A quantitative study of requests in nineteenth-century Italian conduct books: Do authors practice what they preach?
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Previous groundbreaking volumes, *Historical (Im)Politeness* (Culpeper and Kádár 2010) and *Understanding Historical (Im)politeness* (Bax and Kádár 2011) have suggested that the nineteenth century represents a transitional period in the linguistic and cultural meanings and realisations of politeness in Europe, between *Ancien Régime* and the contemporary period. It has been argued that in line with the historical rise of the middle classes and their increasing importance as social, political, economic and cultural actors, the aristocratic model of behaviour gives way to a bourgeois model in the new century (Paternoster and Fitzmaurice 2019).

In the nineteenth century, Italy is literally inundated with conduct manuals and etiquette books. Tasca (2004) counts 186 original titles, resulting in at least 450 different editions, a true boom, which can probably be explained by conventionalisation processes in regard to an emerging bourgeois code of conduct. The *Corpus dei galatei italiani ottocenteschi* (CGIO, Corpus of Italian Nineteenth-Century Conduct Books, comprises the 50 most representative sources (i.e. ed. the ones having most reprints) of the long nineteenth century, 1800-1920. CGIO contains just over 2,300,000 parole.

This contribution focuses on requests in nineteenth-century conduct books in Italy. Firstly, I will summarise the metadiscourse on requests, its rules and formulae as prescribed by the conduct books. The picture is mixed. Whilst some of the rules (regarding optionality) and formulae (the use of the conditional mode) are already familiar to a 21st-century reader, features emphasizing hierarchical difference by means of addressee elevation have presently lost currency. The latter still closely follow formulaic patterns described for 14th-century official petitions (Held 2010) and they are, in fact, impositives, conservative elements, echoing the *Ancien Régime* concern with rank and power (Paternoster and Saltamacchia 2017).

Secondly, in line with the 3rd wave politeness model and its theoretical tenet that politeness conventions can be usefully studied by frequency studies and/or metadiscourse (Terkourafi and Kádár 2017), I will present a quantitative study designed to investigate the usage of requests in these same sources and raise the question whether the rules and formulae for requests are put into practice when the authors use requests themselves, in the numerous rules that make up most of the texts. I will tentatively propose a first sample of results, produced with a manual annotation based on UAM Corpus Tools (O’Donnell 2008a; 2008b). I will discuss the layers of the annotation scheme and show the outcome of the annotation of 3 conduct books. So far, results indicate that there is a strong discrepancy between usage and metadiscourse. This setup, which is unique it that it compares usage and metadiscourse within the same sources, throws up important methodological questions about the usefulness of metasources for the study of conventionalization processes, which has been strongly supported by Terkourafi 2011 and Culpeper 2017. The main question being how exactly they contribute to conventionalization: through metadiscourse, or through usages.
Sources:
Paternoster Annick / Saltamacchia Francesca (compilers).bedtls\textit{ Corpus di galatei italiani ottocenteschi (CGIO)}, in preparation at the University of Lugano (CH) with a grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation, project nr. 100012_153031, \textit{Le ragioni della cortesia. La nascita della cortesia contemporanea nella trattatistica comportamentale italiana dell’Ottocento}

Studies:


Paternoster Annick, and Francesca Saltamacchia. 2017. “(Im)politeness formulae and (im)politeness rules: metadiscourse and conventionalisation in 19th Century Italian conduct books.” In Elena Maria Pandolfi, Johanna Miecznikowski Sabine Christopher, Alain Kamber (eds.), \textit{Studies on Language Norms in Context}. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang (Duisburg Papers on Research in Language and Culture), 263 - 301.

