

# The role of personal pronouns in forming community and individuality in J. R. R. Tolkien's "The Fellowship of the Ring"

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**The Role of Personal Pronouns in Forming Community and  
Individuality in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring***

Master's thesis

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Zagreb, April 2024

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## **Abstract**

Personal pronouns are deictic referents which are used based on their surrounding context, the role of the speakers, their intentions, and other factors. Pronouns also play a role in placing the speaker within a language community, and they help the speaker express notions such as solidarity and individuality. This thesis takes a pragmatic approach towards analyzing how personal pronouns are used in order to form a sense of community or express individuality in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring*. The analysis is performed on selected dialogues, among the nine members of the Fellowship, which include multiple occurrences of the first person singular and plural pronouns in various context and with different aims. The aim of this paper is to show how referents from the same category can play multiple roles when it comes to constructing community and individuality, based on their surrounding context and the speakers' intentions.

**Keywords:** personal pronouns, pragmatics, community, individuality, J. R. R. Tolkien.

## Introduction

Pronouns in language are used as deictic referents which can represent a variety of meanings depending on their surrounding context. This also implies that personal pronouns especially can showcase a number of interpersonal relationships and hierarchy among the participants in the discourse. These relationships include, among other things, solidarity and community bonds, as opposed to power and individuality, which will be the main points of interest in this paper. We will be looking at how those notions are expressed within a group of characters with diverse backgrounds and social standing, and thus different amounts of power in discourse.

The fields of study which are concerned with deixis, amongst other things, are semantics and pragmatics, but since semantics is more meaning-oriented, this paper will have a pragmatic approach and will be concerned with language in use. Pragmatics will first be explained in terms of its aims and importance, together with a brief mention of discourse analysis which is also focused on language use in different contexts. Furthermore, we need to define the notions of power, solidarity and community which can be constructed and expressed in language through deictic pronominal referents, among other things. For the purpose of this paper, the first person plural pronoun *we* is significant due to its many possible uses and connotations, and even ambiguity in the context of discourse. Moreover, we need to acknowledge Tolkien's approach to language in fiction, which played a significant role in the choice of the corpus.

The theoretical framework of the study therefore consists of a pragmatic approach to the use of personal pronouns in expressing different relationships among speakers, and its aim is to show how personal pronouns were used to construct community and individuality in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the first book of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy written by J. R. R. Tolkien. More precisely, it will be examined how the members of the Fellowship use the first person singular and plural pronouns to reflect their backgrounds, identities, and ultimately common goals, and whether characters from starkly different backgrounds have different ways of speaking, regarding the use of pronouns. What is expected to be discovered is that the characters involved use *I* and *we* equally as much, but in varying ways: *I* to express personal struggles, attitudes and their own identities on one hand, and *we* to express some of their shared goals and the closeness of the group, on the other hand. Due to the limited scope of the paper, I will only be analyzing the discourse among the nine main characters in their dialogues amongst each other in the first book, since it encompasses the period in which all of them were together on the journey before splitting into smaller groups in the following two books.

## **Pragmatics and pronouns**

In everyday life and literature, language is used to convey messages, share information, make requests, express thoughts and feelings, build or break interpersonal relationships, and more. All of those uses can be more or less categorized into two main functions of language – transactional and interactional. While the transactional function of language encompasses various ways of expressing some content, interactional function includes the ways we employ language when talking about personal attitudes and social relationships. Yule and Brown highlight those two functions, as they are in correspondence with Jakobson’s distinction between different functions of language (1988: 1). Undoubtedly, various functions of language can also be recognized in literature, since writers meticulously craft conversations among characters in what they deem to be the most accurate way of their portrayal. That is slightly different to how we use language in regular conversations in real life, when the exchange is conducted quickly in real time and may contain many characteristics specific to the spoken register. According to Yule and Brown, a writer “may look over what he has already written, pause between each word with no fear of his interlocutor interrupting him, take his time in choosing a particular word, even looking it up in the dictionary if necessary... reorder what he has written, and even change his mind about what he wants to say” (1988: 5). Since linguistics and language studies were Tolkien’s primary and most important occupations, it is to be expected that he had meticulously planned and crafted every single interaction in his stories, but that will be discussed more thoroughly in the upcoming chapters. Culpeper and Fernandez-Quintanilla explain that “fictional character behaviours are complete” (Locher and Jucker 2017: 96) unlike human behaviors in reality; this means that we can entirely analyze a character linguistically because his or hers entire compilation of language behavior is at our disposal in a work of fiction.

When it comes to linguistic disciplines necessary for this paper, there is a certain overlap between them. Firstly, discourse analysis is regarded more as a set of techniques for describing data, rather than “a theoretically predetermined system for the writing of linguistic rules” (Yule and Brown 1988: 23). Discourse analysts are, therefore, more interested in the function or purpose of linguistic data and how it is processed by both the producer and the receiver (Yule and Brown 1988: 25), than in establishing a rigid set of rules for the interpretation of discourse. Moreover, this area of research analyzes the ways in which speakers use language for negotiating role-relationships, peer solidarity, the exchange of turns in a conversation (Yule and

Brown 1988: 3), and ultimately how those different modes of expression interact with the environment in which they occur, or their context. Since the approach of discourse analysis involves a careful consideration of context, this discipline necessarily “belongs to that area of language study called pragmatics” (Yule and Brown 1988: 26). Such is the case with many disciplines which study language, i. e. it is challenging to come across a strict definition of pragmatics. However, Levinson provides multiple options in his book on pragmatics: it is the study of language usage; the study of language from a functional perspective; it is concerned with the study of deixis, presupposition and speech acts; it is the study of the relations between language and context that are basic to an account of language understanding (Levinson 2008). Ultimately, he suggests that, in comparison to other language disciplines, “the upper bound of pragmatics is provided by the borders of semantics, and the lower bound by sociolinguistics” (Levinson 2008: 27). In relation to fictional works, pragmatics is “not restricted to linguistic forms but includes semiotic behaviours in all their multimodality” and it has “much more to do with what readers infer from the language or behaviours” (Locher and Jucker 2017: 96), which makes it applicable to analyses of written works of fiction.

Deixis, as one of the points of interest of pragmatics, is going to be especially significant in this study, since personal pronouns are the main topic of discussion and analysis, and they are deictic referents. According to Levinson, deixis “concerns the ways in which languages encode or grammaticalize features of the context of utterance or speech event, and thus also concerns ways in which the interpretation of utterances depends on the analysis of that context of utterance” (2008: 54). Therefore, deixis is concerned with how language represents the context of a particular conversation, and how participants can interpret language based on the surrounding context. We will be paying attention to person deixis which has the task of encoding the role of participants in a speech event, and it can be divided into a couple of categories. First person deixis entails the grammaticalization of the speaker’s reference to himself/herself. Second person deixis refers to one or multiple addressees who are receiving a message from the speaker. Third person deixis is the encoding of reference to persons and entities which are neither speakers nor addressees of a particular utterance (Levinson 2008: 62). The first person plural pronoun *we* could thus be placed in the category of first person deixis because it includes the speaker’s reference to himself/herself, but in this case as a part of a particular group or community. According to the aforementioned criteria, first person singular pronoun *I* is certainly a part of first person deixis as well.

Personal pronouns are a closed class, they possess minimal descriptive value and, what is most significant for this study, they are “deictic indicators of their referents” (Ortega 1996: 402), which means that they are to be interpreted with the help of context. Although there is a number of different subcategories within the category of pronouns, we will be interested in personal pronouns, the most common kind, especially the first person singular pronoun *I*, and the first person plural *we*. While in some languages there is a gender distinction in the first person plural pronoun (e.g. Spanish *nosotras* denotes a group consisting of female members, while *nosotros* denotes a mixed or male group), in English that is not the case. Although personal pronouns are deictic forms, their meanings can be relatively fixed – *I* refers to the speaker, for instance, and *we* usually indicates a group of which the speaker is a member. However, “the actual person referred to depends on context of use in any given interaction,” and the references to the speakers shift as well as their roles, from “moment-of-use to moment-of-use” (Noverini Djenar et al. 2018: 25). According to Yule and Brown, pronouns are some of the most obvious linguistic elements which require contextual information for their interpretation since they require the analysts to know at least who are the speaker and hearer in the discourse (1988: 27). It can also be added that it is important to understand the roles of discourse participants in relation to each other, and to pay attention to how they might be changing throughout different situations.

Not only do the roles of the conversational participants shift throughout discourse, but also their intentions and what they wish to convey can fluctuate. Furthermore, through the speakers’ use of pronouns we can deduct their relationship to other participants. In the words of De Fina, through pronominal reference “the speaker expresses both his own presence in discourse, the presence of others and the relationships that he/she entertains with these others” (1995: 384). Thus the relationships among participants in a speech event can be expressed through the use of pronouns, depending on what kind of relationship they share. While many languages have the informal and formal version of the second person pronoun *you*, which can help to clarify certain hierarchy, closeness or a lack of it among the speakers, English does not have the formal version. Therefore, we must look to other ways of expressing hierarchical relationships shared by participants in discourse. Pronominal forms can also “be manipulated to convey implicit meanings” (De Fina 1995: 380) which is especially the case with the first person plural pronoun in English.

Some of the motivations behind using the pronoun *I* are the following: showing the speaker’s private persona, commitment and responsibility, emphasizing some individual agency (Ali



Akbari Hamed and Behnam 2020: 224); indicating some personal involvement and self-importance (Karapetjana 2011: 38); expressing personal feelings and opinions or setting oneself apart from a group. De Fina also writes that constant employment of this pronoun “may indicate a high degree of involvement of the speaker with a topic or a commitment to ‘authorship’, but does not tell anything about the speaker’s relationship to others” (1995: 384). In other words, the speaker who uses *I* can do so to emphasize that something is of great personal importance to him/her, but he/she can do it without revealing what kind of relationships are shared between him/her and other participants in the discourse. Moreover, we can use this pronoun to stress some personal successes and achievements, to boast and set oneself apart from the others. On the other hand, subjective feelings and the private persona of the speaker can be diminished and made secondary through the use of the pronoun *we*.

The first person plural pronoun can be used for a variety of reasons, depending on the context and on the motivations of the speakers, and whether they consider themselves a part of a larger group in particular discourse. Firstly, it is used to express solidarity, community and togetherness. It shares responsibility among participants, creates the notion of a collective identity (Ali Akbari Hamed and Behnam 2020: 225) while simultaneously excluding the outsiders from the group. The pronoun *we* can especially vary in accordance with the context – it can be exclusive or inclusive of the listener/viewer/hearer (Iñigo-Mora 2004: 34). This pronoun can also be especially persuasive since it has “the potential to encode group memberships and identifications” (Iñigo-Mora 2004: 45) and thus urge someone to feel responsibility towards the group, eventually perhaps deciding to join a common undertaking and fight for the well-being of the collective. The inclusive *we* denotes a group within the speaker’s territory, consisting of the speaker and a number of other participants together with the listener (Kamio 2001: 1116), while the exclusive variant of the pronoun denotes a group which does not involve the listener/viewer, who is in that case marked with the pronoun *you*. Moreover, *we* possesses one quite specific quality, according to Iñigo-Mora, and that is the fact that it is the only personal pronoun that can simultaneously be exclusive and inclusive, and it can be used to express communality and authority at the same time, depending on the intentions of the speaker (2004: 41).

It is clear that the first person singular and plural pronouns have a variety of different meanings and aims in discourse, depending on what the speaker wants to express or accomplish. Marchetti, in her paper on Tolkien’s use of pronouns, sums it up by saying that “first person pronouns, whether “I” or “we”, can reveal a character’s inner feelings, his real intentions or

motivations and can make the difference between self-assertion and cooperation, unity and separation” (2022: 3). This brings us to the notions of community, solidarity and power which can be expressed through varying deictic pronominal references.

## **Power, solidarity and community**

In communication, participants consciously or subconsciously express their respective identities. According to Gumperz, communicative phenomena play a role in the “exercise of power and control and in the production and reproduction of social identity” (1997: 1). Someone’s social identity can include not only their private aspects, but also belonging to a particular group or community of speakers. Communities can be based on different qualities (religious, national, linguistic) and they can exist on different levels. In a broad sense, the term community is a “collection of individuals who either act together, or who cooperate with one another in pursuit of their own goals, or who at least possess common interests” (Mason 2003: 21), and they have a distinction between insiders and outsiders, *us* and *them*. Something similar is also stated by Ahmad, Batson and Tsang in their “Four Motives of Community Involvement” where they write that typically, in order to identify with “our” group we also require recognition of an outgroup, someone who is not *us*: “them-us comparison is necessary to define a collective” (2002: 438).

In this case, the Fellowship is a smaller collective of heroes who represent a much wider scope of positive characters who are all, to some extent, attempting to stand up to the rising evil which threatens the very existence of their world. The Fellowship is a *we* – the readers are supposed to support them and sympathize with them throughout the story, while their enemies are *they*. Categorizing what exactly a community is still continues to be challenging due to the fact that communities can be based on various changing and unchanging factors, and the scope of a community can be anywhere between two persons and millions of them. For the purpose of this study, we will take into consideration Mason’s definition which considers community to be “a group of people who share a range of values, a way of life, identify with the group and its practices and recognize each other as members of that group” (2003: 21). According to Iñigo-Mora, there is an ordinary and a moralized concept of community: the ordinary concept entails mutual recognition and sharing certain values, while the moralized concept includes two additional conditions – solidarity between members and no systematic exploitation or injustice (2004: 28). From a linguistic standpoint, communities are significant because we can predict that the members of the same community could exhibit similar language patterns, in this case similar pronominal choices. Iñigo-Mora even states that “there is a close connection between the use of personal pronouns and the expression of communality” (2004: 37). The community that we are inspecting in this study is the Fellowship, which could be considered a moralized

community consisting of members from different backgrounds and even different fictional races. In spite of their intrinsic differences, they all decided to work together in order to achieve a common goal for the good of everyone: it is “a form of relationship in which the participants agree on a kind of free contract” (Iñigo-Mora 2004: 29); none of the members of the Fellowship were forced to participate in the quest, and they were also free to give up at any point, if they so decided<sup>1</sup>.

If we tried to apply some of Ahmad, Batson and Tsang’s principles of motives for community involvement to the members of the Fellowship, perhaps the most accurate ones would be principlism<sup>2</sup>, in some characters even altruism<sup>3</sup>, but most of all collectivism – “motivation with the ultimate goal of increasing the welfare of a group or collective” and being directly focused on the common good (2002: 434). Furthermore, the collectivist motivation is called to action in situations in which the community’s welfare is being threatened, so the collective must take action, which may eventually benefit the whole group in return as well (Ahmad et al. 2002: 434). Collectivism might be the most applicable to the Fellowship due to the fact that they volunteered to aid in a very perilous task, but with the knowledge that, if they succeed, they might save all the good creatures in their world and ultimately end evil – the potential desired outcome, as well as their personal bonds and friendships, outweighed the fear of danger. This is in accordance with Mason’s aforementioned definition of community since the group members in question share a range of values required in order to defeat evil together, and they also continuously recognize one another as members of the same collective that is united by a common goal.

Solidarity and power are, in the words of Brown and Gilman, “two dimensions fundamental to the analysis of all social life” (1960: 252). While solidarity within a community is reciprocal, power is non-reciprocal, since not all participants can be in the position of power simultaneously in an interaction. Furthermore, it is important that the members of a group agree on the way they express those notions, so as to communicate successfully: Gandalf and Aragorn are recognized by other members to be in higher positions, due to their age, knowledge, experience and background. Others can respect their authority and follow their advice, or challenge it, and that “awareness of power” can also be a “potential factor in pronoun usage” (Brown and Gilman 1960: 193). However, those characters in positions of power are also

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<sup>1</sup> “... no oath or bond is laid on you to go further than you will” (J. R. R. Tolkien 2004: 365)

<sup>2</sup> Upholding some moral principle, directed towards universal good. (Ahmad et al. 2002: 434)

<sup>3</sup> Increasing the welfare of one or more individuals. (Ahmad et al. 2002: 434)

members of the group with which they share solidarity and common goals, and they are not there only to give orders but to equally (if not even more actively) participate in all that happens; Brown and Gilman mention that as well by saying that “power superiors may be solidary or not solidary” (1960: 190). Although they can appear to be two opposite ends of a spectrum, solidarity and power do not have to be exclusive, which is additionally confirmed by Al Abdely – “they are not paradoxical; they rather entail each other as they emerged in conversations” (2016: 34). He continues by claiming that “the linguistic markers of power and solidarity are not only ambiguous, implying either power or solidarity, but are also polysemous as they may imply both at the same time” (2014: 34). This brings us back to context which becomes crucial to interpreting what is trying to be conveyed through the use of a particular personal pronoun, as well as knowing some background information about the characters in question. Since they all do not share the same background, it is then expected they utilize different referents in discourse in order to express their social standing, individual struggles, or various relationships within the community.

## **The Importance of Language in Tolkien's works**

J. R. R. Tolkien has been one of the most famous authors of the fantasy genre since the last century, and today he is still widely read and extremely popular decades after his work was published. Though his legendarium is vast and incredibly complex, during his lifetime he only saw the publishing of a few works set in Middle-earth, his fantasy world: *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, the first installment of which will provide the corpus for this research. The trilogy has had a considerable cultural influence to this day, “no other work of fiction ever reached larger print runs” than *The Lord of the Rings* (Kullman and Siepmann 2021: 1) and it is still inspiring for different adaptations, from TV shows to video games. One thing that sets Tolkien apart from a plethora of other fantasy writers is the fact that he was, first and foremost, a linguist and a proficient language scholar, which is mirrored in his fiction; the keystone of the fantasy world is a detailed linguistic structure (Broadwell 1990: 34). According to Keene, Tolkien's invention of his own fictional languages (around fourteen or more) was the foundation of his fiction and he wanted to provide a world for his languages to be used in (Keene 1995: 6). Tolkien himself “observed that the primary fact to be grasped concerning his writing is that it is... fundamentally linguistic in inspiration” (Ashford 2018: 28). In his writing, language has the power to characterize different individuals and entirely different races, it has the power of doing and undoing things, to honor the past, construct the present, and have effects on the future. Due to the weight he puts on the language use of his characters, his work provides a rich field for language research. Precisely for this study it is interesting to inquire how Tolkien utilized pronouns – the stories about the struggle between good and evil usually contain one prominent hero who is a strong individual, but that is not the case in *The Lord of the Rings*. Since the whole quest is a joint endeavor, it is to be expected that the collective achievements and goals will be highlighted equally, if not more than individual ones.

Fawcett writes that language in Middle-earth is “not only a means of communication and interaction, but also a mechanism of power and authority,” (2007: 1) which is especially significant in this study. It is important to note that the research will not be concerned with any of the fictional languages, but English. Although different fictional languages are scattered throughout the story, the characters also speak Westron or the “common tongue” which is their equivalent of English in the modern society. The characters turn to the common language since members of different races are present together in discourse, whereas their native languages are subtly reflected in the way they use the common speech (Kirk 1971: 13). In the construction

and creation of Middle-earth's inhabitants, language is one of the main ways of expressing diversity – different races of beings were all based on language “as a mechanism of both definition and differentiation” (Fawcett 2007: 38). Their linguistic background defines them and characterizes them, and in accordance with that there are certain expectations when it comes to characters' behaviors and decisions. Despite the varying vocabularies among communities in Middle-earth, they all interact in some way; the ultimate goal, after all, is cooperation in order to carry out a crucial task. In other words, “finding common ground through a mutual purpose while accepting and even valuing difference are key features of this alliance” (Young 2010: 354). The variety of language styles and discourses within *The Lord of the Rings* is one of its most conspicuous features (Kullman and Siepmann 2021: 27), yet in spite of this variety they succeed in finding common ground and accomplishing a common goal. Another linguistic feature which is strongly present throughout the story is the differentiation of good and evil characters based on the way they use language: the heroes “speak plainly with a mythic language of literal and figurative truth” while their enemies limit language “to the material” and “play games with meaning” (Jarman 2016: 158). A quality which makes *The Lord of the Rings* a dense corpus for linguistic analyses is not only the fact that it contains a variety of unique languages, but how much characters actively participate in discourse – “just over fifty per cent of the text is taken up by dialogues and exclamations, as well as by stories told or poems recited by characters” (Kullmann and Siepmann 2021: 90). However, due to the limited scope of this paper, stories and poems will be omitted, since dialogues will be the main point of interest.

The solidarity among characters who are in different positions of power, and the power expressed towards a community can be conveyed through the use of personal pronouns which is yet another tool Tolkien had used in constructing discourse in his writing. Marchetti claims that “the principles of conversation can be applied in analyzing how characters communicate feelings, deceive, provoke or resolve conflicts by strategically using “I” or “we” (2022: 12). She continues by saying that, while *we* mostly defines the characters as integrated members of a group, *I* can be used for a range of utterances: from marking pride, greed, self-assertion, to revealing intimate feelings such as nostalgia or regret (Marchetti 2022: 12). The characters are complex and not just one-dimensional heroes, which is revealed through their speech and precise use of pronouns. Kullmann and Siepmann even go so far to argue that “Tolkien's works of fiction are not so much about elves, dwarfs and warriors as about using words and producing meaning by means of language conventions” (2021: 28) so it can be interpreted that all of his

characters are vessels for utilizing language with precision in order to achieve specific effects on the readers

Even though Tolkien's fantasy world is an ancient one with kings, legendary warriors and epic battles, as it is supposed to be an epic story, he does not make much use of archaic pronouns; instead, he wrote in a language that is closer to us today. However, there are a few exceptions, as written by Irwin in "Archaic Pronouns in *The Lord of the Rings*": "Tolkien's use of archaic th-pronouns is rare; in only nine scenes does he express an attitude by using these distinctive words... Tolkien, a master of his language, uses these archaic pronouns sparingly but effectively to add another dimension to his world of the past" (Irwin 1987: 47). Among the members of the Fellowship there are no occasions on which they use archaic pronouns, which can also be interpreted as a signifier of their closeness and community – they are all on a similar level of importance for the task, in spite of the fact that they come from varying social and linguistic backgrounds. Moreover, this is significant on a higher level, not only for a language analysis but because it shows the value that Tolkien put on the concept of a community. Thorpe confirms this in "Tolkien's Elvish Craft" – "evil is self-regarding and isolated, but from hobbits to elves, those on the side of good are moved by a sense of belonging to a larger thing... to be rooted is a drive shared by hobbits, elves, dwarves, men, trees, and even mountains" (1995: 317).



## Corpus Analysis

As mentioned before, the corpus has been extracted from *The Fellowship of the Ring* and it includes examples of the nine members interacting with each other, not with characters outside of their limited group. The selected examples will be grouped based on the frequency of the pronouns used, ranging from examples with (almost) exclusively first person singular pronoun, to those with (almost) exclusively first person plural pronoun.

1) **Group one:** first person singular pronoun *I* is almost exclusively used.

- a) *'No indeed,' [Aragorn] answered. 'But I miss something. I have been in the country of Hollin in many seasons. No folk dwell here now, but many other creatures live here at all times, especially birds. Yet now all things but you are silent. I can feel it. There is no sound for miles about us, and your voices seem to make the ground echo. I do not understand it.'*  
*Gandalf looked up with sudden interest. 'But what do you guess is the reason?' he asked. 'Is there more in it than surprise at seeing four hobbits, not to mention the rest of us, where people are so seldom seen or heard?'*  
*'I hope that is it,' answered Aragorn. 'But I have a sense of watchfulness, and of fear, that I have never had here before.'*

The biggest part of this passage is spoken by Aragorn who, in this case, is constantly using the first person singular *I* as he suspiciously interprets the current situation based on his previous personal experiences. Through that pronoun Aragorn places himself outside of the collective experience (Karapetjana 2011: 38) as he emphasizes his past actions and experiences which enable him to have a more extensive knowledge and expectations in this particular situation. He notices the peculiar silence which does not align with his previous familiarity with their location and the information that he has about it “obtained through [his] direct experience” (Iñigo-Mora 2004: 35) which is why he opts for the pronoun *I*. Furthermore, the fact that he possesses experiences that others do not in the particular situation allows him to set himself apart from the fellowship in a linguistic sense.

- b) *'If Elves could fly over mountains, they might fetch the Sun to save us,' answered Gandalf. 'But I must have something to work on. I cannot burn snow.'*

*'Well,' said Boromir, 'when heads are at a loss bodies must serve, as we say in my country. The strongest of us must seek a way. See! Though all is now snow-clad, our path, as we came up, turned about that shoulder of rock down yonder. It was there that the snow first began to burden us. If we could reach that point, maybe it would prove easier beyond. It is no more than a furlong off, I guess.'*

*'Then let us force a path thither, you and I!' said Aragorn. Legolas watched them for a while with a smile upon his lips, and then he turned to the others. 'The strongest must seek a way, say you? But I say: let a ploughman plough, but choose an otter for swimming, and for running light over grass and leaf, or over snow – an Elf.' 'Farewell!' he said to Gandalf. 'I go to find the Sun!'*

In this paragraph the first person singular *I* prevails: first, there is Gandalf who seems surprisingly defensive of his abilities in the moment, but as opposed to that Aragorn and Legolas use *I* to show personal initiative and readiness for action. In their case, the pronoun *I* shows their individual agency (Ali Akbari Hamed and Behnam 2020: 224) to do something on their own without including the rest of the Fellowship in the activity, but for their collective benefit in the near future. Even more interesting to analyze is Boromir's statement which includes two types of *we* and one *I*. The first *we* he uses is a reference to his people as a whole, and him as a part of the nation who are also a kind of community. Mason explains this by writing that "the individual members identify with the group" which is in this case important for "explaining their behavior and their general orientation to the world" (2003: 33). "As we say in my country" means that Boromir as the speaker strongly identifies with something that is a shared notion where he comes from. His second use of *we* refers to the Fellowship which is another community he is a part of in that particular situation. The final utterance in his suggestion is a hesitant "I guess" – as if he is trying to shift the responsibility of making the next move onto somebody else, or perhaps even onto the collective.

c) *'But I am going to Mordor.'*

*'I know that well enough, Mr. Frodo. Of course you are. And I'm coming with you.'*

*'Now, Sam,' said Frodo, 'don't hinder me! The others will be coming back at any minute. If they catch me here, I shall have to argue and explain, and I shall never have the heart or the chance to get off. But I must go at once. It's the only way.'*

*'Of course it is,' answered Sam. 'But not alone. I'm coming too, or neither of us isn't going. I'll knock holes in all the boats first.' Frodo actually laughed.*

*'Leave one!' he said. 'We'll need it. But you can't come like this without your gear or food or anything.'* *'Just hold on a moment, and I'll get my stuff!' cried Sam eagerly.*

Throughout this example we have a conversation between Frodo and Sam who have decided to leave the Fellowship and continue the rest of the journey alone. There is extensive usage of the first person singular pronoun *I* by both characters as they make personal decisions regardless of the rest of the group – Frodo is intent on leaving them and not endangering them further, and Sam is intent on going with him. They both have a personal commitment to their own words (De Fina 1995: 384) and they are distancing themselves from the group they used to belong to (Ali Akbari Hamed and Behnam 2020: 223). Towards the end of the selected example, we observe the plural pronoun *we*, which no longer refers to the Fellowship consisting of nine members, but instead it includes only Frodo and Sam this time.

d) *'I will tread the path with you, Gandalf!' said Gimli. 'I will go and look on the halls of Durin, whatever may wait there – if you can find the doors that are shut.'*

*'Good, Gimli!' said Gandalf. 'You encourage me. We will seek the hidden doors together. And we will come through. In the ruins of the Dwarves, a dwarf's head will be less easy to bewilder than Elves or Men or Hobbits. Yet it will not be the first time that I have been to Moria. I sought there long for Thráin son of Thrór after he was lost. I passed through, and I came out again alive!'*

*'I too once passed the Dimrill Gate,' said Aragorn quietly; 'but though I also came out again, the memory is very evil. I do not wish to enter Moria a second time.'*

*'And I don't wish to enter it even once,' said Pippin.*

(...)

*'Of course not!' said Gandalf. 'Who would? But the question is: who will follow me, if I lead you there?'*

*'I will,' said Gimli eagerly.*

*'I will,' said Aragorn heavily. 'You followed my lead almost to disaster in the snow, and have said no word of blame. I will follow your lead now – if this last warning does not move you. It is not of the Ring, nor of us others that I am thinking now, but of you, Gandalf. And I say to you: if you pass the doors of Moria, beware!'*

*'I will not go,' said Boromir; 'not unless the vote of the whole Company is against me.'*

This example contains many occurrences of the first person singular pronoun *I*, since the characters are in the position to make individual choices and state how they feel about taking a certain path. Since Gimli the dwarf is at home in the mines, he confidently volunteers first, but then Gandalf tries to be encouraging by saying ‘*we* will come through.’ He opts for the plural pronoun in order to “give a sense of collectivity and help to share responsibility, especially when decisions are highly controversial, unpopular and doubtful,” (Karapetjana 2011: 38) which is the case in this particular situation – almost nobody is eager to accept the wizard’s suggestion. Through repeated use of the first person singular *I*, Gandalf and then Aragorn share their individual experiences they had previously had in the mines, but especially Aragorn admits to having a very bad experience. The other characters use *I* in order to express their unwillingness to go into the mines, and in this situation most of them are not considering the collective identity of the group or the need to adapt to something for the benefit of the group. Notably, Aragorn puts additional emphasis simultaneously on his reluctance to go, but the fact that he will do it anyway (“I will follow your lead now”) because he trusts Gandalf’s leadership and judgement; however, he still issues him a warning.

2) **Group two:** the first person singular pronoun prevails, plural used occasionally.

a) *‘But happily your Caradhras has forgotten that you have Men with you,’ said Boromir, who came up at that moment. ‘And doughty Men too, if I may say it; though lesser men with spades might have served you better. Still, we have thrust a lane through the drift; and for that all here may be grateful who cannot run as light as Elves.’*

*‘But how are we to get down there, even if you have cut through the drift?’ said Pippin, voicing the thought of all the hobbits.*

*‘Have hope!’ said Boromir. ‘I am weary, but I still have some strength left, and Aragorn too. We will bear the little folk. The others no doubt will make shift to tread the path behind us. Come, Master Peregrin! I will begin with you.’ He lifted up the hobbit. ‘Cling to my back! I shall need my arms,’ he said and strode forward.*

Boromir starts off with a cautious “if I may say it” because he knows he usually is not the one in charge of making decisions and his suggestions are not always taken into consideration. However, later on he takes charge and expresses initiative followed by immediate action. When he says “we will bear”, the plural pronoun refers to him and Aragorn as the only members of the race of men in the Fellowship, thus being some of the

strongest and most physically capable members of it. In this case, their shared race is also a kind of a community and Boromir feels as if he has the right to speak on behalf of them. In a similar fashion, when Pippin voices his concerns and uses *we* in his question, he means *we* as in ‘hobbits’ and their smaller community with shared background and, in this case, a shared problem of getting through very deep snow.

b) *‘Come!’ said Aragorn. ‘If I am still to lead this Company, you must do as I bid. It is hard upon the Dwarf to be thus singled out. We will all be blindfold, even Legolas. That will be best, though it will make the journey slow and dull.*

*‘I am an Elf and a kinsman here,’ said Legolas, becoming angry in his turn.*

*‘Now let us cry: “a plague on the stiff necks of Elves!”’ said Aragorn. ‘But the Company shall all fare alike. Come, bind our eyes, Haldir!’*

*‘I shall claim full amends for every fall and stubbed toe, if you do not lead us well,’ said Gimli as they bound a cloth about his eyes.*

In this conversational situation, we have an occurrence of some of the characters disagreeing, so Aragorn as the present leader has to invoke his authority and be outwardly commanding towards his companions. He must be driven, proud and fierce, “but not wantonly cruel” (Lakowski 2002: 22) in order to succeed in slightly subordinating the other group members – after all he possesses more vast knowledge and experiences. Yet he soon opts for reminding them all that they are in the same position as a group – “*we* will all be blindfold.” His usage of the pronoun *we* shows that he may be considering the relative power or status difference between him and his addressees to be small, so he softens the imperative (Brown and Levinson 1988: 108). As opposed to Aragorn’s modest claim to authority, Legolas and Gimli employ the first person singular *I* in order to complain about their treatment and position which they find unfavorable.

c) *‘What is it?’ he whispered, springing up and coming to Frodo. ‘I felt something in my sleep. Why have you drawn your sword?’*

*‘Gollum,’ answered Frodo. ‘Or at least, so I guess.’*

*‘Ah!’ said Aragorn. ‘So you know about our little footpad, do you? (...) Since we took to boats, he has been lying on a log and paddling with hands and feet. I have tried to catch him once or twice at night; but he is slier than a fox, and as slippery as a fish. I hoped the river-voyage would beat him, but he is too clever a waterman. We shall have to try going faster tomorrow. You lie down now, and I will keep watch for what is left of the night. I*

*wish I could lay my hands on the wretch. We might make him useful. But if I cannot, we shall have to try and lose him.'*

This dialogue between Frodo and Aragorn offers a plethora of pronominal items, usually used in a similar fashion. *I* is being used for the expression of personal thoughts and feelings (I felt something, I guess, I hoped, I wish...), but also to express an individual's commitment to carrying out an action (I have tried, I will keep watch...). Nevertheless, Aragorn contrasts *we* and *I* when it comes to trying to succeed in avoiding the enemy – if he cannot accomplish the goal alone on behalf of the group, he hopes that a collective effort might solve the problem (we might make him useful, we shall have to try...). He expresses a strong commitment, through his use of pronouns, to the reliability of information he shares with his companion about the common enemy (Landert 2017: 490).

d) *'Grievous is our loss,' said Legolas. 'Yet we must make up our minds without his aid. Why cannot we decide, and so help Frodo? Let us call him back and then vote! I should vote for Minas Tirith.'*

*'And so should I,' said Gimli. 'We, of course, were only sent to help the Bearer along the road, to go no further than we wished; and none of us is under any oath or command to seek Mount Doom. Hard was my parting from Lothlórien. Yet I have come so far, and I say this: now we have reached the last choice, it is clear to me that I cannot leave Frodo. I would choose Minas Tirith, but if he does not, then I follow him.'*

*'And I too will go with him,' said Legolas. 'It would be faithless now to say farewell.'*

This discourse has interesting connotations since it happens between Legolas and Gimli who are of two different races and, at the beginning of the journey, they even resented each other due to their differences. However, after being a part of the group for months, they built a friendship and a sense of togetherness – *we* must make up our minds, why cannot *we* decide, *we* were sent to help. This is further explained by Keene who writes that, in Tolkien's works, "words can promote unity between various characters and cultures" and that "language serves as a bond among diverse groups" especially among the members of the fellowship who use "restorative language to establish order and harmony" (Keene 1995: 9). Moreover, the two aforementioned characters employ the first person singular pronoun *I* often in their exchange in order to express their personal commitment to the goal of the group and the fact that they are individually willing to continue working for the ultimate success of the group mission. Although in this example the pronoun *I* prevails, it is not necessarily an exclusive *I* which highlights some personal achievement or deviance from

the group decisions; instead it is *I* for the sake of supporting the group, *I* that is restorative and promotes unity, setting aside one's own wishes in order to assist the group endeavors.

**3) Group three:** equal frequency of both first person singular and plural pronoun.

a) *'Alas! I fear we cannot stay here longer,' said Aragorn. He looked towards the mountains and held up his sword. 'Farewell, Gandalf!' he cried. 'Did I not say to you: if you pass the doors of Moria, beware? Alas that I spoke true! What hope have we without you?' He turned to the Company. 'We must do without hope,' he said. 'At least we may yet be avenged. Let us gird ourselves and weep no more! Come! We have a long road, and much to do.'*

Even though this is not an example from an active dialogue, but instead one character speaking to the others, it shows a good contrast between instances of using *I* versus *we*: after the fellowship lost Gandalf, who was mostly in charge, Aragorn has a moment of reflection and expresses his regrets and fears with the first person singular pronoun three times in the first half of his statement. He reminisces and regrets being right about something, thus providing explicit information about himself and his inner world (Locher and Jucker 2017: 107). Nevertheless, it is even more important to recognize how he switches from more personal issues to assuming the role of the leader for the sake of the others by utilizing *we*, even though he does not feel particularly optimistic. Now he is the one who has to be motivating towards others and the one who makes most decisions.

b) *'Come!' said Aragorn. 'We will venture one more journey by night. We are coming to reaches of the River that I do not know well; for I have never journeyed by water in these parts before, not between here and the rapids of Sarn Gebir. But if I am right in my reckoning, those are still many miles ahead. Still there are dangerous places even before we come there: rocks and stony eyots in the stream. We must keep a sharp watch and not try to paddle swiftly.'*

*'Hoy there, Aragorn!' shouted Boromir... 'This is madness! We cannot dare the Rapids by night! But no boat can live in Sarn Gebir, be it night or day.'*

*'Back, back!' cried Aragorn. 'Turn! Turn if you can!' He drove his paddle into the water, trying to hold the boat and bring it round. 'I am out of my reckoning,' he said to Frodo. 'I did not know that we had come so far: Anduin flows faster than I thought.'*

All instances of *we* in this passage refer to the same unit – the Fellowship as a group or collective. While Aragorn gives directions and polite orders to his companions, Boromir is in defense of the group and tries to protect them in a precarious situation, as opposed to what Aragorn wants them to do in that moment. Throughout the paragraph Aragorn displays a lot of self-reflection through his speech, notably through the use of the first person singular pronoun. Although his point of view is “usually confined to factual perceptions” (Kullman and Siepmann 2021: 113), in this passage we have a deeper insight into the fact that he seems to be doubting his decisions and leadership (“if I am right in my reckoning” versus “I am out of my reckoning”), since he accidentally exposed his companions to unexpected danger.

c) *‘The day has come at last,’ he said: ‘the day of choice which we have long delayed. What shall now become of our Company that has travelled so far in fellowship? Shall we turn west with Boromir and go to the wars of Gondor; or turn east to the Fear and Shadow; or shall we break our fellowship and go this way and that as each may choose? Whatever we do must be done soon. We cannot long halt here. The enemy is on the eastern shore, we know; but I fear that the Orcs may already be on this side of the water.’*

*‘Well, Frodo,’ said Aragorn at last. ‘I fear that the burden is laid upon you. You are the Bearer appointed by the Council. Your own way you alone can choose. In this matter I cannot advise you. I am not Gandalf, and though I have tried to bear his part, I do not know what design or hope he had for this hour, if indeed he had any.’*

Even though these paragraphs do not contain dialogues among multiple characters, in Aragorn’s short speech to his companions he exhibits interesting linguistic choices in order to cause the desired effect in the readers. First and foremost, the first passage contains most prominently the first person plural *we* – the Fellowship is still a collective which must make a difficult choice on how to continue their journey as Aragorn tries to emphasize the group identity. Despite the fact that Aragorn as the leader has certain power and control over what his companions do (Brown and Gilman 1960: 255), he cannot make their decisions for them, so especially in the second passage of his speech he slightly distances himself from influencing anybody’s decision. In that situation he is only capable of hoping for the best, but he simultaneously expresses that perhaps he is lacking wisdom and advice that their previous leader might have had in his place. He does not “want to presume that a “we” exists” (Sarlin 2017: 320) since it is a complex situation for everyone individually, and none of them are bound to stay with the Fellowship.



4) **Group four:** first person plural pronoun prevails, singular is used occasionally.

a) *'Tonight we shall be on our way high up towards the Redhorn Gate. We may well be seen by watchers on that narrow path, and waylaid by some evil; but the weather may prove a more deadly enemy than any. What do you think of your course now, Aragorn?'*

*'I think no good of our course from beginning to end, as you know well, Gandalf,' answered Aragorn. 'And perils known and unknown will grow as we go on. But we must go on; and it is no good our delaying the passage of the mountains. Further south there are no passes, till one comes to the Gap of Rohan. I do not trust that way since your news of Saruman. Who knows which side now the marshals of the Horse-lords serve?'*

*'Who knows indeed!' said Gandalf. 'But there is another way, and not by the pass of Caradhras: the dark and secret way that we have spoken of.'*

*'But let us not speak of it again! Not yet. Say nothing to the others, I beg, not until it is plain that there is no other way.'*

*'We must decide before we go further,' answered Gandalf.*

*'Then let us weigh the matter in our minds, while the others rest and sleep,' said Aragorn.*

This conversation includes only Aragorn and Gandalf, perhaps the most prominent characters in terms of making decisions for the Fellowship. The first five instances, and the final one, of the pronoun *we* all refer to the whole group even though only two of its members are talking about it. Even though the characters involved in the dialogue are in relative positions of power, they still want to stress the fact that they are all undertaking the journey and facing the perils together – it is the inclusive *we*. However, the second to last occurrence of *we* (“we must decide”) refers exclusively to Aragorn and Gandalf who are responsible for making the decision about which path to take, thus it is the exclusive *we*. On the other hand, the first person singular pronoun appears with verbs which denote personal opinions and feelings, it transports the readers into what an individual character feels or thinks (Luck 2020: 50).

b) *'And then where are we to go?' asked Frodo.*

*'We still have our journey and our errand before us,' answered Gandalf. 'We have no choice but to go on, or to return to Rivendell.'*

*'I wish I was back there,' he said. 'But how can I return without shame – unless there is indeed no other way, and we are already defeated?'*

*'You are right, Frodo,' said Gandalf: 'to go back is to admit defeat, and face worse defeat to come. If **we** go back now, then the Ring must remain there: **we** shall not be able to set out again. Then sooner or later Rivendell will be besieged, and after a brief and bitter time it will be destroyed...'*

*'Then **we** must go on, if there is a way,' said Frodo with a sigh.*

In this example Frodo, whose task it is to carry the One ring, expresses his doubts and the fact that he wishes not to be on the journey anymore. Since that is specific to him in a particular situation, there are three occurrences of the pronoun *I*, but he also employs *we* upon realizing that the quest does not only include and concern him – “we are already defeated.” In his responses, Gandalf uses the plural pronoun the whole time in order to put emphasis on the fact that the quest is a joint effort and that it has, and will have, effects on everybody included. In the article “Wizards and Rhetoric in *The Two Towers*” Ruud writes about how Gandalf prompts the rest of the group to not give up: “Gandalf’s art of persuasion is based not on logic or argument, but on rhetorical colors and on conclusions drawn from assumed shared values that he regards as self-evident” (2010: 148), thus he knows how to emphasize the collective identity in order to reach a certain goal. At last Frodo unwillingly agrees with the wizard concluding “*we* must go on” which is simultaneously encouraging because he does not have to continue alone, but also a burden to know that his choices have large and lasting effects not only on his future, but on his companions from the Fellowship as well.

c) *'Which way shall **we** go?' asked Boromir. 'Back to the hall,' answered Gandalf. 'But our visit to this room has not been in vain. **I** now know where **we** are. This must be, as Gimli says, the Chamber of Mazarbul; and the hall must be the twenty-first of the North-end. Therefore **we** should leave by the eastern arch of the hall, and bear right and south, and go downwards...'*

*'They are coming!' cried Legolas. '**We** cannot get out,' said Gimli.*

*'Trapped!' cried Gandalf. 'Why did **I** delay? Here **we** are, caught, just as they were before. But **I** was not here then. **We** will see what——'*

*'Slam the doors and wedge them!' shouted Aragorn. 'And keep your packs on as long as you can: **we** may get a chance to cut our way out yet.'*

*'No!' said Gandalf. '**We** must not get shut in. Keep the east door ajar! **We** will go that way, if **we** get a chance.'*

In this discourse there are many instances of the plural pronoun *we*, which prevails throughout the conversation. The Fellowship found themselves in a life-threatening situation in which it is probably vital to address the fact that they are all in the same position as a community – they have a close alliance (Kamio 2001: 1120) amongst themselves, which is one of the occasions for using *we*, as opposed to the enemies attacking them. The only character who has an utterance with the first person singular *I* is Gandalf who is basically thinking out loud and sharing his thought processes with his companions. Not only that, he goes from being confident (“I now know...”) to doubting his decisions openly (“why did I delay”). According to Kullman and Siepmann “the operations of Gandalf’s mind remain a mystery” usually (2021: 114), which means that in this particular example we have a deviation from what is expected of his characters – instead of keeping to himself, he articulates his doubts for everyone to hear.

**5) Group five:** almost exclusively the first person plural.

a) *‘It is for the Dimrill Dale that we are making,’ said Gandalf. ‘If we climb the pass that is called the Redhorn Gate, under the far side of Caradhras, we shall come down by the Dimrill Stair into the deep vale of the Dwarves...’*

*‘Dark is the water of Kheled-zâram (...)’ said Gimli, ‘my heart trembles at the thought that I may see them soon.’*

*‘May you have joy of the sight, my good dwarf!’ said Gandalf. ‘But whatever you may do, we at least cannot stay in that valley. We must go down the Silverlode into the secret woods, and so to the Great River, and then——’ He paused.*

*‘Yes, and where then?’ asked Merry.*

*‘To the end of the journey – in the end,’ said Gandalf. ‘We cannot look too far ahead. Let us be glad that the first stage is safely over. I think we will rest here, not only today but tonight as well.’*

In these passages the *we* pronoun prevails - Gandalf gives directions to his companions and explains to them what he thinks is expected in the upcoming stretch of the journey, but he is expressing it in a way that includes all of them together as a group: *we shall, we must, we cannot...* This stresses the fact that he is a figure of authority amongst them, but he strives to make everyone feel included and important. Gandalf identifies as a part of the Fellowship

which “can be a tactical device to reach certain persuasive goals” (De Fina 1995: 384), and he has the role of the motivator to keep the journey moving forward.

b) *‘It is long since any of my own folk journeyed hither back to the land whence we wandered in ages long ago,’ said Legolas, ‘but we hear that Lórien is not yet deserted, for there is a secret power here that holds evil from the land. Nevertheless its folk are seldom seen, and maybe they dwell now deep in the woods and far from the northern border.’*

*‘Indeed deep in the wood they dwell,’ said Aragorn, and sighed as if some memory stirred in him. ‘We must fend for ourselves tonight. We will go forward a short way, until the trees are all about us, and then we will turn aside from the path and seek a place to rest in.’ He stepped forward; but Boromir stood irresolute and did not follow.*

*‘Is there no other way?’ he said.*

*‘What other fairer way would you desire?’ said Aragorn.*

*‘A plain road, though it led through a hedge of swords,’ said Boromir. ‘By strange paths has this Company been led, and so far to evil fortune. Against my will we passed under the shades of Moria, to our loss. And now we must enter the Golden Wood, you say. But of that perilous land we have heard in Gondor, and it is said that few come out who once go in; and of that few none have escaped unscathed.’*

This exchange contains exclusively the plural pronoun, but it has different connotations depending on the character who is speaking. When Legolas uses it, it is once again a reference to his kind – the elves – and their ventures throughout the past, which is something that aligns with what Kullman and Siepmann wrote about the characteristics of his speech and the array of vocabulary, which is supposed to be unfamiliar and strange to readers (2021: 276). Aragorn, on the other hand is only presently concerned with the Fellowship and their immediate plans and well-being. Boromir is also troubled with the past struggles of the group and he doubts Aragorn’s decision based on things he knows from his country – “of that land *we* have heard.” He identifies with what is believed among his people back home and based on that he judges the current situation. According to Marchetti, he has a tendency to “impose his viewpoint on the group to which he allegedly belongs,” and that group in this case are “his people’s elders” (2022: 4).

c) *‘That would not be easy, even if we were all Men,’ said Boromir.*

*‘Yet such as we are we will try it,’ said Aragorn.*

*'Aye, we will,' said Gimli. 'The legs of Men will lag on a rough road, while a Dwarf goes on, be the burden twice his own weight, Master Boromir!'*

*'Well, here we are, and here we must pass another night,' said Boromir. 'We need sleep, and even if Aragorn had a mind to pass the Gates of Argonath by night, we are all too tired – except, no doubt, our sturdy dwarf.'*

*'Let us rest as much as we can now,' said Aragorn. 'Tomorrow we must journey by day again. Unless the weather changes once more and cheats us, we shall have a good chance of slipping through, unseen by any eyes on the eastern shore.'*

This dialogue involves multiple occurrences of the pronoun *we*. While Boromir uses it mostly in order to convey his concerns about the group and try and evoke sympathy from Aragorn, who is in charge, Gimli and Aragorn use the first instances of *we* to motivate the Fellowship to go forward and not give up. This is especially characteristic of Gimli according to Kullman and Siepmann, since he “is given to exclamations and apostrophes,” and “large proportions of his speeches contain first-person messages, which may range from declarations of intent to indications of anger, frustration, and enthusiasm” (2021: 274). In this dialogue we can see an example of an exclamation in first person plural with which he expresses enthusiasm and motivation. In the final passage of this example Aragorn uses *we* to plan the following stretch of the journey of the Fellowship and explain to them what he thinks will happen next.

## **Discussion**

From the examples above, some results can be derived based on how Tolkien's characters use the first person singular and plural pronouns. There have been multiple cases of the pronoun *I* showing personal commitment or initiative for something (examples 1b, 2a), but for the ultimate wellbeing of the collective and not for the individual himself. However, in some instances *I* implied distancing of the individual from the group (1c, 3c). A large number of examples included the first person singular pronoun used in order to express the character's inner world, his struggles and doubts (examples 1d, 2c, 4a, 4b, 4c...). There have also been personal disagreements (2b) and moments of self-reflection (3b). Maybe some of the most notable instances of the first person pronoun are the moments in which the character expressed some experience-based knowledge in order to aid the group undertaking (example 1a), and when they expressed individual effort and willingness to do something for the sake of the

collective good and potential success (2d). Thus, instead of *I* serving as an emphasis of individual heroism, it was used more frequently to showcase information close to the speaker, including their actions and behaviors, or knowledge placed within the speaker's field of expertise (Iñigo-Mora 2004: 35).

The first person plural pronoun has, in the highest degree, been used to emphasize a collective identity and the fact that all nine characters in the Fellowship are together in the same situation (examples 2d, 3b, 3c, 4c). Nevertheless, sometimes *we* was used to denote a smaller group within the larger one (2a, 4a), or the characters used it to express their background and where they come from, aligning themselves with the beliefs and experiences of their people outside of the Fellowship (5b). Moreover, the plural pronoun was occasionally used in order for the character(s) in charge to simultaneously give directions, but also emphasize a sense of community and togetherness, and to even motivate others by stressing the fact that nobody was alone in their quest (3a, 4b, 5c). *We* was also used by the leader(s) of the group to soften the imperative when giving orders to the other members of a slightly lower hierarchical position (2b, 5a). It can be said that *we* was used in high degree to democratize the discourse and to avoid explicitly marking power inequalities within the group (Ali Akbari Hamed and Behnam 2020: 225), since it has been shown that the selected dialogues did not include many overt displays of power imbalance in the Fellowship, despite the characters' status differences.

Hence, both first person singular and plural pronoun were used almost equally, based on selected examples, but they possess varying connotations. However, it is interesting to notice that the first person singular pronoun was seldom used in an exclusive manner, to emphasize an individual character's strengths; rather, it was used in most cases to either self-reflect relatively negatively and express worries, or to show personal initiative for the sake of the benefits of the collective. The first person plural pronoun was most often used to indicate a sense of collectivity within the group and to motivate the members, but it occasionally served to indicate a smaller group of speakers within the larger group, or for the characters to express their belonging to their communities at home, away from the Fellowship.

Since the analysis was executed by one author only, it is possible that other contributors would have had different interpretations of certain utterances and the notions that were being highlighted through pronominal choices. If not due to the limited scope of this thesis, the systematization of the examples might have been more detailed as well. Furthermore, the examples above were extracted solely from the first book of the trilogy in which the nine characters are put together in a group for the first time, while many of them are not yet familiar

with one another. It can be expected that, in the subsequent two books, all of their interpersonal relationships evolved in different directions, which can certainly have an effect on linguistic choices used in their discourse. Thus it can be analyzed and expanded further how the author employed various pronominal choices as the story and the characters developed, and what exactly he wanted to indicate with the help of different linguistic choices.

## Conclusion

The goal of this study was to apply a pragmatic framework to the analysis of the corpus which was derived from *The Fellowship of the Ring* by J. R. R. Tolkien, and ultimately explore how personal pronouns, as deictic referents and thus relevant for pragmatics, were used in a variety of ways and with which end goals. Pragmatics is, among other things, concerned with what can be inferred from language in context, and how deictic referents can be interpreted in diverse situations. That makes it an excellent backdrop against which personal pronoun usage could be analyzed and researched, due to the fact that personal pronouns can convey a range of meanings, depending on how and by whom they are used. Community and individuality are some of the notions which can be expressed through mindful use of personal pronouns, and those concepts are of great importance in some of Tolkien's works. He was originally a language scholar and linguist, before publishing fictional works, so in his works language is used very accurately and plays a large role in the story.

The analysis was carried out on selected examples of dialogues among the characters in the Fellowship, and it included passages spoken by different characters in different circumstances. It has been found that *I* and *we* were used equally frequently, thus not emphasizing only one main character's endeavors or thoughts, but instead highlighting community bonds and the importance of belonging to a group which is trying to achieve a goal together. However, *I* was occasionally used to express minor personal disagreements and divergences among opinions, as well as for self-reflection, especially in correlation with doubtful feelings. Even though *we* was mostly used in order to emphasize a sense of belonging to a collective, it occasionally served the purpose of referring to a group outside of the particular collective that is the Fellowship. It is notable that even the first person singular pronoun, and not only the plural one, was often used in the service of the collective, instead of to establish a particular hierarchy or to put oneself in a more prominent position of power as opposed to the other members of the group.

It is interesting to see more closely how language is precisely crafted in a well-known work of fiction, and how referents belonging to the same category can, depending on the character and context, formulate plenty different meanings.



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