: *Eccellenza* is the correct title for a marquis, while the more common *Signore* is suitable for a cavalier.

(16) *Fabrizio: Mi comandi, signore (al marchese)*

'**Command.3SG** me, **Sir** (to the marquis)'

Marchese: Signore? Chi ti ha insegnato la creanza?

'**Sir?** Who **taught.2SG** you.2SG your manners?'

Fabrizio: La perdoni.

'**(You.3SG.F) Pardon.3SG** (me).'

Conte: Ditemi: come sta la padroncina? (a Fabrizio)

'**Tell.2PL** me: how is your mistress? (to Fabrizio)'

Fabrizio: Sta bene, illustrissimo.

'She is very well, **illustrious.M**'

Marchese: è alzata dal letto?

'Is she up yet?'

Fabrizio: Illustrissimo sì.

'Yes, **illustrious.M**'

Marchese: Asino.

'Donkey'

Fabrizio: Perché, illustrissimo signore?

'Why, **illustrious.M** Sir?'

Marchese: Che cos'è questo illustrissimo?

'Don't Lordship me!'

Fabrizio: è il titolo che ho dato anche a quell'altro cavaliere.

'It is the title I gave to the other cavalier, too.'

Marchese: Tra lui e me vi è qualche differenza. [...]
 'There is some distinction between him and me.'

Fabrizio: Eccellenza sì. Ho fallato questa volta?
 'Yes, **Excellency**. I made a mistake this time, didn't I?

Marchese: Va bene. Sono tre mesi che lo sai; ma sei un impertinente.
 'All right. You **have.2SG** known it for three months; but you **are.2SG** an insolent fellow.'

Fabrizio: Come comanda, eccellenza. (LOC, I, 2)
 'As [you] **command.3SG**, **Excellency**.'

Interactions between middle- and lower-class characters are more subject to variation and to negotiation in the interaction. For instance, characters may exchange non-reciprocal *tu-voi*, as in the case of the merchant Pantalone who addresses with *tu* Colombina, the maiden of Countess Isabella (his daughter's mother-in-law), and receives *voi*; but they may also exchange reciprocal respectful *voi* as in the case of the innkeeper Mirandolina and of her waiter Fabrizio (see example 21 below). Moreover, in the lines of middle-class characters such as Mirandolina or Pantalone, pronoun switches are more frequent (see the discussion on example 20 below).

5.2.2 Distance

The dimension of distance is characterised by the widespread use of reciprocal *voi*, with few exceptions, such as emotional situations or marked dissociative attitudes, where *tu* is used instead.

The situational variable of formality, of 'civil' interaction, is dominant. Almost everyone in the comedies exchanges reciprocal *voi*, including kins (such as husband–wife or father–daughter). This happens regardless of the social status of characters in intimate or frequent relations. For instance, aristocrats like Countess Isabella and her gallant, the Cavalier, in (17), the servant Brighella and his friend Arlecchino in (18), the innkeeper Mirandolina and her waiter Fabrizio in (19).

(17) *ISABELLA Cavaliere, siete venuto a tempo. Ho bisogno di voi.*
 'Cavalier, [you] **have.2PL** arrived.**SG.M** at the right moment. I need **you.2PL**'

CAVALIERE Comandate, signora. Disponete di me. (ANT, I, 14)
 'Command.2PL Milady, **dispose.2PL** of me'

(18) *ARLECCHINO Un gran ben che ghe volì al voster padron!*
 'You.2PL really **love.2PL** your.2PL master!'

BRIGHELLA Ve dirò. Ho procurà de illuminarlo, de disingannarlo, ma nol vol. (ANT, I, 16)
 'I'm telling **you.2PL**, I tried to open his eyes, to dissuade him, but he doesn't want to.'

(19) Fabrizio: *Cara Mirandolina, compatitemi.*

'Dear Mirandolina, forgive.2PL me.'

Mirandolina: *Via, andate, lasciatemi stirare.* (LOC, III, 3)

'Come on, go.2PL [and prepare me another iron], let.2PL me iron.'

Unlike the address pattern in (14) where Count Anselmo addresses his servant Brighella with *tu* and receives *lei*, in (19) the Mistress Mirandolina and the waiter Fabrizio exchange reciprocal *voi*.

Nominal forms carry the load of modulating distance in terms of both formality and intimacy. As for the first, common patterns among aristocrats include such forms as *Signore/la* 'sir/lady', *Madama* 'milady', *Galantuomo* 'gentleman', titles such as (*signor*) *cavaliere* 'Sir Cavalier', professional terms like *sior dottore* 'sir doctor', but also less deferential forms among middle and lower-classes like proper names, *Arlecchino*, *Brighella* and *Colombina*, *caro signore* 'dear sir', *caro amico* 'dear friend', *damine mie* 'my ladies.DIM', etc. As for intimacy, even if husband and wife exchange reciprocal *voi*, they use a variety of nominal forms preceded or followed by a possessive adjective or by the adjective *caro/la* 'dear.M/F' which are known to reduce distance, convey affection and intimacy.¹⁶ This is for instance the case of proper names (*Doralice mia* 'my Doralice', *cara Mirandolina* 'dear Mirandolina'), titles (*contessa mia* 'my countess'), kinship terms (*moglie mia* 'my wife', *mia cara nuora* 'my dear daughter-in-law'), etc.

The use of *tu* in the comedies is episodic and its functional domain is very limited. A character may use it in moments of display of affection, but then he/she switches back to *voi*. This is exemplified in (20), where Pantalone is asking his daughter Doralice to get on well with her mother-in-law. The interaction begins with a reciprocal *voi*, but in the course of the conversation, Pantalone (but not Doralice) tries to reduce the distance and to show his affection through a series of devices: He switches to Venetian (underlined in the extract), which in Goldoni represents the language of affection (see section 4), he uses the endearment term *cara fia* 'dear daughter' and he also switches to *tu*.

(20) DORALICE *Signor padre, vi ringrazio dell'amorosa correzione che mi fate.*

'Sir father, I thank you.2PL for the kind correction that (you) are.2PL doing me.'

PANTALONE *Vostra madonna sarà in tutte le furie, e con rason. [...] Via, cara fia, dame un poco de consolazion. No gh'ho altri a sto mondo che ti. Dopo la mia morte, ti sarà parona de tutto.* (ANT, I, 19)

'Your.2PL mother-in-law will have flown off the handle and she is right. [...] Come on, dear daughter, give.2SG me some consolation. I

¹⁶ On the use of possessives as pragmatic means to index proximity, affection and intimacy see Fedriani & Unceta Gómez (2021), as well as Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg (1995: 556).

do not have anybody else in the world except **you.2SG**. After my death **you.2SG will own.2SG** everything.'

Tu is also used in moments of anger. In (21) Harlequin, disguised as an antiquarian, is trying to deceive the merchant Pantalone by selling him fake antiquities. At first Pantalone addresses Harlequin with civil *voi*, while Harlequin addresses him with a 'mock' polite *lei* in an attempt to deceive Pantalone (see also Harlequin's 'as you are a true gentleman'). However, when the latter discovers Harlequin's trick, he switches to an angry *tu*. Later, after Harlequin's apology, he returns to civil *voi*.

(21) *Pantalone: Caro amico, se me farè a mì sto piaser, oltre al pagamento, ve servirò in quel che poderò, in quel che ve occorrerà.*

'Dear friend, if you **do.2PL** me this favour, I will pay you and be at **your.2PL** service for anything **you.2PL** may need.'

Arlecchino: Za che ved che l'è un galantomo, l'osserva che roba! [...].

'As **you.3SG are.3SG** a true gentleman, **look.3SG** at these things!'

Pantalone: Questa la par una pantofola vecchia. [...] No voggio veder altro. Baron, ladro, disgrazià! Crèdistu che sia un mamalucco? A mì ti me dà da intender ste fandonie? Furbazzo, te farò andar in galia.

'This looks like an old slipper. [...] I do not want to see anything else.

Thief! Liar! Wretched! Do **you.2SG think.2SG** I am a fool? Do **you.2SG sell.2SG** me these lies? **Sneaky**, I will have **you.2SG** put in jail.'

Arlecchino: Ah signor, per amor del cielo, ghe domand pietà. [...]

'O **Sir**, for God's sake, I **beg your.3SG** mercy.'

Pantalone: Orsù, vegnì con mì. [...]. (ANT, II, 12)

'Come on, **come.2PL** with me.'

In these moments nominal forms, such as the insults *baron* 'liar', *ladro* 'thief', *disgrazià* 'wretched', are used accordingly.

In the two 18th-century comedies, address forms index social status within the power dimension, as address towards nobles, by middle- or lower-class characters, is regularly with titles, e. g. *Vostra Signoria*, third-person pronouns and related forms. On the contrary, nobles address middle class members with *voi* and lower classes with *tu*.

Voi, on the other hand, is the unmarked address form in all other contexts. It is used to index distance, civil formality irrespective of social status. Patterns of address with *tu* are used in rare moments of intimacy (to show affection) or of anger. Nominal forms carry the load to modulate the degree of distance between characters. The repertoire of nominal forms is rich and includes a variety of titles, but also of 'new' endearment terms (e. g. *cara contessa* 'Dear Countess', *Doralice mia* 'My Doralice', etc.).

5.3 Early 20th-century comedies: *tu*, *lei* (and *voi*)

The situation of the address system as it emerges in the early 20th-century comedies is that of an essentially bipartite system where the standard V-form of address is *lei*. However, relics of *voi* can still be found in the power as well as in the distance dimensions.

5.3.1 Power

Most interactions are characterised by reciprocal patterns of address, either *tu-tu* or *lei-lei*. Only master and servant address each other with non-reciprocal *tu-lei*, in *Così è se vi pare* (22), or *tu-voi* in *Il giuoco delle parti* (23). However, in both comedies this pattern of address is marginal.¹⁷

(22) *Laudisi: Tu hai risposto che non c'era nessuno.*

'**You.SG have.2SG** answered that everyone was out!'

Cameriere: Ho risposto che c'era lei. (COS, II, 3)

'I answered that **you.F.3SG were.3SG** in!'

(23) *Filippo: Ma che volete dire! Statevi zitto!*

'What do (you) **want.2PL** to say. **Shut.2PL** up!'

Leone: Che siete Socrate, invece.

'(You) **are.2PL** Socrates, instead.'

Filippo: Con codesto Socrate voi dovete finirla! Perché io non lo conosco!

'**You.2PL have.2PL** to stop with this Socrates, as I do not know him!'

Leone: Come! Non lo conosci? (GIUOC, II, 1)

'Really! Don't (you) **know.2SG** him?'

In *Così è se vi pare*, exemplified in (22), the butler does not even have a proper name. He just enters the scene to introduce people arriving at the house. The extract in (22) is the only one where *Laudisi*, the brother of the butler's mistress, engages in conversation with him. By contrast, in *Il giuoco delle parti*, in (23), *Filippo*, the old personal butler of *Leone Gala*, the main character of the comedy, is more clearly defined. The extract shows how the relationship between them is less formal, as *Leone* is teasing *Filippo*. The higher degree of intimacy between them, their frequency of contact, probably explains the use of the respectful *voi* instead of the distancing *lei*.

In the comedies, it is the nominal forms that actually index the power dimension. In *Così è se vi pare*, the commissioner *Centuri*, who is a subordinate of *Agaz-*

17 It is relevant to stress that, although this non-reciprocal pattern of address is marginal in the two comedies, it was (and it is) a common pattern in the language. However, its marginality in the comedies analysed for the early 20th century, if compared with those of the previous centuries, is in itself telling as to changes that were taking place in the relevance of the power dimension.

zi, is addressed with his surname, but he addresses his superior with the title *Signor Consigliere* 'Mr Councillor'. Both of them, however, exchange reciprocal *lei*.

5.3.2 Distance

The reciprocal pattern of address *lei-lei* indexes unfamiliarity and civil formality, the pattern *tu-tu* intimacy and familiarity. Pronoun switches do not happen even in moments of particular affection or anger.

As regards pronouns, occasional encounters are characterised by reciprocal *lei*. This occurs consistently regardless of any other parameters, such as age or social status.

When male characters are acquaintances, they typically exchange reciprocal *tu*. In (24) Leone and Barelli, two old friends, address each other with *tu*, but once Barelli addresses Leone's wife, he switches to a more distancing *lei*. This happens since he has never met her before, but also to show her respect, as underlined by his gallant bow.

(24) LEONE *Avanti, avanti, Barelli!* – *Oh! Con tutto questo armamentario?*
'Come in, come in, **Barelli!** Oh, with all this paraphernalia?'

BARELLI *Ah, senti, caro mio: sono cose da pazzi ... da idioti ... [...] Che cos'è?*

'**Listen.2SG, dear friend,** these are crazy things, silly things. What is it?'

LEONE *Ti presento alla mia signora. (A Silia): Barelli, tiratore formidabile.*

'I introduce **you.2SG** to my wife. (To Silia): Barelli, excellent shooter.'

BARELLI *(s'inchina). [...] Io non ho mai visto una cosa simile! **Mi perdoni, signora;** ma se non lo dico, io ... io ci faccio una malattia, ecco. (GIUOC, II, 8)*
'(he bows). [...] I've never seen such a thing! **Forgive.3SG me, Madam;** but if I don't say it, I ... I'll get mad, that's it.'

The repertoire of nominal forms of address, if compared with that used in 18th-century Goldoni's plays, is qualitatively different. Characters who are strangers generally exchange the neutral title *Signore/la* 'Sir/Madam', followed by the personal surname (*Signora Cini, Signor Sirelli*), or by the professional title (*Signor Consigliere* 'Mr Councillor', *Signor Prefetto* 'Mr Prefect'). Occupational terms are also used alone (*dottore* 'doctor') or with a surname (*Dottor Spiga* 'Doctor Spiga'). Moreover, nominal forms modulate distance, as characters who are only acquaintances exchange forms such as *signora mia* 'my lady', *cara signora* 'dear lady' with women, or *cara Sirelli* 'dear Sirelli'.

Reciprocal *tu* indexes both intimacy and familiarity. As for the first, it is especially characteristic of kinship relations, regardless of age, gender, role. For instance, in (25) Dina and her uncle Lamberto Laudisi exchange reciprocal *tu* while discussing the appropriateness of visiting their neighbour.

(25) *DINA* Ecco, **vedi?** *Te ne meravigli!* **Ti sembra una stramberia, e me ne domandi subito il perché.**

'There. (You) **see.2SG?** **You.2SG wonder.2SG** about it! **You.2SG think.2SG** it is a strange thing and [you] **ask.2SG** me the reason why immediately.'

LAUDISI *Carina!* **Hai ingegno tu; ma parli con me, sai?** – **Tu vieni a posarmi qui sul tavolino le scarpe della cuoca appunto per stuzzicar la mia curiosità.** (COS, I, 1)

'Oh, **dear one!** **You.2SG are.2SG** clever; but [you] **are.2SG** talking with me, [you] **know.2SG?** – **You.2SG put.2SG** the cook's shoes on the table to pique my curiosity.'

Nominal forms of address are used accordingly. Characters who have a high degree of intimacy address each other with their first names, with the adjective *caro/a* 'dear.M/F', with or without the adjective *miola* 'my.M/F', or with more intimate forms such as *zietto* 'uncle.DIM', *carina* 'pretty.F'. All these suggest that relationships in the early 20th century are characterised by a reduced degree of formality, etiquette and distance, compared with those emerging in the comedies of the previous centuries.

As regards familiarity, the use of reciprocal *tu* also indexes frequency of contacts. In (26) Laudisi and Sirelli, two male neighbours who know each other quite well, exchange reciprocal *tu*.

However, as in the case of (24) above, civil distant formality is indexed by reciprocal *lei*. In the extract in (26) when Laudisi addresses Mrs Sirelli he switches to *lei*.

(26) *LAUDISI* **Tu mi vedi?** *Guardami meglio. Toccami. [...] così, bravo. Tu sei sicuro di toccarmi come mi vedi, è vero?*

'**You.2SG see.2SG** me? **Take.2SG** a better look at me ... **Touch.2SG** me! Like this, very good. **You.2SG are.2SG** sure to touch me as [you] **see.2SG** me, are you not?'

SIRELLI *Direi.*

'I would say (so).'

LAUDISI **Non puoi dubitare di te, sfido!** – **Torna al tuo posto.**

'[You] **cannot.2SG** doubt **yourself.2SG**, I dare! **Go.2SG** back to **your.2SG** seat!'

LAUDISI (*alla Signora Sirelli*). **Ora, scusi, venga qua lei signora.** *No no, ecco, vengo io da lei. Mi vede, è vero? Alzi una manina; mi tocchi. Cara manina!* (COS, I, 2)

'(To Mrs Sirelli), Now, **excuse.3SG** me, **you.3SG come.3SG** here **madam.** No, no, I come to **you.3SG**. [You] **see.3SG** me, do you not? **Raise.3SG** [your] little hand, **touch.3SG** me. **Dear little hand!**

The change from *tu* to *lei* can be explained by two, probably, concurring reasons. The first relates to the degree of familiarity between Laudisi and Mrs Sirelli, as they do not know each other very well, since the friendship relation is between Sirelli and Laudisi. The second has to do with gender relations and with the connotations that the use of *lei* has, if compared with those of *voi*.

In the language of the early 20th century, *lei* is considered the appropriate address form between civil and well-educated people who are not exceedingly servile or flattering, *voi* on the contrary is a sort of intermediate respectful solution somewhere between formal *lei* and informal *tu* and it is quite common between men and women (Ridolfi 1968: 124).¹⁸

In the comedies analysed these patterns of address are marginal, but an interesting example can be found in *Il giuoco delle parti*. Silia, Leone's wife, and Guido, Leone's friend, have a love affair. Leone knows it, but they do not know that he does. When they are alone, Silia and Guido exchange a reciprocal *tu*, but when Leone is present, they exchange a reciprocal *voi* in an attempt to increase the distance between them. As they know each other quite well, they exchange a respectful *voi* instead of *lei*.

In the 20th-century comedies pronominal address forms only marginally index the power dimension, which is mostly dependent on nominal forms. On the contrary, pronouns index the distance dimension as characters use reciprocal *lei* as a V-form, as a way of showing reciprocal unfamiliarity and civil formality (based, for example, on gender), or reciprocal *tu* as a T-form to show familiarity and intimacy. This implies that the functional domains of *tu* expand, if compared with those found in 18th-century comedies. For instance, it is used to index kinship relations, irrespective of any other parameter. The repertoire of nominal forms changes considerably, if compared with previous centuries. Titles basically shrink to *Signore/la* 'Sir/Madam', while new forms are introduced to index (a) power relations (e. g. surname vs. occupational term), (b) a reduction of distance (e. g. appellatives as *cara signora* 'dear madam', *zietto* 'uncle.DIM').

6 Concluding remarks

From the analysis of comedies emerges not only that the situational and macro-sociological variables indexing the distance and power dimensions are relevant for the choice of address forms, but also that these dimensions dynamically reconfigure in time by acquiring and/or losing prominence in each century considered. These reconfigurations can be correlated with changes in rules for polite behaviour that were taking place in the societies.

In the 16th century comedies, the non-reciprocal pronominal pattern *tu-voi* indexes the power dimension, particularly the contextual variables of social status and, secondarily, of kinship status among higher classes. In contrast, the recip-

¹⁸ Cf. also Spitzer, cited in Paternoster (2015: 273), who notes that with the spread of *ella/lei*, *voi* is confined to a more confidential domain.

rocal patterns *voi-voi* or *tu-tu* index the distance dimensions, particularly civil formality (*voi-voi*) or intimacy (*tu-tu*). The first (*voi-voi*) characterises interactions among members of higher classes – on a general level – and among people of lower classes – of different gender –, while the second (*tu-tu*) is characteristic of interactions among lower classes. In other words, the V-form is *voi*, T-form is *tu*, and norms of *tu-voi* variation are based on a non-reciprocal power semantics that are vertical in nature.

Third-person address is used as a V-form only with the nominal form *Vostra Signoria/Signoria Vostra* and it only characterises Aretino's *La cortigiana*, where it appears in specific domains with a courteous connotation. *La cortigiana* is set in Rome, which at the time is an extremely cosmopolitan world, where life is deeply imbued with the courtly ideal. The comedy itself is a parody of Roman court life and, more generally, of the 'perfect courtier' described in Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*. In contrast, this pattern of address is absent in Machiavelli's *La mandragola*, which is set in republican Florence.

In the 18th-century comedies, social status is the only macro-sociological variable indexed within the power semantics. It emerges in pronominal address pattern *tu-lei*, for the lower class-aristocracy dyad, and *voi-lei*, for the bourgeoisie-aristocracy dyad. The distance dimension is more prominent, if compared with 16th century comedies, as distancing formal 'civility' is indexed by the widespread use of reciprocal *voi-voi*, regardless of social status. By contrast, the domains of use of the T-form *tu* are extremely narrow and relegated to moments of anger, where they index a dissociative behaviour, or of emotional transport, where they index intimacy. Nominal forms, especially titles, are more frequent and varied, if compared with those used in 16th century comedies. Titles index the power dimension, as they help in the correct positioning of characters with respect to their social status. However, a rich inventory of endearment terms is also used to index the different positioning of characters along the distance dimension (intimate vs. formal relations).

In the early 20th-century comedies, the power semantics are marginally indexed by address pronouns, but they still show a variable configuration that interacts with the distance dimension: either *tu-lei* to index more formal relations or *tu-voi* to index more intimate ones; by contrast the distance semantics are central and are indexed by reciprocal *tu* in intimate interactions or reciprocal *lei* in formal ones. Nominal forms can index the power dimension, for instance with patterns such as non-reciprocal surname vs. professional title, or the distance dimension, with forms like *signora mia* 'my madam', *cara signora* 'dear madam', *mio caro Barelli* 'my dear Barelli' aimed at reducing distances.

Therefore, in the texts considered, the vertical dimension of power, indexed by the contextual variable of social status, is central in the comedies of the 16th century and, more markedly, of the 18th century; on the contrary in the early 20th-century comedies, the horizontal dimension of distance becomes more relevant. This is well exemplified by patterns of address pronouns usage in the 16th-century comedies, but also of titles in the 18th century. By contrast in the early 20th-century

comedies, pronouns more frequently index social distance (either reciprocal *tu-tu* or *lei-lei*); on the contrary nominal forms take on the load to index the power dimension, but they also have a relevant role in the modulation of distance. These changes in the relevance of different dimensions in the comedies can be related to the social changes that were taking place in the societies represented.

As regards the prominence of the vertical power dimension, the spreading of abstract titles, which require a third-person verb agreement (e. g. *Vostra Signoria*), is a sign that the courtly ideal is becoming dominant in parts of the Italian society (i. e. in courts). This development is so widespread that it is also ridiculed in plays: Aretino himself, through his satirical comedy on court life and rituals, depicts the Sienese Maco as a country simpleton who does not know how to use *Vostra Signoria*. However, as Valleriani (2004: 17) notes, the courtly behavioural (and linguistic) code progressively transfers to all social classes through a *curializzazione della società* 'curialisation of society'. The spreading of the title *signore*, fiercely condemned by 16th-century literates like Ariosto (section 2), is an example of this curialisation.

Therefore, even though abstract titles were already employed before the 16th century, it is in the 16th century that their use explodes as they are more and more required by incipient politeness conventions to appropriately position and rank individuals on a social scale. Titles, but more generally also address forms, are central elements in the linguistic codification of deference, which in the 16th-century behavioural code corresponds to the verbal expression of 'honour' (Paternoster 2015: 170). In the complex Italian system of *cerimonie* and *precedenze* honour is highly valued and, as Della Casa underlines, needs to be verbally conveyed with the *bilancia dell'orafo* 'goldsmith's scales' (Della Casa, *Il Galateo*, viii), i. e. with extreme accuracy and caution considering the status of the interlocutor. Text analysis provides evidence for this concern, on the part of characters, to engage in appropriate (linguistic) behaviour. Characters engage in negotiations of address forms through frequent switches, as each form indexes and stresses a different contextual variable on the basis of the interactional status of speaker and addressee at the microlevel of the conversation.

This inflation of titles is probably propelled externally by the Spanish behavioural code of flattering ceremoniousness, which at the time enjoys prestige in society. However, it develops into the all-Italian elaborate system of *cerimonie* and *precedenze* which pervades any personal or public space of individuals. Both the Spanish cultural influence and the Italian behavioural code create more and more opportunities for people to use titles, which require a third-person verbal agreement, favouring the routinisation of these patterns in the language and, eventually, of a second pronominal V-form (*ella* and later *lei*).

Therefore, as more people feel the need to position themselves and their interlocutors properly according to politeness conventions, the contextual variable of social status becomes more relevant within the power dimension and more deferential devices are used, causing a veritable inflation of titles and of contexts requiring a third-person agreement.

As for the dimension of horizontal social distance, the use of the V-form *voi* in 16th-century comedies characterises interactions among or to members of higher classes, as it is used as a reciprocal address form among higher class members or as a non-reciprocal form to address them. In these contexts, its use is indexical of higher social status, along the power dimension (non-reciprocal), or of 'civil' formality, along the distance dimension (reciprocal). The latter property qualifies it as a contextual 'prestige' variable and as a desirable trait to be used also by members of other social classes, to position positively within the 'competitive' public ceremonial of the time (cf. Labov 1972 on prestige variants and their use by speakers). As a matter of fact, two centuries later, in 18th-century comedies, *voi* is used as a reciprocal pattern of address by everybody regardless of social status. When this happens, the use of *voi* is so commonplace that it no longer indexes social power, but only distant 'civil' formality, which is dominant in all parts of 18th-century society. In other words, *voi* ceases to perform its original deferential function, which in the comedies is fulfilled by *lei*, as Goldoni's merchants and servants use it to address aristocrats.

In these 18th-century uses of *voi* that index 'civil' formality the notion of negative face, the need for individual freedom, seems to begin to emerge. The power deference of 16th-century comedies cannot be considered a substrategy of negative politeness (in Brown and Levinson's understanding) as it stresses a difference in height on a vertical level where social status is central (see also Paternoster 2015: 171). On the contrary in 18th-century comedies, this power deference begins to be substituted by a 'distance' deference which entails a new 'modern' negative face. Yet, although this change is evident in the 18th-century texts, it is the result of longer socio-cultural processes that had begun after the end of the Middle Ages and that progressively eroded the monopoly of power deference as a mean for social positioning. The trajectory of *signore* 'sir', mentioned earlier, is an example of the progressive structural and social simplification of (power) deference. The spreading of the use of *signorella* within all social classes as early as the 16th century, begins to neutralise power distinctions among the ranks below nobility.

The erosion of power deference is also well exemplified by the spreading of *voi*. As *voi* is characteristic of the language used by aristocrats within the power deference, initially its indexical value of prestige plays a role in its spread across other classes. However, this same value is also responsible for its general decline in use in later centuries, precisely because of this linguistic ideology 'attached' to it. This happens when from the 18th century onwards, the behavioural code of the *Ancien Régime* begins to be felt as too old-fashioned, inappropriate, formal, cold and 'flat affect' to the point that it is openly criticised by literates and ridiculed in comedies.

In the comedies of the early 20th century, as the bourgeoisie promoted a new type of politeness designed to reduce the exaggerated distances and effacement of emotions of earlier centuries, pronouns of address almost exclusively index the distance dimension, and two different developments are at work. On one hand, the 'new' V-form *lei* substitutes the 'old fashioned' *voi*. This latter remains, how-

ever, as a marginal variant used as an intermediate form between the use of *lei*, to index courteous acquaintances, and *tu*, for tested friendships. On the other hand, the T-form *tu*, which in 18th century is relegated to moments when the ability to efface emotions is put to test (e. g. by anger), is used in a higher number of contexts to index intimacy. In other words, the domains of use of *voi* are progressively eroded. Therefore, the social salience that initially promotes the spread of *voi* among all social classes, also promotes its abandonment in the long run. A similar fate seems to have befallen to the habit of using titles, so strongly mocked by Goldoni (cf. example 17), to the point that the repertoire of such forms two centuries later, in the comedies of the early 20th century, is reduced to *Signore/la* 'Sir/Madam'.

Along similar lines, however, beginning with Goldoni's comedies, characters show more concern with positive face (and politeness) as positive politeness strategies diversify. This is already evident in Goldoni's play with the use of endearment terms, but it is more marked in early 20th-century comedies as endearment terms are more frequent and in-group identity markers emerge (as *zietto* 'uncle.DIM'). Therefore, if in the early 20th-century comedies the use of *lei* can be considered a 'distancing' negative politeness strategy that reflects the speaker's desire to avoid imposing on the hearer, the use of endearment nominal forms like *cara signora* 'dear madam', belong to a new 'approaching', positive politeness strategy that is associated with appreciation, consideration and solidarity. In other words, the politeness system associated with forms of address in the 20th-century comedies comprises two 'faces', one negative associated with the notion of *buone maniere* 'good manners' and one positive associated with *cortesìa* 'kindness' (see Paternoster 2015: 301). The former is reflected in the use of strategies that imply putting some distance between interlocutors (e. g. use of *lei*, honorifics, etc.), the second with strategies that reduce these distances (e. g. use of *tu*, adjectives as *caro*, *mio*, etc.).

In sum, in 16th-century plays, polite conduct code is centred around the vertical power dimension where social status determines the appropriateness of (linguistic) behaviour ('power' deference). Honour (and honourability) are expressed through a behavioural and linguistic code whose correctness is determined by the adherence to the necessary level of social decorum. One concern of politeness is to show one's social position through a display of courteous behaviour. As early as the 16th century, however, the seeds begin to grow for a new type of politeness where the relevance of the horizontal distance dimension increases ('distance' deference). The approved conduct is one which implies 'civil' manners and concerns on how to get along with people and where ceremonious formality is central in interaction. When, moving from the 18th century, politeness as a mere 'civil' conduct is felt as insincere and cold, two different types of politeness begin to emerge along the distance dimension (and have developed further in the 20th century): one associated with polished manners (*buone maniere*), one with morality and virtuous behaviour (*cortesìa*). Therefore, if in 16th-century Italian comedies, a sense of social identity and position in relation to others is dominant (I am what others recognise me to be), from the 18th century onwards a new subjective iden-

tity develops (I am what I recognise myself to be) and together with it a new type of politeness with positive and negative counterparts.

This aligns with this volume's overarching view of politeness as shaped by societal change and contact across periods and places (see the editors' overview and Dickey, Monte, Fleming, Scharinger, Gennies).

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