Henryk Kardela
ORCID: 0000-0003-0145-5659
henryk.kardela@gmail.com

Relevance and Political Discourse: Cognitive Grammar Meets Relevance Theory[*]

Abstract: The paper seeks to account, in terms of the Cognitive Grammar (CG) approach, for what Relevance theorists call *epistemic vigilance*, a *metarepresentational human ability*, often adopted by the addressee in his/her attempts to detect and evaluate (potentially) fake messages. In this way, we wish to explore the possibility of *rapprochement* between Cognitive Linguistics and Relevance Theory. In our attempt to incorporate epistemic vigilance into the Cognitive Grammar format, we propose to set up a cognitive space called a Relevance Schema (RS), a special "module" associated with Ronald Langacker's Current Discourse Space (CDS). We claim that epistemic vigilance is instrumental in deriving "an implicational character" of the "true", intended message that emerges in the blended space as a result of the clash between the explicatures' meaning and the addressee's understanding of a "state of affairs". In Section 2, we discuss Charles Forceville's Relevance-theoretic account of a political poster featuring Barack Obama. This is followed by a presentation in Section 3 of Ronald Langacker's theory of CDS. Finally, Section 4 develops an analysis of the front-page issue of the Russian independent newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* and the related article devoted to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Keywords: relevance, epistemic vigilance, Cognitive Grammar, Current Discourse Space, Relevance Schema, conceptual integration, political discourse

1. Fragestellung

Consider the following two utterances
1. This surgeon is a butcher.
2. This butcher is a surgeon.
The utterance in (1), which is perhaps as an equally oft-cited example in Cognitive Linguistic theory as Noam Chomsky's sentence "Colourless green ideas

---

sleep furiously" is in the Generative Grammar enterprise, has been analysed by
Grady, Oakley and Coulson (105) in terms of the Conceptual Integration Theory
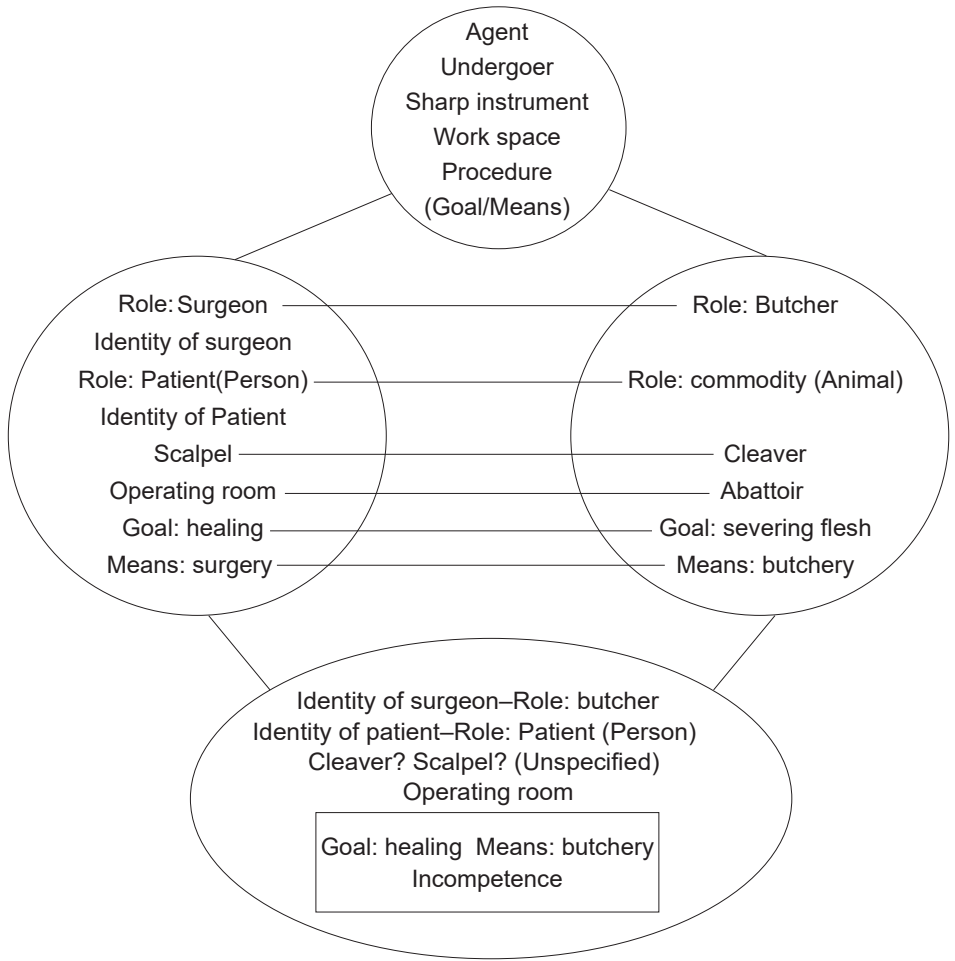(CIT) as follows:

Figure 1: *This surgeon is a butcher*: A CIT analysis

    The diagram depicts the process of *conceptual integration*, which is involved
in our understanding of (1). What (1) effectively says, apart from its literal mean-
ing, is: "This surgeon is incompetent; hence, do not risk being operated on by
him". As shown in the above diagram, the Conceptual Integration Theory (CIT),
also known as the Blending Theory (BT), consists of four (in this case) so-called
mental spaces.[1] Input Space 1 contains general information about a surgeon, who,

----

    [1] Mental spaces are defined by Fauconnier and Turner (4) as "small conceptual packets con-
structed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action. … They contain el-

using a scalpel, operates on a patient in the operating room in order to heal him/her. Input Space 2 characterises a butcher, who severs animal flesh with a cleaver in the abattoir. The Generic Space specifies the commonality of the two Input Spaces: both the surgeon and the butcher, following special procedures, use sharp instruments to achieve their goals. The *correspondences* establish conceptual links between equivalent pieces of information found in the respective spaces: surgeon = butcher; patient = animal; scalpel = cleaver; operating room = abattoir. Finally, the Blended Space contains some (but not all) of the specifications appearing in the three spaces. Crucially, the Blended Space contains an emergent piece of information, in this case: "the incompetence of the surgeon", which, crucially, does not appear in either of the above-mentioned spaces.

The question now is, what happens if the order of appearance of the two agents, the surgeon and the butcher, in an utterance is different, as in (2)? More specifically, what is the emergent information in the Blended Space in (2)? Clearly, the emergent information is not primarily about the surgeon; it is about the butcher and, interestingly, it is not about the butcher's incompetence, but rather about the latter's "artist-like dexterity" in cutting animal flesh.[2] What (1) and (2) show, then, is that the kinds of elements that appear in particular blends and the order of their appearance in an utterance are *relevant* for the direction and ways the blends develop. Indeed, as noted by Fauconnier and Turner (333)

> Participants in communication are under general pressures to make their communications relevant. When a blend is used in communication, it is subject to these general pressures, but part of its relevance derives from its location and function in the network. An element in the blend can fulfil the general expectation of relevance by indicating its connections to other spaces or indicating the lines along which the blend is to develop. Speaker and listener are aware of this fact, and it guides their construction and interpretation of the network. The expectation of relevance encourages the listener to seek connections that maximize the relevance of the elements *for the network*, and it encourages the speaker to include in the blend elements that prompt for the right network connection, but also to exclude elements that might prompt for unwanted connections. We will call this principle "Network Relevance". [italics original]

The paper discusses the role of the Relevance Principle as formulated by Relevance theorists (cf. Sperber and Wilson; Wilson and Sperber) in multimodal discourse and, associated with it, the metarepresentational human ability of epistemic vigilance assumed by the addressee during the ongoing discourse. Drawing on the insights offered by Relevance Theory (RT), we stress the importance of this type of meta-representation for linguistic investigation, including its relevance

---

ements and are typically structured by frames. They are interconnected, and can be modified as thought and discourse unfold. Mental spaces can be used generally to model dynamic mappings in thought and language".

    [2] This point is worth stressing because, in contrast to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which posits the directionality of mapping from the source domain to the target domain, the correspondences between the mental spaces do not have a direction. Furthermore, the blend, once formed, can be run by recruiting some of the elements from the initial input spaces.

for Cognitive Grammar analysis proposed and developed by Ronald Langacker (cf. Langacker, *Foundations*, *Cognitive* and *Nominal*).

According to Relevance theorists, the metarepresentational abilities include the *mindreading* process (attributing one's own thoughts to somebody else), *meta-communicative* (or *pragmatic*) *ability* (understanding and making use of communicative acts involving *explicatures* and *implicatures*) and the *argumentative* (or *metalogical*) *ability* of being *vigilant* (and thus defend oneself against mistakes or deliberate deception) (cf. Wilson; Padilla Cruz; Yus). This last ability is particularly important in today's world full of "communicative noise" created by the barrage of information, some of which is true, some appears to be true and some is outright false. Visual messages appearing on TV, in the press, and in social media, which juxtapose suggestive images with a view to steering public opinion, call for particular vigilance on the part of the public. This paper addresses the issue of the epistemic vigilance associated with the recipients' response to visual images, proposing to incorporate this type of metarepresentational ability, in the form of Relevance Schema, into Ronald Langacker's theory of the Current Discourse Space. To prepare the ground for our analysis, we discuss, in Section 2, Charles Forceville's Relevance-theoretic account of a political poster featuring Barack Obama. This is followed by a presentation in Section 3 of Ronald Langacker's theory of CDS. Finally, Section 4 develops the analysis of the front-page issue of the Russian independent newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*, which alludes to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

2. Charle's Forceville's Relevance-Theoretic account of Barack Obama's poster

In his analysis of the Barack Obama political poster, shown in Figure 2, Charles Forceville makes use of the RT model, developed by Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson (henceforth S&W).

Following S&W, Forceville notes that normal communication is ostensive-inferential, which means that the speaker wants the addressee to know that the intended message he conveys contains *relevant* information and that his "true communicative intention" should be recognized by the addressee as an attempt to convey relevant information only. A message is said to be relevant for a particular addressee when, as Forceville observes, following S&W, it has an impact on the addressee's "cognitive environment", i.e. on the addressee's knowledge, beliefs, and emotions, but also on the time and place of the communicative event. Generally speaking, the greater the impact on the addressee's cognitive environment, the greater the relevance of the message.

Figure 2: Cartoon of Barack Obama (Forceville 61)
Source: retrieved from http://noisyroom.net/blog/2012/06/30/obama-lies-taxes-rise/. 17 Mar. 2022.

According to RT, an utterance is optimally relevant under two conditions, spelled by the Optimal Relevance Principle (ORP), based on the *presumption of optimal relevance* (Wilson and Sperber 7, 65):

An utterance is optimally relevant to the hearer if:

a. [It] is relevant enough to be worth the hearer's processing effort.

b. It is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences.

Associated with the ORP is the so-called *relevance-guided comprehension heuristic* (RCH), which is formulated as follows:

a. Follow a path of least effort in constructing an interpretation of the utterance (and in particular in resolving ambiguities and referential indeterminacies, in going beyond linguistic meaning, in supplying contextual assumptions, computing implicatures, etc.).

b. Stop when your expectations of relevance are satisfied. (7)

RT thus makes an important distinction between explicit information, which in RT assumes the form of *explicatures* and implicit information, or *implicatures*. Being based on *logical forms*, explicatures are propositions that are subject to *truth*

values and involve what Relevance theorists call *reference-attribution*, *disambiguation*, and *enrichment* (cf. point (a) of RCH above).[3]

A great deal of conversational burden falls to implicatures—implicit meanings expected to be inferred by the addressee. S&W (182) draw the distinction between explicatures and implicatures thus:

Explicature: A proposition communicated by an utterance is an *explicature* if and only if it is a development of a logical form encoded by the utterance.

Implicature: A proposition communicated by an utterance, but not explicitly, is an *implicature*.[4]

Now, as observed by Forceville, for RT to be used for the interpretation of pictures, one has to draw a distinction—just as one does in the case of verbal communication—between pragmatically inferring explicatures and pragmatically inferring implicatures. According to Forceville, in the case of Figure 2, the reference attribution, disambiguation and enrichment make the addressee draw the conclusion that the man with a long nose depicted in the poster is none other than

---

[3] Reference attribution has to do with the fact that the hearer, upon hearing a sentence such as *Mary has gone to Paris*, must decide *which* Mary of, say, the two persons named 'Mary' known to him and the speaker, has left for Paris. Disambiguation takes place when only one of the meanings of, say, *Flying planes can be dangerous* (i.e. 'Flying planes can be dangerous' or '(The fact that) one flies planes can be dangerous (to this person)' must be selected. Finally, enrichment is involved in interpreting a phrase such (*It will*) *take some time*. Does *some time* mean here 'one hour', 'three hours' or perhaps 'several days'?

[4] The following dialogue, presented in Wilson and Sperber (14), shows the difference between explicatures and implicatures:

a. ALAN JONES: Do you want to join us for supper?
b. LISA: No thanks, I've eaten.

The explicature in (b) is that Lisa has already eaten and as such her utterance is subject to truth value: if she has eaten, the proposition is true; if she has not eaten, the proposition is false. However, Lisa's answer can be, and indeed is, interpreted as a refusal to join for supper and this is the implicature that Alan is likely to arrive at. This is how, according to Wilson and Sperber (14), he does it:

Lisa's utterance 'No thanks' should raise a doubt in Alan's mind about why she is refusing his invitation, and he can reasonably expect the next part of her utterance to settle this doubt by offering an explanation of her refusal. From encyclopaedic information associated with the concept eating, he should find it relatively easy to supply the contextual assumptions in [7]:

[7] a. People don't normally want to eat supper twice in one evening.
b. The fact that one has already eaten supper on a given evening is a good reason for refusing an invitation to supper that evening.

These would suggest an explanation of Lisa's refusal, provided that the encoded meaning of her utterance is enriched to yield an explicature along the lines in [8]:

[8] Lisa has already eaten supper on the evening of utterance.

By combining [7] and [8], Alan can derive the implicated conclusion that Lisa is refusing his invitation because she has already had supper that evening (which may in turn lead on to further implications), thus satisfying his expectations of relevance. On this approach, explicatures and implicatures are constructed by mutually adjusting tentative hypotheses about explicatures, implicated premises and implicated conclusions in order to satisfy the expectations of relevance raised by the utterance itself.

Barack Obama, the former president of the United States. Let us note that the poster design (red-and-blue colour) brings to mind the original poster in Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign, given below:

Figure 3: The original "Obama-Hope" poster
Source: retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barack_Obama_%22Hope%22_poster. 17 Mar. 2022.

The "Obama-Hope" poster and the "Obama-Long Nose" poster lead the viewer—through the reference attribution process—to the conclusion that these two pictures portray one and the same person: Barack Obama, the President of the United States. On the other hand, the reference attribution in the case of the man with the long nose evokes the image of Pinocchio, the main character of Carlo Collodi's book *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, a pathological liar whose nose grew longer and longer with every lie. The recognizable image of Barack Obama, despite his Pinocchio-like nose, creates thus the explicature: "Obama is a liar". It is now up to the addressee/viewer to pragmatically infer the implicatures the communicator of this poster wants to convey, which is: "Do not vote for Obama—he is a liar".

Note that Forceville's analysis can be readily recast in terms of the Conceptual Integration Theory. In this case, Input Space 1 contains information about Barack Obama as the (former) President of the USA and Input Space 2, the characteristics of Pinocchio—his propensity for lying. The blend contains the novel information,

the implicature: "Do not vote for Obama—he is a liar". We will exploit the blending mechanism of the CIT model in our analysis in Section 4.

In what follows, we present a modified version of Ronald Langacker's theory of the Current Discourse Space incorporating, in the form of the Relevance Schema, the Optimal Relevance Principle of RT. This modified model will be used in Section 4 for our analysis of the message conveyed by the front cover of the Russian newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* and the article associated with the war in Ukraine.

3. The Current Discourse Space and the Optimal Relevance Principle

In Ronald Langacker's theory of Cognitive Grammar (cf. Langacker, *Foundations*, *Cognitive* and *Nominal*), the *Current Discourse Space—CDS* is defined as a mental space established by the speaker and the hearer during their discursive exchange. The CDS, which is part of a *usage event*, is given in Figure 4 (Langacker, *Cognitive* 466; cf. Kardela 108).
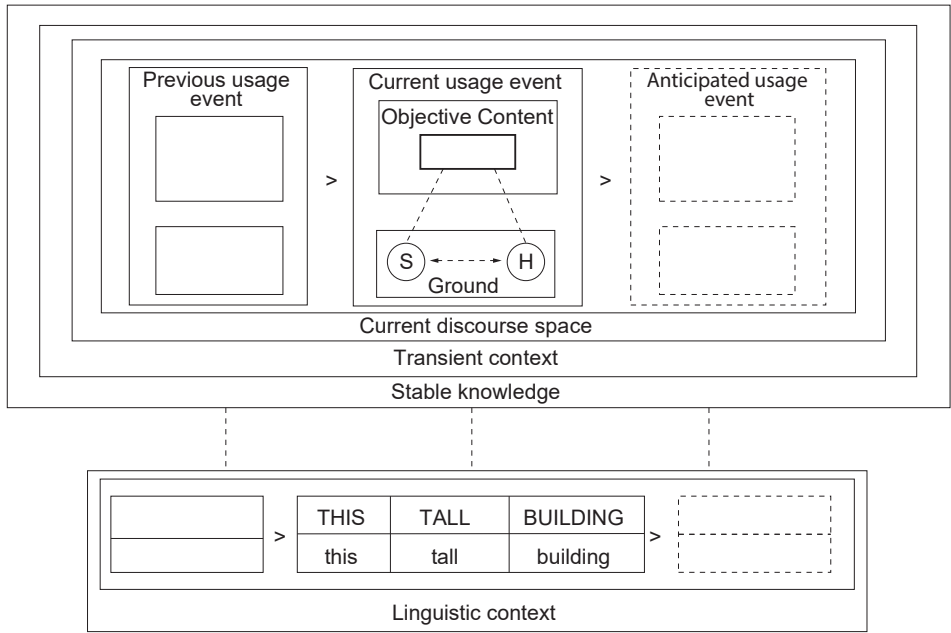

Figure 4: CDS and linguistic context

The figure presents a modified version of Langacker's conception of *usage event*; it shows the communicative interaction between speaker (S) and hearer (H), which takes place in the CDS (upper box in the diagram). The "S–H meaning"

thus negotiated is coded by a linguistic expression—here: *the tall building* (lower box). The CDS consists of three elements: the *current usage event*, the *previous usage event* and an *anticipated usage event*. This conceptual arrangement holds at all "levels" of linguistic organization.[5] The current usage event consists of the so-called *objective content* (OC), that is, the scene or the thing conceptualized which form the communicative content. S and H are part of the *ground*, i.e. persons and circumstances accompanying the production and understanding of utterances. The production and understanding of utterances are determined by *transient context*, which is recruited from stable knowledge for the purpose of local understanding, of "the here and now", of a particular utterance.

Now, the cognitive mechanism which governs the discursive exchange between S and H is what Langacker calls the *apprehension of other minds*—a cognitive process based on the idea of conceptual integration, discussed above. The process, which in cognitive science is also known as *mind reading*, is presented in Figure 5 (Langacker, "Constructing" 182). The diagram represents what Langacker calls the *canonical speech event scenario*, in which the roles of the interlocutors (speaker—S and the hearer—H) alternate: S says something to H, H listens, and then H says something to S. The correspondences (dotted lines) indicate that S and H play a dual role: in the blend, the speaker (S) is also a potential hearer (H') and the hearer (H) is also a potential speaker (S').
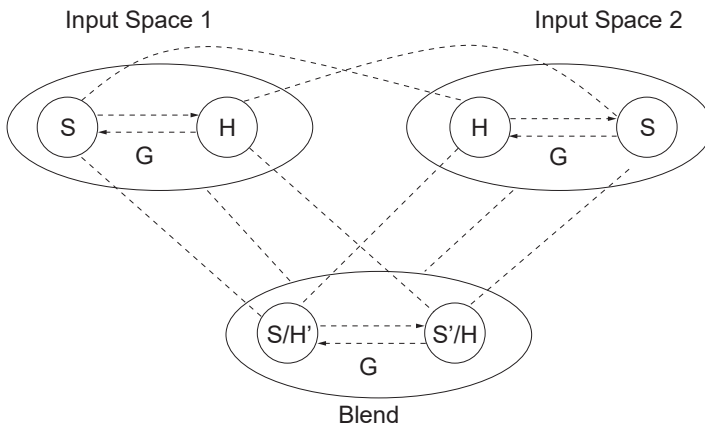

Figure 5: The apprehension of other minds

We will claim now that the apprehension of other minds in the canonical speech event scenario develops on the basis of the Speaker–Hearer discursive

---

[5] In Langacker's model of Cognitive Grammar, a linguistic unit, like *the tall building*, consists of two poles: the *semantic pole* (upper box with capital letters), which expresses the (linguistic) meaning of the expression, and the phonological pole (lower box), which corresponds to the "form" of a linguistic unit—its phonological, morphological and syntactic organization.

exchange which takes place in CDS (cf. Figure 4). Additionally, we stipulate that the mind-reading process itself is governed by the *epistemic vigilance*-guided Optimal Relevance Principle, the main component of what we wish to call the Relevance Schema (RS). The proposed "hybrid" CDS-RS model for Speaker-Hearer meaning negotiation process involved in the interpretation of messages, visual messages included, looks now as follows:
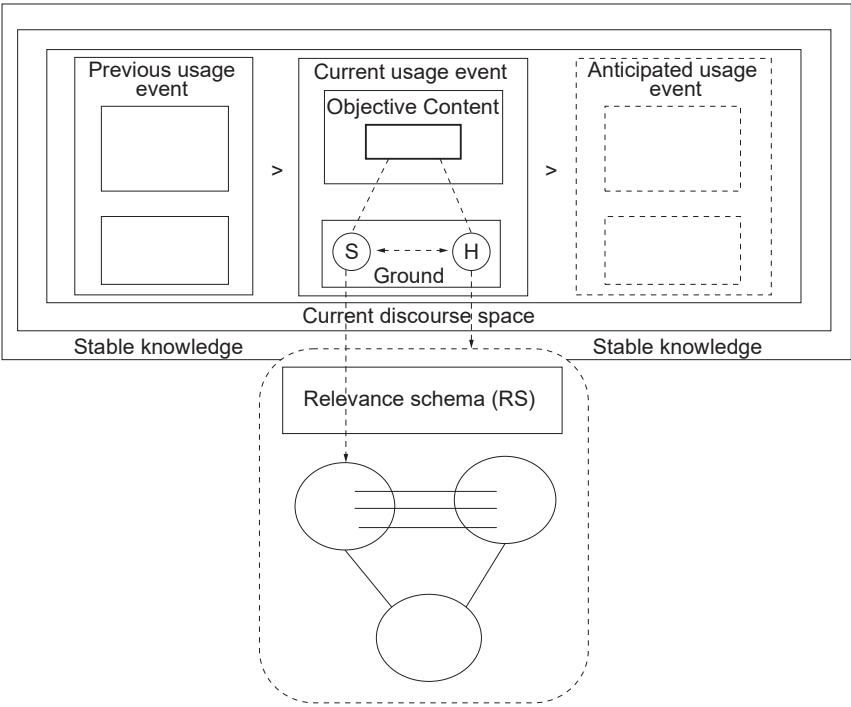

Figure 6: CDS and RS

Figure 6 represents a combined CDS-RS model of the speaker-hearer communicative exchange. The exchange takes place within a usage event, with CDS as its basic component. Governed by the epistemic vigilance-guided Optimal Relevance Principle of the RS, the hearer arrives—via establishing explicatures and implicatures—at the meaning of an utterance or a visual message. Following Manuel Padilla Cruz, we thus stress the importance of epistemic vigilance in communication, which, in Padilla Cruz's own words, "trigger[s] shifts from a default processing strategy driven by expectations of optimal relevance to more complex processing strategies". This happens whenever "hearers notice speakers' linguistic mistakes, hearers realise that they have made interpretive mistakes or when

hearers discover that speakers seek to mislead them to erroneous or unintended interpretations" (365).[6] For Padilla Cruz, epistemic vigilance is then a kind of "credibility verifier":

> … as a verifier of the reliability and credibility of both communicators and information exchanged, epistemic vigilance checks, on the one hand, interlocutors' benevolence and linguistic or pragmatic competence, and, on the other hand, it monitors and surveys the different interpretive steps that we take as hearers, their potential or actual outcomes and the pragmatic material exploited in them in order to test their trustworthiness, usefulness and viability for the process of comprehension. If it discovers that something goes wrong or might go wrong, it is capable of instructing the comprehension module to adopt more complex and effort- demanding processing strategies than the strategy that it might make use of by default, driven by expectations and considerations of optimal relevance. … (366)

Epistemic vigilance is thus

> … able to make the comprehension module shift from the strategy labelled naïve optimism to either cautious optimism or sophisticated understanding. Such shifts would be enacted if epistemic vigilance discovers that (i) our interlocutors are not (very) competent language users, (ii) we make interpretive mistakes at either the explicit or implicit level of communication, and (iii) our interlocutors either do not behave benevolently and intentionally try to deceive us by offering information that cannot or should not be believed or play with us by inducing us to arrive at an interpretation that could be initially accepted and believed, but must be subsequently rejected. In other words, epistemic vigilance might trigger the said processing

---

[6] Arguing in the spirit of Sperber et al., Marta Kisielewska-Krysiuk (79) enumerates two types of epistemic vigilance mechanisms:
   (a) mechanisms for assessing the reliability of the speaker
   — whether the speaker is competent, i.e. able to provide true, reliable and relevant information
   — whether the speaker is benevolent, i.e. willing to provide such information and not deceive
   (b) mechanisms for assessing the believability of the communicated content
   — whether communicated information is consistent or coherent with background assumptions.
   Let us note in passing that, in his critique of Sperber et al.'s conception of epistemic vigilance, Michaelian (37) observes that, as he puts it, "the lion's share of the responsibility for explaining the reliability of testimony falls not to the vigilance of receivers but rather to the honesty of communicators, implying that vigilance does not play a major role in explaining the evolutionary stability of communication". According to him, of the two types of epistemic vigilance, formulated by Sperber et al., one "should accept only a weakly effective form of type 2 vigilance". (But see Sperber's response to Michaelian's critique) The two types of vigilance, formulated by Sperber et al., are the following (Michaelian 42):
   Strongly effective vigilance: Recipients exercise bare vigilance, and, due primarily to this, they usually avoid being deceived;
   Weakly effective vigilance: Recipients exercise bare vigilance, and they usually avoid being deceived, but this is due primarily to some other factor, where (Michaelian 40):
   Bare vigilance: Recipients are vigilant in the sense that they monitor for (are on the lookout for) deception on the part of communicators, whether or not they often succeed in detecting it when it is present;
   Effective vigilance: Recipients are vigilant in the sense that they monitor for deception on the part of communicators (they exercise bare vigilance), and this monitoring is effective, i.e. they often succeed in detecting deception when it is present.

strategies when it finds out that speakers make expressive mistakes, we make interpretive mistakes or speakers intentionally mislead us or playfully fool us for the sake of achieving effects like humour. (366)

As claimed by Relevance theorists, epistemic vigilance requires so-called "sophisticated understanding", one of the three interpretive strategies employed by the addressee in his attempt to arrive at an interpretation. The strategies, which are the three versions of the *relevance-guided comprehension heuristic*-RCH; see above), are as follows (Mazzarella 191):

— Naïve optimism: Stop when your expectations of *actual optimal relevance* are satisfied (i.e., stop at the first relevant enough interpretation).

— Cautious optimism: Stop when your expectations of *attempted optimal relevance* are satisfied (i.e., stop at the first interpretation that the communicator might have thought would be relevant enough to you).

— Sophisticated understanding: Stop when your expectations of *purported optimal relevance* are satisfied (i.e., stop at the first interpretation that the communicator *might have thought would seem* relevant enough to you).

In what follows, we will use the proposed CDS-RS model to analyse the front page of Russian newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*, which alludes to the war in Ukraine. For our analysis to go through, we will assume that

a. the apprehension of other minds (or *mind reading*), as shown in Figure 4, is a result of the S–H meaning negotiation process, which takes place in the CDS;

b. following Wilson and Sperber, we assume that mind reading is one of the three *metarepresentational (human) abilities*, the remaining two are *pragmatic ability* and the *argumentative ability*, the latter involving an *epistemic vigilance stance*;

c. metapresentational abilities, including epistemic vigilance, are activated, in the Relevance Schema (RS), based on the contextual clues/markers appearing in the "linguistic module" of the CDS (cf. Figure 6) and on (extratextual) world knowledge;

d. the hearer's interpretation of a message, including a visual message, conveyed by the communicator takes place on-line and is done step-by-step by the "vigilant" hearer/viewer, on the basis of the *oncoming textual information* and relevant *discourse markers* confronted with the addressee's world knowledge;

e. at each *interpretational level* of the Relevance Schema (RS-Level), a *relevance schema switch* (RS-switch) activates the formation of explicatures and implicatures.

With this in mind, we turn now to the analysis of the front page of *Novaya Gazeta* and the related article.

4. The *Novaya Gazeta* front cover:
The CDS-TCRS analysis of the newspaper's message

The front cover of the newspaper shows a group of ballet dancers dancing against the background of a "mushroom" of fire and the billowing smoke—presumably caused by a falling bomb. In the "deep" background, a discerning viewer can notice the contour of an ominous face, barely sketched. The inscription—apparently pasted—is in Russian and so is the title of the newspaper issue: *Новая газета*. The overall image of the ballet group dancing against the pillar of fire and smoke is disturbingly incongruous; the blast of fire and smoke is not a natural scene for a ballet performance. Clearly, the communicator wants to communicate some relevant information to the addressee and it is now up to the latter to get the message—to derive the (enriched) explicatures and, based on them, arrive at the implicatures. Consider the explicatures first, based on both intratextual clues and (extratextual) world knowledge

Figure 7: The front page of *Novaya Gazeta* (9 Mar. 2022)
Source: retrieved from https://pochitaem.su/novaja-gazeta-24-2022/. 25 Mar. 2022.

dancers | 'cultural, artistic event' |
the newspaper's title: *Новая газета*	'newspaper's name'
the expressions in the expressions in the inscription: *новый выпуск*	'new' edition [*новый* 'new' in inverted commas—a "special meaning" of 'new']
Уголовный кодекс России	'Russian Criminal Code'

Figure 8: The article "It Is Time to Start Dancing Tchaikovsky"
Source: retrieved from https://pochitaem.su/novaja-gazeta-24-2022. 25 Mar. 2022

The article by Larisa Malyukova tells the story of *Swan Lake* by Tchaikovsky, of its creation and reception in Russia and in the Soviet Union. A particularly relevant section of the article, crucial for getting to an educated Russian the intended fuller interpretation of the message conveyed by both the front-page image and the article, is the column titled "Лебединое" и большие похороны" ("*Swan Lake* and big funerals"). In English translation, this section reads as follows (The stretches of the text in bold are contextual markers which help the addressee derive "proper implications" and ultimately decipher the message conveyed both by the front cover and the article):

Those Russians who can read between the lines and be able to listen between the musical notes know all this too well: if you switch on TV and **you hear "blah-blah-blah" and then the** *Dance of the Little Swans***, rest assured: there comes mournful news**.

On November 10, 1982, during the *Militia Day* celebrations, one could hear, apart from the expected large number of occasional concerts, *Swan Lake*. **Our Beloved Leonid Ilyich had died**.

The ballet gradually evolved: once the official prominent symbol of the Bolshoi Theatre and of the Russian Empire, it was finally reduced to a funeral piece: it was played in honour of Andropov and it was played in honour of Chernenko.

The putsch of 19 August 1991 started with *Swan Lake*. Greeted by the hot August morning TV news programs, Russians struggled with the TV remote control buttons; all in vain: all TV channels televised *Swan Lake*. **It became clear: something happened—the same sort of thing happened again. The result? The reactivation of the USSR**!

At the same time, *Swan Lake* became the "lake of hope" and the symbol of change**, a sign of political restauration and the last chord of the Soviet era—its swan song**.

Later on, in a popular late night show for adults, ***Turn off the lights***, **Hrun Morzhov deciphered the word** *putsch*. **In its abbreviated form read backwards, it was ГКПЧ: Пора Уже Танцевть Чаиковского [ПУТЧ = 'putsch'—Н. К.] 'Time to dance Tchaikovsky' and Год Когда Чаиковского Показывают [ГКПЧ—Н. К.] 'The year in which Tchaikovsky is played and shown'**.

The article's meaning:	
the *Dance of the Little Swans*	(i) 'there comes mournful news';
	(ii) 'death';
(iii) PUTSCH = Пора Уже Танцевать Чаиковского	'time to dance Tchaikovsky';
	(iv) 'the restoration of the Soviet era'

4.1. Extratextual clues

4.1.1. *Новая газета*

Новая газета: **Novaya Gazeta** (Russian: Новая газета, IPA: [ˈnovəjə ɡɐˈzʲetə], lit. 'New Gazette') is an independent Russian newspaper known for its **critical and investigative coverage of Russian political and social affairs**. … It is published in Moscow, in regions within Russia, and in some foreign countries. …

Seven *Novaya Gazeta* journalists, including **Yuri Shchekochikhin, Anna Politkovskaya and Anastasia Baburova, have been murdered since 2000, in connection with their investigations**.

In October 2021, *Novaya Gazeta*'s editor-in-chief Dmitry Muratov was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, alongside Maria Ressa, for their safeguarding of freedom of expression in their homelands.

In March 2022, **during the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, the newspaper suspended publication due to increased government censorship**. … The next month, a European edition of the paper, *Novaya Gazeta Europe*, was launched from Riga in order to avoid censorship; the website was blocked in Russia later that month. In July, the newspaper launched a magazine, *Novaya Rasskaz-Gazeta*, with its website blocked shortly later.

On 5 September 2022, **a Russian court revoked the print license of Novaya Gazeta**, based on allegations about missing documents in connection with a change in ownership in 2006. Editor-in-chief Dmitry Muratov has indicated that the decision will be appealed. ("Novaya Gazeta")

4.1.2. The term *special operation* used by Vladimir Putin

A televised address by Russian president Vladimir Putin on 24 February 2022, immediately preceding the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine, addressing to the citizens of Russia and Ukraine, and the military personnel of both the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the Russian Armed Forces. … [Putin] said:

"We have been left no other option to protect Russia and our people, but for the one that we will be forced to use today. The situation requires us to take decisive and immediate action. The people's republics of Donbas turned to Russia with a request for help. ... In this regard, in accordance with Article 51 of Part 7 of the UN Charter … I have decided to conduct a **special military operation**". ("On Conducting")

Turning now to implicatures involved in the whole interpretational process, we suggest that it takes place step-by-step and involves a series of the "interpretational levels" (RS-levels), which incorporate the three interpretive strategies employed by the addressee, proposed by Sperber et al. The process might look as follow:

RS level-1 ("Naïve Optimism": the addressee does not know Russian)

Level-1 Explicatures (explicit interpretation via enrichment, based only on the perceived image)	Level-1 Implicatures (implicated interpretation)
— the pillar of fire and smoke — a group of ballet dancers — an ominous looking contour of a face in the background — an inscription—*probably* in Russian (if the addressee knows that the Cyrillic alphabet is not only used in Russia) — newspaper title—probably in Russian: *Новая газета* — the article's meaning: not included	Contextual incompatibility (if noticed) may lead to a series of *improbable* implicated interpretations.

The whole situation is likely to look different for those who understand the inscription in Russian, which says: "A new edition issued in conformity with the regulations of the amended Russian Penal Code". The pasted nature of the inscription, the mention of "regulations" and "Criminal Code", as well as the word *новой* 'new' put in inverted commas—all these informational signals appear to indicate that the text has been censored. These RS-switches, as we call them, "push" the interpretation of messages to the next RS- level, as shown below.

The table describes a Russian-speaking addressee who, confronted with the incompatible images, tries to arrive at a possible implicated interpretation. Assuming the stance of cautious optimism, he is expected to "stop when [his] expectations of *attempted optimal relevance* are satisfied".[7]

---

[7] Actually, one might be inclined to say that epistemic vigilance "starts" already with RS level-2, as the word "cautious" appears to suggest. One could also say that, precisely because in

RS level-2 ("Cautious Optimism": the addressee knows Russian)

Level-2 Explicatures (explicit interpretation via enrichment, based on the perceived image)	Level-2 Implicatures (implicated interpretation)
— Russian newspaper: *Новая газета*, whose front page shows a pillar of fire and smoke, a group of ballet dancers and an ominous looking contour of a face in the background; — *pasted* inscription in Russian, which contains expressions such as *правила* 'regulations', *Уголовный кодекс России* 'Russian Criminal Code', *новой* 'new' (in inverted commas). — the article's meaning: included	Contextual incompatibility may lead to a series of interpretations *possible*, though *not intended* by the newspaper's editor.

Yet it is unlikely that an educated, well-informed reader of *Novaya Gazeta* should be satisfied with the message's "attempted optimal relevance" only. On the contrary, when detecting the incompatibility between the explicatures-based information and the "actual state of affairs", he or she will "probe deeper into the matter", to get the intended message, guided by (i) his/her knowledge of the political situation in Russia, (ii) the general background Wikipedia-type information about the newspaper, (iii) Vladimir Putin's use of the misleading term: "special operation", (iv) his/her access to some other additional extratextual information (such as, say, non-Russian independent media). Thus, a well-educated Russian reader should be able to establish a link between (i) the Russian invasion of Ukraine, (ii) the related article and (iii) the front-page cover of the newspaper with a pasted censorship circumvention-like signal. In so doing, he/she will have shown "sophisticated understanding"; he can now "stop at the first interpretation that the communicator *might have thought would seem* relevant enough to him". The table given below describes this situation:

RS level-3 ("Sophisticated understanding")

Level-3 Explicatures (explicit interpretation via enrichment, based on the perceived image + the contextual information supplied by the article + extratextual information)	Level-3 Implicatures (implicated interpretation)
— Russian newspaper: *Новая газета*, whose front page shows a pillar of fire and smoke, a group of ballet dancers and an ominous looking contour of a face in the background; — *pasted censorship circumvention signal-like inscription in Russian*, which contains expressions such as *правила* 'regulations', *Уголовный кодекс России* 'Russian Criminal Code', *новой* 'new' (put in inverted commas). — the article-based explicit contextual interpretation including: the reference to Russians' ability to read between the lines, the ballet as a sign of a mournful event; the meaning of the acronym *putsch* (Пора Уже Танцевть Чаиковского = ПУТЧ); — the knowledge about the Russian invasion of Ukraine.	Contextual incompatibility + additional context supplied by the article lead to a series of *probable* and *intended* interpretations, including the following: — "It is WAR! Russia started the war with Ukraine! DO NOT BELIEVE THE OFFICIAL RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA!"

---

today's world of mass media one is bombarded with deception and fake news, epistemic vigilance must be kept all the time. This issue, however, lies beyond the scope of this paper.

Let us take stock. We have proposed that a "full" interpretation of the *Novaya Gazeta* front page and the related article cannot be arrived at by the viewer/reader unless he assumes the stance of epistemic vigilance. The latter, which is associated with RS-Level-3, requires sophisticated understanding and is "awakened" as a result of the reader's/viewer's careful analysis of the newspaper's front image and the article's content. Seen in this light, the overall, *intended* CDS-RS interpretational process can be presented diagrammatically as follows:
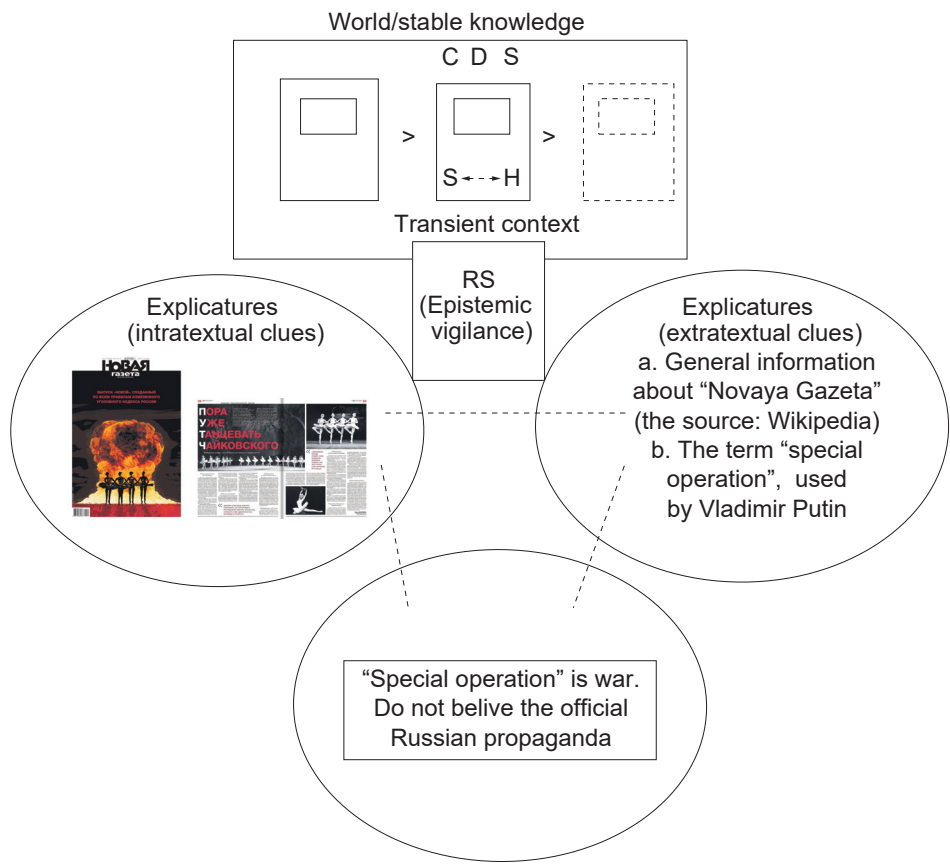

Figure 9: CDS-RS-based interpretation of the article and front-page image of *Novaya Gazeta*

Figure 9 shows the last stage (RS level-3) of the combined interpretation process of the front-page image of *Novaya Gazeta* and, related to it, the article devoted to the story of the *Swan Lake* ballet. After a series of improbable or possible, but not intended implicated interpretations, the addressee finally arrives at the *emergent* implicated message, *intended* by the newspaper's editor: "PUTIN'S SPECIAL OPER-ATION" IS WAR. DO NOT BELIEVE THE OFFICIAL RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA!"

5. In lieu of a conclusion

In this paper, we have developed a cognitive linguistic analysis of a combined visuo-verbal message conveyed by the Russian newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*, associated with the war in Ukraine. In so doing, we have incorporated some of the insights offered by Relevance Theory, chiefly the Relevance Principle, into Ronald Langacker's theory of the Current Discourse Space. We have done so despite the fact that Ronald Langacker's Cognitive Grammar and Deidre Wilson and Dan Sperber's Relevance Theory are two different linguistic programs, each having its own history, methodology and research agenda. We are not alone, however, in making this kind of attempt at "inter-theoretical rapprochement". In his book *A Hybrid Theory of Metaphor. Relevance Theory and Cognitive Linguistics*, Marcus Tendahl develops a "hybrid", as he calls it, cognitive linguistic model of metaphor which incorporates many of the insights of Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson's Relevance Theory (S&W; Wilson and Sperber), and especially of the theory's Principle of Optimal Relevance. Says Tendahl (148):

> … the differing views of cognitive linguistics and relevance theory on metaphorical meaning are complementary, because both go beyond their respective emphases on image-schematic and propositional views of meaning. These two perspectives contribute different ways of looking at how metaphorical language expresses meaning. Cognitive linguistics, with its interest in metaphorical thought, studies entrenched metaphorical mappings, and has done extensive work illustrating the range of meaning correspondences that arise in the source to target domain mappings within conceptual metaphors, for instance. Relevance theory, on the other hand, explores the meanings that arise in specific contexts, and aims to demonstrate how these cognitive effects are constrained by the principle of optimal relevance. Overall, both theoretical frameworks are well equipped to make statements about why we speak and think metaphorically, but only cognitive linguistics studies the motivation for individual metaphors, classes of metaphorical statements, and metaphorical inference patterns. Furthermore, relevance theory focuses more on the role of metaphor for communication, and thus the pragmatics of metaphor, whereas cognitive linguistics focuses more on the role of metaphor in our conceptual system. We do not see these varying approaches to be at all contrary. … Integrating the conceptual and pragmatic principles associated with cognitive linguistics and relevance theory seems very desirable.

We cannot but repeat after Tendahl: "Integrating the conceptual and pragmatic principles associated with cognitive linguistics and relevance theory seems very desirable".

References

Fauconnier, G. and M. Turner. 2002. *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic.
Forceville, C. 2014. "Relevance Theory as Model for Analyzing Visual and Multimodal Communication." In: Machin, D. (ed.). *Visual Communication*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 51–70.

Gibbs, R. and M. Tendahl. 2008. "Complementary Perspectives on Metaphor: Cognitive Linguistics and Relevance Theory." *Journal of Pragmatics* 40.11. 1823–64.

Grady, J., T. Oakley and S. Coulson. 1999. "Blending and Metaphor." In: Steen, G. and R. Gibbs (eds.). *Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 101–24.

Kardela, H. 2018. "Cognitive Linguistics and Biolinguistics: On the Path to Rapprochement?" In: Bogucki, Ł. and P. Cap (eds.). *Explorations in Language and Linguistics: For Professor Piotr Stalmaszczyk on the Occasion of His 60th Birthday*. Berlin: Lang, 105–30.

Kisielewska-Krysiuk, M. 2016. "Lying and the Relevance-theoretic Explicit/Implicit Distinction." *Anglica. An International Journal of English Studies* 23.2. 77–85.

Langacker, R. 1987–1991. *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*. 2 vols. Stanford: Stanford UP.

—. 2007. "Constructing the Meanings of Personal Pronouns." In: Radden, G. et al. (eds.). *Aspects of Meaning Construction*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 171–87.

—. 2008. *Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

—. 2016. *Nominal Structure in Cognitive Grammar: The Lublin Lectures*. Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska UP.

Mazzarella, D. 2015. "Pragmatics and Epistemic Vigilance: The Deployment of Sophisticated Interpretative Strategies." *Croatian Journal of Philosophy* 15.44. 183–99.

Michaelian, K. 2013. "The Evolution of Testimony: Receiver Vigilance, Speaker Honesty and the Reliability of Communication." *Episteme* 10.1. 37–59.

Padilla-Cruz, M. 2012. "Epistemic Vigilance, Cautious Optimism and Sophisticated Understanding." *Research in Language* 10.4. 365–86.

Sperber, D. 2013. "Speakers Are Honest Because Hearers Are Vigilant: A Reply to Kourken Michaelian." *Episteme* 10.1. 61–71.

Sperber, D. and D. Wilson. 1995 [1986]. *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

Sperber, D. et al. 2010. "Epistemic Vigilance." *Mind and Language* 25.4. 359–93.

Tendahl, M. 2009. *A Hybrid Theory of Metaphor. Relevance Theory and Cognitive Linguistics*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wilson, D. 2009. "Irony and Metarepresentation." *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 21. 183–226.

Wilson, D. and D. Sperber. 2012. *Meaning and Relevance*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

Yus, F. 2016. *Humour and Relevance*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Online sources

"Novaya Gazeta." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 9 Oct. 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novaya_Gazeta.

"On Conducting a Special Military Operation." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 9 Oct. 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On_conducting_a_special_military_operation.