

FUNCTIONAL OVERVIEW OF SECOND PERSON SINGULAR PRONOUN IN "BEOWULF"

Valery Mykhaylenko,

Ivano-Frankivsk University of Law named after King Danylo Halytskyi
35, Konovaltsia St., Ivano-Frankivsk, 76018
E-mail: mykhailenko@mail.ru

This paper focuses on the Old English second person singular pronoun paying specific attention to its functional paradigm. There are some interpretations of the pronoun pragmatic specialization in Middle English and further limiting its usage in Modern English. The development of the second person singular pronoun in English has been a complex process, one which shows the variation available within what is considered a "closed system".

The major change was in the personal pronoun case system – Nominative, Possessive and Oblique or Objective case (← OE Dative and Accusative). In the second person pronouns there was still a distinction between singular and plural. The Early Middle English second person singular forms were used with close acquaintances, family members and subordinates. The plural form began to be used even when addressing a single person to show deference or respect under the Norman French influence, which also developed the distinction.

There is no intralinguistic explanation of the change then there may be an extralinguistic one, in particular pragmatic, the form þu / ðu → thou must have become so offensive because of its use as a class marker by the end of the Early Middle English that eventually everyone began to use the respectful ge → ye → you. And one more cause lies in the language of the conquerors: in (1066) the French-speaking Normans invaded and conquered England — French became the language of the rich and superior, while English remained chiefly the language of the conquered. Accordingly, one of the most mysterious questions in the grammatical history of English is how this highly differentiated system of the personal pronouns came to collapse so completely.

To go back to the Old English grammar of the personal pronoun "þu / ðu" we have an opportunity to employ the instruments of analysis elaborated in Modern linguistics — transformational, functional, discourse and pragmatic to fully describe the second person pronoun as a word, as part of a phrase, as a part of a sentence and as a part of a text / discourse.

The present investigation is aimed at proving that the thesis of "adopting ge à ye à you as a polite form led to the pejoration of þu / ðu → thou" has no foundation in Old English. We believe that the pejorative component was not present in the meaning of the OE unit, therefore it could not have been verbalized in ME. The functional stratification might begin in the usage competition of both units within social registers that needs a drastic systemic investigation in the framework of discourse studies and sociolinguistics.

"þu / ðu → thou", "þe / ðe, þec / ðec → thee", "þin // ðin → thine" and "þy / ðy → thy" are pronouns that have dropped out of the main dialects of Modern English. During the period of Early Modern English (~1470—1700), they formed the Second Person Singular Paradigm of the language and were standardized by the time of the King James Bible.

In the poem "Beowulf" the Nominative forms of the second person singular pronoun are used in the syntactical function of the subject of the simple sentence, the main clause, the subordinate clause. The Nominative case form "þu" can combine with the verbs in the post-position; the verbs in pre-position; in the mid-position between the verb and the direct address. Therefore, structurally the Nominative forms "þu / ðu" could have served due to their function of the nominative grammatical centre of the sentence. We have selected instances like Hrothgar, wine min Beowulf, wine min Unferð, goldwine gumena, etc. in the referred context but we would like to highlight two more aspects, first, they correlate with the second person singular pronoun and, second, the pronoun itself does not verbalize any positive or negative pragmatic component which is inherent in the lexical meaning of direct address (in our case it is positively charged). Terms of address are the markers of Direct Speech, they show the speaker's attitude to the addressee, based on his / her position in the family, the social status in the community, the pragmatic relationship between the addressor and the addressee.

The loss of "thee" and "thou" (in the so-called Standard English usage) and its permanent replacement with "you" in Modern English is attributable to pragmatic factors influencing word choice and its consequence on language change. By the beginning of the 14th century Middle English singular and plural pronouns had developed

an additional pragmatic function, stimulated by social concerns. The choice of pronouns was not determined solely by the grammatical designation of person (first, second, third) or number (singular, plural). Instead, what the speaker chose in order to address his / her interlocutor signified her / his assessment of that person's status and relationship with her / him — as one of equal or superior social status. You tended to be the preferred option mainly in upper-class or courtly contexts in the Middle English period, "thou" increasingly came to be associated with lower status.

Key words: second person pronoun, singular, plural, paradigm, Old English, referential function, pragmatic function, text, grammaticalization.

Михайленко В.В.

Функціональний погляд на особовий займенник другої особи однини у «Беовульфі»

Дослідження спрямоване на доказ того, що теза про засвоєння займенника другої особи мн. *ge/eow* → *you* «ви» як ввічливої форми призвела до розвитку негативної прагматичної функції *þu / ðu* → *thou* «ти» не має достатніх підстав, про що свідчать результати аналізу тексту давньоанглійської поеми «Беовульф». Вважаємо, що зазначена функція була відсутня в д-а. особовому займеннику 2-ої особи од. Відповідно, він не міг бути вербалізованим у середньоанглійській мові. Функціональне розшарування двох форм *thou* та *you* розпочалося у процесі їх конкурентного вживання у різних соціодіалектах під впливом французьких форм *tu* і *vous* егістрів, як результат розшарування середньоанглійського соціуму, що потребує корпусного аналізу оригінальних і перекладних текстів з латинської і французької мов.

«*þu / ðu* → *thou*», «*þe / ðe, þec / ðec* → *thee*», «*þin // ðin* → *thine*» and «*þu / ðu* → *thy*» — форми відмінків займенника 2-ої особи однини, які поступово перестають вживатися у середньоанглійській. І далі у сучасній англійській стали маркерами релігійного та поетичного регістрів дискурсу. Не існує інтралінгвістичного пояснення зазначеної зміни — можливе тільки екстралінгвістичне: французькі форми займенника та розшарування суспільства на вищий і нижчий класи під впливом норманських завойовників.

Ключові слова: особовий займенник 2-ої ос. однини, особовий займенник 2-ої ос. множини, парадигма, давньоанглійська мова, референційна функція, прагматична функція, текст, граматикизація.

Михайленко В.В.

Функціональний взгляд на личное местоимение второго лица единственного числа в «Беовульфе»

Данное исследование направлено на доказательство того, что тезис о восприятии местоимения второго лица мн. ч. *ge* → *ye* → *you* «вы» как вежливой формы привел к развитию негативного компонента *thou* «ты» не имеет достаточных оснований, о чем свидетельствуют результаты анализа текста древнеанглийской поэмы «Беовульф».

Считаем, что указанная функция отсутствовала в д-а. личном местоимении второго лица ед.ч. Соответственно, она не могла быть вербаллизованной в среднеанглийском языке. Функціональне розшарування двох форм *thou* і *you* почалося в процесі їх конкурентного використання в різних соціодіалектах під впливом французьких форм *tu* і *vous*, як результат розшарування середньоанглійського соціуму, що потребує додаткового корпусного аналізу оригінальних і перекладних текстів з латинського і французького мов.

«*þu / ðu* → *thou*», «*þe / ðe, þec / ðec* → *thee*», «*þin // ðin* → *thine*» and «*þu / ðu* → *thy*» — надійні форми древнеанглийського місцеимення другого лица единственного числа, которые постепенно перестают употребляться в среднеанглийском, а в дальнейшем и современном английском языке, стали маркерами религиозного и поэтического регистров дискурса. Не существует интралингвистического объяснения указанного изменения — возможно, только экстралингвистическое: французские формы местоимения и расслоение общества на высший и нижний классы под влиянием норманских завоевателей.

Ключевые слова: местоимение 2-го л. ед.ч., местоимение 2-го л. мн.ч., парадигма, древнеанглийский язык, референциальная функция, прагматическая функция, текст, грамматикализация.

Introduction

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” [28, 389; Sara Malton, 2001]. We have traced the background and early history of the Old English second-person pronoun singular *þu / ðu* [see: 3]. Like Modern English, Old English has both

singular and plural forms for the personal pronouns. But Old English also has a dual form, used to indicate two closely associated persons — two people. There are three persons for pronouns in Old English (first person = speaker; second person = person being addressed to; third person = third party being spoken about), and the third person has masculine, neuter, and feminine forms [Algeo, 2009], see Table 1.

Table 1

**Old English Second Person Personal
Pronouns Paradigm**

Case	Singular	Dual	Plural
Nominative	þu = you (singular)	git = you two	ge = you (plural = “y’all” or “younz”)
Genitive	þin = your (singular)	incer = of your two (yours)	eower = your (plural = “y’all’s” or “younz’s”)
Accusative	þec or þe = you (direct object)	incit or inc = you two (direct object)	eowic or eow = you (direct ob- ject)
Dative or In- strumental	þe = with you (or indirect object)	inc = with you two (or indirect object)	eow = with you (or indirect object)

The major change was in the personal pronoun case system — Nominative [26, 52–53], Possessive and Oblique or Object case (← OE Dative and Accusative). In the second person pronouns there was still a distinction between singular and plural. The Early Middle English second person singular forms were used with close acquaintances, family members and subordinates. The plural form began to be used even when addressing a single person to show deference or respect under the Norman French influence, which also developed the distinction, French has the distinction to this day in it is the singular “*tu*” versus plural form “*vous*”.

The case of pronouns indicates how they function in a sentence: nominatives are subjects, genitives are possessive modifiers, accusatives are direct objects, and datives are objects of prepositions and indirect objects.

It has been widely viewed that the adoption *ge* → *you* as a polite form led to the pejoration of *þu / ðu* → *thou* and thus occasioned a development of a “power semantic” [7, 255] in which *thou* became “a mark of contempt or a social marker”, the term of address often given by a social superior to an inferior. Although *thou*-forms are also retained in the marriage service, even in civil ceremonies, in all parts of the Anglophone world, as a proof K. Wales gives an instance from her wedding ceremony: “I, Katie Wales, do take thee, David Bovey, to be my lawful wedded husband”: again, there is the connotation of intimacy and affection to take account of. The language of the King James translation of the Bible (1611), for example, is very conservative in its use of pronouns. In Genesis 3:15, God tells the serpent “I will put enmity between thee and the woman.” In Genesis 6:18 Noah is told “...thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons’ wives with thee.”

As an old-fashioned form, *þu / ðu* → *thou* thus became largely confined to Biblical and religious contexts or other specialized instances of address. It can often be found in literary contexts into the nineteenth century, particularly those associated with intimate relationships [see: 11]. Nevertheless the older usage can still be found in certain dialects; West Yorkshire, for example, retains the use of *tha / thee* [21, 144]. The category of Number has also been nearly universally lost, although in certain dialects plural forms such as *youse* and *y’all* (especially in the southern United States) exist. By Chaucer’s time (14th century), English was the language of the administration, court and other institutions [28, 286–289]. The dialect that Chaucer wrote in, was rich in French vocabulary. And under the intensive French influence the historical second person singular form *thou* was no longer in use in Standard English [18, 196–197].

There is no intralinguistic explanation of the change then there may be an extralinguistic one, in particular pragmatic [see: 24], the form *þu / ðu* → *thou* must have become so offensive because of its use as a class marker by the end of the Early Middle English that eventually everyone began to use the respectful *ye* (*you*). And one more cause lies in the language of the conquerors: in (1066) the French-speaking Normans invaded and conquered England — French became the language of the rich and superior, while English remained chiefly the language of the conquered [see: 32]. One of the most interesting questions in the morpho-syntactic history of English [see: 17] is how this highly differentiated system came to collapse so completely.

Discussion

To go back to the Old English grammar of the personal pronoun we have an opportunity to employ the instruments of analysis elaborated in Modern linguistics — transformational, functional, discourse and pragmatic to fully describe the second person singular pronoun as a word, a part of a phrase, a part of a sentence and a part of a text / discourse.

The referential aspect of pronominals and anaphors is dealt with from a syntactic perspective in which the structural properties established between them and their antecedents determine whether they share the same reference or not [29, 399–402]. In transformational grammar a pronoun included in a clause or a noun phrase and cannot be controlled or refer to an antecedent within such syntactic domains. Personal pronouns distinguish their special properties in functional Grammar, which describes language not for the sake of language itself, but as a means to explain the sentences of a linguistic system taking into account the functions that we speakers want our utterances to reflect:

- they have a minimum of descriptive value, which makes them be almost simple deictic indicators [see: 14] of their referents (Addressor,

Addressee and the Subject / Object spoken of). We may assume that the functional paradigm subsumes both exophoric and endophoric reference under the expression;

- they are a closed class in comparison to other terms of the lexicon;
- their description can be made according to a few basic distinctions, among which the feature of Person is always present [13, 17–20].

Thus, the first person is characterized by the feature [+ Speaker], the second person by [+ Addressee], and the third person by both [- Addressor / Speaker] [- Addressee], the so-called non-participant. Inclusive and exclusive uses of the first and second person plural will combine these features in several ways. Other distinctions that define them are grammatical categories of Number, Gender, Case or, for example, Politeness or Degrees of Politenes [29, 403–404].

D. Bolinger in his “Pronouns in Discourse” writes that in the course of verbal interaction both speaker and addressee are capable of presenting pronouns that have no explicit antecedents provided they are easily recovered at that point of conversation, either because of their general knowledge of the world, or because they share particular knowledge that make the referents be near in previous discourse whether explicit or implicitly [6, 397–412; 34]. According to Emile Benveniste [4], first and second person pronouns are more context-bound than the third person pronoun [see: 34,]; these pronominals that are dependent on the context had been labeled shifters both by Otto Jespersen (1923) and by Roman Jakobson (1957). Emile Benveniste says that the utterances where the first and second person pronouns appear are characteristic of the level of language called pragmatic which contains not only linguistic signs but also the individuals that use them [4, 397–412]. *Thee* was also used among equals of the lower class; the nobility would typically use *you* among themselves [7, 256–57; 23, 107]. 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 K. Wales, like many, insists that “in English usage, right from the beginning, there was always considerable fluctuation between *þu / ðu* → *thou* and *ge* → *you* forms in the singular” [37, 110–114].

Both J. Hope and K. Wales show that *þu / ðu* → *thou* could be used to mark a range of emotions other than contempt; it could also express familiarity and intimacy. Yet although, as K. Wales suggests, a “master’s *þu / ðu* → *thou* need not only indicate “condescension,” but familiarity”, it is certainly important to consider who has the ability to exercise choice when it comes to pronoun usage [37, 110–114].

The present investigation is aimed at proving that the thesis “adopting *you* as a polite form led to the pejoration of *thou*” has no foundation in Old English. We believe that the pejorative component was not present in the meaning of the unit, therefore it could not have been verbalized by verbalized. The functional stratification might begin in the usage competition of both units within social registers that needs a drastic systemic investigation in the framework of discourse studies and sociolinguistics.

Investigation

Our corpus of the sentences (63 from the total number of units — 17 929) with *þu / ðu* pronoun was selected from the poem “Beowulf” [see also: 27] in its earliest recorded use: “Eart þu se Beowulf?” “Beowulf” written at an unidentified time some scholars consider to be a pre-Christian poem. This epic tale is set in and Norway at pagan times but is written in Old English as transmitted in a manuscript from the 11th century. The poem may have been produced earlier and transmitted orally. Some of its formulaic wording would support this, as do its tribal Germanic setting and its heroic celebration of the warrior-king Beowulf [19, 36]. Though sentences are not formally indicated in Old English manuscripts by capital letters at the beginning and by punctuation at the end as they are in Modern English. Each pronoun form has its own peculiarities in its historical development. Like Modern English, Old English has both singular and plural forms for the personal pronouns. But Old English also has a dual form, used to indicate two closely associated persons — two people [10, 27]. There are three persons for pronouns in Old English (first person = speaker; second person = person being addressed; third person = third party being spoken about), and the third person has masculine, neuter, and feminine forms and they are rather frequent in Beowulf — 430 instances of the third person singular and plural pronouns *thouh* quite a few as clause openings [5, 267], for instance:

1333 *fylle gefægnod/. Heo þa fæhðe wræc*
fain of her fill. The feud she avenged

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the pronoun by which a person (or thing) is addressed in the nominative singular or the pronoun denoting the person (or thing) spoken to Old English *þu / ðu* ‘thou’ is, for instance:

1707 *ðu scealt to frofre weorþan*
as, awhile ago, I promised;
thou shalt prove a stay in future,
1708 *eal langtwidig leodum þinum,*
in far-off years, to folk of thine

The corpus analysis of the text of the poem revealed 46 instances of *þu* with the initial *þ* and 17 instances with

the initial *ð*. The Old English letter *þ* ‘thorn’ had both *th* sound like in *thin* and *this*, and the letter *Ð* (capital) or *ð* (lowcase) ‘*eth*’ could also had both pronunciations:

- 529 *Beowulf* *mapelode, bearn Ecgþeowes:*
Beowulf *spake, bairn of Ecgtheow:—*
 530 *Hwæt þu worn fela, wine min Unferð/,*
 “What a deal hast uttered,
 dear my Unferth ,...
 1478 *aldre linnan, þæt ðu me a wære*
 should lose my life, thou wouldst loyal bide
 1706 *Ic þe sceal mine gelæstan*

‘*Th*’ as in ‘*that*’ usually occurred between vowels but also possible at the beginning of the word as ‘*thin*’.

The communicative analysis of the *þu* and *ðu* forms points out their role of the addressee, for instance:

Speaker (Addressor) *ic* → Addressee *þu* or *ðu* (*þe*)

- 525 *ðonne wene ic to þe wyrсан geþingea,*
 So ween I for thee a worse adventure
 526 *ðeah þu heaðoræsa gehwær dohte, —*
 though in buffet of battle
 thou brave hast been,...

The Old English personal pronouns underwent, as S. Scott points out, the least drastic changes on the way to Middle English. The Middle English personal pronouns preserved three gender categories, although they changed from “grammatical” to “natural” gender, they preserved two of three numbers (the old dual was already gone in Late Old English), and person distinctions (1-3) [31, 49–52]. An analysis of the historical development of *thou* shows that in Middle English, it was frequently combined with its verb when this precedes, the “*þ*” being then absorbed in the preceding “*t*,” as in “*artow*” for “*art thou*,” and “*hastow*” for “*hast thou*.”

The personal pronoun of the second person singular in the morphological system was the marker of person, number and person to the homonymy and arising case synonymy could make the pronoun itself to be redundant [2, 503–530]. “*þu* → *thou*”, “*þe, þec* → *thee*”, “*þin* → *thine*” and “*þy* → *thy*” are pronouns that have dropped out of the main dialects of Modern English. During the period of Early Modern English (1470–1700) [8, 15–36], they formed the Second Person Singular of the language, and were standardized by the time of the King James Bible.

In Modern English the forms of the second person pronoun do not show number contrast; they are absolutely invariant except for the possessive (and even here it is identical for both singular and plural). In fact, in Old English too there is some replication of forms, but not as much as there is in Middle English.

In the poem “*Beowulf*” the Nominative forms of the second person singular pronoun are used in the syntactical function [10, 41–47; 35, 120–131] of the subject of

— the simple sentence:

Ne+ V + þu / V + þu

- 1322 *Ne frin þu æfter sælum. Sorh is geniwod*
 “Ask not of pleasure! Pain is renewed
 1333 *fylle gefægnod/. Heo þa fæhðe wræc*
 fain of her fill. The feud she avenged

— the main clause:

- 506 *Eart þu se Beowulf, se þe wið Breca wunne,*
 “Art thou that Beowulf, Breca’s rival,

— the subordinate clause:

- 1671 *Ic hit þe þonne gehate,*
 þæt þu on Heorote most.

þu can combine with

— the verbs in the post-position, for instance:

þu +VP

- 351 *frea Scildinga, frinan wille,*
 the Scyldings’ friend, I fain will tell,
 352 *beaga bryttan, swa þu bena eart*
 the Breaker-of-Rings, as the boon thou askest,

— the verbs in pre-position, for instance:

V + þu +

- 506 *Eart þu se Beowulf, se þe wið Breca wunne,*
 “Art thou that Beowulf, Breca’s rival,
 507 *on sidne sæ ymb sund flite,*
 who emulous swam on the open sea,

— with the negative adverb in the preposition to the Verb phrase and in the post-position to the negation marker, for instance:

Ne + þu / ðu

- 445 *Na þu minne þearft*
 my noblest thanes. Nor need’st thou then
 446 *hafalan hydan, ac he me habban wile*
 to hide my head; for his shall I be,
 450 *mearcað morhopu;*
 no ðu ymb mines ne þearft

— in the mid-position between the verb and the direct address, for instance:

Vbeon + þu + DAdr + Adj

- 407 *Wæs þu, Hroðgar/, hal. Ic eom Higelaces*
 “Thou Hrothgar, hail! Hygelac’s I,

Therefore structurally the Nominative forms *þu* / *ðu* could have served into Middle English due to their function of the nominative grammatical centre of the sentence [15, 42; 10, 41–47]. The logical way of development was interrupted by bilingualism in the country: there came the French influence and a socio-linguistic differentiation of the language community in the country began. Susan Pintzuk in the process of researching Old English pronouns using the framework of Klavans, (1982, 1985) drew

the conclusion that in the Language of Beowulf unstressed personal pronouns are not topics but are rather syntactic clitics [30, 186–188], therefore, they could hardly survived as an autonomous part of a sentence into Middle English.

We fully realize that grammaticalized forms do not undergo changes abruptly; rather, they go through a gradual series of transitions. For example, Old English had both singular, dual and plural personal pronoun forms for the category of the second person pronoun. The forms *þu/ ðu*, *þe / ðe*, *þy / ðy*, and *þine / ðine* constituted the 2-nd person singular category and they were in OE used in ordinary speech. They could become formal markers of the person and number further on. E. A. Abbot in his Shakesperean Grammar describes the four basic functions of *thou* as follows:

1. Affection towards friends;
2. Good-humoured superiority to servants;
3. Contempt or anger to strangers;
4. In the higher poetic style and in the language of solemn prayer [1, 159].

E. A. Abbot modified the 4th function saying that its use characterised sometimes by euphony and sometimes by fluctuations of feeling (Schmidt and Sarrazin [1862], 1962). G. Byrne presented a detailed list of communicative situations specifying the speaker's emotion and attitude to the hearer: *thou* is used by father to daughter; by superior to inferior; by superior equals; by inferior equals; to the spirit and to the dead [9, xix-xx, xxiii-xxiv, xxvii]. J. Hope formalized these functions and situation into pragmatic frames: Superior → Inferior; Superior → Superior; Inferior → Inferior [22]. J. Hope and K. Wales added all kinds of unequal power relationship between the interlocutors [22, 57; cf.: 36; 37; see also: 1, 1 12]. Elise Louvriot points out that “the clusters of forms of address” in Beowulf (terms of endearment, terms of respect), are mainly used in “the context of direct illocutionary acts” (426b–430a; 1474–1483; 1758–1761a) [see: 25, 152].

We have selected instances like *Hrothgar, wine min Beowulf*, *wine min Unferð*, *goldwine gumena* in the referred context but we would like to highlight two more aspects, first, they correlate with the second person singular pronoun and, second, the pronoun itself does not actualize either positive or negative pragmatic component, which is inherent in the lexical meaning of direct address (in our case it is positively charged):

- 350 *Ic þæs wine Deniga,*
 his courage and counsel: “The king of Danes,
 351 *frean Scildinga, frinan wille,*
 the Scyldings’ friend, I fain will tell,
 407 *Wæs þu, Hroðgar/, hal. Ic eom Higelaces*
 “Thou Hrothgar, hail! Hygelac’s

- 457 *For /gewyrhtum/ þu, wine min Beowulf,*
 “For fight defensive, Friend my Beowulf,
 530 *Hwæt þu worn fela, wine min Unferð/,*
 “What a deal hast uttered, dear my Unferth,
 1171 *goldwine gumena,*
 breaker of rings, and blithe be thou,

There is no negative component in the lexical meaning of direct addresses in Beowulf, consequently the pronoun cannot be negatively marked either. Elise Louvriot comments that “the poet never explicitly expresses disapproval of Beowulf” [25, 249]. Terms of address [28, 154] are the markers of Direct Speech, they show how the speaker's attitude to the addressee, based on his / her position in the family, the social status in the community, the pragmatic relationship between the addressor and the addressee.

One phenomenon that has been identified at the diachronic level as a major cause of language change is the process of grammaticalization (Meillet 1912; quoted in Hopper and Traugott, 2003). One factor that has been identified as a driving force for the changes that languages experience is frequency of usage. As Antoine Meillet (1912) explains, grammaticalization leads to a loss of expressivity in frequently used collocations, whose functions may then be rejuvenated through new collocations filling more or less the same role. See some other views on grammaticalization [16, 25–26].

The religious discourse [see the term register: 28, 402] represented by Biblical texts shows the number opposition: *thou* and *you* simply signified the singular and plural pronouns respectively. This was partially due to the fact that the *King James Bible* was already archaic in pronoun use in 1611, but its special status (together with the *Book of Common Prayer*) helped to define *thou* as ‘religious’.

The other special register in which *thou* survives is the language of poetry, where *thou* signifies intimacy, this meaning which licenses its survival into the twentieth century poetry. The choice of *you* instead of *thou* is often reserved for outsiders or strangers to these communities, so pronoun shift (from *thou* to *you*) from addressee to addressee is controlled by pragmatic factors. *Thou* has become a strong reference of (1) address to social inferiors; (2) address of social equals; (3) address in private; (4) familiar or intimate address; (5) contempt, scorn but in the appropriate text / discourse [see: 29, 39–42].

The history of English illustrates the interaction of morphological change and social factors. The personal pronouns expressing reference to Speaker (I), Addressee (you) and the Person spoken of (He, She, It, They) [28, 144] is a universal feature of human language [see: 38, 339–83]. This fact proves that the system of pronominal reference is fundamentally stable. It is also true that the forms constituting the pronominal system have been involved in tremendous changes in the history

of English. Since Old English, a phonological change combined with morphological leveling has wrought a considerable change in the shape and sound of the pronoun system as a whole.

Part of the cause of collapsing the Old English system lies in the social function of pronouns. By Late Middle English the second pronoun singular had evolved into *þu / ðu, þe / ðe* → *thou* and *thee*, while the plural, second person had evolved into *ge, eow* → *you* and *ye* (Lass, 1992).

The loss of *thee* and *thou* (in the so-called Standard English usage) and its permanent replacement with *you* in Modern English is attributable to pragmatic factors influencing word choice and its consequence on language change [33, 43–45]. By the beginning of the 14th century the singular and plural Middle English pronouns had developed an additional pragmatic function, stimulated by social concerns [20, 89]. The choice of pronouns was not determined solely by the grammatical designation of person (first, second, third) or number (singular, plural). Instead, what the speaker chose in order to address his / her interlocutor signified her / his assessment of that person's status and relationship with her / him — as one of equal or superior social status. *You* tended to be the preferred option mainly in upper-class or courtly contexts in the Middle English period, *thou* increasingly came to be associated with lower status.

The status-oriented distinction of the second person pronoun usage is by no means unusual. In many languages, like German and French, there is still a regular pragmatic distinction between

the polite so-called “V” option (*Sie, Vous, Usted, Lei / Loro*) and the more familiar “Tu” option (*du, tu, tu, voi*) to address an individual. In fact patterns of address in different languages tend to be as complex and socially-sensitive as their cultural-specific norms of politeness may dictate [12, 4].

Conclusion and Perspectives

The research of the second person pronoun has revealed that in the Old English system language there was a strong number opposition supported by the verb flexions.

The Nominative form *þu / ðu* was used as the subject of the sentence and played the role of the constructive element of the sentence as its nominative grammatical centre.

The OE singular pronoun *þu / ðu* reveals several functions: the grammatical functions of person and number, the syntactical function of the subject, the referential function (referring to the subject expressed before), the communicative function of Addressee and the deictic function of the person.

The OE pragmatic function of the second person singular form did not possess it began to develop it due to the social stratification of the society and the French pragmatic differentiation of the second person singular and plural pronouns. Nevertheless, the pragmatic function is not essential of the pronoun it is inherent in the nominal used as its antecedent.

The next step to make in this field is to investigate the correlation of the second person forms, first, in the OE translations of Latin texts and, second, ME translations of French texts.

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