

## Hidden Stories in Monologues

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**Abstract:** In this article, we present a procedure for isolating a hidden story from a monologue on an assigned topic. We define a *hidden story* as a story about the author's own life, accessible to the recipient of a monologue indirectly—by inference—on the basis of the rules of language use, verifiable in linguistics and literary theory. The procedure involves four stages: 1. preparing the recording and transcription of a monologue; 2. isolating and analyzing linguistically and/or narratively out-of-key elements in a monologue; 3. making a conclusion about hidden content on the basis of out-of-key elements and their contexts; 4. formulating a hidden story. We focus mainly on explaining the mechanisms of linguistic and narrative distinguishability of elements in a monologue, and describing, "step by step," consecutive stages of the procedure.

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## 1. Introduction

Our aim in this article is to present a procedure for isolating hidden stories from monologues. We believe that this procedure can be used successfully in studying psychological and social phenomena, such as changes resulting from individual development, cultural influences, or psychotherapy. Before presenting the procedure, we explain how we understand the concept of a hidden story (Section 1.1) and compare our methodological approach with other similar ones (Section 1.2). Then, the largest part of this article includes the presentation of the procedure, "step by step," using fragments of monologues taken from our studies (Section 2). In particular, we focus on the method of interviewing and transcription of the monologues (Section 2.1), identifying out-of-key elements of the monologues (Section 2.2), the process of inference about hidden content (Section 2.3), and (re)constructing a hidden story (Section 2.4). Finally, we

discuss the credibility, application and directions for further improvement of the presented procedure (Section 3). [1]

### 1.1 Hidden stories

We use the word *story* in psychosocial terms; that is, in relation to stories internalized in our minds (McADAMS, 1993). Stories understood in this way have the status of relatively stable mental structures that allow us to interpret our experiences narratively, understand them and constitute our own identity (SOMMERS, 1994). Although they are located *inside* us, that is, encoded in our memory, they are created on the basis of *external* influences, present in social interactions, upbringing, and narrative cultural patterns (BRUNER, 2004). [2]

We assume that stories about a person's life stored in his/her memory are usually not identical to those he or she relates. This is because we sometimes embellish stories about ourselves, omit—consciously or unconsciously—difficult subjects or do not know how to verbalize them. Thus, stories about a person's life, understood as mental structures, remain *hidden* to the recipient and often to the sender. Nevertheless, they are indirectly revealed in a manner of speaking, which means it is possible to reconstruct them (KUNCEWICZ, SOKOŁOWSKA & SOBKOWICZ, 2014a; ONG, 2011). [3]

Hidden stories are encoded in our memory at the unconscious procedural level ("narrations in action"), or as conscious memories (SALVATORE, DIMAGGIO & SEMERARI, 2004; TRZEBIŃSKI, 2002), but they are so personal or emotionally fraught that they are usually not disclosed to others or even to ourselves. Hidden stories may not be told at all, but merely reconstructed in a manner of speaking (but also in non-linguistic expressions; behavior, transference, or as clinical symptoms (see "stories that tell the man"; GROSZ, 2012, p.10). Or they are able to be verbalized, but so far have not been; or they have been verbalized in a fragmentary way or only among some people, usually the speaker's most intimate acquaintances. [4]

Hidden stories such as those which are explicitly verbalized are constructed socially (TAYLOR & LITTLETON, 2006). We assume, however, that these are more deeply embedded in an individual's mental structures and the content of which are personally important. Therefore, hidden stories are characterized by a greater stability and independence from their context. In turn, stories that are spoken reflect, to a greater extent, the impact of situational factors. What a person says or does not say about himself or herself and what he or she does not might be influenced by, among other things, being positioned as a tested person (DAVIES & HARRÉ, 1990), by the researcher's age and gender, and by a unique process of interaction between two people which takes place at a specific time and place. Stories told during the interview are conceptually closer to a product of social discourse (GERGEN & GERGEN, 1993), whereas stories hidden in them—to the individual identity of the narrator (McADAMS, 1993). [5]

However, a question arises: Do stories hidden in the speaker's utterances actually represent him or her? We assume that a full understanding of the speaker through his or her narration is impossible if only for the reason that it is a complete product, limited by the type of communication situation, the number of decisions the speaker makes as to what and what not to talk about, and by the language resources which are available to him or her (DOUCET & MAUTHNER, 2008; OKOPIEŃ-SŁAWIŃSKA, 2001). On the other hand, no matter what and how much the speaker says or wants to say reveals himself or herself indirectly through the very act of narrating a story, which, according to OKOPIEŃ-SŁAWIŃSKA "discloses him/her through what is unconscious, unintentional or automatic in his/her action" (p.121)<sup>1</sup>. Using the language of OKOPIEŃ-SŁAWIŃSKA's theory of literary communication, it can be said that getting to know the speaker is partly possible thanks to using in the analysis the *information implied* by his or her way of speaking (e.g., "the *implied author*"; BOOTH, 1983, p.211), which corrects and/or valorizes the *thematized information* included in the meanings of the words and sentences uttered. Thus, we recognize that the hidden story, reconstructed on the basis of the information implied by the speaker's way of speaking, also partly represents him or her, and that it actually does so on a deeper level than the story told. [6]

## 1.2 The specificity of our analytical approach

There is a key convergence between our approach and those already present in qualitative research aimed at *hearing the unspoken* as they all focus on the speaker's distinctive ways of speaking. This analytical attitude is reflected in paying attention, inter alia, to "inconsistent and/or conflicting statements" (HARTMAN, 2013, p.22); "dichotomies" (BOJE, 2001, p.21); "pattern in the talk" (TAYLOR & LITTLETON, 2006, p.31); shifts between "I," "we," "you" or "it" (DOUCET & MAUTHNER, 2008, p.406); "unconventional conversational moves" (MORISON & MACLEOD, 2014, p.695); "returns, silence, interruptions [...], omissions [...], resistances [...], denials" (MAZZEI, 2007, p.636). [7]

However, unlike many other approaches (e.g., BOJE, 2001; MAZZEI, 2007; MORISON & MACLEOD, 2014), in the process of inferring hidden content we consider the specificity of the speaker's distinctive ways of speaking and their semantic contexts. If we "squeezed" some out-of-key linguistic behavior into the interpretive templates of psychological or sociological theory too soon, we might assign it a meaning too distant from "the theory" implied by the utterance itself. Researchers who analyze free-flowing utterances are often tempted to "translate" the narrator's specific ways of speaking directly into theoretical concepts. If we carefully analyze the semantic context of distinctive ways of speaking, we reduce the risk that our interpretation of the "unspoken" may include something that only apparently "fits in" with the theories we know or something that we would like to hear (MAZZEI, 2004). [8]

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1 All English translations from Polish texts are ours.

## 2. The Procedure for Isolating Hidden Stories from Monologues

### 2.1 Preparing the recording and transcription of a monologue

When searching for hidden meanings in monologues, we are much closer to "the hermeneutics of suspicion" than to "the hermeneutics of faith" (JOSSELSOON, 2004). Following CULLER (2000), we assume that a specific utterance reveals its speaker not only through what is desired to include in it, but also through what is sometimes unintentionally not said. At the same time we accept the empathic and atheoretical approach of "the hermeneutics of faith." However, we do not empathize so much with what is said explicitly as with this person's fate, which is revealed through the analysis of an utterance; empathy here is the result rather than the cause of understanding. Also, we try not to look for theoretical explanations, except for those provided by the text itself; in the monologue we look for a narrative trajectory rather than any trace of the Oedipus complex or a discourse on social inequalities. [9]

Bearing in mind that mental processes are better revealed through spoken rather than written language (ONG, 2011), in our analysis we focused on the spoken word (recorded and then transcribed), rather than on written statements. In the process of making inferences about hidden stories it is more crucial *how* a person says something rather than *what* was said. Thus, we tried to minimize the researcher's interference in the manner in which a participant constructed an utterance. Therefore, we asked interviewees to make a speech in the form of a monologue on a given topic, lasting 10-20 minutes (e.g., "Tell me about your relationship," "Tell me how you were brought up," "Tell me about recent major changes in your life") and informed them that they would not receive any additional information or "follow-up" questions. When, in spite of this, in the course of the interview interviewees asked, for example, if they could now end their speech, a standard answer was given (e.g., "As you wish," "Whatever you want"). If interviewees decided to terminate their monologues before the agreed time, we did not ask them to comply; if they spoke longer, we waited until they finished. [10]

We transcribed the recorded monologues using the spelling notation. We wrote down everything that was said, including pauses, breaking off in mid-sentence, and any additional information which drew attention: prosodic (e.g., lowering one's voice, putting a stronger stress on a specific phrase), paralinguistic (e.g., laughter, sounds of hesitation) and non-linguistic (e.g., clenching fists, turning off the phone). Following O'CONNELL and KOWAL's (1995) recommendations, we made sure that the detail of the transcript did not interfere with its readability. Therefore, we included only those additional data that could be sensibly analyzed (e.g., we did not record the duration of pauses lasting less than two seconds). Besides, the transcription of these data must be intuitively understandable (i.e., louder utterances are marked in bold) and transparent (prosodic and paralinguistic data are usually placed in brackets while non-linguistic data are shown in footnotes). [11]

## 2.2 Isolating and analysis out-of-key elements

This stage involves reading the transcribed monologue a number of times and identifying any linguistically as well as narratively out-of-key elements, i.e., those that seem to be "different," "do not fit," "jar," or "draw attention." We accept that readers perceive some elements of the text as linguistically or narratively distinctive, because they are inconsistent with their mental representation of speaking rules (which they shares with other society members) or with their representation of the text constructed "in real time." In other words, a specific element of a monologue can stand out in four ways: 1. linguistically in the context of the speech rules ("people do not usually speak like this"); 2. narratively in the context of the speech rules ("people do not usually relate their stories in this way"); 3. linguistically in the context of a monologue ("there is something wrong with this text"); 4. narratively in the context of a monologue ("there is something wrong with the way the story is told"). Further analysis involves only those elements whose "distinguishability" can be verified; i.e., where it is possible to sensibly account for their inconsistency. The tools useful in the verification process are, for example: Polish dictionaries, dictionaries of collocations and of literary terms, linguistic corpora, and also Google's browser (which allows us to check the typical use of words and phrases). Below, we discuss each of the four variants of elements' distinguishability at greater length. [12]

### 2.2.1 "People don't usually speak like this"

An element stands out linguistically in the context of speech rules when the monologue author speaks (using an unusual word, set phrase or syntax, or changing the word order) in a manner inconsistent with the language system which is common to him or her and the recipient of the monologue. For example, the following statement stands out linguistically in the context of speech rules: "a decision happened"<sup>2</sup> (people usually say: "I made a decision"); inversion: "it was a sad split-up a little" (people say instead: "the split-up was a little sad"); pleonasm in the sentence: "we have our own intimate privacy" (we usually speak about having either *intimacy* or *privacy* and the content of one word is not strengthened by the other); or the sentence: "parents pushed me to seek happiness" (we say instead that parents encourage something, rather than *push* for something). [13]

Dialectal expressions are typically not classified as linguistically distinctive in the context of speaking rules, especially when the speaker uses these phrases all the time, which suggests that they are not discordant with his or her regional language use. [14]

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2 All fragments of monologues included in this article were taken from our archives

### 2.2.2 "People don't usually relate their stories in this way"

An element stands out narratively in the context of speech rules when the monologue author constructs a story, or talks about something in a manner inconsistent with the convention of storytelling which is expected in the research situation and/or in a given culture. If an interviewee chooses to develop a ten-minute narration on a personal subject, we can expect it to be a personal narration, spoken in the first person singular, told "in his/her own way" (without external styling), "to the point" and to last about ten minutes. An example of a narratively out-of-key element in the context of speech rules is a fragment of a monologue about changes in life, in which the speaker enumerates what has not changed in his or her life: "the child was not born (...) the job problems persist as they did before." Another example is a "scientific" stylization of a statement about the narrator's relationship ("looking statistically, we've been together for twelve years now (...) our love is developing on many levels"). [15]

Also, according to the cultural convention of storytelling, we can expect speakers to adopt the role of both the narrator-main character (presenting events from their own lives which involve other characters) and the chief narrator (commenting on these events). However, we got monologues about the narrators' own relationships in which she or he either focused exclusively on the chronology of events, without giving any comments, or *vice versa*— rich reflections were developed on their relationships, but did not connect them with any facts. An unconventional method of constructing a narration is presented when a speaker refers to his or her marriage as an impersonal entity, without saying a word about a spouse. [16]

### 2.2.3 "There is something wrong with this text"

An element stands out linguistically in the context of a monologue when its semantic structure is disrupted. A phrase is incomprehensible because it lacks another one which would clarify it (reference inconsistency), or it is incomprehensible in relation to another phrase (relational inconsistency). For example, the sentence: "this child was the result of a conflict" contains reference inconsistency. The author of this statement, when talking about the circumstances in which her son was born, does not provide any additional information to help us understand what conflict she means. Another example is the sentence: "my granny will also be moving out of this world," which is incomprehensible because the speaker does not indicate who, apart from his grandmother, would "be moving out of this world." In turn, the following sentence can be considered relationally inconsistent: "I had quite a good relationship with my mother, because in my family it was my father who worked." In this sentence it is not sufficiently clear in what way the narrator's good relationship with his mother might have resulted from the fact that "it was his father who worked" (here the "cause-effect" coherence relation is disrupted). The following passage is another example of relational inconsistency: "He drinks, for example a glass of wine, and that is the end; he never gets drunk (...) He is never aggressive, he always gets happy when he is drunk." The speaker says here that her husband

*never gets drunk*, and a moment later that there are times when *he is drunk* (the "confirmation" coherence relation is disrupted). [17]

A specific element, for example a certain word or its synonym, content or syntax, can stand out linguistically in the context of a monologue when, as with a key word or refrain, it recurs (e.g., lexical, semantic and syntactic parallelism). This especially applies to such repetitions which on the one hand dominate, which seems to give the text formal coherence (cohesion) but, on the other hand, violate its content's consistency (coherence), determined by the explicit central theme. In this way, for example, the structure and content of the following three sentences stand out: 1. "I said to Eve briefly: if you don't go with me, I'll go alone"; 2. "she had to learn to ski, otherwise I would have gone alone"; 3. "if she hadn't got into the swing of it, it (their relationship) probably wouldn't have lasted until now." All these sentences can come down to one, which sounds like blackmail: *if you do not do what I do, we will part*. Using split-up as a blackmail threat is seen as inconsistent with the explicit theme of the monologue, i.e., *sharing things that bind*. [18]

#### 2.2.4 "There is something wrong with the way the story is told"

An element stands out narratively in the context of a monologue when its narrative structure is disrupted. The fundamental manifestation of such disruption is inconsistency between the theme of a narration and the prosodic, paralinguistic or non-linguistic data, or its style. For example, a woman laughingly says that her partner loves her female friends "and every now and then he falls for one or another." The non-linguistic data (the speaker's laughter) does not fit with the themes of the narration (her boyfriend's emotional infidelity). [19]

In addition, disruptions to the narrative structure might concern disproportions between the components of the presented world (inadequate, with regard to the subject of a narration; definiteness or indefiniteness of time, place, events, characters and their internal states). The following fragment of a monologue about a marital quarrel illustrates indeterminacy of events and characters: "sometimes quarrels broke out between us but someone always stepped aside so that the other person could somehow unwind." This is the only fragment about the narrator's relationship, in which she talks about violent quarrels she has with her partner. However, she speaks about them very cautiously and does not specify who steps aside, and who unwinds. [20]

The narrative structure may also be disrupted by changes in its course (e.g., increasing or decreasing the narrator's distance from the presented world, changing the subject of a narration, introducing a new character, changing the style of speaking) and in its fluency (e.g., one part of a narration is chaotic, fragmented and contains inclusions, auto-corrections, unfinished sentences, interruptions or sounds of reflection while the other one is developed smoothly and consistently). [21]

The presented typology is not disjunctive in character. Certain elements of the monologue can stand out both linguistically and narratively. For example, the sentence quoted earlier: "I said to Eve briefly, if you don't go with me, I'll go alone," together with the other two sentences, stand out both linguistically (its syntactic-semantic parallelism is inconsistent with the central theme of the monologue) and narratively (only in this sentence the speaker abandons the role of the narrator-character and assumes the role of the speaking character, thus considerably reducing the narrator's distance from the presented world). The division of out-of-key elements according to the context of their distinguishability, i.e., the monologue and the speaking rules, is not fully disjunctive either. For example, the following sentences, which refer to the same person ("he never gets drunk" and "he always gets happy when he is drunk"), are inconsistent not only because we perceive them as such within the monologue, but also because our perception of inconsistency is determined by the language system, which is based on the rule of consistency. [22]

We must not ignore the impact of individual differences in isolating out-of-key elements. After reading the same monologue a few times, two people—depending, for example, on the level of their linguistic sensitivity or personality factors—may differ as to what and how many elements they identify. What is more, the reader might mistakenly identify some elements in a monologue as outstanding only because they are similar in content to her or his own life story. To minimize the impact of individual differences it is necessary to carry out a detailed analysis of out-of-key elements. This analysis can be facilitated if the reader asks the following question about each isolated element: "Why does it stand out linguistically and/or narratively?" Our work experience shows that analysis oriented to giving a clear answer to this question makes it possible to eliminate some elements (for lack of sufficient linguistic and/or narrative justification) and clarify others (by defining the linguistic and/or narrative mechanism for distinguishing themselves). The accuracy of linguistic and narrative verification of out-of-key elements is further audited by a philologist. [23]

### **2.3 Drawing conclusions about hidden content on the basis of out-of-key elements and their contexts**

The answer to the question about a specific element in a monologue "Why does it stand out linguistically and/or narratively?" allows us to identify the linguistic and/or narrative mechanism for distinguishing itself. This mechanism is related to narrative mental schemas, which are activated when a person is asked to comment on a specific subject. Regardless of the content of the narrative schema corresponding to this subject, the speaker transforms it—consciously or unconsciously—in his or her monologue (e.g., expresses something only in part, generalizes, camouflages or leaves unsaid; KUNCEWICZ, KUNCEWICZ, SOKOŁOWSKA & SOBKOWICZ, 2015) so that its large part is not disclosed or comes out tacitly. We assume that the unspoken content of this schema, which at the same time is the most active, interferes (directly, or indirectly through control processes activated with it) with the narrated story in such a way that it manifests itself in the form of linguistic and/or narrative disruptions. These, in turn, are



perceived by a linguistically sensitive recipient of a monologue as out-of-key elements. [24]

Of course, not all out-of-key elements, verified by the linguistic or narrative mechanism, are manifestations of the main narrative schema's activity (the hidden story concerning the assigned topic of a monologue). Some of them may stand out "accidentally," for example due to the speaker's situational distraction, and some because they are the manifestation of other hidden stories that are activated in parallel. However, there are few such elements. The participant is told to speak on a specific topic for about ten to fifteen minutes so all the time she or he tries to keep this topic in mind and return to it, which also serves as a self-boosting stimulus activating this particular key story. [25]

In order to reconstruct the hidden key story, it is necessary to analyze the context of a verified out-of-key element according to its content. The narrow context comprises the data located in close proximity to an out-of-key element (conventionally, up to two sentences before and after it), while the broader context comprises other data from the monologue and from other sources: interview, observation as well as other utterances made by the speaker and by people who know him or her. [26]

The narrow context, located immediately in front of an out-of-key element, plays a special role in reconstructing the hidden story. Already at this point in his or her speech, the participant approaches (consciously or unconsciously) the more personal content of the main narrative schema, which is emotionally important and which he or she would prefer not to disclose. This means that this precise part of a monologue contains the data that are "closer to" the hidden content in the speaker's mental semantic network, and thus they are an important source of hypotheses and conclusions about it. Further priority is given to the narrow context, located immediately after an out-of-key element—the hidden content, just triggered, or the data reflecting the processes of controlling this content may still be active and leave other linguistic and/or narrative "traces" in the monologue, useful in the inference process. Then we look at the broader context, comprising the remaining data from the monologue. The hidden content or the processes of its controlling, once triggered, become more readily available throughout the speech, so they can be activated many times and leave even more "traces" in it. Next, we analyze the broader context, containing data from other sources. Generally, the larger and more multi-faceted the set of data we have, the more accurately we can verify hypotheses and the more plausible it becomes to make conclusions about the content hidden in a monologue (HILL et al., 2005). [27]

Therefore, how is it possible to practically infer hidden content on the basis of out-of-key elements and their context? The starting point is the answer to the question about the linguistic and/or narrative mechanism for the analyzed element's distinguishability. (Why does it stand out linguistically and/or narratively?). Capturing the essence of this mechanism allows us to specify another question about its role in revealing hidden content. (Why does the

narrator tell the story in this way?) If this linguistic or narrative mechanism partly serves to express hidden content, the latter will reveal itself in it more directly, like a "semantic intercalation" in the structure of a speech. If this mechanism is used, for example, to generalize this hidden content, camouflage it with other data or conceal it, hidden content will reveal itself more indirectly through the data semantically related to it, reflecting the processes of control. When the answer to the question about the role of linguistic or narrative mechanism in exposing hidden content is not precise enough to identify it, we use it as a basis for formulating another question, semantically deepening and more accurately "calibrated" in relation to hidden content (e.g., why ...?; who ...?; what ...?). If the next answer is not sufficient, on its basis we specify another question, and we do it to the point where—at the level of detail permitted by the monologue—hidden content is identified (see "the downward arrow technique"; BECK, 1979, p.250). Although it is not a rule, hidden content recognized in this way often concerns the narrator's undisclosed motives. [28]

This next example illustrates the process of making inferences about hidden content. We referred to this example before, with the phrase "a decision (...) happened," taken from the monologue of a 25-year-old student who talks about recent major changes in her life. Below, to facilitate visualization, we present the beginning of the monologue<sup>3</sup>, together with the out-of-key element (italicized) and the data from its narrow context.

"Right. So I think that the most important *change that happened recently in my life is a decision* first of all, and the consequences of this decision; namely my return from Poznań, where I lived for the last year, to Łódź in order to settle certain matters relating to my life, let's call it, internal life, my rearranging the matters which I still haven't put in order; my decision to finally try to sort it all out and try to cope with it, I think was quite important, and, it seems to me, a watershed one. Besides, it seems to me also fairly significant, a fairly significant issue was that I decided to go back to college, that is to say, I completed my studies in one field, and having to choose from any indefinite and unspecified career paths, I decided however to continue my education and I've also chosen such studies which are still quite unpopular, however but I think they are the ones that can me ... can give me something more ... hmm ... for me, something that might also help and give me more insight into myself." [29]

In the Polish language we would not usually say: "... change that happened recently in my life is a decision." We are more likely to specify the noun "decision," thus: "... change that happened recently in my life was taking a decision." The lack of such a specification leads to the speaker not so much semantically specifying what this "change" was about (taking a decision) as fully identifying it with "decision" (change = decision). Thus, the verb "to happen" refers as much to the noun "change" as to the word "decision." In the Polish language, "decision" is a resolution resulting from choice, while the verb *to happen* usually refers to events that "happen to" a person, regardless of her

3 A transcript of the entire monologue can be found in the [Appendix](#).

choice (NKJP<sup>4</sup>, 2012). Thus, the narrator speaks about her own decision in life as if it does not depend on her. Why does she speak in such a way? [30]

A clue as to how to answer this question is provided by the narrow context, located after the phrase: "decision (...) happened." Firstly, the narrator talks about her life decision ("to finally try to sort *it all* out <...> to settle *certain* matters related to my life, *let's call it*, internal life") in a fuzzy, indeterminate way. Secondly, she distances herself from this decision, using formal language ("*in order to settle certain matters*"). Thirdly, she talks about her decision in life as if she had doubts as to whether she would realize it ("*to try to sort out, try to cope*"). Fourthly, she tries, however, to invest this decision with importance ("quite important. And it seems to me a watershed decision <...> quite an important, quite an important issue"). An indefinite, distanced and uncertain way of talking about the subject of the decision is in clear dissonance with her attempt to give the decision greater significance ("important," "watershed") and with an accumulation of expressions that imply decisiveness, confidence and definite choices ("a decision first of all <...> consequences of this decision <...> my decision <...> I decided to <...> I decided, however, <...> I have chosen"). [31]

This dissonance can be explained by referring to the narrow and wider context of the out-of-key element. Although she needs a definite change in her life ("to finally try to sort everything out and try to handle it"), in fact she does not know exactly what this change would involve, and thus, why it should end in success. The only tangible aspect of the change is limited to the idea of returning to a place (Łódź), and to adolescent hobbies (guitar, yoga, skateboard). However, these are not changes that would fundamentally affect her life, or have any effect on organizing her inner and professional life. Therefore, it can be assumed that the narrator speaks about her life decision as if she did not have any influence on it. It is because personally she is not convinced that the decision will really change her life. [32]

Thus, she devalues the effectiveness of her decision ("to *try to* <...> *try*") about settling her inner life ("*let's call it* inner life"). Secondly, her resolution to continue education (she undertook further studies; philosophy, which did not specify or define her career path more than her previous studies, only to break them, taking dean's leave). Thirdly, she devalues her resolution to fulfill her desires, important and pleasant for her ("I used to play the guitar <...> I enjoyed it a lot and I really liked it <...> *It seems a kind of* need woke up in me to go back to it <...> I would like to return *perhaps* to yoga <...> well a little *infantile thing*, but also *probably* important for me <...> I'm a *little old for such things*, but I decided to learn to ride a skateboard, and just today I bought a skateboard <*laugh*>"). Thus, she devalues her decisions about settling her inner life and her career as well as fulfilling her desires related to her hobbies. [33]

4 NKJP (Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego) [National Corpus of Polish] is a shared initiative of four institutions: Institute of Computer Science at the Polish Academy of Sciences (coordinator), Institute of Polish Language at the Polish Academy of Sciences, Polish Scientific Publishers PWN, and the Department of Computational and Corpus Linguistics at the University of Łódź. It has been carried out as a research-development project of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

Moreover, the narrator has to make an effort to identify these adolescent desires and feel them again. In a sense, she tries to plan them ("I also decided to sort of *build in myself* such a need and *to arouse in myself* such a need, to *find in myself* the hobby that I gave up"). The need to plan, as well as make decisions and resolutions concerning her desires suggests that her inner life is also very vague. So is her personal life, about which she talks enigmatically ("settle *some* personal sphere") and extremely incoherently ("*well, any such probably just some* personal problems"). The fact that throughout the ten-minute narration, except for the main character-narrator, no other character appears allows a tentative assumption that the speaker's personal sphere and personal problems are related to her relationships with other people. Although it is also possible that because of focusing on her own devalued desires, the speaker currently takes little interest in other people. [34]

Summing up, the distinguishability of the element "decision (...) happened" is linguistic in character and lies in the fact that the narrator speaks of her own life decisions as if they were independent of her (Conclusion 1a). She says so because she does not really believe that this decision will become the desired turning point in her life (Conclusion 1b). She is skeptical in particular about, and therefore devalues, such aspects of her decision as the possibility of organizing her inner, personal and professional life, including her hobby (Conclusion 1c). [35]

The above interpretative conclusions contain only part of the hidden content necessary to reconstruct the hidden story. In order to disclose the remaining part, we need to analyze and interpret other out-of-key elements in an analogous manner. We assume that the more frequently interpretative conclusions are semantically consistent with each other, the greater their credibility. Our assumption corresponds with MARKIEWICZ's (1984) thesis, according to which an interpretation's plausibility is related to the size of the text that confirms it. Additionally, in our research, interpretative conclusions are audited by a psychologist familiar with this procedure and, if necessary, we also consult with a specialist in Polish studies. The auditor's task is to read the monologue, analyzing the correctness of reasoning and to identify "gaps" that might lead to over-interpretation. [36]

## **2.4 Formulating the hidden story**

The content included in interpretative conclusions and explicitly in the monologue usually "makes up" a coherent whole already in the previous stage of the procedure. Thus, the final stage is to organize this whole in the frame of a simple, single-threaded narrative schema (*ibid.*). [37]

In the initial phase of work on the procedure we built such a schema in the following way: we used the content of interpretative conclusions and the data contained directly in the monologue to formulate a short single sentence reflecting motives (events) in which significant changes in the main character's situation take place, namely his or her fate, nature or knowledge (FRIEDMAN, 1967; MARKIEWICZ, 1984). Following MARKIEWICZ (1984), we assumed that

the motives included in the narrative schema can be external (physical) or internal (mental); mutational (directly causing a change in the character's situation) or static (concerning his/her states and properties). From the language perspective, we made sure that the formulated sentences contained the vocabulary and syntax of the author, as they are indispensable carriers of personal meanings. However, we sometimes introduced words, phrases or whole sentences which did not appear in the monologue, only if they represented a specific motive more accurately. Next, we arranged the isolated motives in chronological and cause-and-effect order to construct a relationally and referentially coherent system, constituting the hidden story (SŁAWIŃSKI, 2010). [38]

Our strategy for reconstructing the hidden story did not quite work when we compared more hidden stories in order to make generalizations. The differences in the structure and content of the hidden stories reconstructed in this way predominantly resulted from the length or complexity of the monologues. Moreover, part of the formulated motives that constituted the hidden stories proved to have minor psychological impact. Thus, we tried to find a solution or an interpretative template that would allow for more precise and psychologically justified comparisons of reconstructed stories. [39]

In narrative psychology, there are now two complementary types of narrative schemas. The so-called teleological narrative schema, advocated by TRZEBIŃSKI (2002), contains the following elements: 1. the main character's intention (desires, fears, values); 2. complications on the path to realizing this intention; 3. possible ways of overcoming these complications and realizing the intention; 4. the other characters' participation. The "core conflictual relationship theme" method as developed by LUBORSKY and CRITS-CHRISTOPH (1998), based on research in psychotherapy, defines the narrative schema in a similar way. It involves a sequence of the following elements: 1. the "Self's" desires (the main character's intention); 2. other people's reactions to the "Self's" desires (complications on the path to realizing this intention and the other characters' participation); and 3. the "Self's" reactions to other people's reactions (cf. possible ways of overcoming these complications and realizing the intention). Generalizing these two approaches, we can talk about the three-component narrative schema, built around the main character's goal (intention) in relation to the other characters: *intention-complications-resolution* (IKR). [40]

Adapting the IKR pattern to the procedure for isolating a hidden story from a monologue, we applied a few additional interpretative rules: 1. the *intention* sub-schema reflects the main character's motivation, which manifests itself to a relatively larger degree in the explicit layer of a monologue; 2. the *complications* sub-schema refers to the main or another character's motivation, which is in opposition to that of the *intention* sub-schema and includes more inferred hidden content; 3. the *resolution* sub-schema contains the content that reflects the effects of the mutual influence which the motivations of the two previous sub-schemas exert on each other. The respective shares of explicit and hidden content in it are not important; 4. in order to maintain the consistency of the IKR schema, the content assigned to each sub-schema is reduced to the most

significant elements and is formulated in a concise manner. The correctness of assigning hidden and explicit content to the appropriate categories (sub-schemas) of the hidden-story schema is audited by a psychologist. Below, we present an example of the hidden story which we isolated from the previously analyzed monologue, following the aforementioned schema.

*Intention:* The participant wishes to make a "watershed" change—to sort out her "inner," "personal" and "professional" life.

*Complications:* She does not know, however, what exactly that change would involve, or what specifically she would have to do. She cannot translate her intent into purposes that would offer a chance to reorganize her life.

*Resolution:* She takes up unpopular studies that result in her going on dean's leave. She harbors the idea of returning to what she knows: places and abandoned hobbies (her teenage dreams, which she is planning to realize during her leave). She considers her plan for life change to be the "absolute optimum." The implementation of the plan is supposed to make her "very satisfied" with herself. Yet she does not believe that it will be the turning point in her life, which she desires so much. [41]

### 3. Discussion

The longer we deal with the procedure for isolating hidden stories from monologues, the more we see aspects that need checking and/or improving. For example, in one of our recent studies we checked on the reliability of the procedure, which, after SILVERMAN (2006), we understand as compatibility of findings between people independently analyzing the same data. Three teams (each consisting of two psychologists and one specialist in Polish studies), independently analyzing the same monologue, showed a satisfactory compatibility in terms of the content of interpretive conclusions and the schema of the hidden story (KUNCEWICZ, KUNCEWICZ, SOKOŁOWSKA & KRUSZEWSKI, 2016). This preliminary result suggests that the process of inferring a hidden story from a monologue was repeated regardless of the researchers' personalities, scientific ideas, or their personal or professional biographies. The effect of the interpretation's repeatability was achieved perhaps due to the fact that each team had been provided with a separate audit at the consecutive stages of the procedure (SMITH, FLOWERS & LARKIN, 2012). Another contributory factor might have been the diversity of the researchers' cognitive perspectives who, within a team, not only verified each other's findings, but also supplemented and enriched them (PEZALLA, PETTIGREW & MILLER-DAY, 2012). [42]

We presume, however, that the underlying reasons for the interpretation's repeatability may be the procedure itself and, more specifically, the rules verifying the inference process, which are based on the text. The analysis involves only the interviewee's ways of speaking, whose mechanisms of standing out are verified by means of linguistic and literary theory tools. Secondly, the procedures for inferring from semantic contexts are quite precisely specified; they are enforced, as it were, by the essence of the verified mechanisms of linguistic or narrative

distinguishability of the monologue's elements. Thirdly, interpretative conclusions are also subject to verification in terms of their coherence with the other conclusions and the text as a whole. [43]

Regardless of what, in this particular study, had the greatest impact on the repeatability of the interpretation—whether it was the use of an audit, teamwork, or verification rules based on the text—it seems advisable to combine different methods of objectivizing the inference process. With this in mind, we dare to presume that the rules objectivizing the inference process, included in our procedure, can be a useful complement to other analytical approaches. For example, we would like to refer to the approach modeled on the reception and understanding of poetic expression, developed by MAZZEI (2003, 2004, 2007). The key to this approach is to listen carefully, again and again, to what is being spoken and, at the same time, try to hear/recognize the linguistic traces of what is *unspoken (silenced)*. This attitude is also the core of our procedure. It is precisely thanks to this careful listening that a mental space is created, in which it is easier to hear the *unspoken*. If we fill this space with correctly orientated analysis which utilizes linguistic and literary theory tools, we reduce the risk that we may hear our voice in it, instead of the speaker's (MAZZEI, 2003). [44]

Another aspect of our procedure which required checking was the time stability of the hidden stories. To find out whether and to what extent a hidden story, narrated by a specific person on a subject important for her, changed over time, we compared this person's two hidden stories which had been isolated from her monologues on her own upbringing, recorded over a span of two years. Both reconstructed stories had a two-threaded structure. Besides, the *culmination* of the primary storyline implied the *intention* of the secondary storyline, set in the events which chronologically happened later. The key results indicated the stability of the primary and the instability of the secondary storyline in a span of two years, which supported our presumption that hidden stories are constructs relatively persistent in time. The variability of the secondary storyline, according to the psychosocial approach (McADAMS, 1993), reflected not so much the variable research context as the speaker's developmental changes; in this particular case, separation from her family of origin. [45]

Although this procedure fits into the paradigm of qualitative research, it also aspires to nomothetic purposes, commonly attributed to quantitative methods. An example of its application is the research conducted by KUNCEWICZ, SOKOŁOWSKA and SOBKOWICZ (2014b). The authors analyzed and interpreted a total of 56 monologues made by mothers (who recounted how they brought up their children) and their adult children (who described how they were brought up). The monologues were analyzed in mother-child pairs. On this basis, the researchers isolated four types of relationships between hidden and explicit stories on upbringing: 1. compatibility of both explicit and hidden stories of mother and child); 2. compatibility of explicit, but incompatibility of hidden stories; 3. incompatibility of explicit, but compatibility of hidden stories; 4. incompatibility of both explicit and hidden stories. At a later stage of analysis, this typology proved to be useful for a deeper understanding of phenomena occurring in

intergenerational family relationships. The explicit stories of mothers-"buddies" and their daughters were coherent, while the hidden ones did not match at all. In childhood, the daughters needed mothers in the role of mothers, not friends. Yet, their mothers played the role of children. On the other hand, the explicit stories of mothers and daughters who were constantly at loggerheads were not compatible, but their hidden stories remained coherent. Both sides met each other, even if it happened in a specific way, in the context of negative feelings. Moreover, their narratives showed more signs of a sense of belonging, attachment and closeness than those produced by mothers-"buddies" and their daughters. [46]

We believe that the procedure for isolating hidden stories from monologues may be useful not only in psychological research. Individual autobiographical utterances reflect the influences of both the local family environment and a wider socio-cultural niche (TAYLOR & LITTLETON, 2006). Our procedure can therefore be successfully used in the analysis of the micro- and macro-social processes, for example within the framework of sociological, anthropological, or historical research. An interesting trend is the study of hidden, *unspoken* stories in comparison with the norms and stereotypes which prevail in society (GERGEN & GERGEN, 1993; MAZZEI, 2004; MORISON & MACLEOD, 2014, 2015). Interestingly, the study carried out by URBAŃCZYK (2015), adopting the procedure presented in this article, indicated that heteronormative patterns do not have to be a source of concealing important experiences, but they themselves can be *silenced* (MORISON & MACLEOD, 2014, 2015). When asked to make a statement about their relationships, some women appreciated, at the explicit level, the modern, partnership model, and flexible role reversal, but in the hidden layer they longed for a romantic relationship, based on the former, traditional division of roles between men and women. [47]

So far the results of work on the procedure for isolating hidden stories from monologues have been encouraging, but it should be recognized that this procedure has its limitations. One of them is the intercultural communicativity of successive stages of inference. For example, some of the linguistic nuances that form the basis for inference may be indiscernible to recipients of another language and culture. Therefore, good translation is so important; it reproduces, in the target language (as in the case of poetry), extra-textual aspects of an utterance, for example its rhythm or unusual syntax. [48]

To sum up, the preliminary results of the research on the procedure for isolating hidden stories are encouraging. It can be used in those studies on processes regulating the behavior of individuals and groups in which verbal declarations made by the respondents are difficult or impossible to analyze. Thanks to adapting linguistic and literary theory tools to the analysis, not only can we better understand "intuitive" forms of cognition (which most of us use on a daily basis), but also verify them to a certain extent. Further work on the improvement of the procedure should aim at tackling important theoretical and methodological issues. [49]

At the theoretical level, it is necessary to develop the concept of hidden stories, to clearly distinguish between hidden stories which are accessible and inaccessible



to the narrator's consciousness, and also to examine their functions. According to the assumptions of the leading directions in psychotherapy, the awareness and verbalization of stories which are inaccessible to consciousness and which manifest themselves in behavior, including the way of speaking (GROSZ, 2012), serves a therapeutic function. However, it is not completely clear, and this requires further research into the extent to which "therapeutic stories" are constructed, and to which are reconstructed. [50]

In the field of methodology, it is necessary to continue work on the interpretation credibility rules. It is worth checking what skills are needed to ensure the accuracy of interpretation (Is it linguistic and/or emotional sensitivity? Clear thinking? Self-awareness of mental processes potentially affecting interpretation?). Perhaps one competent auditor supervising the correctness of inference at particular stages of the procedure means more than five judges who are affected by group processes? Of course, the interviewee is also the source of evaluating the correctness of interpretation. We had informal conversations with some of the participants, which confirmed our conclusions on implicit content in monologues. However, it is necessary to conduct a formal study into the accuracy of interpretation, in which the respondents play an active part. [51]

Finally, we would like to refer to a few (out of many) ethical issues which, in our opinion, are very important. Research carried out by means of this procedure involves disclosing highly personal information. It is therefore important not only to inform the interviewee about the possibility of withdrawing from the study at any time, but also to genuinely care about his or her comfort and sense of security. The researcher is required to have the ability to establish and maintain interpersonal contact, show a readiness to listen before and after the examination and, above all, treat participants with compassion. [52]

Disclosing hidden stories, important in a person's life, is also part of the psychotherapeutic process. The therapist helps the patient recognize and verbalize hidden stories, understand their impact on her or his current life and include them in a new, more adaptive autobiographical narrative (SUMMERS & BARBER, 2010). However, the immediate goal of a study conducted by means of our procedure is not psychological help, but a scientific understanding of phenomena that can be thematically related to it. Besides, participants do not usually approach a researcher for help with their problems. Therefore, revealing to them their hidden stories (which they do not tell easily because such stories are too personal, or they want to avoid being hurt, or they are unconscious of them) would be, in our opinion, an unethical act. However, it should be recognized that some participants, when talking about personal matters, may be confronted with painful problems and/or show readiness to get assistance. In such situations, they should be entitled to free diagnosis and psychological consultation, as well as guidance about adequate forms of further psychological care, support, and/or psychotherapy. [53]

At the stage of publishing research results which include hidden stories or their fragments, every effort should be made not to disclose any identifiable

information about participants. We do not mean just removing sensitive information or applying data masking. It is also important to check if the sequence of events constituting a hidden story makes it possible to reveal participants' identities and, if need be, introduce appropriate masking modifications in such a way that the meaning expressed by the author of the monologue is not altered. [54]

### **Appendix: Katarzyna's Monologue**

Katarzyna is a 25 year old philosophy student, currently on dean's leave.

"Right. So I think that the most important change that has happened recently in my life is first of all a decision, and the consequences of this decision, namely my return from Krakow, where I lived for the last year, to Lublin in order to settle certain matters relating to my life, let's call it, internal life, my rearranging the matters which I still haven't put in order my decision to finally try to sort them all out and try deal with them, I think was quite important, and, it seems to me, a breakthrough. Besides, what also seems fairly significant to me, a fairly significant issue was that I decided to go back to college, that is to say, I completed my studies in one field, and having to choose from some indefinite and unspecified career paths, I decided to continue my education and I've chosen studies which are still quite unpopular, however I think they are the ones that can me ... can give me something more ... hmm ... for me, something that might also help and give me more insight into myself, and I don't mean psychology but philosophy, and somehow these decisions within one year because actually all this happened over the last year; I think that they are quite ... quite important decisions and now what I really have to do – because I have decided to take a mm ... mm dean's leave and stop these studies for now, and just try to focus more on how to arrange a certain personal and emotional sphere in my life and right now I will try to realize the resolution I have made this year. I think that would be it. Mmmm ... Anything else? Mmmm. In that case I would have to go a little deeper in my mind, because these are the things I put to the fore, but I have also decided to build a need in myself, (and) create the need to take up the hobby that I quit some time ago, namely playing the guitar. Because I used to play the guitar; I do not know how it came out, but I know that it gave me a lot of pleasure and I liked it a lot and it was just around the second year of my studies, because my first field of study was ... I have a degree in the history of art, so around the second year, I somehow gave up playing ... the guitar ... completely and I stopped dealing with it and recently I felt the need to go back to this activity; similarly, I have decided to improve my physical condition, because I have a feeling that somehow my physical condition has deteriorated and so I do not feel good in this frail body of mine, so I would like ... I would like to strengthen also this physical sphere, not only the emotional and mental one, but also the physical aspect and that's why I would perhaps like to go back to yoga, which I did two years ago and which I did for over a year and I had really good results, but which I gave up because of some personal problems, and which ... i.e., yoga—at some point—fell by the wayside; and a little infantile thing, but also probably important to me, infantile in the sense that, let's say, I'm a little old for such things, but I've decided to learn skateboarding and just today I already bought a skateboard

(laughs) so tomorrow I am going to learn how to ride it, because this is something that is interesting, because I never ... never allowed myself to think that I would like to ..., I mean ... I'll put it differently: I did not allow myself to think that I could take it up, but I have wanted to do it for a very long time and there were always half-measures like a bicycle or roller-skates, and finally I said to myself that I had already turned twenty-five and sometimes people say that such round anniversaries make people do some strange things, and I think they caused such a strange thing in me—that I have decided to buy myself a skateboard and learn how to ride it I do not expect that I will be a great skateboarder, but that I will simply ride it and be able to move along and just be able to tell myself that I have tried, that I wanted to learn something, that... that I have fulfilled some kind of, this strange dream of mine that I have had in my mind for a few years, as I now recall, and which I haven't realized so far, so probably such hobbies would be exercise, which is my return to yoga, skateboarding, and playing the guitar (laughs). Yes, and I think that it is really such an absolute optimum that if I manage to realize it together with what I have already said at the beginning, I will be very satisfied with myself."

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