

Early feminist or mainstream writer?
An analysis of George Moore's use
of *verba dicendi* in three novels.

José Antonio Hoyas Solís
University of Extremadura
jahoyas@unex.es

Two research questions

- 1. How does Moore use verbs to create the sociolinguistic profile of his characters?
- 2. Does his characterization of men and women confirm the view that he is a feminist?

The Corpus: Three Novels

- *A Mummer's Wife. A Realistic Novel.* 1885
London: Vizetelly.
- *A Drama in Muslin.* 1886. *A Realistic Novel.*
London: Vizetelly.
- *Esther Waters.* 1894. London: Walter Scott.
- This corpus comprises 375,677 words

Method and data

- Instances of *oratio recta* (Coulmas 1986) or direct speech reporting verbs in *dictum* (Coulmas 1986)
- Example: John *said*, “He’s my best friend”
- Use of WordSmith Tools 6 Concordancer.
- List of reporting verbs drawn mainly from Levine (1993) but supplemented by Wierzbieszca (1987), Martínez (2005) and Caldas-Coulthard (1994)

Method and data 1:

List of reporting verbs found in corpus

- Add (51), Address (16), Admit (16), Advise (13), Agree (22), Announce (12); Answer (154), Appeal (5), Argue (20), Ask (301), Assent (2) Assure (10), Bawl (1), Blurt (1), Chatter (1), Comment (3), Complain (4), Cry (132), Declare (68), Exclaim (77), Explain (50), Express (20), Groan (1), Growl (1), Grumble (3), Interject (3), Interpose (3), Interrupt (6), Mention (17), Moan (5), Mumble (4), Murmur (42), Mutter (14), Prattle (1), Remark (12), Repeat (23), Reply (132), Roar (4), Say (1871), Scold (1), Scream (15), Shout (9), Shriek (2), Snarl (1), Speak (201), Tell (349), Utter (13), Whine (1), Whisper (11), Yell (2)
- **50 verbs and 3724 tokens**
- **Neutral verbs of saying (say, tell, speak, utter, ask, or answer) make up to 71,84% of tokens (2675)**

Method and data 2

- This list of verbs further refined
- Only verbs of manner of speaking chosen
- Most verbs left out
- Including neutral quotative **say** and other saying verbs (**tell, ask, repeat, reply, answer,** etc., Caldas 1994) + glossing prepositional phrase or adverb: “I know,” he said in a whisper/bluntly.

Method and data 3

- About verbs of manner of speaking:
- 1. The metonymy of SOUND for SPEECH.
- 2. Three types of sounds: human, animal and inanimate things
- 3. Mark manner and attitude of speaker
- 4. Convey authorial presence (Caldas 1993, 1994)

Method and data 4

- **Men:**
- Bawl (1), blurt (1), cry (23), exclaim (14), growl (1), murmur (12), mutter (4), roar (1), scream (2), shout (7), snarl (1), whisper (4).
- **Women:**
- Cry (77), exclaim (55), moan (2), murmur (20), mutter (8), prattle (1), scold (1), scream (8), shout (1), shriek (2), whine (1), whisper (6), yell (1)

Discussion 1

	VERBS	TOKEN
MEN	12	71
WOMEN	13	183

- 25 verbs: 50% of the whole list (50)
- Low number of tokens (Caldas 1993, 1994)
- Practically same number of verbs. More tokens for women but mainly because of *cry* and *exclaim*

Discussion 2

- Prosodic verbs:
- cry 23/77, scream 2/8, and shout 7/1
- Paralinguistic verbs. Voice qualifiers:
- 1) exclaim 14/55, murmur 12/20, mutter 4/8
- 2) growl, roar, snarl vs moan, shriek, whine
- Social perception:
- Bawl vs yell and blurt vs prattle
- Scold and women at home (Caldas 1993, 1994)

Discussion 3

- 1. Men (assertive, domineering, public sphere) (Parkins 2012)
- 2. Women (emotional, submissive, private domain) (Parkins 2012)
- 3. Subjective presence of authors in texts and the question of “affect” (Martin and White 2005)

Discussion 4

- Some critics support view that Moore was a committed feminist (Jaime de Pablos 2006)
- Others are more cautious and think of Moore as aware of feminist issues only (Stubbs 1979, Hoyas 2014)

Conclusions

- Moore's use of reporting verbs in the three novels does not display a marked bias in favour of women. Sympathetic at most.
- The study of the linguistic choices made by this author does not, then, lend support to the view that George Moore was an artist committed to the feminist cause.

Further research

1. Study to be extended to the rest of Moore's novels
2. Comparison with other contemporary writers such as George Gissing, Walter Bessant, Mark Rutheford, Arthur Morrison, Somerset Maugham or Thomas Hardy
3. Study of novels of contemporary female writers (Maria Corelli)
4. Exploring Henry Sweet's influence on these writers known for having a keen interest in incorporating into their novels how people spoke

References

- Caldas-Coulthard, Carmen Rosa. 1993. “From Discourse Analysis to Critical Discourse Analysis: The Differential Representation of Women and Men Speaking in Written News”. John Sinclair, Michael Hoey and Gwyneth Fox (eds.). **Techniques of Description. Spoken and Written Discourse.** London: Routledge: 196-208.
- Caldas-Coulthard, Carmen Rosa. 1994. “On Reporting Reporting: The Representation of Speech in Factual and Fictional Narratives”. R.M. Coulthard (ed.). **Advances in Written Text Analysis.** London: Routledge: 295-320.

References

- Coulmas, Florian (ed.). 1986. **Trends in Linguistics. Studies and Monographs 31. Direct and Indirect Speech.** The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Hoyas Solís, José Antonio. 2014. “Early Feminist or Mainstream writer? A Linguistic Analysis of George Moore’s Portrayal of Women in Three Novels”. M^a Elena de Pablos and Mary Pierse (eds.). **George Moore and the Quirks of Human Nature.** Bern: Peter Lang: 183-203.
- Jaime de Pablos, Elena. 2006. “George Moore: The Committed Feminist”. Mary Pierse (ed.). **George Moore: Artistic Visions and Literary Worlds.** Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press: 184-196.

Bibliography

- Levin, Beth. 1993. **English Verb Classes and Alternations**. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Martin, J.R., and P.R.R. White. 2005. **The Language of Evaluation. Appraisal in English**. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Martínez Vázquez, Montserrat. 2005. “Communicative Constructions in English and Spanish”. Christopher S. Butler, M^a de los Ángeles Gómez González and Susana M. Doval-Suarez (eds). **The Dinamycs of Language Use**. Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing Company: pp. 79-109.

References

- Parkins, Rósín . 2012. “Gender and Emotional Expressiveness: An Analysis of Prosodic Features in Emotional Expression”. Griffith Working Papers in Pragmatics and Intercultural Communication, 5, 1: 46-54.
- Stubbs, Patricia. 1979. **Women and Fiction. Feminism and the Novel 1880-1920.** Sussex: The Haverster Press.
- Wierzbieszca, Anna . 1987. **English Speech Act Verbs: A Semantic Dictionary.** Sidney: Academic Press.