



Pragmatics of Gaslighting in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*

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Abstract

Gaslighting is not a linguistic concept per se. Rather, it is a psychological manipulative tactic employed to affect self-esteem, generally speaking. This concept has sufficiently been treated within psychology, in the first place, along with sociology and medicine. Yet, very few linguistic studies have been conducted in this regard. Accordingly, this represents a gap in this field, in general, and pragmatics, in particular, the issue which this study aspires to handle. Using a qualitative approach, the paper aims to investigate the pragmatic strategies which realize gaslighting in the data taken purposefully from the novel entitled *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn. The significance of the study resides in shedding light on one of the hidden manifestations of hate speech which has, unfortunately, been invasive recently owing to the boom of technology. Among the most important conclusions is that gaslighting can be practiced on everyone without being aware of it. This can be of special importance in the age of adulthood of teenagers whose personality has not been fully shaped. That is why they can be a very good target for disseminating certain concepts through gaslighting. That's why this concept should be given its due attention with the edificatory lectures on hate speech as it is a very risky strategy employed to achieve certain aims.

Keywords: gaslighting, lies, love bombing, name-calling



تداولية التلاعب بالعقول في الفتاة المفقودة لجيليان فلين

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المستخلص :

ان مفهوم التلاعب بالعقول ليس مفهوما لغويا بالدرجة الاساس. انما هو وسيلة تلاعب نفسية توظف للتأثير على تقدير الشخص لذاته. حيث تم تناول هذا المفهوم باسهاب في علم النفس بالدرجة الاولى فضلا عن علم الاجتماع والطب كذلك. ولوحظ وجود دراسات لغوية قليلة جدا عن هذا الموضوع وذلك يمثل فجوة في علم اللغة عموما والتداولية على وجه الخصوص وهو الشيء الذي تسعى الدراسة لملأه. فمن خلال تطبيق منهج نوعي تهدف الدراسة الى تقصي الاستراتيجيات التداولية التي تحقق هذه الظاهرة لغويا من خلال دراستها في رواية الفتاة المفقودة لجيليان فلين. وتكمن اهمية الدراسة كونها تسلط الضوء على احدى الاشكال الخفية لخطاب الكراهية والتي اصبحت منتشرة في الوقت الحالي بسبب التطور التكنولوجي الهائل. ومن اهم الاستنتاجات التي توصلت لها الدراسة هو امكانية التلاعب بعقل اي شخص دون الادراك بذلك. وتتجلى اهمية هذا الامر في اعمار معينة كفترة المراهقين الذين لم تتشكل شخصيتهم بصورة تامة لذلك يكونون هدف سهل وفعال لنشر مفاهيم معينة كونهم ارض خصبة تتقبل اي شيء. عليه يجب تسلط الضوء على هذا المفهوم واعطائه حقه ضمن المحاضرات التوعوية ضد خطاب الكراهية كونها استراتيجية خطيرة جدا توظف لتحقيق اهداف معينة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التلاعب بالعقول، الكذب، تفجير الحب، الشتم

1. Introduction

This work tackles one of the topics that has not been given its due attention in linguistics yet – gaslighting. Generally speaking, gaslighting refers to “a tactic in which a person or entity, in order to gain more power, makes a victim question their reality” (Sarkis 2017, 1). This is best performed through language. A gaslighter, as Morrison (2022) speculates, will make you second-guess your perceptions and your reality as whole with all its details. They employ various strategies to perform gaslighting on their victims.

Hence, the problem which this study aspires to solve is to explore the linguistic, viz. pragmatic, infrastructure of the concept of gaslighting, which is psychologically rooted in the first place.

Accordingly, the aims are designed to: identify types of gaslighting which symbolize this concept; examine the strategies which pragmatically represent gaslighting, and pinpoint which pragmatic concept usually constructs those strategies.

It follows that there are three research questions that need to be answered: what type of gaslighting is employed in the data under analysis? What strategy is pragmatically employed to instantiate gaslighting in the data? What is the pragmatic structure of gaslighting as tackled in this work?

The methodology followed is qualitative, instantiated by analyzing some extracts taken from the novel entitled *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn (2012), especially dialogues between Amy and Nick, wife and her husband, who are the main characters in the novel.

The significance of the study is symbolized in attempting to bring to notice one of the hidden manifestations of hate speech which is, regrettably, spreading in a remarkable way owing to the boom of technology.

2. Theoretical Framework

In what follows gaslighting is linguistically presented first, but pragmatically designed last. Thus, this section introduces the definition, types, strategies, and structure of this concept as reviewed from various sources.

2.1 Gaslighting Defined

Linguistically speaking, two references, out of the many reviewed, tackled

gaslighting linguistically: Podosky (2021), and Ghaltakhchyan (2024). The former depicts it as both intentional and unintentional and proceeds to set its criteria: "Gaslighting occurs when (i) a speaker uses words and either (ii) the speaker intends for the use of such words to cause a hearer to form (iii) negative attitudes toward her own interpretive abilities, or (iv) a speaker uses words without such an intention, but (v) the use of words is apt to cause the hearer to doubt her interpretive abilities (vi) owing to the hearer being subject to systematic epistemic injustice that has disposed her to do so" (p. 212). As just quoted, the relationship between gaslighting and linguistics is built here through the use of 'speaker', 'words', and 'hearer' respectively, but the concept has not been defined only explained. Consequently, it cannot be adopted as a definition. Later on, Ghaltakhchyan (2024, p. 61) presents gaslighting as a form of manipulative communication whose main target is to make the gaslightee doubt their own actions whatsoever: "Gaslighting is viewed as a form of manipulative communication that involves deliberate denial or distortion of reality, making the victims doubt their own actions, perception, memory and sanity". Again, this definition is not adopted as it is owing to the fact that manipulative communication is dealt with as being intentional, whereas gaslighting can be both intentional and unintentional. As a result, and for the aims of this work, the two notions are blended together to set the operational definition adopted here after adding a pragmatic aspect to it:

Gaslighting is a constellation of utterances expressed within a manipulative communication, whether intentional or not. It occurs when it satisfies one or more of the following criteria: "(i) a speaker uses words and either (ii) the speaker intends for the use of such words to cause a hearer to form (iii) negative attitudes toward her own interpretive abilities, or (iv) a speaker uses words without such an intention, but (v) the use of words is apt to cause the hearer to doubt her interpretive abilities (vi) owing to the hearer being subject to systematic epistemic injustice that has disposed her to do so".

[For other perspectives on gaslighting, see, Hussain (2024), Shaprio and Hayburn (2024), and Shekhar and Tripathi (2024)]

2.2 Types of Gaslighting

Among the references consulted in this regard, Podosky's (2021, pp. 207-211) is adopted. This is because he gives an illustrative account of his taxonomy. He classifies types of gaslighting into three major paired classes:

1. Individual vs. collective class
2. First-order vs. second-order class
3. Intentional vs. naïve class.

The second class, i.e. first-order vs. second-order, is embraced. Let's first inspect this class, as Podosky (2021) per se did, and then justify this selection.

2.2.1 First-Order vs. Second-Order Gaslighting

Simply put, first-order gaslighting means "disagreement over whether a shared concept applies to some aspect of the world, and where the use of words by a speaker is apt to cause hearers to doubt their interpretive abilities without doubting the accuracy of their concepts" (Podosky, 2021, p. 208). The following example is given by the author

- (1) "Woman: John brushed up against my bottom; that's sexual harassment.
Man: Sexual harassment? I'm sure it was an accident".

Second-order gaslighting, on the other hand, indicates "disagreement over which concept should be used in a context, and where the use of words by a speaker is apt to cause hearers to doubt their interpretive abilities in virtue of doubting the accuracy of their concepts". Podosky (2021, p. 208) presents the following example on this type:

- (2) "Woman: John brushed up against my bottom; that's sexual harassment".
Man: That's not sexual harassment. It's so trivial.

The difference between the two examples can be roughly put as follows in the way Podosky (2021) illustrated them: the man's use of words, in the first example, is able to make the woman be uncertain that sexual harassment really occurred, without her doubting that she has the exact concept to spot. In the second example, however, the man's words are capable of making the woman be uncertain that sexual harassment actually took place as she suspects that her perception can reliably comprehend it as such.

At a closer inspection, it has been remarked that this taxonomy revolves around a direction of fit. That is, it scales a match between a specific concept (topic, notion, opinion, etc.) and the words used to express it. Therefore, the direction of fit can either be from situation-to-word or from word-to-situation. So, in the first-order type of gaslighting, what is stabbed is not the concept per se, but rather the 'fitness' of that concept to a specific situation, that is, the fit is a situation-to word one. Second-order gaslighting, by contrast, hits the concept itself in its heart, so then came a search for another concept or, more specifically, a gaslightee will 'second-guess' their

perception, so the fit is a word-to-situation one.

The reason why this taxonomy is selected out of all the others is that it has been noticed that it can be employed as an umbrella encompassing all the others in one way or another. What helps us to decide on whether gaslighting is individual or collective, naïve or intentional, is the context which is itself the solid ground on which the principle of ‘direction of fit’ is built.

2.3 Strategies of Gaslighting

As indicated in 2.1 above, gaslighting is not a linguistic concept per se; it is deeply rooted in psychology. Thus, the strategies listed below are borrowed from references about psychology, then they are pragmatically translated by associating them to one of the well-known pragmatic theories.

To start with, Morrison (2022) lists the following strategies of gaslighting, taken along with their definitions from this source, examples are also cited when needed:

1. **Confusion:** involves the following scheme: The gaslighter tells you something, but does another thing in order to convince you that you did not understand, i.e. you were confused about what the gaslighter first said. Morrison gives the following example:

(3) Suppose you are going to have lunch for that day. They might have said something like: “Let’s go to the Chinese restaurant up the road”, and then moments later, they drive you to the Mexican place around the corner. They’ll tell you that you just didn’t understand what they meant even though you remember the conversation clearly.

2. **Lies:** involve telling explicit lies to keep you confused. To do lying, gaslighters will either change their mind abruptly or will convince you that they said something different.

3. **Reality Distortion:** This indicates changing a person’s version of reality by convincing them that they need to listen to the gaslighter to discover what actually reality is. This is usually implemented through repeatedly lying about something until the gaslightee believes it. For example:

(4) Someone always accuses you of being overreacting, when you think you’ve been pretty calm.

4. **Illusory Truth Effect:** This means replicating information that isn’t necessarily factual but becomes the truth, as in:

(5) Someone recurrently telling you that you are doing something in

the wrong way, and you will believe them.

5. **Name-calling:** This encompasses such terms as: stupid, incompetent, insane, and the like, for believing or telling a gaslighter that they might do something wrong.

6. **Playing the victim:** This is related to the previous strategy, in that once a gaslightee is name-called, the gaslighter often starts to play the victim. Put another way, a gaslighter will name-call you in one of the ways above, and then lament on how difficult you are making things to the extent that they are the only one who can put up with you.

7. **Love bombing:** This pertains to “excessive attention, admiration, and affection with the goal to make the recipient and obliged to that person”, as Morrison (2022) quotes L’Amie 2019. Morrison exemplifies this strategy as follows:

(6) It is like a puppy who is waiting for a treat, is given one, then is smacked on the nose late.

8. **Justification of their behavior:** This is related to the previous strategy. It involves reminding the gaslightee of how the gaslighter showed them love. For example,

(7) On attempting to withdraw from a relationship with your gaslighter, s/he will say such utterances as: I’m too busy with work, I don’t have the capacity right now, etc.

Such justificatory utterances make you justify their behaviors thinking that things will finally be better.

9. **Alienation:** This involves separating a galightee from his loved ones, whoever they are family members and the like, in order not to make them able to change the reality which completely differs from that of the gaslighter’s.

10. **Lying to others:** This is a form of the previous strategy that embraces a gaslighter lying to others to dominate you wholly, as in:

(8) They might tell stories about how you aren’t able to handle situations, about how you’ve been irrational recently, and will convince your loved ones that they are taking care of you.

Cardin (2024) adds another group of strategies, as shown below:

1. **Denial of facts:** This has to do with insisting that certain conversations never took place or even never happened, forcing the victim to doubt their memory.

2. **Misdirection:** This revolves around shifting blame onto the gaslightee to distract them from the issue at hand, as in the following example:

(9) If a victim confronts the gaslighter with hurtful behavior, the latter might respond with accusations about the victim's flaws or past mistakes.

3. **Trivializing emotions:** This pertains to belittling a gaslightee's feelings, accusing them of being overreacted or too sensitive.

4. **Triangulation:** This appeals to involving a third party into a situation to create conflict, confusion or competition among the individuals involved.

5. **Silent treatment:** This involves deliberate withdrawal of communication, leaving the victim in a state of confusion and insecurity.

2.3.1 Strategies of Gaslighting Pragmatically Constructed

After explaining the strategies that will be utilized to analyze the data of the work, it seems necessary at this point to investigate the pragmatic concepts that construct those strategies. To start with, and on a closer perusal, Morrison's (2022) ten strategies of gaslighting can be re-grouped on the basis of the relationship between as shown in their definitions. Thus, they can be re-classified into five types:

1. **Lying:** including the first three strategies.
2. **Illusory Truth Effect.**
3. **Name-calling:** including the fifth and sixth strategies.
4. **Love bombing:** including the seventh and eighth strategies.
5. **Alienation:** including the ninth and tenth strategies.

Along with these re-grouped five strategies, there are Cardin's (2024) five strategies (denial of facts, misdirection, trivializing emotions, triangulation, and silent treatment), so the total is ten strategies that can be pragmatically structured. This is going to be done through citing the appropriate pragmatic theory then listing all the strategies that can subsumed under it. The theories listed are selected on the principle of observation, that is, when surveying the strategies certain theories fit more than others to the construction:

1. **Speech Act Theory (SAT):** This involves Searle's 1969 classification. Under this theory, the following strategies are subsumed: illusory truth effect, love bombing (as re-grouped), alienation (as re-grouped), misdirection, trivializing, and

triangulation.

2. Politeness Theory (PT): This involves Brown and Levinson's 1987 theory. Only one strategy is subsumed under it: name-calling (as re-grouped).
3. Cooperative Principle and its Supporting Maxims (CP): This refers to Grice's 1975 theory. The following strategies are tackled under its umbrella: lying (as re-grouped), denial of facts, and silent treatment.

2.4 Related Works

Alsabagh (2023) in her paper aims to succinctly address some teachers' gaslighting of their students in the classroom and how it negatively impacts students' credibility, self-confidence, memory, and sanity, as well as provide suggestions on how educational institutions and students should and can deal with incidents of gaslighting and perpetrators of gaslighting. Besides, a framework for gaslighting that can help identify cases of gaslighting is proposed. The main implication is to address how students can be gaslit by some teachers as well as provide suggestions for how victims of gaslighting in this case students can deal with perpetrators and situations of gaslighting. Because teacher-student gaslighting is likely to occur inside academic and educational institutions these institutions are liable for any intended harm that befalls the mental and emotional state of their students, not just their physical state.

Deeb (2023) approaches gaslighting, in her study entitled 'The Portrayal of Relationship Gaslighting in Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*: A Psychoanalytic Approach', from a literary point of view. She adopts Robin Stern's 2007 definition of gaslighting and its effects in her book *The Gaslight Effect*. The main conclusion she comes up with is that gaslighting can disclose the truths of emotional abuse imposed on the victims, or gaslightees, such as children or spouses.

Engelhardt (2023) proposes that, in his work entitled 'Some Reflections on Gaslighting and Language Games', conversational norms permit gaslighting when socially subordinate speakers report systemic injustice. He depends on scholarship on epistemologies of ignorance to suggest a kind of gaslighting that is systematically produced by dominant epistemic systems. Moreover, he adopts Lynne Tirrell's account of language games that've been influenced by oppression to make the case that conversational norms make gaslighting "appropriate" when socially subordinate speakers report systemic injustice. He follows employs a mixed-methods approach. His

basically concludes that If it's true that gaslighting occurs systematically in part thanks to our warped conversational norms, then we may be able to mitigate the prevalence of gaslighting by attending to these norms.

Darke et al. (2025), in their review entitled 'Illuminating Gaslighting: A Comprehensive Interdisciplinary Review of Gaslighting Literature', "aims to compile and synthesize research from various disciplines, enhancing cross-field communication and providing a clearer understanding of the term's origins and potential future applications of gaslighting. This literature review synthesizes existing research on gaslighting by examining its evolution and operationalization across multiple fields, including medicine, psychiatry, psychodynamics, psychology and individual differences, sociology, and philosophy". "By providing a comprehensive synthesis of existing research, this review shines a light on the shifting conceptualization of gaslighting. It emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary communication and the need for a more robust theoretical framework to improve empirical studies. This unified understanding is crucial for developing more effective legal and psychological interventions to address gaslighting and other forms of psychological abuse".

As far as the foregoing is concerned, it differs from all the listed above in its approach which is purely pragmatic. It has nothing to do with literature or psychology, nor has it anything to do with gender or power. It borrows some strategies from psychology, then translates them pragmatically, and finally analyzes then as such to uncover the pragmatic infrastructure of gaslighting.

2.5 The theory/Model Adopted in Data Analysis

The model that is utilized to analyze the data is eclectic. It consists of three levels: type, strategy, device. Each is detailed below.

To start with, once a gaslighting utterance (or constellation of utterances) is selected (on the basis of the criteria set in the operational definition above), then its **type** is specified first. The types selected are Podoscky's (2021) first and second-order. After that, Morrison's (2022) and Cardin's (2024) **strategies**, all listed above, are detected by means of one of the aforementioned pragmatic theories, and this what is meant by **device**.

The following diagram schematically depicts the model synthesized above:

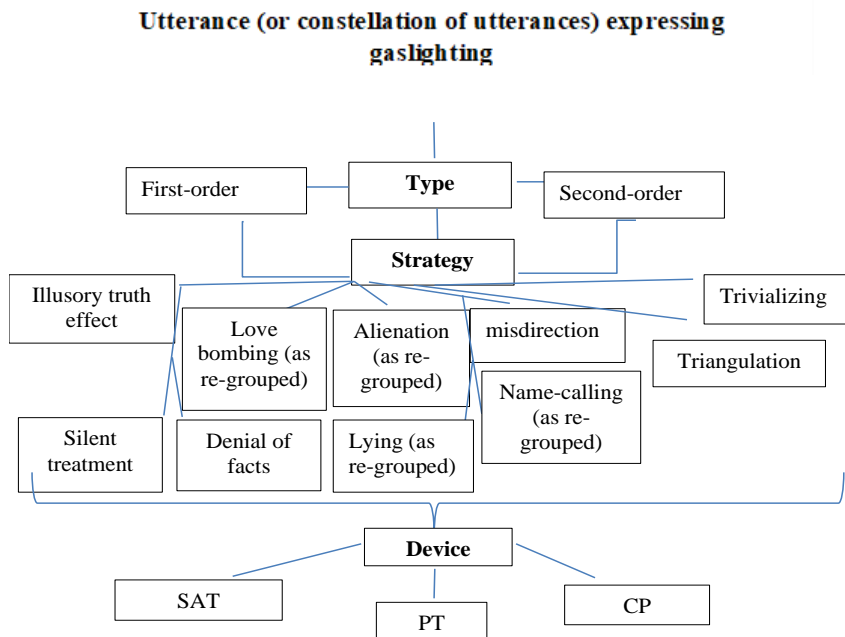


Figure 1 Model of Analysis

3. The Analytical Part

After synthesizing the model, it is time to check on its workability in accordance with the data under scrutiny. This is going to be done as shown below.

3.1 Methodology of the Study

The methodology followed in this study is qualitative supported by some percentages for verification. It involves employing the model just synthesized to analyze the data. As regards the data of the study, they are represented by extracts taken from the contemporary novel *Gone Girl* (2012) by the American novelist Gillian Flynn. In this novel, the heroine Amy, a gaslightee in the novel, is forced by her spouse, Nick, who is forced on, later on, by Amy herself in mutual gaslighting. This novel has been selected as it sold over two million copies and was translated into 40 languages (Adeeb, 2024), and it is representative to what this paper intends to investigate. The analysis goes as follows: after reading the novel thoroughly, certain extracts, viz. eleven, which meet the criteria set in the operational definition, have been highlighted as instances of gaslighting. They will be analyzed in accordance with the levels illustrated above in the model: type, strategy, device. The extracts are not equal in length; they vary in accordance with the situation itself.

3.2 Data Analysis

The extracts are numbered as **Ex.1**, **Ex. 2**, **Ex. 3**, etc., and then analyzed on the basis of the model presented before. The utterance(s) which involve(s) gaslighting is (are) highlighted in bold for distinction. It is necessary to mention that all the extracts analyzed are dialogues between Nick and Amy who are husband and wife:

Ex.1 “*McMann’s*, Nick. Remember, when we got lost in the rain in Chinatown trying to find that dim sum place, and it was supposed to be near the statue of Confucius but it turns out there are two statues of Confucius, and we ended up at that random Irish bar all soaking wet, and we slammed a few whiskeys, and you grabbed me and kissed me, and it was—”

“Right! You should have done a clue with Confucius, I would have gotten that.”

“The statue wasn’t the point. The place was the point. The moment. I just thought it was special.” She said these last words in a childish lilt that I once found fetching.

This extract utilizes first-order type of gaslighting. It is tokened by the disagreement over the suitability of the statue of Confucius as clue for finding something. That is, Nick does not disagree over the concept of the statue per se, rather he disagrees on whether it was a good choice for a clue. As for the strategy employed, it is identified as ‘trivializing the emotions’ issued by means of speech act of statement, as highlighted in bold. The selection of this strategy becomes evident when checking Amy’s answer: “The statue wasn’t the point. The place was the point. The moment. I just thought it was special.” That is, she felt something that Nick trivializes by shifting the turn to something different, i.e. statue.

Ex.2 “I love you, Amy. You know I love you,” “I said, tailing her in and out of the family packs of dazed tourists parked in the middle of the sidewalk, oblivious and openmouthed. Amy was slipping through the Central Park crowds, maneuvering between laser-eyed joggers and scissor-legged skaters, kneeling parents and toddlers careering like drunks, always just ahead of me, tight-lipped, hurrying nowhere. Me trying to catch up, grab her arm. She stopped finally, gave me a face unmoved as I explained myself, one mental finger tamping down my exasperation”: **“Amy, I don’t get why I need to prove my love to you by remembering the exact same things you do, the exact same way you do. It doesn’t mean I don’t love our life together.”**

Secon-order type of gaslighting is detected in the example. This is justified by the disagreement over what love is for each of Amy and Nick. This means there is disagreement over the concept per se. The pragmatic strategy utilized is misdirection. It is represented by shifting the blame, through two successive statements, on Amy as the tensed relationship between them is because of Amy's misconception of what love is.

Ex.3 "Nick got home just after four, a bulb of beer and cigarettes and fried-egg odor attached to him, a placenta of stink. I was still awake, waiting for him, my brain ca-thunking after a marathon of *Law and Order*. He sat down on our ottoman and glanced at the present on the table and said nothing. I stared at him back. He clearly wasn't going to even graze against an apology— *hey, sorry things got screwy today*. That's all I wanted, just a quick acknowledgment". "Happy day after anniversary," I start. He sighs, a deep aggrieved moan. **"Amy, I've had the crappiest day ever. Please don't lay a guilt trip on me on top of it."**

First-order gaslighting is employed here. It is portrayed by Nick's disagreement over the fit between the words and situation. Two strategies are employed: silent treatment, as narrated in the lines above the statement in bold, and justification of his behavior. The latter is implemented through the speech act of statement.

Ex.4 "Amy, I've had the crappiest day ever. Please don't lay a guilt trip on me on top of it." "I was just saying happy anniversary." **"Happy anniversary, my asshole husband who neglected me on my big day."**

First-order type is found here. It is achieved through unsuitability between the words and the situation. It is tokened by the strategy of name-calling symbolized by the use of 'asshole', which is a face-threatening act. This, in turn, implies utilizing the politeness theory.

Ex. 5 "We sit silent for a minute, my stomach knotting. I don't want to be the bad guy here. I don't deserve that. Nick stands up". "Well, how was it?" I ask dully. "How was it? It was fucking awful. **Sixteen of my friends now have no jobs.** It was miserable. I'll probably be gone too, another few months."

First-order type is instantiated here. It involves the disagreement over the fit between the words and the situation. It is represented by utilizing the strategy of triangulation. This is implemented through the inclusion of Nick's sixteen friends in the dialogue between them to justify the misery of his day. This is issued through the statement in bold.

Ex.6 “I know it feels dire right now, Nick. But—” **“It’s not dire for you, Amy. Not for you, it never will be dire. But for the rest of us? It’s very different.”**

This is an example of second-order gaslighting. It revolves around the meaning of ‘dire’ for both. It is implemented through employing ‘illusory truth effect’, by repeating the piece of information, about Amy’s not knowing about what dire is, to convince her that they are different. It is implemented through issuing statements and a question.

Ex.7 “We have to move back.” “He glares at me, opening his eyes wide. He flicks his fingers out as if he is trying to rid himself of something sticky”. “We’ll take a year, and we’ll go do the right thing. We have no jobs, we have no money, there’s nothing holding us here. **Even you have to admit that.**” “Even *I* have to?” As if I am already being resistant. I feel a burst of anger that I swallow. “This is what we’re going to do. We are going to do the right thing. We are going to help *my* parents for once.”

Second-order gaslighting is detected. It involves disagreeing over the main concept of leaving their current place. It is constructed through the strategy of ‘reality distortion’ by issuing the obligation via ‘have to’. It can be simply re-phrased in the following way: there is something in Nick’s about leaving their home to another place, which he depicts as something completely different from what is found in Amy’s mind. This is done by the use of the adverb ‘even’ to communicate the unusuality of her conception concerning this situation.

Ex.8 “We can take the bed if you really want to,” “Nick says, looking past me down the street”. “We have enough room.” “No, you promised it to Wally, Wally should have it,” I say primly. Nick blows out a sigh. **“Okay, if that’s what you want. Amy? Is it?”**

First-order gaslighting is found in this instance. It is represented by ‘if that’s what you want’ which means he does not deny the idea, just changing the fit. This is supported by employing the strategy of ‘confusion’ which is instantiated by the statement and the tag question.

Ex.9 “This is the last I’ll hear about the bed, Amy? Because I’m offering right now. **I’m happy to pack the bed for you.**”

This turn is a complement to the previous. It has been separated because it employs another strategy than the previous. So, there is also a first-order type of gaslighting. The strategy, however, is love bombing. This is implemented through the statement in bold. It implies that I am doing this

for you, otherwise I am not willing to do it.

Ex.10 “Wow, your parents must really hate me,” “Nick says whenever we’re both in earshot of the noise, though he’s smart enough not to recommend ridding ourselves of the thing just yet”.

second-order gaslighting is implemented. This is communicated through building a concept of hatred as he views it through the use of ‘must’. This leads to employing the strategy of ‘alienation’ as Nick, by his continuous mentioning of Amy’s parents hatred to him, he implicitly attempts to alienate her from them because things cannot continue in the way they do in the present. This is done through the obligation issued via ‘must’.

Ex.11 “We’ve been trying to reach you for hours,” I say.

“My phone was out of juice. You fainted?”

“I thought you said your phone was out of juice.”

“He pauses, and I know he is about to lie. The worst feeling: when you just have to wait and prepare yourself for the lie. Nick is old fashioned, he needs his freedom, he doesn’t like to explain himself. He’ll know he has plans with the guys for a week, and he’ll still wait until an hour before the poker game to tell me nonchalantly”, **“Hey, so I thought I’d join the guys for poker tonight, if that’s okay with you,”**

First-order gaslighting is spotted here. It is achieved by issuing a blatant lie symbolized by the words in bold. In other words, the lie is actually issued with the words ‘if that’s okay with you’. It means that what I say is not true, but if it is okay with you, then I say so. So, the strategy is ‘lie’ and the device is the speech act of statement.

After analyzing the extracts above, the following has been recorded:

1. Three strategies have not been found in the data, namely: playing the victim, lying to others, and denial of facts. This can probably be justified by the selection of the turns between Amy and Nick. There are other instances of gaslighting in the novel, but between other characters, so analyzing all of them is very lengthy and involves repetition which goes beyond the limits of paper-writing. However, in conducting other research works in this field they might be found. In the wife-and-husband social role, these strategies did not play a role. Nevertheless, they can be well-activated in other social roles such as parents or friends, which are all active in the novel under investigation.

2. The synthesis of the model, as shown above, has been proved to be successful on the three levels: type, strategy, and device. This is supported by the workability of the components of the model so consistently as shown in the analysis.
3. Generally speaking, the first-order type of gaslighting is employed more commonly than its second-order counterpart. This is claimed owing to employing the former in seven instances out of eleven. This might be justified by the type of situation which feeds gaslighting in addition to how smart the interlocutor is. Put another way, the smarter our interlocutor is, the more difficult to employ second-order type becomes, as this involves hitting a specific concept in the heart which is hard to maintain with smarts. It is necessary to mention that there is no relationship between being smart and less confident as the latter is psychological, whereas the former is genetic.
4. Most of the strategies worked successfully in the data. This means that they are fruitful in gaslighting. However, there might be some other strategies in other situations that can be studied. This presents a good point of departure for researchers to look for them.
5. As for the pragmatic structure suggested, it has been found workable, for the theories selected all support the strategies analyzed.

4. Conclusion

Analyzing the data has shown that gaslighting is a vital phenomenon which passes unnoticed in people's everyday lives. This is because it can be practiced by anyone, whether relative or not, that is why it can be described as invasive. However, the analysis has led to answering the research question as demonstrated below:

4.1 What type of gaslighting is employed in the data under analysis?

The two types of gaslighting, viz. first and second-order, are employed in the data under analysis. This connotes their workability. By answering this question, the first objective, which is about identifying types of gaslighting symbolizing the concept of gaslighting, is answered.

4.2 What strategy is pragmatically employed to instantiate gaslighting in the data?

Most of the strategies listed, namely twelve out of fifteen, have been employed in the data. This appeals to achieving the second aim of this work - examining the strategies which pragmatically represent gaslighting.

4.3. What is the pragmatic structure of gaslighting as tackled in this work?

This is answered by the three theories of SA, PT, and CP. With this answer, the third objective, which revolves around pinpointing the pragmatic concept usually constructs strategies of gaslighting, is pursued.

5. Recommendations of the Study

In line with the conclusions above, the study strongly recommends holding workshops on explaining the negative impact of gaslighting on all people, whoever they are. Moreover, students' attention, especially girls', should be grabbed to this phenomenon in order not to fall prey to gaslighting by different individuals who would like to achieve various aims through them.

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