POSITIVE EXPRESSIVE SPEECH ACTS COMPLIMENTING AND SELF-COMPLIMENTING IN THE NOVEL *CIOCOII VECHI ŞI NOI*

Roxana-Florentina FLUERAŞU
University of Bucharest
roxanafluerasu@yahoo.com

Abstract:

The present paper aims at analysing some specific aspects regarding the functioning of compliment and self-compliment -speech acts belonging to the category of positively perceived expressives- in a literary text, Nicolae Filimon's novel "*Ciocoii vechi şi noi*"[1]. The purpose of the paper is to highlight the role of these subtypes of speech acts in contouring a human typology characterized by a specific relational system. The following parameters are taken into account: the environment in which the speech acts are produced, the target addressees, the object of the speech acts (concrete or abstract, moral or physical features of the addressee) and the value (inherently positive or attributed by the speaker) of the elements that mark the illocutionary force as positive. In the novel under consideration, there is a dichotomy between the characters with high moral qualities and the parvenus –a social type definitory for the Phanariot times. Author's intention is to emphasize the victory of good and healthy moral principles.

Keywords:

Expressive speech acts, complimenting, self-complimenting, literary text, illocutionary force.

1. The category of expressives within the Speech Act Theory

Expressives have a special status both in the classical version of the speech acts theory, belonging to J. Austin and J. Searle, and in its later developments (Vanderveken 1988; Gilbert 1999; Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2001). From the first variants of taxonomy, expressive speech acts were regarded as an independent category. Although it was labelled differently

[1] „The Old and New Parvenus".

BDD-A20386 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 23:04:51 UTC)

(behavioural or behabitive acts for Austin, expressive acts for Searle), this category was defined quite similarly, taking into account the fact that the speakers use expressive acts in order to express feelings and attitudes. The analysis of the expressive acts brought forward the heterogeneous structure of this category. The multiple functionality of the acts included in this category explains the temporary state of the classifications suggested so far. The conventional, ceremonial and somehow predictable status of this category is another feature which was continuously pointed out.

These acts are defined as a speaker's attempt to express a certain attitude regarding certain features or actions of the interlocutor or of her/himself (in the case of self-addressed acts), their sincerity condition requiring that the speaker should really posses the feeling that (s)he transmits. The propositional content condition is that the act should be related to an action or feature of the aimed addressee.

The psychological state expressed by the category of acts under consideration represents, in our opinion, a relevant criterion for its sub-categorisation. According to the mentioned criterion, one can distinguish between acts which express positive affects (compliment, praise, boast) and acts which express negative affects (insult, criticism, self-criticism). These two types correspond to the concepts of *face flattering acts* and *face threatening acts* from the politeness theory postulated by Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1996, p. 51-54). The speaker's statements have an evaluative function since they express admiration for or resentment against the state of facts presented by the content of the uttered sentence. The evaluation perspective is a subjective one and the use of expressive speech acts in interaction appeals to non-linguistic competences (of social, cultural-ideological, etc. order) different from one community to another, apart from the communicative competence. Speaker's attitude is expressed through the linguistic elements which accomplish the role of markers of the illocutionary force. Some of these markers have an inherently positive or negative value, but there are also neutral lexical units, with a positive or negative axiological value attributed by the speaker.

On the basis of their capacity of indicating different attitudes or psycho-emotional states experienced by the speaker during an interaction, in the series of expressives are included: the compliment, the praise, the self-compliment (by means of which the speaker expresses affinity, appreciation, admiration, approval), the insult, the criticism, the self-criticism, the blame, the accusal (expressing dislike, contempt, indignation, discontent, disapproval of the speaker), the gratitude (used to express gratefullness), the apology (as a form of verbalising regret, remorse), the greeting (as a means of showing interest and affability towards the receiver or joy/surprise of

BDD-A20386 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 23:04:51 UTC)

meeting her/him), the wish, the congratulation and the empathy (understood as verbal evidence from the speaker in taking part in the joy or sadness of the interlocutor). The acts are oriented towards the addressee, except for the self-compliment and the self-criticism, which represent special cases, since they are oriented towards the speaker.

In the case of a compliment, the speaker expresses her/his feelings of admiration, affinity or appreciation regarding different aspects related to the interlocutor. The successful utterance of a compliment involves the co-presence of the speaker and the addressee in the communicative setting and the sincerity of the speaker regarding the speech act; at the same time, the content of the sentence has to assign a positive attribute to the addressee, given the lack of evidence that this attribute would be surprised by the addressee.

2. The place of expressive acts in the literay text

Literary texts include simulated conversations, with a certain number of features depending on the conditions of their production and receiving, but all the statements belong to a unique sender, who can multiply him/herself. The diversity of lexical choices is thus influenced by the author's intentions and by the nature of the text. The characters are only apparently authors of their own utterances; in fact, they are manipulated by the writer, in order to express her/his intentions.

In the analysed novel the speech acts of complimenting highlight speaker's attempt to create or to maintain an affable relationship with the target-addressee of the act. In some situations, the favourable evaluation included in the compliments highlights a certain social-emotional connection between the characters (between servants and masters or between people having the same social status), while in others, the dissimulated behaviour of the characters, which is quite obvious, implies breaking the sincerity conditions of the acts (especially in the relationship of the parvenus with their masters). Self-compliments (boasts) are related to moral, behavioural or attitudinal characteristics, self-attributed by the sender.

3. Expressive acts in the novel *Ciocoii vechi şi noi*

The novel *Ciocoii vechi şi noi sau ce se naşte din pisică şoareci mănâncă*[2] describes the ascending and the collapse of Dinu Păturică, the type of new parvenu. The author brings in front of the reader two groups of characters placed in a perfect symmetry. The negative characters, Dinu Păturică, Chera Duduca, Andronache Tuzluc, Domnul Caragea, Chir Costea Chiorul, have their correspondents, at the other end of the scale: Gheorghe,

[2] "The Old and New Parvenus or What the Cat Gives Birth to Eats Mice"

BDD-A20386 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 23:04:51 UTC)

Banul C., Maria and Grigore Ghica. Focusing on the process of social ascent in the Phanariot times, the writer insists on the negative characters. He proves a sharp spirit of observation in presenting them, noticing gestures, words, attitudes. At the same time, he explicitly evaluates the characters' behaviour, interferes his moral appreciations, being meant to orient the reader's attitude (metacommunicative aspects). The positive characters are less conspicuous as their presence is meant by the author to suggest that the good and the healthy moral principles are always victorious.

The narrator manages to concentrate within the main character, Dinu Păturică, the attributes of a social type that defines the Phanariot times– the parvenu, presented as a factor of social dissolution. In the author's opinion, which was largely acknowledged in the epoch, the contact with the cultural models and mentality brought by the Phanariots in the Principalities had as a result the corruption of the traditional values and social behaviour. The writer follows in detail the evolution of the character; the humble appearance of the young man hides a force dominated by the thirst for social promotion, which governs his relationships with the other characters. Dinu Păturică's portrait takes shape in the course of the story: his physical features, his gestures, his mimic, his clothes, the inner spaces talk about his social status, his economical and cultural level. His moral portrait becomes richer as he climbs step by step the road to social ascension and finally, to decay.

A. The compliment

In the mentioned novel, the speech acts of complimenting, which have the physical appearance or the moral features of the addressees as their object, highlight either the conventional sociability among characters with the same social status or the dissimulated attitude of the characters with low social status towards those in a superior social position. Sincere compliments refer to the relationship between parents and children or to love relations, while the senders of unsincere compliments are mostly the parvenus.

In the discussion between Banul C[3]. and Maria, the father's appreciation aims at the physical beauty of his daughter: *Mario, tu te faci din zi în zi mai frumoasă şi te deschizi întocmai ca un trandafir la razele soarelui.* (p. 18) / *Maria, you become more beautiful day by day and you open up like a rose to the rays of the sun*; *Ştii, dragă Mario – urmă el -, că măria-sa doamna şi toate cocoanele nu mai vorbesc decât de frumuseţea ta?* (p. 18) / *You know, Maria dear, that her Highness and all the ladies only talk about your beauty?*. Compliments are expressed through declarative or interrogative sentences. The subjectivity of the speaker's

[3] Ban - a high rank in the feudal hierarchy in Wallachia.

BDD-A20386 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 23:04:51 UTC)

appreciation, expressed by the qualifying adjective *frumoasă* (*beautiful)* and the comparative structure *te deschizi întocmai ca un trandafir la razele soarelui* (*you open up like a rose to the rays of the sun*), is diminished by mentioning an exterior competent point of view: *măria-sa doamna şi toate cocoanele nu mai vorbesc decât de frumuseţea ta* (*her Highness and all the ladies only talk about your beauty*), which gains the value of a strong argument.

The beauty of Duduca (the mistress of the court marshal Andronache Tuzluc, who brought him to ruin, admitted by all the characters of the novel, is not neglected by Dinu Păturică either (the central parvenu of the novel). The dialogue between Duduca and Dinu indicates an attempt of closeness between them: - *În sănătatea cocoanei Duducăi, cea mai frumoasă din toate femeile Bucureştiului.; - Astea sunt linguşiri, ştrengarule! răspunse greaca luând o poziţiune şi mai invitătoare.; - Nu, nicidecum; ba încă, dacă voieşti să spui adevărul, eşti mai frumoasă decât Afrodita din mitologie*. (p. 55) / *I drink in honour of Lady Duduca, the most beautiful of all women in Bucharest; This is all flattery, you rascal! answered the Greek, posing even more inviting.; No, not at all, even more, if you want me to tell the truth, you are more beautiful than Aphrodite from mythology.* In order to convince her of the truth of his sayings, since Duduca notices the exaggeration when Păturică uses the absolute superlative *cea mai frumoasă din toate femeile Bucureştiului* (*the most beautiful of all women in Bucharest*), the parvenu recommences the compliment referring to the Godess Aphrodite, known for her armonious physical features. The dissimulated attitude at the beginning of the dialogue (when he tries to please her so that Duduca won't suspect the real reason for his moving from the court of squire Andronache Tuzluc: her surveillance) is dissimulated by means of the compliment iterated in an enhanced form.

In exchange, the compliment of the squire Andronache Tuzluc highlights his sincere admiration towards Chera Duduca: *Dumnezeule! cât eşti de frumoasă, Duduco!* (p. 137) / *Oh, my God, how beautiful you are, Duduca!*. The appreciation directly aims at his interlocutor and the exclamatory sentence is a hint of the high level of emotional involvement of the speaker in the discourse. The interjection *Dumnezeule!* (*Oh, my God!*) and the exclamatory structure *cât de* (*how*) contextually represent linguistic means of showing a powerful subjectivity.

Chera Duduca is honest when she addresses compliments to Păturică. His favourable evaluation contained in the compliments highlights a certain socio-affective connection between the sender and the target-receiver of the act: *Auzi colo! Să sperie cineva atât de mult pe un flăcăiaş aşa de frumos şi muchelef! Să n-ai grijă de nimica, o să trăieşti în casa mea ca la pieptul maicei tale.* (p. 47) / *One can hear that! Such a handsome and*

BDD-A20386 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 23:04:51 UTC)

jiggle young man got so frightened! Don't worry, you will live in my house like at your mother's breast!; *Știi tu că eu de mult te iubesc și nu cutezam să-ți spui, căci mă temeam să nu fii vreun berbant; dar fapta ta de astă-noapte, dragostea și credința despre care mi-ai dat dovadă m-au făcut sa-mi iau hotărârea ... Vino, dar, dragă, în brațele mele! Nu te sfii, Dinule; eu te iubesc căci ești tânăr și frumos, ești plin de foc și de mândrețe.* (p. 55) / *You know I have loved you for a long time and I didn't dare to tell you because I was afraid you were a rake; but what you did last night, the love and faith you have proved made me decide ... Therefore, dear, come into my arms! Don't be shy, Dinu; I love you because you are young and handsome, passionate and stunner*. The evaluative terms make reference to physical or moral features of the addressee. The interlocutor's beauty, youth or pride are captured in an exclamatory structure: *așa de frumos și muchelef* (*such a handsome and jiggle young man*) or by using qualitative coordinated adjectives *tânăr și frumos*, *plin de foc și de mândrețe* (*young and handsome, passionate and stunner*). The choice of the evaluative terms can be explained by certain strategic reasons of the character: Chera Duduca tries to flatter Dinu Păturică in order to use him as an ally in the attempt to spoliate Tuzluc.

In some situations, Duduca's admiration towards the interlocutor (Dinu) is implicitly contained in the positive evaluation of some external elements (for example, the clothes): *O fi precum zici, dar, uite, te văz îmbrăcat bine, cu giubea, cu anteriu, cu fermenă, cu papuci galbeni și cu fes de Țarigrad; pare că ești scos din cutie ...* (p. 46) / *May it be as you say, but, look, I can see you are well-dressed, with a fur coat, with a surplice, with an embroidered coat, with yellow shoes and Țarigrad fez hat; it seems that you are spick-and-span*. The favourable evaluation *îmbrăcat bine* (*well-dressed*), augmented by the enumeration of the clothing pieces *cu giubea, cu anteriu, cu fermenă, cu papuci galbeni și cu fes de Țarigrad* (*with a fur coat, with a surplice, with an embroidered coat, with yellow shoes and Țarigrad fez hat*), is concentrated in the conclusive formula *ești scos din cutie* (*you are spick-and-span*).

The sincere compliment is also initiated by the squire Andronache Tuzluc. When evaluating the court bailiff Gheorghe (however, the only trustful servant), the evaluative terms refer to elements of moral order: *Ei bine, ești om cinstit, sunt mulțămit de tine și la ziua mea o să te fac șătrar.* (p. 64) / *Well, you are an honest man and on my birthday, I shall make you a camp commander*.

The same positive evaluation of the bailiff is also observed in the reply of a character like the old nurse Iana: *Stăpâne! Acest june atât de milostiv și cu inimă bună este boierul cel necunoscut care de atâta timp ne*

BDD-A20386 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 23:04:51 UTC)

dă mijloace de viețuire; (p. 186) / *Oh, master! This young man who is so merciful and good-hearted is the unknown squire who has been offering us a living for so long*. The inherently positive meaning of the evaluative terms *milostiv* (*merciful*) and *bună* (*good*) is intensified in the structure *atât de milostiv și cu inimă bună* (*so merciful and good-hearted*). One needs to notice the fact that in this case the positively characterised target addressee is a third person, who is present in the communication situation.

In the compliments initiated between parvenus one can distinguish the attitude that is specific to this social category: dissimulation. The features appreciated by the parvenus are the skills to arrange things or favourable faith. They represent the object of some exagerated compliments, that are addressed to Dinu Păturică by the other parvenus, who want to take advantage of his acknowledged superiority: *Și ce am putea să născocim noi mai mult decât tine, care știi câte în lume și în soare?* (p. 108) / *And what could we possibly invent more than you, who knows everything?*; *Aferim, nene Păturică! Tu nu faci lucrurile pe jumătate.* (p. 111) / *Well done, mister Păturică! You don't do things by halves.*; *Nenorocire! ... Și chiar la dumneata, care ești cel mai mare prieten al norocului! Asta nu e de crezut!* (p. 167) / *Bad luck! ... And to you, who are the good luck's best friend! This is unbelievable!*. In the interrogative and exclamatory utterance we can notice a high intensity level of positive evaluation: *ce am putea să născocim noi mai mult decât tine, care știi câte în lume și în soare?* (*what could we possibly invent more than you, who knows everything?*)*; chiar la dumneata, care ești cel mai mare prieten al norocului!* (*And to you, who are the good luck's best friend!*).

The compliments are sometimes mutual. Dinu Păturică praises another parvenu, referring to elements of moral order: *Bravo, Năstase, ești un mare om.* (p. 190) / *Well done, Năstase, you are a great man*. The positive axiological value of the expressive act, reflected by the abstractization of the meaning of the noun "man", is confirmed by the adjective used with connotative meaning (*great*). The word order change (*a great man*) triggers stylistic effects.

B. The self-compliment (the boast)

A subjective judgement with a positive pattern applied to one's own persona appears in different situations. For example, in the dialogue between the ban C. and the prince Caragea, the ban does not agree to marry his daughter without her consent, even if the request belongs to the prince: *Unul din obiceiele mele, bune sau rele, este a spune adevărul: nu voi, măria-ta, să amăgesc pe nimeni și cu atât mai puțin pe stăpânul meu.* (p. 24) / *One of my habits, good or bad, is to tell the truth: your highness, I don't*

BDD-A20386 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 23:04:51 UTC)

want to deceive anybody, and least of all, my master.; in Dinu Păturică's dialogue with Constantin, another parvenu who tries to get a job at Păturică's court: - *Ştiu să fac împliniri de bani; am fost eu vinăriciul, cu oieritul şi cu fumăritul.; - Aşa de tânăr?; - Da, stăpâne; tata mă lua cu dânsul prin judeţ de-l ajutam la taxidărie.; - Da ceva elinica te-a învăţat tată-tău?; - De! Ce să zic, stăpâne? ... Mă cam pricep puţintel. Am învăţat pedagoghia şi eclogarion din scoarţă până în scoarţă; dar tocmai când era să încep la grammatichi, m-a trimis tata la înălţimea-voastră!* (p. 34) / *I am very good at raising money; I used to collect the wine tax, the sheep tax and the chimney tax.; So young?; Yes, my master; my father used to take me with him in the district to help him collect the taxes.; Has your father taught you any Greek?; Well! What should I say, my master? ... I know a few things. I learned pedagogy and the entire Eclogarion; but when I was about to start grammar, my father sent me to your highness.*; in Păturică's flattering acts directed to his master: *Când este vorba să te slujesc pe domnia-ta, stăpâne, sunt gata a trece chiar prin foc; spune-mi numai ce am să fac şi vei vedea.* (p. 38) / *When it comes to serving your highness, my master, I am even ready to walk through fire; just tell me what I have to do and you shall see*. Self-compliments appear with reference to the sender's features of moral, behavioural or attitudinal order, features that are evaluated in appreciative terms: sincerity, good qualification, loyalty. The declarative statements focus on a certain quality, while the exclamatory and interrogative statements: *De! Ce să zic, stăpâne?* (*Well! What should I say, my master?*), attached to the declarative ones, contribute to creating a certain suspense in waiting for the answer (highlighting staged modesty on behalf of the speaker). The metaphoric idioms *am învăţat pedagoghia şi eclogarion din scoarţă până în scoarţă* (*I learned pedagogy and the entire Eclogarion*) or *sunt gata a trece chiar prin foc* (*I am even ready to walk through fire*) indicate a certain exaggeration of the capacity to assimilate and of the availability to obey the master's requests, in order to be liked by the interlocutor.

The servant's will to sacrify himself for his mistress' well-being also appears as an object of the self-compliment: *Am înţeles, milostiva mea, şi sînt gata a suferi şi mai mari pedepse decât acestea, fără a mă plânge, căci stăpână-meu te iubeşte şi eu trebuie să sufăr orice mi s-ar întâmpla dupe urma domnii-sale* (p. 46) / *I have understood, my merciful lady, and I am ready to suffer even greater punishments than these, without complaining, because my master loves you and I have to suffer everything that happens to me on his behalf*. Dinu Păturică's determination in convincing Chera Duduca of his loyalty to the court marshal Tuzluc, and, implicitly, in getting her trust can be noticed in the parvenu's statement*: sînt gata a suferi şi mai*

BDD-A20386 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 23:04:51 UTC)

mari pedepse decât acestea, fără a mă plânge (*I am ready to suffer even greater punishments than these, without complaining*).

In the speech act of self-complimenting one can notice a certain exaggeration of the speaker's own position in the social hierarchy and of the high appreciation he benefits from. The boast is directly verbalised by Radu, the great satârgi-başa, while he was crossing Vlăsiei woods, with Dinu Păturică, in order to inspect the court of Andronache Tuzluc: *N-ai nici o teamă, cocoane; ţi-am spus că am fost nefer la spătărie şi n-or fi ei nebuni să se lege de oameni, când îi văd cu mine. Ei! din câte i-am scăpat eu! Ia întreabă-i numai, să-ţi spuie: ar mai fi astăzi vreunul din ei nepus în ţeapă, dacă n-ar şti să se poarte cu oamenii stăpânirei?* (p. 72) / *You shouldn't fear, my lord; I told you I was a great soldier and they aren't mad so as to assault people when they see them with me. Well, well! I have saved them from many troubles! Simply ask them to tell you: would there be today any of them left unimpaled, if they had not known how to treat the command men?*, or by a direct servant of the lord who came to ask Păturică to help him become district deputy at the court marshal Andronache's command: *Să-i spui că neamul meu a slujit ţărei de la descălecătoare, că am şi eu ceva cunoştinţe de slujbă, că mă voi sili a nu nemulţumi lumea pe unde voi fi, ci dimpotrivă a aduce laude şi binecuvântări domniei-sale şi măriei-sale lui vodă…* (p. 82) / *Tell him that my family has served the country since dismounting times, that I am good at what I do, that I will do my best not to disappoint anybody wherever I'll be, but to praise and bless his highness the emperor*. The boast is indirectly formulated when the prince Caragea suggests to the ban C. the consequences of his refusal to give his daughter's hand to Dinu Păturică: *Ai uitat oare că padişahul mi-a dat sabie şi topuz ca să vă sfărâm oasele când vă veţi răzvrăti?* (p. 25) / *Have you forgotten that the padishah had given me a sword and a sceptre to break your bones whenever you uprise?*, expressing, indirectly, a threatening act. In order to convince his interlocutor of the truth of his sayings, the sender mentions some concrete situations: *am fost nefer la spătărie* (*I was a great soldier*), *neamul meu a slujit ţărei de la descălecătoare* (*my familiy has served the country since dismounting times*). The exclamatory constructions *Ei! din câte i-am scăpat eu!* (*Well, well! I have saved them from many situations!*) and the interrogative construction *Ai uitat oare că padişahul mi-a dat sabie şi topuz ... ?* (*Have you forgotten that the padishah had given me a sword and a sceptre?*) create different possibilities of expressing the object of self-complimenting by means of their indefinite character.

Self-complimenting also indicates interlocutor's possibility to reward accordingly the one who would do her/him a favour. The prince Alesandru Ipsilant, for instance, suggests to Dinu Păturică to become his

BDD-A20386 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 23:04:51 UTC)

ally to get the country's throne: *Răvaşul consulului zice curat că eşti cel mai întreprinzător şi mai îndemânatic dintre boieri; fă-mi dar această slujbă şi te voi face cel mai bogat dintre toţi ... Cunoşti puterea mea, ştii că sunt ocrotit de marea împărăţie; lucrează pentru mine şi norocirea ta e făcută.* (p. 180) / *The consul's letter clearly states that you are the most pushful and skillful of the squires; therefore, do this for me and I shall make you the richest of them all ... You know my power, you know I am protected by the great empire; work for me and your luck is arranged*. Reffering to common knowledge that should highlight the speaker's power in society, but also the added promise: *te voi face cel mai bogat dintre toţi* (*I shall make you the richest of them all*)*, norocirea ta e făcută* (*your luck is arranged*), are meant to enhance the persuasive function of the act: *cunoşti puterea mea, ştii că sunt ocrotit de marea împărăţie* (*You know my power, you know I am protected by the great empire*).

Some other times, self-complimenting expresses the wish of the parvenu Dinu Păturică and Neculăiţă (the bailiff of the provost marshal M...) to individualize themselves among those with the same rank: *Ei bine, boieri, fiţi cu băgare de seamă, că am să vă fac o socoteală cu tahmin, ca să vedeţi că vorba mea e vorbă;* (p. 106) / *Well, well, squires, pay attention, because I shall make an approximate counting for you so that you shall see I keep my word; Unul e Neculăiţă, nu sunt doi. O să-mi fac o păreche de case să le întreacă pe ale armaşului; saraiuri, bre, nu glumă!* (p. 110) / *Neculăiţă is one, not two. I shall build a pair of houses better than those of the provost marshal, palaces, not else!*. In the above examples, the object of the parvenu's boast resides in underlining the strength of the opinions that were communicated to the others: *vorba mea e vorbă* (*I keep my word*) and in praising his skill of cheating on the master (perceived as a quality by the other parvenu): *unul e Neculăiţă, nu sunt doi* (*Neculăiţă is one, not two*).

Self-boasting is sometimes indirectly expressed. The court marshal Andronache Tuzluc makes reference to the generous way in which he treats his mistress: *Să te ferească Dumnezeu de una ca aceasta. Amoreaza postelnicului Andronache nu va purta niciodată rochii de maniţă şi de bogasiu.* (p. 138) / *God protect you from something like that. The mistress of the court marshal Andronache will never wear dresses made of cheap material*; *Nu te teme despre preţ, adaose postelnicul, cam atins la mândrie. Scoate tot ce ai mai bun şi voi plăti cu bani peşim (gata).* (p. 140) / *Don't be afraid of the price, added the court marshal, touched in his pride. Take out what you have best and I will pay cash.*; *Ia orice-ţi place: ia chiar toată marfa lui Costea, ca să vezi că pentru amorul tău sânt în stare să jărtfesc chiar viaţa mea.* (p. 140) / *Take everything you like, you can even take Costea's entire merchandise, so that you can see that I am able to sacrifice*

BDD-A20386 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 23:04:51 UTC)

my life for your love. Boast that is expressed in declarative statements aims at highlighting the speaker's generosity.

Boast also evidentiates a dissimulated behaviour. Dumitrache, one of the squire's servants, declares: *Eu fac ca filosoful; vorbesc puţin şi ascult mult, adecă îmi fac capul ceaslov de havadişuri, fără ca alţii să poată afla ceva de la mine.* (p. 149) / *I act as the philosopher; I talk little and listen a lot, meaning I aquire a lot of information, but nobody ever finds out something from me*. The noun *filosof* (*philosopher*) is explained by means of the self-evaluations *vorbesc puţin, ascult mult* (*I talk little and I listen a lot*) and by the appositive structure *adecă îmi fac capul ceaslov de havadişuri, fără ca alţii să poată afla ceva de la mine* (*meaning I aquire a lot of information, but nobody ever finds out something from me*).

The experience aquired along appears as an object of self-complimenting in the casual encounter of Niculăiţă, the bailiff of the provost marshal M., with Dinu Păturică: *Ascultă-mă pe mine, că sunt lup bătrân, am dat cu capul de pragul de sus şi am văzut pe cel de jos.* (p. 43) / *Listen to me because I am an old wolf, I have knocked my head against the upper wall and I have seen the lower*. The self-assigned position of the experienced one (in our case, Niculăiţă), which can be noticed in the metaphorical construction *lup bătrân* (*old wolf*), is comprised in the structure of a folk saying *am dat cu capul de pragul de sus şi am văzut pe cel de jos* (*I have knocked my head against the upper wall and I have seen the lower*).

Other features that appear as object of self-complimenting are the sincerity assumed by one of the court marshal Tuzluc's servants: *Eu nu pricep nimic din câte îmi spui: eşti beat?; O fi ş-asta, cocoane, dar eu spui adevărul.* (p. 166) / *I don't understand anything you are telling me: are you drunk?; It may also be that, my master, but I am telling the truth*, and the knowledge of the psychology and human behaviour that Alesandru Ipsilant claims (the Romanians): *Astea sunt vorbe, arhon stolnice; eu cunosc foarte bine pe români. Ei îţi făgăduiesc astăzi totul şi mîne nu-ţi dă nimic.* (p. 202) / *These are words, my great steward; I know the Romanians very well; they promise everything today and they don't give you anything tomorrow*, or Neagu Rupe-Piele, Păturică's servant from the times he was a tax farmer (the great people): *Fiindcă cunosc prea bine pe oamenii cei mari* (p. 212) / *Because I know the great people very well*. The speakers aim at highlighting a point of view that corresponds to reality: *spui adevărul* (*I am telling the truth*), *cunosc foarte bine pe români* (*I know the Romanians very well*), *cunosc prea bine pe oamenii cei mari* (*I know the great people very well*).

BDD-A20386 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 23:04:51 UTC)

4. Conclusions

The study of expressive acts from the perspective of the positive connotations they carry evidentiates, on the one hand, the conventional sociability among characters with the same social level, and on the other hand, the dissimulated attitude of characters with a low social status towards those on a superior level. The above analysed examples indicate the fact that the target of complimenting or of self-complimenting is represented by the physical aspect, by moral, inner features or by the people's social behaviour. Regarding the compliments, one can distinguish between sincere compliments, associated with the relationship between parents and children or with love relations, and unsincere compliments, whose senders are mostly the social parvenus the author describes. The speech act of boasting can be directly or indirectly formulated.

The most frequent category of lexical-semantic units that carry a positive judgement of value, that is defining for speech acts of complimenting and self-complimenting, illustrated in the selected examples, is represented by the adjectives with appreciative lexical meaning. The qualifying adjectives are predominant; they can function as determinants of nouns from different domains. Some lexical units have an inherently positive value, their attached determinants highlighting the evaluative-affective speaker's reaction determined by the mentioned feature, while in other cases, this value is attributed by the speakers (by making use of exclamatory or interrogative structures or by word order changes).

In some situations, the speaker evaluates directly the entire interlocutor's persona, while in others, the positive evaluation of some elements related to the interlocutor implicitly expresses the speaker's admiration.

The choice of the addressee who is the target of favourable appreciation is not accidental: the compliment indicates the interpersonal relationship that exists between the sender and the target addressees: the positive evaluation highlights a certain socio-affective connection between them or the attempt of creating such a connection.

The use of speech acts from the category of positively perceived expressives has the function of staging the characters. Accordingly, the author creates a "world" and an atmosphere that is specific to the epoch. For a certain category of characters (the parvenus), compliments attempt to create and maintain a group solidarity everybody can take advantage of.

The compliments exchanged between characters having the same social status (parvenus), which reveal the true nature of the speaker (his duplicity), are less frequent than the compliments which appear in the

BDD-A20386 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 23:04:51 UTC)

dialogues. As expressive speech acts, self-compliments reflect a certain self-confidence of the parvenus, which is typical of their general attitude and behaviour.

Ciocoii vechi și noi is, basically, a romantic novel, opposing characters with high moral qualities to the parvenus –a social type definitory for the Phanariot times- dominated by the thirst for social promotion. The contrast between the positive and negative characters is meant to demonstrate the victory of the good and healthy moral principles.

Acknowledgement

This paper is supported by the Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development (SOP HRD), financed from the European Social Fund and by the Romanian Government under the contract number SOP HRD/159/1. 5/S/136077.

Sources:

FILIMON, Nicolae, 1990, *Ciocoii vechi și noi*, București: Editura „Minerva".

References:

AUSTIN, John Langshaw, 1962, *How to do things with words*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

GILBERT, Michael, 1999, „Language, Words and Expressive Speech Acts", in: *Proceedings of the fourth International Conference of the International Society for the study of argumentation*, Amsterdam: SIC SAAT, p. 231-234.

IONESCU-RUXĂNDOIU, Liliana, 1991, *Narațiune și dialog în proza românească*, București: Editura Academiei Române.

IONESCU-RUXĂNDOIU, Liliana, 2003, *Limbaj și comunicare. Elemente de pragmatică lingvistică*, București: Editura „All Educational".

KERBRAT-ORECCHIONI, Catherine, 1996, *La conversation*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

KERBRAT-ORECCHIONI, Catherine, 2001, *Les actes de langage dans le discours*, Paris: Éditions Nathan.

MARTINEZ-FLOR, Alicia, USO-HUAN, Esther, 2010, „Pragmatics and speech act performance", in: Alicia Martinez-Flor, Esther Uso-Huan (eds.): *Speech act performance. Theoretical, empirical and methodological issues*, Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, p. 3-22.

PUPIER, Paul, 1998, „Une première systématique des évaluatifs en français", in: *Revue québécoise de linguistique*, 26, no. 1, p. 51-78.

BDD-A20386 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 23:04:51 UTC)

SBISÀ, Marina, 1995, "Speech act theory", in: Verschueren et al.: *Handbook of Pragmatics*: *Manual*, Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, p. 495-506.
SEARLE, John R., 1976: "A classification of illocutionary acts", in: Johnstone (ed.): *Language in Society*, 5, USA: Carnegie Mellon University, p. 1-23.
VANDERVEKEN, Daniel, 1988, *Les actes du discours*, Liege: Pierre Mardaga.
ZVIRID, Ramona-Maria, 2013, *Actele verbale expresive în limba română*, București: Editura Universității din București.

BDD-A20386 © 2015 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 23:04:51 UTC)