

ABSTRACTS

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Idiom Variability across Different Varieties of English

Sarah Dobiášová

The presentation wishes to investigate the grammatical and semantic variability of a selected idiomatic expression, namely *Bob's your uncle*, across different varieties of English, employing the cognitive linguistic and cultural linguistic perspective. Contrary to the traditional view, which considers the meaning of idioms as fully opaque and unpredictable, the cognitive linguistics' perspective maintains that the meaning of most idioms can be understood with the help of the conceptual systems deeply embedded in human minds. Additionally, cultural linguistics considers idioms to be culturally motivated. This means that the choice of lexemes in an idiomatic expression is influenced by the particular cultural setting in which the expression is used. It was the aim of several fairly recent articles to compare various idioms across different varieties of English in order to investigate their variability and establish whether this variability can be explained in relation to their cultural settings. The common conclusion of these articles is that idiomatic expressions do vary when compared across different varieties of English.

The presentation wishes to elaborate on this point, attempting to answer the research question as to what are the reasons for the lexico-grammatical and conceptual variability of a selected idiom across different varieties of English. It is also believed that name idioms, i. e. idioms containing a proper name, might be particularly susceptible to variability, as proper names are more tied to the particular culture. The analysis revealed that proper names in name idioms are prone to a considerable variety. It was also revealed that the topic of the text, in which the modified idiom is used, as well as the intention of its producer, play an important role in the whole process. In view of these findings, possible paths of future research are suggested at the end of the presentation.

English Accents in Rap Music

Tomáš Jenčo

The thesis focuses on the inherent technical and social differences between rapping and singing. In the introduction a hypothesis is made that because of the fundamental opposition of the rapping and singing forms, the individual regional varieties of English spoken by different rappers would be retained in their rap pronunciation. The definition, cultural history and technical aspects of rap are first clarified. The focus then shifts to various reasons behind the shift of one's linguistic style or variety, both from the general perspective of regular speech and from that of pop music singing. Various speech style theories are commented on and applied to rap music based on its social and technical aspects. Subsequently, a few selected regions where rap is popular are delimited based on their respective geographic regions and linguistic features. The Case Study follows, which is entered with a two-level hypothesis – first of all, that rappers do not shift their speaking styles when rapping and secondly, that this retention of individual styles has an implicit influence on the rhymes which can be constructed in each respective variety and thus also on the overall lyrical content of the rap songs. Both of these hypotheses are unambiguously confirmed on particular examples of General American, British Creole, Popular London and Northern English rappers, all of whom retain their own idiolects and use them to their advantage when writing and performing rap lyrics.

Informality on Social Media: Instagram Influencers and Their Linguistic Accommodation

Dominika Kováčová

The emergence of influencers, otherwise referred to as digital celebrities or superusers, who manage to build a large and loyal following owing to their captivating performance is considered one of the most important milestones in the Web 2.0 environment. In order to become successful online and attract as many users as possible, the preliminary findings of my research suggest that these digital celebrities accommodate to the language of their target audience and assume the role of their friend and lifestyle guru. While the power of influencers is visible on multiple social media platforms, this paper focuses on the language of Instagram, where their impact is potentially the strongest as the majority of Instagram users is formed by Millennials. These actively participate in social media trends and represent a highly influential group of consumers. Language-wise, Millennials are often accused of disrupting the norms of written language and their linguistic performance is typically described as too informal. Since informality is one of the most characteristic features of youth talk, this research presents itself as a pilot study of informality on Instagram, a predominantly visual social media platform with an inconspicuous textual element. More importantly, this project aims to identify the status of informality on Instagram and the extent to which it is appropriated by influencers in textual and visual modes. The analytical data consist of posts that have been extracted from Instagram profiles of three influencers with comparable number of followers and scanned for any recurrent features of informality. Inspired by the communication accommodation theory, this paper argues that Instagram influencers linguistically converge to their audience by adopting features of informality and thus challenge the (unwritten) norms of what level of informality is acceptable online.

Slavic Etymological Dictionary Online

Dario Rebernik

After years of using “Etymonline” (<https://www.etymonline.com>) to understand English words better, I wondered if the same could be done for Slavic (or Balto-Slavic) family. The etymological spark was partly re-kindled by the course “Historical Development of English” at MUNI.

This is not a thesis, thus I do not have a particular text written about it. This is an idea - a project - that I'd like to develop, support, and share in order to find more support and people willing to discuss and work on it.

The presentation will discuss:

1) The scope of the project

- i) difference between an English and Balto-Slavic dictionary
- ii) possible ways of organising the project that will include all the languages from the family

2) The challenges of the project:

- i) methodology/processes
- ii) available literature (how far back could we go?)
- iii) technological requirements
- iv) funding and monetizing the project

3) Feedback from the person behind “Etymonline”

- i) Personal correspondence and tips I got

4) Conclusion/Discussion

Attribution Theory and Second Language Learning in Secondary School Students

Boguslawa Gosiewska-Turek

Affective factors are undoubtedly considered to be vital in second language acquisition. Among these factors attribution theory is of primary significance as it affects learners' final achievement. It indicates that people attribute various causes in their lives to their success and failure.

With the employment of attribution theory this study examines Polish secondary school adolescent students' attributions for success and failure in second language learning. The main purpose of the study is to investigate whether Polish secondary school students' attributions have an impact on their achievements in second language acquisition. In order to conduct the study, the researcher administered attribution questionnaires to the students and achievement sheet to the teacher to fill in with students' semester grades in English. Then the data obtained from questionnaires and achievement sheet were correlated. The results show that successful students are more likely to attribute their success to internal facets such as ability and effort and unsuccessful learners attribute their lack of success to external factors among which task difficulty or luck could be enumerated.

The effect of enjoyment on learning English as a foreign language. What do philological students derive joy from?

Ewelina Mierzwa

Recent trends in psychology have led to a proliferation of studies that strengthen the importance of learning being charged with positive emotions. In the same vein, the researchers within the field of second language acquisition (SLA) have been recently focused on the role of positive academic emotions and their role in the process of acquiring a foreign language (FL). It is due to the fact that a deeper understanding of the positive emotional processes accompanying learning a FL may offer hope to those learners who fall victim to a limited and boring FL instruction. An example of such a positive academic emotion is foreign language enjoyment (FLE), which constitute a relatively new and unexplored concept in the field of SLA, especially in the university settings. Thus, the purpose of the present study was to examine the influence of FLE on learning English as a FL from the perspective of English philology students, as well as to investigate the sources of FLE which the students declare. The following qualitative research question was formulated for the purpose of the study: What do philology students derive joy from while learning English as a FL? To lay the theoretical foundation for the study, the opening part of the presentation will be devoted to the concept of flow, curiosity and interest, all factors being inextricably intertwined with enjoyment. Subsequently, two crucial dimensions of enjoyment will be discussed. That is, the social and the private dimension. The design of the study, its methods and instruments, and eventually, the obtained results will be presented in the final part of the presentation.

Unique Items: Challenges and Prospects

David Špetla

The search for features that set translated texts apart from texts originally produced in the target language has been in the spotlight of Translation Studies for more than two decades. Although this endeavor may have shed some light on the nature of translated language, it has turned out to be very problematic – both theoretically and methodologically.

Many hypotheses have been formulated within this research area, Sonja Tirkonnen-Condit's unique items hypothesis being one of the more recent ones. Take diminutives, for instance. English has a very limited repertoire of diminutive expressions, whereas Czech is quite keen on diminutives. According to the unique items hypothesis, there will be much fewer diminutive expressions in texts translated into Czech from English than in original Czech texts. Data from the Jerome corpus corroborate this particular claim.

Grave issues arise, however, as soon as one tries to define the notion of a unique item – especially issues related to cross-linguistic comparability. The use of the term diminutive, for example, obscures the fact that what we call diminutives in English may not be the same thing as diminutives in Czech, and if one moves to less studied phenomena and/or languages, cross-linguistic comparability becomes a major problem.

Nevertheless, it would be a pity to give up on such a promising hypothesis, which is interesting, for instance, from a cognitive standpoint. According to Sandra L. Halverson's model, the underrepresentation of unique items in translated texts is due to the absence of cognitive links between a target-language unique item and items in the source language. Therefore, it is time to develop a new, sounder approach to unique items.

Harry Potter Film in Translation: Language Variety in the Flemish Dubbing of Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

Lenka Žárská

The Harry Potter film series is not often an object of academic attention, though it certainly has a topic or two to offer, at least when we look at it from the sociolinguistic point of view. While in the books, most of the characters speak the same language variety, the actors in the film had to adopt a certain way of speaking to make the characters believable. However, when creating a dubbed version of the film in other languages, this can present a challenge. This contribution will therefore look at the way this issue has been dealt with in the Flemish dubbing of the third film of the series, Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban. This version is especially interesting because Flemish is not a recognized language as such: in Flanders, the northern part of Belgium where it is spoken, the official language is Dutch, adopted from the country's northern neighbour. The presentation will offer a short summary of the language situation in Flanders compared to that of the United Kingdom, and then focus on the way the different varieties were handled in the film, analysing its notable characters.

Crouching Tigress, Hidden Dragoness: The Journey of Asian-American Women

Tereza Šmilauerová

Asian-American female writers are in a position of “the Other” in American culture in two aspects: as women and as an ethnic minority, despite the proclaimed growth of equality of genders and races in the U.S. That made them, usually well-educated and independent thinkers, particularly sensitive to the imagery imposed on them by the Westerners. They reacted by creating the heroines of their novels to be strong and self-reliant women. It is no coincidence that character type has emerged during human rights movements in the United States as it stands in sharp contrast to how women from this ethnic group were stereotyped – docile, beautiful, and helpless “China dolls”. Recently, the “Woman Warrior” characters have easily fitted in the trend of strong females, however, when those literary amazons arose, pre-eminently in *The Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston, they were meant to be not just a means of self-expression but also an instrument for provoking re-consideration of stereotypes about the minority – both those coming from Americans and from Asian Americans themselves – since while Asian-American women were formally given American rights, often far more than in their country of origin, they were freed from neither expectations of their communities nor the conventional assumptions within American culture. The character type can be also understood as building the identity of their own choice, not that one imposed on them. This paper deals with origins of this character type, its typical features, contrasting archetypes of Asian-American women, and various responses to it.

The London Underground in Contemporary British Urban Fantasy

Monika Markéta Šmídová

The presentation will be based on the recently finished bachelor thesis, which researches how the London Underground is depicted in the corpus of selected British urban fantasy works published between the 1990s and 2018 and traces the discovered themes to their historical and cultural roots. The corpus includes works by Neil Gaiman, Ben Aaronovitch, Paul Cornell, China Miéville, Douglas Adams and others. As some of the novels are very recent, no substantial research in this area has been done yet.

In the first part of the presentation, several relevant facts from the history of the Underground will be mentioned and supported with visual material: the origins of the network, sheltering during WWII bombing, and the development of the Underground map. The way in which the Underground has influenced society and culture in London and has appeared in literature will be explained.

The second part will discuss the recurring themes discovered in the urban fantasy corpus. Most of them reflect the rich history and cultural significance of the Underground. Some of them are universal for more genres, however, some are unique for the urban fantasy genre and its combination of supernatural and ordinary elements. The Underground is also useful for the establishment of new mythologies in the very competitive London setting. The creativity of writers in this area will be discussed as well.

Finally, the Underground in other genres, especially detective and horror stories, will be briefly mentioned as an inspiration to carry out further research.

The Uncanny and the Reversal of the Monomyth in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*

Kamil Pacuda

Questioned about his novella *Coraline*, Neil Gaiman quoted the opinion of the British editor whom he consulted in 1990, and who described it as a “dark fantasy novel for children and adults” , “absolutely brilliant and completely unpublishable”. Both scary and disturbing, *Coraline* nevertheless became an immediate publishing success. During the same interview, Gaiman commented on the various reactions of two reading audiences, due to which his novel could be classified as an adventure story - by children, unaware of “how much trouble *Coraline* is in”, or as horror fiction - by adults, sensing the odd familiarity of the main character's nightmarish journey through the other Mother's realm. In my paper I hope to reconcile these two different ways of reading *Coraline* with the help of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of the uncanny and Joseph Cambell's theory of the monomyth, which, in its reversed version, adds to the unsettling effect of the book.

Is Sheila Heti's *Motherhood* Stuck in Cyclical Time?

Petra Polanič

Should the decision whether or not to have children be treated as a philosophical question? Sheila Heti, whose 2018 novel *Motherhood* is an attempt to wrestle with that dilemma, claims it would've had a central role in philosophy if it were men who gave birth. I look at Heti's work through the theoretical frame provided by Julia Kristeva, specifically her 1979 essay *Women's Time*, in which she warns that the desire for motherhood, if left unexplained, opens the door for (religious) mysticism.

Kristeva suggests the division of feminism not into waves – as is widely accepted especially in Anglo-American contexts – but into generations, defined as “signifying spaces” rather than chronologically successive periods. The three generations are differentiated by their relationship to time and – necessarily, for Kristeva – motherhood. The existentialist feminists of the first generation fight for the right to participate in historical, linear time, often rejecting motherhood on principle as it might interfere with their goal. The second generation, focusing on sexual difference and the unique experience of womanhood (including pregnancy), confines itself to cyclical time, risking the creation of a new sexism. Kristeva predicts the emergence of third generation feminism, whose authors and artists will turn towards the potential co-existence of motherhood and active participation in linear time.

I argue that Heti, despite her work being recent, remains attached to the second generation in her ahistorical treatment of motherhood and her cyclical set-up of the novel itself (its chapter titles mirroring the menstrual cycle). As such it fails to pose motherhood as the philosophical question Heti believes it should be. I will briefly discuss at the possibility of this third signifying space in modern English fiction on motherhood, comparing Heti's writing to that of Jessie Greengrass (*Sight*, published 2018) and Sarah Moss (*Night Waking*, published 2011).

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