

Spatio-temporal systems in an Early Modern courtroom: A case from the trial record of King Charles I

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The purpose of this paper is to carry out a systematic analysis of the spatio-temporal systems in Early Modern courtroom interactions against the background of historical pragmatics and discourse analysis (Jucker & Taavitsainen 2015). The text used for the present research is the trial record of King Charles I (1600-1649) taken from the Sociopragmatic Corpus (Archer & Culpeper 2003).

Speakers exploit spatio-temporal systems by which they judge how distant the situations they wish to express are from their domain. Such relationships of space and time are embodied by spatio-temporal elements such as pronouns, demonstratives, adverbs, tense forms and modals, with a proximal (close) and distal (distant) distinction. These elements can be related to each other to take either a proximal or distal perspective. Speakers can continue to take the same perspective, or alternate different perspectives, in discourse. However, the mechanism of such perspective changes in discourse has not been well explored yet, particularly in courtroom interactions in history.

The present paper makes a quantitative and qualitative analyses of the spatio-temporal systems adopted in the trial record of King Charles I. Firstly, the quantitative analysis of how frequently each element of space and time is employed reveals that the proximal perspective is adopted more frequently, due to the characteristics of the courtroom where face-to-face interactions among speakers occur. This paper also examines how the spatio-temporal systems work in the interactions between major interlocutors, that is, Lord President (the judge) and the King (the defendant). For example, the King uses proximal pronouns and modals *SHALL* and *WILL* more frequently, while Lord President addresses the King with medial pronouns and with proximal modals, *MUST* in particular. This contrast reflects where the authoritative power is: Lord President assumes the authoritative power of the court, while the King asserts his authority of the Kingdom, which becomes weaker as the trial proceeds.

A qualitative analysis then shows how these spatio-temporal elements are related with each other to take either proximal or distal perspective, and how the speakers handle perspectives in discourse. The elements such as forms of address and imperatives promote a proximal perspective, while a distal perspective is kept when the speaker explains what happened in the past with the aid of other distal elements. Certain discourse markers shift the perspective from distal to proximal, and fast-moving alternations between perspectives are observed before the sentencing of the King to death.

Finally, this research project demonstrates how the speakers used the systems of space and time in courtroom interactions, advancing a new perspective to the dynamics of communication in history.

(424 words)

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