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Essay on the Linguistic Features in J.K. Rowling's

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.

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English Linguistics
C-essay 10 p
Spring 2006
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Abstract

The literature on J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter is prolific. People have written on various topics dealing with issues such as translation, etymology and diverse areas concerning the language. In this essay, I examine whether linguistic features such as reporting verbs, adverbs of manner and adjectives contribute to the depiction of heroic and villainous characters. Before conducting this research, my assumptions were that there would be a great difference in the value of the words depending on the character they were associated with. I wanted to see if the heroic characters used verbs and adverbs with positive connotations, and the villainous characters verbs and adverbs with negative connotations. I also wanted to know if the adjectives describing the characters could, in themselves, clearly indicate whether a character was a hero or a villain.

The results of my research suggested that the choice of particular verbs and adverbs contributed only indirectly to the depiction of the characters. Without context, it was not possible to know if the character was a hero or a villain simply by identifying the verbs and adverbs used to describe their speech. By contrast, the choice of particular adjectives did appear to indicate more clearly whether a character was hero or villain. Finally, the results of my research indicated that context, rather than the use of particular linguistic features was often the most important factor in contributing to the portrayal of characters in the novel.

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1. Introduction

When J. K. Rowling published the first Harry Potter novel in 1997 no one knew what a big success it would be. She conquered the world, and various academic readings and analyses of the Harry Potter novels have been made in recent years. The issue of the use of language in the Harry Potter novels is an interesting one, and there has been a small body of research and commentary written on this topic, particularly with reference to problems in translating J.K. Rowling's novels.

2. Review of the literature

In this section of my essay, I shall present a review of relevant literature, including (2.1) literature dealing with the language of Harry Potter, and (2.2) literature concerned with the wider issue of linguistic approaches to fiction.

2.1 The literature on the language of Harry Potter

Chaudhuri (2000)

One of the earliest papers on the language of Harry Potter by Chaudhuri concerns the American version of the novel, which studies the changes made when translating the British English into American English. She believes that the reason for making an American version is "to make the book user friendly for the American child, sparing him/her any jolt or distress in negotiating alien British terrain" (Chaudhuri ,2000:1). Such changes even include the titles of the books, so that *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in Britain became *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in the USA. There were also vocabulary changes, so that:

> post becomes mail, lorry becomes truck, fortnight becomes two weeks; and going a step further, crumpets becomes muffins (which they are not). Besides which, colour becomes color and grey becomes gray. (Chauduri 2000: 5)

Chaudhuri disapproves of this "forced cultural shift" and argues that the novels be kept in their original language.

Morris (2001)

Morris' article focuses on the etymology of some proper nouns in the Harry Potter novels. He argues that a character's name can reveal a lot about him or her, and discusses the name of the most malicious wizard, Voldemort:

The word Voldemort is a subtly constructed one, made up of parts which explicitly define the character. The component parts of the name are the morphemes *volde* and *mort*. […] The word *volde* is taken from old English, and is an obsolete version of the word will. […] *Mort*, of course, is a much simpler word to understand since it is a term which still exists in modern usage. […] It is a word of French origin and is identified primarily with the meaning "dead". (Morris 2001 : 9)

Morris further argues that with these references to death, the combination of the two words *volde* and *mort* "implies a definite characteristic of Voldemort himself. He is the will of death, it is his will that those who oppose him shall die." (2001: 9).

Having discussed several proper nouns in the novel, Morris writes:

The specific use of proper nouns with etymological precedents can be used as a stylistic device to achieve one of three ends: firstly to foreshadow character traits or personalities prior to their proper "physical" introduction […], secondly to re-enforce a view of a character from the information already given […], and thirdly, in a device which also relies quite heavily on the previous two, as part of a mechanism to provide the reader with red-herrings through misinformation. (Morris, 2001: 31)

Jentsch (2002)

Jentsch focuses on the difficulties of translating the Harry Potter novels, including the issue of made-up words. Here she notes:

The translator of the Harry Potter series has a unique challenge in the genre, that is, to portray a setting and its people that are a world apart from ours, and at the same time located due north of London (Jentsch 2002: 285).

Jentsch points to some problems that the translators of the Harry Potter novels must face, namely when to translate and when to keep the original words, and how to handle the problem of translating puns and word play since instances of these are almost impossible to translate directly. Also, since there is no distinction between formal and informal 'you' in English, the translators must decide themselves which grade of formality needed between the characters in the novel. Jentsch writes:

The subtlety of the difference between formal and informal address and what it has to say about the state of a relationship can be apparent only in a translation to a language with more than one form of address […] In the German version of the Harry Potter books, there is unfortunately much inconsistency in the

forms of address used by teachers to pupils. This detracts from the translation, as the reader continually wonders if he or she has missed some important relational shift. (Jentsch 2002: 289).

Even if Jentsch is not completely satisfied with how some of the translations have been done, she applauds how some translators has overcome the difficulties of made up words and word plays.

Mayes-Elma (2005)

Viewing the Harry Potter novels from a different perspective, Mayes-Elma writes about the agency of female characters, stating that "the purpose of this study was to deconstruct the representations of women's agency" (2003:1). Through a critical discourse analysis and a content analysis of the Harry Potter novels, she finds that:

> Traditional gender constructions of both men and women were found throughout the text. Ultimately, the adventure in the book is highlighted through active male characters, while passive/invisible female characters exist only in the background (Mayes-Elma 2003: 1)

Mayes-Elma discusses the roles of male and female characters in children's literature, based on five different themes: rule following and breaking; intelligence; validating/enabling; mothering; "bounded resistance". She concludes that:

> The construction of women's agency that J.K. Rowling presents to the reader in Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone is very much in keeping with the dominant discourse on gender. We do see images of intelligent, take charge women, but more frequently we see images of women who doubt themselves, feel the need to comfort or to take care of men, and need validation from the men in their lives. On the whole we see far more images of weak, needy women than strong, independent women. (Mayes-Elma, 2003: 107)

Mayes-Elma does not support this kind of children's literature, where the female characters are put out of the action, but placed as subordinate characters that helps the male heroic characters.

Goldstein (2005)

The main issue that Goldstein discusses is that of translating the Potter novels into languages other than English. Here, he writes, the challenge is partly linguistic and partly cultural. He comments that:

The most important of these challenges is undoubtedly a cultural one, as the environment of the book is decidedly English, from the very English-sounding Privet Drive, where Harry lives with his non-magical relatives, to teachers calling students by their surnames to virtually everyone having tea and crumpets in the afternoon. The stories follow a familiar theme in English children's books, that of adventures at boarding school, and many of the cultural nuances will be unfamiliar to readers in translation. Translators have several options, including de-Anglicizing the text, leaving names and concepts as they are (but including explanations of particularly difficult notions, such as Christmas crackers, Halloween, and Cornflakes—the latter having earned a footnote in the Chinese translation, to indicate that these are consumed immersed in milk for breakfast), or some combination of the two. (Goldstein 2006: 1)

Goldstein provides a list of the linguistic features that pose problems for translators. These include proper names, "made-up words, magic spells, regional accents, unknown creatures, and descriptive names" (*ibid*.: 2). Goldstein further explains that:

The language of Harry Potter's world is fraught with challenges for translators. The mere manner of speaking, for example, of the various characters reveals much about them. Expressions and forms of speech are often regional, requiring corresponding equivalences, where possible, in other languages. […] Invented words, including the spells and incantations of Harry's magical world, pose special problems. The names of people, places, and things—"Knockturn Alley" "muggles," and "Ravenclaw," for example—invariably evoke powerful imagery and thus create immensely difficult problems for translators. Not all names are translated, but those that are require extreme creativity and sensitivity in an attempt to duplicate—or at a minimum, approximate—the associations of the native English. (Goldstein 2006: 2)

Goldstein also reports that there were changes in the text for the American edition. Spellings were amended, as were some vocabulary items:

Thus dustbin becomes trashcan and a packet of crisps is turned into a bag of chips. Dumbledore is barking in Britain but off his rocker across the Atlantic. Most importantly, at the suggestion of the American editor, the title of the first book was altered from Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone to Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, both to avoid what might be thought of as a reference to misleading subject matter, and to reflect Harry's magical powers. (2006: 3)

Thus, when we consider the previous literature on the language of the Harry Potter novels, it appears that previous studies tend to fall into various groups. The work of Chaudhuri (2000), Jentsch (2002), and Goldstein (2003) all deals with issues relating to translation. Morris (2001), by contrast, focuses on the creation of names throughout the books, whereas Mayes-

Elma (2003) is concerned, through critical discourse analysis, to examine the ways in which female characters are presented. As my own interest was concerned with the linguistic features of the novels, I also reviewed the stylistics literature, in particular two books by Leech and Short ([1981], 1992), and Sanger (1998).

2.2. The linguistic features of popular fiction
Leech and Short ([1981] 1992)

Leech and Short's book is called *Style in Fiction*: *A Linguistics Introduction to English Fictional Prose.* It was first published in 1981 and reprinted in 1992, and is essentially intended as an introduction to "stylistics", the linguistic analysis of literature. In their book, Leech and Short describe different ways of looking at literature from a linguistic point of view. They use examples from prose fiction to exemplify their statements and analyses. They start with a brief explanation of stylistics, explaining that:

> Style being a relational concept, the aim of literary stylistics is to be relational in a more interesting sense than that already mentioned: to relate the critic's concern of aesthetic appreciation with the linguist's concern of linguistic description. (Leech and Short 1992: 13)

Leech and Short mention the importance of how to present a text to its readers. Sometimes the form is more important than the meaning. In such cases, the literary style is in focus. The question of how literary texts can be analysed in matter of style is brought up by Leech and Short who argue that the important things to find in a text, when one wishes to investigate the style of it, are those that are reoccurring:

> To find out what is distinctive about the style of a certain corpus or text we work out the frequencies of the features it contains and then measure these figures against equivalent figures which are 'normal' for the language in question. The style is then to be measured in terms of deviations – either higher frequencies or lower frequencies – from the norm. (Leech and Short, 1992: 43)

Later, Leech and Short discuss the difficulties of quantitative definitions of style, arguing that "any practicable method of stylistic analysis must select some features for analysis and ignore others" (1992: 69). They conclude that "the study of style cannot entirely rely on quantitative data, neither can it ultimately do without them" (1992: 70). In Chapter Three, Leech and Short provide a description of their suggested methodology for dealing with the stylistic analysis of

fiction. They group their categories of linguistic analysis into four groups, each containing several subcategories:

Table 1: Categories of linguistic analysis (Leech and Short, 1992:75ff)

A. Lexical categories

1. General

2. Nouns

3. Verbs

B. Grammatical categories

1. Sentence types

2. Sentence complexity

3. Clause types

4. Clause structure

5. Noun phrases

6. Verb phrases

7. Other phrase types

8. Word classes

9. General

C. Figures of Speech

1. Grammatical and lexical schemes

2. Phonological schemes

3. Tropes

A. Context and Cohesion

1. Cohesion

2. Context

This list of features "may or may not be significant in a given text" (Leech and Short, 1992: 75). They stress that not all of the things are always relevant when making a stylistic analysis of a text because all texts are different and are written for different purposes by different authors.

In Part II of their book, Leech and Short consider the importance for a writer to decide how much information to give in a text. They argue that it all comes down to the genre of the text. A detective story must be more precise in details than other genres of prose fiction, and it is up to the writer to choose what to write and what to ignore:

> Whenever a writer uses language, he seizes on some features of 'reality' which are crucial for his purpose and disregards others. He cannot give an exact physical portrait of a person: he is bound to ignore this or that wart, mole, pore or whisker (Leech and Short 1992: 151)

Leech and Short then discuss 'realism in conversation' (1992: 160), which simply means how to write dialogues to make them look natural, noting that there is a huge difference between a written, made-up dialogue and a spoken one. Speech in reality is never as fluent as when written down, as there are pauses, hesitations and false starts. Furthermore, literature can be written from different points of view, and this is not neglected by Leech and Short who write that a "[f]ictional point of view, by the standard of authorial omniscience, can be regarded as a selective withholding of information, or relinquishing of omniscience." (1992: 174)

They then go on to discuss the *rhetoric of text*, and describe the different ways of expressing language. They look at the textual functions of language, such as the principle of end-focus, the importance of writing A before B, and the importance of considering each text addressee-based. In this context they write that:

> A distinction may be drawn between communication as discourse and as text. Discourse is linguistic communication seen as a transaction between speaker and hearer, as an interpersonal activity whose form is determined by its social purpose. Text is linguistic communication (either spoken or written) seen simply as a message coded in its auditory or visual medium (Leech and Short 1992: 209)

Discussing the concept of discourse in literature, Leech and Short say that the writer of a novel or short story has the goal of informing his readers, and to tell about a specific fictional world (1992: 257). The writer does not know anything about his readers, and can therefore not assume how the text will be received. All readers have different levels of knowledge and therefore look at literature in various ways. However, it is possible to assume certain things, given the social and historical background. Society looks different from time to time, and therefore people of different time periods perceive literature differently. For example:

> When Jane Austen wrote *Mansfield Park*, she could assume that her readers had a view of society where the male was dominant, and where women never pushed themselves forward (Leech and Short 1992: 260).

Leech and Short also discuss different kinds of narrators in literature, mentioning first person and third person. They look at the stylistic values of point of view, and they argue that fiction writing is discourse between author and reader, noting that here one may usefully employ a "speech act analysis" to investigate the text. Other linguistic aspects of fiction that are worth researching, they argue, include the differences between direct and indirect speech, and the ways those are presented in fiction (1992: 320).

Sanger (1998)

Sanger's 1998 book, *The Language of Fiction* is written at a somewhat lower level than the Leech and Short volume. It is written in an uncomplicated language, turning to an audience not completely familiar with the subject or its terminology. The book contains seven chapters, dealing with the following topics: openings, point of view, how to construct a character and pop fiction.

Sanger discusses the importance of openings in novels, listing things openings are supposed to do, such as attract the reader's interest and to establish a relationship to the reader. Giving examples from various texts, Sanger makes it easy to follow his arguments. The same goes for his discussions about the different points of view from which a novel can be written. He mentions the first (internal) and third (external) person, and describes the difference between the two. The text extracts he uses as examples function as a foundation for his comments and discussions on the subject.

Moreover, Sanger writes about the construction of a character. He divides the topic in two separate chapters: the first dealing with speech, the second with description. A character's speech and dialogues, he argues, are important since it can reveal a lot about him or her:

> Speech can be used to suggest personality as well as intelligence, class and education. Speech, too, can be relatively formal […]; it can operate at the level of caricature […]; it can try to be as real or authentic as actual everyday speech (Sanger 1998: 48).

Sanger notes that even if a dialogue in a novel is made to look authentic, it is not. In natural speech, there are pauses, false starts and hesitations, which would only make the reading difficult if used in a dialogue. Moving to the next chapter concerning the construction of a

character, Sanger writes: "characters are more than just how they talk. They are also about how they are seen, what they do and how they behave (1998: 61). He describes different roles and characters in literature, mentioning the frequent use of stereotypes.

When it comes to the issue of specific features in the language of pop fiction, Sanger writes:

> One key feature in pop fiction is the kind of reporting word used to describe dialogue. Characters rarely 'say'; instead they 'murmur', 'grunt', 'agree'; moreover they often 'murmur seductively', 'grunt tersely', 'agree readily'. (Sanger 1998: 75)

He also writes:

> Another feature of some of the marked reporting words used in pop fiction is the use of the added manner adverb. Adverbs are added, again, in an attempt to heighten emphasis, though they are often redundant or even nonsensical. Forms, then, like 'he grunted tersely' are employed where 'tersely' is largely redundant; grunting is, after all, naturally terse – it would be hard to imagine a *protracted* grunt: similarly, 'she whispered quietly.[...] Sometimes some variety is achieved by forms indicating physical response such as: 'chuckled', 'grinned', 'shrugged' or whatever. (Sanger 1998: 78)

Comparing the literature on the linguistic features of popular fiction, there are some similarities to note. An issue discussed by both Sanger and Leech/Short is different kinds of narration, used in literature for different purposes. Both books discuss authentic speech compared to written speech, where the later never can be the same as the former. Only Sanger discusses the reporting verbs and the added manner adverbs, while Leech and Short focuses more on the construction of a character.

2.3 Research issues

Having carried out the review of the literature, it was then possible for me to formulate my research issues in more detail. As I note in the introduction, the starting point for my interest in writing an essay on the language in Harry Potter was originally the desire to investigate how language was used in these novels in order to depict "heroic" verses "villainous" characters. My review of the literature indicated that it was possible to investigate the language of fiction from a wide range of perspectives, and that in many ways linguists such as Leech and Short advocate an eclectic approach to stylistics.

Given the numerous possibilities of a stylistic approach to fiction, I decided to limit my study to the investigation of a limited range of features in the Harry Potter novels. In particular, I decided to study the ways in which three grammatical features appeared in these works. These were: (i) the use of reporting verbs, (ii) the use of adverbs (used in conjunction with reporting verbs), and (iii) the use of adjectives in describing the "heroic" and "villainous" characters of the novels.

One of my assumptions here (based partly on my reading of the Harry Potter novels and partly on my reading of the stylistics literature) was that such linguistic features helped contribute to the characterization of the heroes and villains in various positive and negative ways. In fact, when researching this topic, I also noticed that many commentators have previously criticized J. K. Rowling's over-use of adverbs and adjectives. For example, Bennett (2006) notes that Rowling is often criticized for "her abundant use of adverbs" and Eberhardt criticizes the author using too many adjectives and adverbs (2003).

My research issues may therefore be summarized as follows:

> (i) to investigate how reporting verbs may contribute to the description of characters in a Harry Potter novel;
>
> (ii) to study how adverbials may also assist in the depiction of character;
>
> (iii) to investigate how the use of adjectives contributes to the description of characters in positive and negative terms;
>
> (iv) to evaluate whether such uses of language by the author are important in the creation of a "heroic" or "villainous" identity for individual characters.

3. Methodology

At first I was interested in looking at the novel *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* to see how the author J. K. Rowling portrays her heroic and villainous characters. I narrowed my analysis down to three areas of investigation; I look at the reporting verbs in speech as well as the adverbs collocating with the reporting verbs, and the adjectives describing the characters.

My theory was that the adjectives would be of different value depending on whom they were describing. My assumption was that adjectives describing a hero would evoke positive thoughts and feelings, while adjectives describing a villain would evoke negative thoughts and feelings. I also believed that the reporting verbs would be of different kind depending on to whom it belongs. My belief was that that the language of "heroes" would be friendly in tone, and while that of the "villains" less friendly. Thus, I believed, the use of certain adverbs would be associated with certain heroes or villains.

In order to fully investigate these areas I decided to look at the novel as a whole, rather than focus on one or a few chapters. In order to conduct my research, I used a pdf-version of the novel, which enabled me to count the number of times that a certain character used a certain reporting verb. It also made it possible to find the collocating adverbs.

According to the model of analysis used by Leech and Short, one can choose one or a few issues to focus on in an analysis. Of their four categories of linguistic analysis, I have chosen to focus on one, namely lexical categories. Following Sanger's ideas about there being specific features in the language of popular fiction, I have chosen to look at the use of reporting verbs, and I have searched the novel thoroughly to find reporting verbs other than 'say', and to quantify their occurrence. I have also investigated the adverbs of manner mentioned by Sanger.

The characters I decided to include in the analysis are Harry, Ron, Hermione, Malfoy, Dudley, Voldemort, Snape and Quirrell. Harry was an obvious choice, being the protagonist. His two sidekicks, Ron and Hermione, were also of interest since the three together make up the heroic side. It was also important to include Harry's three enemies: Voldemort is the true villain, while Malfoy is Harry's nemesis at school and Dudley is Harry's nemesis at home. Since my study focus on how language can be used to portray good and bad, I thought it was a good idea to look at two ambiguous characters as well, namely professor Snape and professor Quirrell. The fascinating thing about these two characters is that they are portrayed in such a way that we, as readers, cannot perceive them as anything but good (Quirrell) and bad (Snape). However, through the splendid use of language, Rowling manages to fool us all until the end where she lets us know, counter to our expectations, that Snape is the good one and Quirrell is the bad guy.

4. Presentation of results

I have three sections: reporting verbs, added manner adverbs and adjectives. Each section will contain a description of the issue, and an analysis followed by a discussion.

4.1 Reporting verbs

In my attempt to see how the reporting verbs contribute to the description of the various characters, I have looked at the sentences where the characters speak, and I have counted the number of times that certain reporting verbs have been used. As the verb *said* is generally neutral (and used most frequently), I have excluded this from the analysis. The verb *thought* is

excluded as well, as this not used to refer to speech. Table 2 below shows the frequency of occurrence of reporting verbs throughout the novel.

Table 2: The frequency of reporting verbs in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

	Harry	Ron	Hermione	Voldemort	Malfoy	Dudley	Quirrell	Snape
admitted		2						
asked	58	3	2			2		
bellowed	1	1						
blurted		1						
breathed		1						
called	4	1						
cried			2					
croaked	1							
cut in								1
demanded						1		
exploded		1	1					
gasped	10	2	3					
grinned		1						
groaned	1	1						
grumbled		1						
hissed	1	2						
laughed							1	
moaned		4				1		
mumbled	1	1						
murmured	2						1	
muttered	4	7	1				1	
ordered			1			1		
panted	3		1					
repeated	1					1		
screamed			1	1				
screeched				1				
shouted	4	1	1		1		1	
shrieked			2	1				
sighed	1	3						
smiled	1							
snapped		3	2		1			
snarled		1	1	1				1
sneered					1			
spat								1
squeaked			1					
stammered							1	
suggested	3	1	2					
urged	1		1					
warned		2						
wheedled			1					
whispered	10	5	2	1				
yelled	4	1				1		

Looking at the verbs listed above, there seems to be only limited evidence that the choice of verbs contributes clearly to the depiction of characters as heroes or villains, and it appears that there is no strong association between "positive" verbs and "good" characters. In fact, if we look at the above table, we can see that the speech of the "good" (Harry, Ron, Hermione) characters is reported far more frequently through reporting verbs than that of the "bad" (Voldemort, Malfoy, Dudley) or "ambiguous" (Quirrell and Snape) characters. Table 3 indicates which verbs are most frequently associated with which characters.

Table 3: Reporting verbs and characters

Harry: asked 58, gasped 10, whispered 10

Ron: muttered 7, whispered 5, moaned 4

Hermione: gasped 3, whispered 2, suggested 2, asked 2, cried 2, shrieked 2, snapped 2

Voldemort: screamed 1, screeched 1, shrieked 1, snarled 1, whispered 1

Dudley: asked 2, demanded 1, moaned 1, ordered 1, repeated 1, yelled 1

Malfoy: shouted 1, snapped 1, sneered 1

Quirrell: laughed 1, murmured 1, muttered 1, shouted 1, stammered 1

Snape: cut in 1, snarled 1, spat 1

Harry, Ron and Hermione all "whispered" a lot, and both Harry and Hermione appear to be rather humble since it is reported they "asked" and "suggested" rather than, as Dudley, "demanded", "ordered" and "yelled". However, Ron and Dudley do not seem to be the happiest boys on earth, as it is also said that they both "moaned".

Voldemort speaks on few occasions. He is spoken of a lot, and he has an important role, and is supposed to be the feared evil character that nobody knows. He is a villain, but yet the most unknown character. However, when he does speak, it is written that he "screamed", "screeched" and "shrieked". On another occasion, we read he also "snarled". All four of these verbs could be said to have negative rather than positive connotations. They all mean basically the same thing. If you look up the words in the *Oxford American Dictionary*, it is stated that to 'scream' means "to utter in a screaming tone" and "to make a long piercing cry of pain or terror or annoyance or excitement". I cannot see how that in any way could be perceived as something else than negative. A 'screech' is "a harsh high-pitched scream or sound" and a 'shriek' is a shrill cry or scream. One could note that 'scream' seems to be the

most neutral word of the three, since the other two are variants of the first. However, even a neutral word could be considered negative, depending on how the word as such is judged by most people in society. It is always people's opinions that decide whether a word is negative or positive. The word itself is neither positive nor negative, but gets rated by the community in which they are used. The context in combination with people's and the community's judgment gives the words their value. The word 'said' is the most neutral reporting verb since there is no value to it. All the other ones are various ways of 'saying' something.

When it comes to the verb 'snarl' there were two definitions in the dictionary, where the first reads "to growl angrily with the teeth bared" and the second "to speak or utter in a bad-tempered way". In my view, it is rather obvious that the word is to be considered negative since there is nothing positive about such behaviour.

Malfoy's speech (another villainous character) is described through verbs indicating anger and contempt, as it is written that he "shouted", "snapped", and "sneered". These words are negative because in our society it is a bad thing to be very angry.

Quirrell appears to be quietly-spoken and timid, as we are told that he "murmured", "muttered", and "stammered". Snape seems more aggressive as on the few occasions when he speaks, we are told that he "cut in", "snarled", and " spat".

To some extent certain reporting verbs do have negative connotations, and if reporting verbs are used to describe the speech of the 'bad' characters then these are often verbs that have negative connotations. In the *Oxford American Dictionary*, one can read that negative means the lack of positive qualities and characteristics, and that positive means having specific or definite qualities. Two examples of positive reporting verbs are 'smile' and 'ask'. To smile indicates pleasantness and happiness which are two characteristics of something positive. When asking for something, rather than ordering or demanding, a certain humbleness is shown and it is a sign of being polite.

4.2 Adverbs of manner used in conjunction with reporting verbs

Sanger discusses the use of adverbs of manner, and I have studied the ones used by the eight characters, and listed them in Table 4 below. The adverbs that collocate with the three most frequently used verbs (*said*, *asked, thought*) are listed below, where it is also indicated which character's speech is described by which adverbs. The adverbs listed below are all used to modify reporting verbs, although exactly which verbs these are is not revealed the table (see Tables 2 and 3 above). The numbers in brackets indicate how often the adverb has been used, if more than once.

Table 4: Adverbs of manner collocated with reporting verbs in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*.

Harry	Ron	Hermione	Snape	Quirrell	Dudley	Malfoy	Voldemort
angrily	bitterly	anxiously	silkily	casually	dully	loudly	~
anxiously (3)	casually	bravely		coolly		quickly(2)	
awkwardly	crossly	briskly		idly			
bewildered	darkly	faintly		impatiently			
blankly	eagerly (2)	grimly		quietly			
breathlessly	furiously	miserably					
coldly	grumpily	nervously					
coolly	impressively	thoughtfully					
darkly	loudly	timidly					
eagerly (2)	nervously						
flatly	proudly						
frantically	reasonably						
furiously	sleepily (2)						
gloomily	softly						
loudly (2)							
miserably							
quickly (3)							
quietly (3)							
sharply							
shortly							
suddenly							
thoughtfully							
urgently							

Harry has the widest range of adverbs. He is the protagonist, and dominates the action of the novel. Depending on whom he speaks with, Rowling provides him with positive or negative adverbs. Ron uses approximately half the number of Harry's adverbs, and Hermione one third. The speech of Hermione is mostly described using such 'unassertive' adverbs as *anxiously*, *faintly*, *miserably*, *nervously*, *timidly*, etc.

In the case of the villains, we can see only a limited use of adverbs. Malfoy evidently speaks "loudly" and "quickly". Voldemort speaks rarely, and there is no combination of reporting verb plus adverb referring to his speech. Dudley's only added manner adverb is 'dully' which could say something about his personality. However, although the use of certain adverbs may contribute to the description of character, the context is very important. Without the context in which something is said, it is difficult to distinguish a "positive" use of "coolly" from a "negative" use of "coolly". Leech and Short also mention that both cohesion and context are

important factors in the language of fiction. Here, with reference to the use of adverbs, I would also argue that the context is very important in determining to what extent the choice of particular adverbs contributes to the depiction of a "good" (or "heroic") or a "bad" ("villainous") character.

4.3 Adjectives

The adjectives used in describing a character are very important. Some adjectives have positive denotations and connotations, and some words are associated with negative meanings. Depending on which specific word the writer has chosen in the portrayal of a character, the reader is often able to understand whether the character is a "good" or "bad" character. Since language is such a powerful tool, a writer can deceive the readers into believing things that are not necessarily true. The differences between good and bad are based on opposites. Hourihan (1997) writes:

> The conceptual centre of a hero story consists of a set of binary oppositions: the qualities ascribed to the hero on the one hand and to his 'wild' opponents on the other. (Hourihan 1997: 15)

In the first instance, when describing a character's physical appearance, the writer can either choose to make the person beautiful or ugly. I will compare the adjectives concerning the outer looks of the characters to see if those describing the good guys are more positive than those describing the bad guys. I will present the characters one by one, starting with the "good" characters (Harry, Ron, Hermione), followed by the "bad" characters (Voldemort, Malfoy, Dudley) and finally the two ambivalent characters Quirrell and Snape.

Included in the analysis below are all those adjectives describing the character's physical appearance. Included are also a few adverbs that are important in the sense that they describe other qualities of the character.

Harry

The first description we get of Harry is of him as a baby: "Under a tuft of **jet-black** hair over his forehead they could see a **curiously-shaped** cut, like a bolt of lightning" (Rowling, 1997:17). The scar is described as something very special; it is a unique scar, which makes him unique and easy to recognize. If Harry had been a bad guy his scar might have been described as a dreadful and irregular one instead of a "curiously-shaped" one, even if it had still been describing the same shape. Later on in the story we are told that Harry "had always

been **small** and **skinny** for his age" (20), and that he "had a **thin** face, **knobbly** knees, **black** hair and **bright-green** eyes" (20). What is striking in this description is that his eyes are not just green, but "bright-green". There is something special about them. His face is "thin", compared to his cousin Dudley who is extremely fat (which will be shown further down).

Even if Harry is "one of the most **popular** and **admired** people at the school" (179) he is a very humble person. He is not spoiled, and he does not have high expectations of himself: "The only thing Harry liked about his own appearance was a very **thin** scar on his forehead which was shaped like a bolt of lightning" (20). Harry is obviously a rather humble person who hardly sees himself as the hero he is. He does not like the way he looks, and because he does not brag, it is easy for the readers of the novel to care for Harry and to really see him as the hero and a good person. It is also said of Harry that: "He was ever so **polite** when he asked how to get on to the platform" (73). This statement also describes Harry as being a good person.

Ron

When Ron is first mentioned he is at the train station with his family. They were "four boys, all with **flaming red** hair" (69). It is stated that he is "the **youngest** boy" (72). It is once stated "all the Weasleys have **red** hair" (81). The best description, however, covers everything: "He was **tall**, **thin**, and **gangling**, with freckles, **big** hands and feet, and a **long** nose" (72). Apparently, the most prominent thing in his looks is the red hair, as it is mentioned several times.

Hermione

Hermione is described as a girl with **a bossy** sort of voice, lots of **bushy brown** hair, and **rather large** front teeth (83). The bossy voice and the bushy hair imply her being a girl with an attitude. She is not a girly girl caring only about her looks. When Harry and Ron once end up in a dispute with Hermione, she refuses to speak to them. They think that is okay, since she is "such **a bossy** know-it-all **(130)**". Because of her being so good at everything in school, she is not very well liked. Ron even describes her as "a nightmare" (137).

Voldemort

Lord Voldemort is described as follows: "Where there should have been a back to Quirrell's head, there was a face, the most **terrible** face Harry had ever seen. It was **chalk white** with **glaring red** eyes and slits for nostrils, like a snake" (212). Nothing in this appearance would

make one believe that he is a sweet and innocent man. The "glaring red eyes" are a feature one might expect to find on a monster or a werewolf. Red eyes are not natural, and their appearance here implies evil. The "chalk white face" also implies something bad, as paleness is often associated with disease and illness.

Malfoy

Draco Malfoy is described as "a boy with a **pale, pointed** face" (59) with a **bored, drawling** voice" (60). Paleness, as mentioned above, often implies unhealthiness and disease. His character is also described in a negative fashion. Malfoy likes to pick on others, which can be exemplified by following quote: "So Malfoy, **jealous** and **angry**, had gone back to taunting Harry about having no proper family" (143).

Dudley

There is not much written about Dudley, since he mostly appears in the beginning of the novel. However, the photos of him as a baby are described as "a **large pink** beach ball". The photos of him as older describe him as "a **large, blond** boy" (19). The complete description of him is that "he had a **large, pink** face, not much neck, **small, watery blue** eyes and **thick, blond** hair lay smoothly on his **thick, fat** head" (21). Dudley's mother believed he looked like an angel, while Harry thought he looked like "a pig in a wig" (21). It is also stated that he became the leader of his group of friends because "he was the **biggest** and **stupidest**" (28). In today's society, people often look down at fat people, and it is not uncommon that villains are described as fat. He is the complete opposite to Harry who is very skinny. J. K. Rowling has tried to portray Dudley as a very unsympathetic character. His eyes are "watery", which does not sound nice at all, and his face is "pink".

Quirrell

Quirrell is described as a "**pale young** man" (55). He is also very nervous, which following dialogue concerning Quirrell will illustrate: *"Is he always that **nervous**?" "Oh yeah. Poor bloke. **Brilliant** mind."* (55). With the paleness, together with his stammering speech, he seems to be very timid. As a reader one cannot help but feeling a bit sorry for the poor man. He is "**scared** of the students, **scared** of his own subject" (55). At the end of the novel, we learn that Quirrell has shared his soul and body with Voldemort and that he is full of hatred, greed and ambition (216).

Snape

Professor Snape is described as "a teacher with **greasy black** hair, a **hooked** nose and **sallow** skin (94). These features contribute to the image of a bad and dangerous character, without actually stating it. The hair is not just "black", but "greasy black". The nose is not a fine, pointed nose or a big potato nose, but a "hooked" nose. The skin is not as white as snow but "sallow", which implies sickness. "His eyes were **black** like Hagrid's, but they had none of Hagrid's warmth. They were **cold** and **empty** and made you think of dark tunnels" (102). Nothing in the description of Snape reveals any signs of him being a pleasant person.

4.3.1 Discussion

Both Snape and Harry have black hair, but not of the same kind. Harry's hair is "jet black" which sounds excellent. Snape's hair is nothing special, but just "black" and "greasy". The greasiness is put in focus and becomes the dominant characteristic of his hair. When it comes to the colour of eyes, there are great differences between the good guys and bad guys. Harry has "bright green" eyes, which implies some sparkling energy as if he was very special. Snape has "black" eyes, but here too the importance lies not on their colour but on them being "cold" and "empty". Lord Voldemort has red eyes and that is rarely associated with good characters. This specific feature then, makes the readers believe he belongs to the villains. Not only do the characters have differently coloured eyes, but they also have different colours or tones of the skin. Dudley is described as "pink", Voldemort "chalk white", Malfoy has a "pale" face, Quirrell is "pale" and Snape has a "sallow" skin. It is interesting to note that it appears that only the villains are described in terms of their skin colour. Perhaps J. K. Rowling has chosen to describe the things that do not follow the traditional norm for how to look. The heroic characters do fit into the normative way of looking, while the villains are marked as different by having unexpected characteristics such as strange eye or skin colours.

In the novel, Harry is mentioned more frequently than any other character. He is also described more thoroughly than the others. His friends Ron and Hermione are mentioned more often than the rest, which probably has to do with the fact that the three of them are the heroes of the story. The readers see the story from their point of view and J.K. Rowling wants her readers to get to know the good guys the best. The lack of knowledge about the villains creates a certain distance, and perhaps it is easier to dislike a character that you do not feel familiar with. The professors are being kept at a distance, and the true nature of Lord Voldemort is not mentioned much at all. He is of course mentioned a lot in the novel, but not always with his full name. He is very often referred to as "he who must not be named", and I

believe that Rowling has withheld information about his physical appearance on purpose. It is much more frightening for the reader if they do not know much about the appearance of an evil character, as this leaves more for the imagination.

5. Conclusion

At the beginning of the essay, I defined my research issues as follows: (i) to investigate how reporting verbs may contribute to the description of characters in a Harry Potter novel; (ii) to study how adverbs may also assist in the depiction of character; (iii) to investigate how the use of adjectives contributes to the description of characters in positive and negative terms; (iv) to evaluate whether such uses of language by the author are important in the creation of a heroic or villainous identity for individual characters.

With reference to research issue 1, there is only limited evidence that reporting verbs contribute to the description of characters. It became clear that certain reporting verbs are associated with the various characters more often than others, but without the context it is not possible to say whether this contributes directly to the depiction of these characters as heroes or villains. As Harry is the protagonist he speaks the most, and is therefore provided with more varied expressions.

With reference to research issue 2, concerning the use of adverbs, my research indicates that once again the context is important. Without considering the context, there is little evidence to support the claim that the choice of particular adverbs clearly contributes to the differentiation of the heroes from the villains. Clearly, the speech of the heroic characters is described with far more adverbs than the speech of the villains. However, this was expected since the heroes appear more frequently in the novel and therefore have the possibility to speak more.

With reference to research issue 3, which questioned the importance of adjectives, I would claim that the choice of particular adjectives does contribute directly to the depiction of heroic or villainous characters. The evidence I present clearly indicates that the author, J. K. Rowling, makes extensive use of rather positive adjectives to present a likable depiction of good characters, as opposed to the use of negative adjectives in describing the villains of her novel.

Finally, with reference to research issue 4, which involved the consideration of how important such uses of language are in depicting heroic or villainous characters, I concluded that the context is far more important than I first expected. I believe that the use of reporting verbs, added manner adverbs and adjectives do play an important role in the portrayal of heroic and villainous characters, but their importance also depends heavily on the context.

Knowledge of the context explains a character speaks in a certain manner. Thus it is of primary importance to know to whom the speech is directed and the situation in which communication occurs. Thus, the linguistic analysis of "style in fiction" (to use Leech and Short's phrase) can provide us with some clues, but not perhaps the whole picture.

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