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## ■ DICKENS'S USE OF NON-FLUENCY FEATURES IN SPOKEN DISCOURSE

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U radu se ispituje upotreba standardnih odlika ne fluentnosti diskursa u dijalogima likova u delima Čarlsa Dikensa. U te odlike spadaju hezitanija (oklevanje), interupcija (prekidanje), popunjavanje praznina itd. Te odlike se obično sreću u govornom jeziku, dok su ređe u pisanom i tada mogu reći dosta o autorovoj nameri. U radu se zaključuje da ove odlike uglavnom označavaju pojačana osećanja kod književnih likova, a da njihova upotreba kod Dikensa otkriva da se piščevo glavno interesovanje odnosi na porodične odnose.

Ključne reči: standardne odlike ne fluentnosti, autorska namera, Dikensova glavna tema.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Rarely has there been a time when more attention has been paid to the discourse features of texts than today. One category of such features, i.e. normal non-fluency features in conversation, as discussed in Hughes (1996), is particularly helpful in showing an author's intent in his or her works.

The following text (1) is an extract from Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*, in which 'Peggotty tries to tell David, who has come home from Yarmouth, about his mother's remarriage. David wonders about the somewhat strange atmosphere in the house, and warm-hearted Peggotty hesitates about how she can unfold delicate matter'. (Yamamoto 1974: 139-140):

(1) Hesitation

"Why, Peggotty!" I said ruefully, "isn't she come home?"

"Yes, yes, Master Davy," said Peggotty. "She's come home. Wait a little bit,

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Master Davy, and *I'll — I'll* tell you something."  
 (Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 40) (Italics mine)<sup>(1)</sup>

Peggotty's hesitation, which is a normal non-fluency feature, shows that her speech is spontaneous and unplanned, and indicates her warm-heartedness, as Yamamoto points out. This feature is a normal part of impromptu speech that we usually barely notice. In fiction, there are roughly three types of participants. A fictional discourse has a more complex structure than a spontaneous exchange and it is necessary to posit firstly a fictional in-story character who utters 'I'll — I'll tell you something', and also a second fictional construct who reports the character's speech (i.e. a narrator), and behind them, an entity outside the story who creates these two fictional people, Peggotty and the narrator. This multi-layeredness of communication in a literary text can be illustrated as in the next section.

This complexity in fictional communication can be seen more easily in comparison with a sociolinguistic narrative analysis. When applying the sociolinguistic framework of Labov & Waletzky (1967), which is based on a natural narrative with two narrative layers of speaker-listener and character-character, to a more complex literary text in which the speaker is divided into author and narrator, and the listener is divided into the reader and the one who listens to the narration, we must make a slight correction in analyzing the point of view. The communication framework discussed in Austin (1962), Benveniste (1966) and Ross (1970) belongs to the former. Their discussion, therefore, needs modification in the discussion of a literary text.

## 2. NON-FLUENCY FEATURES USED BY DIFFERENT CHARACTERS IN THE SAME WORK

Before we analyze normal non-fluency features in Dickens's works, it is necessary to see how such features appear in normal conversation. For example:

- |    |                          |  |                              |
|----|--------------------------|--|------------------------------|
|    | (false start)            |  | (gap filler)                 |
| A: | <i>A Mars Bar is ...</i> | you can have either a Mars Bar, Kit-Kat or <i>erm</i> cherry Bakewell                        |                              |
|    |                          |  | (gap filler)                 |
| B: |                          | Oh <i>erm</i> it's   |                              |
|    |                          | a toss-up <i>between...between</i> the cherry Bakewell and the Mars Bar isn't it?            |                              |
|    | (hesitation)             |  | (interruption   overlapping) |
| A: |                          | bring some in then cos you might want another one cos I don't want them all, I'm gonna be... | Well shall I                 |
- (Carter & McCarthy 1997: 85, revised)

Usually these conversational features do not appear in a literary discourse, though they are common in natural conversation. When they do appear in a fictional exchange as in (1), they often express heightened emotion, as Hughes (1996) points out:

- (2) heightened emotion ... such as anger, fear or uncertainty ... mental disturbance

(Hughes 1996: 52)

When these features appear, the author has inserted them 'on purpose', as Short (1996) claims in regard to the language of drama:

- (3) Normal non-fluency does not occur in drama dialogue, precisely because that dialogue is written (even though it is written to be spoken). Moreover, if features normally associated with normal non-fluency do occur, they are perceived by readers and audience as having a *meaningful* function precisely because we know that the dramatist must have included them *on purpose*.

(Short 1996: 177) (Original italics)

When viewed from this point of view, the three examples of hesitation from *David Copperfield* given here, i.e. (1), (4) and (5), reveal a topic the author seems to have had in mind when writing this novel:

- (4) False start

"The rooks — what has become of them?" asked Miss Betsey.

"There have not been any since we have lived here," said my mother. "*We thought—Mr Copperfield thought* — it was quite a large rookery; but the nests were very old ones, and the birds have deserted them a long while."

(*David Copperfield*, 6) (All italics in quotes hereafter are mine)

- (5) Interruption

"You were speaking about its being a girl," said Miss Betsey. "I have no doubt it will be a girl. I have a presentiment that it might be a girl. Now child, from the moment of the birth of this girl —"

"*Perhaps boy*," my mother took the liberty of putting in.

(7)

Yamamoto (1974: 140) says regarding the Copperfields' housekeeper, 'warm-hearted Peggotty hesitates how she can unfold delicate matter', focusing on her warm character in (1). Example (4) expresses David's hesitation by means of a false start, while example (5) shows his mother's emotional intensity when she interrupts Miss Betsey. These three samples all illustrate the speakers' heightened state of emotion.

In addition, all of these three samples are related to a family. In (1), Peggotty hesitates when she has to reveal the awkward situation of David's family. The deserted old rooks' nests in (4) were the home of a family of birds. David's mother interrupts Miss Betsey in haste in (5) when they are talking about the birth of a new member of her family. It is possible, perhaps, to infer that Dickens's main concern in all these examples was family.

We have discussed how the narrator/author's concern can be inferred by looking at the common implication realized in non-fluency features used by different characters in the same work. What is the case if we look at these features in different works by the same author?

### 3. NON-FLUENCY FEATURES IN DIFFERENT WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

In the previous chapter, non-fluency features used by different characters were discussed. As the features are related to the same topic, it is possible to infer that this topic is the main concern of the narrator/author behind the characters who use them, because he/she uses them deliberately. What if these non-fluency features are used in different works by the same author?

Dickens's *Great Expectations*, which describes various frustrations of expectations, also contain some instances of non-fluency features.

Pip, the protagonist of the story, is staying with Joe Gargery, a blacksmith and the husband of Pip's sister, and he is in indentured servitude to Joe. One non-fluency feature occurs when Pip and Joe visit Miss Havisham, a wealthy spinster:

#### (6) Interruption

...I took the indentures out of his hand and gave them to Miss Havisham.

"You expected," said Miss Havisham, as she looked them over, "no premium with the boy?"

"Joe!" I remonstrated; for he made no reply at all. "Why don't you answer — "

"Pip," returned Joe, cutting me short as if he were hurt, "which I meantsay that were not a question requiring an answer betwixt yourself and me, and which you know the answer to be full well No. You know it to be No, Pip, and wherefore should I say it?"

(*Great Expectations*, 99)

In this passage, Joe gives Pip's indenture papers via Pip to Miss Havisham, who asks Joe if he expects a special payment for Pip's work with her. Joe adamantly refuses this offer. This is followed by Pip's question, and then Joe cuts Pip short. As Joe is a sort of adoptive father to Pip, this interruption, which is a non-fluency feature, occurs within Pip's familial relation with Joe.

Self-correction, i.e. an alteration made by a speaker, occurs in (7) when Pip expects to be 'a gentleman' to attract Estella, who is an orphan brought up by Miss Havisham:

#### (7) Self-correction

"Yes, Joe; but what I wanted to say, was, that as we are rather slack just now, if you would give me a half-holiday to-morrow, I think I would go up-town and make a call on *Miss Est — Havisham*":

“Which her name,” said Joe, gravely, “ain’t Estavisham, Pip, unless she have been rechrised.”

(109)

In (7) Pip asks Joe for a half-holiday to go to Miss Havisham’s mansion to call on her, but as his visit is actually in expectation of seeing Estella, he carelessly reveals his secret desire by saying the first syllable of her name. Joe teases him and says that there is no such a person as ‘Estavisham’. The italicized part of (7) is an instance of self-correction, and Pip’s expectation of a closer relationship with Estella is exposed by this non-fluency feature. Since the story ends with Pip’s expectation of marriage with Estella, the occurrence of this feature in (7) is significant.

In *Great Expectations* a number of expectations are described, including the two examples above: (6) emphasizes the familial relations of Joe and Pip, while (7) reveals Pip’s expectation of marriage with Estella.

By looking at the examples above from *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*, it is possible to identify some common core of concern which the author had at the time of writing. A narrator usually belongs to a specific text, not to multiple works by the same author. *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations* each have a narrator who is specific to the work, and the person who conceives the identical concern of family in both novels must be the author, not the narrator.

#### 4. NON-FLUENCY FEATURES IN WORKS BY DIFFERENT AUTHORS

The use of non-fluency features in works by different authors reveals certain common features belonging to these works and authors. Let us look at an extract from James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist of a Young Man*, in which the characters are talking about a funnel for pouring oil into a lamp.

##### (8) Hesitation

— To return to the lamp, he said, the feeding of it is also a nice problem. You must choose the pure oil and you must be careful when you pour it in not to overflow it, not to pour in more than the funnel can hold.

— What funnel? asked Stephen.

— The funnel through which you pour the oil into your lamp.

— That? said Stephen. Is that called a funnel? Is it not a tundish?

— What is a tundish?

— That. *The... the funnel.*

— Is that called a tundish in Ireland? asked the dean. I never heard the word in my life.

(James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist of a Young Man*, 158)

This exchange indicates Stephen’s feeling of inferiority in the presence of the dean, who does not know the Irish word for a funnel that pours oil into a lamp. Stephen’s hesitation shows that he is feeling inferior.

Another example is from a story by Kazuo Ishiguro., in which Raymond, the main character, visits his best friend in London in the middle of the latter's marital crisis, and tries to reconcile the couple. He and his friend's wife Emily listen to some jazz which they enjoyed in the past, but she gets angry with him, saying that he does not listen to this type of music any more. Raymond replies to this:

(9) Hesitation

'No, no, Emily, please, it's lovely. It...it brings back memories. Please, let's just get back to being quiet and relaxed, the way we were a minute ago.'

(Kazuo Ishiguro, 'Come Rain or Come Shine', *Nocturnes*, 83)

In this example, hesitation is related to memories.

What, then, is the common element in the normal non-fluency features in the examples given above from the works of Dickens, Joyce and Ishiguro? We return to the statements by Hughes (2) and Short (3), i.e. these non-fluency features show 'heightened emotion'.

## 5. SUMMARY

Non-fluency features normally occur in natural conversations, and they usually cause no problems. On the other hand, they usually do not occur in written language, so if present, they deliberately show the speaker's heightened emotion, as stated in (2) and (3). The analysis of these features in a range of characters and works, rather than in specific characters, reveals the author's intent behind the characters and the literary work.

It is possible to summarize and say that there are several levels at which non-fluency features can be analyzed.

At the lowest stage in a written medium, non-fluency features occur locally, showing the characters' emotions, as is clear in (1), (4) and (5). At this stage it is possible to claim, as Hughes does in (2), that these conversational features show the characters' emotional arousal, and they are made to use them on purpose by the narrator/author, as Short argues in (3). At this stage, Peggotty's hesitation in (1), together with other personal characteristics, both verbal and non-verbal, help clarify the author's depiction of her.

At the second stage, identification of something common to a number of characters in the same text gives us a glimpse of the narrator/author's concern behind the characters who use the normal non-fluency features. The person who made the characters use the features could be the narrator, because comparison of the features is done only within the same text, or it may be the author, but this is just a theoretical possibility at this stage.

At the next stage, in different works by the same author, his/her main concern common throughout the works emerges, rather than that of the narrator, since a narrator, generally speaking, does not narrate in more than one work, except in a series like the Sherlock Holmes series.

At the fourth stage, non-fluency features in works by different authors indicate, again, the same thing as at the first stage, i.e. they show 'heightened emotion' in general.

Therefore, when we look for authorial intent, the second and third stages are where we can find clues for this.

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## SUMMARY

### DICKENS'S USE OF NON-FLUENCY FEATURES IN SPOKEN DISCOURSE

This article examines Charles Dickens's use of 'normal non-fluency features' in his characters' discourse, and probes the speakers' and the author's intent behind the use of them. 'Normal non-fluency features' means features of non-fluency in conversation such as hesitation, interruption, gap-fillers and the like. They are, as Hughes (1996: 39) points out, a sign of positive participation by conversational participants. In addition, they have another function when they appear in a written text, because, in the case of a drama, 'the dramatist must have included them on purpose' (Short 1996: 177). By looking at a number of Dickens's works, it is possible to infer that he is particularly interested in family relations.

**KEYWORDS:** normal non-fluency features, authorial intent, Dickens's main concern.

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