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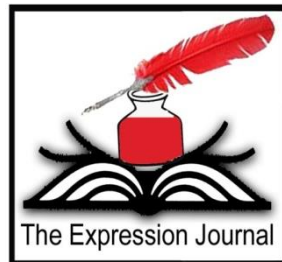
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## **A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF CHARLES DICKENS'S NOVELS**

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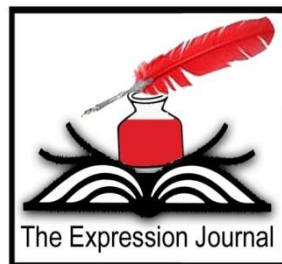
### **Abstract**

Sociolinguistics studies the effects of all aspects of society, including cultural norms, expectations and the context in the way language is used. The present paper shed light on the Charles Dickens's novels by applying the principles of Sociolinguistics, case-study of Charles Dickens's Novels. It aims at showing the influence of both the linguistic and the social structures, society and language may affect each other. In this respect, speech genres differ between characters separated by certain social variables such as gender, age, status, religion, ethnicity and level of education. In fact, literature and Sociolinguistics are concomitants.

### **Keywords**

Sociolinguistic, Structure, Speech Genre, Gender, Religion, Ethnicity, Education.

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## **A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF CHARLES DICKENS'S NOVELS**

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In all its genres, British literature is considered to be rich in its themes and its linguistics techniques. It has seen various phases of change beginning from Old English to the present day, passing through different historical periods. One of the most important periods in the history of England was that of Queen Victoria who reigned from 1837 till 1901 (Carter and McRae, 1996). In literature, the period began with the death of Sir Walter Scott in 1832, and went up to 1914. The Victorians made many changes in different fields such as Science, economy and politics.

The relevance of Charles Dickens (1812-1870) within the literary panorama of English speech is immense. Trying to synthesize it in a few lines is a very complex task. For many, his accomplishments "ranks behind only the King James Bible and Shakespeare" (Poussa, 2000). Indeed, its position in English literature is behind only Shakespeare is not strange, or even the comparison between the two. Beyond his occasional assimilation with the Elizabethan playwright, it is clear that its emergence on the English literary scene in the first half of the 19th century was the greatest popularity phenomenon since Shakespeare himself. His conception, almost unanimous, of better English novelist of all time (Dyson, 1970) is easily understood through of recognition, not only from critics, but also from renowned writers. Figures of reference of universal literature such as Benito Pérez Galdós, Bernard Shaw, Franz Kafka or Leo Tolstoy, to cite four examples of quite different origin, saw in Dickens a figure of reference (Coolidge, 1967). This level of recognition is based, among other factors, on his early success, which raised him with barely twenty-five years to a privileged position from which would not get off again. Thus, already in October 1837, with the simultaneous publication of *Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist*, *The Quarterly Review* echoed the phenomenon of the appearance of this new author on the literary scene: "The popularity of this writer is one of the most remarkable literary phenomena of recent times, for it has

been fairly earned without resorting to any of the means by which most other writers have succeeded in attracting the attention of their contemporaries. He has flattered not popular prejudice and profited by no passing folly: he has attempted no caricature sketches of the manners or conversation of the aristocracy; and there are very few political or personal allusions in his works. Moreover, his class of subjects are such as to expose him at the outset to the fatal objection of vulgarity; and with the exception of occasional extracts in the newspapers, he received little or no assistance from the press. Yet, in less than six months from the appearance in the form of fiction." This is just one example of the many that could be offered about an author who became "The first modern celebrity model" (Bodenheimer, 2006) almost from the beginning. The curiosity that his deliveries aroused led people to stop in front of the windows of bookstores to speculate on the plot of their stories as a result of the illustrations that accompanied the deliveries themselves, which were hung by booksellers as a sort of claim (Mahdi, 2015). Even more striking are some of the legends surrounding the Interest sparked by certain numbers, such as Nell's death at The Old Curiosity Shop. As Mahdi points out: "As Nell's journey seemed more and more pointed toward death, readers' anxieties increased, until the final weekly parts were selling upwards of 100,000 copies. An apocryphal story, that probably has some mythic if not material truth to it, tells of avid American readers flocking to the docks when the packet boat arrived, yelling to the crew, 'Is Little Nell still alive?'" Dickens is essentially a novelist of the Victorian London – the London of 1820 and 1830's. He presents the Victorian London in all its colors, with its squares and shops and offices and murky slums and prisons and clamorous thorough – fares, its churches striped with soot, its suburbs with their trim cottages and tidy gentle spaces of open country. In depicting the horrors of prison life or the abomination of private schools, his heart is moved and he presents them to his readers, surely for the better. He knew his people best and gave them what they wanted. Dickens is not only a representative novelist of the Victorian age, but he is also a typical Victorian novelist. Lord David Cecil points out some general characteristics of the Victorian novels. He says that the Victorian novels are an extraordinary mixture of strength and weakness. He illustrates this point with special reference to Dickens- all the more to our advantage. "There is," he says, "hardly a book of Dickens which is not deformed by false sentiment, flashy melodrama, wooden characters; as often as not the hero is one of them."

The novel became the fundamental form in the Victorian age (Klingopulos, 1996). One of the most outstanding literary figures during the Victorian age was Charles Dickens (1812-70) whose works have remained popular up to now. Through many of his works, Dickens changes the theme of the novel, focusing on the social problems of his time (Miller, 1965). The main themes of Dickens's writings are about sufferings of both children and the working class (Thornley and Roberts, 1984). These are the subject of one of his well-known novels, David Copperfield (1850) (Carter and McRae, 1996). David Copperfield, the main character of the novel, is the Victorian boy who is able to release his dreams. The novel tackles part of Dickens's childhood and his success. Great Expectations

(1861) is another famous novel of Dickens (Shelston, 1993). It is an autobiographical story with an unhappy ending. Philip, the author's main character in the novel, has many hopes which cannot be fulfilled. The expectations of Philip are not great as they were for David. Most of Dickens's writings of the 1850s were characterized by a sense of irony (Carter and McRae, 1996). *Hard Times* (Dickens, 1854) is often regarded as a work of the Victorian times. Through this novel, Dickens attempts to criticize the values of the industrial Victorian society. Dickens's later novels tackle the situation of the London society (Miller, 1967). Dickens is often known for the continuous vitality for his prose style (Grant, 1984). Most of his novels are characterized by his gift of fascinating characterization (Hyland, 1981). His minor characters are, in terms of action, distinguished by their individual speech patterns, idiosyncratic idioms which belong only to those characters and are never repeated (Grant, 1984). Dickens's extremely flexible style creates such discriminations and social observations (ibid.). His characters take place in the world of the novel to which they belong through their language (Wilson, 1967). They are remarkable individuals (Price, 1967). *Oliver Twist*, *Micawber*, *Uriah Heep*, *Tiny Tim*, *Squeers*, *Scrooge* and dozens of other characters are part of the English folklore. In writing, Dickens's powers are thought to be many. The author can make plots of complexity to ensure a sense of mystery and uncertainty in his novels (Hyland, 1981). This way helps him as a novelist whose writings are produced in serial form (ibid.). He develops the technique of suspense to a fine art in his works (ibid.). His plots are deemed to be the product of his fertile imagination. His characters are vividly and cogently drawn and invite the readers warmly into the pages of his novels (Thornley and Roberts, 1984). A further quality of Dickens's novels is his gift for humour (Carey, 1973). This feature is closely related to that of characterisation (ibid.). His humour is of a more varied kind than would be done by characters' depiction alone (ibid.). Many instances of his amusing comments, the comic scenes and the complete wit of the dialogue are all parts of the rich vein of humour that makes his novels distinguishable (Hyland, 1981). Dickens's novels are not only fun; they are full of satire (Grant, 1984). He is often considered as a satirist and a critic of the Victorian society. He shows all the inadequacies of the Victorian institutions. Dickens's satire strikes England and leaves its mark (Hyland, 1981). He attacks schools, family, Parliament and the Church. It is said that his novels frequently reflect aspects of his own personal experience. Idioms of the Victorian folk used by Dickens have a particular impact on the reader (Gillie, 1996). The use of such idiomatic expressions is considered as a way to introduce the Victorian culture and traditions to the reader. Therefore, Dickens's language is not only a communicative device, but it also bears a cultural heritage of his society. All his novels are the embodiment in words of a very special way of experiencing the world (Miller, 1965). Dickens's novels, including *Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, *Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend*, represent important segments of the curve of his temporal development in his creative vision.

Dickens loved the style of the 18th century picaresque novels which he found in abundance on his father's shelves. According to Ackroyd, other than these,

perhaps the most important literary influence on him was derived from the fables of The Arabian Nights. His special forms of expression techniques of creating audio-visual and emotional situations, he writes sentences that are too long and too detailed; (he uses circumlocution instead of simple, forthright statement). He was sometimes overly sentimental, in A Tale of Two Cities, On the first interview between Lucie and her father is scarcely natural; and the farewell scene between Charles and Lucie in the Paris Tribunal a situation more likely to leave a couple bereft of words. Dickens characters prove their love more convincingly by their actions than by their Words! But his clear purpose to make his readers and audience sees, feel, hear, and he labored to perfect a style that would accomplish his purpose. Talking about the relations between the Language on one side and the style and stylistic on the other it ought to be enlightened that Language and style never moves beyond a concentration on the supremacy of words. These words somehow contain meanings in our mind while the use of style is an effectively language manipulated in ways that signal it as different from ordinary language. A stylistic analysis of the three uses of Dickens's famous novels is carried out to, educate, explicate and expose to everybody that comes across this write up, in guiding them on how to analyze it. The data used to illustrate and substantiate our claims are systematically sourced from these novels. The lexico-syntactic patterns and choices, the phonological, morphological, Grammatical and graphological devices are the main stylistic elements used to prove our claims.

Sociolinguistics shows us some humorous realities of human speech and how any linguistic form can often describe the age, gender, religion and social class of the speaker (the character); it codes the social function of language (Hudson, 1996). Moreover, it is the study of language aspects (features, styles and variation) in relation to the social context (Spolsky, 1998). Sociolinguistics involves the description of language features (lexis and syntax) and an identification of the social factors that lead people to use one form rather than another (ibid.). The basic framework of any sociolinguistic description includes participants, setting, topic, notions of social distance, formality, status and ideological and referential functions (Trudgill, 2002). For example, when participants, context and topic are considered, the use of language variation of different language styles becomes more predictable and meaningful (ibid.). Linguistic diversity correlates with social diversity. People often use a language to signal their membership of particular groups. Sociolinguists need to describe the linguistic patterns that correlate with the macro-level abstract categories of class, age, ethnicity and gender to explain the social meaning of language (Freeman and McElhinny, 1996).

Dickens is well known for the constant vitality of his unique prose style. A large number of his literature has been recognized as a unique creation with fascinating characteristics. His every- characters stand for their actions, personal speech patterns, specific expressions that relate only to those characters and will never be repeated. A very flexible form of Dickens's writing creates these perception, and social observation. Those characters take place in a world of fantasy that occurs in their own language. As for instance Squeers, Tiny Tim, Heep, Micawber, Oliver Twist, Uriah, Scrooge and many others are remarkable characters

of numerous English folklore (Matta, 2006). Considering his writing, Dickens is accepted as very strong compared to others. The author critically thinks and creates plots to bring mysterious and uncertain sense in his writing. This style enables him to establish his name as well as published his writing in a serial form. His technique to transfer suspense into fine art is unique and is the result of his great imagination. His writing is clear and interesting and welcomes readers to continue reading his novels. Dickens writing not only gives fun to his readers, instead they are considered as satire. He has been seen as a satirist as well as critic of the Victorian society. His writing shows the weakness of the Victorian institutions. His satire left its mark to strikes England. His writing continuously attacked Church, Parliament, schools, and families, of Victorian society. Here, it is necessary to mention that his writings were the reelection of his personal experiences (Moja, 2018).

The expressions of these Victorian folk have a good impact on readers. These expressions are generally idiomatic expressions that were uses in such a way in aimed to familiarizing the reader with Victorian traditions and culture. Hence, Dickens's writing does not only act as a communication tool but also it carries the cultural heritage of Victorian society. All his novels are written in such a manner to experience the world in a specific way. General stylistic features, repetitive words and pictures, and the author's particular tone are as personal as his face or the way he walks. Dicken's writing style is actually his own life style which has been given a verbal form (Mahdi, 2015). Dickens novels such as *Hard Times*, *Bleak House*, *Pickwick Papers*, *Great*

*Expectations*, *Oliver Twist*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, including *Our Mutual Friend* are important parts of his temporal growth curve in his imaginative vision. Conclusion Victorian novel and sociolinguistics are concomitants: the use of sociolinguistics increases the understanding of the language found in the novel. In fact, this study attempted to show that the language used in literature is of sociolinguistic importance and is the result of continuing political- social-economic forces.

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