Shakespeare’s Language

Dr Sean Murphy
Lancaster University

@ShakespeareLang
http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/shakespearelang/
Outline

Encyclopaedia of Shakespeare’s Language

Shakespeare’s errors

Features of Shakespeare’s language
What is “Shakespeare’s Language”?

- First Folio 1623 – Shakespeare dead for 7 years
- Good quartos, Bad quartos
- Play text – manuscript fragments
- Collaboration among playwrights
- Plagiarism – a compliment?
- No record of Shakespeare’s spoken language
- SO, Shakespeare’s language = surviving texts
The Encyclopaedia of Shakespeare’s Language

- **Encyclopaedia of Shakespeare's Language**
- **Volume 1:** A kind of dictionary which focuses on:
  - use and meanings of Shakespeare's words
    - in the context of what he wrote
    - in the context in which he wrote
- **Every word in Shakespeare is compared with:**
  - a 1 million word corpus of other contemporary playwrights
  - a 379 million word corpus of other contemporary publications
The Encyclopaedia of Shakespeare’s Language

Volume 2: A compendium of linguistic profiles based on comparisons, e.g.:

- The play Hamlet v. all Shakespeare’s other plays
- The character Hamlet’s speech v. all other characters in Hamlet
- All tragedies (incl. Hamlet) v. all comedies and histories

Volume 3: focuses on grammatical words and patterns

- plays
- characters
- genders (female/male/assumed female/assumed male)
- social status (scale 0-7)
- dramatic genres (comedy/history/tragedy)
- concepts (e.g. love, death)
Social status of characters

• Is the word ‘prithee’ more commonly used by higher or lower status characters?
• Is a clown’s language different from that of his social betters?
• What sort of language is used by characters of low social status?
**Social status for each character**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Status</th>
<th>Representative Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monarchy (0)</td>
<td>Queen, King</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobility (1)</td>
<td>Duke, Earl, Baron, Archbishop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentry (2)</td>
<td>Knight, General, Gentleman, Ambassador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional (3)</td>
<td>priest, doctor, lawyer, schoolmaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middling (4)</td>
<td>merchant, captain, steward, jester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commoners (5)</td>
<td>hostess, joiner, apprentice, shepherdess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest (6)</td>
<td>servant, messenger, common soldier, guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supernatural (7)</td>
<td>ghost, fairy, spirit, god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problematic (p)</td>
<td>actor, poet, musician, character who undergoes a significant change of status</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Characters per social group

- Monarchy (0): 78
- Nobility (1): 379
- Gentry (2): 263
- Professional (3): 102
- Middling (4): 71
- Commoners (5): 90
- Lowest (6): 324
- Supernatural (7): 41
- Problematic (0): 54
Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593)
William Shakespeare (1564-1616)
Ben Jonson (1572-1637)
Thomas Kyd (1558-1594)
Thomas Dekker (c.1570-1632)
John Lyly (1554-1606)
Philip Massinger (1583-1640)
Thomas Heywood (c.1574-1641)

Thomas Drue (c.1586-1627)
Anthony Munday (1553-1633)
George Wilkins (c.1576-1618)
John Fletcher (1579-1625)
John Webster (c.1578-1634)
George Chapman (c.1559-c.1634)
Robert Greene (1558-1592)
George Peele (1556-1596)
Thomas Middleton (1580-1627)
Henry Porter (d.1599)
John Marston (c.1575-1634)
William Rowley (1585-1637)

Francis Beaumont (1584-1616)
Thomas Drue (c.1586-1627)
John Fletcher (1579-1625)
George Wilkins (c.1576-1618)
William Shakespeare (1564-1616)
Thomas Kyd (1558-1594)
Thomas Dekker (c.1570-1632)
John Lyly (1554-1606)
Ben Jonson (1572-1637)
Philip Massinger (1583-1640)
Thomas Heywood (c.1574-1641)
Thomas Drue (c.1586-1627)
John Fletcher (1579-1625)
George Wilkins (c.1576-1618)
William Shakespeare (1564-1616)
Thomas Kyd (1558-1594)
Thomas Dekker (c.1570-1632)
John Lyly (1554-1606)
Ben Jonson (1572-1637)
Philip Massinger (1583-1640)
Thomas Heywood (c.1574-1641)
Data and genre: *Early English Books Online (TCP)*

1560-1639 (379 million words; 5,750 texts categorized by genre, domain and style)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Styles</th>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Genres</th>
<th>Sub-genres (examples)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literary</td>
<td>Imaginative</td>
<td>Plays&lt;br&gt;Poetry, Verse &amp; Song&lt;br&gt;Fiction&lt;br&gt;General</td>
<td>Comedy, History, Tragedy, Masque Ballads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal – Spiritual</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Bible&lt;br&gt;Catholicism&lt;br&gt;Protestantism&lt;br&gt;Doctrine, Theology and Governance&lt;br&gt;General</td>
<td>Anti-Catholicism&lt;br&gt;Church of England&lt;br&gt;Sin and Repentance&lt;br&gt;Sermons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal - Statutory</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Royal&lt;br&gt;Parliamentary&lt;br&gt;Legal&lt;br&gt;General</td>
<td>Proceedings&lt;br&gt;Reports&lt;br&gt;Trials&lt;br&gt;Speeches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal - Instructional</td>
<td>Didactic</td>
<td>Philosophy&lt;br&gt;Science&lt;br&gt;Mathematics&lt;br&gt;Medicine&lt;br&gt;General</td>
<td>Experiments&lt;br&gt;Anatomy&lt;brAlchemy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>Factual</td>
<td>Biography&lt;br&gt;Essay&lt;br&gt;Letters&lt;br&gt;Pamphlets&lt;br&gt;General</td>
<td>Dialogue&lt;br&gt;Food and Cookery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shakespeare dictionaries: *good*

- *Onions* (1911): (1) Conventional epithet to titles of high rank, (2) comely, (3) Financially sound; (hence) wealthy, substantial.

- *Crystal & Crystal* (2004): (1) [intensifying use] real, genuine (‘love no man in good earnest’). (2) kind, benevolent, generous. (3) kind, friendly, sympathetic. (4) amenable, tractable, manageable. (5) honest, virtuous, honourable. (6) seasonable, appropriate proper. (7) just, right, commendable. (8) intended, right, proper. (9) high-ranking, highborn, distinguished. (10) rich, wealthy, substantial.
**good**

(gud ə)

**Word forms:** comparative **better** , superlative **best**

1. adjective

**Good** means pleasant or enjoyable.

*We had a really good time together.*
*I know they would have a better life here.*
*There's nothing better than a good cup of hot coffee.*
*It's so good to hear your voice after all this time.*

2. adjective

**Good** means of a high quality, standard, or level.

*Exercise is just as important to health as good food.*
*His parents wanted Raymond to have the best possible education.*
*The train's average speed was no better than that of our bicycles.*
*...good quality furniture.*
The Encyclopaedia of Shakespeare’s Language: good

Encyclopaedia of Shakespeare's Language

Definition preview: definition 104 for entry good_ADJ

**good**** adj. (good, better, best):
1. A polite address: '(my) good Lord/friend/Sir/Master/Lady/Madam/etc.' Typically used when meeting or parting, thanking or making suggestions. But *(good my Lord)* do it so cunningly TGV, III. 1.
2. Honest, truthful, principled; of high moral standards. (This sense also shapes the discourse markers '(in) good faith/sooth/troth', which mean truly or honestly). *a man of good repute, carriage, bearing, & estimation* LLL, I. 1.
3. Positive rather than negative. Typically, contrasted with 'bad'. *Is thy news good or bad?* ROM, II. 5.
4. In one's favour, especially favourable wishes or blessings. *The Gods be good to us* COR, V. 4.
5. A welcoming, cheerful manner. *Therefore for Gods sake entertain good comfort, And cheer his Grace with quick and merry eyes* R3, I. 3.

**good will** As now.
**good morrow** Good morning.
**good night** As now.
Three’s a crowd
Henry VIII, Katherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn
A quick guide to keywords

**Corpus A**
- King Henry’s speech
- Make wordlist A

**Corpus B**
- All other characters’ speech
- Make wordlist B

**Compare**
- Compare wordlists
- Statistical significance (99% sure)
  - King Henry’s keywords

**Statistically**
- much more frequent in A than B - positive keywords
- much less frequent in A than B - negative keywords
King Henry
Keywords: we, ha, prithee

Henry speaks like a king, particularly in his use of the royal we (and also us and our'). 'Sit by us' (1.2.124), he says to Katherine. Henry's characteristic exclamation is Ha. It occurs with an interrogative in eight out of nine cases. Ha? is an interjection in the form of a question which invites the addressee to agree to something. It is a linguistic character trait which may be interpreted as Henry having a quick-tempered and intimidating personality:

Henry: Who am I? Ha?

Norfolk: A gracious King (2.2.65-66)

His keyword prithee is always used before an imperative, 'Prithee come hither' (1.4)
Katherine of Aragon
Keywords: I, woman, trouble

Collocates of Katherine's keywords woman and women include 'poor', 'simple', 'weak', 'wretched' and 'unhappy'; ‘I am a Woman friendless, hopeless’, she says (3.1.80). Together, they paint a depressing picture of the status and regard for women in the period, at least from Katherine's perspective.

She regards herself as a source of trouble for her husband and as she is dying, she tells her gentleman usher to tell the king that: 'his long trouble now is passing / Out of this world' (4.2.162-163).
Anne Bullen (Boleyn)  
Keywords: not, pity, she

Anne refers to Katherine often, using *she* and *her*, and claims to feel *pity* for her: 'she / So good a Lady' (2.3.3); 'So much the more / Must pity drop upon her' (2.3.18).

Anne is courted by Henry, but appears full of doubts, reflected by *not*: 'I would not be a Queen' (2.3.24).

However, when Henry makes her Marchioness of Pembroke and gives her a thousand pounds a year, she says with great modesty: 'I do not know / What kind of my obedience, I should tender' (2.3.65-66). In reality, her use of negatives equates to a modest acceptance and she knows very well what obedience she must tender.
Features of Shakespeare’s language
Functional shift

I like to verb words. What?
I take nouns and adjectives and use them as verbs. Remember when “access” was a thing? Now it’s something you do. It got verbed.

Verbing weirds language. Maybe we can eventually make language a complete impediment to understanding.

You should tweet that! Let me Google it! I’m going to Bing him! That moment is Instagrammable! I’m going to tumble that! Do you want to Skype? You should Facebook that! I’m going to Photoshop your photo!
Shakespeare loved functional shift

Noun → verb
Tut, tut! Grace me no grace, nor uncle me no uncle. (R2 2.3.86)

Noun → adjective
Kingdomed Achilles in commotion rages (TC 2.3.173)

Adverb → noun
Thou losest here a better where to find (KL 1.1.126)

In Hamlet
the sepulchre Wherein we saw thee quietly inurned (1.4.27-28)
noun → verb
And many suchlike 'as'es of great charge (5.2.43) conj. → noun
So why does Shakespeare use functional shift?

• It increases the number of words you can use up/down (adv/prep): I’m having a lot of **ups and downs** (noun)

• Neuroscientific tests show that functional shift can have ‘distinct and unique’ effects on the brain.

A) You said you would **accompany** me.
B) You said you would **charcoal** me.
C) You said you would **incubate** me.
D) You said you would **companion** me.
WE DON'T NEED
NO EDUCATION
Multiple negation

Famous
You ain’t heard nothing yet.  
I can’t get no satisfaction.

Shakespeare
I have one heart, one bosom and one truth.  
And that no woman has, nor never none
Shall mistress be of it, save I alone. (TN 3.1.155)
Nor understood none neither sir. (LLL 5.1.144)

Hamlet
Hamlet: What man dost thou dig it for?  
First Clown: For no man, sir.  
Hamlet: What woman then?  
First Clown: For none neither. (Ham 5.1.131)
## False friends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>word</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>catastrophe</td>
<td>Like the <strong>catastrophe</strong> of the old comedy (KL 1.2.133)</td>
<td>final conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glass</td>
<td>You go not till I set you up a <strong>glass</strong> (Ham 3.4.20)</td>
<td>mirror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issue</td>
<td>To what <strong>issue</strong> will this come? (Ham 1.4.64)</td>
<td>result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>table, meet</td>
<td>My <strong>tables</strong>, my <strong>tables</strong>! <strong>Meet</strong> it is I set it down (Ham 1.5.107)</td>
<td>notebook / appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>owe, intelligence</td>
<td>Say from whence / You <strong>owe</strong> this strange <strong>intelligence</strong> (Mac 1.3.75)</td>
<td>got (and now possess), information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bully</td>
<td>I love the lovely <strong>bully</strong> (H5 4.1.48)</td>
<td>good friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>want</td>
<td>A beast that <strong>wants</strong> discourse of reason / Would have mourned longer (Ham 1.2.150)</td>
<td>lacks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Typical Shakespearean words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>word</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cuckold</td>
<td>I could marry this <strong>girl</strong> (TN 2.5.175)</td>
<td>wench</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fain</td>
<td>[the] spirit <strong>hurries</strong> / To his confine (Ham 1.1.156)</td>
<td>hies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forbear</td>
<td>I <strong>would like it just as much</strong> if the town-crier had spoke my lines (Ham 3.2.3-4)</td>
<td>had as lief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hie</td>
<td>who would not make her husband a <strong>husband of an unfaithful wife</strong>, to make him a monarch? (Oth 4.3.75)</td>
<td>cuckold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had as lief</td>
<td>Who calls me villain? Breaks my <strong>head</strong> across? (Ham 2.2.569)</td>
<td>pate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pate</td>
<td>I would <strong>happily</strong> prove [to be a faithful and honourable man] (Ham 2.2.131)</td>
<td>fain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wench</td>
<td>For love of God, <strong>stop</strong> him (Ham 5.1.269)</td>
<td>forbear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Metre – the rhythm of speech

Iambic (unstressed-stressed) pentameter (5 times in a line)

If mu /-sic be / the food / of love, / play on (TN 1.1.1)
ADD A SUFFIX - vastly

Can this cockpit hold

The vast /-y fields / of France? / Or may / we cram

(H5 Prologue 11-12)

ADD A PREFIX - disbenched

Sir, I hope

My words / disbenched / you not (Cor 2.2.69)

CHANGE THE WORD ORDER

• I saw / your son / walking / so early
• So ear /-ly walk /-ing did / I see / your son (RJ 1.1.123)
Archaic forms

**woo’t** – wouldst thou (would you)

*Woo't* weep? *Woo't* fight? *Woo't* fast? *Woo't* tear thyself? (Ham V.i.271)

**yclept** - called

Judas I am, *yclept* Maccabaeus (LLL V.ii.594)

**trow** – guess, know

'Twas time, I *trow*, to wake and leave our beds (1H6 II.i.41)

**eyne** – eyes

To what, my love, shall I compare thine *eyne*? (MND III.ii.138)

**shoon** - shoes

[Ophelia singing] And his sandal *shoon* (Ham IV.v.26)
LEAR what can you say to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters'?
Speak!

CORDELIA
Nothing, my lord.

LEAR
Nothing?

CORDELIA
Nothing.

LEAR
Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.

CORDELIA
I love your majesty
According to my bond, no more nor less.

LEAR
How, how, Cordelia! Mend your speech a little
Lest you may mar your fortunes.

CORDELIA
Good my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, loved me.
I return those duties back as are right fit,
Obey you, love you, and most honour you.

LEAR
But goes thy heart with this?

...Let it be so! Thy truth then be thy dower!

...thou my sometime daughter.

(KL 1.1.85-120)
thou (thee, thy, thine)  

you (you, your, yours)

Use of thou or you can depend on a variety of factors:

- **number**
  - talking to one **thou**; talking to more than one **you**

- **status**
  - high to high: **you**; low to low: **you/thou**
  - higher to lower: **thou**; lower to higher: **you**

- **intimacy**: ‘Wherefore art **thou** Romeo?’ (RJ 2.2.33)

- **insult**: ‘If **thou thou’st** him some thrice’ (TN 3.2.43)

- **non-human**: ‘I have **thee** not, and yet I see **thee** still’ (Mac 2.1.35)
you and thou: Lady Macbeth/Macbeth

LADY MACBETH
He has almost supp'd. Why have you left the chamber?
MACBETH
Hath he ask'd for me?
LADY MACBETH
Know you not, he has?
MACBETH
We will proceed no further in this business

LADY MACBETH Was the hope drunk,
Wherein you dress'd yourself?
... From this time
Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard
To be the same in thine own act and valour,
As thou art in desire? ...
(Mac 1.7.29-41)
Rhetoric

- Medieval universities – liberal arts – ‘trivium’ of basic subjects: grammar, logic, rhetoric – the art of persuasion
- Students learned to structure and present arguments, using rhetorical devices
- Bdelygmia: a list of abusive terms

KENT (to OSWALD)
A knave, a rascal, ...a base, proud, shallow, beggarly ...knave, a whoreson, glass-gazing, ...and art nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, pander and the son and heir of a mongrel bitch

(KL 2.2.14-22)
Rhetorical devices in *Hamlet*

**Apostrophe** - exclamatory address

*O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?*  
(1.5.92)

**Chiasmus** – repetition in reverse order

*That he is mad ‘tis true, ‘tis true ‘tis pity / And pity ‘tis ‘tis true*  
(2.2.97-98)

**Hendiadys** – one thing in two

*Within the book and volume of my brain*  
(1.5.110)

**Hyperbole** - exaggeration

*Forty thousand brothers / Could not with all their quantity of love / Make up my sum*  
(5.1.269-271)
Rhetorical devices in Othello

Anadiplosis – reduplicate

OTHELLO Is he not honest?
IAGO Honest, my lord?
OTHELLO Honest? Ay, honest.
IAGO My lord, for aught I know.
OTHELLO What dost thou think?
IAGO Think, my lord?
OTHELLO Think, my lord! By heaven, thou echo'st me

(3.3.103-109)

Metonomy - name change

an old black ram / Is tupp ing your white ewe! (1.1.87-88)

Hypallage - words in the wrong place

Alas, what ignorant sin have I committed? (4.2.71)

Antanaclesis - play on words

Put out the light, and then put out the light (5.2.7)
SOLILOQUY

+ LOVE  
+ O  
+ FIE

+ YET, AND, THUS

+ I, MY, MYSELF

+ Comedy - LOVE
+ History - KING
+ Tragedy - O

- SIR, LORD, LADY
- TELL, GO, SPEAK
- PEACE

DREAM, SLEEP, THOUGHT/S, MIND
BRAIN, EYES, BODY, BLOOD
NATURE, EARTH, LIGHT, WORLD
COMES
Ideas

My **thoughts** are whirled like a potter’s wheel
*Henry VI Part I I.v*

Within the book and volume of my **brain**
*Hamlet I.v*

Thou, **Nature**, art my goddess
*King Lear I.ii*

**O sleep!** thou ape of death
*Cymbeline II.ii*

Mine **eyes** are made the fools o’ the other senses
*Macbeth II.i*

**O world,** thy slippery turns!
*Coriolanus IV.iv*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>L3</th>
<th>L2</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>Centre</th>
<th>R1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>AND</td>
<td>HERE</td>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>COMES</td>
<td>HERE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>HE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SHE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HERE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

O here comes my nurse  Romeo and Juliet III.ii
But who comes here    Taming of the Shrew II.i
Emotion

**Love looks** not with the eyes, but with the mind

*Midsummer Night’s Dream* I.i

My only **love sprung** from my only hate

*Romeo and Juliet* I.v

**O thou blessed moon**

*Antony and Cleopatra* IV.ix

**O! that I had my wish**

*Love’s Labour’s Lost* IV.iii

**Fie on ambition! fie on myself**

*Henry VI Part 2* IV.x

**Fie, fie, fie, fie!**

*Timon of Athens* II.ii
I have thee not and yet I see thee still!

*Macbeth* II.i

For who would bear the

**whips and scorns** of time

*Hamlet* III.i

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,

**And thus** the native hue of resolution

*Hamlet* III.i
The self

I will proclaim **myself** what I am
*Merry Wives of Windsor III.v*

O no! Alas, I rather hate **myself**
*Richard III V.iii*

**my tongue** to the roof of my mouth, **my heart** in my belly
*Taming of the Shrew IV.i*
Soliloquy by genre

+ love, I, she
- thy, thou
+ Henry, King, many
- love, her
+ ‘t, gods, O
- love, I
Shakespeare’s ‘errors’
Common ‘errors’

Staying in our country is more better than going abroad.

Despite of the problems, I would live there.

When I buy the newspaper, these news are old.

I can not wear no dress on a hot day.
## Shakespeare’s ‘errors’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corpus/Text</th>
<th>Word Count</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longman Learners Corpus (1990-2002)</td>
<td>9 million</td>
<td>staying in our country is more better than going abroad (14.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Despite of these problems, I would live there (8.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>when I buy the newspaper, these news are old (1.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I can not wear no dress for very hot day (0.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early English Books Online (EEBO) (1473-1700)</td>
<td>1.2 billion</td>
<td>Are ye not more better then they? (4.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Despite of you i'll tarry with them still (5.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>because these news are general (0.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I can not go no faster (0.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakespeare (First Folio, 1623) (1.2 billion)</td>
<td>1 million</td>
<td>nor that I am more better Then Prospero (Tem) (20.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Despight of mine owne Nature (KL) (15.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>But wherefore doe I tell these Newes to thee? (HIV1) (4.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I can not goe no further (AYL) (1.8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So are these ‘errors’?

• *First Folio* - 5 ‘better than’, 78 ‘better then’, 3 ‘more better’
• Early English Books Online - 5,180 ‘more better’
• Late 16\textsuperscript{th} c. / early 17\textsuperscript{th} c. no written standard
• 18\textsuperscript{th} c. more prescriptive attitudes
• Evidence of language change and standardization
• In linguistics, we call ‘more better’ a ‘variant form’
• Should we describe learner ‘errors’ as ‘variant forms’?
• Negative connotations of ‘errors’ – undermine learners’ self-confidence
• Good opportunity to raise awareness of language change and even spark an interest in Shakespeare!
Questions?

@ShakespeareLang
http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/shakespearelang/