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Representations of linguistic variation in children's books: register stylisation as a resource for (critical) language awareness

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By drawing upon the dialogic theory of Bakhtin, I consider how register variation is represented in the children's books by the popular Greek writer Dr. Eugene Trivizas, with the aim to explore whether, and in what terms, it could be exploited for the raising of (critical) language awareness. Most sociolinguistic studies which have used literature as data have focused on more or less 'accurate' representations of linguistic variation. The present study indicates that strategically deauthenticated depictions of register variation exploited for humour could still be used as a resource for raising children's (critical) language awareness. Register humour as a case of stylisation involves a reauthentic linguistic behaviour, since the reader should have recourse to shared scripts about what a specific register involves and under what circumstances it is employed, in order for him/her to resolve the script opposition, and hence, to appreciate humour. Stylisation is extensively employed by the cultural products of postmodernism. Moreover, it contributes to the adoption of a reflexive stance towards linguistic conventions, which is necessary for their critical use on the part of future citizens.

Keywords: register; sociolect; picture books; language awareness; register humour; heteroglossia

Introduction

Sociolinguistics makes a well-known distinction between linguistic variation according to user (dialects) and according to use (registers). Dialects index aspects of the speaker's identity (i.e. geographical, social, ethnic). Registers, in contrast, give information about language use in different situational settings. Nevertheless, this distinction is mainly an issue of division of labour, since dialectal and register variation are actually interrelated (Biber & Finegan, 1994). Consequently, we can only tell what type of linguistic variation is primarily involved each time.

Another widely used – but not without ambiguity – bipolar conceptual pattern in sociolinguistics is that of 'standard' versus 'non-standard' linguistic varieties. Some features shared by most definitions (e.g. Trudgill, 1999) are that the standard variety is the form of language which is normally used in writing, spoken by educated people, and taught in schools. It is considered to be the most (overtly) prestigious linguistic variety in a society. Non-standard varieties are normally only spoken and are excluded from education. They typically include regional dialects, ethnolects, and low-prestige sociolects. On the other hand, registers related to formal settings are typically associated with standard forms of

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language, while registers tied up with casual settings usually involve the use of non-standard varieties.

In the present study, I examine the linguistic varieties (registers, and registers which function as sociolects) depicted in the children's books by the popular Greek writer Dr. Eugene Trivizas. By drawing upon the dialogic theory of Bakhtin, I consider how register variation is employed in the particular textual material, with the aim to explore whether, and in what terms, it could be exploited for the raising of (critical) language awareness. Most sociolinguistic studies which have used literature as data have focused on more or less 'accurate' representations of linguistic variation (e.g. Poussa, 2000; Wack, 2005). But, do literary texts which represent linguistic varieties in an intentionally subversive and deauthenticated way for producing humorous effects still constitute useful and 'reliable' sociolinguistic data to be exploited for (critical) language awareness? The answer to this question is particularly relevant nowadays, as children, through postmodern culture, are increasingly exposed to recontextualised and playful representations of linguistic varieties, a process known as 'stylisation' (Coupland, 2001).

Literature review: literary representations of linguistic variation

The representation of dialects in literary texts (and especially in novels) – a phenomenon known as 'literary dialect' (Poussa, 2000) – has been the object of many studies (e.g. Antieau, 2001; Fowler, 1989). Through the use of literary dialect, the author constructs the voice of his/her characters (Tamasi, 2001). By making characters speak a regional or social dialect, the author is able to stress asymmetries of power between different localities and/or social groups. When literary dialect involves the use of a minority language rather than a variety of the same language, asymmetries of power between different cultures and national languages are usually raised (e.g. Moyna, 2008). In contrast to dialects, the study of the depiction of registers in literary texts has been very limited (Carter, 1978; Fowler, 1996). Registers are employed in order to construct the fictional situational setting of the literary text. Literature is situationless, namely 'we know nothing of the imagined situation until the author has told us' (Binns, 1966, reported by Carter, 1978, p. 230).

Linguistic variation in children's books has been also scantily considered (e.g. Lathey, 2001). However, linguistic variation in children's literature serves an additional stylistic function compared with adults' literature, since it can help making characters more recognizable to children, especially when books are read aloud. By differentiating the characters' speech through the use of linguistic varieties, 'the hearer can recognize at once who is speaking, without the boring necessity of always including "said the prince", "replied the princess", "interrupted the dragon", and so forth' (Aiken, 1972, p. 7).

Many studies which have explored the literary representation of linguistic varieties have attempted to determine the extent to which literary depictions of linguistic varieties diverge from instances of language use as found in everyday communicative events. Most scholars agree that literary dialects should not be equated with linguistic varieties as spoken in a linguistic community, since they are 'stage dialects' (Giner, 1997), namely they concentrate on a few salient linguistic features to suggest a specific way of talking. Similarly, by focusing on some conspicuous linguistic markers, literary texts tend to draw upon many different registers (Fowler, 1996). Nevertheless, most studies which have compared literary representations of linguistic varieties with primary (socio)linguistic data (e.g. Burkette, 2001; Poussa, 2000) have found that such depictions have a more or less realistic basis. Obviously, since linguistic varieties perform a particular function in the literary world created by a writer, they must be plausible even if, to some degree, stereotyped.[1]

The present study focuses on a different type of literary representation of linguistic variation, namely on 'stylised' (Coupland, 2001) depictions of registers. Stylisation refers to the artificial use of a linguistic variety on the part of the speaker. In other words, it is a form of strategic and self-aware deauthetication through which language users make it clear to their audience that they 'are putting on a voice' in order to project identities (dialects) and situation types (registers) other than those that are predictably linked to themselves and/or the particular speech event. Hence, 'stylization implies performance, and to a certain extent constructing a persona that is not the "normal" self' (de Fina, 2007, p. 76). Coupland points out that stylisation challenges the sociolinguistic assumption of 'authenticity' of naturally occurring linguistic data, according to which speakers observed in natural contexts 'speak as "true" representatives of their "traditional" speech communities' (2001, p. 346). However, he argues that stylisation is offered for scrutiny and re-evaluation on the part of speakers, since they are able to reassess and reshape linguistic resources in a reflexive way. In this sense, through strategic deauthentication, stylisation eventually leads to a consideration of a linguistic variety from a new perspective, namely to 'reauthentication' (Coupland, 2001, p. 368).

Theoretical framework

The dialogic theory of Bakhtin

The role of registers in the texts will be delineated with the use of the dialogic perspective of Bakhtin (1935/1981). The Bakhtinian thinking now constitutes a broad theoretical framework for discourse analysis. However, it initially developed to address literary texts. In the present study, registers will be treated as 'voices', drawing upon the Bakhtinian key concepts of 'polyphony', 'heteroglossia', and 'dialogism'.

Polyphony consists in the weaving of different perspectives or voices in a text. In novels, these voices include the voice of the author, of the reader, of the narrator, and of the characters. The author's and the reader's voices are clearly heard when the former addresses the latter (e.g. expression of moral sentiments). The narrator's voice typically involves the monological parts of the novel. The characters' voices – when they are not conflated with the narrative voice – are normally heard in dialogues. Polyphony is instrumental in order to consider what voices speak what registers.

Heteroglossia involves a kind of polyphony which stems from the diverse linguistic varieties spoken hierarchically in a linguistic community. In other words, heteroglossia refers to the well-known sociolinguistic distinction between standard and non-standard linguistic varieties within a linguistic community. The Bakhtinian contribution is that heteroglossia is regarded as a mirror of unresolved social class struggle rather than as a peaceful coexistence of diverse sociolinguistic perspectives. Voices that speak non-standard linguistic varieties ('centrifugal forces') represent the oppressed social groups that struggle to be heard against those voices that speak the standard variety ('centripetal forces') and constitute the ruling class in society. Hence, the concept of heteroglossia is useful for viewing standard versus non-standard registers as forces which struggle against one another in the text.

Dialogism is at the core of the Bakhtinian perspective, but it is a remarkably broad notion. In general terms, it conveys the idea that we do not speak or write in isolation, but that our talk or writing responds to previous thinking and anticipates prospective words. Then, dialogism is construed as 'intertextuality', namely in the way texts live through their dialogic relationship with other texts. Moreover, it involves dialogue among the different

voices of the text: the dialogue between the author and the addressee (addressivity), and the dialogue between the author and the voices found within the text (authorial commentary). In the present paper, dialogism construed as intertextuality and as authorial commentary will be explored.

Intertextuality does not only involve the dialogue of a text with other specific texts ('manifest intertextuality': Fairclough, 1992a). It concerns as well the way a text engages in dialogue with the linguistic conventions (e.g. linguistic varieties etc.) of a speech community ('constitutive intertextuality': Fairclough, 1992a). In this sense, the registers depicted in children's books will be seen as intertextual resources employed by the author and expected to be drawn upon by the reader.

The dialogue of the author's voice with the other voices within the text brings to the fore that the mere presence of different voices in the text (i.e. polyphony) does not necessarily signify richness of perspectives. Diverse voices can be controlled in such a way by the author as to be framed by a dominant voice which presents a single perspective. In contrast, dialogism consists in the integrity of distinct voices relinquished by authorial control in order for the distinct standpoints to be freely juxtaposed with each other in the text. Consequently, the concept of dialogism contributes to the discussion about whether the polyphony of different registers detected in children's books actually leads to a truly plural, or rather to a monophonic, perspective.

(Critical) awareness of linguistic variation

Under the influence of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis in language studies from the mid-1960s onwards, there has been a growing interest in the inclusion of linguistic variation in the language-learning process at school. Language awareness is a perspective for language teaching informed by these developments in linguistics. It complements other approaches to language teaching, such as 'communicative language teaching' (e.g. Widdowson, 1978) and 'genre-based education' (e.g. Bhatia, 1993).

Specifically, it involves a proposal for language learning based on sensitivity and explicit knowledge about language (e.g. James & Garrett, 1991). It is believed that reflexivity and active engagement with language can facilitate language learning. The raising of students' awareness may involve language structure (e.g. phonological awareness), language use (register awareness), the role of language in society (dialect awareness), and issues of language and power (critical language awareness). The results of textual analysis will be discussed regarding their implications for the raising of (critical) register and dialect awareness.

Register awareness (Carter, 1978) concerns making students realise the variability of language in communicative contexts and learn how to use language forms depending on the situation type and the meanings intended.[2] The aim of this approach is to make learners capable users of a wide linguistic repertoire in order to cope with the communicative challenges of contemporary society. Evidence from developmental sociolinguistics (Slosberg-Andersen, 1990) shows that in contrast to social and regional dialects which have been acquired up to the age of 10, children are not aware of the sociolinguistic parameters which govern register use, and find it difficult to differentiate among distinct types of registers, because register acquisition requires enhanced social experience.

Although a social or regional dialect is easy to acquire, social factors (e.g. prejudices) tend to impede its use. Hence, dialect awareness projects aim to make students act as sociolinguists by investigating the linguistic variation of their local community (Cheshire

& Edwards, 1991). Ultimately, the standard variety will be added to instead of replacing the students' linguistic repertoire.

Critical language awareness is based on a critical socio-cultural theory of language, the so-called 'critical discourse analysis', which focuses on the ways language use is invested with power relations and ideological processes (e.g. Fairclough, 1992a). Hence, its major aim is to cultivate the critical thought of students by making them able to disclose the latent and naturalised meanings embedded in language use (e.g. Fairclough, 1992b). Therefore, this approach intends not only to sensitise students, but also to empower them. In this context, critical language awareness criticises 'orthodox' register and dialect awareness for failing to delve into the social significance which governs the use of sociolinguistic resources (e.g. Siegel, 2006). The latter tend to consider linguistic variation in a rather self-evident way (e.g. as a repertoire of linguistic options that a speaker must acquire), and they do not account for the power relations which are implicated in those linguistic 'options' (e.g. who decides about what register is 'appropriate' in what situational setting).

Since language awareness in general and register awareness in particular aim to make learners become conscious about language use within specific communicative contexts, participants are introduced to naturally occurring linguistic data, namely to authentic texts (Chan, 1999). In this sense, there are no privileged texts (McCarthy & Carter, 1994). Moreover, literary texts are regarded as communicative events which are part of the genre repertoire of a speech community (Fowler, 1996).

In practice, language awareness projects have primarily focused on non-literary utilitarian texts. In the present paper, aligned with the view of literature as part of the genre continuum of a speech community, the focus on children's books stems from the polyphonic property of those (among other) texts to become 'a potential receptive to and illustrative of different genres, text-types, registers, narrative structures, points of view' (Chan, 1999, p. 40).

Methodology

The textual material

In the present study, the registers depicted in the children's books by Dr. Eugene Trivizas were examined. Born in Athens, Trivizas is a professor of criminology at the University of Reading, UK. In parallel to his academic career, from the 1980s onwards, he has written children's books, and is now one of the most popular and most prolific Greek writers (more than 150 pieces of work), while many of his books have become bestsellers. Much of his work has been transferred to the stage and serialised for television and radio. Trivizas has received many literary prizes and awards (e.g. The Sheffield's Children's Book Award Commendation). Some of his books have been translated into other languages. For instance, his first book for children, translated into English – *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* (Trivizas & Oxenbury, 1993), reached second place in the American bestseller list for picture books.

A major characteristic of his writing style is humour, parody, and the playful use of language (Akritopoulos, 2007). In fact, as Trivizas himself has admitted in an interview (in the Greek public TV programme *Imerológia* in May 2009), he pays particular attention to the language he uses, and might think for hours about his characters' names. Moreover, through humour, he argues that he attempts to make children (and adults) enjoy themselves while reading his books. Furthermore, through violations in the world described and the language used in order to produce humorous effects, he tries to subvert commonsensical ideas about who is the 'monster' and who is the 'hero'.

Although Trivizas's books seem to be part of contemporary Greek pop culture, in the present study, his books were particularly selected for his focus on stylisation exploited for humour. Specifically, the textual material consists of 12 of Trivizas's picture books written and published in Greek (see Appendix 1). These books were selected with respect to their polyphonic character, namely the extent to which Trivizas mixed different registers. Consequently, the aim of the present study was not to capture a representative picture of Trivizas's writing style, but rather to explore how register variation is used in his books in order to create humour (stylisation), and with what implications for (critical) language awareness.

Register analysis

Register classification is a thorny issue in the relevant literature (e.g. Biber, 1994). On the other hand, methodological approaches premised upon statistical analyses have attempted to provide reliable criteria in order to distinguish registers based on the frequency and co-occurrence of linguistic patterns (e.g. 'multi-dimensional analysis': Conrad & Biber, 2001).

The aim of the present study was not to identify and analyse different registers per se. Instead, this analysis was instrumental in order to account for the way depictions of register variation exploited for humour could be used as a resource for awareness projects. Therefore, register identification and analysis was made inductively, based on the way registers were instantiated in the particular picture books examined.

Specifically, the analysis of registers in children's books was informed by Fowler's view that register 'exists for language users as a package of sociolinguistic knowledge which can be activated by relatively slight textual cues' (1996, p. 191). Register cues are part of 'contextualisation cues', which refer to any linguistic form or paralinguistic sign that contributes to the signalling of contextual presuppositions (Gumperz, 1982). Hence, most people may not be able to produce many registers, but they know through experience the conventions attached to each register. Moreover, through particular cues, a number of different registers can be drawn upon in a single text. Therefore, many texts contain a range of registers. In literary texts, such mixtures are exploited in order to trigger off unfamiliar feelings for the reader, and thus are offered for critical consideration (Fowler, 1996).

In the textual material of the present study, multiple registers were drawn upon in each picture book by the device of contextualisation cues. Therefore, by considering registers as mental models to be activated for the reader, textual analysis attempted to identify and distinguish the different registers which were drawn upon.

Except for particular formulaic expressions which function as strong contextualisation cues for a register (e.g. 'once upon a time' for fairy tale language), register identification was primarily premised upon the analytical model of Halliday and Hasan (1985). This model approaches register as a configuration of meanings typically associated with a constellation of a three-dimensional situational context, namely 'field' (i.e. the activity and the topic involved), 'tenor' (i.e. the participants' social roles and relationships), and 'mode' (i.e. the communication channel through which the message is delivered).

Following Eggins (1994), the three variables of situation type were associated with specific linguistic features in terms of three bipolar stylistic distinctions. Specifically, field was analysed in terms of the distinction 'technical versus non-technical style', tenor was considered regarding the distinction 'formal versus informal style', and mode was examined in terms of the distinction 'writing versus oral style'. Since writing style is typically associated with formal occasions and technical fields, and oral style with casual settings and non-technical fields, the three kinds of style share many linguistic features. Moreover, the three kinds of style were regarded as prototypical categories against which actual texts (and registers) are usually hybrid, placed along a continuum of literacy versus orality (Tannen,

Table 1. Framework of register analysis.

Variables of situational context		
Field	Tenor	Mode
Style		
Technical	*Formal*	*Writing*
Specialised lexis/terminology	Standard variety/formal lexis	Standard variety/formal lexis
Definitions (identifying processes)	Politeness phenomena (pronouns of distance, modality to express deference)	Hypotactic and passive syntax
Lexical density (content words)	Hypotactic and passive syntax	Features of scripted discourse (lexical density, completed meanings)
Hypotactic and passive syntax	Honorifics/full names	Monological organisation (indicative mood, third-person pronouns)
	Full forms	Context-independent meanings (clarity)
		Detachment (neutral lexis)
Non-technical	*Informal*	*Oral*
Everyday lexis	Non-standard varieties/colloquial lexis	Non-standard varieties/colloquial lexis
Qualifications (attributive processes)	No politeness phenomena (pronouns of solidarity, modality to express opinion)	Paratactic and active syntax
No lexical density (grammatical words)	Paratactic and active syntax	Features of spontaneous discourse (repetitions, self-repairing restarts, ellipsis, uncompleted meanings)
Paratactic and active syntax	First names/nicknames/ diminutives	Dialogic organisation (imperative mood, interrogative forms, first- and second-person pronouns)
	Abbreviated/reduced forms	Context-dependent meanings (ambiguities)
		Involvement (emotional lexis)

1982), formality versus informality, and technicality versus non-technicality. This means that one register could have been distinguished from another not necessarily in relation to stylistic polarities (e.g. formal register vs. informal register), but probably in terms of the degree to which a register comprised more or less prototypical linguistic features of a stylistic pole (and thus, it was more or less formal from another one), or even, with respect to the very linguistic features through which a register was instantiated in the text (e.g. how formality was linguistically expressed in one register compared with another). A summary of the major prototypical linguistic features (see Eggins, 1994) which characterises each style is provided in Table 1.

Since registers were analysed as they entered the literary text – through the register cues which were drawn upon – they were not necessarily represented in terms of all situational dimensions/stylistic distinctions (e.g. as we shall see below, the registers of school and leisure were only depicted with respect to field, i.e. technicality vs. non-technicality). Furthermore, registers were often recontextualised into non-prototypical situational settings (e.g. as we shall see below, officialese/legalese was represented in direct speech, and hence gathered many features of the oral style).

Results of the analysis

Intertextual resources

Each of the picture books analysed contained two or three different registers, while there were five books which drew upon between four and nine different registers. The registers

drawn upon could be distinguished into four broad categories: 'officialese/legalese', 'colloquial', 'register of school and leisure', and 'literary'. The register of school and leisure was the most frequent register type detected, appearing in 10 out of the 12 books analysed. The other registers were present in half of the books analysed (i.e. officialese/legalese and colloquial register appeared in six out of 12 books; literary register appeared in seven out of 12 books).

Officialese/legalese and colloquial register constitute the two opposite forces of linguistic homogenisation and diversity in a speech community, respectively. Although these two register types seldom coexisted in the same book, heteroglossic tensions were ubiquitous in the texts (see 'Register Humour'). Moreover, the two register types had the status of high- and low-prestige sociolects, respectively, since they were associated with specific characters' voices. In contrast, literary register and the register of school and leisure reflected the multiple social domains of language use, and had only the status of registers in the books, by being either used by the narrator's voice or by most of the characters' voices.

Officialese/legalese was heard in the voice of institutional characters, such as sea captain, traffic policeman, and judge, in relevant institutional settings created by the texts. In fact, legal contexts were frequently drawn upon, which echo the author's academic identity. Thus, the reader is invited to attend a trial in *Panic in the Land of Geometry* and in *Santa Claus with 83 Rats in Jail*, as well as an interrogation and confession in *Who Has Peed in the Mississippi River?*

Officialese/legalese could be placed on the poles of technicality and formality by including many linguistic features of both styles. Specifically, as shown in Excerpt 1, technical style was realised with the use of many specialised bureaucratic and legal terms, and through lexical density by means of nominalised actions. The bureaucratic and legal terminology mainly consisted of formal words, and thus expressed at the same time the formality of the register type. In fact, there were also some archaic forms inherited from the diglossic past of Greece, being part of the so-called 'Katharévusa' (i.e. 'kat epanálipsin' meaning 'repeated', and 'kata parávasin' meaning 'in violation of').[3] Formal style was also expressed through the use of the second-person pronoun plural 'esís' (+formal 'you') instead of the singular 'esí' (–formal 'you') for politeness reasons as well as by means of passive syntax. Since officialese/legalese were mainly represented in (free) direct speech, it also gathered features of oral style, such as question–answer sequences, ellipsis, context-dependent meanings, self-repairing restarts, first- and second-person pronouns, and paratactic syntax:

Excerpt 1:

— [Judge speaking] You [–formal] are accused of unlawful sleigh parking, of police officer's attempted bribery, of repeated [+formal] damage of unauthorised property, of reindeer's abuse and of unfair competition in violation of [+formal] the commercial legislation about [+formal] the flat price of gifts. Ah! I forgot . . . Just a few minutes ago, we were notified by the Aviation that you [–formal] are also accused of violation of the air space. What do you [–formal] say?

— [Santa Claus speaking] I am innocent.

— Everybody says so. One hundred eighty three years of imprisonment without suspension.

— And what about the gifts?

— They will be pulped.[4]

Colloquial register was employed in order to hear the voice of common characters, such as two fishes (Fánis the Pagrus and Sotíris the Mackerel) and two whales (Fifí and Fofó) that quarrel over food. Thus, it was mainly linked to disputatious situational contexts. The

low social status of those who spoke colloquial register was also reflected by their common Greek names, such as 'Fanúris', 'Sotíris', and 'Fofó'.

In contrast to officialese/legalese, this register type could be placed on the poles of non-technicality and informality. Orality is also a prototypical style of colloquial register. Specifically, as shown in Excerpt 2, colloquial register was non-technical, by containing no specialised terms from a specific domain of activity. However, it is worth noting that since it was mostly associated with quarrelsome settings, it included many threatening words. Contextualisation cues for informal style were colloquial words, first names and nicknames, paratactic syntax, abbreviated forms, and lack of politeness (e.g. the use of –formal 'you', imperatives with no modality). Orality was also expressed through emotional words which index involvement, and through repetitions:

Excerpt 2:

— [Fánis the Pagrus speaking] You [–formal] are insane [–formal], buddy, hands off [–formal], hungry guy [–formal], this tasty worm does belong only to me! Stop, then, to fancy [–formal] it and to torture yourself in vain!

— [Sotíris the Mackerel speaking] No way! No way! No way! [–formal] I will gobble up [–formal] the nosh [–formal]! If you [–formal] dare to swallow the worm, wretch, I tell you [–formal] for sure [–formal] that you [–formal] will immediately pop off!

The registers of school and leisure were only depicted with respect to field, i.e. technicality versus non-technicality. In other words, they had the status of 'jargons' in the data, namely they were activated by means of specialised words or expressions (terminology) employed by a particular profession or group of people. As we shall see in 'Register Humour', these technical terms were represented out of their prototypical context of use and were mixed with other registers. The registers of school and leisure were dictated by the topics found in the books. For example, in *The Night of Banana Skin*, a wedding is described, and therefore, the relevant terminology was employed. The domains of activity represented in the books were organised regarding the dichotomy of school life (school subjects such as mathematics and geography) versus social life/leisure (party, Christmas, food, trips), and thus addressed the interests of children. Some specialised lexis drawn upon from a distinct jargon included the following:

Excerpt 3:

Jargon of pastry making: sweets (e.g. doughnut, sugared bun, baklavas, chocolate cake), ingredients (e.g. honey, almond, peanut, cinnamon, truffle), actions (e.g. squeeze, peel, garnish).

The literary registers drawn upon in the books included cases of language use associated with specific genres (for a distinction between 'register' and 'genre', see Note 2), namely epic, fairy tale, melodrama, elegy, and romance novel. They mirrored distinct social domains of language use as constructed by the books. Specifically, epic language was used in *The Pagrus and the Mackerel*, in order to describe the battle of fishes for a worm (see Excerpt 4). *The Greedy Tunnel Dragon* was partly written as classic fairy tale (see Excerpt 5). Melodramatic language was used in order to describe the troubles the hero or heroine goes through, and was a recurrent register in the books (e.g. *Panic in the Land of Geometry*, *The Night of Banana Skin*; see Excerpt 6). Elegaic language was used during a funeral in *The Greedy Tunnel Dragon* (see Excerpt 7), while romantic novel language was drawn upon in order to describe romantic love (e.g. in *Mr. Zaharias and Mrs. Glikeria*; see Excerpt 9).

All literary registers were largely characterised by orality, either because this was their prototypical style (e.g. elegaic language) or because they were recontextualised

into non-prototypical situational settings (e.g. melodramatic language was represented in free direct thought mode; fairy tale language was linked to the process of storytelling). Regarding the other two stylistic distinctions, epic and fairy tale languages came close to the technicality pole (but less than in the case of officialese/legalese), by involving specialised words related to battles and fairy land, respectively. In contrast, melodramatic, elegiac, and romantic novel language could be placed on the non-technicality pole (but less than in the case of colloquial register), by referring to human-interest issues, such as misfortunes (melodramatic language), loss (elegaic language), and sentimentality (romantic novel language). On the other hand, epic and melodramatic languages gathered some features of formal style (but less than in the case of officialese/legalese). In contrast, romantic novel, elegiac, and fairy tale language, which were associated with more popular genres, were characterised by informality. Regarding the prototypical features of informality, romantic novel language comprised the most, and fairy tale language the least (but all literary registers comprised fewer features compared with colloquial register).

Formulaic expressions also served as strong contextualisation cues for most literary registers. For instance, 'alí, alí ké trisalí' (meaning 'alas, alas, alas') and 'kléne ta vuná' (meaning 'the mountains are mourning') constitute strong contextualisation cues for Greek elegaic language (Excerpt 7):[5]

Excerpt 4:

They all gathered in the seashore, infuriated dogfishes, fully-armed lobsters, whales and sharks, reinforcements and reserves, robust [+formal] fries with pennants and helmets, and the bellicose [+formal] herrings, known as tuareg. In other words, it was a historic crusade with swords [+formal] and lambrequins.

— The victory, they shout, belongs to us, the worm is ours!

Excerpt 5:

Once upon a time, in the old times, an evil and greedy Tunnel Dragon lived in the Land of Trains, the faraway Trenintand [fictitious place]. This Tunnel Dragon was enormous! His mouth was two hundred six times bigger than that [picture shown]. His throat was ninety thousand times longer than that [picture shown] and his belly was eighty eight million ninety seven thousand times bigger than that [picture shown]. Do you [–formal] know what the Tunnel Dragon fed on? Do you [–formal] know what his favorite dish was? Trains! That's right, trains! He was infatuated with trains!

Excerpt 6:

They will drag me chained to jail and I will live in a dark cell far away from my parental [+formal] home together [–formal] with a rat telling me: 'Anna, why did you [–formal] throw that banana skin?' How could I have performed such an atrocious [+formal] deed?

Excerpt 7:

Alas, alas, alas! Wagon Lit [a train-girl's name], the best friend of Tsouf Tsouf [a train-boy's name] was gone! She's gone and never comes back! The rails are mourning, the mountains are mourning! She was a lovely [–formal] little train!

Excerpt 8:

Mrs. Glikeria met Mr. Zaharias one morning and they loved each other very-very much from the very start. He told her:

— Have [–formal] a candy!

And she answered him:

— Have [–formal] a cinnamon cookie!

He gave her a marzipan and she gave him a soft kiss!

She gave him a fig jam and he gave her a kiss!

She gave him a jar of honey and he told her that he wanted her!

Register humour

Registers were represented in the books analysed in such a way as to create humour. From a Bakhtinian perspective, the author's mocking voice constantly filtered the narrator's and the characters' diversely voiced registers. In this way, two voices were heard at the same time, in what is called 'double-voicing': the narrator's or the character's voice which actually spoke, and the author's voice, which was echoing and orchestrated the whole situation. Consequently, an apparent polyphony but true monologue was constructed.

The humorous representation of registers constitutes a case of stylisation. Specifically, registers were represented in a strategically non-authentic manner in the sense that they were depicted in ways to produce humorous effects. According to Attardo's (2001) General Theory of Verbal Humour, the mechanism for humour production resides in a cognitive opposition or incongruity between what is expected to happen and what actually happens in a text. Since our knowledge of the world is organised through 'scripts', the breach of expectations about specific scripts ('script opposition') is what produces humour. When script opposition involves only the world being described (i.e. based only on the meaning of the text), this is called 'referential humour'. In contrast, when script opposition involves not only the world being described but also the language used to describe that world, this is called 'verbal humour'. In other words, verbal humour sustains referential one.

The verbal humour which resides specifically in register incongruities is called 'register humour'. Hence, register incongruities involve specific sociolinguistic conventions (e.g. which register is appropriate or expected in which situation) that are violated. In this sense, humorous representations of registers are in Coupland's (2001) sense reauthentic, since they resort to assumed sociolinguistic resources (e.g. rules which govern language use) which are broken, and therefore, they lead to the reflexivity around those resources.

The picture books analysed were full of 'irregular' events. Simultaneously, the breaking of the readers' expectations about the world (referential humour) was accompanied by a challenge to their expectations about language use (register humour). The most frequently recurring script opposition was the seriousness with which very trivial and completely insignificant events were treated. This seriousness was constructed through the selection of a register which was completely inappropriate for the trivial situational setting. Hence, register humour was realised through 'register clash in absentia' (Attardo, 2001, p. 105), since register opposition involved a register present in the text (but non-appropriate) to one not appearing in the text (but more appropriate).

For instance, in *Who Has Peed in the Mississippi River?*, a duck is interrogated for having peed in the Mississippi River. This fact violates the normality of the world, because nobody (let alone a duck) is interrogated for having done something so trivial. At the same time, the use of officialese/legalese, namely 'serious' language, contrasts with the triviality of the situation. Similarly, in *Santa Claus with 83 Rats in Jail*, Santa Claus is accused of bribery and stands trial (in officialese/legalese), because (among other things) he has given a lollipop to a traffic policeman (see Excerpt 1). Other examples include the use of a

rather 'pompous' register, such as epic language and the creation of a war-like climate in *The Pagrus and the Mackerel*, in order to describe the battle of fishes for just a worm (see Excerpt 4), or melodramatic language in *The Night of Banana Skin*, in order to describe the miseries that the heroine thought she would suffer, only because she had thrown a banana skin on the street (see Excerpt 6).

Yet, in most of these cases, the writer warns the reader against taking the whole thing too seriously, not only because of the triviality of the event described, but also because the language used was ridiculed and therefore was not that 'serious' and 'pompous' after all. This was achieved by means of certain stylistic techniques. One such technique involved the interference of informal language forms in officialese/legalese, such as in Excerpt 9 (see also Excerpt 1). Mixtures of formality with informality bring out the heteroglossic tensions which exist in a linguistic community and are a well-known humorous strategy (e.g. Fillmore, 1994). Moreover, they constitute a stylistic practice often exploited as a source of laughter in the Greek media nowadays (Canakis, 1994):

Excerpt 9:

— [Traffic policeman speaking] You [+formal] parked unlawfully! This is exactly [–formal] what you [+formal] are doing! Can't you [+formal] see that perfectly good [–formal] road sign? Are you [+formal] blind [–formal]?

Another stylistic technique through which 'pompous' registers are ridiculed concerns their mixing with other more 'mundane' registers. Such mixtures involved cases of 'register clash in praesentia', namely the opposition of two registers which appear in the text at the same time (Attardo, 2001, p. 105). A typical example is the mixing of epic language with the fish and fishing jargon in *The Pagrus and the Mackerel* (see Excerpt 4).

As well as ridiculing 'serious' and pompous registers, the mixing of contrasting registers leads to the juxtaposition of completely different situation types, and also sustained referential humour. In most of the cases, such mixtures concerns the register of school and leisure (activated through specialised vocabulary) with other register types, and therefore terminologies are represented out of their prototypical context. Characteristic cases are the fish and fishing jargon which is interwoven with epic language in *The Pagrus and the Mackerel* (Excerpt 4), and thus, the author links two 'unexpected' situations, war with fish and the pastry-making jargon mingled with romantic novel language, in *Mr. Zaharias and Mrs. Glikeria* (see Excerpt 8), in which case, the author represents romance as residing in sweets and candy.

Implications for (critical) language awareness

Readers of Trivizas's picture books are invited to identify through specific contextualisation cues with a wide range of registers. Thus, children are able to grasp the dynamic property of texts, which tend to contain a variety of registers mingled in creative ways. Moreover, the polyphonic character of these texts can sensitise them about how language use varies across different situational contexts (register awareness). The portrayal of officialese/legalese and colloquial register, in particular, has the potential to make them become aware of the distinct social status attached to these linguistic varieties (dialect awareness). However, despite this apparent polyphony, a monologue is constructed, as the author's voice echoes throughout the texts, depicting registers in an intentionally subversive way in order to produce humorous effects.

Can, then, stylised representations of registers still constitute 'reliable' sociolinguistic data to be exploited for (critical) language awareness? The stylised representations of

the data may be regarded in Coupland's (2001) sense as reauthentic, because they reside in specific sociolinguistic conventions which are violated in order to depart from expectations, and thus create the register humour. In other words, readers should have recourse to shared scripts about what a specific register involves and under what circumstances it is employed, in order for them to resolve the script opposition, and hence, to appreciate register humour.

Consequently, the present texts as well as similar ones which contain stylised representations of linguistic codes could be used for teaching different varieties of a language in terms of which sociolinguistic rules are broken rather than followed to serve the author's stylistic purposes: e.g. why officialese/legalese is inappropriate for the situational contexts as constructed by the author, under which conditions the use of the above register would be appropriate, and so on.

In particular, the interference of informal language forms in formal registers brings out the heteroglossic tensions which exist between standard and non-standard varieties, to be seen as forces which struggle against one another in the texts. Hence, this could be used as a resource for both the 'sociolinguistic' (i.e. theoretical discussions about the notion of 'standard variety', etc.) and the 'contrastive' component (i.e. raising awareness of the structural differences which exist between dialects and the standard), which are included in many (critical) dialect awareness projects (Siegel, 2006).

It is evident from the above discussion that in order for readers to decipher stylised representations of registers, they need enhanced social experience about the sociolinguistic resources available to their linguistic community. Although referential humour also resides in background cultural knowledge, register humour is more sophisticated (Fillmore, 1994). So, could register humour be included in awareness projects, when these are particularly addressed to children? It can be argued that a focus on strategically deauthenticated representations of registers has much to offer to awareness projects. The current post-modern culture celebrates the multiplicity of fragmented perspectives, through which boundaries between different spheres become fluid (Harvey, 1990). Moreover, it is a world in which stylistic imitation prevails, via the play of allusion to other texts and styles. Hence, several empirical studies have shown that contemporary cultural products are pervaded by textual practices which sustain post-modern sensibility and characterise stylisation in general and register humour in particular (e.g. Kristiansen, 2001). Such practices include, among others, the random compilation and imitation of various styles and registers, known as 'pastiche' (Gitlin, 1989), and the appropriation of linguistic varieties, known as 'crossing' (Rampton, 1995). Consequently, children must early develop adequate skills to cope with these communicative challenges.

On the other hand, the reflexivity around the linguistic conventions provided by stylisation could make more apparent for children the dynamic character of these conventions, seen as communicative resources to be exploited in diverse and creative ways by specific speakers in specific communicative situations. A static approach to registers is in fact a caution raised by many critics of awareness projects (e.g. Carter, 1978; Johns, 2008). Thus, stylisation could prevent against the danger of seeing registers as fixed categories to be simply deciphered and internalised, and could help children to adopt a more critical stance towards language use in general.

Except for more 'orthodox' register and dialect awareness projects, register humour could also be employed as a resource for critical awareness activities. The critical thinking of children could be developed in relation to the very selection of the registers depicted in the picture books. Trivizas seems to create a rather bipolar heteroglossic picture of Greek society. Specifically, he makes a contrast between the social dialect of upper middle (officialese/legalese) versus the social dialect of lower middle/working class (colloquial

register), a division between the register of public life (officialese/legalese) versus the register of private life (colloquial register), and a dichotomy between the registers used by children in their school life versus those employed during their free time (registers of school and leisure). Moreover, he draws upon major literary conventions (literary registers), which could be seen as cutting through the school and leisure activities of children. Yet, the heteroglossic tensions that the author depicts in his books are construed dynamically by the creative blending of registers exploited for humorous effects. For example, standard language forms are put side by side with non-standard ones, emotion (melodramatic language) is mingled with reason (mathematical jargon), and pomposity (epic language) is interwoven with triviality (the fish and fishing jargon). In this way, Trivizas makes oppressing centripetal forces freely interact with oppressed centrifugal ones.

In Attardo's (2001) theory, humour has always some 'target(s)', namely some person, social practice, etc., made fun of and ridiculed. In this sense, humour can be seen as a mechanism of camouflaged criticism of social reality (Archakis & Tsakona, 2005). In the case of children's books, in particular, register humour could be seen as an implicit transmission of moral messages to children. Thus, critical language awareness projects could also focus on exploration of what aspects of the world authors choose as targets of their register humour, and hence, on social commentary. A major concern in Trivizas's books – probably echoing his academic identity of criminologist – seems to be to critique the abuse of institutional power. Therefore, through the systematic parody of officialese/legalese, he wishes to denounce the process through which official authorities, such as police and courts, construct 'criminals' (e.g. Santa Claus giving a lollipop to a traffic policeman or a duck urinating in a river) and 'heroes' (e.g. somebody who has simply thrown a banana skin on the street). However, he also criticises other aspects of social reality he considers important. For instance, through the parody of epic, he intends to transmit antiwar messages (in *The Pagrus and the Mackerel*), or through the mixing of the pastry-making jargon with romance, he wants to critically comment stereotypical views of romance (in *Mr. Zacharias and Mrs. Glykeria*).

There is therefore a clear case for register humour to be included as a subject for awareness projects targeted at both younger (e.g. 5- to 6-years-old) and older (e.g. 10- to 15-years-old) children, depending on the difficulty of the activities proposed and the text type involved. In principle, picture books target pre- and primary school children. Moreover, they are mostly read to the children, or their reading is usually controlled, by adults. Therefore, in reading practices, but also in literacy events in general, very young children could be initiated to register humour and linguistic variation by their engagement with simple tasks, such as whether they find the story funny (and in which points), the role of language in this process, etc. In contrast, activities with older children could involve more complex issues, such as the resolution of register incongruities and the ideological function of humour.

In conclusion, the aim of the present study was to show whether, and in what terms, register variation exploited for humour could be used as a resource for raising children's (critical) language awareness. Register humour as a case of stylisation involves a reauthentic linguistic behaviour, extensively employed by the cultural products of post-modernism. Moreover, it contributes to the adoption of a reflexive stance towards linguistic conventions, which is necessary for critical use on the part of future citizens. By focusing on a specific kind of stylisation (i.e. register humour) and on a particular genre (i.e. children's books), the present paper raises many issues to be addressed by future research, such as the function of register humour in other texts and across different cultural contexts (e.g. consider cultural specifics such as diglossic humour), the ways other forms of stylisation are reauthentic

and with what implications for (critical) language awareness, and more importantly, the evaluation of the implementation of specific awareness projects of stylisation.

Notes

1. Androutsopoulos (2010) critically comments on such comparisons undertaken in several studies. According to him, this contrastive practice is characterised by 'reflection fallacy', namely the belief that texts (must) mirror sociolinguistic reality 'out there'.
2. A related concept which appears more frequently in the more recent literature is that of 'genre awareness' (e.g. Johns, 2008). Register and genre are not synonymous, but their distinction has proven to be a difficult task. Register is linked to 'a communication situation that recurs regularly in a society', while genre to 'a message type that recurs regularly in a society' (Ferguson, 1994, pp. 20–21). Martin (1984) has regarded register as the expression-plane of genre and genre as the content-plane of register. This means that register analysis tends to focus on micro-structural elements of text (e.g. lexicon), while genre analysis on macro-structural (e.g. text structure) as well as on non-linguistic features of text (e.g. paper type). The decision to adopt the term 'register (awareness)' in this paper stems from the fact that with few exceptions, it was only micro-structural features of text that were represented in the data.
3. According to Ferguson (1959), diglossia is defined as the sociolinguistic phenomenon according to which a speech community uses two different varieties of the same language to serve its distinct communicative purposes ('high variety' for formal settings, and 'low variety' for informal ones). In Greek speech community, 'Katharévusa' (which drew upon linguistic forms from Ancient Greek) had the status of high variety, and 'Dimotikí' functioned as low variety. Greek diglossia was resolved in 1976, when 'Dimotikí' was designated as the standard. Nevertheless, Modern Greek standard draws upon forms also from 'Katharévusa' in order to express those meanings in sectors which had not developed in 'Dimotikí', such as administration, etc. (Yannoulopoulou, 2001).
4. The translation of style is a really hard task, and an issue of many studies (e.g. den Otter, 2007). It is certainly beyond the scope of the present study to engage in this discussion. Wherever possible, a word which was stylistically equivalent (or almost) to English was provided. In cases in which the translated style was opaque, it was signalled with a note +/– formal in brackets. In other points in which clarification was needed, additional information was provided in brackets. Punctuation followed the original text.
5. In some literary registers, text structures were also activated by serving as contextualisation cues of the genres associated with them. For example, for melodrama, the typical structure 'the hero faces a threat-the hero escapes the threat' was recognised.

Notes on contributor

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Appendix 1. List of Trivizas's picture books analysed

The Greedy Tunnel Dragon [*O Lémargos Tunelódrakos*] (1991). Athens: Kedros.
The Lisa's Sun [*O Ilios tis Lízas*] (1991). Athens: Kedros.
A Spade in Mars [*Ena Ftiári ston Ari*] (1997). Athens: Ellinika Grammata.
When the Train Leaves [*Otan íne na Fígi to Tréno*] (1997). Athens: Ellinika Grammata.
Who Has Peed in the Mississippi River? [*Pios Ekane Pipí sto Misisipí*] (1997). Athens: Ellinika Grammata.
Fifi and Fofo: The Arrogant Whales [*I Fifí ke i Fofó: I Fantasménes Fálenes*] (1998). Athens: Minoas.
The Night of Banana Skin [*I Níhta tis Bananófludas*] (2000). Athens: Ellinika Grammata.
Poupou and Carlotta [*I Pupú ke i Karlóta*] (2000). Athens: Ellinika Grammata.
Santa Claus in Jail with 83 Rats [*O Ai Vassílis sti Filakí me tous 83 Aruréus*] (2000). Athens: Ellinika Grammata.
The Pagrus and the Mackerel [*To Fagrí ke to Skubrí*] (2003). Athens: Ellinika Grammata.
Mr. Zaharias and Mrs. Glikeria [*O Kírios Zaharías ke i Kiria Glikería*] (2007). Athens: Ellinika Grammata.
Panic in the Land of Geometry [*Panikós sti Hóra tis Geometrías*] (2007). Athens: Ellinika Grammata.