

Realization Of Subject/Object Functions In Interpersonal Relationships (Based On A.P. Chekhov's Short Story The Lady With The Dog)

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ABSTRACT

The article explores how individuals realize subject/object functions within the framework of interpersonal relationships in the space of a literary text. The empirical basis for the study is A.P. Chekhov's short story *The Lady with the Dog*.

The aim of the research is to identify the forms of interpersonal interaction represented in the story, to examine the genesis and ontogenesis of the characters' personal relationships, and to analyze the dominant types of interpersonal relationships depicted in the text. The paper also focuses on how the characters perform subject-object functions within interpersonal interaction, as well as on the lexical and grammatical means used to express these functions. The study highlights the possible modification of types of connections, the redistribution and transformation of subject and object functions among participants in the course of communication, and even the combination of these functions within a single actant. The article also notes the significant impact of the emotive aspect on the level of interpersonal relationships between communicants..

Keywords: interpersonal relationships, interaction, connection, subject, object, function, literary text, emotiveness

INTRODUCTION:

Relevance of the Study

As is well known, interpersonal relationships are connections formed between individuals in the course of their life activities, realized through visual, nonverbal, verbal, physical, psychological, gender-based, socio-economic, political, and other types of interaction. Interpersonal relationships emerge through communication and manifest in intersubjective interaction. In our view, they serve as a communicative channel linking individuals. The most cognitively manageable number of interpersonal connections a person can maintain—according to the so-called Dunbar's number—averages around 150 contacts and may range from 100 to 230 individuals involved in interpersonal relationships with a single subject [43]. These may

include family members, relatives, colleagues, classmates, neighbors, and so on.

In this study, we distinguish between the concepts of *intersubjectivity* (interactionality)—the subject's capacity to engage with other subjects (subject–subject relationships)—and *interactivity*, understood as the subject's engagement with active objects (phenomena, objects, actions, situations, etc.) that influence the subject to various degrees, stimulate the expansion of their cognitive space, and prompt the transformation of subjectively-objective reality (subject–object relationships) [41, p. 29].

Interpersonal relationships, subject–object functions, and their linguistic expression have long been the subject of research in philosophy, psychology, sociology, linguistics, and philology by numerous scholars, including A.F. Lazursky, S.L. Frank (1912), M.Ya. Basov (1975),

V.M. Bekhterev (2023), K.K. Platonov (1986), E.P. Ilyin (2017), L.P. Bueva (1978), G.M. Andreeva (2009), D.A. Leontiev (1989), A.A. Leontiev (2005), A.A. Bodalev (2018), G.M. Breslav (2018), L.N. Galiguzova (2017), I.N. Gorelova (2017), I.S. Kletsina (2017), A.I. Vvedensky (1996), M.M. Bakhtin (1986), É. Durkheim (1995), A. Comte, H. Spencer (1996), T. Parsons (2018), A.A. Potebnya (2007), A.M. Peshkovsky (1956), V.V. Vinogradov (1986), V.A. Bondarko (1991), G.A. Zolotova (2001), Yu.D. Apresyan (1986), S.D. Katsnelson (1974), A.J. Greimas, J. Fontanille (2007), M.A. Ivanov (2020), among others.

However, to the best of our knowledge, the analysis of the realization of subject–object functions within the system of interpersonal relationships—taking into account the influence of the affective (sensory-emotional) factor on the dynamics of interaction, the redistribution of functions, and even their fusion within a single communicant—has not been conducted on the material of A.P. Chekhov's literary works.

This study, based on Chekhov's short story *The Lady with the Dog*, examines the mechanisms behind the emergence and development of interpersonal relationships between the protagonists, one of whom predominantly performs the subject function within the relationship, while the other occupies the object position.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a linguistic approach aimed at analyzing gender representations, stereotypes, and roles in literary works [32]. It includes the examination of how authors portray characters of different genders, the analysis of gender-related aspects of plot development and thematic content, as well as the influence of the author's gender on text production. The narrator of the story is the author himself—renowned Russian writer and playwright Anton P. Chekhov—known for his often critical and ironic attitude toward women. The narrative is conducted from the perspective of the main character, Dmitri Dmitrich Gurov, a male protagonist.

The study also employs the interpretative method, structural text analysis, and lexical-semantic, stylistic, and grammatical methods of analysis.

DISCUSSION

In the psychology of interpersonal relationships, binary typologies are typically distinguished: professional vs. personal, emotional vs. rational, subordinative vs. egalitarian.

Interpersonal relationships, as is well established, are realized through three main forms of interaction:

- the exchange of information through verbal interaction (spoken communication);
- the use of nonverbal cues, including tactile signals such as facial expressions, gestures, posture, eye contact, touch, and so on;
- interpersonal communication is accompanied by emotional expression and occurs through means of affective interaction, such as crying, laughter, tears, etc. (affective contact).

Stages of the Formation of Interpersonal Relationships

Interpersonal relationships emerge and develop through several stages. They begin with the acquaintance of individuals.

This initial stage may be preceded by certain information transmitted through various channels of communication about one or more of the involved subjects. Such information contributes to the subject's interest in the object(s) of their attention.

For example, in Chekhov's short story, the premise for the protagonists' acquaintance and subsequent relationship arises when Gurov hears a rumor about a new vacationer—a young, beautiful woman with a dog.

A true acquaintance begins with:

the moment of visual contact—mutual recognition of individuals, driven by one-sided or reciprocal (less frequently, multilateral) interest.

During the first visual contact, Gurov notices the striking, well-dressed woman he had previously heard about. After analyzing her appearance, physical features, and gait, Gurov concludes that she is from respectable society and likely married. A plan begins to form in his mind:

"If she's here without her husband and without acquaintances," Gurov considered, "then it wouldn't be a bad idea to make her acquaintance." (Original in Russian: «Если она здесь без мужа и без знакомых, – соображал Гуров, – то было бы не лишнее познакомиться с ней.» — Chekhov, *The Lady with the Dog*)

2) The further development of the relationship implies the emergence of verbal (a word, a phrase, a question, an answer, etc.) or nonverbal contact—establishing greetings (a bow, a wave of the hand, a nod, tipping the hat, a curtsy, etc.) between the participants in a communicative situation. This leads to verbal interaction, which in turn grants the participants the status of acquaintances.

In the scene of Gurov's first encounter with the lady with the dog, the phatic function of language is realized—that is, language used to establish contact.

Gurov skillfully constructed his behavior, taking advantage of the situation to indirectly prompt Anna Sergeyevna to speak to him first. He directed his attention toward the dog, with whom the woman was almost never seen apart. He showed his finger to the dog, which growled in response—provoking a reaction from the woman. She said that the dog does not bite:

"He doesn't bite," she said. (Original in Russian: «Он не кусается», – сказала она. — Chekhov, *The Lady with the Dog*)

Thus, the little Spitz became a key element—a mediating factor and indirect cause—serving as a connecting link in their acquaintance and subsequent relationship.

Undoubtedly, all of this was intentional—a well-calculated move by a man experienced in romantic affairs. However, it is also worth noting that the woman herself was not entirely passive; she, too, appeared to seek acquaintance with the elegant, well-groomed man. As A.P. Chekhov writes, there was something about him that drew women to him. This explains her seemingly

accidental choice of time and, more importantly, place for walking and dining.

Hence, an act—or more precisely, an interaction—of contact establishment was carried out:
 $S_1 \rightarrow O \leftarrow S_2$

The scene of acquaintance reveals a mutually directed, combined subject–object interaction, meaning that the participants simultaneously act as both subject and object within the paradigm of interpersonal relationships:
 $S_1 Ob_1 \rightarrow \leftarrow S_2 Ob_2$

During their first meeting, while walking after lunch, the protagonists engaged in a light conversation in which they shared a considerable amount of personal and private information.

Based on textual analysis, we identified nine key criteria that provide insight into the characters' social status, family background, cultural and educational level, and financial situation. By disclosing the content of their conversation, the author presents a comparative characterization of the protagonists (see Table).

№ / №	Criteria	Dmitri Dmitrich Gurov	Anna Sergeyevna von Dideritz
1.	Gender	Male	Female
2.	Place of residence	Moscow	St. Petersburg
3.	Age	Around 40 years old	Slightly over 20 years old
4.	Education	Philologist	Former institute student
5.	Marital status	Married	Married
6.	Presence of children	Two sons (grammar school students) and a daughter	No children
7.	Employment	Position at a bank	Not employed
8.	Financial situation, property ownership	Relatively wealthy, owns two houses in Moscow	Wealthy, lives in her husband's house
9.	Social status	High	High

As we can see, in three categories—No. 3, No. 6, and No. 7—Dmitri Dmitrich Gurov occupies a dominant position, while the remaining initial characteristics are generally balanced.

The post-lunch conversation revealed mutual interest and the emergence of trust between the communicants. These

interpersonal relationships were consolidated through verbal interaction.

Types of Interpersonal Relationships

As a result of acquaintance, various types of relationships arise, each accompanied and shaped by a certain range of emotions. It is emotions that determine the degree of closeness between the participants in the interaction, thereby characterizing interpersonal relationships either positively or negatively. These relationships may be marked by both positive and negative content. They can be friendly, neutral, hostile, neighborly, respectful, antagonistic, collegial, partnership-based, trusting, comradely, professional, elevated, romantic, and so on.

Interpersonal relationships can develop in either a negative or positive direction.

I) Interpersonal relationships developing along a negative trajectory may lead to confrontation, antipathy, hostility, and hatred between participants, ultimately resulting in the complete breakdown of interpersonal ties and the termination of interaction between individuals. In real life, participants in such relationships often part ways, resign from jobs, divorce, move out of shared living spaces, and sever family or social connections.

II) Interpersonal relationships with positive content have the potential to strengthen and evolve into more intimate forms over time. A positive dynamic in interpersonal relationships leads to the emergence of shared interests and mutual respect between individuals. As a result, the following stages may be observed: 1) Casual acquaintanceship, which, through the development of professional or situational connections, may evolve into 2) Comradeship, and eventually into 3) Friendship. This stage of interpersonal relationships between communicants involves mutual trust, respect, and selfless support in difficult situations.

The highest form of connection between individuals is 4) Love. In love, the most profound interpersonal interaction is realized; a loving individual demonstrates self-sacrifice, loyalty, empathy, and responsibility for their partner.

Thus, the emerging powerful, dynamic, and emotionally charged romantic bond serves as the foundation of the subject–object relationship between the protagonists of the story. Moreover, given the mutual and growing interest between Dmitri Dmitrich and Anna Sergeyevna, this bond may be viewed as the basis of subject–subject (interactional) relationships.

Emotiveness of Interpersonal Relationships

In psychology, the strongest degree of romantic attraction from one individual to another—or their mutual, overwhelming emotional pull—is commonly referred to as passion. According to S. I. Ozhegov, passion is defined as:

Intense love, a powerful sensual attraction.

A strongly expressed emotion, enthusiasm.

An extreme interest or obsession with something [33, p. 799].

A person may feel passion toward a particular activity or interest—for example, fishing, reading, traveling, stamp or coin collecting, or playing games. In such cases, passion is semantically equivalent to a personal hobby. However, passion in the context of interpersonal relationships is an intensely pronounced emotional attraction between people. Passion is an emotion capable of clouding a person's reason. It is no coincidence that we speak of "mad love."

Let us examine the components of passion as a structural category:

Possession

Passion—whether one-sided or mutual—is characterized by a powerful desire to possess the object of one's passion *hic et nunc* (here and now), regardless of consequences. In our view, possession—the act of claiming or controlling the object—lies at the heart of the subject's passion toward someone or something. To possess is also to gain a certain degree of influence or control over the object within the framework of a given relationship; it is the subject's will to command or direct the object.

Possession also implies an element of power, the ability to express ownership (possessiveness) over someone or something.

Thus, when Gurov is at the theater in St. Petersburg, he cannot contain his emotions and, overwhelmed by love, covers the object of his passion—Anna Sergeyevna—with kisses:

"He no longer cared. He pulled Anna Sergeyevna close and began kissing her face, her cheeks, her hands." (Original in Russian: «...но Гурову было все равно, он привлек к себе Анну Сергеевну и стал целовать её лицо, щеки, руки.» — Chekhov, *The Lady with the Dog*)

Desire

Passion is characterized by the presence of a strongly expressed desire. In psychology, desire is defined as a form of experiencing a need in which the object of the need (the "motive") and the potential means of satisfying that need are specified or represented [38, p. 203].

For Gurov, the object of desire becomes:

"She, this little woman... now filled his entire life, became his grief, his joy, the only happiness he now wished for himself."

(Original in Russian: «.....эта маленькая женщина....., наполняла теперь всю его жизнь, была его горем, радостью, единственным счастьем, какого он теперь желал для себя;...» — Chekhov, *The Lady with the Dog*)

To "desire" is an inherent property of subjectivity in the individual.

It is worth noting that this concept, along with others such as "to know," "to feel," "to think," and "to speak," is considered by the prominent linguist Anna Wierzbicka as a semantic universal, and is included in the framework of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage she developed.

Motivation

Desire, in turn, presupposes the necessary presence of the subject's motivation and their psychological responses, as

well as a range of actions—visible or implied—often well thought out but sometimes inconsistent, ungrounded, or illogical.

Actionality

Passion defies the rules of logic and often disregards any form of regulation, crossing social and age boundaries between participants.

Reacting to Dmitri Dmitrich's display of affection in a public place, Anna Sergeyevna exclaims:

"What are you doing, what are you doing!... We've gone mad!"

(Original in Russian: «Что вы делаете, что вы делаете!..... Мы с вами обезумели.» — Chekhov, *The Lady with the Dog*)

Imperativity

Passion also presupposes the presence of certain demands expressed by the subject—Dmitri Dmitrich—toward the object—Anna Sergeyevna.

"Stop, my dear," he said. "You've cried enough..."

(Original in Russian: «Перестань, моя хорошая, — говорил он. — Поплакала — и будет...» — Chekhov, *The Lady with the Dog*)

Thus, from a linguistic standpoint, the subject of passion necessarily involves categories such as modality (desirability), possessiveness, emotiveness, imperativity, and actionality.

However, ontologically, it is the object that plays the leading role in evoking passion. The object represents a certain value and significance for the subject and serves as a trigger that provokes the individual to become a subject of passion.

Passion is characterized by the object's magnetic pull on the subject; it creates high emotional tension within interpersonal relationships and expresses the intent to reduce psychological and physical distance between the communicants.

In this way, the lady with the dog—through her behavior, walk, clothing, and facial expression—arouses Gurov's interest and ignites the flame of passion and love.

As noted by S. V. Valiullina, passion belongs to the category of complex emotions that reflect a person's internal state. Its manifestation is influenced not only by lexical means that convey ideas about the characteristics of this emotion, but also by the nonverbal behavior of the subject of passion, represented in linguistic forms [11].

Visually, the symptoms of romantic passion may include the following psychophysiological reactions: the individual may cry, sigh loudly and frequently, tremble, experience a racing heartbeat and bodily tremors, weakness in the legs or knees, dry mouth, difficulty speaking, fainting, loss of consciousness, appetite, or sleep. The subject may also exhibit changes in skin tone or a marked brightness in the eyes [see 11]. Many of these psychophysiological reactions find their lexical-semantic expression in the portraits of the protagonists in A. P. Chekhov's *The Lady with the Dog*.

Anna Sergeyevna, in her communication with Dmitri Dmitrich, would lower her eyes, laugh, cry, and often forget what she had asked just moments earlier.

Her emotional reactions are described by the author through the following expressions:

"He doesn't bite," she said, blushing. "Her eyes filled with tears..."

"She hid her face against his chest and pressed close to him..."

"She looked at him with fear, with pleading, with love, and she stared intently..."
(Chekhov, *The Lady with the Dog*)

Gurov, by contrast, displays emotional restraint in a moment of tension:
"There was a watermelon on the table in the room. Gurov cut himself a slice and began eating it slowly. At least half an hour passed in silence."
(Chekhov)

His emotional tension surfaces later, at the moment of Anna Sergeyevna's departure for St. Petersburg: "He was touched, sad, and felt a slight remorse."
(Chekhov)

When he meets his beloved again at the theater, Gurov says in a trembling voice, forcing a smile: "Hello." (Chekhov)

Both protagonists are not free in their family lives—he is married and the father of three children, and she is also married. However, neither finds joy in their respective marriages. Their everyday lives have become dull and monotonous; they do not love their legal spouses. During their time in Yalta, they are overwhelmed by unexpected emotions and engage in an affair.

Gurov, who has long been unfaithful to his wife, regards the incident as something ordinary and remains calm. Anna Sergeyevna, on the other hand, reacts strongly—she cries and is deeply affected. "She took what had happened especially seriously, as though she were a sinner in a painting..."
(Chekhov)

This was her first adulterous experience. She is clearly fond of Gurov, even in love with him—she calls him kind, exceptional, noble—but at the same time, she realizes that what happened was immoral with respect to her husband. Nevertheless, passion overpowers her. She repeatedly turns to Gurov in search of reassurance and comfort.

Gurov calms her, saying: "There, there." He kissed her and spoke to her softly and gently.
(Chekhov)

The manifestation of passion in the protagonists' interpersonal relationship is expressed in different ways. Their passion also differs in emotional intensity. The author portrays a mutually directed dynamic of desire. In the story, romantic passion flows between the two lovers like liquid in communicating vessels—moving from one to the other, and back again.

Subjectivity/Objectivity in Interpersonal Relationships

As demonstrated in the narrative, in certain life situations and due to subjective factors related to the personal circumstances of the protagonists, the leading actant—the subject of interpersonal relationships—is at times one participant, and at other times the other. However, in our view, the role of the subject in interpersonal relations is more frequently performed by the male character, Dmitri Dmitrich Gurov.

In interpersonal relationships marked by romantic passion, one of the communicants is always more active and initiative-driven, capable of taking action and making sacrifices—thus playing a leading role. This can be explained by the fact that human society as a whole, and any social group in particular, functions as a bio-social system, which inherently organizes itself according to hierarchical principles. Accordingly, any social entity is characterized by a certain degree of inequality among its members [39].

In the course of life activity and through the formation of interpersonal relationships, there occurs a distribution of functions and roles, which are differentiated as leading and auxiliary, primary and secondary, dominant and subordinate, and so on. This type of distribution is rooted in the subject-object relationship, a concept that dates back to René Descartes [27].

A subject is defined as "an individual (or social group) engaged in cognitive or goal-directed transformative activity aimed at a specific object" [24, p. 565].

A person in the function of a subject possesses subjectivity—that is, the capacity to act as the strategist of their own activity, to set and revise goals, to be aware of their motives, to independently structure their actions and evaluate their alignment with intended outcomes, and to construct life plans [26, p. 166].

Let us recall: subjectivity is the property of an individual to be the subject of activity. In relation to a human being, it is the ability to act as an agent (subject) of action and to be relatively independent from others.

Subjectivity is the capacity of a person to transform their life, to pursue goals, to monitor and evaluate their actions and behavior, and to manage them effectively.

Subjectivity is characterized by a set of qualities, including activity, awareness, responsibility, reflexivity, creativity, self-discipline, autonomy in decision-making, and a drive for self-development and self-improvement.

Subjectivity is expressed through activity, cognition, and communication [40].

The vast majority of these qualities are present in the protagonists of Chekhov's story.

However, in order to be able to realize the functions of a subject, an individual must possess a certain potential.

Viewed as a preliminary condition—a potential for action—competence primarily exists as a state in which the subject resides; this state represents their mode of "being," a form that is actualized prior to action itself [16, p. 21].

Chekhov's story is so realistic, and its characters so believable, that they are perceived as real, living individuals.

In the case under discussion, the status of the acting subject should be considered in terms of two modes of existence within the Saussurean concept of speech—that is, in discourse, or, which is nearly the same, in life as observed and represented through discourse [16, p. 21].

In Chekhov's literary work, the subject reflected by reality is represented in the artistic text.

The subject of romantic relations—such as those that connect the protagonists—is driven to, and in fact engages in, the process of knowing the object, primarily through sensual and bodily experience. Sensory cognition (perceptions, impressions, and sensations) is known to be carried out through the senses and constitutes the initial stage of knowledge in general.

“Primary-level cognitive activity, whose content consists in the categorization of phenomenological knowledge by linguistic means—that is, knowledge derived from direct sensory experience—has as its starting point the figure of the human individual who perceives the real world. It has long been acknowledged by linguists that the spatial entity defined as the human body serves as fertile ground for the metaphorical categorization of experience” [25, p. 12; see also 31].

A person's objectivity is defined by their ability to manifest the qualities of an object. In this case, the individual is subjected to various external influences from other participants in a given situation.

However, as a personality, a person possesses dichotomous subject-object attributes: activity vs. reactivity, autonomy vs. dependence, mediation vs. immediacy, integrity vs. fragmentation/non-integration, creativity vs. reproductivity, self-worth vs. insignificance. A human being, including in their social dimension, is simultaneously both subject and object of influence... [1].

Let us now examine how the protagonists realize subject and object functions.

Subject – D. D. Gurov ($S_1 \rightarrow Ob_1$)
As the text analysis shows, D. D. Gurov, in most situations, functions as the subject of action and speech. By attributing to his character the internal reasoning leading to the desire to get acquainted with the lady with the dog, A. P. Chekhov—as a subtle psychologist—assigns Gurov the role of the subject.

Gurov receives information about the newly arrived vacationer in Yalta, sees the object—Anna Sergeyevna—analyzes her appearance, draws conclusions, formulates a plan of action, and proceeds to implement it with regard to the object, i.e., Anna Sergeyevna.

The author conveys Gurov's internal monologue:

“...the tempting thought of a swift, fleeting affair, of a romance with an unknown woman whose name and surname he did not even know, suddenly took hold of him.”

(Original in Russian: «...соблазнительная мысль о скорой, мимолетной связи, о романе с неизвестною

женщиной, которой не знаешь по имени и фамилии, вдруг овладела им.» — Chekhov, *The Lady with the Dog*)

Gurov's active role is further illustrated in the following narrative excerpts: “And Gurov would often stop by the pavilion, offering Anna Sergeyevna either soda water with syrup or ice cream.” (Original in Russian: «И Гуров часто заходил в павильон и предлагал Анне Сергеевне то воды с сиропом, то мороженого.» — Chekhov)

“...suddenly he embraced her and kissed her... ‘Let's go to your place,’ he said quietly.” (Original in Russian: «...вдруг он обнял её и поцеловал... – Пойдёмте к вам, – проговорил он тихо.» — Chekhov)

Thus, within the paradigm of interpersonal relationships between Dmitri Dmitrich Gurov and Anna Sergeyevna, it is Gurov who occupies the dominant position. The author emphasizes his advantages: he is nearly twice the age of his romantic interest (he is almost forty), he is more experienced, he has already spent two weeks at the resort while Anna Sergeyevna has only recently arrived, and he is more worldly-wise.

Dmitri Dmitrich Gurov is active, calculating, and attractive to women—and he is aware of this. His dominance is further highlighted by the fact that he addresses Anna Sergeyevna using the informal second-person singular (“ty”) form in Russian: “Why should I stop respecting you? You don't even know what you're saying. You're trying to justify yourself,” while she continues to address him using the formal “vy” form:

“You don't respect me anymore.”
He also decides where and when they go: “They found a cab and went to Oreanda.”
“Yes, it's time to go home. They returned to the city.”
“It's time for me to go north.”

In the early stage of their relationship, Gurov more frequently appears as the subject. He demonstrates himself to be an initiative-taking, active, rationally thinking man in love, especially in his effort to arrange a meeting with Anna Sergeyevna in St. Petersburg. As the narrator describes, one morning at the train station, he saw a theater poster, considered that Anna Sergeyevna might wish to attend the premiere, and went to the theater:

“It's very likely that she'll be at one of the first performances,” he thought.
Gurov scanned the crowd eagerly. Anna Sergeyevna entered. She sat in the third row... (Original in Russian: «Очень возможно, что она будет на первых представлениях, – думал он. Гуров жадно искал глазами. Вошла Анна Сергеевна. Она села в третьем ряду,...» — Chekhov, *The Lady with the Dog*)

The subject's plan was successfully carried out: his logical reasoning, situational analysis, and conclusions were proven accurate, and the object of his search was located.

The perspective on gender relations presented in the story reflects the prevailing masculine dominance in the

Russian Empire at the time, particularly in the sensitive sphere of romantic relationships.

It should be noted that Gurov, despite his words of consolation addressed to Anna Sergeyevna, displays a rather arrogant—even dismissive—attitude toward women. He regards them as an inferior race, whom he is accustomed to using for his own base sexual purposes. At first, he views his encounter with this young woman as just another affair, yet another romantic adventure:

“...in his tone and caresses there was a faint trace of mockery, the crude arrogance of a man who was fortunate.”

(Original in Russian: «...в его тоне и ласках сквозила тенью легкая насмешка, грубое высокомерие счастливого мужчины...» — Chekhov, *The Lady with the Dog*)

Gurov's calm, calculated attitude toward the act of infidelity also underscores his dominant position in the relationship with Anna Sergeyevna.

As the subject, he analyzes, acts, observes, initiates contact, and comforts his lover. However, the roles within a developing interpersonal relationship can shift and transform.

Object – Anna Sergeyevna (Ob₁ ← S₁)
Anna Sergeyevna's object position is emphasized in the author's words:

“She was alone, in an environment where she was followed, and looked at, and spoken to only with one secret aim, which she could not fail to guess.”
(Original in Russian: «Она была одна, в такой обстановке, когда за ней ходят, и на нее смотрят, и говорят с ней только с одной тайной целью, о которой она не может не догадываться.» — Chekhov, *The Lady with the Dog*)

The grammatical form of the Russian verbs ending in *-ют* and *-ят* (*ходят, смотрят, говорят*) indicates actions directed toward an object—Anna Sergeyevna. The subject of the action is not explicitly stated in the impersonal construction, but can be easily inferred from the context.

Object – D. D. Gurov (Ob₂ ← S₃)
As noted above, the status of subject and object is not fixed or constant; an individual's role in interpersonal interaction may shift to its opposite over time. Thus, Gurov appears as an object in his interpersonal relationship with his legal wife.

Gurov's objectivity is conveyed through the impersonal construction:

“He was married off early... and now his wife seemed one and a half times older than he was.”
(Original in Russian: «Его женили рано... и теперь жена казалась в полтора раза старше его.» — Chekhov, *The Lady with the Dog*)

In Chekhov's text, age functions as a significant factor and a relevant advantage in the hierarchy of interpersonal relationship criteria. It serves as an indicator of subjectivity. Gurov's lack of agency—his passivity or non-subjectivity in the choice of a spouse—is expressed through the past passive verb form *was married off* (*женили*). As a result, his marriage is unsuccessful.

He does not love his wife, has long been unfaithful to her, fears her to some extent, and tries to stay away from home as much as possible. Within the system of personal family relationships, he occupies a dependent position.

Subject – Anna Sergeyevna (S₂ → Ob₃)
In contrast to Dmitri Dmitrich, Anna Sergeyevna, in our view, acts as a subject in relation to her husband. She is more proactive, energetic, and sufficiently independent from him. She considers her husband a lackey due to his obsequiousness and, as a result, does not respect him.

Thus, in addition to their primary, legal marital ties, both protagonists form a secondary, and arguably stronger, relationship based on love and mutual understanding.

Dynamics of Roles in the Interpersonal Relationship between Gurov and Anna Sergeyevna

After parting with Anna Sergeyevna and returning to Moscow, Gurov realizes that he can no longer live without his beloved.

(*Did he truly love her back then?*)—this instance of free indirect speech reflects his retrospective assessment of the beginning of their relationship.

Gurov, as if under a spell, finds himself in a state of constant recollection:

“...his memories turned into dreams, and the past became mingled in his imagination with what was yet to come. Anna Sergeyevna did not appear in his dreams but followed him everywhere like a shadow, watching him.”
(Original in Russian: «...воспоминания переходили в мечты, и прошедшее в воображении мешалось с тем, что будет. Анна Сергеевна не снилась ему, а шла за ним повсюду, как тень и следила за ним.» — Chekhov, *The Lady with the Dog*)

He sets out for St. Petersburg in order to meet her again: “He wanted to see Anna Sergeyevna and talk to her, to arrange a meeting if possible.”

Dmitri Gurov now understands that for the first time, he has truly fallen in love — with his whole heart and soul: “And only now, when his hair was already turning gray, did he fall in love as one ought to — for the first time in his life.”

(Original in Russian: «И только теперь, когда у него голова стала седой, он полюбил, как следует, по-настоящему — первый раз в жизни.» — Chekhov)

Following their reunion in St. Petersburg, the roles of the protagonists begin to shift: Anna Sergeyevna increasingly assumes the role of subject in their relationship. She decides how to proceed under the circumstances, urges Gurov to return to Moscow, and chooses to come to him for secret meetings, thereby deceiving her husband (in this case, she also acts as a subject in relation to him).

As Chekhov writes, her husband both believes and doubts the reasons she gives for her trips to Moscow, which confirms his function as an object.

Anna Sergeyevna displays imperativity in her speech to Dmitri Dmitrich:

“You must go,” Anna Sergeyevna continued in a whisper. “Do you hear me, Dmitri Dmitrich? I'll come to you in Moscow.”

(Chekhov)

In conclusion, the protagonists' initial passion transforms into a profound feeling of love—one that elevates their relationship and calls for the forgiveness of their forbidden physical bond: "They... felt that this love had changed them both." (Original in Russian: «Они... чувствовали, что эта их любовь изменила их обоих.» — Chekhov)

In this way, the author offers readers a sense of hope for a difficult, yet potentially happy future for the couple.

CONCLUSION

In the text of the story, various forms of interpersonal interaction—personal, emotional, subordinative, and egalitarian—are linguistically represented in the relationships between the characters.

All three types of interaction are employed in the narrative: verbal and nonverbal communication accompanied by emotive expression.

The deep romantic feelings that emerge in the course of communication determine the degree of closeness between the protagonists and thus characterize the nature of their interpersonal relationship.

Passion, as expressed through the actions and emotional responses of the characters, is fully reflected in the linguistic fabric of the narrative.

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