



FINLAND

**INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC
ONLINE CONFERENCE**

SUSTAINABILITY OF EDUCATION, SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCIENCE THEORY



SUSTAINABILITY OF EDUCATION SOCIO- ECONOMIC SCIENCE THEORY

International scientific-online conference

Part 28
APRIL 7th
COLLECTIONS OF SCIENTIFIC WORKS

HELSINKI 2025

SUSTAINABILITY OF EDUCATION SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCIENCE THEORY: a collection of scientific works of the International scientific online conference (7th APRIL , 2025) – Finland, Helsinki: "CESS", 2025. Part 28 –107p.

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The collection consists of scientific researches of scientists, graduate students and students who took part in the International Scientific online conference.

" SUSTAINABILITY OF EDUCATION SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCIENCE THEORY ". Which took place in Helsinki on APRIL 7th, 2025.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Mambetiyarova Venera To'rabayeva Maftuna <i>"OILADA OTA-ONA MUNOSABATLARI VA TARBIYA USLUBLARI"</i>	7
Mambetiyarova Venera O'mirbayeva Maftuna <i>"OILANING HAYOTIY TSIKLI"</i>	10
Farmonova Ruxshona Xayotjon qizi <i>JADIDCHI ABDURAUF FITRATNING QARASHLARIDA OILA MASALASI</i>	14
Xudoyberdiyev Shoxrux Xudoyberdiyev Murodjon <i>O'ZBEKISTONDA ICHKI TURIZMNI RIVOJLANTIRISHDA AR VA VR TEXNOLOGIYALARINING AHAMIYATI</i>	22
Karimova Feruza Zokirjon qizi <i>НАВОИЙ АВФ ЭТИШНИНГ ФАЗИЛАТЛАРИ ХУСУСИДА</i>	26
Юлдашева Камила Жахонгировна Ахмедова М.М <i>ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКИЕ ПОДХОДЫ К ПОНИМАНИЮ МЕДИЙНОГО ПРОДВИЖЕНИЯ УЧРЕЖДЕНИЙ КУЛЬТУРНОЙ СФЕРЫ</i>	31
Mamadjanova Nozimaxon Azimxodjayevna <i>ENHANCING SPEAKING COMPREHENSION AND EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES IN LANGUAGE LEARNING</i>	35
Abdumannopov Murodjon Ilxomjon o'g'li <i>TALABALAR BILIMINI BAHOLASHDA E-ASSESSMENT VOSITASIDAN FOYDALANISHNING TA'LIM JARAYONIGA TA'SIRI</i>	39
Khalimjon Salimovich Safarov <i>THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE USE OF GREEN ENERGY IN SERVICE ENTERPRISES</i>	42
Umarova Shaxnoza <i>QISHLOQ XO'JALIGIDA KREDIT MUNOSABATLARINI IQTISODIY JIHATDAN TARTIBGA SOLISH YO'LLARI</i>	46
Artikova Karomat Kamoldjonovna <i>MODERN TRENDS IN THE ORGANIZATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS</i>	58

Ro‘zimatova Nigora Abdullaevna <i>DAVLAT MOLIYAVIY NAZORATIDA AXBOROT TEXNOLOGIYALARIDAN FOYDALANISHNI KENGAYTIRISH MASALALARI</i>	62
Nimatov Kamoliddin Bakhridinovich Nurova Malika Abduzairovna <i>REAKTIV QUVVATNI AVTOMATIK BOSHQARISHDA QO‘LLANILADIGAN ZAMONAVIY USULLARNI TAHLILI.</i>	66
Anarboyeva Iroda Oripovna <i>ENSEIGNER LE THEME DE L'ECOLOGIE LORS DE L'ETUDE DU FRANÇAIS</i>	72
Shodmonov Zoir Xolmurod o'g'li Turopova O'g'iloy <i>YOSHLAR TARBIYASIDA OMMAVIY AXBOROT VOSITALARINING O‘RNI VA AHAMIYATI</i>	74
Saidova Mukhayyo Umedilloevna <i>PRAGMATIC MARKERS AND THEIR ROLE IN BUILDING COHERENCE AND COHESION IN ROALD DAHL'S "LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER"</i>	77
Abjalov Abdijabbor Maxammadiyevich <i>INNOVATSION RIVOJLANISH VA JAMOAT XAVFSIZLIGINI TA'MINLASHDA AXBOROT TEXNOLOGIYALARINING ROLI</i>	84
Хуразов Ганишер Мусурманович Хамроев Шерзод Шоди угли <i>ПОСЛЕОПЕРАЦИОННЫЕ ОСЛОЖНЕНИЯ ПРИ ХИРУРГИЧЕСКОМ ЛЕЧЕНИИ ЭХИНОКОККОЗА ПЕЧЕНИ: ПРИЧИНЫ, ПОСЛЕДСТВИЯ И МЕТОДЫ ПРОФИЛАКТИКИ.</i>	90
Искандаров Юсуф Назимович Хакимов Элёр Халилович <i>ХРОНИЧЕСКАЯ БОЛЬ ПОСЛЕ ПЛАСТИКИ ГРЫЖ: ПАТОГЕНЕЗ, ДИАГНОСТИКА И ЭФФЕКТИВНЫЕ МЕТОДЫ ЛЕЧЕНИЯ.</i>	92
Rakhmonova Nilufar Zakirzhanovna <i>SYSTEM OF WORK FOR DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN PRESCHOOLERS WITH COCHLEAR IMPLANTATION</i>	94
Qalandarova Sabohat Atabek qizi	97

PRAGMATIC MARKERS AND THEIR ROLE IN BUILDING COHERENCE AND COHESION IN ROALD DAHL'S "LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER"

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Key words: *cohesion, coherence, pragmatic marker, dramatic irony, ambiguity.*

Cohesion and coherence are key elements that help create a logical flow and connectedness in language and communication. Linguists study these concepts through various approaches, each with its own theories and methods.

These approaches explore how meaning is formed and sustained in discourse, offering insights from different perspectives, such as linguistic, cognitive, social, and functional frameworks.

For instance, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by Michael Halliday, looks at how language serves specific communicative purposes. In this view, cohesion refers to how parts of a text work together, while coherence is about the logical connection of ideas, shaped by the context in which communication happens. A pragmatic approach emphasizes the role of context and speaker intentions.

Here, cohesion isn't just about grammar – it also involves shared knowledge, context, and social roles. Coherence, in this case, depends on how listeners or readers interpret what's being said, often filling in gaps using their background knowledge and shared assumptions. The cognitive approach focuses on how our brains process and represent language. It sees cohesion and coherence as mental processes, where people build mental models of what's being communicated.

Discourse analysis adds another layer by looking at how language is used in social settings. It examines how speakers create coherence through interaction, using tools like discourse markers, turn-taking, and structuring conversations. Finally, the sociocultural approach highlights the influence of social roles, cultural norms, and power dynamics on language use. Cohesion and coherence vary depending on the cultural and social context, reflecting expectations and relationships within a community.

This paper focuses on pragmatic approach and presents a detailed analysis of Roald Dahl's *Lamb to the Slaughter*, with a focus on how pragmatic markers help construct narrative coherence and cohesion. We explore how Dahl skillfully uses these linguistic devices to shape the flow of information, guide readers' interpretations, and enhance the story's dramatic irony.

Drawing on established linguistic theories about discourse markers [1], and their roles in creating textual and interpersonal meaning, we examine their impact on the story's suspense, ambiguity, and chilling effect. Specifically, we investigate the various functions of pragmatic markers, such as establishing temporal sequencing, developing characters, creating dramatic irony, managing reader expectations, and building ambiguity.

By analyzing Dahl's strategic use of these markers, we aim to show how they significantly enhance the story's overall impact. Our methodology involves a qualitative approach, including close reading and detailed textual analysis. We will identify instances of pragmatic markers, categorize them based on their function, and consider their role within the story's context and interactional dynamics. This analysis draws on established frameworks for understanding pragmatic markers in both spoken and written discourse.

Our study takes a qualitative approach, focusing on a close reading and detailed analysis of *Lamb to the Slaughter*. We aim to identify pragmatic markers in the text and group them based on their functions, such as additive, adversative, or contrastive.

To do this, we'll rely on established taxonomies of discourse markers from existing research. Along the way, we'll examine how these markers function within their immediate context to support local coherence (within sentences and paragraphs) and global coherence (throughout the story).

We'll also explore how these markers shape the interaction between the narrator and the reader, drawing on frameworks for analyzing pragmatic markers in both spoken and written discourse [2].

Special attention will be given to how these markers build suspense and enhance the story's overall narrative effect. Our process will involve identifying the markers, analyzing their individual roles, and studying their cumulative impact on the story. We'll consider the broader narrative structure and even the potential for multiple interpretations, which reflects the story's inherent ambiguity.

Ultimately, we aim to show how Roald Dahl's thoughtful use of pragmatic markers amplifies the chilling impact of the story. In addition, we'll explore how these markers interact with other stylistic tools, such as irony, foreshadowing, and characterization, to create a rich and layered narrative.

Dahl skillfully employs pragmatic markers to manage the timeline of events, crafting a narrative that is both precise and suspenseful. Markers that indicate sequence, cause-and-effect relationships, and temporal shifts play a crucial role in driving the plot forward. The structure of the story depends on the careful sequencing of events, with pragmatic markers acting as signposts that guide the reader through the unfolding timeline. For instance, connectives like *then*, *after*, *later* clearly outline the progression of Mary Maloney's actions before, during, and after the murder:

She carried the meat into the kitchen, placed it in a pan, turned on the oven, and then went upstairs to change. Here we can see *then* marks the next step in a series of actions Mary Maloney performs as she prepares the alibi for her crime. It shows the logical progression of her actions.

Another example, *After* she had given him his drink, she sat back in her chair, with the sewing in her hands. *After* sets the temporal relationship between giving her husband the drink and resuming her normal behavior, emphasizing her calm demeanor.

These markers establish a chronological order, even as the story's dramatic irony keeps the reader aware of Mary's deceptive behavior. Our analysis will highlight how Dahl's choice of specific markers influences the pacing and rhythm of the narrative.

Short, concise sentences punctuated by temporal markers create a sense of urgency and immediacy, especially in the tense moments leading up to and immediately after the murder. In contrast, longer, more descriptive sentences during the police investigation provide a deliberate change in rhythm, emphasizing Mary's composed demeanor as she skillfully conceals her crime. Dahl's strategic use of these markers adds depth to the suspense and enhances the overall narrative impact. The seamless integration of temporal cues ensures a smooth flow that keeps readers engaged and invested in the story's progression.

Dahl uses pragmatic markers to reveal Mary Malone's complex personality and psychology. Her use (or lack thereof) of specific markers reveals her emotional state, thought processes, and evolving relationship with the reader. Initially, Mary's language appears innocent and unassuming. However, a close examination reveals subtle shifts in her linguistic choices that reflect her internal conflict and manipulative tendencies. For example, her use of seemingly simple phrases can be interpreted as both innocent and subtly deceptive. The analysis will explore how these linguistic choices contribute to the portrayal of Mary as both seemingly innocent and subtly manipulative.

The study will also consider the impact of her linguistic choices on the reader's interpretation of her actions and motivations, contributing to the overall ambiguity of the story. By carefully analyzing the pragmatic markers, we can gain a deeper understanding of Mary's character development throughout the narrative and how her actions are influenced by her emotional state and psychological makeup [3]. This nuanced approach to character analysis allows for a more comprehensive understanding of Mary's motivations and the chilling nature of her actions. Furthermore, comparing Mary's use of pragmatic markers with those of other characters (or the lack thereof) will further highlight her unique personality and the deception she employs.

Roald Dahl skillfully uses pragmatic markers to heighten the dramatic irony in *Lamb to the Slaughter*. The reader, fully aware of Mary's calculated deception, becomes even more engrossed in the story thanks to Dahl's deliberate use of these markers. This knowledge deepens the suspense and amplifies the chilling effect as events unfold. A key element of the story's impact is the contrast between Mary's outward calm and her inner thoughts and intentions. Pragmatic markers of understatement and deception play a crucial role in creating this divide. For example, Mary's seemingly innocent comments to the police officers carry a layer of irony that only the reader, aware of her crime, can fully grasp. These markers subtly highlight the tension between Mary's performance as the grieving wife and the cold, calculated reality beneath it.

Dahl's use of specific markers doesn't just build suspense; it creates a palpable sense of unease and anticipation, keeping the reader hooked. By analyzing moments where this irony is most evident, we can see how Dahl masterfully manipulates language to achieve his desired effect. The careful placement of these markers is central to the story's power to shock and surprise, showcasing Dahl's brilliance in using language to shape our understanding and emotions.

An excellent example of how Roald Dahl uses pragmatic markers to heighten dramatic irony can be found in Mary Maloney's interactions with the police officers. When

Mary serves the leg of lamb (the murder weapon) to the officers, she uses seemingly innocent and conversational language, marked by phrases like:

Why don't you eat up that lamb that's in the oven? It'll be cooked just right by now.

The phrase just right by now serves as a pragmatic marker of reassurance, positioning Mary as a thoughtful host concerned about her guests' comfort. To the police officers, it's an innocuous suggestion; they interpret it as her trying to take care of them during their investigation. However, for the reader, it's loaded with dramatic irony because we know she's feeding them the very evidence they're searching for.

Similarly, her casual remark It'd be a shame to let it go to waste adds another layer of irony. This seemingly pragmatic justification for serving the lamb doubles as a darkly humorous way of ensuring the murder weapon is destroyed.

These markers enhance the story's tension because they operate on two levels: to the characters in the story, they appear straightforward and benign, but to the reader, they are cleverly deceptive and reveal Mary's manipulative brilliance. This dual understanding is central to the suspense and chilling humor of the narrative.

One more striking example of Roald Dahl's use of pragmatic markers to create dramatic irony is in Mary Maloney's conversation with the police officers after they arrive to investigate her husband's murder. Mary's pragmatic markers, such as Would you mind terribly...? and It would be such a favor to me..., reflect her polite, almost self-effacing demeanor. For instance, she says:

Would you do me a small favor? Here you all are, good friends of dear Patrick's, and you're helping to catch the man who killed him. You must be terribly hungry by now because it's long past your suppertime, and I know Patrick would never forgive me if I let you go without offering you something to eat.

Here, the pragmatic markers like Would you do me a small favor? and I know Patrick would never forgive me... signal her supposed concern for the officers' well-being, positioning her as a grieving widow trying to honor her husband's memory. However, these phrases also carry a layer of dramatic irony because the reader knows her true intentions – to dispose of the murder weapon by having the officers eat it. The dramatic irony intensifies as the officers accept her offer and unknowingly consume the evidence.

Mary's innocent-sounding language, mediated through pragmatic markers of politeness and care, underscores the disparity between her outward behavior and her cunning manipulation. This clever use of language not only deepens the suspense but also adds a darkly comedic edge to the story. By using these pragmatic markers, Dahl ensures that the reader is acutely aware of Mary's deception while the characters remain oblivious, heightening the dramatic irony and making the story's conclusion all the more chilling.

Dahl skillfully uses pragmatic markers to shape reader expectations and control their emotional response. He creates anticipation, surprise, and unease, contributing to the story's overall impact [4]. The initial portrayal of Mary as a loving and devoted wife establishes a certain expectation in the reader. However, Dahl uses pragmatic markers to subtly undermine this expectation, creating a sense of unease and foreshadowing the events to come. For example, seemingly innocuous phrases can be interpreted in retrospect as indications of Mary's growing resentment and her premeditated plan. The strategic

placement of these markers creates a sense of suspense, as the reader anticipates the unfolding events. The analysis will focus on specific examples of how Dahl manipulates reader expectations through the use of pragmatic markers, creating a gradual shift from initial trust to apprehension. The use of understated language and seemingly innocuous phrases creates a sense of normalcy before the sudden, shocking revelation of the murder. This contrast enhances the story's impact and makes the ending all the more chilling. Further, the analysis will explore how the use of pragmatic markers contributes to the narrative's ambiguity, creating multiple possible interpretations of Mary's actions and motivations.

Roald Dahl skillfully uses pragmatic markers to create a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty in *Lamb to the Slaughter*, which adds to the story's open-endedness and invites multiple interpretations. This ambiguity isn't accidental – it's a deliberate choice that makes the story more complex and impactful. Dahl's use of vague language and indirectness keeps the reader guessing, particularly about Mary's true motivations and psychological state. For instance, rather than explicitly stating Mary's emotions or intentions, Dahl leaves subtle clues in her words and actions, encouraging the reader to infer what might be going on beneath the surface. This creates a layered narrative where different readers might interpret the same events in entirely different ways.

By focusing on specific moments where Dahl's pragmatic markers create ambiguity, we can explore how they reflect the complexities of human nature – hidden motives, deceptive behaviors, and the gray areas of morality. These linguistic choices don't exist in a vacuum; they interact with the cultural and social context of the story, enhancing its depth and resonance.

Ultimately, this ambiguity is part of what gives the story its enduring appeal. By leaving room for interpretation, Dahl ensures that readers continue to find new layers of meaning, making the story feel relevant and thought-provoking across different times and perspectives. This nuanced approach allows us to better understand the story's richness and its ability to captivate readers on so many levels.

An example of how Roald Dahl uses pragmatic markers to construct ambiguity in *Lamb to the Slaughter* can be found in Mary Maloney's interactions with the police officers after the murder. One key moment is when she says:

It'd be a favor to me if you'd eat it up. All right, then. Put your feet up and go on, eat it.

On the surface, this statement seems like a kind and hospitable offer from a grieving widow. Pragmatic markers like *It'd be a favor to me* and *All right, then* emphasize her politeness and her apparent desire to take care of the officers. However, these same markers create ambiguity by masking her true intentions. From one perspective, Mary's language reflects her attempt to maintain an image of innocence and normalcy, avoiding suspicion. From another perspective, it can be read as a calculated effort to destroy the murder weapon and manipulate the situation to her advantage. The indirectness and vagueness of her phrasing leave the reader questioning whether she's acting out of self-preservation, malice, or perhaps a mix of both. This ambiguity is further heightened by the dramatic irony of the situation: the police officers unknowingly eat the murder weapon while commenting that the evidence must be right under their noses. The pragmatic markers in Mary's

dialogue, paired with the narrative's indirectness, force the reader to infer her motivations, creating a lingering sense of uncertainty and complexity that makes the story unforgettable.

Another example, All right, she told herself. So I've killed him.

The pragmatic marker All right functions as an acceptance of her situation, but it's ambiguous in tone. It could suggest calm resolve, emotional detachment, or even shock. Dahl leaves it unclear whether Mary's reaction is calculated or a natural coping mechanism, creating uncertainty about her psychological state.

And in the other room, Mary Maloney began to giggle.

Here, the pragmatic marker began to giggle is especially ambiguous. Is her laughter a result of relief, nervousness, triumph, or something else entirely? The vagueness of the description leaves the reader questioning her emotional state and whether she feels guilt, satisfaction, or even amusement at the irony of the situation. In these examples, Dahl's use of pragmatic markers not only enhances the dramatic irony but also keeps Mary's true motivations and emotions deliberately unclear. This ambiguity invites the reader to interpret the story in different ways, contributing to its lasting impact.

To sum up, this paper has demonstrated how Roald Dahl masterfully employs pragmatic markers in *Lamb to the Slaughter* to achieve a range of stylistic and narrative effects.

Through a close reading of the text, we have analyzed how these markers contribute to temporal sequencing, character development, the creation of dramatic irony, the management of reader expectations, and the construction of ambiguity. This analysis has revealed the crucial role of pragmatic markers not only in building coherence and cohesion but also in shaping the overall impact and chilling effect of Dahl's masterful short story.

Dahl's skillful use of pragmatic markers is not merely a stylistic choice; it is a fundamental aspect of his narrative strategy.

By carefully analyzing these markers, we can gain a deeper appreciation of his narrative techniques and the power of language in shaping reader interpretation and response. The study highlights the importance of considering pragmatic markers in literary analysis, as they provide valuable insights into how authors craft meaning and manipulate reader response through subtle but powerful linguistic strategies.

Further research could explore the broader use of pragmatic markers in Dahl's other works, examining cross-textual consistency and variations in his stylistic choices. The study of pragmatic markers in literary texts offers valuable insights into how authors craft meaning and manipulate reader response through subtle linguistic strategies.

This analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of Dahl's narrative techniques and the power of language in shaping reader experience.

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