

Luca Valleriani (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy)

“Am I bovered?”

Accent enregisterment through humour in *The Catherine Tate Show*

Language is a fundamental aspect of the construction of fixed audiovisual characters, especially in the case of memorable humorous figures. Performed language in pop culture thus often resorts to language variation, and more specifically to dialects and accents, to create recognisable characters who manage to elicit humour not only for what they say but also, and sometimes mainly, for how they say it. Humour, in fact, is one of the main functions for the use of diatopic varieties in the audiovisual dialogue (Ranzato et al. 2017).

The Catherine Tate Show (2004–2007) is a case in point of a product featuring recurring fictional “types”, whose character is also sketched thanks to the adoption of “clichéd dialects” (Kozloff 2000: 82), such as Londoners Nan and Lauren, the Irish nurse Bernie, the Essex couple Paul and Sam, Elain Figgis from York, Geordie Georgie, etc., just to mention some of the most popular characters played by comedian Catherine Tate. Tate’s show, therefore, is a fruitful source of instances of stereotyped language varieties as linked to specific types of people, which reflect how speakers coming from specific regional areas in the British Isles are generally and stereotypically perceived within British society, and which contribute in their linguistic “enregisterment”, to use Agha’s terminology (2003).

Building on previous studies on dialects in the media (Kozloff 2000; Hodson 2014) and their stereotypical representation (Valleriani 2020; Ranzato 2021; Zabalbeascoa 2021, among others), this proposal is aimed at giving an account of the various implications and functions of the language varieties used to build some of the fictional identities presented in *The Catherine Tate Show*.

References

- Agha, Asif. 2003. The social life of cultural value. *Language & Communication* 23. 231–273.
- Hodson, Jane. 2014. *Dialects in film and literature*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kozloff, Sarah. 2000. *Overhearing film dialogue*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ranzato, Irene. 2021. An audiovisual topos: The “butler” character. *Textus* 34(1). 181–201.
- Ranzato, Irene et al. 2017. *Dialects in audiovisuals*. <https://dialectsinav.wixsite.com/home/>
- Valleriani, Luca. 2020. Accents and stereotypes in animated films: The case of *Zootopia*. *Lingue e Linguaggi* 40. 361–378.
- Zabalbeascoa, Patrick. 2021. Some observations on British accent stereotypes in Hollywood-style films. In Donatella Montini & Irene Ranzato (eds.), *The dialects of British English in fictional texts*, 133–149. London: Routledge.