CULTURAL AND PRAGMATIC SPECIFICITY OF NOUN PHRASES IN *SISTER CARRIE*

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Abstract: *This article examines the cultural and pragmatic specificity of noun phrases in Chapter V of Sister Carrie by Theodore Dreiser. The study focuses on how noun phrases reflect American urban life, social hierarchy, and consumer culture at the turn of the 20th century. Using a qualitative and contextual analysis, the research identifies structurally and semantically significant noun phrases and interprets their pragmatic functions. The findings reveal that noun phrases function not only as grammatical units but also as carriers of cultural meaning and social identity.*

Keywords: *noun phrases, cultural specificity, pragmatics, American culture, semantics, literary linguistics.*

Introduction

Language in literary discourse serves as a medium for representing social reality, cultural values, and ideological perspectives. In this regard, noun phrases are among the most important syntactic units that contribute to meaning construction. According to Michael Halliday, language is a resource for meaning-making, and nominal groups play a central role in construing experience.

The novel *Sister Carrie* provides a rich linguistic landscape for analyzing how noun phrases reflect the socio-cultural context of American urban life. Chapter V, in particular, offers detailed descriptions of environments, social

interactions, and material conditions through carefully constructed nominal expressions.

This study aims to analyze noun phrases extracted from this chapter, focusing on their structural characteristics, semantic content, and pragmatic functions in representing cultural and social realities.

Methodology

The research is based on qualitative textual analysis. Noun phrases were selected from Chapter V of the novel and analyzed according to the following approaches:

- ✓ Descriptive analysis to identify structural patterns;
- ✓ Semantic analysis to interpret meaning;
- ✓ Pragmatic analysis to examine communicative functions;
- ✓ Contextual analysis to reveal cultural significance.

The data consist of authentic noun phrases taken directly from the text, ensuring reliability and relevance.

Analysis and Discussion

1. Representation of Urban Culture through Noun Phrases

Noun phrases in Chapter V vividly depict the urban environment and its cultural atmosphere. Expressions such as *"a restaurant of some local fame"*, *"the imposing Federal Building"*, and *"a gorgeous saloon"* illustrate the grandeur and appeal of city life. These constructions emphasize architectural scale, public spaces, and the aesthetic qualities of urban settings. The phrase *"a blaze of incandescent lights"* reflects technological advancement and the visual spectacle associated with modernity. From a discourse perspective, as noted by Teun A. van Dijk, linguistic structures encode social environments and collective perceptions. The noun phrases in this context function as descriptive tools that construct an image of urban sophistication and dynamism.

2. Social Stratification and Identity Construction

Noun phrases in the text frequently encode social status and identity. Examples such as *"a successful man"*, *"rich young rounders of the town"*, *"a well-known performer"*, and *"a very successful and well-known man"* reveal hierarchical distinctions within society. These expressions classify individuals according to wealth, occupation, and social recognition. The use of evaluative adjectives such as "successful," "rich," and "well-known" reflects the cultural importance of achievement and public reputation. According to Pierre Bourdieu, language plays a crucial role in reproducing social structures and symbolic power. The noun phrases in this chapter function as linguistic markers of social stratification, reinforcing distinctions between different social groups.

3. Consumer Culture and Material Representation

Materialism and consumerism are central themes represented through noun phrases describing objects and environments. Examples include *"fine clothes"*, *"good eating"*, *"polished marble walls"*, *"rich, dark, polished wood"*, and *"fancy wines and bar goods"*. These noun phrases emphasize luxury, refinement, and aesthetic value. The accumulation of descriptive modifiers contributes to a sense of abundance and opulence. Such linguistic patterns reflect the cultural shift toward consumer-oriented values in American society.

Theoretical perspectives by Jean Baudrillard suggest that material objects carry symbolic meanings beyond their functional purpose. In this context, noun phrases serve as indicators of social aspiration and cultural identity.

4. Pragmatic Functions of Noun Phrases

Noun phrases in the text perform several pragmatic functions that contribute to narrative development and meaning interpretation.

Function	Example	Interpretation
Reference	"that same place"	Identifies a shared contextual element

Evaluation	"a splendid bar"	Expresses subjective judgment
Emphasis	"the proper place for a successful man"	Highlights significance

These functions demonstrate how noun phrases guide the reader's understanding and emphasize important aspects of the narrative. According to Eugene Nida, meaning is shaped by context and communicative intent. The pragmatic use of noun phrases in the text enhances interpretive depth and directs attention to culturally significant elements.

Conclusion

The analysis of noun phrases in Chapter V of *Sister Carrie* demonstrates their central role in representing cultural and social realities. These linguistic units reflect key aspects of American urban life, including modernization, social hierarchy, and consumer culture. Noun phrases function not only as structural components of language but also as carriers of cultural meaning and social identity. Their semantic richness and pragmatic flexibility enable them to convey complex ideas related to class, status, and material values. The findings confirm that the study of noun phrases in literary texts provides valuable insights into the relationship between language, culture, and society. Such analysis is particularly relevant for fields such as cultural linguistics, discourse analysis, and translation studies.

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