

## The foregrounding of place in *Trainspotting*: A discourse-stylistic analysis

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**Abstract:** In this paper, we investigate how place is foregrounded through language in Irvine Welsh's 1993 novel *Trainspotting*. We establish that many of the linguistic features which occur in the novel are associated with and represent Scots, a stigmatised language variety of Scotland. Drawing on Silverstein (2003), Johnstone (2009, 2010, 2013), and Eckert's (2008) work on indexicality, we argue that these linguistic features in *Trainspotting* function as indexical markers connecting the characters and the novel to place, more specifically to Scotland. In the analysis, we explore three channels through which the foregrounding of place is evident. First, the foregrounding of place happens through the sheer volume of nonstandard English associated with Scots throughout the novel in that the extensive appearance of nonstandard English deviates from most novels, and in that the nonstandard variety indexes Scotland. Second, place becomes foregrounded through the discourse surrounding language in the novel; throughout the novel, several characters comment on their own styles of speech and linguistic abilities, which highlights the focus on language and directs the reader's attention hereto. Finally, the foregrounding of place happens through the ideology that favours Standard English over nonstandard English. This channel of foregrounding appears through the characters' ability or inability to style-shift between nonstandard English and Standard English, and the effects of the ability or inability to do so. We argue that the unique nature of the vernacular language used in *Trainspotting* emplices the characters and novel solidly in Scotland through the indexical nature of language.

**Keywords:** Stylistics, discourse analysis, foregrounding, place, indexicality, nonstandard English, Standard English, style-shifting.

### 1. Introduction

In Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993), the foregrounding of place through language is central not only to the development of the characters and the plot, but also in discovering the ideological underpinnings which influence Welsh's writing. Not only do Welsh's characters speak nonstandard English, they also narrate in nonstandard English, with most styles of speech carrying indexical markers specific to Scots.

The foregrounding of place happens through several channels: The sheer volume of nonstandard language associated with Scots in the novel foregrounds place in that it stands out amongst novels written in Standard English. This foregrounding happens through the use of indexical markers, these being central in connecting the language to Scotland. The discourse surrounding language in the novel, i.e. the characters' meta-comments on their use of language, additionally foregrounds place. Finally, place is foregrounded through the ideology that favours Standard English over nonstandard English as shown through style-shifts and the benefits of being able to detach oneself from local speech variants by style-shifting to Standard English.

In *Trainspotting*, an identification with Scotland is represented and contested through the characters' discourse. The characters' linguistic features are enregistered (following Agha 2003) as a nonstandard language variety and thus linked to a specific place.

The language in *Trainspotting* is a mix of styles, ranging primarily from Scots to Scottish

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English, although other dialects are depicted to a limited extent<sup>3</sup>. Scots and Scottish English are often perceived as constituting a linguistic continuum (Aitken 1984) and, indeed, this is how linguists tend to conceptualise dialects and varieties in general. Lay people, on the other hand, tend to conceptualise dialects as consisting of distinct linguistic features (Hodson 2016: 416). When considering the Scottish dialect continuum, we find Scottish English placed at one end of the continuum and we may define it as “Standard English pronounced with a Scottish accent and with few scotticisms in grammar and vocabulary, e.g. *wee* for ‘little’...” (Melchers and Shaw 2003: 63). This variety is consequently often called Standard Scottish English (Melchers and Shaw 2003: 63). Found on the other end of the continuum is Scots, a variety which diverges more from Standard English than Scottish English does, featuring an elaborate and unique vocabulary and grammar, whose properties will be introduced in section 2.4.1. In this article, we choose to view the complex system of languages in Scotland as a dichotomy, setting up a contrast between Standard English (including Standard Scottish English) and nonstandard English. We are well aware that such a dichotomy ignores many accents and dialects on a continuum between Scots and Scottish English, and indeed Scots and Standard English. In between the two opposites is found a rich spectrum of linguistic varieties based on regional or social situations. The use of a nonstandard language variety specific to Scotland assigns the country a voice of its own; it brings attention to linguistic diversity, and allows an ideologically stigmatised variety a window of free expression.

The novel portrays a group of friends immersed in the Edinburgh drug scene in the 1980s; some of these characters try to clean up and get out, despite the allure of the drugs and the influence of friends. The outcome varies for the characters in their personal negotiations for belonging and adaptations to find suitable identities within their locations – this pursuit is clearly visible through their discourse. In this paper, we investigate the foregrounding of place through indexicality in *Trainspotting*, focusing on linguistic features and discursive elements in the novel which connect the characters to Scotland.

## 2. Foregrounding language varieties and social meaning

In stylistics, foregrounding denotes that something is in the foreground of a text or of speech, i.e. it takes up the position of figure in a figure-ground relation. The term is borrowed from art criticism, but it has become widely used in stylistics as well (Short 1996: 11). To a reader or listener, foregrounded elements in a text or in speech are more perceptually prominent in relation to other elements. Indeed, foregrounding is described by Short (1996) as the psychological effect caused by deviation from an established norm (11). According to Short (1996), the study of deviation is “one of the most fundamental concepts in stylistic analysis” (10). In stylistics, deviation takes two forms: external deviation and internal deviation (Short 1996: 59).

External deviation describes deviation from an established norm found outside of the text, e.g. deviation from the conventions of spelling, genre, lay-out. etc. This means that the use of nonstandard language is a deviation from the standard language norm, seeing as novels are usually written in Standard English, which in turn prompts the expectation that they are written so. Internal deviation is deviation from a norm which is set up in the text itself. In other words, a pattern must be established in the text before internal deviation is possible. In relation to *Trainspotting*, this means that, whilst the use of nonstandard language can be classed as a deviation from an external norm, sections written in Standard English in the novel deviate from the internal norm and can thus be classed as internal deviations. We argue, then, that the extensive use of nonstandard features in *Trainspotting* foregrounds language and language variation generally, but also that it foregrounds the stereotypes and perceptions which people have of speakers of the nonstandard variety in question.

<sup>3</sup> The main characters for the most part use a variety which can be described as a representation of the local vernacular found in Leith, an area to the north of the city of Edinburgh.

The indexing of place through language functions as an additional way in which Scotland is foregrounded in the novel. Scotland is clearly foregrounded because the story takes place in the country, but the foregrounding of place becomes especially prominent through the extensive use of Scots as well as the indexical features of this variety, which include, but are not limited to, place. Indeed, we suggest that these multiple layers of foregrounding nearly transform Scotland to an additional character in the novel. In the sections below, we discuss how language varieties index place as they are invariably linked to geographical location.

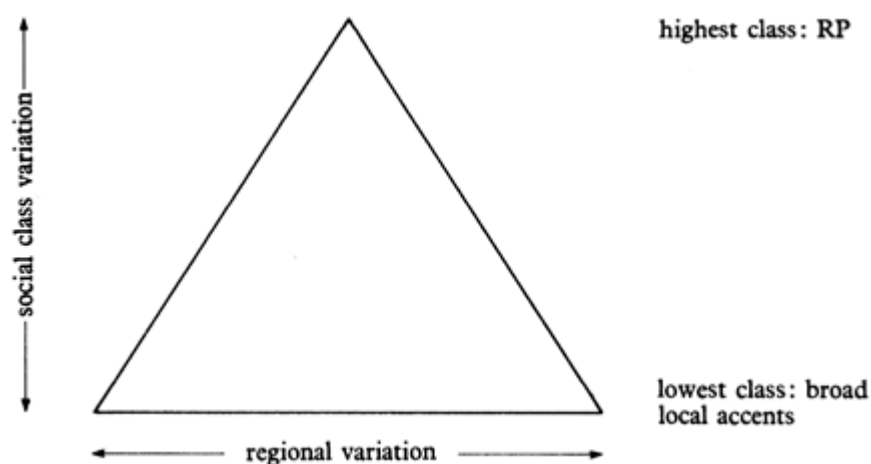
### 2.1. *The ideology behind language variation*

By default, a person holds power if he or she speaks the language, or language variety, which is perceived as legitimate. By legitimising a language as the national language in a nation-state, the policy of a linguistic union favours those who already know and speak the official language or dialect, whilst those who speak a local dialect find their competence, linguistic and non-linguistic, devalued and subordinated (Bourdieu 1991: 6). As Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) add,

While members of professional and elite classes are engaged in globalizing institutions (e.g. education, non-local government, corporations), the lives of laborers, tradespeople, small business people, etc. are embedded in local communities. While the local language represents membership and loyalty to a local community, and to the practices and relationships that make up life in that community, the standard language represents disengagement from the local. (276)

Note that nonstandard varieties are intimately connected to locality and place in the quote above. Trudgill also notes the link between language and place as well as social class and states that, in British society, conservative and rural dialects are associated with groups lowest in the social hierarchy, and that these dialects alter gradually from countryside to countryside in Great Britain (Trudgill 2000: 30). However, speakers of the highest social class typically employ Standard English, which only varies slightly in different parts of the country (Trudgill 2000: 31). Trudgill (2000) proposes a model of social class and language variation in Great Britain (30):

Figure 1: Social and regional accent variation (based on Trudgill 2000: 30. Figure 1).



First, the model identifies the circumstance that the amount of regional variation in English is greater

amongst people of low social status than of high social status. Secondly, the model shows that it is possible to determine a speaker's background based on their accent. Lastly, the model elucidates that individuals in the top strata sound more alike across the country than do people at the bottom. Evidently, language features which are most indicative of location are also those associated with low social status (Kerswill 2009: 359). This means that nonstandard varieties index lower class and regional links, whereas standard varieties index higher class and lack regional links. By extension, then, we argue that the deviation from the Standard language norm foregrounds place, in this case Scotland, signifying a connection with the local perspective.

Individuals may strive to improve their lives by 'moving up the class ladder'; thus, social mobility is found in all societies with social classes (Kerswill 2009: 364). English speakers may feel the need to change their style of speech, because "other people's negative attitudes are too high a price to pay for keeping their working-class accent, and the effort acquiring another accent reaps sufficient awards" (Kerswill 2009: 358). The negative attitudes towards working-class accents persist, and individuals worry that such accents might impose constraints on their social mobility.

The relationship between geography and language variation shows that there is a direct agreement between stratification and levels of language use (Kerswill 2009: 358). The value credited to certain forms of language variation is aligned with the social status of people. Fairclough (2001) asserts that sociolinguists have found "systematic correlations between variations in linguistic form (phonological, morphological, syntactic) and social variables" (7). When, in a culture, a language variety or dialect is standardised, deviation in dialect and vocabulary from this standard mirrors an individual's position in the social hierarchy, and consequently becomes part of that person's cultural habitus (Bourdieu 1991: 1). This linguistic capital is disproportionately distributed among people from dissimilar strata of society; the more linguistic capital a speaker possesses, the more the speaker is able to exploit the system to his or her advantage (Cregan 2008: 13). Thus, a speaker must be aware of these variations and generate discourse that is valued in certain contexts. Notably, nonstandard varieties may enjoy overt prestige in some communities (see Trudgill 1974 for his famous Norwich example), and manipulation of registers can be used to show solidarity as well as authority and power. Unequally distributed cultural capital in connection with linguistic identity is evident throughout *Trainspotting*, in which some of the characters have access to multiple linguistic styles, whereas others are unable to style-shift, and others yet have the power to impose and enforce constraints on this access, or lack thereof. In *Trainspotting*, Welsh's use of nonstandard English is a key aspect of creating a realistic voice for the working-class which the novel represents.

## 2.2. *The indexical nature of language*

Silverstein (2003) suggests that considering the concept of *indexical order* aids in an investigation of the ways in which speakers relate linguistic features to socio-cultural values and thus create social identities in interaction. Indexical order is the formulation of the observation that linguistic features have social meaning which is a consequence of the social values expressed and maintained by speakers (Silverstein 2003: 193-194). Silverstein elaborates by adding the notion of ' $n + 1^{\text{st}}$  order indexical value' which is defined as a competing structure of value that is characterised as a distinct but overlapping form directly indexing the social meaning in communication. This competition between the two forms can lead to a re-conceptualisation of the meaning of the linguistic feature as the  $n + 1^{\text{st}}$  order indexical value replaces the  $n$ -th order indexical value (Silverstein 2003: 194). Departing from Silverstein's idea of the indexical order, Eckert (2008) introduces *indexical fields* as a base for the interpretation of the meanings of linguistic variables. She defines these *fields* as a

constellation of ideologically related meanings, any one of which can be activated in the situated use of the variable... and each new activation has the potential to change the field

by building on ideological connections. Thus, variation constitutes an indexical system that embeds ideology in language and that is in turn part and parcel of the construction of ideology. (Eckert 2008: 454)

When linguistic forms, and whole varieties and registers, have become imbued with social meaning, and indeed index the social before the semantic, they have become enregistered. The process of enregisterment can be described as the “processes through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of forms” (Agha 2003: 231). Johnstone (2009) additionally combines Silverstein’s level of indexicality with Agha’s enregisterment and describes the different levels of indexicality in the following way:

Table 1: Levels of indexicality and enregisterment of linguistic forms  
(adapted from Johnstone 2009: 164)

$n^{\text{th}}$ order indexicality/first order	A linguistic form the frequency of which patterns according to speakers’ socio-demographic background
$n+1^{\text{st}}$ order indexicality/second order	A linguistic form which has acquired a social meaning which is governed by ideologies pervasive in the speech community. The linguistic form and associated link are noticed by speakers.
$(n+1)+1^{\text{st}}$ order indexicality/third order	A linguistic form which has acquired an additional indexical meaning which is essentially removed from the first ( $n^{\text{th}}$ level) interpretation. The form is enregistered in the community and linked to a cultural value primarily expressing place.

### 2.3. Indexing place

A number of sociolinguistic studies investigating the links between language and local identity (i.e. identities linked to place) in both the UK (e.g. Beal 2009) and the US (e.g. Johnstone 2009) have relied on social indexicality and the enregisterment of linguistic forms as explanatory concepts. Johnstone (2010) argues that globalisation tends to lead to increased dialect awareness, a re-indexing of social meaning, and enregisterment of local forms. The main argument is that first and foremost strongly local forms come to index different social meanings; Johnstone refers to this as ‘resemioticization’. The local linguistic features become the topic of conversation in the community, and they are used to differentiate members of different speech communities. More importantly, Johnstone argues that the idea of local speech as unique solidifies the links between speech and place (as opposed to gender, class or age) which renders other links, or indexicalities, less accessible.

Thus, as outlined above, processes of enregisterment take place both through discourse about language varieties and the places they are connected to (see Johnstone 2013), and through the consumption of commodities featuring linguistic forms uniquely connected to a specific place (such as t-shirts with dialect written on them – see Johnstone 2009) regardless of whether they in reality are

unique or not. Considering this idea in regard to *Trainspotting* brings forward the idea of the novel itself as a commodity which both strengthens the enregisterment of Scots as well as signalling the enregistered nature of this variety. The enregistered nature of Scots vernacular then also means that place is a social index of the variety<sup>4</sup>. In our reading of the novel, place is then always present; place becomes foregrounded in the novel in the sense that it becomes primary through the use of a nonstandard language variety. Thus, the stylistic choices made in the novel not only foreground Scotland through the setting and sheer volume of nonstandard language, but also through the processes of indexicality and enregisterment outlined above.

#### 2.4 *Analysing dialects in literature*

Before turning to the analysis of several excerpts from *Trainspotting*, we explore the role which dialects play in literature and attempt not only to exemplify the language situation in Scotland, but also to pinpoint some of the Scots features that Welsh uses in his novel. Some linguists choose to ignore representations of dialect in literature due to the inauthenticity of the attempted representation, claiming that true examples of dialect only exist in the ‘real world’, whilst others question the very existence of authentic speech (Hodson 2016: 418). When a reader notices representations of linguistic features that are identified as specific to a dialect, “it generates the perception that it must originate from a ‘real’ speaker” (Hodson 2016: 418). In other words, the reader automatically draws on both cultural and linguistic knowledge about which social characteristics are typical of the speaker of that particular dialect as a means of gathering information about the speaker. Concurrently, readers may be enculturated into their understandings of spelling, grammar, and vocabulary; thus, when writing in novels deviates from Standard English, a character’s dialect, and an author’s spelling, grammar, and vocabulary are seen as ‘wrong’ (Hodson 2016: 425). Note that cultural knowledge about Standard and nonstandard English is not inherently right or wrong; rather, it is culturally constructed and ideologically bound.

Welsh and other authors who use nonstandard spellings of the English language in their work may deliberately take advantage of real-world language ideologies. In fact, they may disregard orthographic conventions to achieve certain literary effects (Honeybone and Watson 2013: 313). Respellings capturing local pronunciations, also known as ‘eye-dialect’, have “been claimed to cause readers to stigmatise both the language itself and the person they imagine is responsible for producing it” (Honeybone and Watson 2013: 313). However, writers may use this stigmatisation intentionally to portray particular personalities, and therefore, the intent is not always destructive. In *Trainspotting*, the social identities of the characters are interrelated, and so is their use of language. The individual characters speak in their own unique ways through the employment of nonstandard English and slang. Not only does the reader become connected to the novel’s characters through language, but language also allows for an examination of the novel’s genre and central idea, namely the conflict between ‘voices’ represented by the author, narrator, and different characters. It may be noted that these different ‘voices’ are strongly connected to the various ideological underpinnings which the novel is imbued with. The ‘voices’ foreground place in that they carry indexical markers of Scotland; they carry linguistic features which are largely identifiable as Scots vernacular. These features, some of which are investigated in the following subsection, do not occur in Standard English, and consequently, they foreground place.

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<sup>4</sup> Non-standard language varieties in the UK carry a range of social indices, for instance social class and regionality as also indicated in Figure 1, and the authors acknowledge that these are not only difficult to tease apart but also vary between individuals. The authors wish to underline, however, that the scope of the research presented here is limited to how place is stylistically foregrounded in the novel, thus establishing place as the primary index for the reader.

#### 2.4.1. Scots features

Scots is a West-Germanic language variety spoken primarily in Lowland Scotland (Unger 2010: 100), closely related to English in that Scots and English share Indo-European roots and derive from Old English (Douglas 2009: 29). Indeed, much of the Scots vocabulary is shared with Standard English. Other Scots words may be classified as close cognates, words that Standard English and Scots have in common but with different pronunciations and spellings, whilst others yet are particular to Scots (Eagle 2016: 26). In this paper, we pay attention primarily to the latter two categories in our investigation of indexicality and emplacement. Scots differs from Standard English on a lexical level, morphological and syntactic level, and on a phonological and orthographical level.

In terms of lexis, Scots has a wide variety of words which differ from Standard English. The ones salient to this paper are *wee*, *ken*, and *likesay*, although the representation of the Scots lexis is certainly not limited to these lexical items in *Trainspotting*. The adjective *wee* means *little*, and although the adjective is widely used in Scottish English as well, this co-occurrence is unproblematic in terms of indexicality and placement as its occurrence is particular to Scotland whether it be in Scots or Scottish English. The verb *ken*, meaning *know*, is distinctively Scots; and apart from being used as a verb, *ken* can additionally function as a focusing device in colloquial speech, a function which is depicted in *Trainspotting* (Scots Online 2015). The Scots adverb *likesay* means *for example* (“Likesae” 2005), but like *ken*, the word is also used as a focusing device in *Trainspotting*.

In terms of syntax and morphology, Scots has many patterns in common with Standard English. One noteworthy difference is the negative suffix *-nae* as in for example *canna* (*cannot*) and *dinna* (*don't*) (Unger 2010: 100–101). Phonologically and orthographically, there are several notable differences between Scots and Standard English; those relevant to this paper are described in the following. Resulting from the Scottish English pronunciation of /l/ as dark in all positions, Scots has /l/-vocalisation (Melchers and Shaw 2003: 65), which is generally represented orthographically with <w> as in <aw> in contrast to the Standard English <all> (Jones 2002: 89). Scots moreover differs from Standard English in the pronunciation of various vowels. The MOUTH vowel is pronounced monophthongally as [u] rather than as the diphthong [aʊ] in Standard English. The Scots pronunciation is often orthographically represented by the spelling <oo> as in <oot> and <about> instead of the Standard English spellings <out> and <about> (Melchers and Shaw 2003: 67). Likewise, the Scots pronunciation of the LOT vowel differs from Standard English in that the Scots pronunciation is [ɔ] rather than [ɒ], meaning that LOT merges with THOUGHT (Melchers and Shaw 2003: 65 – 66). This deviation from Standard English is orthographically represented in *Trainspotting* as <oa>, meaning for example that the Standard English <lot> becomes <loat>. Scots additionally differs from Standard English in the pronunciation of words such as *do* and *to*. Whereas the vowel is pronounced as [u] in Standard English, Scots speakers pronounce it as the fronted and lowered vowel [e], which is often orthographically represented with the spelling <ae>, e.g. <dae> and <tae> instead of <do> and <to> (Jones 2002: 88).

Another notable difference between Standard English and Scots is the personal pronouns in the first and second person: The first person singular subject can be spelled <ah> in contrast to the Standard English <I> (“A pers. pron.” 2004), whilst the second person singular subject is spelled <ye> (“Ye pron., v.” 2004). The main argument for the relevance of investigating foregrounding in place through indexical markers in the novel is that the novel carries many linguistic features which are largely specific to Scots; this will be explicated in the analysis.

#### 2.5 *Socio-cultural and ideological aspects of language in Scotland*

Language variations associated with Scots are some of the most unique and deviating variations from Standard English; Scottish English, Scottish Gaelic, and Scots are all recognised language varieties in Scotland, and each variety includes several dialects (Melchers and Shaw 2003: 61). In recent years,

Scottish English in the spoken mode has become distinguished from Standard English primarily based on pronunciation, but various vocabulary features, idioms, and grammatical features can also be replicated in writing (Douglas 2009: 34). Scottish English is in varying degrees influenced by Scots, resulting in phonological compromises and lexical transfers, and has now become the accepted norm in schools and the distinct speech of the professional class in Scotland (McClure 1994: 79-80).

Historically, speakers of Scots have struggled for recognition. Many consider Scots a dialect or a vernacular variety of English and regard Scottish English as having the most prestigious status, whilst others contest this perspective. Regardless of the somewhat complex and unclear language situation in Scotland, a language label permanently reflects a linguistic reality for a group of speakers, which results in ideological consequences. As previously stated, Welsh not only introduces a nonstandard language variety to such an extent that it becomes a distinctiveness, a character, with its own function, but he also creates a realistic voice for the working-class in Scotland. As Horton (2001) notes, “*Trainspotting* tells a story that is culturally and historically specific, one that recognizes the ways in which identity is constructed out of multiple and competing discourses, including masculinity, nationhood, class, family and youth culture” (232). By portraying a working-class community in the geographical region of Edinburgh, Welsh depicts the economic and cultural shifts of the Thatcher era.

Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister at the time during which *Trainspotting* is set, provoked strong opinions in Scotland in the 1980s, and she still does today (Kerr 2015). Thatcher was perceived as anti-Scottish and, consequently, she became strongly disliked amongst working-class communities not only in Scotland but also in the rest of Great Britain (Kerr 2015). Thatcher’s conservative politics stood for privatisation of industry and public services, and advocated for the free market; “[a]s an ideology, Thatcherism sought to discredit notions of class, arguing that the goal of society was to maximize economic efficiency – individuals being free to pursue their own selfish ends, change in social values, breakdown of community” (McGuire 2010: 20). Many of these political initiatives were regarded as specific attacks on the working-class communities not only in Scotland but also throughout Great Britain.

In *Trainspotting*, Welsh depicts not only a displacement and a breakdown of a working-class community, but also an end to working-class identity, exploring the void left behind by the fading traditional notions of communities and class (Horton 2001: 221). Welsh portrays what may be termed ‘the ugly side’ of the working-class culture in Thatcher’s Great Britain by describing “a community of dependency - welfare-dependency, drug-dependency, money-dependency - which is the mirror image of the society of isolated, atomized individuals of modern capitalism” (Craig 1998: 97). Literary critics characterise *Trainspotting* as both working-class fiction as well as a fundamental departure from working-class fiction (McGuire 2010: 21). Welsh does not take his point of departure in a factory worker’s life or a bus driver’s life; Renton and most of his friends have either never worked or only been in short-term employment.

An important theme to consider in *Trainspotting*, related to language politics, is Welsh’s portrayal of the “ambiguous relationship between Scottish history and narratives of colonialism” (McGuire 2010: 23). The aspect of post-colonialism provides a suitable context for understanding part of *Trainspotting*’s influence and charm, “both in terms of its subversion of Standard English as well as the cultural imperialism it implies and the hybrid existences of characters living . . . border lives that require a ‘new art of the present’ and a proliferation of ‘englishes’” (Morace 2001: 22). Welsh displays this hybridity through Renton, who defines himself neither as Scottish nor British, but there is also a display of nationalism, chiefly presented by Begbie, who represents Scots national pride for better or worse.

The problematic position of psychological benefit from independent nationhood on one side and, on the other, relying on support and jobs resulting from being a part of the United Kingdom is reflected in the ongoing language debate in Scotland. Owing to the complex and blurred language



situation as to whether Scots is a language or a dialect, Scots is trapped in a somewhat confused identity mirroring the peculiar political, cultural, and social position of the country itself. Scotland's special status illustrates that people of Scotland are aware of their distinct character of speech and writing; there is a long and respected tradition for academic linguistic study of Scots, societies dedicated to further Scots as a language, and there is an ever-growing corpus of written material in Scots (Crystal 2003: 328). Scottish culture is also reflected in the institutionalised social structure, the Scottish home rule, although this happened after Welsh wrote *Trainspotting*. Scotland now has its own parliament, which oversees education, transportation, and the power to introduce new taxes, though subject to approval of the British government. Despite these national reinforcements, and a distinct language loyalty, Scots has not been recognised as a language of prestige and power, as it has no official mandate. For the scope and ease of this paper, Scots is not termed a dialect or a language (no political or ill will intended). Instead, we utilise the dichotomy of nonstandard and Standard English.

### 3. Analysis: Identifying place in *Trainspotting*

The focus of this analysis is to investigate the channels in which the foregrounding of place is central to the development of the characters' identities in *Trainspotting* as well as to examine the discursive elements in the novel which connect to a certain place, namely Scotland. In the following, we argue that place and nonstandardness are foregrounded by the sheer volume of nonstandard language occurring on the pages in *Trainspotting*. The discourse surrounding language in the novel as well as the uniquely Scot vernacular forms which strongly index Scotland are impossible to ignore. Welsh ensures that the reader takes an active part in the construction of meaning in the novel firstly by utilising a language variety which, for a Standard English speaker, is difficult to comprehend and, secondly, by challenging the formal device of narrative voices.

Another way in which place is foregrounded is through the characters' meta-discourse about personal language use and their abilities to style-shift or make conscious shifts in register. Through the characters' use of style-shifting, Welsh comments on the language ideology at play, illuminating what certain characters gain from mastering this ability. We commence our analysis by locating Scots features in the novel represented in three characters' language: Renton, Spud, and Begbie's.

#### 3.1. *The use of nonstandard features in Trainspotting*

The language in *Trainspotting* is not only recognisable as nonstandard; the occurrence of linguistic features associated with Scots index a specific place, namely Scotland. This foregrounding of place via indexical markers is evident in Renton, Spud, and Begbie's speech and internal monologues. Renton's internal monologue contains several indexical markers as seen in the following excerpt from the novel:

The Magistrate lets oot a sharp exhalation. It isnae a brilliant job the cunt's goat, whin ye think aboot it. It must git pretty tiresome dealin wi radges aw day. Still, ah bet the poppy's fuckin good, n naebody's asking the cunt tae dae it. He should try tae be a wee bit mair professional, a bit mair pragmatic, rather than showin his annoyance so much. (Welsh 2013: 207)

Renton's internal monologue clearly occurs in nonstandard English as evidenced by the /l/-vocalised utterance <aw> corresponding to Standard English <all>, and the nonstandard pronunciations of vowels represented in the spellings <aboot> instead of <about>; <tae> and <dae> instead of the Standard English <to> and <do>; and <goat> rather than <got>. The Scots negative marker <nae> as the suffix in <isnae>, and the first person singular subject <ah> are also recognisably Scots features.

Notice also the adjective *wee*, which is widely recognised as specific to Scottish vernaculars.

Begbie's internal monologue furthermore contributes to the volume of nonstandard language in the novel: "Ah'm ootay here. Fuckin sharpish, ah sais, no lookin roond. Whair the fuck's they soacks... everything takes twice as fuckin long whin yir hungover n ah kin dae without this cunt nippin ma fuckin heid" (Welsh 2013: 146). The quote features various words with nonstandard spellings, e.g. the verb <dae> in place of the Standard English spelling <do>; the respellings <ootay>, <roond>, and <without>, representing the Scots pronunciation [u] in contrast to the Standard English pronunciation [aʊ]; and <soacks> rather than <socks>, representative of the Scots pronunciation of the LOT vowel. As in Renton's internal monologue, the first person singular subject is spelled <ah> rather than <I>.

Finally, Spud's speech also carries many linguistic features specific to Scots, as the following excerpt from his direct speech exemplifies: "That's spot on man . . . eh . . . ye goat it, likesay" (Welsh 2013: 208). The occurrence of the focusing device *likesay*, along with the nonstandard pronunciation of the LOT vowel as represented orthographically in the verb <goat> as opposed to the Standard English spelling <got>, and the second person singular subject <ye> instead of <you> once again index place. Noticeably, the reoccurrence of the same words with the same spellings across the characters' speech and internal monologues, e.g. <tae>, <goat>, and <ye> substantiate the foregrounding of place. Drawing on Silverstein's (2003) work on indexicality as well as Kerswill's (2009) work on the connection between language variation and geographical placement, we argue that the nonstandard language carrying indexical markers index Scotland. All linguistic features described above function as external deviations from an established norm, that of Standard English writing. The majority of the novel is written in a nonstandard English variety specific to Scotland, and the sheer volume of nonstandard English thus further foregrounds place. In the following, we investigate the discourse surrounding language in *Trainspotting* and argue that this acts as an additional channel in which firstly nonstandardness and secondly place is foregrounded.

### 3.2 The discourse surrounding language in *Trainspotting*

The chapter titled "Speedy Recruitment" (Welsh 2013: 82-88) features the characters Renton and Spud prior to, during, and after their separate job interviews. Having been referred to a potential employer by the Department of Employment's Jobcentre, neither Renton nor Spud seek to be hired; rather, they prefer remaining unemployed in order to continue receiving 'giro' from the government. Before their interviews, Renton recommends to Spud that he act in a certain way in order to seem convincing in the interview: "what ye huv tae dae is tae act enthusiastic, but still fuck up the interview" (Welsh 2013: 82). Although Renton does not explicitly comment on language use, the reader may infer, based on Renton's interview, that Renton implicitly encourages Spud to speak Standard English; that he associates enthusiasm and correctness with Standard English. This inference is drawn from the fact that Renton employs Standard English in his interview in order to appear as a viable candidate for the job before he eventually sabotages his interview by mentioning his heroin habit: "I've had a long-standing problem with heroin addiction. I've been trying to combat this, but it has curtailed my employment activities..." (Welsh 2013: 85). Note that Renton's speech is written in Standard English; this style is representative of the entire conversation which Renton and the interviewer conduct.

Contrary to Renton, Spud does not shift to Standard English in his interview. Rather, he speaks in his usual nonstandard style. Spud is linguistically recognisable through his incessant idiolectal use of the focusing devices *likesay* and *ken*, features which are strongly associated with Scots. Equal to his pronunciation and his vocabulary, Spud appears incapable of speaking without these devices, as seen in the following example: "The poppy, likesay, eh . . . the bread, the dosh n that. Ken?" (Welsh 2013: 87). He comments on his own inability in his internal monologue during the interview, "Ah'll huv tae stoap sayin 'ken' sae much. These dudes might think ah'm a sortay pleb" (Welsh 2013: 87),

illustrating that he is aware that there is a connection between being a *pleb* and the way he speaks, but only to the degree that his use of *ken* is the nonstandard or informal feature of his speech. As such, Spud's comment elucidates that his speech carries a social class index in addition to the index of place and, to him, the index of class or level of education may very well be primary. His comment furthermore reflects his awareness of the underlying issues in terms of cultural power between Standard English and nonstandard English. Drawing on Johnstone (2010), Spud's awareness of the gap between Standard English and his local linguistic features differentiates him, and his community, from other speech communities. Consequently, not only is his speech nonstandard, and thus 'different', but it is very clearly a local vernacular which indexes Scotland and working-class speech. The use of *ken* is a prime example of social indexing, which Spud also comments on himself. The idea that local speech is unique or different solidifies the links between speech and place. In this way, Welsh cues in on the importance of language in the novel. This focus on language is also highlighted by the character Begbie.

The chapter "Inter Shitty" (Welsh 2013: 139-151) revolves around Begbie and Renton. Narrated by Begbie, the last half of the chapter follows Renton and Begbie on a train ride from Edinburgh to London, during which the pair of Scots encounter several individuals with styles of speech different from theirs:

- Begbie: – No fuckin shy, they British Rail cunts, eh?" *ah sais, nudging the burd next tae us.*
- Stranger: – Pardon? *it sais tae us, sortay soundin likes, 'pardawn' ken?*
- Begbie: – Whair's it yis come fae then?
- Stranger: – Sorry, I can't really understand you. *These foreign cunts 've goat trouble wi the Queen's fuckin English, ken. Ye huv tae speak louder, slower, n likesay mair posh, fir the cunts tae understand ye.*  
(Welsh 2013: 146, speaker information, italics, and layout added)

Note that Begbie's internal monologue is represented in italics. When the Canadian woman informs Begbie that she cannot understand his speech, Begbie becomes irritated. In his frustration, Begbie, in his internal monologue, declares that he believes his speech to be the Queen's English, possibly expressing that he views his own language variety to be as prestigious as the Queen's, or perhaps that he believes that he is not at fault if others cannot understand him. Begbie internally mocks the foreigner by asserting that he must speak louder, slower, and 'more posh' to be understood by her, and thus his thoughts and speech reveal that he identifies Standard English as 'talking posh'. Whilst he believes his speech to be the Queen's English, although his internal comment might be ironic, Begbie's trail of thought nonetheless reveals that he is aware that his English is not 'posh'.

Both Spud and Begbie are aware of their language use, but in two different ways: whereas Spud comments on his need to correct his own language, specifically to reduce his incessant use of *ken*, Begbie does not see anything wrong with his language use; his variety of English is as good as any variety, in his opinion. Their comments on language show that Begbie and Spud are conscious about their own language, but they are either unable (Spud) or unwilling (Begbie) to style-shift to gain advantages and status. Renton, on the other hand, style-shifts because he has cracked the 'cultural code' of language ideology, and he even tries to teach Spud how to master this ability. In this manner, place is foregrounded in the novel in that the nonstandard variety used by both Spud and Begbie transmits indexical markers of Scots, whereas the nonstandard variety becomes foregrounded in Renton's ability to style-shift.

### 3.3 *The foregrounding of place through ideology*

The final way in which place is foregrounded relates to the ideological underpinnings of the discourse in *Trainspotting*. We have established that Renton, Spud, and Begbie possess a linguistic awareness in that they reflect on their own use of language; Spud even exhibits an awareness of the stereotypical connection between the way he speaks and being a *pleb*. In the chapter *Courting Disaster*, Renton acts upon his linguistic awareness and shifts his style of speech to Standard English in the face of an authority.

Following a legal dispute, Renton and Spud find themselves in court, accused of stealing books. Not only does the chapter illustrate the differences between Renton and Spud's general and linguistic abilities, the situation also demonstrates the consequences of these differences. To understand the consequences, we must however initiate this investigation of foregrounding with an identification of the differences between Renton and Spud's speech. Upon being addressed by the Magistrate, who asks Renton if he intended to sell the stolen books, Renton responds with "no, your honour. They were for reading" (Welsh 2013: 207), and when the Magistrate questions Renton's claimed interest in Kierkegaard, Renton responds with "I'm interested in his concepts of subjectivity and truth" (Welsh 2013: 207-208). These excerpts of Renton's direct speech are completely absent of indexical markers and occur in Standard English. The contrast between this specific excerpt of direct speech and Renton's usual style of speech is particularly evident in the Standard English spelling of the negative marker <no>, and the spelling of the first person singular pronoun <I> in 'I'm' rather than the Scots spelling <ah>. Throughout his entire conversation with the Magistrate, Renton employs Standard English. This appearance of Standard English amidst an otherwise overwhelming amount of nonstandard English serves as a case of internal deviation in that the volume of nonstandard language secures this variety as the norm. This stylistic device has the same effect as external deviation: the internal deviation foregrounds the employment of nonstandard speech associated with Scots in the presence of the foregrounding of Standard English.

Contrary to Renton, Spud addresses the Magistrate in his usual nonstandard style of speech, as seen in the example previously investigated in subsection 3.1, in which we identified Scots words and spellings, meaning that they index Scotland: "That's spot on man . . . eh . . . ye goat it, likesay" (Welsh 2013: 208). Following Renton and Spud's separate explanations of the events, the Magistrate calls Spud a "habitual thief" (Welsh 2013: 208), whereas he deems Renton to be a "different matter" (Welsh 2013: 209). At the end of the court hearing, Spud is sentenced to prison whilst Renton's escapes with a much milder punishment. The significant difference between Renton and Spud's punishments is somewhat surprising seeing as they were, as far as we, as readers, can deduce from the chapter, equally responsible for their crime. Although their individual punishments may be traced to their individual overall conduct during the court hearing, the reader is led to believe that Renton's mild punishment is at least partly grounded in his linguistic ability to style-shift; to employ Standard English for his own benefit. This interpretation of the events is closely tied together with the ideology that Standard English is favourable to nonstandard English, in that the Magistrate favours Renton to Spud due to Renton's style of speech. In this instance, then, nonstandardness is foregrounded in Renton's ability to style-shift, and in what he achieves through this ability; because the nonstandard variety used by Spud, and also by Renton in his internal monologue, it may be noted, carries indexical markers of Scots, place is yet again foregrounded in the novel.

## 4. Discussion and conclusion

In the analysis, we set out to investigate how place is foregrounded in *Trainspotting* through different channels, namely through the volume of a nonstandard language variety associated with Scotland; the discourse surrounding language in the novel; and through the ideology at play which emerges through style-shifting and the benefits of being able to style-shift.

We have established through an investigation of lexis, syntax and morphology, and orthography

and phonology that a significant amount of the writing employed in *Trainspotting* represents Scots. The linguistic features which represent Scots include the focusing device *ken*, the preposition *tae* and the negative marker *nae* as in *cannae*, and because they are recognisably associated with Scots, they foreground Scotland. Place is additionally foregrounded through the characters' meta-awareness and comments on their own language use as seen in Begbie's comment on 'the Queen's English' and Spud's thoughts on his own language at his job interview.

Concerning the third channel through which foregrounding of place is evident, Renton and Spud's different punishments for the crime which they were equally responsible for committing foregrounds the difference between Renton's employment of Standard English and Spud's nonstandard style of speech. The main reason that this foregrounds place is that Spud's style of speech carries indexical markers specific to Scots. Renton's ability to style-shift, and the benefits he gains from this ability, measured against Spud's local speech, contributes to a stigmatisation of Scots vernacular. Notably, the foregrounding of place happens in two steps in this channel: First, nonstandard language is foregrounded in that Spud's employment of nonstandard speech contributes to his punishment whereas Renton's use of Standard English saves him from prison and, second, because, as we have shown, the nonstandard speech employed is very much recognisable as Scots and thus clearly linked to Scotland.

Besides employing a vocabulary and orthography associated with Scots, *Trainspotting* draws on its own linguistic system, since, in several instances, Welsh has created his own particular orthography for the novel. We reason that *Trainspotting* is written in a mixture of Scots and a Scottish English dialect represented on the page by nonstandard spellings. We conclude this based on the presence of various Scots features, and on the fact that although English orthography is standardised, and has been for centuries, variation is still possible. Indeed, the common view of Scots and Scottish English as constituting a linguistic continuum supports the idea that the different language varieties on the continuum are easily intermixed. We additionally conclude that Welsh's use of nonstandard spellings, representing the phonology of a nonstandard variety, is intentional. His orthographic variation is a judicious decision, and it offers the potential for orthography to convey a deeper social meaning (following Sebba (2007) and (2009) who argues that orthographic practices indeed reflect social meaning). Welsh utilises the accepted phonological spellings of Standard English in an alternative manner to denote pronunciations which are prevalent in the area he wishes to portray.

By using a nonstandard language variety to an extent that it almost overpowers the 'norm' of the standard variety, Welsh comments on the linguistic inheritance of his characters, illustrating how one is forced to feel in one language and to reason and to write in another if one is able. In this manner, Welsh succeeds in portraying the language of a locale as a whole in contrast to the surrounding society by use of nonstandard English, not only in direct speech as most often seen in literature connected to dialect, but also in internal monologues accessed through first-person points of view. Simultaneously, he portrays his characters individually by creating variances within the apparent sameness of his linguistic system. These variances work as signposts which help the reader distinguish between the different characters, whilst concurrently shaping these characters' identities. These linguistic features convey personal identity, interrelationships, and standpoints on one level; on another level, they display the ideological battle between Standard English and nonstandard English. The characters' speech patterns may either be marked or unmarked choices, depending on the author's intentions, expressing solidarity or underlining authority towards other characters and towards society, e.g. Scottish language policy, as a whole.

Another aspect of Welsh's use of nonstandard English is that readers might connect the orthography with Scotland and also with language features associated with the working-class speakers which Welsh presents, although notably the orthography is, to some extent, merely 'eye-dialect' (as defined in Honeybone and Watson 2013: 313). As Hodson (2016) notes, for readers

familiar with the represented regional variety, in this case a nonstandard form of English associated with Scotland, the regional variety “signals highly specific information about social and geographical identity” (426). Welsh thereby empowers an un(der)represented group in society by letting the working-class speak (Morace 2001: 26).

By intentionally employing an extensive amount of nonstandard English, Welsh creates a surprising depiction of Standard English as being the deviant norm, and thus Standard English becomes the nonstandard variety. In other words, *Trainspotting*'s nonstandard language becomes a “hybrid linguistic form that marginalizes the standard English on which it depends” (Morace 2001: 27). This effect is connected to Short's (1996) notion of internal deviation: in the novel, nonstandard English is used to the extent that it becomes the norm, and when Standard English does appear on the page, it internally deviates from the internal norm.

Through the employment of nonstandard English in *Trainspotting*, Welsh expects the reader to draw on his or her social and linguistic knowledge to link specific linguistic features with certain language varieties and again with specific social characteristics believed to be typical of the speaker of the represented language variety. The social identities of the characters are connected to their ability to style-shift and to their mastering of Standard English. These abilities mirror their social, cultural, and economic background, exemplified by the status Renton upholds through his ability to style-shift compared to the positions offered to Begbie and Spud, who are both portrayed as less fortunate linguistically and, on account of such misfortune, socially, when faced with formal contexts. Welsh illustrates how the characters operate with greater benefit if they are able to adjust their speech to the social context.

To utilise Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's (2003) supposition, emphasising that members of the local community remain embedded in and loyal to their community, Begbie and Spud represent a national and local perspective on life respectively, maintaining status quo. Begbie is proud of his position, whilst Spud has no means, no wish, nor the ability to change his lifestyle. These life positions are depicted in their nonstandard language, and the positions fit Trudgill's (2000) ideas about regional variation in English being greater amongst people of low social status than of high social status. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) furthermore state that members of the elite classes by default engage in globalising institutions, e.g. educational institutions, and Trudgill (2000) asserts that speakers of the highest social class employ Standard English, which is nearly devoid of regional variation. Consequently, the standard language represents a detachment from the local perspective. Through style-shifting, Renton climbs the social ladder, and he elevates himself from his local community in an effort to escape his situation, attaining a global perspective on life and the opportunities such an existence will afford him.

Welsh offers no simple narrative solution to the oppression Renton and his friends face, only an emphasis on the status quo and the implicit need for change. *Trainspotting* as a localised Scottish story challenges traditional notions of nationalist literature. The novel foregrounds locality through the use of Scots, Scottish specificity, reference to Scottish beliefs and attitudes, and points of cultural and geographical Scottish references. By addressing local Scottish issues and concerns, Welsh stimulates a fascination within his readership for the lives of unfamiliar people and the places which these people inhabit; he seeks a readership that is willing to engage critically with the flaws and complications of Scottish life. Conversely, this spectacle is represented as a commodity for consumption by a readership fascinated with Scottish life but also with people at the bottom of society.

The use of a nonstandard language variety may be seen as a reaction to the loss of national stability in the eighties and nineties in Europe due to globalisation. Globalisation has created an increased interest in regional cultures by “asserting an identity independent of the centre's mainstream culture” (Stedman 1997: 82). By inserting ‘outsiders’, such as speakers of Scots, into his novel, Welsh upholds the fact that Standard English is merely one language variety amongst many, and he thereby proposes a transformation in language structures formerly determined by colonial and imperialist

hierarchies. In this manner, Welsh's use of Scots vernacular, regardless of its genuineness, establishes a renewed understanding of a Scottish nation and of Scotland as a place.

The volume and unique nature of the vernacular language used in *Trainspotting* not only foregrounds place through various means in the novel but adds an additional layer to the reader's perception of the characters. The use of the vernacular here not only brings some realism to the characters (as also mentioned by Hodson 2016) but in fact emplaces the characters solidly in Scotland, and it is tempting to suggest that Scotland becomes a character of its own through the indexicality of language.

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