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Oral varieties of English in a literary corpus of West African and South East Asian prose (1954 – 2013): commitment to local identities and catering for foreign readers

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Introduction

In literary texts that emanate from multilingual societies, authors need to reconcile their commitment towards the representation of a multi-faceted socio-cultural identity and constraints that are inherent in literary production. To reflect multilingual backgrounds and experiences, they are faced with the need to adopt different creative strategies. This paper aims at demonstrating that what looks like mimetic elements in that they can be perceived as imitations of actual speech belongs to the symbolic order and functions in a tension between the real and the imaginary, as stated by Hernadi (1971, 18) [Fludernik (1993, 27-28)]:

Literature as an art is representation (mimesis) even though it can assume the style of straightforward, non-imitative representation; literature as verbal discourse is presentative (diegesis) even though it can assume the style of mimetic representation.

To depict varying local situations and convey cultural elements, prose writers have different creative means at their disposal. The written language undergoes dia-variations across place, social groups and across medium (oral language *versus* written language). In our corpus, language

undergoes adjustments in terms of code, lexical creations, and structural features.

The sociolinguistic phenomena of code-mixing and code-switching, traditionally defined as “sentence-internal switching” and “language alternation between independent syntactic units” respectively (Auer 2011, 467), are due to language contact and multilingualism. Code-mixing occurs to insist on cultural differences and cultural artefacts. Two languages are used in a message. The introduction of a word that belongs to a language different from English is meant to convey otherness, to preserve other cultures and traditions. Code-switching is controlled by social rules: each variety (standard and non-standardized) has a function to fulfil. The use of code-mixing and code-switching is a demonstration of some of the attempts by novelists to represent the sociolinguistic realities of the geographical area they depict. Simultaneously, code-mixing and code-switching are also used to create stylistic effects and to arouse the reader’s capacity to build up his or her own representation of otherness. We support Bourdieu’s position (1991, 221) when he advocates that the definition of regional or ethnic identity can only be apprehended if we subsume the opposition between representation and reality and include in reality the representation we make of it. The practices of code-mixing and code-switching shape identities: that of the world which is represented and, to some extent, that of the receptive reader. Traditionally one agrees to identify communication with others and representation of the world as the primary objectives of language. As stated by Joseph (2004, 20), identity can also be qualified as a major objective of language in that it exists by the assertions we make of it. Authors commit themselves in making choices to represent the fictional (as opposed to factual) reality they create. The interpretation readers make is influenced by their inner representation of what they read, independently of consciousness or not.

Texts articulate an in-between identity by transposing African and South East Asian sociocultural fictional reality into a European language consciousness, English. To do so stylistic devices are needed. They vary depending on geo-linguistic situations and authorial choices. As stated by Bandia (1993), literary recourse to code-mixing, varieties of English, and code-switching result in a “post ethnic” literary language. Literary works are specific “places of contact” where ethnic, national identities co-exist with the identities of the readers. The value of an Igbo or a Malay word, for instance, is constructed differently by the author, the local reader, or the international reader of English. So are varieties of English: West

African pidgin English and Nigerian English are constructed differently by local readers or international readers, for whom these varieties signal West-Africanness, post ethnic and post national.

Looking at language features from the point of view of identity enables us to shift from representation – or how the world is categorized by using means that language provides us with – to an ideological concern and to consider language varieties for what they “mean” beyond their referential and propositional content or truth-value. By using language alone, fiction is a linguistic construct that does not need to be faithful to reality to make the reader apprehend the real, the reality of identities. In our approach, we operate a move from essentialism to constructionism and tackle identity markers as they are co-constructed by the interpretation readers make of them.

Methodology

The present section will outline the methodology used. Following a description of the text selection process, the procedure for annotating non-standardized features in the corpus will be outlined. The section ends with a brief overview of the current size and utilization of the corpus.

Text selection

Rather than drawing from all varieties of English from around the globe, the decision was made to focus on specific regions. This choice was motivated by the authors’ knowledge of varieties, given that efficient annotation and analysis require familiarity with the varieties at hand. Thus, the focus lies on West African and Southeast Asian texts. A selection of Scottish texts was included to serve as an Inner Circle yardstick.

The selection was limited to prose texts, given that non-standardized syntax in poetry may be due to rhetorical devices in addition to local varieties of English, while accents in drama texts may be hinted at in stage directions rather than represented in dialogues. For novels, excerpts consisting of one or more chapters were chosen in order to represent the local literary landscape as well as possible, rather than limiting the selection to a few texts and authors, which would be the consequence of selecting entire texts. For short stories, the selection of entire texts was possible.

Corpus annotation

Selected texts are digitized and proofread. A first round of annotation, performed automatically via a Python (Python Software Foundation 2015) script, adds paragraph numbers and detects character passages. This is followed by the main phase of annotation, in which any instance of non-standardized language use is annotated manually with the help of a custom-made XML editor. Overall, five main linguistic categories, shown in Table 1, are distinguished in the annotation scheme.

Category	Example
Phonology	in de street
Grammar	He want to sign on another fireman
Lexical	You got handphone ?
Code	They were kampung colours
Spelling	But lissen

Table 1: Overview of annotation categories

The categories “phonology” and “spelling” both refer to non-standardized spelling in the written medium, but with the crucial difference that the former represents local accent features, e.g. [d] rather than [ð] in “the”, while the latter has no bearing on pronunciation and corresponds to “eye dialect”, e.g. <lissen> rather than <listen>. The category “grammar” is used to mark observed instances of non-standardized grammatical constructions, e.g. the omission of the third person singular present tense {-s} morpheme as shown in Table 1. The category “lexical” refers to semantic extensions or shifts of standard English lexemes, as well as local lexical innovations, e.g. “handphone” meaning “mobile phone” in Southeast Asian varieties of English. Finally, the category “code” covers instances of code-mixing and code-switching, e.g. the insertion of the Malay word “kampung”, whose primary denotation is “village”, but which can also mean “unsophisticated” or “rustic” when used as a modifier.

Additional annotation is applied to character passages, narrator attributes, and metalinguistic commentary. The latter category is represented by a “meta” tag, which covers additional marking of features, such as italics, footnotes, translations, as well commentary on language by narrators and characters alike.

Corpus size and utilisation

The current size of the corpus is 178,584 words, which consists of a West African component made up of texts from Nigeria, Liberia, and Sierra Leone and comprising 78,761 words, a Southeast Asian component made up of texts from Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines and comprising 81,351 words, and a Scottish component comprising 21,472 words. The goal of the data collection process is to achieve a word count of 100,000 words per component. The Scottish component will be supplemented with texts from other European varieties of English to form a European component, equally consisting of 100,000 words.

The XML-annotated corpus can be viewed in a web browser for qualitative analysis, or can be exported to R (R Core Team 2015) for quantitative analysis and the plotting of figures.

Regional profiles

The annotation of non-standardized features in the corpus allows us to produce preliminary quantitative results, both in terms of feature density and distribution.

Feature density

The overview of features normalized for 10,000 words, given in Figure 1, reveals clear differences in terms of feature density across the three regions. Scottish texts display by far the highest density, approximately 3.5 times denser than West African texts. In turn, West African texts are almost three times as dense as Southeast Asian texts.

Figure 1: Normalised feature profiles per region, values per 10,000 words

Feature distribution

When looking at the same data proportionally, distinct feature profiles become apparent, as shown in Figure 2. Each region focuses on a different linguistic category: Scottish texts mainly have recourse to phonological features, Southeast Asian texts to code-mixing/code-switching, whereas West African texts mostly rely on grammatical features. In spite of these stark differences, a common underlying pattern can be observed, in that a single category clearly prevails over the others.

**Figure 2: Proportional feature profiles per region
Signalling local identities**

To signal local identities, markers of otherness that transform the literary medium to various degrees are introduced. Firstly, a quantitative approach will be adopted, detailing two major strategies for signalling local identities. This will be followed by a detailed look at select excerpts illustrating the various approaches that express local identities.

Two methods for encoding local identity

Authors follow two main avenues for encoding local identities: the first being the use of lexemes referring to local cultural artefacts and customs, such as food, clothing, creeds, festivities, etc. These lexemes may originate from local languages or local varieties of English. As such, they correspond to the tags “code” (borrowings, xenisms) and “lexical” (neologisms). Secondly, authors may resort to structural features from local varieties of English, which correspond to the tags “phonology” and “grammar”.

Figures 3 and 4 depict the frequency of both methods for each text. Each data point represents a single text, with the x-axis for the code and lexical method, and the y-axis for the phonology and grammar method.

The dashed line stands for parity between the two methods. The distance of a given text from this line indicates its preference for one method over the other. The solid line corresponds to a linear model, which is an attempt to trace a straight line as close as possible to all data points.

Figure 3, which covers Southeast Asian texts, suggests that most texts favour the code and lexical method. The data points do not coincide with the solid line due to the presence of a minority of texts favouring the alternative method.

Figure 3: Scatterplot of lexical and structural features in Southeast Asian texts, normalised per 1,000 words

Figure 4, which covers West African texts, shows a clearly different picture. The phonology and grammar method appears to be favoured. Even the texts that show a preference for the alternative method are not very far away from the dashed line of parity, nor from the solid line. The closer fit of the solid line suggests that West African texts follow a more regular pattern than Southeast Asian texts.

Figure 4: Scatterplot of lexical and structural features in West African texts, normalised per 1,000 words

Lexical features and discourse markers

Lexical borrowings or xenisms (code-mixing) used in narrative passages or in direct discourse can either be italicized or not. In (1), italicization is not used: the word is lexicalized in the OED and described as a word of West African origin. The central importance of garri as a staple food is enhanced by the repetition of the lexical item. Nevertheless it may not be fully referential for the international reader and the autonymic dimension of the term (as defined by Authier-Revuz, 1995), – if only partial – cannot be denied.

- (1) All Oshia seemed to have now, she thought as she watched him banging his head against the door, were head and this unhealthy-looking stomach. What was she to do? The child was being fed regularly, though if one had told her that **garri**¹ in the morning, **garri** in the afternoon and **garri** in the evening all days of the week, was not proper nutrition for a

¹ We use a bold font to emphasize the markers.

growing child, she would have felt very hurt. She knew no other way to feed a child, and the sad thing was that Oshia was lucky to get even enough **garri** to fill his belly.

(Emecheta [1979] 1982, 98-99)

In (2) the foreign word, a xenism in that it is not integrated into the English lexicon, is italicized, repeated and defined. It functions both at the referential level and at the symbolic level.

(2) "Well, Oshia, you can't force people to invite you to their *sarah*²" But she sighed, knowing that *sarabs* were unofficial parties where food was free for all, especially children; they were usually given by women who wanted babies who were invariably told by the native doctors that the only way they would conceive was if they fed other children. Nnu Ego could see in her mind's eye what must have happened.

(Emecheta [1979] 1982, 99)

In (1) and (2), the importance of code-mixing lies in conveying an African identity. Code-mixing also echoes the major themes of the novel: motherhood and the central place of children in a woman's life. In (3), code-mixing as well as transposition into English are used: the English language borrows the signified *evil spirits* from another culture and language and adapts it to the morphosyntax of the English language. Even though the signifier *evil spirits* is well-formed and easily understood ("the spirits are evil"), a certain degree of cultural opacity remains to a lesser extent than would have been the case had an Igbo word been used.

(3) He went out to the front yard, past stones placed side by side around the manicured lawn. The **evil spirits** would not win. He would not let them defeat him.

(Adichie [2006] 2009, 14)

The integration of a discourse marker, syntactically independent in that it can be removed without affecting the syntax of the utterance in (4), creates a different sense of defamiliarization that no longer concerns cultural elements but modes of communication. The particle is a marker of emphasis; it has a phatic function and it adds in terms of pragmatic meaning: it is an invitation for the reader to hear the informality of the exchange as well as the intonative pattern of the turns.

² We do not edit a bold font when the lexical items are italicized in the text.

(4) "So which Nigerian channel do you watch?"
"I don't even really watch any o. I watch Style and E! Sometimes CNN and BBC." Ranyinudo had changed into shorts and a T-shirt. "I have a girl who comes and cooks and cleans for me, but I made this stew myself because you were coming, so you must eat it o. What will you drink? I have malt and orange juice."
"Malt! I'm going to drink all the malt in Nigeria. I used to buy it from a Hispanic supermarket in Baltimore, but it was not the same thing."
(Adichie 2013, 388)

Cultural artefacts introduced by authors in their works are not limited to food, clothing, and cultural practices, but can focus on local myth and folklore, as shown in (5):

(5) Cemeteries didn't scare me; horror stories did. I grew up on comic books in which **vampires** overran whole villages in a rabid frenzy, turning everyone, including newborn infants, into their kind. The *mananangals*' bodies broke off at the waist come feeding time, when they would sprout bat wings and fangs and leave their lower torsos standing upright at the backdoor. The uninfected man had to catch these momentary halves in precisely that state, before the pack returned, and sprinkle salt into the raw flesh; the salt would sear the wound and render reconnection and all further pretense to a normal life impossibly painful. The airborne **vampire** would flail and rant at the sight of its lost legs, and it was in these throes that the *manananggal*, realizing the imminence of its death, became most virulent; it would seek out its tormentor and grapple and chew him down to mutual damnation.
(Dalisay [1992] 2011, 18)

The Filipino mythical creature portrayed in (5) is first introduced as the closest European counterpart "vampire", thus allowing foreign readers to quickly conceptualize the creature's major traits. This is followed by a mention of the creature's actual name, "manananggal", and a concise description highlighting the differences between the European concept of vampires and the local equivalent. The introduction of a local mythical creature to foreign readers testifies to the author's commitment to local folklore, as it constitutes an act of exportation from the confines of the local realm to the wider world, thus raising its potential for wider recognition.

Discursive chunks

Discursive chunks are apprehended as cohesive elements on the discourse level (Peirce, 1998). They function as figures of central importance in the overall movement of discourse and play a part in the integration of cultural otherness. In (6), the Igbo traders' song functions as a cohesive element

whose meaning is reconstructed by Obi across the barrier of the English language. The song acquires meaning for Obi as he translates it. The power of translation in representing a foreign culture functions at two different levels: between social groups (unlike the traders, Obi is a British educated Nigerian) and beyond the Nigerian scene. The song is emblematic of the situation in the whole country, “a world turned upside down”; it is concerned with boundaries, allegiances and betrayals. The paddle betrays its master as it speaks a language he does not understand, English, which makes him lose control.

(6) The traders burst into song again, this time there was nothing bawdy about it. Obi knew the refrain, he tried to translate it into English, and for the first time its real meaning dawned on him.

"An in-law went to see his in-law"

"*Oyiemu-o*"

"His in-law seized him and killed him"

"*Oyiemu-o*"

"Bring a canoe, bring a paddle"

"*Oyiemu-o*"

"The paddle speaks English"

"*Oyiemu-o.*"

On the face of it there was no kind of logic or meaning in the song. But as Obi turned it round and round in his mind, he was struck by the wealth of association that even such a mediocre song could have. First of all it was unheard of for a man to seize his in-law and kill him. To the Ibo mind it was the height of treachery. Did not the elders say that a man's in-law was his *chi*, his personal god? Set against this was another great betrayal; a paddle that begins suddenly to talk in a language which its master, the fisherman, does not understand. In short then, thought Obi, the burden of the song was 'the world turned upside down'. He was pleased with his exegesis and began to search in his mind for other songs that could be given the same treatment. But the song of the traders was now so loud and spicy that he could not concentrate on his thinking.

(Achebe [1963] 2010, 37)

The literal translation of a West African proverb in (7) is used as a means of cultural transposition, as it is already the case in (6). The oral proverb is translated in Pidgin English: diamesic variation relies on different strategies; syntax and lexicon are engaged to render the illusion of orality.

(7) "Do you still eat meat?" he challenged.

"Who am I? But other big men like you eat."

"I don't know which big men you have in mind. But they are not like me. I don't make money trading with the enemy or selling relief or..."
"Augusta's boy friend doesn't do that. He just gets foreign exchange."
"How does he get it? He swindles the government -- that's how he gets foreign exchange, whoever he is. Who is Augusta, by the way?"
"My girl friend."
"I see."
"She gave me three dollars last time which I changed to forty-five pounds. The man gave her fifty dollars."
"Well, my dear girl, I don't traffic in foreign exchange and I don't have meat in my fridge. We are fighting a war and I happen to know that some young boys at the front drink gari and water once in three days."
"It is true," she said simply. "Monkey de work, baboon de chop."
(Achebe [1972] 1982, 112)

Structural features

In (8), structural features are used to represent a Nigerian variety of English somewhere along the continuum between Nigerian Pidgin and Nigerian English. In the excerpt in direct discourse, educated characters (Odili Samulu, a teacher; the Minister of Overseas Training; Mrs John who is a friend of his; and James, a journalist) switch from an unmarked variety of language in the first turn by the Minister to a marked, non-standardized variety in the following turns. The switch is initiated by Mrs John as she addresses Odili in the second turn. Pidgin is used to cut across different social classes and to encode the closeness of the relationship between the participants and perhaps even more so their awareness of the informality of the situation. The situational informality as well as the psychological state of the participants at the time of their utterance are conveyed thanks to code-switching.

Core structural features such as the use of *no* verbal negative marker, *na* presentative particle, *say* complementizer, the omission of third person singular present tense {-s}, to mention the ones that are recurrent, serve a double purpose: they represent a regional variety (cf. Figure 2) but they also function as markers of otherness with a phatic dimension for the reader who is not familiar with the sociolinguistic varieties. Representative phonological features of the variety, which are more rarely used as diamesic variants in West African texts (cf. Figure 2) enable the reader to gain an acoustic representation of the exchange without hindering his/her comprehension.

(8) "If you come as soon as you close," he said, "you can stay in my guest-room with everything complete – bedroom, parlour, bathroom, latrine, everything – self-contained. You can live by yourself and do *anything* you like there, it's all yours."

"Make you no min' am, sha-a," said Mrs John to me. "I kin see say you na good boy. Make you no gree am spoil you. Me I no de for dis bed-room and bath-room business-o, As you see dis man so, na wicked soul. If he tell you stand make you run."

Everybody laughed.

"Eleanor, why you wan disgrace me and spoil my name so for public for nothing sake. Wetin I do you? Everybody here sabi say me na good Christian. No be so, James?"

"Ah, na so, sir," replied the journalist happily.

In spite of all this joking the Minister's invitation was serious and firm. He said it was important I came at once as he was planning to go to the United States in about two months.

(Achebe [1966] 1982, 16)

The use of structural features in texts can not only serve to represent a local variety, but also to represent what it is not, that is to address and dispel any stereotypes and assumptions that foreign readers may have. A case in point is shown in passage (9), in which the main protagonist, Holden Heng, an ethnic Chinese Singaporean, asks his father about the origins of his given name.

(9) "Well," his father said, "your name come from William Holden."

"William Holden is the actor, is it?" he asked.

"Yah, it is. From the picture *Picnic* —"

"Oh, I know, I know. He steals Kim Novak from her boyfriend, is it? My friends tell me. But why you call me Holden, not William? William is better."

"No use, no use. William so common, Holden so lomantic."

Holden's fluent recall was forced to pause at his father's mispronouncement.

(Yeo [1986] 2011, 7-8)

In this exchange, both Holden and his father use a range of grammatical features characteristic of Singapore English, e.g. the invariant question tag "is it", copula deletion, auxiliary deletion in interrogatives, and the omission of third person singular present tense {-s}. The father then substitutes /l/ for /t/ in the word "romantic", a highly stereotypical feature associated with ethnic Chinese Englishes in general. The fact that it is a phonological feature, a category which is extremely rare in Southeast Asian texts (cf. Figure 2), renders the feature even more salient. The narrator proceeds to label it a "mispronouncement", which, given the focalisation on Holden, also reflects his attitude towards it. The isolation of this stereotypical feature as the highly noticeable difference in the speech of father and son, as well as its rejection by both the latter and the narrator,

categorize it as belonging to the older generation and therefore on the brink of extinction.

Catering for foreign readers or not

In “The Dowry of Virgins” by Ophelia Lewis, the recurrent addition of footnotes may be interpreted in different ways: as a commitment to signal local practices and uses explicitly or as a tendency to provoke the foreign reader by providing explanations that are not needed to ensure referentiality.

(10) Twoku Village had thirty huts closely packed together in no clear order, except for a few that were made of family of rank groups. Most of the huts are formed with a framework of light poles interwoven with thin branches and the walls are filled with mud and then plastered with smooth clay taken from abandoned **bug-a-bug mounts**¹. Most hut roofs are covered with **palm thatch**² except those families with some rank. Their huts are built rectangular shape with several rooms, a porch and, in Josef Yeke's case, a zinc roof.

1. Mount created by large termite (ants). Such mount can reach a height of an eight to ten feet tall and have the strength of hard clay or cement.

2. Whole palm branches are folded over and stitched closely together into bands; one band is laid on top of another to make double thickness of palm branches. The folded palm branches are placed like shingles.

(Lewis 2010, 71)

The introduction of code-mixing referring to local cultural artefacts can function on separate levels for the local and the foreign reader. The Singaporean short story “The Borrowed Boy”, from which passage (11) is taken, narrates events taking place during the celebration of “Hari Raya” (literally “Great Day”, also known as “Lebaran” or “Aidilfitri”) at the end of the fasting month of Ramadan by the Malay minority. As such, the text makes a multitude of references to cultural artefacts associated with the festivities.

(11) At Yishun, it was a similar affair, the relatives doting on Mydeen, but never to the point of smothering him with needless curiosity. They played a cartoon on the DVD player, and the children crowded in front of the television set. Sometimes Junaidah allowed herself to observe the proceedings just like she had seen it on television, the orphan boy surrounded by his surrogate family, the Hari Raya diorama of crystal glasses filled with Coke, little girls dressed like dolls in mini *kebayas*, the gold and silver threads on the *songket* worn by the men, and in the evening, the fairy lights turned on at the window, bathing the balcony with alternating waves of jeweled colours. But she would snap out of it, suddenly reminded that the boy was on loan, and that all this would vanish for him by the next day — the money in his pocket and his *baju kurung* being the only mementoes smuggled out from a dream.

(Sa'at 2012, 207-208)

The insertion of code-mixing from Malay in passage (11), i.e. “kebaya”, “songket” and “baju kurung”, will achieve a different effect for local and foreign readers. For the former, which include readers from neighbouring countries with sizeable Malay populations such as Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia, these lexical items convey their referential content, as these readers are familiar with the cultural artefacts at hand. For readers from other parts of the world, however, these cultural artefacts are most likely unknown.

Without any explanation provided inline or in footnotes, the Malay words shift their function from carriers of referential content to markers of a local Malay culture. In other words, what matters for the foreign reader is not the exact semantic content, but rather the fact that it is a local word denoting a local concept. The foreign reader can derive the broad semantic field from the context provided, e.g. “clothing” in the given passage. The same applies to Malay words denoting items of food elsewhere in the text. The status of such code-mixing items as markers of local identity is emphasized by the fact that a vast majority are italicized, and therefore stand out as exceptional to the reader.

The italicisation of local words, as used in passage (11), assists foreign readers but may be off-putting to local readers, as it treats local terms as special or unusual. Authors and publishers therefore tread a fine line between making texts accessible to a foreign audience and alienating local readers. While most passages quoted so far tend to favour the needs of the international audience, the Malaysian publisher Fixi Novo takes the side of local readers, as explicitly stated in their manifesto reproduced in each of their publications. Point 5 of said manifesto is given in passage (12):

(12) We will not use italics for non-American/non-English terms. This is because those words are not foreign to a Malaysian audience. So we will not have “They had *nasi lemak* and went back to *kongkek*” but rather “They had nasi lemak and went back to kongkek”. Nasi lemak and kongkek³ are some of the pleasures of Malaysian life that should be celebrated without apology; italics are a form of apology.

(Fixi Novo 2013, n.p.)

³ Curious readers wishing to look up the meaning of these Malay lexemes are advised that while the first item is culinary and innocuous, the second one is vulgar.

A comparative overview of additional marking of features, as annotated with a “meta” tag, is given in Figure 5. In terms of frequency, a clear distinction can be drawn between Inner Circle and Outer Circle texts, with the latter category using more additional marking. West African texts stand out in terms of diversity of markers: whereas Scottish and Southeast Asian texts focus almost exclusively on footnotes and italics respectively, West African texts display a more balanced blend of italics, translations and commentaries on language.

Figure 5: Dot chart of "meta" features per region, normalised per 10,000 words

Conclusion

Manifest signs of heteroglossia such as code-mixing and code-switching are apprehended as creative devices that cannot be understood apart from their ideological meanings. Authors’ choices are generated by the readership they have in mind and are intrinsically dialogical. Assembling different languages or language varieties in literary discourse, or, in other terms, fitting together markers of otherness, creates meaning as much as

the separate components do. Following the Hallidayan tradition (Halliday 1978), we support the claim that it is the hidden ideologies that preside over language use, more specifically in this study over the use of code-mixing and code-switching authors make.

The insertion of foreign words and varieties of English play a part in constructing identities - ethnic or trans-ethnic, national, social... - in contrast with what is associated with central British English. In our corpus, the linguistic and metalinguistic devices at work do not merely signal otherness but they create otherness “making the language culturally ‘loaded’” (Joseph 2004, 167). Once the international readership becomes familiar with the linguistic strategies that are recurrently present, the latter become part of the cultural habitus of the readers. It is then that language varieties spread the cultural values that they enhance:

The language must be embedded within the cultural habitus in order to function as the vehicle in which the culture will be acquired. Transferred to a different habitus, the language will mould itself to that habitus, rather than the other way round. (Joseph 2004, 167)

The notion of identity cannot be taken from an essentialist point of view. Identities are constructed in the dialectic relationship between the work of literary art and the reader who superimposes his integrated vision of the identities that are depicted onto the language he reads on the written page. The reader’s vision is in its turn influenced by the ideological stance adopted by the authors, the strategies they use to present and preserve a cultural heritage, languages and language varieties worthy of use in literary productions.

Language becomes a new space, a new identity; foreign words are seen as immigrants; code-switching changes power relations in the language laboratory that literature is. The emergence of said creative practices, as well as their dynamic quality, deserves to be investigated in a diachronic manner by tracing developments by decades, which will be tackled at a later stage.

Despite the symbolic dimension of linguistic creation in literary texts, it is still based on a substratum of real life language varieties: core features are partially represented, more peripheral features may be present, invented features may be introduced though it is rare:

[...] in the process of textual construction dramatists (like poets and novelists) have at their disposal all the codes and resources of language. Their creativity can therefore be fully appreciated only when charted against the substratum of naturally occurring language. (Simpson 1997, 164)

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