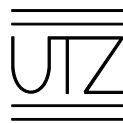


Maria Sutor

Non-native Speech in English Literature



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I INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Foreign accents in fiction are ever-present, but easily overlooked. When Shakespeare's Doctor Caius asks "Do intend vat I speak?" (Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, I/IV/40), his pronunciation and grammar are taken as a natural side-effect of seeing – and hearing – a Frenchman on stage. The same is true for black servants in 19th-century adventure tales, whose 'lingo' is as distinct as it is elusive to define: A sentence like "Christian George King sar [sir] berry sorry" (Dickens [1857] 1890, 245) instantly brings a certain type of character to mind, but the reader will be hard-pressed to describe the exact linguistic characteristics that define a literary figure like Dickens's "native Sambo" (Dickens [1857] 1890, 240). Fictional accents are perceived as a matter of course, and are therefore hardly acknowledged as a stylistic tool that conveys a very specific message about its speaker. This functionalization is not restricted to literature: A recent example of social media propaganda that instrumentalizes foreign accents can be found in the controversial YouTube video *The Innocence of Muslims*, which in September 2012 sparked violent protests in several Muslim countries. In a scene involving two followers of the prophet Muhammad, one of them asks permission to rape children that were captured in war, and does so in an undefined, but distinctly foreign accent. Muhammad, on the other hand, speaks accent-free English, which suggests that the accent was added to underline the barbaric nature of the request – 'barbaric' in its original etymological sense, a word intended to echo the unintelligible 'babbling' of foreigners,¹ and in its later sense, denoting cruelty and an uncivilized state of mind. As is evident from these examples, foreign-sounding language in fiction evokes a variety of associations, depending on its linguistic characteristics, its context and the socio-historical background of the respective work and its intended recipients.

It is the purpose of this study to examine the linguistic representation of non-native speech in English literature by means of a corpus analysis, and to interpret the findings in the literary, social and historical context of the respective era. An interdisciplinary approach, combining linguistics, literature studies and sociolinguistics, is central to this study, which may be classified as a contribution to the field of literary imagology, a discipline that examines the textual expression of "the origin and function of characteristics of other countries and peoples" (Beller/Leersen 2007, 7). Imagological topics have met with

¹ "The name was applied by Greeks to foreigners to express the strange sound of their language" (Skeat 1956, 47).

increasing interest in recent years, as have the interrelations between society and the media, but very few studies in this context focus primarily on linguistic aspects. Therefore, the objective of the present study is to provide findings on two levels: The first aim is to gather systematic data on the linguistic representation of non-native speech, and to discover possible interrelations with the respective socio-historical background. Secondly and on a more general level, the study intends to demonstrate the great influence of functionalized language on the representation of social and ethnic minorities in fiction, and to make a linguistic contribution to a field which has so far been the focus of primarily literary and social studies. The final results may help improve our understanding of the mechanisms behind a modern media landscape that is dominated more than ever before by language and verbal representation.

1.2 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Before taking a closer look at the individual steps of the analysis, three central methodological issues should not be left unaddressed. They concern the diachronic approach of the study, the decision to conduct a corpus analysis, and the combination of literary and linguistic research. As indicated above, examples for foreign accents in present-day media, print and otherwise, are numerous and certainly provide enough material for an analysis of their own. Nevertheless, the present study takes a diachronic approach, analyzing plays and novels from three different time periods within English history: the Renaissance, the Victorian Age and the War Decades of the 20th century. As a consequence, modern media like tape and film recordings, as well as social media and the internet, cannot be part of the corpus, since their technological and social context has no equivalent in earlier time periods. Such a restriction to the printed word may seem limiting; however, an analysis of different eras and their respective backgrounds allows insights into developments, trends and possible parallels that a strictly synchronic analysis could not provide. The three periods mentioned above were chosen for their distinctly nationalistic atmosphere and intensified patriotic sentiment, a development not unlike certain trends we observe today. A look back at history and its literary expression may allow a more objective view of the social context of our findings, and the background before which they should be interpreted. For that reason, and despite its limitations, a diachronic analysis was deemed a useful approach to the present subject.

The second methodological question to be discussed here is the decision to compile and analyze a corpus of non-native fictional speech. This decision was made for the basic reason that there is very little data at hand on the sub-

ject, and no ready-made corpus that could be used. In order to conduct a primarily linguistic analysis, it was necessary to find text samples to be examined and compared on a systematic level. It should be noted at this point that the present corpus is a comparatively small one, and as such does not meet the requirements of exclusively quantitative corpus linguistics. A purely quantitative approach is not, however, the purpose of this study, which intends to provide observations on trends and developments rather than statistical frequencies. Accordingly, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was chosen as the best way to understand the linguistic representation and social implications of fictional non-native speech.

Finally, the question of whether it is methodologically sound to combine linguistic and literary research in a single study nevertheless remains. It is an issue that was addressed as early as 1969 by Leech in *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, in which he discusses the forced dichotomy that categorizes linguistics as a science and literary studies as belonging in the field of arts (Leech 1969, 6). Leech (1969, 4) argues against this separation, and points out that a linguistic analysis that disregards the literary context of its text samples may result in “train-spotting,” that is, a mere cataloguing of frequencies without including the context. This “lang.-lit.-problem,” as Leech (1969, 1) calls it, can be solved by recognizing how the two fields may benefit from each other if combined in a “descriptive rhetoric,” which is

a body of theory and technique devoted to the analysis of the characteristic features of literary language, and to the explanation of terms in the critic’s vocabulary, where this can be done, using the linguist’s insights at a level where they become useful to the student of literature.

(Leech 1969, 3)

Poetic language, according to Leech, deserves special attention by linguists as it is unique in its deviations from the normatives of non-fictional language; deviations which are “worthy of a careful study” (Leech 1969, 5). Leech’s suggested method of studying literature through linguistics and vice versa is consistent with the interdisciplinarity that is presently becoming the preferred approach in both literary and linguistic studies (see, for instance, Lattuca 2001, 1 ff., on the emergence of interdisciplinarity within the Humanities). Interdisciplinarity, as mentioned before, is central to the subject of non-native fictional speech, and following Leech’s line of argument, it would be a methodological fallacy to exclude literary aspects from the present analysis. It should be noted, however, that such a combined approach requires careful consideration of the methods involved, and if necessary, an adaptation of exclusively linguistic or literary methods to avoid inaccuracies. A more detailed description of the method that was adapted to meet the specific requirements of this study will be given in Chapter 4, Section 4.

1.3 OUTLINE

In a first step towards approaching non-native English in fiction, Chapter 2 presents a survey of previous research on the subject. Since there are few publications that focus primarily on non-native speech in English literature, it was necessary to branch out into the related topics of speech in fiction, imagology and Second Language Acquisition research, all of which are central to the present study. Speech in fiction, in itself a sparsely acknowledged field, includes both text-oriented publications such as Page's *Speech in the English Novel* as well as theoretical studies like Koch and Oesterreicher's model of linguistic distance and immediacy. Imagology, a field that has attracted increased interest in the past decades, concerns itself with the representation of foreigners in fictional and non-fictional texts, and provides a retrospective glance at several centuries of anthropological research. In accordance with the diachronic approach of the study, early publications dating back to the 16th century were included, tracing the development of imagological thinking from the Climate Theory to Herder to the modern de- and reconstruction of the term *image* and the most influential present-day publications in the subdiscipline of literary imagology. Finally, the field of research on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) was covered in a brief survey, as the method used in the present analysis is based on SLA methods that were developed to analyze the language of non-native learners of English.

The following two chapters are dedicated to the methodological framework of the present study: the corpus and the method of analysis. As there are no previous corpora of non-native fictional speech, the present corpus was created 'from the ground up,' a process described in Chapter 3. The chapter outlines the methodological considerations behind the corpus, that is, the limitation of the source material to certain historical periods and to the epic and dramatic genre, excluding non-fictional texts and poetry. In a final step, the method that was used to select individual works is described, including a sample chosen work from the Renaissance corpus. A comprehensive list of the plays and novels of the corpus can be found in Chapter 3, Section 8.

As fictional speech is in itself a rarely researched subject, the method of analysis, like the corpus, had to be developed specifically for this study. Chapter 4 begins by defining the dichotomy between real and fictional speech and its methodological implications. An excursus into the theory of Second Language Acquisition, and more specifically the model of Error Analysis, follows to illustrate why this theoretical framework was chosen as a background before which the present analytical procedure was developed. In this context, the terms *error* and *mistake* are addressed and their usage defined, followed by a short discussion of the interlanguage question in relation to the present study.

After setting the theoretical parameters, the second part of the chapter concerns itself with two error taxonomies and their respective adaptations to the requirements of fictional speech. An overview of the model of analysis that was developed based on these two revised taxonomies can be found in Section 4.3. The included sample analysis contains examples taken from different works of the corpus.

The subsequent and most extensive part of the study comprises the literary and socio-historical background of non-native fictional speech (Chapter 5) and a comprehensive report on the findings gained from the linguistic analysis of the corpus (Chapter 6). Chapter 5 commences with a brief definition of *national identity* and related terms, followed by an overview of non-native speech in fiction before the 16th century, here identified as a watershed date after which England developed a national identity as we understand the term today. It should be noted that *England* and *English* was used in this chapter to refer specifically to the country of England and its citizens, not to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This is due to the fact that a study of Scottish, Welsh and Irish literature in correlation with non-native speech would require a different socio-historical approach than a study of English literature, since all three countries have a history of colonialization and suppression of their traditional Gaelic mother tongues in favor of English. Chapter 5 continues by reviewing the social situation and literary perception of non-native speakers in the Renaissance, the Victorian Age and the War and Inter-War Decades of the 20th century. Special attention is paid to relevant historical events, as well as historical and literary sources that supply evidence of the foreigner's image and treatment in the respective era. The literary context of each of the analyzed works is briefly outlined, focusing on the non-native character's function and linguistic characterization in the narrative, without yet including any of the corpus data. The intent of Chapter 5 is to cover the aforementioned context of the linguistic analysis, in order to remain in accord with Leech's uniting of language and literature and the interdisciplinary demands of the subject.

Chapter 6 complements this approach by providing a synopsis of the data collected in the corpus analysis, a detailed overview of which can be found in the appendix (see Chapter 8). Section 6.3 describes the qualitative and quantitative tendencies observed in the corpus, examining the levels of Substance (pronunciation), Text/Grammar, Text/Lexis and Discourse separately for each of the respective subcorpora. A tabulated overview of the results is given at the end of each subsection. The second part of the chapter is devoted to two aspects of non-native fictional speech that proved to be of particular interest: the influence of the non-native characters' respective national identities, and the linguistic inconsistencies that characterize their speech. Section 6.4 examines the three subcorpora in relation to these aspects, and describes the general functionalization of fictional speech as observed in the corpus.

Chapter 7 unites the findings of Chapters 5 and 6 and points out the correlations between the socio-historical and literary background of an era, and the linguistic representation of the non-native speaker in fiction. After a section focusing on the analysis and its results, the theoretical implications of fictional varieties created exclusively for certain outgroups are discussed and applied as a theoretical framework for imagining minorities in fiction.

To enable further access to the data outlined in Chapter 6 and demonstrate their reliability, an appendix was added in Chapter 8 containing a tabular overview of the analysis results, listed according to subcorpus and non-native character. The text source or sources² are given for each of the works, including an online link to the full texts accessible at archive.org, the public internet archive that was used to obtain electronic versions of the texts. The texts at archive.org can be viewed in different media formats, generally including Read Online, PDF (Google.com), EPUB, Kindle, Daisy, Full Text, DjVu and Metadata. For potential further research projects using the data of this study, the most economic of these formats would be Read Online, as it provides a search function that allows the quick location of individual text samples. Alternatively, the samples listed in the appendix include the bibliographical information of the electronic or print edition that was used in the analysis (page numbers for novels, acts/scenes for plays). In Chapter 9, there is a reference list of primary and secondary sources cited in this work, including a separate list of fictional texts used in the corpus. An alphabetical index of relevant subjects and authors concludes the study.

² In order to account for the variability of Renaissance orthography, the Renaissance subcorpus was analyzed using both a text source with original spelling as well as an edited modern version for purposes of comparison. The bibliographical information for both is given in the appendix.

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