

Pronoun “you” in the Functional Aspect*The work was wrote in the BSFA*

The dynamics of the thou-pronoun in ME, its functional paradigm in comparison with OE and NE ones are in the focus of the present research. The issues of the thou-pronoun functional development, its specialization in the religious discourse, and the causes of its shift to the periphery at the end of the ME and the beginning of NE.

Key terms: pronoun, function, discourse, dynamics, periphery, paradigm, addressee.

Михайленко В. В. Займенник “ти” у функціональному аспекті. Статтю присвячено динаміці займенника 2-ї особи однини у с.-а. мові порівняно з д.-а. та н.-а. мовою. Розглянуто становлення функціональної парадигми займенника, його відносну спеціалізацію у релігійному дискурсі та причини периферизації наприкінці с.-а. та початку н.-а. періоду.

Ключові слова: займенник, функція, дискурс, динаміка, периферія, парадигма, адресат.

Михайленко В. В. Местоимение “ты” в функциональном аспекте. В центре исследования – динамика личного местоимения 2-го лица ед. ч. в с.-а., его функциональная парадигма в сравнении с д.-а. и н.-а. языком. Рассмотрены вопросы функционального развития 2-го лица ед. ч., специализации в религиозном дискурсе и причины периферизации в конце с.-а. и в начале н.-а. периода.

Ключевые слова: местоимение, функция, дискурс, динамика, периферия, парадигма, адресат.

The development of the second-person pronoun in English has been a complex process, one which shows the variation available within what is considered a “closed system”. Old English distinguished between singular *þu* (ME thou) and plural *ge* (ME ye ð you). Yet, notably, OE also contained dual pronouns to represent ‘you two’, as opposed to ‘you many’. The grammatical case system of Old English is more extensively developed than that of Modern English, however, there are many more forms of personal pronouns that change depending on grammatical function: Nominative: second person singular – *þu*, second person dual – *git*, second person plural – *ge*. Accusative: second person singular – *þe*, *þec*, second person dual – *inc*, second person plural – *eow*, *eowic*. Dative: second person singular – *þe*, second person dual – *inc*, second person plural – *eow*. Genitive: second person singular – *þin*, second person dual – *incer*, second person plural – *eower* [1, 40–55].

The objective of the present paper is to investigate the discourse functions of *thou / thee* and define the causes of *thou* leveling in Middle English. The data selected from Genesis (King James Bible) was further verified in other texts of Middle English. There are 230 cases of *thou* and 325 cases of *thee* in Genesis. The functional expansion of *thou* in various registers of ME discourse proves the extra-linguistic character of its fall. The hypothesis put forward that in the Middle English period, the distinct singular and plural forms were increasingly used to signify social rather than grammatical relationships. Charles Barber explains how, in the Middle English period, second-person pronouns were still distinguished by number and case, *thou/thee* the singular forms (nominative/objective) and *ye/you* the plural forms, but the dual form was lost [3, 273–289]. During the XVI c., however, this nominative/objective distinction in the plural form would be leveled at the expense of *ye*. Yet, by the early XVIII c., this distinction was leveled in standard usage, and *you* assumed the functions of both the singular and plural forms.

In addition to its canonical propositional (deictic) use, the second person singular pronoun in English can be still used in two Modern English discourse registers – poetry (rarely) and in the King James Bible. The practice of using *ye* and *you* (singular and plural) instead of *thou* and *thee* (*thou*-singular) apparently spread to English during the XIII c. and by about the XVI c. had become established in polite usage. For some time thereafter, however, the *thou* singular continued to appear in emotional or intimate speech: superior ð inferior; member of the lower class ð member of the lower class; equal ð equal in the lower class community.

In Old English, *thou* was governed by a simple rule: *thou* addressed one person, and *ye* more than one. After the Norman Conquest, which marks the beginning of the French vocabulary influence that characterized the Middle English period, *thou* was gradually replaced by the plural *ye* as the form of address for a

superior person and later for an equal. For a long time, however, *thou* remained the most common form for addressing an inferior person:

Thou: Superior \rightarrow inferior; Thou: Inferior \rightarrow Inferior; Thou: Parents \rightarrow Children; You: Children \rightarrow Parents; You: Inferior \rightarrow Superior.

Gradually decreasing in use, it became obsolete in the standard language in the XVIII-th c. and now appears only in poetry and the address of the deity or among Quakers and those who speak a dialect [2, 273–289]. French usage spread to England in the Middle Ages and *thou* (nominative) and *thee* (the singular forms) began to be used as intimate singular forms, while *ye* and *you*, the plural forms, were used as non-familiar singular forms: Intimate / familiar \rightarrow intimate / familiar. This usage continued until the 17th century, when *thou* and *thee* dropped out and *you* became the regular singular as well as plural [4]. The *you*-singular, apparently, was not formally recognized before the second half of the XVII c. Like his contemporaries William Shakespeare uses *thou* both in the intimate, and also emphasis in rank, but he is by no means consistent in using either or. For example, in the passage from Henry IV, Shakespeare has Falstaff use both forms while jesting with Prince Henry. First, Falstaff addresses “*Hal*” as an intimate comrade, emphasizing “*you*”; then he switches to a facetiously contrasted “*thou*” for a future majestic but still graceless King.

The second person plural pronoun of address doubles as an honorific form to singular respected or distant alters. Such usages are called T/V systems, after the French *tu* and *vous* (Brown and Gilman, 1960). In such languages, the use of *thou* / *thee* (singular non-honorific pronoun) to a non-familiar alter can claim solidarity:

Thou: singular non-honorific pronoun; You: plural honorific pronoun.

In the XVII c., Samuel Johnson, in his Grammar of the English Tongue, wrote that in the language of ceremony the second person plural is used for the second person singular, implying that the second person singular was still in everyday use. By contrast, The Merriam Webster Dictionary of English Usage says that for most speakers of southern British English, *thou* had fallen out of everyday use, even in familiar speech, by sometime around 1650. *Thou* persisted in a number of religious, literary, and regional contexts, and those pockets of continued use of the pronoun tended to undermine the obsolescence of the T–V distinction. Notice that in Middle English *you* could only be the second-person plural objective pronoun. In the other places *you* is used today, Middle English speakers instead used *ye*, *thou*, and *thee*. The *thee*’s and *thou*’s of Shakespeare and the King James Bible are the equivalent of today’s *you*. Let’s compare King James Bible and New American Standard Bible and we can find some trends of *thou* \rightarrow *you* interpretation:

1. (King James Bible) And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon... (Gen 12:11).

2. (New American Standard Bible) As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “I know what a beautiful woman you are (Gen 12:11).

In the model “Abraham (husband) \rightarrow advises \rightarrow Sarah (wife)” the substitution of *thou* / *thee* to *you* causes the loss of intimacy.

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Table 1

Middle English pronouns

| | Subjective | Objective | Possessive |
|------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Second-person singular | thou | thee | thy/thine |

The movement from Middle English to Modern English took place during A. D. XV–XVIII c. W. Shakespeare wrote during the late 1500s and early 1600s, and the King’ Charles Barber explains how, in the Middle English period, second-person pronouns were still distinguished by number and case, *thou/thee* the singular forms (nominative/objective) and *ye/you* the plural forms, but the dual form was lost. During the sixteenth century, however, this nominative/objective distinction in the plural form would be leveled at the expense of *ye*. See: *ye/you*: to express plural (in a definite social group). The practice of matching singular and plural forms with informal and formal connotations is called the *Thou-You* distinction. Eventually, this was generalized, as in French, to address any social superior or stranger with a plural pronoun, which was felt to be more polite: You: Stranger \rightarrow Stranger (polite, formal address); You: Social

inferior \hat{a} Social superior (social function). In the XVIII c., Samuel Johnson, in his *Grammar of the English Tongue*, wrote that in the language of ceremony the second person plural is used for the second person singular, implying that the second person singular was still in everyday use. By contrast, The Merriam Webster Dictionary of English Usage says that for most speakers of southern British English, *thou* had fallen out of everyday use, even in familiar speech, by sometime around 1650. Although many recent studies have complicated the issue, it has been widely viewed that the adoption of *you* as a polite form led to the pejoration of *thou* and thus occasioned a development of a “power semantic” in which *thou* became “a mark of contempt or a social marker” [3, 536], the term of address often given by a social superior to an inferior. *Thee* was also used among equals of the lower class; the nobility would typically use *you* among themselves [2, 208–209]: *Thou* (address): superior \hat{a} inferior to express emotions, familiarity, condescension; to mark social group. Let’s consider the functions of *thou/thee* in Genesis:

3. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat (Genesis, 2:16).

4. And he said, Who told thee that thou [wast] naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? (Genesis, 3:11).

5. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where [art] thou? (Genesis, 3:14).

Here is the relationship between: Lord \hat{a} man (his creation). *Thou* (address): equal \hat{a} equal (of the lower class) to express emotions, familiarity, intimacy. Cf.: *you* (address): nobility \hat{a} nobility to mark a social group.

In this way, the use of pronouns came to serve as a means not only of distinguishing one social group from another, but also as a means of consolidating affiliation, even among family members. While thoroughly acknowledging the “solidarity dimension” of pronoun usage Wales, like many, insists that the use of *you* and *thou* was hardly this straightforward, pointing out that “in English usage, right from the beginning, there was always considerable fluctuation between *thou* and *you* forms in the singular. Both Hope and Wales show that *thou* could be used to mark a range of emotions other than contempt; it could also express familiarity and intimacy. Yet although, as Wales suggests, a “master’s *thou* need not only indicate “condescension,” but familiarity” (114), it is certainly important to consider who has the ability to exercise choice when it comes to pronoun usage. There was some semantic overlap between *you* and *thou* even as their values changed from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century. This overlap in meaning and usage may have led to the eventual dominance of *you*: since *you* and *thou* may have been used interchangeably in informal speech, one form may no doubt have become redundant. Increasingly seen as an old-fashioned form, *thou* thus became largely confined to Biblical and religious contexts or other specialized instances of address. By 1800, both unmarked and marked uses of *thee* and *thou*, had become virtually obsolete in Standard English [5, 141–152]. Yet, throughout the XIX c., its marked use remained extant in many regional dialects, particularly those of rural areas. As in older Standard English, *thee/thou* continued to be used to address family members, particularly one’s children to express familiarity or affection, to address one’s inferiors, or to express contempt. These marked uses of *thee/thou* still survive today mostly amongst the oldest generation of speakers in a reduced number of English dialects in the north, south, and south/west of England and in Canada’s Newfoundland [See in Germanic: 6]. The development of the second-person pronoun has generated much critical debate. Studies cluster largely around the middle Early Modern period; the frequent employment of pronoun switching in Shakespearean texts renders them a common site of analysis and hypothesis. Yet the eventual leveling of the singular and plural second-person pronoun can be attributed to a variety of factors. Increasing upward mobility may have also contributed to the eventual dominance of *you*, which, by the early eighteenth-century, generally took over all of the functions of *thou/thee*. In the Middle English and Early Modern periods, members of the expanding middle class sought to imitate polite forms of speech and to avoid those usages that would associate them with the lower classes. By the XVII c., polite society typically shunned *thou*, which had become the marked form [7]. This was in large part the result of the use of *thou* and *thee* by religious groups such as the Quakers, who saw the older pronoun form as that which emphasized the equality of rather than the social distance between all individuals, cf.:

6. (King James Bible) And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather [it] to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them (Gen, 6:21).

7. (New American Standard Bible) As for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible, and gather it to yourself; and it shall be for food for you and for them (Gen 6:21).

The communicative model “Lord (Speaker) *ð* V instructs Noah (Recepient)” to make supplies, which can be reconstructed as an instruction of Senior (Teacher) *ð* inexperienced (Disciple). The substitution of *thou/thee* causes leveling specific relationship between God and believers, likewise in the model “Lord *β* prayer *β* believer” the relationship of intimacy between Teacher and disciple is also lost.

Again, because of the prestige of the Authorized Version of the Bible, as well as the continued influence of 1549 Book of Common Prayer *thee/thou* persists most vibrantly in liturgical settings. This survival too is degrading with the introduction of new prayer books such as the “Alternative Service” Book in England and Celebrate God’s Presence: A Book of Services for the United Church of Canada in Canada which do not use *thee/thou*. The increasing use of modern translations of the Bible, such as The Good News Bible, which drop the use of *thee/thou* also influences the decline of the use of *thee/thou* in liturgical settings. The discourse analysis of the thou-pronoun closely correlate with the utterance of request in “Genesis”. It also revealed that the thee-pronoun started to form a fixed phrase “I pray thee ...” [2, 27–31] and “I bless thee...” in the biblical discourse, e. g.:

8. And *I will bless* them that *bless thee*, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Gen 12:2).

9. Say, *I pray thee*, thou [art] my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee (Gen 12:13).

The analysis of Middle English as a specific discourse pointed out that the loss of *thou/thee/ty/thine* is not linguistically but socially motivated. Primarily it was caused by initiating the second person plural use as a form of address on the French analogy in the XIII c. On the contrary, its survival lies in the orthodox approach to the Biblical language retention and preservation. Though its development is highly doubtful. Therefore there must be an investigation of the-thou pronoun in all the dialects of English in the structure of written records representing every century from OE to ENE.

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