AN APPROACH TO THE USE OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS IN ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN[1]

Abstract*: The paper is conceived as an analysis of the use of personal pronouns in English and Romanian. In English personal pronouns may take different forms depending on number, grammatical or natural gender, case and formality. Personal pronouns may also refer to objects, animals, or people. In Romanian personal pronouns directly establish the protagonists of speaking, especially those persons who are indispensable to the linguistic act. The first person elaborates the enunciation, the second intercepts and decodes the message while the third person represents the object of communication which the message speaks about.*

Key words: *personal pronouns****,*** *person, case, gender, functions*

Résumé*: Cette étude consiste en une analyse contrastive des pronoms personnels en anglais et roumain. En anglais, les pronoms personnels peuvent prendre de différentes formes en fonction du nombre, le genre grammatical ou naturel, cas ou formalité. Les pronoms personnels peuvent désigner aussi des objects, animaux ou personnes. En roumain, les pronoms personnels établissent de façon directe les locuteurs, surtout qui sont indispensables à une situation de communication. Le première personne produit l'énonciation, la seconde reçoit et décode le message alors que la trosième personne représente l'objet de communication.*

Mots-clés*: pronoms personnels, personne, cas, genre, fonctions*

1. The Use of Personal Pronouns in English

English has three classes of personal pronouns, denoting, respectively, the person(s) speaking (first person); the person(s) spoken to (second person); an(other) person(s) or thing(s) (third person).

The personal pronouns of the first and third persons have distinct forms, a. for the singular (I, he/she/it), and for the plural (we, they); b. for the 'nominative' (I, he, she, we, they), and for the 'accusative' (me, him, her, us, them). *It* does not distinguish nominative and accusative.

The third person singular has distinct forms for the 'masculine' (he, him), for the 'feminine'(she, her), and for the 'neuter' (it). The second person (you) makes none of these distinctions.

The pronoun of the second person may be used vaguely to denote someone (often the speaker himself) to whom something happens, or may happen, in the ordinary course of events:

It was not a bad life. ***You*** *got up at seven, had breakfast, went for a walk, and at nine o'clock* ***you*** *sat down to walk.*

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In cases where *I* or *me* would sound so assertive (hence often in the style of authors, editors and critics) the pronouns of the first person plural may be used to denote a single person (the so-called editorial *we*).

***We** are convinced that this book supplies a long felt want.*

In colloquial English *us* is sometimes used instead of *me,* especially after an imperative: *Let's **s** have a book.*

The pronouns of the first person plural may be used to denote the speaker or writer and those associated with him (his audience, readers, etc.):

*But **we** must not forget that it was their energy that made the undertaking possible at all.*

The Nominative forms are chiefly used as the subject of a sentence. As nominal predicates, especially after *it is (was)* or *that is (was)*, spoken English uses the stressed oblique forms: *it's me, that's him, if I were her.* As a rule written English prefers the nominative forms *(she saw that it was he)*, though *it is I* is often felt to be pedantic. *Me* is also used in exclamations: *ah **me**! Dear **me**!* Also in combination with an exclamatory infinitive: *What! **Me** fight a big chap like him? Not **me**!*

After *as, but* (=except) and *than* the nominative is the usual form in parallelism with the subject, though spoken English also uses the oblique: *She is not as tall as **I (me)***; *You are much better off than **they (them)***.

The unstressed oblique forms are used reflexively (with reference to the subject) in prepositional adjuncts, chiefly of place: *He looked behind **him** to see if anyone was watching.*

The personal pronouns of the third person are chiefly used anaphorically, i.e. to refer to an idea in the speaker's mind, usually expressed by a preceding noun. The choice of a pronoun of the third person singular depends, roughly speaking, on whether the reference is to a living being (*he/him* or *she/her*) or to a lifeless thing (*it*).

He and *she* may also be used deictically, to point out a person: Who is ***he***? (i.e. the person going or standing there). In this case, they are given strong stress. *It* is not used in this way, *that* being used instead: What's ***that***?

He (him) are used chiefly to refer to male persons. Occasionally *he (him)* refer to a child or baby when the sex is unknown or a matter of indifference. *He (him)* may also refer to male animals and to animals whose gender is a matter of indifference:

*The horse was rather restive at first, but **he** soon became more manageable.*

He (him) are sometimes used with reference to plants or to artificial objects, to express affection or familiarity.

In literary English *he (him)* may be used with reference to lifeless things, such as *sun, river* (and names of rivers)*, mountain* (and names of mountains)*, oak, Love, Death, Time, War,* etc. This usually implies a greater or smaller degree of personification, which in the case of abstract nouns is often indicated by a capital:

*Death will come when **he** is least expected.*

*She (her**)*** are used chiefly to refer to female persons. *She (her)* may also refer to female animals whose gender is a matter of indifference: *A hen with a dozen chickens around **her**. She (her)* are occasionally used with reference to plants and, rather oftener, to artificial objects, to express affection or familiarity:

*The Good Hope was a three-master built in 1890. **She** was lost with all hands in a gale off the coast of France.*

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In literary English *she (her)* are sometimes used with reference to lifeless things, such as *sea, moon, earth, country* (and names of countries)*, city* (and names of cities), *the church;* and to abstract ideas such as *Nature, Fortune, Science, Liberty, Mercy, Peace*, etc: *To know nature is to love **her***.

It is used chiefly to refer to lifeless things. *It* may also refer to animals suggesting less familiarity than either *he* or *she*: *The dog always barks if **it** hears any unusual noise.*

Similarly *it* may refer to a child or a baby when the gender is unknown or a matter of indifference:

*Poor George! Was all the beef gone? Did **it** get nothing but bread and cheese and gingerbeer?*

Finally, *it* may refer to nouns denoting a number of persons when the group is thought of collectively: *Give the public full information so that **it** may judge for itself.*

'Gender', in English, is mainly a matter of the choice of one of the three personal (or possessive) pronouns of the third person singular to refer to a preceding noun (referring gender). As has been shown, with a not inconsiderable number of nouns, this gender differs according to context and point of view, so that it is hardly possible to say whether such a noun 'is' masculine, feminine or neuter.

The idea referred to by *it* may also be expressed by a preceding word-group, especially one containing an infinitive with *to*, or by a clause or a sentence:

a. *I am trying to get a taxi. - You won't find **it** easy.*

b. *We hope you understand that this is a matter of months, not of weeks? – Yes, you've made **it** quite clear.*

c. *I hear that Peter has given up football. – I rather expected **it**; he was never very keen.*

d. *Mary is well again, fortunately. – I am very glad of **it**.*

The idea referred to by *it* is not always expressed by the actual words of the preceding group, clause or sentence. In the third example (c), for instance, what the speaker expected is that Peter *would* give up football; indeed, he might have said: *I rather expected **he** would.*

Verbs like *to know, to forget, to try, to tell, to remember* do not take *it* to refer to a preceding clause or word-group:

Jane is coming home tonight. – Yes, I know.

My number is 298761. – I'll try and remember.

The word group or clause referred to by *it* may also follow:

●You won't find ***it*** easy to get a taxi.

It was not easy to get a taxi.

● Ben made ***it*** clear that it was a matter of months.

It was clear that it was a matter of months.

We may notice that *it* as an object may refer to a following infinitive or to a following clause introduced by *that* when there is an intermediate predicative adjective. The construction also occurs with a predicative noun (*I think **it** my duty to warn you*) or a prepositional adjunct (*He has **it** in his power to kill you*). After the verb *to hear* we find the past participle *said* or a synonym:

We have heard *it* said that they that they are paying no dividend this year.

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There are constructions where *it* is usually dispensed with. This is the case with a small number of set phrases, the principal of which are *to think fit (right, proper), to see fit*. Verb and adjective form a close group, with the stress on the adjective:

After eighteen years' devoted service he thought fit to discharge her without a pension.

It may refer forwards in sentences beginning with *it is* or *it was* in order to give prominence to some part of them:

It is the work of these ten years which gives Richardson a place in English literature.

It was riding to hounds that my son met him.

The construction also serves, not merely to emphasize, but to identify: This time *it* was not the woman who was to blame.

It refers backwards as well as forwards in sentences giving a person's name or identity:

My bag was carried for me by a man I must have seen before. I wonder if ***it*** was George, our old gardener.

Go and see who it is who rings. – ***It*** is Will and Dora.

In such cases both pronoun and verb refer to an image seen, a sound heard, a smell perceived.

With some verbs *it* is used as a 'formal' *subject* or as a 'formal' *object*, referring either to some vague notion, or to nothing at all. As a *formal subject it* precedes verbs and verbal phrases denoting weather conditions (***it*** *snows,* ***it*** *was raining,* ***it*** *is warm today*). *It* is also used in expressions of time and distance (***it*** *is three o'clock,* ***it*** *is six months to Cambridge*) and in other impersonal statements:

It says in the Holy Bible that all men are liars.

It occurs as a *formal object* a. in phrases like *to fight it out, to have it out, let him have it hot*; b. after verbs like *to chuck, to go, to hang, to hop*; c. after nouns used as verbs meaning either 'to behave like the person indicated by the noun', or 'to avail oneself of the vehicle or public building indicated by the noun'; and after the adjective *rough* used as a verb, meaning 'to do without the ordinary conveniences of life':

a. The Dales have ***it***.
b. Hang ***it*** all, I don't want to stay here all day!
c. Steven lorded ***it*** over the other servants.
She was queening ***it*** over the younger girls.
We tried hotelling ***it***.
I am quite prepared to rough ***it***.

2. The Use of Personal Pronouns in Romanian

In Romanian personal personal pronouns directly establish the protagonists of speaking, especially those persons who are indispensable to the linguistic act. The first person is called "destinator" or "locutor" and elaborates the enunciation, transmitting it in a concrete course of events. The second person, called "destinatar" or "colocutor", intercepts and decodes the message. The object of communication which the message speaks about is called the third person.

The Romanian personal pronouns are those pronouns which can distinguish various persons. They replace nouns pointing out the person who is speaking (the first person): ***Eu*** *plec*; the person whom the speaker is addressing to (the second person): ***Tu*** *ai*

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plecat în oraş; the third person pronoun refers to the object which is being talked about, when that object is quite other one than the first or the second person: ***El (ea)*** *cântă la pian*.

The personal pronoun constitutes a unitary system, because it designates the first two persons as fundamental elements of the speaking act and the third person as an object of communication.

As concerns the gender, which is closely related to the noun, it appears to be marked for only the third person because the third person pronouns are solely substituted by nouns. The pronouns *eu* and *tu* distinguish no gender, because they refer to present persons who are in a dialogue, so their gender is not to become precise. The third person pronouns: *el, ea, dânsul, dânsa*, etc. substitute nouns which are considered not to be present or are not included in the spacial or temporal situation of speaking, so the gender has to be stated. The third person pronoun has different forms for the two genders both in the singular and plural.

The personal pronoun differs from the noun as regards the number because the first and the second persons plural can be understood as being absolute, exclusive and separating. The given person is quite different from the other persons depending on the way the "locutor" regards the second and the third persons, if he/she associates them or not, if he/she considers to be solidarized with the other persons or not. Thus, *noi* may mean: *eu + tu, eu + voi, noi + voi*, and, sometimes, *eu + tu + el(ei).*

The plural of the second person pronoun is more restricted, because voi may mean *tu + tu, tu + el(ea), voi + el(ea), voi + ei(ele),* but not *+ eu.* The third person pronoun refers to different objects from the first and second persons and has a plural which excludes the other persons.

The personal pronoun has a richer paradigm than the noun regarding oppositions. For the oblique *cases* there are two or three forms, some of them called stressed or long and being autonomous, the other being non-autonomous, and contextually conjunct.

As for the *Dative* case, the personal pronoun resembles the person's name because the autonomous forms of *Accusative* are naturally marked by the preposition "pe", as the personal pronoun is quite the linguistic expression of the category of *person*.

We could also use in the third person together with the pronouns *el, ea, ei, ele*, the forms *dânsul, dânsa, dânşii, dânsele*, which the speakers consider to be polite and respectful. These forms are exclusively used in order to replace names of persons and those associated with them.

The personal pronoun in the first and second person has no specific forms in the Genitive. We can express them by means of possessive pronouns, because the noun in the Genitive generally denotes 'the owner'.

There are cases where the conjunct forms of the Dative are used in adnominal position as if they were forms of the Genitive. These forms are called "dativ posesiv" by the grammarians.

Thus the basic functions of the Genitive and Dative are mixed not from the inventory point of view of forms but from their contextual distribution. The possessive Dative has the same meanings like the Genitive: possession, affiliation, dependence, subject, attribute. The examples: *sufletu-**mi** se pierde, de doru-**ţi** mă topesc, ochii-**mi** n-au putut să vadă, pe buza-**ţi** purpurie* show evidently the syntagmatic group of unstressed forms. There are constructions where the pronouns are in the same syntagm with the verb: ***îm**i recitesc ultima pagină, **îmi** simt inima ca un mic cheag.*

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The presence of non-autonomous Dative forms in the syntagm with the prepositions used with Genitive confirms that these forms belong to the Genitive if they enter in its functional area.

The unstressed Dative and Accusative forms give rise to a series of problems concerning their using and writing in various contexts:

● The forms: *le, mă, ne, te, vă* can appear non-conjunct before a verb or an adverb, if this begins with a consonant or with a stressed vowel: ***le*** *spune,* ***mă*** *lasă,* ***ne*** *află,* ***te*** *zăreşte,* ***vă*** *tot întreabă*. If the verb begins with an unstressed vowel, the pronoun is conjunct with the verb: ***ne****-aşteaptă,* ***le****-am spus,* ***ne****-apucă noaptea,* ***te****-am văzut,* ***te****-aud*. In the literary style, these forms can appear non-conjunct to the following verb (***ne*** *apucă noaptea,* ***te*** *aud)* but always conjunct to the auxiliary *am, ai, a, aţi, au*: ***ne-am*** *dus,* ***te-ai*** *apropiat,* ***le-a*** *spus,* ***le-aţi*** *arătat.*

● There are independent forms: *îmi, îţi, îi, îl* which are used without being conjunct, even if the next word begins with an unstressed vowel: ***îmi*** *aduce,* ***îţi*** *arată,* ***îi*** *acoperă,* ***îl*** *apără*.

● The forms: *mi, ţi, i, ni, vi, li* are used non-conjunct, if they are followed by the pronouns i-, l-, le, le-, se, s-, te, te- : ***mi*** *se pare,* ***ţi*** *s-a spus,* ***i*** *le-am dat,* ***ni*** *l-au aprobat,* ***vi*** *le spune,* ***li*** *se alătură.* Prior to the conjunct forms of the verb *a fi*: *-s (sunt) şi –i (e, este)* and to the pronouns *–i, -l*, these pronouns make up a syllabic unit with them: ***mi-s*** *dragi copiii,* ***li-e*** *foame, nu* ***i-i*** *bine,* ***ţi-e*** *sete,* ***ni-i*** *arată,* ***vi-l*** *dă.*

● The forms: *mi, ţi, i, -l* are used in an enclitic position and are conjunct to a word finished in a vowel, making up together a syllabic unit: ***dă-mi*** *pace,* ***să-ţi*** *spună,* ***nu-l*** *lasă.*

● There are also forms – *mi-, m-, ţi-, i-, ne, te, v-, l-, le-* which are procliticly conjunct to auxiliary verbs that begin with a vowel: ***mi-au*** *spus,* ***m-a*** *văzut,* ***ţi-ai*** *amintit,* ***v-am*** *dat,* ***l-a*** *luat*; when used before verbs beginning with an unstressed vowel the pronoun forms are sometimes conjunct, sometimes independent: *ţi-arată, v-aduce, vă adduce, le aduce, le-aduce, te-aduce, le aude.*

● *Mi-, ţi-, i-, ne-, v-, le-* are also used with the feminine pronoun *o*: ***mi-o*** *ia,* ***ţi-o*** *spune,* ***i-o*** *dă,* ***v-o*** *aduce,* ***le-o*** *lasă.*

● *Mi-, ţi-, i-, ne-, vi-, le-* may be enclitic and conjunct when used after gerunds or imperatives, and followed by one of the pronouns: *-se, -l, -i, -le, -o: părându-****mi-se****, dându-****ţi-se****, lasă-****i-o****, dăruindu-****i-le.***

3. Conclusions

In English the personal pronouns of the first and third persons have distinct forms, a. for the singular and for the plural, for the ‘nominative’ and for the ‘accusative’. ‘It’ does not distinguish nominative and accusative. The pronoun of the second person (*you*) may be used to denote someone to whom something happens in the ordinary course of events.

He is used chiefly to refer to male persons and occasionally refers to a child when the sex is unknown. *He* may also refer to male animals and to animals whose gender is a matter of indifference. In literary English *he* may be used with reference to lifeless things.

She is used chiefly to refer to female persons or may also refer to female animals whose gender is unknown. In literary English *she* is sometimes used with reference to lifeless things.

It is used chiefly to refer to lifeless things. *It* may also refer to animals suggesting less familiarity than either *he* or *she*. Similarly *it* may refer to a child when the gender is

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unknown. *It* may also refer to nouns denoting a number of persons when the group is thought of collectively.

The Romanian personal pronouns replace nouns pointing out the person who is speaking (the first person), the person whom the speaker is addressing to (the second person). The third person pronoun has different forms for the two genders both in the singular and plural) and the third person pronoun refers to the object which is being talked about.

As concerns the gender, which is closely related to the noun, it appears to be marked for only the third person because the third person pronouns are solely substituted by nouns. The pronouns *eu* and *tu* distinguish no gender, because they refer to present persons who are in a dialogue, so their gender is not to become precise. The third person pronouns: *el, ea, dânsul, dânsa*, etc. substitute nouns which are considered not to be present or are not included in the spacial or temporal situation of speaking, so the gender has to be stated.

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