



## Trabajo Fin de Grado

# Uses and Functions of the Second Person Personal Pronoun in Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*

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## **Abstract**

This paper aims to know the uses of second person personal pronouns with singular meaning at a time when there was more than one possibility in English, that is, when there was still a T-V distinction, what does not happen any more nowadays. To do so, we turn to the Early Modern English period (in particular to Christopher Marlowe's play *The Jew of Malta*), where th- forms and y-forms coexisted. To understand the choice of one form or the other we look into *Politeness Theory*. Bearing in mind the evolution and situation of the English language at that time and the premises of *Politeness Theory*, an analysis of the pronouns has been carried out and, leaning on the plot of the play, an explanation about the use of one pronoun has been searched. Both, the situation in which the expectations were fulfilled as well as exceptions have been taken into account.

## **Resumen**

Este trabajo pretende conocer cuáles eran los usos de los pronombres de segunda persona de singular cuando existía en inglés más de una posibilidad, es decir, cuando aún había una distinción T-V, algo que no sucede hoy en día. Para ello, nos trasladamos al periodo del Inglés Moderno Temprano (en concreto, a la obra de Christopher Marlowe *El judío de Malta*), donde coexistían las formas th- (T) y las formas y- (V). Para interpretar la elección de una forma u otra se ha recurrido a la *Teoría de la Cortesía Lingüística*. Teniendo muy claro la evolución y la situación de la lengua inglesa en dicha época y los principios de la *Teoría de la Cortesía Lingüística*, se ha realizado un análisis del uso de los pronombres y ayudándonos de la trama de la obra se ha tratado de buscar la explicación del empleo de un pronombre u otro. Se han tenido en cuenta tanto situaciones en las que sucedía lo esperado como las excepciones, prestando especial atención a estas últimas.

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## 1. Introduction

Unlike other modern languages such as Spanish, German or French, Present Day English lacks a T-V distinction, i.e. separate forms for the singular second person personal pronoun (as a matter of fact it does not distinguish between a singular and a plural second person personal pronoun either). However, this was not always the case. In past periods of English there was such a distinction. It is necessary to turn to samples of English in which there was such T-V distinction to try to understand how it worked. The text chosen for analysis belongs to the Early Modern English period: the play *The Jew of Malta*, by the playwright Christopher Marlowe. A statistical register of the personal pronouns and a subsequent analysis has been carried out under the premises of Politeness Theory to try to understand the difference of meaning the use of one form or another might entail.

## 2. Historical Context

The English language has evolved and changed from what is known as Old English, introduced in England about 1500 years ago by some Germanic tribes, to Present Day English, the language of millions of people around the world. Linguistic aspects such as vocabulary, grammar and syntax have undergone several transformations, and English personal pronouns are no exceptions. The tables below show the system of the personal pronouns in the Old English period:

SINGULAR	1 <sup>st</sup> person	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	3 <sup>rd</sup> person		
			M	N	F
Nominative	ic	ðū	hē	hit	hēo
Accusative	mē	ðē	hine	hit	hīe
Genitive	mīn	ðīn	his	his	hiere
Dative	mē	ðē	him	him	hiere

Table 1. Old English singular personal pronouns (Baugh & Cable, 2013, p.55).

<b>PLURAL</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> person</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> person</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> person</b>
<b>nominative</b>	wē	gē	hīe
<b>accusative</b>	ūs	ēow	hīe
<b>genitive</b>	ūre	ēower	hiera
<b>dative</b>	ūs	ēow	him

Table 2. Old English plural personal pronouns (Baugh & Cable, 2013, p.55).

Old English had a complete system of inflections regarding person (first, second, third), case (Nominative, Accusative, Genitive, Dative), gender (masculine, neuter, feminine) or number (singular, dual, plural). The choice between *ðū* and *gē* was merely one of number, i.e. a grammatical choice. It must be taken into account that Old English was a synthetic language, that is, the relationship between words in a sentence was indicated by means of inflections. There were a great number of inflections in Old English for nouns, adjectives, demonstratives, pronouns as well as a wide verbal system. With the passing of time, words changed their form. Thus, some of the inflection differences gradually disappeared.

In the Middle English period (1150-1500) key changes took place. By this time, there was a great variety in the personal pronoun forms due to differences among regional dialects and chronological evolution. A late Middle English text would show forms like the following:

<b>SINGULAR</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> person</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> person</b>
<b>nominative</b>	ich, I, ik	thou
<b>object</b>	mē	thee
<b>genitive</b>	mī, mīn	thī, thīn

Table 3. Middle English 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> singular personal pronouns (Algeo, 2010, p.131).

<b>3<sup>rd</sup> person</b>			
<b>SINGULAR</b>	<b>masculine</b>	<b>neuter</b>	<b>feminine</b>
<b>nominative</b>	hē	hit, it	shē, hō, hyō, hyē, hī, schō, chō, hē
<b>object</b>	him, hine	hit, it	hir(e), her(e), hī
<b>genitive</b>	his	his	hir(e), her(e), hires

Table 4. Middle English 3<sup>rd</sup> singular personal pronouns (Algeo, 2010, p.131).

PLURAL	1 <sup>st</sup> person	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	3 <sup>rd</sup> person
<b>nominative</b>	wē	yē	hīe, they, thai
<b>object</b>	us	you	hem, heom, them, thaim, them
<b>genitive</b>	our(e), oures	your(e), youres	her(e), their(e), heres, theirs

Table 5. Middle English plural personal pronouns (Algeo, 2010, p.131).

Most forms have undergone small spelling and pronunciation changes and the number of cases has been reduced.

The history of the English language has been framed by invasions. The Germanic tribes brought Old English with them and Scandinavian peoples left their imprint on the language (such as the third person plural personal pronoun). French had the next turn. After the Battle of Hastings in 1066, England fell under French rule. French became the language of power, the language used by the king, the court and the aristocracy. Nevertheless, English kept on being used among the common people and French never replaced English as the language of England, which is the opposite of what had happened to the Celtic languages when the Anglo-Saxon tribes arrived in Britain. Nonetheless, the influence of French on English was huge. It affected all aspects of language such as vocabulary, syntax, pronunciation or spelling.

The French brought with them some innovations to the English language. Unlike the French, when English-speaking people had to refer to another person they had just one choice, using the singular second person personal pronoun (thou, thee, thī/thīn). French-speaking people could choose between *tu* (singular second person personal pronoun) and *vous* (plural second person personal pronoun) not only depending on the number of people they referred to. *Vous* was used when referring to one person in formal situations, among upper-class equals and when addressing a superior. *Tu* was reserved for intimate situations, among low-class equals and when addressing an inferior in the social scale. By the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century, English adopted this use, called the T-V distinction, imitating the usage of French.

Present Day French keeps the t-/v- distinction and so do many other languages such as Spanish, German or Italian. *Y-* forms were not mere polite singular forms. There is a huge range of possibilities to consider when looking at human relationships. For this reason, it is interesting to analyse the several uses of these forms while they coexisted. The th- forms gradually disappeared along the Modern

English period. Hence, there is no coexistence in standard Present Day English, as can be seen in the tables below:

<b>SINGULAR</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> person</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> person</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> person</b>		
			<b>M</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>subject</b>	I	you	he	it	she
<b>object</b>	me	you	him	it	her

Table 6. Present Day English singular personal pronouns (Wales, 1996, p. 86).

<b>PLURAL</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> person</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> person</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> person</b>	
<b>subject</b>	we	you	they	
<b>object</b>	us	you	them	

Table 7. Present Day English plural personal pronouns (Wales, 1996, p. 86).

Unlike the plural third person personal pronoun, the singular second person personal pronoun was not replaced by a foreign pronoun. A pronoun already present in the English language, the plural second person pronoun, acquired a new function, being used as a singular pronoun and eventually replacing it, while keeping its original function. This replacement was carried out because of the French influence on the English language. Roughly speaking, the *th-* forms were mainly used for addressing social inferiors, addressing social equals (lower class), addressing in private, familiar or intimate tone, contempt or scorn; *y-* forms, in turn, were used for addressing social superiors or social equals (upper classes), addressing in public, formal or neutral tone, respect or admiration (Wales, 1996, p.75). Nevertheless, it must be taken into account that in Middle English the shift between *you* and *thou* for reasons other than status was very common. Feelings and emotions in particular situations might motivate these fluctuations between pronouns (Wales, 1996, p.75). Besides, unlike other languages in which the change from a V-form to a T-form means that a new degree of confidence has been achieved and the T-form will be henceforth always employed, it was perfectly normal in Middle English to use a T-form (in this case a *th-* form) when a V- form (*y-* form) was expected due to emotional factors and then continue to use the V-form as if nothing had happened (Díaz, 1999, p. 43).

The plural forms, known as *y-* forms, became more and more used during the Middle English period and eventually replaced the singular forms, known as *th-* forms, by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Nowadays, the *th-* forms are restricted to some dialects. There is no distinction between singular and plural forms, or between formal and informal forms in standard Present Day English.

### 3. Politeness Theory

It was first formulated by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson in 1978. When approaching this theory there are two concepts that must be very clear: face and face-threatening act. 'Face' is "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61). A 'Face-threatening act' is any act that might damage either the speaker's or the hearer's face (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.65). Bearing in mind these two ideas, Politeness Theory may be defined as the theory that explains how to compensate the offence to face caused by face-threatening acts when addressing someone (Foley, 1997). There are two kinds of face: positive and negative. The positive face is the necessity of any person to be likable and attractive to an interlocutor. The negative face is the wish of people to act with nobody hindering them.

As it has been said before, there are face-threatening acts. People have to interact with others and face-threatening acts are not always avoidable. They may damage both, the speaker's positive or negative face and the hearer's positive or negative face. Therefore, acts can be classified according to whose face they threaten (the hearer's or the speaker's). Within those two categories, we can create two subgroups depending on the kind of face they damage (positive or negative) (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 63).

#### **Acts that threaten the hearer's face**

- Acts that threaten the hearer's negative face

They are those acts in which the speaker does not care about evading situations that may interfere with the hearer's will, choices or actions. This category includes orders and requests, suggestions and advice, reminders, threats or warnings, offers, promises, compliments and expressions of negative emotion towards the hearer.

- Acts that threaten the hearer's positive face



They are those acts in which the speaker does not care about the hearer's wishes, feeling or opinions. This category includes expressions of disapproval, contradictions, expressions of violent emotions, mention of taboo topics, bad news, controversial topics, interruptions and the use of inappropriate pronouns of address.

### **Acts that threaten the speaker's face**

- Acts that threaten the speaker's negative face

They are those acts that may impede the speaker's freedom of action. This category includes expressing thanks, acceptance of hearer's thanks or apology, excuses, acceptance of offers, reaction to hearer's mistakes and unwilling promises and offers.

- Acts that threaten the speaker's positive face

They are those acts that may negatively affect the speaker's wishes, feelings or opinions. This category includes apologies, acceptance of a compliment, breakdown of physical control over body, self-humiliation, confessions and non-control of laughter and tears.

When a face-threatening act is required, the speaker may use some politeness strategies to try to mitigate the threat. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p.75) there are five strategies: bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record and not doing the face-threatening act.

**'Bald on-record'** strategies do not aim to soften the face-threatening act at all. The statement is uttered straightaway. The speaker should have a close relationship with the hearer, otherwise s/he will shock him/her (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 95).

**'Positive politeness'** makes the hearer notice that you respect him/her. To do so, the speaker tries to pay particular attention to the hearer's positive face needs. Thus, the threat to his positive face decreases considerably (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.101).

**'Negative politeness'** consists in avoiding impositions on the hearer, that is, minimising the threat to his negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.129).

**'Off-record'** involves approaching the issue in such a way that the speaker is not responsible for the face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.211). In these cases, the speaker makes use of ambiguity. S/he does not directly state his/her intention, but the hearer must infer it.

**'Not doing the face-threatening act'** involves not carrying out the face-threatening act.

The choice of one of these strategies may be motivated by balance between the necessity to communicate and being respectful. The greater the risk of doing the face-threatening act, the more careful strategy will be chosen. According to Brown and Levinson, there are three variables that determine the choice of strategy: distance (D), power (P) and risk (R) (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 74, 211).

**'Distance'** refers to the social distance between the speaker and the hearer. It may be minimal, such as that between two very close friends; huge, such as that between a king and a slave; or go through many other intermediate stages.

**'Power'** is the relative power the speaker has over the hearer and vice versa regarding age, rank, wealth etc.

**'Risk'** means to what extent the act of communication is threatening in a particular culture. What is acceptable for one culture may be insolent for another. Within a particular culture there are also different levels of risk.

#### 4. Purposes and Corpus

Looking back at the time when both, the *th-* and the *y-* forms coexisted, is a good way to observe how they were used. This paper intends to analyse the use of *th-* and *y-* forms during the Early Modern English period, focusing on their appearance in some literary works. Our choice of that period of time is grounded on two main reasons. First, it had been a long time since French entered the island and, therefore, influenced the English language. Also, the *y-* forms had not prevailed over the *th-* forms yet. Secondly, at that time, there was a great production of theatre plays, commonly referred to as Elizabethan theatre. Obviously, there is not any record of the talk of the time, apart from letters or government acts, which do not reflect spoken English properly. Hence the great importance of plays. Although they are not true samples of real life –plots are usually far from every-day life and language is sometimes much more elaborated– they are the closest documents one can turn to (Brown & Gilman, 1960). During the Elizabethan period there were lots of innovations concerning drama. Playwrights began to use a language closer to the rhythm of the English language, disregarding complex metrical patterns employed before. One of the first, if not the first, playwrights to do so in his plays was

Christopher Marlowe, considered as Shakespeare's predecessor and one of the most popular authors of the period (Jayapalan, 2001, pp. 45-49). This new use of language makes Marlowe's plays good sources to observe the oral speech of that time. One of his plays, *The Jew of Malta* (c.1589), will be analysed under the premises of Politeness Theory in order to try to understand how, when and why the pronouns *thou* and *you* (and their variants) were used and the implications that their use can have for a better understanding of the relationship among the characters of the plays.

#### Plot of the play

The Turks arrive in Malta and claim for the debt Malta has incurred with them. The governor of Malta orders the Jews to turn over half of their property to the government or convert to Christianity. Barabas, the wealthiest Jew of Malta, refuses to do so, all his estates are confiscated and his house turned into a nunnery. By means of his daughter (who pretends to be a nun), Barabas recovers part of his fortune, buys a new house and a slave, Ithamore. Meanwhile, the Christians of Malta decide not to pay the tribute to the Turks because they have been promised help from Spain. With the help of his daughter, Abigail, and his slave, Barabas persuades the governor's son and a friend of his to have a duel over Abigail's hand. They end up killing each other. Later, Barabas and Ithamore poison the nuns Abigail had joined. They also manage to kill two friars who had found out their plans by means of Abigail. A courtesan and a thief trick Ithamore to blackmail his master. Eventually, all three are poisoned by Barabas but he is denounced to the governor of Malta because of his crimes. Barabas pretends to be dead and helps the Turks to take the city of Malta. He is appointed governor of Malta. He offers the old governor of Malta to cheat the Turks in exchange of money. At the end, the governor of Malta cheats Barabas, who dies in his own trap, and saves Malta from the Turkish threat by capturing Calymath.

## **5. Methodology**

A careful reading of the play *The Jew of Malta* has preceded the analysis intended. Particular attention has been paid to the pronouns of address (*thou, thee, thy, thine/ye, you, your, yours*) and the forms of address (*my lord, sir, sirrah*). Occasions where the main uses of *th-* and *y-* forms are respected (in accordance with the Historical Context section) and others where they are not respected have been closely observed and analysed bearing in mind the plot situations.

A statistical register of the *th-* and *y-* forms as well as the use of forms of address of the type *sirrah*, *sir*, *my lord* or *madam* has been carried out. Forms of address such as *sir*, *my lord* or *madam* have been assimilated to the uses of *y-* forms while *sirrah* has been assimilated to the uses of *th-* forms.

## 6. Analysis

In Elizabethan times there was a choice between *thou* and *you* (and their respective variants) when referring to a single person. This choice was based on social circumstances. In the Elizabethan era "upper-class speakers said *you* to one another; lower-class speakers said *thou* to one another; the between-class rule was *you* to the upper and *thou* to the lower" (Brown & Gilman 1989: 177). This rule does not always apply. Sometimes, one would expect to find a *y-* form but a *th-* form is used instead. This may be an indicator of the mood of the speaker (Brown & Gilman 1989: 177).

### Barabas

One of the most interesting cases to analyse is the main character, Barabas, i.e. the Jew of Malta. He is in contact with most of the other characters in the play. Furthermore, his status is particularly attractive because he is neither a highborn man nor a lower-class man. The reasons for his special rank is that he is a very wealthy man, which guarantees him a high status, but he is a foreigner and a Jew in a Christian city, which makes his social position lower than the one a Christian as rich as he would have. This can be deduced reading the play, but also carefully observing how Barabas addresses the other characters (Table 8) and how they address him (Table 9).

BARABAS →	<i>th-</i>	<i>sirrah</i>	<i>y-</i>	<i>my lord</i>	<i>sir</i>	<i>your lordship</i>	<i>T</i>
<b>no.</b>	119	4	71	9	10	2	215
<b>%</b>	55,3	1,9	33	4,2	4,7	0,9	100
	57,2		42,8				

Table 8. Pronouns used by Barabas when addressing other characters.

to BARABAS	<i>th-</i>	<i>sirrah</i>	<i>y-</i>	<i>my lord</i>	<i>sir</i>	<i>master</i>	<i>T</i>
<b>no.</b>	82	4	21	2	15	18	142
<b>%</b>	57,8	2,8	14,7	1,4	10,6	12,7	100
	60,6			39,4			

Table 9. Pronouns used when Barabas is addressed by someone.

Both tables provide similar results. In both cases *th-* forms are more abundant than the *y-* forms, but this difference is not excessive. Barabas seems to have the need to employ both kinds of forms because he is in a middle position. However, it would be a mistake to think that he limits himself to the norm previously explained. It is necessary to analyse Barabas's attitude and behaviour towards other characters belonging to several social classes.

### Barabas and the upper strata

There are two characters that undoubtedly belong to an upper class than Barabas: Ferneze, the Governor of Malta and Selim Calymath, the son of the Emperor of Turkey. Barabas is expected to use *y-* forms when addressing them, whereas they will use *th-* forms when addressing him. Nevertheless, this prediction is not completely correct:

BARABAS → FERNEZE	<i>th-</i>	<i>y-</i>	<i>my lord</i>	<i>your lordship</i>	<i>T</i>
<b>no.</b>	21	4	5	1	31
<b>%</b>	67,8	12,9	16,1	3,2	100
	67,8		32,2		

Table 10. Pronouns Barabas uses when addressing Ferneze.

FERNEZE → BARABAS	<i>th-</i>	<i>y-</i>	<i>sir</i>	<i>my lord</i>	<i>T</i>
<b>no.</b>	27	0	1	1	29
<b>%</b>	93,2	0	3,4	3,4	100
	93,2		6,8		

Table 11. Pronouns Ferneze uses when addressing Barabas.

The expectations are only fulfilled in Calymath's case. Focusing on Ferneze's case we must bear in mind the three factors that influence the choice of strategy. The social distance between Ferneze and Barabas is wide: Ferneze, as Governor, is the most powerful man in Malta, while Barabas combines his position as a wealthy and Jewish man. Ferneze has clearly more power over Barabas than vice versa. Risk will

depend on the situation but, in general, Ferneze will take less risk when talking to Barabas than when Barabas addresses him.

FERNEZE. And therefore are we to request your aid.

BARABAS. Alas, my lord, we are no soldiers;

And what's our aid against so great a prince?

FERNEZE. Tut, Jew, we know thou art no soldier;

Thou art a merchant and a moneyed man,

And 'tis the money, Barabas, we seek. (I, ii)

This conversation takes place at the very beginning of the play. Being Barabas a wealthy Jew and Ferneze the Governor of Malta, politeness theory suggests that Barabas should show more deference to Ferneze than vice versa because Ferneze has the greatest power. The norm is indeed respected in this example. Ferneze merely announces the Jews, and therefore Barabas, why they have been summoned: to be asked for aid. This is a good example of bald on-record strategy because the speaker's only purpose is to communicate his aim without trying to soften the blow. Barabas, who imagines it is going to be bad for him and is reluctant to help the Christians, addresses Ferneze as politely as possible (*my lord*). Barabas makes use of positive politeness here by using the pronoun of address that suits the Governor of Malta. He also expresses his vacillations concerning helping the Christians (*we are no soldiers*). This reluctance is an indicator of negative politeness because Barabas does not want to have the obligation to help him. Finally, he deferentially asks which is that aid the Governor is talking about (*And what's our aid against so great prince?*). Ferneze puts an end to his doubts displaying bald on-record strategies (*'tis the money, Barabas, we seek*) and also positive politeness. He wants to overcome Barabas's resistance to help him by reminding him that he is a wealthy merchant, which Barabas is proud of.

Nonetheless, there is a significant turning point in the relationship between Barabas and Ferneze. It has to do with an inversion in the power and distance factors. After certain events, Barabas becomes the new Governor of Malta and Ferneze becomes his prisoner. As a result, the social distance (between the Governor of Malta and a mere prisoner) increases. The novelty is that now Barabas is in a higher

position. Also the power one (Barabas) holds over the other (Ferneze) is greater than in the previous situation. This explains Barabas's change of attitude:

*Ferneze:* My lord?

*Barabas:* (Aside) Ay, «lord»; thus slaves will learn. [...]

This is the reason that I sent for thee: [...]

*Ferneze:* [...] Nor fear I death, nor will I flatter thee. (V, ii)

In this new situation Barabas seeks no more to care about Ferneze's positive face. On the other hand, Ferneze calls Barabas *my lord* but this is the only concession he makes. As he claims not to be afraid of death, he does not care about the risks of addressing his rival using *th-* forms, which is disrespectful and dangerous in his situation.

The other character who clearly holds a higher position than Barabas is Selim Calymath:

BARABAS → CALYMATH	<i>th-</i>	<i>y-</i>	<i>my lord</i>	T
<b>no.</b>	1	4	3	8
<b>%</b>	12,5	50	37,5	100
	12,5	87,5		

Table 12. Pronouns Barabas uses when addressing Calymath.

CALYMATH → BARABAS	<i>th-</i>	<i>y-</i>	T
<b>no.</b>	11	0	11
<b>%</b>	100	0	100

Table 13. Pronouns Calymath uses when addressing Barabas.

As we can see in the tables above, this case corresponds perfectly to the predictions. The social distance between Calymath and Barabas is even greater than that between the latter and Ferneze because Calymath is the heir of the Turkish Empire. The power Calymath has over Barabas is also higher than Ferneze's.

CALYMATH. For thy desert we make thee governor.

Use them at thy discretion.

BARABAS. Thanks, my lord. (V, ii)

Even if Barabas is appointed Governor, he is still addressed with *th-* forms because he owes his charge to Calymath.

### Barabas and the lower strata

The clearest example of a relationship between Barabas and a lower-class person is the one he has with his slave Ithamore. The social distance is quite wide, for Barabas is a wealthy man and Ithamore his slave. Regarding power, Barabas has total power over Ithamore while the latter has none over his master:

BARABAS → ITHAMORE	<i>th-</i>	<i>sirrah</i>	<i>y-</i>	T
<b>no.</b>	48	3	7	58
<b>%</b>	82,7	5,2	12,1	100
	87,9		12,1	

Table 14. Pronouns Barabas uses when addressing Ithamore.

ITHAMORE → BARABAS	<i>th-</i>	<i>sirrah</i>	<i>y-</i>	<i>sir</i>	<i>master</i>	T
<b>no.</b>	2	2	7	5	18	34
<b>%</b>	5,9	5,9	20,6	14,7	52,9	100
		11,8		88,2		

Table 15. Pronouns Ithamore uses when addressing Barabas.

There are few exceptions to the rule, but they are interesting and deserve to be analysed. First, we will focus on some of the exceptions that Barabas makes:

BARABAS. Come on, *sirrah*: Off with your girdle, make a handsome noose. Friar, awake! (IV, *i*)

In this example, Barabas and Ithamore are on the verge of murdering Friar Bernardine. Perhaps the fact that they are accomplices and both are enjoying the crime leads Barabas to treat Ithamore more respectfully this particular time.

ITHAMORE. Does not know a Jew, one Barabas?

BARABAS. Very mush, monsieur. You no be his man? (IV, *ii*)



This example is different from the previous one. Barabas pretends to be a French musician to kill Ithamore and those who have been blackmailing him. To do so, he has to change the way he speaks not to be discovered.

Now we will see some cases in which Ithamore uses a *th-* form instead of the *y-* forms he should use:

ITHAMORE. Ten hundred thousand crowns. (*He writes.*)

«Master Barabas—»

PILIA-BORZA. Write not so submissively, but threatening him.

ITHAMORE. «Sirrah Barabas, send me a hundred thousand crowns.»

PILIA-BORZA. Put it in two hundred at least.

ITHAMORE. «I charge thee send me three hundred by this bearer, [...].» (IV, *ii*)

In the example above, it is not Ithamore's own idea to use the *th-* forms but he accepts it. Although the social distance has not changed, the power relationship has done so. Ithamore knows Barabas's secrets and tries to blackmail him. Furthermore, he is not directly addressing him, but he is writing a letter. Thus, the risk of such offence decreases because there is no confrontation. Blackmailing someone is risky, but the very information that allows Ithamore to blackmail his master offers him some protection at the same time.

ITHAMORE. Wilt drink, Frenchman? Here's to thee with a—Pox on this drunken hiccup! (IV, *iv*)

This example is very similar to the second one, exemplifying Barabas's switches when addressing Ithamore. Again, the explanation can be found in the fact that Barabas is disguised as a musician. Therefore, Ithamore does not know whom he is talking to.

### **Barabas and equal strata**

It is really difficult to find a true equal to Barabas. Hence, Abigail (Barabas's daughter) and First Jew have been chosen to serve the purpose. It was not uncommon

in Elizabethan times that children were addressed using *th-* forms whereas they addressed their parents with the *y-* forms. There were differences between the relationship of upper and lower class parents with their offspring. As pointed out earlier, Barabas does not belong to upper or lower strata, and neither does her daughter. They belong to something in-between. Maybe that is the reason why in general both Barabas and Abigail address each other using *th-* forms:

BARABAS → ABIGAIL	<i>th-</i>	<i>y-</i>	T
<b>no.</b>	26	6	32
<b>%</b>	81,25	18,75	100

Table 16. Pronouns Barabas uses when addressing Abigail.

ABIGAIL → BARABAS	<i>th-</i>	<i>y-</i>	T
<b>no.</b>	12	1	13
<b>%</b>	92,3	7,7	100

Table 17. Pronouns Abigail uses when addressing Barabas.

Barabas has not an equal among the Christians. Hence, it is interesting to analyse his relationships with other Jews. He is wealthier than them (indeed the wealthiest Jew in Malta) and, therefore, he is a more powerful person. Unfortunately there is just one example:

FIRST JEW. Thou seest that they have taken half our goods. (I, *ii*)

This statement takes place after half the Jews' goods have been confiscated by the authorities of Malta. The use of a *th-* form may be a sign of camaraderie because all are Jew and have received the same unfair treatment from the authorities (although Barabas's goods are all confiscated).

### The upper strata

To analyse the relationships the upper strata have among them, we have focused on two characters relationships: Ferneze and Calymath, who are enemies, and Lodowick and Mathias, who are friends.

At the beginning of the play Ferneze is the Governor of Malta and Calymath is the son of the Turkish Emperor. Both belong to the upper strata but Calymath has a higher rank because of his position (prince of the Turkish empire) and the land where

he exercises his power (an empire and not an island). As a consequence, Ferneze should be more careful and respectful when talking to Calymath than vice versa. However, the analysis of personal pronouns and forms of address offers results that do not fulfil the expectations completely.

FERNEZE → CALYMATH	<i>th-</i>	<i>y-</i>	<i>my lord</i>	<i>your highness</i>	T
<b>no.</b>	19	0	1	1	21
<b>%</b>	90,5	0	4,8	4,8	100
	90,4	9,6			

Table 18. Pronouns Ferneze uses when addressing Calymath.

CALYMATH → FERNEZE	<i>th-</i>	<i>y-</i>	T
<b>no.</b>	2	1	3
<b>%</b>	66,7	33,3	100

Table 19. Pronouns Calymath uses when addressing Ferneze.

Although there are not many samples of Calymath addressing Ferneze, *th-* forms are more abundant than *y-* forms, as expected. When Ferneze address Calymath, on the other hand, there are far more *th-* forms than *y-*forms. This fact is even more surprising when we look at the plot of the play and find out that, whereas Calymath keeps his status as the Turkish Emperor's son, Ferneze goes down in the social scale as he must quit his position as Governor of Malta and becomes a mere prisoner. The explanation for this is that most of the *th-* forms Ferneze employs when talking to Calymath are used at the very end of the play, where Ferneze successfully sets a trap for Calymath and his army. In short, at the beginning of the play both characters, but especially Ferneze, act very carefully:

FERNEZE. Alas, my lord, the sum is over-great!

I hope your highness will consider us.

CALYMATH. I wish, grave governor, 'twere in my power

To favour you, but 'tis my father's cause, (I, *ii*)

In this case, Calymath has even more power because he has military strength to attack Malta. Ferneze uses positive politeness when employing *my lord* and *your highness* in order to try to persuade Calymath to be more flexible. Calymath makes

use of a *y*- form pronoun to politely deny Ferneze's request. Calymath has great power over Ferneze and Malta but thinks that acting kindly could make a good ally of Ferneze. He prefers to avoid the risk of conquering Malta by force when it would be much more simple to wait and receive the tribute.

Once the Turks have taken control of Malta, Calymath's attitude towards Ferneze changes:

CALYMATH. [...] Ferneze, speak. Had it not been much better  
To've kept thy promise than be thus surprised?  
(V, ii)

Now the Turks control the island and Ferneze has been substituted as Governor of Malta. He is no more valuable for Calymath, and, besides, he has broken a promise. Consequently, Calymath does not show him respect anymore by using *th*- forms. The social distance between both characters has widened, the power Calymath holds over Ferneze has hugely increased and Calymath takes no risks when talking to a defeated prisoner.

At the end of the play, the Christians recover control over Malta and take Calymath prisoner (although he still has some status being the Turkish Emperor's son). Under these special circumstances, Ferneze can allow himself to address Calymath in a more disrespectful way than previously:

FERNEZE. Content thee, Calymath, here thou must stay  
And live in Malta prisoner [...] (V, v)

Ferneze and Calymath have exchanged the power one has over the other and the same social distance as at the beginning of the play (between the Governor of Malta and the son of the Turkish Emperor). Furthermore, Ferneze knows that he is not taking any risk when talking to Calymath because he is now a prisoner and his army has been murdered.

Both Lodowick and Mathias belong to the upper strata and they are good friends. It is expected that in a cordial relationship between them, *y*- forms will be used.

LODOWICK → MATHIAS	<i>th-</i>	<i>the villain</i>	<i>y-</i>	T
<b>no.</b>	0	1	2	3
<b>%</b>	0	33,3	66,7	100
	33,3		66,7	

Table 20. Pronouns Lodowick uses when addressing Mathias.

MATHIAS → LODOWICK	<i>th-</i>	<i>y-</i>	<i>sir</i>	T
<b>no.</b>	1	1	1	3
<b>%</b>	33,3	33,3	33,3	100
	33,3	66,7		

Table 21. Pronouns Mathias uses when addressing Lodowick.

LODOWICK. And if she be so fair as you report,  
'Twere time well spent to go and visit her.  
How say you, shall we?  
MATHIAS. I must and I will, sir; there's no remedy. (I, *ii*)

Lodowick has a slightly higher rank but the social distance between them is insignificant as well as the power each one has over the other. There are no risks or they are negligible because it is a friendly chatter about a topic which is not controversial, the beauty of a young girl. In the case of two close friends, it would be likely that one of them breaks the norm because of positive affective matters; for example, a demonstration of camaraderie. However, there is another possibility: scorn and disagreement. It is the latter that is found in the play, for Lodowick and Mathias will become enemies because of Barabas's machinations.

LODOWICK. What, dares the villain write in such base terms?  
MATHIAS. (*To Lodowick.*) I did it; and revenge it if thou dar'st.  
(III, *ii*)

In the heat of the battle, both forget their good manners. Their scorn is not only shown by the use of *th-* forms but also by insults. This enmity culminates in a quarrel with a fatal ending for both characters.

### The lower strata

Ithamore, a slave, Bellamira, a courtesan, and Pilia-Borza, a thief, have been chosen as representatives of the lower strata in the play, being the lowest of all characters. Due to their social condition, they are expected to use *th-* forms when talking among themselves and *y-* forms for the rest of situations, because everybody (at least in the play) has a superior status.

Firstly we analyse the relationship between them, i.e. a relationship in which the two of them belong to the lower strata:

PILIA-BORZA → BELLAMIRA	<i>th-</i>	<i>y-</i>	T
<b>no.</b>	3	2	5
<b>%</b>	60	40	100

Table 22. Pronouns Pilia-Borza uses when addressing Bellamira.

BELLAMIRA → PILIA-BORZA	<i>th-</i>	<i>y-</i>	T
<b>no.</b>	4	0	4
<b>%</b>	100	0	100

Table 23. Pronouns Bellamira uses when addressing Pilia-Borza.

As expected for a pair of ruffians, tables 22 and 23 show that when talking to each other, *th-* pronouns are employed more frequently.

PILIA-BORZA. Hold thee, wench; there's something for thee to spend.

*(He gives her money from a bag.)*

BELLAMIRA. 'Tis silver; I disdain it.

PILIA-BORZA. Ay, but the Jew has gold.

And I will have it, or it shall go hard.

BELLAMIRA. Tell me, how cam'st thou by this? (III, *i*)

The example above is one of the pronouns they usually employ to address each other. They not only share the same social position but are also friends, or at least partners. Consequently the social distance between them is very short or even non-existent. Their partnership suggests that no one has a considerable power over the other. Whenever they address the other, they use bald-on record strategies because

they are planning something beneficial for both of them and which both are eager to do.

Nevertheless we cannot neglect the few samples of *y*-forms, which come from Pilia-Borza talking to Bellamira.

PILIA-BORZA. This is the gentleman you writ to. (IV, *ii*)

The reason why Pilia-Borza now uses a *y*-form instead of a *th*- form as he had previously done, is that he and Bellamira pretends to be a great lady to trick Ithamore, and therefore, steal Barabas's gold. Thus, Pilia-Borza adopts the tone and pronouns that he should use when addressing a woman whose status is higher than his. This situation is similar to that one where Ithamore employs *th*- forms to talk to his master because he thinks he is just an itinerant musician. In accordance with this farce, Pilia-Borza will refer to Ithamore in very different ways:

PILIA-BORZA → ITHAMORE	<i>th</i> -	<i>y</i> -	<i>sir</i>	<i>your worship</i>	T
<b>no.</b>	2	6	4	1	13
<b>%</b>	15,3	46,2	30,8	7,7	100
	15,3	84,7			

Table 24. Pronouns Pilia-Borza uses when addressing Ithamore.

The aim of using pronouns or forms of address as formal as *y*- forms, *your worship* or *sir*, is to make Ithamore feel more important and more prompt to believe the ploy Pilia-Borza and Bellamira have schemed.

PILIA-BORZA. I warrant, your worship shall have't.

ITHAMORE. And if he ask why [...] (IV, *ii* )

In the example above, we can see how positive politeness is used to please Ithamore and persuade him to blackmail his master.

There are few occasions when characters of such low condition address someone of very high status other than Barabas. Nevertheless, Bellamira talks once to Ferneze.

BELLAMIRA → FERNEZE	<i>th-</i>	<i>y-</i>	T
<b>no.</b>	2	0	4
<b>%</b>	100	0	100

Table 25. Pronouns Bellamira uses when addressing Ferneze.

It is extremely unusual for someone like Bellamira to use only *th*-forms when addressing someone as powerful as Ferneze.

BELLAMIRA. Whate'er I am, yet, governor, hear me speak.

I bring thee news by whom thy son was slain:

Mathias did it not, it was the Jew.

The social distance is huge, as is the power Ferneze holds over Bellamira. The contents of the communication, who is the responsible for Ferneze's son death, is also very risky. However, Bellamira has been poisoned and is going to die. She needs to communicate her message as quick and clear as possible. Furthermore, the content of the message has a common enemy, Barabas. These reasons altogether seem to be responsible for the use of the *th*- forms in this particular occasion.

## 7. Conclusion

This analysis of Christopher Marlowe's play *The Jew of Malta* has tried to present the different possibilities the speakers of the Early Modern English period had of using the second person singular personal pronouns (*th*- forms/ *y*-forms) together with some forms of address and the reason of their choices, in accordance with Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory. The historical context and the brief summary of Politeness Theory provided in the essay prepare the reader to undertake the subsequent analysis. The latter points out that the characters' choices may or may not fulfil the expectations (in accordance to the main uses mentioned in the section 'Historical Context'). Both, Politeness Theory and the plot of the play usually offer satisfactory reasons to explain why the already mentioned choices agree or disagree with our conjectures. The most surprising uses, which do not fit in with the expectations or with Politeness Theory, may be explained by emotional factors.



Finally, I would like to emphasise that not a single communicative situation is completely predictable and there are several factors that must be considered to have an (almost) absolute understanding of the situation.

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