



Undergraduate dissertation

Trabajo de fin de grado

A Sociolinguistic Approach to *Downton Abbey*
English: Social Class, Gender,
Geographical Origin and Context.

Author

María Lahuerta Bruballa

Supervisor

Ana María Hornero Corisco

FACULTY OF ARTS
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ABSTRACT

This undergraduate dissertation aims to study the variations in speech of the main characters in the British television series *Downton Abbey*, variations that are motivated by different extralinguistic factors, such as social class, gender, geography and context. Therefore, the characters' speech has been examined with respect to these factors, in order to find the most representative linguistic features displayed in each of them. The reason why this specific corpus has been chosen for the main objective is that it presents a wide range of accents and dialects of the English language along the six seasons of the series. More specifically, twenty-five episodes from all these seasons have been used for the analysis. The results of the study indicate that, linguistically, the main features and differences are found in the field of vocabulary and phonology. They demonstrate how these extralinguistic factors influence the speakers' way of speaking and, consequently, provide information about their identity and lives.

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este trabajo de fin de grado es el estudio de las diferencias en el habla entre los personajes principales de la serie de televisión británica *Downton Abbey*. Estas diferencias están motivadas por factores extralingüísticos como la clase social, el género, las distinciones geográficas y el contexto. Por ello, se ha analizado la forma de hablar de los personajes con respecto a estos factores, con el fin de encontrar las características lingüísticas más representativas dentro de cada uno de ellos. En concreto, se han seleccionado veinticinco episodios de todas las temporadas. La razón por la que se ha escogido este corpus es que se presenta una amplia gama de acentos y dialectos del inglés entre sus personajes. En términos lingüísticos, los resultados del análisis muestran que las características y diferencias principales están relacionadas con vocabulario y fonología. Estos resultados demuestran cómo los factores extralingüísticos influyen en la forma de hablar de las personas y, por lo tanto, facilitan información sobre su identidad y su vida.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The way people speak is determined by many factors, which are part of the world that surrounds them. In other words, language is never neutral because it reflects our lives and constructs our identity. Depending on matters such as social class, gender, geography or context, speakers of the same language show different linguistic forms. Sociolinguistics studies this behaviour of language in society. The focus of this dissertation is on the sociolinguistics of British English and the corpus selected for the analysis is the British television series *Downton Abbey*. The main reason for this choice is that the series' characters, who come from different backgrounds, show diverse linguistic features. Furthermore, the series is set in a period in which British society was strongly influenced by traditional values and a rigid social hierarchy. Both things are reflected in the characters' speech.

The theoretical section of this dissertation is divided into three parts. Firstly, there is an approach to the main aspects of sociolinguistics that are relevant for the proper comprehension of the analysis; secondly, the period in which the series takes place is briefly contextualised, in order to understand better the characters' situation; and thirdly, after a presentation of the main characters, there is a short introduction to the different accents and dialects that coexist in *Downton Abbey*. Regarding the analysis, I want to call attention to the fact that in order to locate the examples in the series, the season, episode and time will be indicated as follows: "S1E1, 01:00" making reference, in this case, to Season 1, episode 1, minute 01:00.

To conclude, the main results found after the study of the corpus show linguistic variations mostly within the section of social class, but also in aspects like gender, geography and context. These variations concern principally phonology and vocabulary and are motivated by each character's background.

2. A SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPROACH TO THE CHARACTERS' SPEECH

Languages are alive and they vary with the passing of time and change from region to region. Milroy (1992) states that “change seems to be inherent in the nature of language: there is no such thing as a perfectly stable human language” (p. 1). Indeed, it can be “observed to vary geographically and socially” (Milroy, 1992, p. 1). In geographical terms, a language contains different accents and dialects, and it is important to understand that there is a distinction between both concepts. According to Downes (1998), “a dialect varies from other dialects of the same language simultaneously on all three linguistic levels; phonologically, grammatically, and in terms of its vocabulary or lexically. An accent, by contrast, consists of phonetic variation on its own.” (p. 17). The difference between them is clear, but, sometimes, it is difficult to apply it in real life. Therefore, Trudgill (1983) notes that, instead of doubting whether to use one word or the other, “we shall be employing variety as a neutral term to apply to any ‘kind of language’ we wish to talk about without being specific” (p. 17).

Regarding the English spoken in the British Isles, many varieties can be noticed. Honey (1991) divides them into three registers: acrolect, mesolect and basilect. These are based on social and geographical factors. Accents and dialects in the acrolect are those considered to be more prestigious. This is the case of Received Pronunciation and its variations, which are regionless varieties. On the contrary, the basilect covers those varieties spoken by people with the lowest level of education, containing the broadest and most regional accents and dialects. The mesolect refers to those varieties spoken by most Britons, situated between the acrolect and the basilect. Indeed, the mesolect is between broad accent and RP. Furthermore, there is another register named hyperlect, which is above the acrolect. The hyperlect includes variations of Received Pronunciation known as the marked RP, which nowadays would be that one spoken by the Queen of England

and some other members of the Royal Family and the British upper class, and the unmarked RP, placed between the hyperlect and the acrolect.

Concerning sociolinguistics, everyone is influenced by the groups they belong to, groups that depend on variables such as people's social class or gender, among others. The relationships these individuals establish within their groups are called 'social networks' which, according to Downes (1998), are "a way of representing the individual's pattern of social transactions within a community" (Downes, 1998, p. 118). Apart from that, speakers create their unique manner of communication as well. This is what Downes (1998) calls idiolect, which are "those features peculiar to an individual's 'lect', [that] reflects each person's unique position in relation to the structural heterogeneity of a changing language" (p. 270). Therefore, idiolects define people's identity with respect to the others. In addition, depending on their speech, a person can be classified in one group or another, and consequently, he or she will be thought to share specific characteristics of it. Accents and dialects carry stereotypes and, unintentionally, they give information about the speaker, too. Indeed, in British society, linguistic stereotypes are common. Downes (1998) explains that listeners "typically make judgements about the speaker's personality from the way he or she speaks" (p. 266) and also that linguistic forms "elicit perceptions of the personality of the speaker as a representative of a type" (p. 266). As an example, enunciated by Honey (1991), RP speakers are associated with "educatedness and competence" (p. 75), whereas speakers of non-standard accents are related to features such as "sociability and solidarity" (p. 75).

In films and series, the use of the different varieties of a language is also influenced by these social stereotypes. Accents and dialects are frequently used with the purpose of creating stories as close to reality as possible. In other words, it can be stated that the varieties of a language are another tool to create the world of a film or a series.

Referring to this topic, Bruti and Vignozzi (2016) explain that language varieties become “an effective resource that filmmakers have at their disposal and with which they not only produce natural sounding conversations, but also give background information about characters’ lives and locations” (p. 48). Nonetheless, when accents and dialects are used in films to give this background information, they are not completely natural. Bruti and Vignozzi (2016) agree that “compared to spontaneous speech, film speech shows a neutralising tendency and thus, also dialects and accents, when present, tend to be less strong and marked in order not to affect the audience’s comprehension” (as cited in Taylor, 2006, p. 38). However, varieties of language are a good resource to provide information about the characters.

Regarding social class, language is an important factor that defines people in this matter. Britain has always been a country strongly divided into classes. In general terms, these classes are upper class, middle class and working or lower class, and there are particular varieties that depict each class. People from the upper class tend to use Received Pronunciation. On the contrary, working or lower classes speak with a wide range of varieties, from different regions of the country. That is, those features that are associated with specific regions in Britain tend to be related to lower class speakers. The varieties that determine an individual’s socioeconomic class are called sociolects.

Language also plays a preponderant role with respect to gender. As indicated by Downes (1998) “‘gender’ is a sociological category...[that] characterizes the socio-cultural features of identity which make up the contrast between ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’” (p. 203). Hence, people’s gender is determined by features and differences established by society, and it can also be inferred by the speech. In English linguistics, some experts state that women tend to use more standard forms than men, an issue called “the typical pattern”. Downes (1998) explains that this may happen due to “normative

pressure from above” (as cited in Labov, 1972, p. 204). That is, perhaps women use more standard forms because they have been performing a subordinate role in society throughout history, although, nowadays things are changing. Therefore, women are more conscious about their condition and they use language to improve it. Also Trudgill (1983) mentions that women’s speech is “‘better’ than men’s speech” (p. 88) and that this is “a reflection of the fact that...more ‘correct’ social behaviour is expected of women” (p. 88). Language reflects all these gender social issues.

The last sociolinguistic consideration to mention here is context. As well as it would be inappropriate to wear a swimsuit to a wedding, speakers need to know that certain uses of language, or certain varieties, are also inappropriate in specific situations. According to Trudgill (1983) “the same speaker uses different linguistic varieties in different situations and for different purposes” (p. 100). He states that, depending on the context “different degrees of politeness and deference may be required, and these are signalled linguistically” (p. 102). Indeed, vocabulary plays a crucial role in context, which is characterized “by the use of particular words, or by the use of words in a particular sense” (Trudgill, 1983, p. 101). Social conventions determine the uses of language in specific contexts and speakers learn and perform them.

3. SOCIOHISTORICAL CONTEXT IN ENGLAND AT THE ONSET OF THE 20TH CENTURY

As the corpus of the analysis is set on the early 20th century period in Britain, it is important to briefly comment the main events that marked those times. Many changes were brought with the turn of the century and many others were yet to come. In 1901 Queen Victoria died and was succeeded by his son Edward VII, who reigned until 1910. The Victorian and Edwardian periods were notable in terms of social, technological and

economic change. To begin with, British society was undergoing a growth in terms of modernisation and mobility, with the arrival of the railways or the steam locomotion as well as the presence of electricity in daily life. Apart from that, society was arranged into classes, a hierarchical division that “presupposes that each individual has an allotted place in the divinely pre-ordained order of things” (Still, 2017, p. 12). Royle (1987) states that until the 20th century, British society “was divided into the servant-keeping and the serving-classes” (p. 228). Many aristocrats lived in big country houses, which were a way of proclaiming “their wealth, power and influence to their equals and inferiors alike” (p. 227). Within their walls lived the aristocratic family and many other people who devoted their lives to serve them. Nevertheless, some experts agree that after the turn of the century, Britain was evolving to a kind of classless society. Among the main reasons of it, Royle (1987) mentions “the changing structure of the national economy [which] had facilitated social mobility, thus weakening class barriers” (p.148). But classes were not the only thing that began to weaken. Around 1880s, women raised their voices in order to put an end to the restrictions they suffered, seeking the right to vote with active campaigns, that were stopped by the beginning of the First World War. Carter and Mears (1960) comment that many women decided to help during the war years becoming nurses or munition workers. This way, they started performing important roles in society. The war, in which Britain participated from 1914 to 1918, was one of the most meaningful events of the early 20th century and it marked a milestone in the country and the rest of the world. This atmosphere brought with it many social changes but, also, it prompted a change of mentality, in the sense that many people started seeing life from a different perspective.

4. DOWNTON ABBEY

The British drama series *Downton Abbey* was created in 2010 by Julian Fellowes and it is set amidst these social and psychological conditions. The series, which has 6 seasons with 52 episodes altogether, narrates the life of the aristocratic Crawley family during the previously explained period, between 1912 and 1926, in England. More specifically, the majority of the events happen in the family's house, Downton Abbey, situated in the English northern county of York, in which both the noble family and their servants live. Mattisson (2014) states that in *Downton Abbey* there is a “prominence given to World War One as a catalyst for social and intellectual change” (p. 1). The arrival of the war in July 1914 takes characters by surprise and makes them live in the middle of this social transition. The series represents the revolutions and innovations of that society in which characters try to get along with their lives.

4.1. Characters

There is a well-defined distinction between two groups of characters: aristocrats and servants. As was the case during the Edwardian period, each group has their own rules and hierarchy within and between them. For instance, they do not share the same spaces in the house, which is one of the most remarkable symbols of this differentiation. Mattisson (2014) comments that “each member of the Downton household, both above and below stairs, has his or her proper place both physically and socially” (p. 10). Thus, the Crawley's physical space is upstairs whereas the servants' one is downstairs. Sociallywise, there are differences between both groups in terms of behaviour, education, ideologies or speech, among others.

Regarding upstairs characters, the first one to mention is Lord Robert Crawley (Hugh Bonneville), Earl of Grantham and owner of Downton Abbey. As the only male figure inhabiting and managing the house, his main concern is to protect both Downton

and his family. Lady Cora Crawley (Elizabeth McGovern), Countess of Grantham, who is originally from America, is his wife. They have three daughters: Lady Mary (Michelle Dockery), Lady Edith (Laura Carmichael) and Lady Sybil (Jessica Brown-Findlay). Mary is the eldest daughter and the one who is expected to inherit the family's mansion. The second daughter is Edith, who tries to find her position in life alongside evolving with the times. During the series, she learns to drive and later, she works in a newspaper. She is followed by Sybil, the youngest sister, who becomes very politically and socially engaged. She usually attends political meetings about women's rights or works as a nurse during the war. Both Lady Sybil and Lady Edith "represent the "new women" of the early 20th century, who welcomed the opportunity to adopt roles hitherto reserved for men and to prove their worth." (Mattison, 2014, p. 17). By contrast, Lord Robert's mother, Lady Violet, the Dowager Countess (Maggie Smith), is the opposite to her granddaughters. She depicts those traditional values that characterise the British upper-class and, clearly, she "represents the older generation, who staunchly resists change" (Mattison, 2014, p. 17).

Regarding the staff downstairs, two essential characters are Mr. Carson (Jim Carter), the butler, and Mrs. Hughes (Phyllis Logan), the housekeeper. Their main task is to supervise the rest of the workers at Downton Abbey and make sure that everything works properly. As can be seen, "the focus on Mr. Carson and Mrs. Hughes below stairs is mirrored by the influence and authority of the Earl and Countess of Grantham above stairs" (Mattison, 2014, p. 10). In other words, Mr. Carson and Mrs. Hughes are somehow representatives of Lord and Lady Grantham in the downstairs' world. Furthermore, both Mr. Carson and Lord Robert have similar conservative ideologies, which slightly differ from those of Mrs. Hughes and Lady Cora. What's more, according to Mattison (2014) "Mr. Carson is constantly reminded by Mrs. Hughes that times are changing" (p. 11). Apart from that, each member of the Crawley family has their own servant. Mr. Bates

(Brendan Coyle) is Lord Robert's valet and Anna, Mr. Bates' wife, (Joanne Froggatt) is Lady Mary's maid. In the case of Lady Cora, Mrs. O'Brien (Siobhan Finneran) is the one appointed to be her maid, although she is later replaced by Edna (MyAnna Buring). Another significant member of the downstairs' employees is Thomas Barrow (Rob James-Collier), who initially worked as first footman and later he becomes head valet and under-valet. Thomas does not get on very well with the rest of servants, perhaps because he always tries to get them into trouble. In the kitchen, the cook is Mrs. Patmore (Lesley Nicol), who oversees Daisy (Sophie McShera). At first, Daisy is the kitchen maid but later she is promoted to assistant cook. She is the youngest and most naïve worker in the house, although she is very hardworking and develops a strong temper throughout the series. Both Mrs. Patmore and Daisy are similar in the sense that they "have strong personalities, and their values and ideas have changed very little as the series has progressed." (Mattison, 2014, p. 7). Other relevant downstairs characters are Mr. Molesley (Kevin Doyle), Jimmy (Edward Speleers), William (Thomas Howes) and Alfred (Matt Milne), who are the male servants, and Gwen (Rose Leslie) and Ethel (Amy Nuttall), who work as female housemaids.

There are also characters who do not live in the house but who play a preponderant role in the Crawleys' lives and the series. This is the case of Lady Isobel Crawley (Penelope Wilton) and her son, Matthew Crawley (Dan Stevens), who are relatives of the Crawley family and belong to the upper middle class. At the beginning of the series Matthew works as a lawyer in Manchester and he becomes the sole heir of his cousin Robert's fortune by getting married to Lady Mary. His mother is a doctor's widow and, in contrast to her upper class relatives, she is much more open-minded and always willing to work. Several times she helps Doctor Clarkson (David Robb), Downton's doctor, working at the hospital. Ajtony (2013) comments about her that she "has quite modernist

and feminist views” (p. 7). Finally, another interesting character who becomes part of this class is Tom Branson (Allen Leech). Originally from Ireland, Branson starts working as a chauffeur for the family and his socialist ideologies catch the attention of Lady Sybil. They fall in love and, without the approval of Lady Sybil’s family, they get married. Consequently, Tom Branson climbs up in the social ladder, from living a working class life to becoming a member of the Crawley’s aristocratic world. Still (2017) mentions that Branson “rises from the working class by marriage but cannot become a part of the aristocracy...instead, he becomes upper middle class” (p. 51). Thus, Thomas Branson is an intriguing character in the sense that he, as well as Lady Sybil, depicts those social changes that characterised the period.

4.2. Accents and dialects in the series

As *Downton Abbey* is a television series, it is important to keep in mind the idea previously exposed by Bruti and Vignozzi (2016) that accents and dialects in films show a “neutralising tendency”. Nonetheless, there has been a process of historical research and coaching mainly accomplished by the journalist and historian Alastair Bruce which advises actors and producers about the speech and vocabulary they should use in the series, among other things.

Downton Abbey portrays a wide variety of accents and dialects. In fact, the division between the upstairs and downstairs characters is represented in linguistic terms as well. In general, most of the members of the Crawley family speak either Standard English or use a Received Pronunciation. RP started to be taught in British public schools during the 19th century. Honey (1991) mentions the case of a parent who sent his children to Eton College, in London, “to withdraw his sons from local associations” (p. 25). In the series Lord Robert says that he went to Eton, “I mean, if I'd shouted blue murder every time someone tried to kiss me at Eton, I'd have gone hoarse in a month.” (S3E8, 40:06-

40:11). Consequently, this provides a clue to the audience about his speech, influenced by that “public school accent”. Simultaneously, their servants tend to show features from British northern dialects, apart from other varieties of English, such as Scottish or Irish. Each variety creates character’s identity, as Ajtony (2013) mentions “the language different characters speak is the primary indicator of their cultural identity.” (p. 7).

Regarding Received Pronunciation, the current definition given in the Oxford Dictionary of English is “the standard form of British English pronunciation, based on educated speech in southern England, widely accepted as a standard elsewhere”. In the case of *Downton Abbey*, as mentioned before, the Crawley family and their relatives use RP. However, Lady Violet seems to differ from the rest of the family in that she speaks a different type of RP. As affirmed by Honey (1991), marked RP speakers seem to talk “with a plum in the mouth” (p. 28), which could be an accurate description of Lady Violet’s speech. Lady Cora’s speech is also remarkable since, although she is American, she presents some features of RP. She tends to speak with a drawl, pronouncing words very slow, which makes her speech very elegant and easy to understand. Therefore, she has her own idiolect derived from American dialect and British RP. Moreover, something interesting about the variety spoken by these characters is that it contains many colloquial expressions as well as archaic forms. The use of these archaisms, such as “alas” (Lady Mary, S1E6, 11:40), is outstanding in the sense that it helps to shape the Edwardian world of *Downton Abbey*.

Concerning the rest of varieties found in the series, one that appears more remarkably is the northern dialect. As the house is set in Yorkshire, some of the staff characters show features of the Yorkshire dialect. This is the case of Anna and Gwen who instead of pronouncing words, as in Standard English, with /ʌ/, they do it with /ʊ/. This can be heard, for instance, in a moment when they reprimand Daisy: “You made me

jump” (Anna, S1E5, 00:42), “You are all thumbs” (Gwen, S1E5, 00:47). Also Daisy and Mrs Patmore show another feature of the northern dialect, which is the use of the 3rd person plural pronoun “them” as a demonstrative, instead of using “those”: “But he drowned in them icy waters (Daisy, S1E5, 05:46-05:48), or when Anna asks Mrs. Patmore what she will serve for dinner and she responds “Them, of course” (Mrs. Patmore, S1E5, 29:51). Furthermore, these two characters, along with Barrow, also present characteristics of the Cockney dialect in their speech, mainly displayed in terms of vocabulary and phonology. Regarding vocabulary, there are some remarkable words such as “blimey” (Mrs. Patmore, S1E6, 26:07) or “loony” (Barrow, S2E4, 12:17). As regards phonology, a very significant feature is the h-dropping, considered to be a speech characteristic of lower classes. It is heard in Daisy’s and Thomas’ speech, among other characters: “They’ve arrested this fellow and ’is gang” (Thomas, S1E7, 19:42); and later in the same episode “she can’t ’ave” (Daisy, 35:46).

As to other dialects, one worth mentioning is that of Mrs. Hughes. In season one, she mentions that she is from Scotland, something which is reflected in her speech. There are several Scottish dialect features portrayed by her. For instance, the pronunciation of postvocalic r, “Are you sure?” (S1E3, 13:27), a characteristic known as rhoticity. Also, her intonation at the end of some sentences is different from that of Standard English. Mrs. Hughes finishes her sentences with a high-rising pattern, as it happens in some Scottish accents, “He is just jealous!” (S1E4, 39:25). And lastly, someone whose speech is also outstanding is the Irish Tom Branson, with features of the Irish dialect. The most noticeable one is that, usually, he makes no distinctions between /ʌ/ and /ʊ/. For example, when Branson says to Lady Sybil “that’s the first time you’ve ever spoken about us” (S2E4, 37:51-37:54), he pronounces “us” with /ʊ/. That is, he pronounces /ʊ/ in cases where RP shows /ʌ/.

5. SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERS

Methodology

All these *Downton Abbey* characters come from different backgrounds and present distinctions between them in social terms. As the focus of this end-of-degree project is on their linguistic differences, as explained before, and the implications they have in society, the characters' speech will be analysed with regard to four aspects: social class, gender, geographical variation and context. For the analysis, all the episodes from the six seasons of the series have been examined. In particular, the data belong to 25 episodes altogether. As to comment on every detail concerning sociolinguistics would be beyond the scope of this dissertation, the focus is on what I have considered to be some of the most curious and interesting points found in linguistic terms.

Analysis

5.1. Social class

Perhaps one of the most distinctive variables in linguistic terms is social class. In the series, the differences in speech between servants and aristocrats are very remarkable. Regarding **vocabulary**, many words used by the Crawley family derive from Latin and French, whereas other words used by the servants are dialectal forms and slang terms which are not considered formal. Furthermore, they carry linguistic stereotypes.

There are some examples of these words in Tables 1 and 2, which show some of the words found in the corpus regarding this sociolect:

Upper class characters

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Lord Robert | horrid (S1E3, 36:45) fragile (S1E3, 37:10) |
| Lady Mary | absorbed (S1E5, 01:20) |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| | idiotic (S1E5, 09:45) preoccupied (S2E3, 06:20) abhorrent (S4E8, 47:45) testimonio (S3E9, 31:00) |
| Lady Edith | imbecile (S5E1, 51:20) |
| Lady Violet | splendid (S1E5, 24:05) lamentation (S5E1, 05:37) |

Table 1: Vocabulary used by upper class characters

Lower class characters

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Thomas Barrow | clodhopper (S1E6, 03:40) loony (S2E4, 12:15) |
| Daisy Mason | jiffy (S1E6, 06:50) daft (S2E5, 23:30) |
| Sarah O'Brien | noodle (S1E6, 09:40) mare (S2E5, 16:40) |
| Mrs. Patmore | dozy (S1E6, 26:03) ruddy (S4E1, 01:20:40) |
| Anna Bates | chump (S1E6, 07:47) |

Table 2: Vocabulary used by servants

In the case of the Table 1, 6 out of 10 words have a Latin origin and the remaining 4 have Middle French origins. This detail is significant, given the fact that both Latin and French have been languages of prestige in Britain, which only a small part of the population could

learn through education. By contrast, none of the words in Table 2 present a Latin or French origin; according to *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, they are slang and colloquial words which come from Old English expressions and, curiously, 8 out of 9 are adjectives used to address someone. For instance, “loony” means “lunatic”, and dates from the 19th century as well as “chump”, which means “blockhead”. Therefore, the vocabulary of the upper classes, which have been educated, contrasts with that of the lower classes, which have not received an education. The rest of characters that have not been mentioned here are not so representative in this aspect under analysis.

Apart from that, there are variations in other groups of words, as it is the case of expressions used by the characters to swear or to express surprise. Before commenting on this, it is important to clarify that as well as the rest of people, Standard English speakers also swear and use informal language, but of course with lexical differences. As Trudgill (1983) states “many people appear to believe that if someone uses slang expressions or informal turns of phrase this means that he is not speaking standard English” (p. 17). Thus, all characters swear, regardless of their social class, and it is interesting to examine the broad variety of terms found in *Downton Abbey*. On the one hand, the most common words used among the servants are:

- 1) “Bloomin’” (Mrs. Patmore, S1E5, 29:39), which “is used as one of the many slang euphemism substitutes for *bloody*” (Onions, 1966, p. 101) and dates from 19th century.
- 2) “Blimey!” (O’Brien, S3E7, 06:50), which dates from the 19th century and is a short vulgar expression of the word “gorblimey”, as stated by Onions (1966, p. 100).
- 3) “Bloody” (O’Brien, S1E7, 26:10). According to the Online Etymology Dictionary (henceforth OED), this word was “heavily tabooed [during] c.1750-c.1920,

perhaps from imagined association with menstruation” it is also mentioned that Johnson calls it “very vulgar,” and the Oxford English Dictionary writes about it that “now [is] constantly in the mouths of the lowest classes, but by respectable people [is] considered 'a horrid word', on par with obscene or profane language.”

- 4) “By heck!” (Mrs. Patmore, S3E4, 37:11), which, as mentioned in the OED, seems to be a “euphemistic alteration of hell” and dates from 1865.

On the other hand, expressions used by the Crawleys are:

- 1) “Heavens!” (Lady Mary, S3E8, 03:50; Anna, S2E2, 11:10), which expresses surprise. It is also said by Anna, perhaps because she is Lady Mary’s maid and she has daily contact with the aristocrats’ speech.
- 2) “Golly” (Lord Robert, S3E1, 36:20; Lady Mary, S4E8, 16:55; Lady Cora, S4E8, 19:45). In the OED, this word is explained as a euphemism for “God”, which was already used in 1775. Also, it is said that the word originated in the U.S. (Onions, 1966, p. 405) and curiously enough, Lady Cora is American.

Moreover, the word “crikey” is used by both the aristocrats and the servants. It is first uttered by Lady Sybil (S3E1, 25:25), later by Jimmy (S3E8, 03:08), and also, by Lord Robert (S3E8, 40:20). This word dates from the 19th century and is an alteration of “Christ”, “used to avoid the appearance of profanity” (Onions, 1966, p. 228).

Phonological features are very representative in this aspect. Upper and upper-middle class characters use varieties within the acrolect indicated by Honey (1991), which, as stated in the section 2, is divided into marked and unmarked RP. Lady Violet seems to use marked RP, and one example is her pronunciation of the word “off” as /orf/ (S1E5, 15:50), which, as Honey (1991) would say, is a rather “fraffly-fraffly” (p. 28) sound.

Apart from that, the speech of the servants in this field is very appealing, because it shows more variations compared to Received Pronunciation. In the following table, there is a list of all the characteristics found in their speech along with some of the most representative samples found throughout the series:

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Pronunciation of <u> as /ʊ/ instead of as the RP sound /ʌ/</p> | <p>“I thought you’d given <u>up</u>” /ʊp/ (Gwen, S1E5, 02:05)</p> <p>“Don’t punish <u>us</u>” /ʊs/ (O’Brien, S1E7, 07:50)</p> <p>“Don’t <u>fuss</u> me” /fʊs/ (Mrs. Patmore, S1E7, 12:28)</p> <p>“with any <u>luck</u>” /lʊk/ (William, S2E2, 02:00)</p> <p>“I’m fed <u>up</u>” /ʊp/ (Daisy, S3E1, 14:00)</p> |
| <p>H-dropping</p> | <p>“<u>e</u> ‘ad other interests” (Thomas Barrow, S1E3, 34:10)</p> <p>“<u>e</u> is not a ladies’ man!” (Mrs. Patmore, S1E4, 34:12)</p> <p>“Too much death in this ‘<u>ouse</u>” (Daisy, S135, 05:50)</p> <p>“I envy ‘<u>im</u>” (Ethel, S2E4, 17:55)</p> <p>“I don’t blame ‘<u>er</u>” (Jimmy, S4E1, 07:45)</p> <p>“I work with ‘<u>im</u>” (Mrs. Hughes, S4E1, 18:55)</p> |
| <p>Final velar voiced /-g/ pronounced as velar voiceless /-k/</p> | <p>“Whoever heard of such thing?” /θɪnk/ (Mrs. Patmore, S1E5, 36:30)</p> <p>“Nothing!” /’noθɪnk/ (Mrs. Patmore, S5E1, 09:07)</p> |
| <p>Velar /ŋ/ pronounced as alveolar /n/</p> | <p>“It’s that <u>bloomin</u>’ Daisy” /’blu:min/ (Mrs. Patmore S1E5, 29:39)</p> |
| <p>1st person possessive <my> pronounced as /mi/ or /mei/</p> | <p>“I’m here to have <u>mi</u> dinner” (Mr. Molesley, S1E7, 34:25)</p> <p>“Someone walked over <u>mi</u> grave” (Daisy, S2E5, 02:25)</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>“<u>Mi</u>self” (Mrs. Patmore, S4E3, 09:20)</p> <p>“I’ve got <u>mei</u> own stuff” (Daisy, S4E3, 30:45)</p> <p>“I want to stretch <u>mi</u> legs” (Jimmy, S4E1, 31:50)</p> |
| Use of <my> instead of the object pronoun <me> | <p>“You don’t mind <u>my</u> seeing to her ladyship?” (Anna, S4E1, 05:35)</p> |
| Glottal stop | <p>“Just <u>water</u> and a <u>bit</u> of soup” /'wɔ:ʔə/ /biʔ/ (Daisy, S1E7, 36:18)</p> <p>“<u>but</u> I’m a very hard worker” /bʊʔ/ (Edna, S4E1, 46:20)</p> <p>“Don’t be like <u>that</u>” /ðætʔ/ (Mrs. Patmore, S5E1, 02:34)</p> |
| Pronunciation of intervocalic <t> as /ts/ | <p>“Next <u>satur</u>day” /'sætʃədəi/ (Mr. Molesley, S1E5, 02:54)</p> |

Table 3: Phonological features in the lower classes

In **grammatical terms**, Daisy is worth mentioning. Regarding her speech, it is very frequent to hear her using a double negation “I didn’t see nothing” (S1E5, 22:20) or using the auxiliary verb “don’t” for the 3rd person instead of “doesn’t”, as in “that don’t count” (S2E6, 39:55) or “don’t she?” (S4E4, 12:00).

There are other characters who have not been mentioned in these previous parts, and that is because they are not that illustrative. However, that does not mean that they are not appealing in sociolinguistic terms. This is the case of Mr. Carson, the butler. Even though he is considered to belong to the lower class, he does not show the expected linguistic features of it. Mr Carson has his own idiolect, which, despite what may be expected, is very formal and rather close to RP in most contexts. Perhaps this is due to his job and to the fact that he is frequently in contact with Lord Robert and shares similar ideologies with him.

5.2. Gender

“People are socialized into gender characteristics, not born with them” (Downes, 1998, p. 203) and therefore, as language is a tool to socialise, it plays a relevant role in the issue of gender differentiation. In this matter, the distinctions found in the series are mostly in terms of vocabulary.

Women’s role in the early 20th century was quite subordinate compared to men’s role, although *Downton Abbey* shows the improvement and growth of many female characters in their professional and personal lives. Linguistically, one aspect worth mentioning, very briefly, is **prosody**. With respect to most of the female characters who appear in the six seasons, their speech is very close to the standard, exception made of Daisy’s and Mrs. Patmore’s. Particularly, the ladies’ speech is very easy to understand because they speak with a drawl. This linguistic issue makes them look more elegant and fragile, as Lord Robert would say to Mr. Carson “they are finer and more fragile than we are” (S1E3, 37:10). Thus, this is the kind of image that society wanted women to give and their prosody helps them to achieve it.

Another important aspect to mention, that has to do with gender and **vocabulary**, is taboos and the words characters use to talk about them. Both male and female characters avoid talking about things like menstruation, “women’s stuff” (Lady Mary, S3E8, 04:09); having sexual relationships for the first time, “now you are damaged goods” (Lady Cora, S1E5, 27:59-28:00); or women’s underwear, “the smaller items” (S5E6, 13:38) and “your things” (S5E6, 13:49), said by Mr. Spratt when talking to Lady Violet, for whom she works as butler. Apart from these expressions, other recurrent way of avoiding talking about “women’ stuff”, as Lady Mary would say, is a pause. This resource is used twice. The first time by Lord Robert when he discovers that Lady Cora is pregnant and speaks with Dr. Clarkson: “How long has she ...? (S1E7, 06:54-06:56).

In order to make himself understood, he gesticulates. The second time when Lady Mary announces her husband Matthew that she had had difficulties to get pregnant: “There was something wrong with ... actually I cannot talk about this sort of thing, even to you” (S3E8, 36:54-37:03). In this case, Lady Mary makes a pause and looks right to Matthew’s eyes.

The last thing to comment in this section are the words used to insult other people used by women and men. The examples found are represented in the following table, although these are only some of the most representative ones:

| | |
|-------|---|
| Women | silly chump, noodle, bloody, slut, silly mare, daft, idiotic, whippersnapper, ruddy, imbeciles. |
| Men | clumsy clodhopper, sod’em, loony, bad pennies, bastard, bloody, grubby little chauffeur, foul, bat. |

Table 4: Insults used by both genders

In the case of women, the words labelled as derogatory, according to online English Oxford Living Dictionaries, are:

- 1) “Slut” (Lady Edith, S1E7, 32:30), used to refer to “a woman who has many casual sexual partners”. Lady Edith uses this word with Lady Mary, in a private moment when she is angry with her.
- 2) “Mare” (O’Brien, S2E5, 16:42), which is another word used to insult a woman. This word is said by O’Brien when she is talking to Barrow about Mr. Bates’ ex-wife.

In contrast, the following expression is found derogatory in the case of men:

- 1) “Sod’em” (Barrow, S1E7, 26:30), which is composed by the verb “sod” and the personal pronoun “them”. As stated in online English Oxford Living Dictionaries, “sod” is used “to express one’s anger or annoyance at someone or something”. Barrow uses this expression to refer to the Crawleys when O’Brien tells him that she could be dismissed from her job.

Although there are probably more examples throughout the series, the results found here show that there are 11 examples of insults used by men and 10 used by women; 2 out of 10 words used by women are pejorative and aimed to other women, whereas only 1 out of 11 is considered to be pejorative in the case of men and aimed to the Crawleys in general. In real life, the truth stated by Trudgill (1983) is that “it is certainly more acceptable in our society for men to swear and use taboo words than it is for women” (p. 84). The data reveal more examples in the case of men, but there are more words used by women that are derogatory.

5.3. Geographical variation

As regards variations in speech with respect to regions, there are features to comment mostly in lexical and phonological terms. In this case, Lady Cora, Mrs. Hughes and Branson are crucial characters. Moreover, some other features shown by the servants, such as Mrs. Patmore, Mr. Molesley and Alfred, deserve to be commented because they are significant in this section. The data concerning this topic in the corpus points to the following regions:

- 1) Scotland. Mrs. Hughes is from there and the Crawleys have relatives in the Scottish Highlands, whom they visit in season 2.
- 2) Ireland. It is represented by Tom Branson.
- 3) United States, where Lady Cora was born.

- 4) Yorkshire, England, which is the place where Downton Abbey is and where some of the servants have been born and raised.

With respect to **vocabulary**, there are some words used by the characters that are typical of these regions, but not part of Standard English:

- 1) “Wee” (Mrs. Hughes, S2E5, 28:25), a word used in Scotland meaning “little”.
- 2) “Glens” (Lady Edith, S2E9, 38:36). According to the OED, it is the Scottish word for "narrow valley," coming from Gaelic “gleann”. Edith says this word when she is visiting her relatives in Scotland.
- 3) “Summat” (Alfred, S4E1, 03:35), a non-standard form of the word “something”, as stated in online English Oxford Living Dictionaries.
- 4) “Quid” (Mrs. Patmore, S5E5, 02:41). As indicated in the OED, it is a "one-pound sterling," dated from 1680s, from British slang. It is usual of Cockney.
- 5) “Poppet” (S5E5, 42:22). This word, according to online Oxford English Living Dictionaries, is defined as “an endearingly sweet or pretty child (often used as an affectionate form of address)”. It is a British word and curiously, it is said by Lady Cora to address her daughter Edith. Although Cora is American, she is also influenced by British English as it can be seen here.
- 6) “Nay” (William Mason’s dad, S4E9, 53:20). Typical of the Yorkshire dialect, it is a non-standard way to say “no” that has its origins in the Middle English.

Nevertheless, geographical differences are better depicted in terms of **phonology**.

In the following table, there is a brief summary of the characteristics that have been found in the corpus:

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Yorkshire dialect | Vowels - Pronunciation of <u> as /ʊ/ instead of as the RP sound /ʌ/ “While we are <u>stuck</u> down here” /stʊk/ |
|-------------------|---|

| | |
|------------------|---|
| | <p>(Daisy, S6E4, 21:44)</p> <p>Consonants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Glottal stop <p>“Don’t say <u>tha</u>” /ðæʔ/ (Daisy, S6E7, 24:51)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - H-dropping <p>“She was a housemaid ‘<u>ere</u>” (Mrs. Patmore, S6E4, 21:39)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suffix -ing, in which <n> is pronounced as alveolar nasal /n/ instead of as velar nasal /ŋ/ <p>“It’s that bloomin’ Daisy” /blu:mi:n/ (Mrs. Patmore, S1E5, 29:39)</p> |
| Scottish English | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rhotic accent <p>“That’s <u>working</u> in a big house” /wɔ:rkɪŋ/ (Mrs. Hughes, S1E4, 20:45)</p> |
| American English | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <t> pronounced as /r/ <p>“Sybil is on <u>duty</u>” /’djuri/ (Lady Cora, S2E6, 09:59)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “wanna” instead of “want to” <p>“Do you <u>wanna</u> come?” (Lady Cora, S4E1, 10:52)</p> |
| Irish English | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pronunciation of <u> as /ʊ/ instead of as the RP sound /ʌ/ <p>“This <u>stuff</u>” /stʊf/ (Branson, S3E1, 35:20)</p> |

Table 5: Phonological features concerning geographical variation

5.4. Context

As explained in section 2, context variations are represented mostly by **vocabulary**. This is reflected in *Downton Abbey* too, where knowing how to address other people is important. Several issues can be commented about forms of address in the series.

To begin with, distinctions are found between servants and aristocracy. Downstairs characters refer to Lord Robert as “Milord” or “My lord” when they talk to him. Nevertheless, in his absence, they refer to him as “His lordship”. The same happens with the ladies of the house, who are “Milady” or “My Lady” if speaking with them and “Her ladyship” if they are not present in the conversation. According to the OED, “milady” and “milord” are words that started to be used around 1758 and they come from French. “Milady” is described as “a continental rendering of 'my lady', used as an appellation in speaking to or of an English noblewoman or great lady” whereas “milord” “is a rendering of my lord used as an appellation in speaking to or of an English nobleman”. By contrast, servants are addressed by aristocrats mostly by their surnames. It seems, however, that young servants are called by their names, instead of their surnames. This is the case of Anna, Daisy, Jimmy, Alfred or William, among others. This could also have to do with the job they have. Mr. Carson, Mrs. Hughes and Mrs. Patmore are called by the rest of servants “Mr.” or “Mrs.”, perhaps because they are the figures of authority downstairs.

Regarding the Crawleys, Lord Robert and Lady Cora are “papa” and “mama” for their daughters, both when they talk to them or talking about them. The same happens with Lady Violet, who is “grandmama” or “granny”. Except for “granny”, the rest of words are stressed in the last syllable. The *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* indicates that “in educated English use.... [is] pronounced as /məmə/” (p. 549) and the same about “papa” which “in courtly and polite use it remained fashionable till early XIX” (p. 647). Although the series’ period is the early 20th century, it is true that these words are used by educated characters, as Onions (1966) states. In contrast, when Matthew addresses his mother, he says “mother”. Kutsenko (2014) explains that “because

they do not belong to the upper class and do not have courtesy titles, they use standard forms of address like *mother*” (p. 86).

Forms of address can also be confusing sometimes. Lady Sybil and Tom Branson are good examples in this matter. When Sybil is doing her job as a nurse, she has to correct Mr. Carson when he calls her “milady”:

MR. CARSON: “I'm sure that's not necessary, milady.”

LADY SYBIL: “It's not "milady" now, Carson. It's Nurse Crawley.” (S2E2, 21:10)

Therefore, in this case Mr. Carson must call her “Nurse Crawley” instead of “milady” because she is working. Branson’s case is similar. When he works as the family’s chauffeur, his workmates call him “Branson” or “Tom”. Nonetheless, when he marries Lady Sybil, servants must address him “Mr. Branson”, something that not all of them are willing to do. Simultaneously, the Crawleys start addressing him as “Tom”. Lady Cora is the first member of the family to call him by his name: “Hello Tom, welcome to Downton” (S3E1, 18:10). Addressing conventions are also confusing for Branson once he climbs up in the social ladder. An example can be found when Branson attends an upper class meeting:

1) He addresses a duchess as “Your Grace” and Lady Violet tells him not to do it.

Branson responds that he “thought it was correct” and Lady Violet says, “for a servant, or an official at a ceremony, but in a social situation, call her Duchess.” (S4E3, 07:40-07:50)

Lastly, in terms of **vocabulary**, there are two frequent words that I would like to mention because they illustrate this issue of context in a very clear way: the words “lunch” and “luncheon”. According to the OED, the Oxford English Dictionary informed in 1820 that “lunch” “was regarded either as a vulgarism or as a fashionable affectation”. Perhaps,

this is the explanation why it is never said by the aristocrats and downstairs servants use it very frequently when they talk to each other. In order to compare the use of these words, here are some examples, from the same episode (S4E1), uttered by different characters:

- 1) The nanny: “Will you ask Mrs Patmore to send up the children's luncheon in half an hour?” (07:24). She is asking Thomas Barrow, who, as a footman, is lower in the social scale than her.
- 2) Mrs. Patmore: “servants’ lunch is on the table” (10:33)
- 3) Lady Edith: “How is the luncheon for the tenants farmers coming along?” (36:05)
- 4) Anna asking Lady Mary: “How was the famous luncheon?” (54:50) She does not say “lunch” because she addresses Lady Mary. It is understood that it would not be appropriate to say “lunch” in front of her.

Nowadays, the Oxford English Dictionary labels the word “luncheon” as formal and indicates that it can also be used as a formal word for “lunch”. Moreover, “luncheon” appears only 346 times in the British National Corpus whereas “lunch” has a frequency of 4850 appearances. This emphasises the differences in terms of formality and context of these two words. Therefore, they are synonyms, but their use depends on the context.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the preceding analysis was to explore the variations among the characters of *Downton Abbey* in linguistic terms, considering different aspects of their lives: social class, gender, geography and context. The main results found are distinctions in phonology and vocabulary, but also, to a lesser extent, in prosody and grammar. Nonetheless, vocabulary differences are the only ones that appear in each subsection of the analysis. In general terms, it can be concluded that vocabulary is the main factor that defines the characters of this series in linguistic terms.

As regards social class, the data reveal that this is one of the most representative aspects concerning the topic. In terms of vocabulary, upper middle classes use words that derive from French and Latin, which are regarded as prestigious languages in Britain, whereas lower classes mainly use dialect and slang expressions. Phonologically, the downstairs characters' linguistic features are very illustrative when compared to Standard English, presenting features such as h-dropping or glottal stops. Daisy also displays distinctions in grammar, such as the use of double negation. Finally, there are several characters who, despite their social class, have their own idiolects, as is the case of Mr. Carson or Lady Violet.

In gender terms, vocabulary plays a crucial role. The taboo and swear words have been studied in this section following Trudgill's statement about it. The results show that men use more swear words than women and that they avoid talking about taboo matters. Furthermore, prosody must be commented here. Women characters seem to pay more attention to their speech, using a more standard and unhurried pronunciation and intonation.

Concerning geography, the principal findings show distinctions in lexical and phonological terms. In vocabulary there are several regional forms such as "wee", "summat" or "quid", which give information about the characters' origin. But, undoubtedly, phonological features are remarkable in this issue of geographical variation, as shown in Table 5, finding features like rhoticity, typical of Scottish English.

Lastly, in the section of context, many expressions have been found in the corpus regarding forms of address, which vary depending on context and people. Moreover, other words that I have decided to include in this section are "lunch" and "luncheon", because they represent this topic of context very well. "Lunch" is the informal synonym of "luncheon", used mostly in informal situations by the servants. In contrast, "luncheon"

is used by aristocrats and by servants when they speak to the aristocrats.

All these features and distinctions found during the analysis help to create the world of *Downton Abbey* and give extralinguistic information about the characters. To conclude, I personally think that this sociolinguistic approach to the series is a reflection of real life: our use of language and speech are never neutral, they are influenced by many factors and they are part of our personal and social identity.

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