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**HETEROGLOSSIA IN ZADIE SMITH'S
NOVEL *WHITE TEETH*
MA thesis**

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ABSTRACT

The primary intention of this thesis is to study the language dynamics in Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* (2000) and the means of creating the coexistence of recognizably different varieties of English in the novel. The main hypothesis of this thesis is that although the novel presents a number of minority languages, the perceived importance and ideological power of Standard English is nevertheless strongly present in relation to the minority languages in the represented postcolonial linguistic setting.

The study of the varieties of English in multicultural writings of contemporary Britain is a field of literature and linguistics that is gaining evermore attention, as authors who convey hybridity and linguistic plurality in their writings are becoming more noticed and appreciated. The creation of hybrid languages in the contemporary British novel does not only speak of the diversity of the different ethnic groups who use varying kinds of English, but it also creates a realistic atmosphere which reveals that there exist linguistic variations also within seemingly homogeneous ethnic groups.

The thesis consists of an introduction, two core chapters, and a conclusion. In the introduction, I will introduce some important notions relevant for the study, such as postcolonial literature, ethnic and racial minority writings, and their rising importance in British contemporary writing.

In the theoretical chapter, I will focus on the theories developed by the Russian literary theorist and semiotician Mikhail Bakhtin, focusing on the points made in *The Dialogic Imagination*. The main focus is on the notion of heteroglossia, developed and exemplified by Bakhtin, who believes that any powerful novel should employ the coexistence and conflict between different types of speech.

The second, empirical chapter of the study focuses on a Bakhtinian analysis of Zadie Smith's celebrated novel *White Teeth*, where I will follow three Bakhtinian features of heteroglossia which characterise any novel: the direct speech of characters, third-person representation of the character's inner speech, and incorporating other literary genres into the novel. All of the three phenomena exist to a larger or smaller extent also in Smith's novel. I will discuss how the author of *White Teeth* has produced calculated nuances for conveying heteroglossia, the ways of depicting language crossing in the novel, the omniscient narrator's comments on the type of language used, and other significant functions that language representation holds.

The results of the study will be presented in the conclusion.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SE – Standard English

WT – White Teeth

INTRODUCTION

The term 'postcolonial literature' is often considered to be a controversial notion. Some would define it in temporal terms as the literary practices that have emerged after the colonial times, but generally the term comprises both the literature written by the colonised and formerly colonised peoples, including literatures written in both the native languages of the colonised, as well as in English (Talib 2002: 17), which is how it is employed in this thesis. Authors who write in Britain and on Britain could all be categorised as writing from a postcolonial context.

Historians observe that many successful works of British literature are nowadays still greatly influenced by the aftermath of the British Empire and the following decolonisation period, which roughly began after the Second World War and could be considered as having ended by the late 20th century with the political transfer of Hong Kong to China (MacPhee 2011: 3-4). British diasporic past naturally has had an effect on the linguistic scene in the host country which has, over time, been greatly influenced by the Celtic, Roman, Anglo Saxon, Latin, Norse and French languages as the tongues of the conquering people of the island nation, in time hybridising into the modern Standard English as we know it today (British Library 2015: para. 1-7).

C. L. Innes (2007: viii) points out that a "major and unintended consequence of British colonialism has been an enormous flowering of literature in English by postcolonial authors" who all have contributed to the "representation and reclamation requiring a reinvention of the English language and English literary tradition". Whereas in the earlier decades the British literary scene and canon was dominated by mainly white, male authors, then after that period, quite slowly, but firmly, more and more authors from the "fringes" have begun to gain a wider audience – most notably female writers, as well as ethnic and

racial minority writers. Laura Moss (2008: 13-14), a postcolonial theorist and comparatist of world literature written in English, points out that the literature of the new generation of writers is “not a spectacle of a ‘reinvented Britain’, or reinvented Canada, or even Caribbean, but a /.../ rediscovery of the ordinary”, where the ordinary is made up of a mixture of differing cultures, languages and races that have always existed in Britain, but are only now becoming more noticed also in contemporary British literature. Caryl Phillips has, in turn, pertinently stated that “as soon as one defines oneself as ‘British’, one is participating in a centuries-old tradition of cultural exchange, of ethnic and linguistic plurality” (cited in Bryan 2004: 63).

Minority writing as a separate literary category has always existed, but it is only now that it is becoming more noticed. A distinguishable literary renewal to have taken place together with post-colonialism as a historical and literary development, is the rise of black British writing, among many other minority writings. In an essay on the transformations that have taken place in Black British writing in recent decades, Kadija George Sesay (2004: 100) states that contemporary young writers who interpret Britain from the perspective of black British experience have a “common distinguishing mark”, which is that they were mostly born in Britain to their migrant parents who arrived in Britain from Africa and the Caribbean in the 1950s and 1960s. Tracey Walters, in an essay on black British literature, has underscored that as a direct result of ‘Postcolonial’, ‘Transatlantic’ and ‘Diasporic’ studies, the once ignored and marginalised black British literature is “today a burgeoning field that is beginning to receive serious critical attention from scholars on both sides of the Atlantic” (Walters 2004: 169). In an essay on identity and belonging in the writings of contemporary Britain, the cultural theorist Chris Weedon (2004: 95) expresses his belief that “recent black British writing is making a positive contribution to this process [i.e. developing a society that is truly diverse and in which

difference is valued and celebrated] by rendering visible the issues at stake, by suggesting new ways of articulating Britishness, and by offering a range of narratives of the interrelation between and within British and black histories”.

A noticeable change among the British writers of the contemporary, postcolonial period, no matter what their ethnicity, age, race or gender is, is the growing inclusion of ethnic and racial minority characters in their writings (Thomas 2005: 312). For many writers, this kind of inclusion might only be passing mentioning of some character's background or physical characteristics, for others this might be reflected in the portrayal of fully-fledged characters of minority background who differ from the majority white characters either due to their ethnic, religious or cultural background. The shifting and more positive portrayal of minorities is considered a noteworthy change dating from the early 1980s, during which the African, Caribbean, and Asian communities of Britain were more known to be rioting than writing, and during the time of which the fiction of minorities and by minorities, such as Black British fiction, was mainly a minority and not a mainstream interest (English 2006: 112).

Creating characters with varying English dialects is one of the most resourceful means of drawing attention to the ever-changing populace and the social and cultural setting of Britain in modern British literature. In an overview of recent British writing, McRae and Carter (2004: 1) have concisely stated that although most titles continue to be published in London, the writing centre has shifted, as there are now works published “in different voices, from different centres, from what used to be thought of as the fringes, in voices which used to be thought of as ‘outsiders’”. Although immigrants have a long-standing history in Britain, they have not been in a focal position in English literature in the previous decades. As R. Victoria Arana (2004: 21), a literary theorist of British minority writing, has stated, “the British nation has re-invented itself each time it has

absorbed another influx of people from outside Britain who have brought with them different customs, different languages, and new ideas”. Arana follows with even a more thought-provoking idea by saying that “what hasn’t been noted with absolute clarity yet – especially in relation to the postcolonial influx of the mid-twentieth century – is that, invariably, those invaders who come to Britain to stay are the ones who call the shots on cultural change and adjust the British cultural landscape to suit themselves” (Arana 2004: 21).

Such an ethnically diverse image also associates with a diverse linguistic representation of such characters. Generally, the English dialects used in contemporary mainstream literature are based on actual spoken dialects, but these are also often borrowed from the writings of earlier writers, and the authors of course add their own inventive literary features when writing about some non-standard English variety (Talib 2002: 119). The creation of hybrid languages in the contemporary British novel does not only speak about the diversity of the different ethnic groups who use varying kinds of English, but it also creates a realistic atmosphere which reveals that there exist linguistic variations also within seemingly homogeneous ethnic groups, depending greatly on age, generation, profession and the social groups these people interact with.

The earliest uses of non-standard English in literature date back to the beginning of modern English literature (Talib 2002: 124). Some of the most famous writers who have used non-standard English in their works include the Elizabethan dramatist Christopher Marlowe (use of pidgin), the late 17th – early 18th century English novelist Daniel Defoe (also use of pidgin), and Scottish 19th century poet and lyricist Robert Burns (use of vernacular Scottish) (Talib 2002: 123-125). However, it has often been claimed that none of these writers’ work has been faithfully realistic, as Burns’ use of Scots language has been deemed artificial and Marlowe’s and Defoe’s characters need not have been based on

empirical observation of any actual language use (Talib 2002: 123-125). Nevertheless, the use of such “minority” languages by these noted writers may have been inspirational for some following literary minds.

Despite multicultural and -voiced novels becoming increasingly more common, in contemporary British literature readers most often still come across Standard English, and writers do not always pay a lot of attention to the speech mannerisms and linguistic differences between the characters described in a novel. In fact, many authors often deliberately avoid using non-standard English(es) in their writings due to a fear that if they used a marked and a clearly discernible English dialect in their writings then they would not gain a wide readership (Talib 2002: 119). However, such fears can be ungrounded in contemporary writing, which can, for example, be seen from the international popularity of the works published by the Scottish novelist, short story writer and playwright Irvine Welsh, who writes in a distinctively emphasised Scottish dialect.

The comprehensibility of non-standard English naturally varies among different readers, especially when the type of language spoken differs greatly from SE, such as pidgins and creoles (Talib 2002: 119), but very often authors, when writing for a wider audience, also take this into consideration, and provide the readers with either an explanation/ translation of the type of language used or some other means to convey their meaning to the readers. However, it is important for authors who use varying types of sub-languages of English and other minority culture-specific references to bear in mind that the load of explanatory information offered to readers from all walks of life would not become overwhelming. Translation scholars Bassnett and Trivedi (2002: 29) maintain that “prevailing Western standards of literature /.../ exclude instructional or didactic literature”, and follow their claim by stating that “thus ‘frontloading’ cultural information or foregrounding material that is normally presupposed in an intracultural text – resulting in

the more highly explicit quality of both post-colonial literature and translations – potentially compromises the literary status of a text *per se*.” Therefore, when writing for a diverse audience, it is advised to avoid compromising the literary status of an imaginative text by making it sound too much like a study guide (Bassnett and Trivedi 2002: 29).

Very often the use of an English variety can be a source of strength in literature, especially as using different English dialects adds a new flavour to the SE used within any storyline, making it sound different, but at the same time remaining comprehensible to metropolitan readership (Talib 2002: 119). Whereas a novel where all the characters are combined into the storyline with a perceived similar manner of speaking might seem like an easier read, a novel that brings out and emphasises the use of differing varieties of one umbrella language, generally that of SE, also within seemingly similar groups, makes the readers think more about the differences between the characters within a single literary work, such as the characters’ generational, educational and occupational dissimilarities, which are bound to exist.

Naturally, one of the main obstacles contemporary writers might have when portraying different English varieties is the question of authenticity. Talib (2002: 123) believes that very often literary languages are the author's vision of the languages used in their writings and they do not “faithfully give readers the precise dialect or variety of English”. Most writers who represent different English varieties in their writings supposedly base their representations on their own personal experience and to some extent there definitely do appear discrepancies between the represented English variety and the real social setting which it is based on. It should also be noted that representatives of a seemingly similar linguistic group can reveal linguistic discrepancies of their own. In addition, the acceptability of a heterogeneous literary work could be decided on the basis of the linguistic attitudes a given variety of English has received, being thus determined by

a social dimension, which in turn means that there is also an aesthetic dimension involved in the determination process, but the social and aesthetic dimension attributed to any type of English variety is not always easy to separate from one another (Talib 2002: 133). One also has to take into consideration that while some varieties of English might be considered inferior and might not be as widely used in literature, such attitudes can also change in time, such as the use of Cockney, which has generally been associated with the London working classes and which was popularised in the writings of Charles Dickens (Freeland 2013: para. 1).

An author who creates the images of different Englishes and characters with varying backgrounds in her writings is Zadie Smith, whose first novel *White Teeth* was published in the year 2000. Smith's *White Teeth* is an end-of-the-20th-century/ beginning-of-the-21st-century British novel that was predicted to become a huge literary success even before the novel itself was finished. Reportedly, Hamish Hamilton decided to publish the novel already when Smith had finished only some 80 pages (Tew 2010: 19), and their predictions were right – the novel was a huge literary success not only in Britain, but all over the world. The novel was adapted for television in 2002, and by today, it is available in more than 20 translations (UMass Amherst 2013: para. 4). The novel has also been turned into an audiobook, which inevitably underscores the wide range of languages employed throughout *White Teeth*.

By today, Smith's writings have proven to be “of general interest to reviewers, academics, students and the general reading public” (Tew 2010: viii). Smith's popularity might also be due to her predominantly comic narrative mode, which dates back to the writings of E. M. Forster, whom Smith has acknowledged as one of her main literary influences (Acheson and Ross 2005: 109). Bentley (2007: 497-8) has marked that “the deployment of a realist mode is part of the text's desire to reach an inclusive interpretive

community, one that not only speaks to the various ethnic and cultural minorities it includes, but is also directed to the dominant white middle-class readership that probably still makes up the majority of the British novel-reading public”.

Smith’s *White Teeth*, written during her studies at Cambridge and finished at the young age of 24, represents a multicultural setting *par excellence*, including characters of English, Jamaican, Bengali, Saudi Arabian, Polish and German descent, among others. The discourse(s) of such a combination of mixed characters own their inception to the general popularity and fame of the mid-1980s writers such as Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi (Murdoch 2007: 589), who were among the first multicultural writers recognized as belonging to the British canon, and discussing topics such as Britishness, linguistic colonization and hybridization. It could be argued that the phenomenal reception of *White Teeth* “hints at a broader fascination with African, Caribbean, and South Asian culture in Britain in recent years” (English 2006: 111).

The novel revolves around three leading families – the Joneses, combining both English and Caribbean heritage; the Iqbals, representatives of Bangladeshi roots; and the Chalfens who are a white middle-class family of Jewish heritage. All the families together with their interacting parents and children represent the hybrid nature of contemporary Britain, which is especially represented by the varying types of Englishes they use in their everyday interactions. Moss (2008: 12) has noted that “the current state of globalisation, diasporic migration, and contemporary cosmopolitanism has brought about a ‘normalisation’ of hybridity in contemporary postcolonial communities.” Through the everyday experiences, struggles and happenings in the novel, Smith represents this normality of hybridity in the quotidian lives of her characters.

White Teeth (2000) pays significant attention to the novel’s characters’ speech mannerisms, depicting a multitude of English varieties, including a mixture of Jamaican

English, Cockney, and Bangladeshi English, to name just some deviations from Standard English. Murdoch (2007: 589) believes that Smith's vision of a "new, mongrel Britain" is especially emphasized by her predominantly immigrant characters whose language is the "arbiter of contemporary metropolitan materialities". Such an "extended web of origins and belonging" is used to re-present the "postmodernist newness of the post/colonial metropolis", but also to reveal the important contributions the migrants have made in the development of the multiple registers of language in England (Murdoch 2007: 589).

The main location of the novel is north London, which in itself represents numerous variations in terms of how English is spoken within this region, and is therefore a promising location where to study the hybrid setup of the novel. London, the capital city and hub of England, has for decades been used as the setting for many British novels and the city can be considered the epitome of metropolitan multiculturalism and hybridity. One of the reasons could be that it is a location every English-speaking reader knows. In addition, readers of a London novel generally tend to have some preconceived ideas about what type(s) of English(es) and other languages could be spoken in the location, and the London novels can only affirm or contort their imaginations of the London setting. Thomas (2005: 312) has noted that although London can be considered to be "Europe's most multicultural and racially diverse city", it is mostly writers who are themselves Black or of Asian heritage who have faithfully recorded such changes in their writings about British life. In relation to the evident multiculturalism of modern London, Murdoch claims that:

The pressing presence of the postcolonial community in London epitomizes the transformative structure of the nation, and through them Smith inscribes an intercultural plethora of language, food, and culture, an ethnocultural incursion of otherness that redefines what it means to be British at the end of the twentieth century. (Murdoch 2007: 592)

In an analysis of *White Teeth*, Sebastian Groes (2011: 227), a scholar of contemporary London literature, believes that Smith's "emphasis on London's new 'breeds' of hybrid, spoken languages comes to permeate the text", adding that the

‘mutation’ of received pronunciation by the various languages spoken by the immigrants and their London-born children is a marker of how “the English language is reinvented from the inside out”, also signifying a “kind of linguistic equivalent of miscegenation”. Groes (2011: 16) has also pointed out in his analysis of contemporary London literature in general that “writers are interpreters and translators of the various, often conflicting discourses the city offers – Rushdie calls it ‘Babylondon’ (in *Satanic Verses* 1989: 459) – and they take their city right inside our minds to construct profoundly real, imaginary London”. As can be gathered from this quote, literary London can at the same time be the projection of the writer who positions his/ her characters into the hybrid linguistic setting of London, but the writer can also create for the reader a remarkably realistic setting while at the same time broadening the readers’ understanding of how great the changes in the types of English varieties of London really are.

White Teeth is a literary work that has drawn its readers’ attention to topics of great importance in contemporary London. In previous research into the novel, the main focus has mostly been on the representation of the complex dynamics of multicultural societies, race relations and identity through the themes covered and ideas expressed in the novel (see Upstone 2007, Murdoch 2007, Moss 2008, Bentley 2008, McCann 2012), whereas my research would discuss how Smith has created the coexistence of recognisably different varieties of English, and where and how the different types of English are used in the novel to create a literary whole. In addition, I hope to find out what different literary techniques have been employed to represent linguistic variability, and whether they are sufficient. In doing so, I plan to apply the theory of linguistic heteroglossia, developed and described comprehensively by the Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin. From the research I expect to find out more about the function of artistic heteroglossia and hybrid languages as used in the novel. In addition, the thesis will also explore how credibility is granted to the

characters' speech, what their linguistic limitations are, and consider the possible future developments in the English language as used in a multicultural British writing in general.

1 MIKHAIL BAKHTIN ON THE NOVEL AND HETEROGLOSSIA

Ideas on the novel form as developed by the Russian literary scholar, philosopher and semiotician Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895–1975) were first introduced to the Western world in the 1970s, after his death, by critics such as Julia Kristeva and Tzvetan Todorov, when his ideas moved on from France to the United States, the United Kingdom, and many other countries (New World Encyclopedia 2012: para.2). Bakhtin’s views had become increasingly popular by the late 1980s, greatly due to the support of his ideas by critics like Michael Holquist and Katarina Clark (New World Encyclopedia 2012: para.2). Holquist (2004: xx), a well-known translator of Bakhtin's work from Russian into English, has stated that the “extraordinary sensitivity to the immense plurality of experience more than anything else distinguished Bakhtin from other moderns who have been obsessed with language”.

In his introduction to Bakhtin’s collection of essays, *The Dialogic Imagination* (2004), Holquist (2004: xvii-xviii) has said that compared to all the other theorists who have contributed to a deeper understanding of language in the 20th century, including Saussure, Benveniste, and Roman Jakobson, who are generally considered to have been extraordinarily systematic, Bakhtin was not working within a systematic frame in his work, meaning he developed his own specific concepts, which, in turn, might have made analysing his ideas more difficult than those of his contemporaries. Holquist also (2004: xxi) points out that Bakhtin’s interest with the problem of alterity in language led Bakhtin to take up the topic in a principled way, in the process coining several terms, including ‘heteroglossia’, ‘word-with-a-loophole’, and ‘intonational quotation marks’. Bakhtin mainly focuses on the function of the language in a novel, most notably in the prose fiction form.

In what follows, I am going to introduce some of the main Bakhtinian concepts concerning the novel form and relate these to an important notion introduced by Bakhtin – heteroglossia, and explicate some methods the presence of which Bakhtin considers important in a heteroglossic novel. In the final section of this chapter I will bring out why and how Bakhtin’s theories on heteroglossia can be applied to my empirical analysis of *White Teeth*.

Bakhtin has dedicated a lot of his work in literature to the study of the novel, mainly focusing on aspects such as language use, the dialogical nature and heteroglossia of the novel form. In the essay “Discourse in the Novel” Bakhtin (2004: 324) introduces the term ‘heteroglossia’, which he defines as being “another’s speech in another’s language, serving to express authorial intentions, but in a refracted way”, thus making up a so-called “double-voiced discourse” where two different speakers’ intentions are being catered for simultaneously – the speaking character’s direct intention, as well as the “refracted intention” of the author. By this Bakhtin seems to want to indicate that the perspective of the author as the creator of any novel is important but it is not the only point of view, as the author’s own voice coexists with those of his or her characters. Such as double-voiced discourse is identified as always being inherently dialogized (Bakhtin 2004: 324). Bakhtin considers this dialogized heteroglossia to be one of the main representations of the uniqueness of the novel genre.

Bakhtin further elaborates that every “human being in the novel is first, foremost and always a speaking human being; the novel requires speaking persons bringing with them their own unique ideological discourse, their own language” (Bakhtin 2004: 332). Heteroglossia enters into the novel through this diversity of voices and worldviews. Here it is important to note that under heteroglossia Bakhtin does not have in mind only different language varieties or dialects that need to be present in a novel, but rather his notion of

heteroglossia covers all of the ‘voices’ of any novel, including the direct opinions of the characters, the authorial commentaries on the characters’ voices, and the author’s voice as a distinct voice from that of the narrator’s voice (because these two may be completely antagonistic). Altogether, Bakhtin believes that there will always be “a set of conditions – social, historical, meteorological, physiological – that will ensure that a word uttered in one place and at that time will have a different meaning than it would have under any other conditions” (Bakhtin 2004: 428). Therefore, there are numerous factors that combine to assure that no utterance in any fictional novel can only have one interpretative meaning. Bakhtin believes that the stratification and heteroglossia of any language is a dynamic invariant of any linguistic life, which will only “widen and deepen as long as language is alive and developing” (Bakhtin 2004: 272).

Bakhtin saw great potential in the study of the novel form as a rising and modern phenomenon in the 20th century (Bakhtin 2004: 260). Theorists who discussed stylistics or language use from a linguistic point of view did not often pay attention to the inevitable linguistic plurality conveyed within novels. As Bakhtin has stated, traditional treatment of the stylistics of the novel has not acknowledged the genre’s uniqueness; instead, the traditional treatments of the novel have focused on an analysis of its language in a narrowly poetic sense or the characterisation of its language has been very limited, such as in terms of ‘expressiveness’, ‘imagery’, ‘clarity’, and so on (Bakhtin 2004: 260).

Historically, Bakhtin differentiates between two arbitrary stylistic lines of development of the European novel starting from the Renaissance onwards (Bakhtin 2004: 375). These lines include what he calls the First Stylistic Line and the Second Stylistic Line for novels. The main point of difference between these two lines is their treatment of languages and other genres. The First Stylistic Line is typical of chivalric romances, the pastoral novel and the Sophistic novel, and literary works categorised under this line are

characterised by “a single language and a single style (which is more or less rigorously consistent); heteroglossia remains *outside* the novel”; whereas the Second Line, “incorporates heteroglossia into a novel’s composition, exploiting it to orchestrate its own meaning and frequently resisting altogether any unmediated and pure authorial discourse” (Bakhtin 2004: 375). Bakhtin believes that it was only in the 19th century that the two Stylistic Lines began to merge (Bakhtin 2004: 414). Bakhtin was especially interested in studying novels belonging to the Second Stylistic Line, because it is in this line that the languages used in the novel turn into an “artistically organized system of languages” where the different languages used “become implicated in each other”, while at the same time also animating each other (Bakhtin 2004: 410).

Bakhtin’s much anthologized four essays combined under the title *The Dialogic Imagination* (2004) offer a thorough overview of the history and stylistics of the European novel. In the essay titled “Epic and Novel”, Bakhtin familiarizes the readers with the crucial differences between the epic and the novel form. Bakhtin uses the epic as the genre belonging under the First Stylistic Line as his main example of literary form to be contrasted with his primary interest – the novel form. His analysis of both of the major genres is based on his readings of many Russian and Western classics, including epic poetry by Homer, Aristotle, Horace, Byron, Goethe and Schiller, among others, and novels by Fyodor Dostoevsky, Cervantes, Rabelais, and Charles Dickens, to name just a few authors. Although the epic is not the focus of interest for this thesis, for the purpose of bringing out the main characteristics of the novel as Bakhtin has defined them, it is useful to contrast the novel genre with that of the epic. The epic is told to present the readers the “absolute past” in terms of being complete and having no place for “openendedness”, whereas the novel is classified as the representation of “contemporary reality” (Bakhtin 2004: 15, 22).

From a linguistic point of view, Bakhtin considers the main difference between the two genres to lie in the official and elevated language that is associated with the epic, whereas the novel is considered to present us with “mixed social registers (or heteroglossia)” (Pearce 1994: 60). Bakhtin follows his contrast of the two genres by claiming that the themes of the epic and the novel are also completely different, with the epic being focused on tradition, having “emphasis on closure and completeness, as well as being described by ‘high moral seriousness’”, and the novel as being the more frivolous, everyday genre of laughter, characterised by its seeming “unfinalizability” (Pearce 1994: 60). As a final point of contrast, Bakhtin (2004 cited in Pearce 1994: 60) concludes that the “epic, with its representation of a single, authoritative voice is profoundly monologic, and the novel is inherently dialogic.” Simon (2005 : 47), in turn, points out that when taking into consideration all of these distinctions between the novel and the epic, “the novel is not so much a genre as an anti-genre, which defines itself by its incessant polemics with the fixed genres that seem to fix and monologize the world”.

Unlike the epic, Bakhtin considers “speech diversity and language stratification” to act as “the basis for style in the novel”, and this is said to apply “even in those places where the author’s voice seems at first glance to be unitary and consistent” (Bakhtin 2004: 315). Bakhtin also claims that the “basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel” is made up of the “distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages”, as well as of the “movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization” (Bakhtin 2004: 263).

In the essay “Discourse in the Novel”, Bakhtin emphasises the importance of studying the heteroglossia of the novel. Bakhtin observes that stylistics has for a long time been ignoring the dialogic nature of language and the heteroglot nature of the novel,

viewing the novel as if a “hermetic and self-sufficient whole” (Bakhtin 2004: 273). Bakhtin presents in the essay a guiding principle to bear in mind when conducting a methodological analysis of any novel, claiming that:

From the point of view of methodology, it makes no sense to describe “*the* language of the novel” – because the very object of such a description, the novel’s unitary language, simply does not exist.

What *is* present in the novel is an artistic *system* of languages, or more accurately a system of *images* of languages, and the real task of stylistic analysis consists in uncovering all the available orchestrating languages in the composition of the novel. (Bakhtin 2004: 416)

Bakhtin maintains that no novel, as opposed to the genres of epic or poetry, is monolingual, in other words, monoglossic. In fact, Bakhtin asserts that heteroglossia is the main characteristic of prose fiction.

Bakhtin’s fascination with the novel lay in how authors of literary works convey their meanings through language, and he has stressed that “the author speaks not *in* a language, but *through* language” (Bakhtin 2004: 299). Bakhtin comments that:

Although at its very core literary language is frequently socially homogeneous, as the oral and written language of a dominant social group, there is nevertheless always present, even here, a certain degree of social differentiation, a social stratification that in other eras can become extremely acute. Social stratification may here and there coincide with generic and professional stratification, but in essence it is, of course, a thing completely autonomous and peculiar to itself. (2004: 289-90)

In contrast to the previously held beliefs concerning the novel, Bakhtin (2004: 368) believes that any powerful novel should exhibit different types of speech and deprive the underlying language system of its “naïve absence of conflict”. In analysing the essentials of the novel form, Bakhtin (2004: 271-2) differentiates between the perceived centripetal and actual centrifugal socio-linguistic forces in any culture, claiming that:

/.../ the centripetal forces of the life of language, embodied in a ‘unitary language’, operate in the midst of heteroglossia. At any given moment of its evolution, language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word (according to formal linguistic markers, especially phonetic), but also – and for us this is the essential point – into languages that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups, ‘professional’ and ‘generic’ languages, languages of generations and so forth. From this point of view, literary language is only one of these heteroglot languages - and in its turn is also stratified into languages (generic, period-bound and others). (Bakhtin 2004: 271)

Bakhtin asserts that literary language is always a heteroglot language, stratified into several layers which are in a permanently dynamic relationship and development. Bakhtin also believes that every generation and age group has “its own language, its own vocabulary, its own particular accentual system”, but adds that “it is even possible to have a family jargon define the societal limits of a language /.../ with its special vocabulary and unique accentual system” (2004: 290-291). The socio-linguistic differences between the heteroglot languages represented in a novel are frequently made overt through external linguistic features, often in the form of direct authorial commentaries concerning the language used by the characters, but the image of a language can never be created only through such external commentaries (Bakhtin 2004: 357). However, it is important to bear in mind that Bakhtin does not mean that the varieties of the languages used by different characters are necessarily always overtly exteriorized, or “expounded” (Bakhtin 2004: 378), rather it is considered novelist’s duty to create an artistic image of the plurality of languages within the generally perceived unity of the novel.

Every author of a novel naturally decides how the characters or voices in the novel are represented, how distinguishable they are, and how often the reader’s attention is brought to the speech differences among the characters. As Bakhtin (2004: 48-49) poignantly states: “The author (as creator of the novelistic whole) cannot be found at any one of the novel’s language levels: he is to be found at the centre of organization where all levels intersect.”

In addition, Bakhtin makes the point that all languages of heteroglossia “encounter one another and co-exist in the consciousness of real people – first and foremost, in the creative consciousness of people who write novels (Bakhtin 2004: 291-291). Bakhtin (2004: 292) follows his discussion of heteroglossia by claiming that, while struggling with one another, all such languages are in a constant evolving state, leading to an environment

of social heteroglossia. Most importantly, Bakhtin (2004: 292) advocates the idea that different languages, all of which make up heteroglossia, can enter:

/.../ the unitary plane of the novel, which can unite in itself parodic stylizations of generic languages, various forms of stylizations and illustrations of professional and period-bound languages, the languages of particular generations, of social dialects and others (as occurs, for example, in the English comic novel). They may all be drawn in by the novelist for the orchestration of his themes and for the refracted (indirect) expression of his intentions and values.

By “social dialects” Bakhtin underscores that what is meant is the “integral mass made up of all the markers that give that language its social profile, a profile that /.../ can be established even within the boundaries of a linguistically unitary language” (Bakhtin 2004: 356). According to Bakhtin, it is the responsibility of any prose artist to “elevate the social heteroglossia surrounding objects into an image that has finished contours”, adding that the author “creates artistically calculated nuances on all the fundamental voices and tones of this heteroglossia” (Bakhtin 2004: 278-279).

In discussing Bakhtin in relation to the plurality of languages in any literary novel, it is also important to differentiate between the terms of ‘heteroglossia’ and ‘polyglossia’. Bakhtin emphasizes that whereas ‘polyglossia’ is used to “describe the linguistic and cultural mixing of national languages: for example, the complex interaction of Greek, Latin and adjacent oriental languages”, then ‘heteroglossia’, on the other hand, refers to the “internal differentiation” and “stratification” of different registers *within* a language: in particular, the struggle between official (ideologically dominant) and nonofficial registers (Pearce 1994: 62). Bakhtin emphasises that although polyglossia has always existed, it has not been an expressed factor of literary creation, because “creative consciousness was realized in closed, pure languages (although in actual fact they were mixed)” (Bakhtin 2004: 12).

In “Discourse in the Novel”, Bakhtin has discussed in detail the function of literary heteroglossia as an ever-present phenomenon in an artistic novel. Although it might seem

like a redundant accentuation, Bakhtin (2004: 359) stresses the idea that any image of a language created for any piece of fiction is in essence artistic. By often repeating the adjective 'artistic' in relation to his analysis of the prose novel form, Bakhtin seems to wish to emphasize the fictionality of novelistic writing and the process of creation itself. He makes this clear through his statement that the main task in the process of artistic creation is to organize diversity of voices into an artistic system (Bakhtin 2004: 416). Yet this artistic system of voices may not immediately be comprehended by many readers of such artistic prose, which in turn would suggest that readers can often neglect the artistic aspect of the novel or, on the contrary, interpret the story they are reading as an authentic representation of any society, which would also be a false conclusion. Bakhtin argues that all the different languages that are included in the novel are "shaped into artistic images of languages (they are not raw linguistic data), and this shaping may be more or less artistic and successful, may more or less respond to the spirit and power of the languages that are being represented" (Bakhtin 2004: 417). Here Bakhtin is trying to draw the readers' attention to the possible artificiality, or the creative aspect in the writing process, in addition to the artistically represented characteristics the languages involved in any heteroglossic novel.

In discussing the Bakhtinian functions of heteroglossia, it is also important to mention Bakhtin's attitudes towards including other genres in a novel. Bakhtin elaborates that incorporating other genres into the novel is "the most basic and fundamental" way to organize heteroglossia, and these other genres can be both artistic (including lyrical songs, poems, and inserted other stories), as well as extra-artistic (incorporating rhetorical, scholarly, and religious genres, among others) (Bakhtin 2004: 320). As Bakhtin underscores, when another genre is included into the novel, then "[c]ertain features of language take on the specific flavour of a given genre: they knit together with specific

points of view, specific approaches, forms of thinking, nuances and accents characteristic of the given genre” (Bakhtin 2004: 289). From a linguistic point of view this means that when we read a novel that has incorporated other literary and non-literary genres into it, then we are already faced with the reality of linguistic difference, because every inserted genre brings its own idiosyncratic linguistic features to the novel.

Taking into consideration that such variable genres can and often do enter the novel, Bakhtin also sees the problematics involved with it, by claiming that:

So great is the role played by these genres that are incorporated into novels that it might seem as if the novel is denied any primary means for verbally appropriating reality, that it has no approach of its own, and therefore requires the help of other genres to re-process reality; the novel itself has the appearance of being merely a secondary syncretic unification of other seemingly primary verbal genres. (Bakhtin 2004: 321)

Bakhtin, however, further explicates that adding different genres in any novel only diversifies it, and the main purpose of adding different genres to the novel is to allow these genres to bring their own languages into the novel, which, in turn, makes the novel more stratified, as well as intensifies “its speech diversity in fresh ways” (Bakhtin 2004: 321).

Although Bakhtin’s views on the inherent multiplicity, stratification and plurality of everyday languages is convincing in its main notions, his theory does have its inherent problematic areas. Pearce (1994: 64) has pointed out that his attempt to distinguish poetic and novelistic discourse on the grounds of the poetic genre being inherently monologic and the novelistic genre as being inherently heteroglossic is far-fetched in its observations. As an example, Pearce (1994: 64) points out that the poetry of Wordsworth and Walter Stevens can be observed to contain as many features of dialogicality as there can be found in the works of Charles Dickens. Furthermore, Pearce (1994: 64) points out that Bakhtin believes that any type of language is inevitably stratified into different points of view, being thus at least double-voiced, which inevitably would suggest that, in addition to the novel form, every other literary genre is also inherently heteroglossic, not monoglossic.

Although Bakhtin's viewpoints on the inherently heteroglossic nature of the novel form are often contrasted in his work with the supposedly monoglossic poetic forms, I do not intend to compare the two genres. In addition, I find Bakhtin's main notions concerning the methodological analysis of the novel form, as my main interest of study, to be very insightful and fruitfully applicable.

In "Discourse in the Novel", Bakhtin demonstrates heteroglossia in comic fiction through different means which make up a unified novel. Among these are the direct speech of characters, third-person representation of the character's inner speech and incorporating other literary genres into the novel, such as songs, fairy-tales, and poetry (Pearce 1994: 64). In my research of the novel *White Teeth*, I intend to study all the three phenomena recognized by Bakhtin as incorporating and organising heteroglossia in the novel. I plan to conduct the research to see if, where and how often Smith uses the three Bakhtinian devices to create a heteroglossic image of the London represented in the novel and discuss their effect.

2 HETEROGLOSSIA IN ZADIE SMITH'S *WHITE TEETH* – A BAKHTINIAN ANALYSIS

White Teeth is a distinctively multifarious contemporary novel in terms of all the various languages, people, cultures, and genres included in the novel. One of the reasons for the novel's worldwide success can be attributed to its particular linguistic playfulness as well as insightfulness in narrating the story. Zadie Smith uses language to create a type of "narrative authenticity" (Groes 2011: 233) in which varying languages play a highly significant role in emphasising the living speech of London. Murdoch (2007: 589) succinctly points out that for Smith, language, "as an arbiter of metropolitan materialities, is always already inhabited by difference". In addition to representing a multicultural model of contemporary Britain through a narrative describing people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds, *White Teeth* (2000) also uses a mixture of varying Englishes, all of which combine and interact to represent "socio-linguistic deviations" within the perceived homogeneity of Standard English, thus undermining the preconceived notions of having a homogeneous language as a common tongue (Bentley 2007: 496). Christian Mair, a scholar of non-standard Englishes, maintains that it is not surprising that in *White Teeth* Smith should take notice of the language use of her characters, as they are:

Carefully arranged so as to allow the author to deal with the maximum number of conflicts between groups: between men and women, between old and young or, more particularly, between the parent immigrant generation and their British-born children, between whites and blacks, between Asians and blacks, and, less prominently, between Asians and whites. (Mair 2003 cited in Watts 2013: 854).

Watts (2011: 159) points out that Smith is consciously trying to represent in English "that which is foreign to English", and for fulfilling it, she uses many ethnic writing techniques. Some of these techniques include "contextualization and direct translation, whereby the writer attempts to "embody in a majority language the strangeness of a minority culture",

in addition to trying to “make that strangeness accessible to the reader” (Eoyang 2003 cited in Watts 2011: 159).

The applicability of Bakhtin’s work in the field of the novel to Smith’s novel is mentioned by Bentley (2007) and Groes (2011) in their analysis of *White Teeth* (2000). Sebastian Groes (2011: 227), in his study of contemporary London writing, has pointed out that Smith has created a type of London which sounds like a “liberated, heterogeneous space which is matched by and created by a particular kind of Bakhtinian heteroglossia, namely the mixture of languages spoken by the new generation of youngsters growing up in this society”. In an article on the representation of language in *White Teeth*, Bentley (2007: 496 -7) argues that Smith has created through her dialogues a “multicultural model of a nation”, thus representing a Bakhtinian “heteroglossic function of the novel”, where “Archie Jones’s working-class, Cockney accent, Samad’s Asian-English and Clara’s Creolized Caribbean English represent socio-linguistic deviations from Standard English as the centripetal forces of language undermining any notion of a homoglossic centre to the nation’s language and culture”. Bakhtin’s other ideas, such as the notion that the novel form is “the genre of laughter” where the readers are presented with a mixture of social registers, are also relevant in the case of *White Teeth*.

Bentley (2007: 497) goes even further, saying that it could be argued that *White Teeth* supersedes the model of heteroglossia demonstrated by Bakhtin, because the novel is presenting heteroglossia as the unquestioningly dominant mode of speech in contemporary Britain, being thus an example of the dynamic linguistic relationships between the vernacular tongues in the London represented by Smith.

Bentley’s claim might indeed be valid in terms of the different approaches Bakhtin and Smith have to representing heteroglossia in their respective works, with Bakhtin bringing the readers’ attention to the already existing, albeit often hidden, plurality of

voices in novels, and Smith creating the explicit images of these different voices herself, but Bentley's interpretation of *White Teeth* might leave the impression as if we are dealing with a novel that presents the readers with a heterogeneous society where all the different languages thrive. Bakhtin, however, believes that in any society, there is always "[t]he victory of one reigning language (dialect) over the others" (Bakhtin 2004: 271), meaning that one dominant language is always opposed by other, minor languages, and the latter do not generally surpass the dominant language in terms of their real or perceived importance.

White Teeth could be said to exhibit numerous thematic language hubs of post-colonial languages, which are mostly related to the same characters and display recurring linguistic peculiarities. Although the examples for the thematic language hubs might be considered somewhat random and chosen subjectively to support my claim of the novel representing postcolonial Englishes, all of the examples do exhibit some of the most characteristic and noticeable examples of the use of varying English throughout the novel.

I have chosen examples of thematic language hubs from the languages used by all the main characters in the novel – the English-Caribbean family of Archibald Jones, his wife Clara Jones and their daughter Irie Jones; the Bengali family Samad Iqbal, his wife Alsana Iqbal and their twin boys Magid and Millat Iqbal; and briefly mention the type of linguistic quirks related to the third family in the storyline – the Chalfens. In addition, I will briefly mention the type of English used by some minor characters in the storyline, either because their language is specifically commented on by the omniscient narrator, hence marking its importance, or because their language use stands out as markedly deviating from the norm or as a potentially conflicting language within the general linguistic setting. Also, instances in the novel where English in combination with a language other than English is represented, will also be discussed.

I have divided my empirical analysis into two subsections. Firstly, in section 2.1, I will focus on the direct speech of characters and the third person representation of a character's inner speech, which are studied together as these two Bakhtinian characteristics of heteroglossia are often applied either together by the author of *White Teeth* or in separate scenes in the case of similar main characters. This section is, in turn, divided into seven subsections to cover all the characters who distinctly deviate from the use of SE in the novel.

Section 2.2 focuses on the third type of a Bakhtinian analysis of the representation of heteroglossia, namely on the inclusion of other genres into the novel. In this section, I give some examples of genres other than the novel form which have been included in *White Teeth*, such as the epistolary and diary genres, and discuss their function and effect.

2.1 Direct speech of characters and third-person representation of the characters' inner speech

A predominant feature of *White Teeth* is its plentiful use of dialogues and third-person representation of the speech of numerous characters in the novel. All of the main characters in the novel have some idiosyncratic linguistic features, such as using a specific vocabulary, having distinct syntactic structures, or their varying pronunciation is made obvious by the orthographic representation of their speech. In addition, the dialogues are often also accompanied by the narrator's comments on the type of language used by given characters, including the inner speech of characters, which from a heteroglossic point of view prove to be one of the most effective ways to highlight the linguistic differences between the characters. Such a representation of language, which combines both dialogues and the character's inner speech, makes the readers familiar with the characters, illustrates

their idiosyncrasies and reveals the enormous amount of linguistic creativity used in the case of every major and some minor characters throughout the novel.

Many of the main characters in the novel seem to be very concerned with how their speech comes across to the other members they interact with. One of the main characters in the novel – Samad Iqbal, who is a Bengali immigrant and a devotee of the Bengali culture, raising his London-born twin boys together with his wife Alsana, a fellow Bengali, is shown throughout the novel to have enormous zeal for “proper” use of English and to go to great lengths when expressing his judgement and scorn when it comes to the use of the type of the English language that deviates from the norm. The kind of English used by Samad is either represented to the readers through authorial commentary on his language or through the direct speech of Samad.

What makes Samad’s interest in speaking correct English somewhat peculiar, at times even humorously obsessive, is that for him, as well as for his wife, English is not their mother tongue. Watts (2011: 164-75) points out that they are both native Bengali speakers, which means that in their adopted country, they consciously choose to engage in the “process of language crossing from Bengali into Standard English throughout Smith’s entire novel”. The married couple do not teach their children their heritage language, although they do both express concern for their twins’ wellbeing in England, which even leads Samad to sending one of his twin sons to Bangladesh to avoid him becoming “corrupted” in and by England (Smith 2001: 144). Paradoxically, Samad is easily offended when he hears the English language being misused by others (Watts 2011: 190). Watts (2011: 190) draws parallels between Samad’s status as an immigrant and his conscious choice to use Queen’s English when living in England, presumably because he perceives Standard English to be the more cultured language compared to other non-standard Englishes.

Murdoch (2007: 589) describes Samad's use of English as having "mellifluous tones, complex sentence structure, and insistent Shakespearean references that mediate the *uber*-expressiveness of Samad". His scrutiny of the type of English used by himself and by those he interacts with often leads to comic results, as, despite being an immigrant, he criticises many of the characters who might be considered to have a generally good command of English. For instance, Samad, infuriated, expresses his frustration concerning the use of non-proper English with his reply to an Englishwoman who says "So what?" by replying: "What kind of a phrase is this: 'So what?' Is that English? That is not English. Only the immigrants can speak the Queen's English these days." (Smith 2001: 181). In another scene where Samad and Alsana are watching the evening news together, Samad again expresses his frustration concerning someone else's use of English by saying: "This woman – Moira whateverhernameis – she mumbles. Why is she reading the news if she can't speak properly?" (Smith 2001: 235). The scenes where the characters display their attitudes towards their own speech and to that of their companions also reveal the linguistic stratification in the novel, which is an everlasting process where languages affect one another, as is suggested by Bakhtin (2004: 433). Such stratification of languages always exists within the urban space the novel portrays, which, according to Groes (2011: 233) results in a "space of linguistic contagion".

Alsana's speech is more recognizably non-native in the novel than Samad's. She reveals that she does not remember some words in English, as when she says: "Anything for a little – how do you say that in English?" (Smith 2001: 76), and when she forgets the word 'ultrasound', she says " /.../ But I tell you, when I turned my head and saw that fancy ultra-business thingummybob..." (Smith 2001: 74). Another telling scene reveals how Alsana mixes up an English idiom: " /.../ Getting anything out of my husband is like trying to squeeze water out when you're stoned.' Neena laughs despite herself. 'Water out

of a *stone*.’” (Smith 2001: 78). In this last scene, Neena, a second-generation fluent speaker of English corrects the non-fluent English of her first-generation aunt (Watts 2011: 167). Although throughout the novel, Alsana does not seem to be nearly as concerned with using “proper” English the way her husband is, she also in time seems to adopt SE as her everyday language of communication, because this is the language of her adopted country.

Very few minority characters in *White Teeth* actually speak or succeed in speaking Standard English as their everyday language, despite often discussing the problematics of SE or trying to impersonate a SE user on specific occasions. One of the main characters in the novel, Archibald Jones, who is a white, middle-class English father, is portrayed as often using Cockney in his direct speech, and he does not seem too concerned about achieving “correct” Standard English. From a Bakhtinian point of view of heteroglossia, Archibald’s use of English is represented only through the character’s own direct speech, while barely any authorial comments follow. When comparing how Samad’s and Archibald’s English are supposed to differ, it is understandable why the narrator does not consider it necessary to comment on the type of English used by Archie, as opposed to how Samad speaks. Whereas Samad exerts himself to use only Standard English vocabulary and intonation, which in a written form would leave the impression of succeeding in speaking in SE, the readers get to hear of his intonational and Bengali-influenced deficiencies through the third-person comments on Samad’s speech. In the case of Archie, we can tell that he speaks Cockney through his choices in vocabulary and the orthographic representation of his deviations from SE pronunciation and wordings, thus there is no need for additional, authorial comments on his speech.

2.1.1 Caribbean English

In analysing the use of Caribbean Creole in diaspora communities, Christian Mair (2003 cited in Watts 2011: 170) asserts that in many diaspora communities, “Caribbean Creoles show few signs of attrition or disappearing”, and in contemporary London, Creole has remained a widely-used variety because it is “a rich expressive code with considerable covert prestige”, most notably due to its connection with Black British English. Watts (2011: 170) adds to Mair’s observations that over time, Jamaican Creole has become known as the “bastardized version of English”, mainly because it is more or less comprehensible to native English speakers, and does not, therefore, necessarily require the Jamaican characters to be involved in the process of language crossing, as opposed to the Bengali-speaking characters in the novel, whose mother tongue is completely incomprehensible to the English ear.

The narrator of *White Teeth* does not only limit itself to merely representing the use of Jamaican English as it occurs throughout the storyline in the dialogues of the characters of Jamaican heritage; rather, the narrator interacts with the readers and explicates some linguistic peculiarities that might not be known or may sound strange to a reader not familiar with Jamaican English. Instances like this occur in places where we are told that: “In Jamaica it is even in the grammar: there is no choice of personal pronoun, no splits between *me* or *you* or *they*, there is only the pure, homogeneous *I*” (Smith 2001: 327). The scene is also followed by an in-the-book example of how Jamaicans use the pronoun *I*, by saying: “When Hortense Bowden, half white herself, got to hearing about Clara’s marriage, she came round to the house, stood on the doorstep, said, ‘Understand: I and I don’t speak from this moment forth,’ turned on her heel, and was true to her word” (Smith 2001: 327). Here we are dealing with what Bassnett and Trivedi (2002: 29) would call an act of ‘frontloading’ cultural information in an intracultural text, thus becoming a

somewhat didactic literary work. I would argue that this kind of extra-linguistic remarks on behalf of the narrator do not disturb the general flow of the storyline, as Smith is not overusing such didactic methods; instead, the readers are little by little made more familiar with the peculiarities of postcolonial English spoken by the people of Jamaican origin, and the general linguistic frontloading does not take away the literary quality of the novel.

One of the most important characters in the novel is Clara Jones, née Bowden, who stands out in the novel for her direct speech and the authorial commentary accompanying her speech, which is underscored as a marked use of Jamaican English. She arrives in Britain as a teenager, marries Archie Jones at the young age of 19, and after their marriage, which takes place very soon after their first meeting, she decides to start working on improving her English and making it more suited for the London area of Willesden where she now lives. This kind of change in one's language (either conscious or unconscious change) is an example of what Bakhtin would call language dynamics (Bakhtin 2004: 271) – no language is static, rather, all languages are in a constant change, and influence one another.

In the case of Clara, her decision to change her language is also influenced by her mother, under whose control she has lived all her childhood and teen years, and from whose influence she is trying to free herself. The changes in her use of English are made overt through scenes where at the beginning of the novel we can read Clara speaking in an English with marked Jamaican English influences: “I see dat you walkin’ down and der’s a missin’ step comin’. I’m just tellin’ you: watch your step! Me jus wan’ share heaven wid you. Me nah wan’ fe see you bruk-up your legs” (Smith 2001: 35-36), whereas in a subsequent scene, when approximately a year has passed in the storyline, we can read “‘Now, isn’t that strange, Archie?’ said Clara, filling in all her consonants. She was already

some way to losing her accent and she liked to work on it at every opportunity” (Smith 2001: 65).

Thus, we are told the inner thoughts of Clara by the narrator who says that Clara is “working on” improving her accent, revealing her wish to linguistically conform in a social setting with new acquaintances, Alsana and Samad Iqbal. It is noteworthy that in this scene we can read that Clara is putting on a linguistic act with people she does not yet know that well, although Clara and Alsana later become good friends. If the direct speech in this scene was not followed by the comments of the third-person omniscient narrator, many readers might not even notice that Clara is making an effort in her speech.

However, in the following chapter, in a private talk with her husband Archie, Clara is in an excited mood telling him of her pregnancy: “I am! And I arks de doctor what it will look like, half black an’ half white an’ all dat bizness. And ’im say anyting could happen. Dere’s even a chance it may be blue-eyed! Kyan you imagine dat?” (Smith 2001: 67). In this scene Clara expresses her joy in Jamaican English, which has for many years of her life been the most comfortable English variety for her. In addition, as the direct speech of Clara is riddled with Jamaicanisms, there is no overt need for additional, third-person commentaries on the character’s inner speech. Sebastian Groes (2011: 226) comments on this extract by pointing out that “Smith’s manipulation of signs on the page” is used to represent a specific, noticeable immigrant speech, the ultimate goal of which is to “undercut the hegemony of received pronunciation.”

In the final chapter of *WT*, when approximately 15 years have passed since her marriage to Archie, the readers can witness an irritated Clara in a scene where she says: “I can’t. She’s too far in to get out. *Archie*,’ she growls, lapsing into a threatening patois, ‘you kyan jus leddem sing trew de whole ting!’” (Smith 2001: 528). Here is another example of how Clara forgets to use SE in an emotional state, and instead “lapses” into the more

familiar Jamaican English. She starts off her sentence in a seemingly SE and, as she gets angrier, she starts to speak in a “threatening patois”. As the narrator comments that she “lapses” into patois then this would indicate that Clara’s speech, which the character herself decided to alter a long time ago, sometimes indicates linguistic forgetfulness.

Groes (2011: 226) goes on by pointing out that Smith is working in an “orthographical tradition” whose representatives from earlier decades include such racial and ethnic minority London novelists as Sam Selvon and Jean Rhys. The common feature between the works by Smith, Selvon and Rhys is that they all highlight “the (Caribbean) immigrant’s struggle with the English language by using semi-phonetic representation of speech to deliberately highlight the grammatical mistakes and poor vocabulary of the characters” (Groes 2011: 226). Naturally, Smith could also have just mentioned in an authorial comment that a Caribbean character is speaking in Caribbean English and left the speech peculiarities unmarked on page, but the semi-phonetic representations definitely add more flavour to the speech and might possibly make the readers also think more about the linguistic diversity of London immigrants.

Although Clara’s type of English is the most frequent representation of Jamaican English throughout the novel, she is not the only character whose Jamaican linguistic influences become apparent both through the characters’ direct speech as well as through the narrator’s commentary on the speech. Clara’s mother Hortense and two customers in a local “Irish” pool house, Clarence and Denzel, are also representatives of Jamaican Creole in London’s linguistic setting. In the case of Hortense, the readers are also shown a Jamaican English, which, unlike her daughter’s English, mostly remains the same throughout the storyline. One of the reasons for Hortense’s unchanging English might be that for her, having spent many decades in a Jamaican linguistic setting where she has only come across Jamaican English, it is not as easy to adopt a new manner of speaking as it

might be for her young daughter. In addition, Hortense does not much expand her social circle when she comes to live in London, and it is thus not surprising that she does not take up Standard English to such an extent as her daughter does or tries to. Throughout the novel, Hortense's direct speech is portrayed through words such as "marnin'" for "morning", "biznezz" for "business", "hexplained" for "explained" (Smith 2001: 385) and "dem" for "them" (Smith 2001: 389), to name just a few examples of her use of English. Nevertheless, in a scene where Hortense has Clara's first boyfriend Ryan over as a visitor, we can read: "'Clara! Come out of de cold.' It was the voice Hortense put on when she had company – an over-compensation of all the consonants – the voice she used for pastors and white women" (Smith 2001: 40). This extract reveals that even Hortense occasionally modifies her voice, but as she is mostly represented in the novel as speaking in a home setting, we generally come across her marked use of Jamaican Creole.

Unlike Clara's and Hortense's case, where the readers get to know very intimate details about them thorough flashbacks to their familial background, life in Jamaica, and even the circumstances of how they both were born, the readers are not told anything about the background of Clarence and Denzel, how they arrived in Britain, or the reason why they spend every day at a local, run-down poolroom. From the dialogues between the two Jamaicans, the readers catch only repeating glimpses, but these are nevertheless loaded with Jamaicanisms, as in the scene:

'Dat pattie look strange', said Clarence.

'Im try to poison us,' said Denzel.

'Dem mushroom look peculiar,' said Clarence.

'Im try to infiltrate a good man with de devil's food,' said Denzel. (Smith 2001: 191)

Such small extracts which are similar in essence, and where both Clarence and Denzel either negatively comment on the food or just criticize the other customers in the poolroom, increase the linguistic diversity of the already linguistically poly- and heteroglot poolroom setting. One can only assume that in the case of Clarence and Denzel, they

interact only with each other; therefore, it is not surprising that their language has not much changed throughout the years they have lived in London.

2.1.2 Cockney

Cockney, as an authentic London speech, is another well-recorded English variety throughout the novel. Cockney stands out as a specifically London-restricted speech, as opposed to Jamaican English, which has its origins from the Jamaican island and has been brought over to England by the migrants. Kadija George Sesay (2004: 101, 105) states that “second- and third-generation black Britons are native speakers of a great spectrum of regional dialects, including “London English” (or Cockney), generally unfamiliar to migrants, who arrived in England speaking, first and foremost, “the Queen’s English”, which they had been taught in colonial schools. Indeed, Cockney is prevalent in many of the works of black British writers today, as it is “one of the languages they ordinarily speak” (Sesay 2004: 105). The latter observation is fittingly represented in *White Teeth* also, as Samad and Alsana, who are first-generation immigrants in England, make every effort to speak Standard British English, which can also be observed from the linguistic behaviour and attitudes of Samad; whereas their second-generation children are more receptive to using varying Englishes, or more specifically, London dialects, including Cockney, as a more relaxed version of English.

Not only is Cockney spoken in *White Teeth* by Archie Jones, a native Londoner, but it is also spoken by an Arab pool house owner Abdul-Mickey, as well as occasionally by Ryan Topps, Samad and his son Millat. Paradoxically, Abdul-Mickey can be considered the most “convincing representation of Cockney” (Watts 2011: 191), as can be witnessed in his use of phrases such as saying “nuffin” instead of saying “nothing” (Smith 2001:

248), and “/.../ it’s the majority wot counts, innit” (Smith 2001: 249). The status of Cockney as it is perceived by the characters themselves is pointed out in a remark by Abdul-Mickey to Samad’s son Magid who has just returned from Bangladesh, where he had been sent by his father several years ago due to his father’s fear of his son becoming corrupted by England, but who, according to Abdul-Mickey: ““Speaks fuckin’ nice, don’t he? Sounds like a right fuckin’ Olivier. Queen’s fucking English and no mistake./.../ Civilized and that. You do feel like you should watch your mouth around him, dontcha?”” (Smith 2001: 449). Watts (2011: 192) interprets the scene with Magid and Mickey to be proof that “nonstandard dialects, including both ethnic dialects and the London-local dialect Cockney, all fail to hold overt prestige in the London of the novel”. Watts elaborates this by claiming that Abdul-Mickey considers the SE used by Magid as having “an element of highbrow culture and education”, which, in turn, “suggests an undertone of social inferiority within his own dialect of Cockney” (Watts 2011: 192). This scene shows how non-standard English speakers are represented as being aware of SE being spoken, especially because they do not come across SE speakers very often in their social circle, and the contrast between the two types of languages is noteworthy. The scene clearly illustrates that Standard English is represented to stand in what Bakhtin (2004: 271) would call a centripetal, powerful position, and all the other speech varieties in the novel, including Cockney, are depicted as somehow lacking in prestige.

Ryan Topps, who was Clara’s first boyfriend when they were teenagers, is a minor character in the novel, but his speech is also heavily loaded with Cockney influences. We can spot examples of him using Cockney in numerous scenes throughout the novel, such as him saying: ““You want sommin’?” said Ryan, taking a fierce drag of a dying cigarette. ‘Or sommin’?”” (Smith 2001: 35); ““Put somefin’ on that.”” (Smith 2001: 36), ““Somefing to fank the Lord for”” (Smith 2001: 388), ““In future, discuss it wiv myself and my

colleagues’” (Smith 2001: 389), “...it appears that you and your mother, and any memory I might ’ave of her, ’ave disappeared. *Erhummmm.*” (Smith 2001: 391), and ““And do you have any uvver in-ter-rests?”” (Smith 2001: 392). In all of these examples of Ryan’s speech, one can see different Cockney characteristics, including *h*-dropping in the beginning of words (*’ave*) and changing the *th*-sound into an *f*-sound (*somefin’*, *fank*, *uvver*). It could even be said that Ryan Topps’ Cockney is as authentic representation of Cockney as is Abdul-Mickey’s, but because he is the less important character in the novel, his speech might not leave such a strong impression on the readers.

Archibald Jones is another character in *WT* who is speaking Cockney, although his speech is represented as less deviating from SE than is the speech of Abdul-Mickey and Ryan Topps. His Cockney is present in excerpts such as “I ’spect they’ve got to go through their notes and that ... ’Snot like just getting up and telling a few howlers, is it?” (Smith 2001: 522) and “Layman’s terms, innit?” (Smith 2001: 528). Archie’s Cockney is revealed even in scenes where Archie’s inner speech is represented, as in “*Cor* (thought Archie) *they don’t make ’em like they used to*” (Smith 2001: 510), showing that the type of heteroglossia appearing in *WT* occasionally combines both the third-person representation of a character’s inner speech as well as that character’s specific social dialect. It seems that Archie is the character who is least concerned about how his speech comes across to other characters. Unlike Samad and Abdul-Mickey, he does not comment on the type of language used by others, nor does he try to alter his language in any way as his wife Clara does.

Cockney is also half-heartedly and even reluctantly adopted by Archie’s best friend Samad, as can be seen in the scene where the latter tries to order food and feels that the only way to get the attention of the waiter is by crossing over into Cockney: “Abdul-Mickey!’ he yelled, his voice assuming a slight, comic, cockney twinge. ‘Over here, my

governor, please” (Smith 2001: 190). From this scene, it is obvious from the authorial comments, that Samad “assuming” a Cockney speech is considered inauthentic and laughable. Also, the scene reveals that Samad is reluctant to distort the SE he generally speaks. Zadie Smith (2009: 133-34), in her collection of essays on her observations on British society, has noted that:

Voice adaptation is still the original British sin. /.../ If you go (metaphorically speaking) down the British class scale, you’ve gone from Cockney to “mockney” and can expect a public tarring and feathering; to go the other way is to perform an unforgivable act of class betrayal. Voices are meant to be unchanging and singular. We feel that our voices are who we are, and that to have more than one, or to use different versions of a voice for different occasions, represents, at best, a Janus-faced duplicity, and at worst, the loss of our very souls. (Smith 2009: 133-34)

This quote, however, does not mean that Smith herself would agree with such general beliefs concerning the assuming of different “voices” in varying situations. Smith concludes her thoughts on voice adaptations by claiming that:

I believe that flexibility of voice leads to a flexibility in all things. /.../ It’s my audacious hope that a man born and raised between opposing dogmas, between cultures, between voices, could not help but be aware of the extreme contingency of culture. (Smith 2009: 149).

Such future-oriented thoughts concerning language use in Britain are foregrounded in her novel where, it seems, very few characters actually remain speaking in only one type of language. Instead, many characters throughout the novel could be considered as representatives of language adaptors who choose language to suit a specific social situation.

2.1.3 Youth language

Most of the younger characters in the novel use a changing, flexible language, and could thus be considered language adaptors. *White Teeth* pays a lot of attention to the type of language spoken by the teenage children of the main characters in the novel; therefore, it is

not surprising that a lot of effort has been put into the representation of authentic youth lingo. It could be said that youth language is an example of what Bakhtin (2004: 271) calls the language of generations; in the case of *WT* it is the distinct language used by Magid, Millat and Irie.

A characteristic feature of the type of language spoken by the youths in the novel is the integration of different natural languages into their speech - polyglossia, as well as using varieties of the same language, including slang words to add colour to their speech. A vivid example of youth language as depicted in the novel is revealed in the scene where Millat Iqbal wants to buy a train ticket:

Millat spread his legs like Elvis and slapped his wallet down on the counter. ‘One for Bradford, yeah?’
 The ticket man put his tired face close up to the glass. ‘Are you asking me, young man, or telling me?’
 ‘I just say, yeah? One for Bradford, yeah? You got some problem, yeah? Speaka da English? This is King’s Cross, yeah? One for Bradford, innit?’
 /.../
 ‘That’ll be seventy-five pounds, then, please.’
 This was met with displeasure by Millat and Millat’s Crew.
 ‘You what? Takin’ liberties! Seventy – *chaaa*, man. That’s *moody*. I ain’t payin’ no seventy-five pounds!’
 ‘Well, I’m afraid that’s the price. Maybe next time you mug some poor old lady,’ said the ticket man, /.../, ‘you could stop in here first *before* you get to the jewellery store.’
 ‘Liberties!’ squealed Hifan.
 ‘He’s cussin’ you, yeah?’ confirmed Ranil.
 ‘You better tell ‘im,’ warned Rajik.
 /.../
 The Crew, on cue: ‘Somokāmi!’ (Smith 2001: 230)

As is suggested by Bakhtin, seemingly homogeneous languages are always stratified into linguistic dialects (Bakhtin 2004: 272). The above scene combines a number of different types of languages used by Millat, including Standard English, Jamaican English (*chaaa, man!*), Cockney (*takin’, payin’*), as well as an example from Bengali (*Somokāmi*). Millat also uses ‘yeah’ at the end of nearly every sentence, leaving an impression of aggression towards the ticket-seller. The scene illustrates Bakhtin’s (2004: 290) idea that every generation from varying social backgrounds have their own language with a specific vocabulary and accentuation system. Watts (2013: 7) considers the latter scene to be an

example of language crossing where the characters are creating themselves a new identity by using the linguistic features of a number of languages, especially as a response to white racism. Although it may be so, it seems that Millat comes off as defensive even before the ticket-man has retorted anything, which would indicate that Millat and his group of friends are also prejudiced towards the ticket-seller, and he only affirms their belief.

Watts (2011: 174) calls attention to Millat performing “racial and linguistic identity that is not his own in order to assert a sense of dominance and to overcome the restrictions imposed upon him by his own Bengali-English identity”. Watts (2011: 175) insightfully follows her claim by pointing out that Millat himself is fully aware of his “levels of performativity – by providing a performance within his own performance”, when he impersonates Elvis and copies the voice of a non-native English speaker, by asking “Speaka da English?” (Smith 2001: 230). Indeed, this observation by Watts is very intuitive in terms of how the character of Millat is constructed, because Millat is often mentioned by the narrator to be a fan of the Hollywood cinema and music, and he would probably try to impersonate his idols, just like many other teenagers would.

In addition, this scene also fittingly illustrates the ideas of Sesay (2004: 101, 105) who claims that second- and third-generation immigrants are very skilled in adopting different local dialects of English. The scene between Millat and the ticket-seller reveals that the stratification and heteroglossia which occurs within this one dialogue is also an example of language dynamics, as it is called by Bakhtin (2004: 271), but in this case the hoped-for result of sounding unique is not achieved, rather, it results in mutual hostility and mockery between the ticket-seller and the ticket-buyer.

Smith also seems to take into consideration her possibly varied readership, and even takes time to elaborate on some slang words used by the children in the novel. By doing this, the narrator disrupts the general flow of the storyline, but this is done in passing

so that it does not much interrupt the stream of the narration. An example of authorial elaborations on the specific meaning of a word can be found in the scene where the twin boys together with Irie are in their early teen years, and are taking a bus ride together: “‘We *got* apples, you *chief*,’ cut in Millat, ‘chief’, for some inexplicable reason hidden in the etymology of North London slang, meaning *fool, arse, wanker*, a loser of the most colossal proportions” (Smith 2001: 163). This elaboration on the word use ties in smoothly with the rest of the dialogue taking place. Another such example of youth-related language comes from the same chapter where the kids begin to play the “taxing game”: “The practice of ‘taxing’ something, whereby one lays claim, like a newly arrived colonizer, to items in a street that do not belong to you, was well known and beloved to both of them” (Smith 2001: 167). Here the readers are introduced to a game played by the children, as well as the colonial reference of its name, which would probably remain opaque to many readers if there were no additional comments.

In the novel, in-group disparagement, ironizing or chaffing between the younger members of a similar minority and age group also occurs. Such chaffing is represented in a scene between Irie and Millat, when the two leading families in the novel have come together and are jointly watching the news on TV:

‘What they want,’ said Millat, ‘is to stop pissing around wid dis hammer business and jus’ get some Sementex and blow de djam ting up, if they don’t like it, you get me? Be quicker, innit?’
 ‘Why do you talk like that?’ snapped Irie, devouring a dumpling. ‘That’s not your voice. You sound ridiculous!’
 ‘And you want to watch dem dumplings,’ said Millat, patting his belly. ‘Big ain’t beautiful.’ (Smith 2001: 239)

Watts (2011: 188-89) observes that there is evidence that Irie, who is of Caribbean descent but who does not use Creole in her speech – or at least it is not indicated in her speech –, is not comfortable with Millat using Jamaican English at his will, especially as in the latter scene Irie makes it clear to Millat that he does not have any authentic claims to take on Creole by telling him in front of their families that he speaks in a borrowed voice. Watts

(2011: 190) makes the generalisation that the rather hostile exchange in direct speech between Irie and Millat is a telling example of the linguistic anxieties represented throughout the novel.

2.1.4 Standard English in relation to other Englishes

In *White Teeth*, the relationship the nonstandard Englishes have with Standard English is persistently underscored through the direct speech of the numerous main and minor characters, as well as the third-person commentaries on the characters' language use throughout the novel. *White Teeth*, in addition to representing varying types of Englishes, also draws the readers' attention to the power relations between the numerous Englishes that differ from Standard English.

Some dialects of English are perceived to carry more prominence and are thus considered to be of greater value to the characters, especially in comparison with SE, which is another important aspect of heteroglossic fiction that according to Bakhtin adds credibility to any realist novel (Bakhtin 2004: 271). The hidden, albeit perceptible, power of SE in *White Teeth* is often demonstrated to the immigrant characters by members of the white community, as in the telling scene where a ticket-man asks Millat and his crew: “/.../ Can't tell me in English? Have to talk your Paki language?” (Smith 2001: 231). Even though Millat is not speaking in a “Paki language”, he has to deal with being judged for his divergence from Standard English. This scene can be interpreted using Bakhtin's notions concerning the ultimate necessity of an artistic novel to exteriorize the presence of conflict between the perceived unitary language and the actual “multi-languagedness” of any culture (Bakhtin 2004: 368). The scenes where the readers' attention is drawn to the conflicts emerging from language contacts between different linguistic varieties reveal how

non-standard dialects can be perceived as not having apparent prestige in the London represented in the novel (Watts 2013: 868).

2.1.5 Authorial commentary and vernacular transcriptions

A clear way of showing to the readers that different points of view, hence also different voices, are being expressed in the novel is through the use of authorial intrusions and comments on a character's speech. One beneficial side to such commentary is that it enables to make the pronunciation differences between different characters clearer in situations where no very noticeable vocabulary differences occur, such as stating that a character is speaking with a "melodious Scottish emphasis" (Smith 2001: 267), "putting on what he [Millat] called a *bud-bud-ding-ding* accent" (Smith 2001: 319), or telling that a character's "voice was a visual in itself: cockney yet refined, a voice that had had much work done upon it – missing key consonants and adding others where they were never meant to be" (Smith 2001: 388).

There are also occasions when a character is said to be "betraying the English inflections of twenty years in the country", and the occasional instances where a character is speaking in a "lilting Caribbean accent" (Smith 2001: 24). Here it is noticeable that the narrator, in addition to elaborating upon the type of variety that is being spoken, has also described what effect the variety has both on the characters themselves, on the people they interact with, and possibly also on the reader.

In addition, the omniscient narrator is not necessarily sympathetic towards her characters whose everyday lives are being described. The readers are deliberately made to pay attention to what the narrator and/or author of the novel seem to think of the speech peculiarities of the characters, and often the judgemental comments of the narrator can be

surprisingly harsh. In addition to the examples of authorial commentary, we can find abundant examples of remarkably sharp criticism of the characters' speech, such as the narrator saying that a character has a "cloying, oleaginous way of speaking" (Smith 2001: 55), and "Samad, never *au fait* with the language of the Willesden streets" (Smith 2001: 216). Such examples resemble what Bakhtin identifies as the "direct, external commentary on the peculiarities of characters' languages", which he believes to be a useful method to help and create the image of any language (Bakhtin 2004: 357).

Another way to reveal that the author pays attention to deviations from Standard English within her narration, and expects the readers to do that too, is through vernacular transcriptions. Understandably, it is easier to represent pronunciation and vocabulary differences between those characters in the novel who are generally known to use a distinct sub-language. Several of the types of varieties in the novel reveal overt differences from SE.

Groes (2011: 226) succinctly highlights that Smith is especially skilled in her representations of what he himself has termed the "orthographies of London's immigrants", which are used to remove the "hegemony of received pronunciation" from the novel. Instances of this are numerous throughout the novel, but the generational evolution of the kind of English spoken by immigrants is especially noticeable when comparing the following dialogue between a first-generation grandmother and her second-generation granddaughter where the latter, Irie, complains that she is feeling ill to her grandmother Hortense who in turn tries to cure her:

Hortense poured a colourless liquid from a small plastic container into her hand. 'Come 'ere.'
 'Why?' demanded Irie, immediately suspicious. 'What's that?'
 'Nuttin', come 'ere. Take off your spectacles.'
 /.../
 'Not in my eye! There's nothing wrong with my eye!'
 'Stop fussin'. I'm not puttin' nuttin' in your eye.'
 'Just tell me what it is,' pleaded Irie. /.../
 'Bay rum,' said Hortense matter-of-factly. 'Burns de fever away. No, don' wash it off.
 Jus' leave it to do its bizness.' (Smith 2001: 383)

The speech mannerisms of a first- and second-generation immigrant are orthographically portrayed as being significantly different. The author has consciously opted for letting the granddaughter's speech be read as non-marked in terms of linguistic peculiarities, whereas the grandmother's speech has been embellished with an added patois speech characteristics, including omitting all the *-ing*-endings, dropping all the *h*-sounds in the beginning of words, and using 'de' instead of the definite article 'the', among some other characteristics. This scene is a pertinent example of Bakhtin's notion about any prose artist trying to produce and elevate social heteroglossia by creating artistically calculated nuances (Bakhtin 2004: 279). It seems that the granddaughter's speech, which seemingly corresponds to Standard English, despite her growing up in a family where a mixture of Standard English, Cockney and Jamaican Creole are constantly spoken, is represented as neutral and unmarked, which in turn allows the grandmother's speech to be specifically elevated as hybrid speech that crosses linguistic boundaries. Most probably the character herself is meant to be content with her own unique speech, not even wanting to conform to the dominant linguistic setting of London like her granddaughter.

2.1.6 Intra-family speech

The third and slightly less prominent family represented in the novel is the Chalfens, who, although they speak SE, and thus do not represent noticeable deviations or conflict in the general linguistic setting, do stand out as a family that pays great attention to their own language use. The family's language could be characterised by their own inventive use of family-related and specifically inter-family vocabulary, which makes it a representative of Bakhtin's notion of a specific family jargon (Bakhtin 2004: 291). What makes the Chalfens

a fascinating case study is that they have a specific way of addressing themselves. At one point we can read:

Bottom line: the Chalfens didn't need other people. They referred to themselves as nouns, verbs, and occasionally adjectives: *It's the Chalfen way, And then he came out with a real Chalfenism, He's Chalfening again, We need to be a bit more Chalfenist about this.* Joyce challenged anyone to show her a happier family, a more Chalfenist family than theirs. (Smith 2001: 314)

The extract shows that the Chalfens seemingly represent a very close-knit family who, due to their peculiar outlooks on life, do not have many friends and do not much interact with other members of the society, thus forming a secluded group. However, the readers soon find out that the Chalfens do actually gladly accept other people into their familial inner circle, and in one extract we can even read that Joyce Chalfen, the mother figure in the family, is said to desperately need other people to need her (Smith 2001: 315).

Although at first reading the Chalfens with their attempts at linguistic purity might seem to be a born-and-bred English family, we are soon told by the narrator that they, too, are immigrants. We can read Irie's inner thoughts about her amazement of the "purity" of the Chalfens through authorial comments on her inner feelings: "She wanted their [the Chalfens'] Englishness. Their Chalfishness. The *purity* of it. It didn't occur to her that the Chalfens were, after a fashion, immigrants too (third generation, by way of Germany and Poland, né Chalfenovsky)" (Smith 2001: 328). The concluding thought by Irie is: "To Irie, the Chalfens were more English than the English" (Smith 2001: 328). As this example poignantly shows, the Chalfens as third generation immigrants have managed to alter their language to such an extent that it is not possible to tell that they are immigrants whose ancestors have not always been speaking English. In addition, although the Chalfens represent characters who seemingly speak pure SE, they too represent linguistic divergences from SE, because they have formed their own, family vocabulary, which SE speakers might not understand.

2.1.7 Polyglossia: languages other than English

Even though the novel abounds in varying speech mannerisms and it could be said that there is no single dominant English variety spoken in the novel, examples where a wholly different language from English is used can result in the reader's incomprehension. However, taking into consideration that a lot of *White Teeth*'s main characters are either immigrants or the descendants of immigrants in Britain, it is not surprising that the readers do occasionally come across languages of the former colonial countries the characters or their parents have inhabited at one point. Such instances make up miscellaneous language hubs, because they occur seldom and rather randomly, but they do make obvious the idea that what we are dealing with is an inherently postcolonial text where the cultural and linguistic inheritance of the new settlers in Britain is still evident. In the context of postcolonial translation theory, Bassnett and Trivedi agree with Maria Tymoczko, who:

/.../ points out that in translation studies a distinction is always made between whether to take an audience to text, or to take a text to an audience, and argues that the same distinction applies also to post-colonial writing. By defamiliarizing the language, post-colonial writers can bring readers face to face with the reality of difference, and call into question the supremacy of the standard language. (Bassnett and Trivedi 2002: 14)

Although the novel presents the readers with snippets of numerous non-English languages, including Spanish (*sí, señor*) (Smith 2001: 9), Italian (*capisce*) (Smith 2001: 10), Latin (*Laborare est Orare*) (Smith 2001: 290), French (*raison d'être*) (Smith 2001: 291), Sanskrit (*Satyagraha*) (Smith 2001: 178) and Arabic (*Salla Allahu 'Alaihi Wa Sallam*) (Smith 2001: 661), the most used non-English language in the novel is Bengali. It is the heritage language of Samad, Alsana and Alsana's niece Neena, but the language is not taught to Samad and Alsana's twin sons Magid and Millat.

Despite Samad's desire to conform in England and speak in Standard English, he also at one point falls into his native Bengali vernacular when he yells the following

sentence at Archie: “You two-faced buggering bastard trickster misā mātā, bhainchute, shora-baicha, syut-morāni, haraam jaddā...” (Smith 2001: 533). The narrator resolves this polyglossic English-Bengali extract that would need to be translated for the non-Bengali-speaking readership by following Samad’s lines with authorial commentary: “Samad tumbles into the Bengali vernacular, so colourfully populated by liars, sisterfuckers, sons and daughters of pigs, people who give their own mothers oral pleasure...” (Smith 2001: 533).

Smith has considered it important to report to the readers the use of languages other than English, either directly, by recording them, or indirectly, by mentioning the use of a non-English language by her characters. Scenes where Neena, Alsana’s niece, speaks Bengali are often all in English, but the narrator does point out that the character is expressing herself in Bengali, not English (Smith 2001: 63). In one scene, where Marcus Chalfen is expecting Magid Iqbal to arrive from a plane coming from Bangladesh to England, we can read Marcus listening to the Bengali people around him, and read one extract in Bengali and its following comment – “*Nomoskār ... sālām ā lekum ... kamon āchô?* This is what they said to each other and their friends on the other side of the barrier” (Smith 2001: 422). This extract in Bengali has been left untranslated by Smith. Although the non-Bengali-speaking readers cannot understand what these extracts of sentences mean, it seems befitting to leave this part untranslated, especially as it represents the cacophony evident in large crowds (Watts 2011: 161). As the Bengali sentence is dotted in two places, leaving the impression as if the whole Bengali sentences exchanged by the speakers are lost anyway in the general chatter of the airport, it only adds to the ordinariness of the setting where a person hears snippets of what other people are saying.

Although supposedly Smith herself is not a speaker of the Bengali language, she does occasionally directly use Bengali, adopting the perspective of the other and thus

revealing what Pamela Bickley (2008: 18) in her characterisation of contemporary British fiction has stated:

.../ one of the aspects of the novel which has changed most in recent years is that, whereas Dickens described his world from his own perspective within that world, the contemporary novelists who evoke London life (including Monica Ali, Zadie Smith, Hanif Kureishi) are writers whose perspective comes in part from “elsewhere” .

In the case of Smith, this “elsewhere” is also evident in the type of different languages she uses, because she has drawn inspiration from numerous languages, including Jamaican patois, Bengali, and Arabic languages.

2.2 Inclusion of other genres in the novel

Another major example of the main characteristics of novelistic heteroglossia that has been introduced by Bakhtin – incorporating other literary genres in the novel – is also present in Smith’s work. Smith uses inclusions as varied as Renaissance poetry in the form of a Shakespearean sonnet, the epistolary genre in the form of a written letter, the diary genre, as well as a literature list with accompanying references. The narrator of the story also makes allusions to the language and imagery of the religious magazine by the Jehovah’s Witnesses, *The Watchtower*, as well as to the Quran. Some semi-literary genres pointed out in the novel include journalistic genres, such as a press release, occasional snippets taken from leaflets and occasional mentioning of British newspapers (*Financial Times*, *Mirror*, *Daily Mail*). The genres may only be mentioned in passing, e.g. by making a reference to a specific novel a character likes, but occasionally the references made to different literary genres are discussed in fuller detail, also in terms of their linguistic significance.

Smith has used relatively many and differing genres throughout *White Teeth*, thus marking their important role in the novel, even if those genres are used as a means by which to reveal something about a character's personality. For the purpose of this thesis, discussing the four separate genres from the previously named literary genres are observed as contributing to the heteroglossia in *White Teeth*.

A noteworthy literary example of an added genre used in a contemporary novel, when analysing the representation and understandability of the English language, is the inclusion of a Shakespearean sonnet. In *White Teeth*, the readers can witness a scene where the narrator introduces the readers into the setting of an English class where both Irie and Millat are the students. The readers are shown a small extract from Sonnet 127 by William Shakespeare:

'Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black, her brows so suited, and they mourners seem...My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun; Coral is far more red than her lips' red; If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun...' (Smith 2001: 268).

At one point, when Irie is asked to interpret the sonnet, we can read how she is "reading it with a modern ear" when Irie thinks the mistress described in the sonnet is black (Smith 2001: 272). She says: "I just thought ... like when he says, here: *Then will I swear, beauty herself is black...* And the curly hair thing, black wires –' Irie gave up in the face of giggling and shrugged" (Smith 2001: 272). Irie, who is laughed at by her classmates for her misinterpretation of the sonnet, is represented as feeling embarrassed for her treatment of the sonnet (Smith 2001: 272). This extract of a Shakespearean sonnet, which is read wrongly by Irie, clearly points out how language is in a constant development, and a text written in the 1600s can definitely cause confusion to a modern reader, thus only amplifying the heteroglossic effect of the linguistic setting in the novel.

The diary genre is another pertinent inclusion into the novel in terms of the language use of the writer of the diary. In one scene we can read Irie's innermost thoughts

which she expresses in her diary when the Jones' and Iqbal families have come together to stay safe from the Great Storm of 1987. We can read the following:

Irie was hunched over a notepad, writing her diary obsessively in the manner of thirteen-year-olds:

8.30 p.m. Millat just walked in. He's sooo gorgeous but ultimately irritating! Tight jeans as usual. Doesn't look at me (as usual, except in a FRIENDLY way). I'm in love with a fool (stupid me)! If only he had his brother's brains ... oh well, blah, blah. I've got puppy love and puppy fat – aaagh! Storm still crazy. Got to go. Will write later. (Smith 2001: 224-225)

This extract highlights several linguistically characteristic features of the diary genre, including the added time of writing, the idiosyncratic words of the character, as well as being written in a spontaneous language directed to the author of the diary herself. Irie has herself stressed the words she considers especially important by using caps lock and writing the word “so” with extra *o*-letters to stress her opinion. Her writing is illustrated with several added “empty words” common in oral speech, including the interjections “aaaagh” and “blah, blah”, which probably are used to imitate Irie's own youth speech.

Although making direct references to other literary works and using snippets from them is not that uncommon in novels, a somewhat more unusual addition is presented to the readers of *WT* in a scene where Irie is visiting her grandmother Hortense and decides to read some of her books. We can read the following extract:

February's list was as follows:

An Account of a West Indian Sanatorium, by Geo. J. H. Sutton Moxly. London: Sampson, Low, Marston & Co., 1886.

(There was an inverse correlation between the length of the author's name and the poor quality of his book.)

Tom Cringle's Log, by Michael Scott. Edinburgh: 1875.

In Sugar Cane Land, by Eden Phillpotts. London: McClure & Co., 1893.

Dominica: Hints and Notes to Intending Settlers, by His Honour H. Hesketh Bell, CMG. London: A. & C. Black, 1906. (Smith 2001: 399-400)

The addition of real-life books together with their specific publication data is noteworthy because the readers, who might not be familiar with these books, are not told the specific genres of the books, but rather the booklist itself makes up a genre. The readers are left to guess what type of books they may be based only on their titles. Smith has gone to great

lengths to find the right references to the historical, real-life books. In addition, this booklist also includes a bracketed side note by the narrator who interjects in order to express the low literary value of one specific book as reading material, thus providing another example of the narrator's judgement comments, only this time concerning the quality of a book, and not of a character's language use.

As a final example of an incorporated genre added to the novel is the inclusion of the epistolary genre. Archie, who used to be a cyclist, receives several letters from his fellow 1948 London Olympics thirteenth-place contestant, a Swede called Horst Ibelgauf. The readers are shown the full letters Horst writes to Archie. We can read:

28 December 1974

Dear Archibald,

I am taking up the harp. A New Year's resolution, if you like. Late in the day, I realize, but you're never too old to teach the old dog in you new tricks, don't you feel? I tell you, it's a heavy instrument to lay against your shoulder, but the sound of it is quite angelic and my new wife thinks me quite sensitive because of it. Which is more than she could say for my old cycling obsession! But then, cycling was only ever understood by old boys like you, Archie, and of course the author of this little note, your old contender,

Horst Ibelgauf (Smith 2001: 16).

The letter adheres to the general letter-writing convention with the date marked at the beginning of the letter, as well as the polite beginning and ending of the letter. Although Horst is Swedish, his English is represented as adhering to SE, both in terms of the vocabulary used, as well as his correct English spelling. Throughout the story, the readers can find several full letters written by Horst to Archie, but what makes them noteworthy is that although Archie is said to remember Horst affectionately (Smith 2001: 17), he has no intention of replying to his letters. Even though it cannot be said that the letters by Horst would add much linguistic variability to the story, the epistolary extracts are specifically marked in italics and are thus easily distinguished from the rest of the narrative as an added genre that brings its own linguistic traditions into the contemporary novel.

Although one cannot be sure whether Smith has included different literary genres into *WT* to add linguistic variability to the novel, or just to parody the languages associated with the given genres, the stylistic and language conventions of all of the genres are adhered to. The slightly intrusive narrator has also made some subjective comments concerning the genres incorporated in the novel, which is an example of the author adding her own voice to the novel by means of the included genre. As is suggested by Bakhtin (2004: 321), the inclusion of other genres adds diversity to the novel.

From the representation of a Bakhtinian analysis of heteroglossia in the novel, all three important measures pointed out by Bakhtin in his collection of essays – the direct speech of characters, the third-person representation of a character's inner speech, and the inclusion of other genres into the novel – are present in *White Teeth*, revealing Zadie Smith's awareness of the fine nuances of any kind of language representation in a heteroglossic setting. Occasionally the three methods of representing and underscoring heteroglossia in *WT* interlink, but it is possible to point at specific examples to discuss them as separate, integral units that contribute to the linguistic plurality of the novel. As this thesis has mostly focused on the representation of different varieties of English, the most clear-cut examples of these can be found in the direct speech of characters and the third-person representation of a character's inner speech, and to a lesser extent in the analysis of other genres included into the novel. Even though at first reading all the fine linguistic nuances that have been put into practice by Smith need not be noticed, most readers of *White Teeth* will probably gain a heightened awareness of the languages used in the novel. The inclusion of different languages which are stratified according to ethnic background, generation, education, period and genre reveals the immense attention Smith has paid to authentic representation of the different languages used in *White Teeth*.

CONCLUSION

British literature is often assumed to be written in Standard British English. Even authors who live in Britain but do not speak English as their mother tongue, often choose to write and publish their works in Standard English as the *lingua franca*. Although Standard English is considered to have a special status as the dominant, central language variety that can reach a wide audience, there seems to be a growing tendency among contemporary British writers to diverge from writing only in Standard English. Instead, many writers, especially when they wish to create a realistic representation of contemporary, postcolonial Britain, often include other varieties of English in their literary works to represent the actual linguistic plurality of British society, which has been greatly influenced by its colonial past. In this sense, most contemporary British writers could be characterised as postcolonial writers. The term ‘postcolonial literature’ has been interpreted in this thesis as embracing both the literature published by the formerly colonised as well as the colonising peoples, in all the different languages published in the affected countries, with the main interest in English.

This thesis mostly focuses on the representation of different English varieties in Zadie Smith’s prize-winning first novel *White Teeth* which was first published in the year 2000. The novel gives voice to Anglo-Saxon, West-Indian and Asian families in a recognizably realistic London setting. Throughout the novel, the readers are made familiar with a number of varying types of Englishes spoken in London, with Jamaican English, Bangladeshi English and Cockney most prominent among them, as well as a mixture of numerous other kinds of languages, for instance Bengali. The inclusion of such a huge diversity of different English varieties as well as languages other than English in a

contemporary British novel reveals the inherently postcolonial nature of the current social and linguistic setting in Great Britain.

In my discussion of *White Teeth*, I have proceeded from the notion of heteroglossia as formulated by the Russian literary theorist and semiotician Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin. According to Bakhtin, the term ‘heteroglossia’ represents the social diversity of speech types. Bakhtin maintains that no novel is in essence homoglot, or unilingual, rather, all varieties of a seemingly unified language are in a constant contact and change. Although one cannot assume that Smith herself specifically followed Bakhtin’s theory of heteroglossia when writing *White Teeth*, her novel does display a lot of Bakhtinian characteristics of heteroglossic writing. In fact, *White Teeth* is a markedly observant novel in terms of the language use of the numerous characters in the novel, and this is an aspect – namely, that the author of any artistic novel should pay attention to the enormous plurality of language in one’s writing – is what Mikhail Bakhtin considers an especially important feature for novelists.

The theoretical chapter of the thesis has been based on *The Dialogic Imagination*, a book of four essays by Bakhtin which was translated into English by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, with the main focus on Bakhtin’s essay “Discourse in the Novel”. Bakhtin identifies three methods by which heteroglossia is incorporated and organized in the novel, including the direct speech of characters, third-person representation of the character’s inner speech, and the incorporation into the text of other literary genres. The applicability of a Bakhtinian analysis to *White Teeth* has been suggested by Groes and Bentley, who consider Smith to be adept in her representation of immigrant languages in contemporary British literature.

The discussion has been based on the premise that *White Teeth* is a representation of a contemporary, postcolonial British literature that underscores the heteroglossic setting

of modern London. The three Bakhtinian features of heteroglossia in the novel are evident to a smaller or larger extent in the languages spoken by characters of different ethnic and racial backgrounds, the comments on the linguistic peculiarities of the characters provided by the omniscient narrator, and the incorporation of other genres into the novel.

I observe closely samples from the novel that are characteristic of the speech of specific characters. I call such extracts thematic language hubs, because they either specifically draw the reader's attention to the peculiar language used by a character, uncover some kind of problematics associated with a character's language use, or reveal how such language relates to Standard English in an inherently heteroglossic setting.

The novel is written in a manner where the readers are constantly made aware of the linguistic differences between the three families represented in the novel, in addition to the comments on and direct speech of other, minor characters the protagonists communicate with. The differences between the types of Englishes represented in the novel can also occur between the different members of one family. Many characters adopt a specific way of speaking, depending on the people they interact with, revealing Smith's remarkable attentiveness in terms of representing linguistic diversity. *White Teeth* demonstrates throughout the story how the characters' accent, intonation, and articulation can indicate a kind of difference, or oddity, to outside listeners. This is made explicit to the readers through authorial commentaries as well as through the dialogues taking place between the characters.

A predominant linguistic concern for all of the families represented in the novel is how the language the characters use in their everyday interactions relates to Standard English, which is evident in the case of nearly all characters in the novel. Although at first reading *White Teeth* could be characterised as a praise of contemporary linguistic heterogeneity of modern London, the novel does draw attention to the continuous

perceived importance of Standard English. This is revealed through the characters who either try to adopt and imitate SE while at the same time trying to get rid of the type of English that comes more naturally for them; express their contempt towards characters who do not speak Standard English; and also through instances where a character attributes superiority to another character for their use of a type of “prestigious” English. Often, the prestige a certain English variety has been attributed to determines the reception a specific variety receives.

Bakhtin believes that no homoglot novels exist, rather, all the different varieties of a language are in constant contact and change. In addition, as Bakhtin has pointed out, there always exist the centripetal, or the dominant language from which all other, centrifugal languages derive from, and this is another important aspect present in *White Teeth*, even if only implicitly, where Standard English is often contrasted to different English varieties. Despite their different methods for representing heteroglossia, Bakhtin and Smith have an ultimately similar goal – making the readers of their respective contemporary novels notice the inherently heteroglossic nature of everyday lives, while at the same time drawing attention to the power positions of different language varieties. Both the centripetal and the centrifugal languages that are expressed in *White Teeth* interact in an inherently heteroglossic society, influencing one another and often vying for supremacy, which ultimately can lead to what Bakhtin calls language conflicts.

The third element of the Bakhtinian example of heteroglossia, the incorporation of other literary genres into the text, is also present in *White Teeth*. Among others, the readers can observe the use of a Shakespearean sonnet, a book list of real-life books together with their publication data, a diary entry, as well as the use of the epistolary genre within the narration. Thus, in the case of *White Teeth*, we are dealing with a genre that is bound to be affected by other, artistic and documentary genres, and the novel draws on the specific

writing conventions of all the included genres, which, in turn, adds variability to the general linguistic setting of the novel.

Smith uses language to create a type of narrative authenticity where varying languages play a highly significant role, being thus sources of humour, mockery, linguistic violation and borrowings. Smith represents London as a multilingual space where the diverse characters, even those from the same family, differ in their use of the English language, underscoring the notion that monoglossia does not exist. The novel has proven through its representation of different English varieties the importance of the experience and linguistic contributions of the ethnic minorities to the larger linguistic and cultural setting. In addition, the novel reveals how important a matter the English language can be to both the first- and second-generation immigrants of England.

The topic of literary heteroglossia in contemporary British writing is a field of study that is becoming more and more noticed, especially through the representation of Englishes other than Standard English by modern writers. The voices and accents of British writers, especially of those who have some connection to the former British colonies, have become varied in their languages, perspectives and cultures, in the process completely transforming ideas of Britishness. Writers who want to represent a realist setting in their narration could benefit from including different English varieties into their works because it adds authenticity to every realist novel, provided that the authors have a good ear to discern between the authentic varieties. Using different English varieties not only possibly adds more layers to any story, but also raises linguistic awareness, and can provide the readers with an opportunity to learn from other cultures and language varieties. Taking into consideration that we live in an age of globalisation, it is only likely that contemporary novels written by authors of varying ethnic, racial and linguistic background

will continue to represent in their novels ever more different Englishes, not just Standard English, thus underscoring the importance of studying such representations even further.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
INGLISE FILOLOOGIA OSAKOND

Kaisa Rotenberg

Heteroglossia in Zadie Smith's Novel *White Teeth*

(Heteroglossia Zadie Smithi romaanis "Valged hambad")

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Annotatsioon:

Käesoleva töö eesmärgiks on uurida, kuidas on Briti kirjanik Zadie Smith oma romaanis "Valged hambad" kujutanud selgelt eristuvaid inglise keele variante ning tuvastada sellise keelelise mitmekesisuse mõju. Töö on jaotatud neljaks osaks –sissejuhatuseks, teoreetiliseks peatükiks, empiiriliseks peatükiks ja kokkuvõtteks. Lähilugemise raames on töös välja toodud temaatilised keelepesad, mis seotud konkreetsete tegelastega ning väljendavad nende lingvistilisi eripärasid.

Teoreetiline peatükk lähtub peamiselt vene lingvisti, kirjandusteadlase ja semiootiku Mihhail Mihhailovitš Bahtini esseekogumikust „The Dialogic Imagination“, mis käsitleb sügavuti romaanižanri keelelisi eripärasid. Uurimuse põhirõhk on Bahtini poolt tutvustatud heteroglossia ehk erinevate keelevariantide koosinemisel, mis on Bahtini väitel iga romaani lahutamatuks osaks.

Empiiriline peatükk käsitleb Zadie Smithi romaani „Valged hambad“, keskendudes kolmele Bahtini poolt tuvastatud heteroglossilise romaani eripärale: tegelaste otsekõnele, tegelaste sisekõne esitamisele kolmandas isikus ja teiste kirjandusžanrite lisamisele romaanile. Peamisteks uurimisküsimusteks on, kuidas on romaani „Valged hambad“ autor loonud oma teoses heteroglossilise keelekeskkonna, millise rõhuasetusega kommenteerib jutustaja teoses kasutatavaid keeli ja kuidas teose tegelased suhestuvad inglise kirjakeelega.

Uurimuse käigus selgus, et Zadie Smith on oma teoses läbivaldt kasutanud kõiki bahtinlikke heteroglossilisele romaanile omapäraseid meetodeid, kõige eksplitsiitsemalt dialoogides, millele on lisaks kasutatud ka jutustajapoolseid kommentaare, mis juhivad lugeja tähelepanu konkreetse inglise keele tüübi eripärale. Uurimusest tuli samuti välja, et vaatamata sellele, et „Valged hambad“ on tunnustatud kui multikultuurse Suurbritannia ühiskonna ülistust, kus on laialt levinud erinevad inglise keele variandid, on tajuda ka inglise kirjakeele tugevat võimupositsiooni teiste inglise keele variantide suhtes.

Märksõnad: inglise keel, heteroglossia, Mikhail Bakhtin, inglise kirjandus, briti kirjandus, inglise keele variandid, postkoloniaalne kirjandus.

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