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## BEYOND REFERENCE AND DESIGNATION: ON INTERACTIVE IMPLICATIONS OF THE PRONOUN *I* IN ENGLISH

### **Abstract**

Using English-language material the paper aims to elaborate a theoretical model for the study of personal pronouns which could account for those uses of pronouns that go beyond their typical deictic (or referential) function of indicating speech-event participants. The proposed analysis focuses on the following two usage types of the pronoun *I*: (1) *I say, there are lots of places to see there*; (2) *I tell you, John is the one to rely on*. It is argued that despite idiomatic boundedness of the pronoun *I* in the expressions *I say* and *I tell you* the pronoun does contribute to the pragmatic effects of the utterances in (1) and (2), namely, the effects of attention seeking and persuasion respectively. It is assumed that these effects could be attributed to interactive implications of the pronoun *I* that typically emerge in situations of dialogic discourse. To account for interactive orientedness of the first-person pronoun the paper puts forward two interrelated hypotheses. First, it is supposed that the first-person pronoun functions as a sign which is indexed to four regular contexts: referential context, perceptual context, the context of the speaker's subjective experiences, the context of interaction. Second, it is hypothesized that interactive implications of the pronoun *I* are introduced into oral discourse due to the interplay of two or more of the postulated contexts. Both hypotheses are further substantiated with reference to examples of oral discourse drawn from English-language fiction.

### **Keywords**

Personal pronoun, context, reference, perception, subjective experience, interaction.

## 1. Referential and non-referential properties of personal pronouns

One of the most common accounts of meanings of personal pronouns is that which is based on generalizations over their referential properties. On this view, which is elaborated in Benveniste (1966, ch. 22) from both linguistic and psychological perspectives the meanings of first-, second-, and third-person pronouns are realized, respectively, through the indication of the speaker (*I*), the hearer/addressee (*you*), and the person or entity (*he, she, it*) referred to in a particular speech event. Since indicating speech-event participants (or non-participants) is one of the most common and obvious functions of personal pronouns there is not much divergence of opinion to be found in the literature concerning their meanings. For example, English personal pronouns are characterized in terms of reference to speech-event participants in such well-known grammar manuals as Jespersen (1933: 147), Huddleston (1998: 97), Quirk et al. (1999, ch. 4).

However, an account of personal pronouns based on their referential functions alone cannot accommodate a number of their uses which, in particular, include those represented in examples (1)–(3):

- (1) **You** bet they are going to win.
- (2) **You** never know what is going to happen next.
- (3) **He** who laughs best laughs last.

Obviously, in (1), the pronoun *you* refers to the speaker rather than to the addressee, whereas in (2) and (3) the pronouns *you* and *he* respectively have generic rather than specific reference. Generic reference is also highly typical of the pronouns *we* and *they*, as shown in Kamio's (2001) analysis of this usage type.

Besides "referential indeterminacy" demonstrated in (1)–(3) a personal pronoun can both display its referential properties and create some pragmatic effects, especially in situations of oral discourse. Consider the example in (4):

- (4) **I** say, Jim, there are lots of places to see there.

In the above utterance the pronoun *I* is part of the discourse marker *I say* which, in turn, functions as an "attention-seeking" device. The addressee orientedness of the expression *I say* on the whole and, presumably, of the personal pronoun *I* as its subject element is obviously preserved even when the addressee is not directly mentioned, as in (5):

- (5) **I** say, there are lots of places to see there.

Besides contributing to the pragmatic effect of attention seeking the pronoun *I* can contribute to other pragmatic effects in situations of dialogic discourse. Illustrative in this respect is the example in (6) where the pronoun is used as part of the semi-performative expression *I tell you*:

(6) *I tell you, John is the one to rely on.*

The pragmatic effect created by the utterance in (6) is that of persuasion. This effect cannot be attributed to the performative function of the expression *I tell you*, since what is actually “performed” is the speech act of telling. The effect of persuasion as part of the speaker’s interactional strategy is supposedly brought about by a more or less compositional semiotic value structured by persuasive intonation, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, by the meaning of the expression *I tell you*. The meaning in question is, in turn, itself compositional (at least partially) and thus relies for its content on the potential of the pronoun *I* for conveying the speaker’s intention to influence the addressee by way of persuasion.

The suggested brief overview of examples (1)–(6) highlights the fact that non-referential properties of personal pronouns manifested in either conveying the idea of some indefinite individual, as in (1)–(3), or indicating the speaker’s communicative intentions, as in (4)–(6), are only loosely linked to referential properties of pronouns that stem from their ability to indicate “the roles” of speech-event participants/non-participants. Consequently, “deictic designation” of communicative roles cannot be regarded as the only or primary factor regulating the use of personal pronouns in speech.

In what follows it will be argued that a consistent pragmatically oriented account of personal pronouns could be made with due regard to all kinds of contextual and/or contextually driven phenomena that come into play every time a pronoun is used in speech. The claim will be elaborated with reference to uses of the pronoun *I* such as those exemplified in (4)–(6). The proposed analysis would follow the aim of revealing the contextually based roots of interactive implications of the pronoun *I* in English.

## **2. The personal pronoun in context: The case of *I***

Though a close link of a (typical) deictic word such as a personal pronoun to the context of its use is self-evident it seems relevant to look at this link from the perspective suggested in Violi (2000). The author claims, in particular, that “words are always anchored and indexed to a regularity context which represents their structured semantic potential” (2000: 116). The notion of regularity or standard context is, in turn, defined as “the regular nature of situations that tend to repeat

themselves, of which we have repeated experiences and on the basis of which we build our expectations about what will or will not happen [...]” (2000: 116).

Though Violi’s contention on meaning-context relationship (in which it is a word’s meaning which evokes a particular context and not vice versa, as traditionally believed) refers to lexical items, it seems applicable to such (semi-) functional words as personal pronouns. The issue in Violi’s argument which probably requires further elaboration with reference to deictic words pertains to *the number of contexts* a deictic word could evoke. Thus, generalizing over contextual implications of the pronoun *I* in English it seems plausible to postulate *four basic regularity contexts* that the pronoun could be indexed to.

The most typical and recurrent context that the pronoun *I* evokes is *referential context*. It is in this context that the pronoun manifests its identifying value which consists in reference to the speaker as a participant of the speech-event. The pronoun *I* evokes the referential context of its use even in cases when the pronoun’s function is not entirely a deictic one (see Smith (1989: 182–186) for a detailed account of such functions).

Another context which the pronoun *I* (presumably) evokes in a typical communicative situation can be defined as *perceptual context*. This context is constituted by the viewing scene which is understood here according to the way it is represented in Langacker (2000: 205) and specified in terms of the psychology of vision in Allott (2001, ch. 5). In Langacker’s treatment of the viewing scene the latter is represented as containing two basic regions: the “onstage” region which delineates the focus of attention and the “offstage” region which makes the locus for the position of the (implicit) viewer. A number of linguistic items may display their close semiotic relatedness to one of the regions of the viewing scene. Thus, the use of the pronoun *I* typically signifies the speaker’s position “onstage” (Langacker 2000: 211). In situations of natural discourse this position of the speaker may contribute to the emergence of certain stylistic and pragmatic effects. Thus, cases of excessive uses of the pronoun may be indicative of the speaker’s preoccupation exclusively with him/herself (Joly and O’Kelly 1989: 170–171), overestimation of his/her own personality (Arnold 2005: 202–203), or imply some other self-centred communicative behaviours. It will be shown in the next section of the paper that the pragmatic effect of persuasion and attention seeking created by the expressions *I tell you* and *I say* respectively emerges—to no small degree—due to the fact that the pronoun *I* evokes, either metaphorically or metonymically, the speaker’s onstage position within the viewing scene.

The third context that the pronoun *I* can indicate is *the context of the speaker’s subjective experiences* throughout his/her communicative interactions with the addressee. In Gallagher’s (2000) view, experiences of this kind include a sense of agency, a sense of ownership for action, access to one’s own self through one’s immediate experience. One might argue, though, that the context of the speaker’s

subjective experiences may or may not be activated in an instance of using the pronoun *I*. There are some grounds, however, for taking the view that the postulated context is activated by the first-person pronoun (rather than not). Thus, according to Steblin-Kamenskij's (1974) approach to grammatical items, personal pronouns are for the most part grammatical or function words. Grammatical words, in turn, as claimed and substantiated in Adamczewski's (1982) grammar of English, function as "indices" or "tracers" of the speaker's internal(ized) operations, such as perceptually and/or conceptually grounded judgments, evaluations, subject-predicate linking procedures. From a semiotic perspective a close relationship between a grammatical item and one's subjective experiences gives grounds to regard the content of such experiences as the signified of grammatical items (Hrisonopulo 2004). With reference to the pronoun *I* in English it has been proven that some parameters of the speaker's subjective domain, e.g. the degree of accessibility of the speaker's own mental experiences to introspection, may affect aspectual choices (progressive *vs.* non-progressive) with verbs of mental activity when the latter are combined with the first-person pronoun (Palmer 1966: 96-97). On the other hand, it has been shown that in performative utterances with the verb *bet* the activation of the speaker's subjective domain triggered off by the pronoun *I* contributes to the expression of the speaker's certainty about the subsequent statement (Hrisonopulo 2006: 287-288). It will be argued further on in the paper that the potential of the expressions *I say* and *I tell you* for conveying the speaker's interactional strategies is also partially dependent on the activation of the speaker's subjective domain which the pronoun *I* (being part of the expressions) is presumably indexed to.

Finally (and importantly), the pronoun *I* can be indexed to *the context of interaction* between the speaker (the referent of *I*) and the addressee (the referent of *you*). It is generally assumed that interactional context is ubiquitous practically in all instances of using language (Clark 1996: 11-17; Verschueren 1999: 76-77). There are also some observations in the literature that presuppose the ability of the pronoun *I* to activate the context in question. Thus, as pointed out in Bühler's (1934, ch. 2) study of linguistic indication, the use of the pronoun *I* (German *ich*) necessarily involves attaching semiotic significance (or, in the author's terminology, "diacritic value") to those qualities of the speaker's voice that make it recognizable to the hearer. "Voice-tuning" operations, whether conscious or unconscious, are, in turn, inherently *interactional*, as well as some other non-verbal semiotic behaviours (e.g. facial expressions, gaze direction) which, according to Clark (1996: 160 ff.), are regularly coordinated by the speaker with the pronouns *I* and *you* as verbal signs. Coordination of interactionally oriented non-verbal signs and the pronoun *I* as a verbal sign necessarily presupposes that the pronoun has complementary interactional orientedness and can thus evoke the respective context.

The existence of the indexical link between the pronoun *I* and interactional context is implied in Breuillard and Fougeron (2004). Specifically, the authors observe—with reference to Russian-language material—that the pronoun *I* (Russ. *ja*) “has a pragmatic effect—it brings interlocutors closer together. *I* is always an invitation to a talk [...]” Though English is a typologically different language, it is not altogether excluded that interactional context (presumably) activated by the pronoun *I* plays a significant role in bringing about the pragmatic effects shortly discussed with reference to examples (4)–(6).

In sum, it would be assumed that the pronoun *I* can evoke the following four regularity contexts:

- (i) referential context;
- (ii) perceptual context;
- (iii) the context of the speaker’s subjective experience(s);
- (iv) the context of interaction.

With reference to what has been said about each of the four contexts it can be hypothesized that it is *due to the interplay of two or more of the (postulated) contexts that interactive implications of the pronoun ‘I’ are introduced into oral discourse*. The hypothesis will be substantiated in the subsequent analysis of linguistic material.

### **3. Interactive implications of the pronoun *I* in context: The case of *I say* and *I tell you*. Interactive implications of *I* in *I say*: Introductory remarks**

As has been observed earlier in the paper the expression *I say* most commonly creates the pragmatic effect of attention seeking. The example in (7) illustrates how the expression is used in a situation of natural discourse:

- (7) He took a candle, lighted it, and went to his bedroom, which was next to Halliday’s. His friend’s voice called as he was passing: “Is that you, old chap? **I say**, come in.” (J. Galsworthy, *The Apple-Tree* [Salvation of a Forsyte and Other Stories] 107)

In (7), the speaker (Halliday) pronounces *I say* in order to attract attention of his friend (referred to as “he”) who—at the moment being described—is unaware of the speaker’s wish to communicate with him. Indeed, there are several means, besides the expression *I say*, that serve the purpose of attracting attention. Among them are the initial utterance (*Is that you, old chap?*), the speaker’s tone of voice and intonation. To identify the role of *I say* in the repertoire of attention-riveting means

an elimination test can be applied. Consider the transformed utterance in (8) from which *I say* is removed:

(8) “Is that you, old chap? Come in.”

From a pragmatic point of view, the utterance in (8) is different from the original one in (7). Namely, the speaker’s invitation to come in, as it is formulated in (8) (without the expression *I say*), models a situation in which the one being invited is standing in the doorway trying to decide whether he could be allowed to come in or not. If the speaker (who is inside the room) pronounces *I say* in this situation it would hardly be pragmatically justified (if possible at all).

In connection with the pragmatic contrast between (7) and (8) there is a question about the role of the (semi-)performative *I say* and, in particular, the pronoun *I* in the expression of the speaker’s attention-seeking strategies. It can be assumed (as previously hypothesized) that these strategies are being carried into effect because of activation of several contexts the pronoun is indexed to. One of them is the context of interaction. Within this context, the semi-performative *say* gets metonymically linked to the instance of listening, whereas the pronoun *I* referring to the subject of the performed speech act metonymically invokes the addressee as the subject of listening. Besides, the pronoun *I* activates perceptual context in which the respective referent has the onstage and thus attention-drawing position. In consequence, by introducing—through the use of the first-person pronoun (among other means)—the contexts of interaction and perception into oral address, as in (7), the speaker can efficiently signal his attention-seeking strategies.

Besides the interplay of interactional and perceptual contexts demonstrated in (7) there are other possibilities of contextual interplay that can be activated by the pronoun *I*. These possibilities will be considered further with reference to uses of *I say* in two types of utterances: (a) exclamatory and related emotionally coloured utterances; (b) statements and questions.

### 3.1. Uses of *I say* in exclamations and other emotionally coloured utterances

There are a number of cases when the expression *I say* can constitute an utterance by itself. This usually happens when the expression performs an exclamatory function, as in (9):

(9) Then the talk switched off to caves and swimming. “Can you swim far?”  
“About two miles.” “Oh!” “**I say!**” “How jolly!” (J. Galsworthy, *The Apple-Tree* [Salvation of a Forsyte and Other Stories] 100)

Example (9) represents a conversation between a young man (who can swim “two miles”) and three young girls, each of them striving for his attention. However, their exclamations, partially involuntary and partially intentional, have different pragmatic and semiotic value. Thus, *Oh* is a mere symptom of emotion which may or may not play a noticeable role in the general scenario of interaction. The exclamation *How jolly*, in turn, performs—in the given context—a compliment-making function, which, again, may or may not be accepted as a compliment by the intended recipient. The only exclamation which displays *the speaker’s active orientedness* towards the addressee is the exclamation *I say* pronounced by one of the girls who (according to the plot) ultimately catches the young man’s attention. The emerging effect of addressee orientedness can be explained here in the following way. The pronoun *I* as the subject part of the exclamation activates two basic contexts. The first one is the utterer’s subjective context in which the feeling of self-agency experienced by the utterer is obviously prevailing. The second context is perceptual one. In this context constituted by the viewing scene the personality of the referent of *I* acquires a fairly high degree of salience and prominence due to the position onstage. The interplay of the two activated contexts—the subjective and perceptual ones—entails the emergence of a close link between the experience of self-agency (arising in the utterer’s subjective context) and the effect of the utterer’s salience within the addressee’s visual field (which comes from perceptual context). It is due to this link that addressee orientedness becomes part of what is implied by *I* as it is used in (9).

Consider another example of a similar contextual interplay, triggered off by the use of *I* as part of *I say*:

- (10) The painted group moved round Samneric nervously and unhandily. Once more the silvery laughter scattered. Samneric protested out of the heart of civilization. “Oh, I say!” “- honestly!” Their spears were taken from them. (W. Golding, *Lord of the Flies* [Selections] 266)

In (10), the exclamation *I say* which follows (less forceful) *Oh* indicates both the utterer’s sense of self-agency in a situation when he has to resist aggressiveness and desire (partially subconscious) to express his protest actively, to remain, in a figurative sense, “onstage”. Both senses of the exclamation *I say*—that of self-agency and self-establishment as an active, or “onstage,” participant of the situation—emerge as a result of activation of the two respective contexts the pronoun *I* is indexed to: the context of the utterer’s subjective experiences and perceptual context shaped by the viewing scene.

Perceptual salience (as viewed from the outside) as well as consciousness of agency (as experienced by one’s ego) associated with the pronoun *I* play no small role in uses of *I say* in emotionally coloured imperative utterances. Consider the example in (11):



- (11) “That’s right, Pete. Let’s go to the dorm. You disturbin’ ever’body.” Pete shook his arm loose. “I’m tired,” he warned. [...] “I said you going’ to the dorm, old man!” The black boy jerked at his arm again, and Pete stopped wigwagging his head. [...]. “O! Man, I say you got –” (K. Kesey, *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest* 47-48)

In (11) there are three imperative utterances that obviously vary in the degree of insistence expressed by the speaker. In using the first of these utterances (*Let’s go to the dorm*) the speaker is least insistent. By contrast, the second and third imperatives introduced by the phrases *I said* and *I say* respectively display a much higher degree of insistence and imperative force. In both cases the verb *say* conveys order or command rather than describes the speech act of saying. Thus, the utterance *I said you going’ to the dorm* can be paraphrased as *I order you to go to the dorm*. Likewise, the speaker’s urgent request *I say you got [to go there]* is a near communicative equivalent of *I insist you got [to go there]*. In other words, the verb *say* in both utterances acquires the communicative value of inducement. This occurs (presumably) due to the adaptation of the verb’s meaning to the sense conveyed by the pronoun *I*. Generally, the phenomenon of semantic adaptation between the elements of a phrase has been thoroughly described in the literature (see Cruse (2000: 77–81) for an overview and references). In the case of using *I say* in (11) it is the relationship of *communicative adaptation* that holds between the subject and the predicate. Specifically, the pronoun *I* brings about—by activating the context of the speaker’s subjective experience and the context of perception—the representation of the speaker as the one who has agentive power and occupies a perceptually salient region in the viewing scene. This implicit representation of the subject element of *I say* entails a complementary communicative modification of the predicate *say*—to the extent that the latter acquires the function of inducement verb.

It can be inferred from the suggested brief analysis of using *I say* in (11) that the specific contribution of the pronoun *I* to the expression of the speaker’s interactional strategy of inducement consists in activating, on the one hand, the speaker’s sense of agency and, on the other hand, the speaker’s prominence in the context of perception which translates, metaphorically, into communicative domination of the speaker.

### 3.2. Uses of *I say* in statements and questions

Besides imperatives and/or exclamations the phrase *I say* often occurs in either statements or questions. Example (12) illustrates one of such uses (with *I say* occurring in statements):

- (12) “Bye-bye, then. Perhaps I’ll come and look you up one day. [...]. I say, I call it a damn shame Max going up to London and leaving you alone like this.” “I don’t mind. I like being alone,” I said. “Do you, by Jove? What an extraordinary thing. [...]. How long have you been married? Three months, isn’t it?” “About that,” I said. “I say, I wish I’d got a bride of three months waiting for me at home! I’m a poor lonesome bachelor.” (D. Du Maurier, Rebecca 175)

In (12), the pronoun *I* is explicitly linked to its referential context. This link brings into relief the figure of the speaker as the one who is actively involved in the situation described. Besides, the pronoun *I* in the expression *I say* implicitly introduces the context of perception. Within this context the speaker goes, in a figurative way, onstage, which helps him to *direct the attention of his interlocutor* (a young girl awaiting her husband) to the aspects of the situation that seem favourable to himself. The dialogue in (12) shows that the speaker focuses mainly on what he considers to be neglect of the girl on the part of her husband Max and on what he believes to be a chance to communicate with the girl. The contribution of the pronoun *I* (as part of *I say*) to bringing the speaker’s interests into the focus of attention of his interlocutor consists in simultaneous activation of the context of reference, on the one hand, and the context of perception, on the other. A tight blend of the two contexts makes the speaker a salient figure in a situation where, as the dialogue in (12) suggests, the speaker is initially not a participant.

Instances of using *I* as part of *I say* can also involve activation of three contexts: those of reference, perception and the speaker’s subjective experiences. This often occurs in cases when the phrase *I say* is used to introduce “attention-diverting” questions. Consider the example in (13):

- (13) “She may be tired,” said Tony. “Has to get up early to do economics. Now I come to think of it someone did say she was tired, earlier on in the evening.” “I say, what’s this frightful piece of fish?” “The waiter said you ordered it.” “Perhaps I did.” (E. Waugh, A Handful of Dust 89–90)

In (13), the question introduced by *I say* profiles the one who asks it in *the context of reference* where another speaker (referred to as “Tony”) is involved. The inquirer’s self-profiling occurs simultaneously with self-reference because in typical speech-events like the one in (13) there is no strict (logical) necessity for the speaker to identify him/herself as the “performer” of the subsequent speech act (cf. Apresjan 1995: 210). The speaker’s self-profiling in the referential context of (13) runs parallel or, rather, is complementary to the perceptual salience of the speaker in the context of *vis-à-vis* communication. Both contexts—those of reference and actual perception—are sustained and foregrounded (if not precisely introduced) by the pronoun *I* as part of *I say*. Besides, the *I* of *I say* in (13)

highlights the sense of self-agency arising from the context of the speaker's subjective experiences. The interplay of the three mentioned contexts accentuates, accordingly, the speaker's self-reference, as well as his dominating position in the perceptual scene and active consciousness of self-agency. In consequence, the pronoun *I*, as used in *I say* in the analyzed example, gets involved in the speaker's *pragmatic act* (to use Mey's (2001, ch. 8) terminology) *of switching from one topic of the conversation* (which is undesirable for the speaker) *to another one*.

A similar "attention-diverting" function is performed by *I say* in (14) where the expression is used to introduce a statement and a question:

- (14) "I love bathing. As long as the currents are not too strong. Is the bathing safe in the bay?" Nobody answered, and I realized suddenly what I had said. My heart thumped [...]. "I say, I'm getting infernally hungry, what on earth is happening to lunch?" said Maxim. (D. Du Maurier, Rebecca 103)

By pronouncing *I say* in (14) the author of the respective utterance is trying to direct the talk into another channel in an awkward conversational situation. This, again, becomes possible due to the role of the pronoun *I* as a sign providing an indexical link to and thus activation of, the speaker's self-profiling (in the context of reference), sense of self-agency (in the context of subjective experiences), as well as the speaker's position within the viewing scene (in the context of perception).

The speaker's subjective context playing an important role in foregrounding the sense of self-agency when the pronoun *I* is used as part of *I say*, may display some of its other aspects in cases of the pronoun's use within the expression *I tell you*. Some interactive implications of the first-person pronoun in this expression will be accounted for in 3.3.

### 3.3. Interactive functions of *I* in *I tell you*

Generally speaking, the occurrence of the pronoun *I* in a construction with the explicit indication of the addressee (*you*) may not be interpreted as introducing any "specific" interactive implications. This would be a logical line of reasoning—to the extent that interaction in general is inherent in the meaning of a construction which includes both first- and second-person pronouns. However, the meaning of interaction conveyed by the construction *I tell you* on the whole is not identical to the pragmatic effect of this construction. Consider the example in (15):

- (15) "[...] I must admit that now you make me feel quite an adventuress, but I tell you frankly I was cold as marble, I quite thought a man was trying to get into my room." (M. Dickens, Flowers on the Grass 65)

In (15), the phrase *I tell you* is used descriptively to convey the idea that the speaker (*I*) interacts with the addressee (*you*) by telling him a certain story or piece of information. Additionally to this, however, the speaker (a woman) makes a point of ensuring that her story sounds plausible enough for the interlocutor to believe her. It may seem at first that the speaker's striving for plausibility is conveyed, on the one hand, by the adverb *frankly*, which follows the phrase *I tell you*, and, on the other hand, by the expression *I must admit* at the beginning of the utterance. However, as the example in (16) will show, the speaker's attempt to make his/her interlocutor believe "the story" is conveyed by the construction without any other "supporting" linguistic expressions:

- (16) "I was a boy in my teens at the time of my father's death, and had never seen the Hall [...]. I tell you it is all as new to me as it is to Dr. Watson, and I'm as keen as possible to see the moor." (A. Conan Doyle, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* 91)

In (16), the expression *I tell you* is solely aimed at ensuring the interlocutor's (maximum) certainty about the truth of what is being said. In part, the aim is achieved due to the speaker's reference to himself (in the respective context) in the performative utterance which is true by definition. However, the main role in creating the pragmatic effect of plausibility is played by the speaker's reference—in an instance of using the pronoun *I*—to *the context of his subjective experiences*. These experiences constitute *the speaker's own egoic domain* and thus serve as the only source of actual and authentic information (cf. Lee (2003) with reference to different linguistic material).

A close indexical link between the pronoun *I* and the speaker's subjective context of actual (vs. "non-verified") experiences can be proven with reference to those uses of *I tell you* in which the first-person pronoun implies authenticity even when this is not the case. Consider a fragment of conversation in (17):

- (17) "Your witness does not seem to have helped you," said Colonel Julyan. "The performance has been rather a waste of time, hasn't it? [...]" "It's a plot," shouted Favell. "A plot against me. You're all in it, every one of you. Someone's paid this half-wit, I tell you. Paid to tell his string of dirty lies." (D. Du Maurier, *Rebecca* 367–368)

In (17), the character pronouncing *I tell you* expresses his strong supposition that the person being interrogated ("half-wit") has been bribed. On the other hand, according to the plot, the character has no actual evidence that could support his supposition. However, the use of the phrase *I tell you*, with the pronoun *I* opening access, as it were, to the speaker's actual subjective domain, lends a greater degree

of plausibility to the utterance on the whole. In other words, the contribution of the pronoun *I* to the expression of the speaker's *interactional strategy of persuasion* consists in indicating authenticity as an inherent property of everything that occurs in the egoic domain of the referent of *I*.

The context of the speaker's subjective (and "authentic") experiences is not the only one activated in uses of *I* as part of *I tell you*. Another important and more explicit context evoked both by the pronoun and by the phrase as a whole is *the context of interaction* in which the speaker is closely linked with the addressee.

The speaker-addressee communicative link can be observed when the phrase *I tell you* correlates and alternates with the expression *believe me*. In this case the *I* of *I tell you* has the implicit *you* of the imperative *believe me* as its counterpart. Such '*I tell you*–*Believe me*'–alternation, with the '*I*–*you*'–correspondence which obtains is fairly obvious in example (18):

- (18) "[...] It's too good a story to waste. He'll tell it in confidence to some woman. [...] **Believe me**, it won't take long to reach India." "You're wrong, Edgar. You misjudge him. [...] I know I can trust him. He'll never give me away. [...]" "You don't know human nature as I do. **I tell you** he hasn't got it in him to resist telling the story." (W.S. Maugham, Up at the Villa 95–96)

The pronouns *I* and *you* can also be correlated when used in the expressions *I tell you* and *You see* respectively. This is the case in example (19), where the character—in a state of half-consciousness—is trying to break through the wall of non-comprehension by appealing to his listeners (in the instance of using *you* in *you see*) and by bringing into the picture his own actual experience (in the instance of using *I* in *I tell you*):

- (19) "**Ya** see. I can't help it, I can't—don't **ya** see. I was born dead. Not you. You wasn't born dead. Ahhhh, it's been hard... [...] Ahhhh, **I** ... tell ... ya ... **I** tell you." (K. Kesey, One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest 49).

To conclude the suggested analysis of the functions of *I* as part of *I tell you* it should be emphasized that the contribution of the first-person pronoun to the general effect of persuasion is predetermined by two contexts the pronoun is indexed to: *the context of subjective or internalized experiences in the egoic domain of the speaker* (which explains the effect of authenticity and plausibility) and *the context of interaction* (in which the speaker is communicatively tied up to the addressee and which explains the effect of enhanced persuasion).

#### 4. Conclusions

The proposed analysis of the pronoun *I*, as used in the expressions *I say* and *I tell you*, has revealed that the pragmatic effects produced by the expressions—those of attention seeking and persuasion respectively—are largely dependent on interactive implications of the first-person pronoun. These implications have been shown to emerge in dialogic discourse as a consequence of the inherent indexical link of the pronoun *I* to the following four regularity contexts of its use: referential context; perceptual context; the context of the speaker's subjective experience(s); the context of interaction. When functioning as part of *I say* and *I tell you* the first-person pronoun proves to activate two or three of the mentioned contexts. The contextual interplay which obtains brings into focus interactive orientedness of the pronoun *I* on the whole and, in particular, its role in the realization of the speaker's interactional strategy of directing the addressee's attention (in uses of *I say*) or persuading the addressee as to the truth of what is being said (in uses of *I tell you*).

The suggested account of interactive implications of the pronoun *I* in English maps out a model for the study of other pronouns and/or deictic words in general which would envisage all kinds of word-context indexical links and which could thus help to reveal the variety of facets in the semiotic potential of the words in question.

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