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PRAGMATIC POTENTIAL OF THE EXOPHORIC USE OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS IN TEXTS ON POLITICAL ISSUES

У статті розглянуто прагматичний потенціал екзофоричної референції засобами особових займенників в українській мові на матеріалі текстів на соціально-політичну тематику. Узагальнено природу екзофоричної референції, встановлено особливості її використання в соціально-політичному дискурсі в проекції на вживання українських особових займенників, запропоновано перспективи подальшого вивчення екзо-ланцюжків задля з'ясування специфіки різних дискурсів, мов, соціально-культурних чинників тощо.

Ключові слова: лінгвістична прагматика, екзофорична референція, соціально-політичний дискурс, особові займенники, когнітивна доступність.

Introduction

Linguistic-pragmatic approach to the analysis of various grammatical phenomena opens a never-ending perspective of the scientific grounding of the communicative process (its external and internal aspects). Moreover, it allows uniting the systemic organization of the language and its actual realization in a particular discourse at a certain time. The nature of the approach makes the investigations topical because they focus on the living and changing embodiment of the comparatively stable and rigid language system. The main approach of this study borders on and includes elements of communicative-pragmatic and semiotic trends in text linguistics because these branches focus on the interpretative aspect of human communication.

This analysis concentrates on the referential functions of pronouns in the Ukrainian language, which, at first sight, seems a well-studied and tired theme: referential function of pronouns, and the function of substitution, in particular, is thoroughly studied in the works of V. Vinogradov, V. Ozhohan, O. Seliverstova, E. Volf, E. Paducheva, J. Lyons and many others in Ukrainian, Russian, English and other languages (Виноградов 1953; Ожоган 1977; Селиверстова 1988; Вольф 1975; Падучева 1982; Lyons 1977); mainly, the scientists analyzed anaphoric and cataphoric references. However, exophoric reference, despite its regular use, has been studied occasionally, and, we believe, quite superficially, because the researchers have rarely taken into account the specificity of the discourse the pronoun is used in. The investigations were mostly held in second language acquisition field and analyzed the influence of different types of reference, the exophoric as well, on

students' reading skills (Ring 1986; Berkemeyer 1994; McCarthy 2002; Aidinlou 2012, and others). Some speculations on the exophoric use of pronouns are found in works of linguists who study dead languages (Kalytiuk 2019) or languages of ethnic minorities (Khachatryan 2020; Meira 2018; Levinson 2018, and others). These scientists point at the obvious lack of studies that would show the specificity of a particular language and its system that allows exophoric use of different pronouns in different discourses and those that would reveal the communicative senses as the by-product of such use. **The theoretical value** of this and similar works is that step by step covering of these gaps will add to the understanding of the nature of the class of pronouns in one language or more and of the communicative processes. **The scientific novelty** of this article is that we prove not only the distinctiveness of the exophoric use of pronouns in texts on political issues but also show its uniqueness in Ukrainian. **The practical value** of the research is that it reveals the mechanisms that explain how the exophoric reference functions in Ukrainian texts on political issues, which will contribute to the practical aspects of language communication, manipulative tactics and critical thinking.

The aim of this article is to analyze the pragmatic potential of Ukrainian pronouns in exophoric function and its communicative effect in texts on political issues. To achieve the aim we have to answer the following questions (fulfill the tasks):

- what is exophoric reference and its grammatical and communicative essence;
- what is the specificity of exophoric use of pronouns in texts on political issues;
- what is the specificity of the Ukrainian pronoun system in this respect.

The object of the research is Ukrainian pronouns; **the subject** of the research is the pragmatic potential of their exophoric use in texts on political issues.

Methods and material

The material of the analysis is texts on political issues taken from online media and social nets. Following the definition given by O. Selivanova ("A text is a coherent semiotic form of a speaker's lingual-psycho-mental activity; it is conceptually and structurally integrated, serves the pragmatic mediator in communication and is fitted into the semiotic universe of culture" (Селіванова 2011: 715)), we selected texts of different authors, of various formal features or intentional directions, etc. united by the common cultural universe – Ukrainian political and social life.

The aim and tasks set in this research presuppose **the methods of investigation**:

- method of objective hermeneutics to trace the influence of the social-political situation on the production and perception of a text ;
- contextual-interpretative method to restore the author's intentions and possible reader's interpretations with regard to the subjective individual and objective cultural reasons;

- structural analysis to single out textual elements that contribute to the pragmatic effect of a personal pronoun in this text.

Theoretical background

It is the axiomatic knowledge that pronouns perform deictic and anaphoric / cataphoric functions and, as far as they do not perform nominative function, they are used in referential chains for substitution. When referring to an object or a part of the previous context a pronoun is mostly used in two ways – anaphorically and cataphorically, though there exists one more type of reference – the exophoric one, or implicit, when the antecedent is not mentioned in the text and “is the fragment of background, encyclopaedic and other speaker’s knowledge” (Селіванова 2011: 170).

The quoted definition of implicit reference does not contradict the understanding of the nature of the exophoric reference: M. Halliday and R. Hasan (Halliday et al 1976: 31) identify exophoric pronouns as “directives indicating that information is to be retrieved from elsewhere” and use the term “exophoric reference” to describe cases when the information about the antecedent is clear from the immediate situation or state of affairs. However, the actual use of these two terms differs in Ukrainian and East European and American linguistic traditions. The term “exophoric” is used from time to time in some works of Ukrainian linguists but never becomes the object of the research or an operational tool (we do not refer to such works intentionally to avoid promoting them). On the other hand, the scientists regularly and actively use the term “implicit reference” to analyse both spoken and written interaction of communicants in various discourses. In Ukrainian scientific communication, the latest works on this problem consider implicit reference a type of reference that allows the speaker to give evaluative description to the referent through the hidden or unspoken of referent’s attributes (for example, the works of T. Davydova, H. Kost’, Yu. Kovalenko, I. Pancheko (Давидова 2015; Кость 2009; Коваленко 2020; Панченко 2016)). Thus, to avoid ambiguity we suggest differentiating the terms of exophoric and implicit references and in further analysis, we will use the original Halliday and Hassan’s idea and the term.

The characteristic feature of exophoric reference is that it “occurs regularly in spoken texts, but rarely in written ones” and it makes a written text acquire features similar to a spoken one (Ring 1986: 193). Exophoric pronouns, says R. Harré, “are those which are disambiguated for reference only if the hearer is fully apprised of the context of use, for instance, by being present on the occasion of utterance” (Harré 2000: 165). Exophoric reference may cause the by-product of the communication in the form of a physical action, as it is described by Ch. Goodwin (Goodwin 1981) such as selection, fetching, matching, etc.

Exophoric reference sometimes “is embedded in the longer-term history of interaction between the given participants, allowing them to have access to mutual knowledge” (Khachaturyan 2020: online). In other words, it may be used in composing a script of social activities “<...> even when a

particular group of interactants has never communicated before” (Khachaturyan 2020: online). In such cases, the interaction is culturally rooted and becomes the common knowledge for anyone in a social group (e.g., a benediction ritual analyzed in the cited work).

Exophoric reference in its classical form is used in the immediate interaction (as the founders of this theory state (Halliday et al 1976)), though they agree that it is hard to limit the exact time and space of the conversational situation because the time and space of the event is very subjective and impossible to measure. For this reason, the scientists distinguish between the specific and generalized exophora: the former being exophoric proper, the latter – homophoric “referring to the larger cultural context or presupposed knowledge” (Halliday et al 1976: 44).

The researchers agree that the borderline between the anaphoric and exophoric reference may be blurred and difficult to identify (Halliday et al 1976:45). We suggest that this characteristic is traced in long texts (for example, in sequences of dialogical passages in comments to an online text or in communication via social nets), as far as the material of our research is concerned.

Another aspect that needs to be taken into consideration is the role of referents when they are represented by personal pronouns (both endophorically and exophorically). As K. Wales states “These (prototypically human) referents have a wide variety of social and political roles and stances <...>. Given also that there is a wide variety of speech and written discourse situations beyond the canonical, they also display a richness of rhetorical and social connotations beyond the strictly denotational” (Wales 1996: 50).

The quoted statements and definitions as well as the review of works on the topic allow singling out the main features of the exophoric reference:

- *grammatically*, it is not limited by any of the traditionally identified classes of pronouns (or it has not been the object of scientific interest yet); it is not limited by any of the semantic-grammatical features of pronouns (person / non-person, definite / indefinite, countable / uncountable, etc.); it is logically built as anaphoric reference (the antecedent is deeply hidden in the context);
- *communicatively*, it presupposes the communicants’ common social-cultural background; the reference is temporal and may lose its communicative value and uniqueness in the course of time or may develop a symbolic culturally grounded meaning; it is communicatively tricky and may need disambiguation; it is a “directive” or a stimulus for further intellectual, emotional, or physical response in communication; it makes the text more speech-like and less formal. Exophoric use of personal pronouns is likely to be marked with regard to the specificity of the discursive situation.

Results and discussion

M. Khachaturyan remarks that “cognitive accessibility becomes one of the factors determining the choice of a deictic marker in exophoric reference” (Khachaturyan 2020: online). This statement concludes her analysis of specific actual communication; however, we believe it can be applied to the

cases of exophoric use of personal pronouns in Ukrainian texts on social-political issues where cognitive accessibility, in our opinion, means acquaintance with the object of reference within specific social-political context. This statement also explains why the material we analyze actually illustrates homophoric use of personal pronouns in social-political discourse, so in the Discussion part we will use the terms “exophoric” / “homophoric” hyper-hyponymously. Further, we will analyze the use of *вона*, *він*, *воно*, *вони* and prove that their homophoric use implies specific culturally and discursively dependent senses.

1. *Вона*

In one of previous election campaigns (2010), Ukrainian political party “Batktivshchyna” used the slogan *Вона працює* emphasizing the uniqueness of the party leader, Yulia Tymoshenko, as the only woman political leader of that period (Уколов 2010). The slogans were aimed to convince people that she was a very effective Prime Minister and had all the right to be a President. The texts of slogans were pragmatically organized into two types: enlightening Tymoshenko’s achievements (*Всупереч кризі зарплати бюджетникам без затримок. Вона працює; Всупереч кризі відроджено авіабудування. Вона працює*) and opposing her to others (*Вони балакають / обіцяють / заважають. Вона працює* (Лещенко 2009; Google Photos)). To avoid misunderstanding, the slogans are in red and white colours, which are symbolic for the party.

In the first group, the initial position of the noun *криза* focuses the addressees’ attention on the objective problematic economic state of the country and Tymoshenko’s efficiency; the adverb *всупереч* implies her resultativeness and stamina. The second group bases on the opposition *вона – вони*, where *вона* is good (*працювати* implies positive evaluation) and *вони* are bad (the verbs that complete the reference bear negative evaluation). The opposition *вона – вони* builds the cognitive and axiological border between the party *вона* presents and the rest of the Ukrainian political spectrum, and excludes cooperation or field for negotiation. Moreover, unlike *вона*, *вони* cannot be identified unanimously and the reference is ambiguous; “othering” or outgrouping of *вони* as one of the strategies of hate speech might increase split in the society and did not facilitate concord and agreement.

The occasional creative use of the pronoun *вона* in the political slogan became a push forward to its acquiring symbolic character and, as a consequence, changing and enriching the cultural background for the homophoric use. The party released one more slogan *Вона працює. Вона – це Україна* with Tymoshenko’s signature. It is possible that the pragmatic by-product was to have equaled Ukraine and Tymoshenko but it could not stop a negative cognitive symbolization of the pronoun and its referent in the perception of Tymoshenko’s opponents or critically thinking people.

As we mentioned before, the common cultural universe of the analyzed texts is Ukrainian social-political life. Social-political discourse nowadays is complicated by the active use of social

media, where the communicants have no mercy to the opponents, and Yu. Tymoshenko is no exception (Поліщук 2009). Tymoshenko was mocked in wise funny texts like <...> – “Тато, а що це за плакати:”Вони заважають, **вона** працює”. Хто ця “**вона**”?” – “Та це синку, **Криза**, яка почала передвиборчу кампанію <...>” (Prikol). The first pragmatic type of her political advertisements gives floor for intentional misinterpretation of the implied sense: if we restore the logical-grammatical anaphoric reference in **Всупереч кризі відроджено авіабудування. Вона працює** and the like, we have the chain of two elements *криза – вона* (Sing., Fem.), which is exploited in the joke. However, the generalized homophoric reference of *вона* to Tymoshenko disambiguates the sense because the noun *криза* is capitalized and followed by the implied referential attribute *яка почала передвиборчу кампанію*.

It is admitted that Ukrainian social-political discourse is marked by general disbelief and dislike of politicians. As a result, skepticism and negative evaluation has begun to prevail, and phrases like “Вони” і “вона” – *одна сатана; Вони зраджують, вона – кидає* (Поліщук 2009) appeared, destroying the initial message of the party. The symbolic sense of *вона* promoted its homophoric use in other short texts that imitated the syntactic structure and the generalized reference to Tymoshenko: there are hundreds of internet-memes like *Сонце встало, бо це вона працює; МВФ – банкує. Вона – працює* (Поліщук 2009); *Космоса лікують а вона працює; Луценко бухає. Вона працює* (Prikol), where the celebrities are named, but *вона* is “anonymous” though obvious. The texts may contain different case forms of *вона* or its possessive match (*В результаті її праці ми опинимось у сраці; І було б нам всім чудово, аж весь світ би заспівав // Якщо б в нас – та окрім **Неї!** – хоч Турчинов працював!* (Поліщук 2009)); the pronoun may be capitalized or capslocked (*Так у світі повелося: від роботи усі косять. // Усі косять, тільки – не **Вона!**; Народ бідує – **ВОНА** луївіттоннує!* (Поліщук 2009)).

And finally, the highest generalization of homophoric *вона* is achieved in texts produced by Russian-speaking communicants: <...> *У **Воны** и Киборгов есть принципиальная разница: Киборги выстояли, а **Вона** просто не тонет; <...> **ВОНА**, внимательно посмотрев финал Евровидения, решила срочно отрастить бороду, чтобы получить хоть минимальный, но шанс – победить на президентских выборах 25 мая!! <...>* (Prikol). These cases, in our opinion, present the quintessence of symbolic homophoric *вона*: the reference is clear and obvious because the cognitive accessibility is supported by the pronoun *вона* that is occasionally borrowed by another language, capitalized and capslocked, which emphasizes its importance and personal name-like use; the pronoun is used in an intentionally created grammatical form – the pronoun has the ending of the Fem. Gender Gen. Case (*у **Воны***) that follows that form of Russian nouns of these grammatical characteristics. These examples show that in Ukrainian social-political discourse, Ukrainian

influences Russian, and the cognitive accessibility and recognisability of the referent allows transmitting the same senses in Russian.

Although the number of negatively coloured cases of exophoric *вона* outnumbers, we should admit that the “original” positive sense of ***Вона працює*** still exists and is used to refer to independent, active and creative women who made their way in the profession in spite of problems and the men-centered world (***Вона працює: історії українок, котрі зробили улюблену справу професією*** (Ksenia Schnaider 2016)). Outside the social-political discourse, the reference to Yu. Tymoshenko is vague and hardly understandable for those who are young or far from politics, however, this homophoric *вона* appeared and got its social-cultural and pragmatic status in Tymoshenko’s presidential election campaign of 2009-2010.

2. Він

The newest politicians appear to be quickly reflected in the “exo-referential” chains (the term is ours – *Ya. S.*). One example of exophoric *він* was found in Yu. Andrukhovych’s text where the reference is made to the current President V. Zelensky: ***Він*** сказав їй: «Тобі личить моє кохання» – і провістив золотий вік. І Україна його почула. Але, що гірше, – йому повірила (Андрухович 2020). Logical textual referential chain with *він* from the formal-grammatical view refers to the street photographer Buma Tutelman. However, the person who the author refers to becomes clear only if the reader is aware of the background of our President and his artistic images. This exophoric reference is communicatively efficient if the reader knows that the phrase *Тобі личить моє кохання* is the commercial slogan of one of the Ukrainian jewelry houses *Zoloty Vik*, and that V.Zelensky used to be its face before he was elected the President. The author fixates the reference of *він* to the person outside the text by attaching to the article an advertisement on one of the jewelry shops with V. Zelensky’s photo.

The use of *він* differs from the use of *вона* immensely. First and foremost, it is an occasional use, the only example we have. Grammatically, exophoric use of this pronoun has not developed into the set of forms (standard or deviant) that would allow its use in other texts. Cognitive accessibility of the politician is limited, which made the author anticipate possible misunderstanding and use Zelensky’s photo. Pragmatically, this exophora implies the sexist sense that any woman is the object of seduction with jewelry, and the author, for whom Ukraine is the embodiment of a woman, comes to the sad conclusion that she believed the sweet words of an indecent man.

3. Воно

Unlike *він*, the pronoun *воно* is often used in reference to V. Zelensky and other politicians or persons from social-political sphere in anaphoric, cataphoric and exophoric chains. Here, we analyze only exophoric use though other cases are worth mentioning as well because they help understand its socio-political and linguistic reasoning.

When applied to humans of masculine or feminine sex, *воно* in anaphoric and cataphoric referential chains implies specific communicative senses and has specific pragmatic effect. We have already mentioned humorous-derogative effect of neuter gender and reference to people as *воно*: “<...> in colloquial speech in Ukrainian it may be used with disdain or caress or their mixture with reference to a person of any gender” (Sazonova 2020: 239). We illustrated this use by examples from blogs in Surzhyck and from other sources in Ukrainian to conclude that the senses that neuter grammatical gender and the pronoun *воно*, in particular, imply accentuate the person’s misery, mental inability, lack of decency and unmanly behavior. In our opinion, the Ukrainian neuter gender has been elaborating these senses for centuries (e.g. *Що старе, що мале, що дурне* (proverb); *Поїзд їде, воно лізе* (Andrii Danylko); *В кого ти таке дурне вдалося?* (from colloquial speech)). The possibility to use *воно* in co-referential chains with nouns of masculine or feminine gender may be considered a nationally preconditioned homophoric potential of neuter gender and of *воно*.

Taking into account this cultural background reflected in the actual use of *воно*, we preclude that its use in exophoric reference is limited and is characteristic to the bearers of opposing to the referent views when they intentionally mark the referent negatively. For example, communicants may use *воно* in online discussion of social-political issues in the comments to some text or in social nets or chat-platforms where they react to some social-political event. This communication is similar to a live dialogue, and each phrase and response is a micro-text, a block. Sometimes, it is difficult to trace the original block which the response refers to – the anaphora loses its antecedent and exophora begins ([1] *Я не знаю українських законів, и меня с самого начала удивляло, как так клоун, это недоразумение, все решает как-будто царь с абсолютной властью! В Болгарии у президента почти такие же полномочия как и в Украине. После выборов он пытался что-то говорить, он ставленник Кремля, но ему быстро указали его место. – [4 blocks] – [6] Воно просто не знало, що казати та ляпало язиком перше* (Anti-Colorados 2019)). The antecedent of *воно* in block [6] is not named though the implication in [1] is easily understood if the reader knows the background of the President and associations that allowed his opponents to create his mocking metaphoric nominations like “a clown” or “a nuisance”, for example. Moreover, the author of block [1] describes a similar case with a Bulgarian president, using the verb *говорить* that helps create the link between the blocks (in block [6] the communicant uses *казати* and *ляпало язиком*). Here, the mismatch between the person’s sex (masculine) and the preceding nouns (*клоун, президент* – masculine) do not prevent the communicants from effective sharing ideas because the dominant evaluative message is successful: derogatory nominations *клоун* and *недоразумение* fit the derogatory *воно* in response.

4. Вони

Exophoric *вони* is not numerous in the analyzed texts. Univocal exophora is, for example, in the text of “Sluha narodu”’s slogan *Зробимо їх* разом or in already described “Batkivshchyna”’s text *Вони балакають / обіцяють / заважають. Вона працює*.

“Sluha narodu”’s slogan is intentionally built to suit the general trend of the newly created party – to unite people of different ideological mindsets and present the platform of unity regardless of ideology (Балабан 2019). Whether the slogan worked or not is the object of sociologists’ research; linguistic-pragmatic aspect shows that the opposition “we” – “they” is double-natured: on the one hand, it splits the electorate, on the other, consolidates the part that supports the party (the group of “against all”, “pro-Russian” group and “anyone but not Poroshenko” one (Пекар 2019). The cognitive accessibility of the referent of *вони* is unclear, it is subjective and variable – it might be the current authorities, old elites, oligarchs, corruption, Poroshenko and his supporters and others¹ (Балабан 2019: 159). Here, exophoric use of *вони* fits the pragmatic trend in English where it may be used to refer to the authorities in colloquial speech. This pragmatic sense needs further investigation and may become the object of contrastive studies of several languages.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of exophoric reference, as it is given by Halliday and Hassan, is distinctive and should not be confused with implicit reference. The use of personal pronouns in exo-referential chains reveals social roles of referents and implies extralingual information about the communicants. Exophoric reference in social-political discourse is subjective, axiologically dependent, temporal, communicatively tricky and pragmatically efficient. Subjectivity and axiological dependence influence the pragmatic effect – joining the group or outgrouping the opponent with regard to the ideological background of the communicants; temporality goes in concord with the topicality of this or that social-political problem or the involved person; communicative efficiency depends on the background of the communicants and their involvement in the social-political life.

Ukrainian system of personal pronouns allows using them in exo-reference and serving the needs of social-political discourse. The analysis of exophoric use of personal pronouns *він, вона, воно, вони* showed that the mechanisms that facilitate this use are different: from occasional artistic use (*він*) or occasional creation of political slogans, which accumulate the political reasoning (*вони*) or suit the leading person (*вона*), to exploiting the already existing in the Ukrainian language derogatory pragmatic effect (*воно*).

The study proves that exophoric use of personal pronouns in the social-political discourse reflects universal trends in languages (the use of *вони*) and nationally specific ones (*воно*) – we

¹ At the moment, the party is going to refuse from the slogan and exophoric *вони* because it has lost its pragmatic sense “to oppose the authorities”: “There are several senses we will use, for example, “Let’s solve it together” – it means increasing the access to making decisions for people, people power”. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2020/07/29/7261060/>

suggest to consider it a nationally preconditioned homophoric potential of *воно*. Once occasional, exophoric *вона працює* developed a symbolic sense and may be viewed as the most long-lasting discursive exophora out of the set analyzed in this article. According to the cognitive accessibility, the personal pronouns used in exo-reference can be presented in the line of unambiguity where the least ambiguous is *вона* and the most ambiguous is *вони*.

The perspectives of further studies of the exophoric use of pronouns belong to the field of contrastive studies, applied linguistics and communicative linguistics as well as social and political sciences.

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