

CHARACTERS' SPEECH PECULIARITIES IN RYŪ MURAKAMI'S  
«IN THE MISO SOUP»

ОСОБЛИВОСТІ МОВЛЕННЯ ГЕРОЇВ У РОМАНІ РЮ МУРАКАМІ  
«У СУПІ МІСО»

Kravets M.O.,

[orcid.org/0000-0002-0542-3470](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0542-3470)

Visiting Researcher

Graduate School/Faculty of Arts and Letters  
Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan

This paper highlights the peculiarities of characters' speech in Ryū Murakami's novel *In the Miso Soup* (1997). The linguistic analysis of the text revealed the speech characteristics of the protagonists due to the transnational aspect of the text and the fact they speak in English, although their dialogues are presented in Japanese. Lexical, grammatical, and graphic features of the depiction of the characters' speech were singled out. As a result, the following details of an English text representation were indicated: the order of words in sentences is close to the one in English. There is no subject omission which is natural for Japanese; direct address is formed by the rules of English – there are no honorific suffixes, characters call each other by their first names, not family names as it is usual for Japanese; when the American speaks Japanese it is highlighted graphically by writing down with katakana and vice versa Japanese words which appear in the artificially created English speech are written with romaji. The author presents the oral speech of the characters without the use of punctuation marks to indicate the end of the sentence – they are replaced by commas or sentence ending particles.

The speech of the American is analyzed particularly, as it is aimed to complete his controversial image built on ambiguities. Despite being shown as a serial killer and an immoral person, he keeps using a childlike *boku* for "I" which can seem unnatural in the context of his client-worker relationship with the guide Kenji. However, it can be considered as author's game with a reader and a feature of Murakami's writing style.

Further research into Ryū Murakami's fiction can be performed with the use of corpus as an instrument for speech analysis not only to outline and summarize main features of his literary style but to find more senses hidden in characters' words.

**Key words:** character's speech, English, Japanese, Ryū Murakami, postmodernism, simulacrum, transnationalism.

У статті висвітлені особливості мовлення героїв роману Рю Муракамі «У супі місо». Попередні дослідження цього твору були здебільшого присвячені явищу транснаціоналізму, репрезентації неоднозначності впливу західної культури на японську, тощо. Детальний аналіз тексту виявив і мовленнєві характеристики головних героїв, зумовлені транснаціональною орієнтованістю тексту, зокрема той факт, що вони говорять між собою англійською мовою, хоч їхні діалоги й записані японською.

У ході дослідження були виокремлені лексичні, граматичні та графічні особливості зображення усного мовлення героїв роману. Серед ознак, які вказують на передачу англомовного тексту засобами японської мови вказують наступні деталі: порядок слів у реченнях наближений до порядку слів, властивого англійській. Зокрема, не відбувається опущення підметів, притаманне японській мові; звертання формуються за європейським зразком – відсутні шанобливі суфікси, герої звертаються один до одного за іменами, а не прізвищами; коли герой-американець говорить японською, автор виділяє це графічно, записуючи ці репліки чи слова складовою абеткою *катакана*, у випадку ж репрезентації японської мови в діалогах використовується латинська транскрипція. Репліки, не залежно від мови, записані без вживання розділових знаків, які б вказували на завершення речення – вони замінені комами, інтонаційно ж компенсуються за допомогою відповідних часток.

Досліджено також формування мовлення американця Френка в контексті його загального образу та інших зображувальних засобів, застосованих для його створення, зокрема елементів симулякру.

У якості перспективи подальших розвідок запропоновано дослідження мови та мовлення героїв романів Рю Муракамі за допомогою інструментів лінгвістичних досліджень, як-от корпус.

**Ключові слова:** усне мовлення героїв, англійська мова, японська мова, Рю Муракамі, транснаціоналізм, пост-модернізм, симулякр.

**Formulation of the problem** The present paper focuses on the analysis of the protagonists' speech in the novel *In the Miso Soup* (1997) as one of the most exponential literary works written by Ryū Murakami where the author actively uses language and speech as a tool to detail the image of the characters.

**The aim of the research** is to single out characters' speech features in the novel by Ryū Murakami

and to assume their influence on the formation of characters' images. Moreover, the present paper is aimed to explore the way how protagonists' speech effects the reader perception of their figures.

**Analysis of recent research and publications** Ryū Murakami's fiction can be described as post-modern prose with a wide range of postmodern literature characteristics such as: temporal distortion,

maximalism, pastiche, faction, etc. He has actively used the topos of 基地の街 – the city where the U.S. navy base is located as well as other simulacrum toposes of a city, an island etc. Western literary criticism in addition also suggests to take into account the theory of simulacra and hyperreality, some of them also highlight Baudrillard's concept of the transparency of evil [11], the phenomenon of shock [10] and its naturalization [1].

K. Suzumura denominates Murakami's prose terrorism literature [19] while J. Erobha outlines its transgressional features, especially when it comes to the representation of female characters [2]. Perwein's work on Murakami is concerned with transnationalism in his selected writings [8].

After the publication of Murakami's debut novel, J. Etou claimed that it was a part of a subculture since it had appealed to the group of people appointed by the same age, and geographical place of living, being a group of migrants rather than representing the whole culture of Japan [15].

Despite this R. Matsuura stated that Ryū Murakami had contributed a lot to the development of Japanese literary language by using slang, loan words, or *gairaigo*, and making attempts to breathe life into Japanese female speech. Although she points to Murakami's machismo in women portrayal, Matsuura also emphasizes on his unique approach to representing female oral speech as close to the real one as possible. [18]

Some mentions of linguistic aspects in Murakami's novels are found also in works by W. Tsunoda, who points out the overuse of loan words in the early fiction [12, p. 425], and K. Heintzman, who depicts honorific language as a feature of one of parallel worlds [4] in Murakami's dystopic novel *The World in Five Minutes from Now* (1994). M. Nakayama studies Murakami's literary language altogether with his *Coin Locker Babies* (1980) having been translated into French and translation strategies applied [13]. Y. Sukegawa focuses on the use of loan words in the novel *The Spleen of a Man Called Tennis Boy* and pointing out those to relate to the era of the economic bubble. He also describes how the characters' relationships are presented through their spoken language [14].

**The presentation of the main research material** The study of characters' speech is what stylistics often deals with. According to Semino E., the aim of such research is "...to relate specific linguistic choices and patterns to potential meanings and effects" [9, p. 428]. The authors of this paper agree with this point of view and consider linguistic analysis as one of the effective approaches to interpretation

of literary texts. Although we should remember that, while examining characters' speech in literary works their oral speech, thoughts and narrative should be distinguished [9, p. 428].

The linguistic analysis in this paper would be mostly concentrated on the figures of two protagonists – a Japanese youngster Kenji and Frank – a sex tourist from America – and their speech. Thoughts of Kenji, who is also a narrator, are given together with the narrative, which at the same time transmits Frank's or somebody else's speech in some cases. Thoughts of other characters are either presented within their own speech or not given.

The main characters can both be considered in the context of several dichotomies. One of them is the juxtaposition at the Japan-America cultural level. In addition to ethnicity, men are captured by stereotypical ideas about countries of origin of each other. However, this point has been already studied as the object of sociological and anthropological studies [8].

Another dichotomy is the speech level. Kenji speaks school-level English and the image of America and life in the U.S. he created for himself is based mostly on the stereotypes. Frank came to Japan for entertainment guided by a magazine about Japanese quarters of red lanterns without knowing the language and was astonished at some cultural features of real Japan. The fact that language and speech take an important place in the novel may be indicated at the very beginning of *In the Miso Soup*:

俺の名前はケンジ。わたしの名前はケンジと申します。ぼくはケンジ。あたしケンジっていうのよ。日本語にはいろいろ言い方はあるがそれは何のためなんだろうな、と思いながら、おれはそのアメリカ人に、マイネーム イズ ケンジ と言った。 [17, p. 4]

As I pronounced these words in English I wondered why we have so many ways of saying the same thing in Japanese. Hard-boiled: Ore no na wa Kenji da. Polite: Watashi wa Kenji to moshimasu. Casual: Boku wa Kenji. Gay: Atashi Kenji 'te iu no yo! [7, p. 9]

Kenji, who is also the narrator, from the first pages shares his thoughts about the differences between Japanese and English assuming that English is easier to use and understand. When he and Frank first meet, they start speaking English, while the whole original text of the novel is written in Japanese. The author reminds readers about it from time to time mentioning when characters are speaking English.

「ありがとう」レイカの英語はたぶん中学二年生程だと思う。 [17, p. 23]

"Thank you." Reika's English was about middle-school level. [7, p. 22]

Still, it is possible to point out some details that can prove the idea of representing English by the means of Japanese. The first one to mention is omitting the subject which is natural for Japanese speakers, especially when it comes to the use of personal pronouns “I” and “you” as they are almost always omitted in Japanese. The protagonists skip this moment and make sentences in accordance with the English grammar. One more nuance here – Kenji and Frank use their first names instead of family names which would have sounded natural in Japanese, especially in the context of interaction with the client.

「フランク、君は個人？ それともグループかな」 [17, p. 6]

“Are you alone, Frank, or with a group?” [7, p. 11]

The characters use some words, exclamations, and expressions typical for English but less spread in Japanese, or at least loaned from English and equally often used in both languages, for instance, “OK” or “oh my God”. We can see them translated or transliterated into Japanese in Kenji and Frank’s dialogs.

「おお、神よ、なんてことだ、あんなに遅いボールなのに」 [17, p. 57]

“Oh my God, what was that? And such an easy pitch!” [7, p. 48]

There are graphical stylistic devices actively used by Ryū Murakami in the examined novel as well. Since the author tries to represent spoken language by the means of written one, the lines of characters are presented as direct speech with quotation marks, however, do not have periods or other punctuation marks to determine the end of sentences. They are substituted with commas, while the intonation is compensated with relative particles. Some of characters’ words are presented as indirect speech transmitted by Kenji as a narrator. In these cases, the punctuation is adapted to the narrative, and the speech itself switches over Kenji’s thoughts within his lines as the narrator.

The representation of Japanese and English when they are used by non-native speakers in artificially created by Murakami English lines is also worth mentioning. When Frank pronounces Japanese words, they are given with katakana, a Japanese alphabet for loan words. In case Kenji uses some Japanese while communicating with his American client it is written with capitalized *romaji* – Latin script to write the Japanese language.

「やすらぎという意味でフランクは PEACE という英語を使った。」 [17, p. 163]

The word “peace” had a compelling reality coming from Frank’s lips. [7, p. 127].

「フランクは次に、アイジン、と言い、続けて、アイジンバンク、と言った。フランクはそ

ういうことを言うときだけ妙に声が大きくなった。」 [17, p. 26]

Next Frank read the word *Aijin* (Mistress), then *Aishiteru* (I love you). He muttered the English translations under his breath, but his voice was loud and resonant when he read the words in Japanese. [7, p. 25]

The graphical elements are also visible in the English translation, although more noticeable for those who read the original text. This means the author paid much attention to creation of a postmodern text with multiple lairs of senses and details to be interpreted.

However, there are also some features of the protagonists’ speech which can be only analyzed within the context considering other literary devices used by Ryū Murakami.

Since the authors started this paper with the notion of dichotomies to be found in the examined novel, the third dichotomy should be outlined as well. It can be called a reality dichotomy because it is supposed to define what is real in Murakami’s “In the Miso Soup”.

Simulacrum is one of the literary devices repeatedly used by Murakami, especially in his early works. He uses it to depict an alternative or parallel reality on which he puts a responsibility to enlighten some flaws of Japanese society. Sometimes the writer uses simulacra as an element of the characters’ image particularly when they are the ones to commit violence depiction of which is among the main characteristics of Murakami’s writing.

Researchers are mostly focusing on simulacra of toposes or locuses ignoring the elements of simulacra they can find in characters’ images as they are not that obvious. For instance, the novel “Coin Locker Babies” is often used as an example of a literary work where several topos or locus simulacra can be found: a coin locker as a womb, a city as a coin locker, Toxitown as a simulacrum of Tokyo. Still, according to N. Yamada Hashi and Kiku as children whose birth we could have seen once they were taken out of coin lockers can also be perceived as partly artificial creatures. As a result, they cannot be seen as true people, and the violence committed by them is not recognized as real and is a warning signal for readers not to let real evil happen. We can also say that here Murakami creates defamiliarization effect through depersonalizing his characters.

At the issue of “In the Miso Soup”, it is a novel in which violence is depicted in an extremely naturalistic way, although the personality of the antagonist is highly ambiguous. Murakami uses elements of simulacrum to describe Frank and language to complete his uncertain image. And naturally, the American tourist appears to be the one who is doing harm in this novel.

While reading the text we notice the description of Frank's strange appearance as at times his skin looks artificial. It happens mostly when Kenji asks him concrete questions and Frank wriggles out of answering or gives confusing answers.

フランクの頬はダイビングに使うシリコンのマスクに似た感触で、ひんやりと冷たかった。 [17, p. 38]

Frank's cheek was cold and felt like the silicone they use in diving masks. [7, p. 33]

That is why Kenji starts suspecting him of murders and noticing things other people did not (like some blood on the banknote). He doubts whether Frank is a real person, therefore asks a sex worker to check it.

However, Frank's ambiguity can similarly be noticed on the language level. Japanese language which is used to represent English in "In the Miso Soup" has strict rules of use personal pronouns, which sometimes can be confused by a speaker while communicating. Even though in English there is only one pronoun used to define the first person singular, in dialogs between Kenji and Frank (which are presented in Japanese) different pronouns are used. Still, we must remember that we are dealing with artificially created dialogs, so any assumptions about Ryū Murakami being mistaken or using personal pronouns inaccurately are baseless. Here the author uses the effect of defamiliarization as well to make the protagonist look and sound as not quite a human.

When Kenji and Frank had a conversation for the first time, Frank used the pronoun *watashi* which is quite formal and neutral.

「ケンジオフィスですか？ わたしはアメリカ合衆国からきたツーリストで名前はフランクといます」 [17, p. 5]

"Is this Kenji Tours? My name's Frank, I'm a tourist from the United States of America?" [7, p. 10]

It sounds polite and natural for the first communication with an unknown person, although it is lost in translation and does not have any sense if we remember that this line is a part of the character's oral speech in English. Consequently, this dialog is meant to be read in Japanese and is an element of the simulacrum character's image.

Then Frank changes *watashi* to *boku* which is mostly used by men in informal speech. Kenji uses *boku* while communicating with Frank from the very beginning and *ore* (which is more informal than *boku*) in his conversations in Japanese with his girlfriend and familiar people. As a narrator he also uses *ore*. Coming back to Kenji's dialogs with Frank it is important to mention that they are communicating without emphasizing on the fact that Kenji is provid-

ing Frank with guide service. It is natural for English, but we should remember the shift that Frank made from *watashi* to *boku*. It would not have happened if he spoke English, or it would have been more natural if Kenji did this. So, we can assume that the text of "In the Miso Soup" was created for Japanese language readers to read the signs.

Frank's image is the image of a murderer, still in the end he managed to get a kind of catharsis through his confession and the Buddhism ritual of ringing a New Year's bell a hundred and eight times. It is important to mention that Kenji did not go to the police even when he had had such a possibility, and the way Frank speaks is one of the reasons for such compassion.

Although Frank is the antagonist, he does not look like a typical one as well as he does not look like a real person from time to time. Moreover, his speech (the one Murakami created and the one we can perceive in the novel) does not sound like a speech of a bad guy. He speaks casually but does not sound aggressive. Kenji who uses *ore* as the narrator sounds much more informal and masculine than Frank with his childlike *boku*.

Before telling Kenji a story about him becoming a criminal, Frank is emphasizing having different personalities living inside him.

「ケンジ、ぼくは君にこれまで嘘ばかりついてきた、それはそれで仕方ないことなんだ、それはぼくの脳が壊れていて、思い出がうまく自分の中でつながらないからなんだよ、つながらないのは思い出だけではない、自分が、このぼくのからだの中にいる自分が、一人ではなく何人もいて、それが決して一つに結びつくことがないんだ、今こうやって喋っているぼくが、きっと本当のぼくなんだろうと思う、たぶん信じてもらえないかも知れないがさっきの店の中でぼくがやったことは、今こうやって喋っているぼくには理解できないことなんだ、違う人間になっていると言ったらあまりにも凶々しいかも知れないが、実際はぼくとそっくりの双子の弟がやったような気がしてるんだ、ああいうことはこれまでもあったよ、充分気を付けたんだ」 [17, p. 161]

"Kenji, you know, I've told you nothing but lies so far. I hope you won't hold it against me, because the truth is I can't help it. My brain doesn't work right and I can't connect the memories in my head very well. And it's not just memories, either, it's me myself. There are several me's inside this body, not just one, and I can't get them to connect, or merge. But I'm pretty sure the me I am right now is the real me, and you may not believe this but the me I am now can't understand the me who was inside that pub

a while ago. You're probably thinking, where does he get the gall to make excuses like this, but I honestly feel it wasn't me doing those things, it was somebody else who looks exactly like me. It's not the first time he's done that, either. I've been trying to make sure it didn't happen again, though the only strategy I could come up with was to not lose my temper" [7, p. 126].

Linguistically Frank gives an impression of a big child, especially when he talks about his experience of killing and committing violence in childhood. Not only he uses *boku* for "I", but also says ママ (Mama), when talking about his mother which is a baby talk word in Japanese.

「ぼくはママの血を飲んでから、また誰かの血を飲みたくなるのではないかというオブセッションにとりつけられた...」 [17, p. 210]

"After that first time (I'd drunk Mama's blood), I became obsessed with the thought that I might do it again, drink somebody else's blood [...]" [7, p. 160]

As we can conclude from the text Ryū Murakami made up a controversial character who has several layers of personality which creates a special atmosphere for the novel and lets it exist as a postmodern novel within multiple genres of a psychological thriller, a detective story, and a horror. Readers suspect Frank and doubt he is a murderer because of the way he speaks and the way he looks together with Kenji who changes his mind about Frank being a bad person once in several pages.

「フランクは本当に悪いやつなのだろうか、おれは何を迷っているのだろうか。」 [17, p. 166]

"Evil? Well, wasn't he? What was I waiting for?" [7, p. 129]

「やっぱりフランクって悪い人だったの?」かなりな、と言っておれは電話を切った。 [17, p. 201]

"So Frank is a bad guy after all?"

"Pretty bad, yeah," I said and switched off the phone [7, p. 153].

Considering how ambiguously Frank's appearance and disappearance are described the American

is supposed to be a simulacrum character, and the main purpose of his existence within the text is to emphasise the imperfection of Japanese society, since Frank despite being imperfect himself asks Kenji a lot about problems of Japanese people, such as loneliness and its consequences, thoughtless consumerism, etc. His way of speaking altogether with his confession at the end of the novel make readers see him as the pure evil and the victim at the same time, and resultantly comprehend the novel with all its complexity.

Thus, language and characters' speech are important aspects to explore while literary analysis of Ryū Murakami's novels, since his works as postmodern texts have several layers of perception and one of those levels is undoubtedly lays in understanding language and characters' speech nuances. Language use analysis opens possibilities to interpret Murakami's violence depiction, realities differentiation, simulacra and hyperreality perception and many others. It would be fair to say that this vector of Ryū Murakami study should not be ignored and is worth further investigation.

**Conclusion.** In conclusion we can say that investigation on language and speech of Ryū Murakami's novels is an important part of literary analysis of his fiction. Through the research into the language and characters' speech features not only other elements of author literary style can be singled out, but also some general Japanese literature trends of the epoch can be crystallised. *In the Miso Soup* is appeared to be a novel with a complex image structure, as protagonists' representation is formed not exclusively through the narrative but includes multiple layered linguistic and semantic foundation. Characters use spoken English presented by the means of the written Japanese which opens new possibilities of literary interpretation of their images, and particularly Frank's image. In our opinion there is a huge prospective in speech and language vector of research into Ryū Murakami's prose with the wide range of linguistic instruments such as corpus and many others.

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## МІФОЛОГІЧНА ОСНОВА ПОЕМИ «КОРОЛЕВА ФЕЙ» ЕДМУНДА СПЕНСЕРА

### THE MYTHOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE POEM "THE FAERIE QUEENE" BY EDMUND SPENSER

Сорока Бояджюглу Л.Т.,

[orcid.org/0000-0002-1265-4832](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1265-4832)

викладач кафедри іноземних мов

Національного університету «Львівська політехніка»

У статті розглянуто звернення до античних міфологічних сюжетів у англійській літературі епохи Відродження. Особливу увагу звернено на відображення міфологічних сюжетів, мотивів та образів у творчості Е. Спенсера («Королева фей»).

Термін «Відродження» вперше ввів Джорджіо Базарі, італійський художник і біограф XVI ст. Цей термін використовували для визначення перехідної епохи в історії європейської культури від Середньовіччя до Нового часу. Характеризуючи Відродження як провідний напрямок європейської літератури XIV – поч. XVII ст., важко не погодитись, що однією з головних рис цього періоду є великий інтерес до античності, який можна було простежити у всіх видах мистецтва у вигляді використання античних сюжетів та античної міфології. Сам термін «Відродження» в основному означає відродження античної культури, повернення до джерел античності.

В Англії період Відродження почався пізніше, ніж в інших країнах Західної Європи, і був короточасним, але насиченим. Англійські гуманісти перебували під впливом італійського гуманізму. Згодом і французький гуманізм почав діставатися Англії. Англійська література в період Відродження була представлена такими жанрами як лірика, пси-