Routines as Social Pleasantries in Period Dramas: A Corpus Linguistics Analysis

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0. Abstract

This paper investigates the role of two conversational routines, greetings and leave-takings, in the dialogues of two period dramas (*Downton Abbey*, 2010-; and *Upstairs Downstairs*, 2010-2012). We aim to show which resources are exploited in television dialogue to construct politeness in interaction given the multiple requirements of the setting of the series under consideration and of television language in general. To do this, we analyze a corpus of 155,235 words of TV series screenplays (104,191 from *Downton Abbey* and 51,044 from *Upstairs Downstairs*), relying on corpus linguistic methodology – both corpus-based and corpus-driven – in order to establish how much narrative space they are granted, which specific linguistic features they have, how frequent conventional expressions are used, and which differences emerge across text types and time.

Keywords: conversational routines, greetings, leave-takings, politeness, corpus linguistics

1. Introduction

This contribution proposes an analysis of some conversational routines in the dialogues of two period dramas, *Downton Abbey* (2010-) and *Upstairs Downstairs* (2010-2012) as devices that are part and parcel of the conversational etiquette of the time. Even though every conversation is the result of a trade-off between repetitiveness and novelty, studies on discourse have unveiled that formulaic language represents a high percentage of conversation: "Normal discourse, both written and spoken, contains large (but not yet fully determined) percentages of formulaic language. […] Overall […] formulaic language makes up between one third and one half of discourse" (Conklin and Schmitt 2012: 46).

Our analysis is based on a corpus of around 150,000 words of TV series[2] dialogues, relying on corpus linguistic methodology, both corpus-based and corpus-driven, in order to establish how much narrative space these routines are granted, which specific linguistic features they have, how frequently conventional expressions are used, and which differences emerge across text type and time. We will thus compare the results to data from spontaneous conversation as well as from more recent dramas, to better assess the requirements imposed by the setting of the investigated series, by television language in general, and those determined by diachronic changes in the linguistic system.

In what follows, we outline the object of investigation, research hypotheses and questions, as well as the main constraining factors determined on the one hand by television talk and its narrative techniques and on the other by period drama. The subsequent sections focus on an overview of relevant data with comparisons drawn from more recent TV and spontaneous dialogues. The work ends with a discussion of the findings and some tentative generals, followed by concluding remarks.

2. Conversational routines and research questions

Conversational routines, as evidenced in recent times by Bardovi-Harlig (2012, 2013), belong to the wider category of formulaic expressions, although a vast array of labels are used to identify the same or similar phenomena (e.g. conversational routines, pragmatic routines, socio-pragmatic formulae, etc.). The interest in formulaic language is manifold, but priority should be ascribed to its ubiquity in human communication, as it makes up a relevant percentage of it, ranging between one-third and one-half of discourse. Part of the interest in formulaic language also rests on its numerous repercussions in cognitive and pedagogical domains. In the former, ongoing research experiments try to assess whether decoding applies to individual constituents or to entire chunks and also how it works in impaired individuals; in the latter, discussions apply to the role of formulae in language teaching and learning (see Wood 2010 *inter alia*).

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[1] The research was carried out by both authors together. SB wrote sections 1, 2, 2.1, 4.2, 5 and GV wrote sections 3, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5.

[2] Even though series are continuous stories "which consist of self-contained episodes possessing their own individual conclusion" as opposed to serials which are continuous stories that develop in different episodes but "usually come[s] to a conclusion in the final instalment" (Creeber 2004: 8). In this contribution "series" is used as an umbrella term.

The label of conversational routines was first employed by Coulmas (1981) to account for a vast array of speech acts with different socio-pragmatic meanings but characterized by a high degree of repetitiveness in form and generally aimed at smoothing out interaction. As Coulmas himself noticed back in the 1980s, the use and frequency of routines are related to the organization of a speech community and to the structural order of its language. So, for example, in certain cultures and time periods deferential strategies are used more extensively given the specific politeness requirements in effect at the time. The second factor he mentions is related instead to the capacity routines have to pinpoint important transitional phases in conversation, thus making its management more effortless and fluent.

More specifically, in Laver's words (1981: 304), the rather formulaic routines of greeting and leave-taking, the object of analysis in this contribution, "far from being relatively meaningless and mechanical social behaviour", are particularly important strategies for the negotiation and control of social identity and relationships between participants in a conversation. More precisely, their purpose is to exchange expressions and pleasantries within a group of people that interact for the purpose of fulfilling social duties for creating and consolidating rapport. In most cases, greetings provide the introductory, ice-breaking material before starting a proper conversation or introducing a factual topic, whereas leave-takings feature in sequences of parting and neatly round off a conversation.

Apart from the guiding factors pinpointed by Coulmas, both the genre and the medium have a direct bearing on the use of greetings and leave-takings. As we have already remarked, in the genre of period drama, to which both the series we have selected for this study belong, social conversation followed rather rigid and pre-patterned rules related to a vast array of interlaced social parameters, so that it can safely be hypothesized that routines aiming to maintain balanced and respectful social relations are well represented.

Conversely, however, if in spontaneous conversation phatic talk, i.e. talk that is conducive to social solidarity but very poor in informative details, is abundant, in other genres, in TV talk in particular, social chit-chat is far less utilized. Although both film and TV dialogues tend to be carefully scripted to sound natural (Taylor 1999; Baños-Piñero and Chaume 2009; Chaume 2012), they undergo severe time constraints that make it necessary to squeeze the narrative into the time boundaries imposed by the format. Consequently, very often scriptwriters tend to economize on phatic talk and sequences that do not carry the plot much forward, unless they are necessary for some reasons (Richardson 2010; Guillot 2015).

Starting from these contrasting tenets, in what follows we mean to answer the following research questions: Whether the setting or the conditioning of the broadcasting mode prevails, and consequently, if routines are well-represented or not; in the latter case evaluate if other strategies, i.e. other linguistic elements, may take on the function of social lubricants. Finally, and even more interestingly, if the scripted dialogues render a convincing snapshot of the setting they aim to portray, by comparing results with more recent data, both spontaneous and telecinematic.

2.1 The conversational routines of greeting and taking leave

Greetings and leave-takings can be described as the exchange of expressions and pleasantries between two people or a group interacting for the purpose of fulfilling social duties or creating or consolidating rapport, at the beginning or end of an encounter.

In other works on the topic (see Bonsignori, Bruti and Masi 2011, 2012) greetings and leave-takings have been described on the basis of some intersecting parameters: linguistic form, position in the exchange, and function (distinguishing between an interactional or a transactional purpose). As has been pinpointed, the boundaries between neighbouring routines is not always clear-cut, and greetings often partially overlap with introductions, and leave-takings with good wishes or blessings (Masi 2008M Bonsignori, Bruti and Masi 2011). Here we will concentrate on functional-positional categories, i.e. openings and closings, which correlate with the initial and final moments of an exchange, respectively, and fixed and conventional greeting and leave-taking expressions.

Routines such as greetings, leave-takings and good wishes have lately received much attention in the sociolinguistic literature (see Coulmas 1981; Laver 1981; Eisenstein-Ebsworth, Bodman and Carpenter 1996; Hudson 1996; Gramley and Pätzold 2004; Bonsignori, Bruti and Masi 2011, 2012, *inter alia*). On the basis of a critical appraisal of the relevant literature on the topic, Masi (2008) has suggested some useful criteria for their description: 1. their marginal vs. salient position within conversation (e. g. whether they appear in initial, central, or final position); 2. their interactional reciprocity (i.e. symmetrical usage, or lack of it); 3. their fixedness of form (i.e. their conventionality and fixity, which usually helps identification).

In the study by Bonsignori, Bruti and Masi (2011: 25) the close relation between greetings and leave-takings, terms of direct address and expressions of phatic communion has been openly recognized, as the three types of expressions are often intertwined and jointly contribute to the negotiation of social relationships between the participants in a conversation (in terms of power, i.e. superiority/inferiority, and solidarity, i.e. vicinity/remoteness; cf. Brown and Gilman 1960).

Terms of direct address, too, express and codify social meaning along the scalar dimensions of power and vicinity, whereas utterances of phatic communion vary greatly across social groups and generations and, outstandingly, across cultures (Coupland and Coupland 1992: 213). They also perform different functions depending on their position: when utterance initial, they defuse the potential hostility of silence (e.g. talking about the weather and/or enquiries about health), and have initiatory and exploratory functions; when utterance final, they typically bring about effects of mitigation (e. g. I must leave) and consolidation of social relationships (e.g. See you next Saturday).

In this contribution, we will give priority to greetings and leave-takings, i.e. expressions of salutation with rather formulaic wordings, but we will also observe if and to what extent the other types come into the picture and play a relevant role.

3. Corpus and methodology

With the aim of focusing on how routinized expressions contribute to specify conversational dynamics in TV series, we selected two period-dramas, that is *Downton Abbey* and *Upstairs Downstairs*[3]. After retrieving from the Internet the transcripts of the first two seasons of the series, *DA* Season one (2010), *DA* Season two (2011-2012) and *UD* Season one (2010) and *UD* Season two (2012), and revising them, we compiled two different corpora: one based on *DA* scripts, of 104,191 words, and the other on the ones from *UD*, of 51,044 words. As both *DA* and *UD* depict situations where characters belonging to different social classes interact, we expected formulaic pleasantries, such as the ones under investigation, to be quite extensively employed (cf. Laver 1981).

Interestingly, both these period dramas debuted in the same year, perhaps following in the footsteps of the great success of other previous TV series of the same kind, such as *The Tudors* (2007-2010) and the American *Mad Men* (2007-2015). *Downton Abbey* is an Anglo-American period drama that transports us back to the post-Edwardian era (1910-1930). The series is set in Downton Abbey, a fictional country mansion in Yorkshire where the aristocratic Crawley family lives with their servants. The captivating peculiarity of this series is its original blend of the fictional characters and settings and the real historical facts that accompany and affect their lives. *Downton Abbey* first aired on ITV in 2010 and is still running, with the sixth and final series coming by the end of 2015. Since the beginning, the show has been outstandingly successful and has become one of the most widely watched television dramas in the world, recently awarded with several prestigious prizes such as a Golden Globe for Best Miniseries or Television Film and a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Miniseries or Movie.

Upstairs Downstairs is the revival, after forty years off-screen, of the British period-drama series, *Upstairs, Downstairs* (1971-1975), produced by the BBC in response to the great success of *Downton Abbey*. The drama is set at the outbreak of the Second World War and revolves around the lives of the 'upstairs' residents (the Holland family), of 165 Eaton Place, London, and their 'downstairs' staff. Despite initial enthusiasm, the show did not match up to the fans' acclaim, as the sometimes unconvincing and far-fetched storylines were strongly criticized. As a result, the drama ended after its second season in 2012.

We decided to analyse the two series relying on corpus linguistics tools. Hence, we first turned our data into two .TXT files and then processed them by means of *Wmatrix* (Rayson 2003) and *Sketch Engine* (Kilgarriff *et al.* 2014). *Wmatrix* software, developed by Paul Rayson at Lancaster University, is available online, and runs automatically a part-of-speech and a semantic tagger on corpora. Thanks to this application, we could calculate and easily visualize key words and key semantic domains, which constituted the starting point for our study. Alongside *Wmatrix,* we resorted to the software packages *Sketch Engine* tools (to calculate word frequencies and concordances of some key words). Moreover, we used the spoken BNC as a reference corpus, in order to compare our results with naturally occurring speech.

As far as the findings of our quantitative research are concerned, a further clarification is in order. Given the different size of the corpora, the word frequency counts were normalized per 10,000 words. To conclude, the quantitative results were carefully skimmed on the basis of our qualitative judgement in order to get rid of the irrelevant ones. Further description of the aforementioned working tools will follow in paragraph 4.

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[3] Hereafter referred to as *DA* and *UD*, respectively.

4. Analysis

4.1 A general overview: what emerges from the word clouds

What differentiates period dramas from other kinds of TV series is that they are based, however freely and sometimes with a great deal of 'poetic licence', on historical facts. In order to reinforce this 'illusion of reality', scriptwriters tend to make their scripts as accurate and truthful as possible (see the notion of 'classical realism' in Creeber 2004: 20 and *ff.*), not only by using a register fitting the period depicted, but also by scattering them with a series of cultural-specific references, bound to the background of the story (Ranzato 2014: 218).

Wmatrix allowed us to generate the following 'key word clouds' on the basis of our corpora and helped us validate our hypotheses. The rationale behind the clouds is that the words with the bigger font size are those with the highest level of 'keyness' in the corpus. This result is calculated by the software by comparing the words that occur most frequently in the corpus under analysis against a large reference corpus (which can be chosen in a selection of proposed choices). In our case, since filmscripts are "written-to-be-spoken-as-if-not-written" (Gregory and Carroll 1978: 42), the Spoken section of the BNC (British National Corpus) appeared as the most suitable one.
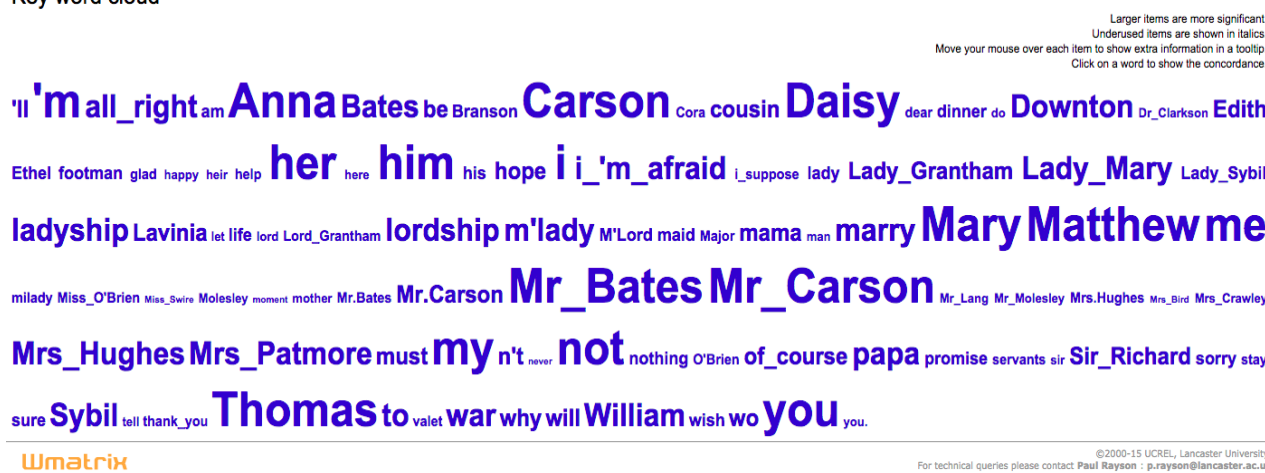

Figure 1. Key word cloud of the *DA* Corpus (vs. the Spoken BNC)

On a surface level, proper names are the most well spread words in the *DA* corpus. This first datum is not very surprising since they are the names of the characters the plot revolves around. More interestingly, instead, terms of address such as *Lady*, *Ladyship*, *Milady*, *Lord*, *Lordship*, *Dr*, *Mr* or *Mrs*, which appear in combination with characters' names or in isolation, are clearly functional to frame the story in the cultural background where it is set and help to focus the attention of the audience on the central thread of the series, i.e. social class differences. Consider the following sequence taken from the first episode of the first season of *DA*:

> Lord Grantham: Mama, may I present Matthew Crawley and Mrs. Crawley?
> My mother, Lady Grantham.
> Mrs Crawley: What should we call each other?
> Lady Grantham: Well, we could always start with Mrs. Crawley and Lady Grantham.

The cutting answer by Lady Grantham, after Mrs Crawley's attempt to establish intimacy by implicitly asking her to avoid using titles between themselves, clearly exemplifies the scriptwriters' strategic usage of terms of address to illustrate the different positions of the characters on the social ladder.

A further element that emerges when observing the key word cloud is that one of the few common nouns that are used is *war*. This word occurs 105 times to refer to the main background event that frames the story: the First World War. In TV dramas every episode serves the purpose of bringing forward the plot and thus scriptwriters avoid being repetitive. The proliferation of such a reference is therefore motivated by its strategic use. On the one hand, the scriptwriters scatter dialogues with this reference as a strategy of textual and narrative cohesion, i.e. a *leitmotif* that links together the episodes of the series that might otherwise come across as rather disconnected and incoherent. On the other,

allusions to such a well-known and popular theme bestow authenticity upon the fictional text and help the audience to identify with a bygone era.

Another remarkable feature is the presence of kinship and household vocabulary. Words such as *mama*, *mother*, *papa*, *cousin*, *valet*, *maid*, *servants* are exceptionally abundant, not only because they are related to the domestic setting and to the plot of *DA*, but also because they label the multitude of characters in the show for the audience's sake. Very interestingly, although with changes due to the slightly different time period and to the setting, the key word cloud of *UD* is very similar.

Figure 2. Key word cloud of the *UD* Corpus (vs. the Spoken BNC)

The largest category is that of proper names, either in isolation or in combination with titles. A variation that can be noticed is that *Lord* does not appear at all; in fact, here the main male character's first name (Hallam) is preceded by *Sir*. This clearly provides the British audience, who is familiar with nobility ranks, with key information about the character and his social rank. What is more, *UD* seems to contain fewer variants for the titles connected to the sphere of nobility: *Milady*, *Milord*, *Lordship* do not occur at all, reinforcing the idea that *DA* is more centred on aristocracy and *UD* more on its downstairs inhabitants. Just as for *DA*, most of the contextually anchored terms, which constitute the link that intertwines the episodes, refer to the background event of the story, the Second World War. In *UD* we may appreciate a wider and more specific range of references such as *war*, *Hitler*, *German*, *Germany*, *Ribbentrop* (one of the Reich's most important figures, the Minister of Foreign Affairs). Other interesting terms that are here strategically used with the aim of drawing an accurate picture of the cultural environment are *nylons* and *macaroons*. The first refers to a kind of women's stockings that became very popular in the 1940s, the second is a small round cake made out of almond, which is nowadays – and during the Second World War even more so – commonly associated with posh and wealthy circles.

As for the occurrence of kinship and household terms, *UD* almost shares the same results as *DA,* although in the former there are no references to *valets*, a category of servants that is peculiar to a slightly higher aristocratic rank, like the one represented in *DA*, but only to *housekeeper*. So, overall, it emerges that the historical and cultural background is crucial to the definition of both these period dramas. In addition, this corpus-driven breakdown suggests that both series share the same array of themes, ranging from war to household, aristocracy and hierarchies. In order to bear out these findings, in what follows we reproduce the key domain clouds for the two corpora.
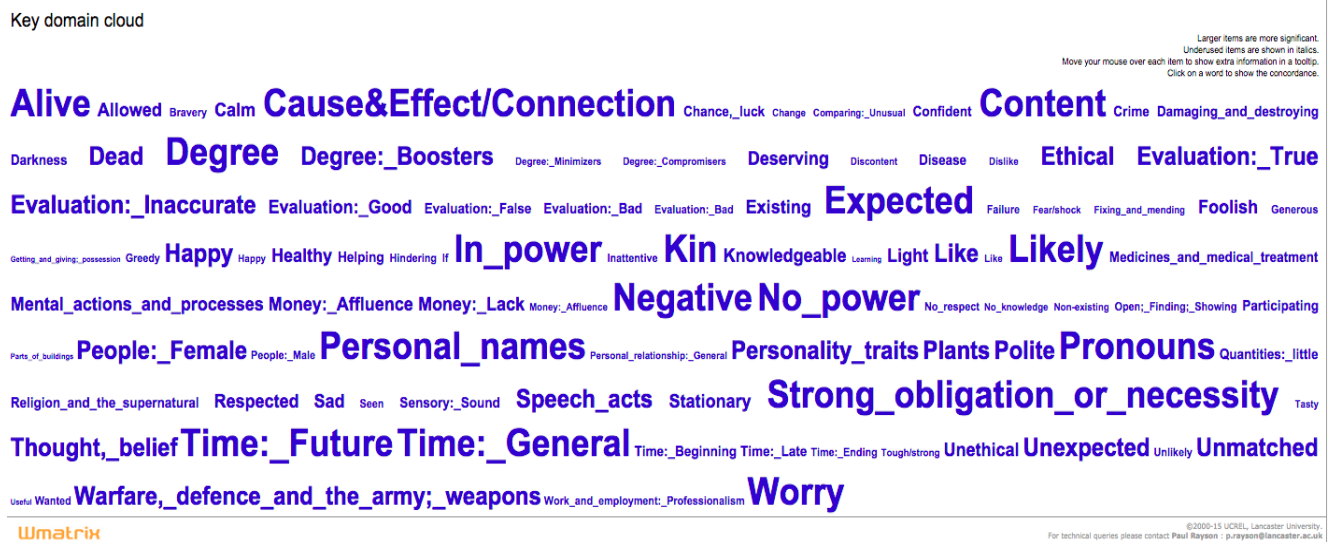
Figure 3. Key domain cloud in *DA*

Figure 4. Key domain cloud in *UD*

These clouds follow the same criteria as the key word ones, but instead of showing the 'keyness' of the words in the

corpus, they display the predominant semantic areas identified by the software thanks to an automatic semantic tagger. At a glance, the presence of the same umbrella terms such as *Personal names*, *In power*, *Kin*, *Warfare, defence and the army; weapons'* in both *DA* and *UD* clouds suggests a similar nature. Hence, these preliminary results confirm our hypothesis that period dramas tend to share a similar range of themes that help emphasize their historical background, with the purpose of involving the audience in the plot and creating a believable storyline.

In her studies on TV language, Monika Bednarek (2010) has highlighted some of the common features shared by TV series[4] of different genres by identifying lists of the most frequent words and phrases, and of the most frequent two- and three-word combinations. For the purposes of our analysis, in order to highlight whether *DA* and *UD* employ typical features of scripted language (and, if so, to what extent) or whether they instead depart from clichéd dialogues, also on account of their different temporal frame, we will only consider Bednarek's list of the 100 most frequent words and compare it to the wordlists of both series, generated with the Sketch Engine.

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[4] She analyzed different TV series, as specified at the link http://www.monikabednarek.com/8.html.

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A good percentage of the words in the list is shared by the three lists. Both *DA* and *UD*, in fact, differ from Bednarek's list of common words for 19 types, some of which (*as, been, could, has, her, him, Lady, Mr, must, oh, they, would*) are common to both series. Among these, a few expressions are directly related to period dramas and the language that they employ, i.e. *Lady*, *Mr*, and also *must*, a deontic modal that is mainly employed in asymmetrical situations such as those between masters and servants, as in the two period dramas under investigation. Some of the terms that distinguish one series from the other refer to the main characters (*Carson, Mary* vs. *Agnes, Hallam, Persie*), but *UD* has one more frequent term that relates to the situational setting and to the relationships across social classes, i.e. *Sir* (and not only *Lady* as *DA*). The other words, although they are not included in Bednarek's list of frequent expressions, all belong to the basic lexicon of English and are for the majority very frequent grammatical words (with the exception of the noun *course* in *DA*, which however often enters the combination with the preposition *of* to form the complex adverbial *of course*, and the verb *see* in *UD*).

4.2 Greetings

Greetings in the two series under analysis are less frequent than might be expected given the politeness rituals that are typical of the time periods that are depicted. Let us describe more precisely the results in the tables below. Apart from the number of tokens for each type, we also normalized the results to 10,000 words for better comparison.

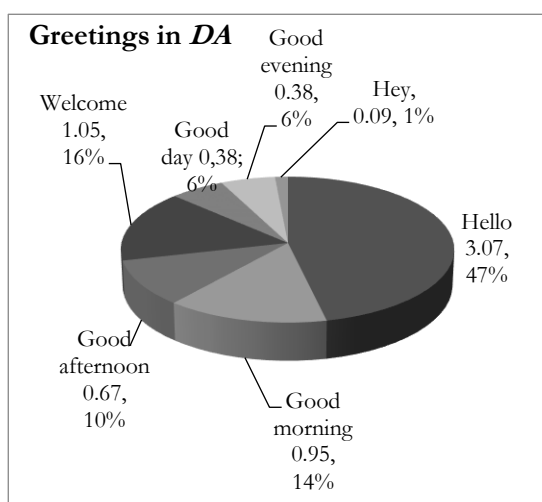| Greeting	DA	DA normalized x 10,000	UD	UD normalized x 10,000
Hello	32	3.07	10	1.95
Good morning	10	0.95	3	0.58
Good afternoon	7	0.67	2	0.39
Welcome	11	1.05	1	0.19
Good day	2	0.38	-	-
Good evening	4	0.38	3	0.58
Hey	1	0.09	-	-
Hallo			1	0.19

Table 1 Greetings in the corpora

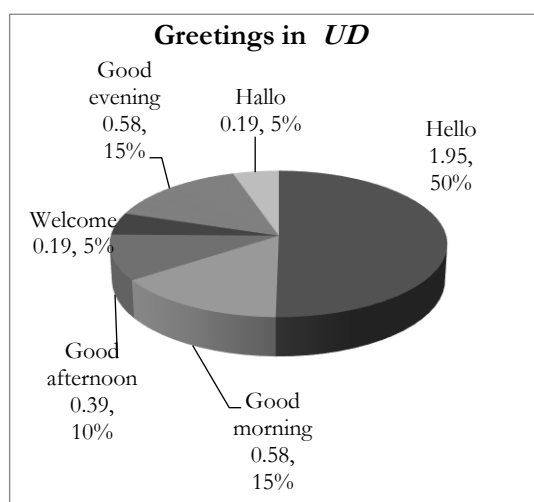Chart 1. Greetings in the *DA* corpus

Chart 2. Greetings in the *UD* corpus

The most frequent form of greeting is in both series *hello*, which is then followed by *welcome* and *good morning* in *DA,* but by *good morning* and *good evening* in *UD*. The fourth item for frequency is then *good afternoon* in both, followed by other tokens that are indeed poorly represented and display just a few occurrences. The so-called 'good forms' are not necessarily diachronically marked, because they were already in use at the beginning of the 20th century, however a certain tendency towards simplification and reduction has been observed in more recent data, so that at present *bye, morning*, and *night* are more well-spread than their full counterparts (see on this Masi 2008 and 4.3).

Good afternoon, for example, is used in a vast array of situations, e.g. symmetrically, especially among peers belonging to the higher classes, or asymmetrically, when it is exchanged between people belonging to different ranks in the social

ladder. In example 1, for instance, it is addressed downwards, towards to the family butler, Carson, whereas in 2, it is exchanged among peers:

1. other telephone? Here in the outer hall. *Good afternoon*, Carson. Is Lady Edith in? - I am! I most
2. disappointed that he wouldn't come shooting. *Good afternoon*, Lady Grantham. Lady Edith!

The same can be claimed for *good morning*, but also for 'good forms' in general. *Good morning*, in fact, is addressed from servants to masters, or exchanged between family members, as well as between daughter and father, as in example 3 and 4 below, both from *DA*:

3. in life is sure.- Good morning, Carson. *Good morning*, my Lord.- Is it true what they say?
4. every ship is unsinkable until it sinks. *Good morning*, Papa.- Morning.- What's that? - Just arrived

The reason why these forms seem to be so versatile is that they are in themselves quite neutral, and much of the deference or affection that is to be conveyed is entrusted to the accompanying vocative. In fact, in *DA*, 9 instances of *good morning* out of 10 are followed by vocatives. Although in *UD* the occurrences are just 3, 2 cases (examples 5 and 6) also feature the presence of a vocative:

5. and down the steps to the staff entrance. *Good morning*, Persie. Oh, darling, I told you not to
6. leggings. Tea, Mr Amanjit? Please. Allow me. *Good morning*, Sergeant. If I might speak to the master

The attention-getting form *hello* (also present with the spelling *hallo* in one case in *UD*), which is by far the most frequent in both series, dates back to the same period in which 'good forms' began to be used. In either forms, it is in origin, probably developed from shipmen's cries to either incite effort or to hail ferrymen. The salutation began to spread dramatically with the advent of the telephone, as it is the typical answering formula employed when using this medium. It is quite widely employed, but with some restrictions, as it is exchanged among peers and also from masters to servants, or to members of inferior social classes, but not vice-versa, that is socially upwards towards aristocratic ranks. In *DA* some of the occurrences are used in phone calls, as Downton Abbey houses one of the first telephone landlines.

7. manage it easily between the two of us. *Hello*? This is Downton Abbey. Carson the butler
8. Downton Abbey. Carson the butler speaking. *Hello*. This is Mr Carson, the butler, of Downton

In the 10 instances in *UD* *hello* never appears in phone calls. The events take place later than those portrayed in *DA* and in a slightly less aristocratic milieu, but the telephone is already quite common. There are in fact several scenes in which communication takes place over the phone, so probably the beginning of these exchanges is either not represented, or the conversation starts with other formulae. With *hello* the same pattern of use as in *DA* can be pinpointed: it is a rather regular form in symmetrical dyads, but it is also occasionally employed from higher-class speakers towards inferiors, which is the case in ex. 9 below. In this case the Hollands' chauffeur, Harry Spargo, addresses Lady Holland's sister, Lady Persephone, using a more deferential form, while receiving from her a more informal and less respectful salutation.

9. Will you take me home now? Yes. Good evening, Lady Persephone. *Hello*, Spargo. It's just like old times.

This asymmetry in greeting forms reflects the difficulty in their relationship, as they have a secret love affair, but their respective ranks prevent this love story from developing smoothly.

The formula *welcome* is quite well-represented in *DA*, but only occurs once in *UD*. The expression is quite neutral and versatile, as it may appear in a wide range of contexts, with different social actors. This feature is confirmed by the fact that it is never used with vocatives (examples 10 and 11):

10. old comrade-in-arms. Bates, my dear man. *Welcome* to Downton. Thank you, sir. I'm so sorry
11. treat to see you. And how smart you look. *Welcome*. Thanks.

A salient and unusual case is represented by *good day*, a salutation which was more popular in the centuries before the time of the story, i.e. in the 18th and 19th centuries, and that can apply to leave-takings as well, as we shall illustrate further on. It surfaces 7 times in *DA*, of which 2 instances are greetings, but never in *UD*. Example 12 is extremely polite, as made even more explicit by the accompanying vocative *milady*, while example 13 uses a diachronically marked expression, *to bid good-day*. The time span lapsing between the events in the two series is not so wide as to prevent the possibility of using

an archaic form in *UD*; rather, the choice of structuring some turns in the dialogues as particularly obsequious seems to be intertwined with the more accurate planning of aristocratic speech in *DA*.

12. you back at the house. Right you are, then. *Good day*, milady. Is her ladyship all right? Has
13. to listen to insults. Then, I'll bid you *good day*. And I want you to leave the village. Even

4.3 Leave-takings

As far as leave-takings are concerned, the following table shows that both in *DA* and *UD* they tend to be granted slightly less space than greetings In fact, their normalized total count is respectively 6.59 (*DA*) and 3.88 (*UD*) for greetings vis-à-vis 5.26 (*DA*) and 1.54 (*UD*) for leave-takings.

Leave-taking	DA	DA normalized x 10,000	UD	UD normalized x 10,000
Good night	24	2.30	1	0.19
Goodbye	18	1.72	4	0.78
See you	8	0.76	1	0.19

Table 2. Leave-takings in the corpora
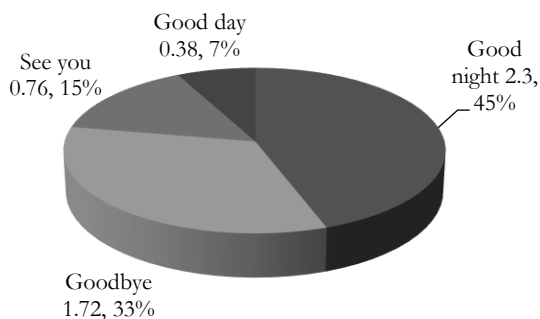

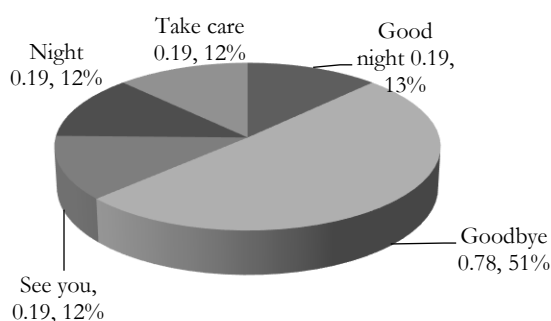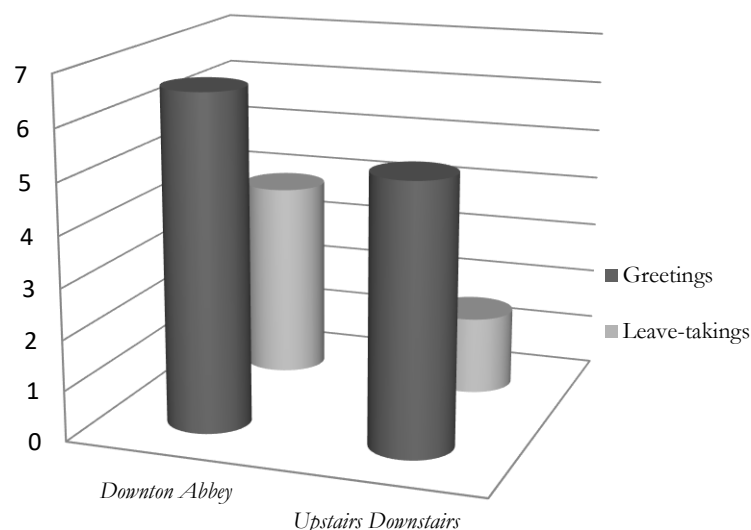Chart 3. Leave-takings in *DA*   Chart 4. Leave-takings in *UD*

Chart 5. Greetings vs. leave-takings in the corpora

This trend, displayed in the chart above, could be explained by the fact that in films and TV series greeting sequences may serve the purpose of introducing new characters. As a consequence, they tend to occur more frequently than goodbyes, which, instead, are less functional to take the narrative forward, and thus they are more likely to be omitted. Among the array of leave-takings listed in the table above, *good night* stands out as the most frequent in *DA*, but it occurs only once in *UD*, in its shortened version *night*. *Goodbye*, instead, is the most frequent parting formula in *UD* and occurs quite extensively also in *DA*, where it is the second most represented form of bidding farewell. *See you* and *good day* occur respectively 8 and 4 times in *DA*, being the third and the fourth items for frequency. Finally, *take care* appears only once in *UD* and never in *DA*.

In line with what has been observed for greetings, leave-takings with 'good forms' are well-spread in both the series, although, in general, they tend not to occur in their shortened versions, which would be less appropriate to the context and the historical setting.

Good night is the only 'good form' (among good morning, good afternoon, good evening and good day) being used only as a leave-taking. This appears to be related to the older sense of 'night' that did not refer to late evening, but only to the time when people normally went to sleep. As a result, 'wishing someone a pleasant night' corresponds to saying goodbye for the day, not expecting to meet again until the next day. This formula, just like all 'good forms', appears to be extremely adaptable and it is, in fact, employed by almost every character, no matter their social status or the level of deference required by the situation. In example 14 *good night* is addressed upwards from Downton Abbey's butler, Carson, to the master of the mansion, Lord Grantham, who does not bid farewell to his butler; in fact, being in a position of power, he can decide whether or not to reciprocate the salutation, without his interlocutor losing face. In example 15, instead, though an asymmetrical exchange is displayed, the parting form is reciprocated by Lady Mary, who thus shows solidarity towards the servant. As can be noticed from both examples, when the farewell is used upwards, the title of the addressee is added in order to maintain the required level of politeness and respect.

14. I think, with everyone ill breakfast at half past seven. Very good, My Lord. *Good night*.
15. Bristol fashion, and it is, *Good night*, Milady. *Good night*, Carson.

In example 16 from *DA, good* is elided and *night* is used on its own. Here Lady Holland is in a kinship context, putting her little son to bed. Therefore, this simplified farewell makes her speech more natural-sounding and spontaneous, as is suitable in an intimate situation.

16. Come on young man. Night, night, be good for Nanny.

The formula *goodbye* shows a similar behaviour to *good night*, being used both by masters and servants to round off conversations.

17. I understand and I admire you more than ever. *Goodbye*, Agnes. *Goodbye*, Caspar.
18. But until she does *Goodbye*, then and such good luck.
19. You've been so kind, Lady Grantham. Thank you. *Goodbye*, Duke, and good luck.

In example 17, taken from *UD*, it is remarkable how Caspar Landry, who is a rich American man without any noble title, addresses the farewell formula to Lady Holland in combination with her first name instead of her title, as normally happens between aristocrats and ordinary people. This exception, which takes place during their second meeting, clearly signals the intimate nature of their relationship; in fact, he is attracted to her. Moreover, being American he is neither used to British etiquette, nor keen on it. It is also noteworthy that in examples 18 and 19 *goodbye* is accompanied by *good luck*, a 'good wish' used to add a sense of phatic communion to the parting.

As has already been said, *good day* occurs both as a greeting and as a leave-taking, though it is more frequently employed to bid farewell (4 times as a leave-taking vs. 2 as a greeting). Nowadays this form of parting persists in the oral language, but it is more often used as a form of dismissal, rather than a simple way of taking leave (particularly when accompanied by a formal form of address, e.g. *good day to you, Sir Grantham!*). In example 20, from *DA, good day* is used upwards. The doctor running the hospital is in a hurry and thus, by using this rather formal farewell, attempts to send Mrs Crawley away without being offensive. In example 21, instead, Lady Grantham uses this formula in quite a sarcastic way (confirmed also by her annoyed tone of voice) to take leave from Mr Crawley, the possible heir of Downton Abbey, towards whom she is rather caustic.

20. and now I really, I really must go. *Good day*, thank you your Ladyship
21. write to the Ministry at once, correcting the misinformation. *Good day*. I'll see myself out

Quite surprisingly *see you* is well-represented in *DA* and employed indiscriminately. It is interesting to highlight that in all the examples from the *DA* corpus, this formula is used referentially, specifying, by means of a prepositional phrase, either the time (ex. 22) or the place (ex. 23) of the next meeting. In this sense, it is used as way of expressing a bond with someone who is more than a stranger. The speaker is thus indicating that he/she wants to see the other person another time. As a final remark, one may note that nowadays *see you* more often occurs on its own, thus displaying a change from a truly commissive act, as in examples 22 and 23, to a more phatic expression, almost a conversational filler.

22. Shall I ring for tea? - No, not for me. I'm meeting Cripps at five. I'll *see you* at dinner.
23. Hm? Corporal, I'll *see you* in my office.

4.4 A comparison with the BNC

In order to better evaluate the findings obtained through the analysis presented in the previous paragraphs, we decided to compare a selection of them with some data retrieved from the spoken component of the BNC, which consists of naturally-occurring speech[5].

Greetings	BNC	DA	UD
Hello	2133	32	10
Good morning	256	10	3
Welcome	177	11	1
Hey	16	1	1

Table 6. Greetings in the Spoken BNC, *DA* and *UD*

Leave-takings	BNC	DA	UD
See you	473	8	1
Bye bye	272	-	-
Goodbye	115	18	4
Take care	42	-	1
Night	47	-	1
Good night	11	24	1

Table 7. Leave-takings in the Spoken BNC, *DA* and *UD*

As can be noticed by looking at these tables, the representation of greetings in *DA* and *UD* is in line with the data from the Spoken BNC and no big discrepancies can be singled out. Very significantly, *hi* (297 occurrences in the BNC), which is a very common greeting in British and American English, is never employed in these period dramas.
In the representation of leave-takings more differences can be observed. In fact, *good night* occurs only 11 times in the BNC and 24 in *DA,* where it is the most frequent form of farewell. This discrepancy can be motivated by the fact that

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[5] The data presented in this table have been qualitatively evaluated and skimmed from those that did not cover the pragmatic function of opening or ending a conversation.

data in the spoken BNC are mostly transcriptions of recorded conversations taking place supposedly during the daytime, where there is little or no need to say *good night*. In *DA*, instead, this formula may be functional to mark the passage of time, dividing one day from the other. As a final remark, in accordance with our observations about *hi*, *bye bye* and its shortened version *bye* are totally absent both in *DA* and *UD*. They are substituted by the more neutral *goodbye*.

All things considered, these results bring to the fore the scriptwriters' will to make their scripts as close as possible to spontaneous speech. Especially in period dramas, where the reliability of the historical background is crucial, the choice of interspersing dialogues with several typical oral features, results vital to make exchanges more realistic and palatable.

4.5 Terms of direct address[6]

From the previous analysis (see 4.1) it has emerged that terms of direct address are among the most frequently employed elements in period dramas. They are usually distinguished according to the function they perform in conversation: Zwicky (1974), for example, uses the terms "calls" and "addresses" to refer respectively to elements that are used to catch the addressee's attention and to maintain or reinforce the contact with him/her. Other scholars (Davies 1986; Leech 1986; Biber *et al.* 1999) also adhere to a distinction between an identifying function that is meant to unequivocally single out the addressee, and an "expressive" function (Bruti and Perego 2005), when the addressee does not need to be selected and the vocative is thus a vehicle of the speaker's attitude towards him/her.

In the period dramas under analysis, the "expressive" function seems to be the most genre-specific: since conversations usually do not involve many speakers at a time and address can count on means other than verbal (gaze, gestures, etc.), vocatives are not necessary to identify speech participants and therefore attend to politeness requirements. This is true especially for titles (also in combination with names), but not for proper names, which also retain the typical identifying function of vocatives. In what follows we will give a closer look at *Lady*, *Ladyship*, *Lord*, *Lordship*, *Sir*, *Madam*.

Vocatives	DA	UD
Lady	346/216-20.73[7]	171/56-10.97
Lord	177/94-9.02	-
Ladyship	74/20-1.91	54/38-7.44
Lordship	99/22-2.11	-
Sir	165/108-10.36	172/125-24.48
Madam	9/7-0.67	-

Table 8. Vocatives in *DA* and *UD*

As can be seen from table 8, the higher number of female vocatives is closely linked to the number of female characters in the two series. The pair *Ladyship*, *Lordship* is always used in asymmetrical dyads from servants to master, whereas the pair *Lady*, *Lord* can also be used in symmetrical dyads among peers (except in the combination *My Lady/Milady – My Lord/Milord*, in which they are employed upwards from servants to masters), as the examples below show.

24. Grant me that? *Lady* Grantham, *Lady* Rosamund. Hello, *Lord* Hepworth.
25. What a pleasure this is! *Lady* Holland. What a wonderful vestibule! You must tell me the name of your decorator.
26. Major Clarkson. Good morning, *Lord* Grantham. *Lady* Edith. Sir. We've had a request

In the example from *UD* (example 25) the two characters involved are Mrs Simpson and Lady Holland: even though they are not on the same hierarchical level, they participate in the same social events and they belong to the same environment. Choosing the right titles seems to be quite crucial in period dramas, as often emerges in exchanges as in the examples below.

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[6] The term "vocative" can be considered a synonym of an "unbound form of address", i.e. both pronominal and nominal syntactically free form (Gramley and Pätzold 1992: 288). Hence in this paper "vocative" and "term of address" are meant to be equivalent. For a descriptive account of vocatives see both Davies 1986 and Gramley and Pätzold 1992.

[7] The first number indicates the total number of tokens in the corpus, the second their occurrences as a vocatives and the third the normalized (x10,000 frequency).

27. My sister says you're all to call me *Lady* Persie, if that's what I want. And I do. I won't call you lady anything if you don't act like one
28. that's not necessary, my lady. It's not *my lady* now, Carson. It's *Nurse* Crawley.

In the first instance the character insists on being called with a title appropriate to her rank. In the second, instead, Mrs Crawley suggests using a simpler vocational form of addressee, e.g. nurse, in order to break down barriers and to make transactions easier in the context of the hospital.

The fact that the term *Sir* appears more frequently in *UD* is due to the fact that the main character, who is very often directly addressed, is not a Lord but a Baronet, a lower nobility rank. More specifically, *Sir* occurs more frequently alone when it is used upwards, in asymmetrical dyads, but it can also be followed by first names when it is exchanged among peers.

29. It is not the law at 165, Eaton Place! *Sir* Hallam and Lady Agnes make the law upstairs.
30. Have you given my proposition any thought? A great deal, *Sir* Richard

The low frequency or absence of the term *Madam* in the two series is due to the fact that female characters are either ladies or non-titled women.
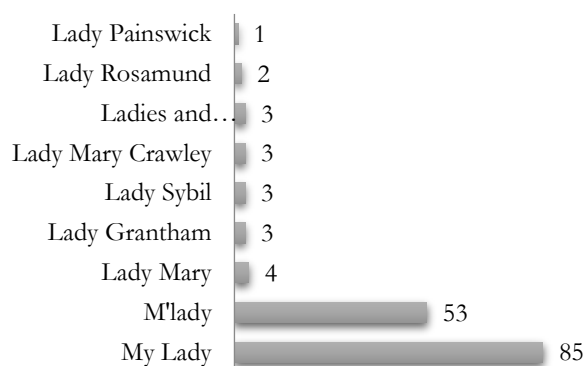
Breakdown for *Lady* in *DA*

Lady Painswick	1
Lady Rosamund	2
Ladies and…	3
Lady Mary Crawley	3
Lady Sybil	3
Lady Grantham	3
Lady Mary	4
M'lady	53
My Lady	85

Chart 6. Breakdown for *Lady* in *DA*

Breakdown for *Lady* in *UD*

Lady Malcolm	1
M'lady	1
Lady Agnes Holland	1
Ladies	2
Ladies and gentlemen	3
Lady Persephone	3
Lady Holland	6
Lady Agnes	9
Lady Persie	10
My Lady	20
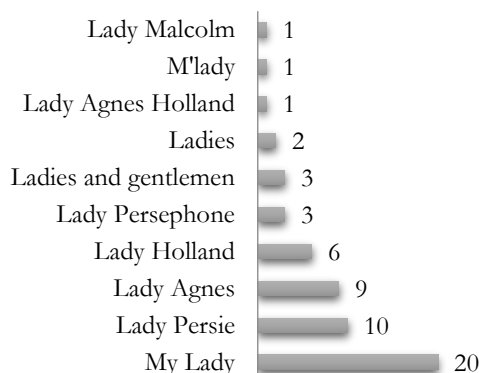
Chart 7. Breakdown for *Lady* in *UD*

Breakdown for *Lord* in *DA*

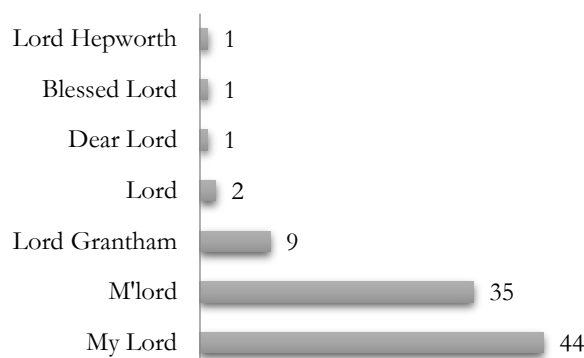|	
Lord Hepworth	1
Blessed Lord	1
Dear Lord	1
Lord	2
Lord Grantham	9
M'lord	35
My Lord	44

Chart 8. Breakdown for *Lord* in *DA*

Bar Charts 6, 7 and 8 above describe the collocational behaviour of the terms *Lady* and *Lord*. The most prototypical collocates of *Lady* are first names (*Mary, Agnes, Sybil* etc.), last names (*Grantham, Holland*) and possessive adjectives (*My Lady, M'lady*). In *DA* the two combinations *Lady* + first names and *Lady* + last names serve to disambiguate between members of the same family: the vocative *Lady Grantham* is used to address *Lady Cora*, Lord Grantham's wife and *Lady Violet*, Lord Grantham's mother, whereas Lord Grantham's daughters are addressed using their first names (*Lady Mary, Lady Edith, Lady Sybil*). The same holds for UD, where *Lady Holland* can refer to both *Lady Agnes* and *Lady Maud. My Lady*

and its shortened form *M'lady*, which reproduces the pronunciation of the servants, is always used upwards. Similar remarks can be made for the term *Lord*, which is more often accompanied by last names and possessives but never by first names.

5. Concluding remarks

In this contribution we have meant to analyse the use of some conversational routines, i.e. greetings and leave-takings, as a means to characterize polite conversations in period dramas.

As a first step in the analysis, we decided to investigate the *DA* and *UD* corpora by using *Wmatrix* software, focusing in particular on Key word clouds and Key domain clouds. This preliminary overview showed that the above-mentioned routines do not occur as frequently as other linguistic phenomena such as terms of direct address, thanks and apologies. At the same time, the Key word clouds highlighted the frequent occurrence of terms that are closely related to the temporal setting and lend credibility to the series (e.g. *war*, which is common to both dramas and words related to the Second World War scenario such as *Hitler, Germany*). The Key domain clouds have confirmed for both series the privileged use of expressions belonging to certain semantic domains such as *In power* (which encompasses terms of address and expressions encoding power/solidarity relationships), *Kin, Warfare, Defence and the Army; Weapons'* and *Personal names* (which are quite frequent given the high number of characters in these dramas).

In order to evaluate whether the language in *DA* and *UD* shares the same features that have been singled out as peculiar of TV language, we compared our wordlists with the list of the 100 most frequent words in contemporary US American fictional television series (assembled by Monika Bednarek, 2010). This comparison has pointed out that, apart from the names of the main characters, the three expressions that distinguish these series are *Lady*, *Mr* and *must*.

To fully interpret the main topic of this research we adopted an integrated quantitative and qualitative approach. On the basis of previous studies on routines, we queried the corpora for some expectedly frequent greeting and leave-taking expressions. The results obtained from the corpus search are the following: 67 greetings in *DA* and 20 in *UD*; and 54 leave-takings in *DA* and 8 in *UD*, a much lower figure than we expected. Our hypothesis was that routinized expressions conveying deference and respect for social conventions should have been quite abundant in *DA* and *UD*, considering the trade-off between the paucity of phatic expressions commonly used in TV talk on the hand and the need to convincingly construct the setting that is a prerequisite in period dramas on the other. A comparison with data from the spoken component of the BNC has indicated that the use of routines in *DA* and *UD* does not differ radically from that in spontaneous contemporary talk. For greetings the same ranks of frequency can be observed, apart from *hi*, which never occurs in period dramas and is instead most common in contemporary English. For leave-takings discrepancies are more striking, in that the most frequent choice in *DA*, *good night*, is very poorly represented in the BNC (only 11 tokens). Furthermore, *goodbye*, the second frequent formula to take leave in DA and the first in UD, does occur in the BNC but not so extensively (115 occurrences), almost certainly because of an observed tendency towards simplification in contemporary compound formulae (e.g. *bye* is more common than *bye bye*, *morning* than *good morning* and so on).

Studies that have been carried out on greetings and leave-takings in modern TV series (Bonsignori and Bruti 2014) offer comparable data to ascertain if the choice of the scenario is more influential than the genre and the constraints of the medium. The modern series for which data are available, i.e. *Brothers & Sisters (B&S)* and *Gillmore Girls (GG)*, are also centred on conversation and include a high number of characters, related by familial friendly or professional relations. *B&S* amounts to the same number of words as *DA*, whereas *GG* is longer and has faster-paced dialogues.

Greetings appear to be strikingly more frequent in the modern series: they are 171 in *B&S*, 213 in GG vs. 67 in *DA* and 20 in *UD*. Both modern series show a marked preference for colloquial greetings *(hey, hi, hello* exactly in this order in *B&S*, and with *hi* as the most frequent and *hey* the second in *GG*), although greetings are more numerous in *GG*. Leave-takings show instead less remarkable differences, for there is less variation in frequency: they are 38 in *B&S*, 95 in *GG* vs. 54 in *DA* and 8 in *UD*. The reason why leave-takings are relatively more abundant in period dramas is that both shows are British and the speech act of parting is a rather articulated and carefully constructed routine especially in British culture (Bonsignori and Bruti 2014: 108). The most recursive leave-taking in modern series is *bye*, but the second and third items in rank are *night* and *good night* (the most frequent in *DA*), respectively in *B&S* and *GG*. In *GG*, where many of the parting scenes take place at the inn where Lorelai Gillmore, one of the protagonists, works, the third frequent option is the more formal *goodbye* (the most frequent choice in the period drama *UD*). Overall, we can conclude that in the period dramas analyzed the complex tensions that push the scriptwriters in different directions strike a balance between linguistic realism, creativity, text simplicity and the constraints of the medium.

The corpus-driven analysis conducted through word clouds has evidenced some linguistic indicators of politeness in period dramas, e.g. terms of direct address and the speech acts of thanking and apologizing. This result confirms the slant of modern TV talk towards expressivity and emotionality pinpointed by Bednarek, which is certainly worthy of further

investigation. In this contribution we have taken into account terms of address, as they are often closely intertwined with the routines of greeting and leave-taking, either because they accompany forms of salutation, in this case specifying the power/solidarity between interlocutors, or because, when they stand alone, they can replace greeting and parting routines, conveying at the same time the appropriate attitudes towards the interlocutor. More specifically, our analysis has shown that the most repeated vocatives in the two series, apart from proper names, are those related to their cultural environment, e.g. *Lady*, *Lord*, *Ladyship*, *Lordship*, *Sir*. Thanks and apologies, instead, are two areas that deserve further attention in period drams as indicators of politeness rituals at work.

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