MITIGATION AS COMMUNICATIVE TACTICS OF HEDGING STRATEGY

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Abstract

Background: The specificity of mitigation are being intensively studied in Ukrainian and foreign linguistics. (O. L. Balats'ka, C. Caffi, B. Fraser, A. V. Jarho, K. Hyland, S. M. Kyshko, S. I. Kryvoruchko, M. Langner, A. E. Levyts'kyy, O. P. Marjuhin, I. M. Misyahina, O. M. Ruchkina, S. S. Tahtarova and others). It is interpreted in different ways, but all definitions of mitigation come down to addressant's intention of cooperation in communication and its harmonious realization.

Purpose: The aim of our research is to figure out the essence of mitigation, possibilities of its use and the specificity of its realization in scientific discourse on the material of Ukrainian reviews which were written by renowned linguists – O. I. Bondar and Yu. O. Karpenko.

Results: Mitigation is one of the tactics of communication strategy of hedging, which is aimed to mitigate the potentially negative impact on the recipient and reduce the danger of an invasion of privacy. Mitigation tactics is used when there is a risk to offend the author of original text. It is also used when there is a risk for an addressant to be biased because of his views on a particular issue. Different means of mitigation allow the reviewer to avoid conflict and correctly express criticism. There are lexical items in Ukrainian language which express approximation, doubtfulness and down-toning. These are adverbs, pronouns, adjectives and parenthesis. O. I. Bondar and Yu. O. Karpenko often use means of mitigation in the genre of scientific review for tactful discussion with the author of the original work and to express their thoughts.

Discussion: Mitigation tactics is used to reduce possible negative effects which can be caused by criticism of other researchers. Different means of mitigating allow recipient to choose necessary ones in a particular situation, depending on existing ethnical, social and other standards. They also allow the reviewer to verbalize their cognitive and communicative potential.

The prospect for further research is to identify and analyze other communication tactics of hedging strategy.

Keywords: strategy, tactics, mitigation, critics, criticism, author, review, hedging.

Vitae

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**PRAGMATIC POTENTIAL OF THE PRONOUN *IT*
IN TEXTS OF HORROR DISCOURSE**

Стаття містить аналіз прагматичного потенціалу англійського займенника it у текстах дискурсу жахів. Дослідження проведено у межах сучасних підходів лінгвістичної прагматики, а саме творення комунікативних смислів та їх відтінків у процесі комунікації «автор – читач». Визнаючи існування вигаданого світу художніх текстів та особливостей референції в них, було здійснено аналіз референційних можливостей особового займенника it та імпліцитних комунікативних смислів, що з'являються у процесі текстопородження й текстосприйняття.

Ключові слова: дискурс жахів, текст, вигаданий світ, імпліцитність, комунікативний смисл, займенник it.

Modern linguistic studies tend to concentrate on the communicative approach to the language phenomena thus elaborating the problematic field of linguistic pragmatics in particular. Apart from thorough analysis of dialogical "here and now" communication, scientists also pay attention to a text as means of communication between an author and readers, as the channel of transmitting ideas or communicative senses (F. Batsevych, V. Bogdanov, T. A. Van Dijk, M. Dymarskyi, T. Radzievska, K. Serova, Yu. Stepanov, etc). **The aim** of this research is to reveal the specificity of personal pronoun *it* functioning in texts of horror discourse in view of its pragmatic potential. The present analysis is based on the following fundamental statements.

The first is that a literary text is the embodiment of a nebulous imaginary world. The tendency to analyze texts taking into account their genre specificity has been formed only recently in works of O. Bochkova, O. Djakonov, S. Lem, M. Misnyk, S. Plotnikova, etc. S. Plotnikova introduces the concept of anomalous artistic world, the one that is organized on the basis of other general structural principles in comparison with "our" (unusual) world. Correspondingly, text linguistics, logical semantics and linguistic pragmatics use the notion of possible or imaginary

world to analyze lingual representation of subjectively created or perceived "possible" actions, states, etc. "which understanding is possible only within the bounds of these imaginary worlds in accord with the rules of their existence and the recognition of their reference truthfulness: possible worlds may be treated as hypotheses or agreements set on the basis of changes of the qualities of the real world objects. <…> The possible world appears as referential reflection of the existing world, as its variant and transformation." (Brazgovskaya 91)

Secondly, reference in artistic discourse depends on the author's intention (it goes in accord with the fundamental principle of linguistic pragmatics – subjectivity of communication and its realization in the intentionality of speech and implicitness). It means that the author's ideas and intentions presuppose the choice of means of text creation and its components, for example, referents, means of their realization, etc, but the process is not considered absolutely subjective and independent, because it is largely motivated by cultural traditions, circumstances, psychological reasons, genre traditions and other extralingual reasons. Internal genre specificity of reference in artistic texts is quite a new object of research; there are only hints on this problem in works of O. Selivanova and I. Smirnov: he believes that some types of text creation (heroic, satirical, idyllic, grotesque, comical and tragic) appeared due to the specificity of referential content of this literature that consists of object-referents and subject-referents, and is defined by their comparative status. We would add the texts of horror literature to the list as far as they are united by a clearly outlined aesthetic intention and psycho-emotional basis of creation and perception, though different in forms and genres. Text creation and reference as its basis in the horror discourse relies upon individual-subjective living through negative emotions connected with the psychological phenomenon of fear in the real world with the aim of having a corresponding empathic feedback or with didactic purpose.

Thirdly, we single out two main subjects whose interaction defines the belonging of a text to the horror discourse – the subject-recipient and the subject-source of horror (further SR vs SS respectively) (Sazonova, "Typy referentsii u tekstah dyskursu zhahiv"). Accepting the idea that the communicative sense of the texts of horror discourse is fear, we mean that it comes as the result of "author – reader" communication and gradually appears in the text basing on all possible textual elements on different levels that not only constitute the basic communicative sense but reveal the variety of its shades and transformations in the course of the text development. The most important textual element – that is the key stone of expressing the sense of fear – is the subject-source of fear, correspondingly, its pragmatic role in revealing the author's intentions and implications and the reader's adequate decoding of them is of primary importance for the realization of the basic communicative sense and, finally, adequate communication.

It is unanimously recognized that everything unknown is considered psychologically uncomfortable with the increasing grading to mysterious and frightening as long as it bears potential threat to the recipient's wellbeing or life, stability and so on. Reference of such SSs in the texts of horror discourse correlates the name with the existing world through the recipient's perception or senses but not with a concrete identified object. In the texts of this type the SS's identification may not be completed, and the veil of mystery and horrific atmosphere may accompany the addressee till the end. The referent is viewed as real as its reference is completed by the predicates of existence and other "world creating predicates" (Frolova 218). This type of reference is the non-identifying reference (Sazonova, "Typy referentsii u tekstah dyskursu zhahiv"). Mostly, it is presented by indefinite pronouns like *something* or *somebody*, though there are rare examples when the personal pronoun *it* is used.

Creation of possible worlds allows authors all kinds of experiments with the language means to achieve the artistic goal and transmit the intentions, for example, they may explore non-traditional or deviant use of pronouns, *it* in particular. In this respect we may speak about the implicitness of communicative senses that accompany the basic sense "fear" of the texts of horror discourse or serve its creation. Implicitness has been the matter of interest of many linguists who contributed to the development of various linguistic theories, but as far as our analysis makes use of the pragmatic studies it is natural to view the phenomenon of implicitness through the prism of "author – reader" communication (F. Batsevich, L. Chernejko, K. Dolinin, M. Nikitin, and other). As L. Nefiodova states, to reveal a hidden implicit sense the communicants take into account a sum of several factors intended for this purpose. This must be a range of textual components that create this implicit sense as the result of discrepancy between what is expressed on the explicit level and what is implied. (Nefiodova 6-7). Implicit meanings of pronouns have been studied by F. Batsevich, N. Ivanyshin, O. Seliverstova, and others who state that "pragmatic aspects of referential mechanism are closely related to the semantics of the units and categories of language code in communication" (Batsevich 130). Also, deictic units (and pronouns, in particular) "are bearers of important semantic-pragmatic communicative senses, which, in general, make communication possible, "tying it up" to concrete persons, places, time of interaction as well to the most important presuppositions of existential and axiological character" (Batsevich 128).

English grammar traditionally treats personal pronoun *it* as a deictic element that substitutes nouns denoting objects that belong to classes of inanimate objects or non-human animate object without gender distinctions, or very small children (baby). It is natural that conventional communicative senses derived from the grammatical system of the language are the following: "inanimate", "dead", and "non-human"; these senses may be actualized separately (*I bought a new bed. It is comfortable. – The police found the victim's body. It was hidden. – I have a cat. It is black.*), or combined (*We saw a roadkilled dog. It lay along the road.*). In communication correct decoding of the referential deictic element *it* is easy as far as it is used anaphorically and the preceding noun guides the understanding of the following reference. Still, the traditional ties are so strong that even taken out of the context the pronoun *it* would be

perceived as denoting something inanimate, dead or non-human, making its use very limited and strongly predetermined by traditional grammar.

For example, in the extract from "To Be Taken with a Grain of Salt" the SR experiences a ghost several times: *That man was **the man who had gone second of the two along Piccadilly, and whose face was of the colour of impure wax**. <...> **A dead man** beckoning! <...> I was absolutely certain that I had never seen **that face** before, except on the one occasion in Piccadilly. Comparing **its** expression when beckoning at the door, with **its** expression when **it** had stared up at me as I stood at my window, I came to the conclusion that on the first occasion **it** had sought to fasten itself upon my memory and that on the second occasion **it** had made sure of being immediately remembered* (Ghost Stories 97). The referential chain logically shows that "the man" is "dead" and has a "face" of particular "expression", the noun *face* being substituted by *its*. Though, this chain loses its logical development further as far as the pronoun *it* doesn't refer back to *face*, neglects the primary nomination of the SS as *the man* but implies the sense "a ghost" as "the spirit of a dead person that someone sees or hears" (Macmillan). It becomes possible due to the predicates of existence or those which can be associated only with living humans' abilities like *stared up, had sought to fasten itself upon my memory, had made sure of being immediately remembered.* Surely, all these actions cannot be performed by a face or a dead man so the implied sense of experiencing a ghost's presence is actualized in the "author – reader" communication. Though one cannot deny the presence of another shade of the communicative sense actualized by SS's reference – "indefiniteness" because neither the nounal nomination (*the man*) nor pronounal indication (*it/its*) have the potential of identification of the SS; even more, the object denoted is viewed as known, familiar but non-identifiable by nature.

The sense of non-identifiability dominates in the text of "A School Story": *First, there was the house with a room in which a series of people insisted on passing a night; and each of them in the morning was found kneeling in a corner and had just time to say, "I've seen it," and died* (Ghost Stories 229). The pronoun *it* doesn't refer back to any noun, and the reference is restored only if the reader consolidates the previous context where the story goes that boys at private schools like telling each other ghost stories, the immediate context which tells about mysterious deaths, and the conventional communicative senses "inanimate", "dead", and "non-human". Still, neither of the implications can be proved, and it remains unclear what is meant by *it*. We consider this sense intentionally predetermined as it helps actualize the communicative sense of fear bearing one of the psychologically important elements of fear "new and unknown".

The conventional senses of *it* in combination with the intentional sense actualized in the texts of horror discourse may be complicated by the sense "doubt". It happens when the author intends to create an epistemic conflict and involves modality of uncertainty into the whole act of SR – SS interaction (Sazonova, "Modalni mehanizmy stvorenna tekstiv dyskursu zhahiv") and in the "author – reader" communication. Thus, in the text of "Ghoul" we come across the following introduction of the SS into the story: ***Something else** was in the ground, too. **Something that was not dead, yet not really alive**. <...> **The creature** slumbered beneath an old granite marker with an even older symbol carved into the stone. Both the symbol and the creature were **ancient**. **The creature in the ground had no name**, at least none that it could remember. None of **its** kind did. <...> **His** race was not smiled upon by Him like the angels and small gods were, nor did they enjoy the autonomy and freedom from His gaze the way the Thirteen did. No. **His** kind were **condemned** to feed on the cold, rotting corpses of the dead the scraps from the Creator's table. <...> **It wished**, at times, for death, but death would not come. <...> **The thing** was **a ghoul*** (Keene 32). As it is seen from the passage, in the referential chain the conventional meaning "indefiniteness" conveyed by the pronoun *something* is gradually changed by the identification and the conventional meaning "a representative of the class" explicated by the predicative noun with the indefinite article (*a ghoul*). The idea of graduality correlates with the shade of the communicative sense "fear – doubt" as it goes through stages of identification: *something – the creature – it – he – it – the thing – a ghoul*, where doubt is implied in the alternating use of pronouns and nouns of "general" semantics opposing key senses "dead" – "alive" and emphasizing doubt and uncertainty. The culminating contradiction is actualized in the sentence *It wished, at times, for death, but death would not come* where it denotes not only a living being but an eternal one.

All previous examples illustrate, though different in communicative senses and types of reference made, traditional anaphoric deictic use of the personal pronoun *it* in texts of horror discourse. Still, horror discourse texts, and they alone, allow such deviations from the usual use of pronouns in their imaginary world as cataphoric use and conversion to the class of personal names. By cataphoric use we mean the use of *it* as the title of a text by S. King: it is, firstly, not characteristic for pronouns to be used as the only word of a heading because in this case the heading becomes difficult to understand and get the idea of the book; secondly, it is capitalized as all non-functional words in headings, and the reader perceives it as a personal pronoun that precedes some other notional element in the further text. It is obvious that it will be either a non-human or inanimate object of reference. But the front page, or cover with the title being part of it, is one of the influential factors that creates the readers' expectations and hints upon the author's intentions, and here the reader gets to know not only the title of the book but also the name of the author – their combination is where the reader derives first impressions from. These two explicit components of the artistic text imply the hidden communicative sense "fear" as the result of the combination of the author's reputation as the most extravagant and successful writer of this genre and the weird title of the text associated with something inanimate, dead, and non-human (as scientists say, implicitness "cements the text" (Ivanyshyn)). And really the text is built around the constant opposing the SRs and the SS that is *It*. *It* converses into the class of personal nouns and acquires some grammatical changes necessary for it: it is capitalized; it doesn't substitute any other preceding or following noun

and refers to the SS in the possible world of the horror text. The first reference made by *It* is introduced in the paragraph that reflects "double" imaginary world in the SR's mind in the artistic text of horror discourse: *He did not like the cellar, and he did not like going down the cellar stairs, because he always **imagined there was something down there in the dark**. That was **silly, of course**, his father said so and his mother said so and, even more important, **Bill said so, but still**. – He did not even like opening the door to flick on the light because he always had **the idea** – this was so exquisitely stupid he didn't dare tell anyone – that while he was feeling for the light switch, **some horrible clawed paw would settle lightly over his wrist . . . and then jerk him down into the darkness that smelled of dirt and wet and dim rotted vegetables. Stupid! There were no things with claws, all hairy and full of killing spite**. Every now and then someone went crazy and killed a lot of people – sometimes Chet Huntley told about such things on the evening news – and of course there were Commies, but **there was no weird monster living down in their cellar. Still, this idea lingered**. In those interminable moments while he was groping for the switch with his right hand (**his left arm curled around the doorjamb in a death grip**), that **cellar smell seemed to intensify until it filled the world. Smells of dirt and wet and long-gone vegetables would merge into one unmistakable ineluctable smell, the smell of the monster, the apotheosis of all monsters. It was the smell of something for which he had no name: the smell of It, crouched and lurking and ready to spring. A creature which would eat anything but which was especially hungry for boy meat*** (King 16-17). The reference of the SS is intentionally vague to create the sense of non-identifiability and the feeling of suspense and expectation of the future revelation of the mysterious *It*. It is difficult to say whether intentionally or not but the author doesn't capitalize *it* in a set of further usages, which doesn't diminish the degree of expressing the general communicative sense "fear" as far as the content side of the extracts is tragic: *She thought Stanley must have made that mark – his final impression on the world – as he lost consciousness. **It** seemed to cry out at her: [Image of the handwritten word "IT", written in blood]* (King 81).

In the text development the author uses an unexpected tactic and the SS's reference changes: instead of clearing out what *It* is S. King multiplies its images or variants of materialization. Firstly, it is only perceived through senses (odourative perception): ***A smell of garbage, a smell of shit, and a smell of something else. Something worse than either. It was the stink of the beast, the stink of It**, down there in the darkness under Derry where the machines thundered on and on* (King 112). Later the material incarnation is referred to as something visible but hardly identifiable: ***the thing** that has shown up every twenty-seven years or so. <...> **It** always comes back, you see.   **It**.* (King 194); or the one that is able to cause real physical damage to the SR: ***Eddie choked**, but clouds of grayness were closing in now, and he realized faintly that **it** was real enough, **this Creature**. **It was**, after all, **killing him**. <...> They fell away only when **the Creature tore his head from his shoulders with a low satisfied grunt**. And as Eddie's picture of what **It** was began to fade, **It began** promptly **to change into something else**.* (King 332-333) It is worth mentioning that, as in the before mentioned extracts from other texts, the sense of SS being eternal or everlasting is universal (*It always comes back*).

In the text of "It" there is a group of SRs, children (later adults) who have different visions of It but unanimously understand it as one SS. According to the fears that pursue each of them individually, the image of It in each case acquires specific features: once it is a mummy, or a leper, or a huge bird, etc, but in every of these images there is something that makes them similar – it is IT. The use of the pronoun *it* in these cases doesn't differ from the usual grammatically correct way: *if **the mummy** had not been a hallucination or a mirage, if **it** had been real, **it** would be waiting under the bridge* (King 274); *It was **not the hobo** with the flayed nose, but there were resemblances. Terrible resemblances. And yet . . . **this thing could not be human. Nothing could be so eaten up and remain alive**. <...> That's all right,' **the leper** said, and Eddie saw with dreamlike terror that **it** was crawling out of the window. The bony shield behind **its** peeling forehead snapped the thin wooden strip between the two panes. **Its** hands clawed through the leafy, mulchy earth.* (King 391) – *it* substitutes a noun that denotes an inanimate or dead object and performs an anaphoric deictic function.

Concluding the brief analysis of the pragmatic potential of the use of the personal pronoun *it* in the texts of horror discourse it is of primary importance to emphasize that linguistic pragmatic approach to the text studies allows making an attempt of revealing the ways of creating communicative senses of whole texts as well as senses of their constituents. The factor of subjectivity adds to the deeper understanding of "author – reader" communication if intentionality and implications are taken into account. The personal pronoun *it*, as one of the means of hiding implicatures in the texts of the imaginary world of horror discourse, performs an important role in creating the sense of fear taking part in the reference of the subject-source of fear. The conventional senses of *it* ("inanimate", "dead", and "non-human") are exploited regularly and acquire new, specific only for horrific texts, shades of meaning: thus, we distinguish a combination of communicative senses "fear – doubt" that is possible to elicit due to the lingual expression of the SS by *it* bearing along with conventional senses new ones – non-identifiability, eternity and undeath. Perspectives of further studies demand thorough examination of the pragmatic potential of indefinite pronouns, word-substitute *one* and other deictic means in the text creation process.

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PRAGMATIC POTENTIAL OF THE PRONOUN *IT* IN TEXTS OF HORROR DISCOURSE

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Abstract

Background: The close attention to communicative aspects of linguistics is presupposed by the stable anthropological viewpoint and quickly developing pragmatic tendencies in modern humanitarian sciences. The researchers stress upon the lack of systematic analysis of “author – reader” communication and deficient methodological basis of linguistic pragmatics. It moves forward and widens the perspectives of studies in bordering spheres.

Purpose: The aim of this research is to reveal the specificity of personal pronoun *it* functioning in texts of horror discourse in view of its pragmatic potential.

Results: Horror discourse is presented by artistic texts which reveal a specific imaginary world that bases on the communicants’ psychological experience. The key stone of “author – reader” communication in these texts is the communicative sense of fear that finds its step by step realization on different textual and linguistic levels. Subjectivity of text creation and text perception in this communication gives birth to various implicit communicative senses that constitute the final sense of fear. One of the bearers of such implicit communicative senses in the English language is pronoun *it*. In some texts of the horror discourse *it* is used to refer to the subject-source of fear to exemplify non-identifying reference. The conventional senses of *it* (“inanimate”, “dead”, and “non-human”) are exploited regularly and acquire new, specific only for horrific texts, shades of meaning: thus, we distinguish a combination of communicative senses “fear – doubt” that is possible to elicit due to the lingual expression of the SS by *it* bearing along with conventional senses new ones – non-identifiability, eternity and undeath.

Discussion: The results of the research show that the specificity of horror discourse language textual realization allows all kinds of experiments, thus, it motivates further analysis of the pragmatic potential of indefinite pronouns, substitute word *one* and other deictic elements of the language system.

Keywords: horror discourse, text, imaginary world, implicitness, communicative sense, pronoun it.

Vitae

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