

PART III

LANGUAGE

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To understand language, the most complex of all human behaviors, involves taking into account a large number of variables, each of which plays a part in what we cumulatively call a person's style. This chapter aims to provide a model, or roadmap, that identifies the main variables and explains their interaction, illustrating each through a recognized point of Shakespearean usage.

Shakespeare used an Early Modern English system of more than forty vowels and consonants, represented by an alphabet of more than twenty letters, combined into more than 300 types of syllables. These, in further combination, generated a lexicon of around 20,000 words, used in more than 3,000 morphological variants and syntactic patterns, identified in writing by more than a dozen punctuation marks and associated symbols and articulated in speech by an uncertain (but large) number of prosodic features and tones of voice. As a consequence, studies of Shakespearean language are typically "bottom-up," beginning with individual features, such as the *thou/you* contrast, and exploring their use in some or all of the canon. It is therefore important to emphasize the need for a complementary linguistically motivated "top-down" approach, where we begin with a literary or dramatic unit and explore the interaction among the language features it contains. The notion of *discourse* represents this orientation. This chapter proceeds from the bottom up but also takes into account the top-down approach.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Generalization amid diversity
- Structure, use, and pragmatics
- Semantics
- Sense relations
- Collocations
- Semantic fields
- Figures of speech
- Encyclopedic awareness
- Names
- Polysemy
- Wordplay
- Grammar
- Syntax
- Morphology
- Medium of transmission
- Speech
- Writing
- Variations in use
- Variations in time
- Variations in place and society
- Individual variation
- The importance of discourse

24. EARLY MODERN ENGLISH: THE LANGUAGE

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Shakespeare's lifetime and creative work coincide with the most inspiring period in English history, characterized by circumstances and events encouraging and demanding novel, even experimental, uses of the English language. This can be

seen most clearly in his use of vocabulary and imagery, but also in his grammar and – judging by puns and rhymes – even in his pronunciation. The Early Modern English period (c.1500–1700) could, with some oversimplification, be characterized as the change from Medieval English (c.1150–1500) to Modern English (c.1700 to the present). Thanks to radical changes in Early Modern English, the language of texts dating from the end of the seventeenth century is very close to present-day English.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Vocabulary
- Pronunciation and spelling
- Vowels
- Consonants
- Spelling
- Morphology and syntax
- Nouns and pronouns
- Verbs
- Adjectives and adverbs
- Negation
- Word order

25. PRONUNCIATION AND OP ON THE MODERN STAGE

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For four centuries, pronunciation has steadily evolved, whereas spelling has remained largely fixed, thus relentlessly widening the gap between the written and spoken forms of English. Nonetheless, the mutual intelligibility of Early Modern English and Modern English (thanks mainly to the stability of consonants) has intrigued a small number of theater artists, keen to explore the performance of Shakespeare in the original pronunciation, or OP as it has now become known. The modern theater's handful of OP productions, particularly the three recent ones described in this chapter, have been sufficient to confirm that the benefits of the exercise go far beyond satisfying merely antiquarian or academic curiosity. Original pronunciation restores and revivifies Shakespeare's language, especially his rhymes and puns.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Evolution of the language
- Original pronunciation on the Shakespearean stage
- Original pronunciation today
- OP, more than just an accent
- Examples of original pronunciation
- OP in practice

26. SHAKESPEARE'S GRAMMAR

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This chapter bridges the gap between two temporal varieties of the English language – Early Modern English and present-day English – by explaining some of the major differences between them and the manner in which Shakespeare makes artistic use of those forms. Each grammatical element is examined in detail, with copious examples from Shakespeare's texts: (1) the noun phrase (with prehead, head, and posthead elements), (2) the verb phrase, and (3) clause organization.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Early Modern English and Shakespeare's English
- The noun phrase
- Prehead elements
- The head
- Posthead elements
- The verb phrase
- Clause organization

27. SHAKESPEARE'S FORMS OF ADDRESS

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Characters in Shakespeare's plays use a variety of forms of address, and we have no trouble, in general, appreciating their significance. We recognize that "sir," "madam," "my lord," "my lady," "highness," and "majesty" are markers of respect, or honorifics, and that "villain," "varlet," "slave," and "cur" are disparaging. It is likewise no trouble to see that short forms of names (Nell, Kate, Rose, Meg, Jack, Hal, Ned) are more affectionate but less respectful than their full-length originals. What we fail, for the most part, to appreciate is the significance of the choice of pronouns of address – *you* or *thou* – that go alongside these titles or taunts, these dignified names or nicknames. This chapter explains distinctions between *you* and *thou* that elude most English-speaking actors, directors, teachers, students, and audiences.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- The language of lovers
- In the family
- Lèse-majesté
- Absent friends and other objects

28. FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Beyond a range of local or regional language varieties, Shakespeare's plays also contain a number of the languages from the continent of Europe. In part, these derive from the past civilizations – Greek and Roman – which humanism was bringing into closer contact with the Englishman at the grammar schools, at the universities, and in print. In part, these language varieties derive from Europe's then contemporary present, as cultural exchange across borders, international political and trade relations, and complex religious affiliations affected the traffic between the emergent nations. Each instance of a foreign language in Shakespeare negotiates the line dividing the "self" and the "other" in a city representing a nation that is beginning to be a redoubtable player on the European and world stages.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Foreign languages and intelligibility
- Classical languages
- Greek
- Latin
- Early modern European languages
- Language lessons
- Self and other

29. JOHN FLORIO AND THE EARLY MODERN DICTIONARY

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The linguistic world that Shakespeare and his English contemporaries inhabited in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was rich in innovation and ripe with promise. But the English language itself was at the time little known outside the British Isles. It took a considerable amount of time before the results of the great cultural laboratory that was early modern England were to find a worldwide audience. Most of Shakespeare's plays had to wait until the second half of the eighteenth century before being translated into other European languages. This time lag in the reception of what we now consider to be English cultural benchmarks is in striking contrast to the speed, even rapacity, with which European culture was consumed in early modern England, and a significant aspect of the history of the English language in these years is the impact that foreign languages and literatures had on the elaboration of the English vernacular.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Language learning
- Dictionaries
- Translations

30. SHAKESPEARE USING EARLY MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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Although it was central to the grammar school curriculum, classical translation in Shakespeare's time was not merely a linguistic exercise. It was also a social and cultural enterprise. The concepts related to *translatio studii et imperii*, a particular brand of knowledge transfer between Roman ideals and Renaissance Europe, underpin early modern England's intellectual sensibilities. Furthermore, fashioned in the protracted wake of the Henrician Reformation and the ideological struggles surrounding the production of the English Protestant Bible, and in an epoch in which Latin was the lingua franca of learned Europeans, it is hardly surprising that the Shakespearean corpus is influenced by the complex discourses of Christian humanism. Although the debate about Shakespeare's knowledge of Greco-Roman literature will no doubt continue, his engagement with the social and cultural politics of classical translation is clearly visible in his comedies, tragedies, and late romances.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- The cultural politics of classical translation
- Comedy
- Tragedy
- Greek romance

31. DIALECTS IN THE PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE

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For Shakespeare, dialects are a matter of sociolinguistic comparison and evaluation, but they are also, more broadly, a special example of his wide-ranging exploration of the dramatic possibilities of Early Modern English, in all its variety. By modern linguistic standards, Shakespeare was not an acute observer of English dialects or the English spoken by foreigners. For dramatic purposes, perhaps he was less concerned with getting them "right" than he was with making difference itself unmistakable. His stage dialects are little more than collections of verbal tics, fixed in their potential for full expression. Yet, if Shakespeare, like many of his contemporaries, privileged the "King's English" over alternative dialects, he did not represent dialects simply in order to make fun of them. Ideologically, the dialects and broken English of Shakespearean drama often expose fault lines in idealizations of unity or consensus.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Regional dialects
- Social dialects
- "Broken English"

32. RHETORIC

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Rhetoric is the art of persuasion. Originally a speech-based skill, it evolved to cover written composition; a good deal of drama, which combines speech and writing, shows the influence of rhetoric. Rhetoric taught Shakespeare the fundamentals of creative writing through the exercises of the *Progymnasmata*. But it also taught him to think in terms of either/or, both sides of the question, which he uses as a tool for moral analysis. We might conclude by saying that what rhetoric gave to Shakespeare was the principle of free speech, in the sense of something abundant, free-flowing, and almost overwhelming but also in its more moral sense as something skeptical, radical, questioning, oppositional, and, in the end, sincere.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Fundamentals of rhetoric
- Classroom techniques
- Both sides of the question
- The moral dimensions of rhetoric

33. FIGURES OF SPEECH (INCLUDING PUNS)

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Shakespeare was educated in a curriculum and culture that mixed two views of the relationship between words and things: the older Ciceronian view that word and thing, verba and res, cannot be divorced and the new Ramist view that philosophy and rhetoric are two different pursuits. Shakespeare's characters address both sides of the question. Figuration in Shakespeare's plays is both an artistic and an ethical act. Shakespeare gives each figure of speech in his plays to a particular speaker at a particular moment, and the psychological characteristics of each are disclosed in speech, especially in figural innovation under the pressure of distinctly thought and felt experience. Ultimately, all figures of speech in Shakespeare's works are speech acts – Shakespeare's speech acts, not the characters'.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Shakespeare's figural education
- Classifying figures of speech
- A tragic scheme: counterchange as history
- A comic trope: the disguise of pun
- Shakespeare's speech acts

34. LANGUAGE: KEY TO AUTHORSHIP

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This chapter is about language in connection to the Shakespeare authorship question and hence about internal evidence rather than the external evidence often advanced. New-optics analysis of Shakespeare's language carried out by the Claremont Shakespeare Clinic shows clearly that he had a single-authored core; that he and his contemporaries had consistent, measurable, distinctive, often profilable patterns; and that, with long enough text blocks, the profiles could tell one author from another with remarkable reliability. Systematic testing of intuitive discrimination, enhanced by screening and aggregation, says that, at least with Shakespeare, it can do the same for short blocks as well.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- The Claremont Shakespeare Clinic
- Original-spelling and modern-spelling e-texts
- Equivalent-word choice
- Intensifiers and adversions
- Prefixes and suffixes
- Badges and flukes
- New words and rare words
- Combinations and collocations
- LION links
- Incongruous uses of *who*, redundant comparatives and superlatives, hendiadys
- Verse tests: line endings and clinging monosyllables
- Modal analysis
- Measuring composite discrepancy
- Reliability
- Enhanced intuition
- The future of new-optics analysis

35. SHAKESPEARE AND THE *OED*

Charlotte Brewer, Hertford College, University of Oxford, United Kingdom

The *Oxford English Dictionary* in its current state – an amalgam of *OED1* (1884–1928) and *OED2* (1989) – maintains Shakespeare’s preeminence as a coiner of new words. In *OED3* (in progress), Shakespeare’s key role in the language is certainly being sustained and, in some respects at least, increased. Shakespeare’s total of new senses, as of December 2010, was 8207 – an immense figure, especially bearing in mind that his total word (or lexeme) stock was around 20,000. Is it still justifiable to claim that Shakespeare had more influence on the English language than did any other writer? His status is resoundingly affirmed by the most up-to-date lexical scholarship. A niggling doubt persists, however, largely because Shakespeare remains the writer most intensely quoted in the *OED*.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Shakespeare’s neologisms
- First and second editions of the *OED* and Shakespeare’s word-coining
- Third edition (*OED3*): outline results
- New neologisms in *OED3*
- “What counts as an English word”
- Modern shifts in *OED3*
- Differentiating *OED2* and *OED3*
- Can we trust *OED*’s verdict?