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INTERPRETING INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS IN PATRICK WHITE'S NOVEL "THE LIVING AND THE DEAD": A RELEVANCE-THEORETIC PERSPECTIVE

Summary. This paper presents an inquiry into the cognitive-pragmatic specifics of indirect speech acts in Patrick White's fiction. Indirect speech acts represent an important pragmatic mechanism through which speakers convey communicative intentions that are not explicitly expressed in the literal meaning of an utterance. Their interpretation requires the involvement of contextual knowledge and inferential processes that allow interlocutors to derive implicit meanings. Traditional speech act theory, associated with John Searle, explains indirect speech acts primarily through conventionalized relations between sentence types and communicative functions; however, such explanations do not fully account for the cognitive mechanisms underlying the interpretation of implicit meaning in discourse. Within the framework of Relevance Theory developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, communication is understood as an inferential process in which hearers seek the most relevant interpretation of an utterance based on contextual assumptions and the expectation of optimal relevance. The article aims to give a relevance-theoretic account of the mechanism of indirect speech acts interpretation in literary communication, that is in Patrick White's *The Living and the Dead*.

The research applies methods of pragmatic, contextual and discourse analysis to identify and classify indirect speech acts in the characters' dialogues and to examine the inferential processes through which their communicative intentions are interpreted. The results indicate that the relevance-theoretic framework provides an effective explanatory model for analysing implicit meaning and pragmatic interpretation in literary discourse, revealing how indirectness contributes to characterisation, interpersonal relations and the communicative dynamics of the narrative.

Key words: cognitive pragmatics, indirect speech act, relevance theory, literary communication.

Statement of the problem and the analysis of recent research and publications. The issue of indirect speech acts is increasingly attracting the interest of researchers across various scientific fields, from traditional to innovative perspectives. It is analysed in the context of culture studies [1; 2], rhetorics [3] and linguistics [4; 5; 6; 7].

Indirect speech acts have always been a concern of the speech act theory [7], Grice's theory of implicatures [8], and Leech's Politeness Principle [9]. Indirect speech acts are regarded in the "speech acts schema" [5] and viewed in the context of a "general structural model of action" [10]. All the above-mentioned researchers aim to examine the structure of indirect speech acts, propose a model for their interpretation, and discuss their linguistic features.

Despite being mentioned in most textbooks on semantics and pragmatics, the reason seems rather to be general puzzlement about the significance of indirect speech acts for an efficient communicative process, particularly in face-to-face and literary communication. There is a further problem with the definition of indirect speech acts and their interpretation. According to Searle, "an indirect speech act is one in which Speaker performs one illocutionary act but intends Hearer to infer another illocution" [7, p. 31]. For this reason, there is overwhelming evidence that "speakers expect hearers to draw inferences from everything that is uttered – just as they do from visual and other data perceived and conceived of – no matter how direct" [11]. However, the hearer's inferences are not enough for efficient communication. The sufficient is the proper interpretation of indirect speech act that "includes the broader process of drawing one's own conclusions as part of the overall search for its relevance" [12, p. 189] as "the search for relevance is a basic feature of human cognition" [13, p. 608].

Indirect speech acts remain a timely issue that warrants the study of various approaches. While traditional speech act theory, associated with John Searle, explains such phenomena primarily through conventionalised rules and contextual cues, this approach does not fully account for the cognitive processes involved in interpreting implicit meanings. Within the framework of Relevance Theory, developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, communication is understood as an inferential process in which hearers seek the most relevant interpretation of an utterance by combining linguistic input with contextual assumptions. Examining indirect speech acts from a relevance-theoretic perspective therefore allows researchers to explain how interlocutors infer speakers' communicative intentions

and derive implicit meanings, which is particularly important for the analysis of literary discourse, where much of the meaning is conveyed indirectly through contextual and pragmatic cues. Consequently, the cooperation between the main principles of pragmatics and cognitive linguistics is evident in the analysis of the mechanisms underlying the use and interpretation of indirect speech acts.

The material for this research is drawn from Patrick White's novel "The Living and the Dead", which contains communicative situations with indirect speech acts. Researchers explore the literary contribution of Patrick White, Australia's only Nobel Prize-winning author, "for an epic and psychological narrative art which has introduced a new continent into literature" (The Nobel Prize in Literature in 1973) [14], but they fail to account for the characteristics of his language style that some linguists find difficult. Patrick White is widely regarded as one of the major writers in English of the 20th century, though Carolyn Bliss noted that his style was the most neglected area [15]. According to Beston, his fiction is "beset by questions and ambivalence"; it is abrasive in mood and features generally unattractive characters [16, p. 13]. Patrick White's fiction is characterised by a wide range of means for expressing implicit meanings and communicative intentions indirectly, and by pragmatic peculiarities of speech acts, many of which are indirect.

The aim of this article is to analyse the functioning and interpretation of indirect speech acts in Patrick White's *The Living and the Dead* through the theoretical framework of Relevance Theory, in order to explain how implicit communicative intentions are inferred in literary discourse. To achieve this aim, the following tasks are addressed: a) to outline the theoretical foundations of indirect speech acts within pragmatic studies, particularly in the works of John Searle; 2) to describe the key principles of Relevance Theory developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson that are relevant for interpreting implicit meaning; 3) to analyse the inferential processes through which speakers' (characters') communicative intentions are interpreted by applying the relevance-theoretic framework.

Outline of the main material of the study. The definition of indirect speech acts has long been the focus of numerous studies. According to Searle, there are cases in which the speaker may utter a sentence, mean what he says, and mean something else in addition, with different propositional content ... And in such cases, the surface form of an utterance and its purpose aren't always straightforward. These are indirect speech acts, cases in which one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another [7, p. 30-31]. Thus, the speaker can use one utterance to perform illocutionary acts of various types. Asher and Lascarides propose to treat indirect speech acts "as a particular sort of complex semantic type that's formed from two incompatible types" [4, p. 3]. Yule suggests indirect speech act as "an action in which the form used (e.g. interrogative) does not directly match the function (e.g. request) performed by a speaker with an utterance, in contrast to a direct speech act" [17, p. 292]. Mey mentions the "indirect speech act paradox" which means that indirect speech act only describes the fact that something is said, something else is intended [18, p. 58].

It results in the speaker's understanding and interpretation of each other's intentions, and then leads to proper responses during verbal interaction. The mechanisms behind the production and interpretation of indirect speech acts have been widely discussed since their origins. Linguists' views on the interpretation of indirect speech acts are different. Grice observes that obeying the Cooperative Principle and its maxims leads speakers to successful communication. In

the light of the Cooperative Principle, indirect utterances are treated as the result of a violation of the maxim of Quality [8]. Leech treats an indirect speech act as a violation of the Tact Maxim in the context of the Principle of Politeness [9]. However, J. Thomas argues that indirect speech acts may constitute violations of the maxims of the Cooperative Principle [19]. A serious weakness with the argument that indirect speech act interpretation depends on the violation of the maxims is that it is not always possible to determine which maxims can explain indirect speech act, as it is hard to distinguish which maxim the speaker violates, since they can superimpose each other.

To obtain the speaker's meaning, hearers must comprehend utterances not simply by encoding/decoding their meanings and transmitting them to each other, but also through inferential processes. Sperber and Wilson hold that the interpretation of utterances humans use to communicate is far too context-sensitive to be automatically achieved in purely code-like terms. The sentences of a natural language are typically multiply ambiguous; they contain referential expressions whose values cannot be assigned by decoding alone; the senses they ambiguously encode are often elliptical or incomplete; and there are still other ways in which the encoded meaning of a sentence falls short of determining what it may be used to communicate [12; 20]. According to the inferential model of communication interpretation, a "communicator provides evidence of their intention to convey a certain meaning, which is inferred by the audience on the basis of the evidence provided" [20, p. 608]. Sperber and Wilson claim the inferential process is an efficient way to recognise the speaker's intentions and interpret verbal interaction. Nevertheless, the following question arises in indirect speech act interpretation: how direct and indirect illocution or literal and implied meanings are interpreted in indirect speech act.

We suggest analysing the process of interpreting indirect speech acts in the light of the Standard Pragmatic View and the Radical Pragmatic View. Proponents of the standard pragmatic model [5; 21] propose a logical procedure for the interpretation of indirect speech acts. The *standard pragmatic view* presumes that constructing literal meaning is the "core function in language interpretation" [21, p. 268]. According to this view, the hearer first needs to process the literal meaning that is most closely connected to tangible objects and the perceivable world. If someone says, *Max's a real hamster*, the standard pragmatic view says that you will interpret the expression as if it meant *Max is an example a solitary burrowing rodent with a short tail and large cheek pouches for carrying food, native to Europe and North Asia*. Of course, normal people will *not* interpret *this utterance* in this way – they will quickly come up with a more sensible interpretation. While interpreting an indirect speech act, the hearer first needs to process the literal meaning with the direct illocution that exists regardless of context. Then, this meaning is tested against the context. If, however, the hearer recognises the inappropriateness of the literal meaning of the indirect speech act in the communicative situation, then they resort to the logical conceit of the indirect meaning of the speaker's utterance and additional illocution. The process of retrieving the intended meaning involves the hearer's inferential steps to identify the opposite of what the speaker has literally said.

Unlike the standard pragmatic model for interpreting indirect speech acts, there is an alternative approach whose supporters question whether the understanding of indirect speech acts is possible only after the hearer interprets their literal meaning in the commu-

nicative situation. Literal and implied meanings of indirect speech acts are simultaneously activated in the inferential process of interpretation of the true speaker's meaning; thus, the hearer immediately understands the indirect utterance [8]. There is still considerable ambiguity regarding this interpretation. The inference of the additional illocution of indirect speech acts only after rejecting a direct one can impede the detection of speaker's intention, because the literal meaning may also be appropriate and correct in context, however, it can be irrelevant for expressing the indirect speech act's communicative intention and effect on the hearer in verbal interaction.

Supporters of the standard and alternative models of utterance interpretation agree that it is important and necessary to comprehend the speaker's meaning, expressed implicitly, for the recognition of indirect speech acts' communicative intention. The key problem with this explanation of indirect speech act interpretation from the point of view of the alternative model is that it does not take into account the ability of communicators to carry out logical-inferential operations, their common grounds and conditions of communicative situations, which can both facilitate as well as complicate the inferential process of indirect speech act interpretation. To carry out the issue of indirect speech act interpretation, it is efficient to use the main tenets of the Relevance theory that proposes to recover the overt speaker's meaning and their communicative intention by constructing logical steps of inferences.

According to the Relevance theory introduced by Sperber and Wilson, the hearer will exercise their reasoning ability to interpret the utterance in a communicative situation until the explanation found satisfies their expectation of relevance [13]. We believe that speakers use indirect utterances not because they adhere to the cooperative principle and its maxim, but because "the search for relevance is a basic feature of human cognition" [20, p. 608], and it is explained as the communicative effectiveness of the statement [23]. Sperber and Wilson proceed from "expectations of relevance raised by an utterance are precise enough, and predictable enough, to guide the hearer towards the speaker's meaning as relevance is a potential property of thoughts, memories and conclusions of inferences as well as utterances [20, p. 607].

Leach defines the category of relevance as the utterance's correspondence with the communicative situation and the speaker's communicative intention: "The statement U is relevant to the situation, if the statement U can be interpreted as contributing to the communicative intention of the speaker" [9, p. 94]. The scholar has noted that a speaker takes the principle of relevance into account when processing the meaning of an utterance: the speaker conveys information that, in their opinion, is relevant to the speech situation and satisfies the hearers' interests.

Relevance, together with intentionality, is the main characteristic of communication, as it determines the significance of the speaker's message in verbal interaction. In addition, "no matter how valuable and reliable a speech act is for conveying the speaker's meaning, if it is not relevant to the speech situation, it remains inappropriate". An indirect speech act is "relevant if it effectively realises the speaker's intention in a speech situation. The effectiveness of an indirect speech act is evident when a hearer responds to a speaker's utterance" [23, p. 213].

Communicative interaction is successful only when the relevance factor is taken into account; if a speaker considers relevance during verbal interaction, the communicative process succeeds. Therefore, if the category of relevance determines the communicative process,

it can be assumed that it causes the emergence of indirect speech acts in verbal interaction. After all, until the speaker is sure that his "speech act meets the needs of the speech situation and becomes relevant and effective in realising the speaker's intention, he does not use the speech act in communication" [23, p. 213].

According to relevance theory, the inferential process of indirect speech act's interpretation involves the following steps:

1. Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about explicit content (in relevance-theoretic terms, EXPLICATURES) via decoding, disambiguation, reference resolution, and other pragmatic enrichment processes;

2. Defining the fact that EXPLICATURES do not satisfy the presumption of relevance as indirect speech act represents not only EXPLICATURES, but the speaker's meaning with one more illocution;

3. Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about the intended contextual assumptions (in relevance-theoretic terms, IMPLICATED PREMISES).

4. Such extralinguistic factors as communicative situations and speaker's common grounds are efficient in constructing an appropriate hypothesis about the intended contextual implications (in relevance-theoretic terms, IMPLICATED CONCLUSIONS).

5. Finding out the speaker's intention to have the pragmatic effect on the hearer and stop the comprehension procedure, as the hearer's expectations of relevance are satisfied [24, p. 98].

We agree with Sperber and Wilson that these steps should not be thought of as sequentially ordered. Linguists claim comprehension is an on-line process, and hypotheses about explicatures, implicated premises and implicated conclusions are developed in parallel against a background of expectations (or anticipatory hypotheses). In particular, the hearer may bring to the comprehension process not only a general presumption of relevance, but more specific expectations about how the utterance will be relevant to him (what cognitive effects it is likely to achieve), and these may contribute, via backwards inference, to the identification of explicatures and implicated premises [20].

The relevance theoretic comprehension procedure of indirect speech act interpretation is shown by means of the example of indirect speech act from Patrick White's discourse.

(1) *'Willy, I want to talk', she said.*

'Mm?' he said. 'At this time of night!' (+> I don't want to talk with you).

'Yes', she said. 'Because, you see, because it's like this', she said.

'You make me tired. You are ludicrous,' he said

'Go on then', she said. 'Go on!' Her clasped hands offered no assistance to the word, were lumped together ineffectually, except as a guard against trembling perhaps [25, c. 69].

Table (1) below is a schematic outline of how a woman might use the relevance theoretic comprehension procedure to construct hypotheses about the explicatures and implicatures of a man's indirect speech act, *'At this time of night!'*

The hearer's aim is to interpret the communicative intention of the speaker, to interpret precisely what the speaker means, that will satisfy the presumption of optimal relevance in the communicative situation. To do this, the hearer constructs meaning at the explicit level and forms the first assumptions about what has been said. In given communicative situation the hearer understands that the explicit meaning does not satisfy his expectation of relevance, and complements the interpretation of the indirect speech act

Relevance theoretic comprehension procedure of indirect speech act interpretation

1) 'At this time of night!'	Decoding the man's utterance. Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about explicit content (in relevance-theoretic terms, EXPLICATURES) via decoding, disambiguation, reference resolution, and other pragmatic enrichment processes;
2) 'You make me tired. You are ludicrous,' he said.	The woman realizes the speech act 'At this time of night!' denote not only the man's unpleasant feelings and opinions (I am tired to have a small talk) but it does not satisfy the presumption of optimal relevance. Defining the fact that EXPLICATURES do not satisfy the presumption of relevance as indirect speech act represents not only EXPLICATURES, but additional speaker's meaning with one more illocution;
3) The man's utterance ' <i>At this time of night!</i> ' does not have the direct rejection of conversation with woman (e.g. The utterance does not have the verbs <i>refuse, reject, don't want to speak etc.</i> , which can express the additional speaker's meaning).	Constructing an appropriate hypothesis about the intended contextual assumptions (in relevance-theoretic terms, IMPLICATED PREMISES).
4) The speech act ' <i>You make me tired. You are ludicrous,</i> ' functions as a microcontext to add additional information, expressing the rejection to continue the conversation because of the tiresomeness.	Such extralinguistic factors as communicative situations and speaker's common grounds are efficient in constructing an appropriate hypothesis about the intended contextual implications (in relevance-theoretic terms, IMPLICATED CONCLUSIONS).
5) Transposition of direct speech act ' <i>At this time of night!</i> ' with illocution to express <i>astonishment and embarrassment</i> into indirect speech act with additional illocution to express the rejection to have a conversation.	By combining the implicit premise in (3) and the explicit premise in (4), the woman arrives at the implicit conclusion in (5), from which final assumptions can be derived; there is one more illocution in the utterance. .
6) The man's answer has not only his psychological state but to express the rejection to have a conversation with a woman.	The resulting overall interpretation satisfies expectations of relevance:

at the implicit level, forming assumptions about the truth of what he said.

The hearer reveals the additional speaker's meaning and illocution that actualises the speaker's true communicative intention, which is formed as a result of the analysis of contextual information and common grounds. The interlocutor dwells on an interpretation that satisfies his expectations of relevance [20, p. 628]. The utterance is only relevant when it meets the needs of the communicative situation that is formed and is capable of producing the desired speech influence on the hearer in verbal interaction.

The analysis of the character's interpretation of indirect speech acts shows how they raise expectations of relevance for the character, which in turn guide its interpretation at the level of communication between characters in the novel. The pragmatic model, combined with a relevance-theoretic account of indirect speech-act understanding and interpretation, can be applied not only to character-character discourse but also to the way authors convey messages to their readers [9, p. 302]. The distinction between the interpretation of indirect speech acts at the level of verbal interaction between the characters and the author and the reader will prove a useful starting point when considering how the relevance of indirect speech acts on two levels of communication in Patrick White's novel *The Living and the Dead* occurs. The theoretical principles and distinctions discussed so far are assumed to be general to all inferential communication.

Conclusions. Indirect speech acts constitute an important pragmatic mechanism through which speakers convey meanings that extend beyond the literal content of an utterance. This study has been an effort to apply a cognitive-pragmatic approach to reveal the mechanism of indirect speech act interpretation based on Relevance Theory. The research is built on ideas and principles from the relevance-theoretic pragmatic framework to demonstrate how the indirect speech acts from Patrick White's novel *The Living and the Dead* might be analysed in terms of their relevance. Indirect speech acts are considered to be a verbal means of realising the speaker's communicative intention by means of additional illocution. Besides, we agree that the mechanism of indirect speech

act interpretation involves hearers' or readers' inferential steps, with test understanding, in order of accessibility, to achieve expectations of relevance.

The findings show that indirect speech acts in the novel are realised through various pragmatic strategies, including requests, suggestions, and evaluations that are conveyed implicitly and interpreted through contextual assumptions and inferential processes. Unlike the rule-based explanation proposed in classical speech act theory by John Searle, the relevance-theoretic approach reveals how interlocutors derive communicative intentions by seeking the most contextually relevant interpretation of an utterance. The study also demonstrates that indirect speech acts perform important stylistic and discourse functions in the novel, contributing to the portrayal of characters, interpersonal relations, and subtle communicative dynamics. Therefore, applying a relevance-theoretic perspective provides deeper insight into the cognitive and pragmatic mechanisms underlying implicit meaning in literary discourse.

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Шуляк І., Бойчук М. Інтерпретація непрямих мовленнєвих актів у романі Патріка Вайта «Живі та Мертві» у світлі теорії релевантності

Анотація. У статті здійснено дослідження когнітивно-прагматичних особливостей непрямих мовленнєвих актів

у художній прозі Патріка Вайта. Непрямі мовленнєві акти є мовним засобом, за допомогою якого мовці передають комунікативні наміри, що не виражені безпосередньо у буквальному значенні висловлення. Їх інтерпретація потребує залучення контекстуальних знань та інференційних процесів, які дають змогу адресату виводити імпліцитні значення. Традиційна теорія мовленнєвих актів, пов'язана з іменем Джона Серля, пояснює непрямі мовленнєві акти переважно через конвенціоналізовані зв'язки між типами речень і комунікативними функціями; однак такі пояснення не повною мірою враховують когнітивні механізми інтерпретації імпліцитного змісту в дискурсі. У межах теорії релевантності, розробленої Даном Спербером і Дердре Вілсон, комунікація розглядається як інференційний процес, у якому адресат прагне знайти найбільш релевантну інтерпретацію висловлення на основі контекстуальних припущень та очікування оптимальної релевантності. Метою статті є осмислення механізму інтерпретації непрямих мовленнєвих актів у художній комунікації, зокрема в романі Патріка Вайта «Живі та мертві», у світлі теорії релевантності.

У дослідженні застосовано методи прагматичного, контекстуального та дискурсивного аналізу для виявлення й класифікації непрямих мовленнєвих актів у діалогах персонажів та для аналізу інференційних процесів, за допомогою яких інтерпретуються їхні комунікативні наміри. Отримані результати засвідчують, що підхід постулатів теорії релевантності є ефективною пояснювальною моделлю для аналізу імпліцитного змісту та прагматичної інтерпретації висловлювання в художньому дискурсі, розкриваючи таким чином, як непрямо виражена інтенція сприяє створенню характерології персонажів, формуванню міжособистісних відносин і комунікативній динаміці наративу.

Ключові слова: когнітивна прагматика, непрямий мовленнєвий акт, теорія релевантності, художня комунікація.

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