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## **Metaphor and Poetic Creativity: A Cognitive Linguistic Account<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract.** The issue of metaphorical creativity was studied by George Lakoff and Mark Turner (1989) in their *More Than Cool Reason*. Lakoff and Turner make two very important claims. One is that poets share with everyday people most of the conceptual metaphors they use in poetry and, second, metaphorical creativity in poetry is the result of four common conceptual devices that poets use in manipulating otherwise shared conceptual metaphors. These include the devices of elaboration, extension, questioning, and combining. However, others have shown that these cognitive devices, or strategies, exist not only in poetic language but also in more ordinary forms of language use, such as journalism (see, e.g., Jackendoff and Aaron, 1990; Semino, 2008). Moreover, it seems that not all cases of the creative use of metaphor in poetry are the result of such cognitive devices. Mark Turner proposed that in many cases poetry makes use of what he and Fauconnier call "blends," in which various elements from two or more domains, or frames, can be conceptually fused, or integrated (see, e.g., Turner, 1996; Fauconnier and Turner, 2002).

In this paper, I will suggest that in order to be able to account for the full range of metaphorical creativity in poetry, we need to go even further. I will propose that a fuller account of the poetic use of metaphor requires that we look at the possible role of the context in which poets create poetry.

**Keywords:** metaphor, metaphoric creativity, cognitive devices, role of context

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to my students, Eszter Nucz and Dénes Tímár, who called my attention to some of the poems to be analyzed here, for some preliminary ideas in the analysis, and for providing me with detailed background information on the poets' lives.

The issue of metaphorical creativity was studied by George Lakoff and Mark Turner (1989) in their *More Than Cool Reason*. Lakoff and Turner make two very important claims. One is that poets share with everyday people most of the conceptual metaphors they use in poetry and, second, metaphorical creativity in poetry is the result of four common conceptual devices that poets use in manipulating otherwise shared conceptual metaphors. These include the devices of elaboration, extension, questioning, and combining. However, others have shown that these cognitive devices, or strategies, exist not only in poetic language but also in more ordinary forms of language use, such as journalism (see, e.g., Jackendoff and Aaron, 1990; Semino, 2008). Moreover, it seems that not all cases of the creative use of metaphor in poetry are the result of such cognitive devices. Mark Turner proposed that in many cases poetry makes use of what he and Fauconnier call “blends,” in which various elements from two or more domains, or frames, can be conceptually fused, or integrated (see, e.g., Turner, 1996; Fauconnier and Turner, 2002).

In this paper, I will suggest that in order to be able to account for the full range of metaphorical creativity in poetry, we need to go even further. I will suggest that a fuller account of the poetic use of metaphor requires that we look at the possible role of the context in which poets create poetry. My interest in the role of context in metaphor use goes back to a suggestion I made in my *Metaphor in Culture* (2005), where I claimed that when ordinary people conceptualize an idea metaphorically, they do so under what I called the “pressure of coherence”: the pressure of their bodily experiences and the pressure of the context that surrounds them. In later and more recent studies (e.g., Kövecses, 2008, 2009), I have suggested that when we speak and think metaphorically, we are influenced by these two factors and that the effect of context on metaphorical conceptualization is just as pervasive, if not more so, as that of the body. I claim that poets work under the same conceptual pressures and that the effect of context may be in part responsible for the creative use of metaphor in poetry. Let me now clarify what I mean by context.

### **Context in poetry**

Context can be used in poetry in two ways:

Poets may describe the context in which they create poetry.

They may use context as a means of talking about something else.

When the first is the case, we get straightforward examples of describing a scene, such as in Matthew Arnold’s *Dover Beach*:

The sea is calm to-night.  
 The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
 Upon the straits,—on the French coast, the light  
 Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,  
 Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.  
 Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!

Here we get an idea of what the poet can see from inside a house on the beach: the sea is calm, the time of the day is night, it is dark outside with some well lighted places, the French coast is visible, the night air is sweet, etc. The context (scene) is described in an almost literal way. This does not mean, however, that the description of the surrounding context does not contain any metaphors. We can suggest that the description of the context is largely literal, though some metaphors are interspersed in the description; that is, in the terminology of conceptual metaphor theory, the surrounding context is the target domain that is described by means of certain source domains. For example, the descriptive statement “the cliffs of England stand” is based on the conceptual metaphor in which the phrase CLIFFS OF ENGLAND functions as the target domain with PERSON as the source domain, as indicated by the metaphorically used verb *stand*. This is not, of course, a major metaphorical achievement by Arnold; it is a completely commonplace metaphor. The point here simply is that an otherwise dominantly literal description of the context may contain certain metaphors, but these metaphors may not be remarkable poetically in general and/or in the particular poem.

From the perspective of poetic metaphors and the study of particular poems, much more interesting are the cases where this more or less literally conceived context is used metaphorically to express meanings that are not normally considered part of the meaning of the context as described. Using conceptual metaphor theory, we can say that the context can function as the source domain and the meanings to be expressed by means of the source domain function as the target. The exciting question in such cases is: What is the meaning (or, what are the meanings) that the dominantly literally-conceived source (i.e., the context) is intended to convey? Consider the continuation of the Arnold poem:

Only, from the long line of spray  
 Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd sand,  
 Listen! You hear the grating roar  
 Of pebbles which the waves suck back, and fling,  
 At their return, up the high strand,  
 Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
 With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
 The eternal note of sadness in.



Although the description of the context continues, there is a clear sense in the reader that the poem is not primarily about depicting the physical location and events that occur around the observer. Indeed, the last line (“and bring the eternal note of sadness in”) makes this meaning explicit; the coming in and going out of the waves convey an explicitly stated sadness. But of course we know that waves cannot actually “bring in” sadness or “notes of sadness”—they can only be metaphorically responsible for our sad mood when we hear the “tremulous cadence slow.” And this sense of sadness is reinforced in the next stanza:

Sophocles long ago  
 Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought  
 Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
 Of human misery; we  
 Find also in the sound a thought,  
 Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

In sum, then, a poet can describe a context (scene) in which s/he writes a poem, or he or she can use the context (scene) (which functions as a source domain) to talk about things that go beyond or are outside the context (scene) he or she is involved in (this functions as the target domain). My concern will be with this second use of context, or scene.

The notion of context is a complex one due to its qualitative variety, on the one hand, and to its space- and time-dimensions, on the other. The kind of context that was considered so far was the physical context, or environment, but there are several others. The notion of context additionally includes the linguistic, intertextual, cultural, social contexts, and the main entities of the discourse, such as the speaker, hearer, and the topic. As regards the space-dimension of context, we can distinguish between local and global contexts that indicate the endpoints of a continuum from local to global. Finally, we can distinguish between contexts that apply to the present time at one end and those that reach back in time, on the other. The contexts that are global and “timeless” are less interesting for the present project because they provide an extremely general frame of reference for whatever we say or think metaphorically, or whatever poets write and think metaphorically. My interest is in the most immediate contexts—physically, linguistically, intertextually, culturally, socially, spatially, and temporally. The assumption is that it is these kinds of immediate contexts that most powerfully and most creatively shape the use of metaphors in poetry.

Let me now take the various types of context and provide an illustration for how they shape the use of metaphors in a select set of poems.

## Physical context

Since I began with the physical context above, let me take this kind of context first and see how it can influence the creative use of metaphors in poetry. For an illustration, let us continue with the Arnold poem:

The sea of Faith  
 Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
 Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.  
 But now I only hear  
 Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
 Retreating, to the breath  
 Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
 And naked shingles of the world.

At work in this stanza are two conceptual metaphors: HEALTH IS WHOLENESS and PERFECTION/ COMPLETENESS IS ROUNDNESS, as indicated by the expressions “at the *full*” (wholeness) and “and *round* earth's shore” (roundness). The stanza, we understand, is about the health and perfection of the human condition until the coming of the changes that were happening at the time: the changes to the established order of the world in which religion played a major role. These two extremely general metaphors can be instantiated (and could be instantiated by Arnold) in many different ways. The question arises why they are made conceptually-linguistically manifest in the particular way they are; that is, by the metaphor “the sea of Faith.” This is, we can safely assume, because of what Arnold saw before him at the time of creating the poem: the ebb and flow of the sea. As the sea retreats, that is, as faith disappears, the world becomes a less healthy and less perfect place.

## Knowledge about the main entities of discourse

We can distinguish several major entities of poetic discourse: the speaker (poet), the topic, and the hearer, or addressee (audience). (In what follows I will ignore all the difficulties in identifying the speaker with the poet and the addressee with the “real audience.” Such distinctions are not directly relevant to the main argument of the present paper.)

*Speaker/ Poet*

The idea that the general physical, biological, mental, emotional, etc. condition, or situation, of a poet can influence the way a poet writes poetry is well known and is often taken into account in the appreciation of poetry. Dickinson is a

well studied case, as discussed, for example, by Margaret Freeman and James Guthrie. Guthrie has this to say on the issue:

. . . I propose to concentrate on the fact of illness itself as a governing factor in Dickinson's development as a poet. We are already accustomed to thinking about ways in which illness or deformity modulate the registers of expression we hear while reading Milton, Keats, Emily Brontë, Lord Byron. For Dickinson, illness was a formative experience as well, one which shaped her entire poetic methodology from perception to inscription and which very likely shook the foundations of her faith. Reading Dickinson's poems in the full knowledge and belief that, while writing them, she was suffering acutely from a seemingly irremediable illness renders many of them recuperable as almost diaristic records of a rather ordinary person's courageous struggle against profound adversity. (4-5)

Along similar lines, I suggest that a poet's physical condition, especially poor health, can have an effect on the way he or she metaphorically conceptualizes the subject matter he or she writes about. In my terminology, this is how self-knowledge of one's situation as a contextual factor can often lead to the creative use of metaphors by poets. Let us take one of Dickinson's poems as a case in point:

I reckon—when I count at all—  
 First—Poets—Then the Sun—  
 Then Summer—Then the Heaven of God—  
 And then—the List is done—

But, looking back – the First so seems  
 To Comprehend the Whole—  
 The Others look a needless Show—  
 So I write—Poets—All—

Their Summer—lasts a Solid Year—  
 They can afford a Sun  
 The East—would deem extravagant—  
 And if the Further Heaven—

Be Beautiful as they prepare  
 For Those who worship Them—  
 It is too difficult a Grace—  
 To justify the Dream—

The question that I'm asking here is how Dickinson's optical illness is transformed into metaphorical patterns in her poetry in general and in this poem in particular. I would propose the following analysis that fits my interpretation of the poem. (However, others may have a very different interpretation that may require a very different conceptual analysis.)

In my interpretation, the poem is about poetic creativity—the issue of what inspires a poet to write poetry. Dickinson uses the following conceptual metaphor to talk about it: POETIC CREATIVITY IS A NEW WAY OF SEEING (AS A RESULT OF THE SUMMER SUN). The mappings, or correspondences, that make up the metaphor are as follows:

summer → productive period  
sun → inspiration  
new way of seeing → being poetically creative (i.e., coming up with a poem)

An interesting property of the first mapping is that the literal summer stands metonymically for the literal year and the metaphorical summer stands for “always.” Thus, poets are always creative; they have a year-long summer.

A second metaphor that Dickinson relies on is POEMS ARE HEAVENS. In this metaphor, the mappings are:

further heaven → poem  
worshippers → people reading poetry  
God → poet

As an important additional mapping in this metaphor, we also have:

God's grace → poet's inspiration

Unlike the previous metaphor, where poetic inspiration is metaphorically equated with the sun, it is God's grace that corresponds to the poet's inspiration in this second metaphor. Dickinson's inspiration, however, is a difficult one: it is her optical illness. She writes her poetry by relying on, or making use of, her illness. This is a difficult grace to accept.

In other words, her bodily condition of having impaired vision is put to use in an extraordinary way in this poem by Dickinson. Other poets may make use of their physical condition, or self-knowledge, in different ways. I believe that it would be difficult to make generalizations about the precise ways in which self-knowledge of this kind is used by poets. At the same time, this contextual factor may explain some of the apparently strange uses of metaphor in the works of poets.

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*Topic and addressee*

For an illustration of how the addressee and the topic can influence the choice of a poet's metaphors, let us turn to Sylvia Plath's poem, *Medusa*. Here are some relevant lines:

Off that landspit of stony mouth-plugs,  
 Eyes rolled by white sticks,  
 Ears cupping the sea's incoherences,  
 You house your unnerving head—God-ball,  
 Lens of mercies,  
 Your stooges  
 Plying their wild cells in my keel's shadow,  
 Pushing by like hearts,  
 Red stigmata at the very center,  
 Riding the rip tide to the nearest point of  
 departure,  
 Dragging their Jesus hair.  
 Did I escape, I wonder?

In this poem, the addressee is Sylvia Plath's mother. The question arises why the poet thinks metaphorically of her mother as a medusa—in both senses of this term. What we know about Sylvia Plath is that her relationship to her mother was strained and ambivalent. The strained and ambivalent nature of the relationship is one of the major topics, or subject matters, of the poem. In Greek mythology, Medusa is a gorgon with snakes for her hair, who turns people who look at her to stone. We can thus suggest that the negative aspects of Plath's relationship to her mother are analogically reflected in the Medusa metaphor for her ("your unnerving head"). That is to say, the particular metaphorical image for the mother is provided by the broader cultural context: i.e., Greek mythology. Note, however, that the selection of the image is secondary to the poet's knowledge about the addressee and the topic of the discourse; if her mother had been different, Plath would not have picked the image of the Medusa but something else—an image that would have fit a different mother with different properties. In this sense, I propose that it is the addressee and the topic of the discourse (the poem) that primarily governs the choice of the image applied to the mother—though conveyed in the form of a culturally defined analogy.

As the lines quoted above also suggest, the poet is trying to escape from the harmful influence of the mother. (This can be seen most clearly in the line "Did I escape, I wonder?"). What is remarkable here is that, to convey this, the poet makes use of the other sense of *medusa*: the "jellyfish" sense ("Your stooges /

Plying their wild cells in my keel's shadow"). She's trying to get away from an overbearing mother, and the mother is portrayed analogically as jellyfish. Schools of jellyfish move about in the sea, and jellyfish stings can inflict pain and even death in humans. Thus it can be suggested that the "jellyfish" meaning of *medusa* is used by the poet because the mythological Medusa was introduced early on in the poem (in the title) to begin with. The word form *medusa* evokes all the knowledge structures associated with it (given as the two senses of the word), and the poet is taking advantage of them, as they analogically fit the nature of the relationship with her mother. Another motivating factor for the use of the second sense is that, according to some commentators, Sylvia Plath developed a great deal of interest in marine biology at about the time she wrote *Medusa*. This kind of personal interest a poet has may also influence the choice of particular metaphorical images (in this case, the image for the addressee).

### Cultural context

As we saw above, the choice of the image of Medusa was in part motivated by the larger cultural context, of which the three gorgons of Greek mythology, including Medusa, form a part. The symbolic belief system is thus one aspect of Sylvia Plath's cultural system. The poem continues with the following lines:

My mind winds to you  
 Old barnacled umbilicus, Atlantic cable,  
 Keeping itself, it seems, in a state of miraculous repair.

Another aspect of the cultural context involves the entities we find in a particular physical-cultural environment. In the lines, the relationship to her mother is conceptualized metaphorically both as the *umbilicus* and the *Atlantic telephone cable*. In the former case, the generic-level conceptual metaphor PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS ARE PHYSICAL CONNECTIONS is fleshed out at the specific level as the umbilicus. This is of course motivated by human biology, not by cultural context. What gives a metaphorical character to it is that we know that the poet is no longer physically-biologically linked to the mother through the umbilicus. The metaphor is probably used to convey the naturalness and inevitability of a strong bond between mother and child. However, the adjacent metaphor *Atlantic cable* derives from the surrounding physical-cultural environment. The first transatlantic telephone cable system between Great-Britain and North-America was laid in the 1950s, making it possible for people to communicate directly with each other at a long distance. Through the metaphor, the strength of the biological bond is reinforced, and the *Atlantic cable* can be seen as the temporal (and metaphorical) continuation of the umbilicus.

The cultural context, among other things, includes, as we just saw, the belief system of a person and the physical-cultural environment. Both of these occur in various specific forms in a large number of other poems. The cultural belief system also involves the religious beliefs that are entertained in a given culture. Let us take the first stanza of a poem, *Prayers of Steel*, by Carl Sandburg.

LAY me on an anvil, O God.  
 Beat me and hammer me into a crowbar.  
 Let me pry loose old walls.  
 Let me lift and loosen old foundations.

Here the poet evokes God and wants God to turn him into an instrument of social change. This making of an “old type of man” into a “new type of man” is conceptualized on the analogy of God’s creation of man in the Bible. In other words, the source domain of the metaphor is the biblical act of man’s creation, while the target domain is the making of a new type of man who can effect social changes in the world. This means that the source domain is provided by the religious belief system in the culture of the poet by virtue of an analogy between God’s creation of man and the creation of a tool that metonymically stands for the poet (INSTRUMENT USED FOR THE PERSON USING IT), who can thus function in a new role to effect social change.

A significant physical-cultural element, or entity, that is significant in Sandburg’s poetry is the skyscraper. Consider the first stanza of the poem called *Skyscraper*:

BY day the skyscraper looms in the smoke and sun and  
 has a soul.  
 Prairie and valley, streets of the city, pour people into  
 it and they mingle among its twenty floors and are  
 poured out again back to the streets, prairies and  
 valleys.  
 It is the men and women, boys and girls so poured in and  
 out all day that give the building a soul of dreams  
 and thoughts and memories.  
 (Dumped in the sea or fixed in a desert, who would care  
 for the building or speak its name or ask a policeman  
 the way to it?)

What makes the skyscraper such a significant symbol and what makes Sandburg choose it to talk about America? The poem was written in 1916 in Chicago. It was at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the major American cities that skyscrapers began

to be built on a large scale. The skyscraper became a dominant feature of the cities' skyline. Due to its perceptual and cultural salience, it became, for Sandburg and many others, a symbol of America. The symbol is based on a connection between a salient element (a kind of building) that characterizes a place and the place itself; hence the metonymy SKYSCRAPER FOR AMERICA, which is a specific-level version of the more generic metonymy A CHARACTERISTIC PROPERTY FOR THE PLACE THAT IT CHARACTERIZES. In this case, the characteristic property is embodied in a type of building.

What is additionally interesting about this example is that it is a metonymy, not a metaphor. It seems that metonymies are also set up in part as a result of the local cultural influence; the skyscraper was at Sandburg's time a salient feature of the American landscape that made it a natural choice for a metonymic symbol for the country.

### **Social context**

We have seen above in the analysis of the first stanza of the Sandburg poem that the poet conceptualizes the creation of a new type of man in the form of an implement on the analogy of the creation of man. We can see the same conceptual process at work in the second stanza:

Lay me on an anvil, O God.  
Beat me and hammer me into a steel spike.  
Drive me into the girders that hold a skyscraper together.  
Take red-hot rivets and fasten me into the central girders.  
Let me be the great nail holding a skyscraper through blue nights into white stars.

An important difference between the first and the second stanza is that the implement that is created in the first can be used to take apart a structure, whereas the object that is created in the second stanza can be used to put a structure together (steel spike, red-hot rivets, great nail). In other words, first an implement is made that is used to destroy a structure, and then the essential ingredients of a structure are made to construct a new structure. This process of work serves as the source domain for a target domain in which the old social structure is removed by means of a work implement and a new social structure is put in its place by means of a new type of man that can accomplish all this. The new type of man is the poet who does both jobs. In short, this is based on the conceptual metaphor THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW SOCIAL STRUCTURE IS THE PHYSICAL MAKING OF NEW TOOLS AND BUILDING INGREDIENTS.



But of course there is more complexity to this conceptualization than a set of systematic mappings that make up the metaphor. The complexities derive in part from the fact that the tools and the ingredients metonymically stand for the poet and that the making of the tools and ingredients metonymically stand for the making of the entire building.

### **The combined effect of factors**

In many cases of the influence of contextual factors on metaphoric conceptualization in poetry, the kinds of contexts we have identified so far contribute jointly to the metaphorical conceptualization and expression of ideas. This situation is another source of conceptual complexities mentioned in the previous section. Let us consider the Sandburg poem again, as analyzed above. Here's the poem in full:

LAY me on an anvil, O God.  
 Beat me and hammer me into a crowbar.  
 Let me pry loose old walls.  
 Let me lift and loosen old foundations.

Lay me on an anvil, O God.  
 Beat me and hammer me into a steel spike.  
 Drive me into the girders that hold a skyscraper together.  
 Take red-hot rivets and fasten me into the central girders.  
 Let me be the great nail holding a skyscraper through blue nights into white stars.

We have seen that both the cultural and social contexts motivate the choice of certain aspects of the language and conceptualization of the poem. The religious belief system (from the cultural context) serves to think and talk about the making of a new man who can build a new social structure and the model of work (from the social context) functions to talk and think about the construction of the new social structure. But there is an additional type of context that needs to be discussed as it clearly contributes to the poem's conceptual universe. This is the knowledge the speaker-poet has about himself or herself, as discussed above in the Dickinson example.

The knowledge a poet has about himself or herself includes not only the biological-physical condition the poet is involved in but also his or her personal history. If we take into account Sandburg's personal history, we can account for the reason he talks about "Lay me on an anvil, O God / Beat me and hammer me into a crowbar" (and "into a steel spike" in the second stanza). The likely reason is that

his father was a blacksmith, and we can assume that the poet had some early childhood experience with the job of a blacksmith. It is a blacksmith who takes a piece of metal, heats it, puts it on an anvil, and shapes it into some useful object. This personal knowledge about the job may have led the poet to make use of this image.

Although both images are simultaneously present and important, the image of the blacksmith overrides the image of God making man. In the Bible, God makes man by forming him from the dust of the ground and breathing life into his nostrils. In the poem, however, the man-object is created by God as a blacksmith. What emerges here is a complex picture in which the creation of the man-object is accomplished by a God-blacksmith and the resulting man-object is used according to the social model of work as source domain to conceptualize the creation of a new social structure. This is a complex case of conceptual integration, or blending, as proposed by Fauconnier and Turner (2002).

What this analysis adds to conceptual integration theory is that it makes the motivation for the particular input frames participating in the blend clear and explicit. My specific suggestion is that the integration network consists of the input spaces (frames) it does (biblical creation, job of a blacksmith, model of work, and creation of new social structure) because of the various contextual influences that were at work in the poet's mind in the course of the metaphorical conceptualization of the poem.

### **The interaction of context-induced and conventional conceptual metaphors**

It was noted in the section on cultural context that the skyscraper became one of America's symbols in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was the result of the metonymy SKYSCRAPER FOR AMERICA. It was also noted in the section on social context that the metaphor THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW SOCIAL STRUCTURE IS THE PHYSICAL MAKING OF NEW TOOLS AND BUILDING INGREDIENTS plays a role in the general meaning of the poem by Sandburg. These context-induced conceptual patterns, however, interact with a conventional conceptual metaphor in the poem; it is SOCIETIES ARE BUILDINGS. This conventional conceptual metaphor is a specific-level version of the more general COMPLEX SYSTEMS ARE COMPLEX PHYSICAL OBJECTS metaphor (Kövecses, 2002). The SOCIETIES ARE BUILDINGS metaphor consists of a number of fixed, conventional mappings, including:

the builders → the persons creating society  
the process of building → the process of creating society  
the foundations of the building → the basic principles on which society is based  
the building materials → the ideas used to create society

the physical structure of the building → the social organization of the ideas  
 the building → the society

Since America is a society, it is conceived of as a building, more specifically, as a skyscraper. The conventional conceptual metaphor A SOCIETY IS A BUILDING is evoked by the poem, but the poet goes way beyond it. He creates a complex image (a blend) with several changes in the basic metaphor: the building becomes a skyscraper, the builder becomes a God/ blacksmith/ poet/ worker, and the building material and tools become the poet. Many of these changes are motivated by contextual factors. The building as skyscraper is motivated by the physical-cultural context, the builder as God by the religious belief system, the builder as blacksmith by the poet's personal history, and the builder as worker by the social model of work.

I'm not suggesting, of course, that such conventional conceptual metaphors are always present in poems. But I think it is a legitimate claim to suggest that when they are, they can be changed and modified largely in response to the effect of contextual factors, such as the ones discussed above.

## Conclusions

I believe that the analyses of metaphorical language in poetry I have presented in the paper have certain implications for a variety of issues both for the study of poetry and that of human cognition in general.

First, the analyses indicate that it is possible to go beyond some limited, and limiting, approaches to the interpretation of poetry. Poems and poetic language are sometimes studied from a purely hermeneutical-postmodernist perspective without any regard to the social-cultural-personal background of the creative process. Poems are, on the other hand, also sometimes studied from a purely social-historical perspective without any regard to the text-internal systematicity of the poem. The approach that I am advocating here provides a natural bridge between these two apparently contradictory views in that context-induced metaphors can be seen as both resulting from the social-cultural-personal background and lending coherent meaning structures to particular poems. This view is supported by, for example, Guthrie, who claims:

Finally, I would add that I am only too well aware that readings based upon biographical evidence are apt to become excessively reductive and simplistic. Nevertheless, in the prevailing postmodernist critical climate, I think we actually stand at greater risk of underestimating the degree of intimacy existing between an author's literary productions and the network of experiences, great and small, that shapes an individual life. (Guthrie 5)

A related implication of the analyses for the study of metaphor in poetry is that in many cases such analyses can point to an additional source of metaphorical creativity in poetry. The use of contextually-based, or context-induced, metaphors is often novel in poems, simply because the contexts themselves in which poems are created are often unique and/or specific to a particular poet. More importantly, although the particular situations (contexts) in which poets conceptualize the world may often be specific to particular poets and hence the metaphors they use may be unique, the cognitive process (i.e., the effect of context on conceptualization) whereby they create them is not. I pointed out in the introduction that context-induced metaphors are also used in everyday speech. In light of what we have seen in this paper, what seems to be unique to metaphorical conceptualization in poetry is the density and complexity of the process of contextual influence on poets. The poem *Prayers of Steele* by Carl Sandburg is a good illustration of how a variety of contextual factors can jointly shape a poet's metaphors within the space of a few lines.

Second, the analyses have implications for conceptual metaphor theory (including blending theory). The most recent and dominant version of conceptual metaphor theory emphasizes the importance of primary metaphors that arise from certain well-motivated correlations between bodily and subjective experiences (e.g., knowing as seeing) (see, for example, Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Grady, 1997). These metaphors are, in turn, seen as having a neural basis (see Lakoff, 2008). In the view that I am proposing, in addition to such metaphors, there are what I call "context-induced metaphors" that derive not from some such correlations in experience but from the context of metaphorical conceptualization (see, for example, Kövecses, 2005; 2008; 2009). This view can also provide us with a missing link in conceptual integration theory. In that framework, blends are seen as coming from a network of input spaces (frames), where the inputs can be source and target domains. It is, however, not always clear where source and target input domains themselves come from. My suggestion would be that in many cases the input spaces (frames) come to the network because of the influence of context on metaphorical conceptualization.

Third, the view proposed here may have certain implications for the study of embodied cognition. If it is true that, for example, the physical-biological aspects of a poet can influence his or her metaphorical conceptualization in the course of creating poems, as we saw in Dickinson's case, then embodied cognition can be based on personal experiences as well—not only universal correlations in experience, as the main proponents of the embodied nature of conceptual metaphors are wont to emphasize. If what we found is correct, embodied cognition may be based on a variety of different experiences in metaphorical conceptualization, including universal experiences, but also social, cultural, etc. experiences (see Kövecses, 2005), and, importantly, personal ones.

Fourth, and finally, the analyses in this paper may point toward a possibly new factor in the classification of poetry. The factor is the role of context in the metaphorical creation of poetry. We can think of this factor as producing a continuum, at one end of which we find highly contextually-driven poetry and at the other poetry that is more or less devoid of the influence of the local context. We can call the former “localist,” or relativist poetry and the latter universalist, or “absolutist,” poetry. I do not know if this is a valid (or useful) distinction to make in the study of poetry, but it seems to follow naturally from the approach I have proposed in this paper.

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## **Explaining the (A)telicity Property of English Verb Phrases**

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**Abstract.** The aim of the paper is that of offering an overview of various executions of the aspectual notions of (a)telicity in mostly current literature. The structure of the paper is as follows: we first distinguish between the notions of (a)telicity and (im)perfectivity and interpret these systems as orthogonal to each other (section 1). Section (2) reviews tests that identify (a)telic predicates. Sections (3-6) are devoted to the analyses and critique evaluations of (a)telicity calculated at VP level in Krifka (“Nominal reference”, “Thematic relations”, “The origins of telicity”) (section 3), in Rothstein (“Derived accomplishments”, “Telicity, atomicity”) (sections 4 and 6), and in Filip (“Events and maximalization”) (section 5).

**Keywords:** aspect, (a)telicity, (im)perfectivity, nominal reference, thematic relations

### **1.0. (A)telicity vs. (im)perfectivity.**

Many linguists clearly distinguish between the perfective-imperfective aspectual opposition and the telic-atelic contrast. The perfective-imperfective opposition is signaled by distinct tense inflectional morphology. The perfective aspect and imperfective aspect, also called aspectual viewpoints, are treated as aspectual operators and they embody grammatical aspect (Smith; Filip (“The quantization puzzle”), *contra de Swart*). The telic-atelic contrast interacts with the

perfective-imperfective grammatical aspects but (a)telicity is compositionally calculated at the level of Verb Phrase (VP) or Inflection Phrase (IP).

Therefore, the syntactic ordering of temporal and aspectual operators that appear in a sentence is given in (1) (Caudal 241) and illustrated in (2):

- (1) [Tense [Viewpoint [Aspect shift [eventuality description]]]  
 (2) John was running: [PAST [PROG [John run]]]

At the lexical level, eventuality descriptions (i.e., states, processes and events) are denoted by verbal predicates with all their argument positions filled.

Parsons and Filip (“The quantization puzzle”) argue that eventuality descriptions are *neutral* with respect to perfective and imperfective grammatical aspects (i.e., uninflected predicates such as *run* or *write a letter* serve as input to both the perfective operator and to the imperfective operator).

Perfective and imperfective aspectual operators are interpreted in terms of conditions that operate on eventuality descriptions (Filip, “The quantization puzzle”). The perfective operator restricts the denotation of eventuality descriptions to a total or complete interpretation. The totality condition combines state, process and event predicates and yields total or complete eventualities in their denotation. In contrast, the imperfective operator contributes to the partitivity condition which, in mereological terms is a part-of relation “<” (Bennett and Partee; Krifka “Thematic relations”; Filip “The quantization puzzle”). The imperfective operator combines with predicates of states, processes or events and yields predicates of *partial* states, processes or events.

The semantics of perfectivity, but not the semantics of imperfectivity, is related to the property of telicity.

Garey (1957), who coined the term “telic” (derived from the Greek word *télos*, meaning “goal” or “purpose”) defined telic verbs as “...the category of verbs expressing an action tending towards a goal envisaged as realized in a perfective tense” (Garey 1957: 6 qtd. in Filip “The quantization puzzle” 2). Atelic verbs, on the other hand, do not involve any such goal or temporal boundedness in their semantic structure.

In recent years, the term telicity is used to describe the property of VPs that *entail* a temporal boundary or delimitation of the situation in which they occur (Krifka “The origins of telicity”; Filip “The quantization puzzle”).

The main purpose of the paper is to bring evidence that in English (a)telicity is a property that applies at the level of VP or IP rather than at the level of verb category.

## 2.0. Tests that identify (a)telic predicates.

The Vendlerian classification of verbs into states (e.g., *know, believe, desire*), activities (e.g., *run, walk, push a cart*), achievements (e.g., *recognize, find, reach the summit*) and accomplishments (e.g., *paint a picture, draw a circle, run across the street*) is best seen as a study of lexical aspect, that part of aspect that is determined by the verbal heads (Vendler; Dowty “Word Meaning”; Smith, Rothstein “Derived accomplishments”). It has also been argued that *states* and *activities* may be taken as *atelic* (unbounded) predicates and *achievements* and *accomplishments* as *telic* (bounded) predicates.

*Telic* predicates are characterized by two pieces of linguistic behavior: they co-occur with expressions that give information about how long an event took till it was over (in particular *in a time*) and their use in the progressive gives rise to the imperfective paradox:

- (3) a. I arrived in an hour (achievement)  
 b. John dug a ditch in an hour (accomplishment)
- (4) a. John was arriving at the station (when he fell)  
*does not entail* John arrived at the station  
 b. John was digging a ditch  
*does not entail* John dug a ditch

In contrast, *atelic* predicates are characterized by their co-occurrence with homogeneous duration adverbials such as *for a time* and their use in the progressive does not give rise to the imperfective paradox:

- (5) a. John believed in the devil for several years (state)  
 b. Mary ran for an hour (activity)
- (6) Mary was running  
*entails* Mary ran (at least a minimal interval)

The data in (3-6) show that unmodified achievements and accomplishments are telic predicates while states and activities are atelic predicates.

On the other hand, Verkuyl and Dowty (“Word Meaning”) among others pointed out that Vendler’s classification of verbs applies at the level of VP since choice of verbal complements affects the linguistic behavior of the VP as a whole. Thus, *intransitive activity verbs* may head telic VPs when modified by directional or measure phrases:

- (7) John ran a mile/to the store in an hour/\*for an hour



In their turn, *accomplishments* may head atelic VPs when their direct objects are bare plurals or mass nouns:

- (8) John wrote novels/propaganda for a year/\*in a year

A bare plural object and an unaccusative *achievement* predicate form together an atelic predication:

- (9) Guests arrived for an hour/\*in an hour

*Transitive activity verbs* seem to be insensitive to the type of direct object they occur with:

- (10) a. John pushed/dragged the cart for an hour/\*in an hour  
 b. John pushed/dragged carts for an hour/\*in an hour

The data in (7-10) clearly show that (a)telicity is a *compositional property* of VPs and other linguistic material contained in the VP affects the (a)telicity of the whole VP.

The basic properties of Vendler's classes of verbs in terms of features with aspectual relevance (i.e., whether or not predicates are inherently temporally extended—activities, accomplishments vs. states, achievements and whether or not they express changes of state—achievements, accomplishments vs. states, activities) cannot be left aside because they have grammatical reflexes and these features enter the compositional calculation of (a)telicity of the eventuality.

### 3.0. (A)telicity of complete VPs. Krifka's ("Nominal reference", "Thematic relations", "The origins of telicity") analysis of (a)telicity.

A well-founded and insightful account of what it means that (a)telicity applies at the VP level has emerged from the work of Krifka ("Nominal reference", "Thematic relations", "The origins of telicity"). It had been already noticed that events *per se* never culminate (Zucchi) and that events cannot be directly measured because they have no measurable dimension as part of their ontological make up (Krifka "Nominal reference", Filip "Events and maximalization").

Following the general intuition that telic predicates are predicates which have a specific endpoint (temporal bound), Krifka argues that telic predicates are *quantized* (e.g., *John ate an apple*) while atelic predicates are *cumulative* (e.g., *John ate apples*). Quantization and cumulativity are properties that apply to both nominal and verbal domains and are defined as in (11) and (12) below:



constitutes the theme of the event and the event can be extended in an unlimited way.

Formally, there is *homomorphism* from the extent of the theme to the extent of the running time of the event and this operation allows the endpoint of the event to be calculated just in case the theme argument is quantized. Krifka's account relies crucially on the fact that only accomplishments assign gradual thematic roles.

The assignment of gradual thematic roles distinguishes accomplishment VPs such as *build a house*, *eat an apple* from activities such as *push/drag a cart*, *push/drag carts*. In this latter case, the theme direct object is not affected gradually/incrementally and activity VPs give no information about when the events in their denotation are over.

It follows that accomplishments and activities contribute to the telicity of VPs in different ways: in an eating event, the theme is affected bit by bit, whereas in a pushing event, the theme is affected "holistically". As a result, pushing events can be indefinitely extended while the extent of an eating event is determined by the extent of its theme (cf. Rothstein "Derived accomplishments").

With accomplishment predicates (i.e., those with incremental theme arguments) the cumulativity / non-cumulativity property of the theme percolates up to the VP.

#### **4.0. Quantization is not the basis for telicity. Rothstein's ("Telicity, atomicity") critique of Krifka's approach.**

Rothstein ("Telicity, atomicity") and Landman and Rothstein observe that on closer scrutiny the characterization of telicity in terms of *quantization* does not work. They notice that a large number of accomplishment predicates co-occur with theme arguments that are cumulative but the overall result at the VP level is a quantized/telic predicate that allows modification only by *in*-phrases and not by *for*-phrases:

- (14) a. John wrote a sequence of numbers in a minute/\*for a minute  
 b. Mary ate at least three apples in 5 minutes/\*for 5 minutes  
 c. Mary ate at most three apples in 5 minutes/\*for 5 minutes  
 d. Mary ate a few/a lot of apples in 5 minutes/\*for 5 minutes

Similarly, the progressive forms of these predications do not entail the truth of the simple past tense sentence, which proves that they are all telic predications:

- (15) John was writing a sequence of numbers in a minute  
*does not entail* John wrote a sequence of numbers in a minute

Notice that on Krifka's definition of cumulativity both *eat at least three apples* and *eat at most three apples* come out as cumulative. That is, an event of eating at least three apples may have a proper part *e'* (e.g., eating two apples) which is also an event of eating at least three apples. In the same line, an event of eating at most three apples can have a proper part *e'* (e.g., eating two apples) which is also an event of eating at most three apples. The same argument goes for the event *e* in the other examples in (14).

Zucchi and White make several suggestions to account for the telicity of the predications in (14) and claim that these predications are quantized because the theme arguments in question form maximal objects in a particular discourse situation. In essence, it is argued that *write a sequence of numbers* and *eat at least three apples* denote sets of maximal/quantized events of writing a sequence of numbers or eating at least three apples since pairs of two such maximal events cannot be put together to make a single maximal event relative to the same discourse situation.

Explaining telicity of the VPs in (14) in terms of quantization cannot work since, as Rothstein ("Derived accomplishments", "Telicity, atomicity") remarks, accomplishment verbs head telic/quantized VPs *only* when these verbs occur with a "measured" direct object. The expression of quantity expressed by the direct object need not be a precise measure when it comes to making the VP telic. Consider the following examples:

- (16) a. Mary ate a few apples in half an hour/\*for half an hour  
 b. Mary crossed an infinite number of points in 10 minutes/\*for 10 minutes  
 c. The doctor examined an enormous number of patients in 3 hours this morning

It seems that any expression of quantity, rather than a precise expression of quantity, is sufficient for a predicate to qualify as telic. This makes it implausible that a VP is telic if and only if there is a homomorphism from the extent of the theme to the extent of the running time of the event, as many telic VPs have themes whose extent is not fully specified.

The same accomplishment verbs in (16) may head atelic/cumulative VPs *only* when their theme direct object is a mass noun or a bare plural:

- (17) a. Mary ate apples/fruit for 5 minutes/\*in 5 minutes  
 b. Mary ate candy/candies for half an hour/\*in half an hour

Based on the set of examples in (16-17) the following generalization emerges (Rothstein "Telicity, atomicity"): a VP headed by an accomplishment is telic when

the theme direct object renders some expression of quantity and is atelic when the direct object is a mass noun or a bare plural.

Rothstein (see section 7 below) argues that a *telic* VP is one in which singular events come with a criterion for individuation or an atomic measure while an atelic VP has no such measure and can therefore be extended indefinitely.

It seems that telicity of accomplishment verbs does not depend on the precise quantity expressed by the theme argument but depends on the morphological shape of the direct object: the direct object should not be preceded by a determiner. In Landman and Rothstein it is shown that VPs in sentences of the form in (18):

(18) John ate DET apple(s) in  $\alpha$  time

are of the accomplishment type and are incompatible with *for*-phrases.

### 5.0. Explaining telicity in terms of maximalization of events and scalar implicatures—Filip’s (“Events and maximalization”) account of (a)telicity.

Another account for how telicity is encoded is given in Filip (“Events and maximalization”) in terms of maximalization of events at a given situation. Under this approach, the maximalization operation picks out the unique largest event at a given situation and the maximal interpretation of an event is triggered by pragmatic scalar implicatures.

Scalar implicatures are a species of Quantity-based conversational implicature (Grice, Horn). They are generated in the following manner: by using a weaker scalar item (e.g., *some boys*), the speaker implicates that he does not know that any of the stronger ones hold (e.g., *all boys*).

The maximalization operation applies when the verb takes an argument that has a certain measurable property on a scale, a property such as volume, temperature, length, weight, temporal extent, etc. Measured quantities (e.g., *a glass of wine, two miles, from 70<sup>0</sup> Celsius to 3<sup>0</sup> Celsius*) provide a scale and an upper bound for delimiting maximal events (e.g., *drink a glass of wine, run two miles, cool the metal from 70<sup>0</sup> Celsius to 3<sup>0</sup> Celsius*).

In English, telicity as maximalization of events is rendered externally to the verb itself by the verb’s arguments and a variety of modifiers (such as *in  $\alpha$  time*) and operates at the VP or IP level (e.g., *John ate three apples (theme), John (theme) entered the icy water very slowly*).

Filip (“Events and maximalization”) claims that all English stem verbs come out from the lexicon as *unmarked* for telicity and it is the structure of their theme arguments, the pragmatic context and world knowledge that decide on the (a)telicity of the VP.

The intriguing telicity of VPs such as *drink at least two bottles of wine* in (19), made up of the incremental verb *drink* and a cumulative theme argument *at least two bottles of wine*, Filip argues, cannot be explained by the application of Krifka's *Rule of Aspectual Composition*:

(19) John drank at least two bottles of wine in two hours

The *Rule of Aspectual Composition* states that if a verb is incremental and its theme argument is cumulative then the whole VP is cumulative while if the theme argument is quantized then the whole VP is quantized.

Instead, Filip argues that the upper bound of the predicate *drink at least two bottles of wine* is given by *scalar implicature* and the entire verbal predicate receives a telic interpretation. The VP in (19) conversationally implicates that no more wine than two bottles of wine was drunk. The truth of the sentence is defeasible as it can be continued without contradiction with "... and in fact, John drank four bottles of wine". Filip concludes that the maximalization on events relies on pragmatic inferences based on scalar implicatures.

The same type of pragmatic knowledge explains (a)telicity of incremental verbs with incremental theme arguments such as *wash, read, examine, comb, brush, pollute, decorate, mop* or *drain*:

(20) John washed three windows

- a. ... (clean) in an hour
- b. ... for an hour, but none of them got completely clean

Verbs of this class are correlated with two different measure scales: the scale measuring the property of cleanliness (associated with *wash*) and a numerical scale (induced by *three windows*). Although the incremental theme argument *three windows* induces a closed scale it does not enforce telicity in (20). Telicity in (20a) is triggered in one of the following possible ways: it is either induced by the time-span adverbial *in an hour* or, without the adverbial, telicity is triggered by pragmatic implicature at the sentence level. The *wash*-type of verbs have as a characteristic feature the mapping to subevents property as part of their lexical meaning and hence directly facilitates but does not condition the application of the maximalization operation.

From the discussion of the examples in (20) it also follows that the direct object is not systematically linked to the telicity of the VP but it crucially depends on the lexical semantics of the verbal predicate, and on pragmatic inferences.

The same behavior is evinced by root scalar change verbs such as *melt, freeze, grow*, scalar verbs derived from gradable closed scale adjectives such as *clean, empty* or from gradable open scale adjectives like *lengthen, cool* or *dim*.

Expectedly, the property scale lexically associated with these scalar verbs is predicated of the entity referred to by their theme argument.

However, these verbs are not automatically telic/maximal as the predications in which they occur freely shift between a telic and an atelic interpretation, depending both on the larger linguistic context (their occurrence with duration adverbials) and on the pragmatic situation. Consider the following examples:

- (21) a. The snow melted in six days/for six days, but it didn't melt completely  
 b. I cleaned the kitchen in two hours/for two hours, but I didn't clean it completely  
 c. The tailor lengthened my pants in an hour/for an hour but they are still too long

The scalar verbs in (21) *do not entail* that the absolute maximal degree of the scale was reached, a fact proved by their co-occurrence with *for*-phrases, and negation of telicity does not give rise to contradictions. Thus, scalar verbs entail only some change along the scale they are lexically associated with but the change along the entire scale is only inferred by conversational implicature, governed by pragmatic conditions.

At the two endpoints of the squish of lexically conditioned telicity we find the limited class of strictly incremental verbs such as *eat*, *build*, *compose* on the one hand, and activity verbs such as *carry*, *wave*, on the other.

Filip ("Events and maximalization") argues that with strictly incremental theme verbs maximality is *entailed* as part of their lexical meaning:

- (22) a. Mary ate three sandwiches ??/\*but only finished two  
 b. Mary built a house ?/\*but she didn't finish building it  
 c. John composed a symphony ?/\*but died before he could finish it

In (22) the verbs *entail* a homomorphism between the strictly incremental verb's scale and their strictly incremental theme arguments, a mapping that cannot be negated.

However, the strict incrementality of the verb alone is not enough to guarantee telicity:

- (23) John ate bread/sandwiches for an hour/\*in an hour

The sentences in (23) are atelic and non-maximal because mass nouns (*bread*) and bare plurals (*sandwiches*) have no scale lexically associated with them and trigger no scalar implicatures. As can be noticed, this class of verbs is the only one that strictly observes Krifka's *Rule of Aspectual Composition*.

At the other extreme, we find activity verbs which can be followed by quantified direct objects that specify some definite quantity but are nevertheless atelic/non-maximal:

(24) Julia carried three apples in her bag for a whole week/??in a week

The predication is incompatible with *in a week* adverbial which shows that it cannot shift to a telic interpretation. This is so because activity verbs such as *carry*, *pull*, *drag*, *wave*, different from strictly incremental verbs such as *eat*, *build* or *compose*, do not entail a homomorphism that maps the theme argument (*three apples* in (24)) onto carrying events and no other plausible mapping of the component parts of the VP can be construed based on general world knowledge.

### **6.0. Telic predicates denote sets of M(easured)-ATOMS fully specified for a unit of measurement. Rothstein's ("Telicity, atomicity") account of (a)telicity.**

On Rothstein's ("Telicity, atomicity") approach, verbs denote sets of measured atoms, M-ATOMS, which are elements in the denotation of the verb that count as 1 by some explicit criterion of measurement (U). The Vendlerian classes of verbs (states, activities, events) are sensitive as to whether or not the content of the unit of measurement U is grammatically specified (or, at the limit, for some activity verbs the value of the unit may be retrieved from the context if it is rich enough).

The contrast between those verbal predicates for which the unit of measurement is provided by the linguistic context and those verbal predicates for which such a value of measurement cannot be constructed constitutes the *semantic basis* that distinguishes between *telic* and *atelic* predicates.

A telic predicate such as *John ate an apple in 10 minutes* provides information as to what counts as *one* eating event: namely, an event of eating one apple. In contrast, in *\*John slept in an hour*, the information about what counts as *one* sleeping event is not given.

Modifiers such as *in a time* are sensitive precisely as to whether individuating criteria for what counts as one event are specified in the structure.

In essence, Rothstein treats telic predicates as sets of M(easured) ATOMS that have a fully specified value for U. Telic predicates denote sets of single events which count as 1 entity by the specified measure value, while atelic predicates denote sets of events which do not count as 1 because they lack the specification of a unit of measurement.



In English, telicity applies at the VP (or IP) level and the whole content of the VP or sentence is used to compositionally recover the value for U. Consider the contrast between (25a) and (25b):

- (25) a. \*John ran in an hour  
 b. John ran to the store/a mile in an hour

While *run* is not a telic predicate in (25a) as no value of the unit of measurement can be retrieved in the context and thus *in an hour* cannot modify it, the predicates *run to the store/a mile* in (25b) are telic since the combination of the verb and a modifier does allow a value for U to be recovered. In (25b) what counts as one running event is an event of running a mile or one running event is a complete event of running to the store.

The larger context, when it is rich enough, can retrieve the content of the unit of measurement and can identify a telic, complete event which can be modified by *in half an hour*:

- (26) John runs about the park every morning, and he always times himself. This morning he ran in half an hour

With the restricted class of telic predicates based on strictly incremental verbs such as *eat* and *build* telicity is compositionally computed in a systematic way, according to Krifka's *Rule of Aspectual Composition*:

- (27) a. Mary ate three sandwiches in 5 minutes  
 b. John built a house in a year

These examples also point to another property of telic events: their *singularity*. So, in (27a) the predicate *ate three sandwiches* must be interpreted as denoting a set of M-ATOMS, i.e., as a set of singular events which count as 1 according to the specified unit of measurement. On the assumption that singular events take singular arguments (cf. Landman), the theme direct object argument *three sandwiches* is interpreted as a singular, atomic collection of apples. The modifier *in 5 minutes* applies only to telic predicates and indicates the single temporal location of the event endpoint. The theme noun phrase must be interpreted as a collective noun: there was a three-sandwich-eating event with Mary as agent and which took less than 5 minutes.

There is a second, less natural reading of *Mary ate three sandwiches in 5 minutes* where *three sandwiches* may be interpreted as plural and *in 5 minutes* distributes over a plural VP and modifies its atomic parts. On this reading, the sentence asserts that there were three events of eating one sandwich and one single

event took less than 5 minutes. However, this reading must be indicated explicitly by the distributive modifier *each*:

(28) Mary ate three sandwiches in 5 minutes each

Different from direct objects in (27) above, where they designate singular atomic entities and allow a measure for a single event to be determined, whenever the direct object is not atomic (i.e., it is a mass noun or a bare plural) as in (29), we cannot determine a measure for what counts as one atomic event and such sentences cannot be modified by the telic individuating modifier *in an hour*:

- (29) a. John ate bread for an hour/\*in an hour  
 b. John ate apples for an hour/\*in an hour

6.1. In spite of the fact that the notion of telicity is accounted for in different fashions, Rothstein's ("Telicity, atomicity") treatment of telicity in terms of atomicity is tightly related to the operation of maximalization on VPs argued for in Filip & Rothstein and Filip ("Events and maximalization"). The maximalization operation on events (Filip "Events and maximization") or the maximalization operation TELIC on events (Rothstein "Telicity, atomicity") apply at the VP level and both operations give a set of maximal non-overlapping entities in V if and only if the measured atoms can recover compositionally a value of measurement.

This is what happens with accomplishment and some activity predicates: with these predicates telicity may be compositionally derived and the value of measurement is calculated on the basis of the interaction of the category V and the contextual information.

On both approaches the identification of maximal/telic events is relevant as certain operations such as modification by *in a time* can only apply to a predicate if it denotes sets of maximal events. Thus, predicates of the form *in a time* are modifiers of sets of events whose unit measure is specified and these modifiers measure the maximal running time of the predicate, which must be telic.

6.2. While Filip ("Events and maximalization") argues that *all* English root verb stems come from the lexicon as *unmarked* for the property of telicity, Rothstein ("Telicity, atomicity") claims that there are verbs which are *naturally atomic* predicates and thus lexically telic predicates in the lexicon. On Rothstein's account, *semelfactive* and *achievement* predicates are naturally atomic predicates in the lexicon.

6.2.1. *Semelfactives* are verbs such as *kick*, *knock*, *jump*, *skip*, *flap (its wings)* and *wink*, which denote single actions that occur once. They are naturally atomic predicates as their unit structure is perceptually salient and given by the world. Thus, their unit measure U is fully determined by the meaning of the verb. The

maximalization operation TELIC applies on a semelfactive verb such as *jump* and gives the same set of events of type *jump*. VPs headed by semelfactives show the properties of telic VPs: they occur with *in a time* modifiers as in (30a), and when used in the progressive with a semelfactive reading (once), they induce the imperfective paradox as in (30b):

- (30) a. John jumped in 15 seconds (once)  
 b. Bill was kicking Mark when he saw the referee so he stopped midway  
 (and Bill didn't kick Mark)

6.2.2. *Achievement* predicates such as *break, arrive, leave, recognize Jane, find* are also naturally atomic since they are non-extended changes of state. Their minimal initial instant *i* and the minimal final instant *i'* are temporally adjacent and they are nearly instantaneous changes. Achievements are telic events as their unit measurement *U* is determined by the properties of the verb itself: what counts as a single achievement event is determined by the lexical meaning of the verb and TELIC (*arrive*) has a denotation identical with *arrive*. Their telicity is verified by their occurrence with *in a time* as in (31a) and they cannot be used in the progressive as in (31b) (except for achievements such as *die* or *land* whose preliminary stages are detached conceptually from the event, cf. Smith):

- (31) a. John noticed the picture in half an hour  
 b. \*John was noticing the picture

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## **Ethnicity in Interaction: The State-of-the-Art**

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**Abstract.** This paper is a work-in-progress on the nature of ethnicity as viewed from an interactional sociolinguistic point of view. Given the goal of our main research, which concentrates on the ethnical bias of literary characters in general, and dramatic genre in particular, we focus our attention on ethnic identities as visible through face-to-face interaction. As the corpus of our main research (G.B. Shaw's plays), a dialogic corpus of texts, belongs to the dramatic genre, it is an ideal field for micropragmatic analysis. It is known from the sociolinguistic literature (Wardhaugh, Trudgill, Romaine, etc.) that language is the primary and most overt marker of ethnic identity, therefore it is not to be discussed here. Other, more covert markers of ethnicity will be addressed, like conversational strategies as consequences of speech acts, markers of power and solidarity, politeness and impoliteness, face, role, turn-taking issues, gender stereotypes. This study offers a theoretical summary which would be applied in later text-based analyses.

**Keywords:** ethnicity, interactional sociolinguistics, drama, micropragmatics, speech acts, politeness

### **1. Introduction**

As drama is the primary scene for face-to-face conversation, it is reasonable to take into consideration the basic principle that stands on the foundation of every human interaction: cooperation. It is the language philosopher Paul Grice's basic

assumption (26 onwards) that in conversation each participant will attempt to contribute appropriately, at a required time, to the current exchange of talk. Participants in a conversation obey the so-called Cooperative Principle. Grice formulates this in the following way:

Make your conversational contribution such as is required at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (26)

This Cooperation Principle is elaborated in the form of four sub-principles (maxims) falling under the general categories of Quantity (appropriate amount of information), Quality (telling the truth), Relation (relevance) and Manner (clarity). For the sake of a maximally efficient exchange of information, all these maxims are supposed to be observed. However, they sometimes fail to be fulfilled, they may be violated, opted out, clashed or flouted. But in certain cases, the so-called ‘conversational implicature’ (CI) arises from the context, which is an additional, unstated meaning of an utterance that has to be assumed in order to maintain the Cooperative Principle. A CI is basically the notion that an utterance may literally mean one thing as uttered, while implying (or meaning) quite another thing as understood (Cornilescu and Chițoran 102), i.e. what is said is not what is meant and vice versa, what is meant is not what is said.

Research on conversational analysis (or ethnomethodology of conversation) has greatly benefited from these insights. Examples of such analysis can be found in the discussion of conversational strategies in Gumperz (*Discourse Strategies, Language and Social Identity*) and Tannen (“New York Jewish”, “Ethnic style”) which will be discussed in the following.

## 2. Conversational strategies

Since speaking is interacting, being able to interact also implies some sharing (Gumperz, *Discourse Strategies* 29). Members in a communicative situation interpret what is being said in forms of judgement of intent. “All such interpretations presuppose shared social knowledge, yet this knowledge is not usually overtly verbalized. Rather, it serves as an input for judgements of what the speakers want to achieve” (Gumperz, *Discourse Strategies* 35).

It is the sharing of conversational strategies that creates the feeling of satisfaction which accompanies and follows successful conversation: the sense of being understood, being “on the same wavelength”, belonging, and therefore sharing identity. Conversely, a lack of congruity in conversational strategies creates the opposite feeling: of dissonance, not being understood, not belonging, and

therefore of not sharing identity. This is the sense in which conversational style is a major component of ethnicity (Tannen, “Ethnic Style” 217).

An individual learns conversational strategies in previous interactive experience, and chooses certain and rejects certain other strategies made available. In other words, the range of strategies familiar to the speaker is socially determined, but any individual’s set of habitual strategies is unique within that range. For example, research has shown that New Yorkers of Jewish background often use overlap—i.e. simultaneous talk—in a cooperative way; many members of this group talk simultaneously in some settings without intending to interrupt (Tannen “New York Jewish”). This does not imply that all New Yorkers of Jewish background use overlap cooperatively. However, a speaker of this background is more likely to do so than someone raised in the Midwest. And it is even more unlikely that such simultaneous talk will be used by an Athabaskan raised in Alaska (according to the findings of Scollon and Scollon 1983, qtd. in Tannen “New York Jewish”), who has shown that Athabaskans highly value silence and devalue what they perceive as excessive talk).

Similarly, Tannen’s study (“Ethnic style”) investigates social differences in expectations of indirectness in certain contexts by Greeks, Americans and Greek-Americans, tracing the process of adaptation of this conversational strategy as an element of ethnicity. According to Tannen, these ethnic groups express their intentions in different ways (sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly) and this frequently leads to communicative misunderstandings, their interaction not always being successful.

### 3. Markers of power and solidarity

Speakers—generally—position themselves in relation to others by using specific linguistic forms that convey social information. A single utterance can reveal much about a speaker: his or her background, place of birth or nation of origin, social class, or even social intent, i.e. whether s/he wants to appear friendly or distant, familiar or deferential, superior or inferior (Gumperz, “The Speech Community” 220). Linguistic choices can create and maintain relationships of **power and solidarity**.

**Power** is a degree to which one interlocutor is able to control the behavior of the other. There are many personal attributes that are potential bases of power in interpersonal relationships: physical strength, age, wealth, sex, profession, or institutionalized role in the church, government, or family. These attributes of power index non-reciprocal, asymmetrical relationships. They are non-reciprocal because both interlocutors cannot have power over the same type of behavior, and they are asymmetrical because they represent relations such as “older than . . .”,

“parent of . . .”, “employer of . . .”, “richer than . . .”, etc., i.e. the superior says one form but receives another, and likewise for the subordinate.

Emblematic for such relationships is the use of T/V pronouns discussed in detail by Brown and Gilman in their early study (255, 257). They discuss the “*pronouns of power and solidarity*” which are basically markers of social distance. They presented the distinction between familiar and deferential pronouns of address (in German we would use either ‘Sie’ or ‘du’, in French ‘Vous’ or ‘tu’, the Italian ‘Lei’ and ‘tu’, the Spanish ‘Usted’ and ‘tu’, the Latin ‘vos’ and ‘tu’) as a system for establishing and maintaining interpersonal relations directly embedded into grammar (Joseph 59). Being unfamiliar with these differences may also be a cause for cultural misunderstanding. In languages where this distinction does not exist (e.g. English) addressing someone by the formal or informal ‘you’ may cause a serious miscommunication and maybe lead to the breakdown of communication and the relationship at all.

Very much significant and intrusive here are the various culture-bound customs in *forms of address*, such as mentioning the forenames and surnames (maybe even the title and other attributes) of the addressee, having eye contact with them whilst the act of addressing, as well as other social niceties. In such cases cultural differences are present as it is a question of differing cultural value systems. The frequent use of the name serves in some cultures as an expression of interest in or respect towards the communication partner; in other cultures it can be a token of a certain intimacy; again in other cultures mentioning a proper name can even be forbidden. In written communication there are differing norms governing whether one may/should use the forename (with or without a surname) when addressing someone, whether one may/should abbreviate it or omit it completely, whether an explicit address is usual at the opening of a letter and whether substitute forms (e.g. passives) may/should be used.

Closely connected to the discussion on forms of address, Bargiela et al. have drawn our attention to *naming strategies* in first-time, dyadic encounters which are potentially delicate interactional moments, particularly in intercultural settings. Whilst in intracultural encounters, norms are often assumed to be shared, and if they appear to be clashing, they can be renegotiated relatively easily, in intercultural encounters, different tacit and often conflicting interactional norms and assumptions are usually at work, which speakers tend to take for granted until misunderstanding arises. The phenomenon of ‘ethnocentricity’ is likely to occur, i.e. the assumption that ‘our way must be everybody else’s way, too’. Ethnocentric interactants are unaware of their listeners’ cultural profiles, and collaterally they are unaware of their own culture-bound preferences, too. In other words, it is temptingly easier to behave with members of other cultures as if they belonged to our own. Moreover, this ethnocentric tendency is more clearly noticeable in contact situations between language users of unequal international status. This is especially



true for the phenomenon of ‘Eurocentrism’ (a form of implicit ethnocentrism) and Anglocentrism (a form of implicit Eurocentrism). In this context, stereotypes act as a form of hypothesised paradigm for linguistic behavior against which individual members of that culture can position themselves; i.e. stereotypes may be a point of reference for a member of another culture to employ.

The discussion in Bargiela et al. makes clear that decisions about naming strategies and politeness when meeting members of other cultures may be fraught with difficulty. It is not simply the hierarchical relations between participants as individuals, as Scollon and Scollon (“Intercultural Communication” 49) suggest, but rather “it is the global relations between *languages* (and their historical legacy) which have an impact on the way that individuals interact with each other. . . . [I]ntercultural communication is one where great tact and thoughtfulness need to be brought into play” (Bargiela et al.)

**Solidarity**, on the other hand, can be achieved in interactions where interlocutors share some common attribute—for instance, attendance at the same school, work in the same profession, membership in the same family, etc. In contrast to ‘power language’, *reciprocal linguistic forms* are used to express and create the relationship of solidarity. While non-solidarity forms express distance and formality, solidarity forms express intimacy and familiarity (Brown and Gilman 258). This relationship is symmetrical in that if Speaker A has the same parents or attended the same school as Speaker B, then B has the same parents, attended the same school as A. It is important to note that not every shared personal attribute creates solidarity. For example, two people who have the same colour eyes or same shoe size will not automatically have an intimate relationship. But they should share political membership, family, religion, profession, sex, birthplace or other common attributes “that make for like-mindedness or similar behaviour dispositions”, the likelihood of a solidarity relationship increases. Similarly, **sharing ethnicity and bilingualism may be grounds for solidarity.**<sup>1</sup>

Just as linguistic choices create and maintain power and solidarity dimensions of role relationships, speakers can also use language to indicate social allegiances, i.e. which groups they are members of and which groups they are not. When people want to be considered part of a particular social group, they express their alignment with that group in different ways, one of which is “talking like” other members of that group. Within a society or a culture group, speech patterns become tools that speakers manipulate to group themselves and categorize others with whom they are interacting.

As seen above, studies on linguistic expressions of power and solidarity contribute extensively to a clearer insight into conversational analysis. They offer

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<sup>1</sup> My emphasis.

us possibilities to see how speakers can grammatically and pragmatically express social distancing and social relationships when having conversational interactions.

#### 4. Social maxims. The Politeness Principle

Grice's maxims mentioned above (section 1) cover only the communication of information, i.e. they establish those rules which enhance the efficient exchange of information in order to establish truth. Nevertheless, sociologists like Goffman, and linguists like Halliday have often stressed that communication may have other purposes as well. Grice himself also mentions non-conversational maxims, which are "aesthetic, social, or moral in character" (47, qtd. in Cornilescu and Chițoran 118) and gives an example of such a universal maxim: 'Be polite!' These researchers contend that speakers may also want (or primarily want) to communicate 'socially'; they want to be efficient, and therefore cooperative, in establishing social contacts. The efficiency of social communication depends on the mutual satisfaction of the participants' social needs as stated in 'social maxims'. These social maxims relate to the same CP as a principle of efficient rational action. This is how we arrive at the study of politeness phenomena, as a reflection of another constitutive aspect of the human being, man's social nature. Leech (131), as well as Cornilescu and Chițoran (119) show that there is also a so-called Politeness Principle pervading most conversations and this interacts with the Cooperation Principle.

The 'social maxims' that fall under the Politeness Principle reflect norms of social interaction. In their salient book, it is Brown and Levinson who suggest that social interaction is that domain of social structure which is relevant for the interface of language and social structure. They consider that interaction is, on the one hand, the expression of social relationships, and it is built out of strategic language use, on the other. They identify *strategic message construction* (i.e. the choice of an adequate communicative strategy, and hence, of a certain message form) as the key locus of the interface of language and society (Cornilescu and Chițoran 120).

In their book entitled *Politeness: some universals in language usage*, Brown and Levinson take up the politeness maxim mentioned in Grice (28), as well as the Maxim of Tact (as one kind of politeness) mentioned by Leech (131). In conformity with Grice's maxims, they offer guidelines for achieving maximally efficient communication, although politeness is exactly a source of deviation from rational efficiency and is communicated precisely by that deviation. They argue for a pragmatic analysis of politeness which involves a concentration on the amount of verbal "work" which individual speakers have to perform in their utterances in order to counteract the force of potential threats to the "face" of the hearer. Goffman approached the individual self through the notion of **face** as "the positive

social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (“Interaction” 5). In other words, face is the term to describe the public self-image which the speaker or the hearer would like to see maintained in the interaction.

Brown and Levinson’s approach is more refined. They state that “face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction” (66). They define “face” as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (61). A threat to a person’s face is termed a Face Threatening Act (FTA) and by their nature, it runs contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker (70). Such threats generally require a mitigating statement or some verbal repair (politeness), otherwise a breakdown of communication will ensue. In Brown and Levinson’s view, face consists of two related aspects: negative face and positive face (61). They see politeness primarily as a matter of communicative strategies adopted by speakers in their conversations in order to solve these ‘face-problems’ without conflict. FTAs that appear to impede the addressee’s independence of movement and freedom of action threaten their negative face, whereas those which appear as disapproving of their wants threaten their positive face. Examples of the former include orders and requests, suggestions, advice, etc., whereas examples of the latter might be expressions of disapproval or disagreement. Thanks, acceptance of thanks, or offers, and so forth threaten the speaker’s negative face in that they accept a debt and humble their own face. Apologies (i.e. regretting a prior FTA), acceptance of compliments, and so on threaten the speaker’s positive face in that they may feel that such activities have to be played down or reciprocated in kind.

Basically the two scholars make a distinction between two extreme communicative strategies (Cseresnyési 58): one which is called ‘*bald on record*’, where an FTA is presented in unmitigated form and the second which is called ‘*off-record*’ (out of game), where the speaker does not openly state the FTA or does so in an ambiguous way (Brown and Levinson 70). These two extremes are further decomposed. In their model, in case of an FTA (for example, a demand) there may be two kinds of redress or mitigation: one is called ‘*positive politeness*’, which is basically approach based and “anooints” the face of the addressee by indicating that in some respects, S[peaker] wants H[earer]’s wants (for example, by treating him/her as a member of an in-group, a friend, a person whose wants and personality traits are known and liked)’ and ‘*negative politeness*’, which ‘is essentially avoidance-based and consists . . . in assurances that the speaker . . . will not interfere with the addressee’s freedom of action’. To sum up the above, we can say that:

- *bald on record* is characterized as open admission of an FTA;

- *positive politeness* is concerned with demonstrating closeness and affiliation (for example, by using compliments);
- *negative politeness* is concerned with distance and formality (for example, through the use of apologies, mitigation, and hedges); and
- *off-record* is an attempt to avoid overtly committing an FTA, through the use of indirectness, ambiguous utterances, or silence.

Thus, as Mills (59) points out, “politeness is viewed as a form of strategic behavior which the speaker engages in, weighing up the potential threat to the hearer, the degree of familiarity with the hearer, the power relationship between them, and modifying the utterance accordingly.”

The degree of the risk of loss of face is determined by the cumulative effect of three universal social variables which, according to Brown and Levinson (79), are:

- D—the social distance between the participants;
- P—the relative power between them;
- R—the absolute ranking of imposition in the particular culture.<sup>2</sup>

Although Brown and Levinson claim the phenomenon of politeness to be universal, they also recognise that “the content of face will differ in different cultures (what the exact limits are to personal territories, and what the publicly relevant content of personality consists in)” (Brown and Levinson 62). In other words, their politeness model allows for certain *cross-cultural variation*, which is revealed in diverse politeness strategies specific to one culture/ethnic group or another. They call this variation **ethos** of communication and they define it as “the affective quality of interaction characteristic of members of a society” (Brown and Levinson 243). Extending the distinction between positive and negative politeness strategies (discussed above) to larger social strata, they make a distinction between positive and negative politeness cultures and societies. As they state, “complex, stratified societies will exhibit both kinds of politeness, with perhaps upper classes having a negative politeness ethos and lower classes a positive politeness ethos” (Brown and Levinson 245).

Consequently, if types of social relationship are repetitive throughout a society, i.e. these relationships are stable and constant, certain generalizations can be made about that particular society. Hence the distinction between *positive-politeness cultures*, where the general level of imposition and social distance is low, while relative power is not great (e.g. the western part of the USA), and *negative-politeness cultures*, with high values of D, R (rating of imposition) and P

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<sup>2</sup> More recent research (cf Brown and Gilman 1989, Kasper 1990) supports the assumption that these variables are the basic determinants in social interaction, but suggests that their treatment by Brown and Levinson is simplistic because the lack of power does not necessarily elicit greater politeness, and because ‘distance’ has to be distinguished from ‘affect’, which appears to be a more powerful variable (in: Sifianou 34)

(e.g. the British society). “[I]n some societies interactional ethos is generally warm, easy-going, friendly; in others it is stiff, formal, deferential; in others it is characterized by displays of self-importance, bragging and showing off; in still others it is distant, hostile and suspicious.” (Brown and Levinson 243). Therefore the “warm”, positive politeness cultures have an ideal of small values for D, P and R which give them their “egalitarian, fraternal ethos”, while the “standoffish” negative politeness cultures have an ideal of large values for D, P and R which give them their “hierarchical, paternal ethos” (Brown and Levinson 247).

Although we can distinguish societies according to the predominant ethos in daily talk-in-interaction, it should not be implied that societies as a whole or that various social groups within a complex society can clearly and exclusively be categorized as being either positively or negatively polite. Rather, they can be categorized as *relatively* more positive politeness oriented or *relatively* more negative politeness oriented, according to the type of ethos which is given more play (Hornoiu 27)<sup>3</sup>.

In a very interesting study on the comparison of politeness in Greek and English language and culture, Maria Sifianou investigates both the conversationalized request patterns and preferences for modification in the two languages. She arrives at the conclusion that Greeks tend to prefer more positive politeness strategies, such as in-group markers, more direct patterns and in general, devices which can be seen as attempts to include the addressee in the activity. They also tend to use constructions which sound more optimistic about the outcome of the request. The English, on the other hand, seem to prefer negative politeness devices as far as both structures and modifications are concerned. *Conventional indirectness*, the chief characteristic of negative politeness, is *equated with politeness*, and this contributes to the elaboration of the structure and the tentativeness of the message. Pessimism expressed by means of negative constructions is also frequent. Linguistic pessimism versus linguistic optimism is perhaps the major difference between positive politeness and negative politeness societies (Brown and Levinson 126, 173).

## 5. Impoliteness and the language of drama

So far issues to do with politeness have been considered: how speakers use linguistic strategies in order to maintain or promote harmonious social relations.

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<sup>3</sup> This idea seems to be in line with what language theory calls “linguistic relativity” advocated by Sapir and Whorf discussing the interrelationship and the uniqueness and distinctiveness of each language on which the real world or culture is built. Hymes (1966:116), however, presents a different version of ‘linguistic relativity’ when he says that ‘cultural values and beliefs are in part constitutive of linguistic relativity’ whereas for Whorf it was the structure of language which in part determined thought and culture (cf. Sifianou 44).

However, there are times when people use linguistic strategies to attack face **intentionally**—to strengthen the face threat of an act. Culpeper (“(Im)politeness” 85) uses the term ‘impoliteness’ to describe this kind of linguistic strategy and defines it as “a type of aggression” (“(Im)politeness” 86). He considers that “the key difference between politeness and impoliteness is a matter of (the hearer’s understanding of) *intention*<sup>4</sup>: whether it is the speaker’s intention to support face (politeness) or to attack it (impoliteness)” (86).

Culpeper also draws attention to the fact that the study of impoliteness is particularly useful in the study of drama. Aggression has been defined as the key concept of intentional impoliteness, and it is aggression that has been “a source of entertainment for thousands of years” (86). It is interesting to notice that while “real life” impoliteness is restricted and rare, in fiction and drama it abounds and we are likely to interpret such kind of behavior as a *message* from the author about an aspect of the fictional world which will be of future consequence.

In the case of drama, this aggression often takes place in dialogue. It is not surprising that the courtroom has provided the basis for so many plays. Here prosecutors are licensed to aggravate a witness’s face. “The courtroom provides a socially respectable and legitimate form of verbal aggression” (Culpeper 86). In drama, the use of impoliteness in dramatic dialogues serves several purposes, as stated by Culpeper: characterization (tensions between characters develop their character) and the plot itself (plot develops from a state of equilibrium, through a state of disequilibrium, to the re-establishment of equilibrium).<sup>5</sup> The researcher analyzes a fragment from the film entitled “Scent of a Woman” and comes to the conclusion that impoliteness is crucial to the construction of character, both Charlie’s and the Colonel’s.

The study of politeness and impoliteness is of crucial importance for our analyses as well, as Shaw’s characters display an entire set of positive and negative politeness strategies as well as impolite linguistic behavior. As we focus our attention on ethnic stereotypes, intuition leads us to think that the ethnic British character’s communicative strategies will be indirect, i.e. belonging to negative politeness culture while others ethnicity characters will be of positive politeness culture, for the sake of dramatic tension.

## 6. Face, Role, and Personal Identity

Starting from the sociological concept of ‘face’ introduced by Goffman (see section 3 above), he also defined the notion of ‘role’ as an occupation that

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<sup>4</sup> Emphasis belongs to the cited author

<sup>5</sup> Verbal conflict can be a symptom of disequilibrium in dramatic dialogue (Culpeper 86)

individuals may take up in social interactions. He defined this notion in the following way:

. . . What Smith possesses as a person or individual is a personal identity: he is a concrete organism with distinctively identifying marks, a niche in life. He is a selfsame object perduring over time and possessing an accumulating memory of the voyage. He has a biography. As part of this personal identity, he claims a multitude of capacities or functions – occupational, domestic, and so forth . . . I shall use the term “role” as an equivalent to specialized capacity or function, understanding this to occur both in offstage, real life and in its staged version. (Goffman, “Frame Analysis” 128-9)

Or to quote another definition,

Role is defined as “the occupation by an individual of a discursive position, conferring a set of socially warranted linguistic and non-linguistic rights and duties which legitimate the performance of certain categories of act: non-verbal, illocutionary and interactive. The enactment of a role is the dynamic expression of a situationally salient aspect of the individual’s social identity. (Riley 99)

Goffman is concerned with the interrelationship between role and personal identity, which could be completed with the notion of membership categorization, i.e. a person realizes a role if s/he conceives him/herself as a member of a given category and consequently assumes the obligations entailed by this category membership. This is in line with Labov and Fanshel’s argument (qtd. in Weizman 156) who have pointed out that “There are many obligations that a person must fulfil in order to be seen as performing his normal role in society with full competence”.

At this point the question may arise: which of the social identities that can be applied to participants, are relevant to understanding their interactional conduct? The answer proposed by CA (conversation analysis) researchers, following Sacks and Schegloff (“Reflections”, “In another context”), is that identities should be investigated to the extent that they are “made relevant” by the speaker, and have consequences for the interaction. Roles, these ‘situationally salient facets of social identity are manifested by the performance of particular kinds of communicative acts, requiring specific forms of knowledge for their competent performance or interpretation’ (Riley 122). Roles can be put on like hats and based on the context, speakers can decide ‘which hat to wear’.



Roles can be made relevant in many ways, and in varying degrees of explicitness. Weizman suggests viewing as challenging any verbal behavior which might be interpreted as saying or implying that the addressee has not fulfilled his or her role appropriately, or failed to fulfil any component of it. In this respect, role includes both interactional and social (institutional) obligations. Following Weizman's study, it could be argued that by challenging one's addressee through ironic criticism (which is frequently the case in interactions of Shaw's characters), the speaker orients towards the (interactional or social) role he/she plays, and by having recourse to irony, one orients towards the interactional role of one's target. Challenge and ironic criticism are therefore indirect ways of making roles relevant.

There is another distinction that has to be taken into consideration: the difference between social roles, inherent in any type of real life discourse, and interactional roles. **Social (institutional) roles** have to do with the obligation pertaining to the speaker's status and activities, such as being a politician, a physician, a friend, a colleague, a journalist, etc. Any active member of society fulfils more than one social role, but it is usually the case that only one role in this repertoire is relevant for a given situation, and it is by virtue of this role that the person takes part in the conversation. **Interactional roles**, on the other hand, have a more specialised use. They have to do with the speaker's rights and obligations *within the interaction*.<sup>6</sup> In institutional discourse where power relations are unequally distributed (e.g., employer-employee, doctor-patient, interviewer-interviewee exchanges), interactional roles are often asymmetrically distributed (Weizman 161).

Similarly, taking this role and membership category relationship into consideration, we may argue that a person will consider him/herself belonging to a certain ethnic group if s/he has realized his/her role of being of a certain ethnic affiliation, i.e. if s/he acts according to the demands of this role. All in all, roles can be considered as the repertoire of a person's linguistic behavior.

## 7. Ethnicity and turn-taking

Another aspect where ethnicity can be traced in micro-sociolinguistic studies is the issue of turn-taking. As several linguists (Mey 1993), have already argued, there are more or less strict universally valid turn-taking rules that all conversationalists have to follow, such as yielding the right to speak to the other partner(s) in the conversation when the so-called TRP-s (Transition Relevance Points) occur, i.e. all those points in the conversation where a 'natural' transition of the right to speak to the next speaker may occur. This flow of conversation may be interrupted and insertions may happen at all times, many of the actual phenomena

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<sup>6</sup> Emphasis in the original.



are related and due to a particular culture. For instance ‘telephone intrusions’ are much more familiar in the US than in Europe and they cannot be properly understood without some insight into the particular pragmatic presuppositions that are at work.

Another such universal is that a question of any kind usually requires an answer which gives dynamism to the conversation. However such a simple question like “How are you?” may be easily misunderstood if there is an intercultural difference between conversationalists. If in one culture this question does not regularly need an answer, as it is interpreted as a simple form of greeting, an instance of phatic communication (in the Jakobsonian sense), in another culture this may be misunderstood, the respondent giving a detailed account of his / her bodily and mental state of health.

### **8. Ethnicity and gender stereotypes**

If we are to observe communicative competence, i.e. how language is used in a given society, it is essential to incorporate social and cultural factors into the linguistic description. In this context we may have an insight into the gender differences, into what is appropriate for men and women as speakers. Jennifer Coates, for instance, describes the British stereotypes that exist in people’s minds (folk knowledge) about these communicative competences: that women talk more than men, that women ‘gossip’, that men swear more than women and that women are more polite (Coates 107).

At a stereotypical level, politeness is often considered to be a woman’s concern, in the sense that stereotypes of how women in general should behave are in fact rather a prototypical description of white, middle-class women’s behavior in relation to politeness (Mills 203). The teaching and enforcement of ‘manners’ are often considered to be the preserve of women. Femininity, that set of varied and changing characteristics which have been rather arbitrarily associated with women in general, has an association with politeness, self-effacement, weakness, vulnerability, and friendliness. This manifests itself in the type of language practices which Lakoff (1975) described as ‘talking like a lady’. Women’s linguistic behavior is often characterized as being concerned with co-operation (more positively polite than men) and avoidance of conflict (more negatively polite than men). This characterization is based on the assumption that women are powerless and display their powerlessness in language. These “womanly” forms of politeness are markers of their subordination. The stereotypic view considers femininity as a civilizing force, mitigating aggression of strangers, while masculinity is stereotypically associated with directness and aggression. Books on courtesy and etiquette state that politeness or concern for others is stereotypically associated with middle-class behavior. Furthermore, politeness is often associated

within *English-speaking communities* with being deferent, which Brown and Levinson have classified as negative politeness, often associated with powerlessness, and care for others, which is associated with stereotypes of femininity.<sup>7</sup>

Research on gender and politeness has also shown that the above-mentioned stereotypes do not apply to all women in all cultures. These so-called 'polite' and 'impolite' utterances may have a range of different interpretations. Kharraki (2001), for example, analyses Moroccan women and men bargaining in Arabic dialect. The interactional power of these women contrasts quite markedly with the stereotypes which many Westerners have of passive, deferent women within the Arab world.

Similarly, Mills's example (227-8) of a dialogue between a New Zealand white, middle-class, middle-aged woman and a white, middle-class, younger British woman is a case in point. Since social distance between them is fairly low and the power relations are fairly evenly balanced, they seem to be displaying a very feminine form of speech behavior in thanking and apologizing excessively. However, thanking and praising the received present several times is misinterpreted by the person who offered the present. Instead of accepting the thanks and praise, this woman interprets the host's moves as a sign that she is interested in hearing more about the special present and she then continues discussing it. The host, however, stated that what she was trying to do was to get her guest to sit down so that they could start lunch. Of course, the reason for this misinterpretation is not necessarily the difference in their ethnicity, but it may be one of its reasons.

As we have seen, naturally research often challenges ethnic and gender stereotypes, proving exactly the opposite. In our analysis we are trying to find examples of Shavian male and female characters who behave according to the stereotypes of their gender and some who do not, i.e. who act exactly the other way round as to what is expected from them, whether they are responsible for more interruptions, whether it is men who are more polite, women who swear more and whether there are any ethnical aspects of this phenomenon.

## 9. Conclusion

From the studies revised above we can conclude that a speaker not only fulfills the ideational and textual functions of language, but he also embodies its interpersonal function. He is a social person as well, whose linguistic acts are embedded in social acts. In choosing a strategy of communication, speakers have to

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<sup>7</sup> This is in line with our findings in the literature about conventional indirectness mentioned in section 3.

take into account the relevant weight of three goals (wants) (following Brown and Levinson, Cornilescu and Chițoran):

- a) the want to communicate the content of the face-threatening act and to obtain one's illocutionary aim;
- b) the want to be efficient or urgent;
- c) the want to maintain Hearer's and Speaker's face to any degree.

Social maxims play a major role in choosing an adequate 'communicative strategy'. This will determine choice of a certain message form, of a certain "way of putting it" to perform a certain speech act in a given situation. "The study of the strategies makes us understand why a given linguistic form is efficient for the job in which it is employed. Linguistic strategies appear as means of satisfying communicative and face-oriented ends in a coherent, well-organized system of rational practical reasoning" (Cornilescu and Chițoran 122). The issues and studies discussed above prove to be useful working tools in analysing the ethnic markers of the Shavian characters' language and are considered to be exemplary models for our analyses.

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## Aspectual Coercion and the Complementation of Aspectualizers in English

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**Abstract.** In the paper I intend to give an insight into the phenomenon of coercion and how this is manifested in the case of aspectualizers in English. The phenomenon of coercion plays an important role in aspectual complementation, and as such also in the complementation of aspectualizers whenever there is a clash between the aspectual category of an aspectualizer and that of the complement verb. I will give examples of coercion by aspectualizers describing the beginning of an event (*'begin'*, *'start'*), continuation (*'continue'*, *'keep'*, *'go on'*), and also final part of a situation (*'end'*, *'finish'*)—also pointing to cases where aspectual complementation lacks the phenomenon of coercion. Coercion often leads to ambiguous sentences; in order to disambiguate the meaning of such constructions it is also necessary to apply to some extra-linguistic world knowledge in addition to a semantic analysis.

**Keywords:** coercion, aspectualizers, aspectual complementation, extra-linguistic world knowledge

### Introduction

The paper gives an insight into the complementation of aspectualizers in English pointing to the importance that coercion plays in this process. The term 'aspectualizer' will be borrowed from Freed and also Brinton to describe those verbs that refer either to the beginning (e.g. *begin*, *start*), continuation (e.g. *continue*, *keep*) or final part of a situation (e.g. *end*, *finish*). These verbs have been

given a variety of names over the years; they have been referred to as ‘begin-class verbs’ and also ‘aspectual verbs’ (Newmeyer), ‘aspectual complement verbs’ (Dowty), ‘aspectual auxiliary verbs’ (Binnick), ‘phasal verbs’ (Michaelis). As it will be shown coercion plays an important role by the complementation of these verbs not only in case they are followed by primitive nouns but also when they take non-finite complement constructions (*to*-infinitive and *-ing*).

Example will be given also of cases where coercion is blocked by the presence of a certain element in the sentence. Unless the semantic clash between the verb and its argument is resolved the sentence results as ungrammatical.

### **The notion of coercion**

Construal plays an important role in the complementation of aspectualizers in English. A special type of construal named aspectual coercion is an important process involved in the complementation of these verbs. Aspectual coercion exists whenever there is a conflict between the verb and its complement, between the aspectual character of the eventuality type and the aspectual constraints of some other element in the sentence and where this semantic clash would lead to ungrammaticality (de Swart 360). Coercion operators can be of various types (e.g. transitions like inchoativity, habituality) and can express both the coercion of a state into an event reading (as in sentence 1)) and that of an event into an ongoing reading (sentence 2)); events can also be coerced into states, by giving a sentence an iterative or habitual reading (sentence 3)):

- 1) Suddenly, I knew the answer. (de Swart 359)
- 2) I read a book for a few minutes. (de Swart 359)
- 3) For months, the train arrived late. (de Swart 359)

Most of the linguists agree that aspectual coercion is a semantic phenomenon. De Swart (359) defines coercion as a contextual reinterpretation with no explicit morphological or syntactical markers. Todorova et al. (523) also note that the effects of coercion are purely semantic, so that ‘the operation does not have any morphological reflex’.

The phenomenon of aspectual coercion brings about some important semantic changes within a sentence; these changes affect mainly the semantic type of the complement construction. Through coercion the default event type of a linguistic construction (i.e. that of the complement) is changed to a different event type (Hindsill 38). As a result of this the verbal predicate receives another semantic interpretation, different from its original aspectual reading (Todorova et al.).

Coercion, as a syntactically and morphologically invisible phenomenon is understood to be governed by contextual reinterpretation mechanisms triggered by

the need to resolve aspectual conflict (de Swart). Since it often results from the combination of all the words in a sentence (Jackendoff), coercion is often understood to be compositional and as such is analyzed at the level of the entire sentence (de Swart).

In the interpretation of coercion context also plays an important role. Coercion can lead to ambiguities and polysemous readings or can preserve the ambiguity already existent in the sentence (Jackendoff). This is the case especially by isolated sentences which are often ambiguous, e.g. between a series and generic reading. In order to resolve this ambiguity a larger context is necessary since in such cases only a larger context can help the reader (listener) to decide for one of the possible readings. A good example of this are sentences 4-5). In sentence 4) 'sleep' has a continuous reading (referring to one night) in sentence 5) the same predicate receives an iterative meaning referring to multiple acts of sleeping and also multiple nights.

- 4) Sue slept all night. (Jackendoff 391)
- 5) Sue slept all night until she started drinking too much coffee.  
(Jackendoff 391)

Besides context which is of a great importance in such cases, world knowledge is also necessary for the interpretation of coerced sentences (de Swart). Very often, for the interpretation of a sentence the hearer needs some extrinsic contextual clue (i.e. sentence 50) can hardly be interpreted without some extralinguistic information).

### **Coercion in aspectual complementation**

The most frequent discussions on aspectual coercion focus on cases where aspectualizers are complemented by Noun Phrase (NP) complements, especially primitive nouns. An important task in such cases is to explain why certain aspectualizers allow for a certain primitive noun as their complement (i.e. sentence 6, 7) but disallow other primitive nouns (i.e. sentences 8-14).

- 6a) John began the job. (Newmeyer 42)
- 6b) John began the pizza. (Newmeyer 58)
- 7) Jane started / continued / stopped the concert / the conversation / the affair.  
(Ter Meulen and Rooryck 461)
- 8) \*John began the book. (Pustejovsky & Bouillon 153)
- 9) \*Mary began the highway. (driving on) (Pustejovsky and Bouillon 136)



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- |                                 |               |                                |
|---------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| 10) *John began the dictionary. | (referencing) | (Pustejovsky and Bouillon 136) |
| 11) * I finished the symphony.  | (listening)   | (Pustejovsky and Bouillon 142) |
| 12) * I finished chocolate.     | (eating)      | (Pustejovsky and Bouillon 142) |
| 13) * John stopped the book.    |               | (Pustejovsky and Bouillon 143) |
| 14) * Madame stopped the tea.   |               | (Pustejovsky and Bouillon 143) |

According to Pustejovsky and Bouillon (Aspectual Coercion) the ungrammaticality of sentences 8-14) can be explained by the qualia nature of the NP complement as well as the semantics of the respective aspectualizer. The qualia structure of a certain construction is defined to contain the definitional properties of a construction (Johnston and Busa), that is, all the semantic information characteristic of the construction including the way the construction is conceptualized.<sup>1</sup> In order to be part of a construction the qualia structure associated with a certain NP complement must be in accordance with the semantics of the aspectualizer.

Aspectualizers often require an event as their complement (Pustejovsky and Bouillon); as a consequence, they usually take such NP constructions that have an eventive (transitional event) interpretation. Considering the sentences 6-7) again, because of the eventive interpretation they may receive (the predicates in these sentences are understood to entail certain goal orientation, e.g. *doing a certain job*, *eating the pizza* in sentences 6a) and 6b); in sentence 7) the NPs also denote events or “in some temporal sense extended objects with internal change” (ter Meulen and Rooryck 461) the sentences result as grammatical. By contrast, in sentences 8)-14) the NPs are usually associated with activities without any goal orientation to be detected; in this case, the semantics of the NPs is in clash with the event type of the verb and this semantic incongruity leads to ungrammatical sentences.

The acceptability of a certain NP with an aspectualizer seems to be more complicated as Pustejovsky and Bouillon (Aspectual Coercion) illustrate since the qualia structure alone does not explain why an NP complement is allowed in certain cases but disallowed in other. According to Pustejovsky and Bouillon the acceptability versus non-acceptability of an NP construction with a certain aspectualizer is closely related to the ambiguous character of aspectualizers. Some

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<sup>1</sup> Pustejovsky (The Generative Lexicon) defines qualia structure as containing four aspects of word meaning. These are manifested by four roles, which are:

- formal role: which distinguishes a word within a larger domain
- constitutive role: reflects the re relation between lexical items and their constitutive parts
- telic role: defining the purpose or goal of the construction
- agentive role: giving information about whatever brings it about

aspectualizers (i.e. *begin* but not *finish*) can have both a raising and a control meaning depending on the context in which they appear (Newmeyer).

Sentence 15) illustrates the use of *begin* as control verb, sentence 16), by contrast, the use of *begin* as a raising verb. An important difference between the two sentences is that while in sentence 15) *begin* appears as complement of ‘force’ (*begin* has a control sense) in sentence 16) the appearance of *begin* as complement of ‘force’ is blocked (the sentence contains the raising sense of *begin*).<sup>2</sup>

15) Mary forced John to begin writing his thesis. (Pustejovsky and Bouillon 144)

16) \*Mary forced it to begin raining yesterday. (Pustejovsky and Bouillon 144)

Further examples of the control-raising ambiguity of begin-class verbs are sentences 17) (control meaning of *begin*: the possibility of agentive nominalization) and sentence 18) (the raising sense of *begin* where *begin* is intransitive and subject embedding):

17) John is a beginner. (Newmeyer 41)

18) The sermon began. (Newmeyer 56)

Pustejovsky and Bouillon (Aspectual Coercion) argue that when an aspectualizer has a control sense it only allows for an NP complement that has in its qualia structure the meaning of a transitional event; this also means that when an NP does not refer to a transitional event (does not have in its qualia the sense of a transitional event) it cannot appear as complement of a control verb (consider for example the ungrammaticality of sentences 9) and 10); by contrast, the raising sense of an aspectualizer allows for any eventuality type as its complement.

In order to explain the appearance vs. non-appearance of an NP complement with a certain aspectualizer Newmeyer (43) introduces the category of C.A. verbs (‘continuing activity verbs’); these verbs are defined as ‘non-instantaneous verbs and non-perceptual verbs over which the subject has conscious control’. The group of C.A. verbs contains such verbs as ‘eat’, ‘cook’, ‘read’, ‘write’, ‘swim’, ‘dance’, ‘act’, ‘study’, ‘sing’ and ‘play’. Newmeyer (45) shows that aspectual verbs behave like C.A. verbs in many respects (e.g. passivization, middle voice formation, impossibility of *there* insertion-sentences 19-24). Due to the similarity they share, aspectualizers only allow for such NP constructions that can be associated with a C.A. reading. According to this interpretation sentence 25) with the NP complement *dinner* only allows the reference to such verbs as ‘cook’ (*began cooking dinner*) or ‘eat’ (eating dinner) but not ‘smell’ (\**began smelling dinner*) or ‘enjoy’ (\**began enjoying dinner*).

<sup>2</sup> On the control-raising meaning of aspectual verbs see Newmeyer.

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- 19) The cake was eaten by John. (Newmeyer 46)
  - 20) Dinner was begun by Tony. (Newmeyer 46)
  - 21) The novel reads easily. (Newmeyer 46)
  - 22) The novel begins easily. (Newmeyer 46)
  - 23) \*There ate a boy. (Newmeyer 46)
  - 24) \*There began a story. (Newmeyer 46)
  - 25) Mary began dinner. (Newmeyer 43)

Dixon (172) in his study on aspectual verbs also notes that only such verbs can be omitted after aspectualizers that are concerned with making, preparing or performing such as ‘cook’, ‘knit’, ‘tell’, or verbs concerned with consumption such as ‘read’, ‘eat’, ‘drink’. In all cases, the NP should be a typical object of the omitted verb, so that the meaning of the verb could be inferred from it (sentences 26) and 27).

- 26) He began (cooking) the supper, she began (knitting) a sweater. (Dixon 172)
- 27) I started (reading) *Great Expectations* last night, John began (eating) the chocolate cake. (Dixon 173)

Finally, it must be noted that the nature of the NP complement (mass vs. count) as well as the type of the predication (static: individual level predicates and dynamic: stage-level predicates) also have a great importance in the complementation of aspectual verbs. Pustojevsky and Brillon (*Aspectual Coercion*) point out that countable NPs are more acceptable with aspectualizers than uncountable NPs and bare plurals; when the complement NP contains a mass noun or an unspecified plural NP the sentence often results as ungrammatical (e.g. sentence 28); by contrast, when the quantity of the complement NP is specified the sentence is grammatical (e.g. sentence 30)).

Aspectual verbs seem to differ with respect to their appearance with mass nouns or plural NPs. While bare plurals or mass noun NPs appear with dynamic aspectual verb e.g. *stop* receiving a generic interpretation (sentence 31)), such NPs are unacceptable with static verbs such as *continue* and *keep* (sentence 32)). This shows that the mass noun vs. count noun distinction works differently with each aspectualizer in turn.

- 28) \* John began cheese (eating). (Pustejovsky 708)
- 29) John began the cheese (eating) / the book (reading). (Pustejovsky 707)
- 30) Jane started / continued / stopped her book / a drawing.  
(ter Meulen & Rooryck 461)
- 31) Jane stopped poetry / books / concerts / affairs. (ter Meulen & Rooryck 461)
- 32) Jane \*continued/ \*kept poetry / books / concerts / affairs.

(ter Meulen & Rooryck 461)

Concerning the distinction between static and dynamic predicates Ter Meulen and Rooryck argue that dynamic aspectual verbs only take stage-level predicates (expressing temporary properties of individuals), and do not normally appear with static individuals (expressing permanent properties). They note that singular object NPs denoting static individuals are only acceptable if the NP denotation is conceived as a theme. Example of this is sentence 29).

### The non-finite complementation of aspectualizers

Coercion is also present in case the aspectualizer is followed by a non-finite complement and the semantics of the complement construction (its eventuality type) differs from that of the aspectualizer; in such cases a recategorization takes place where the eventuality type of a construction (that of the complement construction) is coerced into another eventuality type. This is in accordance with Hindsill's definition of coercion; he defines coercion as the change from a default event type associated with a given Verb Phrase (VP) to a different event type (38).

Example of coercion are sentences 33-41), where the aspectualizer *begin* coerces the eventuality type of activity verb 'to bleed' (sentence 33) and of the state verbs 'to be ill' and 'to be annoyed' (sentences 34 and 35 respectively) into an eventive interpretation by expressing their moment of initiation. In sentence 36) the progressive coerces the eventuality type into an activity; in this case the focus is laid on the preparatory phase that leads to the initiation of the event. Sentence 37) is also recategorized as an activity as 'beginning to fall' receives an iterative interpretation. Other examples of coercion are sentences 38-41): in sentence 38) the coercion between *keep* and 'be ill' results either in a generic or a series meaning (similar is the case with *stop* in sentence 39); here *stop* can refer either to a single occasion or a habitual activity).

Sentences 40) and 41) show the appearance of *finish* with the accomplishment 'build a house'. The function of *finish* seems to differ in the two sentences. That is, although *finish* usually shifts the complement type into an achievement (which also happens in sentence 40) where the complement verb has an achievement interpretation) in sentence 41) *finish* preserves the integrity of the complement event (sentence 41) is and stays an accomplishment).

33) John is beginning to bleed. (Pustejovsky and Bouillon 144)

34) John is beginning to be ill. (Pustejovsky and Bouillon 145)

35) John is beginning to be annoyed by the noise. (Pustejovsky and Bouillon 144)

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- 36) The war is beginning to reach Bosnia. (Pustejovsky and Bouillon 144)  
 37) Snow began to fall last night. (Pustejovsky and Bouillon 144)  
 38) John kept being ill. (Hindsill 39)  
 39) John stopped running. (Hindsill 40)  
 40) Mary finished building the house in 3 months.  
 (Pustejovsky and Bouillon 155)  
 41) Mary finished building the house at 3:00 pm yesterday.  
 (Pustejovsky and Bouillon 155)

### **Lack of coercion in aspectual complementation**

There are also cases where coercion does not take place in a sentence; this may be due to several factors, like the mismatch between the semantic structure of the aspectualizer and the semantics of the complement verb. Sentence 42a) with the achievement verb ‘arrive’ does not undergo coercion since the instantaneous character of ‘arrive’ is not resolved in the sentence; in sentence 42b) however, the plural NP ‘the guests’ makes the sentence grammatical since in this case the situation acquires a certain durativity and the sentence is coerced into an activity reading. In sentences 43) and 44) the complement verbs are state verbs; the sentences are ungrammatical as most of the states are unbound and can neither be finished, completed or continued repeatedly. Similar is the case with sentences 45) and 46) where the complement constructions would receive a bounded state interpretation and this is blocked both in the case of *start* (sentence 45) and *stop* (sentence 46) (Michaelis 94).

Coercion can be blocked in a sentence by other additional constructions as well (e.g. an adverbial phrase). So is the case in sentence 47) where the specified plural noun ‘the six errors’ is compatible with *finish* but cannot co-occur with *stop* and *quit* because this would imply that John stopped before the errors were found (yet an unspecified plural noun would be acceptable in this case, e.g. *John stopped/quit finding errors*). Sentences 48) and 49) represent an interesting case. The sentence *John kept Bill working* can be right or wrong depending on the presupposition expressed by the sentence. Due to the fact that ‘keep’ is non-factive in this case (it does not presuppose the truth of the event expressed by the complement) the sentence is ungrammatical if the truth of the sentence is presupposed (sentence 48)) but correct if the fact that Bill worked is not presupposed (sentence 49)).

- 42a) \*John began to arrive. (Newmeyer 35)  
 42b) The guests began to arrive. (Newmeyer 35)  
 43) \*John finished/ \*completed liking rock music. (Brinton 87)

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- 44) \*He keeps resembling his brother. (Brinton 87)  
45) \*Henry started to be happy when he heard the news. (Michaelis 93)  
46) \*Harry stopped living in Japan in 1970. (Michaelis 94)  
47) John \*stopped / \*quit / finished finding the six errors in the paper.  
(Brinton 86)  
48) \*John kept Bill working. (it is presupposed that Bill worked) (Newmeyer 55)  
49) John kept Bill working. (it is not presupposed that Bill worked)  
(Newmeyer 70)

### **The importance of world knowledge in the interpretation of aspectual complementation**

In the interpretation of aspectual complementation world knowledge plays an important role. That is, although the sentences 50-55) below sound strange and might be ruled out by some native speakers they may be acceptable in certain contexts depending on the conceptualization of the speaker.

Hindsill (31) calls the examples in 50) and 51) attempted series (attempted series are such constructions that need a larger context for their interpretation). According to Hindsill these sentences can be understood as a series of understanding events and loving events respectively (the situation in sentence 50) can receive an event interpretation (e.g. *John tried to convince himself that he didn't speak French, however, whenever a French person talked to him, he understood French*).

Similar is the case with sentence 51) which can also be understood as a series of loving events (e.g. *John tried not to love her, but whatever he did, he still continued loving her*).

With respect to the other sentences, we can say that sentence 52) is strange since 'running a mile' is an accomplishment and 'stop' usually appears with activity verbs; still the sentence is acceptable if we imagine that John intended to run a mile but stopped running before the required mile was done. The ungrammaticality of sentence 53) is explained by Michaelis with respect to causation as being due to a mismatch between the inceptive aspectualizer (*start*) and the continuous causation expressed by the sentence: that is, the outburst of chuckling temporally overlaps the causal situation (watching the dance performance) rather than following it. Sentences 54) and 55) are also odd since *finish* usually takes animate subjects and requires that the subjects take part in the event expressed by the complement; this condition is not fulfilled in these sentences since they contain inanimate subjects.

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- 50) ?John kept understanding French. (Hindsill 39)  
 51) ?John kept loving Mary. (Hindsill 39)  
 52) ?John stopped running a mile. (Hindsill 27)  
 53) Mom watched our dance performance and ?started chuckling merrily.  
 (Michaelis 96)  
 54) ?The leaves have finished falling. (Pustejovsky and Bouillon 155)  
 55) ?The paint has finished drying. (Pustejovsky and Bouillon 155)

Besides these sentences which are marginally acceptable there are also other sentences which are ambiguous between a generic and series reading or between an intentional and a non-intentional reading. For the interpretation of such sentences world knowledge as well as the hearer's conceptualization (and also context) are of a great importance.

The sentences below are ambiguous between a generic and a series reading. Thus, sentence 56) can be understood either as referring to a single sickness that lasts (generic reading) or to getting sick repeatedly (series reading). Sentence 57) also has a certain ambiguity; without further context we don't know whether we talk about one crossing and Bill was on his way to the other side of the street (generic reading) or he crossed the street repeatedly (series reading). Finally sentence 58) is ambiguous between an activity and an accomplishment reading; the sentence could mean either that John stopped reading the book entirely (with the intent not to read from it anymore) or that he stopped reading it for the rest of the day with no particular goal in the mind (Hindsill).

- 56) John keeps being ill. (Hindsill 40)  
 57) Bill kept crossing the street. (Jackendoff 391)  
 58) John stopped reading the book. (Hindsill 27)

Sentences can also be ambiguous with respect to intentionality and non-intentionality (consider sentences 59-63). Sentence 59) has a habitual reading; the need for coercion in this case is due to the fact that *keep* requires an ongoing unbounded process as its complement, and 'to drop something' is bound. The sentence is ambiguous between an intentional and non-intentional meaning: it could mean either that Bill dropped things intentionally or that Bill dropped his things accidentally. In sentence 60) the ambiguity between the two readings remains; this ambiguity is resolved only in sentence 61) where the higher and the lower verb share the same subject.

Sentences 62) and 63) are also ambiguous between intentional and non-intentional readings. Considering sentence 62) we don't know if John started losing weight on purpose (by keeping diet) or he has a sickness, as a consequence of which he is losing weight. Similarly, sentence 63) can be interpreted in two ways.

In the first interpretation John is seen as an acting agent who begins his work intentionally; in the second interpretation John is seen more like a passive subject, with no intention of his own to start work.

According to Pustejovsky and Bouillon (On the Proper Role of Coercion) the ambiguity of such cases can be explained by the presence of both a control and a raising meaning in the case of certain aspectualizers (i.e. *begin*).

- 59) Bill kept dropping things. (Newmeyer 36)
- 60) I made Bill keep dropping things. (Newmeyer 37)
- 61) Bill made himself keep dropping things. (Newmeyer 37)
- 62) John began to lose weight. (Pustejovsky and Bouillon 709)
- 63) Zeke began to work. (Newmeyer 27)

## Conclusion

As the data show, aspectual coercion is a complex phenomenon which involves not only grammatical and syntactic factors but also requires some extra-linguistic world-knowledge. That is, certain sentences are only interpretable if a larger context is given. Sentences that are found as ungrammatical by some speakers might become acceptable in a proper context.

The paper can be considered an attempt to give an overview of aspectual coercion and its importance by the complementation of aspectualizers in English. Many of the issues presented need further investigation. Also additional data are necessary for further conclusions to be drawn.

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## Children's Literature Didactics, a Special Didactics

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**Abstract.** The content of children's literature didactics for the elementary school course was elaborated and organized according to the principles specified in the current curricula documents, namely, providing an adequate balance between the theoretical-applicatory themes with operational value and those centered on intra/inter/cross-disciplinary correlations and openings and the advancing of a thematics able to fundament innovative didactic practices and stimulate differential application and creativity in the didactic process, by emphasizing the practical-applicatory nature of the proposed themes. In this sense, children's literature didactics, as a special type of didactics, offers multiple solutions in the application of school programmes. The main characteristic of the outline of this course is the structuring of its problematics on modern themes, corresponding to innovative dimensions and perspectives of approach: the conceptual dimension, the curricular and didactic dimension, the textual-thematic and functional-discursive dimension, the inter- and cross-disciplinary dimensions. The study of the proposed contents is based on highly-regarded bibliography sources and references. Thus, the bibliography comprises the most recent studies corresponding to the new curricular vision and to the problematics of the course, reference material not only for the didactics of children's literature in elementary school, but also on a more general level, represented by the most popular developments in the area of pedagogical and philological research.

**Keywords:** children's literature, didactics, innovative didactic practices, differential application, creativity, pedagogical and philological research, intra-, inter-, and cross-disciplinary correlations

The general objectives of children's literature didactics for the elementary school course were conceptually and methodologically delineated with the intention of outlining the frame concepts underlying coherent didactic pathways, on the one hand, and of offering different operational strategies, oriented towards building communication and cultural competence, in accordance with the frame objectives specific to the curriculum for the "Language and communication" discipline at the level of elementary school, on the other hand. The objectives of this course are, thus, complementary to all the areas of native language didactics at elementary school level, in accordance with a series of unitary principles regarding the grounding of the problematics of children's literature in nowadays readers' horizon of expectation and the building of diversified and significant learning contexts.

The content of the course was elaborated and organized according to the principles specified in the current curricula documents, namely, providing an adequate balance between the theoretical-applicatory themes with operational value and those centered on intra/inter/cross-disciplinary correlations and openings and the advancing of a thematics able to fundament innovative didactic practices and stimulate differential application and creativity in the didactic process, by emphasizing the practical-applicatory nature of the proposed themes. In this sense, children's literature didactics, as a special type of didactics, offers multiple solutions in the application of school programmes. It offers integrating planning solutions, it presents student-centered learning-teaching strategies, oriented towards global communication activities and the moulding of values and attitudes specific to the "Language and communication" curriculum, and, last but not least, it presents alternative methods of assessing acquired knowledge and skills.

The theoretical background and the strategies presented are based on recent theories from key disciplines in the linguistic and pedagogical sciences area, among which pragmatics, didactic rhetoric, socio-psycholinguistics, text theories, reception theories, on the one hand, and curriculum theory, assessment theory, cognitive psychology or communication sciences theories on the other. This leads to the development of a well-shaped strategy and the structuring of coherent operational pathways focused on the comprehension and interpretation of children's literature texts.

At the end of the children's literature didactics course, the students will be able to:

- master, procedurally, the modern concepts and theories on the development of schemes of action and learning capacities;
- apply the modern concepts and theories on the development of learning capacities;
- identify the specific of the children's literature curriculum for elementary school;

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- plan, organize, and conduct didactic activities adequate to the educational-instructive specific of didactic communication during literature classes for children in elementary school;
  - innovatively apply basic specialty knowledge in various adequate contexts, displaying, professionally, an innovative methodological conduct at all times;
  - acquire the didactic skills prerequisite to the teaching of children's literature in elementary school;
  - create specific learning situations for the teaching-learning of children's literature in elementary school;
  - operationalize the notions specific to the reception of the oral and written literary message and of the oral and written expression in the children's literature area;
  - adopt pertinent strategies for students and class assessment, in order to maximize the educational-instructive process within the parameters of the study of children's literature in elementary school;
  - stimulate both individual and group creativity and promote originality in the didactic process by the formative implementation of the models provided by children's literature texts (integrating skills through formative exercises, establishing analogies based on internalized formative structures);
  - recognize and use the values and functions of the study of literary text in elementary school, for their conveyance in the didactic process;
  - elaborate and effectively and imaginatively apply the educational materials and means characteristic to the study of children's literature in elementary school;
  - display a reflective (self) conduct as to one's own—elementary school specific—didactic activities.

The general framework of this course, both at the level of initial and continuous formation, is set out by the following orientative thematic structure:

1. **Considerations on and current approaches in the field of children's literature. Theoretical dimensions and perspectives on the condition of children's literature;**
2. **Conceptual delimitations and reference terminology:**
  - The concept and area of extension of children's literature
  - Basic concepts in the study of children's literature
  - Current reference terminology;
3. **Founding conventions at the heart of children's literature:**
  - Founding conventions: the object and the importance of the children's literature discipline

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- The specific of children's literature; defining traits
  - The literariness of children's literature. Children's literature, a literature of its own;
- 4. Curricular dimensions and perspectives in the field of children's literature:**
    - Curricular readings in the language and communication area; modern and traditional in the curricular organization of the study of children's literature (a contrastive curricular approach)
    - The place of children's literature within the new curricular framework; curricular and terminological points of reference: general background, education frames, the curriculum for the discipline (school curricula), reference books, methodological norms, support materials and children's literature textbooks (a contrastive curricular approach)
    - Children's literature as compulsory course and as optional course; curricular perspectives of the discipline;
  - 5. Textual-thematic dimensions and perspectives:**
    - Textual founding conventions;
    - Textual-thematic perspectives specific to children's literature;
  - 6. Textual thematizations and reference points emblematic of children's literature:**
    - Particularities of the genres of children's literature. Examples;
    - Particularities of the species of children's literature. Examples;
  - 7. Textual thematizations and reference points emblematic of children's literature:**
    - Special requirements in the reception of narrative texts. Examples;
    - Special requirements in the reception of lyrical texts. Examples;
    - Special requirements in the reception of dramatic texts. Examples;
  - 8. Functional-discursive dimensions and approaches. Functions, theories and discursive practices specific to children's literature;**
  - 9. Functional-discursive dimensions and approaches. Approaching the narrative discourse;**
  - 10. Functional-discursive dimensions and approaches. Approaching the lyrical discourse;**
  - 11. Functional-discursive dimensions and approaches. Approaching the dramatic discourse;**
  - 12. Discursive functions, theories and practices emblematic of children's literature;**
    - Literary functions – children's literature functions (taxonomical dimensions and the summary of children's literature main functions);
    - Discursive theories and practices;

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**13. Didactic dimensions and practices, methodological approaches and alternatives regarding the children's literature discipline:**

- The triad devising/planning—teaching/learning—assessment/self-assessment in children's literature didactics;
- Lesson systems in the teaching-learning of children's literature;
- Planning lessons and selecting content units: principles, models, stages; adequating configuration models to the specific of children's literature; interpretation, comprehension and explanation of content units strategies (LSDGC and effecting intersubjective consent);
- Modern assessment strategies of the skills created/developed; specific criteria and types of assessment; traditional and alternative methods of assessment;

**14. Children's literature didactics, a special didactics:**

- Discourses of children's literature didactics;
- Elements of didactics for narrative, lyrical and dramatic texts; specific concepts and strategies; analytical algorithms and frames of interpretation;
- Didactic references in planning, organizing and assessing children's literature as an optional study discipline; methodological alternatives.

The main characteristic of the outline of this course is the structuring of its problematics on modern themes, corresponding to innovative dimensions and perspectives of approach: the *conceptual* dimension (module 1), the *curricular and didactic* dimension (module 2), the *textual-thematic* and *functional-discursive* dimension (modules 3, 4 and 5), the *inter-* and *cross-disciplinary* dimensions (module 6). Through its last theme, the course aims at values and intercultural aspects children's literature can capitalize on, and that promote the capacity of establishing analogies based on internalized formative structures, the development of independent attitudes, reflective and creative, as well as cultivating originality. Some of these activities contemplate the development of strategies for establishing correlations between children's literature and the other arts, between Romanian literature and the foreign literatures the students are familiar with, the opening up of intercultural borders respectively, through the contrastive correlation of native language and literature study and foreign languages and literatures study. The study of the proposed contents is based on highly-regarded bibliographic sources and references. Thus, the bibliography comprises the most recent studies corresponding to the new curricular vision and to the problematics of the course, reference material not only for the didactics of children's literature in elementary school, but also on a more general level, represented by the most popular developments in the area of pedagogical and philological research.

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As mentioned previously, the content of the course was structured so as to cover all the areas of Romanian language and literature didactics for the elementary school level, which it aims to configure according to unitary and coherent actional-pragmatic principles. The following are included among the main thematic tropes suggested, subsequent to a negotiation between the course and the seminar syllabus:

***1. Current considerations and approaches in the field of children's literature didactics. Conceptual delimitations and reference terminology; specific founding conventions***

- the concept and area of extension of children's literature from a didactic-theoretical point of view;
- basic concepts in the study of children's literature; didactic and terminological points of reference;
- the condition of children's literature (current considerations and approaches);
- founding conventions: the object and importance of children's literature as a study discipline;
- the specific of children's literature; defining traits; children's literature, a literature of its own.

The theme and (sub)themes in point tackle from a theoretical point of view the problematics of the condition and the specificity of children's literature as a distinct type of literature. The modern considerations and approaches in the field of children's literature center around the object and the importance of the discipline, with reference to its specific basic concepts. The students are asked to account for the conceptual delimitations operated and the importance of terminological clarifications in order to understand the relationship between the children's literature area of extension and the basic concepts in the study of the latter, by referring to their reading and their professional experience. Through the analysis of the specific founding conventions, the students identify a series of defining traits of children's literature, as well as the didactic competences required for the interpretation of literary texts specific to preschool age, for the foregrounding of the adequate means and methods of connecting the child with the literary text, and for the acknowledgement and implementation of the values of children's literature, that are to be conveyed in the didactic process. Furthermore, the students can bring up in discussion and debate on the adequate methods for the implementation of the methodological knowledge underlying the planning, organizing, conducting and assessing of didactic activities, in order to maximize the educational-instructive process within the children's literature specific conceptual parameters.

## ***2. Curricular dimensions and perspectives in the field of children's literature***

- curricular readings in the language and communication area; modern and traditional in the curricular organization of the study of children's literature/a contrastive curricular approach;
- the place of children's literature within the new curricular framework; curricular and terminological points of reference: general background, education frames, school curricula, reference books, methodological norms, support materials and children's literature textbooks (a contrastive curricular approach);
- children's literature as compulsory course and as optional course; curricular perspectives for the discipline

The theme and (sub)themes in point deal with the setting up of a system of curricular readings in the language and communication area, in a contrastive curricular approach. The students can make use of a series of terminological delimitations within the established curricular frame of reference. In order to understand the curricular perspectives of the study discipline, one can analyze, for instance, different concepts, such as: the suggested curricular components, in a systemic approach, their characteristics and their interplay, taxonomy and quality criteria, the notions of adaptation, differentiation and accessibility. Likewise, one can identify, through problematization, the curricular perspectives of the subject of interest—a theoretical and/or methodological endeavor (analytical, synthetical, contrastive, comparative, problematizing etc.) that can be constantly supported through examples of recommended didactic practices and paradigmatic professional experiences.

## ***3. Textual-thematic dimensions and perspectives. Textual thematizations and reference points emblematic of children's literature***

- founding textual conventions;
- textual thematizations and reference points emblematic of children's literature; examples;
- particularities of the genres and species of children's literature; examples;
- special requirements in the reception of narrative, lyrical and dramatic texts; examples.

## ***4. Functional-discursive dimensions and approaches. Functions, theories and discursive practices specific to children's literature***

- discourses of children's literature didactics;
- literary functions—functions of children's literature (instrumental, informational, formative-educational, cogno-affective, integrating, motivational, aesthetic, axiological)



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- discursive theories and practices characteristic to children's literature;
  - approaching the narrative discourse;
  - approaching the lyrical discourse;
  - approaching the dramatic discourse.

The themes and (sub)themes from above (4-5) regard a modern collection of thematic-textual and functional-discursive reference points characteristic of children's literature. They contain examples such as a series of special requirements regarding the understanding of the narrative, lyrical and dramatic texts, which also in their turn contain exemplifications. Students are required to recognize features, to explain theories and to create a hierarchical ladder of the discursive methods characteristic to children's literature. The content of the themes and of the (sub)topics chosen for discussion has been structured both according to (a) the requirements of the reform (the emphasis is laid on the teaching-learning activity in order to develop a communicative and a cultural competence; the approach focuses on developing attitudes and values; an integrative teaching of the three areas belonging to the discipline), and to (b) the results of the current researches that took place in the following areas of reference: psycho-pedagogy sciences (the constructivist and cognitive theories) and literature and language knowledge (linguistic pragmatics, textual linguistics, textual genetics, on reception theory, on socio-psycholinguistics, the didactics of rhetoric, etc.).

##### ***5. Dimensions and teaching practices, methodological approaches and alternatives as regards the literature for children***

- the didactics of children's literature, a special didactics;
- the triad design/planning—teaching/learning—evaluation/selfevaluation in the didactics of children's literature;
- lesson planning in teaching/learning children's literature;
- designing the lessons and the units with their content: principles, models, stages; the adjustment of the configuration models to the requirements of children's literature; strategies to link units and their content;
- modern strategies for assessing the thought/developed skills; criteria and specific types of assessment; traditional methods and alternative procedures of evaluation; extra-curricular methods of evaluation;
- didactic elements of narrative, lyrical and dramatic texts; specific concepts and structures; analytical algorithms and interpretative grids; methodological alternatives;
- guidance points in designing, organizing and evaluating children's literature as an optional discipline.

## **6. Inter- and transdisciplinary opportunities in the domain of children's literature; intercultural didactic perspectives**

- interlinguistic opportunities in the domain of language and communication and interdisciplinary perspectives inside the curricular areas;
- children's literature found between the literary and the non-literary; trans-curricular perspectives;
- elements of intercultural and interlinguistic didactics;
- children's literature and other arts; proposals of didactic scenarios;
- cultural and intercultural values and attitudes developed through children's literature; proposals of didactic scenarios;

While discussing the themes and the (sub)themes mentioned above (5-6), students can put into practice the investigation of some didactic guidance points in the form of methodological alternatives by (re)considering the didactics of children's literature from the point of view of special didactics. Some of these proposed themes/(sub) themes can be approached by choosing some strategies that aim to establish correlations between literature and other arts, between the Romanian and non-mother-tongue or other modern languages known to the children of early school age, namely the achievement of perspectives through linking Romanian literature to the respective non-mother-tongue literatures. The purpose of this approach is to emphasize the constants and the differences specific to children's literature.

While discussing the themes/(sub) themes/projects or during the accomplishment of projects created for the final evaluation, students (*a*) may provide multiple solutions for integrative design, namely solutions for implementing school syllabuses and for using alternative textbooks, (*b*) may present teaching-learning strategies focused on preschoolers (oriented towards creating attitudes and values and organized according to the discipline's areas), (*c*) can tackle ways of integrating the contents according to the expectations specific to preschoolers and also ways of discarding the didactic characteristic from global communication activities, or (*d*) may present alternative methods of assessing the knowledge and capabilities specific to preschool education. By tackling these topics and sub-topics an integrated methodological perspective is presented to students, specific to the didactics found in reading classes and to the understanding of the literary narrative, lyric and dialogue text, through a comparative analysis of the methodological alternatives. They have been analyzed as regards their conceptual level and their specific epic, lyrical and dialogue discourses. Besides the inter- and intra-cultural correlations that have been created, the stake of the last issue discussed does not lie only in the proposals of various didactic approaches related to the report between literature and other arts, but also in the formation of cultural and intercultural competence, namely in the tackled trans-disciplinary

perspectives. The topics deal with a modern collection of thematic-textual reference points specific to the study of children's literature in elementary education, with examples and a series of special requirements regarding the understanding of the narrative, lyrical and dramatic text, containing examples as well. During the debate of all the themes and sub-themes proposed, students are requested permanently to recognize functions, to explain theories and hierarchical discursive practices characteristic to children's literature in the elementary education.

At the same time, tackling the themes chosen for debate concern, in turn, the practical investigation of some concrete teaching benchmarks in the form of methodological alternatives by (re)considering the didactics of children's literature in elementary education, from the point of view of special didactics, namely the shaping of some strategies which seek to establish correlations between literature and other arts. The theoretical and methodological views presented by the students, while debating all the proposed thematic areas (1-6) or the seminar activities, namely during the projects that are part of the semester portfolios, can be fulfilled in a wide variety of approaches, among which we mention further on some of the most important ones:

*The theorization of an approach/experience* by making use of the contrastive approach: "Functions of children's literature in preschool/elementary education," "Traditional and modern perspectives in organizing the curricula regarding the study of children's literature") namely "Children's literature seen as compulsory and optional subject";

"Children's literature, a literature on its own path," "Inter- and trans-disciplinary perspectives in the field of children's literature"; "Functions, theories and discursive approaches characteristic to children's literature";

*The construction of models*: "Didactic milestones in planning and evaluating children's literature as an optional discipline"; "Methodological milestones of a successful teaching activity";

*Case study*: "Founding conventions: the subject and the importance of the discipline of children's literature," "Special requirements for understanding the narrative, lyrical and dramatic texts";

*Critical Analysis*: The analysis of programs and manuals, the contrastive analysis of some design/planning approaches, the critical analysis of some structured teaching scenarios according to different design models;

*The design* of some learning situations, of some study units and of some teaching scenarios adapted to the characteristics of the discipline;

*Problematization*: "Children's literature between the literary and non-literary, trans-curricular perspectives," "Children's literature and other arts"; «Recommend 5-10 texts belonging to the children's literature and present

the criteria/functions/values that they recommend for the didactic activities with preschoolers and with pupils of early school age»

*Didactic essays:* «What does children's literature mean for me»; «The last book of literature for children that I have read»; «The most interesting personal experience of reading literature for children».

The construction of a syllabus for the didactics of elementary education has to respond to some needs that regard the training and skill development, that ensure the reflective application of the communicative-functional teaching model, namely knowledge and understanding skills, interpretation and explanation competencies (hermeneutics), instrumental-applicable skills and attitudinal competencies:

- planning, organizing, conducting and evaluating the educational activities;
- supervising and establishing the training-educational process as a didactic/pedagogical/educational communicative approach;
- stimulating creativity and the learning-type training, through encouraging the specific motivational psycho-pedagogy behavior;
- mastery of modern concepts and theories regarding the development of training schemes and of knowledge competencies;
- manifestation of an innovative methodology conduct as regards the profession's level (manifestation of empathy and of “helping orientation”);
- developing tools for assessment and managing the evaluation tests depending on the purpose and the characteristics of the individual/group;
- applying the methods and the students' understanding and activation techniques;
- implementing didactic strategies for using effectively the resources/teaching auxiliaries in the process of education;
- continuous professional development through encouraging the characteristics of the (self)reflective psycho-pedagogical conduct in order to improve the continuous educational activity.

This view—that derives from the awareness of the new curricular visions (of the action-pragmatic features of the communicative-functional model) and also from the knowledge and application of the teaching principles incorporated in the development, implementation and creation of the study units—determined the selection and content structure, as well as the formulation of the practical activities.

Through these it is intended to train/improve/develop the skills requested by the exigencies imposed by pragmatics on the didactic communicative-functional approach:

- the ability to apply the rules of the literary language in any instance of communication;

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- the ability to apply innovative knowledge fundamental to the area of specialty, in various appropriate contexts;
  - the ability to develop teaching skills necessary for interpreting literary texts specific to preschool age;
  - the ability to stimulate individual and group creativity and to encourage originality in the teaching process by exploiting formative models offered by literary texts for children (integrative skills through training exercises, the establishment of analogies based on acknowledged structural training);
  - the ability to create learning situations specific to preschool pupils starting from children's literature texts (through describing the ways and methods of gathering the children close to the literary text);
  - the ability to put into practice the notions of literary theory specific to the study of children's literature;
  - the ability to recognize and exploit the values of children's literature in order to apply them in the teaching process;
  - the ability to design consistent teaching approaches, to achieve a progression in learning and to articulate the areas of discipline, according to the principles of integrative teaching;
  - the ability to exploit from a creative point of view the procedural approaches of teaching-learning courses in order to create communication competence and cultural competence (the methodology of global communication and its application is varied, innovative and creative);

In the teaching activities carried out, there will be used teaching strategies and training- participatory methods, as well as methodological elements specific to a teaching based on tasks: interactive lecture, theorization of an approach/experience, debate, modeling (creating models), case study, critical analysis, contrastive analysis, problematization, conversation, learning through cooperation, demonstration, exercise, simulation, concept mapping, didactic workshop (workshop carousel). Among the alternative or complementary assessment methods used we mention: the investigation, the project, the portfolio, self-evaluation/inter-evaluation, the didactic essay, the experiment, the direct observation of students' behavior and attitude (interest and participation) in teaching activities, the simulation of colloquy evaluation (self-evaluation, inter-evaluation, feedback and discussion), the methods of analysis and evaluation of practical work and course and seminary activities of the type SWOT and INSET, the questionnaires before and after the seminar, the observation protocol, the scale of observing the students' activities, monitoring and practical testing of the skills acquired through educational activities during the course and seminar, in the fields of competence referred to above, namely: cognafective skills (knowledge and

understanding), hermeneutic skills (reading and interpretation), instrumental-applicative skills, attitudinal competencies and communicative skills.

All the organization forms specific to student activities will be used during teaching: frontal activities, group activities, debates in teams, individual and combined activities in teaching workshops, etc. The methodological system is specific to initial teaching training and it makes use of the possibilities offered by the modern methods of participatory and communication training. The favorite ways of teaching during the course and seminar activities are the interactive ones. These are based on the alternation between the analysis workshops that take place during teaching, testing (simulation) experiences of new practices, and group discussion of the projects created during the practical activities. Each student will have in this way the opportunity to submit his/her contributions and to discuss the results that can be applied in the teaching method itself. These analyses of problems, experiences, professional approaches and results will take place permanently, throughout the courses and seminars for teaching children's literature.

Moreover, the very cumulative assessment is carried out not only as a result of writing a written exam, in terms of proposed thematics, but also through evaluating the term portfolios, respectively by the cumulative monitoring of the quality of the seminar projects conducted individually or in groups and of the skills gained as a follow-up of these practical activities. In this regard, a number of key criteria are taken into account, namely: the quality and relevance of the scientific projects performed during the seminar (adequateness and bibliographical and thematic relevance, the novelty of the approach, personal contributions, the quality of writing and the collaboration between students, in case of projects involving pair cooperation or team work, etc.) the quality of answers (their organization and coherence, their originality and creativity) as well as the active involvement and the students' responsive attitude relevant in all the educational activities, carried out through participation in discussions, debates, investigations, experiments, simulations or research projects, to other activities and practical assignments that are relevant for the quality of the global communicative competence.

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## **Reading and Re-Reading Study on Approaching Texts in a Non-Native Language<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract.** The present paper approaches the problems of meaning constitution through reading in the context of bi- and multi-lingualism. We will point out the specific differences of meaning constitution depending on different readings that were achieved in the mother tongue. Starting from the idea that there are as many realizations and specific differences as individuals and gnosiological and glottological experiences, this study presents the different and specific ways of meaning constitution in the case of schools with Hungarian as the language of instruction, in the context of the study of and readings in Romanian.

**Keywords:** reading, asymmetrical bilingualism, Romanian language as non-native language, text comprehension

### **The Labyrinth of Reading**

The act of reading represents an a-typical form of communication (Pamfil 84), an asymmetrical one (as the transmitter and the receiver are not present at the same time), it is a personal, holistic process with our “distant Other.” It represents an

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<sup>1</sup> In the present paper the author details a preliminary study on the "Experiences of meaning in the multilingual existence" research project, financed by Sapientia Foundation-Institute for Research Programs, Cluj-Napoca.



initiation into the (re)reading of former experiences, suggestively described by Jorge Luis Borges: “I always reread rather than read” (42).

In interpreting the concept of *reading* we will take into account the Gadamerian perception of the term, through emphasizing certain similarities and differences between communication and reading. Similar to interpersonal communication, reading, according to Gadamer, in other words the I-text dialogue is based on heuristic inter-assistance, more precisely on the attempt to understand the Other as Alterity, in the context of which any meeting involves meaning constitution, constitution of possible worlds (universes). Critical and self-critical reflections, establishing consensus assures the understanding and acceptance of someone else or something else. Understanding, thus, presupposes in fact the ability to transposing oneself into the Other’s world, a surrender (a deconstruction) of the Self in order to be transposed into the Other’s mono-lingualism. This state of “mutual surrender” is defined by Gadamer as “the ability of listening to an Other” (48), while within this dialogue the metamorphosis of the Self remains a natural addition as neither of the participants remains what he/she was before the dialogue.

Despite the observed similarity between interpersonal and “inter-textual” communication, the written text appears to be the conservation and, implicitly, estrangement through the act of writing down Ideas. In the interpersonal exchange of ideas, thoughts, emotions, etc.—as specified in Gadamer’s writings (73)—understanding is duplicated, maintained, and complemented by reply, by the Other’s explanations, by communicative registers, by the pitch of the voice, by the intonation and rhythm of speech, all which allows for any misunderstanding—wanted or un-wanted—to be clarified. Thus the “live” dialogue (conversation) maintains its existence through itself. The written text, according to Gadamer, represents the textual product estranged through the act of writing, within the context of which reading offers new ways of meaning assignment and constitution. Reading, therefore, represents the framework of the recreation of certain possible worlds. The understanding of a text also involves its interpretation through which the message of any text is interiorized and personalized.

The understanding and interpretation of a text is influenced by linguistic registers, by “implicit theories” formulated in the context of different languages. We base our acts on the assumption that understanding is a complex, holistic process of meaning constitution that undergoes similar moments in the context of different languages, while the specific features of a language offer more efficient comprehension strategies to be applied. Thus, for example, Pléh’s research shows that in the case of texts written in Hungarian the understanding of statements is oriented by the language’s basic word order while in the case of simple sentences marking the case offers an advantage of orientation in the process of decoding. Surely, no matter which the language of decoding is, the nuance of the reading, of the constitution of meaning depends on the richness of the reader’s vocabulary, but

also on the level of maturization of his/her concepts derived from reading, on comprehension, on processing and interpretation.

In the history of teaching reading the relation text-reader-language has had multiple interpretations (Pamfil 102). According to the traditionalist interpretation specific for the 20<sup>th</sup> century, text comprehension depends in particular on the richness of vocabulary and of grammar, while the literary text has been viewed as the absolute model. The crisis of this attitude surfaced in the 70s through the propagation of the communicative model. Within this context the premise of text comprehension has been redimensioned, and accordingly understanding a text depends on the reader's experiences and the quality of his/her meaning configuration techniques, besides his/her level of mastering the language and cognitive structure. Within the context of these emphasis shifts, the reader's personality must prevail as it is involved in the act of reading through cognitive and affective processes and structures that undergo continuous re-dimensioning (according to Giasson's model quoted in Pamfil 87). The processes involved in the act of reading materialize in micro-processes (centering of information); integration processes (establishing semantic links); macro-processes (centering on global meaning); elaboration processes (intertextual correlation); meta-cognitive processes. Cognitive and affective structures mean the reader's language knowledge, his/her knowledge about the text, about the world, as well as his/her general attitude towards the referent of the text.

Thus, the act of reading—in the Gadamerian sense—aims at a dialogue with the Self, a re-reading of the Self, reflected by the meanings constituted during reading, and represents the reflexive re-dimensioning of past experiences in the context of the constituted meanings.

### **Bilingual existence and the articulation of the world**

The attempt to present the act of reading and rereading must be correlated with the interpretative framework of bi(multi)lingualism. In approaching this concept we refer to the holistic view on the bilingual, bicultural personality. This perspective differs from the traditional, widespread view phrased by Bloomfield according to which we talk about bilingualism in the case when the individual masters two linguistic registers at a level similar to that of the mother tongue (24). The “totalizing” reinterpretation of this concept is linked to the name of Grosjean (1982, 1998) (sustained, among others, by Navracscics's research 2000, 2007) that starts out from the perception of the Self as an autonomous, integral personality in whose case the qualitative and quantitative dimension of language acquisition depends on its functions originating from an efficient, insertive verbal behavior. According to this perspective, a bilingual person is not characterized by the adaptation of two monolingual “states,” but by a “bilingual existence” (Grosjean,

*Life 18*), a transmitter-receiver able to activate and manifest him/herself in two (or more) different linguistic registers, adapting insertively to the communicative contexts. As a result, a bi(multi)lingual person cannot be assessed or examined with the same measurement instruments as a monolingual one, and neither through comparison to the performance of monolingual persons. The production of speech acts in the case of a bilingual person is realized differently than in the case of a monolingual one (Navracscics, *A kétnyelvű gyermek* 48). Research in this field has shown that in a bilingual person's "mental lexicon" (Navracscics, *A kétnyelvű mentális* 23) the elements of the two languages co-exist and they do not vanish in the case of choosing and activating one of the linguistic codes in a given communication situation. Within this interpretative framework, the phenomenon of bilingualism must be understood as one similar to biculturalism that does not result the "synthesis" of two persons with two different cultures, thus a "personalized" culture being instituted.

Within this interpretative context, acquiring a language does not represent a linguistic problem but an epistemological one (one of knowledge), more precisely it resides in *learning* and *self-knowledge*, terms used by Wittgenstein (95) to emphasize the idea that the assimilation of languages must be accompanied by the understanding of existential and cultural forms defining the Other. Accordingly, language assimilation—beyond the level of knowledge, skills, and communicative competence—also involves a level of communicative culture (Tódor, *Școala* 25) that consists in responsiveness towards the articulation of reality through the Other's linguistic templates. In other words, the cultural dimension implies a learning according to the logic of diversity, of multiculturalism, within which difference represents a natural element of existence and manifests in the intellectual effort to uncover the Other's monolingualism (Le monolinguisme de l'autre, a suggestive metaphor used by Derrida 6), parallel with the self-definition of one's own identity.

### **Presentation of the investigation process**

"Pupils have difficulties in reading"; "they do not like reading"; "they do not read much"; "they do not understand what they read"; "the increase of internet usage leads to a superficial reader who prefers short texts"; etc. These are only a few "pathologies" generally brought up during discussions (either scientific, or mass-media or everyday conversation) about reading. At the same time, school—according to curriculum discourses—proposes the training of a competent reader, of a reader able to develop his/her own taste in reading, while the dominant types of readings through which this goal is to be achieved are: informative reading, entertaining reading, institutionalized reading (Sâmihăian 10).

Within this context we face the problem of the method through which the reading is to be realized in a language other than the mother tongue. What is the percentage of these types of readings? What reading strategies characterize the general education student population with reference to the languages chosen for reading?

Within the context of a pragmatic relativism that represents the common base of concepts contoured in the previous sections of this paper, the issue of differences and similarities within the context of readings in different linguistic frameworks arises. The final aim set for this paper consists in uncovering the specific differences that can be found in reading Romanian texts by Hungarian native language students. What are the dominant features characterizing the chosen subjects within the context of reading in a language other than their mother tongue?

The data proposed for the presentation is based on the mosaic of conclusions of two implemented research processes (in the years 2007-2008, and 2005) carried out with the aim to show the specificities of studying Romanian language in schools with Hungarian as the language of instruction. We present some aspects of the data gathered through these research processes that focused on the act of reading in Romanian. We have to mention that neither of the studies had as its fundamental topic the investigation of this particular issue which has been included as an aspect of bilingual existence. The conclusions of the two studies constituted the hypothetical premises of an in-depth study in this domain, financed by the Institute of Research Programs of the Sapientia Foundation, Cluj Napoca.

The first type of investigation was based on the study of reality through indirect inquiry, through the questionnaires filled in by students, and sampling from public educational institutions mainly in monolingual areas. The second type of investigation used the method of structured and participative observation, accomplished with the help of 74 students from Sapientia University, Miercurea Ciuc, specialization Romanian and English who assisted 1012 class-room hours within their pedagogical practice.

Within the present paper, after the schematic marking of distortions resulting from the heuristic act within the domain, we present certain data regarding the reading habits of the questioned subjects, while also marking certain specificities of the didactic dialogue that conducts the deciphering and meaning constitution process with a powerful impact upon extra-curricular, individual techniques of reading.

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## Uncontrolled variables within the research of the reading act

In the endeavor to integrate heuristically the specificity of the reading act, the researcher comes up against a series of difficulties and controversies that need to be taken into account as they may distort the conclusions and generalizations of the investigation.

- The first aspect to be mentioned consists of the dimension of the research paradigm, where the distortive character consists in the fact that a reality adapted to a predominantly naturalistic interpretative approach (that aims at the understating of interpretative schemes, prototypes) is re-formulated through an empiric paradigm (which quantifies reality as a countable entity with interdependent components).
- The formulation of generalities within this domain is made difficult also by inter-individual differences that personalize the act of meaning constitution.
- Reading competence depends on a series of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that involve different levels of maturization. This results in the fact that reading in the mother tongue and reading in a non-native language show differences depending on experiences and language knowledge which means that reading in the mother tongue, thus in concordance with the horizon of expectations, would also involve a comprehensive superiority, this, however, not constituting a unison rule. There exist a large number of examples that demonstrate that the reader in a non-native language has superior performances to one reading in his/her mother tongue.
- From the perspective of a holistic definition of multi- and bi-lingualism offered by Grosjean (“Studying” 133), the comparison of performances, even in the sphere of meaning constitution, represents an error of investigation as a bilingual person does not constitute an accumulation of two monolingual existences, but is rather the individual who is able to choose the appropriate linguistic register required by the communicative context.
- The difficulty in researching this domain is determined also by the fact that the act of meaning constitution depends on the experiences, on the language knowledge, on the culture and readings of the individual that confers upon the phenomenon an inter-individual variation.

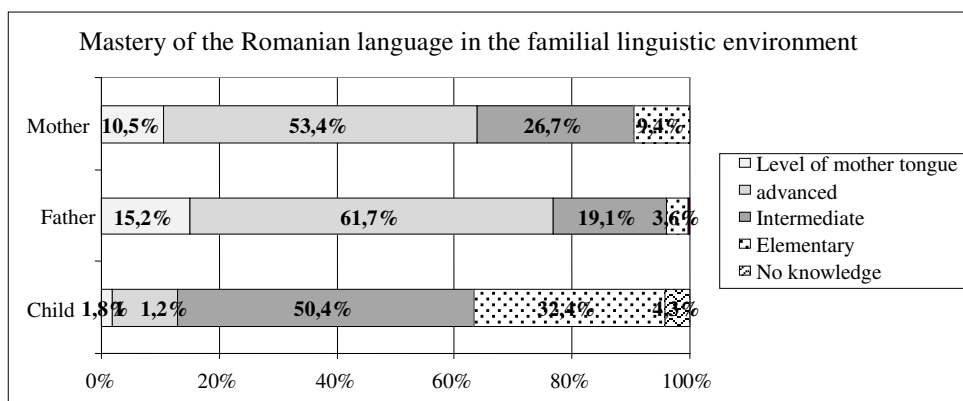
## Linguistic socialization and reading habits

As the specifics of text comprehension depends on the level of language knowledge—as we specified in the first sections of the present paper—the first

aspect that we discuss in what follows is its qualitative level (data presented in Tódor, “Forma”). According to the respondents’ self-evaluation, their majority believe that they master Romanian language at an intermediary level (50,4 %), but percentage of those who think that their knowledge is of elementary level is also significant (32,4 %). The percentage of those who have a thorough knowledge and those who have no Romanian language knowledge is low, but both extremes involve special attention in the choice of pedagogical intervention.

We have to mention that according to the respondents, the specificity of the appropriate linguistic background from the perspective of Romanian language knowledge is predominantly at an advanced and intermediate level which makes it possible for us to talk about a familial linguistic assistance in language learning, taking into account the level of subjectivism due to the students’ evaluation. One can notice the superiority of the fathers’ language knowledge which (from the perspective of the respondents) is characterized by a higher level of flexibility in linguistic acquisition as compared to the mothers, but has a less significant impact upon the orientation and motivation of the children’s learning (presentation of these conclusions in Tódor, “Forma”).

Chart nr.1.



In the context of this type of linguistic socialization, one has to raise the issue of the specificities of habits connected to favorite readings chosen by the respondents. To make data more suggestive, we present a comparison of preferences in reading in Romanian and in English.

Table nr. 1.

Usually I read...	in Romanian	in English
novels	19%	2%
Short fiction	28%	8%
newspapers	27%	3%
youth magazines	27%	5%
sports magazines	10%	2%
webpages	15%	31%

We can talk about options for extra-curricular reading and habits in reading certain texts oriented by institutional expectations. As a probable influence of school requirements, a significant percentage of the respondents mentions their habit of reading literary works, especially short ones in Romanian, this being complemented by the reading (in the case of 27% of the total of respondents) of newspapers and magazines. This type of reading remains in the background in the case of reading in English which represents first of all the language of read internet pages.

A representative percentage of the daily contacts are constituted by different forms of e-communication and short messages. Within the following item we have studied language usage within this type of communicative situations. One can observe the contextual activation of the different linguistic registers. In the case of language usage in short telephone messages use of the mother tongue is dominant (55%) as well as Romanian (32%), while decisions to use English surface to an extent of 5%. In the case of chats again the use of the mother tongue is dominant (59%), Romanian appears at a percentage of 13%, the same as English, while 14% use both languages. In the case of navigating on the internet, the predominant language of the searches is the mother tongue (40%) and English (35%), Romanian being the language of search only rarely (14%). This type of activating of the linguistic registers through relating to the functions of the language illustrates a manifestation of the principle of complementation sustained by Grosjean (*Life* 99), as the specificity of the communication situation, the functions of linguistic acts impose calling into action a certain type of linguistic framework.

### **Comprehension (“re-reading”) of texts in the context of the didactic dialogue**

The obtained panoramic view of the respondents’ reading habits has allowed us to identify the preponderant text types preferred by the respondents. The types of texts in Romanian the students are involved with are short informative texts and institutionally requested readings. This longitudinal view must be complemented

with an in-depth view that focuses on the method of achieving comprehension in the case of these texts. As informative type texts and entertaining ones are processes in the context of different reading strategies and present inter-individual variations, we have considered only the category of texts prescribed by the school context. In what follows we are basing our analysis on data obtained through direct observation of school life's reality, in other words direct participation at Romanian language and literature classes, observing the psycho-pedagogic and linguistic specificities of the organized didactic dialogue.

Among the inventoried characteristics two dominant ones have been found significant that may be included in the category of specific differences of text comprehension from the perspective of bi(multi)lingual existence. The first refers to the linguistic specificity of appropriation and in depth study of texts, while the second refers to the dimension of the reading competence's subcomponents, an activity within the didactic dialogue.

### **The linguistic specificity of re-reading in a non-native language**

In the case of approximately 44% of the total number of observed classes there surfaces the phenomenon of linguistic code shift, a phenomenon that we interpret as the shift from one linguistic register (in this case the Romanian language as a non-native language) to another register (in this case, Hungarian as mother tongue). This shift (Rod 115, Suzanne 74) may manifest within a sentence (at the level of words) but also among sentences (at the level of statements), spontaneously or willingly, intentionally, representing a natural feature of bi(multi)lingual existence.

The significant majority (65%) of linguistic code shift is linked to reading and text comprehension, while the phenomenon appears less in the case of didactic activities dedicated to text creation (composition classes 16%) or in the case of language classes (19%). The presence of this phenomenon refers to that specific difference characteristic to the bilingual reader in the case of whom re-reading cannot ignore the presence of a base language and in this case it has the function to sustain understanding, to mediate meaning constitution.

Depending on the function fulfilled by this phenomenon in text comprehension, texts may be categorized as follows:

Bilingual situations focusing on achieving understanding:

a.1. *didactic dialogue for the initiation (preparation) of understanding*: these moments focus especially on explanation of words, expressions, concepts.

Illustrative examples: lexical correspondences: *popas- pihenő* (resting place)

- What other expression do we use for "felgyorsult"(accelerated)?



- Have you heard of ”*fehér rím*”(white rhyme)?
- a.2. *explanations during “entering the inside of the text”* (term used by Judith Langer). Examples: What is the difference between “*a fost*” (*there was*) in these two sentences?
- a.3. *didactic dialogue focused on the interpretation of the read text*. Example: What is the significance of the title *Enigma Otiliei* (*Otilia’s Enigma*)? How could we translate it? Or reading translations of Ion Barbu’s texts.

The common element of the communicative situations presented above consists in their finality, in other words their aim to sustain, mediate, assist understanding through translation or cultivating a contrastive perspective upon the studied phenomena.

According to their didactic functions, this type of situations predominantly have the following goals:

- Formation of linguistic knowledge based on a contrastive vision. Example: What is the Hungarian version of “*casting a spell over somebody*”?
- Translation-based explanations. Example: How do you say in Romanian “*most tanulok, tanulni fogok*” (*now I am studying, I am going to study*)?
- Verification, evaluation of acquiring linguistic information. Example: What does “*a moaște*” mean? What does the word “*lot*” mean?
- Emphasizing affective involvement in learning. Example: Read it! Be attentive! What have you not understood?

Taking into account the intentions to switch linguistic codes that may be initiated either by the student or by the teacher, we may distinguish a conscious attitude in correlating and using the students’ knowledge and previous experiences, as well as a spontaneous, unplanned one that may be observed in the case of examples, especially in the context of motivation and affective involvement of the receivers.

Directing reading through using the base language as assistance involves didactic situations that have at least double value. The assistance in comprehension derived from the mother tongue, especially in the case of texts that are above the average level of the students’ language knowledge, represents without a doubt indispensable help. However, the mediation value of the mother tongue also represents a “hindrance” in the perception, access, and acceptance of the text as the Other in the process of that “mutual giving in” that represents the premise of consensus, in other words common meaning. Thus, in accessing texts in a non-native language the main phases of comprehension would be:

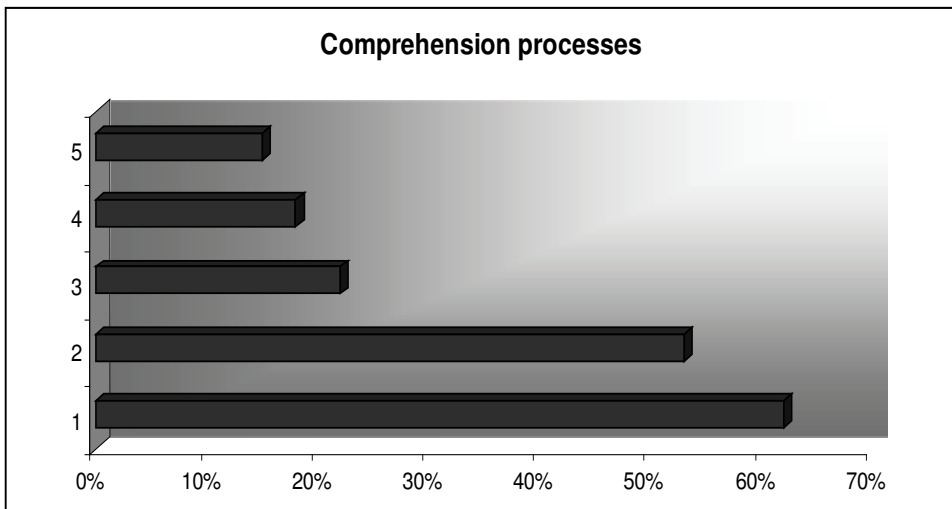
- a. lexical understanding (entering the world of the text),
- b. being inside and exploring the world of the text,

- c. text comprehension, access of the Other (of the non-Self) through the mediation of the mother tongue,
- d. self-definition, re-reading the Self through the relation to the Other (the non-Self).

We believe that one of the goals in the formation of an autonomous reader in the case of a bilingual individual must be the formation of the ability to approach a text, the read discourse as addressed to the Self within which the mediation through the mother tongue and native culture represents only one of the structural elements of re-reading that, however, cannot be ignored.

The analysis of the didactic discourse's specificity, on the basis of direct observation, allows us to derive a panoramic image of processing types within the framework of oriented, organized reading.

Chart nr. 2.



**Key:**

- 1-micro-processes
- 2-macro-processes
- 3-integration processes
- 4-elaboration percentages
- 5-metacognitive percentages

In the category of tasks, types of phrased questions in the context of the didactic dialogue of directing text comprehension, the most significant percentage

at this school level consists of those focused on the activation of micro-processes, in other words clarifying information contained by sentences and statements. These are complemented by tasks focused on micro-processes, namely comprehending the global sense of the text. At a smaller percentage there appear processes of establishing intra- and inter-textual connections and of the problematization of meta-cognition. The proportion of deductive discoveries, of stimulating critical thinking is more reduced. This structure allows us to talk about a reading strategy that is predominantly inductive, namely a strategy of “bottom-up processing” suggested by the specificity of the proposed direction. This type of heuristic initiation moves from the particular to the general, from lexical understanding to a discursive, contextual one. The image that we may deduce from this reality shows a directioning of text comprehension focused on lexical understanding, on comprehension at the level of language, while a comprehension beyond words motivated by learning about the Other remains in the background. Text comprehension presupposes more than just establishing and assimilating syntactic and semantic relations, it presupposes the knowledge of life styles, cultural formations, it involves accessing implicit theories about the world phrased within the context of the Other’s monolingualism.

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## **Did the Székelys Have Their Own Marriage Ritual? A Double-Faced Ancient Marriage Ritual from Székelyland**

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**Abstract.** In Sândominic the initiation into a woman, that is, the ritual of accepting the young wife among the women takes place within the framework of the wedding, after midnight. The ritual of elopement and bunning make the turning-point in one's life temporarily acceptable, tolerable by the community, and make the turning-point irreversible.

The author highlights the legal and moral significance of bunning applied as a life-belt ritual, its historical and validity supremacy. He regards it as the promotion of a pagan ritual to the rank of customary law. Bunning is a marriage ritual deriving from the age of the Hungarian Conquest, which was later replaced by the religious, then by the official marriage ritual. It became part of the customary order of the wedding: it became a ritual of initiation into a woman, it survived as a separate initiation ritual, and in the cases presented it is performed as an independent, what is more, autonomous legal ritual.

In the absence of data deriving from elsewhere, and based on a record from the seventeenth century, the author presupposes that in Székelyland (or Székelyföld as it is known in Hungarian) bunning, as a specific strategy of the rites of passage, constituted an independent marriage custom/ritual of folk-right. Its out of turn applicability in exceptional cases is still recognized, the deviant situation is made acceptable by public opinion by resorting to a former profane ritual which has fallen out of the authority of religious and official law.

**Keywords:** elopement, bunning, rite of passage, initiation, life-belt ritual

By all means: this must have been the ritual of “bunning” [*“kontyolás”*]. However, the hypothesis without proof is nothing more than a mere question mark.

The custom of bunning is not unknown: the majority of ethnographic descriptions devoted to the wedding also touch upon this ritual, which is defined as “the final step of becoming a woman” (Bakó 209; Németné Fülöp 84-85; Gráfik 47). In Sândominic (Romania) the initiation into a woman, that is, the ritual of accepting the young wife among the women takes place within the framework of the wedding, after midnight.<sup>1</sup>

*The “bunning” [*“bekontyolás”*] as an initiation ritual*

A deputation consisting of godmothers and relatives arrive from the house of the family with marriageable daughter. They ask for permission to enter from the best man, saying that “they would like to exchange a few words with the bride”.

The confirmation godmothers or godmothers of the bride and the bridegroom go to the bride and call her out from beside the table: “Come and join us, because we live on bread and salt too!”

Before she goes out, the bride takes leave of her friends, the bridesmaids.

The bride is taken to a dark room, usually to the summer kitchen, and the door is closed behind them. The new young wife takes off her wedding dress, she puts on a woman’s dress and then she sits down in order to be bunned. The woman who makes the bun lets the braid down, then she draws a cross onto the bride’s head, “do not curse my hand because of having bunned you”—she says, then starting the braid rightwards<sup>2</sup>, the bun is made. Once it is ready, she draws a cross onto the head of the young wife, saying: “With the help of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit set out for life!” Then the “bunning headscarf” [*“kontyolókendő”*] is put on, received from her mother-in-law.

In olden times the new woman turned towards the women who made the bun, with a poetic address: “Praised be our Lord, women! Accept me into your company, so that I can take part in it. From now on I will find my place among you. God bless you all!” (Balázs, *Az én első* 145)

I do not go into details about the inset game of hiding the bride, who is looked for by the bridegroom. What really matters is the next step of the initiation ritual.

The bunned young wife is taken back to the company of the wedding guests, the new woman gives a toast, then the wedding guests are offered “bun juice” [*“kontylé”*] (brandy, whose first liter is brought by the women who make the bun,

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<sup>1</sup> With the Hungarians this time is quite different.

<sup>2</sup> Because of the change of the women’s hairdo, this happens more and more rarely, there remains only the putting on of the headscarf.

from the house of the family of marriageable daughter, the rest is provided there) and Hungarian wedding cake [*“kürtőskalács”*], in turn, in sitting order, and she shakes hands with everybody. The new husband pours the brandy. “Everybody is obliged to accept the bun juice, even if he/she does not wish to drink it. This is so because in this way the young couple, now already as a married couple, shows respect towards the married people” (Balázs, *Az én első* 145). I underline that this is a highly important profane ritual behavior rather than an autotelic moment. With a modern expression, the offering of the bun juice is the first truly diplomatic step of the new couple, with the aim of getting into contact with all the guests present, and through them with all the families, those who offer and those who are offered the drink are brought into the same situation by the magic of words and of feasting together.<sup>3</sup>

The people who perform the act of bunning are invited to the celebration, a song is played in their honor and they are danced with. For long, this dance was traditionally danced on a song called *németes* (*‘German style’*), sung also by the wedding guests. In order to illustrate its content and message, I quote the first stanza:

*“Young wife, young wife,  
Don’t go into the forest,  
Because the snake bites you  
In the shape of love.”*

*[“Menyecske, menyecske,  
Ne menj az erdőbe (re),  
Mer a kégýó megmar  
(Mer megmar a kégýó)  
Szerelem képibe.”]*

A very interesting sexual prohibition, taboo, deriving from the new social position of the bride, is formulated in these lines, which, discreetly in my opinion, show that that moment was crucial indeed, so it was necessary to transmit, there and in that moment, the message, the norm of behavior valid from then on, by means of the universal symbol of the snake<sup>4</sup>, in the specifically prohibiting language of folk culture.

<sup>3</sup> In more detail see Balázs, *A vágy* 378-79.

<sup>4</sup> Gábor Lükő considers the snake as an erotic symbol (66); Róheim regards it as the symbol of the male genital organ (90). The Biblical Fall relates Eve’s seduction by the snake. According to Vulcănescu, the snake awakens the sexual desire (522). I found a surprising belief/prohibition parallel in Sumner’s book: “The Makusikis living in British Guyana forbid the women’s entrance into the woods during their period . . . , lest they should be bitten by a snake turned on passionately” (762-63).

Ferenc Bakó's record from Palóceland is also important for me: "In the private life of the married couple, the consummation [*"elhálás"*] put an end by right to the actions of getting married, but in the eyes of the villagers the change in the girl's hairdo<sup>5</sup> and clothes, bunning [*"kontyoló"*] and the procedure of dressing meant the belonging to the new age group of women. When the new wife appeared in front of the public in a headscarf or a scarf tied behind, that moment signified her being accepted as a woman" (Bakó 210). József Faragó further clarifies the significance of the ritual: "Besides the official and church marriage ceremony, bunning is the real folk ceremony of the act of becoming a woman" (Faragó 209).

Perhaps it is enough to conclude here that bunning is a very interesting example, a specific strategy of the rites of passage, as Eliade formulated it, of sequential transition. The girl, who passed through two marriage rituals—through a civil and a church ceremony—in the meantime, is now repeatedly separated from her previous state, and is initiated, maybe only now in fact, into her new social status: that of a woman, by bearing the signs of a woman. This is an initiation having an expressed female point of view.

### **Bunning as a "life-belt" (separating and unifying) ritual**

However, in Sândominic another function of bunning is also known. In the absence of data deriving from elsewhere, and based on a record from the seventeenth century, I almost dare to believe that in Székelyföld bunning constituted an independent marriage custom/ritual of folk-right. Its validity, more precisely its out of turn applicability in exceptional cases is recognized until now, because the pressure of the circumstances has not become outdated, and also because people have always been liable to soothe their sin, they have always tried to have their deviant situation accepted by public opinion, even by resorting to a former profane ritual which has fallen "out of the authority of law". And it is of particular interest that in this matter there is a community agreement, even if it is not acknowledged with satisfaction, but rather with grumbling and dislike.

As A. van Gennep stated in his volume on the rites of passage, on the occasion of any of the turning-points of the individual's life, the relative standstill of the concerned community gets disturbed. The everyday continuity, monotony of life—no matter which event takes place: birth, marriage or death—is regularly interrupted, and it has to be restored as soon as possible, so that the community can function further. However, I do not consider this state—contrary to Van Gennep—as a crisis state. My research has convinced me that the crisis state rather sets in if the change, the transition is not carried out in accordance with the traditions and

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<sup>5</sup> Van Gennep classifies the change of the hairdo among the rites of passage. The form of the hairdo can show the person's age, social status, his/her belonging to a particular group (see 147-48).



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the moral norm system. In other words, it sets in if the individual acts against the tradition. Such an illegal state, for instance, having a not yet baptized child in the house. If the community rules work well, the community is peaceful, being in good spirits, having a productive atmosphere. If the individual lives in accordance with the norm system accepted by the community, then the community takes part in the feast of the individual (each transition constitutes a holiday at the same time), acknowledges the change in the individual's fate, and makes the transition ceremonial and memorable, shows solidarity with the individual and his/her relatives, supports and helps the individual also materially, and finally, by all these, creates an atmosphere reinforcing the cohesion of the community among its members. And this is equally the interest of the individual, of the small community and of society. Peasant communities did not accept at all the confused, uncertain situations and attitudes with respect to the turning-points of life, as this might undermine and erode the existential security of the community. According to Vilmos Keszeg, "Peasant culture excludes the alternative possibilities of interpretation and action. By this it reinforces the feeling of security of the community members" (37). Turner remarks that "the rules undoubtedly reduce deviance and eccentricity in most part of the manifested behaviours" (51).

With respect to the turning-points of life, in the community thinking from Sândominic I have identified three principles which everybody must comply with: 1. The children should be born in families, 2. Marriage should take place after public courting, after a choice of one's life partner in accordance with the interests of the individual and of the family—often only of the family—, with family approval, in accordance with the expectation of the church and of the community, 3. The person, the individual should not interfere into the work of the Creator, should not throw away life with his/her own hands, and should be paid the last honors for a life lived in dignity, spent with honest work. These principles are carried out by means of and thanks to the institution of customs. Customs are our rules! The system of customs of every community constitutes its legal system at the same time. That is why it has ethnical, religious, regional and local traits as well. However, they are also universal, as they fulfill basic human needs. Ernő Tárkány Szücs writes: "in the form of folk customs there are inner, independent legal regulations that had to be kept by everybody" (8). Ortutay formulates the related idea that "in every aspect of the social behavior, from shaking hands to getting married, behind the gestures of behaviors and customs there was the norm system of the community, this peasant law ran the show. The life course of the individual was drawn up by this law from birth to death" (18). By the joint effect of the norm systems—beliefs, religion and religious morals, public morals—the individual is prevented from breaking the rules by much more complex fears; by committing a sin, he/she generates dissatisfaction in the community, and psychically experiences

the consequences of his/her sins in a much more complicated way. He/she is afraid of God, of death, of law, of shame.<sup>6</sup>

As the title of the paper suggests, we are hereby interested in the matter of sinning against the customs of choosing a life partner, of marriage, and out of these acts, we primarily focus on the issue of elopement.

The custom of elopement has not perished definitely: it has a past and it has survived into the present. Ernő Tárkány Szücs describes elopement as a custom practised all throughout Transylvania, and by alluding to Gyula László, he writes the following about the region of Ciuc: “In Ciuc county the elopement without parental approval was still practised not long ago” (261).<sup>7</sup> No statistics are made about elopement; however, according to my informants “maybe more girls are taken away by elopement than in earlier times.”<sup>8</sup> The reasons are manifolded: the girl got pregnant, but often it is also a conscious response to the parental prohibition disapproving of marriage. This is one way of forcing the marriage disapproved of by parents. In other words, it is one way of the enforcement of desire, commanding a high price. “Many times the girl runs away, because she is forced to get married. She runs away even from the altar. There were cases when she ran away before the wedding, and the wedding had to be cancelled, and there were also cases when the wedding was in full swing and the young wife eloped before bunning (!).” One reason for elopement may be the material situation of the parents, who cannot assume the costs of the wedding. In such cases elopement is pretended: it takes place with the agreement of the two families, as the shame of elopement was smaller than that of a poor wedding. The girl suffers the shame of elopement, the family gets somewhat exempted from it. “The family could not afford to organize a big wedding, so, with a dinner, they simply acted that the girl eloped with someone. It was pretended.” The other reason for elopement is the competition, rivalry for the girl: “Elopement is carried out lest the girl should marry someone else. Especially if the girl has several suitors. One of them beats the rivals.” “If the girl’s dowry was ready, there was no time to hesitate, because she was stolen in an instant. There were lads who stole the girl from the dance, while the one who had taken the girl to dance looked aside for a moment . . . Then the eloper had to be given the girl, there was no other choice.” “Many times the girl was stolen from the *guzsalyas* (‘place where women worked with the distaff’), then

<sup>6</sup> To my question whether the person who got rid of a baby committed a sin or not, one of my informants replied: “Definitely, in the eyes of God and of the people! It is a sin in the eyes of God, a shame in the eyes of the people. We consider that person as a murderer. We always think about her deed when we see her in the street. Then she gets mingled in the community, however, she will be always looked at with the thought of what she has committed.”

<sup>7</sup> The author makes reference to Gyula László’s book entitled *A honfoglaló magyar nép élete* [*The Life of the Conquering Hungarians*] published in 1944.

<sup>8</sup> My data refer to the 1970s and 1980s, but I also have new data in this respect.

her parents were sent the message to drink the bun juice, because the girl was already bunned.”

In order to illustrate the bunning applied as a life-belt ritual, I will quote an elopement narrative, as follows:

“Our wedding with my bridegroom was already announced, and its date was fixed. There was one more day left. The lad that I loved came to our house. I was sitting on the table in the first room, in order to be closer to the lamp, and I was sewing. I noticed through the window that there was someone outside. Dressed just in the clothes in which I was sewing, with only a waistcoat on me, bare-headed, I went out.

‘What’s up, big girl, are you getting married?’ the lad asked me.

‘Yes, but I don’t feel like it,’ I replied.

‘Well, don’t you love Gyuri?’

‘No, I don’t love him, but my parents force me to marry him, because he is rich, and they say that I would have a better existence with him.’

‘Would you marry me now?’ he asked.

‘Yes, I would,’ I replied.

The lad, my future husband, was wearing a short coat, he put that on me, he put a cap onto my head, he disguised his head with a handkerchief and I eloped with him. Up in the field, in Kicsimező.

The assisting women noticed that I had disappeared. She must be by the neighbors, they said. Then they asked again and again, where Teréz was, where Teréz was. They were looking for me everywhere, they made a big fuss and then one of them realized that perhaps I had been stolen.

They put the horses to the carriage, and started chasing us. We lived down the village, so I could have been taken only upwards. We already reached the bridge of the stream when I recognized the bells of our horses. We hid under the bridge. We could hear them speaking:

‘If we catch up with them, we will hit them with the axe!’

They suspected the lad, my future husband. His father was called Zsiga Kristály. The chasers entered his house and asked where Gergely was.

‘I do not know where he is, as a lad, he must be walking somewhere,’ my father-in-law said, may he rest in peace. ‘They wanted to turn the house upside down.’

‘Nobody should turn my house upside down, as I have seen neither my son nor anybody else. There was no elopement here.’

The old man behaved roughly, and they went away. When we heard them coming backwards, we entered through a gate. Then we went home. When the old man saw us, he took a stick and gave my future husband a good thrashing.

‘You,’ he was shivering with anger. ‘They wanted to turn my house upside down and they wanted to cut me up with an axe, asking where my son was!’

‘She is my wife from now on,’ my husband replied. ‘Nobody should scold her!’

‘I don’t mind,’ my father-in-law said. ‘But she will go to bed with your mother, and you will sleep with me. Tomorrow morning we will see what we can do.’

In the morning we went to the old priest.

The other bridegroom sued us for the expenses. A big wedding had been prepared; they had already spent much on it. This happened to me in the 1930s.”

Here we witness a special and peculiar case of folk-right, which is, in my opinion, the preservation of one possible ancient ritual of marriage, by the very mode, differing of tradition, of choosing a life partner. The first “saving” act is for the elopers to get the stolen girl *bunned*, and by this, to make her a young wife.<sup>9</sup> In order to carry out this act, they asked/ask a confidential neighbor, who accepts to perform the ritual and does not disclose the “plot” or the lad asks his mother to perform the ritual, and from time to time, so that there should be outer witnesses as well, they invite the lad’s godparents. Only a trustworthy woman was and is allowed to perform the bunning, as she guaranteed the authenticity of the ritual.<sup>10</sup> In Sândominic, according to the principle of folk-right, “once the girl was taken to the lad’s house and was bunned, she could no longer be taken away from there”.<sup>11</sup> This is well illustrated by the above mentioned story and by many other similar stories: by an official legal procedure they could ask for material compensation for the expenses of the wedding, but they no longer tried to win the girl back by force. As folk-right does not grant an appeal, the fact of *bunning* obliged them to surrender.

In my opinion, the legal and moral significance of bunning [“*békonyolás*”], its historical and validity supremacy is also illustrated by the fact that the elopement could/can be carried out during the wedding as well, despite the fact that the civil and religious ceremony of marriage had/has already taken place, but by no means after bunning. Thus in the moral-legal timing of the elopement the customary law is of primary importance.

<sup>9</sup> Until the Council of Trent (1563) the church act was not necessary for the validation of marriage. “Marriage had a folk character and remained within the family.” (see Sumner 612)

<sup>10</sup> It can be read in the volume by Gazda–Haáz that bunning has always had a master of ceremony: “a woman taking care of the trousseau, a bunning woman or an initiating woman” [“*cempelasszony, kontyolóasszony vagy avató asszony*”] (32).

<sup>11</sup> In ancient India and Rome, with the Germans, from ancient times “...the legal requirements of marriage became valid from the moment the married couple had been covered with the bedcloth. This had to be testified by the witnesses” (Sumner 606).

This way of choosing a life partner, of getting married could not be approved of by a legal summary proceeding. In this way I consider it acceptable that regarding the exceptional cases of choosing a life partner, of getting married, we can speak about the promotion of a pagan ritual to the rank of customary law, since the declaration of marriage started to belong to the authority of state and church institutions. This was made possible only by the fact that bunning was a marriage ritual, which was later replaced by the religious, then by the official marriage ritual. As many other similar rituals, it became part of the customary order of the wedding: it became a ritual of initiation into a woman, it survived as a separate initiation ritual, and in the presented cases it is performed as an independent, what is more, autonomous legal ritual. The bride's wreath as a sign, decoration and symbol has to be ignored because of having sinned—this is the sanction!—however, the illegal transition has to be legitimized: the solution to this is the ritual of bunning and putting on the headscarf. At the same time it is a message towards the community, as “the bunning or putting on the scarf . . . objectified the new status of the woman” (Gazda–Haáz 32).

In other words, it presented visually what could not be told by other means of communication within the community: namely, that the girl was no longer a girl, she had become a woman. The ritual of elopement and then bunning exempts the relationship, established in this way, from under the labeling “they have teamed up with each other”, it makes the turning-point in one's life temporarily acceptable, tolerable by the family and by the community, and, what is even more important, and this is a legal point of view, it makes the turning-point irreversible.

In what follows, I will present the reason why I consider bunning as a double-faced ritual.

My hypothesis regarding the former importance of bunning as a separating/initiating ritual is also confirmed by Tárkány Szücs: “The function of bunning, namely, marking the change of social status may also be concluded from the fact that the girls who got pregnant, were also bunned, mostly by godmothers or friends. So it was made public even in such a case” (400).<sup>12</sup>

The highly moral, ethical, social, but also material sanction serves to repress the act of the elopement. Bunning, associated to elopement, only soothes the sin;

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<sup>12</sup> The author also quotes a Presbyterian record from Zemplén county in connection with a girl who got pregnant, who “. . . was bunned by the judges of the Locality at the Village Hall . . .” (Tárkány Szücs 400). In some Romanian villages from Transylvania, but mostly in the Metaliferi Mountains the girl who got pregnant was taken to a fence, a poplar or a locust, she was bunned, people walked around her three times, saying: God's servant, get married to the fence post, to the poplar or to the locust. By this ritual she is acknowledged as a woman. The same rule of behavior applies to her as to a widow (See Marian 518-19). In the region of Ciuc it is said about the girl who eloped or was eloped that “She got married to the fence or gate post.”

however, it does not exempt the person who has committed it from the whole burden of sin.

### **Is bunning a special marriage ritual of the Székelys?**

It remains an open question for me whether the act of getting married performed by the ritual of bunning was, among the Hungarians, indeed only characteristic of Székelyföld, and besides, how far it extended within Székelyland. I have come across it in Sândominic, the rest of the villages from the regions of Ciuc and Gheorgheni do not know of it (although no custom research was carried out in fact), as far as I know, it is not mentioned in the specialist literature either.<sup>13</sup>

As a partial response to my question, surprising data can be found in the record of a hearing of witnesses, taken in Tg. Mureş in 1631 (Víg 109-12). The subject of interrogation is the nuptials of a Székely couple, seemingly not accepted, not acknowledged by the people from Tg. Mureş. It is important to mention that the collection containing testimonies from the seventeenth century “is about many lewds”, who are Hungarians of course, still, only the accused of this case and those taking part in the offence are consistently considered as *Székelys*, as if they consciously wanted to distance themselves from the sinners.

The two young Székelys committing illegal nuptials (their origin is not mentioned, there is a faint allusion to Háromszék/Three Chairs) were sleeping at György Bácski’s place, “but then they did not do anything outrageous”. Then they went to “Miklós Szabó to harvest, there they got to know each other—then they went to Mrs Márton Fazakas, and there happened what happened between them”.

Mrs Fazakas Márton confessed before the court about what had happened: “on Sunday at dawn they slept together . . . in my barn—I was the one who shut the door of the barn.” They worked off the annoyance of the people from Tg. Mureş with the fact that soon they had the girl bunned by a woman also from Székelyföld, and from that moment, as one witness said, “I heard the woman calling the lad as her husband, and the lad called her as his wife.” Another witness noticed an essential change in the girl’s appearance: “Surely, she was a girl yesterday, she had cambric on her head, and now she is wearing a bun.”

Gergely Komlósi said “he had seen how that woman had been bunned next to the fence”. Mrs György Bácski was speaking about the fact that “*the woman who bunned her, who put the scarf on her, was a Székely woman*”. Mrs György Szegedi also mentioned “*Székely brideswomen*” (emphasis mine).

<sup>13</sup> For example in the volume of studies entitled *Lakodalmi szokások. Mátkaság, menyegző* [Wedding customs. Engagement, Wedding] (ed. Erzsébet Györgyi) four studies deal with bunning and elopement, one discusses the customary law aspects of elopement, however, neither of them mentions either of the versions of bunning described by me.

Mrs. Márton Fazakas's confession also contains other ethnographical data that are important for us: after bunning [*"kontyolódás"*], putting on the scarf [*"keszkenődés"*] and changing clothes, the new couple "went to the pub in order to have a drink". When she asked, with a "reprimanding" tone, from the Székely András Forgács, whose wife was the "brideswoman of the young wife", why "they had not got married before already", that is, why they had chosen this way, they answered that "it was better for us to spend the money that we should have given to the priest, on drinks". Then she also mentioned the following in her detailed confession: "I asked him: 'You lad, where did you find this young wife so quickly?' he answered 'God gave her to me, madam, this is the way the people live'".

The order of the church wedding had already been introduced, but still, bunning was chosen even 68 years after the Council of Trent, the new position was legitimated by that, clearly referring to customary law.

If we take into account the elements and moments of the "nuptials" from Tg. Mureş, we can realize that it covers almost wholly the bunning marriage ritual from Sândominic, and also the fact that before the church version of the marriage ritual, the folk ritual had been widely practised, and it had been satisfactory, but it was rejected in the urban environment, though Tg. Mureş constituted an integral part of Székelyföld.

A quick procedure is characteristic of both nuptials: the element of long courting, the series of separating rituals—getting acquainted, visiting the girl's family, parental agreement, presenting oneself, handing over the dowry etc.—in other words, the phases of the rite of passage are absent, and as a consequence, community validation is absent. However, the gesture of communicating towards the community cannot be absent. This function is fulfilled by the ancient marriage ritual presupposed by me: the change of the hairdo and of clothes. The magic which forms the community, the ritual of eating and drinking together plays an outstanding role.

The fact that bunning was indeed a marriage ritual in Székelyföld, is confirmed by a ritual blessing formula, told by a woman who had performed the bunning in Sândominic, still accompanying the event in our days: "God bless you with reason, a lot of luck and a good family; God may give you good luck, and do not mind that we are now putting the bun onto your head; start life with the help of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." Besides its marriage function, it should not be forgotten that if the fate of the young wife turned into bad, in her despair bunning became the reference of the curse instead of the civil marriage or the church wedding, instead of the notary or the priest. "If the marriage is not successful, there are some who curse the person that has performed the bunning: Damned be the hand that has bunned me. The parents curse like this: If only the



hands and legs of the person who bunned the stolen bride had been broken, so that she could not have gone there.”<sup>14</sup>

(Translated by Judit Pieldner)

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<sup>14</sup> The texts of informants quoted in the study are from my collection in Sândominic. In more detail see Balázs *Az én első*.



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## Book Reviews

### Non-Euclidean Study of Literature

Judit Pieldner

**Bíró, Béla. *Eszmélet és körkörösség. [Consciousness and Circularity.]*  
Miercurea Ciuc: Pallas-Akadémia, 2008. 359. pp.**

University professor Béla Bíró's latest volume represents a novelty in the field of literary analysis. It starts from the approach of Attila József's poem entitled *Eszmélet (Consciousness)*, and grows into a scientific treatise which far exceeds the dimension of literary criticism.

We can have no doubts about the philosophical depth of this lyrical masterpiece, about its central position in Attila József's oeuvre and in Hungarian culture. Several interpretations of the poem—even contradictory ones—have come to light, which testify not only the inexhaustible richness of the literary work, but also the fact that this text has often been misunderstood, misinterpreted, even monopolized by various interpreting communities.

Béla Bíró's approach is unconventional, because it explores the plurality of meanings of the text, summarizes the apparently incompatible contradictions accumulated in the existing interpretations, and distinguishes the examined poem as being the starting point of an interdisciplinary discourse, surpassing the limits of literary theory. Considering Attila József's philosophy of art, as well as the spatial-temporal structure of the poem, it turns out that the problems formulated in the language of poetry are not only individual, not only basically human, but more than that, they are of universal significance.

The author of the volume points out that a thorough understanding of the poem can be carried out by interpreting it in relation to the hypothesis of the circularity of universe. The artistic text generates revelations which can open up

new perspectives also for scientific cognition. This calls forth the distinctiveness of the argumentation of the present volume: by confronting literary, philosophical and scientific concepts and arguments, it elaborates a mixed, but still highly coherent scientific language, supporting the idea that following the logic of common sense as well as the principle of scientific unambiguity, even the seemingly complicated matters become accessible. Mathematical calculations, physical formulae as well as cosmological argumentations equally find their place in the text. The idea of the circularity of universe, the system of arguments resorting to the terminology of various disciplines provide a unique spiritual enjoyment also for readers not primarily interested in literary criticism.

Taking into account the principle of circularity, it is not only the paradoxes of *Consciousness* that are put in different new light, but the arbitrariness of interpretation—so fashionable nowadays—is also unveiled. The series of studies, fusing into a major argumentation, brings the so-called postmodern theories, stemming from unfounded, irrational or erroneous ideas, back to the firm soil of common sense, by arguing that “life cannot be irrational, that is, the Universe would come to nothing because of a single really insoluble contradiction”.

To sum up, the volume in question is notable, on the one hand, for the elaborated interdisciplinary discourse, on the other hand, for the quality of thoughts that pave the way for new paradigms both in the study of literature and in scientific thinking.

### **From Film to Literature—from Literature to Film**

Enikő Bíró

**Judit Pieldner: *Beszédterek, képterek. Tanulmányok, kritikák.* [Word Spaces, Image Spaces. Studies, Critiques.] Cluj Napoca: Komp Press Publishing House, 2007. 241. pp.**

The writings included in this volume are grouped into two sections and cover two domains accordingly: the first, longer unit includes studies which discuss various aspects of the relationship between words and images, film and literature, the second unit comprises literary critiques.

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(*Image Spaces*) As the essays of the first unit prove it, the study of the relationship between film and literature requires an interdisciplinary approach, which makes use of the observations of both literary and film theory. The introductory chapter is a survey of the terminological and methodological questions related to adaptation. It provides the theoretical basis for the following essays, case studies in fact, which examine the narrative and rhetorical specificities of some adaptations in particular. The so-called reflexive adaptations are in the focus of attention, these initiate fruitful dialogues with the literary sources and elaborate various self-reflexive strategies. From the field of English literature, three novels from three distinct periods are examined in parallel with their film version, a premodern, a modern and a postmodern text respectively, namely, Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. The comparative analyses highlight the metafictional character of the texts themselves, as well as the corresponding film devices by which the adaptations try to respond to the challenge set up by literature. Further analyses focus on similar questions, applied to Hungarian adaptations. The comparative method in the present volume extends beyond literature and film, to the relationship between film and other arts, between documentary and fiction, between narration and reflexion, applied to Gábor Bódy's experimentalism in Hungarian film, to Iranian films and to Peter Greenaway's Neo-Baroque film style respectively. The analyses rely on contemporary results in the fields of narratology and film studies, and point out the cross-influence and interdependence of the spheres of the verbal and the visual.

(*Word Spaces*) The literary critiques collected in the second part of the volume provide an insight into the realm of literary publications from Transylvania and Hungary after 1990. These critiques follow current literary events, by evaluating and interpreting contemporary young poets, prose writers, essayists, literary historians (among them Szilárd Borbély, László Lövétei Lázár, Laura Iancu, Edit Boda, Anna Szabó T., Csaba Székely, Vince Fekete, Zsuzsa Selyem, Imre József Balázs, Júlia Vallasek). The critiques reflect on phenomena of contemporary literature and elaborate various strategies of reading and interpretation.

The two sections of the volume discuss topics that apparently have little in common. However, in my opinion it is the challenge of interpretation that links the two chapters, whether applied to films or to books. I recommend this volume to all those who are eager to know how to "read" films and who wish to be introduced to a segment of contemporary Hungarian (study of) literature.

## Literary Canon, Intertextuality, Cult

Judit Pieldner

**Tapodi, Zsuzsa: *A soha el nem vesző könyv nyomában. [On the Track of the Book which Never Gets Lost.]* Miercurea Ciuc: Pallas-Akadémia, 2008. 307. pp.**

The studies included in senior lecturer and literary historian Zsuzsa Tapodi's latest volume are connected with three distinct, but also interrelated research domains, specified by the three terms highlighted above.

The studies of the first chapter examine the complex phenomenon of literary canons, providing an insight into the methodology of their research. By resorting to the observations of contemporary trends of literary theory, the author seeks answers to the questions how the system of canonical literary texts, representing prevailing standards and values, is formed, in what ways the various texts become classical, which literary canons coexist within the same period, how they change in different ages of literary history under the influence of various ideologies, which texts are highly appreciated in a particular historical period and lose all their value in another one, what are the factors under the influence of which literary works get from the center to the periphery, and vice versa. These are questions that cannot be ignored by any professional engaged in the study of literature. The educational process, the syllabus well reflect the current state of literary canons. In general, readers are profoundly influenced by these ever changing processes, which determine their reading and value preferences. The studies draw attention to the fact that the examined questions are becoming of special interest nowadays, in the age of multiculturalism and plurality of values.

The writings included into the second part, which can be read both as lecture notes and as a series of captivating essays, treat the wandering motifs of world literature in close connection with the problem of literary canon(s). The presentation of the classics of world literature does not follow a chronological order, but rather the logic of recurrence of different themes and motifs, the intertextual relations, in this way ancient and postmodern texts and authors are juxtaposed. The thorough examination of the Tristram legend, the story of Jonah, the utopia, the labyrinth, the various patterns of novels provide an opportunity for the author to compare the literary works belonging to different ages and to different

nations, to follow the fate and the route of the wandering motifs across time and space. In this approach, world literature is not just a heap of books gathering dust on the shelves, but rather a living material; the precondition of becoming a classic, of forming part of the literary canon is the survival into the texts of later periods, at the level of themes and motifs, overt quotations or covert allusions.

The relationship between cult and literature/literary policy is analyzed in three studies comprised in the final chapter. As it is well illustrated by the cult of Ady or by the homage paid to the mythical figure of Sándor Kőrösi Csoma in Transylvanian literature, the questions of cult and canon are interwoven with the Transylvanist literary tradition. “Canon and cult are related terms in many respects. Both play a crucial role in forming and preserving the identity of a community. Both carry out the act of preservation by covering up the literary works: they construct the past, regarded as a pattern, from the perspective of the present, with the purpose of legitimation”—Zsuzsa Tapodi writes.

The recurring question of literary canons makes the approach of the present volume consistent and shapes the interpretive method of the particular texts. The expression of the “book which never gets lost” alludes not only to intertextuality as the basic form of existence of literature, but also to the transmission of values, to the survival of cultural tradition. At the same time, it expresses the author’s belief in the sustainability and communicability of culture.

The studies of the present volume give proof of this conviction.

**Horváth István and Tódor Erika Mária (eds.). *An evaluation of the policy of producing bilingualism. Studies elaborated on the basis of presentations during the conference held in Miercurea-Ciuc between 12-13 June 2008.* Cluj-Napoca: The Romanian Institute for Research on National Minority, 2008. 309 pp.**

Enikő Pál

”There is an old truth that those who know more than one language, know better their own mother tongue,” said Zoltán Kodály. In my opinion that could be the leading idea of this volume of studies, since bilingualism represents its main concern.

The volume consists of 25 studies divided into 4 chapters, all of which deal with different aspects of bilingualism and its effects on people living in regions that are heterogeneous in many respects: language use, culture, ethnic identity or

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political status. The authors of the studies, belonging to different nationalities and having different mother tongues (Romanian, Hungarian, and English), are experts of this topic, academics, specialists, teachers and PhD students, fact that gives credit to the analyses presented. Thus, the volume offers various perspectives and explanations of the same phenomena. Moreover, there is a selected bibliography at the end of each study to provide the readers interested in that specific subject the possibility of further investigation.

The intended audience, as the editors themselves affirm, is made up of researchers, specialists, teachers preoccupied with the problem of institutional bi(multi)lingualism. In this respect, the volume is appropriate to its audience, for it offers a realistic view of the status of the majority's (state's) language in the context of the minority, including, at the same time, several practical ideas regarding the teaching of the majority's language that I consider really useful in my work as a teacher. In addition, the volume may be interesting for the general public as well, those readers who are not initiated in this topic or have no scientific background but live in specific bilingual contexts able to appreciate cultural diversity and to exert tolerance.

The studies are mainly analytical, their development being orderly and logical. They focus on bi(multi)lingualism and on the correlation of the majority language to that of the minority's in different regions, such as the status of Hungarian in Slovakia, or Romani and Hungarian in Romania, the latter one being the main preoccupation. The theoretical background for these discussions is given by contrastive linguistics (theories of transfer and interference), sociolinguistics (bilingualism and linguistic socialization), psycholinguistics (cognitive models of language acquisition, motivation) and pedagogy (methods and strategies of foreign language teaching). Many of the studies are empirical, based on research (questionnaire) or personal experience, the obtained results, achievements being presented here, as well as the linguistic corpus itself (language examples, schemes, answers of people questioned or from the forum), also including data and numeric data, all of which have documentary value.

Although the majority of the studies focus on language itself as a means of communication and a reflection of ethnic and cultural identity, there are also political aspects involved, such as the rights of minorities in Romania in general, and those of the Hungarians in Transylvania in particular, as well as possibilities of improving of the legislative frame. The volume also offers an insight into bilingual education in different countries, such as in the USA, Canada (the status of French), Catalonia, as well as into the status of "small languages" in the EU, not only from a scientific point of view, but also, in one of the studies, from an *outsider's* perspective—as a teacher and parent who does not feel the historical weight of the

languages discussed—thus initiating new grounds of debate for the definition of the term bilingualism itself. The culture of interethnic dialogue in general, and the case of the Szekelys in particular, is also discussed in one of the studies dealing with the relation between ethnic/political and lexical (linguistic) identity.

One of the purposes of these scientific discussions, as the editors affirm, has been to initiate a search for a common semantic repertoire. The premises for the studies dealing with the acquisition of Romanian in schools where the language of teaching is that of the minority (Hungarian) are provided by the weak performance of pupils studying in these schools in the subject of Romanian language and literature. As well-based empirical analysis and scientific arguments are missing from political and public discussions related to this phenomenon, the volume proposed to fill this gap. Although aspects of bi- and multilingualism are widely discussed in contemporary literature, the issue of institutional bilingualism in the context of school structures of the Romanian educational system represents a matter of the hour a theme less dealt with on the level of scientific discourses. And this represents precisely the volume's novelty and originality. The studies follow diagnostic and prognostic purposes as well, trying to gather the results of existing research in order to find the domains that show a deficit. The aspects of the policy of producing bilingualism discussed in this volume have a tendency to lead us to reform the process of language acquisition. At the same time, readers would acknowledge the necessity of reconsidering the methods and strategies as well as the curriculum itself of Romanian. In this respect the questionnaire-based statistics referring to the linguistic and non-linguistic consequences of present-day Romanian language acquisition policy may be convincing, such as interethnic tension and attitudes of repulsion or hostility.

Another purpose of the volume has been to establish a proper terminology. Thus the new term proposed in this volume, which introduces a new concept of the state's language as well, is that of Romanian as a *non-native* language. This might create a conflict in this specific socio-political context (Hungarian minority in Romania) or confusion and reticence as it might be considered as an offense to the state's language and to its status. However, I think that the term itself is neutral of any kind of political content, which is the volume's standing-point as well, for it is the result of the selection from other terms, such as *foreign language* or *second language*. These two might create indignation of the political power, whereas Romanian as a *non-native* language in Romania does not, reflecting only a socio-linguistic reality. The socio-political implications of this kind of view on educational policy and multicultural dialogue are still implicitly present.

The main topic of the volume, the policy of producing bilingualism, is one of present international interest as the year 2008 has been the European year of intercultural dialogue. It deals with the present state of socio-psycho-educational reality. There are solutions proposed to the deficits presented, solutions that—in



my opinion—are far from being recognized or accepted by common consent and also far from implementation. This could be considered a weakness of the volume, although it has not proposed for a moment to implement those solutions. It also does not impose attitudes to adopt, but urges us to think about them, to look for possible interaction, and once the problem acknowledged, the way to accomplishment opens up.

Last but not least, I would recommend the volume for those interested in bi(multilingualism) and its implications. One could find it challenging to face facts that might have been known but not acknowledged and it could help all of us, in particular language teachers and people living in mixed communities, to consider linguistic, cultural or ethnic differences on other grounds.

**Pap, Levente and Tapodi Zsuzsa (eds.). *Közösség, kultúra, identitás.* [Community, Culture, Identity.] Kolozsvár: Scientia, 2008.**

Árpád Kémenes

*Community, Culture, Identity* is a selection of essays presented at two conferences organized by the Department of Humanities at the Csíkszereda campus of Sapientia University. The first conference was held on the topic of cult, culture, and identity in collaboration with the Institute of Literary Studies of the Hungarian Academy and the Petőfi Museum of Literature in September 2003. The second conference, the title of which was *Community and Outsiders*, was organized in September 2005. It can be regarded as the outcome of the cooperation between the Department of Humanities and the Alexander Csoma de Kőrös Centre for Oriental Studies.

Having in view the partial overlapping between the topics the essays presented in the two conferences focus on, the editors organized the sequence of the 29 writings according to the main theme investigated in each paper.

The first essays provide an insight into the way foreigners and people belonging to other cultures, religions or ranks of society were regarded during the ancient times, the Middle Ages and modern history. The writings entitled “*Pen-pusher, cunning trader and, what is more, and Egyptian*” by László Horváth and “*A Citizen, a Stranger and a Prostitute: the Question of “We and They” in an*

*Athenian Speech* by György Némethy reveal that the citizens of the ancient Athens were reluctant and even forbidden to mingle with foreigners. The tendency of keeping distance from the “others” can also be traced in the Roman Empire. Tertullian’s *Adversus Iudaeos* (presented by Levente Pap) is a telling example of this issue. However, written documents also provide evidence of attempts at opening towards other cultures. In the essay entitled *Possibilities of Social Mobility in the Rome of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century A. D.* Péter Forisek presents the biographical data of a wealthy Roman nobleman of African origin, who led the typical life of knights, while in *The Limes of the Danube and the Carpathian Basin* Tamás Gesztelyi relates about the strategic alliances the Roman Empire concluded with its neighboring peoples living along the Danubian limes of the empire. The necessity of the acceptance of otherness was understood by several outstanding figures of the Middle Ages and modern history, as well. The idea appears in the *Admonitions* of the Hungarian King Saint Stephen, which is interpreted in this volume by László Havas. In the essay entitled *Syncretism and Language Policy in the Mogul Empire*, Imre Bangha emphasizes the beneficial influence of cultural tolerance promoted by the Mogul emperors to the development of mixed language poetry in North India.

Cult is also approached from a varied perspective in the volume. Lajos Balázs’s writing presents the cult of children as it appears in folk-culture. Gábor Gyáni investigates political cult and the cult of the leader from a social point of view. He targets problems such as the proper sociopsychological background (which is indispensable for the development of political cults), or the factors that contribute to keeping alive the myth of the leader.

Several essays describe different aspects and manifestations of literary cults. Orsolya Rákai provides a theoretical approach towards the topic. Basing mostly on Paul Ricoeur’s *Du texte à l’action. Essais de l’hérnéutique II.* (Paris: Seuil, 1986.), the author puts forward her point of view on questions such as the meaning of “otherness” and “sameness” in a collective identity generated by a cult, the way these concepts are connected, and how fiction blends with reality in cults. The cult of canonized figures of Hungarian literature is focused on by Béla Pomogáts, and Zsuzsa Tapodi. Pomogáts writes about the cult formed around Sándor Reményik, while Zsuzsa Tapodi investigates the influence of Endre Ady’s cult on the Hungarian literature from Transylvania at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. György Tverdota approaches Ady’s literary heritage from a different point of view. He provides interesting data on the way the cult formed around the leaders of the 1703-1711 Hungarian war for independence and the poems that were assumed to have been created in that period influenced Ady’s poetry. The author points out that these poems, which served as sources of inspiration for Endre Ady, were in fact fakes written by Kálmán Thaly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in order to strengthen the cult of the independence war.

The last essays in the volume are dedicated to problems concerning identity. *Gender, identity and (film)narrative* by Judit Pieldner focuses on the way subversion of social and cultural identity based on binary oppositions between the two sexes appears in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and in its 1992 film-adaptation written and directed by Sally Potter. Éva Bányai explores different possibilities of interpretation offered by the relationship between characters, their names and identity in Ádám Bodor's novels.

The short outlines of the essays presented above highlight on an interdisciplinary approach towards cult, identity, and culture, as a result of which the present volume can be useful not only for readers interested in literature, but also for historians, anthropologists, sociologists—practically for everyone who is interested in the various aspects of the topics investigated in the volume.