

# ADVISORY SUGGESTIONS IN LADY CATHERINE FITZGERALD'S RECIPE BOOK (1703)\*

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines Lady Catherine Fitzgerald's eighteenth-century recipe book to explore the linguistic and pragmatic features of advisory suggestions in women's culinary writing. In line with Alonso-Almeida's (2025) work on stance and politeness in historical directives, the analysis shows that recipe books function not only as instructional guides but also as spaces where authority, expertise, and social decorum are negotiated. Advisory suggestions appear selectively rather than systematically, signalling deliberate communicative choices. When present, they typically offer optional guidance that balances directive force with politeness. Linguistic forms such as *if you please* and *you may* reveal how female authors strategically combine deference with epistemic authority. Functionally, advisory suggestions enhance the writer's expertise, invite reader agency, and reinforce contemporary norms of politeness. These findings confirm that eighteenth-century women's recipe books are culturally meaningful artefacts in which subtle forms of linguistic authority are exercised.

KEYWORDS: Advisory Suggestions, Women's Writing, Eighteenth Century, Recipe Books, Politeness, Stance, Authority

ADVISORY SUGGESTIONS EN EL LIBRO DE RECETAS DE  
LADY CATHERINE FITZGERALD (1703)

## RESUMEN

Este estudio analiza un recetario femenino del siglo XVIII para explorar las *advisory suggestions* en la escritura culinaria. El análisis muestra que estas sugerencias aparecen de forma selectiva y funcionan como orientación opcional que equilibra autoridad y cortesía. Expresiones como *if you please* y *you may* combinan deferencia y autoridad epistémica, reforzando la competencia de la autora y la iniciativa del lector. En conjunto, los resultados confirman que los libros de recetas femeninos del siglo XVIII actúan como espacios culturalmente significativos de negociación de autoridad lingüística.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *advisory suggestions*, escritura femenina, siglo XVIII, libros de recetas, cortesía, posicionamiento, autoridad.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

English recipe books written by women during the 18<sup>th</sup> century stand as texts loaded with social, cultural and interpersonal information (Leong 2013; Alonso-Almeida 2013). These texts have been extensively studied by linguists from the perspective of historical pragmatics focusing on genre conventions, interpersonal meaning and the linguistic expression of domestic authority (DiMeo & Pennell 2013; Kernan & Müllneritsch 2024). In this study, we dive into a particular section of culinary recipes, the advisory suggestion, which may be included, or not, towards the end of the recipe. The way in which it is offered is closely related to the concept of social politeness typical of the time the recipe book was written. In this case, it is present through forms like, for instance, *If you please*, (Alonso-Almeida 2025) and their function consists in advice or suggestions to improve a particular dish, rather than an explicit order to be followed. This is something quite unexpected to be done by a woman in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as it was assumed that only men could give orders. The reason for this social convention stems from the understanding that they were the ones who owned enough knowledge to instruct.

Our main objective in this paper is to identify and analyse the advisory suggestions found in our corpus of culinary recipes. For this, our research questions are the following: (1) Is the advisory suggestion offered to improve the dish present in all the recipes in the book? (2) In the instances in which it is, indeed, included, is the reader offered the choice to follow the advisory suggestion? (3) What are the mechanisms deployed by the writer to express this optionality to the reader? (4) Which are the prototypical forms of advisory suggestions found in our corpus? (5) What are the functions of advisory suggestions?

In this context, the paper is organised as follows: in section 2, we include the definition of *advice* followed by the identification of notions such as *purpose* and *intention*, since it is understood that the action of giving advice to someone departs from an intentionality to do so by a given individual. In the case of Lady Catherine Fitzgerald's recipe book, the author is in possession of some knowledge (she knows that the advice will improve the recipe) which she intends to share as she takes it to be beneficial for the reader. After a short discussion about the notions of *advice* and *suggestion*, we propose to unify these two terms into the single expression *advisory suggestion*. Also, we ponder briefly on the notion of *speech acts* (Searle 1969), as we keep unfolding the notion of *advice*, in which it is commonly understood that there is an inherent intention of the person giving the advice to persuade the individual receiving it to perform an action. In this sense, the benefit of following such an advice lands on the receiver. The final step towards framing the notion of

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advisory suggestion linguistically leads us onto the concept of stance since it allows for the characterisation of the relationship between the author (as the owner of some knowledge who is in a position to evaluate it) and the reader (as its recipient). Section 3 offers a description of the corpus we have analysed: 224 culinary recipes authored by Lady Catherine Fitzgerald from the subcorpus of the *Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English* (COWITE 18) (Alonso-Almeida et al. 2025). After that, in section 4 we offer the results of our analysis beginning with the layout of the forms attested, and then, this is followed by a detailed inspection of their functions. The paper ends with some conclusions.

## 2. LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTIVE BACKGROUND

### 2.1. DEFINITION OF A PIECE OF ADVICE

According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, a piece of advice is defined as “an opinion that someone offers you about what you should do or how you should act in a particular situation” or “an opinion given to help somebody make a decision”. In the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), most of the meanings associated with the word *advice* relate to opinions, considerations, notices, information given, or counsel. This suggests that advice texts may express a point of view or an idea, but they also carry an intrinsic or inherent meaning conveyed through the term *counsel*. The OED defines *counsel* as “an opinion as to what ought to be done given as the result of consultation; aid or instruction for directing the judgement” (OED).

Since advice involves an opinion given by someone based on their experience or judgement about what one should or should not do, it is inherently linked to a subsequent action. Therefore, the words *purpose* and *intention* are also related to a piece of advice: *purpose* refers to the aim that guides the action, or the goal of accepting the advice to achieve an objective, whereas *intention* indicates the determination to act in a certain way, as well as the degree of effort involved in following the advice (Ortega-Barrera 2009). Advice carries several inherent meanings:

- a) practical help since they are meant to be useful by helping people avoid mistakes, make better choices, or gain clarity;
- b) care and concern as giving advice often indicates that the adviser cares about the other person's well-being or success;
- c) wisdom sharing since it implies a transfer of experience, knowledge, or judgement; and
- d) non-obligation, because, unlike instructions or orders, advice leaves freedom; it suggests rather than commands.

Martínez-Flor (2003, 144), adapting the information from Alcón and Safont (2001, 10) and Hinkel (1997, 11-12) distinguishes four different strategies for giving advice: direct, indirect, conventionally indirect, and other types of strategies. The direct strategy is shown through the use of performative verbs (*suggest*, *advise*,



*recommend*), nouns of suggestion (*my suggestion would be...*), imperative (*Try...*), negative imperative (*Don't try...*). The indirect strategy involves the use of impersonal constructions such as *one thing you can do*, *here's one possibility*, *it would be helpful if you...*, *it might be better to...*, *a good idea would be...*, or *it would be nice if*. The conventionally indirect strategy is expressed through specific formulae like *why don't you...?*, or *have you thought about...?*, as well as through modals of possibility or probability (*you can*, *you should*, *you may*), and the use of conditional sentences such as *if I were you*, *I...*). Finally, other types of strategies include expressions as *I've heard that...*, that introduce advice indirectly through reported information or hearsay (Martínez-Flor 2003).

## 2.2. DEFINITION OF SUGGESTION

Suggestion is defined as “the action of prompting one to a particular action or course of action; the putting into the mind of an idea, an object of thought, a plan, or the like; an instance of this, an idea or thought suggested, a proposal” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). In this definition, it appears the idea of encouraging or influencing someone to do something, and also the action of introducing an idea or thought into someone’s mind, so a suggestion is both, the act of influencing someone’s thoughts or actions and the idea or proposal that results from an act. In the case of the *Cambridge Dictionary*, suggestion is defined as “an idea, plan, or action that is suggested or the act of suggesting it”. In the definition of suggest, we find “to mention an idea, possible plan, or action for other people to consider”, “to say something to influence somebody’s actions or decisions” or “to recommend as being appropriate” (*Cambridge Dictionary*).

Liu & Zhao (2007) describe the most common structures to express suggestions, which include patterns such as “you + modal verbs (*should*, *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*)”, conditional sentences (*if...*), performative expressions (*I suggest... or my suggestion is that...*), and imperatives (*Do/Don't...*).

## 2.3. ADVISORY SUGGESTIONS

From the previous definitions, advisory suggestions can be understood as a communicative act that combines advice, which is primarily oriented towards providing guidance or instruction, and suggestions, which serve to introduce ideas and prompt consideration. Together, these communicative strategies show how the author of the recipe book not only has procedural knowledge but also manages interpersonal relationships, guiding the reader in the decision-making process. Drawing from the definitions provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Cambridge Dictionary*, in this paper, an advisory suggestion refers to a recommendation or proposal intended to guide someone’s actions towards a particular objective without imposing obligation or command. It involves the transmission of an opinion or idea aimed at orienting another person in decision-making, while leaving the final choice to the receiver.



In this sense, an advisory suggestion embodies both purpose and care from the speaker's side, as they pursue to aid or direct through shared knowledge or experience. It also projects a degree of freedom on the hearer's side, since it constitutes a proposal rather than a mandate. It involves a degree of influence motivated by expertise, combining the counsel characteristic of advice with the prompting essence of suggestion. Therefore, the function of an advisory suggestion is to advise, guide, or encourage someone towards a particular action or decision without imposing obligation, combining the instructive role of advice with the invitational tone of a suggestion.

The advisory suggestions appear in our corpus as a distinct section that will be analysed in sections 4 and 5. In the following subsection, we turn to a description of the linguistic framework in which the concepts of advice and suggestion are included, within the speech acts theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969). In the following subsections, we turn to unpack the linguistic concepts which subsume our understanding of advisory suggestion.

#### 2.4. SPEECH ACTS

Advising and suggesting are two closely related types of speech acts that involve the potential risk of seeming opinionated, that is, of giving the impression of imposing one's views on others (Leech 2014).

The theory of speech acts was first introduced by Austin (1962) and later developed by Searle (1969), who classified and categorised them. For Austin (1962), speech acts are statements produced by speakers with the intention of prompting actions from the listener (Hakeem Barzani 2023). He divided them into three different types: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. The locutionary act refers to the literal meaning of the words or utterances used; the illocutionary act represents the speaker's intended purpose (like a command or request); and the perlocutionary act is the actual effect the utterance has on the listener.

Searle (1969) further classified speech acts into five categories: representatives (or assertives), directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Representatives, also called assertives, involve the speaker's commitment to the truth of a statement (affirm, assert, state, describe, conclude, believe). Directives aim to get the listener to perform an action (ask, order, command, request, beg, entreat, permit, advise). Commissives express the speaker's commitment to do something in the future (promise, threat, refuse, shall, intend, offer). Expressives entail the speaker's feelings or attitudes (thank, congratulate, apologise, forgive, welcome). Finally, declarations are speech acts that involve the speaker in changing the existing situation through their statement. They need an institutional or conventional framework to be valid (announce, declare, name, marry, pronounce).

Both advice and suggestions belong to the directive category of speech acts, as the speaker intends the hearer to perform a particular action. For this reason, they are also related to requests; however, the distinction lies in the direction of benefit. Advice is generally intended for the benefit of the hearer (Al-Aadeli 2013), while a



request benefits the speaker, since it involves asking the hearer to perform an action that fulfils the speaker's need or wish.

According to Rahim Dhahirin 2022-23), advice “has the illocutionary power to suggest to the hearer a future action that, in the adviser's opinion, will be to their advantage” (4). In contrast, Searle (1976, as cited in Leech 2014) defines a suggestion as a speech act in which “the speaker's purpose is to get the hearer to commit him/herself to some future course of action” (168). For this reason, most of the times they are interchangeable.

Advice and suggestions are part of the broader group of advisory speech acts, which also includes recommendations. These acts are oriented towards the hearer's benefit rather than the speaker's (Searle 1976). The speaker may also anticipate or hope that the hearer will act upon the advice in the future, implying a future action on the part of the hearer (Brown & Levinson 1987).

According to Hinkel (1997), giving advice should be softened to avoid offending the hearer. At the same time, the speaker assumes a certain degree of authority, as they claim to know what is best for the hearer. Consequently, giving advice leaves the recipient with the responsibility to consider the advice seriously, since it is not a command, but rather a suggestion of what action may be most appropriate (Locher 2006; Hussein & Jameel 2020). Suggestions, on the other hand, “are regarded as an imposition upon the hearer” (Leech 2014, 169).

## 2.5. ADVICE AND SUGGESTION AS STANCE EXPRESSIONS

Both advice and suggestions can be understood as forms of stance expression, as they reveal the speaker's attitudes, evaluations, and interpersonal positioning within communication. Following the definitions proposed by Biber et al. (1999), Hyland (2005), Du Bois (2007), Johnstone (2009), and Dzung Pho (2013), Alonso-Almeida (2023) defines stance as “the way in which speakers appraise people, objects, and ideas, but it also covers self-evaluation” (1). In this sense, giving advice or making a suggestion reflects how speakers evaluate a situation and position themselves in relation to the listener.

When giving advice, speakers usually express a clear evaluation of what they believe is beneficial or appropriate, often implying authority or expertise. Typical linguistic realizations include modal verbs such as *should* or *ought to*, which indicate the speaker's assessment of the most suitable course of action. Consequently, advice reflects a stance that combines evaluation and interpersonal influence, as it not only conveys an opinion but also encourages the hearer to act accordingly (Locher 2006; Hussein & Jameel 2020). To avoid sounding overly imposing, speakers may mitigate advice through hedges such as *maybe*, *I think*, or *perhaps* (Matsumura 2002).

Similarly, suggestions also embody stance, but they tend to be less forceful and more collaborative. When making a suggestion, the speaker expresses a personal viewpoint while leaving greater space for action to the hearer. Expressions such as *you could*, *why don't you*, or *it might be better if..* illustrate how speakers project their evaluations while simultaneously acknowledging the hearer's freedom to either



follow the suggestion or not. As Leech (2014) and Hinkel (1997) note, suggestions are often tentative and politeness-oriented, allowing speakers to express stance in a socially sensitive manner.

Thus, both advice and suggestions function as evaluative and interpersonal expressions of stance, though they differ in strength and degree of imposition. Advice tends to carry stronger authority and a clearer expectation of compliance, while suggestions express opinion in a more mitigated and collaborative way. In both cases, speakers reveal their positioning towards an issue and towards their hearer. In this way, the link between stance-taking, evaluation and interpersonality is established. Once we have presented the linguistic concepts which support our definition of advisory suggestion, in the following subsection, we turn to their identification in culinary recipes from the eighteenth century.

### 3. ADVISORY SUGGESTIONS AS A SECTION IN CULINARY RECIPES

In our corpus, the advisory suggestions appear embedded within recipes included in a cookbook. A recipe is a genre that follows a specific and recognisable structure. We will use the Medieval and Renaissance medical recipes structure established by Alonso-Almeida (2013) as the starting point. In this case, medical recipes are divided into different stages:

(Title) \* Ingredients \* (Preparation) \* (Application) \* (Evaluation / Efficacy) \* (Storage) \* (Expiry date) \* (Virtues). Parentheses show optional stages, whereas the asterisk marks variations in order (Alonso-Almeida, 2013).

In the case of the cookbook, the structure follows a similar pattern. Domínguez-Morales (2025), following Alonso-Almeida (2013) identifies the following sections in an eighteenth-century cookbook:

Title - Ingredients - Preparation instructions - Cooking instructions - Serving suggestion

The stages found in our corpus closely resemble those of medical recipes and those described by Domínguez Morales (2025).

In Fitzgerald's cookbook, the structure of the recipes can be outlined as follows:

Title – Ingredients – Preparation instructions – Cooking instructions - \*Advisory suggestion - \* Serving suggestion

\* The asterisk indicates that they are optional sections.

In the recipes analysed, advisory suggestions and serving suggestions are optional, as they do not appear in every recipe. The advisory suggestion section usually appears towards the end of the recipe, but not in every case. In some instances, the recipes combine features typical of both medical and culinary traditions, showing



an overlap between practical cookery and early domestic medicine. The following example serves to illustrate the stages found in the corpus:

To dry Cheryes [Title]

Take your cheryes and stone them, and take to  $\frac{1}{2}$  <sup>lb</sup> of sugar 6 pound of Cheryes [Ingredients], and as you stone them fling them into the sugar [Preparation instructions]; put your sugar into the preserueing pann, wett it first w.<sup>th</sup> a little Juice of Cheryes, and boyle them till they be pretty tender, then take them of the fire and let them stand Close couered all night, then take y<sup>m</sup> out of the Liquor, and lay them on the bottom of siues, one by one Let them stand till the syrup be quite drained from them, set them in a warme ouen not too hott, for too much heat spoiles them, when they are a little dry, turne them on cleane siues, to drye y.<sup>m</sup> up [Cooking instructions], if the Liquor be not too sharp, you may put in more cheryes and more sugar to them [Advisory suggestion]

In this recipe, we follow the definitions of the different sections found in recipes as established by Alonso-Almeida (2013) and Domínguez-Morales (2025). According to these authors, the *Title* specifies the dish and describes a cooking method (*to dry*). The *Ingredients* section enumerates all the components necessary for its preparation, including quantities and preparation instructions (*Take your cheryes and stone them, and take to  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb of sugar 6 pound of Cheryes*). The *Preparation instructions* section gives information about how to cook it (*and as you stone them fling them into the sugar*). The *Cooking Instructions* stage outlines the specific procedures required to cook the dish (methods, times, and temperatures) (*put your sugar into the preserueing pann, wett it first w.<sup>th</sup> a little Juice of Cheryes, and boyle them till they be pretty tender, then take them of the fire and let them stand Close couered all night, then take y<sup>m</sup> out of the Liquor, and lay them on the bottom of siues, one by one Let them stand till the syrup be quite drained from them, set them in a warme ouen not too hott, for too much heat spoiles them, when they are a little dry, turne them on cleane siues, to drye y.<sup>m</sup> up*). The *Serving Suggestions* stage provides guidance on the appropriate presentation of the finished dish on how to present it. In the example above, this section is not included. The *Advisory suggestion* section offers supplementary recommendations or optional considerations intended to enhance the overall preparation of the recipe (*if the Liquor be not too sharp, you may put in more cheryes and more sugar to them*).

#### 4. CORPUS DESCRIPTION

This book includes a collection of 325 cookery recipes, along with some medical receipts written by Lady Catherine Fitzgerald, which forms part of the 18th-century subcorpus of the *Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English* (COWITE18) (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2025). The recipes under survey are the culinary ones, comprising a total of 224 cookery recipes, while the remaining recipes are left for future research.

Lady Catherine Fitzgerald was an upper-class English woman of the 18th century whose recipe book contains a variety of medical, domestic, and culinary



recipes written between 1703 and 1707. According to Leong (2013, 83) “recipes, both medical and culinary, were the main medium for the recording and transmission of information and knowledge in pre-modern households”. The compilation of medical knowledge in the form of short, concise recipes has a long tradition that extends from antiquity to the late nineteenth century, when Victorian English families still brought their personalised recipes to local pharmacies to be “made up” (Leong 2013). Moreover, as Leong (2013) notes, “Household recipe books highlight the complex gendering of inheriting and bequeathing household knowledge” (90).

## 5. RESULTS

After analysing the 224 culinary recipes in Lady Catherine Fitzgerald’s book, we identified several types and functions of advisory suggestions, which are presented in the following subsections (5.1. and 5.2.).

### 5.1. FORMS

The following table (Table 1) shows, in the first column, the forms attested in the text together with examples extracted from the recipes, in the second column. The forms in the examples are highlighted in bold for ease of identification.

FORM	EXAMPLE
1. Imperative + relative clause or subordinate	a) then <b>season</b> it <b>as you think fitt</b> with a quantity of Nutmegs, Cinamon, Ginger, Cloues & mace b) <b>Cutt</b> them in quarters, or thinner <b>which you think fitt</b> c) <b>Putt</b> the stalkes into water <b>that you think will cover them</b> d) <b>Twist</b> or <b>tye</b> them in <b>what sheap you please</b>
2. If-conditional clause with <i>please, like, intend</i> + imperative or modal	a) <b>If you intend</b> to keep it longer, <b>fill</b> it with clarified butter b) <b>If you please, cleane</b> picked & shred, a piece of lemon pill c) <b>If you like</b> it you <b>may</b> add the Yolks of 2 or 3 Eggs
3. If-conditional clause + future clause <i>will</i> or imperative	a) <b>If</b> it be double refine, it <b>will</b> make them look much better b) <b>If</b> you would have it look red, <b>let</b> it lie in fair water 24 hours.
4. Declarative with modal <i>may</i> or if-clause + modal <i>may</i> or subordinate clause	a) You <b>may</b> Boyle it more after the quinces be taken up. b) <b>If</b> the Liquor be not too sharp, you <b>may</b> put in more cherries. c) You <b>may</b> make it as strong <b>as you please</b>

As it can be observed, the first form is an imperative (*season, cutt, putt, twist, tye*) followed by a subordinate clause (*in what sheap you please*) or a relative clause (*which you think fitt*). In the second row, the form *If-conditional clause with please, like, intend* (*If you intend, if you please, if you like*) can be followed by either an imperative verb (*fill*) or a modal verb (*may*). In the third row, the *If-conditional*



clause (*If it be*) is followed by a future clause with *will* (*it will make them look much better*). Finally, in the fourth row, we include the form declarative with the modal verb *may* (You *may* Boyle it) or with an *if*-clause located before the declarative (*If the Liquor be not too sharp*) followed by a modal *may* (*you may put in more cheryes*), or a subordinate clause.

## 5.2. FUNCTION

The forms presented in Table 1 illustrate the four different types of advisory suggestions found in our corpus, whose function is explained in this subsection. Following the definition of advisory suggestion provided in section 2.3, its function is, in summary, to advise, guide, or encourage a particular action or decision without imposing obligation, including the directive role of advice with the invitation tone characteristic of a suggestion.

A close inspection of the contextual setting of the recipe book reveals that the author (Lady Catherine Fitzgerald) has the knowledge of cooking, and as such, she owns the authority as an expert. She shares this with her readers to the extent that she provides advisory suggestions. These are not part of the core group of instructions to cook a meal; instead, they add extra indications that may be optional, or they may contribute to an improvement. There is no direct imposition on the reader to incorporate them, so there is no obligation, but a latent intentionality by the author towards guiding the reader to follow the instructions, as she knows, for sure, that they will improve the dish because, most probably, she has already tried them herself. In this sense, we wish to claim that the writer mitigates her authorial force, something which complies with the social conventions of the eighteenth century. Let us now turn to analyse some examples from the corpus.

a) then season it as you think fitt with a quantity of Nutmegs, Cinamon, Ginger, Cloues & mace

This advisory suggestion is presented by the author as a demonstration of culinary expertise while allowing the reader a certain degree of autonomy. The expression *as you think fitt* functions as a mitigating clause that softens the imperative *season it*. Through the invitation to determine the quantity, the author acknowledges the reader's practical knowledge and judgement. This linguistic strategy transforms what would otherwise be a direct command into a cooperative suggestion in which the writer is asking for the collaboration of the reader. The expert authority of the writer remains implicit in the use of the imperative *season*, yet the comparative clause *as you think fitt* reduces the directive force, creating a balance between instruction and the reader's freedom to make their own judgement or decision based on individual knowledge, experience, or preference, rather than following a strict command.

Similarly, the writer guides the reader on how to season it, but the quantities of each ingredient (*Nutmegs, Cinamon, Ginger, Cloues* and *mace*) are not specified. The reader can decide the amounts to use and even has the freedom to omit one or



any of the ingredients. Thus, the advisory suggestion keeps its instructive purpose while softening the directive: the reader is expected to season the dish with the listed ingredients, but the expression *as you think fitt* invites them to do so without imposing exact measurements or the specific seasoner.

b) if you please, cleane picked & shred, a piece of lemon pill

This advisory suggestion is offered by the writer as an expert to improve the recipe. The author is aware of the benefit that the recipient may have access to. The use of the *if-clause* together with *please*, *like* or *will* is a strategy to turn an order into a suggestion. Thus, mitigating the force of the message. The actual force is clearly present in the use of the following imperative. The verb *cleane* expresses a command, reflecting the expert authority of the writer. Although the imperative indicates direct advice, it is preceded by the conditional clause *if you please*, which softens the directive tone.

These expressions have been studied by Alonso-Almeida (2025), as discursive strategies used as interpersonal mitigation. This author establishes that “construcciones como *If you...* permiten introducir opciones y sugerencias de manera menos directa, reduciendo el impacto de una posible orden” (16). We must consider that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century this kind of strategies was frequent in instructive texts as they “sirven como marcadores de interacción que ayudan a estructurar la relación autor-lector, creando un ambiente de cooperación y respeto.” (17).

c) If you like it you may add the Yolks of 2 or 3 Eggs

In this case, the use of the modal verb *may* softens the direct action manifested by the verb *add*, and introduces a sense of possibility, giving some freedom to the reader to take the advisory suggestion or not, but this last option is not explicitly expressed. In this context, *may* transmits a real possibility that is authorized by the writer and, at the same time, she offers some degree of flexibility which can be understood by the reader as an invitation to try different options. The use of the conditional *if you like* mitigates the impositive force of the imperative *add*, signaling permission and politeness and turning the order into an advisory suggestion.

d) if it be double Refind it will make them look much better

This example illustrates an indirect strategy of advice-giving, that is an advisory suggestion. The conditional structure (*if it be... it will...*) allows the author to present her recommendation not as an explicit command but as a hypothetical consequence, which mitigates the directive force of the statement. Instead of directly instructing the reader to refine the ingredient twice, Lady Catherine forms the advisory suggestion as an experiential observation. Refining it twice *will make them look much better*. This conditional form functions as a politeness device, softening the imposition while still expressing the superiority of the suggested method. The use of the comparative adjective *much better* introduces an element of gradation and



persuasion, implying an improvement on a scale of quality. This strengthens the pragmatic intention behind the advisory suggestion, that is that the reader follows it by emphasising the benefit of doing so.

e) You may make it as strong as you please

This sentence functions as an advisory suggestion that is presented by the author as a demonstration of culinary expertise while allowing the reader some autonomy in preparation. The modal verb *may* is used to show that the action is optional rather than obligatory, so it can be chosen by the reader. The phrase *as you please* further mitigates the imperative force, offering the reader the freedom to adjust the intensity according to personal judgement or taste, transforming the potential directive into an advisory suggestion, respecting the reader's experience and practical knowledge. The author's expertise is implied, while the sentence reduces the force of the command and allows the reader to make their own judgment (*as strong as you please*). In this way, the advisory suggestion maintains its instructional purpose while softening the tone.

As seen in the instances and following Alonso-Almeida (2025) the use of the advisory suggestions serves as a form of mitigation to establish a polite relationship between the writer and the reader. Alonso-Almeida, making reference to the construction *If you...* considers that "Este patrón discursivo refleja un enfoque en la cortesía y la relación interpersonal, fundamental en un contexto en el que las mujeres tenían un rol central en la gestión doméstica y debían adherirse a normas sociales que valoraban el decoro y la deferencia." (Alonso-Almeida 2025, 26)

## 6. CONCLUSION

The analysis of Lady Catherine Fitzgerald's recipe book provides valuable insights into the linguistic and pragmatic features of advisory suggestions in women's culinary writing of the eighteenth century. Our findings confirm that these texts function as more than mere instructional manuals; they serve as sites of negotiation of authority, knowledge, and social decorum (as already stated by Alonso-Almeida 2025).

Advisory suggestions are not consistently present across all recipes in the corpus, which indicates that their inclusion responds to a deliberate communicative choice rather than to a prescriptive convention of the genre. When present, these suggestions often appear towards the end of the recipe, and perform the pragmatic function of offering optional guidance for improving a dish rather than issuing an obligatory command.

The linguistic analysis of advisory suggestions reveals a careful balancing of authority and politeness. Some of the expressions in the corpus, such as *if you please, you may, that you think, which you think fitt*, among others, allow the author to position herself as knowledgeable yet deferential, maintaining the social expectations of female modesty while still asserting epistemic authority, confirming and extending



the findings in Alonso-Almeida (2025). This reflects a strategic use of stance, where politeness operates as a mechanism to mitigate the directive force of advice and to construct a cooperative relationship between writer and reader.

From a functional perspective, advisory suggestions fulfil several interrelated purposes: (1) they display the author's expertise and experiential knowledge; (2) they invite the reader's participation and agency in the cooking process; and (3) they reinforce the social values of politeness and respect characteristic of eighteenth-century female discourse. The interplay of these functions demonstrates that Lady Catherine Fitzgerald's language choices are both socially conditioned and pragmatically effective.

Finally, by unifying the notions of *advice* and *suggestion* under the broader category of *advisory suggestion*, this study contributes to refining our understanding of directive speech acts in historical contexts. It shows that women writers of the period could exercise subtle forms of authority through language, challenging contemporary gender norms while adhering to the conventions of politeness. The findings thus support the view that eighteenth-century women's recipe books are rich linguistic and cultural artefacts that encode not only culinary knowledge but also complex patterns of social interaction and self-representation.

Future research could build on these findings by expanding the scope of analysis to include a wider range of eighteenth-century women's recipe books and other domestic texts, enabling comparative studies that evidence patterns of advisory language across authors. Such investigations would help determine whether the pragmatic balance between authority and politeness observed in Lady Catherine Fitzgerald's work represents a broader trend in women's linguistic practices or an individual preference. Additionally, corpus-based and diachronic approaches could be employed to examine how advisory suggestions evolved over time. Such approaches will certainly offer enough data to perform a quantitative analysis which would further support our qualitative results.

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