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(Introductory chapter)
Anthropocentrism, egocentrism and the notion of Animacy Hierarchy

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Languages tend to exhibit different treatments of the entities of the extralinguistic world, with phrases that denote human beings (or more generally animates) at the top and phrases that denote inanimates at the bottom. This ranking is known as the Animacy Hierarchy. Croft (2003: 128) terms it one of the ‘best known grammatical hierarchies’, and the notion is so crucially important that it has made its way into the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics* (Matthews 2007) or the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2017).

‘Animacy’ is not to be understood just in its everyday sense, as ‘endowed with life, living, alive’ (OED 2017); the Animacy Hierarchy further isolates a ‘human’ category, reflecting an anthropocentric filter on conceptualisation. This is obvious, for instance, in the gender system of standard English. First, while humans (especially adults) are referred to as *he* or *she* when their sex is known, a statistical analysis shows that animals have a nearly 20% chance of being referred to as *it* when the antecedent noun phrase specifies their sex, regardless of whether the anaphor is far from the antecedent or in the same clause (Gardelle 2013). This is evidence of a filter for humans alone. Secondly, the issue of sexism in the use of purportedly sex-neutral *he* only targets references to humans, not animals: *he* for the average American or with the antecedent ‘your child’ in non-specific contexts is viewed as problematic, but it does not come under any criticism when used for the non-specific raccoon (e.g. *you cannot have a meaningful conversation with a raccoon, although he may occasionally nod*¹) (Gardelle 2015, Chevalier et al. 2017). The implicatures of this human-based filter are well summed up by Yamamoto (1999: 1): ‘The concept of ‘animacy’ can be regarded as some kind of assumed cognitive scale extending from human through animal to inanimate.’

¹ *How to outsmart a raccoon*

Okay, let’s start from the beginning on this one. Everyone says raccoons are smart, but that isn’t true. With the possible exception of Uncle Bob, every human being you’ve ever met is smarter than the smartest raccoon that’s ever been. A raccoon can’t count to ten, at least not out loud, and you can’t have a meaningful conversation with a raccoon, although he may occasionally nod in a way that implies he understands and agrees with your position on protectionism and its effect on international trade. Raccoons are focused and persistent [...]’ (Smith 2010: 200)

Despite an obviously cultural basis, the notion of Animacy Hierarchy appears to be restricted to linguistics; it does not seem to be used, for instance, in sociology, anthropology or philosophy. In linguistics, it is a major reference tool, a status aided perhaps today by a number of influential cross-linguistic studies of grammatical categories that make use of the notion, such as studies of number (Corbett 2000), classifiers (Aikhenvald 2003), person (Siewierska 2004), syncretism (Baerman, Brown & Corbett 2005) or features (Corbett 2012). As can be seen, Corbett has been particularly instrumental to the spread of the concept since the 2000s.

In the existing literature, the Animacy Hierarchy is mainly applied to linguistic phenomena of a grammatical nature, especially ergativity, agreement and markers. Here are a few illustrations of its influence. For one thing, it may constrain number agreement, in the following way: ‘as we move rightwards along the Hierarchy, the likelihood of number being distinguished will decrease monotonically (that is, with no intervening increase)’ (Corbett 2012: 92). This can be illustrated by the pattern of verb agreement in Muna, an Austronesian language spoken on Muna, an Indonesian island: plural pronouns and plural nouns that denote humans impose plural agreement of the verb (1a), whereas nouns that denote inanimates yield singular agreement, even if they do carry a plural marker themselves (1b); in-between, with nouns that denote non-human animates, the verb may take either singular or plural agreement (1c).

(1) Number agreement of the verb in Muna (Corbett 2012: 92-93, based on van den Berg 1989: 51-52)

a. humans

ihintu-umu o-kala-amu
 2-PL 2-go- PL
 ‘you go’

b. inanimates

bara-hi-no no-hali
 good- PL -his 3SG.REAL-expensive
 ‘His goods are expensive.’

c. non-human animates

o kadadi-hi no-rato-mo / do-rato-mo
 ART animal- PL 3SG.REAL-arrive-PFV/ 3PL.REAL-arrive-PFV
 ‘The animals have arrived.’

Another area of influence is case marking. In Manambu (Papua New Guinea), for instance, the accusative case for direct objects is obligatorily marked only for proper nouns and personal pronouns (Aikhenvald 2003: 438), which will concern only human

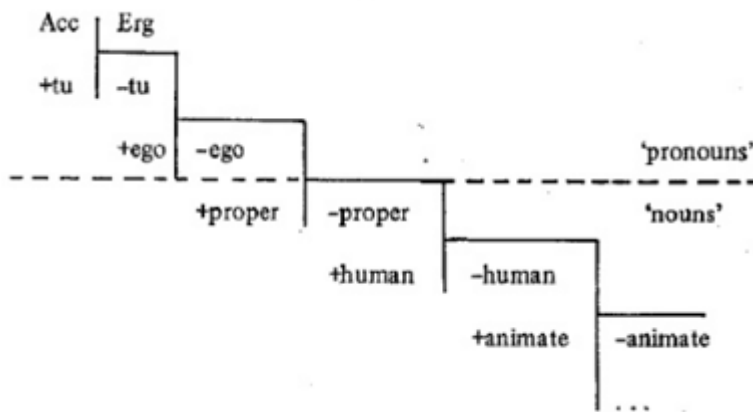
animates or high-ranking animals. Word order, too, is exceptionally constrained by the Hierarchy, as in some Mayan languages: when the subject and object of a transitive verb are of equal rank on the Animacy Hierarchy (for instance, when both denote humans), the constituent order is verb-subject-object, but when the subject ranks higher than the object, the order is verb-object-subject (Aikhenvald 2003: 438, based on England 1991).

1. Origins of the notion of 'Animacy Hierarchy'

The idea of a hierarchy largely based on animacy dates back to the 1970s, when linguists focusing on grammatical 'splits' within languages established a correlation between differences in grammatical behaviours among nouns or noun phrases and the nature of the entities denoted. The first modern description is attributed to Silverstein.² In 1973 he presented a paper at an evening meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society (26 January), later revised and published as Silverstein (1976), in which he showed that the split between accusative and ergative case-marking in noun phrases depended on the denotation of the noun phrase. He established a 'hierarchy' (without yet specifying a name for it) which 'expresses the semantic naturalness for a lexically-specified noun phrase to function as agent of a true transitive verb, and inversely the naturalness of functioning as patient of such. The noun phrases at the top of the hierarchy manifest nominative-accusative case-marking, while those at the bottom manifest ergative-absolutive case-marking. Sometimes there is a middle ground which is a three-way system of O-A-S case-markings' (1976: 164).

(2) 'Possibilities for simple lexical split of case-marking' (Silverstein 1976: 176):

² In a personal communication to Greville G. Corbett (see Corbett 2000: 55), though, Smith-Stark points out that the hierarchy is prefigured in Forchheimer (1953: 12-13), and even earlier, there are precursors such as de la Grasserie (1886-89: 234-7).



Silverstein's approach is encapsulated in Matthews (2007)'s definition of the Animacy Hierarchy:

(3) (Matthews 2007) 'animacy hierarchy' A proposed hierarchical ordering of noun phrases etc. ranging from personal pronouns such as *I* as maximally 'animate' to forms referring to lifeless objects as minimally 'animate'. Those at one end of the scale may differ in syntax from those at the other: e.g. the construction characteristic of an accusative language may be found with those that are maximally animate, that of an ergative language with the remainder.

The scale more clearly reflects degrees of empathy: thus people empathize most with themselves and then with other people, least with stones, etc.

Silverstein's 1973 talk in turn inspired Smith-Stark (1974) for his study of number marking on the NP and number agreement. He showed that plurality can 'split' a language, that is, be 'a significant opposition for certain categories but irrelevant for others' (1974: 657), along the lines of animacy and humanness. For instance, he shows that in Georgian, if the subject is plural and denotes an animate the verb will be plural, whereas if it denotes an inanimate, the verb will not take plural agreement. A similar principle is found in Muna, mentioned above in (1). According to Corbett (2001: 826), Smith-Stark (1974) proposes the following hierarchy:

(4) 'Smith-Stark's (Animacy) Hierarchy' as reported in Corbett (2001: 826)
 speaker > addressee > kin > rational > human > animate > inanimate
 (1st person pronouns) (2nd person pronouns)

2. The 'Animacy Hierarchy' as a deceptively simple concept

Strictly speaking, an Animacy Hierarchy ought to rank noun phrases according to the sole degree of animacy of the entities denoted; as proposed in Siewierska (2004: 149) in (5c) below, for instance, 'human > animate > inanimate > abstract'. Including first and second person pronouns probably reflects the idea that speakers and addressees are typically human, therefore naturally at the top of the hierarchy, but this actually conflates anthropocentrism and egocentrism. The egocentric perspective is obvious in the first half of Smith-Stark's hierarchy in (4) above: the speaker is at the top, followed by the addressee (that is, the person closest to him/her in a given interaction), then kin (those humans closest to him/her). Whether anthropocentrism is a consequence of the egocentric construal of the world is not explicitly established today; but further research at the turn of the 21st century suggests that person and animacy may form two different sub-hierarchies. Indeed, it establishes more generally a complex interaction between animacy and several other features – not only person, but also empathy (see Matthews in (3) above), individuation, definiteness or focus. For example, Siewierska (2004: 149) shows that for the grammatical category of person, no less than five different sub-hierarchies bear an influence on agreement:

(5) Sub-hierarchies that define a preference for person agreement (Siewierska 2004: 149)

- a. the person hierarchy
1st > 2nd > 3rd
- b. the nominal hierarchy
pronoun > noun
- c. the animacy hierarchy
human > animate > inanimate > abstract
- d. the referential hierarchy
definite > indefinite specific > non-specific
- e. the focus hierarchy
not in focus > in focus

The various sub-hierarchies in (5) are obviously related. For instance, if one considers the top item for each of them, a speaker who wants a 1st-person subject (a) typically uses a pronoun (b), is referring to a human (c), and the reference is definite (d). As the speaker has thematic status, he/she will typically not be in focus (e).

The sub-hierarchies do not always overlap, but they interact, in that each defines 'a preference for person agreement when the controller exhibits the characteristics on the left of > as compared to those on the right of >' (ibid.). For example, 'if person agreement

is not obligatory in a language, it will occur with controllers displaying the characteristics on the left-hand side of the hierarchies rather than with controllers manifesting the characteristics on the right-hand side.’ The effects range from presence vs. absence of person agreement to obligatoriness vs. optionality of person agreement, the alignment of person agreement, the order of agreement markers, or the type of agreement (anaphoric vs. grammatical).

Given the general overlap between the person, nominal and animacy hierarchies (Siewierska’s (a), (b) and (c)), the animacy hierarchies proposed in the literature follow Silverstein and Smith-Stark in conflating the three dimensions, but acknowledge the idea of a compound hierarchy – although the authors who then base their work on these models tend to retain only the conflated descriptions. The models show slight variations, which however are not always mutually exclusive, as illustrated by a close comparison between Croft (2003), Corbett (2000) and Aikhenvald (2003).

In his analysis of grammatical number ‘splits’, Croft (2003: 130) proposes the ‘Extended Animacy Hierarchy’ for ergativity (even though the direction of the ‘<’ is different from Siewierska’s description, the top is still on the left-hand side):

- (6) The Extended Animacy Hierarchy (Croft 2003, after Dixon 1979)³
first/second person pronouns < third person pronoun < proper name < human
common noun < nonhuman animate common noun < inanimate common noun

Like Siewierska (2004), Croft points out explicitly that the Extended Animacy Hierarchy is a compound hierarchy involving three ‘distinct, though related, dimensions’ (Croft 2003: 130):

- (7) The Extended Animacy Hierarchy as a compound hierarchy (Croft 2003: 130)
‘1) person: first, second < third
2) referentiality: pronoun < proper name < common noun
3) animacy proper: human < animate < inanimate’

In the ‘animacy hierarchy proper’, ‘humans outrank nonhuman animates, which in turn outrank inanimates’ (Croft 2003: 130) – this is close to Siewierska (2004)’s animacy sub-hierarchy in (5c) above, but does not include abstract entities. The Animacy

³ This model is very close to Silverstein (1976)’s in (2) above, but adds third person pronouns. As for the reference to Dixon (1979), section 3 below will show that Dixon’s description is indeed very close, but that he does not label his description an ‘Animacy Hierarchy’, but a ‘Nominal Hierarchy’.

Hierarchy therefore strongly stresses the anthropocentrism in world views across languages. Croft's description also shows explicitly how the classification of *entities* ('humans', 'nonhuman animates', 'inanimates', as in Siewierska's account in (5) above) underlies the linguistic classification of the *forms* that denote them (in (6) above: 'human common *noun*', 'nonhuman common *noun*', 'inanimate common *noun*'). Finally, unlike Siewierska (5a above), the first person is not systematically ranked above second person.

A slightly different description of the Animacy Hierarchy is proposed by Corbett (2000: 55) in his analysis of grammatical number, a description largely based on Smith-Stark (1974), but which does not include the 'rational' category (which roughly distinguishes adult humans from infants) and adds the third person:⁴

(8) The Animacy Hierarchy for Corbett (2000: 56)

speaker > addressee > 3rd person > kin > human > animate > inanimate
 (1st person (2nd person
 pronouns) pronouns)

(9) Corbett's Animacy Hierarchy - shortened notation (Corbett 2000: 57)

1 > 2 > 3 > kin > human > animate > inanimate

Here again, Corbett further describes the Animacy Hierarchy as the combination of three hierarchies (person, nominal and animacy proper), although he differs from Croft (2003) in not including proper names:

(10) The three 'complementary hierarchies' that make the Animacy Hierarchy according to Corbett (2000: 62), following Comrie (1989: 197-199) and Croft (1990: 112-113)

- 1) Person Hierarchy: 1st > 2nd > 3rd
- 2) Nominal Hierarchy: pronouns > nouns
- 3) Animacy Hierarchy proper: human > animate > inanimate
 [it may be noted that 'kin' does not appear here]

Corbett (2000)'s and Croft (2003)'s descriptions differ slightly, in particular for person: Corbett chooses '1 > 2', where Croft (2003) ranks first and second persons together. Corbett, however, points out that the ordering of first and second person pronouns is 'a matter of difficulty' because studies on different languages do not necessarily consider

⁴ For a detailed discussion of the motivations for these differences, see Corbett (2000: 56-66).

the same categories of pronouns – for instance, some only consider free pronouns, whereas others include agreement markers (Corbett 2000: 62). Beyond that, the two models are not mutually exclusive, and Aikhenvald (2003: 247) brings them together in her description of the Animacy Hierarchy:

(11) Animacy Hierarchy and the expression of number (Aikhenvald 2003) (the arrow 'points at the direction of likelihood of overt number expression, or number agreement')

Pronouns	Proper names/Kinship nouns < Common nouns	Humans < Other animates < Inanimates
1 < 2 < 3		

The one area of more significant theoretical disagreement concerns the inclusion of pronouns. While the Animacy Hierarchies reproduced so far all include them, Bhat (2004: 105), in particular, criticises Corbett's description and argues for a clearer distinction between pronominal systems (to him, 'pronouns' are only first and second person pronouns) and nominal systems in the analysis of grammatical number. First of all, the top position in a hierarchy is normally instantiated by the most prototypical members; for example, in an accusative-ergative case-marking hierarchy, 'first and second person pronouns rightly belong to the top because their occurrence with accusative marking is the most prototypical one.' In the case of the category of number, however, 'personal pronouns do not constitute prototypical instances because the notion of plurality has an extended use among them'. In other words, while nouns typically show a one-to-one relationship between the singular and the plural form (*boy* – *boys*), the relation for pronouns is more complex. For instance, *boys* can be described as denoting several boys, but *we* does not mean 'several speakers'. Or in some languages, there are two plural forms for a given singular pronoun; one such language is Malayalam (a Dravidian language), which has two first person plural pronouns for the singular *naan* – one that excludes the addressee (*naanal*) and one that includes him/her (*naam*) (Bhat 2004: 91-92). There, the plural is thus 'not just a distinction in plurality'. Another argument concerns the dual number: some languages differ in their treatment of pronominals and of nominals, with resulting exceptions that do not fit the Hierarchy. Bhat (2004: 108) therefore proposes to 'regard the hierarchy as involving two different criteria rather than a single one, and to split it into two different levels': 'conjunction',

which moves down from the top of the hierarchy, and ‘plurality’, which moves down from third person pronouns:

(12) Bhat (2004: 108)’s Animacy Hierarchy

1 > 2

Conjunction →

3 > kin > human > animate > inanimate

Plurality →

Another advantage of splitting the Animacy Hierarchy, for Bhat (2004: 108), is that it reflects the fact that associative or collective plurals only concern the third person.

Bhat’s proposal, however, has not made its way into mainstream research. As for Corbett, he replies that there are still more advantages in considering pronouns and nouns together than in separating them (personal communication, 2017).

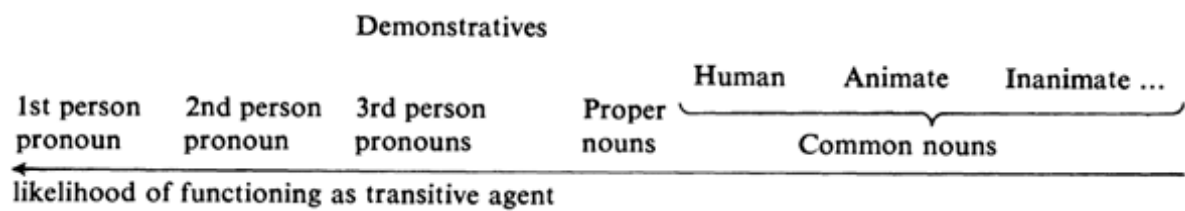
3. Is Animacy the most relevant vantage point? A look at competing hierarchies

As was mentioned above, animacy has been shown to interact with other dimensions which are ordered in hierarchies as well. If this is taken one step further, is animacy the most legitimate dimension to retain as the main vantage point, giving its name to the Hierarchy? The question is raised in particular by Croft (2003)’s and Corbett (2000)’s models, which add a third person pronoun category to Smith-Stark (1974)’s model.⁵ Corbett (2000: 63)’s argument for introducing a third person pronoun category is that some languages exhibit a split between pronouns and nouns for number marking. For instance, in Usan (Papua New Guinea), the personal pronouns mark number in all three persons, whereas nouns do not. This new category, however, has major consequences for the Animacy Hierarchy. Given that a third person pronoun does not necessarily refer to a human or a personified entity, unlike first or second person pronouns, the new category breaks the overall *human* → *inanimate* gradient, and suggests instead that in the grammar of languages, the Nominal Hierarchy (that is, a hierarchy based on types of nominals) prevails over the Animacy Hierarchy.

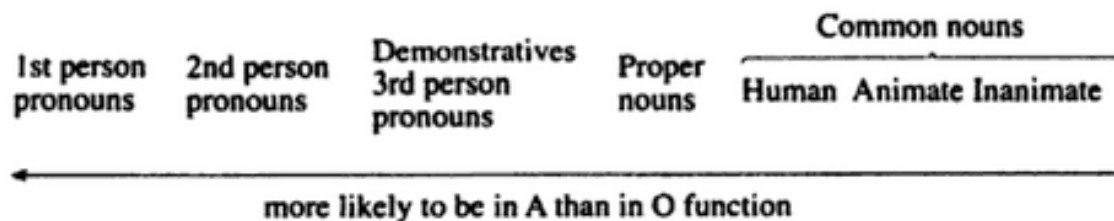
⁵ Corbett (2000)’s Hierarchy only specifies ‘3rd person’, but this is meant as third-person *pronoun* (Corbett 2000: 62): ‘there are languages in which all personal pronouns, including the third person pronoun, can be distinguished from nouns in terms of their number behaviour. This suggests we need a position on the hierarchy, between addressee and kin.’

The issue is all the more relevant as the asymmetric ranking of entities described as the Animacy Hierarchy also appears in hierarchies based on other dimensions, one of them the Nominal Hierarchy. Dixon, studying ergativity splits within languages, proposes a ‘potentiality of agency’ scale that roughly indicates the over-all ‘agency potential’ of any given NP, which he terms the ‘nominal Hierarchy’ (1979: 85-88) and subsequently develops into the ‘Nominal Hierarchy’ (1994: 85):

(13) Dixon (1979)’s nominal Hierarchy for ergativity splits



(14) Dixon (1994)’s Nominal Hierarchy (A = transitive subject function; O = transitive object function)

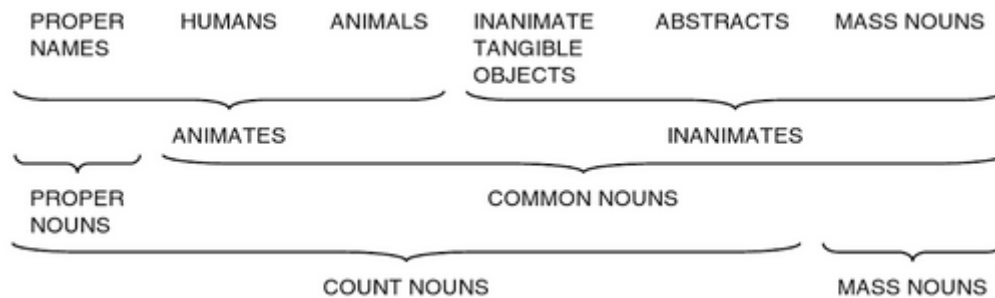


These hierarchies are very close to the Animacy Hierarchy, but with two differences. The addition of demonstratives, for one, further breaks the *human* → *inanimate* gradient: demonstrative pronouns are excluded for humans in some languages, such as English (*Look at this!* may not call attention to a human, unless there is a very strong element of reification). Secondly, the explicit animacy hierarchy (‘Human Animate Inanimate’) is restricted to common nouns, although it could be argued that it also manifests itself implicitly in proper names and first/second person pronouns.

Some studies of grammatical gender place a different focus: they give more importance to entities, but favour individuation over sole animacy, due to a split between count and mass nouns. In his study of English gender across dialects, Siemund (2008: 4) shows that gender systems across dialects of English differ mainly with respect to where the cut-off point is on the scale of individuation. For instance, Standard English, except for cases of promotion or demotion, effects a split between humans and

other entities, while the traditional West Country dialects use animate pronouns for all count nouns, and the neuter for all mass nouns (see also, for instance, Barnes 1863, Elworthy 1877, Wagner 2004). Siemund therefore relies on a 'hierarchy or continuum of individuation', borrowed from Sasse (1993: 659)'s morpho-syntactic distinctions.

(15) Siemund (2008: 4)'s hierarchy or continuum of individuation, borrowed from Sasse (1993)'s morpho-syntactic distinctions



Similarly, Audring (2009) bases her analysis of the modern Dutch gender system on a Hierarchy of Individuation:

(16) Audring (2009: 124)'s Hierarchy of Individuation

male human	>	animal	>	bounded object/abstract	>	specific mass	>	unspecific mass/abstract
female human								
<i>father</i> <i>sister</i>		<i>sheep</i>		<i>book/name</i>		<i>this tea</i>		<i>sand/growth</i>

This Hierarchy is presented as a 'variant of the Animacy Hierarchy', but '[t]he conceptual property that unites the elements on the hierarchy is not that of animacy, as animacy is only relevant to the left side of the scale. A closer fit is achieved by taking individuation as the basic property that holds the scale together.' (Audring 2009: 124-125). In other words, individuation prevails over animacy. Degrees of individuation are based on animacy (anthropocentric perspective), but also on the [+/- count] feature and on other semantic differences such as definite vs. indefinite and generic vs. specific reference. These differences can apply at all levels of the hierarchy (Audring 2009: 125).

4. The relevance of the Animacy Hierarchy for grammar

Should it be concluded from section 3 that Animacy is too restricted a feature, then? On the contrary, it stands out as crucial: while in the hierarchies mentioned in section 3, individuation and nominal types are relevant only for ergativity, or only for gender, animacy crops up as a subcomponent in both of them. It also stands out as fundamental for gender systems. An Animacy Hierarchy is therefore totally relevant to understand some constraints on the grammar of languages.

How broad should it be? The issues raised by the study of the Nominal Hierarchy, or of a broad 'Animacy Hierarchy' that includes third person pronouns, lead us to consider the Animacy Hierarchy in a narrow sense here, following Siewierska (2004) (5c above) or the 'animacy hierarchy proper' proposed by Croft (2003) and Corbett (2000):

(17) The Animacy Hierarchy (proper): for a narrow definition
human > (other) animate > inanimate

This hierarchy may interact with other hierarchies, or act as a subcomponent of a larger hierarchy, but it appears to be the most relevant building block. It may in turn be further subdivided. For instance, in his study of plural marking, Haspelmath (2013) proposes the following implicational scale:

(18) Implicational scale for number marking (Haspelmath 2013)
kinship terms > other humans > 'higher' animals > 'lower' animals > discrete inanimates > nondiscrete inanimates

Does the Animacy Hierarchy rank entities or linguistic units? In linguistic studies, the Hierarchy is a linguistic classification (of nouns, pronouns, NPs), as reflected in dictionary definitions, whether Matthews (2007) in (3) above or the OED (2017):

(19) (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2017, entry 'animacy') **animacy hierarchy** n.
Grammar a ranking of words based on their degree of animacy, with those denoting human beings usually ranked highest, and those denoting inanimate objects lowest.

But underlying this ranking of linguistic units is a hierarchisation of entities, which causes grammatical constraints in some areas of languages. The existence of

grammatical consequences reflects the importance of the hierarchy: grammar encodes those domains of experience which are important to cultures.

The Animacy Hierarchy itself does not seem to have been grammaticalized in the way that time or number, for instance, have been grammaticalized in many languages. The closest one gets to grammaticalization is noun classification systems. Many gender systems are based on animacy, for all nouns or just for the core that denotes humans, with a human vs. non-human, animate vs. inanimate, or male vs. female distinction (the latter may perhaps be viewed as a subspecification within the human and/or animate categories). For instance, Lak (a Caucasian language) has the following gender assignment system:

(20) The predominantly semantic gender system of Lak (Corbett 1991: 25)

Gender I male rational

Gender II female rational

Gender III most other animates and most inanimate objects, including some plants, months; also some female humans (a legacy of a politeness convention)

Gender IV residue, including a very few animates (spiders, dragonflies, etc.), some concrete objects, most liquids, some plants, days of the week, seasons, most abstracts

Just as tenses, for instance, centrally indicate time but have come to take additional, more opaque values (such as modal remoteness for the English preterite), it could be argued that the core values of genders I to III are respectively male rational, female rational, and other concrete elements, but that as a result of grammaticalization, gender III has come to take the additional value of politeness to women, and has partly opacified to include a number of other nouns; also, a residual category has been established, as often in gender systems, forming a fourth gender class. The same would go for formal systems, which always retain a semantic core, especially for the nouns that denote humans: a given gender category would have its core semantic value for a few nouns, but as a result of grammaticalization, would also take on other assignment criteria for groups of nouns, such as declension or a given word ending. This hypothesis, however, requires further research. Moreover, not all gender categories are based on animacy-related features; Corbett (1991: 31) records a gender for diminutives in some Bantu languages, or one for liquids in Fula.

Similarly, animacy is a major categorization parameter in classifier systems, with additional properties such as social status for humans, or function or physical properties for objects (Aikhenvald 2003: 271). Whether these properties can be seen as subdivisions within the Animacy Hierarchy, however, remains to be investigated.

In other areas of languages, the Animacy Hierarchy only acts indirectly on certain grammatical categories, but there, it proves a powerful constraining parameter. The remainder of this section takes the example of the category of number. First, the Hierarchy imposes morphological constraints. As mentioned in the introduction, 'as we move rightwards along the Hierarchy, the likelihood of number being distinguished will decrease monotonically (that is, with no intervening increase)' (Corbett 2012: 92). This holds for number marking on the nouns themselves; for instance, in Kannada, a Dravidian language, number marking is obligatory at the top of the extended Animacy Hierarchy, down to nouns that denote humans, but optional for all those denoting non-humans (Corbett 2000: 61, after Sridhar 1990). The morphological constraint imposed by the Animacy Hierarchy also affects number marking on the verb for number agreement. The introduction mentioned the case of Muna: the verb obligatorily marks plural agreement with plural nominals that denote humans, while agreement is only optional when the nouns denote non-human animates, and impossible (yielding a singular form) when the nouns denote inanimates, even if they do carry a plural marker themselves.

A second type of constraint concerns the ranges of number values a noun might license in languages that have more than one number opposition (e.g. plural, dual, paucal), one of them (typically the plural) the higher choice. Either the lower number value is licensed by the same range of nouns, both involving a top segment of the Animacy Hierarchy, or the lower choice of number value has a smaller range than the higher choice, again starting from the top of the Hierarchy (Corbett 2000: 92-93). For instance, in Manam (Manam island, northeast of New Guinea), the plural is available for all nouns, but the dual and the paucal may only be used for humans and 'higher' animals.

The Animacy Hierarchy also has semantic effects on number. One case in point is recategorization effects, when a noun with a typically count interpretation is used in a mass environment, or the other way round (e.g. *a coffee / there was dog all over the road*). Although recategorization is not available for all nouns (e.g. **two crockerries*), the general trend is that it is more easily available for elements at the bottom of the Animacy

Hierarchy, and becomes more difficult as one moves up the Hierarchy, 'requiring more and more special circumstances' (Corbett 2000: 86). Thus in English, for typically non-count inanimates, a count use yields well-documented unit (e.g. *three coffees*), instance (e.g. *a great injustice*), result (e.g. *inventions*) or kind readings (e.g. *two wines*) (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 336-337); but for animals and humans, coercion into a non-count use is difficult. For animals, it is largely restricted to food (e.g. *salmon*), or more rarely to an animal that has been run over (*there was dog all over the road*); for humans, the coercion is largely derogatory (e.g. *she is too much woman for you, there is not much man left in you*), and does not seem available for many nouns beyond those that primarily indicate the referent's gender (e.g. *?? not much baker*).

Finally, the Animacy Hierarchy constrains possibilities of feature mismatches between controller and target in agreement, for instance for English collective nouns (Corbett 2000: 187). The option of plural agreement of the verb and anaphoric pronoun is available only for collective nouns that denote humans (e.g. *The audience were enjoying every minute of the show*), though with various degrees of acceptability judgment depending on the variety of English and on the predicate; it is impossible for collective nouns that denote inanimates (e.g. **This forest are...*); in-between, it is possible, but uncommon, with non-human animates (e.g. *?The herd are restive*) (Corbett 2000: 189n).

One hypothesis for these constraints of the Animacy Hierarchy on the number category is the relative degrees of salience associated with each type of entity. 'The explanation for the role of animacy in plural marking seems to be the fact that the distinction between one and more than one is more salient for animates than for inanimates, so that speakers are more likely to make use of available plural markers when they refer to a plurality of animates. Through grammaticalization, this preference in language use can lead to obligatoriness in language structure.' (Haspelmath 2013)

5. Further relevance of the Animacy Hierarchy for language and culture

5.1. Beyond grammar

Although the Animacy Hierarchy is mainly applied to grammatical categories, it does correspond to the way one tends to perceive oneself and other entities around us. In Western history, this goes back to Aristotle's hierarchical taxonomic structure of

creatures, with the highest living things being endowed with the strongest capacity of action and intentionality. As Yamamoto (2006: 30) indicates: “It is obvious that the word ‘animacy’ itself stems from the word *anima*, as in the title of Aristotle’s work *De Anima*. [...] In *De Anima*, Aristotle argues that different creatures are endowed with *psuchai*, or animators of different complexity [...] and that, on the basis of his taxonomy of nature, certain creatures – the so-called higher animals – are naturally marked out in virtue of enjoying consciousness and intentionality”. During the scholastic period, this ordering of creatures endowed with different capacities for action was formalised into the Great Chain of Beings (the *Scala Naturae*) which placed humans in the centre, god at the top down to minerals and dirt at the bottom. This hierarchical chain of beings was still in all minds during the Renaissance (see Tillyard 1959: 66). Although this religious ranking of all living creatures has been questioned, it can be said to have had an enduring influence on humans’ perception of the world and their place in it.

The Animacy Hierarchy is particularly entrenched in the way we refer to animals for instance. Recent studies (Sealey & Oakley 2013 and 2014) confirm that they are placed in a clearly distinct category from humans in contemporary texts belonging to a wide variety of genres (newspaper reports, legislation and wildlife broadcasts among others). This anthropocentric way of perceiving humans’ superiority over animals has been recently accused of “speciesism” (though the term was first coined in 1970, see Ryder 2000, 2009) by those who have come to regard this anthropocentric attitude as a form of prejudice against other species that should be granted some of the moral rights that humans enjoy.

The Animacy Hierarchy thus also involves discourse. Because it is based on a human construal of the world, it underlies perspective and speaker positioning: “[a]s Comrie (1989) argues, animacy is not a single linear scale on which all individual entities in this world can be neatly arranged, but reflects a natural human interaction amongst several different parameters.” (Yamamoto 1999: 1). As such, it is closely related to empathy (as reflected in Matthew 2007’s definition in (3) above), so much so that Langacker (1991: 307) describes the *human* → *inanimate* gradient as an ‘empathy hierarchy’, which reflects the “egocentric assessment of the various sorts of entities that populate the world” along their potential to attract our empathy.

(21) Langacker (1991: 307)’s empathy hierarchy

speaker > hearer > human > animal > physical object > abstract entity

To Langacker (1991: 307), degree of empathy is based on likeness to oneself and common concerns. This attitude reflects what Yamamoto (1999: 13) terms our 'human egocentrism'. Consequently, not all animals, or not all physical objects, are 'equally animate' in human cognition, and the empathy hierarchy might occasionally vary slightly from one speaker to another. To a crazy cat lover who does not like human beings, for instance, cats and other cat lovers might rank above other human beings (Yamamoto 1999: 27).

The empathy hierarchy has consequences on trends in discourse – these are just trends, not constraints by any means, resulting from animacy effects. Cross-linguistically, in transitive structures, subjects (which are more likely to attract speaker empathy or interest, Kuno 1976) are more likely to have a higher degree of animacy than objects (Becker 2014: 62, 65). One example is Swedish: Dahl & Fraurud (1996) find that out of a corpus of over 3,100 written utterances, only 2.6% have both a subject that does not denote a human and an object that does. The most common pattern in their corpus is a subject that denotes a human and an object that denotes a non-human (47.7%); this is followed by non-human referents for both syntactic functions (40.8%), and human referents for both (8.9%). This might be related to the fact that the prototypical subject of a transitive verb is an agent, and agency involves intentionality, and thus sentience, animacy (Davidson 1971: 7).

Again as a consequence of the higher ranking of human beings on the empathy scale, perhaps, Dahl & Fraurud (1996) find that in their Swedish corpus, humans are more likely to be referred to with personal pronouns than other animate entities, and animate entities are more likely to be referred to with personal pronouns than inanimate ones.

This asymmetry has an impact for the reading of texts, especially literary ones, as evidenced in cognitive stylistics. Based on Langacker's cognitive grammar, cognitive stylistics (also known as cognitive poetics) is interested in the way a text manages to attract the reader's attention. Some elements tend to be backgrounded or "neglected" as they do not attract the reading eye while others are good "figures" that stand out from the background while reading. Among the stylistic features that are more likely to constitute good "attractors", Stockwell (2009: 24) classifies objects "that are presented as having a unified and coherent structure and identity". What usually attracts attention

are “familiar objects”, i.e. objects for which one has a cognitive schema or template “available”; this is the reason why humans feature prominently as attractive figures in texts. Stockwell establishes an “empathetic recognisability” scale that runs as follows:

(22) Stockwell (2009: 25)’s empathetic recognisability scale:
human speaker > human hearer > animal > object > abstraction

He makes the distinction between human speakers and “the description of a hearer”, speakers being better attractors because they are more “active” (Stockwell 2009: 24). Speakers and hearers are both more figural than animals; animals in turn are better attractors than objects; and objects are usually more figural than abstractions. Of course, as seen above, other features of attraction can interact with the empathy scale, further characterising referents, such as definiteness: definite (‘the man’) > specific indefinite (‘a certain man’) > non-specific indefinite (‘any man’), or agency, which has natural links with animacy as only animate beings can be agents: “agency noun phrases in active position are better attractors than in passive position” (Stockwell 2009: 25).

5.2. Exploiting the Animacy and Agency Hierarchies: a cross-genre (and culture) perspective

Attempts have been made in fiction to adopt non-human perspectives. Apart from children’s books that traditionally give a voice to animals for instance, some popular and literary novels across centuries have been written from the point of view of other animate beings: Anna Sewell’s *Black Beauty* (1877) features a colt named Beauty as its first-person narrator, in order to denounce animal abuse in Victorian England; in the twentieth century, Virginia Woolf tries to imagine herself in Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s cocker spaniel’s mind in her novel *Flush* (1933), verbalising his thoughts in an attempt to bring down the barrier between woman and animal and make the reader feel the unnaturalness of city life (for them both). More recently, in *The Tusk that Did the Damage* (2015), Tanna James addresses animal welfare issues writing in the voice of an elephant. It could be said that however perceptive these experiments are, they are narrated in human language, which questions whether a non-anthropocentric perspective is possible: indeed since human language is used to describe a non-human mind, how can justice be done to radical alterity and its probable language (see Rospide

and Sorlin 2015 on this issue)? There is a difference between narrating what it would be like to be an animal “for me” in an egocentric perspective and succeeding in de-anthropomorphising my natural way of apprehending other categories further down the Hierarchy.

Perhaps only the metamorphosis of language itself, shaking up traditional ways of representing agency and animacy, could give a glimpse of radical alterity, or at least, bring to the fore how subjective humans’ relations to other animate beings or inanimate objects are. A traditional example that is often given of this attempt at disrupting familiar cognitive templates is William Golding’s *The Inheritors* (1955) which features a Neanderthal tribe who do not act upon nature as so-called “more evolved” humans do but live in harmony with it. This is achieved through stylistic choices which defamiliarise our traditional viewpoint on ourselves and nature. First, Lok, the main Neanderthal protagonist, is not portrayed as a human figure that stands out as a whole against a subdued nature. Not only is each part of his body a metonym of himself, as if imbued with an agency of its own (as in “Lok’s feet were clever. They saw” [Golding 1955: 11]) and not only is nature anthropomorphised (“the top of the cliff leaned back a little” [28]), but Lok and his tribe are described as being on a par with nature. The use of the coordinator ‘and’ in the following utterance is made to invite readers to reconsider their place in the universe: “Lok sat between him and the wind”. “The wind” stands out as a defamiliarising figure, for grammar traditionally coordinates elements that belong to the same category (referring to similar ontological elements), which here makes us expect another human agent after “and”. Thus challenging the Animacy Hierarchy and the notion of agency, Golding’s novel can make readers perceive how entrenched their human-centered conception of the world is – as reflected in grammar (Sorlin 2010). Taking up Fowler’s notion of “mind-style”⁶ (1977: 106), Yamamoto (2006: 23) shows that agency as well as animacy – which is presupposed by agency – are key concepts as they affect the way we construe the world: “they both represent a fundamental aspect of linguistic structures which are highly significant determiners of mind-style or world-view”.

Another way to confront the difficulty one has in adopting another’s point of view and feel empathy for someone or something that cannot be likened to oneself or one’s

⁶ For Fowler (1977: 103), a mind-style is the linguistic representation of an individual’s mental perception of the world. But this worldview can be shared by individuals who are similarly-minded.

concerns is to turn to extreme self-centered narratives that reflect the minds of individuals suffering from different pathologies, such as the form of autism experienced by Christopher in Mark Haddon's novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003). Christopher's mind-style is linguistically characterized by extreme photographic precision, accumulation of quantitative details, and a hypercohesive style that gives little space for the interlocutors' interpretation or for consideration of their feelings/beliefs (Sorlin 2014, Semino 2014). Fiction seems to be a particularly good medium to make readers touch upon the difficulty of feeling empathy for minds affected by such syndromes. Schizophrenia is another such syndrome that alters perception of self and other and the surrounding world, as people suffering from it tend to attribute agency to inanimate beings or feel they are being addressed by them (see Demjén and Semino 2015 for instance for a fine-grained qualitative and quantitative study of *Henry's Demons – Living with Schizophrenia: a Father's and Son's Story* by Patrick and Henry Cockburn).

Going down Smith-Stark's Animacy Hierarchy as reported in Corbett (2001) (see extract (4) in section 1 above: speaker (1st person pronoun) > addressee (2nd person pronoun) > kin > rational > human > animate > inanimate) has pragmatic implications that are exploited in discourse. For example, just as number can affect the way one presents oneself (as when a singular author uses *pluralis modestiae* in academic writing to show modesty), the choice of the second person pronoun rather than the first person in autobiographic writing is revealing of a wish to de-center oneself from an egocentric narration and share with addressees some kind of universal feeling or experience. Paul Auster does just that in his autobiographical novels (*Winter's Journal* and *Report from the Interior*): it is clearly a way to reach out to readers and include them as accomplices in a narration of events that could have been lived out by any of them. For De Cock (2016: 368), this deictic shift fosters identification with the narrator and involvement in human experience beyond the ego-centric exclusive narrative that the autobiographic 'I' could have generated. In fictional self-referring second-person narratives, 'going down' the ego- and human-centered hierarchy by opting for the second person can have other pragmatic implications. It can reflect social issues such as in Jay McInerney's *Bright Lights, Big City* (1984) for instance where the use of "you" rather than "I" is a way to mirror the de-humanising process brought about by the consumer society of the 1980s, emphasizing an existence "dictated from outside" (Delconte 2003: 205).

The Animacy Hierarchy can be similarly exploited not to denounce, but to promote selling in consumers' societies. In advertising and marketing, the use of the second person pronoun is strongly advised by marketing strategists as it tends to create an interpersonal relation with the prospect (prospective client, customer etc.) that makes him/her feel special. Placing the prospect at the center of the relationship linguistically shifts the perspective from an ego-centered position that would showcase the product and the producer to an addressee-oriented perspective that foregrounds what the product can do for the prospect. An example given by Trush (2012) from his book on the "You effect" in marketing will make the reversal of perspectives clear: while "the lawnmower has a 21-inch cutting blade" is a third-person "fact" about an object, transforming it into "You slice a wider cutting path so you slash your mowing time by as much as 51%" highlights what the direct profit can be for the prospect, the second-person pronoun placing him/her at the centre of the process (Trush 2012: 100). This pseudo-conversational mode directs towards prospects' needs, beliefs and feelings, making them forget the ego-centered perlocutionary goal of such ads (Sorlin 2017). Web publicity exploits "personhood" in a similar way. In the overflow of anonymous and dehumanized data on the internet, the appearance of the second person is likely to stand out, as it tends to "humanize" interaction, thus producing considerable effect. It has indeed been proved that people are more willing to go on reading if they are invited to do so by clicking on such notices as "click here", "you can click here" or even "I want to learn more" (see Guéguen 2014, 2016). Besides, engaging potential clients in this active interaction also has an impact on how well they remember the information four days after clicking into them.

The Animacy Hierarchy can also be said to be exploited for persuasive effects in a rising number of ads or notices that intertwine anthropocentrism and egocentrism in a defamiliarising way such as "Buy me", "try me" or "I open easily". This is what Katie Wales calls the "Alice In Wonderland" principle (Wales 2013, 2015). In observance of the Animacy Hierarchy, giving humanity to inanimate products confers onto them some form of importance and authority, as the voice they are granted brings them on equal speaking terms with the consumers. Animated to enter a personal relationship with humans, these inanimate objects are thereby located in a human world, endowed with a psychology and humanness that consumers are led to identify with. For Johnson (2010:

19), who denounces this new tendency as part of the “fetishism of the commodity” theorized by Marx, the animistic transfer is meant to manipulate the consumer:

a speaking thing can sell itself; if the purchaser responds to the speech of the object, he or she feels uninfluenced by human manipulation and therefore not duped. We are supposed not to notice how absurd it is to be addressed by the Maalox Max bottle, or Mr. Clean, or Mrs Butterworth, or the Quaker Oat man, or Aunt Jemina, or the Elidel man, or the Aflac duck. [...] It is as though the relation between buyer and commodity were the entrance to a relationship—*res ipsa loquitur*.

Thus second person pronouns (rather than first person pronouns) can be used to express either dehumanisation, as in McInerney’s novel, or to take some distance from an ego-centric perspective (as in Auster’s autobiography). Conversely, in marketing and advertising, humanizing objects and giving them a speaking status transforms an ‘it-you’ relationship into an ‘I-you’ relation, fully exploiting humans’ spontaneous attitude to give prominence to “speakers” rather than inanimate entities, inviting them to focus on the animated products and forget the sellers that hide behind them.

However, avoiding the first person pronoun may not necessarily imply a de-centering process that aims at giving pride of place to the addressee or a third-person referent. On the contrary, it can enhance egocentrism by paradoxically erasing its linguistic markers. In our contemporary society marked by the rise of narcissism (Auerbach et al 2005), through the “Me, myself and I” fostered by social networks, new tendencies have appeared to refer to oneself. Studies of Computer-Mediated Communication reveal that the new media has an influence on how language is used: speakers are led to speak of themselves in the third person, as in for instance *runs to the kitchen* (see Virtanen 2015). This may mark an evolution of language that both exploits and unsettles the Animacy Hierarchy.

Another very different effect of the third person, this time with inanimate referents (for instance “the lorry”), can be used to conceal human agency and responsibility. Jeffries (2010: 41) gives the example of “the lorry hit a man on the crossing” in which “the lorry” is an “agent metonym” hiding the real human agent that is responsible for the accident. Choosing such an inanimate agent as subject can have diverse motivations. In political or ideological discourses, it might be a convenient way of minimizing the responsibility of certain actors. Discourse can indeed grant animacy to geographical entities and human organisations or local communities (“the city council

decided...” for instance) as if they were animate sentient beings. Yamamoto (1999: 18; 2006: 27, 32) situates such NPs on the “borderline” between animacy and inanimacy, opting for the notion of “metaphorical agency” to refer to this kind of discourse use that is made possible by figurative language.

Concealing agency as well as avoiding first and second person pronouns might also be required for altruistic reasons. Indeed the Animacy Hierarchy may play a role in politeness: in order to avoid face-threatening acts, several strategies involve a reduction of the strength of animacy through the choice of NPs. Among Brown and Levinson (1989)’s list of politeness strategies, avoiding direct address to the addressee is one way of saving faces while carrying out a request. This can be done through the impersonalisation of both speaker and hearer, often by using an agentless passive or referring to a general rule (such as “it is forbidden to walk on the grass here”). Such a strategy however may also come across as disembodied and thus be perceived as face-threatening. As a result some official notices now adopt the anthropomorphising mode mentioned above. Rather than a disembodied potentially face-threatening “step off the grass” sign, new ways of engaging the addressee can be used, seeking intimate empathy with the inanimate being, as in the following sign that tends to humanise the grass: “your feet are killing me” (see Wales 2015). It is hoped that appealing to the addressee’s empathy might secure better cooperation.

The pragmatic exploitation of the Animacy Hierarchy as evinced in all the examples so far once again highlights the complex interaction between such features as animacy, person, empathy and agency. One last key element that constrains the use of the Animacy Hierarchy in discourse beyond morpho-syntactic aspects concerns the cultural factor. Cultural reasons may indeed be at the root of inanimacy/animacy choices. This is what Yamamoto (2006) demonstrates in his comparison between English and Japanese as regards impersonality and agency. Japanese are so sensitive to the face-threatening effects that the use of personal pronouns can have– as they clearly signal intentionality and responsibility – that they favour linguistic impersonality in the guise of ‘event-form’ clauses that dilute the agency of humans and animates:

Japanese preference for ellipsis over personal pronouns suggests that the speakers and writers of this language tend to express human beings (particularly human agents which are most likely to be subjects of a clause) by means of impersonal ‘nothingness’, instead of referring to them by means of very personal information encoded by personal pronouns. (Yamamoto 2006: 53)

This preference for impersonal structures witnessed in the Japanese language testifies to the way the Japanese apprehend external reality, highlighting what Yamamoto (2006: 88) calls the “closely-knit co-relationship between ‘language’, ‘thought’ and ‘culture’”. The bilateral influence of language and culture can be perceived in the specificity of the Japanese language as regards the Animacy Hierarchy, favouring impersonality and inanimacy over individuation, personhood and definiteness. Cultural factors are thus constraining factors behind surface linguistic usage which can affect the strength of the Animacy Hierarchy.

6. Specific issues explored in the following papers

First, the Animacy Hierarchy is mainly applied to grammar, and secondarily, in Yamamoto (1999), to perspective. But does it apply to the lexicon as well?

Elise Mignot & Caroline Marty find that in English, the Animacy Hierarchy plays a major role among compound nouns. A study of over 2,400 of them shows that there are far fewer for humans than for inanimates, and that even when a compound noun does exist, it tends to have derogatory connotations and / or to be used for interpersonal relationships. This reflects an anthropocentric view of entities: being humans themselves, speakers typically construe humans as too complex to be reduced to one characteristic. The authors point out resulting asymmetries among compounds that share a common element; for instance, in their corpus, *half* is derogatory for humans (as in *half caste*), but not for inanimates (e.g. *half pint*).

This raises the issue of the definition of personal nouns (that is, nouns that denote humans). **Daniel Elmiger**, focusing on over 60,000 of them in French, shows that they do not form a watertight class of words in the lexicon. One source of difficulty is placing the referential boundaries of humanness; in addition, a number of nouns may also denote inanimates in other contexts (polysemic or homonymic nouns), and many of them may also be adjectives. From these findings, the author seeks to propose ways to improve automated detection of personal nouns in texts, compared to existing tools such as TreeTagger. He concludes that a full list of lexemes will help towards identifying personal nouns; but that additional criteria are required for polysemic and homonymic

nouns. These are very complex to establish, as appears when a number of morphological or contextual criteria are considered.

Secondly, the issue sheds light on the nature of the categories ranked in the Animacy Hierarchy. In grammatical studies, the Animacy Hierarchy ranks ontological categories (humans, other animates, inanimates), as they are the relevant ones for grammar. But as Yamamoto (1999: 14) suggests, to study animacy effects in discourse, it is best to regard the category of animacy as a gradient, with prototype structure. Some animals, such as pets, are 'more animate' than others, while some inanimates more readily take on animate features than others. For instance, cars take us where we want to go; their front can easily be made into a face, with the headlights as eyes and number plate as mouths. Another example is computers, which are capable of clever operations and are sometimes interpreted as sentient – with some people talking to them, especially if the computers do not behave as expected.

In their article, "Bringing the toys to life: Animacy, reference, and anthropomorphism in *Toy Story*", **Diane Nelson** and **Virve Vihman** show how constraints of real world animacy can be flouted in children's stories filled with anthropomorphised dolls and toys that live a secret life when humans are not around. Focussing on the expressions used to refer to them – as well as non-linguistic cues to their animacy such as sentience, physiology and independent motion for instance – they evince how language reflects and even extends the animacy distinctions between the different toys, highlighting complex relations between humans, semi-humans or non-human toys. Going beyond simple anthropocentrism and its linear animacy scale, their findings corroborate Yamamoto (1999)'s radial picture of animacy with categories radiating from a central 'human being' node, offering distinct scales for animals and supernatural beings that complexify the picture. Humans, animals and inanimates are indeed shown to be non-homogeneous categories that contain internal subhierarchies. The authors evince how the use of referential expressions as well as visual cues contribute to creating subtle animacy distinctions which position the toys in the film, and thereby, manipulate viewers' empathy towards them.

In "Animals, animacy and anthropocentrism", **Alison Sealey** highlights the extent to which our human-centered perception of the world orientates our conception of other species. After pointing out the way theories of post-humanism and "new materialism" challenge the absolute separation between human beings and other

species, favouring relationality and dynamic complexity to reductive individualism and linear causality, she analyses how animal experiences are encoded in contemporary British English, specifically focusing on how they are represented as agents of processes. Taking the most frequent animal naming term across all discourse types – the dog – as case study, the author shows how the linguistic representation of the animal varies in accordance with the communicative purpose and discourse type in which it figures. Her findings highlight the way linguistic means available to human beings to name living forms are constrained by humans' perception of themselves and their own modes of sensory perception, which makes it difficult to accommodate other conceptualisation of animacy in organisms that may be more authentically construed as "assemblages" or organised as a "web" rather than a "tree" as more traditional representations would have it.

Thirdly, the present issue explores the relationship between animacy and egocentrism (the speaker outranking the hearer in the hierarchy: speaker > hearer > human > animal > physical object > abstract entity). Yamamoto (1999: 13) suggests the possibility of 'human egocentrism'; but is there always egocentrism, and what other forms than first person pronouns does it take? To answer this question, **Tuija Virtanen** examines the phenomenon of self-branding in the context of new media performance on Twitter, focusing on present-tense virtual performatives such as *dances around the room with my cat*, which present predications in the self-referential third person by means of which users perform some action/emotion by typing it. The author highlights the syntactic and discursive systematicity of this double movement of *externalisation* of the self ('dances') followed by first-person *reassuming* of self ('my'), singling out the structure as an important aspect of playfulness in digital literacy today. The author evinces the added value of this linguistic egocentrism disguised as a distant self as compared to first-person utterances for instance, hypothesizing that the choice of the third person contributes to a disengagement of the speakers' responsibility (which a first person pronoun would more clearly attribute to them), creating some "disembodied" digital self for diverse recreational purposes.

Christelle Lacassain-Lagoïn considers egocentrism and anthropocentrism in setting-subject constructions, that is, when *see* and *witness* are used with inanimate, locative subjects (*the 1970s saw... / Turkey witnessed a rising tide of nationalist sentiments*), rather than the prototypical human experiencer (*I saw..., she witnessed...*).

She finds that despite the apparent setting-centrism conveyed by setting-subject constructions, the setting does not acquire human or animate qualities through its subject position. Rather, it is a point of access to the perception report, while the experiencer, the conceptualizer, remains the speaker; the perspective therefore remains egocentric, though with two differences. The construction shows subjectification: the conceptualizer is not given as the experiencer. Consequently, the speaker conceptualizes the scene as a whole, so that the potential experiencers are anyone in the setting – which is a form of anthropocentric perspective. The larger the setting, the more anthropocentric the perspective, in that sense. Accordingly, the author proposes a ‘ception’ scale, which considers not only the animacy of the subject’s referent, but also generic vs. specific contexts, presence or absence of locative prepositional phrases, and whether the setting is small or large. The notions of animacy, egocentrism and anthropocentrism are found to be relevant building blocks, but the various scales or hierarchies do not entirely overlap.

Lastly, the last issue explored in this volume is to what extent the Hierarchy can be toyed with, that is *exploited* for ideological persuasion in discourse. Indeed the hierarchy can be exploited in discourse aiming at influencing our way of looking at things and humans by attributing animateness to the first and de-humanising/de-personalising the second. Adopting a Critical Metaphor Analysis framework (Charteris-Black 2005, 2011, 2013, Musolff 2004, Hart 2010) and a cognitive linguistic perspective (Talmy, 2002, Lakoff & Johnson 1999, Kövecses 2002, 2010), **Jurga Cibulskienė’s** article offers an analysis of the manifestation of animation in two real-life phenomena which have significantly affected social life in Lithuania: the adoption of the euro in 2015 and the refugee crisis in 2015-2016. Showing the bidirectionality of anthropocentrism, she compares the metaphorical conceptualisation of these two phenomena in Lithuanian media that on the one hand personifies the euro while de-animating refugees. Highlighting the rhetorical and ideological implication of this persuasive use of metaphor, she exemplifies the embodiment hypothesis (Gibbs 2014) and Croft’s related conception in the Extended Animacy Hierarchy, bringing to the fore the potential effects of using anthropocentrism to manipulate the audience.

In conclusion, this journal issue hopefully contributes to show that the Animacy Hierarchy states a trend in conceptualisation, preferences, rather than absolute constraints. It highlights the weight of entrenched cultural conceptions in language and

discourse and, conversely, the influence of grammatical constraints on them, offering a more complete analysis of the workings of the Animacy Hierarchy and its potential cultural exploitations in order to potentially change our ways of viewing ourselves and our relations to others, animals and toys.

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