

Perception Verbs in English and Romanian- Markers of Conversational Negotiation

Dima Gabriela
associate professor, PhD
“Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati

Résumé : *Les verbes de perception en anglais et en roumain peuvent acquérir des valeurs pragmatiques en tant que marqueurs de la négociation conversationnelle ayant le but de rendre la communication plus sensible aux attitudes et émotions des protagonistes.*

Mots clés : *verbe de perception, conversation, pragmatique, locuteur, valeur*

Previous research on perception verbs in English and Romanian highlighted the semantic and syntactic complexity of this class of verbs by signaling both points of similarity and contrast (Dima 2003, 2005, 2006).

The present paper focuses on illustrating some aspects concerning the pragmatic behaviour of seeing verbs in samples of dialogues picked up from literary works.

Seeing verbs such as *a vedea*, *a se uita*, *to see* and *to look* can become markers of conversational negotiation while showing the negotiators' attitudes and emotional involvement directly relating to subjectivity analysis and negotiation outcomes. The background where negotiation takes place is provided by the dialogue or conversation defined as : "[...] a goal-oriented conventional framework in which two speech partners reason together in an orderly way, according to the rules of politeness or normal expectations of cooperative argumentation for the type of exchange they are engaged in" (Walton 1998 : 3).

The language patterns containing the verbs proposed stand for the influencing strategies and tactical moves that both the speaker and the listener make in order to negotiate meaning through verbal exchange: "The verbs of perception [...], are necessarily subjective and more personal than the verbs denoting activity, process, event and state of having or being. The use of perception verbs signals the openness to feedback from the opponent." (Sokolova, Szpakowicz 2006: 6).

The analysis is thus centered on a variety of selected statements, from the declarative affirmative and the imperative to the interrogative, negative and interrogative-negative ones. Such an option has made the pragmatic profile of the verbs more relevant contextually.

Affirmative statements

1) Acceptance to satisfy expectation

The speaker makes the listener accept the state of things or react so as to satisfy expectation.

a) The speaker acts as if the listener already aproved his standpoint, favouring cooperation:

C1: R1: - *Ce gentil ești dumneata, domnule Pascalopol, **vezi**, de aceea te iubesc eu !*

R2: ***Uite**, așa e viața! Am luptat pentru ideal, pentru artă, și acum trebuie să las totul.*

C2: E1: *A few corns of wheat must always drop off, **you see**, before one can get the harvest.*

The verbs *vezi*, *uite*, *you see* are used to amplify the offer by focalising upon the speaker's move, adding new elements: "Focalisation is at the core of both communicational and informational foreground, bringing forth brand new pieces of information into communication" (Dictionar 1997:204). We can notice the use of *you* as a focus mark in English: "The use of personal pronouns signals higher immediacy. In that case the

negotiator explicitly says what he wants the opponent to do” (Sokolova, Szpakowicz 2006:5).

b)The speaker strengthens cooperation, case in which *a vedea*, *a se uita* and *to see* become markers of peremptory assertions, having an emphatic role.

C3: R1: *Iubirea – măsură ea vorba - e un cuvânt mare, dar apoi vezi că singură n-ajunge.*

R2: *Uite-ți jur pe amintirea mamei mele ... că mi-a spus doctorul că n-ai nimic.*

C4: E 1: *You see, one hasn't been trained for it.*

2) Restriction on turn - taking

The speaker restricts the listener's reactions concerning his offer .

a)The speaker avoids a straight, direct answer, leaving the listener insecure about his turn-taking:

C5: R1: *Uite ce e, amice - zise Georgeta - întoarce-o cum vrei, că nu te mai ascult.*

R2: *În sfârșit, vom vedea, îți voi spune eu mai pe larg unele lucruri.*

C6: E1: *We shall see. And you shall wait my pleasure*

Cataphoric markers, *a vedea* and *to see*, are used in the simple future, first person plural, delaying the listener's turn-taking.

b) The speaker interferes abruptly, warning the listener about a coming reproach, reprimand, remonstrance. He presses a presumption ahead in the dialogues too aggressively without giving the listener enough room to respond:

C7: R1: - *Uite, așa se-ntîmplă cînd tinerii fac lucrurile de capul lor și nu-ntreabă pe cei bătrîni.*

R2: - *Tinere, vād că nu mai vii pe la noi să-l ajuți pe Titi al meu. Poți să vii neinvitat.*

C8: E1: - *Now, see here, George : what are you up to that girl?*

c) The speaker tries to influence the listener's standpoint using the verbs *see* and *a vedea* as hedged performatives, where *see* is dominated by the illocutionary power of modal *will*, aiming at threatening, intimidating the listener:

C9: E1: *You will see some day. Now, I will tell you but one word.*

R1: *Las' că ai să vezi tu într-o bună zi.*

3) Evaluation of preceding assertions

Anaphoric markers, used in or related to the past, *a vedea*, *to see* and *to look* send the listener back to previous assertions revealing a cause-effect relationship.

C10: R1: *Cucoana Aglae, pe cît am văzut - observa Felix, nu are ochi prea buni pentru Otilia.*

C11: E1: *We saw before the reason why Hermes is said to be the son of Maia.*

E2: *Now, look what has come out of it. She's crying!*

Imperative Sentences

The speaker states his offer but also blocks it by launching alleged conclusions anticipating a reproach, a suggestion, a persuasion. The verbs *a vedea*, *a se uita* and *to see*, *to look* become markers of argumentative theatricality.

C12: R1: *Vezi ce frumoasă este rochia marei favorite! Am să-mi fac și eu una la fel.*

R2: *Uite, lumea petrece! Așa trebuia să fac și eu cînd eram tînără.*

- C13: E1: **Look here**, Dr. Hare, I don't have a picture at this time!
 E2: **Look you!** They protested to the BBC yesterday over the timing of its only party political broadcast.
 E3: **Let us see** - one o'clock - it is a fine day: the Mall will be crowded.

Interrogative/Negative/Interrogative- Negative Statements

1) Monitoring the Message

The speaker checks up the feedback. This monitoring activity is linguistically rendered by inserting the verbs *a vedea* and *to see* at the beginning or the end of the sentence; pragmatically, they acquire the function of decisive pointers to the protagonists' attitudes and feelings.

- C14: R1: **Vezi?** Oamenii se înfățișează ciolănoși și uscați ca pământul care îi naște.
 C15: R2: **Te iubesc, tu n-ai văzut?**
 C16: E1: *I wasn't really looking at him, you see?*
 C17: E2: *Ah! **Can't you see** that my heart is breaking?*
 C18: E3: **Don't you see** how wrong it is, to trick this man out of his job?

2) Rejecting the Countermove

The speaker rejects the listener's reply in a polyphonic discourse; it then follows a reference to a contradictory process which suggests divergent opinions between the partners.

- C19: E1: **I don't see you** dying yet awhile, said Dr. Quimper.
 C20: E2: **I can't really see** this journey has been any good at all.

In example 2 we can notice the use of the adverb *really* with an illocutionary value, that of a disclaimer.

The analysis has shown that the main function of perception verbs is to influence the listener by dynamic tactical moves in a negotiating activity, where the speaker as negotiator wants to argue about the necessity of the next action or prevent an undesirable step. In the contexts presented, the verbs *a vedea*, *a se uita*, *to see*, *to look* acquire various pragmatic values as synthesized below:

- focalizers, markers of the speaker's insistency on the offer, as in C1, C2.
- emphasizers, markers of amplification in C3, C4.
- disclaimers in C19, C20.
- turn-taking delayers in C7, C8.
- cataphoric markers in C5, C6.
- anaphoric markers in C10, C11.
- hedged performatives, markers of intimidation in C9.
- decisive pointers or monitoring markers in C14, C15, C16, C17, C18.
- markers of argumentative theatricality in C12, C13.

The patterns of the perception verbs' usage disclose conversational immediacy, one of the most relevant negotiation parameters, through deictic markers: *I*, *you*, *we*, *here*. Nevertheless, their contribution ranks high among the instruments used by the protagonists to make judgments about the sequence of argumentation in their meaning exchange.

The research has demonstrated that contribution to or impeding the goals of dialogue through perception verbs in the two languages is highly subjective, with an increase in the speaker's role as main negotiation proponent.

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