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Mourning for companion animals as source of pathemisation in French-language digital discourse

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The death of a companion animal may lead to a state of mourning, frequently experienced by their owners in solitude, as the expression of grief can be marked in this context by a lack of social acceptance and a form of ostracism (Veyrié 2014). It is therefore important for animal owners to seek safe spaces for experiencing difficult emotions (Eason 2021). As a result, the development of online animal cemeteries and commemorative portals has been observed (Florea & Wrona 2018, Veyrié 2018). They offer the possibility to create an emotionally expressive last farewell to a deceased animal, taking the shape of a digital epitaph or a more elaborate form called an homage (French: *hommage*). Emerging digital websites of this type seem to be an interesting and linguistically understudied area of pet owners' discursive activity. The research conducted so far emphasizes the pathemic dimension of commemorative portals, where animal owners may express their grief explicitly, but also through recollecting memories or using specific imagery (Bryja 2024, Veyrié 2018). However, pathemisation, understood as a discursive strategy aimed at increasing the emotional charge of utterances in order to align the listener's (or the reader's) feelings with the speaker's (or the writer's) viewpoint (Charaudeau 2000) has not been studied in this context as such.

The aim of the study is therefore to describe the influence of discursive factors typical of French-language commemorative portals on pathemisation and to characterise linguistic means used by animal owners to express their emotional state. The study employs a corpus-based analysis employing both qualitative and quantitative methods. The research data has been collected from a French-language commemorative website called *Amonami*¹, created by the French pro-animal organization *30 millions d'amis* ('30 millions of friends'). To address both discursive and linguistic issues, the frames of French linguistic discourse theory (e.g. Charaudeau 2011, Grzmil-Tylutki 2010, Maingueneau 2013, 2021) have been adopted to the analysis.

The study is based on the research corpus designed specifically for this purpose. It includes 2625 commemorative texts published on the portal *Amonami*, concerning animals that died between 1st January 2019 and 31st December 2024. Qualitative-quantitative linguistic analysis of pathemisation has been conducted with the use of a lexicometric programme called SketchEngine (see e.g. Kilgarriff et al. 2014). The poster will focus on various pathemic means, referring to enunciators' mental state as such (e.g. appreciative modalities, metaphors) or linked to the figure of deceased animal (e.g. axiologically marked vocabulary, affectonyms, agentive expressions).

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¹ *Amonami* commemorative portal, <https://amonami.30millionsdamis.fr/> [accessed 21 March 2025].

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