

## Research Article

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# Deviant language in the literary dialogue: An English–Romanian translational view

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**Abstract:** Drawing on the scholarly acknowledgement regarding the experimental nature of dialogue in Modern and Postmodern literature, this article attempts at investigating the translatability of dialogic utterances displaying deviant language. The relevance of the study is given by the structural differences between languages, which oftentimes triggers the impossibility of rendering the dialogic information relative to the literary characters' identity in the target language. The examples are depicted from several fictional texts, where part of the characters' identity is constructed by the peculiarities of their speech which deviates, in a range of manners, from standard English. Such deviant language indicates the characters' idiolectal, sociolectal or dialectal identity, as well as the broader social context in which they act. The examination of deviant language leads to findings concerning its structural variety and its essential role in completing some literary characters' identity and, implicitly, its importance in translation. Solutions are suggested to the interlingual transfer of formally untranslatable deviant language of a grammatical, phonological and lexical nature, taking also account of criteria pertaining to functional aspects. The conclusions discuss structural, phonological and lexical possibilities of the target language, the translator's creative engagement in the translation of deviant identity-marking language and suggest further research opportunities.

**Keywords:** structural differences, formal equivalence, deviant language markers, literary characters' identity.

## 1 Introduction: Literature review

Modern and Postmodern times have been witnessing an experimental and novel approach to the literary dialogue as one of its key constituents (Thomas 2012), with literary characters' speech deemed as “one of the main paths of emancipation in the modern novel” (Genette 1980, 173). The dedicated attention that the fictional dialogue has been granted is therefore fully justified. In examining it, its natural relation with sociolinguistics is implicitly addressed since sociolinguistics is the discipline which deals with various facets of the connection between language and society, examining the social and individual language variation, as Spolsky (2010) puts it. The social dependency of language has been acknowledged and extensively discussed in the scholarly literature (Bell 1976, Hudson 1996, Bonaffini 1997, Trudgill 2000, Gardiner 2008, Holmes 2008, Joseph 2010, Spolsky 2010, Wardhaugh 2010, *etc.*). Thus, “[t]he way people use language in different social contexts provides a wealth of information about the social relationships in a community, and the way speakers signal aspects of their social identity through their language” (Holmes 2008, 1). It is hence a crucial contributor to the creation of the literary characters' social world for the

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readers to get familiar with (Thomas 2012). Such social-determined language variety – the sociolect – is associated with the speakers' social background, in contrast with their geographical background (Trudgill 2002). This entails a delimitation among speakers by criteria, such as class, ethnicity, education, religion, age or gender (Hudson 1996), rather than their place of origin or habitation. At the same time, language particularities have the potential of offering the “linguistic fingerprint” marking the characters' idiolect (Coulthard 2004) and thereby providing them with features distinctive from the other individuals within their social context.

As some of the devices employed to render idiolectal and sociolectal features have been set under researchers' lens (Bishop 1991, Fludernik 1993, Herman 2006, Kinzel and Mildorf 2012, Thomas 2012, *etc.*), writers' ability to realize certain character feats by fine-tuning their “ear” for dialogue has been appreciated as a source for their success (Thomas 2012).

Alternatively, the fictional dialogue can imply language tools for the sake of orality, which is “an attempt to recreate the language of communicative immediacy in fictional texts” (Brumme and Espunya 2012, 13). Special orality techniques, including deviant language, can be employed in the literary dialogue to present features of spoken communication, such as spontaneity, closeness, physical proximity and face-to-face interaction. The resources to create orality in the fictional dialogue can be varied. They have been observed by Susanne M. Cadera as possibly unfolding on two levels, namely the narrative level and the linguistic level (in Brumme and Espunya 2012). This means that, apart from the narrative techniques that contribute to orality, diverse linguistic variations can be proposed at a linguistic level. They can comprise orality markers of a phonological, lexical or morpho-syntactic nature.

Technically ungrammatical language or language which does not obey by the norms or displays “deviations from the strict well-formedness” can be well-interpreted and understood (Butters 1971, 239), so the semantic flow of the discourse is not affected. Therefore, the avoidance of such language in translation would not alter or affect in any way the coherence or the fluency of the “story.” Nevertheless, deviant language in a literary dialogue can only stem from the writer's option to complete some characters' personality apart from explicit auctorial interventions and the traits that emerge from the characters' own actions, behaviour and thoughts. This integrates in Bonaffini's claim that the language of individuals “not only pertains to the depiction of local colour, but plays a key role in distinguishing and individualizing the various characters of a work of literature” (1997, 280).

Dialectal variants occupy a particular place in the area of “deviant” language, being deemed as alternative transformations within the same grammatical system (Butters 1971) rather than ungrammatical language. As for the translation of dialect, three tendencies have been identified by Englund Dimitrova (2004), namely: (i) the translations tend to be more normative than they are rendered in the original, conforming more to standard target language use; (ii) the linguistic markers for a language variety or a register expressed in translation tend to be reduced in numbers as compared to the source language text; and (iii) the translation uses predominantly lexical markers even if the source text applies a larger variety of markers, such as phonological, orthographical, morpho-syntactic and lexical ones.

Whichever language specificity avoiding its standard version is expressed by literary characters, with the obvious intention of exhibiting character-descriptive language, it envisages the creation of a complete and genuine picture of the characters' ways of life and personality. In doing so, authors evidently endeavour to depict their characters' speech performance in an authentic and realistic manner. As opposed to “the falseness and sentimentality of romanticism” (Serafin and Bendixen 1999, 935), literary realism lays emphasis on characterization. Realism is “an international movement that emphasized a fidelity to literary representation of the actual experience and consequences of everyday life” (Serafin and Bendixen 1999, 935).

Given the joint relevance of all these scholarly contributions, borrowed from literary studies, sociolinguistics and translation studies, the translation of fictional dialogue situates itself at the crossroads of these disciplines, whereby it acquires a beneficial interdisciplinary character.

In order to confine the concept of language deviance within the scope of this very study, mention needs to be made that deviant language is to be understood as any instant of spoken language that does not comply with the norms of the standard English language. The translational directionality proposed here is

from English as a natively used source language. The translation of deviant language occurring in the fictional dialogue is to be generally considered into whichever target language, and is particularly discussed in relation to Romanian as a target language. Whether such deviations are (temporary) speech performance instances or are competence determined – to recall the denomination offered by Bar-Hillel (1967, in Butters 1969) – it is the language employed by writers for the obvious purpose of adding to the characteristic personality features of literary characters, be they of an idiolectal, sociolectal or dialectal nature or displaying stylistic and rhetorical values.

With a view to further proving this point, the following sections offer analyses and discussions of sundry illustrative instances of dialogic turns focussing on the power of deviant language to mainly mark the literary characters' idiosyncratic features or their belonging to a social class or to an ethnic or regional group.

## 2 Methods and analysis

This article attempts at providing an inventory of deviant language means present in the utterances of literary characters, depicted from several fictional prose works written in English. The selection of the texts serving as grounds for investigation initially rested on the translation experience with master's degree students at the Faculty of Letters within Transilvania University of Brasov, Romania. This was the setting where the relevance for investigating the deviant dialogic language from a translational perspective revealed itself. Subsequently, an empirical selection of text from the broad range of modern and postmodern literature was performed, without claiming to have covered this literature overwhelmingly. Therefore, the inventory proposed in the analysis part of this article is subject to alteration and completion in further similar studies. The criterion that determines the selection of the texts is their common quality to distinguish certain characters from the others, they all bear one character's speech imprint, thereby fostering the shaping of his/her individual identity. The instances of deviant language different from standard English attempt at exhibiting the authentic speech of various individuals or social and regionally bound categories. Such deviant language might other times be just occasional colloquial speech that indicates a close social context, with literary characters' relaxed speech in close and socially balanced relationships. The translatability from English into Romanian of the illustrated dialogic items is discussed, while the assessment of the extent to which they can be translated within other language pairs remains open for subsequent research.

### 2.1 Grammatical deviations

To start with, the disagreement between a third person singular subject and the predicate can lead to the misuse of the auxiliary verb in both affirmative and negative utterances, as in the following three examples, from three different short stories:

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- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| (1) | <i>"It don't have eyes."</i> (O'Connor 1983, 322).                                    |
| (2) | <i>"She don't like most white people, but she might like you."</i> (Paley 1983, 392). |
| (3) | <i>"This one doesn't count, does it?"</i><br><i>"It do."</i> (Friedman 1983, 309).    |
- 

The third example comprises the two interactants' dialogue illustrative of the distinctive way they realize the agreement, the former being correct, while the latter incorrect. This speech feature remains consistent throughout their conversation, therefore marking the distinctiveness of the latter and generating the need for its preservation in translation (Arhire 2017). As far as Romanian is concerned, none of the examples are formally translatable because the information about the subject is inflected in the verb form,

with the subject not being explicitly mentioned, which makes no subject–predicate disagreement possible. Besides, in Romanian, no auxiliaries are used to construct negations or to express substitutions. Therefore, there is no authentic incorrect solution to be introduced as an idiosyncratic marker of the respective characters. Even though the micro-contextual semantic content can be easily preserved, the translations display the loss of the idiolectal and/or sociolectal value.

In contrast, the disagreement between a plural subject and a singular predicate is a language mistake existing in the Romanian language of native speakers, so that such a mistake in English can find itself a natural equivalent in Romanian. This is the case in the following examples:

- 
- (4) *“In the umbrella stand is some arrows.”* (Williams 1983, 141).  
 “–E niște săgeți în suportul de umbrela.” (my translation).
- (5) *“Two men lives here now.”* (Paley 1983, 392).  
 “–Acum locuieste doi bărbați aici.” (my translation).
- 

Although the compound subject, in the next example, also requires a plural predicate, the English version employs a singular one. This is untranslatable into natural, authentic Romanian:

- 
- (6) *“Tom and me is buddies.”* (Jones 1983, 75).
- 

The omission of auxiliary verbs seems to be one of the predilect means to indicate deviant language in the literary dialogue in English. Here are a few examples in which the auxiliary *have* has been omitted from the standard construction of the perfect aspect (omissions are marked by  $\Delta$ ). Examples (7) and (8) employ the omission of the auxiliary *have* in the present perfect tense, a tense which does not have a formally equivalent tense in Romanian:

- 
- (7) *“We  $\Delta$  done a good job on it.”* (Jones 1983, 74).
- (8) *“I  $\Delta$  been married four times in five years.”* (Jones 1983, 77).
- 

In the next example, the auxiliary *have* is missing from a perfect infinitive:

- 
- (9) *“You ought to  $\Delta$  seen their faces.”* (Miller 1983, 130).
- 

Even if not so commonly, the auxiliaries for the future or the conditional can also be omitted at times:

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- (10) *“That  $\Delta$  be fun.”* (Paley 1983, 390).
- 

Since Romanian does use auxiliary verbs corresponding to examples (9) and (10), for the perfect infinitive, and the future/conditional, respectively, their omission as in English could technically be “imitated.” However, the result would lead to an unnatural deviation, not existing in the authentic Romanian faulty language, therefore not possibly generating the same idiosyncratic features in the target language version. It would rather indicate a foreigner’s speech and thereby change the character’s identity.

The intentionally employed ellipsis of the verb *to be* either as auxiliary or copular or notional verb is the recurrent speech marker in one of Paley’s characters. It occurs as a missing auxiliary in the use of the present tense progressive, as in the following two examples, when colloquial or fast speech in English would normally employ a contraction rather than an omission:

- 
- (11) *“We  $\Delta$  coming, we  $\Delta$  coming, hold your head up, we  $\Delta$  coming.”* (Paley 1983, 393).
- (12) *“She  $\Delta$  gonna hide me in the cedar box[...].”* (Paley 1983, 393).
- 

The Romanian present tense has a unique form, with no progressive aspect of representation, so the translation of example (11) cannot involve any omission. As for example (12), the future value is normally generated by an auxiliary verb in Romanian as well, but its omission would be similarly unnatural as

discussed in relation to examples (9) and (10). Formally similar translations of the copular verb and the notional verb *to be* would also be unnatural in Romanian. Examples thereof are provided below, under number (13) and number (14), respectively:

- 
- (13) “He  $\Delta$  a natural gift giver.” (Paley, 1983, 391).  
 (14) “You  $\Delta$  in my house.” (Paley, 1983, 393).
- 

As previously hinted at, the translation of negative structures into Romanian can be highly challenging when the omission of auxiliary verbs occurs as a purposeful deviant language feature. The structural differences between English and Romanian in the expression of negation have been dedicated in a previous study, which addressed the problem of contrastiveness and translatability of negative structures between English and Romanian based on instances of speech depicted from fictional dialogue as well. The study also discussed solutions and means of compensation when formal equivalence is not possible and when this affects the sociolectal or stylistic content of the message (Arhire 2018a). One of the obvious differences between the two languages relative to negation consists in the fact that standard English does not allow for double and multiple negation, whereas in Romanian they are the norm. When double negation appears in English, such as in examples (15)–(17), translated as such, its deviant nature will not be revealed in Romanian, but a fully correct expression is inevitable:

- 
- (15) “Don’t call me none of your family names.” (Jones 1983, 80).  
 (16) “Now you shouldn’t pay no attention to those boys downstairs.” (Paley 1983, 392).  
 (17) “Only remember there won’t be nobody here when you come back.” (Jones 1983, 77).
- 

As indicated by examples (18)–(21), the double or multiple negation in English might be accompanied by additional speech markers, such as deviant phonological ones (*runin*, *writ* in example (18), and *nothin’* in example (19), respectively), which reinforces the speech features, coherently contributing to the construction of the whole sociolectal picture:

- 
- (18) “You shouldn’t wear no undershirt like that without no runin number or no team writ on it.” (Paley 1983, 391).  
 (19) “He don’t want nothin’.” (Miller 1983, 133).
- 

Another additional marker besides double negation is the subject–predicate disagreement:

- 
- (20) “She don’t know nothing about it.” (O’Connor 1983, 324).
- 

The omission of the auxiliary *have* (substituted, in example (21) by *aint*) discussed in previous examples can join the double negation, too:

- 
- (21) “You aint never been in the army, have you?” (Jones 1983, 80).
- 

All the deviant devices in examples (18)–(21) pose translational problems due to structural differences, thereby affecting the information about the literary characters.

The translation into Romanian of deviant language related to auxiliary verbs is perhaps of highest relevance in interrogative sentences. This is due to the fact that, as compared to English, Romanian yes–no interrogatives include no auxiliary verb. Given that the omission of the auxiliaries in questions embedded in the fictional dialogue in English is commonly resorted to, it becomes a troublesome undertaking since a Romanian formal equivalence is impossible. The absence of the auxiliary (or copular) verb in Romanian yes–no interrogatives is the norm. Albeit not affecting the semantic content of the dialogue, the translation displays loss of the characters’ (usually) sociolectal identity:

- 
- (22) “Sandy,  $\Delta$  you know it?” (Jones 1983, 74).  
 (23) “ $\Delta$  You think you  $\Delta$  any good?” (Friedman 1983, 308).  
 (24) “How come you know,  $\Delta$  you go up their house?” (Paley 1983, 392).  
 (25) “What  $\Delta$  you goin’ to do when you got these cleaned out?” (Miller 1983, 132).  


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When the subject is omitted along with the auxiliary, the translational problem is doubled due to the verb form inflecting the information about the subject, which is hence included in the verb form instead of being explicitly mentioned in Romanian (Arhire 2018b). This is the case of the following two examples, in which the ellipses of both the auxiliary verb and the subject are marked by  $\Delta$ :

- 
- (26) “ $\Delta$   $\Delta$  Like to win some money?” (Miller 1983, 129).  
 (27) “ $\Delta$   $\Delta$  Do for you?” (Williams 1983, 147).  


---

Some elliptical expressions might contribute to completing the literary character’s personality, whose reactions, behaviour, emotional state – be they even momentary – are part of the character’s identity. Here is an example of obvious distress, expressed in a succession of rhetorical questions, where the subject and the auxiliary verb are omitted:

- 
- (28) “Anyway, I’ll be goddamned if I know what to do.  $\Delta\Delta$  Wait around?  $\Delta\Delta$  Pretend she’s never coming back?” (Friedman 1983, 308).  


---

*Shall I* would be necessary in the aforementioned questions to realize fully standard interrogatives. Although the missing surface subject is not a problem in Romanian (see explanation for examples (26) and (27)), *shall* corresponds to the Romanian conjunctive particle *să*, which cannot be omitted without affecting mood of the verb and, consequently, its grammatical meaning. The character’s emotional involvement can only be inferred from the fragmented syntax and the rhetorical questions as such.

There are other occasional and quite diverse language deviations, as enlisted below, that have no equivalent in Romanian at a formal level. Example (29) displays the recurrent and idiosyncratic wrong use of the modal expression *used to*, whose wrong translation into Romanian would be forced, not really existing as a formally incorrect equivalent:

- 
- (29) “We really use to have some times.” (Jones 1984, 80).  


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Another non-standard structure is the misconstruction of the verb form in the synthetical subjunctive, the Romanian equivalent of which cannot be altered in a credible manner:

- 
- (30) “I just wish I get me a good horse down there.” (Miller 1983, 129).  


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The use of the adjective *awful* in the example below, instead of the adverb *awfully* cannot be rendered in incorrect Romanian language, where adjectives and adverbs sometimes overlap in form:

- 
- (31) “It’s awful pretty.” (Jones 1983, 76).  


---

In example (32), the indefinite article *a* is used instead of *an*. In Romanian, the indefinite articles differentiate by gender only, with each gender-determined article having its unique form. The error in the example below is hence untranslatable:

- 
- (32) “Tom’s a old buddy of mine.” (Jones 1983, 75).  


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The wrong use of lexical items may also entail translation issues. The transitive – double transitive (double objects) verb pair in English, *learn vs teach*, can both be translated correctly by a single Romanian

verb, *a învăța*. The erroneous use of *learn* instead of *teach*, in the example below is therefore not translatable into Romanian, where a correct translation is inevitable:

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(33) *“I was learning them.”* (Miller 1983, 130).

---

## 2.2 Phonological and lexical deviations

Phonological deviations are more and more often marked in the speech of some literary characters. As illustrated by the examples below, they can be fairly effective in attributing a diversity of features to the characters' distinctive identity. They can be employed to display the speech of foreigners, non-native English speakers, minorities or certain language variations, colloquial speech or other idiosyncratic manners of speaking, all of which naturally exhibit the speakers' identity, confirming and supporting their image and status as depicted in the narrative. Phonological deviations manifest as quite daring interventions on standard language, consisting in writers' using wrong spelling. This means that orthographic markers are used to actually indicate phonological features so as to signal some literary character's non-native status or idiosyncratic speech peculiarity. Here is an example of a foreigner's speech:

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(34) *“They stayed up all night and et my lettuce.”* (Williams 1983, 148).  
*“– Au stat treji toată noaptea și mi-au mancat salata.”* (my translation).

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The phonological marker *et* (for *ate*) indicates that the pronunciation of vowel sounds is peculiar, which might be creatively compensated for in any language. The translation below example (34) is a possible solution, which uses no diacritics in the verb *au mâncat*, thereby indicating mispronunciation. Another translatable phonological marker is inserted in non-native English speech:

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(35) *“In Amayrica now.”* (Roy 1998, 129) (meaning *America*).

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Since this phonological deviation occurs in a proper name here, it poses no translation problems, being one of the very rare cases when the exact deviance can be transferred to the target language. In contrast, phonological deviations in verbs and common nouns require creativity in translation. What is more, when the translation of a dialect or a language variety is necessary, it becomes a matter of considerable compromise irrespective of the target language. The purpose of resorting to a language variety or a dialect in fiction is precisely to exhibit a sociolectal picture or a local dialectal – sometimes ethnic or minority-related – language representation. The cultural and linguistic “displacement” inherent in translation turns the endeavour into an adventure with most possibly inappropriate results. Such is the rather intricate orthographic and phonological deviation of the nouns *think* (for *thing*) and *stommick* (for *stomach*) in the following example (which adds up to the additional syntactic deviation):

---

(36) *“There's only one think can turn my stommick.”* (Jones 1983, 80).

---

In relation to translation, equivalents for language variety markers of a phonological nature that are used to indicate colloquial or careless speech are perhaps fairly easy to find in any target language even if they do not necessarily exhibit the colloquial nature in the same spot as in English. The deviations need to be planned out at a macro-contextual level so as to provide the information about the character's identity in a coherent and consistent manner. In contrast, when phonological language markers exhibit language varieties or dialects, they might raise particular transfer problems. The (rather undesirable) solution might then be the omission of the deviations for the sake of preserving the semantic content and the naturalness of the language unaltered, while assuming the loss or alteration of the original local colour. Below is another example from the same Afro-American variety as in example (36):

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(37) “*Pore feller. He’s lost a leg. And I’d say, Why that’s turrible, ain’t it?*” (Jones 1983, 77).

---

Here is another example of an Afro-American speech variety, materialized in a distinct phonological configuration of a numeral, which has no reasonable equivalent in Romanian:

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(38) a) “*Fo’ hundred.*” (Friedman 1983, 5).

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This utterance is immediately followed, for obvious contrast and distinctiveness of language usage, by the interlocutor’s standard use of the same numeral:

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(38) b) “*Four hundred.*” (Friedman 1983, 5).

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As features of language varieties as well, incomplete words are at times adopted in the literary dialogue. In other cases, they can bear idiolectal features or mirror careless or emotional speech or social contexts in which literary characters are in a close relationship to one another. Such incompleteness often entails dropping the final *g* from *-ing* forms, as in:

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(39) “*Women comin and women goin.*” (Paley 1983, 392).

(40) “*They wanted him for an airline pilot flyin’ up into Montana and back.*” (Miller 1983, 133).

---

As compared to example (39), in number (40), the missing letter is replaced by an apostrophe.

Other letters and implicitly sounds are omitted and marked as such in the examples below, extracted from several literary works. In Jones’ short story, the conjunction *and* is reduced to *an*:

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(41) “*An this here’s Tom Hornney.*” (Jones 1983, 76).

“*-Ș-ăsta-i Tom Hornney.*” (my translation).

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The reduction of the conjunction in Romanian, as suggested in the translation above, is definitely possible, but it is a commonly used phonological reduction by all native Romanian speakers. Therefore, the deviant nature of the English version is lost. The same conjunction is reduced even more, to be left only as ‘*n* in Algren’s work (the translation solution would be similar to the one in example (41)), along other quite daring spelling experiments (*ah* for *I*, *m’* for *my*, *t’* for *to* – in example (42); *fer* for *for* – in example (43), etc.) to indicate distress besides current speech particularities, as can be witnessed below:

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(42) “[...]’*N he had somethin’ in his hand. It looked like a gun ‘n ah pulled out m’ pistol ‘n stahed t’ fire. He shot ‘n hit me in the right ahm ‘n ah ran ‘n tried t’ find some place t’ hide.*” (Algren 1983, 72).

(43) “*Ah was out look’n fer somebody t’ stick up ‘n had m’ gun handy ‘n he come along, that’s all.*” (Algren 1983, 72).

(44) “*Oh, you found the bow’n arrow!*” (Williams 1983, 150).

---

A credible translation option of the lexical reductions above would probably require a phonological study of fast speech as it manifests in each target language.

Incomplete words appear, with idiolectal function, in Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1998), where only one character, Comrade Pillai, distinguishes his speech by omitting parts of words, as in the following instance, where *mint* is contextually understood as *minute*. A possible Romanian version is suggested below:

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(45) “*One mint.*” (Roy 1998, 134).

“*- Un mnut.*” (my translation).

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Roy is quite explicit at times on her characters’ use of language. Comrade Pillai’s speech usually carries consistent peculiarities, one of which is displayed in connected words, indicating fast speech and the lack of phonological delimitation between words. Here is an example thereof:



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- |      |    |   |
|------|----|---|
| (46) | a) | <p>“<i>Mo-stunfortunate.</i>” (Roy 1998, 130).<br/>         “– Ceghnion.” (my translation).</p> |
|------|----|---|
- 

As the previous few phonologically engaging examples, this one also presents instances of the literary character’s performance, being convincingly illustrative of the character’s speech pattern. The suggested translation displays two connected words and the omission of a letter for consistency reasons (the full and correct version would be *Ce ghinion!*). For contrastive reasons, the utterance is preceded, this time and only exceptionally, by the same character’s standard use of the same language item, as exemplified below in the English original and the Romanian translation:

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- |      |    |   |
|------|----|---|
| (46) | b) | <p>“<i>That is most unfortunate</i>” (Roy 1998, 130).<br/>         “– Vai, ce ghinion!” (my translation).</p> |
|------|----|---|
- 

Additionally, it is accompanied by the author’s narrative account of the language use: “For some reason resorting to uncharacteristic, bookish language [...]” (Roy 1998, 130).

Deviant contractions occur in Jones’ and Paley’s short stories. Sometimes, the misuse of contractions could be rendered in Romanian, where hyphens are used to mark contractions. Here are a few examples of contracted words in English with the missing apostrophe. Translations have been provided where Romanian contractions are possible:

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- |      |  |
|------|--|
| (47) | <p>“<i>He shouldnt be drinking.</i>” (Jones 1983, 75).<br/>         “– Nar trebui să bea.” (my translation).</p> |
|------|--|
- 

The correct contracted form of *nar* (from *nu ar*) is *n-ar*.

- 
- |      |   |
|------|---|
| (48) | <p>“<i>No. You wouldnt like them.</i>” (Jones 1983, 74).<br/>         “– Nu. Nu țiar plăcea.” (my translation).</p> |
|------|---|
- 

The correct form of *țiar* is *ți-ar*.

- 
- |      |   |
|------|---|
| (49) | “ <i>I cant stay.</i> ” (Jones 1983, 74).             |
| (50) | “ <i>Its all right, George.</i> ” (Jones 1983, 80).   |
| (51) | “ <i>Whyn’t you[...]?</i> ” (Paley 1983, 390).        |
| (52) | “ <i>I dint do it on purpose.</i> ” (Jones 1983, 80). |
- 

The contractions in examples (49)–(52) have no equivalent in Romanian.

The translation solutions of incomplete words, as well as of other phonologically marked words and combined words, need to be evaluated distinctly for each target language and for each function that the incomplete words fulfil.

### 3 Results and discussions

The aforementioned examples illustrate deviant structures in dialogic utterances that doubtlessly contribute to the construction of some literary characters’ identity and need to be dealt with accordingly in translation. The relevance of the analysis and of the discussions stems from the structural differences between two languages in contact in the process of translation, but also from the fact that such language instances are not singular or isolated. On the contrary, the same markers occur in several literary texts. Even though deviant language in the source text does not affect the coherent flow of the text which could be translated in the same coherent manner, the idiolectal, sociolectal and dialectal or stylistic and rhetorical values marked by the deviant language pose translational problems in most cases. What is more and

important to be taken into account, language markers alternate among literary characters, but are consistent with each of them, thereby proving their function as identity markers. The aforementioned 52 examples were selected from the dialogue of several literary texts so as to present such language instances in a possible categorization and discuss their translatability in general and into Romanian in particular. The study thereby envisages to raise awareness of the relevance but also the difficulty of the problem and to provide some solutions for their translation. The categories proposed for a systematic and orderly observation are integrated in the morpho-syntactic, the phonological and lexical language areas. They are displayed in a configuration that has been suggested by the deviances identified in fictional dialogue in English as a source language.

Language deviations occur and are diverse mostly as far as grammatical structures are concerned (see examples (29)–(32)), which sometimes display a combination of markers, while phonological ones are the next common. In contrast, purely lexical deviations have rarely been identified (see example (33)).

In as far as grammatical deviations are concerned, the disagreement between subject and predicate has been exemplified in negative and affirmative dialogic turns. Such disagreement is almost always realized with auxiliary verbs in English, which are formally untranslatable into Romanian. Besides, the wrong use of utterances consisting in the omission of auxiliaries is formally untranslatable into Romanian in interrogative sentences because Romanian does not employ auxiliaries in the construction of questions and because the information about the subject is inflected in the verb form, with the subject not being explicitly mentioned (examples (22)–(25)). The ellipsis of both subject and auxiliary in some interrogatives poses therefore a double challenge when translated into Romanian (see examples (26) and (27)). Alternatively, the same untranslatable double omission of subject and auxiliary verb may occur to mark some character's emotional state, as in example (28).

In addition, negation does not presuppose the use of an auxiliary verb in Romanian as it does in English, which triggers similar issues. As for the disagreement in affirmative sentences, the mistake does exist in authentic Romanian within similar social categories and is therefore translatable (see examples (4)–(6)). Other examples involving the omission of auxiliaries in affirmative sentences (*have* in the perfect aspect of verb tenses and the perfect infinitive) is problematic when transferred to Romanian since it would generate unnatural language use due to Romanian not displaying such erroneous language (examples (7)–(9)). The omission of the verb *be*, irrespective of its grammatical status, is similarly uncommon in Romanian native speech (examples (11)–(14)).

A distinct section has been dedicated to the translatability of negative structures due to the fact that double and multiple negation is deviant in English, but it is the norm in Romanian. This means that, when deviant double negations are used in English, their formal equivalent in Romanian translation would create but correct language (see examples (15)–(20)).

Phonological markers materialize in orthographic deviations and can be indicative of foreigners' speech (examples (34) and (35)), language varieties (examples (36)–(44)) or idiosyncratic speech features (examples (45) and (46)). Moreover, writers sometimes apply orthographic markers with no obvious phonological implication, like in contracted forms where the apostrophes are often missing (see examples (48)–(50) and (52)).

Markers of a phonological nature are used as part of language varieties (examples (47)–(51)), which are realized in wrong spelling, sometimes imitating the pronunciation pertaining to a dialect or a language variety. Incomplete words (see examples (38)–(45)) and connected words (see example (46)) are some of the authors' tools to mark fast or careless speech.

Although lexical incompleteness and connectedness can be managed creatively in any language to mark fast or careless speech, markers that specifically highlight variational peculiarities entail far more challenging translation techniques, calling for adaptation to some target language varieties and coping with compromises triggered by the cultural displacement. The treatment of such language varieties, be they attached to social or ethnic groups, is hence similar to the transfer of dialectal language, where the geographical belonging of a language variety is the core of the problem.

The solutions in case of untranslatability due to structural differences can be finding means of compensation. These require different sources depending on the nature of the deviations, corroborated with a

thorough evaluation of the idiolectal, sociolectal or dialectal functions they accomplish and with the options available in the target language. A possible classification by function of the language that is deviant from standard English is further proposed with possible translation solutions.

- a) If incorrect grammar is used to indicate low educational level in native speakers of a language or their belonging to a particular, usually lower social class, a set of acknowledged target language mistakes can be resorted to. They should be able to render particular grammar mistakes made by some native speakers of a language. Even if there is no perfect equivalent of a source language mistake in the target language, the translation solution should serve the preservation of the literary character's identity. For Romanian, there are several resources accounting for native speakers' mistakes, which can be greatly useful for the identification of the proper deviant language so as to remain in the authentic realm of language and picture the same identity features (Graur 2009, Graur 2012, Sporiş 2013). However, the challenges are here related to finding the right solution which can be applied consistently throughout one character's speech.
- b) The non-native speakers' or foreigners' language deviations need to be dealt with distinctly in every target language, with no generally valid solution possible to establish. Such language commonly implies deviations of a phonological nature, mirrored in writing by orthographic markers, which require a strategic and consistent approach in the target language. Certain peculiar sounds typical or unique in a language could be the area offering alteration solutions to display foreigners' deficient pronunciation.
- c) If the function of deviant language is to render an authentic language variety or a dialect, the choice depends on the dialectal nature and the variational possibilities of the target language.

Broadly speaking, even if the analysis section presented a diversity of speech markers, most of which are grammatical, lexical deviant markers might be handier to find in the target language to compensate for structural mismatches. The prevalence of lexical markers in translation as compared to the source text as observed by Englund Dimitrova (2004) confirms the quality of lexical markers to compensate for lacking structural ones in the target language.

Sometimes, the omission of the speech peculiarity is necessary, but it is only an extreme option, when the target language does not offer any means of compensation. This might be the case rather with dialectal speech information, which entails considerable compromises even if decent translation solutions are found. This is because the switch to another language cancels the very point of using a dialect, namely the depiction of some linguistic specificity rooted in a particular geographical area. Other situations in which some speech markers need omission occur when translation-driven compromises are necessary and the semantic accuracy might prevail over the idiolectal, sociolectal or dialectal value embedded in some utterances.

The essential points to take into account when attempting to translate deviant dialogue remain (i) the accurate macro-contextual identification of the functions that are attached to any kind of deviant language, and (ii) finding translation solutions that provide equivalent identity-related functions, with no formal equivalence necessarily employed or forced into the target language. Instead, these solutions should be natural, authentic, credible and consistent for each literary character.

No translation method or strategy could possibly be generally valid for all language pairs involved in translation, but each translator needs to evaluate the pragmatic and idiolectal functions of the deviant source language items and develop a strategy to resort to the deviant language means available in the target language, without affecting the characters' identity or personality. Besides, deviations might be attributed in the target language to certain characters in other structures or lexical items than those presenting deviations in the source language. For instance, such a solution can be provided in example (2), where the disagreement *She don't* cannot be translated into Romanian. Instead, a disagreement can be placed in *Nu-i place oamenii albi* (*She doesn't like white people*), where the verb *place* (*like*) would correctly agree with *oamenii* (*people*) and have the plural form *plac*. Being an authentic grammar mistake made by some Romanian natives exhibiting deficient education, the solution suitably compensates for the untranslatability of the wrong source language structure.

## 4 Conclusions and further study

Despite its not offering an exhaustive image of structurally deviant language idiosyncrasies and their values, this study has hopefully revealed their weight in picturing a literary character, and their implicit relevance in translation. The investigation will hopefully expand the scholarly lens onto the matter of translating deviant language. It is thought to offer multiple opportunity for further examination as more examples can be added so as to complete the inventory of deviant structures that determine the readerships' full depiction of the literary characters. Furthermore, an important path to follow is the evaluation of the contrastiveness and translatability of such structures in the case of other language pairs than English and Romanian, which might include other translation solutions or means of compensation.

As a final remark, since we witness a continued and diversified process of experimenting with speech features in the literary dialogue, we need to consider the importance of including this matter in translator training programmes. For instance, a descriptive approach to translational learner corpora can lead to accurate translation results and thereby to dedicated training methodologies. The use of such corpora has been long tested with valuable results and is well-acknowledged by now (e.g. Bowker and Bennison 2003, Laursen and Arinas Pellon 2012, Arhire 2015, Laviosa and Falco 2021, etc.). In this way, new generations of translators can be taught to deal with the requirements of the literary dialogue when deviant structures are employed.

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