



11.2.2023, Frankfurt a.M.

REsearch in English Linguistics (REEL Day 2023) Digital data in English linguistics

Saturday, 11.2.2023, 9am-6pm
IG Building NG 1.741b

This is the fifth joint REEL Day of the working groups on English linguistics of Gutenberg University Mainz and Goethe University Frankfurt a.M.. The workshop is based on seminars taught at the two universities. Students will have the opportunity to present their in-class research projects to fellow students from the partner university. After two online instantiations, we are excited that the 2023 REEL Day can take place on campus.

There are no Corona restrictions in place. For everybody's comfort, it would be appreciated if all participants took a Corona self-test before the workshop.

Please contact Manfred Sailer (sailer@em.uni-frankfurt.de) if you are interested in attending.

Organizers

[Ulrike Schneider](#) (Mainz)
[Manfred Sailer](#) (Frankfurt a.M., local organization)

Invited speaker

[Dr. Claudia Lehmann](#) (Potsdam)

Directions

[Here are](#) directions from the station (Hauptbahnhof) to the University, with the route on foot from the U-Bahn station Holzhausenstrasse to the University shown as well (5 mins walk)

From Frankfurt/Main Central Station:

- Take the subway (U-Bahn): U4 (direction Seckbacher Landstr.) or U5 (direction Siegmund-Freud-Str)
exit at **Willy-Brandt-Platz** (1 stop!)
- Change to U1 (Ginnheim), U2 (Bad Homburg Gonzenheim), U3 (Oberursel Hohemark), or U8 (Riedberg),
exit at **Holzhausenstraße** (4 stops)
- About 6 minutes walk from there.
Note that we are in the so-called **Nebengebäude** of the IG Farben building.

You can get a campus plan [here](#)

Practical information

Unfortunately, there is very limited catering on campus on Saturday, but there is a supermarket nearby.

On campus:

- [Café Explizit](#) (Gebäude Rechts- und Wirtschaftswissenschaften)
- [Café Hoppenworth & Ploch](#) (nearby the Haus der Stille)

Here are some places for lunch near campus:

- Pizzeria Roma: <https://pizzeriaromaffm.de/de>
- Dominionfood: <https://dominionfood.de/>
- Triniti: <https://www.trinitii.de/>

Program

chair: Manfred Sailer

- 9.15-10.15 [Claudia Lehmann](#) (Potsdam) [Multimodal constructions in spoken English. A corpus-based approach.](#)
- 10.15-10.45 Leonie Dewes, Michelle Kollross, Loris Manke & Karl Tovar (Mainz) [Facework Analysis: Confessional YouTube Videos of Female and Male Content Creators](#)

10.45-11.15 *coffee break*

chair: Ulrike Schneider

- 11.15-11.44 Josephine Koennecke, Julia Skoluda, Lara Becker & Charlotte Stüber (Mainz) [The “Functions” of *Air Quotes* in Spoken English](#)
- 11.45-12.15 Anna-Maria Kiemen, Jana Haas, Jenna Emilia Martha Hopfe, Mieke Laurisch & Marc Belling (Mainz) [“I’ll be there early ... *Ish*.” A corpus-based analysis of the morpheme *-ish* in contemporary American English](#)
- 12.15-12.45 Miriam Ertel, Jennifer Franz, Marie-Kristin Schmadel, Lieselotte Dickes & Sarah Matok (Mainz) [“They were still tryna find a way to destry me”. A case study of /str/ palatalization in the speech of Meghan Markle](#)

12.45-13.45 *lunch break*

chair: Manfred Sailer

- 13.45-14.15 Amé Beert, Luca Bindi & Emma Twedt (Mainz) [Sarcastic *much*? Use of the X + *much* construction](#)
- 14.15-14.45 Elise Frankline Kiehne, Annika Nowak, Evelyn Schütz, Emelie Henrike Lambertz und Alexander Gelmann (Mainz) [A corpus-based study of *because X* in web-based language across three varieties of English](#)
- 14.45-15.15 Yasemin Akbulut, Nikola Brzoska & Nadia Rubinskii [“Sew those lips and dig, Elf!” – Is the term *elf* used as a slur in the TV series “The Rings of Power”?](#)

15.15-15.45 *coffee break*

chair: Ulrike Schneider

- 15.45-16.15 Sofia Rossato & Maria de Marchi (Frankfurt a.M.) [How do people from the Middle Earth interact in different communicative situations?](#)
- 16.15-16.45 Lisa Henties, Gaia Pavlovic, Alessia Di Giorgi & Charlie Gumbs (Frankfurt a.M.) [“I don’t speak firefly.” People-specific expressions and topics in “The Rings of Power”](#)
- 16.45-17.15 Ouiam El Bakhchouche, Gizem Bozdogan, Laila Maach & Yaroslava Klaus (Frankfurt a.M.) [The Use of Regional Accents in The Rings of Power: Do the Harfoots speak with an Irish accent?](#)

Multimodal constructions in spoken English.

A corpus-based approach

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Face-to-face communication is inherently multimodal. When we talk to one another, we use morpho-syntactic structures, prosody, facial expressions, and manual gestures (to name but a few) to convey meaning. Given these observations, does that imply that linguists should concern themselves with these meaning-making practices? In this talk, I will argue for an enthusiastic ‘Of course, they should!’.

The line of argumentation is couched in a Construction Grammar framework (see e.g. Hoffmann & Trousdale 2013). A construction is a “learned pairing of form with semantic or discourse function, including morphemes or words, idioms, partially lexically filled and fully general phrasal patterns” (Goldberg 2006, p. 5). I will argue that apart from the morpho-syntactic constructions Goldberg mentions in her definition, there are also constructions that are not exclusively morpho-syntactic, i.e. also include prosodic and/or visual components on their formal side.

For that matter, I will report on three corpus-based studies investigating the prosodic and visual features of stance-related constructions in spoken English: *Tell me about it*, syntactically independent *as if* clauses and the morpheme *ish*. The results of these studies show the following: Stance-related *Tell me about it* is rather long in duration and is associated with avoidance of eye contact, raised eyebrows, smiles and head movements. Independent *as if* clauses are produced with a lowered mean pitch, are followed by a pause, and are associated with head tilts. Finally, free uses of *ish* are prosodically distinct from previous language material, tend to be longer and show more pitch variation, while bound *ish* with the meaning of ‘approximately X’ shows the same prosodic tendencies, but is further associated with a “wobble” of either head or hand(s) and slit eyes.

The discussion of these results will show that while some of the prosodic and visual features independently contribute to the meaning of the utterance, some only have meaning in tandem with the morpho-syntactic construction and must, therefore, be considered integral parts of a multimodal grammatical construction.

References: • Goldberg, A. E. (2006). *Constructions at work. The nature of generalization in language.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. • Hoffmann, T., and G. Trousdale (eds.) (2013). *The Oxford Handbook of Construction Grammar.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Facework Analysis: Confessional YouTube Videos of Female and Male Content Creators

Leonie Dewes, Michelle Kollross, Loris Manke, Karl Tovar

University of Mainz

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the role of facework in connection with gender differences in confessional YouTube videos. The relationship between content creators and viewers constitutes a parasocial relationship. In these relationships, one or both parties imagine a personal relationship which does not truly exist. As Dekavalla (2022) notes, the relationship between influencers and their audience seems to denote a new kind of parasocial relationship. While in classic parasocial relationships only the viewer or the fan imagines a relationship, Dekavalla (2022) shows that influencers also imagine a relationship with their audience. They make use of facework to pre-emptively respond to imagined viewer reactions.

Dekavalla (2022) analyses confessional videos as a purely feminine phenomenon. In this paper we aim to expand on her research and plan to compare facework strategies in confessional videos of both female and male YouTube influencers. Facework is based on the politeness theory first established by Brown and Levinson (1987). The theory describes how linguistic strategies are employed to manage potentially damaging situations. They postulate that the speaker and the hearer both try to communicate in a manner which lets both parties “save face”, meaning that neither the autonomy nor the self-image of either party is infringed upon.

We compare six videos, three by male and three by female creators. The videos were obtained by using predefined search strings in the YouTube-internal search. To keep the focus on the confessional element of the videos, we transcribed three minutes from each video around the moment of confession. These transcripts were then analysed for different facework strategies.

The findings of this study will expand on previous research and provide insights into the dynamics of online communication and the role of gender in parasocial relationships in the digital age.

References: • Brown, Penelope & Levinson, Stephen C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. • Dekavalla, Marina (2022). “Facework in Confessional Videos by YouTube Content Creators.” *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 28(3), 854-866.

The “Functions” of *Air Quotes* in Spoken English

Josephine Koennecke, Julia Skoluda, Lara Becker, Charlotte Stüber

University of Mainz

Air Quotes are not a new phenomenon and many speakers use them daily. Nevertheless, research concerning the function(s) of air quotes remains sparse to this point. One of the early attempts at categorizing the functions of air quotes is Graf (2016) who analyses the usage of air quotes in the YouTube format “Shore, Stein, Papier” and finds that they fall into four distinct categories. Unfortunately, his findings cannot be generalised as they are based on gestural quotatives of a single person. Furthermore, there is research by Lampert (2013), which deals with different uses of air quotes, but it has been shown that her categorisation is rather broad.

Our study is an important contribution within this field of research as it extends existing categorisation schemes. While studies are mostly based on small datasets or do not capture all functions that air quotes perform, we investigate air quotes used in a variety of different sources that differ with regard to the content that is presented, the gender of the speakers and in terms of whether the content is scripted or not. The only restriction imposed on data selection was that speakers had to speak American English. The decision to use a wide range of different data allows us to get an overview of different uses and to investigate whether existing classifications can be applied of whether they have to be extended.

The analysis is mainly based on YouTube content but also excerpts of movies. We investigate a total of 27 occurrences of air quotes. To categorise the data, we draw on the classification system by Cirillo (2019).

The results show that air quotes are used to express vagueness, irony or distance from what is said. Air quotes are further used to cite, similar to the use of quotation marks in written language. This shows that in many respects they fulfil the function of *scare quotes* in written English. However, even though most of the uses of air quotes are covered by the classification scheme, they sometimes fulfil more than one function at a time. Preliminary results also indicate that it is a fluid phenomenon, and usage can differ depending on the context and speaker.

References: • Graf, Marius (2016). “Air Quotes im YouTube-Format ‘Shore, Stein, Papier’ – Gesprächsanalytische Betrachtung einer redebegleitenden Geste”. In Arens, Katja & Sarah Torres Cajo (eds.), *Sprache und soziale Ordnung. Studentische Beiträge zu sozialen Praktiken in der Interaktion*, 101-126. Münster: MV Wissenschaft. • Lampert, Martina (2013). “Say, be like, quote (unquote), and the air-quotes: interactive quotatives and their multimodal implications: The ‘new’ quotatives remind us of the vocal, verbal, and gestural dimensions of speech”. *English Today* 29(4). 45-56.

“I’ll be there early ... Ish.”
A corpus-based analysis of the morpheme *-ish* in contemporary
American English

Anna-Maria Kiemen, Jana Haas, Jenna Emilia Martha Hopfe,
Mieke Laurisch & Marc Belling

University of Mainz

The suffix *-ish* came into the English language via its Germanic roots. Current research suggests that *-ish* is used in a greater variety of constructions than the traditional adjectival marker permitted (Eitelmann et al. 2020). Besides its original function of deriving adjectives, it now has many other meanings such as its “approximative sense ‘somewhat X, vaguely X’” (Eitelmann et al. 2020: 805). Crucially, it can now also be used as a free morpheme (Harris 2021). However, previous research has focused on the development of the suffix *-ish* and related functional changes over the course of the history of English rather than on the contemporary phenomenon of *-ish* turning into a free morpheme.

Attempting to fill this gap, this presentation examines freestanding *-ish* as part of a larger study investigating not only the diachronic changes in the use of *-ish* but also its emerging new functions. Using a quantitative as well as a qualitative approach, the morpheme *-ish* is investigated. For our analysis, we use the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), which contains a total of 351 tokens of freestanding *-ish* used in texts produced between 1990 and 2019. After eliminating tokens that are either names or not phrase final, we were left with a total of 94 tokens relevant for our research. Further steps included normalizing and visualising the data, with the aim to not only compare tokens across decades, but also to classify the data by function and base.

Results show that there has been a significant increase in the use of free *-ish* over the past 30 years. Simultaneously, the meaning of the suffix has changed and broadened, now allowing for approximative interpretations of entire sentences, as in (1).

(1) And I actually told her the truth. Ish.

These findings suggest that the change in the use of the suffix goes beyond that of an approximate sense. Instead, our research shows a shift to a free lexical item and that the former suffix can now even serve as an adequate answer to a question or reaction to a statement.

References: • Eitelmann, Matthias; Haugland, Karie and Dagmar Haumann (2020) “From *english* to *whatever-ish*: a corpus-based investigation of *-ish* derivation in the history of English”. *English and Linguistics* 24 (4): 801-831. • Harris, Tabea (2021). *-ish / Ish: Aspects of a suffix turned free morpheme*. Unpublished Dissertation. University of Mannheim.

“They were still tryna find a way to destry me”
A case study of /str/ palatalization in the speech of Meghan Markle

Miriam Ertel, Jennifer Franz, Marie-Kristin Schmadel,
Lieselotte Dickes & Sarah Matok

University of Mainz

This paper focuses on the palatalization of /s/ in the idiolect of Meghan Markle. It has been argued that the relatively recent change from /s/ to /ʃ/ in the cluster /str/ in word-initial and medial positions, such as in the pronunciations *shtrong* and *indushtry*, is triggered, among other factors, by “long distance assimilation to the cluster-final /r/, making [s] become more retroflex and rounded” (Durian 2007).

Most previous studies focus on the influence of speaker age, social class and location of the sound cluster in the word (Durian 2007). In this study, we focus on one speaker: Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, née Markle, actress, and celebrity, who has been identified to palatalize /s/. We examine the syntactic and semantic factors which influence Meghan’s use of the variant /ʃtr/. We want to determine whether palatal /ʃtr/ is a consistent feature of her speech. In particular, we investigate the occurrence of palatalization when the cluster /ʃtr/ stretches across a word-boundary, as in *it’s^h true*, which has not received any attention from previous researchers. We further investigate the question whether Meghan, as a professional actress, can suppress her idiolect while she is in character.

To answer these questions, we analyze video material and transcripts of all six episodes of the 2022 Netflix documentary *Meghan and Harry*, as well as two seasons of *Suits*, a Netflix drama series with Meaghan Markle as the side character Rachel Zane.

Initial results support the hypothesis that /s/-palatalization to /ʃtr/ is not dependent on any specific syntactic or semantic factors. Meghan shows the phenomenon at almost every opportunity. There is thus almost no variation in her idiolect. Moreover, she does not differentiate between her idiolect and her character Rachel Zane.

References: • Durian, David. (2006) “Getting [ʃ]tronger Every Day?: More on Urbanization and the Sociogeographic Diffusion of (Str) in Columbus, OH.” *University of Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics* 13(2): 65-79.

Media Treatment of Young LGBTQ+ Communities: A Study on the Adoption of Gender-Neutral Pronouns in Journalistic Texts

Pia Barua, Maria Victoria Go, Katharina Harig, Hannah Sophie Kraus,
Jasmin Müller & Chiara Scheibz
University of Mainz

Recently, people have begun to identify themselves as non-binary and to use pronouns such as *they/them*. This movement challenges the socially constructed gender categories based on biological sex. Most journalists avoid using *they/them* to refer to a single person in their articles (cf. Arnold et al. 2020). This phenomenon is of interest because it affects media treatment of young LGBTQ+ communities. Despite the topicality of this issue, there is little research on the topic.

Drawing on Arnold et al. (2022), the present study analyzes journalistic texts with references to celebrities who identify as nonbinary or genderqueer to explore whether nonbinary *they* is chosen over binary *he/she*. The database for this quantitative study consists of texts about 36 celebrities who have publicly announced a pronoun change according to a list published in 2022 by BuzzFeed. First, the study explores whether these celebrities tend to fully abandon their original pronouns or whether they merely add *they/them* to their original pronoun (e.g. *she/they*). Furthermore, it explores the average age of these celebrities when changing their pronouns. This is followed by an analysis focusing on six celebrities, more specifically on articles published about them since the year after their pronoun change. We explore (non-)usage of the non-binary pronoun with the aim of finding contextual patterns. The data used for this study consists of 55 randomly selected articles published in online tabloid journalism. Each year between the individual's announcement of the pronoun change and the year 2022 is represented by three articles.

The analysis of the BuzzFeed list reveals that two-thirds of the individuals are biologically female (28 female and 8 male). From this, one could conclude that individuals that are assigned female at birth are more predisposed to adopt non-binary pronouns. Chew et al. (2020) confirm this hypothesis in their review of sociodemographic and clinical profiles of young people with a non-binary gender identity.

The analysis of journalistic texts show that authors use the preferred pronouns of biologically female celebrities. In articles about biologically male celebrities, by contrast, the use of the binary pronouns *he/him* was still common. Finally, if a celebrity uses both binary (e.g. *she/her*) and non-binary *they/them* pronouns, authors tend to switch or continue to use the binary pronoun. Thus, the results reveal societal disparities between biologically male and biologically female non-binary individuals concerning the acceptance and adoption of gender-neutral pronouns.

References: • Arnold, J. E., Franck, G., Li, J. & Marquez, A. (2022). "Does Nonbinary *They* Inherit the Binary Pronoun Production System?" *Glossa Psycholinguistics* 1(1): 1–14. • Chew, D., Tollit, M. A., Poulakis, Z., Zwickl, S., Cheung, A. S. & Pang, K. C. (2020). "Youths with a Non-Binary Gender Identity: A Review of Their Sociodemographic and Clinical Profile." *The Lancet. Child & Adolescent Health* 4(4): 322–330.

Sarcastic much?

Use of the X + *much* construction

Amé Beert^{1,2}, Luca Bindi¹ & Emma Twedt^{1,3}

¹University of Mainz, ²Ghent University, ³University of Edinburgh

This presentation contributes to the hitherto limited research on the recent phenomenon of the X + *much* (*sarcastic much?*) construction. In this construction, X can be an NP, VP or AdjP, and is always followed by the adverb *much*. There may be another element after *much*, but the utterance always ends with a question mark, although it does not have the same function as a regular question.

- (1) - He owns three dealerships.
- God, Mom. **Brag much?**
- She's just being proud of me.

Previous studies have analyzed the use of the construction (Gutzmann & Henderson 2015, 2019) and have delved into the evolution of its function (Hilpert & Bourgeois 2020). The construction started out being used in dialogue as a critical response to a previous statement or behavior, as is shown in (1). Over time it has conventionalized enough for speakers of English to use it in written and monological settings (blog posts, TV show episode titles, etc.). At first, speakers only used it to convey a critical or sarcastic meaning, and although this continues to be the main reason for using the construction, it can now also convey a positive or neutral message. Although the construction has gained in popularity since the 1990s, it is still considered as slang and not part of Standard English.

For our research, we used the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) to find instances of X + *much*. We will present five tokens per part of speech (NP, VP, AdjP) that represent our general impression of the data. This presentation aims at understanding the function of the construction, i.e., when and how speakers use it and what it does in an utterance, as well as its evolution over time.

Preliminary results suggest that in the majority of cases, speakers continue to use X + *much* for sarcastic or critical purposes, such as calling someone out on their behavior. Instances of this construction being used positively or neutrally are much rarer. Moreover, in recent years, the open slot allows for a lot more variation, and speakers can be very creative.

References

- Hilpert, Martin, & Bourgeois, Samuel (2020). "Intersubjectification in Constructional Change: From Confrontation to Solidarity in the *Sarcastic Much?* Construction." *Constructions and Frames* 12(1), 96-120.
- Gutzmann, Daniel, & Henderson, Robert (2015). "Expressive, much?". In *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung* 19, 286-303.

Gutzmann, Daniel, & Henderson, Robert (2019). "Expressive updates, much?". *Language*, 95(1), 107-135.

A corpus-based study of *because* X in web-based language across three varieties of English

Elise Frankline Kiehne, Annika Nowak, Evelyn Schütz,

Emelie Henrike Lambertz & Alexander Gelmann

University of Mainz

The English conjunction *because* has attracted some attention in recent years, as it has been noticed that speakers of contemporary English use *because* + noun (e.g. *because science!*) or *because* + adjective (e.g. *because bored.*) innovatively thereby creating new constructions in which *because* can be used. Previous research revealed that before the 21st century, *because* was mostly followed by *of* or by a clause and that constructions in which *because* was followed by nouns, as in *because circumstances* (Bergs 2018: 43), or by adjectives, as in *because fat* (Bohmann 2016: 149), were extremely rare. While previous research focusing on the “new” *because* paid particular attention to the constructions in which it appears as well as to the semantics of *because* in these constructions, less has been said about its occurrence in different varieties of English.

The current paper aims to analyze the frequency of occurrence of *because* + noun and *because* + adjective in American, Canadian, and Australian English. We use the Corpus of Global Web-Based English (GloWbE) to examine the frequency of the “new” *because* in these varieties. For the purpose of the study, we extracted all tokens of *because* X from the GloWbE corpus. This 1.9-billion-word dataset covers web and blog entries published between 2012 and 2013. The preliminary results suggest that *because* + noun and *because* + adjective are most widely used in American English.

References: • Bergs, Alexander (2018) “Because Science! Notes on a Variable Conjunction”. In Seoane, Elena; Carlos Acuña-Fariña and Ignacio Palacios-Martínez (eds.) *Subordination in English. Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives*, 43-60. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.
• Bohmann, Axel (2016) “Language Change because Twitter? Factors Motivating Innovative Uses of *because* Across the English-Speaking Twittersphere”. In Squires, Lauren (ed.) *English in Computer-Mediated Communication: Variation, Representation, and Change*, 149-178. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

“Sew those lips and dig, Elf!” - Is the term *elf* used as a slur in the TV series *The Rings of Power*?

Yasemin Akbulut, Nikola Brzoska & Nadia Rubinskii
Goethe-University Frankfurt

Certain expressions in the English language change in their meaning depending on their social rather than lexical meaning. Derogatory words prove to be one of those instances, specifically slurs. Researchers still argue over the definition of what makes a derogatory term a slur, however, many studies define it similarly.

Slurs themselves are “plain vanilla words” (Nunberg 2018) until they are not; what that means is that in order for a slur to become socially accepted as a slur, the speaker uses it to “derogate or dehumanize” a certain group of common race, sexuality, religion, etc. (Jeshion 2013). Furthermore, Liu (2021a,b) describes two different properties of a slur: Derogatory force and offensiveness. A slur can remain offensive, as well as be derogatory without being offensive.

In our talk we will investigate whether the term *elf* is used in a slurring fashion in the 2022 TV series *The Rings of Power*. For that we extracted all instances in which *elf* is used from five episodes and analyzed the utterances according to relation the speakers are in and other contextual factors such as intonation and power relation.

Jeshion (2013) explains that neutral counterparts of slurring terms can be used as weapons in the same way a slurring term would, marking it with contemptuous intonation. In our contribution we examined the neutral descriptive term *elf* and its uses with negative connotation in the TV series *The Rings of Power* and analyzed whether it can be labeled as a slur in its individually given context.

(1) “Sew up those lips and dig, Elf^C!” (Episode 3, Rings of Power, 2022)

(2) “Yao Ming is Chinese^C.” (Jeshion, 2013)

(Italics were used to indicate intonational stress and the superscript C stands for contemptuousness.)

When a speaker uses the species of the person where the name of the person would be more appropriate it seems as if Grice's Maxim of Manner is being violated. Since it is assumed that speakers behave according to the Cooperative Principle the hypothesis can be made that by using the species-term instead of the name, the speaker is doing so because of their negative attitude towards elves. By using *elf* instead of the addressee's name the speaker is reducing that person to their species. In a way they are dehumanizing them by projecting the stereotypes they have of the species onto an individual.

References: • Grice, H. P. (1989). Logic and conversation: In P. Cole and J. Morgan (eds.) *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press • Jeshion, R. (2013). Expressivism and the offensiveness of slurs. *Philosophical Perspectives. A Supplement to Nous*, 27(1), 231–259. • Liu, C. (2021a). Slurs as illocutionary force indicators. *Philosophia* (Ramat-Gan, Israel), 49(3), 1051–1065. • Liu, C. (2021b). The derogatory force and the offensiveness of slurs. *Organon F*, 28(3), 626–649. • Nunberg, G. (2018). *The social life of slurs*. Oxford University Press. • Popa-Wyatt, Mihaela. (2016). 2016 Not all slurs are equal. *Special Issue on Phenomenology and Mind: Emotions, Normativity, and Social Life*.

How do people from the Middle Earth interact in different communicative situations?

Sofia Rossato & Maria de Marchi

Frankfurt a.M.

Our research project deals with some recurrent linguistic features typical of specific communicative situations and register. We will focus on interactions of one character from the tv series "The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power."

According to Finegan & Biber (1994) the use of economy features is more frequent in low-ranked classes rather than high-ranked classes, as it represents greater ease but lesser clarity and explicitness. On the contrary, high-ranked classes are more likely to adopt elaborated forms in their way of speaking, which require more effort at production but make their speech clearer. The distribution of certain linguistic features across social groups reflects differences in opportunities for involvement in the range of situations that undergirds the distribution of these linguistic features across social groups. We explored the applicability of Finegan & Biber's ideas to the recent fantasy series, "The Rings of Power". We looked at three scenes with different situational settings, but the same character, Halbrand, appearing in them. Example utterances from these scenes are given in (1)-(3).

- (1) "Because I **cannot** stop" (*Galadriel, an elf, talking to Halbrand. Episode 6*)
- (2) "Hey, low man. Really thought I wouldn't notice?" (*Tamar, Numenorean, talking to Halbrand. Episode 3*)
- (3) "All others look on you with doubt. I alone can see your greatness. I alone can see your light. You would make me a tyrant. I would make you a queen." (*Halbrand talking to Galadriel. Episode 8*)

As these examples show, the language of the characters varies according to their interlocutor, the people they belong to, and the related social rank. The character of Halbrand seems to vary his own way of speaking in relation to the interlocutor's social rank, who also changes their speech accordingly. Therefore, the use of more elaborated and explicit variants in sentence (1) can be motivated by the fact that Galadriel uses an higher register that reflects her high social status. On the other hand, in sentence (2) the use of syntactic economy such as respectively *that*-deletion and the absence of *do* as a mark of *yes/no* questions are considered in Finegan & Biber 1994 as characteristic of spoken registers and characteristic of lower-ranked social groups.

In relation to Halbrand's linguistic style and considering the sentence (3), we can notice that he shifts gradually from an informal language with economy variants in the first episodes to a very formal language full of prepositional phrases and lacking of contractions. This is in line with the character development in the series.

The following table indicates the number of realizations for each feature in relation with the possible realizations given in round brackets and the realizations per 1,000 words in square brackets.

Table 1 (scene from episode 6)

Contraction	That-deletion	Prepositional phrase	It-pronoun	Tot.words
0 (4) [0]	0 (1) [0]	3 [50]	0 [0]	60

Table 2 (scene from episode 3)

Contraction	That-deletion	Prepositional phrase	It-pronoun	Tot.words
29 (38) [75.7]	6 (7) [15.7]	20 [52.2]	8 [20.9]	383

Table 3 (scene from episode 8)

Contraction	That-deletion	Prepositional phrase	It-pronoun	Tot.words
2 (26) [5.6]	2 (9) [5.6]	28 [77.8]	4 [11.1]	360

References: • Finegan, Edward & Douglas Biber. 1994. Register and Social Dialect Variation: {An} Integrated Approach. In: Douglas Biber & Edward Finegan (eds.): *Sociolinguistic perspectives on register*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 322-339

“I don’t speak firefly.”

People-specific expressions and topics in “The Rings of Power”

Lisa Henties, Gaia Pavlovic, Alessia Di Giorgi & Charlie Gumbs

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For our research, we investigated the different peoples present in the fictional world of the series “The Rings of Power”.

We decided to collect data based on four main groups: Harfoots, Elves, Southlanders and Númenóreans. We focus on these specific groups as we find the largest share of developed speaking in the English language among these groups.

We are going to present a collection of different people-specific-expressions divided into different categories/topics. Using Sketch Engine, we were able to extract vocabulary per species, highlighting and discovering the differences and similarities among single words and lexical terms used by these populations.

Examining five episodes of the series, we noticed a correlation between groups’ lifestyle and culture and their active vocabulary. This ranged from the frequency of certain words to particular expressions that were sometimes even exclusive to one group. One example for these phenomena is that the Harfoots, an ancestral group to the well-known Hobbits that regularly switch living environments in a nomadic style, tend to use terms related to wild nature and migration.

While there are various potential research angles on the “Rings of Power” protagonist groups and their language use, we benefited from the exceptional scientific condition of being able to look at a specific group of people and their language use without the constraints and considerations of real-life settings. In contrast to non-fictional “speech-communities”, their speech can be investigated as self-contained rather than the product of exchange and historic development.

The Use of Regional Accents in *The Rings of Power*: Do the Harfoots speak with an Irish accent?

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The Harfoots, who first appeared in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937), are one of the central groups in "The Rings of Power" (2022) (in the following: *TRoP*) and are represented as a nature-loving nomadic tribe with a shortened height and a semi-dark complexion. According to the series' dialect coach, Leith McPherson, "the Harfoots have an Irish base to their accent." We analyze the following pronunciation features:

- t-glottaling; g-dropping: "The missus 'll be wai'in'." (Sadoc)
- /t/ as a "sh": "They're wrong about /əbaʊʃ/ your name." (Nori)

Moreover, we will consider the variables of rhotic speech, vowel pronunciation, and sound insertions after an initial and distinctive intonation pattern which are typical of an Irish accent to support our claim that the Harfoots, indeed, speak with an Irish accent. We will also compare the Harfoots to one another, as they have considerable differences in their accents with respect to Irish English (IE). Furthermore, we will shortly address the issue of how heavy accents and dialects are often connected to social standing. A "sociolect" may subconsciously be associated with a lack of education and is thus used to imply that a speaker is less intelligent. To demonstrate that, we will compare the Harfoots to other groups in the *TRoP* e.g., Elves, who do not speak with a regionally marked accent and may therefore appear more sophisticated. We will also address the claim that regional accents are traditionally used for more likable people in phantasy genres which will neutralize our first issue of heavy accents being used for less educated groups of people.

In the end, we will come to the conclusion that the Harfoots do have an Irish accent on the linguistic level, due to the fact their accent appears to have exclusive features of Irish English.

This is in line with practice in mainstream fantasy film productions, but should, in our view, be considered a potentially harmful perpetuation of stereotypes from the non-fantasy world.

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