RESPONDING TO INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS IN PATRICK WHITE'S NOVEL *THE AUNT'S STORY*

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Abstract: This article adopts a cognitive-linguistic perspective on communication through indirect speech acts in Patrick White's novel, "The Aunt's Story." We employ the notion of indirect speech acts as a tool for analyzing listener responses in indirect communication events. The responses to indirect speech act coordinate communication, providing a conceptually unified understanding or misunderstanding of the indirect utterance. The methods applied here include targeted sampling, contextual interpretation, quantitative analysis, and descriptive methods. The objectives are as follows: 1) to investigate how listener responses to indirect speech acts differ in terms of types and functions they perform in conversation; 2) to highlight that listener responses to indirect speech acts construct and coordinate different types of communication in the speaker's dialogues; 3) to specify the predominant type of indirect speech act communication by analyzing listener responses in Patrick White's novel, "The Aunt's Story." This paper examines how listeners' responses to indirect speech acts contribute to cooperative and uncooperative communication. The study demonstrates that proper listener responses to indirect speech acts mostly lead to successful types of indirect communication in Patrick White's novel, "The Aunt's Story."

Keywords: indirect speech act, pragmatics, relevance theory, responses, successful/unsuccessful communication, cooperative/uncooperative communication.

1. Introduction

The issue of indirect speech acts is increasingly capturing researchers' attention from both traditional and innovative perspectives. Extensive scientific coverage has been given to examining the creation and structure of indirect speech acts (Searle). Scholars have suggested models for interpreting indirect utterance (Bach and Harnish) and discussed the linguistic features of this phenomenon (Asher and Lascarides; Clark; Meibauer, Ruytenbeek).

The article explicitly focuses on studying communication with indirect speech acts from the listener's perspective rather than the speaker's, highlighting that indirect speech acts can contribute to successful cooperative communication. Listeners actively participate in verbal or non-verbal interactions by providing feedback that signals comprehension of the utterance, the listener's interest or attention, and engagement in the conversation. Listener responses have consistently piqued the interest of researchers in various fields of study, including psychology, didactics, literary studies, and linguistics (Sanae; Kita; Aoyama, Sugimori; Simon; Thonus; Clark, etc.).

The controversy surrounding the listener's responses and their impact on speakers in verbal interaction provides a compelling avenue for the study of indirect communication, representing an under-researched area. According to Searle, "an indirect speech act is one in which the Speaker performs one illocutionary act but intends the Hearer to infer another illocution" (31). Consequently, there is substantial evidence suggesting that speakers anticipate hearers to draw inferences from everything uttered – similar to inferences drawn from visual and other perceived or conceptualized data – regardless of directness (Allan). Nevertheless, the hearer's inferences alone may not suffice for efficient communication.

Communication's sufficient condition lies in the proper listener's reaction to an indirect speech act, encompassing the broader process of drawing conclusions as part of the overall search for relevance (Wilson 189). The appropriate listener's reaction serves as further confirmation of the speaker's intention expressed in the utterance. These reactions, or various types of listener behaviour, exhibit different natures that can either facilitate or hinder successful communication.

Scholars have explored the application of listeners' responses in indirect speech acts, albeit to a limited extent (Clark). However, there remains a gap in understanding the nuances of listeners' responses to indirect speech acts in conjunction with specific types of communication. Consequently, this research aims to delve into the theoretical underpinnings of the issue at hand and to identify the

predominant type of communication involving indirect speech acts by analyzing listeners' responses in Patrick White's novel, "The Aunt's Story." Additionally, our objective is to uncover how listener responses to indirect speech acts vary in terms of types and the functions they fulfil within the characters' speech in the novel.

2. Methodology and Corpus

The research was prompted by the hypothesis that the listener's responses to indirect speech acts coordinate successful cooperative communication in the character's speech in the novel. Despite the potential challenges posed by indirect speech acts, which may be viewed as "costly and risky, more complicated to comprehend and efforts productive to react" (Thomas 2015: 119), listener responses may demonstrate no less comprehension and relevant reactions to the speaker's indirect utterances than, for instance, to direct speech acts.

Listeners' responses to indirect speech acts suggest the development of various types of communication that the speaker might employ in verbal interaction. Therefore, the findings related to listeners' responses to indirect speech acts may be presumed to have universal applicability. They are particularly crucial in today's culturally blended world, where individuals are encouraged to enhance understanding in communication and build rapport with others in different spheres of life.

The study of the functions of listener responses to indirect speech acts in conversation aligns with current theoretical and methodological advancements in pragmatics and cognitive linguistics. The collaboration between the fundamental principles of pragmatics and cognitive linguistics becomes apparent when addressing the consequences of the listener's reactions to indirect speech acts during conversations. The theories of meanings in semantics and pragmatics, as well as the methodology of interpretation of the intended meaning presented in Relevance theory, are applied in the research paper to achieve the following tasks:

- 1) to identify the different types of listener responses to the indirect speech acts in Patrick White's novel based on various criteria;

- 2) to determine the frequency and relevance of listener responses to indirect speech acts in comparison with direct ones;

- 3) to specify the types of communication the indirect speech acts form in dialogues by analyzing the listener responses in the novel "The Aunt's Story" by Patrick White.

Solving the research objectives has determined the application of a comprehensive array of both general scientific and linguistic research methods. A targeted sampling method is applied to choose the study's

corpus to enhance the research results' objectivity. The descriptive method is employed to present the essential characteristics of indirect speech acts as a linguistic phenomenon. Utilizing the cognitive interpretation method within the framework of Relevance theory facilitated the presentation of the listener's interpretation and comprehension of indirect speech acts. The method of speech-act analysis enabled the differentiation of the indirect speech acts according to the illocutionary forces. A comparative analysis of listener responses to indirect speech acts in relation to direct ones revealed that listeners respond to both types of speech acts similarly. The qualitative analysis, visually represented in diagrams, facilitated a comparison of the frequency of various types of listener responses to indirect speech acts, illustrating their occurrence relative to direct speech acts.

Our research corpus encompasses 673 responses from listeners reacting to indirect speech acts extracted from Patrick White's novel "The Aunt's Story." It is crucial to note that Patrick White's distinctive style, characterized by its abundance of implicitness, provides an ideal platform for investigating indirect communication and exploring its nuances. The central theme of White's novel, "The Aunt's Story," revolves around the portrayal of Theodora Goodman, a schizophrenic woman whose complex character demands White's imaginative prowess. Patrick White skillfully employs a rich array of stylistic devices, systematic vocabulary, and both direct and indirect expressions by the characters to convey Theodora's intentions (Beston 324; Marr 256).

Published in 1948, "The Aunt's Story" marks White's inaugural masterpiece. According to Beston, the narrative unfolds as the story of a solitary spinster, profoundly affected in her early years by a destructive mother, hindering her pursuit of a meaningful life until her mother's demise (10-11). Theodora's journey extends to France and America, but the true Odyssey takes place within her psyche (Beston 11). The narrative's stream of consciousness and the quest for identity propels the heroine into an imaginary realm that may confound a casual reader. Theodora eventually finds herself confined to a mental institution, but not before the readers bear witness to the pivotal events in her life. Enduring numerous hardships, she aspires to gain insight into the truth by delving into her psyche (Panaghis 30). The character's ability to transcend conventional boundaries, moving toward the sublime, places her beyond ordinary comprehension. Theodora's primary objective is to apprehend the truth in life through a personal transformation. She realizes that there is no specific formula she can apply, adopt, or follow to ascertain her true identity (Panaghis 34). White poetically describes

her as a "doubtful rose that trembled and glittered, leading a life of its own," a statement that encapsulates the novel's central message (336).

The novel 'The Aunt's Story' represents a monumental and innovative endeavour, characterized by a style crafted to evoke dimensions beyond the tangible and the commonplace (Beston 324). Patrick White employs a plethora of metaphors to convey Theodora's mental state, as well as numerous anthropomorphic expressions to underscore the fluid nature of the world she inhabits, where the boundaries between the senses blur (ibid.). Observations by Marr and Beston highlight White's penchant for employing verbs with unstated objects and crafting incomplete or extended sentences (Marr 257; Beston 325).

These insights from Beston and Marr underscore the comprehensive and intricate nature of the linguistic research undertaken on 'The Aunt's Story' and its chosen linguistic phenomenon. Furthermore, Patrick White's stylistic features enhance the terrain for investigating communication through indirect speech acts. Analyzing listener responses to indirect speech acts in literary discourse holds potential utility for participants in conversations, aiding them in selecting an appropriate communication style for a given verbal situation.

3. Theoretical framework

The conversation has been identified as a collaborative activity, an interactional achievement, or a joint activity of the speaker and the listener(s) (Heylen 2151). Recent scientific studies attempt to identify the role of listeners' responses in the emergent construction of a conversation (ibid.). The scholars examine how responses influence the production and reception of information in the interaction between participants in conversation and give reasons for their contribution to the interpersonal and social context on an ongoing basis (Clark; Turnbull). Responses carry an enormous burden of interactional meaning (Xudong 115) and may be effective and successful communication descriptors. The listener's response facilitates the content recognition of the utterance; it shows an active, responsive attitude toward the speaker's intention that the utterance expresses in conversation.

The interaction between participants in a conversation involving indirect speech acts highlights the complexity of the actions in which listeners are engaged. Both the speaker and listener must make numerous inferences to sustain the conversation with indirect utterances. In a conversation with indirect speech acts, the listener must

infer the utterance's direct and indirect illocutionary forces and understand their logical priority and rationality (Clark 435-438). These steps occur because of the nature of indirect speech acts that are revealed in the Searlean idea, i.e., indirect speech acts consist of a simultaneous realization of a primary (= indirect) illocutionary meaning and a secondary (= direct) one (Searle 31; Ruytenbeek 298). Meibauer indicates that

> a speech act realized by sentence type x whose illocutionary force in context type[1] does not correspond to the illocutionary force that is prototypically (normally, standardly …) assigned to an utterance of this sentence type in context type[2]. Indicators of indirectness may signal a deviation from the prototypical speech act assignment (79).

Based on the identified properties of indirect speech acts, it is clear that listeners must follow a specific chain of actions or steps to discern the speaker's intended meaning, eliciting an expected reaction. This set of steps for interpreting an indirect speech act is more intricate than that required for interpreting a direct one.

Towards the processing model of an indirect speech act comprehension, we turn to the relevance-theoretic framework, which reflects how the listener derives the intended meaning from the speaker. According to the Relevance theory, the listener will exercise their reasoning ability to interpret the utterance in a communicative situation until the explanation found satisfies their expectation of relevance (Sperber and Wilson 607). We share our thoughts with scholars who claim that speakers use indirect utterances not because they adhere to the cooperative principle and its maxim but because "the search for relevance is an essential feature of human cognition (Sperber and Wilson 608), and it is explained as the communicative effectiveness of the statement. Sperber and Wilson state that

> the expectations of relevance raised by an utterance are precise enough and predictable enough to guide the hearer toward the speaker's meaning, as relevance is a potential property of thoughts, memories, and conclusions of inferences (607).

Leech defines the category of relevance as the utterance 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" [94]. The scholar has noted that a speaker takes into account the principle of relevance to guess the

meaning of the utterance: the speaker conveys the information that, in their opinion, is relevant in speech situations and satisfies the interests of the hearers.

Relevance emerges as a central characteristic of communication, shaping the significance of the speaker's message in verbal interaction. No matter how valuable and reliable the speech act is to convey the speaker's meaning, it only is appropriate if it is relevant in a speech situation. An indirect speech act is deemed relevant when it successfully fulfils the speaker's intention within a speech situation. The effectiveness of an indirect speech act becomes apparent when a hearer responds to the speaker's utterance.

The listener aims to comprehend the speaker's speech act meaning and intention, to interpret and react precisely to what the speaker means, which will satisfy the presumption of optimal relevance in the communicative situation. According to Relevance theory, to achieve this relevance, the listener follows several subtasks:

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

b. constructing an appropriate hypothesis about the intended contextual assumptions (in relevance-theoretic terms, IMPLICATED PREMISES);

c. constructing an appropriate hypothesis about the intended contextual implications (in relevance-theoretic terms, IMPLICATED CONCLUSIONS) (Wilson and Sperber 615).

In the case of indirect speech acts, the hearer initially constructs meaning on the explicit level, forming initial assumptions about what has been said. In a given communicative situation, the hearer recognizes that the explicit meaning does not fully satisfy their expectation of relevance. Consequently, the hearer supplements the interpretation of the indirect speech act at the implicit level, making assumptions about the truth of the speaker's statement.

The hearer uncovers the speech act's meaning by analyzing contextual information and common ground to meet their expectations of relevance. The utterance is deemed relevant only when it aligns with the needs of the communicative situation and can produce the desired positive cognitive effects on the hearer in verbal interaction. To illustrate, consider the exchange in (1) and follow its processing:

(1) Woman: *"I have all these bags,"* she said hopefully, but in doubt, wondering whether, for the Hotel du Midi, she had brought too little or too much. Indirect speech acts

interpretation: DIRECT illocutionary force (or secondary): I travel with some luggage (assertion) +> INDIRECT illocutionary force (or primary): Could you help me to carry these bags to my hotel room? (request).
Man: *'Oui. Henriette [Yes, Henriette]"* called Monsieur Durand. [expected verbal character's response]. Taking the bags, Henriette shifted with flat feet over the linoleum squares [expected non-verbal character's response] (White 1982:137).

The utterance *I have all these bags* may be a direct speech act, but in a specific context, such as the hotel check-in, it acquires an indirect illocutionary meaning or functions with an indirect illocutionary force. The woman's statement carries assertive force, providing information about her belongings, and simultaneously reflects a directive illocutionary force.

In the conversation between a man and a woman, it becomes apparent that carrying heavy bags may signify a need for assistance. In this context, the woman's utterance functions as a request. The indirect speech act is optimally relevant to the receptionist in the hotel, achieving positive cognitive effects by explaining the difficulty a woman faces in carrying such heavy bags.

The encoded logical form facilitates access to the contextual assumption that heavy luggage is challenging for a woman to carry, serving as an implicit premise in deriving the expected explanation of the woman's behaviour and the conveyed information on an explicit level. By combining the implicit premise (heavy luggage is challenging for a woman to carry) with the explicit premise ('all these bags'), the man arrives at the implicit conclusion: the woman is asking for help. This proper conclusion leads to the man's relevant response to the woman's request, as he calls for a porter to assist.

The man comprehends the woman's communicative intention in this situation. In this exchange, we posit that communication containing an indirect speech act yields positive cognitive effects on the listener, and the anticipated cooperative listener response coordinates the interaction toward a successful outcome. Successful communication, as defined by Oswald (59), involves effortful cognitive behaviour from at least two participants. This behaviour encompasses a proper listener's response, signifying accurate comprehension and coordination aligned with the speaker's expectations, and the consequences of this response are satisfactory for both participants.

In this context, successful communication presupposes that conversational participants share the goal of understanding each other,

or, in Attardo's terms, the goal of *maintaining communication* (idem: 32). Achieving successful communication implies a *meeting of minds*. Conversely, communication is considered unsuccessful when the goal of maintaining communication is not realized. The speaker fails to attain the desired result in verbal interaction, such as inappropriate outcomes from the response or the absence of a response to the utterance.

4. Results and discussion

Every listener's verbal or non-verbal response to an indirect utterance reveals a spectrum of reactions capable of influencing the conversation's course. Responses to indirect speech acts come in various types, and these variations stem from multiple factors. Turnbull distinguishes responses according to the sender's style, the situation, the audience, and the content of the message itself (251). According to Clark, the indirect speech acts obtain the properties that, to some extent, match the set of responses to them. Hence, the linguist distinguishes expected and unexpected responses to indirect speech acts (234). Xudong's study shows that responses vary in type and frequency of use (115).

In this paper, the classification of responses to indirect speech acts is built according to the following criteria:

a) The type of communication: verbal (VR) or non-verbal (NVR). Verbal responses consist of words, whereas non-verbal ones include facial expressions, gestures, and other paralinguistic moves of the listener.

b) The use of conversational strategy: expected (ER) or unexpected (UR). An expected response is the listener's acknowledgement or recognition of what the speaker has meant using their speech act and the proper reaction to the indirect utterance. An unexpected response occurs when the listener reacts or behaves differently than the speaker expects.

c) The functions present in the conversational context: cooperative (CR) or uncooperative (UR). Each token of the listener's response performs a distinctive interactional function. The case of cooperation is elusive because the type of cooperation almost exclusively depends on the conversational participants' mental states (beliefs, desires, goals, etc.) rather than on operational aspects of communication or some principles. Oswald claims that cooperation might be achieved in case of 1) the speaker's and listener's possibility and readiness for communication, 2) the recognition of the actual contextual relevance of the speaker's utterance, i.e., both make use of the

exact cognitive mechanisms for meaning to be successfully exchanged and 3) the fulfilment of extra-linguistic matters. Cooperation is achieved beyond the exchange of relevant information and supposes further confirmation (verbal or behavioural) on the hearer's behalf. Even if communicative exchanges turn out to be overall uncooperative, they are still cooperative on at least one level, namely the level of meaning, so we treat an uncooperative response as the response which shows the listener's comprehension of the indirect speech act, but not an agreement to fulfil the speaker's intention in this indirect utterance (Oswald 59).

d) Directness and indirectness: direct or indirect. Direct response explicitly illustrates the listener's comprehension of the utterance's intended meaning. The indirect response is regarded as the listener's reaction to the indirect speech act in an implicit way.

There is a class of listener responses that the speaker is willing to obtain from the listener. For example, when the speaker tells the listener *You have dropped your handkerchief,* the speaker intends (i.e., wants and expects) the listener to produce an assertion with directives. It means that the listener must stop and take up the lost item, as happens in the following dialogue exchange between the characters from the novel. If the listener is fully cooperative and the circumstances are right, they will produce such a response. According to Clark, this class of responses is called *expected responses* (434). Consider the following example of a response to indirect speech acts from Patrick White's novel:

(2) Theodora: "*You have dropped your handkerchief",* said Theodora to the girl. Indirect speech act interpretation: DIRECT illocutionary force (or secondary): The handkerchief is dropped (assertion) +> INDIRECT illocutionary force (or primary): Stop walking and pick up your handkerchief (request).

Girl: *"Thank you,"* said the girl, who had just returned, her eyes almost asked the time.

She bent and touched the body of the cloud (White 145) [verbal direct expected cooperative character's response].

The earlier example of a listener's response to an indirect speech act illustrates the successful identification of communication through indirect utterances. In this instance, the listener collaborates with the speaker, accurately comprehends the indirect speech act, and responds acceptably.

(3) When Theodora came into the room, onto the green, cold soughing of the pines, his eyes, she saw, had not returned. *"It's cold in here'*, she said and stooped. Indirect speech act interpretation: DIRECT illocutionary force (or secondary): I am cold (assertion) +> INDIRECT illocutionary force (or primary): Could you please make the room warmer for me? (request).
He raked the coals to sparks and threw on another knot of wood [non-verbal expected cooperative character's response] (White 67).

Of course, the speaker could be wrong in their presuppositions about the situation. Consider the following example, where the listener responds to the indirect speech act, but this response is not the one anticipated by the speaker. For instance, the man invites the woman to have lunch together. The expected response would be the woman's consent, e.g., *'Thank you, it would be great* or *Ok'*. However, if the woman is in a hurry, she may turn down the invitation. According to Clark, these are cooperative responses, but the latter is not the expected one; that is why it is considered a cooperative but unexpected response. For example,

(4) She was self-contained as a rock. See, I can see, her eyes said, as she touched the ridiculous arm of Sokolnikov. She could afford to love his ridiculousness, but he recognized the touch of charity.
"I think also you have grown," said Alyosha Sergei. Indirect speech act interpretation: DIRECT illocutionary force (or secondary): You have grown (assertion) +> INDIRECT illocutionary force (or primary): I am glad to see you are so beautiful (expressive).
"I am wearing higher heels," Katina said [indirect verbal unexpected, but cooperative verbal character's response].
Even if it was only half explained, it was necessary to say (White 226).
(5) *"You have forgotten your hat in the wash-house. With that black thing,"* he said, "the black rose." Indirect speech act interpretation: DIRECT illocutionary force (or secondary): You forgot your hat (assertion) +> INDIRECT illocutionary force (or primary): Go back and get your hat (request).
'So I have," said Theodora [verbal direct unexpected, partially cooperative character's response].
But she continued to walk on, away from the house in which she might not be able to make the necessary answers.

The woman's response *So I have* demonstrated the listener's understanding of the priority of the indirect meaning of the indirect speech act, yet because of some individual presuppositions and extra-linguistic matters, she refuses to perform in the way that the speaker wants or expects: i.e., to go back and get her hat. Instead, she walks away and shows indifference to the lost hat or the man's request.

How the speaker can be uncooperative is unlimited. We agree with Oswald, who confirms that not only the violation of Grice maxims can lead to uncooperative verbal interaction, but "any contravention of conversational maxims can be taken to result in uncooperative communication" (96). There is room to discuss whether the woman's utterance in (6) is an uncooperative answer. It becomes evident that the woman's response not only ignores the child's intention but also wants to stop any cooperation:

> (6) Katina: "I would like you," said Katina, "to be a kind of aunt. Then we would still come to islands, but without books. We would sit without our dresses, and eat pistachios, and do nothing, and talk. And I would kiss you, like this, in the particular way I have for aunts… *The air has stopped. I cannot sleep,"* the child said. The air certainly did not advance and was brittle as guitars. Indirect speech act interpretation: DIRECT illocutionary force (or secondary): I could not go to sleep (assertion) +> INDIRECT illocutionary force (or primary): Let us have a talk (request).
> *Mother: "Go, Katina. It is far too hot."* (White 143) [verbal indirect unexpected uncooperative character's response].

Listener responses to indirect speech acts lead to successful and unsuccessful speech situations. A successful speech occurs if the listener reacts appropriately to the speaker's speech act. The responses in successful speech situations vary from verbal direct expected to indirect, unexpected, but cooperative. For example:

> (7) "In time it will be time for lunch," he sighed, examining the envelope as if he doubted the address. Indirect speech acts interpretation: DIRECT illocutionary force (or secondary): it is time to have lunch (assertion) +> INDIRECT illocutionary force (or primary): Stay with me for a lunch (request).
> "I am going out. I am going to put on my hat," Theodora said [verbal unexpected, but cooperative character's response].
> "Why?" asked Sokolnikov, "why put on your hat if your haste is so indecent?
> "Alyosha Sergei," Theodora said, 'you do not know." (White 237).

The unsuccessful verbal situation occurs if the listener misinterprets the indirect utterance or responds unexpectedly in verbal or non-verbal ways. For example,

"Mother," said Lou, "why is Aunt Theo mad?"

"What a thing to ask!" said Fanny. Indirect speech acts interpretation: DIRECT illocutionary force (or secondary): It is impolite to ask such a question (expressive) +> INDIRECT illocutionary force (or primary): Stop asking/ I am not going to answer such a question (directive/commissive).

Lou would not ask more. [non-verbal uncooperative character's response] (White 258).

The differentiation among various types of listeners' responses to indirect speech acts and the analysis of their functions and outcomes on communication will serve as a valuable starting point for examining how these responses influence, coordinate, and shape the type of communication in Patrick White's novels.

Table 1 compares the distribution of different types of listener responses in the novel "The Aunt's Story". The listener's reactions to indirect speech acts are predominantly verbal (92%), sometimes with non-verbal tokens (8%). The most notable disparity in the listener's responses occurs between the direct and the indirect types. For the characters, the most favoured type of listener's response is the direct one, which occupies 89% of all the listener's responses they uttered. Indirect responses are present in verbal exchanges between characters. They illustrate how the speakers obtain some "social or communicative advantage through employing indirectness" (Thomas 2015: 119), where one of the benefits is avoiding poor communication.

Another observation based on Table 1 relates to the notable percentage (74%) of expected listeners' responses to indirect speech acts in the novel. This type of response signifies appropriate listener reactions to understanding the speakers' communicative intention implicated in the additional illocutionary force of the indirect speech act. In addition, as we have already discussed above, comprehending the speaker's indirect speech act is not solely sufficient. It is necessary to react appropriately, according to the situation and the speaker's expectations.

Unexpected responses to indirect speech acts are documented in the novel, falling into two categories: cooperative and uncooperative. The study suggests that indirect speech acts significantly coordinate communication in a cooperative direction by utilizing both expected and unexpected but cooperative responses. In such cases, participants

display a willingness to agree, act together for a particular purpose, or be helpful by fulfilling the speaker's indirect requests. Unexpected responses, on the other hand, lead to uncooperative verbal interaction, showcasing the listener's reluctance to comply and their disagreement with or disapproval of the speaker's actions and desires.

	Verbal	Non-verbal	Direct	Indirect	Expected	Unexpected but cooperative	Unexpected partially cooperative	Unexpected uncooperative
Responses	635	38	599	74	501	101	19	52
Total	673		673		673			

Table 1. Distribution of listener responses types to indirect speech acts in Patrick White's novel *The Aunt's Story*

Figure 1 illustrates the number of listener responses to indirect speech acts compared to responses to direct speech acts in dialogues within the novel 'The Aunt's Story.' Based on response criteria and their effectiveness, over 90% of listeners' responses to direct and indirect speech acts originate from characters in the novel. Test results affirm that most indirect speech acts elicit responses in Patrick White's narrative, generating either desired or undesired cognitive effects on the listener.

Importantly, the notably high percentage of responses to indirect utterances suggests that listeners perceive, understand, and express some attitude or attention to the speaker's indirect expressions, reacting accordingly. However, it's worth noting that, as Thomas (2015: 119) highlights, indirect speech acts might be 'costly and risky, more complicated to comprehend, and efforts productive to react.

The research indicates that responses to indirect speech acts in Patrick White's discourse are contextually relevant. Listeners predominantly favour expected and coordinated responses over

unexpected and uncooperative ones. This observation supports the claim that indirect speech acts can construct and coordinate successful communication, where both the speaker and listener achieve their expected or desired outcomes in a conversation. This is evidenced by the occurrence of 90% of such listeners' responses.

However, approximately 10% of communicative exchanges involving indirect speech acts result in poor communication, leading to subsequent problems such as conflicts, mistakes, and misunderstandings between the participants. The reasons for being cooperative or uncooperative determine the nature of responses in Patrick White's novel.
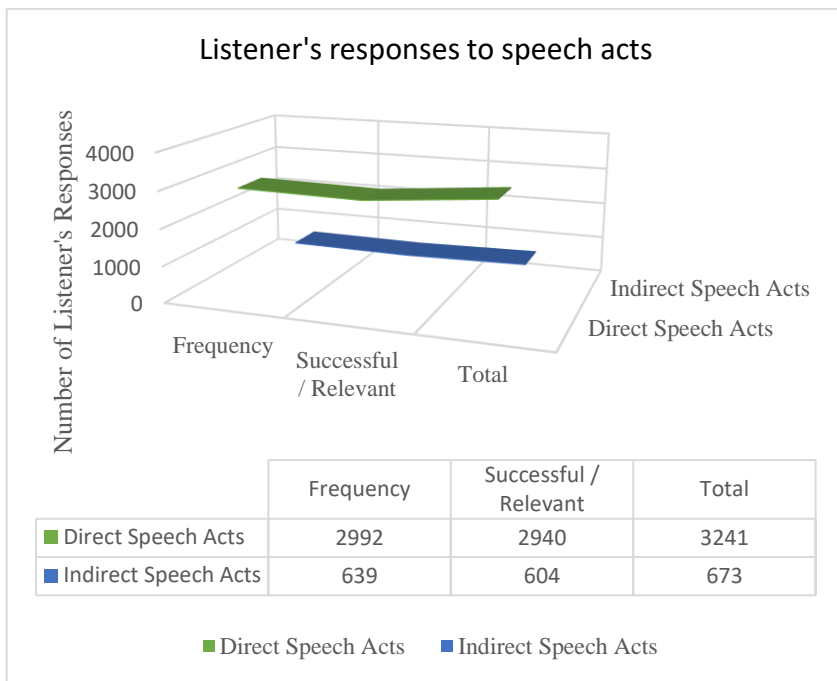

Listener's responses to speech acts

	Frequency	Successful / Relevant	Total
🟩 Direct Speech Acts	2992	2940	3241
🟦 Indirect Speech Acts	639	604	673

🟩 Direct Speech Acts   🟦 Indirect Speech Acts

Figure 1. Frequency of listener responses to direct and indirect speech acts

The results obtained in this study suggest potential strategies for navigating verbal or non-verbal interactions successfully or unsuccessfully, offering insights into individuals' communication preferences. Furthermore, these findings from literary discourse could be applied to examine and compare communication involving indirect speech acts in both face-to-face and computer-mediated interactions.

5. Conclusions

The distinctive characteristics of communication employing indirect speech acts are delineated from the listener's perspective in Patrick White's novel, "The Aunt's Story." The study has yielded noteworthy outcomes. Initially, the overall frequency of listener responses was identified, serving as evidence of the substantial role played by indirect speech acts in fostering successful communication. Success in communication materializes when participants comprehend and interpret each other's intentions, leading to appropriate verbal responses. The results of the analysis of listener responses demonstrate that effective communication is achieved when employing indirect speech acts, as evidenced by speakers realizing their intentions, a fact made apparent through the appropriate reactions of the listener.

Secondly, it has been observed that tokens of listeners' responses to indirect speech acts exhibit a range from verbal to non-verbal, direct to indirect, and expected cooperative to unexpected uncooperative. The prevalence of expected cooperative listener response types in Patrick White's novel underscores the cooperative nature inherent in communication involving indirect speech acts. These preferences imply a discernible pattern of conversational style in a character's speech employing indirect speech acts. Within the novel, instances of unexpected yet cooperative or partially cooperative listener responses to indirect utterances are documented. Such communicative feedback indicates the listener's intention to cooperate in the communication, albeit with an inability to fulfil the speaker's desires for some reason. The unexpected uncooperative listener reactions to indirect utterances serve to impede any act of interaction, although their frequency is notably lower than that of the expected cooperative listener responses in Patrick White's narrative.

Thirdly, the significance of listener responses to indirect speech acts, when compared to those directed at direct ones, is nearly identical (with 95% of responses being positive to direct speech acts and 97% positive to indirect speech acts). This finding reaffirms the trend of indirect speech acts contributing to the facilitation of successful verbal interactions, despite the additional cognitive effort required by listeners compared to processing direct speech acts. Moreover, there is a heightened probability of misinterpretation with indirect speech acts. These conversational insights may be extrapolated to other forms of communication and discourse types, offering an avenue for further comparison with the findings of this study. Lastly, the data can be scrutinized to determine whether communication through indirect

speech acts does indeed influence the success or failure of interactions among participants in different forms of communication or discourse.

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RÉPONDRE AUX ACTES DE DISCOURS INDIRECTS
DANS LE ROMAN DE PATRICK WHITE *L'HISTOIRE DE LA TANTE*

Cet article explore la communication à travers les actes de discours indirects en se basant sur les aspects pragmatiques et cognitifs des recherches linguistiques dans le roman de Patrick White, "L'Histoire de la Tante." Nous utilisons la notion d'acte de discours indirect comme un outil d'analyse du type de communication en examinant les réponses des auditeurs. Les réponses des auditeurs aux actes de discours indirects coordonnent la communication en fournissant une compréhension ou une incompréhension conceptuellement unifiée de l'énoncé indirect. Nous appliquons diverses méthodes, telles que l'échantillonnage ciblé, l'analyse contextuelle, l'interprétation quantitative, ainsi que la méthode

descriptive. Les objectifs de cette étude sont les suivants : 1) découvrir les différences entre les types de réponses des auditeurs aux actes de langage indirect en termes de fonctions dans la conversation ; 2) souligner que les réponses des auditeurs aux actes de langage indirect construisent et coordonnent différents types de communication dans les dialogues des orateurs ; 3) spécifier le type prédominant de communication avec les actes de discours indirects en analysant les réponses des auditeurs dans le roman "L'Histoire de la Tante" de Patrick White. Pour atteindre ces objectifs, une variété de réponses des auditeurs aux actes de discours indirects a été identifiée afin de déterminer le ton de la communication dans les dialogues des personnages de "L'Histoire de la Tante". Cet article examine diverses façons dont les réponses des auditeurs aux actes de langage indirect contribuent à la communication coopérative et non coopérative. Les résultats démontrent que la majorité des réponses appropriées des auditeurs aux actes de discours indirects conduisent à des types de communication réussis dans le roman de Patrick White "L'Histoire de la Tante.

Mots clés : acte de langage indirect, pragmatique, théorie de la pertinence, réponses, communication réussie/échouée, communication coopérative/non coopérative.