Meta-Communicative Expressions and Situational Variation of Stance Marking: *I say* and *I tell (you)* in Early Modern English Dialogues[1]

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Abstract
In this study, I compare the functions of *I say* and *I tell (you)* in the different text types in *A Corpus of English Dialogues 1560–1760* (CED). The text types differ with respect to a number of parameters, such as the authenticity of the dialogue, the stability of the participant roles, the formality of the setting, and the dominant verbal activities. I show that the two expressions are used with a range of different functions, most of which express the speaker's stance, and I argue that the differences in function are related to differences in the communicative setting and the roles of the participants.

1. Introduction

There are many ways in which speakers and writers can express an attitude towards what they say. This includes meta-communicative expressions, i.e. expressions that refer to the communicative event or process in which they occur. *I say* and *I tell (you)* are two meta-communicative expressions that are used quite frequently in Early Modern English dialogues. From a semantic point of view, they clearly relate to speaking and, therefore, they can be expected to be typical of speech-related texts. When looking at some instances in context, as in examples (1)–(4), two aspects become clear. First, the expressions occur in a variety of constructions with various degrees of integration with co-occurring clauses, including negated instances and instances that are modified by modal verbs. Second, they tend to express commitment to

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what is said, which makes them relevant for the study of epistemic stance.

(1) Mr. Com. Serj.: *I tell you* I caught hold of him, and the Rabble got him from me.
(Trials, *Tryal ... of Tho. Pilkington*, 1682/1683)

(2) Hon.: [...] Take heed *I say,* for if I catch you once, Your bodies shall be meat for Crowes [...]
(Drama Comedy, *A Knacke To Knowe a Knaue*, 1594)

(3) William Dawes sworn.: All that *I can say* is this; William Turner was at my house on Wednesday was seven-night last; comes in, and called for a Flaggon of Beer; there comes in a Customer of mine, sayes he to me, What do you with such a Fellow in your house? have a care of him, he is a dangerous fellow; presently after Col. Turner came in and paid for a Flaggon of Beer, and went away.
(Trials, *Tryal ... of Col. Iames Turner*, 1663)

(4) Ld. T: How! Where? When?
Ldy T.: That *I can't tell*; nay, *I don't say* there was -- I am willing to believe as favourably of my Nephew as I can.
(Drama Comedy, *The Double-Dealer*, 1694)

Both stance and meta-communication have attracted the interest of researchers in recent years. Meta-communication has been studied particularly well in the context of academic writing (e.g. Hyland 2000; Ifantidou 2005). Concerning historical data, the settings that have been analysed with respect to stance and meta-communication (although not in all cases covering and combining both concepts) include legal discourse (e.g. Grund 2012, 2013, and in the present volume), medical writing (e.g. Taavitsainen 2000; Taavitsainen and Hiltunen 2012), religious discourse (e.g. Boggel 2004, 2009) and correspondence (e.g. Dossena 2012; Fitzmaurice 2003, 2012). These studies investigate texts from one setting in great detail and their findings suggest that the dominant strategies found in these texts are related to the setting in which the text is produced. For instance, Taavitsainen (2000) relates diachronic changes in the use of meta-discourse to overall changes in scientific thought styles, and Grund (2013) points out that the use of evidential strategies in witness depositions is directly related to the witnesses' need to be perceived as reliable and credible. Comparisons across different historical settings are not easy and have less frequently been made.

Because stance expressions are context-dependent, the range of expressions that are used differs across settings, which poses problems for a direct comparison of detailed qualitative findings. In contrast, purely quantitative evaluations of a large number of stance terms (e.g. Biber 2004) provide only limited insight into how the function of these expressions depends on context.

The aims of this study are two-fold. The first aim is to investigate the functions of *I say* and *I tell (you)* in Early Modern English dialogues, based on *A Corpus of English Dialogues 1560–1760* (CED). I will analyse the extent to which the functions depend on different structural realisations and on the context in which they are used, and I will also look at similarities and differences between uses with *say* and uses with *tell*. In particular, I am interested in how the functions of these expressions relate to stance. This leads me to the second aim of this study, which is to assess what can be learned about the context-dependency of stance marking by looking at meta-communicative expressions. Meta-communicative expressions explicitly refer to aspects of communication and, thus, they are highly dependent on the communicative situation. As such, they are promising candidates for the study of situational variation of stance marking and may help increase our understanding of how stance depends on context.

2. Meta-communication and stance marking

Meta-communication, as used in this study, can be defined as "communication about (selected aspects of) communication" (Hübler 2011: 108), and is sometimes also referred to as meta-discourse (see, for instance, Boggel 2009; Hyland 2000, 2005; Taavitsainen 2000). Meta-communication takes place whenever participants in a communicative situation refer to the communicative activities in which they are engaged. Depending on the function and the communicative constellation, various subtypes of meta-communication can be distinguished. Following Hyland (2000: 110–113), a first distinction is often drawn between textual and interpersonal meta-communication.[2] Textual meta-

[2] Ifantidou (2005: 1328) points out that the distinction between textual and interpersonal meta-communication is not clear-cut and that both are concerned with expressing the author's attitude towards the propositional content. She proposes an alternative classification that distinguishes between inter-textual and

communication is used to structure and organise a text, to increase cohesion and to make it more accessible. Hyland (2000: 111) gives examples from academic writing, which include logical connectives (e.g. *in addition*), frame markers (e.g. *finally*, *to repeat*), endophoric markers (e.g. *noted above*, *see Fig.*), evidentials that mark references to other texts (e.g. *according to X*), and code glosses (e.g. *namely, such as*). In contrast, interpersonal meta-communication expresses the attitude of authors and speakers towards the information they present. Hyland's examples from academic writing include hedges (e.g. *perhaps*), boosters (e.g. *definitely*), attitude markers (e.g. *unfortunately*), markers that refer to or build a relationship with the addressee (e.g. *you can see*) and person markers referring to the author (e.g. *I, our*).

From the point of view of stance marking, interpersonal meta-communication is of special interest. First person references often mark speakers or writers explicitly as source of information, thus expressing evidential stance. Hedges and boosters are used to express different attitudes with respect to the reliability of the information, and as such they contribute to epistemic stance. *I say* and *I tell (you)* contain explicit self-references to the speaker and they can be used as boosters. The emphatic quality of *I say* has been noted by Goossens (1982: 95) and Brinton (2008: 77), and it has been identified as one of the frequent markers of authorial stance in Early Modern English religious texts (Boggel 2009: 183).

The second distinction of different types of meta-communication depends on the communicative context. In non-dialogic settings, meta-communication is usually directed towards an audience that is not present, i.e. a text-external addressee. Scientific texts, for instance, may contain instances of meta-communication that instruct readers how the text has to be read and understood. Many historical studies on meta-communication focus more or less exclusively on this aspect of meta-communication (e.g. Boggel 2004, 2009; Dossena 2012; Taavitsainen 2000). In contrast, meta-communication directed towards a text-internal addressee can take place in dialogic settings when interactants discuss their communicative behaviour, for instance for the purpose of clarifying miscommunication. At least as far as historical texts are concerned, this

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intra-textual meta-discourse. My study deals only with intra-textual meta-discourse.

aspect has received less attention in the study of meta-communication, but it is included sometimes (see, for instance, Simon-Vandenbergen and Defour 2012). In this study, I will look at meta-communication in dialogic texts and I will only focus on text-internal addressees.

3. Data and method

The data used in this study come from *A Corpus of English Dialogues 1560–1760* (CED). The CED contains roughly 1.2 million words of speech-related texts from five text types: drama comedy, didactic works, prose fiction, witness depositions, and trial proceedings (see Kytö and Walker 2006; Culpeper and Kytö 2010). The texts are from the Early Modern period. The corpus contains meta-textual information for all text files and the text is annotated so that passages of direct speech can be distinguished from the rest of the text.

As a first step in my analysis, all instances of *I say* and *I tell (you)* were tagged semi-automatically in an XML version of the corpus. The tagging included spelling variants, like *I saie,* and, for *I tell (you)* forms with the pronoun *thou* (i.e. *I tell thee*). Only the present simple forms were tagged, thus excluding forms like *I said* and *I am telling you*. Using regular expressions, all instances with a maximum of four intervening words between *I* and *say/tell* were tagged. This resulted in 1,289 hits, roughly half from each verb. Following this, all instances underwent detailed manual analysis. This included the sorting out of wrong hits and hits that were not relevant for this analysis. Examples of instances that were excluded are cases in which *I* was not the subject of *say* or *tell* (e.g. *I've heard say*), past tense uses (e.g. *I did not tell*) and interrogatives (e.g. *what shall I say?*). After removing these instances, 1,138 hits remained, exactly half of which were cases with *say* and half with *tell*. Except for 14 hits all occurred within text marked as direct speech.

Table 1. Overview of structural types

Type	Examples
Unmodified uses	
parenthetical	Take it *I say.* (Drama Comedy, *A Mad Couple Well Match'd*, 1653) [...] I doe not meane (*I tell you*) to shew euery bodie that favour. (Didactic Works, *Concerning Churching of Women*, 1601)
matrix clauses with *that*-complement clauses (including cases with zero complementiser)	*I tell you,* that I mistake it nothing at all (Didactic Works, *Surueyors Dialogue*, 1607) *I say,* thou stolest Iupiters Crowne from his head, [...] (Drama Comedy, *Menaecmi*, 1595)
other	I know what *I say.* (Didactic Works, *Jack and UUill*, 1697) *I tell you* nothing but what is true. (Didactic Works, *A New and Easie French Grammar*, 1667) Prim.: Hark, my Lady is just return'd. Do you, Sir, but stretch your self out in your Chair, and feign your self dead, you'll then see the violent Grief, she'll be in, when *I tell* her the News. (Drama Comedy, *The Mother-in-Law*, 1734)
modified uses	*I can not yet tell* where to begyn [...] (Depositions, *Courts of Durham*, 1560–88/1845) To that question, *I must say* there was a letter, [...] (Trials, *Triall of Mr Love*, 1651/1652)

During the manual analysis, additional information about each instance was added to the XML markup. This included the annotation of structural information, i.e. whether the instance was negated and/or modified by modal verbs and, for unmodified instances, whether it occurred as a parenthetical or in a matrix clause with following *that*-complement clause. For the group of parentheticals, only instances in which the construction was used sentence-medially or sentence-finally were considered. Sentence-initial instances without overt

complementiser are in most cases structurally indeterminate and could be analysed either as parenthetical or as matrix clause with following complement clause with zero complementiser (Brinton 2008: 12). All these sentence-initial uses were included into the matrix clause category.

Table 1 gives an overview and examples of each of the categories. These examples provide a first illustration of the fact that the different structural types express stance to varying degrees. As I will further show in Section 5, practically all uses of *I say* and *I tell (you)* from the categories of parentheticals and matrix clauses followed by *that*-complement clause express epistemic and evidential stance. In contrast, the uses in the group 'other' are very varied, and many of these instances are not relevant from the point of view of stance. Finally, the modified uses are difficult to generalise, since the meaning depends on the modifier to a considerable extent. I will discuss this group in more detail in Section 5.2.

4. I say *and* I tell (you) *across CED text types*

Before I take a closer look at their functions, I will present an overview of the frequency of *I say* and *I tell (you)* across various text types in the CED. Tables 2 and 3 present the frequency of all instances that occur within text marked as direct speech, thus excluding the 14 instances occurring in passages other than direct speech. The frequencies are normalised on the basis of all words occurring in direct speech in the respective text type. Figures 1 and 2 present a visualisation of the same results, excluding the miscellaneous group of texts, which is very heterogeneous and, therefore, more difficult to interpret.

The results show striking parallels for *I say* and *I tell (you)*. The overall frequency is exactly the same (62.9 instances per 100,000 words). For both verbs, there is strong variation in the frequency across the different text types, and the distribution is similar; trial proceedings are the text type with the highest overall frequency, followed by drama comedy. Concerning structural types, modified instances are more frequent than unmodified instances for both verbs. For *I tell (you)*, this holds for all text types except the mixed group of texts labelled 'miscellaneous', whereas for *I say* some text types have a higher frequency of unmodified instances. Particularly noteworthy is drama comedy, which has a high frequency of parenthetical *I say* – twice as

high as the average of parenthetical *I say* across the corpus. The group 'other', which is of least relevance from the point of view of stance marking, contributes about 10% of all instances, 67 (12%) in the case of *I say* and 41 (7%) for *I tell (you)*.

Table 2. Frequency of *I say* across CED text types per 100,000 words of direct speech (and absolute number of instances)

	Unmodified						Modified			
	Parenthetical		Matrix + *that*		Other		All		**Total**	
Trials	1.2	(3)	12.3	(31)	2.8	(7)	74.5	(187)	**90.8**	**(228)**
Depositions	0.0	(0)	13.6	(4)	3.4	(1)	17.0	(5)	**34.0**	**(10)**
Drama	20.0	(44)	15.5	(34)	14.6	(32)	16.4	(36)	**66.5**	**(146)**
Didactic	8.8	(20)	7.0	(16)	6.6	(15)	21.5	(49)	**43.9**	**(100)**
Fiction	10.5	(15)	4.9	(7)	6.3	(9)	23.2	(33)	**45.0**	**(64)**
Misc.	12.6	(3)	25.1	(6)	12.6	(3)	8.4	(2)	**58.7**	**(14)**
Total	**9.5**	**(85)**	**11.0**	**(98)**	**7.5**	**(67)**	**34.9**	**(312)**	**62.9**	**(562)**

Table 3. Frequency of *I tell (you)* across CED text types per 100,000 words of direct speech (and absolute number of instances)

	Unmodified						Modified			
	Parenthetical		Matrix + *that*		Other		All		**Total**	
Trials	0.0	(0)	4.4	(11)	3.2	(8)	68.5	(172)	**76.1**	**(191)**
Depositions	0.0	(0)	0.0	(0)	0.0	(0)	30.6	(9)	**30.6**	**(9)**
Drama	7.3	(16)	14.1	(31)	4.6	(10)	44.2	(97)	**70.2**	**(154)**
Didactic	0.9	(2)	11.8	(27)	5.7	(13)	27.2	(62)	**45.6**	**(104)**
Fiction	3.5	(5)	11.2	(16)	7.0	(10)	40.1	(57)	**61.8**	**(88)**
Misc.	4.2	(1)	46.1	(11)	0.0	(0)	16.8	(4)	**67.1**	**(16)**
Total	**2.7**	**(24)**	**10.7**	**(96)**	**4.6**	**(41)**	**44.8**	**(401)**	**62.9**	**(562)**

Concerning differences between the two verbs, the most notable difference is the higher frequency of modified constructions for *I tell (you)* compared to *I say*. This is true for the corpus overall, but also for all of the text types except trial proceedings. There, *I say* has a higher frequency for almost all structural types, including modified constructions. In contrast, unmodified constructions are generally less frequent for *I tell (you)* than for *I say*, and the difference is particularly strong for parenthetical constructions.

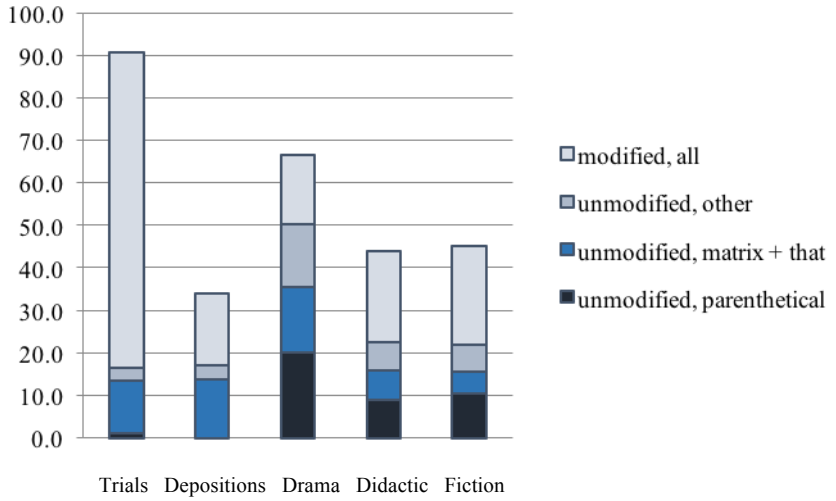

Figure 1. Frequency of *I say* across CED categories per 100,000 words of direct speech

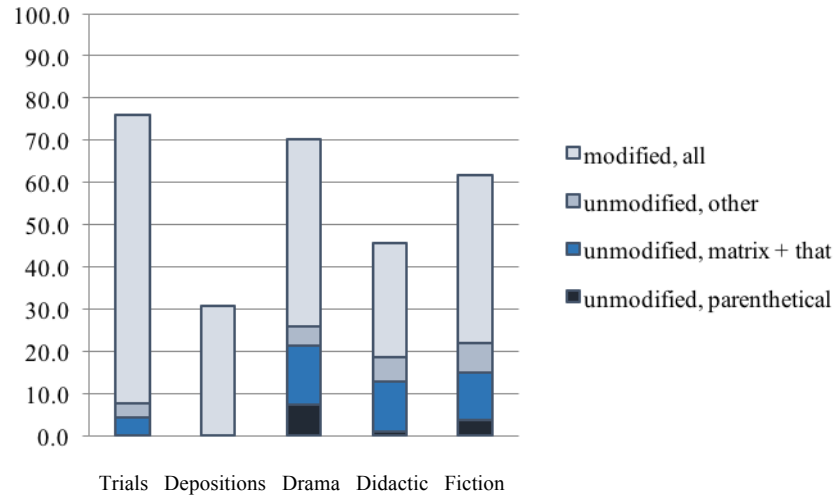

Figure 2. Frequency of *I tell (you)* across CED categories per 100,000 words of direct speech

5. Functions of I say *and* I tell (you) *in trial proceedings and in drama comedy*

In what follows, I will have a closer look at the functions of *I say* and *I tell (you)*, and at how these functions depend on the context of the speech situation. I will focus on two of the text types in the corpus, namely trial proceedings and drama comedy. These are the two text types in which *I say* and *I tell (you)* are most frequent, as the quantitative overview in Section 4 has shown. At the same time, the distribution of the structural types is very different for these two text types. Drama comedy is the text type in which most unmodified parentheticals and matrix clause + complement clause constructions were found. In contrast, trial proceedings have the highest frequency of modified instances.

In order to see how the functions of *I say* and *I tell (you)* relate to the context and the communicative situation, it is necessary to have a closer look at the main context parameters of trial proceedings and drama comedy. Table 4 provides an overview of these parameters. Perhaps the most obvious difference is that drama comedy texts are fictional and thus contain constructed dialogue, whereas trial proceedings contain authentic dialogue that was transcribed by a scribe (for a detailed discussion, see Kytö and Walker 2003; Walker 2007: 14–17). In addition, the two settings differ considerably with respect to participant constellation and formality. The trial setting is formal and given that the outcome of a trial was often literally a matter of life and death for the defendants, the situation was very serious. The participant roles in a trial are fixed and the power is distributed asymmetrically between the communicative participants, with judges and court officials being in charge, while defendants and witnesses have to comply. In contrast, the settings in drama comedy are much more varied and the power distribution between the participants can change during the interaction. The difference in setting can also be seen in the different verbal activities that are dominant. For trials, the main activities are questioning and testifying, and each of these activities is clearly assigned to different parties. In drama comedy, it is more difficult to identify dominant verbal activities. Activities that can frequently be found include arguing, fighting, joking and teasing, but they are by no means exclusive.

Table 4. Context parameters for Trials and Drama Comedy

	Trials	**Drama Comedy**
Authenticity	Authentic dialogue	Constructed dialogue
Participant constellation	Stable roles	Various participant constellations Changes in communicative roles possible
Formality	Formal setting Potentially grave consequences	Mostly light tone
Dominant verbal activities	Questioning Testifying	More varied, including arguing, fighting, joking, teasing

These parameters can influence language use and the function of linguistic expressions. Following Levinson (1979: 370) it is clear that activities like joking and testifying constrain verbal contributions, their functions, and interpretations quite directly. Expressions that are perfectly acceptable in the context of joking can be inappropriate and thus unlikely to occur in the context of giving testimony. Alternatively, the same utterance made when testifying can have a completely different meaning in the context of a joke. Formality constrains expressions in a similar way. In addition to suppressing colloquial expressions, very formal settings are often characterised by specialised meanings and formulaicity. Verbal activities, formality and participant roles are related to each other in systematic ways, and authenticity is related to these other factors, too, given that we do not have a choice between authentic and constructed data for the different settings. This means that it is often not possible to single out one of these parameters as the responsible factor behind differences in linguistic expressions and their functions.

I will start the analysis of *I say* and *I tell (you)* with a discussion of unmodified parentheticals and unmodified matrix clauses followed by *that*-complement clauses. In many ways, these instances are easiest to analyse, since they are more stable in meaning than the other uses. In Section 5.2, I will then take a closer look at the uses in which *I say* and *I tell (you)* are modified by modal verbs. By differentiating between the modals that are used, I will show that there are clear parallels with the results from the first part of the analysis. The uses with other constructions will not be included in the detailed analysis. They are very heterogeneous and not all of them are relevant for the expression of stance.

5.1 Main functions of parentheticals and matrix clauses followed by that-*complement clauses*

I restrict my discussion of unmodified instances of *I say* and *I tell (you)* to functions occurring more than once. Since the analysis is based on a relatively small set of instances, the classification cannot be tested for reliability. As a consequence, I do not provide exact frequencies for each function. Nevertheless, it is still possible to see differences and similarities between the uses of the two constructions by looking at the main functions with which they are used. Table 5 lists the functions that occur repeatedly in trial proceedings, including examples of each function.

By far the most frequent use of *I say* in trial proceedings is to mark a statement as official testimony. Three examples of this function are given under A in Table 5. Overall, 20 instances of *I say* in trial proceedings fall into this group. Often, *I say* is used to introduce facts about the identity of the speaker, as is the case in the first example given in Table 5. In other cases, *I say* precedes information that is given as part of the testimony. The second example is quite typical of this use. The witness uses *I say* before providing information as facts. There are only a few instances in which speakers explain how certain they are about the information they provide. The third example is one of these instances.

This first use of *I say* is very specific to the legal setting of trial proceedings. The expression appears to acquire a specialised meaning in which *say* does not just stand for 'uttering aloud' but for committing the speaker to the truthfulness of what is said. Speakers on the witness stand want to appear credible, and thus they want to present their statements as having a high degree of reliability. In the examples listed under A in Table 5 the speakers appear to use *I say* in order to claim such a high degree of reliability for their statements and, as a consequence, a high degree of credibility for themselves. The fact that *I say* can often be found at the beginning of statements by witnesses and defendants suggests a certain degree of formulaicity that is owed to the formal procedures at court. However, it is important to note that *I say* is not obligatory and fixed; sometimes *I say* occurs only in later turns and sometimes it is not used at all.

Table 5. Main functions of *I say* and *I tell you* in Trials (parentheticals and matrix clauses followed by *that*-complement clauses)

I say

A.) testifying, declaring under oath

> Leut. Col. Lilburn.: Well then Sir, according to your own explanation, *I say* my Name is John Lilburn sonne to M. Richard Lilburn, of the County of Durham, a Free-man of the City of London, and sometimes Lieutenant Colonel in the Parliaments Army;
> (Trials, *Triall, of Lieut. Collonell John Lilburne*, 1649)

> Record.: What is your Name Sir?
> Chad.: John Chadwick.
> Record.: Go on.
> Chad.: *I say* this John Giles was at my House between Eight and Nine a Clock.
> [...]
> Record.: Can you say any more to it?
> Chad.: No.
> (Trials, *Tryal of John Giles*, 1680/1681)

> Counsel for the prisoner.: If you never saw any of his writing upon parchment, and you admit this to be a stronger hand than his, what reason have you to say this deed is of his writing?
> James Dalby, Esq.: I have often seen Mr Ayliffe write, and I have received many letters from him; and *I say,* that the turn of the letters in this deed greatly resembles the manner of his hand-writing.
> (Trials, *Tryal ... of John Ayliffe*, 1759)

B.) clarification of previous statement

> Mr. Hungerford.: I am not understood. *I say* all that is offer'd against him is from the Papers found in his Custody.
> (Trials, *Tryal of Francis Francia*, 1716/1717)

C.) insisting on question

> Council,: Did any Body shew you the place beside Farewell.
> Batson,: I had no acquaintance with any but him.
> Council,: Did any shew you the place, but Farewell, *I say*?
> (Trials, *Tryal of Nathanael Thompson*, 1682)

D.) instructing witnesses / defendants

L. Ch. Just.: Take your own Method, Mr. Sidney; but *I say*, if you are a man of low Spirits and weak Body, 'tis a Duty incumbent upon the Court, to exhort you not to spend your time upon things that are not material.
(Trials, "Algernon Sidney", 1683/1684)

I tell (you)

E.) testifying, declaring under oath

Mr. Williams,: Mr. Common Serjeant, you say, you heard this; can you name any person?
Mr. Com. Serj.: *I tell you* I caught hold of him, and the Rabble got him from me.
Mr. Williams: Can you name any one?
Mr. Com. Serj.: *I tell you* I cannot.
(Trials, *Tryal of Tho. Pilkington*, 1682/1683)

F.) instructing witnesses / defendants

L. Col. Lilb.: By your favour, Sir, thus, then let me have a little time to consult with counsell.
L. Keble.: *I tell you,* That if the matter bee proved, there needs no counsell.
(Trials, *Triall, of Lieut. Collonell John Lilburne*, 1649)

All the other functions of *I say* do not occur more than two or three times each in the trial proceedings of the CED. The examples given in Table 5 illustrate their use. Function B is closely related to the first function. The uses in this group also occur in turns by defendants and witnesses and *I say* is again used to emphasise the fact that the statement that follows is the speaker's official testimony. What differentiates this use from A is the fact that it occurs in a context in which the speaker feels that his or her statement has been misunderstood and needs clarification. *I say* has an even clearer meta-communicative character here compared to A; it helps differentiate between what was said (and intended) and what was not said. In contrast to the first two functions, functions C and D occur in turns by court officials. In C *I say* is used to insist that a previously posed question should be answered completely. The original question is repeated, followed by *I say*. Finally, D refers to uses in which court officials instruct witnesses or defendants about the rules and proceedings of the court.

All these uses are clearly tied to specific participant roles of the communicative situation. While the first two uses occur in the turns of witnesses and defendants, the last two uses occur in the turns of judges

and other court officials. This is related to the different communicative activities of the participants. What all four uses have in common is that they express a strong commitment to the statement with which they are used. Witnesses and defendants commit to the truth of their statement with functions A and B, while court officials insist on their power and the illucutionary force of their statements with functions C and D. Irrespective of role, all uses clearly help establish the stance of the speaker.

There were only eleven relevant instances of *I tell (you)* in trial proceedings, which provides a very small basis for investigating the functions of the construction. However, what is noteworthy is that two of the functions that were identified for *I say* can also be found for *I tell (you)*. There are three instances in which *I tell (you)* refers to testifying and which are very similar to function A. In contrast to the uses of *I say*, the uses of *I tell (you)* occur in contexts in which the same or very similar information has already been provided earlier, so that *I tell (you)* in these data has a stronger connotation of confirming previous statements than *I say*. The second function for *I tell (you)* is instructing witnesses and defendants. There are five instances of this function in my data, and they are very similar to function D for *I say*. The remaining instances have functions which do not occur repeatedly.

The functions of *I say* and *I tell (you)* in drama comedy show differences to those found in trial proceedings. By far the most frequent function of *I say* is the one listed as G in Table 6. This use occurs together with imperatives and it serves as a booster for the speaker's request of the addressee. About one third of all instances of *I say* in drama comedy fall into this group. The next two functions, H and I, are closely related to each other. In both cases, speakers use *I say* when expressing their personal opinion or point of view. What distinguishes the two is that in H *I say* is used to emphasise information that has been provided before. Often, this occurs in the context of arguments in which both parties insist on their point and in several cases, *I say* occurs in two consecutive turns, as in the example given in Table 6. This use has some parallels with one of the functions found for trial proceedings, function C, used by court officials when insisting that a question should be answered. The example used to illustrate function I is one of the few cases in which *I say* occurs in a context in which the degree of commitment to the truth of the statement is hedged. The insertion *(for my*

part) signals that the speaker is going to present his own opinion, with which others might disagree. The last function, J, refers to cases in which speakers use *I say* to introduce a decision, especially as to whether or not they are complying with a request by the addressee. Like most of the other functions this was not found in trial proceedings. However, there is a certain similarity between this use and use A, testifying, in that both mark that the following statement is binding, be it as official testimony in a court trial or as mutual agreement between the interactants in a drama comedy.

Table 6. Main functions of *I say* and *I tell (you)* in Drama Comedy (parentheticals and matrix clauses followed by *that*-complement clauses)

I say
G.) emphasis / boosting (especially with imperatives) Men.: Tell me wife, what hath he told ye of me? Tell me *I say*, what was it? (Drama Comedy, *Menaecmi*, 1595)
H.) insisting on a point Har.: But sirha: what made you in that tree? My man and I at foot of yonder hill Were by three knaues robd of three hundred pound. But.: A shrewd losse berlady sir, but your good worship may now see the fruit of being miserable: You will ride but with one man to saue hors-meat and mans meat at your Inne at night, & lose three hundred pound in a morning. Har.: Sirha, *I say* I ha lost three hundred pound. But.: And *I say* sir, I wish all miserable knights might bee serued so: For had you kept halfe a dozen tall fellowes, as a man of your coat should do, they woulde haue helpt now to keep your money. (Drama Comedy, *The Miseries of Inforst Mariage*, 1607)
I.) expressing opinions and judgements Bar.: Why sir, (for my part) *I say* the Gentleman had drunke himselfe out of his fiue sentences. (Drama Comedy, *The Merry Wiues of Windsor*, 1623)
J.) introducing decision (especially in context of requests) Perin.: Very wel, and what say you maister Squire. Squire,: *I say* that my reuenewes are but small, yet I will lend his Maiestie ten pound: (Drama Comedy, *A Knacke to Knowe a Knaue*, 1594)

I tell (you)

K.) assuring

> Per.: Sir, feare not, I wil do it for you, I warrant you, For *I tel you* I can do much with the King.
> (Drama Comedy, *A Knacke to Knowe a Knaue*, 1594)

L.) insisting on a point in an argument

> Har.: Was it so.
> But.: Nay twas so sir.
> Har.: Nay then *I tell thee* they tooke into this wood.
> But.: And *I tell thee* (setting thy worsh. knighthood aside) he lyes in his throat that saies so: Had not one of them a white Frocke? Did they not bind your worships knighthoode by the thumbs? then fagoted you and the fool your man, back to back.
> (Drama Comedy, *The Miseries of Inforst Mariage*, 1607)

M.) emphasis / boosting (especially with threats)

> Sir Tim.: If you do Sir, I will fight Sir, *I tell you* that Sir. hah,
> (Drama Comedy, *The Lancashire-Witches*, 1682)

The most frequent function of *I tell (you)* in drama comedy is assuring the addressee, as illustrated in Table 6 under K. This function accounts for roughly 30 percent of the instances. Like *I say*, *I tell (you)* is repeatedly used in arguments when a speaker insists on a point that was previously made. *I tell (you)* is less frequently used as a booster than *I say*. When it is used in this function, it tends to occur with threats rather than requests, as can be seen in the example given for function M. Overall, *I tell (you)* tends to have a somewhat stronger relational component than *I say*. For instance, the uses of *I tell (you)* that are most similar to function I for *I say*—expressing the opinion of the speaker—tend to involve a considerable degree of either assuring or advising the addressee. It seems that this is related to the presence of the second person pronoun, which is used in all of the unmodified instances of parentheticals and matrix clause + complement clause constructions of *I tell (you)* in drama comedy and trial proceedings.

Comparing the findings from trial proceedings with those from drama comedy there are three main observations. First, there are some general similarities in meaning across both settings and both constructions. In practically all uses I analysed, *I say* and *I tell (you)* express a strong commitment to the truth of the statement with which they occur. This means that these parenthetical and matrix clause +

complement clause constructions are highly relevant for the study of stance. Second, the functions of *I say* and *I tell (you)* show considerable similarities, which tend to be stronger than the similarities of each construction across the two settings. Indeed, in many cases, *I say* and *I tell (you)* appear to be more or less interchangeable with respect to their meaning.[3] Finally, the context plays an important role for the functions with which *I say* and *I tell (you)* are used. Both constructions tend to be used with somewhat different functions in the two settings, and there is more homogeneity in the functions found in trial proceedings than in those found in drama comedy. As discussed above, it is difficult to identify which factors are mainly responsible for the variation. However, the results suggest that participant roles and activity types may be the most important factors. Trial proceedings contain only a limited number of participant roles, each of which has clearly associated activities. This corresponds with the high degree of homogeneity in the observed functions. Moreover, some functions in trial proceedings are used almost exclusively by participants who are being questioned, while other functions are used only by participants who are in power. In contrast, drama comedy contains more varied roles and activity types, which might explain why the functions of the two expressions are more varied. A closer analysis of the participant roles in other settings and their relation to the functions of meta-communicative expressions would be an interesting starting point for further research.

5.2 Frequent constructions with modal verbs

I will now briefly turn to those instances of *I say* and *I tell (you)* that are modified by modal verbs. Table 7 gives an overview of the constructions I found, ordered by frequency. Constructions that were observed less than three times are not listed, but the total number of examples this applies to is given in Table 7 at the end of each list. The information in Table 7 shows that the marked differences in frequency between trial proceedings and drama comedy are mainly due to constructions

[3] There are other factors that can make one of the two constructions the preferred or even exclusive option. For instance, the booster *I say* in drama comedy is often used when asking someone to provide information, as in "Tell me, *I say*" (see the example for function G in Table 6). The lexical repetition makes *I tell (you)* a very unlikely choice in this context.

containing the modal *can*. For *say* there are 108 instances of *I cannot say* or *I can't say* and 32 instances of affirmative *I can say*. Together, they account for 75 percent of all modified instances of *I say* in trial proceedings. This is very similar for *I tell (you)*, where 74 percent of all modified instances are cases with *cannot, can't* or *can*. The dominance of *I cannot say* and *I cannot tell* in trial proceedings can also be seen in the results of a study by Culpeper and Kytö (2010: 116–117). Their analysis of lexical bundles in the CED identified *I cannot say* and *I cannot tell* as two of the twenty most frequent lexical bundles in trial proceedings.

Table 7. Frequent modal modifications of *I say* and *I tell (you)* in Trials and Drama Comedy

	Trials	**Drama Comedy**
I say	Total: 187 *I cannot/can't say:* 108 *I can say:* 32 *I dare say:* 6 *I must say:* 5 *I have to say:* 4 *I should say:* 4 *I will say:* 4 *I dare not say:* 3 *I do say:* 3 *I shall say:* 3 other: 15	Total: 36 *I will say:* 5 *I dare say:* 4 *I do not / don't say:* 4 *I may say:* 4 *I must needs say:* 3 *I must say:* 3 other: 13
I tell (you)	Total: 172 *I cannot / can't tell (you)*: 122 *I will tell (you)*: 17 *I could not tell (you)*: 9 *I must tell (you)*: 8 *I can tell (you)*: 6 *I could tell (you)*: 3 *I do tell (you)*: 3 *I shall tell (you)*: 3 other: 1	Total: 97 *I cannot / can't tell (you)*: 29 *I will tell (you)*: 24 *I can tell (you)*: 12 *I must tell (you)*: 10 *I may tell (you)*: 3 *I will not / won't tell (you)*: 3 other: 16

The remaining modal verbs play a minor role compared to this, and their distribution does not show striking differences across the two settings. Most noteworthy regarding these other modal verbs is, perhaps, that for

both *I say* and *I tell (you)* only drama comedy has at least three instances with *may*.

A more detailed study of the uses with *cannot* in trial proceedings shows that they are used in a very consistent manner, illustrated in examples (5)–(7). Again, the uses are to some extent formulaic and they are clearly related to participant roles and activity types. They occur in turns by witnesses or defendants and serve to indicate that the speaker does not have sufficient evidence for making a statement. In some cases, the entire turn consists only of *I cannot say* or *I cannot tell*, as in the first and third instance in example (5). In other cases, the speaker provides explanations why he or she cannot provide any further information, as in examples (6) and (7). The affirmative *I can say* is used to mark that the statement represents the full extent of information available to the speaker, as can be seen in examples (8) and (9). This is made especially clear by the formulation *all I can say* used in example (9), which can be found repeatedly.

(5) Q.: Was the Royal-Oak the Leewardmost of the four Ships a-stern of you?
A.: *I cannot say.*
[...]
Q.: When you saw her Smoke, was she at the proper Distance to engage the Enemy?
A.: No, *I cannot say,* but I think not.
Q.: Whether was the Royal-Oak or the Rupert at the greatest Distance?
A.: *I cannot say.*
(Trials, *Trial of Captain Edmund Williams*, 1745)

(6) Lord High Steward.: What Day or Night, was all this you speak of?
Dixon.: Truly my Lord, *I cannot tell* what Day it was, it was in December, as I take it, the 9th. and it was Friday I believe, I do not know justly.
(Trials, *Tryal of Charles Lord Mohun*, 1692/1693)

(7) Att. Gen.: VVere there not letters sent to Scotland to them, and back again hither, about sending moderate propositions to the King?
M. Adams.: There was such letters.
L. Pres.: VVho writ them?
Mr. Adams.: That *I cannot tell.*
L. Pres.: Had Mr. Love a hand in them?
M. Adams.: *I cannot say* he had. I cannot prove a negative, *I cannot say* he had not.
(Trials, *Triall of Mr Love*, 1651/1652)

(8) L. C. J.: Maid, can you say that he was always at home at night?
Mary Tilden.: *I can say* he never was abroad after eight at night.
(Trials, *Tryals of Robert Green*, 1678/1679)

(9) Att. Gen.: Now we speak of a letter from Alderman Bunce, and others?
Adams.: I cannot speak particularly to that; for I did not see them, but they were told me by one or other of those that were of the correspondency, and this is *all I can say*.
(Trials, *Triall of Mr Love*, 1651/1652)

In drama comedy, instances with *can* and *cannot* are far less frequent than in trial proceedings. The most frequent construction, *I cannot tell*, sometimes occurs in a very similar way to the uses described for trial proceedings above. Example (10) contains such an instance. Like in the examples from trial proceedings, the speaker replies to a question and indicates both her lack of information as well as the reason for it. She is a witness of some kind, but the setting—a conversation with her husband's ward Jacintha—is far less formal than a court trial. Example (11) contains an instance of *I can't tell* with a very different meaning. Here the speaker refers to his physical inability to speak.

(10) Jacin.: Was he really a pretty Fellow?
Mrs. Strict.: That *I can't tell.* I did not dance myself, and so did not much mind him. You must have the whole Story from herself.
(Drama Comedy, *The Suspicious Husband*, 1747)

(11) Town.: Love and the Hickup have seiz'd me so of the sudden, *I can't tell* the dear Creature how much I love the Tip of her little Finger.
(Drama Comedy, *Chit-Chat*, 1719)

Again, the quantitative distribution of modal modifiers and the functions with which constructions with *can* and *cannot* are used show strong variation across the two contexts. Trial proceedings contain more and different constructions with modal verbs than drama comedy. In addition, the functions found for constructions with *can* and *cannot* are more consistently related to the epistemic stance of the speaker in trial proceedings.

The results also show that some of the modifications—especially *I cannot say* and *I cannot tell*, and to a lesser extent *I can say* and *I can tell*—are very frequent. They constitute a large proportion of the modified instances of *I say* and *I tell* and some constructions are

considerably more frequent than unmodified *I say* and *I tell*, at least for trial proceedings. This means that restricting the analysis to unmodified instances only would result in a very limited view of *I say* and *I tell (you)* in these texts.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study have shown that both *I say* and *I tell (you)* often express stance in Early Modern English dialogues from trial proceedings and drama comedy. Unmodified parentheticals and matrix clauses with *that*-complement clauses usually express emphasis and a strong commitment to the truth of the proposition. The most frequent modified constructions contain the modal *can* and these instances are often used to express the extent of information available to the speaker, especially in trial proceedings. Together, modified instances with *can* and unmodified parentheticals and matrix clauses with *that*-complement clauses—all of which tend to be directly relevant to stance—make up the large majority of instances in trial proceedings and drama comedy. This means that *I say* and *I tell (you)* are relevant for the study of stance in these texts.

The analysis provides various types of evidence for the dependency on the situational context of the two expressions. The quantitative evaluation showed clear variation across the different text types in the corpus. The detailed study of the functions identified differences between trial proceedings and drama comedy and it is noteworthy that the differences between trial proceedings and drama comedy were overall more marked than the differences between *I say* and *I tell (you)*. To some extent, these differences can be viewed as text-type differences and formulaicity plays a certain role. However, participant roles and activity types appear to be important too. In trial proceedings it becomes particularly clear how different functions correlate with different roles and verbal activities. It would be interesting to extend this study to other data in order to see whether the same functions of *I say* and *I tell (you)* can be found in other text types that contain the same or similar verbal activities.

Concerning the suitability of the two expressions for the study of context-dependency of stance marking, some limitations have to be mentioned. The functions vary across the different constructions in

which they occur. This makes it necessary to differentiate between the constructions, which cannot be done without manual analysis. In addition, the classification of the functions is not always straightforward and relies on interpretation that is subjective to some extent. Last but not least, it is clear that it is not possible to achieve a comprehensive view on stance by looking at meta-communication only, and even less by restricting the analysis to just two expressions.

Still, the study of meta-communicative expressions like *I say* and *I tell (you)* can provide insights into the context-dependency of stance markers. The expressions are very often used to express stance and they strongly depend on the situational context. In addition, they have the advantage that they are quite frequent and relatively easy to retrieve, even from large corpora. Thus, they can reveal differences between different (sub-)corpora relatively quickly. For future research, it would be interesting to expand the analysis to texts from other settings and to include additional meta-communicative expressions. In addition, differentiating between different roles and the identities of the language users would provide further insights into how the expression of stance depends on social factors—an aspect that has not yet been explored in detail.

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