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## **Speaking to the Masses: Orality and Literacy in Six Early Modern Texts on Witchcraft**

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*Abstract.* This paper focuses on features of orality and literacy in six Early Modern texts on witchcraft. While previous research has shown that plays resemble spoken language and studies of genres related to academic treatises point to the literacy of academic treatises, it is not clear where the emerging genre of pamphlets is situated on the continuum between orality and literacy. The assumption is that since pamphlets were read out loud to large illiterate audiences, their authors would compensate for their audiences' illiteracy by writing texts that resemble speech rather than writing. At the same time, this paper tests how easily different genres can be fitted onto a continuum of spoken and written language.

### **1. Introduction**

This is a pilot study on the levels of orality and literacy in six Early Modern texts on witchcraft that belong to three different genres: academic treatises, plays and pamphlets. Previous research has shown plays to be close to spoken language (Biber & Finegan 1992; Culpeper & Kytö 2000), whereas the academic nature of treatises suggests that they retain the characteristics of written language and have few features of spoken language. Studies on related genres such as seventeenth-century essays (Biber & Finegan 1989), philosophy and education (Taavitsainen 1995), and scientific research writing (Atkinson 1999) show results that support this assumption. Pamphlets have not been analyzed in terms of orality, even though we know that they were read out loud to crowds of people. The aim of this study is to place pamphlets on a continuum between spoken and written language vis-à-vis academic treatises and plays. This will also test how easily genres can be fitted into such a continuum.

### **2. Materials of the study**

The six texts chosen for this study represent three different genres: academic treatises, plays and pamphlets. The earliest is Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) (hereafter Scot), a treatise written to refute opinions expressed in two very influential continental treatises on witchcraft, the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486) and *De la démonomanie des sorciers* (1580). The other academic text analysed in this study is James I Stuart's answer to Scot's treatise, the *Daemonologie* (1597) (hereafter James). While Scot's treatise is written in the standard academic prose format, James' treatise is written in dialogue form, showing some of the variation characteristic of the genre. The purpose for writing these treatises was to convince other scholars of the validity of each author's views on witchcraft theory.

The two plays, both based on actual events, were expressly intended to take advantage of contemporary sensationalist news items in order to entertain the theater-going public. While doing this, however, the plays also reinforced popular superstitions by their conventional portrayals of witches and witchcraft. The earlier is *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621, published in 1658) (hereafter Edmonton) by William Rowley, Thomas Dekker and John Ford. The

second is *The Late Lancashire Witches* (1634) (hereafter Lancashire) by Richard Brome and Thomas Heywood. Both plays were written while the actual events while they were still fresh in the minds of the audiences; *The Late Lancashire Witches* came out even before the final outcome of the trial was decided.

Pamphlets were a new form of writing in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The subject matter of pamphlets ranged from news to rogue biography describing the lives of notorious criminals, but they also included texts with quite a degree of sophistication with references even to classical authors. Nevertheless, it seems that the primary audience of pamphlets consisted of tradesmen, merchants, bankers, manufacturers, skilled craftsmen and farmers – people for whom texts had previously not been written (Clark 1983: 17-20). Pamphlets were fast and easy to print and distribute; they were scattered in the streets, pasted on the walls of houses and read out loud in public places or even the pulpit. Consequently they were one of the first true forms of mass communication (Bach 1998: 97). The two pamphlets analyzed in this study describe the trials of two condemned witches, but they do so in different ways. *The Wonderful Discovery of Elizabeth Sawyer, a Witch, Late of Edmonton...* (1621) (hereafter Goodcole) by Henry Goodcole, the minister at Newgate Gaol, summarizes the trial of Elizabeth Sawyer and adds Goodcole's own examination of the witch in prison as well as her statement before her execution. Thomas Potts' pamphlet, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster* (1613) (hereafter Potts) is a lengthy transcription of the trial proceedings of a case that resulted in several executions.

Altogether the corpus formed by these six texts comprises over 140,000 words, divided as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Size of the corpus

	<b>Texts</b>	<b>Words</b>
Academic Treatises	Scot (1584)	61,764
	James (1597)	21,762
Plays	Edmonton (1658)	21,360
	Lancashire (1634)	24,739
Pamphlets	Goodcole (1621)	5,105
	Potts (1613)	8,330
<b>Total</b>		<b>143,060</b>

With the exception of Scot and Potts, all the texts have been included in their entirety. The excerpts from Scot deal with the same topics as James, while the excerpt from Potts deals with the proceedings against the two main accused. The prefaces to the academic treatises and the pamphlets have also been included; the plays had no prefatory material.

### 3. Genre and text type

The concepts *genre* and *text type* need to be clarified before moving on to the salient characteristics of spoken and written language. I follow Douglas Biber (1988) in keeping these two concepts separate. I define *genre* by external factors such as the purpose and function of a text, since doing so makes clear the fact that genres are guided by changing conventions, and accounts for their variability. For authors, genres function as models of writing (Taavitsainen 1994: 200; 1997: 54; 2001: 140-141), while readers and listeners place certain expectations on texts once they have identified the text with a specific genre.

*Text types* are here defined by the linguistic features of a text, but conventions dictate the linguistic features that identify them just as they do the features that define genres. Among all the choices available in a language system, convention guides the linguistic features used in different text types (Taavitsainen 1997: 52). As with genres, the edges of text types are blurry and overlapping; a text may belong to more than one text type or genre at the same time. Some text types can be very homogeneous, while others exhibit much variation (Taavitsainen 1993; 1997: 52).

Maintaining the distinction between *genre* and *text type* is useful in that looking at various text types shows us how genres are realized in language; we may even be able to pinpoint certain linguistic features such as genre or text type markers that distinguish genres from each other (Taavitsainen 1997: 52; 2001: 140). What is important to note is that text types and genres, though both guided by convention, need not necessarily coincide; a genre may be realized with many text types (Taavitsainen 2001: 140). One of the aims of this study is to see how much variation in text types the three genres chosen for analysis exhibit.

#### **4. Spoken and written language**

For the purposes of this study, it is important to note how spoken and written language differ from one another. My hypothesis is that printed pamphlets meant to be read out loud contained features of spoken language. There is some evidence that oral tradition emphasizes the shared knowledge and the interpersonal relationship between speaker and listener, whereas literate tradition stresses the communicative function of language (Tannen 1982: 2-3). The grammar and syntax of both written and spoken language has been researched quite extensively (see, for example, Chafe 1982 and 1985). A study on school children has shown that children listening to a story pay attention mostly to the theme or central aspects of the story, focusing on what was *meant*, while children reading a story pay close attention to what the sentences themselves mean, and what is actually *said*. Listeners and readers thus have different strategies for comprehending narrative discourse (Hildyard and Olson 1982). It has also been discovered that when nonliterate people hear speech that uses the syntax of written language they are sometimes unable to follow the unfamiliar syntax (Woodbridge 1995: 33). This is why I assume that written texts meant to be read out loud, such as pamphlets, used features of spoken language to ensure that the hearers understood what was written/read.

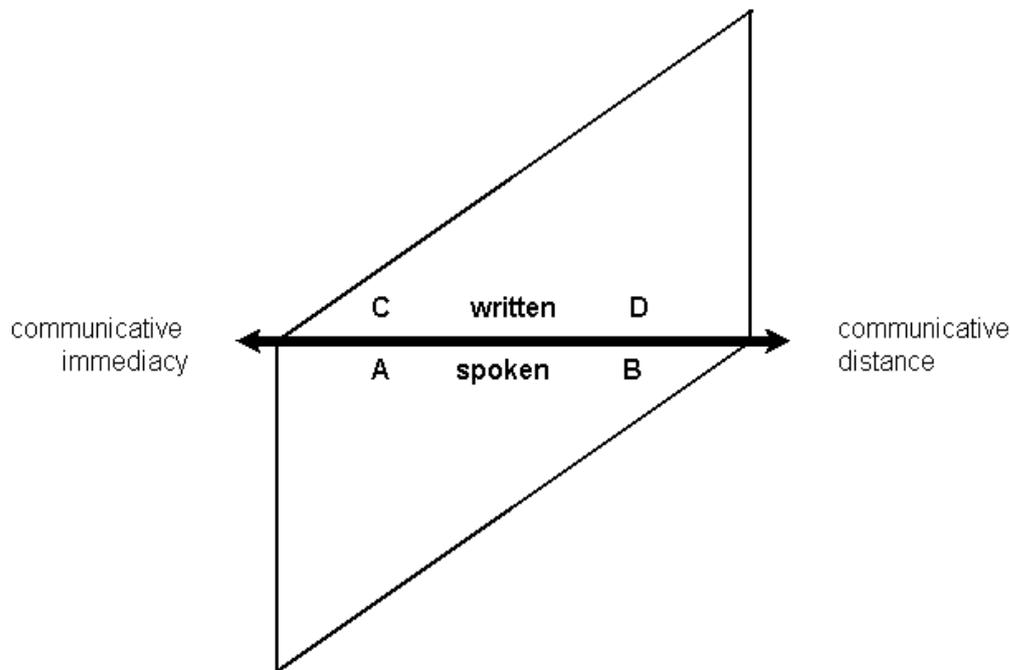
Spoken language is fragmented and involved – it is made up of loosely connected clauses and features such as emphatics and first-person pronouns. Written language, conversely, is made up of integrated, tight packed units of information, and passives and nominalizations that signal detachment. Chafe attributes these differences to the fact that writing takes up much more time than speaking does. Speech is produced in spurts, or “idea units”, lasting about two seconds, each spurt representing a thought or idea we have; in other words, we speak at about the same rate we think. Writing, however, takes much longer, even though we do not think any slower. Since the brain has “extra time”, it has time to formulate several thoughts into one linguistic whole – in a sense, then, we edit our thoughts while we are writing them down (Chafe 1982: 37).

Using factor analysis, Biber (1988) has been able to show that certain linguistic features group together. He interpreted these clusters of features on the assumption that they have a special communicative function, and came up with seven dimensions along which genres line up. Three of Biber’s dimensions are relevant to the written – spoken dichotomy:

- (1) Informational versus Involved Production; at the one end is “discourse with interactional, affective, involved purposes, associated with strict real-time production and comprehension constraints”, while at the other end is “discourse with highly informational purposes, which is carefully crafted and highly edited.” This dimension is characterized for example by very low frequencies of first- and second-person pronouns but high frequencies of nouns and long words.
- (2) Explicit versus Situation-Dependent Reference; one extreme “identifies referents fully and explicitly through relativization”, the other extreme “relies on nonspecific deictics and reference to an external situation for identification purposes.” WH-relative clauses are significant features in this dimension.
- (3) Abstract versus Non-Abstract Information; “distinguishes between texts with a highly abstract and technical informational focus and those with non-abstract focuses.” Passives figure high in this dimension (Biber 1988: 104-115).

These three dimensions are the ones that Biber and Finegan use in their subsequent analyses of the evolution of genres (1989, 1992). With the exception of one (Latin), all the linguistic features I chose to look at in my analysis appear in one of these three dimensions, either as indicators of orality or literacy.

It is important to note that the spoken – written language dichotomy is not absolute, since written texts may contain features of spoken language and vice versa. Thus plays, for example, while written texts, imitate speech; formal speeches, on the other hand, may resemble written language. The situation can be shown graphically, as in Figure 1 below.

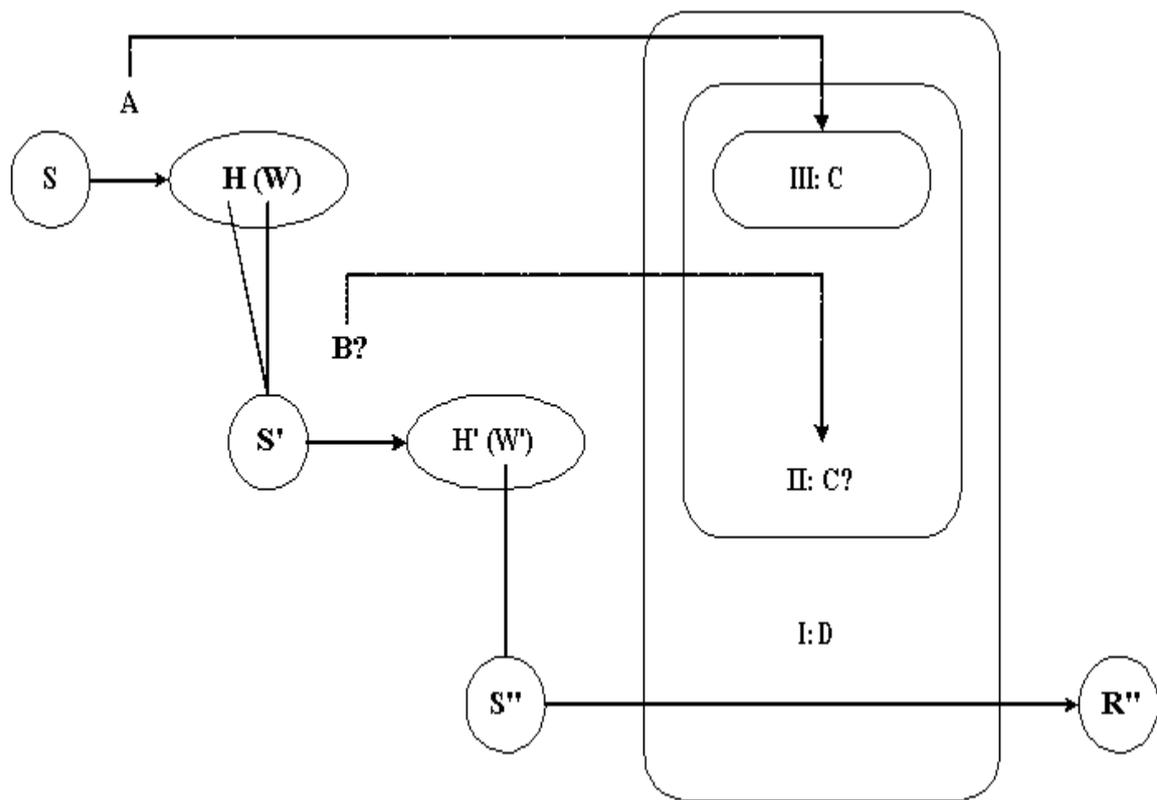


**Figure 1.** The relationship between spoken and written language and the communicative immediacy and communicative distance continuum (based on Koch 1999: 400).

Koch thinks of communicative immediacy and communicative distance as a continuum that intersects with spoken and written language. At the extreme end of communicative

immediacy are the parameters physical immediacy, privacy, familiarity between the partners, high emotionality, context embeddedness, deictic immediacy, dialogue, communicative cooperation between the partners, free topic development and spontaneity. At the extreme communicative distance end are the opposite parameters of physical distance, publicness, lack of privacy, etc. (Koch 1999: 400-401). Face-to-face conversations, stereotypical speech situations, would be situated at A in the above figure, whereas legal texts, stereotypical situations of written language, would be situated at D. However, texts such as spontaneous personal letters or plays, though written, are strong in communicative immediacy, and would thus be situated at C. Conversely, spoken language of communicative distance, such as funeral orations or formal speeches, would be situated at B.

The situation can be even more complicated, since texts with greater communicative distance may incorporate spoken situations strong in communicative immediacy. One example is court proceedings. The situation is shown in Figure 2 below.



**Figure 2.** Embedding of speech situations in court records; S = speaker, H = hearer, W = witness, R = reader, A, B, C, D refer to Figure 1 (based on Koch 1999: 411).

In the actual speech situation, a speaker (S) tells something to a hearer (H) or a witness (W), who in turn as S' relates the same thing during the court proceedings to another hearer (H') or witness (W'). The first situation is high in communicative immediacy and spoken (A in Figure 1); the second speech situation, taking place in a court of law, is more formal but nonetheless spoken (B? in Figure 1; Koch also places this situation at A). The court scribe (S'') then writes down what he has heard as H' or W' in court, which a reader (R'') reads in the form of court proceedings. In this way, the court proceedings, formal in nature and written in mode (D in Figure 1), contain both the original speech situation (III) and the one taking place in court (II), both of which are now written in mode but presumably less formal

in nature (C in Figure 1). This embedding of spoken situations in written texts turned out to be an important aspect of the two pamphlets.

## 5. Methodology

The main aim of this study is to analyze the level of features of orality and literacy in the six texts chosen to see how neatly the three genres they represent fit into a written – spoken scale made up of features of spoken language, i.e. orality, and features of written language, i.e. literacy. I chose seven features for my analysis: first- and second-person pronouns, questions, discourse markers, passives, Latin words and phrases and, finally, references. These features were chosen because they could be found easily with a computer program being developed specifically for corpus linguistics, the *Corpus Presenter* (see Hickey 2000). The assumption is that the academic treatises will be at the opposite end from the plays, while the pamphlets are likely to fall somewhere in between, though closer to the plays.

I chose to look at four features that related to conversation (first and second-person pronouns) and turn-taking (questions and discourse markers). Questions are also indicators of the writer's or speaker's expectation of a response from the hearer or reader. All these features figure on Biber's dimension of informational versus involved production, which is the most important of the three dimensions relevant for spoken and written language (see Table 6.1 in Biber 1988: 102). In addition to these features of spoken language, I chose to look at a few features characteristic of written language. Passives are important indicators of abstract and technical language, and this is why they have been chosen for analysis here. Another clue to written language is lexis: words of Latin origin are more likely to appear in written language, while words of Germanic origin occur in speech (Goody 1987: 263; Culpeper 2001: 183). I have taken Goody's and Culpeper's point about lexis even further by focusing on Latin and Greek words embedded in the text rather than on words of Latin or Greek origin. The third aspect of written language chosen for study, references to other authors or other written texts, are perhaps more characteristic of academic texts rather than all written language; however, as the point is that texts resembling spoken language will have fewer features of written language and definitely few features of academic texts, I feel justified in using references as an indicator of non-speech-like language.

The starting point of this study is thus form-to-function mapping (Jucker 1998: 4), but close readings of the texts were necessary to distinguish between some features; for example discourse particles are not always distinguishable from adverbs on the basis of form alone (think of the word *well*, for instance). Similarly, as I sought the passive forms by looking at all occurrences of the verb *be* (in all forms), all examples had to be double-checked to make sure *be* was being used in a passive construction rather than as a copular verb. Since the distinction between rhetorical and direct questions could only be made after a look at the context, a qualitative analysis was an essential part of the full analysis, not only for deciding which forms were relevant, but also for the interpretation of the results. In the course of this study it became clear that quantitative methods are insufficient in an analysis of this kind, and need to be supplemented by qualitative analyses.

## 6. Analysis

### 6.1 First-person pronouns

I start with personal pronouns and more specifically with first-person pronouns. Table 2 lists the frequencies of first-person pronouns in the six texts.

**Table 2.** The frequency of first-person pronouns per 1000 words (raw figures are in parentheses).

<b>Pronoun</b>	<b>Scot</b>	<b>James</b>	<b>Edmonton</b>	<b>Lancashire</b>	<b>Goodcole</b>	<b>Potts</b>
I	6.49 (401)	10.34 (225)	33.66 (719)	34.20 (846)	14.89 (76)	2.40 (20)
me	0.91 (56)	1.33 (29)	11.05 (236)	10.02 (248)	12.14 (62)	0.84 (7)
mine	0.31 (19)	0.05 (1)	1.69 (36)	1.50 (37)	0.20 (1)	3.00 (25)
my	1.51 (93)	1.38 (30)	14.75 (315)	12.25 (303)	5.29 (27)	-
we	1.55 (96)	1.79 (39)	3.70 (79)	6.87 (170)	0.39 (2)	0.96 (8)
us	0.60 (37)	1.01 (22)	1.17 (25)	1.98 (49)	-	-
our	1.59 (98)	1.70 (37)	2.15 (46)	2.43 (60)	0.59 (3)	0.36 (3)
ours	0.03 (2)	0.09 (2)	-	0.04 (1)	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>12.98 (802)</b>	<b>17.69 (385)</b>	<b>68.16 (1456)</b>	<b>69.28 (1714)</b>	<b>33.50 (171)</b>	<b>7.56 (63)</b>

It is quite clear that the highest density of usage of first-person pronouns is in the two plays, with twice as many personal pronouns as Goodcole, which comes in third. This comes as no surprise, since plays rely on dialogue to convey the emotions and thoughts of the characters. Thus the predominance of *I* is easily explained.

The frequencies of first-person pronouns are fairly even in the case of academic treatises, except for *I*, which appears twice as often in James as it does in Scot. The reason for this is probably the dialogue format of James, which relies heavily on explicit conversation, whereas Scot is more like a monologue, with phrases that only imply the addressee, such as *I say (to you)*, *I warrant (you)*, etc.

The surprise comes with the pamphlets, for Goodcole comes third in the overall frequency of first-person pronouns, whereas Potts lags significantly behind even the two academic treatises. A closer look at the oral and written parts of the two pamphlets is even more revealing. The results are shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3.** The frequency of first-person pronouns per 1000 words in the written and spoken parts of Goodcole and Potts (raw figures are in parentheses).

<b>Text</b>	<b>Pronouns</b>
Goodcole oral	61.15 (122)
Goodcole written	15.76 (49)
Potts oral	3.01 (6)
Potts written	18.33 (57)

The frequency of first-person pronouns in the oral part of Goodcole is very close to those of the two plays. Conversely, the frequency of first-person pronouns in the written section is along the lines of the two treatises. This explains why Goodcole is third in the overall frequency of first-person pronouns. Results such as these are what I expected for the pamphlets. The results of Potts, however, are not as simple since, while the written part has a frequency of first-person pronouns close to that of James, the oral section has practically no first-person pronouns at all, entirely against expectations. The absence of first-person

pronouns in Potts is explained by the content of the oral part of the pamphlet: it is made up almost exclusively of confessions and witness depositions written in the third person, as in example (1) below.

- (1) The said *Elizabeth Sowthern*s confesseth, and sayth; That about twentie yeares past, as she was comming homeward from begging, there met her this Examinee neere vnto a Stonepit in *Gouldshey*, in the sayd Forrest of *Pendle*, a Spirit or Deuill in the shape of a Boy, the one halfe of his Coate blacke, and the other browne, who bade this Examinee to stay, saying to her, that if she would give him her Soule, she should haue any thing that she would request (Potts, p. 18).

This was the contemporary way of recording official proceedings such as witness depositions. In Werlich's terms, texts such as this one are narrative, a text type characterized especially by the use of the past tense and third-person pronouns (1983). Biber's studies (1986, 1988) in which he found that third-person pronouns often occur together with past tense and perfect aspect forms as markers of narrative or reported styles, corroborate Werlich's view.

The frequency of first-person pronouns in the written part of Goodcole is explained by the fact that he added many comments and marginal notes to the readers (and listeners). Potts, though mostly concerned with recording the proceedings of the trial accurately, also added summaries of the activities of the accused witches; these preceded the examinations of the witnesses and the accused. These summaries are rather interpersonal in nature, because Potts justifies to his readers why he has added this material, sometimes addressing his readers directly. The following example is taken from Potts' "particular Declaration of the most barberous and damnable Practises, Murthers, wicked and diuelish Conspiracies, practiced *and executed by the most dangerous and malicious Witch Elizabeth Sowthern*s alias *Demdike*" (15). Sowthern died in prison before her trial, but Potts included her confession and examination along with a summary of her activities nonetheless in his pamphlet, for reasons he makes clear in the following passage.

- (2) Therefore I pray you giue me leaue, (with your patience and fauour,) before I proceed to the Indictment, Arraignement, and Tryall of such as were Prisoners in the Castle, to lay open the life and death of this damnable and malicious Witch, of so long continuance (old *Demdike*) of whom our whole businesse hath such dependence, that without the particular Declaration and Record of her Euidence, with the circumstaunces, wee shall neuer bring anie thing to good perfection: for from this Sincke of villanie and mischiefe, haue all the rest proceeded; as you shall haue them in order (Potts, p. 16).

Potts' dedications to his patrons are also interpersonal in nature. This is why the frequency of first-person pronouns in the written part of his pamphlet comes close to that of James, even though some of the pronouns are used in purely formulaic terms as parts of the titles *my lord* or *my lady*.

## 6.2 Second-person pronouns

In the case of second-person pronouns, the situation is much the same as with first-person pronouns, but with the added complication of the historical plural forms *ye/you* and the historical singular forms *thou/thee*. The figures are shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4.** The frequency of second-person pronouns per 1000 words (raw figures are in parentheses).

<b>Pronoun</b>	<b>Scot</b>	<b>James</b>	<b>Edmonton</b>	<b>Lancashire</b>	<b>Goodcole</b>	<b>Potts</b>
you	3.32 (205)	2.07 (45)	19.52 (417)	22.43 (555)	17.63 (90)	2.16 (18)
ye	0.02 (1)	3.35 (73)	0.56 (12)	1.54 (38)	-	-
your	1.36 (84)	0.69 (15)	6.60 (141)	8.93 (221)	3.53 (18)	2.40 (20)
yours	0.02 (1)	-	0.28 (6)	0.16 (4)	-	-
thou	0.44 (27)	0.05 (1)	8.10 (173)	3.64 (90)	-	0.36 (3)
thee	0.06 (4)	0.14 (3)	6.65 (142)	1.74 (43)	-	0.36 (3)
thy	0.40 (25)	0.05 (1)	4.78 (102)	2.34 (58)	0.20 (1)	0.24 (2)
thine	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.62 (347)</b>	<b>6.34 (138)</b>	<b>46.49 (993)</b>	<b>40.79 (1009)</b>	<b>21.35 (109)</b>	<b>5.52 (46)</b>

Again, plays have significantly higher frequencies of second-person pronouns than the other texts. Goodcole comes closest to these figures, whereas Potts has a very much lower total frequency. This time, however, Potts' total is not much less than those of the two academic treatises. The overall ranking in relation to each other is thus the same as with first-person pronouns. Differentiating between the written and spoken parts of the two pamphlets (Table 5) shows that, again, the oral part of Goodcole resembles the two plays and the written part resembles the two treatises, while Potts is a case of its own.

**Table 5.** The frequency of second-person pronouns per 1000 words in the spoken and written parts of Goodcole and Potts (raw figures are in parentheses).

<b>Pronouns</b>	<b>Goodcole oral</b>	<b>Goodcole written</b>	<b>Potts oral</b>	<b>Potts written</b>
you	41.10 (82)	2.57 (8)	1.44 (6)	2.88 (12)
ye	-	-	-	-
your	6.52 (13)	1.61 (5)	-	4.81 (20)
yours	-	-	-	-
thou	-	-	0.72 (3)	-
thee	-	-	0.72 (3)	-
thy	-	0.32 (1)	0.48 (2)	-
thine	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>47.62 (95)</b>	<b>4.50 (14)</b>	<b>7.02 (14)</b>	<b>10.29 (32)</b>

As with first-person pronouns, the paucity of second-person pronouns in Potts must be due to the peculiar format of the witness depositions and the confessions he uses as his source material. The frequency of second-person pronouns in the written part of Potts is higher than those of the two treatises; this is no doubt due to the interpersonal way of writing that Potts employed.

### 6.3 Questions

All questions had to be sought manually, as question marks proved to be insufficient markers of questions. The distinction between rhetorical and direct questions proved to be an important one for the analysis of the level of interpersonality, but the distinction also allowed analysis of the level of learning of the different texts. The results are shown in Table 6 below.

**Table 6.** The frequency of rhetorical and direct questions per 1000 words (raw figures are in parentheses).

<b>Text</b>	<b>Rhetorical</b>	<b>Direct</b>	<b>Total</b>
Scot	1.88 (116)	0.36 (22)	2.23 (138)
James	0.87 (19)	3.81 (83)	4.69 (102)
Edmonton	1.17 (25)	17.51 (374)	18.68 (399)
Lancashire	0.61 (15)	10.35 (256)	10.95 (271)
Goodcole	0.20 (1)	7.84 (40)	8.03 (41)
Potts	0.12 (1)	0.12 (1)	0.24 (2)

The results show that about 19% of the questions in James are rhetorical, and that direct questions predominate. This makes sense, considering the dialogue format of the treatise; however, there is still a significant number of rhetorical questions. Only about 15% of the question marks in Scot indicate a direct question, while the majority actually refer to rhetorical questions. In the case of Potts, the vast majority of question marks turned out to indicate indirect questions rather than rhetorical or direct questions; indirect questions were excluded from the analysis and thus have not been included in Table 6. In the case of James and Lancashire, not all questions were marked with question marks but with full stops. Relying blindly on punctuation would thus have seriously skewed some of my figures. These problems also show how important close readings of the context were for gaining an understanding of the levels of interpersonality and learning of these texts.

As before, the two plays have the highest frequencies of direct questions, followed by Goodcole and James. This time Potts inches ahead of Scot. These results come as no surprise, since the four texts with the highest frequencies of direct questions are all in dialogue format, where questions are very likely to signal the end of one turn and the beginning of another. The two plays are by far the most speech-like, but Goodcole and James also have significantly higher frequencies of direct questions than Potts or Scot, making them thus stand apart clearly from the two texts. It should be noted that all questions, direct and rhetorical, in Goodcole occur in the oral part of the text; thus the written part is actually very literary indeed. It is a peculiarity of Potts that, although the pamphlet is a record of witness depositions and confessions, the questions that the witnesses and the accused answer are not recorded; this was the way witness depositions were recorded at the time. The questions (direct and indirect) in Potts are not actually questions addressed to a witness, but questions that figured in the witnesses' oral accounts of their dealings with the accused. The written part of the pamphlet actually has only one rhetorical question, which is a characteristic of literary style. No conclusions can, however, be drawn, as there is only the one instance of a rhetorical question.

The distinction between rhetorical and direct questions can also be used to analyze the level of learning of these texts. Since rhetorical questions were an accepted and common feature of learned texts, the ratio between rhetorical and direct questions should give some indication of how learned the texts are. The results, shown in Table 7 below, are telling.

**Table 7.** The percentages of rhetorical and direct questions (raw figures are in parentheses).

<b>Text</b>	<b>Rhetorical</b>	<b>Direct</b>	<b>Total</b>
Scot	84.1 (116)	15.9 (22)	100 (138)
James	18.6 (19)	81.4 (83)	100 (102)
Edmonton	6.3 (25)	93.7 (374)	100 (399)
Lancashire	5.5 (15)	94.5 (256)	100 (271)
Goodcole	2.44 (1)	97.56 (40)	100 (41)
Potts	50.0 (1)	50.0 (1)	100 (2)

Scot stands out with its marked use of rhetorical questions rather than direct ones. The ratio is even clearer when one differentiates between prefatory material and the body of the text: without the prefatory material the percentages of rhetorical and direct questions are 91.8 (112/122) and 8.2 (10/122). In the prefatory material, the ratio is inverse, for there only 25% (4/16) of the questions are rhetorical, while 75% (12/16) are direct. The prefatory material is much more clearly interpersonal in nature than the body of the text. The extensive use of rhetorical questions and the paucity of direct questions (in the body of the text) show clearly that the level of learning in Scot is very high.

The distinction between prefatory material and the body of the text seems to be a necessary one for Potts as well. At first glance it seems that Potts has a high ratio of rhetorical questions (50%), but a closer look reveals that there is only one instance of a rhetorical question, in Potts' dedication to Lord and Lady Knyvet. Similarly, there is only one direct question, in the body of the text; it is not a question directed at an examinee or a witness, but rather one that an examinee reports as having asked. Normally all questions are reported indirectly.

Leaving Potts aside as having inconclusive data, James is the text with the next highest rate of rhetorical questions. For a text in dialogue format, James uses rhetorical questions extensively, far more than the other three dialogic texts. This would indicate a higher level of learning vis-à-vis the two plays and Goodcole's pamphlet, which concurs with the differences in genre. The two plays rely almost exclusively on direct questions, as does Goodcole. The dominance of direct questions in the plays is natural: the plot moves forward only through the interaction of the characters. Furthermore, the turns in the two plays considered here are very short, and rely heavily on the question-answer format. Monologues are practically nonexistent. One explanation for the absence of rhetorical questions in Goodcole is his desire to steer clear of controversy: since he does not argue for any point but only reports, he does not need to counter possible arguments or prove a point with rhetorical questions, as was the case with traditional argumentative texts. At the same time, Goodcole may not want to clutter his account with paraphernalia of learned discourse in order to keep it as easy to follow as possible.

The analysis of questions has thus shown that the two plays are by far the most speech-like, and also clearly on the less learned end of the scale. Goodcole also stands clearly apart from the other texts in these respects. James, as a dialogue, has many direct questions, but the large number of rhetorical questions also suggests a high level of learning. Scot is the exact opposite of the two plays in having very few direct questions, indicating a lack of speech-like quality, and abounding in the learned practice of relying extensively on rhetorical questions. Since Potts has so few questions, the results cannot really be used to make any hypotheses as to the level of speech-like features or the level of learning.

#### 6.4 Discourse markers

I examined the occurrences of nine discourse markers that have been analyzed in a variety of studies (McCarthy 1993; Jucker 1997; Fischer 1998; Kryk-Kastovsky 1998, 2000; Schmied 1998; Culpeper and Kytö 2000). Since sometimes only a handful of the occurrences were instances of a form being used as a discourse marker the polysemy of some of the discourse particles forced me to analyze the context closely. Compare for example the use of *well* in (3) and (4) below.

- (3) Arthur: *Well well* Gentlemen, be you of your own faith, but what I see / And is to me apparent, being in sence, / My wits about me, no way tost nor troubled, / To that will I give credit (Lancashire I.31-34, my emphasis).
- (4) Doughty: Here's a house *well* govern'd? (Lancashire I.448, my emphasis)

The results of my analysis are shown in Table 8.

**Table 8.** The frequency of discourse markers per 1000 words (raw figures are in parentheses).

Discourse particle	Scot	James	Edmonton	Lancashire	Goodcole	Potts
aye/yea	0.73 (45)	0.13 (3)	0.51 (11)	1.21 (30)	1.37 (7)	-
Marry	0.03 (2)	-	0.19 (4)	0.40 (10)	-	-
Nay	0.03 (2)	-	0.98 (21)	1.54 (38)	0.20 (1)	0.12 (1)
Now	0.36 (22)	0.60 (13)	0.33 (7)	0.81 (20)	-	-
o/oh	0.10 (6)	-	1.87 (40)	1.90 (47)	0.20 (1)	-
Pray/prithee	0.06 (4)	0.92 (20)	1.78 (38)	1.82 (45)	0.20 (1)	-
So	0.19 (12)	0.23 (5)	0.28 (6)	0.40 (10)	0.39 (2)	1.20 (10)
Then	0.21 (13)	1.29 (28)	1.36 (29)	1.05 (26)	-	0.12 (1)
Well	0.05 (3)	0.05 (1)	0.42 (9)	0.69 (17)	-	0.12 (1)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.73 (107)</b>	<b>3.22 (70)</b>	<b>7.72 (165)</b>	<b>9.82 (243)</b>	<b>2.35 (12)</b>	<b>1.56 (13)</b>

Once again, the two plays have significantly higher frequencies of discourse markers than any of the other texts. This time, however, James comes in third before Goodcole; Scot has inched ahead of Potts. Considering the importance that has been placed on discourse markers as signals of spoken language, it is telling that the four texts that have the highest frequencies of discourse markers are precisely those that have been written in dialogue format. For once, differentiating between the oral and written parts of the two pamphlets does not materially change the results, the frequencies for Edmonton being about the same with the distinction and without it, while the oral part of Potts reaches the same frequencies as Edmonton and the written part has hardly any discourse markers at all. It is somewhat surprising that James comes ahead of Goodcole in this analysis, but this can perhaps be accounted for by the fact that Goodcole is largely made up of very straightforward question-answer sequences. Furthermore, it is also possible that Goodcole edited the text, since he may have had to rely on his own notes for the account instead of having access to the trial proceedings. It is very likely that in the process of writing down the witness depositions and examinations Potts was edited for clarity or "readability", which would have meant the elimination of particles such as discourse markers. The low frequency of discourse markers is not surprising in Scot, since this text is the most unambiguously written in nature.

## 6.5 Passives

I located the passive forms in the texts by searching all forms of the verb *be*; close reading inevitably became necessary to distinguish between passive forms and other forms, such as copular verbs and participial adjectives. The passive forms were then divided into long (*by*-) passives, which are more frequent in academic prose, and short passives, which can be further divided into dynamic and stative; short dynamic passives are again characteristic of written language (Biber et al. 1999: 935-937). The results are presented in Table 9 below.

**Table 9.** The frequency of passives per 1000 words (raw figures are in parentheses).

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Long</b>	<b>Short dynamic</b>	<b>Short stative</b>
Scot	17.91 (1106)	2.91 (180)	10.07 (622)	6.54 (404)
James	13.60 (296)	2.39 (52)	5.51 (120)	5.70 (124)
Edmonton	7.72 (165)	0.61 (13)	1.87 (40)	5.24 (112)
Lancashire	6.55 (162)	0.77 (19)	1.94 (48)	3.84 (95)
Goodcole	10.38 (53)	2.94 (15)	5.29 (27)	2.15 (11)
Potts	8.28 (69)	1.20 (10)	6.24 (52)	0.84 (7)

The two treatises clearly have more passives than the two plays, while Goodcole comes somewhere in between. Potts is closer to the plays than the treatises in this respect. This is confusing, since Potts has so far been quite consistently more written in nature and closer to the treatises than the plays. The apparent controversy is, again, due to the fact that the pamphlet is a mixture of witness depositions and Potts' commentary. Almost three quarters of the passives (52/69) occur in Potts' own text, while only a quarter (17/69) of the passives are found in actual witness accounts, which were originally oral and thus likely to contain fewer passives.

Goodcole is also a mixture of spoken and written text, and it turns out that the majority of all the passives, 83% (44/53), occur in Goodcole's preface or in his commentary, while only 17% (9/53) are in the actual question-answer sequences of Goodcole's interviews with Sawyer. The frequency of passives in the oral and written parts of the two pamphlets is shown below in Table 10.

**Table 10.** The frequency of passives in the oral and written parts of Goodcole and Potts (raw figures are in parentheses).

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Long</b>	<b>Short dynamic</b>	<b>Short stative</b>
Goodcole oral	4.07 (17)	1.44 (6)	1.92 (8)	0.72 (3)
Goodcole written	12.49 (52)	0.96 (4)	5.39 (44)	0.96 (4)
Potts oral	4.51 (9)	3.01 (6)	1.00 (2)	0.50 (1)
Potts written	14.15 (44)	0.29 (9)	8.04 (25)	3.22 (10)

Taking into account the mixture of spoken and written text shows that the written parts clearly have more occurrences of passives than the oral ones; in fact, the dichotomy in the use of passives in all the written and spoken texts becomes obvious.

The rest of the texts seem to fall along the lines of the findings of Biber et al. (1999) on the occurrence of passives. The two treatises clearly have more long passives than the two plays,

and the ratio of short dynamic and short stative passives is just as clearly distinctive as Biber et al. (1999: 937-940) found in their work. The only exception is James, where there are slightly more short stative passives than short dynamic ones, but this can no doubt be explained by the dialogue format: the attempt at writing a spoken dialogue in a treatise evens out the dichotomy between the kinds of short passives. The ratio of long passives nevertheless exhibits the characteristics of an academic text. Thus it seems that on the whole the findings of Biber et al. (1999: 937-943) are also supported by Early Modern English texts, though not quite as clearly as in their modern material. We should also remember that the two poles used in their study are conversations and academic texts, which do not quite correspond to my material.

## 6.6 Latin words and phrases

As analyzing the etymology of the lexis in these texts would have been impossible to accomplish automatically, I chose to take the dichotomy between Germanic and Latin lexis further by concentrating on the use of Latin phrases and words as indicators of the level of learning and abstraction of the texts. I have also included Greek words in the analysis, since Greek was another language of learning at the time; only the two treatises, however, contain Greek words and phrases. The results of my analysis are shown below in Table 11.

**Table 11.** The frequency of Latin per 1000 words (raw figures are in parentheses).

Text	Latin/Greek
Scot	7.37 (455)
James	5.19 (113)
Edmonton	1.36 (29)
Lancashire	1.21 (30)
Goodcole	1.18 (6)
Potts	17.53 (146)

Potts stands out with its very high frequency of Latin words. A closer analysis of where the Latin occurs solves the mystery: practically all the Latin comes from formulaic wordings in headings. Each examination and indictment is preceded by a heading, where information is given about the occasion – who interviews whom, where and when. The year is indicated in Latin by telling which year of King James' reign it was; James' full title is used. An example heading is

- (5) *The Examination of Allizon Device daughter of Elizabeth Device: Taken at Reade, in the Countie of Lancaster, the thirtieth day of March, Annoq; Regis IACOBI nunc Angliæ, & c. Decimo, & Scotiæ Quadragesimo quinto. Before ROGER NOVVEL of Reade aforesaid, Esquire, one of his Maiesties Iustices of the Peace, within the said Countie* (Potts, p. 45).

These headings were probably written by the clerks who wrote down the spoken examinations. At the time, much of the trial proceedings were still conducted in Latin; the indictments, for example, were written in Latin though read in English translation to the accused (Gibson 1999: 56). To emphasize the majesty of the trial proceedings and to inspire awe in his readers, Potts has included in full the Latin formula used at the opening of the arraignment and trial session. Thus all the Latin in Potts is actually formulaic. He gives the indictments as paraphrases of the English translations rather than the original Latin wordings,

which he no doubt also had available (Gibson 1999: 56). There is only one occasion when Potts uses Latin in his own running text. None of the actual witnesses or accused use Latin in their examinations or confessions. Therefore the high frequency of Latin in Potts is misleading: in actual running text there are only two words of Latin, while the majority is in formulaic headings which places no real constraints on the understanding of the text.

Goodcole also contains an example of the formulaic use of Latin in the term *Anno domini*. However, the frequency of Latin words is mostly made up of a phrase that Elizabeth Sawyer used as a spell. The illiteracy of Sawyer is brought home by her claim that the phrase is all the Latin that she knows, and that she does not even know its meaning. The use of Latin from a religious context for magical purposes was a direct descendent of the medieval liturgical practice, where rituals and formulae were emphasized to the point that they acquired magical qualities. Ecclesiastical formulae were regularly used in various charms of popular magic (Thomas 1971: 48). Sawyer's use of Latin is therefore portrayed as one of the characteristics of a witch. Goodcole himself uses Latin in two formulaic phrases. This goes along with his intended audience: there is no point in using Latin in a text that is supposed to correct the illiterate population's mistaken comprehension of the case.

The two treatises, James and Scot, have more Latin and Greek than the rest of the texts. This is in accordance with their literate nature and the learnedness of the authors. Both Scot and James quote their Latin and Greek sources, sometimes directly, sometimes in paraphrase, and also use Latin or Greek terms when they find no comparable English term. Thus for example James writes in his preface that he reasons only "to speak scholasticklie, (since this can not bee spoken in our language) ... vpon *genus* leauing *species*, and *differentia* to be comprehended therein" (A3). Scot favors direct quotations over paraphrase, so that when he uses the original author's own words he can not be accused of misunderstanding the point; this works both when he uses the quotations to buttress his own arguments and also when he quotes from an opponent and then refutes his opponent's views. The citation-reply form was established tradition in academic texts (Schwitalla 1999: 117).<sup>1</sup> More will be said on the use of quotations to buttress arguments in the next subsection on references. Here it suffices to say that the use of Latin in the two treatises is clearly an indication of the high level of learning of the texts, which places constraints on their audiences.

The two plays resemble each other in having low frequencies of Latin (and no Greek), but the functions of the foreign expressions are different. In Edmonton, almost all the occurrences of Latin come from Elizabeth Sawyer's use of a spell taught her by her familiar: "*If thou to death or shame pursue 'em, / Sanctibicetur nomen tuum*" (II.i.183-184). The origin of the use of Latin in spells and charms has been remarked on above. The play exploits for comic effect the fact that Sawyer is an uneducated woman, and unable to comprehend Latin, by having her promptly mispronounce the Latin phrase. At one point, whilst claiming her learning, she actually reverses the meaning of the phrase: "*Contaminetur nomen tuum*. I'm an expert scholar, / Speak Latin, or I know not well what language / As well as the best of 'em" (II.i.189-191). The other four words of Latin are uttered by Young Banks in the same scene, when he overhears Sawyer muttering the Latin phrase in an attempt to bewitch him. As Young Banks is a countryman and the clown of the play, his use of Latin cannot be an indication of his learnedness. In fact, he uses two phrases, *pater noster* and *hisce auribus*.

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<sup>1</sup> The strategy of quoting an opponent only to refute his views was carried over to the pamphlet controversies so prevalent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries all over Europe. For more on the strategies used in pamphlet controversies, see Gloning (1999) and Schwitalla (1999).

*Pater noster* was a term used for a prayer, and thus required no special learning to recognize, while the other term, *hisce auribus*, was used as a set phrase to mean something like “yes, you heard correct”. The point of the use of Latin in this scene was perhaps to show how illiterate country folk could nevertheless pick up pieces of Latin here and there, most notably from religious services.

In Lancaster, it is the young gentlemen who throw in Latin terms and phrases in their dialogue with each other. The intention is thus clearly to suggest the social class of the characters, who are educated men and of a higher status than the rest. A telling example of the function of Latin in Lancaster is given in (6), where Master Arthur, Mr. Shakstone and Mr. Bantam make fun of Mr. Whetstone’s attempt to seem more educated than he really is.

(6) Mr. Whetstone: I see *you* are perfect both in my name & surname; I have / bin ever bound unto *you*, for which I will at this time be *your* / Noverint, and give him [his uncle] notice that *you* Universi will bee with / him per præsentis, and that I take to be presently. [Exit]

Master Arthur: Farewell As in præsentis.

Mr. Shakstone: It seemes hee’s peece of a Scholler.

Master Arthur: What because he hath read a little Scriveners Latine, / hee never proceeded farther in his Accidence than to Mentiri / non est meum; and that was such a hard Lesson to learne, that / he stucke at mentiri; and cu’d never reach to non est meum / since, a meere Ignaro, and not worth acknowledgement (Lancaster I.137-147).

The purpose of using Latin in Lancaster is thus to describe the learning and social standing of some of the characters. Whether or not an illiterate audience could understand the word play is open to question; I suspect that while the point of making fun of Mr. Whetstone was understood, the actual meanings of the words remained unclear. The play operated on several levels, only one of which an illiterate audience could appreciate. Thus Lancaster is more sophisticated than Edmonton in its use of Latin.

The analysis of the use of Latin and Greek words and phrases in the different texts shows that it can have several functions, only one of which is to highlight the level of learning and abstraction of the text. This is the function of the Latin and Greek in the two treatises, but in the plays and the pamphlets the functions are different. Thus the occurrences of Latin and Greek words in a text are not as clear-cut indicators of learning as one would suppose at first glance. Nevertheless, they shed some light on the level of learning of the intended audiences of the texts.

## 6.7 References

I did not limit my definition of “reference” to include only cases where a specific text or author was mentioned, for this would have left out more general references such as “philosophers” or, in the case of the pamphlets, the source of the text itself when it was mentioned (e.g. “the confession of x”). Some kind of mention was necessary, however, and to make sure I caught every occurrence of a reference, however vague, I also went through the texts manually. The results are shown in Table 12.

**Table 12.** The frequency of references per 1000 words (raw frequencies are in parentheses).

Text	References
Scot	15.11 (933)
James	3.35 (73)
Edmonton	-
Lancashire	0.12 (3)
Goodcole	0.78 (4)
Potts	1.92 (16)

Scot stands out in its extensive use of references. The treatise is clearly a product of the scholastic tradition: the majority of the references are to classical authorities and poets, the Bible, or contemporary authorities on the topic of witchcraft. References to Bodin's *De la démonomanie des sorciers* (1580) and the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486) are particularly frequent, as they are the two primary texts against which Scot wrote his treatise. Tellingly, Scot is as precise as possible when he cites from these texts, usually giving the exact location of his quotation in the original text. He is thus very much concerned with projecting an air of objectivity.

Not all of Scot's references are to learned texts, however, since he also refers to contemporary witchcraft trials that he had read about in pamphlets. The range of authorities is extensive, as is the level of learning of his sources. The effect is that reading becomes slow and laborious, though there is no doubt of Scot's learning. However, no one not trained in the scholastic tradition would be able to read and understand Scot's treatise with facility.

James, though it has clearly more references than the two plays or the two pamphlets, is nowhere near Scot in the frequency of references. The author is also not as concerned with giving the exact location of his quotations, usually only mentioning the author's name and perhaps the title of the text. Almost three-quarters (53/73) of the references are to the Bible; this is because one of James' primary proofs for the reality of witchcraft is the biblical story of the witch of Endor, a case of witchcraft which is examined extensively. Very often James' references to contemporary authorities are meant as sources for further reading rather than as buttresses to his own arguments. The dialogue format is no doubt responsible for the relatively low frequency and specificity of references, though there are nevertheless more of them than in the plays or in the pamphlets. Thus James is clearly a learned text, but not on a par with Scot.

Of the two plays, Edmonton has no references at all, while in Lancaster, the names of three classical authors are mentioned (Ovid and Pliny by the would-be learned Mr. Whetstone, and Aesop by Mrs. Generous). The references are very general, and are perhaps best understood as names that even illiterate audiences would be able to connect with the learned tradition; in any case, the references reflect on the learning of the characters rather than on the learning of the play.

In the case of the pamphlets, I have counted as references mentions of their source material. These turn out to be the only kinds of references in the pamphlets; in the case of Potts, I have counted each individual examination or confession as one reference, which makes the frequency as high as it is. As the accused and witnesses in both trials were uneducated and of the lower social classes, it makes sense that there are no references to authorities in the oral parts of the pamphlets. In this sense, the pamphlets are as listener-friendly in terms of references and level of learning as the plays are.

## 7. Discussion

My analysis of features of both spoken and written language in three different genres has shown that, as expected, plays are by far the most like spoken language. The plays are consistently highest in the total frequencies of all four features of oral language investigated here: first- and second-person pronouns, direct questions and discourse markers. They had consistently low frequencies of written features. The treatises and pamphlets, however, are not as distinctively different, James and Goodcole being consistently either third or fourth, while Scot and Potts alternated between fifth and sixth positions. Separating the pamphlets into their oral and written parts produced some surprising results: while the oral part of Goodcole had frequencies of oral features on a par with the plays, and the literate part was as literal in character as the treatises, in Potts the results were exactly the reverse. This was largely due to the dominating text type of Potts, witness depositions, which is characterized by third-person narratives and the absence of direct and rhetorical questions. The convoluted form of the witness depositions (i.e. the oral parts of the pamphlet) would have made it hard to understand for illiterate people listening to the text being read out loud even if the rather obviously interpersonal nature of the written parts of the pamphlets compensates for this. The clear dichotomy between the spoken and written parts in Edmonton also contradicts my hypothesis of the more oral nature of pamphlets; I would have expected the written parts to have higher frequencies for features of orality, but they are as literate as the two treatises. At best, it can be said that Goodcole made some effort to render his pamphlet more understandable to his illiterate audiences by writing the oral sections to resemble spoken language closely, while Potts did not consider his audience at all.

The analysis of written features, however, seemed to support my hypothesis in that the frequencies of the pamphlets as a whole come between treatises and plays only in the frequency of passives. In the case of Latin and/or Greek and of references the treatises have frequencies as low as the plays. However, the dichotomy between the oral and written parts of the two pamphlets in the case of passives was disappointing once again. Thus my hypothesis that the two academic treatises are at one end of the pole and the two pamphlets somewhere in between, though closer to the plays than the treatises, is in actuality not confirmed. The oral features provide contradictory evidence since the two pamphlets usually have values much closer to the academic treatises than to the plays. The analysis of the written features of the texts, while more along the lines of my hypothesis, can be challenged: the features where the pamphlets resembled the plays most closely, that is, Latin and/or Greek and references, can be argued to be features of academic writing – and not all written language is necessarily academic. Distinguishing between oral and literary sections shows that parts of the pamphlets are very literary in nature, thus making them more difficult for illiterate people to understand when listening to them being read out loud.

To some extent the fluctuation of the treatises and pamphlets in different positions on the spoken – written dimension can be explained by the fact that the two texts chosen to represent academic treatises and pamphlets belong to different text types when text types are defined by linguistic features rather than by external criteria. James is a dialogue, whereas Scot is predominantly straightforward academic prose; Goodcole is made up in part of question-answer sequences characteristic of interviews, but Potts is mostly witness depositions. Thus, though my hypothesis about the relative location of pamphlets on a spoken – written scale was not confirmed by my analysis, it did become very clear that there is variation within genres, which makes their placement on any kind of continuum a very difficult undertaking.

Furthermore, it is absolutely vital to combine a quantitative approach with a qualitative one in order to be able to analyze the results properly.

## 8. Conclusion

The results of this analysis can in no way be regarded conclusive, for the corpus is much too small to produce conclusive results. At best, this is a pilot study that shows that my hypothesis merits further research. To do this, the corpus needs to be enlarged, since two examples of each genre are simply not enough. Another possibility, perhaps more feasible, is to focus on only one genre, that is, pamphlets. It is clear from this study that pamphlets are a heterogeneous group of texts, even when their topic is the same. Identifying the possible text type markers of pamphlets would certainly be a challenge. A diachronic study of the development of various features would also be enlightening: do witchcraft pamphlets always incorporate distinctly different oral and literate parts? If yes, is the distinction always as clear, or is there a movement in either direction? If no, which part is added, when and why?

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