

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE PRAGMATIC USAGE OF THE PRONOUN SHE REFERRING TO A CAT

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Abstract

In the article we show how the method of discourse analysis can be applied to examine pragmatic usage of the category of gender in English, its different connotative meanings. Unusual, not motivated and even illogical use of the masculine, feminine or neuter gender is often accounted for by personification, "upgrading" or "downgrading". In English, the use of the personal pronouns HE and SHE with nouns denoting animals, plants or inanimate objects is more expressive than in Romanian. It attracts reader's attention, creates a certain psychological effect and provides foregrounding. Although little attention is paid to the category of gender in traditional grammars of English, pragmatic gender usage is an important aspect of linguistic awareness and language teaching or learning.

Keywords: *gendered pronouns, animacy scale, pragmatic functions, upgrading, personalizing, discourse analysis.*

Rezumat

În articol, se prezintă modul în care metoda analizei discursive poate fi aplicată la cercetarea utilizării pragmatice a categoriei de gen în limba engleză. Utilizarea neobișnuită, nemotivată și chiar alogică a genului masculin, feminin sau neutru este adesea cauzată de personificare, de „trecerea într-o categorie mai înaltă” de obiecte sau ființe, sau de „coborârea într-o clasă mai joasă”. În limba engleză, folosirea pronomelor personale HE (el) și SHE (ea) cu substantive care denotă animale, plante sau obiecte neînsuflețite este mai expresivă decât în limba română. Acest fapt atrage atenția cititorului, creând un anumit efect psihologic. Deși puțină atenție este acordată categoriei de gen în gramaticile tradiționale ale limbii engleze, întrebuintarea pragmatică a genului este un aspect important al conștientizării lingvistice și al predării sau studierii limbii engleze.

Cuvinte-cheie: *pronume personale, scară de animație, funcții pragmatice, trecerea într-o categorie mai înaltă, personalizare, analiza discursului.*

Learners of English are usually taught traditional, i.e. covert or unmarked gender system with little consideration of the connotative meaning or animateness scale. English textbooks neither include the analysis of the pragmatic function of the English gender nor encourage investigating the non-normative cases found in different written and spoken contexts. J. Lyons¹ states that gender “plays a relatively minor part in the grammar of English”. R. Quirk, S. Greenbaum, G. Leech and J. Svartvik point out that “English makes very few gender distinctions. Where they are made, the connection between the biological category ‘sex’ and the grammatical category ‘gender’ is very close, insofar as natural sex distinctions determine English gender distinctions”².

The difficulties in using English gender correctly for foreign learners, in our case Moldavians, arise from different systems of gender category in both languages. In Romanian gender is a grammatical category with syntactic conse-

quences throughout the grammar, i.e. with premodifiers in the noun phrase (determiner or adjective) being in agreement by grammatical concord with the gender of the noun. The nouns of Romanian are assigned a grammatical gender class of masculine and feminine with the help of certain endings and affixes for every animate or inanimate thing, every phenomenon or notion.

We think that the students should be taught how to use the method of discourse analysis in order to examine pragmatic functions of the English gender, its deviation from the norm and to reveal its connotative meanings. The given article shows an example of how discourse analysis can be applied in considering pragmatic aspects of the English gender.

In English, the referent of the neuter pronouns *it(s)* cannot normally be human. One of the gendered pronouns must be used to refer to singular humans in the third person, namely *he/him/his* (*HE*) or *she/her(s)* (*SHE*). Inanimate nouns are normally referred to by the neuter pronouns, although the gendered pronouns are conventionally used by some people to refer to some inanimate referents, especially ships and problematic machines.

When we refer to animals and some inanimate objects, we have a choice in English, as we can use both the human and gendered terms (*WHO, HE, SHE*) and the inanimate and ungendered terms (*WHICH, IT*). Dictionaries and grammars are quite explicit about the areas of choice between *HE/SHE* and *IT*. D. Biber, S. Johansson, G. Leech, S. Conrad and E. Finegan³ refer to *he* and *she* as "personal reference," and to *it* as "non-personal." They point out the main areas where the speaker has a choice (babies; animals, especially pets; countries, and ships). They also explain the choice: "Personal reference expresses greater familiarity or involvement. Non-personal reference is more detached."

Animacy is not a simple dual choice. The way in which these pronouns are used establishes a gradation of animacy, the normal order of which places humans at the top; other animals second; moving machines (such as ships, trains and cars) third; and the plant and mineral world at the bottom. It may seem strange that moving machines are placed higher in this scale than do living plants, but that is how English usage places them.

Another important notion is that of sentience. "New Scientist" (4 June 2005) devoted one issue to the relationship between humans and animals, with an emphasis on the emerging scientific acceptance of sentience in animals. F. de Waal⁴ indicated a distinction between *anthropomorphism* ("the projection of human feelings onto animals") and what he called *anthropodenial* ("blindness to the human-like characteristics of animals and to people's animal-like characteristics"). He pointed out that both of these are problematic.

We can admit that this gradation of animacy reflects (and perhaps also shapes) an attitude to the way the world is organized. We can assume that if there is a choice - for example with animals or ships - a speaker's selection of one alternative or another is meaningful. Treating a nonhuman entity lin-

guistically like a human enhances the animacy status of the nonhuman, indicates sentience, and situates the nonhuman closer to the human.

In this article we apply the method of discourse analysis to examine how gendered pronouns are used in the discourses about animals where emotions run high. For this purpose we selected a text from children's literature to illustrate the pragmatic aspects of such usage, which is expressing certain attitudes (personal involvement) by means of gendered pronouns.

The method of discourse analysis

It could be mentioned that the text-internal elements constitute the *text*, while the text-external ones constitute the *context*. D. Schiffrin points out that all approaches related to discourse analysis view *text* and *context* as the two kinds of information that create the communicative content of an utterance, and she defines these terms as follows: "I will use the term "text" to differentiate linguistic material (e.g. what is said, assuming a verbal channel) from the environment in which "sayings" (or other linguistic productions) occur (context). In terms of utterances, then, "text" is the linguistic content: the stable semantic meanings of words, expressions, and sentences, but not the inferences available to hearers depending upon the contexts in which words, expressions, and sentences are used. [...] Context is thus a world filled with people producing utterances: people who have social, cultural, and personal identities, knowledge, beliefs, goals and wants, and who interact with one another in various socially and culturally defined situations"⁵.

Thus, according to D. Schiffrin, discourse analysis involves the study of both *text* and *context*.

Formalists tend to see language as a mental phenomenon, while functionalists see it as a predominantly social one. Authors like D. Schiffrin integrate both the formal and the functional approaches within DA, and consequently, DA is viewed as an all-embracing term.

Thus, when analyzing discourse, researchers are not only concerned with "purely" linguistic facts; they pay equal or more attention to language use in relation to social, political and cultural aspects. In this article, we are going to adopt the general definition of DA as *the study of language in use*, and we shall follow D. Schiffrin in including both *text* and *context* as parts of discourse.

Broadly speaking, discourse analysts study the use of language in context, thus they are interested in what speakers/writers do, and not so much in the formal relationships among sentences. Discourse analysis, then, has a social dimension, and for many analysts it is a method for investigating how language "gets recruited 'on site' to enact specific social activities and social identities"⁶.

Researchers in DA are certainly engaged in the study of *language in use*. Thus, discourse analysts have helped to shed light on how speakers/writers organize their discourse in order to indicate their semantic intentions, as well as on how hearers/readers interpret what they hear, read or see. They have also contributed to answer important research questions which have

lead to the identification of the cognitive abilities necessary in the use of symbols or semiotic systems, to the study of variation and change, or to the description of some aspects of the process of language acquisition.

In this article we examine the issue of gender variation in English by means of discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis of the short story
“Affection Exhibited by a Cat” by William Henry Giles Kingston

Affection Exhibited by a Cat
(by W.H.G. Kingston)

“I was one day calling in Dorsetshire on a clever, kind old lady, who showed me a beautiful tabby cat, coiled up before the fire. “Seventeen years ago,” said she, “that cat’s mother had a litter. They were all ordered to be drowned with the exception of one. The servant brought me one. It was a tortoise-shell. ‘No,’ I said; ‘that will always be looking dirty. I will choose another.’ So I put my hand into the basket, and drew forth this tabby. The tabby has loved me ever since. When she came to have a family, she disappeared; but the rain did not, for it came pouring down through the ceiling; and it was discovered that Dame Tabby had made a lying-in hospital for herself in the thatched roof of the house. The damage she did cost several pounds; so we asked a friend who had a good cook, fond of cats, to take care of Tabby the next time she gave signs of having a family, as we knew she would be well fed. We sent her in a basket completely covered up; and she was shut into a room, where she soon exhibited a progeny of young mewlings. More than the usual number were allowed to survive, and it was thought that she would remain quietly where she was. Not so. On the first opportunity she made her escape, and down she came all the length of the village, and early in the morning I heard her mewing at my bed-room door to be let in. When I had stroked her back and spoken kindly to her, off she went to look after her nurslings. From that day, every morning she came regularly to see me, and would not go away till she had been spoken to and caressed. Having satisfied herself that I was alive and well, back she would go. She never failed to pay me that one visit in the morning, and never came twice in the day, till she had weaned her kittens; and that very day she came back, and nothing would induce her to go away again. I had not the heart to force her back. From that day to this she has always slept at the door of my room.”

Surely you will not be less grateful to those who brought you up than was my old friend’s cat to her. Acts, not mere words, show the sincerity of our feelings. Consider how you are acting towards them each hour and day of your life. Are you doing your best to act well, whether at home, at school, or at play?”⁷

The given extract is taken from the book “Stories of Animal Sagacity” by William Henry Giles Kingston. It represents a collection of humorous tales of how clever various individual animals have been seen to be, and in most cases a little moral is drawn from the story.

Macrocontext

William Henry Giles Kingston (28 February 1814 - 5 August 1880), writer of tales for boys, was born in London, but spent much of his youth in Oporto, where his father was a merchant.

His first book, *The Circassian Chief*, appeared in 1844. His first book for boys, *Peter the Whaler*, was published in 1851, and had such success that he retired from business and devoted himself entirely to the production of this kind of literature, in which his popularity was deservedly great; and during 30 years he wrote upwards of 130 tales.

He also conducted various papers, including *The Colonist*, and *Colonial Magazine* and *East India Review*. He was also interested in emigration, volunteering, and various philanthropic schemes⁸.

The book "*Stories of Animal Sagacity*" was published in 1874. It was intended for children. The author described the behavior of various domestic and wild animals, as well as birds. The stories are true to life. The author tells us what he has seen or heard from other people about animals' behavior. He shows us how clever and resourceful animals can be. The author also gives children pieces of advice as animals sometimes set example for people to follow.

Text genre

The text represents a short story "*Affection Exhibited by a Cat*" of an anecdote genre. Anecdote is a short, interesting or amusing story about a real person, animal or event; a personal account of an event. The story of the tabby is told by "a clever, kind old lady", and she speaks about her own experience.

Macrotext functions (intentional types of discourse)

The text under consideration is a combination of argumentative and informative types of discourse. "Argumentative or persuasive communication is characterized by exerting influence on the interlocutor. Its goal is to change, transform, modify the addressee's "world picture" which is only part of the objective picture of the situation and includes knowledge, convictions, beliefs, emotional and intellectual state of the addressee. The efficiency of persuasion, its success or failure as intentional move is reflected in the recipient's response reaction by performing a non-verbal action (or refuse to perform an action). The choice of means of verbal influence is determined to a certain extent by the characteristics of communicative act, as well as its logical structure chosen by the speaker"⁹.

The principal goal of informative communication and discourses representing it is the transfer of certain content or information. The main strategy of argumentative discourse is persuasion.

Thus, the macro-functions of the given story are: a) informative - to describe the tabby's behavior; b) argumentative - to persuade the reader that cats are capable of affection, devotion towards people, and deserve to be treated in the same way by people. The author's point is that animals have high level of sentience or human-like characteristics.

Immediate context: the speaker and the addressee

"A linguistic individual, as a rule, isn't prone to give up easily his/her knowledge and beliefs acquired in the process of his/her social practice, neither to act in their everyday activity contrary to the formed opinions and stereotypical representations"¹⁰. Therefore, in each concrete case the speaker needs concrete tactics of persuasion based on the analysis of the situation and the addressee, including the latter's level of education and information awareness. The efficiency of the communicative act of "persuasion" depends on such conditions as: the content of propositional information, psychological features, social status and social-role functions of the speaker and the addressee, time and place of the communicative act, the form of information transfer which includes both verbal and non-verbal components.

The story "Affection Exhibited by a Cat" is the first person narration. There are two narrators in it - the author himself and a "kind old lady" who told the story. This argumentative strategy is known as example/illustration. A powerful move in argumentation is to give concrete examples, often in the form of a vignette or short story, illustrating or making more plausible a general point defended by the speaker. Concrete stories are usually better memorized than abstract arguments and have more emotional impact, so they are argumentatively more persuasive.

The addresser is individual - the author and an old lady, while the addressee is collective - readers of young age. The relations between the speaker and the reading audience are those of exerting influence, persuasion. The speaker's goal is to change, transform, modify the addressee's "world picture" which is only part of the objective picture of the situation and includes knowledge, convictions, beliefs, emotional and intellectual state of the addressee.

As the reading audience is children, the language is informal, emotional-evaluative, quite simple. The author's tone is objective, edifying, realistic on the one hand, and cheerful, hopeful, optimistic on the other hand.

The means of establishing contact between the speaker and the hearer

Turning to the readers the narrator uses the pronouns "you" and "our". The pronoun "you" is often used in advertisements. Its pragmatic functions are to establish close contact with the hearer by addressing him/her directly; to individualize the hearer; to get them involved in the event which is described.

The pronoun "our" has the same function as "we-inclusive". The characteristic feature of functioning of the pronoun "we" in interaction is its ability to demonstrate to the hearer his/her involvement in what is going on (communication act). In this way the addressee is included in the personal sphere of the addresser¹¹. Thus the use of pronouns "we", "our" creates the effect of existing common field of the speaker and the recipient, relations of intimacy, mutual understanding.

Topics: semantic macrostructures

Linguists often advocate beginning discourse analysis with an analysis of semantic macrostructures, that is, with a study of global meanings, topics or themes. These are what discourses are (globally) about; they are mostly intentional and consciously controlled by the speaker; they embody the (subjectively) most important information of a discourse, express the overall content of mental models of events, and perhaps most importantly, they represent the meaning or information most readers will memorize best of a discourse. Discursively, topics or themes are characteristically expressed in titles, abstracts, summaries and announcements.

For contextual reasons, we select topics as a significant structure to study because they are usually controlled by powerful speakers, because they influence many other structures of a discourse (such as its global coherence), and because they have the most obvious effects on the (memory and consequent actions of) recipients¹².

In the given text we have identified the following topics:

- Animals should be treated by people with love, care, humaneness;
- Animals have high level of sentience, that is human-like features, feelings;
- Animals are capable of showing affection, devotion, gratefulness to people;
- Animals can set examples of behavior for people.

These topics are reflected in the title "Affection Exhibited by a Cat"; key words - affection, grateful, sincerity of feelings, to love (the mistress), to be fond of (cats), to take care of (cat), to stroke (the cat's back), to speak kindly to (the cat), to be well fed (of a cat).

The text structure

Being a short story the given text has a corresponding structure, which is the plot develops through exposition, complications, climax and denouement. This structure is based on the argumentative strategy cause-and-effect. Causes are the factors giving rise to a phenomenon or event and effects are the outcome of events. Analysis of cause and effect is a commonly used strategy in argumentation. It helps to understand the issues involved in a controversy and gives the reasons for adopting a certain stance.

In our story old lady's kind, humane attitude to the tabby cat is the cause which gave rise to the cat's affection and gratefulness.

Illocutionary speech acts

The main strategy of argumentative discourse is persuasion. The logical structure of persuasive texts is generally predetermined by the fact that persuasion is a special informative process consisting in the transfer of corresponding facts. The core of persuasive texts is mainly information about facts or their interpretation. Therefore in the analyzed text directive illocutionary

acts such as advice, suggestion, request (whose meaning boils down to the phrases such as “Do this” and “Don’t do this”, “Act in this way” and “Don’t act in this way”) follow after descriptive text consisting of representative/ assertive speech acts and arguments containing evaluative language units.

Descriptive text tells us about the cat’s behavior and consists of assertive speech acts whose goal is to inform about the facts, thoughts, feelings, opinions and beliefs. The conclusion of the story consists of directive speech acts, such as advice, suggestions, whose goal is to persuade, to exert certain influence on the addressee.

Language means

It has been mentioned above that the efficiency of communicative act of persuasion depends on a number of factors. The most important role is given to the linguistic execution of the persuasion. Language as a means of sensible communication contains in its structure units capable to realize fully and rationally the speaker’s intentions and to implement effectively their strategic goals. The choice of means of verbal influence is determined to a certain extent by the above mentioned parameters of communicative act and its participants, as well as its logical structure chosen by the addresser.

Directive speech acts are important as system of actions used by interaction participants to manage, coordinate and control the communication process depending on the participants’ goals and corresponding verbal strategies.

A number of lexical and grammatical means is used for explicit expression of assertion whose goal is to provide for coherence and effectiveness of argumentation. The speaker chooses such verbalization means that in their opinion would keep the current focus or indicate to the shifting of attention from one focus to another. Language units or verbal constructs that are placed in argumentative focus must ensure, from the addressor’s point of view, the greatest impact on the addressee.

Local meanings

Adjectives and nouns with positive evaluative connotation: *old lady* – clever, kind, fond of (the rabby); *the tabby cat* – beautiful, grateful, sincerity (of our feelings), *Dame Tabby* (“Dame” is used in phrases Dame Nature, Dame Fortune meaning lady «госпожа»).

The pronoun “she” is referring to cat. The use of “she”-reference means that the higher animacy is attributed to the tabby cat. The common use of SHE especially in reference to the cat signals the personalization of the pet, a respect for her, and emotional closeness to her. Besides, a consistent use of the personalized pronouns could help signal to the reader that the animals are sentient and could convey emotional closeness. The owners regard their pets in particular as equal to humans and capable of understanding their masters and even of ‘speaking’. The text also suggests the idea that people

shouldn't make animals suffer as the latter are sentient beings, and therefore highly animate and personalized entities.

Semantics of verbs:

- to love, to make her escape, to come back, not to go away, to satisfy herself (that I was alive and well), not to fail to pay a visit, to sleep (at the door of my room) – these verbs imply that the tabby was attached emotionally to her mistress, took care of her, was devoted to her, didn't want to part with her;
- to have a family, to disappear, to make (a lying-in hospital), to do damage (to the roof), to exhibit a progeny, to look after her nurslings, to wean her kittens – these verbs show the tabby as a good mother looking after her nurslings;
- to take care, to stroke (her back), to speak (kindly to her), not to force her back – the verbs express kind, humane attitude of the mistress towards the tabby.

Semantics of adverbs, adverbial modifiers, pronouns:

- ever since, from that day to this, always, nothing (would induce her to go away) – imply the cat's devotion to her mistress;
- on the first opportunity, all the length of the village, every morning, regularly, never (failed to pay a visit) – these adverbials express the tabby's reluctance to part with her mistress, her insistence in coming back, desire to remain near the old lady.

The modal verb "would" in "the tabby would not go away" – means persistent refusal to quit the old lady; the same verb in "back she would go" – has the meaning of repeated habitual action, so the cat was patient and persistent enough to come to see the old lady and then return to her kittens every day.

The adverb "surely" in the final part where the author gives advice to his readers has the following function. The modal words with the meaning of certainty, having hidden performative nature, play an active role in creating persuasive utterances. The hidden performative nature is conditioned by the very semantics of modal words as "autocentricity", i.e. their correlation only with the speaker, is part of their semantics¹³. By means of the words such as *surely, certainly, definitely, indeed, really, as a matter of fact etc.* the speaker can express a certain degree of confidence in the uttered assertion.

Implication (meaning)

For many pragmatic (contextual) reasons, speakers do not (need) to say everything they know or believe. Indeed, a large part of discourse remains implicit, and such implicit information may be inferred by recipients from shared knowledge or attitudes and thus constructed as part of their mental models of the event or action represented in the discourse.

In order to identify implicit meanings we shall analyze the following extract:

"The damage she did cost several pounds; so we asked a friend who had *a good cook, fond of cats, to take care of Tabby* the next time she gave signs of having a family, as we knew *she would be well fed*. We sent her in a basket completely covered up; and she was shut into a room, where she soon exhibited a progeny of young mewlings. More than the usual number were allowed to survive, and it was thought that she would remain quietly where she was. Not so. On the first opportunity she made her escape, and *down she came all the length of the village*, and early in the morning I heard her mewing at my bed-room door to be let in."

In this extract the following phrases have some implied meanings:

- a good cook, fond of cats, to take care of Tabby, she would be well fed
 - it implies that the tabby had very good conditions in the friend's house. Despite this she made her escape and returned to her mistress which proves her devotion to the old lady.
- more than the usual number (of kittens) were allowed to survive - it implies that the tabby could not return immediately as she had to take care of the kittens, and the phrase further in the text - *she never came twice in the day till she had weaned her kittens* - shows that the tabby was a responsible and careful mother as well.
- we sent her in a basket completely covered up, she was shut into a room, down she came all the length of the village - the implication here is that there were many difficulties and obstacles for the cat's return but all of them were overcome and solved. So the tabby was persistent in her actions whose goal was to remain with the person who helped her to survive and brought her up.

Grammar means (syntax)

The use of active voice describing the tabby's actions - has loved, come to have a family, disappeared, made a lying-in hospital, gave signs of having a family, exhibited a progeny, made her escape, came, went off to look after, came to see, to satisfy herself, to pay a visit, to wean the kittens, not to go away - by this the cat is presented as an active agent, capable of making her own decisions, instead of being passive object of people's actions.

Sentences with inverted word order:

- *On the first opportunity* she made her escape, and *down* she came all the length of the village, and *early in the morning* I heard her mewing at my bed-room door to be let in;
- *off* she went to look after her nurslings;
- *From that day, every morning* she came regularly to see me;
- *back* she would go;
- *From that day to this* she has always slept at the door of my room.

The use of this device has two effects. Firstly, it signals emotional speech, so the speaker is impressed by the cat's behavior. Secondly, it emphasizes the author's message that the cat was devoted to her mistress so much and couldn't be separated from her.

Subjunctive mood – “and nothing would induce her to go away”. Here subjunctive mood expresses unreal condition. This is a persuasive argumentative move called “Counterfactual”. The typical expression of a counterfactual is – “What would happen if...?” In the given text the use of Subjunctive mood means: no matter what benefits you could offer to the tabby, what could happen to her, she wouldn’t quit the old lady, she would remain with her mistress under any circumstances.

Imperative sentence – “Consider how you are acting towards them each hour and day of your life.” It is used to express a directive speech act, and namely a piece of advice. As we have mentioned above, the text consists of a descriptive part expressed by assertive/representative speech acts, whose goal is to inform, to explain, to state opinion etc. It is followed by a directive text where the speaker gives advice in order to persuade the addressee and to make him/her behave in a certain way. In the given text, the readers/children are advised to follow the tabby’s example and to show the same attitude to their parents.

Rhetorical figures and argumentative moves

Contrast:

- “she disappeared, but the rain did not” – it serves to emphasize the reason why the mistress had to part with the cat, and namely that she did damage to the roof;
- “acts, not mere words, show the sincerity of our feelings” – the contrast between acts and words shows that real feelings (love, affection, devotion) should be proved by our actions. This sentence is also an argumentative move called Authority. Many speakers in an argument have recourse to mentioning authorities to support their case, usually people who are generally recognized experts or moral leaders, international organizations. In some cases the reference is made not to a specific person, but to a generally accepted statement. We call them maxim-utterances. The use of such maxims (adages) by the speaker contributes to his/her communicative purpose as his opinion is corroborated by the majority’s point of view.

Rhetorical question – “Are you doing your best to act well, whether at home, at school, or at play?”

Representative function is performed not only by affirmative sentences. There are cases when interrogative sentences express assertion. These are rhetorical questions. A distinctive feature of these questions is that they are more expressive, are colored by the speaker’s definite emotions. “Rhetorical questions don’t require an answer. Though addressed to the interlocutor, they are intended to exert certain influence on the addressee. Asking a rhetorical question, the speaker induces the hearer to find the answer on his/her own, at the same time convincing him/her in the correct answer”¹⁴. The use

of rhetorical questions, whose goal is to involve the addressee in the speech production process, and namely in search for the answer to the question being asked, contributes to the achievement of a definite communicative purpose – to convince the hearer in the truth of the addressor’s words. In the analyzed story the rhetorical question “Are you doing your best to act well, whether at home, at school, or at play?” suggests the answer that the children should do their best to act well towards grown-ups, thus showing the sincerity of their feelings, gratefulness.

Comparison (argumentative move) – children’s behavior is compared to that of animals; moreover the cat is personalized by using she-reference. It implies that cat’s behavior is an example for people. Therefore cats have high level of sentience worth to be respected.

Litotes – “you will not be less grateful” – it’s a piece of advice, the use of litotes is a weakening or softening device which makes the advice more indirect, polite, less categorical, imposing.

Anaphora (the repetition of the word ‘never’) and parallel structure – “She never failed to pay me that one visit in the morning, and never came twice in the day, till she had weaned her kittens” – is used to emphasize the fact that the tabby cared both for the mistress and for her kittens.

Enumeration – “Are you doing your best to act well, whether at home, at school, or at play?” – draws attention to the importance of good actions towards grown-ups in order to prove how grateful one is.

Conclusion

In English some entities, like animals, moving machines, can be treated as more or less animate. People personalize these entities as a sign of emotional involvement with them. In the story “Affection exhibited by a cat” the tabby cat is treated linguistically as highly animate, personal entity. The author’s intention is to show that: a) the tabby is treated by people with love, care, humaneness; b) a cat may have high level of sentience that is human-like features, feelings; c) pet animals are capable of showing affection, devotion, gratefulness to people, and in this way they can set examples of behavior for people. The tabby cat is personalized first of all by means of the pronoun SHE. In order to convince the reader, to change their world picture, the author draws upon a number of strategies, such as:

- *Speech acts* – directives and representatives;
- *Local meanings* – adjectives and nouns with positive evaluative connotations; pronouns SHE (to refer to the cat), YOU, OUR (to establish contact with the reader); verbs with semantics of feelings, attitudes, treatment; adverbs with semantics of cat’s persistence; modal verb WOULD; adverb with the meaning of certainty etc;
- *Implicit information* – part of meaning is implied and must be inferred by recipients from shared knowledge as part of mental models of events;

- *Syntax* – active voice, inverted word order, subjunctive mood, imperative sentences;
- *Rhetorical figures and argumentative moves* – contrast, maxim-utterance, rhetorical question, comparison, litotes, anaphora, parallel structure, enumeration etc.

The author's use of SHE in reference to the cat signals the personalization of the pet, a respect for her, and emotional closeness to her. Animal rights advocates might consider that a consistent use of the personalized pronouns could signal to the reader that the animals are sentient and could convey emotional closeness. This is particularly important where the argument is based on an instinctive repugnance to the suffering of sentient beings.

Finally, it could be said that English gender distinctions are not as obvious as have sometimes been assumed. The difficulties to use English gender correctly for the Moldavian learner arise, on the one hand, from the different systems of gender category in English and Romanian and, on the other hand, from the connotative use of personal pronouns *he*, *she* and *it* indicating masculine, feminine and neuter gender accordingly. Deviation in English gender is often linked with certain stylistic and pragmatic connotations, such as personification, 'upgrading', 'downgrading', etc.

Though our students are mostly taught traditional, 'unmarked' gender system without any consideration of the animacy scale, they should be encouraged to investigate and understand the pragmatic use, the connotative meanings of the non-normative cases encountered in different kinds of written and spoken discourse. We advise that the students should use the method of discourse analysis to examine gender variations due to pragmatic functions of the third person singular pronouns.

Notes

¹Lyons, 1968, p. 283.

²Quirk *et alii*, 1982, p. 85.

³Biber *et alii*, 1999, p. 317-318.

⁴Waal de, 2005, p. 48.

⁵Schiffrin, 1994, p. 363.

⁶Gee, 1999, p. 1.

⁷Kingston, 2011, p. 8-9.

⁸www.wikipedia.org

⁹Grigoryeva, 2007, p. 135.

¹⁰Troyanov, 1989, p. 37.

¹¹Apresean, 1995, p. 153.

¹²Van Dijk *et alii*, 1983, p. 68.

¹³Miloserdova, 1991, p. 111.

¹⁴Grigoryeva, 2007, p. 146.

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