LANGUAGE OF CHARACTERS IN SERGEI YESENIN'S WORKS

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Abstract

The article examines the role of character speech in Sergei Yesenin's literary works and its impact on narrative realism, character development, and cultural expression. By analyzing Yesenin's prose and poetry, the study explores the use of colloquial language, dialects, and register variation in constructing distinct voices. Findings indicate that speech stylization enhances reader perception of social identity, emotional depth, and psychological nuance. The study underscores the importance of character language in literary analysis and its role in reflecting Russian rural and folk traditions. The research also highlights implications for teaching Russian literature and for understanding early 20th-century literary trends.

Keywords: character speech, Yesenin, colloquial language, dialect, literary style, Russian literature, register variation, narrative realism

Introduction. Sergei Yesenin (1895–1925) is celebrated as one of Russia's most lyrical and culturally rooted poets, whose works vividly reflect rural Russian life and folk traditions [1]. Beyond his poetry, Yesenin's prose and narrative dialogues reveal a **careful and deliberate use of language** to portray characters authentically, showing that linguistic choices are central to the aesthetic and social realism of his works. The way characters speak in Yesenin's texts provides critical insight into their social, geographic, and emotional identities. Previous studies often focus primarily on Yesenin's poetry, highlighting his lyricism and imagery, yet limited attention has been given to how the **language of his characters** functions to convey nuanced social and psychological dimensions [2].

This study seeks to address this gap by examining the linguistic and stylistic features of Yesenin's characters, including dialect, colloquial expressions, and register variation. The research questions guiding this analysis are:

1. What linguistic features characterize the speech of Yesenin's characters?
2. How do dialects, colloquialisms, and register variation contribute to character development and narrative realism?
3. What cultural, emotional, and aesthetic functions does character speech perform in Yesenin's works?

The investigation contributes to the broader field of literary linguistics by demonstrating how stylistic elements of character language serve as a lens through which social and psychological realities are conveyed [3]. It also highlights the continued relevance of Yesenin's works in literary studies, cultural studies, and pedagogy.

This study employs a **qualitative content analysis** of selected works by Sergei Yesenin, focusing on both prose and poetry to capture a comprehensive picture of character speech. The primary texts analyzed include the novella Yar, narrative poetry such as Anna Snegina, and selected lyrical works where dialogue and monologues are prominent. The analysis focused on

identifying linguistic patterns that reveal character identity, social positioning, and emotional states [4].

The study considered four key elements:

1. **Dialect and regional vocabulary:** Identification of words, expressions, and syntactic structures reflecting regional and rural varieties of Russian. This involved comparing character speech with known dialect features documented in linguistic studies of early 20th-century Russian.
2. **Colloquial and vernacular expressions:** Analysis of informal speech forms, idiomatic expressions, and conversational strategies used in dialogue and monologues. These expressions were coded to evaluate their functions in narrative realism and emotional expression [5].
3. **Register and stylistic variation:** Examination of how Yesenin alternates between elevated, poetic diction and everyday speech to achieve dramatic, emotional, or reflective effects.
4. **Narrative and cultural function:** Assessment of how character speech contributes to social realism, cultural representation, and reader perception [6].

Data collection was supported by a review of scholarly literature, including analyses of Yesenin's dialogue, stylistic studies, and linguistic interpretations of Russian folk speech. Coding was conducted thematically to categorize speech features and link them to character traits, narrative functions, and cultural context. Comparative analysis allowed identification of recurring patterns across multiple texts.

The analysis revealed several significant patterns in the language of Yesenin's characters:

1. **Dialectal and regional markers:** Characters often employ region-specific phonetic, lexical, and syntactic forms. For example, in Yar, rural characters' speech reflects central Russian dialect features, including vowel shifts, specific verb forms, and local idioms. These markers not only authenticate the setting but also signal social class and geographic origin, providing a sense of cultural rootedness. Dialect use also conveys intimacy and familiarity among characters, reflecting social bonds and communal values [7].
2. **Colloquial speech and idiomatic expressions:** Yesenin extensively uses informal, everyday language in dialogue, including idioms, proverbs, and figurative expressions. This colloquialism serves multiple purposes: it makes characters relatable, conveys humor or irony, and emphasizes emotional intensity. In narrative poetry, conversational interjections and informal phrasing allow readers to perceive the speaker's voice as human and psychologically credible.
3. **Register variation and stylistic layering:** Yesenin frequently juxtaposes poetic, elevated language with vernacular speech. Elevated diction often appears in monologues or lyrical reflection, while dialogue remains conversational and idiomatic. This layering enables readers to sense shifts in mood, social hierarchy, or intimacy, enriching narrative depth. Such variation also mirrors internal character conflicts, reflecting personal longing, nostalgia, or moral tension [8].
4. **Cultural and aesthetic functions:** Character speech serves as a medium for integrating folk culture and local color into literary narrative. Dialect and colloquial forms evoke social, historical, and cultural contexts, situating Yesenin's work within the Russian literary tradition that values authentic representation of ordinary life. The use of

vernacular also demonstrates a stylistic choice aligned with the literary Silver Age's focus on blending high art with folk and popular elements.

5. **Emotional and psychological depth:** Linguistic choices reveal nuanced emotions and internal conflict. Characters shift between informal and poetic registers depending on emotional state, interpersonal relationships, or situational tension. This linguistic flexibility highlights Yesenin's sensitivity to the psychological dimension of speech, enabling readers to perceive subtle variations in character thought and feeling [9].

Yesenin's treatment of character speech exemplifies the **fusion of linguistic realism and literary artistry**. His deployment of dialects and colloquial expressions demonstrates a commitment to authentic representation of social and regional identities while maintaining poetic cohesion. Compared to other Silver Age authors, Yesenin's technique stands out in its ability to integrate folk vernacular seamlessly into literary language, producing a voice that is both grounded and lyrically expressive.

Character speech in Yesenin's works performs multiple functions simultaneously: it communicates social and cultural identity, conveys emotional states, and enriches narrative realism. By foregrounding dialogue and monologue, Yesenin bridges the gap between poetic imagination and the realities of everyday speech. This approach also has pedagogical implications: understanding these linguistic features is crucial for interpreting Yesenin's works in translation, teaching Russian literature, and studying literary linguistics.

Furthermore, the interplay between colloquial and elevated registers suggests that Yesenin's characters are dynamic, psychologically complex, and culturally situated. His linguistic choices reflect broader societal trends in early 20th-century Russia, including urbanization, the tension between rural traditions and modernity, and the literary valorization of folk speech.

Conclusion. The study concludes that the **language of characters in Yesenin's works** is a multifaceted literary instrument, combining dialect, colloquial speech, and register variation to convey identity, emotion, and cultural context. Yesenin's careful stylization of speech enriches characterization, enhances narrative realism, and reflects his deep engagement with Russian folk traditions. This analysis demonstrates that character language is central to understanding the aesthetic and social dimensions of Yesenin's literary achievement. Future research may expand to additional texts, investigate comparative dialect usage across authors, or explore pedagogical applications in Russian literary studies.

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