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Requests in *The Way of the World*

Suzuka Yano

In this study, I have examined Congreve's request expressions, dealing with *The Way of the World*. The play is William Congreve's last play and one of his greatest masterpieces. It was premiered in 1700 and now it is widely regarded as one of the best Restoration comedies.

My primary concerns are with what request expressions are and how they were used in *The Way of the World*. Specific speech acts have been studied in various ways and especially requests have been well-studied; however, there are few studies focusing on them in a play and analyzing their characteristics. This study aims to make a categorization of request expressions in the play and to characterize them. Based on Searle's (1969: 66) felicity conditions, *A Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles* (Jespersen, 1961), and the *Oxford English Dictionary*, I shall define requests as illocutionary acts whereby a speaker conveys to a hearer that he/she wants the hearer to perform an act.

Firstly, I examined the framework of request expressions, focusing on the forms of the sentences. The large groups are interrogatives, imperatives, and declaratives. In each large group, the realization patterns for request expressions which are used in Present-Day English are outlined and the specific forms of requests which can be regarded as request expressions in the seventeenth century such as *pray* with imperatives are added to them.

Secondly, I studied examples of request expressions and applied the principles which were dealt with in Chapter I. In addition to the categories focusing on the forms of the sentences, examples regarded as request expressions determined by their contexts were to be found.

Lastly, I presented some data on categories of request expressions. Comparing the frequencies in the play with those in Present-Day English, requests in the play are based more on the speaker than the hearer.

Imperatives make up a significant proportion of request expressions; however, it can be suggested that not all imperatives should have the authority

of a strong imposing force. Moreover, the request types can be connected to the characteristics of the dramatic personae in the play, which have been studied by several scholars.

In conclusion, Congreve uses various types of request expressions, from which a framework focusing on the forms of sentences is established and some characteristics of them are to be found.

Through this study, it becomes clear that it is necessary to focus on indirectness in order to classify or categorize requests. The forms of the sentences are sometimes too ambiguous to distinguish whether they are declaratives or not. The idea of indirectness would provide a principle by which the more notable characteristics of gender and those of social status would stand out. In addition, it is necessary to examine other works written by Congreve and to compare them with some works by his contemporaries. I will establish what the distinctive features of Congreve's requests are in future studies.