

REVIEWS

Kačmarová, A. (2006) *On Conveying Strong Judgements in Conversational English*. Prešov: Prešovská univerzita, 152 pp.

The study of a speaker's attitudes, emotions and degree of involvement with a topic and his/her co-participants has been the subject of ongoing discussion in the linguistic community in the last two decades, and there are several concepts and frameworks which try to systematize related discourse strategies and language means, such as 'attitude' (Halliday 1994), 'stance' (Biber et al. 1999), 'appraisal' (Martin 2000), 'evaluation' (Hunston & Thompson 2000), and 'metadiscourse' (Hyland 2005). While not entering this debate directly, the book *On Conveying Strong Judgements in Conversational English* brings new insights into this field of research by looking into what Kačmarová calls 'accentuation' markers in internet chat discourse from the perspectives of stylistics and pragmatics. The study promises to be of great interest to both researchers and language students, as it offers a systematic classification of the language means under investigation supported by numerous examples.

As the title suggests, Kačmarová approaches the chat session as a sub-type of conversational English. She claims that despite its written character the discourse of synchronous internet chat bears resemblance to face-to-face conversation in many aspects in terms of its choice of lexical and grammatical means, while the use of paralinguistics features for meaning disambiguation is substituted by the use of a wide range of graphic means. The material under investigation consists of 165 synchronous group chat sessions from the period January 2000 to March 2003; this is a specific type of chat session based on an interview model, i.e. there is a moderator who is in control of the exchanges and an interviewee, while the rest of the chat participants - who are anonymous - ask questions. However, the analysis of discourse strategies used in this kind of communication is not central to Kačmarová's study.

The author's theoretical considerations are firmly rooted in the Slovak and Czech traditions of stylistics studies (e.g. Mistrík 1968, 1997, Slančová 1996, Hoffmanová 1997, Urbanová 2003) and draw on a number of grammars (e.g. Biber et al. 1999, Celce Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1983, Huddleston 1988, Quirk et al. 1985). Kačmarová adopts the term 'accentuation' to refer to "the mapping of an accent to give prominence to a particular sentence element whether through assigning intensity, emphasis or focus" (p. 8); thus she understands accentuation as a term super-ordinate to the conceptual triad "focus-emphasis-intensification". The analysis

of accentuation is carried out within the framework of modality: the markers of accentuation under investigation are interpreted as indicators of the stance of the speaker, i.e. “the meanings expressed are certainty, high likelihood, or readiness” and the utterances are understood to be marked as “subjective, interpersonal, evaluative and context-dependent” (p. 126).

Since internet communication uses the written medium, the study focuses on non-prosodic means of accentuation. Though she mentions briefly the role of punctuation and capitalization in marking emphasis, the author concentrates primarily on lexical and syntactic means for the expression of the phenomenon under investigation. The inventory of non-prosodic accentuation markers she proposes includes: accentuation figures (e.g. contrast, pseudo-coordination, gradation, hyperbole), which achieve the effect of amplification or/and emphasis; sentence-modifications (e.g. clefting, fronting, inversion, passive structures), used for focusing; highly emotive lexical units (e.g. adjectives, nouns and verbs expressing ‘strong’ or ‘extreme’ meaning), which function as amplifiers; emotive modification of head (e.g. pre-modifying and post-modifying adjectives, pronouns and adverbs), which may achieve all three effects under discussion – amplification, emphasis and focus; and emotive modification of clause (e.g. content disjuncts, ‘pleonastic modals’), for achieving emphasis. In addition, the study presents a classification of multiple occurrences of accentuation devices within a single utterance, as identified in the material.

Special attention is devoted to a functional analysis of pre-modifying *-ly* adverbs for expressing accentuation. The description of the occurrences of these adverbs in the material under investigation indicates that the main functions performed by *-ly* adverbs are those of amplification, emphasis and focus, and that a change of position within the utterance may affect the function they fulfil.

The implication that emerges from Kačmarová’s study is that accentuation is a complex, context-dependent phenomenon which plays an important role in coherent discourse interpretation. While the most obvious advantage of the research is the detailed description it gives of accentuation in a novel kind of discourse, more discussion of the strategic use of markers of accentuation by discourse participants would have made the study more complete.

In conclusion it may be said that this investigation has brought new insight into the study of language devices used for the expression of a speaker’s attitudes and emotions. While providing a detailed description of a language phenomenon, the book suggests a number of important issues for contemplation and is bound to appeal to all those interested in the study of speaker meaning from the perspectives of stylistics and pragmatics.

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